June 2000

Translating Research into Action: Gender-Specific programming for At-Risk and Court-Involved Girls

Alyssa D. Benedict

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TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO ACTION: GENDER-SPECIFIC PROGRAMMING FOR AT-RISK AND COURT-INVOLVED GIRLS

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B.A., University of Connecticut, 1998

M.P.H., University of Connecticut, 2000

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Public Health at the University of Connecticut 2000
APPROVAL PAGE

Master of Public Health Thesis

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO ACTION: GENDER-SPECIFIC
PROGRAMMING FOR AT-RISK AND COURT-INVOLVED GIRLS

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Chapter I - Introduction

Juvenile delinquency has been identified as a societal problem since the early 1800's. In 1899 the first juvenile court was established in Illinois because people favored the creation of a separate court for juveniles that would "...act in a parental role towards [youth] rather than in the punitive, adversarial role seen in adult criminal court" (Hartford Institute of Criminal & Social Justice, 1996; Shelden, 1998). By the middle of the 20th century, the utility of prevention- and intervention-based juvenile delinquency prevention programming was recognized and addressed actively nationwide through program development, implementation, and policy reform.

Until relatively recently, however, research on patterns of delinquency and recidivism within the juvenile justice system was conducted mostly on males, and research on the etiology and the treatment needs of juvenile offenders focused solely on males as well (Odem & Schlossman, 1991; Chesney-Lind, 1986; 1989; Shelden, 1998). Juvenile delinquency was viewed as a "male problem," and such a misconception had many consequences for young girls, not the least of which was the lack of appropriate program options tailored to address their unique needs. Society is now being confronted with a pressing reality. Recent studies on juvenile delinquency reveal that rates of female delinquency are on the rise (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). Statistics show that young girls are becoming court-involved at greater rates, even greater than young boys (1998). Between 1993 and 1997, increases in arrests were greater for girls than for boys in nearly every offense category (Snyder, in press). In 1986, girls younger than 18 years of age comprised 22 percent of all juvenile arrests; in 1997 this figure rose to 26 percent. Confronted with such compelling numbers, policy makers, professionals, and
practitioners have been searching for ways to ameliorate growing rates of female juvenile crime.

Most recently, gender-specific treatment has been deemed necessary for the optimal success of prevention and intervention programs that serve at risk and court-involved girls (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, as revised in 1992, officially acknowledged the need to offer and expand gender-specific treatment, support, and rehabilitation options for troubled adolescent girls. The federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (hereafter referred to as OJJDP), part of the Justice Department of the United States, as well as several other governmental and non-governmental organizations and agencies, have also promoted gender-specific treatment for girls. In fact, in 1996, OJJDP contracted with Greene, Peters, & Associates to promote gender-specific programming across the country. The contract has resulted in much research related to gender-specific treatment, including the pivotal publication, Guiding Principles for Promising Female Programming: An Inventory of Best Practices, released in 1998.

Conceptually, as an unconventional, neoteric idea, gender-specific treatment has not been without controversy, however the prevailing attitude is that it is a compelling research-based notion worthy of broad implementation. “The juvenile female offender is perhaps the most enigmatic, misunderstood, [and] underserved...not only do the therapeutic needs of this population often go unidentified or unserved, but the specific personal, social, and criminal variables that impact a young woman’s ability to function independently in an adult society remain unclear” (Fejis-Mendoza et al., 1995). It has been recognized that there are “several measures that could be taken to prevent further

Various studies have identified the need for new program models for girls. Because the unique needs of females have only recently come into view, juvenile programs are in the preliminary stages of refining their program objectives to suit more adequately the females they serve. According to the Office of Juvenile Delinquency and Prevention (OJJDP), “There is a lack of gender specific treatment in the United States in the juvenile justice system.” The juvenile justice systems in many states, cities, and municipalities are unsure of how to successfully implement gender-specific protocols. The unfortunate consequence of such uncertainty is that many much needed gender-specific programs and systemic protocols have been implemented slowly, incorrectly, or not at all. Institutionalization of gender-specific strategies for at-risk and court-involved girls continues to be vital, however, and requires familiarity with the history of girls' treatment in the juvenile justice system, their unique needs, best practices in female programming, and for practical purposes, a model through which gender-specific programming can be successfully implemented.

An exploration of the historical, sociological, and psychological perspectives that influenced the development of gender-specific treatment may serve to resolve any uncertainty about where gender-specific programming fits in juvenile delinquency prevention for girls and what gender-specific programming actually is. Furthermore, viewing female delinquency as a public health problem will serve to guide practitioners,
administrators, and policy makers as they endeavor to implement and ultimately institutionalize gender-specific strategies. The following pages, therefore, will provide a framework wherein the following will be explored:

1) The **history** of girls' treatment in the juvenile justice system.

2) The **epidemiology** of adolescent female juvenile delinquency including past statistics and current rates of offending.

3) A comprehensive description of what it means to be an at-risk female, including an overview of girls’ unique **pathways to delinquency**.

4) The unique **psychosocial development** of adolescent girls and how it differs from that of young boys.

5) A description on the concept of and proposed need for **gender-specific programming** for at-risk and court-involved girls in the context of girls’ different offense patterns, psychosocial development, risk factors, and treatment needs.

6) A profile of juvenile delinquency prevention programs and the provision of gender-specific services in the City of Hartford.

7) A proposal for best practices in gender-specific programming for at-risk and court-involved girls based on an adaptation of the public health model of disease development and control.

A prerequisite to any discussion about gender-specific treatment for at-risk and court-involved girls is an acute awareness of society’s treatment of all females, regardless of age, throughout history, and the implications that societal practices such as oppression, discrimination, and dismissal have had on the personal and professional lives of all women. Attitudes about females that gave rise to such practices were riddled with erroneous assumptions and powerful stereotypes that, although less prevalent and in many cases less overt today, are arguably no less potent, especially for the developing adolescent girl. Indeed, some theorists propose that residual discriminatory and
Oppressive practices, however inadvertent, continue to have more of a profound effect on girls and society at large than is explicitly recognizable (see Gilligan, 1977, 1982).

Girls with healthy self-esteem have an appropriate sense of their potential, their competence, and their innate value as individuals. They feel a sense of entitlement: license to take up space in the world, a right to be heard and to express a full spectrum of human emotions. The fact that, in study, after study, women and girls are less likely to feel those things than men and boys should be no surprise. We live in a culture that is ambivalent toward female achievement, proficiency, independence, and right to a full and equal life (Orenstein, 1994).

Attitudes and societal practices related to girls and women that historically characterized American society have also influenced the institutions, systems, and programs through which girls and women pass. This directly relates to treatment for adolescent female offenders, as the system of juvenile justice, and the accompanying programs to which at-risk and court-involved girls are referred, presently tend to reflect the cultural practices of gender-bias, discrimination, and patriarchy that, however in their diluted forms, continue to characterize American society. Such practices, however esteemed or denounced, have permeated, characterized and ultimately influenced the form and function of delinquency prevention and intervention programs that serve girls.

Pivotal studies such as The American Association of University Women’s (AAUW) Study, Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America, have provided evidence for the dynamic whereby negative societal attitudes about women, and the discriminatory practices these attitudes create, permeate socially constructed systems and institutions at the expense of girls’ growth and development. The AAUW Study, an extensive national survey on gender and self-esteem (3000 boys and girls between the ages of 9 and 15 were polled on their attitudes toward self, school, family, and friends), uncovered the ways in
which the educational system - often unwittingly - inhibits, restricts, diminishes and
denies girls' experience (Orenstein, 1995). Results confirmed that the educational system
often lacks appropriate institutional practices that build upon girls' strengths and
challenge them to transcend pervasive stereotypical attitudes about women's roles and
capabilities. Often inadvertently, the educational system contributed to the adversity in
girls' lives by ill-serving them in the classroom (Orenstein, 1995; AAUW Report, 1995).

The relationship between young girls and the institutions and systems that are
transmitters of larger societal attitudes and practices, as exemplified by the AAUW
Report, is unequivocally apparent in at-risk and court-involved girls and their interactions
with the juvenile justice system and associated delinquency prevention programs. Like
the system of education, justice systems and programs have the capacity to hinder or
facilitate girls' development. In particular, the juvenile justice system is an important
unit of analysis because it was created primarily to provide youth who have been accused
of engaging in deviant or criminal behavior with a haven or sanctuary, wherein action
may be taken to protect, discipline, guide, and refer appropriately (Hartford Institute of
Criminal & Social Justice, 1996). It was also constructed to address the needs of abused
and neglected children and juveniles, and the juvenile court was obliged to proffer
decisions esteemed to be in the best interest of the child or juvenile (1996).

Especially for the policy maker and practitioner, understanding the history of
girls' treatment in juvenile justice system can create a knowledge base that will allow for
the proper identification of residual discriminatory practices that currently remain at all
levels of the system; this knowledge can then be translated into appropriate corrections
and changes. Understanding the history also facilitates an awareness of how girls
entered, experienced, and emerged from the juvenile justice system and its accompanying services compared to their male counterparts and how their movement through the system today is similar to and different from that of the past. Finally, as will be seen in subsequent pages, awareness provides practitioners, administrators, and policy makers with an ability to understand the origins and identify the present-day effects of past discriminatory practices so that they can expeditiously and correctly implement gender-specific strategies in the juvenile justice system and its concomitant programs.

Before moving into a discussion of the juvenile justice system's history, two clarifications are important to note. First, the term "at-risk" will be used in the following pages to refer to youth (girls in particular) who have a likelihood of entering the juvenile justice system based on risk factors that have been established by empirical research (see Greene, Peter, & Associates, 1998). The term "court-involved" will be used to refer to youth (girls in particular) that are officially involved with the juvenile justice system. In Connecticut, youth may become involved in the juvenile justice system if they 1) have been accused of breaking the law or committing a status offense (i.e. one that would not be punishable if they were an adult, such as failing to attend school and running away), or 2) have been referred to the courts because they are deemed "unmanageable" by their parent(s) and/or guardian(s) (formally referred to as a youth within a family with services needs, FWSN). A court-involved girl incurs "delinquent" status only after admission and/or proof that she committed one or more offenses, and, in the case of a girls within a FWSN, after admission and/or proof that she has violated a court order related to her court-involvement. "At-risk" is best understood as a category under which the distinction "court-involved" falls, as opposed to a mutually exclusive
category, for even if a girl has exited the court system, she is prone to further offending, and as such remains “at-risk.” In summary, then, the term "at-risk" will refer to girls who are at risk of becoming involved with the juvenile justice system and girls who have had contact with the system one or more times.

Second, the term “delinquency” is used reluctantly in the following pages. Although technically proper, the reader should be aware that such a term carries with it a connotation that perpetuates the myth that juvenile “delinquents” are offending or deviant (by social standards) without recognizing the significant influence that the social context within which they develop has had upon their behavior. “Delinquent” is a label, and as such carries with it stigmatizing and stereotypical effects that often follow the individual referenced throughout their lives in terms of how they view themselves and in terms of how they are viewed by others. Because of this, the author will use the term “delinquent” and its variants interchangeably with the phrase “youth in need.” Indeed, what many researchers refer to as “delinquent” behavior is better understood in most cases as “a call for help” and an overt signal that a youth, and girl in particular, is in need.

Because theories of deviance were developed and tested exclusively with males (Rhodes & Fischer, 1993), many researchers and scholars in the field have contended that such theories necessitate revision, or at the very least revisiting, as they have been inappropriately applied to understanding delinquent behavior among girls (Klein, 1973; Hoffman-Bustamante, 1973; Adler, 1975; Smart; 1977; Horowitz & Pottieger, 1991).

Rhodes and Fischer (1993) provide a cogent summary of two principal theoretical responses to the contention that a gender-specific theory of adolescent deviance needs to be developed. The first theoretical response proposes that there is a need to develop a
gender-specific theory of deviance and criticizes traditional deviance theory and its applications. These "critics of current theoretical applications assert that males report significantly more involvement in delinquency....and arrests of young women are largely for minor crimes and status offenses such as running away from home, incorrigibility, truancy, and other noncriminal offenses” (Morash, 1986; Chesney-Lind, 1986; 1989; Naffine; 1989). A gender-specific theory is consequently believed to account for such differential rates and patterns of males' and females' deviant activities.

The second theoretical response denounces the development of a gender-specific deviance theory and instead proposes the development of a general, more gender-neutral theoretical framework that is believed to be more appropriate (Smith & Peternoster, 1987; Canter, 1982; Figueria-McDonough & Selo, 1980.). It asserts that "an empirical assessment of the applicability of traditional theories of deviance to explain patterns of female behavior is necessary before gender-specific theories are developed" and claims that differences in the incidence of male and female delinquent behavior reflect differential exposures to the same, predisposing factors.

Gender-specific programming is a practical application of both theories and, without attempting to definitively answer the complicated questions of why the epidemiology of female delinquency differs from that of male delinquency, responds to the underlying assumptions and facts contained in both. Indeed, gender-specific programming is arguably an application of a more holistic theoretical approach ultimately sought by Rhodes and Fischer, one that "encompass both gender-specific and general influences...[and] offers the most promise in accounting for the complexity of adolescent
behavior" (1993). Consider the following assertion contained in the first theory (cited in Rhodes & Fischer, 1993):

Theoretical criminology was constructed by men, about men. It is simply not up to the analytical task of explaining female patterns of crime...Existing theories are frequently so inconsistent with female realities that specific explanation of female patterns of crime will probably have to precede the development of an all inclusive theory.

Gender-specific programming is sensitive to females' unique realities. Instead of placing the spotlight on girls as the "new and emerging problem" in the field of delinquency, it incorporates gender-sensitivity into juvenile justice processes and programs. The facts remain clear, girls are not doing well in programs that, dominated by males in absolute numbers, have been inadvertently structured to be predominantly sensitive to males' needs. Sensitivity to girls creates parity and equality within the programmatic milieu, wherein the needs of girls and boys are attended to. Consider the following assertion contained in the second theory (cited in Rhodes & Fischer, 1993):

We regard this [recent] period of gender-specific theoretical development as the "dark ages" of deviance theory because it was based on the unproven assumption that the deviant behavior of males and females reflected different underlying processes and motivation. The current call for a separate body of theory to explain the deviant conduct of women simply perpetuates the sterile, sexist origins of theories of deviance.

Gender-specific programming strategies recognize and are responsive to the fact that girls' are differentially exposed to risk factors such as sexual abuse and victimization.

In the absence of a perfect theory that will presumably lead to perfect program strategies, gender-specific programming has pragmatic utility as it connects empirical data on the psychosocial realities of girls' lives with best practice program principles, and ultimately
presents the most promising and tangible solutions to the amelioration of female delinquency.

Indeed, it is arguable that the time spent attempting to resolve the nearly impossible, though intriguing theoretical question of how girls become deviant - whether they are motivated to engage in deviant behavior a) as a result of their exposure to different risk factors, b) as a result of different genetically- or socially-determined responses to the same risk factors as boys that are unique to their gender, or c) as a result of their differential exposure to the same risk factors compared to boys - is better spent on making logical connections between empirically demonstrated exposures, girls' likely reactions to those exposures, and the interventions most likely provide girls in need with the skills they require to effectively respond to such exposures.
Chapter II – History of Girls’ Treatment in the Juvenile Justice System

While the juvenile justice system’s discrimination against poor and minority children has been well documented, the system’s discrimination on the basis of gender has been less widely recognized (Schlossman & Wallach, 1978). Historically, female delinquents received little attention for several reasons. First, they were accused primarily of victimless crimes, or, offenses that did not involve clear-cut damage to persons or property. Called status offenses, if committed by adults, these actions were not legally punishable (i.e. violations of parental authority, truancy); if committed by boys, these acts were interpreted less seriously and punished less severely (1978). Second, traditional stereotypes of women as the weaker more dependent sex rationalized discriminatory correctional practices in the name of humanitarianism. This so-called chivalrous attitude led to earlier intervention and longer periods of supervision for delinquent girls compared to delinquent boys (1978).

Public response to female delinquency as a social conundrum can be traced at least as far back as 1856, when Massachusetts opened the nation’s first reform school for girls. The reform school inspired emulation by diverse philanthropic organizations, and state governments began to respond by building reformatories for girls (1978). Unlike the reformatories for boys (which often held up to 1000 inmates), those constructed for girls were small and makeshift, usually consisting of two or three converted farmhouses (1978). Several studies see a benign humanitarian spirit behind early 20th century correctional innovations for girls. It is important to note, however, that these humanitarian schemes, however good intentioned, were quite repressive in design and outcome (1978).
Until the end of the nineteenth century, the image of the female delinquent remained mainly that of a “fallen woman” or sinner, while the image of the male delinquent was not that of a sinner, but a carefully nurtured young delinquent in need of brief rehabilitation (1978). The first juvenile court was established in Chicago in 1899, and its enabling act was considered a prototype for legislation in other states (Shelden, 1998) (see Shelden, 1998 for a historical discussion of the evolving rationale for government intervention in the lives of adolescents, and how girls were uniquely and unduly affected by government practices and philosophies). “One of the unique features of the new juvenile, or family, courts was that they focused to a great extent on monitoring and responding to youthful behaviors that were ‘indicative’ of future problems in addition to being violations of the law” (1998). For instance, the Tennessee juvenile code contained the phrase “[youth] who are in danger of being brought up to lead an idle or immoral life” (1998).

The evolving philosophy of the juvenile courts began to place major emphasis on the “reform” of “delinquents,” particularly “delinquent” girls, and girls’ moral behavior soon became the focus of court processes and subsequent reform efforts.

Eventually, reformers began to focus their activities on the “delinquent girl” and “moral campaigns to control female sexuality” began to appear. Reformers during this later period (1910-1925) assumed they had the authority to define what was “appropriate” conduct for working class women and girls, with the definition of course based upon middle-class ideals of female sexual propriety. Girls who did not conform to these ideals were labeled as “wayward” and thus “in need of control” by the state in the form of juvenile courts and reformatories and training schools (Odem, 1995).

And, studies of early family court activity reveal that virtually all girls who appeared in juvenile court were charged with immorality or waywardness, and the sanctions for such
behavior were extremely severe (Shelden, 1981; 1998; Chesney-Lind, 1971; 1989; Schlossman & Wallach, 1978). For example, in Chicago, $\frac{1}{2}$ of the girls compared to $\frac{1}{5}$ of the boy delinquents were sent to reformatories between 1899-1909. In Milwaukee, twice as many girls as boys were committed to training schools (Chesney-Lind, 1989). Proof of girls' immorality was sought and vigorously pursued by both arresting officers and social workers. Evidence of such immorality was detected by way of lengthy interrogations with the girls and, if possible, the males with whom she was suspected of having sex. Other evidence of "exposure" was provided by gynecological examinations that were routinely ordered in virtually all girls' cases (1989). In one study (Honolulu) during the period of 1929-1930, over half of the girls referred to the court were charged with "immorality" (which meant evidence of sexual intercourse) (1989).

In the early 20th century, female delinquency began to attract increasing attention as a separate and pressing social problem. There was a heightened public awareness and a growing governmental response to female delinquency, and articles on girl offenders began to appear in a wide range of popular scholarly journals. Books were devoted in whole or part to female criminality, and civic groups began giving attention to the "girl problem" despite media concentration on the "boy problem" (Schlossman & Wallach, 1978). Civic groups led campaigns to garner funds for various girls' clubs like the YWCA, summer camps, and girl scouts, and government investment in the custody and treatment of female delinquents increased substantially (Schlossman & Wallach, 1978; Shelden, 1998). The "attention" given to female delinquency, however, was much different in form and content than that given to boys' delinquency. Boys' delinquencies were condemned while girls' delinquencies were regarded as indications of moral
perversity. In terms of research and inquiry in the area of juvenile delinquency, authors of crime literature wrote endlessly about male delinquency but, comparatively, paid little attention to female delinquents (Schlossman & Wallach, 1978). Indeed, what was written about female delinquency was riddled with stereotypical assumptions about women, particularly immigrant women, and these stereotypes laid a basis for more punitive treatment of delinquent girls compared to their male counterparts (1978). Girls were prosecuted almost exclusively for “immoral” conduct (a broad category that regarded all forms of sexual exploration as perverse and leading to promiscuity and possibly prostitution), and, unlike their male counterparts, while they were almost never accused of violating criminal statutes, they received stiffer legal penalties (Schlossman & Wallach, 1978; Shelden, 1998; Chesney-Lind, 1989).

The “training” of girls soon began to reflect the image of the ideal woman that had evolved during the early nineteenth century around the notion of “separate spheres” (Shelden, 1998). According to this ideal, a woman belonged in the private sphere and was expected therein to perform tasks such as rearing children, keeping house, attending to her husband, and serving as the “moral guardian of the home,” and expected to exhibit qualities such as obedience, modesty, and dependence (1998). The public domain, her husband’s place, included the workplace, politics, and the law, wherein he, by virtue of his “public power,” was the final arbiter of public morality and culture (Shelden, 1998) (see Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988). “This middle-class ‘cult of domesticity’ was, of course, very distant from the lives of many working- and lower-class women and girls who by necessity were in the labor force” (Shelden, 1998). Indeed, Schaffnner proposes that “…the history of female juvenile delinquency is a history of state interventions in the
sexual behavior of mostly working-class, immigrant, and/or women of color in urban settings" (Schaffner, 1999).

Between 1910 and 1920 new reformatories were erected, old 19th century reformatories expanded, and states' took over private girls' reformatories. Many were obsessed with "precocious female sexuality" and set out to isolate the females from all contact with males. The goal was to hold the girls until marriageable and occupy them in domestic pursuits, and incarceration was often lengthy (Schlossman & Wallach, 1978). Consider the following statement by the Ladies Committee of the New York House of Refuge (cited in Shelden, 1998):

The Ladies wish to call attention to the great change which takes place in every girl who has spent one year in the Refuge; she enters a rude, careless, untrained child, caring nothing for cleanliness and order; when she leaves the House, she can sew, mend, darn, wash, iron, arrange a table neatly, and cook a healthy meal (Pisciotta, 1983: 265).

Despite modest growth in public consciousness about female delinquency and its etiology, discriminatory treatment persisted. Juvenile courts treated girls more harshly; boys were charged with offenses that fell under the adult criminal code, while girls were charged under the loose heading of "immorality" (this labeling did not have to mean that the girl had had sexual intercourse or some other "mature" sexual act. She merely needed to "appear" that she had or appear that she would in the near future) (Schlossman & Wallach, 1978). The system lacked sensitivity to culture and was therefore ill-equipped to deal competently with individuals of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Sentimental notions of the "good girl" and conventional ideals of domesticity influenced punitive treatment for girls, and boys often received non-coercive sanctions or probation (supervised in their own home or another approved by the court). Therefore, a higher percentage of girls
compared to boys were incarcerated in reformatories for sentences that could last several years. In Chicago, 59% of boys who appeared in court between 1899-1909 were placed on probation, as compared to only 37% of girls (Chesney-Lind, 1989).

Shelden (1998) proposes that one of the main problems facing the juvenile court was its role as a legal institution and as "a sort of social work agency seeking to find the causes as well as the solutions to the problems of the youth who came before them." The problems were multiple, diversified, and very complex, however, and included poverty, abuse, and single-parent families in distress, to name a few. "For girls, you had the added problem of sexual abuse" (1998). Studies of early court records reveal that the majority of girls referred to juvenile court had been victims of abuse, and most runaways, and those labeled "incorrigible" or unmanageable (especially girls) suffered incredible amounts of sexual abuse (1998). "To add to the problem, girls who were victimized at home have often been either sent to the same home where the abuse was occurring or to one of several institutions...where the abuse all too often continued" (1998). Recent studies of juvenile justice system activities continue to reveal what may be referred to as institutional disorganization, and an acute difficulty in effectively defining and executing its various roles and functions. It is precisely this historical and chronic failure to comprehensively address the underlying realities of girls' behaviors that has placed girls currently, as a group, in severe jeopardy.

The Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO) Strategy

Gender bias clearly characterized the juvenile justice system, plagued its philosophical underpinnings, and besieged its daily operations. Indeed, a few observers became concerned about the abandonment of minors' rights in the name of what the
system labeled as "treatment," "saving," and "protective actions," especially such actions that were overwhelmingly applied to girls (Chesney-Lind, 1997). Paul Tappan's Delinquent Girls in Court, was both a critical and neglected work that provided vital information on early court activity (1997). Tappan evaluated several hundred cases in the Wayward Minor Court in New York City during the late 1930s and early 1940s with the intention of looking at and reporting on "what the courts do rather than what they say they do" (1997). While Tappan's observations and ultimate conclusions about the juvenile justice system were many, at least two must be mentioned. First, Tappan concluded that there were serious problems with statutes allowing young girls to be brought into court for status offenses, or, disobedience of parental authority or because they were "in danger of being morally depraved" (1997). Second, he observed that the structure of the Court "entrusted unlimited discretion to the judge, reformer, or clinician and his [or her] personal views of expedience, " and cautioned that, as a consequence, "the fate of the defendant, the interest of society, the social objectives themselves, must hang by the tenuous thread of the wisdom and personality of the particular administrator" (1997).

Odem and Schlossman provided additional insights about Los Angeles Juvenile Court and its preoccupation with girls' sexual morality and the practices that allowed such bias to plague the system there well into the 1950s. They reviewed the characteristics of girls who entered the juvenile justice system at two different periods of time during the first half of the 20th century, 1920 and 1950 (Odem & Schlossman, 1991). Briefly, in 1920, 93 percent of the girls accused of delinquency were charged with status offenses, and of these, 65 percent were charged with immoral sexual activity (though the vast
majority of these - 56 percent - had engaged in sex with one partner, usually a boyfriend) (1991). They found that 51 percent of the referrals had come from girls' parents, and contended that such parental referrals resulted from "working class parents' fears about their daughter's exposure to the constant 'omnipresent temptations to which working class daughters in particular were exposed to in the modern ecology of urban work and leisure" (1991). In 1950, again girls were referred to the Los Angeles court overwhelmingly for status offenses (78 percent), though the charges had changed (Odem & Schlossmann, 1991). 31 percent were charged for running away from home, truancy, curfew, or "general unruliness at home," but nearly half of the status offenders were charged directly with sexual misconduct even though such "misconduct" was usually with a single partner and virtually none had engaged in prostitution (Odem & Schlossmann, 1991). According to Odem and Schlossman (1991), even though the rate of venereal disease had dropped among these girls by 1950 (only 4.5 percent tested positive), the concern for female sexual misconduct "remained determinative in shaping social policy" (Chesney-Lind, 1997).

Problems with the vague nature of status offenses and their stereotype-based implications for girls continued to plague the juvenile justice system during the 1960s and the 1970s, and such problems were also present in other parts of the world (see Chesney-Lind, 1997 for discussion). In a study conducted by Rogers (1972) in the early 1970s in a New Jersey training school, it was revealed that large numbers of girls were incarcerated "for their own protection," and, when asked about this pattern, judges' responses reflected the troubling system-wide perception of girls (1997). As one judge explained, "Why most of the girls I commit are for status offenses. I figure that if a girl is
about to get pregnant, we'll keep her until she is sixteen and then ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) will pick her up" (1997). Andrews and Cohen's (1974) review of the judicial handling of cases of “ungovernability” in New York in 1972 concluded with the comment that judges were acting "upon personal feelings and predilections in making decisions," and offered courtroom lectures that they had recorded throughout their study as support for their conclusion (1997). Consider the following excerpt, "She thinks she's a pretty hot number; I'd be worried about leaving my kid with her in a room alone. She needs to get her mind off boys" (1997).

Empirical studies of the processing of girls' and boys' cases that were conducted between 1950 and the early 1970s clearly documented the impact of [such] judicial attitudes. That is, girls charged with status offenses were often more harshly treated than their male or female counterparts charged with crimes (Gibbons & Griswold, 1957; Cohn, 1970; Chesney-Lind, 1973; Datesman & Scarpitti, 1977; Kratcoski, 1974; Mann, 1979; Pope & Feyerherm, 1982; Schlossman & Wallach, 1978; Shelden, 1981) (Chesney-Lind, 1997).

In the late 60's and early 70's, the inappropriate treatment of youth and girls finally began to change. The behaviors inside “rehabilitation” institutions began to stimulate scandal as they became increasingly exposed to the public by the inquiring media. “Following the Supreme Court cases of the 1960s (Gault, etc.) – where one justice called the Juvenile Court a ‘kangaroo court’ and another lamented that [youth] receive the worst of both worlds – attention was finally focused on reforming the system, especially on status offenders who, after all, had not committed a crime” (Shelden, 1998). The documented juvenile justice system's abuse of the status offense category was severely tested, and in some locales eroded, during the 1970s "when court critics around the world mounted a major push to 'deinstitutionalize and divert' status offenders from formal court jurisdiction," and by the mid 1970s, correctional reformers around the world
became concerned about the abuse of the status offense category by juvenile courts (see Chesney-Lind, 1997 for discussion). In the United States, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act of 1974 (hereafter referred to as the Act) "required that states receiving federal delinquency prevention monies begin to divert and deinstitutionalize their status offenders," and despite inconsistent enforcement of this provision and resistance from juvenile court judges, girls were the clear beneficiaries of the reform (1997).

While the incarceration of young women in training schools and detention centers nationwide fell in the decades following the Act's passage, more recent analysis and statistics revealing a leveling off of the decline, and noted mixed patterns of the deinstitutionalization of status offenders (DSO) strategy have been suggested to be a product of two circumstances: 1) the fact that court officials have always been critical of deinstitutionalization (see Schwartz, 1989), and 2) the lack of federal enforcement of the Act's provision (1997).

Not surprisingly, then, while there were great hopes when the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act was passed, a 1978 General Accounting Office (GAO) report concluded that the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), the agency given the task of implementing the legislation, was less than enthusiastic about the deinstitutionalization provisions of the Act. Reviewing LEAA's efforts to remove status offenders from secure facilities, the GAO concluded that during certain administrations LEAA had actually "downplayed its (the DSO strategy) importance and to some extent discouraged states from carrying out the Federal requirement" (General Accounting Office, 1978,10) (Chesney-Lind, 1997).

According to researchers, opponents of the DSO strategy were successful in narrowing the definition of status offender in the amended Act so that any youth who violated a "valid court order" would no longer be covered under the deinstitutionalization
provisions (United States Statutes at Large, 1981). "This change, which was never publicly debated in either the House or the Senate, effectively gutted the 1974 JJDP Act by permitting judges to reclassify a status offender who violated a court order as a delinquent" (1997). This also translated into a tragic reality for girls - a girl in need who ran away from a court ordered placement, regardless of her reasons, could be "re-labeled as delinquent and locked up" (1999) (see Chesney-Lind, 1997, for discussion of ways in which justice officials circumvented the deinstitutionalization component of the Act prior to the revision, e.g. bootstrapping).

Bishop & Frazier (1990) have concluded, "the traditional double standard is still operative in the juvenile justice system. Clearly neither the cultural changes associated with the feminist movement nor the legal changes illustrated in the JJDP Act's mandate to deinstitutionalize status offenders have brought about equality under the law for young men and women" (see Spergel et al., 1981; Shelden, 1998; Chesney-Lind, 1989) (Chesney-Lind, 1997).

Gender-specific Programming

The notion of gender-specific programming emerged from one of the most recent attempts to reauthorize and solidify the Act's influence on the operations of the juvenile justice system. This revision reflects an attempt to mitigate the negative effects of earlier revisions that allowed systemic abuse of the status offense category - a category within which girls were significantly over-represented. The reauthorization of the Act moves to make "bootstrapping" of status offenders into delinquents so that they can be detained, more difficult by specifying that status offending youth who are being detained due to a violation of a "valid court order" have to have appeared before a judge and made subject
to the order, and have to have received, before issuance of the order, "the full due process rights guaranteed to such juveniles by the Constitution of the United States" (Chesney-Lind, 1997). The Act also requires that before issuance of the order, "both the behavior of the juvenile being referred and the reasons why the juvenile might have committed the behavior must be assessed" (1997), and it must be determined that all dispositions (i.e., sentences, including treatment, other than placement in a secure detention or correctional facility) have been exhausted or are clearly inappropriate (1997). Finally, the court has to receive a "written report" detailing the results of the review (United States House of Representatives 1992, 4983). "These changes mark a distinct departure from previous policy which ignored the situation of girls who found their way into the juvenile justice system...[and] this visibility is clearly needed," since a review of the characteristics of girls in detention centers and training schools still reflects evidence of problems with the juvenile justice system's treatment of girls. (See Chesney-Lind, 1997 for a discussion of recent research that suggests that the impact of de-institutionalization "has produced a racialized, two-track system of juvenile justice.")

Most importantly, pivotal hearings held in conjunction with the most recent authorization of the JJDP Act in March, 1992, addressed for the first time the "provision of services to girls within the juvenile justice system" (United States House of Representatives, 1992), the double standard of juvenile justice, and the paucity of services for girls (Shelden, 1998; Chesney-Lind, 1997). Consider the following statement by Representative Matthew Martinez:

In today's hearing we are going to address female delinquency and the provision of services to girls under this Act. There are many of us that believe that we have not committed enough resources to that particular issue. There are many of us who realize that the problems for young
ladies are increasing, ever increasing, in our society and they are becoming more prone to end up in gangs, in crime, and with other problems they have always suffered (United States House of Representatives 1992,2).

Martinez commented on the high number of girls arrested for status offenses, the high percentage of girls in detention as a result of violation of court orders, and the failure of the system to address girls' needs, and representatives from organizations that serve girls such as Children of the Night, the Pace Center for Girls, Girls, Incorporated, and girls active in these programs made strong testimonies as well (1997). Undoubtedly influenced by the hearing, the re-authorized JJDP Act of 1974 includes specific provisions requiring plans from each state receiving federal funds to include (1997):

An analysis of gender-specific services for the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency, including the types of such services available and the need for such services for females and a plan for providing needed gender-specific services for the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency (Public Law 102-586--November 1992).

Additional funds were set aside as part of the Act's challenge grant program for states wishing to develop policies to prohibit gender bias in placement and treatment and to develop programs that assure girls equal access to services, and in response, 23 states have begun such programs - by far the most popular of the ten possible grant activity areas (Chesney-Lind, 1997; Girls Incorporated, 1996). The Act also called for the GAO to conduct a study of gender bias within state juvenile justice systems (see Chesney-Lind, 1997 and Shelden, 1998 for a discussion of logistical problems associated with the GAO study and results).

Clearly, the JJDP Act leaves researchers, practitioners, administrators, and policymakers with at least two critically important tasks. The first task involves resolving the legal and practical complexities of penalizing youth and adolescent girls in need
particularly, for status offenses. As subsequent chapters of this monograph will illustrate, adolescent girls still enter juvenile court overwhelmingly for these offenses. Clearly, this needs further exploration, as the juvenile justice system must critically assess the underlying reasons for girls’ overrepresentation in the status offense category, the barriers to implementing the DSO strategy, and its understanding of and response to the underlying realities of girls’ lives that bring them before the court at all. The second task involves attending to girls’ specific needs while simultaneously uncovering other barriers to their proper care, essentially ensuring that Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act and its provisions regarding the implementation of gender-specific treatment and programming is translated into real justice for girls and real delinquency prevention. Indeed, the title itself creates that expectation.

A legal obligation exists to ensure that girls are treated fairly with the juvenile justice system and its accompanying programs. States, cities, and municipalities must work with the juvenile justice system and its accompanying programs to translate the Act’s provision wherein gender-specific services are targeted, into meaningful and measurable changes for girls at all levels. This means that all parts of the justice system must refer girls in need to appropriate services tailored to address their needs and ensure that the services to which girls in need are referred are implementing gender-specific protocols and integrating them into their service delivery package.

The historical facts are irrefutable. Girls appeared in juvenile court on non-criminal charges far more frequently than did boys, yet they received more punitive dispositions. The private lives of girls were probed so that judges and probation officers could assess the underlying causes of their misbehavior. In cases of “sexual
misconduct,” a girls’ moral condition and potential for rehabilitation depended on how much of her biological “purity” had been “preserved,” and on how morally “revolted” she was by her experiences (Schlossman & Wallach, 1978). Researchers and juvenile justice workers rarely reflected on the broader nature of female misbehavior or on the sources of misbehavior.

The current reality is undeniable. Although many improvements have been made to better serve young girls in the juvenile justice system, there is much work to be done. Sexism, gender bias, mistreatment, and neglect still persist at all levels in the system and within the programs that provide services to at-risk and court-involved girls. In a recent study by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, results revealed that gender bias still mars the juvenile justice system in profound ways. The era of mandatory gynecological examinations was not that long ago and it is critical that policy makers and practitioners are mindful of what is more appropriately referred to as a recent history.

Finally, the structure of the juvenile justice system, including its historical philosophy, administration, and protocols ultimately reflects the larger sociocultural context in which it operates and develops – an environment that remains unaware of and inattentive to the realities of girls in need. But recent theorists and advocates have added to the small knowledge base on girls’ delinquency and their unique needs. Indeed, theorists who have conducted extensive empirical and practical research on female adolescent development, such as Carol Gilligan, and female adolescent delinquency, such as Meda Chesney-Lind and Randy Shelden, have provided critical information that can be applied to a more comprehensive and informed societal response to girls in need.
New unbiased theories about girls' delinquency and adolescent female development have paved the path toward the development of best practices and implementation of gender-specific strategies. Despite this, the compelling lack of information about gender-specific programming has resulted in its incorrect and erratic implementation nationwide. Society is in desperate need of its expedient and thorough institutionalization. Female delinquency is on the rise. Girls are becoming court-involved at unprecedented rates and at younger ages. Something is going on with these girls, something that has been going unnoticed and unattended to for decades. Researchers, practitioners, administrators, and policy makers have been unaware of and insensate to girls in need and their realities, and, consequently, programs have been constructed to meet boys’ needs and have been based on boys’ realities (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998; Chesney-Lind, 1989; Shelden, 1998; Girls Incorporated, 1996). If such societal, institutional, and programmatic blindness persists, at-risk and court-involved girls will not get the help they need, and adolescent female delinquency will continue to rise.
Chapter III – Juvenile Delinquency: A Comparison of Male and Female Trends

Significance and Magnitude of the Problem

Adolescent offenders account for a large number of arrests for violent and property crimes. The Federal Bureau of Investigation statistics shows that persons under age 25 were responsible for 45 percent of the violent crimes and 61 percent of the property crimes committed in 1988 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1988). These figures are well below the number of crimes actually committed (Foley et al. 1996). Juvenile crime represents astronomical costs to society in terms of damage to property and persons, and in terms of the monies required for the treatment and rehabilitation of delinquents and their victims. It also represents significant personal costs to troubled adolescents, many of whom have adopted maladaptive behaviors to cope with their life situations. Annually, the United States spends more than 1 billion dollars to operate the juvenile justice system. Furthermore, the United States spends even more dollars to operate the adult criminal system, and many individuals in the adult system report that they were juvenile offenders. The costs to society only continue when youth in need reach adulthood due to the propensity of this population for unemployment, accidents, divorce, and welfare services (Foley et al., 1996). Juvenile offenders also tend to exhibit a higher prevalence of learning disabilities, hyperactivity, attention-deficit disorders, mental retardation, and substance abuse problems, and demonstrate less skill mastery in problem-solving than the general adolescent population (Foley et al., 1996).

Juvenile arrests for violent crime fell 6 percent between 1995 and 1996, but juvenile arrests for all offenses increased 3 percent over the same period (Butts & Harrell, 1998). Arrests for property crimes, drug offenses, and misdemeanors increased, and
these offenses account for the vast majority of juvenile crime (Butts & Harrell, 1998). Violent index crimes (e.g. murder, rape, aggravated assault, and robbery) accounted for fewer than 5 percent of all juvenile arrests in 1996 (1998).

As juvenile arrests increase, so to do the corresponding juvenile court workloads. Indeed, according to the Juvenile Court Statistics series sponsored by the United States Department of Justice, the number of law violations referred to juvenile courts (i.e. delinquency cases) increased 57 percent between 1980 and 1995; furthermore, the number of delinquency cases doubled nationwide between 1970 and 1995 (1998). While the growth in juvenile court caseloads is due in large part to the growth in juvenile arrests (up 32 percent since 1980), police officials are increasingly more likely to send arrested juveniles to court as opposed to utilizing feasible alternatives such as informal probation (1998). Also, according to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (hereafter referred to as OJJDP), the proportion of arrested youth sent forward for juvenile court sanctioning increased from 58 percent to 69 percent between 1980 and 1996 (Snyder, 1997; 1998).

The above statistics must be viewed with caution, as two assumptions often lead to erroneous conclusions and societal responses. First, the perception that adult crime is a more pressing societal issue is a dangerous one. At first glance, adult crime does seem more perilous; after all, adults account for 7 out of every 10 arrests for serious crimes. What that statistic fails to report is that the likelihood of arrest is highest during the late teen years (Butts & Harrell, 1998). The United States juvenile population has declined slightly since 1980, but juvenile arrests grown by 32 percent and juvenile delinquency cases have increased by 57 percent. And, although juvenile violence peaked in 1994 and
dipped slightly since that time, it remains much higher than a decade ago. The nation's youth are in trouble. Second, the perception that male juvenile offending is the dominant problem is also highly inaccurate, for if you critically explore the numbers, the real picture of female offending is devastatingly clear.

**Juvenile Delinquency: Understanding Girls**

**Volume of Delinquency Cases**

In 1995, juvenile courts across the country disposed 1,338,600 delinquency cases involving males, compared to 375,800 cases involving females. Such numbers seem to indicate that for girls, delinquency is less of a problem. However, further analysis of delinquency case trends reveals that the number of delinquency cases involving females increased 68 percent between 1986 and 1995, while the number of cases involving males increased only 40 percent in that same period. During the decade from 1983 to 1993, arrests of female juveniles increased by 31 percent compared to 21 percent for boys, and between 1989 and 1993, the relative growth in juvenile arrests involving females was 23 percent, *more than double* the 11 percent growth for males (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998).

In the last decade, violent crime among girls has increased faster (16.5 percent) than violent crime for boys (4.5 percent), and females were responsible for 17 percent of the growth in juvenile arrests for Violent Crime Index (VCI) Offenses between 1989 and 1993 (1998). During those same years, VCI offenses increased 55 percent for females compared to 33 percent for males (1998).

**Delinquency Case Rates**
Between 1986 and 1995, the **delinquency case rate for males increased 28 percent**, to 92.4 cases per 1,000 male youth, and in that same period, the **delinquency case rate for females increased 54 percent** to 27.3 cases per 1,000 female youth. So, while the delinquency case rate for males was more than 3 times greater than the rate for females in 1995, it became 4 times greater in 1986. These numbers delineate that females are becoming increasingly involved in the juvenile justice system.

Between 1986 and 1995, the relative change in delinquency case rates was greater for females than for males in both person and property offense cases. The per capita **rate of person offense cases involving females increased 126 percent compared with 71 percent for males.** The **rate of property offense cases increased 38 percent for females and 7 percent for males.** In 1995, both male and female delinquency case rates generally increased through age 16, before declining among 17-year-olds. Male case rates increased continuously with age in two of the four delinquency offense categories - drug law violations and public order, the drug offense case rate for females also increased continuously through age 17. (Juvenile Court Statistics, 1995).

While status offenses continue to account for the majority of cases involving girls, females are now more likely to be arrested for robbery, assault, drug trafficking, and gang activity - juvenile crimes only recently considered to be the exclusive domain of young males (Greene, Peters, Associates, 1998; Schaffner, 1999). According to Uniform Crime Reports, just between 1994 and 1995, girls' arrests increased 3 percent for aggravated assault (vs. a decline of 4.5 percent for boys); increased 7.7 percent for other assaults (vs. a 1.8 percent increase for boys); and increased 26.6 percent for drug abuse violations (vs. 16.7 percent for boys).
Nationwide, girls are becoming involved with the juvenile justice system at younger ages. From 1987 to 1991, the number of 13- and 14-year-old girls in juvenile court increased by 10 percent, and one in five girls in secure confinement is now 14 or younger (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). Ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented in the female offender population. Although 65 percent of the population is Caucasian, only 34 percent of girls in detention are Caucasian, and 7 out of every 10 cases involving White girls are dismissed compared to 3 out of every 10 cases involving Black girls.

**Judicial Decision and Disposition**

Delinquency cases involving males were six times more likely to be judicially waived to criminal court than were cases involving females. In 1995, 1.2 percent of formally processed cases involving males were waived to criminal court compared with 0.2 percent of cases involving females (Juvenile Court Statistics, 1995). Both males and females had a smaller proportion of cases waived to criminal court in 1995 than in 1986. For males, cases involving person and drug offenses were more likely to be waived in 1995 than in 1986 (but less likely in 1991). For females, drug cases showed the same pattern for waivers, but the likelihood of waiver for person offense cases declined during the same period (1995).

Cases involving male juveniles were more likely than cases involving females to be adjudicated once petitioned (57 percent compared with 52 percent) (1995). This pattern was found in all offense categories. For males, the probability of adjudication was greatest in cases involving property offenses (59 percent). For females, the probability of adjudication was greatest in cases involving public order offenses (55
percent). The probability of adjudication decreased between 1986 and 1995 for formally handled cases involving males (from 65 percent to 57 percent) and females (from 60 percent to 52 percent). The proportion of formally processed cases resulting in adjudication decreased among all offense categories for both sexes (1995).

Once adjudication occurred, cases involving male delinquents were more likely than those involving females to result in out-of-home placement in 1995 (1995). Place was the most restrictive disposition in 29 percent of adjudicated cases involving males and 22 percent of those involving females. For both males and females, higher proportions of person and public order cases resulted in residential placement than did property or drug cases. And, between 1986 and 1995, the use of placement declined slightly for both males and females (1995).

Formal probation was ordered in 52 percent of adjudicated delinquency cases involving males and 59 percent of those involving females in 1995 (1995). The use of formal probation for adjudicated males and females changed somewhat between 1986 and 1995. The likelihood of probation decreased slightly for cases involving males (from 55 percent to 52 percent) and increased slightly for females (from 57 percent to 59 percent) (1995).

“Ethnic minority female offenders are treated more harshly than white girls. For boys and girls alike, Black offenders are more likely than White offenders to receive a more severe disposition at their arrest, intake hearings, and in court” (Bergsmann, 1994; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Belknap, 1996; Lindgren, 1996). Greene, Peters, & Associates report that Black, Asian, and Latina girls who are poor and addicted are more likely to be incarcerated than referred to treatment (Girls, Incorporated, 1996; Sarri, 1983). “African
American girls make up almost 50 percent of all girls in secure detention, and Latinas make up 13 percent” (Bergsmann, 1994). And, researchers report that White girls are more likely to be referred to mental health facilities than juvenile justice facilities (Federle & Chesney-Lind 1992; Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998; Chesney-Lind, 1997).

Statistical Trends in Juvenile Arrests for Violent Crime Index (VCI) Offenses

VCI offenses include murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. From 1986 to 1995, juvenile arrests for VCI offenses increased 67% (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1997):

- Juvenile arrests for murder and non-negligent manslaughter increased 90 percent.
- Juvenile arrests for forcible rape declined 4 percent.
- Juvenile arrests for robbery increased 63 percent.
- Juvenile arrests for aggravated assault increased 78 percent (Snyder, 1997).

Youth violence has particularly devastating effects on the African American community (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1997):

- In 1994, African American juveniles were 6 times more likely than Caucasian juveniles to be homicide victims (Snyder et al., 1996).

- Homicides involving firearms have been the leading cause of death for African American males ages 15 through 19 since 1969, and the rates have more than doubled from 1979 to 1989 (Snyder & Sickmund, 1995).

- Since 1987, African Americans have outnumbered Caucasians as juvenile homicide offenders. By 1994, 61 percent of juvenile homicide offenders were African American and 36 percent were Caucasian (Snyder et al., 1996).

Statistical evidence indicates that girls are increasingly involved in aggressive crimes (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1997):
In 1995, females were responsible for 15 percent of the total juvenile arrests for VCI offenses, with the most extensive involvement in aggravated assault arrests (20 percent).

From 1991 to 1995, female juvenile arrests for VCI offenses increased 34 percent, nearly four times the male juvenile increase of 9 percent (Snyder, 1997).

OJJDP recently initiated a series on youth development and has begun to publish key findings from the Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency. *The Epidemiology of Violence* (Kelley et al., 1997), the first bulletin in the series provides provocative and current information about the varying levels of involvement in violent acts according to age, sex, and ethnicity. Furthermore, the findings of the studies are particularly relevant to female delinquency growth and provide current information that may be added to the growing database on girls' realities and concomitant needs.

The Causes and Correlates studies are designed to improve understanding of serious delinquency, violence, and drug use through the examination of how individual youth develop within the context of family, school, peers, and community. In 1986, OJJDP initiated support for three coordinated longitudinal projects: The Denver Youth Survey, the Pittsburgh Youth Study, and the Rochester Youth Development Study (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1997).

Although the findings from the studies conducted at selected research sites may not be appropriately generalized to the entire nation, they may be accurately reflecting recent shifts in violence participation rates among all youths. A greater percentage of boys are involved in serious violence than are girls, however, in the early teenage years (13-15), the prevalence of serious violence among girls in the Denver study was more than half of that of boys (Kelley et al., 1997). In Rochester, the prevalence of serious violence among girls approached the rates of boys even more closely between the ages of 12 and 15 (1997). Surprisingly, and unlike what has been documented in past research, 18 percent of the 13-year-old girls in the Rochester study reported the commission of serious
Girls show an unexpected age curve of serious violence with prevalence rates peaking in mid-adolescence (ages 13 to 15) and generally declining thereafter, while boys show no decline in prevalence rates in late adolescence.

Age curves also indicate that small but substantial proportions of boys and girls were involved in serious violence prior to the teenage years. For example, at age 12 in Rochester, 19 percent of the boys and 15 percent of the girls reported involvement.

In terms of prevalence by ethnicity, differences in serious violence prevalence rates were observed across ethnic groups. Overall, a greater proportion of minorities was involved in serious violence. With the single exception of 18 year-old in Rochester, prevalence rates were higher among minority groups than Caucasians at each age and site, and such differences were often substantial.

In general, an active male offender committed more serious violent acts than did an active female offender.

A relatively large proportion of boys and somewhat smaller proportion of girls were involved in serious violence sometime before the late teen years.

A larger proportion of seriously violent girls than boys reportedly begin their violent behavior prior to or by age 13.

Both girls and boys exhibited an intermittent juvenile violence; in other words, they were active offenders for a short time and terminated their involvement for a longer time if/before they offended again.

Girls' increasing involvement in violent crime is a complex issue that is beyond the scope of this monograph, however, troubling statistics signal a growing problem and should guide further exploration into the unique environment and circumstances within which girls' violent criminal activity develops. Some questions and theories related to girls and violent crime, however, deserve brief attention. In Violence and Female Delinquency (1999), Schaffner 1) proposes a revamping of the framework traditionally used to study "delinquency," 2) suggests that specific topics need additional research if
we are to understand the experiences and needs of girls who are committing violent offenses, 3) describes recent debate over the number of violent offenses being committed by girls, and 4) focuses on the juvenile justice system's shift away from penalizing the sexual girl to penalizing the violent girl. In her article, Schaffner proposes that most recently, girls are being punished for "gender transgressions" because "gender norms, specifically regarding sexuality, have shifted in the last few decades" and "what is sexually and morally transgressive to mainstream American popular culture has changed." She ultimately asserts that certain forms of contemporary delinquency, namely girls' emerging involvement in violent crimes, can be framed as gender transgressions: "We punish when boys are 'feminine' (prostitutes, homosexual) and when girls are 'masculine'" (aggressive) (1999). Schaffner provides sociocultural evidence to support her claim and posits that mainstream media images of girls and women "exhibit a sexiness, formerly troublesome, that is now routinized, accepted, and normalized" (1999). As a result, certain behaviors such as illegitimate pregnancy, extramarital sex, and prostitution, are less alarming today, both to the general public and in the eyes of the law (1999).

Girls' violence is an emerging calamity laden with the same gender issues and implications discussed throughout this monograph. Society must comprehensively research the nature and etiology of girls' increasing engagement in violent acts historically remanded to and observed within the domains of boys and acts punished mostly in boys. Society must also be sure to not begin another historical injustice to girls whereby punishment that focused on sexuality is now, in a more sexually "relaxed" culture, focused on punishing girls for acting like boys. Indeed such labeling and the
active punishing of girls for acting like males further role types both girls and boys and ultimately alienates them. Most importantly, as with any female adolescent “delinquent” act, "it is essential to contextualize girls' perpetration of violence within the violence they experience: witnessing it, listening to it, watching it, suffering it" (1999). Society must be aware of trends in girls’ violence and how they are operationalized, measured, interpreted, and ultimately responded to; or the gender typing that plagued the juvenile justice system will further mar its contemporary and future operations, processes, and programs.

Juxtaposed male and female delinquency statistics, while extremely informative, do not delineate the whole story of female delinquency. Indeed, they simply provide evidence for and substantiate the claim of a potent problem – the problem that adolescent girls are entering the justice system at unprecedented rates. The behaviors that bring girls to the courts and it’s associated prevention- and intervention-based programs, as will be shown in subsequent chapters, are best understood as cry for help and a signal that girls are in need. In the cases of chronic offenders, they are repeated cries for help in a system that is blind to girls' realities and inattentive to their needs. Practitioners, administrators, and policy makers need to understand the larger context of girls' offending. Recent theorists have uncovered "pathways to delinquency" that are unique to females, pathways that must be understood if the juvenile justice system and the programs that serve girls in need are going to develop effective, gender appropriate protocols to prevent court involvement and recidivism.
**Chapter IV – Girls’ Pathways to Delinquency**

Although research about delinquency among girls is still limited, some researchers have begun focusing on girls’ developmental “pathways to delinquency” (Belknap & Holsinger, 1998). Just as girls and boys develop in different ways physically and emotionally during adolescence, their pathways to delinquency are often gender specific as well (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). Simply stated, girls get into trouble differently. Boys in trouble tend to lash out; they set fires, they get into fights, they carry guns, they look dangerous, they inspire fear, and they get attention (1998). Conversely, girls get into trouble more quietly. Indeed, in most cases girls were victims themselves before they became offenders (Prescott, 1997; Girls Incorporated, 1996; Davis, et al., 1997). When girls are angry, frightened, or unloved, they are more likely to strike inward. They may hurt themselves by abusing drugs, prostituting their bodies, and/or starving or even mutilating themselves (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998; Belknap, 1996). Also, because girls in need are more likely to threaten their own well being, they may not seem dangerous to society (Chesney-Lind, 1988).

Problems faced by girls and young women can be viewed as part of a developmental continuum linking early problems (such as family dysfunction, abuse, loss of a primary caregiver, and other traumas) to later behavioral problems (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998; Oregon Commission on Children and Youth Services, 1990). During the teen years, when girls are transitioning to adulthood, unresolved issues from earlier stages of their development may culminate (e.g., incomplete bonding in infancy, sexual abuse in childhood, failed relationships with adults, and other problems) and significantly interrupt girls’ normal development. This often results in girls’ inability to
form positive relationships, develop self-respect, understand and attend to physical health and sexuality issues, and maintain a stable self-image (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998; Oregon Commission on Children and Youth Services, 1990).) Substance abuse at a young age can also interrupt a girl’s psychosocial development. As one researcher observed, “It is not unusual to have a 16-year-old check into a residential drug treatment program with both her ‘works’ (needle and syringe) and a well-worn stuffed animal hidden in her backpack.” (Acoca, 1995). Unresolved issues in their personal histories hinder girls’ development and contribute to their offending behavior. These issues capture them, and girls find themselves caught in between two processes – that of their youth development, and that of their trauma and coping. The latter process is persistent, overwhelming, and inevitably distracts girls from the successful completion of vital adolescent developmental tasks. Girls’ coping is often silent, they are not challenged, they become increasingly troubled quietly, and their inner struggles are often unidentified by systems and programs.

Meda Chesney-Lind suggests that girls who break the law may not be perceived as a danger to society because, traditionally, they have come into contact with the courts for nonviolent status offenses such as curfew violations, running away, or unruly behavior (Chesney-Lind, 1988). As a result, girls’ needs are overlooked and undertreated and they are an afterthought of a juvenile justice system designed to deal with boys (Chesney-Lind, 1988; Bergsmann, 1989; Miller, et al., 1995).

Over one-third of girls (37 percent) who enter the juvenile justice system have been charged with status offenses, such as running away, being ungovernable, underage drinking, truancy, and curfew violations. In contrast, one-fourth of boys (24 percent)
who enter the juvenile justice system has been charged with status offenses (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1998). Rhodes & Fischer (1993) found that boys were more likely to be referred to a court diversion program for violations of the law, to have been arrested, and to have engaged in aggressive offenses and selling drugs, while females were more likely to be referred because of status offenses. Indeed several studies show that girls are more likely than boys to be arrested for status offenses. “Girls are most frequently arrested for nonviolent delinquent offenses such as larceny-theft (usually shoplifting), and for status offenses, in particular, running away from home” (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992). In fact, girls are arrested for running away more often than boys, accounting for 57 percent of such arrests in 1994, even though girls and boys run away from home at similar rates (1992). Another study revealed that “girls were detained and formally charged in juvenile court in 15 percent of the delinquent offense cases and 42 percent of the status offense cases in 1992” (Snyder et al., 1996). In particular, girls were detained and formally charged in court more often than boys for running away, accounting for 62 percent of such cases in 1992 (1996).

Clearly, girls and boys don’t get into trouble for the same reasons, in the same ways, or at the same rate. However, just as there are gender-specific pathways to delinquency, there are system-specific, or system-governed practices that impact girls’ pathways within the system as well. Girls are not treated the same as boys by a juvenile justice system designed to deal with boys. Via its often biased and stereotyped treatment of girls, the juvenile justice system has a profound influence on girls’ pathways within the system that ultimately shapes her development and rehabilitation. Because community-based resources for girls are scarce and the juvenile justice system perceives
the need to 'protect' girls, a disproportionate number of girls are committed to state training schools, often for status offenses (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). Girls and women commit different types of crimes than do males and receive differential treatment for similar crimes (Chesney-Lind, 1987; Sarri, 1983). Adolescent females tend to receive harsher treatment in the courts for status offenses than do males (Miller et al., 1995; Armstrong, 1977). And, it is not uncommon for girls to have a great deal of court contact before actually being placed in a juvenile or adult correctional setting (Henggeler, 1989). Since most judges are reluctant to place girls in correctional settings, they either send them home with supervision, try alternative placement, or a variety of residential options before incarceration (Miller et al., 1995). However, when many of these girls are sent to such institutions, they are more likely to be severely impacted, and the prognosis for treatment is not good (Miller et al., 1995).

Girls, Incorporated (1996) found that girls are twice as likely to be detained and to be detained longer and that the percentage of girls in custody for violating a court order is twice that of boys. Ultimately, they contend that “the limited placement options for girls often result in inappropriate placements, which means that girls do not get the help that they need.” Indeed, girls in need are often unidentified or become court-involved at later stages of problem behavior that are arguably more difficult to treat. But programs have been tailored to meet the needs of boys (Meda Chesney-Lind, 1989; Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998; Shelden, 1998), and, perhaps this is one of the reasons that girls have not fared very well.

The chapters heretofore have explored the history of girls' treatment in the juvenile justice system, their rates and patterns of offending, and their pathways to and
within the system. Taken together, they provide useful preliminary information concerning the basic circumstances of at-risk and court-involved girls that define them as a population in need. A comprehensive understanding and investigation of their needs, however, cannot end here, and falls short of providing the information and tools necessary to implement appropriate and needed gender-specific protocols. While the preceding chapters provide a context within which the need for gender-specific programming is understood, a comprehensive understanding of girls' psychosocial development is essential to its effective implementation. Gender-specific programming emerged from a comprehensive understanding of the at-risk and court-involved girl in the context of her history and circumstances. Empirical evidence reveals that girls in need are likely to share the following profile (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998):

- She is now 14 to 16 years old, although she may have started acting out a few years earlier.
- She is poor and has grown up in a neighborhood with a high crime rate.
- She is likely to belong to an ethnic minority group (50 percent of female juveniles in detention are African American, 13 percent are Hispanic, 34 percent are Caucasian).
- She has had a history of poor academic performance and may be a high school dropout.
- She has been a victim of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse or exploitation.
- She has used and abused drugs and/or alcohol.
- She has gone without attention for medical and mental health needs.
- She feels that life is oppressive and lacks hope for the future.

As girls develop, they have unique psychosocial experiences that influence their attitudes and responses. At-risk and court-involved girls not only have the same psychosocial
experiences that are unique to their gender, but they bear added pressures and circumstances which complicate their development and are unique to their status as at-risk. The challenge, then, is to understand how the preceding empirically identified at-risk profile interacts with female psychosocial development. Indeed what emerges from a focus on girls' psychosocial development and its interaction with the exigent circumstances of at-risk and court-involved girls is a keen consciousness of and ability to respond to their unique needs as a population. Gender-specific programming acknowledges the profile of the at-risk and court-involved girl in the context of her psychosocial development.

An awareness of girls' psychosocial development is a prerequisite to appreciating fully the need for gender-specific programming, including an ability to identify which program strategies reflect gender-specific principles. Environments within which girls pass affect and influence them in ways that must be understood. A complete understanding of the at-risk and court-involved girl and her reactions to her environments is vital and must precede any efforts to respond to her needs. A momentary look at adolescent female psychosocial development provides a constructive mechanism whereby the realities of at-risk and court-involved girls and their unique needs can be understood and successfully addressed. This requires that the psychosocial realities of girls' be integrated into existing institutions and programs. Conventional programs are not working, and it is critical that society understand why. The focus, then, aptly shifts to the girls themselves.
Chapter V – Female Psychosocial Development

Conceptually, gender-specific treatment as a vital protocol in juvenile justice rests upon on the notion that girls have different needs and tend to face unique challenges throughout their lives that differ from that of boys. Simply stated, girls are different. It is important to note that gender-based qualities, regardless of their origins, have been assessed, judged, and eventually interpreted by society, resulting in developmental theory that "has established men's experience and competence as a baseline against which both men's and women's development is then judged, often to the detriment or misreading of women" (Belenky, et al., 1997). Socially derived standards and judgements of "correct" behavior for males versus females influence both their social and psychological development. Indeed studies have shown that children who engage in forms of "gender nonnormative" behaviors tend to be significantly more maladjusted than children who engage in gender normative forms of behavior (Crick, 1997). These outcomes suggest that societal gender lines, enforced through negative feedback when gender nonnormative behaviors are displayed, strongly influence child and adolescent development.

Adolescence marks a time in the lives of juveniles where, for the first time, they are developmentally able to process more abstract notions of themselves and their environment and are consequently able to become more fully and keenly aware of society and their place in it. The period of psychosocial development during this tumultuous period arguably connotes, for girls, an awakening to and increased internalization of societal pressures and norms that young boys are less likely to face. Prior to adolescence girls report lower levels of self-esteem and happiness. The American Association of University Women (1992) found that girls at age nine have higher self concepts of
themselves and their abilities than do adolescent girls, and this lowered self concept is
directly associated with high rates of distorted body images, eating disorders, chronic
dieting, and very high stress levels. Such research underscores the impact that societal
attitudes, stereotypes, and expectations have on adolescent girls who, by way of their
development and cognitive maturation, are becoming increasingly able to mentally and
psychologically process and internalize attitudes that during childhood were less
understood and therefore less potent.

Studies and observations of girls and boys during adolescence provide perhaps
some of the most compelling and notable examples of the unique challenges girls face,
studies that have motivated many researchers and practitioners to identify “girls’ needs.”
Adolescence is a difficult passage for all girls, including girls who have a strong support
system at home and in school. Physical changes occur simultaneously with emotional
and psychological changes. Girls begin to separate from family, assert their own identity,
identify with their peers, redefine relationships with the adults in their lives, explore their
sexuality, develop their own moral and ethical sense, and prepare for the responsibilities
and challenges of adulthood (Brooks-Gunn & Reiter, 1990). This transformation called
adolescence also marks girls' entry into a society that devalues their unique qualities and
strengths. Persistent sexism renders adolescence more confusing for girls because it
projects mixed messages about the role and worth of women in society (Greene, Peters,
& Associates, 1998). Girls may measure their own looks against media images of what
constitutes “perfect” female beauty and they lack of female role models. When girls are
continually exposed to media images of the “ideal woman” - an image that is likely to
include the typical thin “model” figure that is nearly impossible to attain and in many
cases, physically unhealthy to sustain - it is not surprising that they report feelings of personal inadequacy and low self-esteem. Furthermore, the repeated focus on and portrayals of females as sexual objects in all mediums sends subtle messages to both girls and boys about females' worth and capabilities. The Maryland Department of Justice asserts that the culture of adolescence "demands that while young women may achieve, they should be careful not to look too smart" else they display qualities that, by societal standards, are more appropriately exhibited by men. (Maryland Department of Justice, 1995). Such societal pressures and stereotyped expectations for women that are often based on incorrect assumptions must be addressed and processed with girls in gender-specific programs.

**Self-esteem and Self-worth**

A growing body of research documents a drop in self-esteem and lowered confidence among many teenage girls (Miller, et al., 1995; Girls Incorporated, 1996; Albrecht, 1994). For instance, research reveals that girls emerge from their teenage years with reduced expectations, and have less confidence in themselves and their abilities than do boys (Orenstein, 1995). This is not surprising in light of the aforementioned societal pressures that are placed upon girls daily, and the studies revealing that girls and boys tend to report similar self-esteem levels prior to adolescence and the accompanying awareness of socially derived expectations about gender roles. As adolescence progresses, girls' self-esteem tends to become diminished, whereas boys' self-concept and self-esteem tend to improve (Miller et al., 1995; AAUW Report, 1991). Furthermore, while several studies evince that adolescence is a challenging and often tumultuous experience for all youth, male and female, studies that explore girls' lives
more carefully indicate that many have additional encumbrances that are less likely to be observed among their male counterparts. While all youth experience confusion and a faltering sense of self at adolescence, “girls’ self regard drops further than boys and never catches up” (AAUW Report, 1991). Indeed, for girls the passage into adolescence is not just marked by physical changes “it is marked by a loss in confidence in herself and her abilities” (Orenstein, 1995). “[For a young girl] adolescence is marked by a scathingly critical attitude toward her body and a blossoming sense of personal inadequacy” (1995). The identified drop in self-esteem among girls is a reality that is addressed by gender-specific programming. As will be seen in the next chapter, girls’ lower self esteem is not arbitrary, but directly related to their unique challenges and circumstances.

The severity and nature of the reduced self-worth observed among girls vary within different ethnic groups (Orenstein, 1995). Far more African American girls retain their overall self-esteem during adolescence than White or Latina girls, maintaining a stronger sense of both personal and familial importance. They are about twice as likely to be “happy with the way I am” than girls of other groups and report feeling “pretty good about a lot of things” at nearly the rate of White boys (Orenstein, 1995; AAUW Report, 1990). The one exception for African American girls is their feeling about school: Black girls are more pessimistic about both their teachers and their schoolwork than other girls (AAUW Report, 1990). Meanwhile, “Latina girls’ self esteem crisis is in many ways the most profound” (Orenstein, 1995). Between the ages of 9 and 15, the number of Latina girls who are ‘happy with the way I am” plunges by 38 percentage points, compared with a 33 percent drop for white girls and a 7 percent drop for Black girls. Family disappears as a source of positive self-worth for Latina teens and, academic
confidence, belief in one’s talents, and a sense of personal importance all plummet (AAUW Report, 1990; 1991). In fact, as recently as 1995, urban Latinas left school at a greater rate than any other group, male or female (Orenstein, 1995).

Clearly, the research is not outdated. Such research on the differences between girls of different ethnic groups has direct implications for gender-specific programming. Building upon the strengths of girls that are unique to their ethnic backgrounds is just as important as building upon the strengths of girls that are unique to their gender. Additionally, the overrepresentation of minority girls in the juvenile justice system deserves further study. It also makes sense to look more thoroughly at ethnic differences in justice system involvement and in patterns and profiles of offending so that the ethnic discrimination that may be partially responsible can be identified and addressed in addition to the gender discrimination. Finally, understanding the strengths and challenges that are unique to certain ethnic groups can integrated into and mitigated by program protocols, respectively, and ultimately contribute to and render more whole the entire field of juvenile justice. After all, a female's identity includes her ethnicity in addition to her gender, and the value that society places on both, including how each is represented in the media, shapes the way girls view and treat themselves and the way they are viewed and treated by others. Ethnic minority status has been identified as a characteristic that an at-risk and/or court-involved girl is likely to possess. Gender-specific programming provides opportunities for institutions and programs to help girls to positively develop their ethnic identities and build upon them as personal strengths and attributes for which they can have pride. Understanding the different strengths and
challenges of girls within different ethnic groups, essentially developing cultural sensitivity, is an extremely important principle of gender-specific programming.

The Importance of Relationships in Girls' Lives

Dr. Carol Gilligan (Harvard Graduate School of Education) and others have found that girls often react to adolescent pressures of the kind described above by silencing their own feelings and turning to others for validation (Taylor, et al., 1995; Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Gilligan has pointed out that classical psychological models, such as Erickson's view of identity formation, were based almost entirely on studies of boys. Her groundbreaking studies on female development illustrate the importance of relationships in girls' lives. For example, the formation of a girl’s mature identity cannot be based solely on separation from her parents, but must also include her enduring relationships with adults (Acoca, 1995). A parent, teacher, counselor, probation officer, or other adult who demonstrates ongoing commitment and caring plays an essential role in a girl’s development. Conversely, a lack of a close, caring adult in adolescence could interrupt or delay a girl’s development. Without a close adult and without confidence in her own judgement and abilities, she may be more likely to turn to her peers for support and validation (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). Pioneer research on girls and the importance of relationships and connection in their lives has been conducted by Judith Jordan and her colleagues at the Stone Center at Wellesley College, where studies continue to provide evidence for the importance of gender-specific programming.

Of further interest is Gilligan's work on how girls' attentiveness to relationships influences their moral development (Miller et al., 1995; Gilligan, 1977). When Gilligan looked at definitions of morality posited by male theorists like Karl Kohlberg, she
identified a lack of recognition and understanding that girls' value relationships, and how their unique values defined the moral decisions they made. Prior to Gilligan's pivotal work, girls' moral decisions had been characterized as weak and ultimately inferior to those of boys (See Gilligan, 1977, In A Different Voice: Women's Conception of Self and Morality.)

Ways of Knowing and Ways of Communicating

Carol Gilligan began writing about females having a "different voice" after hearing the girls and women in her studies talk about personal moral crises and decisions (Belenky et al., 1997). Her studies and those of others have demonstrated that adolescent females develop a "different voice" from males in discussing and acting out their relationships with others (Miller et al., 1995; Gilligan, 1982). Others have observed that girls are at particular risk of losing a sense of themselves and their personalities during adolescence (Miller et al., 1995; Thompson, 1964). In research examining the types of knowledge that men and women use to understand their lives and relationships, adolescent females have been shown to have different "ways of knowing" from that of males (Miller et al., 1995; Belenky, et al., 1986). Such research must provide the basis for the development and implementation of gender-specific principles.

This research has significant implications for juvenile justice treatment programs that serve girls. To successfully help girls in need, it is vital that juvenile justice practitioners understand girls' unique ways of knowing and the treatment protocols that recognize their unique needs. Instead of assuming that their interpretations of and reactions to their environments are the same as boys or placing value judgements upon them, the juvenile justice system and all programs serving girls must translate empirical
and practical research into substantive programmatic changes for at-risk and court-involved girls at all levels.

**Overt Aggression and Relational Aggression**

Crick & Grotpeter (1995) propose that "although significant advances have been made in our understanding of childhood aggression, one limitation of this research has been the lack of attention to gender differences in the expression of aggression." Past studies have concluded that, as a group, boys display significantly higher levels of aggression than do girls, a difference that persists throughout the lifespan (see Block, 1983; Parke & Slaby, 1983 for reviews), and, not surprisingly, such studies have been interpreted to demonstrate that girls, as a group, are less aggressive than boys.

Recently, however, many researchers have proposed an alternative explanation to the above studies that is more attentive to girls' psychosocial experiences and realities. They assert that "the forms of aggression assessed in past research are more salient for boys than for girls" (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), and measures used to assess gender differences in aggression that are only relevant to males have not identified girls' differential expression of aggression" (Caplan & Caplan, 1999). Simply stated, girls are indeed aggressive, they merely express this characteristic in different ways. Recent studies have demonstrated that relational aggression (i.e. harming others through purposeful manipulation and damage of [others] peer relationships) is a more meaningful form of aggression for girls.

As past research has consistently shown, boys tend to harm others through physical and verbal aggression (e.g., hitting or pushing others, threatening to beat up others). These behaviors are consistent with the types of goals that past research has shown to be important to boys within the peer group context, specifically, themes of instrumentality and physical dominance (see Block, 1983 for review). These types of
concerns are not as salient for most girls, however. In contrast to boys, girls are more likely to focus on relational issues during social interaction (e.g., establishing close, intimate connections with others) (see Block, 1983 for review) (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

In a study of 491 third- to sixth-grade children, where relational aggression, overt aggression (i.e., the physical and verbal aggression assessed in past research) and social-psychological adjustment were assessed, results provided evidence for the validity and distinctiveness of relational aggression, and simultaneously indicated that girls were significantly more relationally aggressive than were boys. The foregoing study is reflective of others that have provided evidence indicating that the degree of aggressiveness exhibited by girls has been underestimated in prior studies "because forms of aggression relevant to girls' peer groups have not been assessed" (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Relational aggression has been identified by researchers as a behavior that girls tend to exhibit and research shows that girls are less likely to exhibit overt aggression. Juvenile justice researchers have found that at-risk and court-involved girls exhibit relational aggression in prevention- and intervention-based programs (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). Indeed, because it is a behavior that is not well understood, as the (previously reviewed studies led to wrongful conclusions about girls and aggression), practitioners do not know how to identify or respond appropriately to relational aggression. Gender-specific research must continue pave the way towards a complete understanding of and successful response to girls' display of relational aggression.

Dependency and Interdependency
Like studies of gender differences in aggression, most studies which conclude that girls are more dependent and less assertive than boys have been based on notions of dependency and assertiveness that are often inconsistent with girls' experiences. The conclusions drawn from dependency studies, unlike the studies on aggression, are perhaps more damaging, as they tend to label qualities exhibited by girls and women as weak and inferior to men's qualities. Indeed, male qualities have been labeled as strengths, and those associated with women have been categorized as weaknesses.

Past studies have concluded that women and girls are "emotionally dependent" based on results revealing that, compared to boys, females look at other people more; listen, pay attention, and respond to the speaker more; interrupt less; time their responses to a speaker so that the speaker does not change or drop the subject; engage in more nonaggressive touching; stand and sit closer to same sex people; are accurate senders and interpreters of emotion-related messages; change their behavior on depending on another person's behavior and how well they know them; smile; and have positive, friendly, and encouraging reactions with strangers (see Caplan & Caplan, 1999 for review). Furthermore, more recent studies have described girls as dependent based on behaviors such as wanting to be near an adult; being upset by an adult's negative evaluation or disapproval; actively soliciting comfort from an adult after a minor injury; agreeing with the statement "The idea of losing a close friend is terrifying to me;" and disagreement with the statement "What people think of me doesn't affect how I feel." Researchers have analyzed more closely the conclusions reached in past studies, as well as the measures upon which such conclusions were based. They identified the bias that governed the operationalization of the study variables and the study conclusions and have
posited that the "dependent" behaviors ascribed to girls actually represent strengths and abilities from which society can benefit.

Social worker Rachel Josefowitz Siegel (1988) has proposed that researchers have mislabeled dependency, and its place has suggested the term interdependence; and, psychologist Janet Surrey (1985) has offered the term relational abilities to replace the labels of dependency and immaturity given to the behaviors described in past studies (Caplan & Caplan, 1999). Conventional terms clearly have negative connotations, and "for women and for men who have felt ashamed about displaying characteristics such as concern about and responsiveness to other people, the proposed re-labeling can transform their views of themselves, significantly enhancing their self-esteem" (Caplan & Caplan, 1999). Furthermore, such a re-labeling of characteristics exhibited by and ascribed to females, namely relational abilities, that emphasizes the characteristics' strengths, can set the stage for their complement to the social and political characteristics (upon which American society was created and continues to develop) such as independence and autonomy.

Psychologist Nikki Gerrard (1987, 1988) has described the way that Surrey's term, relational abilities, can help us to think differently, and more productively, about human relationships. Until recently, most of the theorists about human development have named independence and autonomy as the major aims (Miller, 1984). Although independence and autonomy are important goals for development, so are the goals of increasing and expanding the variety of abilities that help us form relationships and express and understand our own feelings and the feelings of others (Miller, 1984) (Caplan & Caplan, 1999).

Society's traditional emphasis on independence has created an environment within which girls' and women's unique strengths are dismissed as weak and unacceptable. Indeed, all of the above qualities are best categorized as human strengths, the expression of which
both women and men, girls and boys, can benefit from. The excessive focus on and labeling of "male qualities" and "women qualities" prevents men and women from complementing each other and eventually discourages, through socialization and discrimination, one gender from exhibiting behaviors traditionally associated with the other. This is consistent with Carl Jung's theory of personality development, and his assertion that society and family systems have made it easier for males to exhibit qualities ascribed exclusively to their gender to the extent that males not only tend to exhibit these "male" characteristics more, but they are less likely to exhibit "female" characteristics. "The focus has been on studying the intellectual capacities most often cultivated by men rather than on identifying aspects of intelligence and modes of thought that might be more common and highly developed in women" (Belenky et al., 1997). For in the end, the qualities associated with men and women are all beneficial and can all contribute to a more whole society. Indeed it is arguable that the qualities associated with one gender are only hurtful to society if they are displayed at the expense and neglect of characteristics traditionally associated with another gender.

Addictive Behavior

Research suggests that females and males tend to differ in their addictive behavior, whether the addiction is related to food or drugs (Miller et al., 1995; Comerci, 1986; Kagan & Squires, 1984). It has been shown that female adolescents use drugs, alcohol, and tobacco for different reasons and at different rates than do male adolescents (Miller et al., 1995; Bodinger-Deuriarte, 1991). In fact, Bodinger-Deuriarte claims that adolescent females' drug and alcohol behaviors are influenced by different factors from those of males (Miller et al., 1995).
Indicators

Ultimately, it is not surprising that teenage girls are more vulnerable to feelings of depression and hopelessness and are four times more likely to attempt suicide (Orenstein, 1995; AAUW Report, 1992). Research has revealed that adolescent females experience more episodes of depression throughout adolescence than do males (Miller et al, 1995; Rutter, 1986), attempt suicide more frequently (Miller et al., 1995; Rosenthal, 1981), and exhibit lower levels of resilience (Miller et al., 1995; Block, 1990).

Gender as a mitigating factor

In summary, research reveals that girls move through adolescence with the added pressures of sexism, gender typing, and the tension between their personal expectations and those of society. Research also reveals that White privileged girls exhibit the same hardships despite the perception that their high SES would render them less vulnerable (Orenstein, 1995). Such research seems to exhibit that gender may be more of a mitigating factor than was originally thought. In a study of girls Orenstein found that girls internalized the limitations of their gender very early.

During the course of my conversations it was clear that, regardless of race and class, [girls] had still learned to see boys as freer, with fewer concerns, and ultimately more powerful. Girls’ diminished sense of self means that, often unconsciously, they take on a second-class, accommodating status. Few of the girls I spoke with had ever been told that “girls” can’t do what boys can – most were overtly encouraged to fulfill their potential. Yet all, on some level, had learned this lesson anyway. By sixth grade, it [was clear] that both girls and boys [had] learned to equate maleness with opportunity and femininity with constraint (Orenstein, 1995).

Clearly, subtle and often silent messages about gender and worth are very powerful. They plague society, media, institutions, communities, programs, families, and individuals. The pressures of poverty, discrimination, and the inadequacy of education
facing all youth have historically overshadowed gender differences and the “strategies youth [pursue] to maintain self-esteem in such challenging environments are often dictated by gender.” Ultimately, when other risk factors to be described in subsequent pages are added to the already challenging developmental tasks of adolescence and female adolescence in particular, the results can be overwhelming, pushing some girls into delinquency (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). Indeed, the unique risk factors to which girls in have been exposed - risk factors that are unique either because they are not experienced by boys, or significantly less likely to be experienced by boys - have yielded unique responses that are not only consistent with their psychosocial development, but they are responses that are less likely to be observed among boys.
Chapter VI – Risk Factors for Female Delinquency: A New Perspective

Many of the risk factors to which at-risk and court-involved girls, as a group, have been exposed are similar, if not the same, as those to which at-risk and court-involved boys are exposed. Empirical and statistical research has revealed continuously, however, that girls in need are differentially exposed to and affected by such risk factors. Indeed this pattern of exposure holds true for girls in the general population, and the reality then becomes that such exposures are merely more concentrated in the at-risk and court-involved population. It is critical, then, that practitioners, administrators and policy makers understand girls’ realities.

Comprehensive studies of female offenders and their lives and attitudes are allowing researchers and practitioners to make critical connections between their life circumstances and delinquency development. Understanding the unique conditions in girls' lives that place them at-risk of exhibiting criminal behaviors, known as risk factors, are allowing researchers to respond via the identification of protective factors, or, the conditions in girls' lives that are likely to hinder delinquent behavior. In order to be gender-specific, programs must address "the risks and dangers girls face, and also [encourage] those protective factors" that can help girls avoid contact, or further contact with the juvenile justice system (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). Such risk factors include poverty, ethnic membership, poor academic performance, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, victimization, health and mental health concerns, and gang membership. The identification of risk factors, however, may be oversimplifying the circumstances that place girls at-risk of court-involvement or continued court-involvement. Such oversimplifying may also be curbing society’s ability to successfully meet girls’ needs.
The conditions in girls' lives that often precede maladaptive, delinquent behavior have been demonstrated by several studies. Collectively, such studies reveal that specified pervasive risk factors that are shared among female delinquents. Referred to continuously by researchers as risk factors, **some of these conditions tend to be part of girls' lives and their exposure to them is essentially beyond their control.** Indeed the following risk factors that have been consistently identified as conditions that often precede delinquency in girls are better understood as **precursors** to delinquency. These four main precursors include victimization (sexual, physical, and/or emotional), violence, family dysfunction, and gender discrimination. Consider the following research.

**Victimization**

Sexual abuse is a particular problem for girls, as several studies have shown that girls are more likely to be victims of child sexual abuse than boys. Studies have shown that girls are sexually abused almost three times more often than boys (Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996). Girls are more likely to be abused by a family member (70 percent) (Louis and Harris Associates, Inc., 1997). The majority of girls who report having been physically or sexually abused also report that the abuse occurred at home (53 percent). Girls are more likely than boys to be assaulted by a family member, and their sexual abuse also tends to start earlier than boys' abuse, and consequently lasts longer.

The Commonwealth Fund Survey of the Health of Adolescent Girls was conducted by Louis Harris and Associates, Inc. from December 1996 to June 1997, and consisted of in-class questionnaires completed by 6,748 adolescents, 3,586 girls and 3,162 boys - in grades 5 through 12. The classroom sample included a nationally representative cross-section of schools, with 265 public, private, and parochial schools
participating (1997). Findings from the Commonwealth Fund Survey of the Health of Adolescent Girls showed "a disturbingly high rate of abuse." One in five girls in grades 9 through 12 reported that they had been physically or sexually abused (1997). Additionally, high school girls surveyed were more than twice as likely as boys to report sexual abuse: among girls grades 9 through 12, 12 percent reported abuse, compared with 5 percent of high school boys. In addition, 17 percent of high school girls reported physical abuse, compared with 12 percent of boys. Considerable overlap was found between sexual and physical abuse: half of girls who reported sexual abuse also reported physical abuse. Older girls were more likely than older boys to experience sexual abuse, and twenty-one percent of older girls reported that they had been either sexually or physically abused (1997).

The survey also revealed that "sexual and physical abuse rates are high across the country, with little variation among urban, suburban, or rural areas or by region. Although more variation was discovered across income levels, using mother's education as a proxy for family income status, the survey found that 9 percent of adolescents whose mothers had a college education reported abuse, while 17 percent of those whose mothers had not completed high school reported abuse" (1997).

Rates of sexual abuse were also fairly consistent across racial and ethnic groups, with the exception of Asian Americans. "Rates of sexual abuse among White, Black, and Hispanic girls were 9 percent, 10 percent, and 11 percent, respectively, yet only 5 percent of Asian American girls reported sexual abuse. Hispanic girls were the most likely to say that they had been physically abused (15 percent), followed closely by White girls (13 percent), and Asian American and Black girls (11 percent and 10 percent) (1997). The
survey found high correlations among reports of abuse, fair or poor health status, and risky health behaviors.

It is not surprising, then, that similar studies show that adolescent female offenders experience more sexual abuse and at higher frequencies than do adolescent male offenders (Miller et al., 1995; Chesney-Lind, 1987; National Institute of Mental Health, 1977; Youth Policy and Law Center, 1982). Indeed, research has invariably identified victimization - physical, sexual, and emotional - as the first step along females' pathways into the juvenile justice system (OJJDP, 1998; Girls Incorporated, 1996; Chesney-Lind, 1997). The National Girls' Caucus reports that over 70% of young women in correctional settings have had histories of physical and/or sexual abuse, and nearly 4 out of 5 have had prior incidents of running away, a behavior that has been linked to the abuse (Chesney-Lind, 1989). In fact, as noted earlier, running away often brings girls in need to the attention of the courts more than their male counterparts. The American Correctional Association (1990) found that girls have higher rates of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse - 60 percent of all court-involved girls reported physical or sexual abuse, and of the girls who reported abuse, 90 percent reported that the first incident of sexual and/or physical abuse occurred before the age of 15 (American Correctional Association, 1990). In some detention facilities, the incidence of girls who have been abused is closer to 90 percent (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998).

In one survey of adolescent offenders, it was found that 64 percent of the adolescent females reported sexual abuse experiences as opposed to 13 percent of the males (Miller et al., 1995; Miller, 1990; 1992). Of the adolescents questioned, 81 percent of the females reported having been raped, while none of the males said they had been.
Also, in the same study, 42 percent of female offenders reported being physically abused by their "dates," while only 3 percent of males reported a similar experience. Finally, "in a recent study, ninety-two percent of girls in the California juvenile correctional system reported experiencing sexual, physical or emotional abuse (Acoca & Dedel, 1998), and "many reported experiencing combinations of multiple forms of abuse on multiple occasions (Owen & Bloom, 1998)."

Earlier studies of court-involved girls report a range of physical and sexual abuse from 40 to 73 percent (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1992), compared to 5 to 45 percent of "community" females (Bloom et al., 1994). Of girls involved in the justice system, 40 to 70 percent report a past history of family abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional) compared to 23 to 34 percent of girls in the general population (Girls Incorporated, 1996). The most recent studies indicate that as much as 90 percent of court-involved girls have been victimized prior to their offending (Greene, Peters, and Associates, 1998).

Correlates of Abuse

All of the above characteristics of girls' abuse are associated with more severe trauma, causing dramatic short- and long-term effects that can significantly affect their psychosocial stability. The effects noted by researchers in this area range from "fear, anxiety, depression, anger, hostility, and [early] sexual behavior," to running away from home, difficulties in school, and truancy (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). Girls who report having been physically and/or sexually abused are more likely than girls who have not been abused to report symptoms of high stress, depression, and low self-confidence (Acoca & Austin, 1996), and they are at elevated risk for substance abuse (Loius, Harris,
Unsurprisingly, such victimization interrupts girls’ normal identity development and, in cases of sexual abuse, part of their normal sexual development. "Sexual abuse can have a profound impact on a girl during adolescence, resulting in lessened self esteem, inability to trust, academic failure, eating disorders, teen pregnancy, and other serious concerns" (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). The Commonwealth Fund reports that "experience with abuse or violence during childhood or adolescence can affect one's health status through adulthood. Such violence can have a lifetime impact on physical and mental health, and often results in self-destructive behavior" (Louis and Harris Associates, Inc., 1997).

In the CWF study, high school girls who reported some form of abuse were approximately twice as likely to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes frequently, or to have used drugs in the past month as those not reporting abuse. Such outcomes are consistent with research revealing that girls with victimization in their histories report using alcohol and other drugs to numb the emotional pain and mental confusion associated with their abuse. High school girls who reported abuse were also far more likely to report eating disorders: 32 percent said that they had binged or purged, more than double the rate (13 percent) of girls who did not report abuse. Finally, of all abused girls, 17 percent they were bingeing and purging a few times a week or more (1997) - a response to abuse that is consistent with research revealing that many girls respond to the trauma associated with their victimization by striking inward and inflicting self-harm (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998).

In the same study it was also found that "physical and sexual abuse were also correlated with poor mental health. Among high school girls, nearly half of those who
reported physical or sexual abuse also reported moderate or severe depressive symptoms - a rate more than twice as high as that reported by girls who had not been abused." Reports of suicidal thoughts were also much higher among girls who reported either physical or sexual abuse (47 percent versus 26 percent of girls not reporting abuse) (1997).

Although the survey found that abused adolescent girls were more likely than abused boys to have talked to someone about their abuse, nearly three in ten abused girls and half of abused boys said they had not told anyone about it. When adolescent girls did share their experiences with others, they most often spoke with a close friend rather than an adult (1997).

Not knowing how to share and talk about their abuse with adults that have the abilities and tools to a) protect them from the abuse, in a legal sense, and b) guide them through the process of emotional and psychological recovery, means that girls are trying to interpret and deal with a variety of extremely complex emotions alone and at an age when they are psychologically and mentally immature and ultimately unable to process such complexity.

It is consequently unsurprising that research reveals that abuse survivors in general attempt suicide more often than do persons without abuse histories (Snell, 1994). Similarly, institutionalized girls are far more likely to think about and attempt suicide than are institutionalized boys, and "one explanation for this self-destructiveness is that, like their adult counterparts, girls in the criminal justice system have high rates of physical and sexual abuse" (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). Such rates of abuse have been targeted by some to be precursors to behaviors that, while labeled "delinquent," are better understood as a natural response to trauma and viable means to avoiding further abuse and victimization. Attempts to understand responses to trauma
have led researchers into diverse fields of study (See "The Theory Behind the Concept: The Trauma-based Approach," Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services). Some key findings from trauma studies include, but are not limited to, the following:

- People start off life with normal potential for growth and development, given certain constitutional and genetic predispositions, and then become traumatized. Post-traumatic stress reactions are reactions to the abnormal stress caused by experiences that threaten one's sense of integrity and survival.

- If people experience trauma early in life, its effects may impact development throughout the lifespan.

- Trauma has biological, psychological, and moral effects and these effects impact families, communities, and societies across and through generations.

- Much of what we call symptoms and syndromes are manifestations of adaptations that were originally useful coping skills, but may now have become hurtful.

In addition, the powerful influences of socialization, influences that have encouraged girls to be passive recipients of the environment around them, interact with girls' experience of and reactions to traumatic situations. And, as was discussed earlier in female pathways to delinquency, girls tend to strike inward while boys tend to strike out. Studies show that many women, while they were physically and sexually abused as girls, employed survival skills which were labeled as "criminal" such as running away from home, using drugs, and prostitution (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1991; Chesney-Lind, 1989).

The extremely high rates of abuse among females may influence or serve as a precursor to many other behaviors that are noted risk factors for delinquency including but not limited to poor academic performance, family difficulty, and low self-esteem.
Female adolescents who have been sexually abused have been shown to have more serious problems than do males with self-image, sexual attitudes, family relations, vocational and educational goals, and "mastering" their environment (Miller et al., 1995; Orr & Downs, 1985). And, abused adolescent females have been found to be at higher risk for sexual assault and rape than are males (Miller et al., 1995; Gruber, 1984; Levine & Kanin, 1987). In a study about girls and violence, Schaffner reported that interview data "made clear that factors such as witnessing and experiencing sexual and physical trauma are [crucial] to understanding and interpreting girls' [offending]" (Schaffner, 1999). Girls who have been sexually abused often have problems with body image, and learn to associate sexuality with pain and manipulation. They develop a powerlessness that can affect other life areas and become part of their identity. Reactions to trauma such as running away, silencing oneself, or manipulating feelings that originally served as coping strategies eventually become hurtful to the at-risk and court-involved girls who employ them. These reactions must be understood as a normal response to a trauma that has interrupted healthy development. The vision of gender-specific programming is not to punish girls for exhibiting them, but to help them understand why they developed them, why they are no longer needed, and ultimately provide them with the tools, skills, and therapeutic opportunities they need to develop more positive coping strategies so that they can continue their healthy identity development.

**Violence**

In a 1996 study of incarcerated women in three states, researchers found that one of the most universally shared characteristics among the women was a history of exposure to violence - 68 percent of the participants had been victims of violence as
children (Acoca & Austin, 1996). Violence has significant effects on all people; however, statistics show that it has profound effects on the lives of girls and women. For instance, homicide is the second leading cause of death among females 15-19 years old and the leading cause of death among Black females 15-19 years old (Gardner et al., 1992). Victims of rape are disproportionately children and adolescent girls, 60 percent of forcible rapes occur before the victim is 18 years old, and 29 percent of victims are younger than 11 years old when raped (National Victim Center, 1992). In 1997, homicide was the fourth leading cause of death for 5- to 14-year-old girls. For women aged 15 to 14, homicide was the second most frequent cause of death, and suicide was the fourth most frequent cause. (Hoyert, 1999).

Violence in the home and community also has lasting effects on young girls. One source revealed that "of all rapes and sexual assaults, 75 percent involve family members" (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997). In a 1997 survey of adolescent girls, about half (46 percent) did not always feel safe in the neighborhood where they lived (Louis Harris and Associates, Inc. 1997). "Some adolescent girls also indicated that they were witnesses to violence in their homes, as well as targets of abuse." Across all grades, 25 percent of adolescent girls said that they had wanted to leave home at some point because of family violence. Among high school girls, 29 percent reported experiencing such a time (1997).

Abused girls were far more likely than nonabused girls to report that they had wanted to leave home at some point because of violence or threat of violence (58 percent versus 18 percent). This means that the nurturing environments that are critical for the healthy development of any adolescent, namely the community and the home, and the
relationships within these environments that are especially important for girls, are perceived as and experienced by girls as threats and places of danger and personal harm.

"Girls in juvenile corrections revealed that they witnessed an inordinate amount of violence on a routine basis" (Johnson, 1998). They witnessed brothers, friends, cousins, fathers, and boyfriends being kicked, beaten, punched, shot, and killed (1998). They also witness their mothers being devalued and hurt physically by fathers, stepfathers, and boyfriends (1998). “The young women in this population are often unnoticed, mute witnesses of front-line violence in day-to-day urban life.”

Correlates of Violence

In the CWF study, girls exposed to violence reported increased levels of depressive symptoms, risky behaviors, and lack of access to health care (Louis Harris and Associates, 1997). Researchers note that violence can be “normalized, even routinized, as an emotional strategy and a psychological response to troubles and frustrations (Schaffner, 1999). This routinization of violence in girls' everyday lives appears to have a strong effect on their subsequent behaviors” (1999). When researchers studied adult female participation in violence, they found that and girls who experience extensive violence in everyday life “may be more likely than women and girls who are situated differently to view violence as an appropriate or useful means of dealing with their environment” (1999). For young women who are exposed to and who suffer violent and/or sexual assaults, aggression itself may become a seemingly reasonable response (1999).

Psychologists have long known that adolescents' exposure to community violence has serious consequences (Osofsky, 1995; Schaffner, 1999). Studies show that exposure
to violence in the media may result in young people 1) becoming "less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others," 2) being "more fearful of the world around them," and 3) possibly behaving in more "aggressive or harmful ways toward others" (Schaffner, 1999). "Directly witnessing or being a victim of violence has even more detrimental effects" (see Baskin, 1993) (1999). Such facts are not surprising, especially in light of what society learned from the emergence of post-traumatic stress disorder in post war veterans.

In light of the foregoing statistics, girls' increasing violence and offending are best processed as survival behaviors, and interventions need to provide girls with healthier alternatives and coping skills. Indeed, Schaffner notes that “contextualizing female offending behaviors in the realities of girls' lives reveals that violence by girls is intimately related to violence that girls witness and are victims of in increasing numbers and in new ways” (1999). Greene, Peters, & Associates (1998) report that some girls lash out at their perpetrators violently, a behavioral outcome that is directly related to their victimization (1998). Gender-specific programming addresses these realities, and to the extent that the principles of such programming are not understood, programs will not be able to comprehensively address girls’ needs and prevent the onset of or continuation of their hurtful coping and offending behaviors.

Discrimination (Stereotyping, Racism, Sexism, etc.)/Correlates

"Great strides have been made to narrow the gap between the sexes, but inequity still exists and has far reaching consequences for the future of this nation and its girls" (Girl Scouts of the USA, 1997). "According to a 1995 report of the United States Department of Education, 17-year-old girls scored 4 scale points lower than boys on the national mathematics assessment test and were less likely than boys to take science
classes such as physics (24 percent versus 19 percent). These numbers are consistent with the findings of a 1988 study by Gibbins and Codding (and AAUW report in 1998, ten years later) that indicated girls are discouraged from developing an interest in these fields at an early age (1997). And, studies have revealed an association between confidence and educational achievement; specifically, research has delineated that outcomes in education are influenced by confidence. This relationship is especially important with regard to girls as studies reveal that they tend to experience a significant drop in confidence during adolescence compared to boys. In fact, researchers found that a loss of confidence in the ability to pursue mathematics and science usually precedes a drop in achievement, rather than vice versa (Orenstein, 1995). Indeed, the AAUW report revealed that teachers are more likely to respond to girls’ demonstrated scientific abilities by recommending that they be teachers of such disciplines as opposed to scientists or mathematicians (1995).

**Dysfunctional Family System**

Children are born into families where they learn culture, family history, values, and how to love and work (Schaffner, 1999). "Families can simultaneously offer girls love, nurturing and encouragement, and also violence, incest, neglect, homophobia, and abuse (1999). Many girls in trouble wandered in empty and painful family situations and reported feeling 'passed around' to aunts, grandmothers, foster care, and group homes (1999).

The search for close, nurturing relationships and approval from others is a factor that precedes criminal behavior (see Carol Gilligan, Harvard School of Education; Meda Chesney-Lind, Judith Jordan, Stone Center at Wellesley College). Girls are far more
likely to fight with a parent or sibling while boys are more likely to fight with strangers (Adams et al; Kann et al). About one in three middle and high school girls (34 percent) reports that she does not always feel safe when she is at home (Louis and Harris Associates, Inc., 1997). About 1 in 4 girls in grades 5 through 8 (24 percent) and in grades 9 through 12 (29 percent) has ever wanted to leave home because of violence or threat of violence (1997). Most girls involved in violent street crime in New York City came from homes characterized by poverty, domestic violence, and substance abuse. Research reveals that at-risk and court-involved girls often come from dysfunctional family systems and disorganized homes. Research also shows that emotional and psychological stability and childhood is directly related to a structured, stable, organized family environment.

Studies reveal that girls have greater vulnerability to marital and family discord. "Analyses suggest that family discord is a strong mediator in the development of girls' conduct disturbances and a modest mediator of girls' depressive symptoms" (Davies & Windle, 1997). In another study, one of the major reasons adolescent females reported for joining a gang was that it allowed them to belong to a family (Molidor, 1996).

Schaffner reports that "one reason for family troubles is domestic violence" and that "witnessing woman-battering affects girls deeply" (1999). One study estimates that 3.3 million youths each year witness parental abuse, ranging from batteries to fatal assaults involving knives and guns (1999).

**Correlates of Family Dysfunction**

The effects of the home environments from which so many girls in need emerge are potent and indisputable. Calhoun et al. (1993) reports that "mediating factors in
delinquency for juvenile females...appear to be the result of a deterioration in life, rather than what is attributed to the more masculine criminal career,” and Mendoza found that “many delinquent girls tend to be products of dysfunctional families and sexual abuse” as opposed to their male counterparts. Those who became delinquent as younger adolescents, as opposed to later in their teens, were more likely to come from neighborhoods with "high concentrations of poverty," to have been sexually or physically abused by a stranger, and to have friends involved with violent crime (National Institute of Justice, 1994).

"Family structure is...associated with differential risks of substance use. Adolescents living with both biological parents are less likely to use alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, or other illicit substances; family structures consisting of a biological father and the absence of a biological mother are associated with greatest risk” (Johnson et al., 1996). "Family background may involve indirect adverse effects such as poor parental support, lack of care and nurturance during childhood, physical or sexual abuse, poor supervision of peer relations, weak coping resources, high stress within the home, and low SES" (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 1999).

Parental influence has been found to be of critical importance in studies of risk factors for adolescent substance abuse (and other maladaptive behaviors) (1999). Among significant determinants of adolescent substance abuse are parental attitudes and behavior, role modeling, parental behavioral management, and the quality and consistency of family communication (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 1999; Kandel, 1982; Kandel et al., 1978; Donovan & Jessor, 1978). "Parental supervision and the perception of parental concern have been found to be
associated with reduced likelihood of substance use (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 1999; Fletcher et al., 1995; Richardson et al., 1989). "It may be that weak parent-adolescent bonds augment vulnerability to peer pressure. Impaired parent-adolescent attachments may reflect difficulties that date to childhood and escalate to crisis proportions with the developmental challenges and associated turmoil of the adolescent life stage" (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 1999).

In one study, where relations among maternal depressive symptoms, family discord, and adolescent psychological adjustment were assessed, a history of maternal depressive symptoms was related to subsequent adolescent reports of depressive symptoms, conduct problems, and academic difficulties for girls and not for boys. The study also indicated that girls' greater vulnerability to family discord (e.g., marital discord, low family intimacy, parenting impairments) accounted for the impact of maternal depressive symptoms on their social and emotional adjustment.

Unsurprisingly, criminology theorists generally correlate family violence and marital discord with "at-risk youth" and delinquency (1999). Other studies find that adolescents who grow up in homes characterized by violence are more likely to report being violent (Thornberry, 1994).

It is critical to highlight the growing body of literature examining the potentially deleterious effects of witnessing domestic violence on the health and behavior of child witnesses. This research reveals that the consequent disorders generally fall into two groups: internalized problems such as withdrawn or anxious behaviors and externalized problems such as aggression and delinquency (Schaffner, 1999).

Schaffner reports that her research suggests a "link between witnessing wife beating and perpetrating violence and girls' own lives (1999). Girls' experiences of violence "must
come to the fore of criminology literature if we are to understand girls’ aggression and anger.” Marital discord is consistently related to delinquency, but little definitive research has studied the ways in which girls who witness wife-beating respond by being aggressive themselves. Family violence, especially wife-beating, needs to be included explicitly in analyses of delinquency and of girls’ involvement in violent crimes (1999). Family violence and family trauma and trauma in general need to be included in analysis of female delinquency and immediately incorporated into programs.

Finally, because Chapter V delineated the centrality of relationships and connection in girls’ lives, repeated studies indicating that at-risk and court-involved girls tend to come form dysfunctional and disorganized homes that lack stable and nurturing relationships should immediately allow practitioners to contextualize their offending behavior.

Summary

Victimization (emotional, physical, and/or sexual), family and community violence, family dysfunction, and discrimination have been homogenized with other risk factors for delinquency even in the most promising publications. Though appropriately referred to in the literature as risk factors, they command, by their demonstrated correlations with maladaptive outcomes, a more specific distinction as precursors that are likely to precede delinquency development, especially for the girls who, as a group, are disproportionately exposed to them. Proper gender-specific protocols place victimization, violence, family dysfunction, and discrimination in their proper context as precursors to maladaptive behavior and address them as such.
That said, other conditions, often referenced as risk factors in girls' lives are better understood as **emotional and behavioral responses** to the above uncontrollable conditions, or precursors, to which girls are exposed. These behavioral responses include, but are not limited to, early sexual involvement/teen pregnancy, academic failure, substance abuse, truancy, waywardness, gang membership, and delinquency. This distinction acknowledges the connection between precursors (agents) and behaviors (behavioral diseases), and prohibits behaviors such as running away from being criminalized while simultaneously allowing them to be viewed in their appropriate context.

**Early sexual involvement/teen pregnancy**

Teen pregnancy is gaining increasing attention as a particularly pressing social problem. Its effects are often measured by the adverse outcomes it is likely to produce at both the individual and societal level. At the individual level, research shows that a young girl that becomes pregnant early in her own development as an adolescent is at elevated risk for maladaptive behavioral responses to and associated with her development. Researchers note that parenthood at an early age may interfere with and complicate the normal challenges of adolescence, such as identity development. (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998; Corley & Chase-Lansdale, 1998; Apfel & Seitz, 1996) At the societal level, pregnancies to teens often translate into financial and economic difficulties. “Adolescent mothers are more likely to drop out of high school, limiting their future chances of employment and increasing the likelihood that they will live in poverty” (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998; Robin Hood Foundation, 1996).
Teen pregnancy creates special needs for both the adolescent mother and her child” (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998; Maynard & Garry, 1997). The children of teen mothers are at greater risk for abuse and neglect and twice as likely to become victims of child abuse and neglect compared to children of adult mothers (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998; Robin Hood Foundation, 1996). Maynard & Garry (1997) report that the sons of teen mothers are 2.7 times more likely to be incarcerated than the sons of adult mothers (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). Greene, Peters, & Associates asserts that “because at least 70 percent of girls in the justice system have a history of abuse themselves, [teen pregnancy] becomes an issue that spans generations” (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). This is certainly a call to action.

But the outcomes of teen pregnancy must not be the primary focus, for the life circumstances that are likely to precede it must be the focus of prevention and intervention strategies. Teen pregnancy is often the outcome of early sexual experimentation (Maynard & Garry, 1997), and early sexual experimentation is related to abuse. It is not surprising, then, that many teen mothers have been victims of sexual abuse (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). And, with such high rates of abuse among girls, and the fact that up to 70 percent of court-involved girls report histories of victimization, it is not surprising that female offenders engage in sexual activity at an earlier age than non-offenders (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). Miller (1995) reports that sexual victimization jeopardizes girls’ ability to form healthy sexual relationships. Sexual abuse interrupts sexual development and often prevents child and adolescent victims from associating sex with safety and reciprocity of expression.

**Academic failure**
The most significant risk factor related to early onset of delinquency is poor academic performance (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998; Dryfoos, 1990; Yoshikawa, 1994; Greenwood et al., 1996). A disproportionate number (26 percent) of female juvenile offenders have learning disabilities (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998; U.S. Department of Justice, 1994). By the time they enter the system, girls may be at least a grade level behind their peers, and they may have developed a negative attitude about learning and lack self-confidence about their own ability to master academic skills (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998; Bergsmann, 1994; Girls Incorporated, 1996).

Academic difficulties are undoubtedly related to truancy among at-risk girls. “Girls who are juvenile offenders may have reacted to academic challenges in the past by skipping school or dropping out all together” (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998; Bergsmann, 1994; Hugo & Rutherford, 1992). Girls’ reactions to academic difficulties must be viewed in the context of their psychosocial development. The American Association of University Women (1991; 1995) has done extensive research on girls in the educational system and posits that girls who do stay in school as opposed to running away may “shut down” in a classroom that does not meet their unique needs (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). Consistent with their psychosocial reality, they are likely to internalize their frustration and assume that they “[cannot] learn” (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998; AAUW Report, 1991; 1995). “Once they enter the juvenile justice system, these girls find themselves back in the classroom...[and] they may perform well behind grade level” (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). Indeed, girls with a history of academic failure “may respond with defiance or anger if forced back into the classroom.” Instead of viewing this as an overt signal that a girl is in need and that specialized
attention must be given to her, practitioners and researchers alike often label her as noncompliant and an inappropriate candidate for the program wherein she happens to reside. Greene, Peters, & Associates reports that “because academic failure is so closely linked to underemployment and unemployment, it is a risk factor that must be addressed for female delinquents if they are to avoid a life of impoverished opportunities” (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998).

Substance Abuse

It is now known that drug abuse is a greater problem for female offenders than for male offenders. The American Correctional Association found that girls have higher rates of substance abuse and addiction - 60% of girls in state training schools in the juvenile justice system need substance abuse treatment at intake and over half of those were multiply addicted (American Correctional Association, 1990).

The 1996 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse indicated that females comprise 44.7 percent of those who ever reported using illicit drugs in their lifetime and 36.2 percent reported use in the last month. The survey also found that more women than men reported having taken prescription drugs for non-medical purposes during the last month. The National Comorbidity Survey, conducted between 1990 and 1992, estimated that six percent of all women ages 15-54 years of age have met criteria for lifetime drug dependence (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1996).

Childhood sexual abuse has been associated with drug abuse in females in several studies. Some studies indicate that up to 70 percent in drug abuse treatment report histories of physical and sexual abuse with victimization beginning before 11 years of age and occurring chronically. A study of drug use among women who became pregnant
before reaching 18 years of age reported that 32 percent had a history of early forced
sexual intercourse (rape or incest). These adolescents, compared with non-victims, used
more crack, cocaine, and other drugs (except marijuana), had lower self-esteem, and
engaged in a higher number of delinquent activities (National Institute on Drug Abuse,
1996). Acoca reports that if sexual abuse is not addressed, girls may run away or turn to
alcohol or other drugs to numb their emotional pain (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998).
Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998 reports that substance abuse exacerbates the other
problems that might place a girl at risk of delinquency. Sommers & Baskin report that
many girls report being intoxicated or under the influence while committing delinquent

Female drug abusers [may] have a greater vulnerability to victimization than
males. For example, in a recent study of homicide in New York City, 59 percent of
White women and 72 percent of Black women had been using cocaine prior to death
compared with 38 percent of White males and 44 percent of Black males. Thus, while
more males than females use cocaine, its use is a far greater risk factor for women [than
men]. It is critical that the factors that govern the relationship between drug abuse and
dependence among females, and physical and sexual victimization (including partner
violence) be identified and understood (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1996).

Gang Activity

Most research on gang membership has concentrated on males, and "minimal
work has been done to examine the etiology of female gang membership" (Molidor,
1996). Studies that have focused on females, however, show that serious criminal
behavior committed by female gang members has steadily increased over the past twenty
years and is becoming increasingly commonplace (Molidor, 1996; Campbell, 1987; Spergel, 1992; Taylor, 1993). Although statistics indicate that teenage girls are becoming more involved in serious criminal and gang-related activity, in major studies of gang activity, female gang members have been largely ignored (Molidor, 1996; Chesney-Lind, 1989; Covey et al., 1992). Researchers that have begun to include females in their studies have uncovered "themes" related to the ecology of female gang participation, including lack of formal education and severely dysfunctional family life. In a 1997 survey, 7 percent of girls in 6th to 12th grade reported taking part in gang activity, although only 2 percent reported participating "a lot" or "often" (PRIDE, 1998). Indeed by joining gangs, females often end up subjecting themselves to more victimization (Molidor, 1996; Campbell, 1984; Covey et al., 1992; Huff, 1990; Monti, 1993). Joe & Chesney-Lind (1995) interviewed 48 youth from varied gangs and found that "although gang members face common problems, they deal with these in ways that are uniquely informed by gender" and suggest that "extensive concern about violent criminal activities in boys' gangs have distracted researchers from exploring the wide range of activities and experiences gangs provide their members," including activities that appeal to girls, as opposed the stereotypical activities portrayed by the media.

Among girls involved with gangs the rate of alcohol use is two times higher (67 percent versus 34 percent), the use of marijuana three times higher (57 percent versus 18 percent), the use of inhalants nearly 6 times higher (20 percent versus 5 percent), and the use of cocaine almost nine times higher (19 percent versus 2 percent) than the rates of use among girls who are not involved with gangs (PRIDE, 1998). Rhodes & Fischer (1993) found that gang membership had an intensifying effect on the delinquent behaviors of all
youths studied, that male gang members were far more likely than nonmembers to have been arrested, and female gang members were more likely than nonmembers to carry weapons.

**Truancy**

In Schaffner's studies, girls reported that they felt plagued by unresolved arguments and fights with other girls and rival groups and that they often skipped school because it did not feel safe" (Schaffner, 1999).

Girls' violent acts are often preceded by sexual harassment perpetrated against them by others. Many accounts from girls in detention reflected their school experiences and were similar to those of Alegra Johnson: "I was suspended from school because this boy put his hands on me and I tried to hit him back." Young women have somehow remained the invisible witnesses to and recipients of much school violence, which is rarely characterized as sexual harassment. These girls deal with the fear by fighting and by dropping out. Over half of the young women in my sample had already quit school (1999).

In Schaffner's study, many girls reported being sexually harassed in school. "Although they are often not able to fight back successfully, some girls do attempt to retaliate, and when this occurs, they are "frequently labeled as violent offenders by school and state officials (1999)." Indeed, school is a very violent place for girls (Edwards, 1998), and school violence is often framed as a "gun" issue, not a "gender" issue (Greenbaum, 1997).

In the meantime, being verbally abused by boys, being grabbed and fondled sexually, and even being shot at by boys were topics that girls brought up in their interviews regarding sexual harassment and school (American Association of University Women Report, 1991;1995).

**Waywardness**

Girls often run away from home to get away from abuse (Chesney-Lind & Sheldon, 1998), and they are often punished for such behavior by the juvenile justice
system. The American Correctional Association found that 80 percent of girls in the juvenile justice system have run away from home at least one time and 50 percent of them have run away six or more times. In one study over 70 percent of girls on the streets have run away to flee violence in their homes and are therefore at a higher risk of victimization, prostitution, petty theft, and drug dealing to survive (Chesney-Lind & Sheldon, 1998).

**Delinquency**

Studies show that the best routes available to many women while they were physically and sexually abused as girls involved employing survival skills which are criminal: running away from home, using drugs, and prostitution (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1991). Some girls lash out at their perpetrators violently (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). All of these behaviors are often punished and addressed in isolation. They are identified as primary problems, and the context within which they develop is ignored. Girl who offend are more invisible than boy delinquents because "young men are more likely to act out in ways the community can see, [although] it may be the invisible delinquent and troubled girls who actually experience earlier and more serious damage" (Covington, 1997). It is not surprising that a national study of state prisoners states that females are far more likely than males to report prior physical and sexual abuse before the age of 18" (Moon et al., 1993).

The relationship between the precursors present in girls' lives and the behavioral outcomes that are likely to follow is strikingly clear. This chapter offers a new perspective on delinquency development and provides evidence supporting the claim that traditional risk factors must be separated into precursors and behavioral outcomes. It is
believed that such a distinction is vital and, when embraced, will facilitate the development of more appropriate and effective programs for girls and boys.

Practitioners, policy makers, and researchers must employ a multi-faceted approach to delinquency prevention programs wherein precursors, identified along with emotional-behavioral outcomes, are incorporated into a gender-specific treatment approach. Many however remain unaware of the realities behind adolescent female offending, and consequently, there is a clear lack of effective programming. Indeed, many existing programs have not succeeded in diverting girls’ offending or in fostering sustainable success. Adolescent female delinquency is rising at unprecedented rates. Study after study is revealing the real truth behind adolescent female offending and risk behavior, yet the juvenile justice system and treatment programs are not meeting girls’ unique needs (United States Dept. of Health and Human Services, 1999).

The juvenile justice system is...based on models of male interaction and boys’ development [and] the entire system is an uncomfortable fit for girls. Traditional efforts at making the system more appropriate for girls have usually consisted of switching urinals to toilets, adding medical staff to administer screening and assessment for sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy, and offering cosmetology rather than auto repair or welding. In most cases, girls are housed in separate quarters in male facilities and are offered the same programs as the boys, although "separate access" often means that they only have access to services and programs when they are not being used by boys (Brown, Guisinger, Albrecht, Cahill, & Lynn, 1997).

Girls' realities must shape delinquency prevention and intervention strategies because they are inextricably linked with their delinquent behavior. Girls in need are not being helped in systems and programs that fail to make connections between precursors and behavioral outcomes. It has been found that many at-risk and court-involved girls do not run away or skip school arbitrarily without reason; a complex array of factors unique to
their environments are at play. Such factors must be recognized and fully understood as major influences of behavior patterns. Finally, they must be attended to via systemic and programmatic protocols; for in the meantime, girls are left to navigate the tumultuous waters of adolescence, and added traumatic life circumstances, alone and devoid of the help they need to develop more personally beneficial coping strategies.

Statement of a 16-year-old girl who, after having been physically and sexually assaulted, started running away from home and was arrested as a runaway (Chesney-Lind, 1989):

"I ran away so many times. I tried anything man, and they wouldn't believe me...As far as they are concerned they think I am the problem. You know, runaway, bad label."

Statement of a 16-year-old runaway with a long history of physical abuse (Davidson, 1982):

"You know, one of these days I'm going to have to kill myself before you guys are gonna listen to me. I can't stay home."

Statement of a 13-year-old gang member (Molidor, 1996):

"My gang is my family; I'm accepted, and I know I can always count on them."

Response of a 16-year-old gang member (Molidor, 1996):

Interviewer: "Ok, in a given month, how often would you say something sexually humiliating happens to you?"
Response: "A month? Let's say a day. In a 24-hour period of time, I might have to have sex or do something two or three times."

Every precursor and behavioral outcome described in the preceding paragraphs is a public health problem by virtue of its effects on the individual, community, and society. While they are pervasive and ultimately debilitating at the individual and social level, they are identifiable and can be specifically and comprehensively and properly addressed. Correct gender-specific strategies that represent the most appropriate response to adolescent female offending are ones that embrace girls' realities and the realities of their
surrounding environments; essentially, they are strategies that make critical connections between precursors and behavioral outcomes.
Chapter VII – Gender-specific Programming for At-risk and Court-involved Girls:

**Applying the Public Health Model of Disease Development and Control**

As a significant public health problem, adolescent female delinquency must be attended to as comprehensively and systematically as would be any other disease that threatens the public's health. Indeed, female delinquency is appropriately likened to a disease process because it is so pervasive in the population, and because it seems to develop as a result of the interaction between a girls' **environment**, the **exposures** she has to **negative agents** within her environment, and the **outcomes** that empirical studies have revealed are likely to accompany such exposures (e.g., emotional/behavioral responses to negative agents). It is logical, then, that society respond to the problem of female delinquency, at both the individual and society level, via the utilization of public health strategies that are attentive to the negative exposures which are ever-present in the environments of delinquent girls, and the effects such exposures are likely to produce.

"Important public health problems are a result of the way people behave; [and] these [behaviors] are often called diseases of lifestyle (Last, 1998)." As a public health problem female delinquency is a behavioral disease, and like the development of disease, it has been linked to the presence of specific negative agents in girls' lives. Indeed, the increasing rates of female delinquency nationwide have been likened to a disease epidemic. A reference was made to defining, viewing, and treating female delinquency as public health problem in OJJDP's 1998 publication, *The Epidemiology of Violence*, wherein a public health model of prevention, treatment, and control was mentioned. "Just as a single dose of medicine will be ineffective against a virulent illness, so will one-time remedial action prove inadequate to prevent or successfully intervene in
juvenile delinquency” (1998). The authors noted that “all youth are not equally likely to engage in violent behavior” and “this lends credibility to adopting a disease prevention perspective that requires clear identification of the at-risk population” (1998). Though mentioned, viewing and treating female delinquency as a public health problem is an idea that remains undeveloped and consequently underutilized. The previous chapter distinguished between risk factors that are clearly precursors to maladaptive behaviors and risk factors that are behavioral outcomes that result from exposure to the precursors. Such a distinction is consistent with and can be applied to the public health model of disease development and its accompanying disease control mechanisms.

The presence of certain risk factors or negative exposures that tend to characterize the environments within which at-risk and court-involved girls live and develop are essentially beyond their control, and as such affect these girls in very much the same way that a virus would infect them. Identified earlier as precursors, the four main conditions in girls' lives that place them at risk of maladaptive behavioral outcomes are victimization (sexual, physical, and/or emotional), violence, discrimination, and family dysfunction. Similarly, other risk factors, such as substance abuse, truancy, waywardness, gang activity, and academic difficulty can be more comprehensively identified and understood as emotional and behavioral responses to such conditions. This is a vitally important distinction as it relates to the development of female delinquency. Consider, for a moment, the research showing that "uncontrollable" risk factors such as sexual abuse affect girls emotionally and psychologically in very profound ways. The effects of such trauma render them vulnerable to delinquency, drug abuse, and premature pregnancy, otherwise known as behavioral diseases. These outcomes are equally as compelling as
those that might result from an infection or the symptoms associated with infection. And, just as an exposure to an agent places an individual at risk for negative physiological health outcomes that often lead to disease, risk factors like sexual abuse cause negative emotional and psychological outcomes that often lead to delinquency. Furthermore, such behavioral outcomes are no less significant than those that are physiological; indeed some would argue that they could, in many cases, be more severe.

It is probably clear, then, that female delinquency development is more analogous to the veritable medical notion of disease than one might think, and the public health model of disease and the control measures that are fundamental to the model’s practical utilization have direct application to its alleviation at both the individual and societal level. It is necessary, at this point then, to describe in brief, the public health model of disease development and its concomitant principles of control.

In brief, the public health model of disease contains three major components. The agent is defined as any bacteria and/or virus to which an individual is exposed; the host (human or animal) is defined as the organism that is vulnerable to the effects of the agent; and the environment is defined as the surrounding conditions that either hinder or facilitate whether or not the host succumbs to the agent and its effects, effects that often involve disease development. The disease, then, is defined as the outcome that is likely to follow exposure to the agent. The broad-based perspective of public health has taught us that disease manifests when an environment permits the existence and survival of certain germs/viruses/bacteria that can have deleterious effects on the individuals and communities that are exposed to them. Public health control measures of disease aim to
intervene in this process of disease transmission and its effects via widely accepted principles of control including:

1) Create a safe environment;
2) Enhance host resistance;
3) Interrupt transmission; and
4) Inactivate the infectious agent.

The public health model of disease development and the control measures that are inherent in its application to real interventions and protections for both the individual and society can also teach us about female delinquency. As host, a young female moves in and out of environments, namely her home, school, and community, within which she is exposed to a variety of agents such as the four precursors identified earlier: victimization, violence, family dysfunction, and discrimination. These negative agents influence, in public health terms, her susceptibility and resistance to disease, or, delinquency. Again, for the purposes of this monograph, the disease outcome is defined as the behavioral outcome such as delinquency. Delinquency, substance abuse, poor academic performance, gang membership, and premature pregnancy may all be viewed as "behavioral diseases" in the sense that they are negative, often debilitating, outcomes that prevent a young girl from developing healthily (See Figures 1 and 2). They are also behavioral diseases in the sense that the same public health protocols that apply to successful disease prevention and intervention arguably apply to female delinquency prevention with equal success.

Gender-specific programming, in the above sense, is a truly public health approach if it aims to do the following:
• Provide girls with a healthy, **supportive environment**;

• **Enhance** girls' **resistance** to the effects of the negative agents that are likely to be present in their environment, whether it be the home, school, or community;

• **Interrupt transmission** of the adverse effects associated with exposure to the agent(s); and

• Where possible, **inactivate the infectious agent**.

The ultimate goal of course, is to prevent further disease development.

Even the most seemingly infallible public health strategy may prove ineffective in successfully preventing, for every individual, the adverse effects that often follow a harmful environmental exposure. This possibility of nonsuccess may be related to the inherent characteristics of the host and/or the extreme nature of their exposure. In public health, this has never served as an excuse for inaction, and nor should it serve as a reason to dismiss a public health perspective of gender-specific programming. The ultimate goal remains to "cast a wide net" and provide every girl with every chance possible to recover from a delinquent or imminently delinquent lifestyle.

Via its broad, systemic implementation, gender-specific programming, if implemented comprehensively utilizing the public health model of disease development, prevention, and control, has the potential to significantly benefit, if not change the face of, young girls and the larger society of which they are a part. The only remaining task then is to ensure correct implementation of gender-specific strategies. For just as the wrong vaccine places individuals and the public at large at continued risk of exposure to the effects of a physiologically threatening bacteria, so too do erroneous pseudo-gender-specific strategies place girls and communities as continued risk of exposure to the psychosocial effects of delinquency and its byproducts. Gender-specific programming
and its concomitant public health principles can be thought of as a timely remedy that aims to strengthen young girls' resistance to negative agents in their lives and the behavioral outcomes that are likely to follow exposure.
Figure 1: Breaking Down Risk Factors. Historically, risk factors have been "homogenized" in prevention literature. In order to treat girls more successfully, risk factors must be further distinguished as precursors (things that happen to girls) and outcomes (girls' reactions to the precursors). Furthermore, the four identified precursors (victimization, violence, family dysfunction, and discrimination) function as agents in girls' lives that "infect" them, beyond their control; and, various behavioral outcomes (delinquency, substance abuse, etc) function as manifestations of the agent's effects, or, as behavioral disease processes.

Risk Factors

- Precursors: (Happen to girls...)
  - Exs: Victimization, Violence, Family Dysfunction, Discrimination

- Outcome: Emotional/Behavioral: (Likely effects of what happens to girls...)
  - Exs: Delinquency, Substance Abuse, Poor Academic Performance, Violence

- Function as

- Env't
  - Host
  - Agent

- Disease Process
Figure 2: Understanding Adolescent Female Delinquency in the Context of the Public Health Model of Disease Development and Control. The unique characteristics of a girl as host and the conditions to which she is exposed (agents) in her surroundings (environment), all influence her likelihood of developing problem behavior (or disease). Delinquency and gang activity for example, are appropriately likened to diseases because they are linked to specific conditions (agents) in a girl’s life that are beyond her control.
Chapter VIII – Principles of Gender-specific Programming: Best Practices

According to Greene, Peters, and Associates, gender-specific programming refers to:

Program models and services that comprehensively address the special needs of a targeted group, such as adolescent girls,... [foster] positive gender identity development,...[and] recognize the risk factors most likely to impact the targeted group, and the protective factors that can build resiliency and prevent delinquency (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998).

Principles of gender-specific programming based on theoretical, empirical, and practical research are being promoted nationwide and are providing practitioners and policy makers with tangible ways to create delinquency prevention programs and institutions that are more sensitive to girls' experiences and directly attentive to their needs as a unique subgroup (see Greene, Peters, Associates, 1998, for review). Best practice principles of gender-specific programming, though developed by various researchers and organizations, all tend to have common research-based components, and have been developed in accordance with girls' realities and unique needs. Therefore, the following pages provide a brief summary of some of the documented best practices in gender-specific programming.

Paula Schaefer (1998) has summarized the needs of girls by highlighting research that delineates how girls view, approach, and react to life situations differently than boys. She instructs that girls define themselves in relation to others and focus on connectedness and interdependence. Relationships are central to girls, and they actively work to avoid isolation. **Conversely**, boys define themselves in relation to their place in the world, and focus on independence and autonomy. For boys, getting ahead in the world and gaining status are central and they actively work to avoid intimacy. Programs for girls, therefore,
are most successful when they are attentive to relationships. Schaefer contends that in the absence of caring relationships, rules inspire rebellion in girls and relationships are what hold girls’ lives in place. She further posits that “girls do what they do” to feel safe, to feel loved, to feel important, and to belong. According to Schaefer, gender-specific programs for girls:

- Make sure each girl is connected within the agency and within her community.
- Work to become a significant relationship for each girl.
- Focus on community responsibility versus rules.
- Focus on violation of relationships versus violations of rules or laws.
- Focus on reintegration into the community.

In *How to Work Effectively with Girls: Promising Practices in Gender-specific Interventions*, Ryan & Lindgren propound that the meaning of the phrase “gender-specific” has not always been clear or consistent. Based on literature reviews and research, Lindgren developed the following definition of gender-specific programming:

Comprehensive programming which addresses and supports the psychosocial developmental process of female adolescents, while fostering connection within relationships in the context of a safe and nurturing environment.

Lindgren identifies the three following components of the definition: comprehensive programming, a safe and nurturing environment, and relationships and connection (see Lindgren for complete discussion of each component). Comprehensive programming involves the employment of strategies that transcend a girl’s outward behavior and “relate to the whole girl and the root causes of her behaviors, rather than focusing only on the behaviors themselves” (Ryan & Lindgren).
Whether an adolescent girl is in an actual program or working individually with a practitioner, it is important to consider the many factors affecting her life. These factors can include the various forms of discrimination she may experience, and they require a program that helps her learn how to advocate for herself and for others as a way to "fight back" (Ryan & Lindgren).

Runaway programs, for instance, must be geared toward the underlying causes of the running away, and provide viable alternatives to such behavior. Furthermore, they must be designed in accordance with research that has revealed that girls who tend to be runaways are often fleeing from disorganized, dysfunctional, unhealthy, and often unsafe situations in their home environments. Additionally, then, these programs must, whenever possible, advocate for and connect girls with safe living environments.

The second component of the foregoing definition, a safe and nurturing environment is critically important for girls because so many at-risk and court-involved girls have been emotionally, physically, and/or sexually victimized. "Emotional safety includes an environment that enhances self-esteem, encourages a sense of connectedness within a relationship, and promotes cultural awareness and acceptance of diversity" (Ryan & Lindgren). Many girls enter programs filled with distrust, a distrust that is a normal reaction to a traumatic and damaging personal history. Programs must be consistently emotionally safe so girls can commence the healing process. "Girls (as well as boys) need to feel that they belong and are safe in order to remain in one place long enough to heal from within (Ryan & Lindgren). Many programs inappropriately attempt to address girls’ behavior in a strictly external manner; they evaluate girls’ actions, illuminate the socially defined negative ones, and try to change behavior via sanctions or punitive action. This is a common approach in both programs and justice systems and can be extremely damaging, especially to girls who have been victimized already. Too
often programs and systems blame and punish girls for exhibiting a behavior such as running away, that in the context of her personal situation, is quite normal and self-protecting. It is a survival strategy that, though maladaptive in that it often serves as a trigger to drug abuse, school discontinuation, and gang involvement, is essentially a victim’s only route to safety. Programs and systems that punish girls for running away are simply re-victimizing them. Similarly, programs that impose solely punitive sanctions are not getting at the root and reality of girls’ behaviors, the healing process is therefore by-passed, and the maladaptive behavior is likely to continue. Building and maintaining safe program environments for girls means that girls are given the opportunity to empower themselves, share their realities, and count on the program and system of which they are a part to protect them from external forces that have hindered their ability to develop healthily.

Building these safe programs and systems is also part of the process whereby girls can believe that “their honest opinions, thoughts, and feelings will be heard and validated without having to worry that sharing will somehow damage a relationship” (Ryan & Lindgren). This is an essential process that directly corresponds and is attentive to the centrality of relationship in girls’ lives. Safe programs and processes cannot exist if girls’ psychosocial realities are not included in their design or operations.

The last definition component, relationships and connections, directly corresponds to vital empirical research on girls and relationships.

Forging a strong, positive relationship with any child is a prerequisite for facilitating progress in his or her learning. But because girls often develop their sense of identity more strongly in relation to others, forging such relationships with girls can carry even greater significance (Ryan & Lindgren).
Gender-specific programs ensure that girls can develop respectful and emotionally supportive relationships with staff that not only foster their healing processes, but serve as models for healthy relationships that can be applied to relationships of any kind. This is vitally important as so many at-risk and court-involved girls enter programs with a history of damaged personal relationships. And, because so many at-risk and court-involved girls have been victimized, observing and experiencing healthy relationships within the program milieu can help girls reprocess the meaning of relationships in their lives and create their own relationship expectations and boundaries. It is also important to note that, as stated earlier, many structured, rule-oriented or “consequence-type” programs are not successful with girls because they are based on and therefore modeled after research on boys’ development (Ryan & Lindgren).

Boys are more likely to follow rules because they respect rules or want to avoid consequences, while girls are more likely to follow rules if they have established a relationship with the authority figure and feel this person respects them and has their best interests in mind. If girls have to choose between a relationship and a rule or consequence, they will often choose the relationship (Ryan & Lindgren).

Lindgren and Ryan also propose that when rules and/or punishments are applied to girls, they should be reassured that it is their behavior, not them, that is unacceptable (Ryan & Lindgren). Many girls enter programs with decreased self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy that are often caused or enhanced by victimization, discrimination, and family disorganization and dysfunction. It is vital that they understand the rationale for the imposition of consequences on their behavior, how consequences relate to their healing and treatment, and the steadfastness of staff members’ belief in them.

Linda Albrecht and Rebecca Maniglia suggest specific recommendations regarding group process, that are based on Sturdivant’s Therapy with Women: A
Feminist Philosophy of Treatment. Group process is a common component of many juvenile programs for boys and girls, however in mixed gender groups it often functions in a way that is more accommodating to boys and isolating for girls, and in girls’ groups it is often structured without sensitivity to gender and girls’ specialized challenges. Albrecht and Maniglia proffer that within group processes, girls should be working toward optimal functioning.

This includes the rejection of the social conformity goals (not those related to legal matters obviously) adopted by the adjustment models of mental health, in favor of goals of personal-definition and self-determination. It also refers to the girl’s ability to relate to self, other, and environment, including the development of a set of attitudes and behaviors that are a function of personality and situation by which the individual may move further her own potential development (Albrecht & Maniglia).

Symptom removal has also been identified as an important goal of therapy with girls/women, and is not simply the elimination of those behaviors that relate to delinquency, but is the interpretation of behaviors in the social context of the girl’s own situation (Albrecht & Maniglia). Other important gender-specific goals of group process (see Albrecht and Maniglia; Sturdivant, 1980 for detailed discussion) include:

- **Work on self-esteem** (For instance, this involves a re-examination of sex-role stereotypes and the redefinition of the ideal self, helping girls shift from reliance on external sources of self-esteem to more autonomous, self-defined ones, etc.)

- **Improved relationships** (This does not necessarily mean getting along better with other people, since, in most cases, for girls, that may mean more conformance to role expectation as passive, subordinate, and self-sacrificing. Instead, assertiveness training, is an essential part of this process)
➢ **Competence in a wider range of roles** than the traditional roles ascribed to females (This may involve a change in the reference group through which a girl validates her self-image or a reinterpretation of the characteristics of the reference group)

➢ **Solution of specific problems**, especially as they are intertwined with social and economic positions in society (One of the most important outcomes of girls’ treatment is a means for problem solving and decision making that is based on her own skills and abilities rather than in accepting others’ decisions)

➢ **Political awareness and social action** (Political action, even with regard to one’s own life, is necessary to prevent social awareness from simply becoming over-identification with victim status)

The Valentine Foundation (1990) has proposed the following essential elements of effective gender-specific programming for adolescent girls that, collectively, help foster a safe environment within which girls can learn skills that will allow them to successfully resist the effects that negative agents have had on their lives.

- Space that is physically and emotionally safe, and removed from the demands for attention of adolescent males
- Time for girls to talk, for girls to conduct emotionally "safe," comforting, challenging, nurturing conversations within ongoing relationships
- Opportunities for girls to develop relationships of trust and interdependence with other women already present in their lives (such as friends, relatives, neighbors, church members)
- Programs that tap girls' cultural strengths rather than focusing primarily on the individual girl (i.e. building on Afrocentric perspectives of history and community relationships)
- Mentors who share experiences that resonate with the realities of girls' lives and who exemplify survival and growth
• Education about women's health, including female development, pregnancy, contraception, diseases and prevention, along with opportunities for girls to define healthy sexuality on their own terms (rather than as victims)

• Opportunities to create positive changes to benefit girls on an individual level, within their relationships, and within the community

• Giving girls a voice in program design, implementation, and evaluation

• Adequate financing to ensure that comprehensive programming will be sustained long enough for girls to integrate the benefits

• Involvement with schools so that curriculum reflects and values the experience and contributions of women

Other elements that have been identified as being the hallmarks of gender-specific strategies include programs that "stress the importance of valuing, celebrating, and honoring the 'female perspective' in programming planning and design (Girls Incorporated, 1996), and programs that "address racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and other identified isms" (Ms. Foundation, 1993). Again, such elements are directly responsive to the psychosocial realities of girls.

In *Guiding Principles for Promising Female Programming: An Inventory of Best Practices*, Greene, Peters, & Associates (1998) stresses the importance of psychotherapeutic program components for at-risk and court-involved girls. "Because a majority of girl offenders have experienced sexual, emotional and/or physical abuse during childhood, gender-specific programming within the juvenile justice system makes treating the issues related to abuse a priority in all aspects of care" (Greene, Peters, and Associates, 1998). In designing programs this means strengthening girls' resistance to the adverse effects of victimization and trauma. Greene, Peters, & Associates (1998) has asserted the following:
Girls need to develop an understanding of their victimization and how they may continue to view themselves as victims.

Girls need to begin to understand that they can accept the power to not participate in abusive situations in the future.

Girls need opportunities to address their feelings of anger and frustration that might have contributed to their involvement of criminal activity.

Girls need to systematically explore their reluctance to trust others.

Girls need opportunities to learn how to develop and maintain appropriate, healthy boundaries in relationships.

Girls and women have clarified the characteristics within programs that they find to be most helpful to them. They champion programs that provide them with (Galbraith, 1998):

- Relationships with people who cared, listened, and could be trusted.
- Relationships with other women who were supportive and role models.
- Proper assessment/clarification (included gender-specific needs assessments/intake assessments that measure gifts' unique needs).
- Well trained staff, especially female staff.
- Programs - not just incarceration, but [that include] job training, education, substance abuse, and mental health treatment and parenting.
- Efforts to reduce trauma and revictimization/alternatives to seclusion and restraint.
- Financial resources.
- Safe environments.

After reviewing an "extensive body of work on key issues in the lives of adolescent girls," The National Council for Research on Women proposed conclusions and recommendations that "should underlie efforts by adults, communities, and all others
working to meet the needs of adolescent girls and enrich their opportunities. They posit that:

- Girls are multidimensional individuals with diverse perspectives, needs, and developmental contexts. Researchers, policymakers, and people who work directly with girls must be sensitive to the interactions of gender with other aspects of their identities - including race, ethnicity, social class, sexuality, (dis)ability, and the communities where they live - that influence girls' actions attitudes, and, ultimately, their futures.

- Girls can benefit from programs and strategies that build on their strengths and encourage them to explore meaningful possibilities for their futures. In many fields, including education, health care, athletics, and juvenile justice, adults have worked successfully over the last decade to create school- and community-based programs that provide support to many girls and that could be replicated.

- Research must continue to play a role in deepening our understanding of girls' needs and how to respond to them. Researchers, advocates, public officials, and funders should collaborate to articulate, fund, and promote a research agenda.

- Girls require and deserve the awareness, attention, and commitment of a wide range of individuals and institutions to promote their healthy development. Parents should continue to play the primary role in supporting girls' development. However, educators, a range of professionals, public officials, and other members of the community should strengthen their efforts to create a safe and supportive climate that nurtures girls and encourages them to develop and pursue their goals.

- Adults should listen to what girls have to say about their own lives. Adults who want to help girls must collaborate not only with one another, but also with girls themselves. Adults should listen to girls' concerns and perspectives and include girls as partners in designing and implementing programs and research that address their needs.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse proposes that research on women and girls and drug abuse needs to include the following:

- Basic research, both human and animal, as well as epidemiological and longitudinal research directed at identifying gender differences in the etiology and consequences of drug use, abuse, and dependence

- Research on antecedents, pathways, risk, and protective factors involved in drug abuse by girls and women with emphasis on early identification and the full spectrum of prevention interventions
• Research on the impact of violence and victimization on the psychosocial
development and psychosocial functioning of girls and women as it relates to drug
abuse and dependence, and their implications for prevention and treatment

• Research on the co-existence of drug abuse and dependence with psychiatric
disorders, especially PTSD, anxiety, depression, and eating disorders

• Expanded research examining the development and effectiveness of drug abuse
treatment models that are specific to the unique needs of females. Such models
should include treatment for dependence as well as any co-existing psychiatric
disorder (e.g., depression, anxiety, PTSD, eating disorder) and they must be culturally
relevant

The above best practice principles are based on empirical research on girls,
research that has been conducted without the stereotypes and male-dominated
orientations that have guided much past research. As revealed in earlier chapters, girls
have unique psychosocial realities and needs that differ from those of boys, and best
practices in gender-specific programming provide a blueprint of appropriate responses to
the challenging and specialized needs of at-risk and court-involved adolescent girls.
Aside from the experiences that are distinctive to their gender, at-risk and court-involved
girls tend to have challenging personal and emotional profiles that have been carved out
of their experiences as victims, as ethnic minorities, as school dropouts, and, most
profoundly, as children separated from the healing, skills and coping strategies they need
for healthy development. Best practices in gender-specific programming connect girls to
the healing they need and assist them as they build upon their strengths and learn
effective strategies that will allow them to continue their healthy development and avoid
delinquency. "We need to help girls get their needs, particularly their need for
connection, met in safe, healthy and legal ways” and “[we need to] teach girls ways to
stay connected with the people who are important to them without sacrificing themselves to their relationships” (Schaefer, 1998).

The most effective programs "are rooted in the experience of girls” (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). Gender-specific programs are aware of girls' realities, the psychosocial pressures that complicate their development and behavioral responses, and the negative agents (precursors) that are often the root of their behavioral outcomes (disease behavior). Most importantly, as proposed in Chapter X, gender-specific programs must be familiar with girls' environments, the agents that are likely to infect them, and the responses that usually follow exposure. They must translate that awareness into a continuum of services that targets girls in need as hosts and provides them with the tools and skills they need to avoid disease development and/or continuation. Finally, gender-specific programming creates an environment wherein girls are encouraged to realize the untapped power and skills that reside within themselves, and use such power and skills to create a healthy paths and successful, rewarding lives. Gender specific programming helps girls identify and develop the power and strength they already have that may have been temporarily stifled by adverse experiences and/or reactions, and provides them with the knowledge, skills and coping strategies they need to move forward in their lives positively, productively, and happily.
Chapter IX – Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and Gender-specific Programming:

A Look at the City of Hartford

A preliminary Needs Assessment (NA) was performed in the City of Hartford to identify existing delinquency prevention programs that provide services to at-risk girls.

The primary purpose of the NA was to provide preparatory information to the Hartford Department of Human Services (HDHS) regarding delinquency prevention programs in the City that serve at-risk and court-involved girls so that a second more gender-focused NA could be performed.

Goals

The goals of the Preliminary Needs Assessment were as follows:

1) Identify juvenile delinquency prevention programs that include at-risk and/or court-involved girls in the target population.

2) Develop a survey instrument and administer it to the identified programs to yield basic data on juvenile delinquency prevention programs in the City such as program mission, program services, and gender-specific services.

3) Obtain preliminary data on the extent to which the needs of at-risk and court-involved girls are being addressed by delinquency prevention programs in the City.

Target Programs

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) defines juvenile delinquency prevention as any activity that is geared toward preventing youth from engaging in “delinquent” behaviors such as running away from home and disobeying the law. Delinquency prevention programs are referred to broadly by OJJDP as those programs that are geared toward preventing juvenile delinquency.
Criteria for Inclusion

In the NA, delinquency prevention programs were defined more narrowly and had to meet at least one of the three following criteria:

1) Provide services for girls that have been formally referred by the juvenile justice system.

2) Provide services to girls that have been arrested/adjudicated, or youth that have had prior involvement with the juvenile justice system.

3) Provide services to girls who are considered to be “at-risk” of becoming court-involved (as a pre-delinquent, delinquent, or youth within a family with service needs) (FWSN).

Any program that met one or more of the preceding criteria was considered to be a delinquency prevention program.

Program Exclusion

It is acknowledged that any program that offers activities that promote positive youth development - physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, socially, and academically - constitutes, in a technical sense, a juvenile delinquency prevention program. The purpose of this assessment however, was to target specifically those programs that specifically tailor services to youth that have been, are currently or are at

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1 An at-risk youth is defined as any youth who is not developing adequately (mentally, emotionally, physically, socially) because of limiting conditions (Bureau for At-risk Youth).

2 In Connecticut a juvenile delinquent is defined as one who, before his/her 16th birthday (in CT) has violated or attempted to violate any federal or state law, order of the Superior Court, or municipal or local ordinance, other than an ordinance regulating behavior of a child in a family with service needs.

3 A family with service needs is defined as a family which includes a person under 16 years of age who:
   - Runs away from home (or other authorized place of residence) without good cause;
   - Is beyond the control of his/her parents, guardian, or custodian;
   - Has participated in indecent or immoral conduct; OR
   - Has been truant or habitually truant or who while in school has been continuously and overtly defiant of school rules and regulation.
risk of being court-involved. Therefore, enrichment programs, or programs that provide enrichment- and recreation-based activities such as arts and crafts, sports, dancing, and cultural activities, were not included in the NA. While these programs have a critical role in the City, many are not designed to specifically address the complex needs of girls who possess a profile that often precedes court involvement. They do not, nor should they be expected to, provide specific delinquency prevention services. Girls may benefit from such programs in conjunction with other specialized services but not in isolation. Similarly, residential programs that remove girls from the community are intended to provide more intensive services to girls who have had long-term and/or multiple contacts with the juvenile justice system. As such these programs do not, and should not be expected to, provide delinquency prevention services.

In public health terms, enrichment programs function as provide primary prevention services – they focus on providing a target population that has not begun offending with services that are geared toward preventing the onset of any behavior(s) that will lead to court involvement. Residential programs function as tertiary services - they focus on stabilizing a target population that has exhibited behaviors that have already lead to repeated and/or chronic court involvement. The goal of the NA was to characterize juvenile delinquency prevention programs that function as provide secondary prevention services – services that are geared toward preventing delinquency or continued delinquency in a population that has demonstrated risk behavior that has or is likely to lead court-involvement.

It is important to recognize that there exist a wide array of services for youth and there is much overlap in services provided. Many programs provide primary and
secondary services concurrently while others may provide secondary and tertiary services. Therefore, it is acknowledged that in attempting to specific in this NA, certain programs may have been inappropriately excluded. However, the goals and design of the second, more exhaustive NA to be described subsequently will serve to correct any such errors.

**Methodology**

**Survey Development**

The NA was executed using the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Program Survey A (JDPS-A). The JDPS-A was designed to meet the objectives of the NA by providing baseline information on juvenile delinquency prevention programs in the City that serve the target population, at-risk girls. The JDPS-A was originally designed to be self-administered; however it was ultimately modified so that it could be administered personally by the researcher to providers/program personnel for the purposes of maximizing participation and fostering a clear understanding of the survey questions.

The JDPS-A was pilot tested in four City programs. It was also reviewed by Initiatives for Human Development, Inc. a Rhode Island-based agency that specializes in the development and evaluation of prevention/intervention programs for at risk populations. All recommendations for survey alteration and enhancement were considered in the context of the NA goals and appropriately incorporated into the final version of the JDPS-A (See Appendix A).

The JDPS-A questions were constructed to obtain information on the following program characteristics:
### Program Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sponsoring agency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program location and contact information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant referral sources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program type/program services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency prevention services and/or curriculums, if offered</td>
<td>(defined as those services and/or curriculums that are designed to specifically address the unique needs of juvenile delinquents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-specific services and/or curriculums, if offered</td>
<td>(defined as those services and/or curriculums that are designed to specifically address the unique needs at-risk and court-involved girls)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative agreements</td>
<td>(i.e. any formal or informal agreements, contracts and/or subcontracts entered into with other programs, agencies, state entities, private entities, or service providers for the purposes of executing program objectives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program funding source(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target population (i.e. who is eligible to participate in the program)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program logistics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for family/parental involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for volunteers, internships, and/or practical work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Materials

Materials from the following departments, divisions, and agencies were utilized in order to garner information regarding the variety programs and services that serve the target population:

1) The City of Hartford Department of Human Services, HDHS
2) The Hartford Police Department, HPD
3) The Court Support Services Division, CSSD (formerly the Office of Alternative Sanctions, OAS)
4) The Department of Children and Families, DCF
5) Other private/non-judicial agencies

The following resources were utilized to obtain program contacts and general program information:

1) City of Hartford Department of Human Services Youth Services Survey
2) City of Hartford Quick Reference Guide to Recreation and Youth Services
4) Court Support Services Division, Region I List; “Programs Providing Services to Hartford Superior Court-Juvenile Matters (as of 2/8/99)
5) Department of Human Services Youth Services Programs, Contractual
6) Department of Children and Families

**Summary of Results**

| Number of juvenile delinquency prevention programs that included girls in their target population | 28/28 |

Selected outcomes that pertain to gender-specific treatment

In over 50 percent of the programs identified as juvenile delinquency prevention that provide services to at-risk and/or court involved demonstrate the following results were obtained:
Most were gender-based, not gender-specific.

**Gender-based** refers to those programs that remove girls either temporarily or completely from an environment in order to provide them with services. **Gender-based services therefore refer to the environment within which girls receive services and do not refer to the quality or gender-specificity of such services.**

Within programs, gender-based services existed in two dominant forms:

1) **Gender-based/removed** - Programming and services offered to girls by temporarily removing them from a larger gender-mixed population (girls and boys).

2) **Gender-based/uniform** - Programming and services offered to girls within an exclusively female population.

**Gender-specific** refers to program models and services that comprehensively address the special needs of a targeted gender group, such as adolescent girls, and are based on research-based best practices.

**Gender-specific programs therefore exist within the context of gender-based programs but are not synonymous with them.**

- The concept of gender-specific programming was inconsistently embraced and inconsistently implemented and enforced through program design, development, and evaluation.
- There was a lack of information on girls' psychosocial development and their unique needs.
- There were no research-based gender-specific curriculums/services that meet girls' unique needs as a subgroup.
There was a critical lack of mental health treatment built into program design and service delivery.

There was a lack of programming that involves parents/family.

There was a lack of follow-up following discharge or program completion which is needed as relapse prevention.

There was a lack of evaluation built into program goals and design.

Many programs reported that they were providing services to more girls than they had in the past.

Many programs referenced a lack of communication between delinquency prevention programs in the City, as well as competition and “turf wars.”

**Discussion**

Twenty-eight juvenile delinquency prevention programs were identified in the City of Hartford, and all twenty-eight were administered the JDPS-A.

It was found during the interviews that the terms gender-based and gender-specific, if used at all, were often used interchangeably. In fact, regardless of what phrases were used, the distinction between providing girls with services specific to their needs and providing them with either gender-typed services or with services within a certain environmental arrangement was not made. Many programs did not understand the reasons for and principles of gender-specific programming, and were consequently ill equipped to serve girls in need.

Gender-specific programming goes beyond simply focusing on girls. It represents a concentrated effort to assist all girls (not only those involved in the justice system) in positive female development. It takes into account the developmental needs of girls at adolescence, a critical stage for gender identity formation. It nurtures and reinforces "femaleness" as a positive identity with inherent strengths (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998).
Programs lacked gender-specific, research-based components that are sensitive to girls' psychosocial realities, and address the underlying agents (e.g. victimization, violence, discrimination, and family dysfunction) that influence behavioral disease development (e.g. delinquency). Girls in such programs cannot get the help they need to deter court involvement because the realities are not being comprehensively addressed.

Many programs lacked comprehensive mental health treatment to assist girls in their processing of traumatic life situations and developing appropriate coping mechanisms. Empirical research indicates that as much as 90 percent of court-involved girls report some form of victimization, emotional, physical, and/or sexual. Research also reveals that victimization interrupts female adolescent development, and correlates of such trauma include, but are not limited to, depression, feelings of powerlessness, and early sexual experimentation. Victimization is linked to subsequent delinquent behavior and programs that do not address it as a precursor (agent) to delinquency (the maladaptive behavior outcome or diseases) cannot effectively facilitate a healing process that will provide girls with opportunities to process their trauma and develop appropriate coping strategies and resistance skills.

Research on female adolescent development reveals that girls are more relational and consequently more affected than their male counterparts by family dysfunction and disorganization. The majority of at-risk and court-involved girls report histories of family dysfunction, yet programs did not have components that included family strengthening strategies. Indeed, even in the most comprehensive and gender sensitive program, girls who obtain useful skills cannot fully utilize and develop them in a dysfunctional family environment. Providers reported barriers to the successful
implementation of family strengthening components such as lack of transportation, lack of compliance, and lack of fiscal and human resources.

Many programs did not have outcome evaluations. Providers reported several barriers to implementing such evaluations such as the difficulty inherent in tracking girls once they exit a program, and limited financial and human resources. Program curriculums often did not have an evaluative mechanism built in to their design and consequently programs lacked measurable, quantitative ways to articulate program success or failure.

Finally, virtually all providers indicated that they had observed an increase in the number of girls to whom they were providing services, compared to past years. Several noted a particular increase in adolescent female clients over the past 2 to 3 years. Indeed such reports are consistent with several studies that reveal girls' increasing involvement in the juvenile justice system. They also render the effectiveness of existing programs that are tailored to meet boys' needs highly questionable in preventing juvenile delinquency and recidivism in girls, and at best inconsistent and disorganized.

**Conclusion**

Existing treatment models lack research-based gender-specific strategies and must be reassessed in the context of new knowledge on girls’ needs. Many treatment models were based on the needs of boys and designed for delivery to a predominantly male population. Other models, such as the cognitive behavioral model, although very useful, must be combined with other models that address the underlying causes and influences of delinquent behavior. Psychotherapeutic protocols that address the anger, fear, sadness, and confusion associated with the victimization, violence, discrimination, and family
dysfunction that is ever present in the lives of at-risk and court-involved girls should be part of all programs and their basic service delivery package. Attending only to girls' maladaptive behavior means that underlying causes of their behavior are not addressed.

The agents that influence behavioral disease must be comprehensively addressed in the context of girls' psychosocial development. Indeed, program components that address girls' environments, such as the school and family, must be developed. In an atmosphere of limited funding and staffing, resources must be shared and shifted so that girls' immediate and unique needs are addressed. If such a task is not completed expeditiously, girls' needs will remain unmet, and their maladaptive behavior will continue and become more difficult to treat. Essentially, behavioral disease will continue to develop - a consequence that has significant personal and societal ramifications.

The HDHS's next goal must be to conduct an extensive and comprehensive needs assessment that will be designed to identify and evaluate the extent to which existing delinquency prevention services are providing gender-specific services to at-risk girls. Such an assessment must include identifying gaps in services, opportunities for service modification, opportunities for service expansion and opportunities for collaboration within and across programs. The HDHS must work with providers and help them modify and/or enhance existing services and embrace gender-specific practices that are more responsive to girls while utilizing the strengths of their current service delivery package.

Best practices criteria for gender-specific programming such as that outlined by the Valentine Foundation in 1990 must be established in the City of Hartford, shared with programs, and evaluated. The HDHS must develop consensus around best practices
criteria for gender-specific services, educate delinquency prevention program providers about the importance of such practices, and provide them with the tools they need to incorporate such best practices into their current service delivery package. Indeed the development and implementation of program models for girls that are gender-specific should be prioritized when applying for prevention and intervention funding monies as they become available.

As providers in the City are educated and delinquency prevention programs for girls begin to adopt and deliver gender-specific services, the City of Hartford must comprehensively define, describe, and identify at-risk and court-involved girls so that they can be referred to the services that are being reorganized to meet their unique needs. Adolescent girls who are exhibiting behaviors, such as truancy failure at school, and other maladaptive behaviors that have been shown by research to precede juvenile court involvement, must be identified. Similarly, girls who have already come to the attention of the courts must be identified also so that they can be referred to delinquency prevention and intervention programs that are gender-specific.

Girls in need must be divided into three distinct subgroups to which the HDHS must ascribe three corresponding goals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Population</th>
<th>Corresponding HDHS goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Girls that have exhibited high-risk behavior(s) that have not been court-involved&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>➢ Prevent girls that have exhibited high-risk behaviors but have not offended from becoming involved with juvenile court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Girls that have just begun to be court-involved&lt;sup&gt;5&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>➢ Prevent girls that have begun to be court-involved from re-offending</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>4</sup> High-risk behavior noted in the literature as being likely to precede court-involvement such as truancy.
<sup>5</sup> Court-involved refers to involvement with the court as a delinquent or as a youth within a FWSN.
Primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention programs must be identified, and gender-specific programming must developed within them so that their exists a continuum of gender-specific delinquency prevention- and intervention-based services in the City. Agencies, programs, and departments can no longer work in isolation, and must begin to communicate formally about girls' needs and the integration and institutionalization of gender-specific programming throughout the City. This requires, as stated earlier, that the girls become the units of analysis, so that their experiences through the various programs and institutions can be tracked, understood, and improved.
Chapter X – Gender-specific Programming:

Recommendations and Future Directions

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on theoretical research conducted on the history of girls’ treatment in the juvenile justice system and delinquency prevention programs, girls’ unique pathways to delinquency, the psychosocial realities that influence their behavior and behavioral responses, best practices in gender-specific programming, and practical research conducted on delinquency prevention services in the City of Hartford.

Gender-specific protocols for girls must be implemented at all levels of the juvenile justice system in order to comprehensively and successfully address girls' needs as a unique subgroup, and ultimately ameliorate female delinquency. The vision, then, is to ensure that girls enter a juvenile justice system wherein there is an institutionalized response that is both aware of and attentive to their particular needs. This gender-responsive juvenile justice system will be equipped to appropriately assess and refer juvenile girls.

Components of a Gender Responsive System

The formal juvenile justice systems in each state need to create new realities for the girls they serve. "Development of [gender-specific] programs at the state and local level involves high-level administrative commitment and a plan to address girls' specific needs" (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). “It is crucial that professionals…understand female adolescent development in order to make accurate assessments, provide appropriate treatment plans, conduct evaluations, and make recommendations” (Knight, 1991).

A gender-responsive juvenile justice system is a system that:
Acknowledges the inherent inequalities between men and women that pervade society and their potential to influence girls’ lives and further acknowledges that the differential treatment of males and females has pervaded the juvenile justice system.

Is familiar with the gender-bias that has permeated the system’s historical identification of, response to, and research on juvenile justice and female delinquency, and actively seeks to identify and ameliorate any residual gender-bias that is part of the current system.

Is committed to strengthening each component of the system, so girls may travel through a gender-responsive climate throughout their involvement, as evidenced by:

1. Educating juvenile justice workers. All juvenile justice workers must be educated and trained on the history of gender bias in the system, the need to eliminate it, and the critical insertion of gender-specific protocols that address girls’ unique needs.

2. Developing and institutionalizing appropriate programs and policies that will allow it to function in the best interest of girls. Justice systems must ensure that the programs they fund are gender-specific programs. This means updating program criteria that is out of pace with current research and incorporating gender-specific programming principles into programs so that they conform to best practices. This also means developing a continuum of gender-specific juvenile delinquency prevention services (primary, secondary, and tertiary) and transforming existing inter-program relationships.

Evaluates its progress in all of the above areas via comprehensive system-wide evaluation.

Conducts responsible and ongoing research on the girls it serves by defining, identifying, and describing them as a target population and by identifying and implementing the best practice services that correspond to their needs. (Each state juvenile justice system must obtain a comprehensive profile of the at-risk and court-involved girls it serves).

Develops sufficient and sustainable funding that will allow for the successful implementation of best practice programs and services.

Matches the above goals to increase systemic gender-responsiveness with the infrastructure enhancements that are needed to successfully realize such goals. Updated, efficient, and multi-tiered databases that track girls through the complexities of the system are critical.

Provides opportunities for women to have a major role in constructing and overseeing the system, including employing women in high-level administrative positions/roles.
Similarly, the programs to which girls are ultimately referred by the justice system, or any other entity, must be equally responsive to gender via the development, enhancement, and delivery of best practice gender-specific services.

Best Practices

Gender-specific Programming

Gender-specific programming strategies create a safe programmatic environment for girls (and, where possible, a safe home, community, and school environment), strengthen girls as hosts, interrupt transmission of the negative effects of the agents in their lives, and enhance their resistance to behavioral disease (i.e., female delinquency).

Therefore, gender-specific juvenile delinquency prevention programs must:

- **Create a safe environment for girls by:**
  
  - Providing program space that is physically and emotionally “safe,” and removed from the demands for attention of adolescent males, and time for girls to talk (Valentine Foundation, 1990).
  
  - Providing family strengthening services, including:
    
    1. Family environment assessment, including appropriate referrals for parents and/or siblings to needed services, and when necessary, referrals to DCF in cases of neglect and abuse
    2. Parental education about female adolescent development and delinquency development
    3. Parental education about their daughter’s unique needs, and opportunities, when appropriate to engage parents in their daughter’s healing process
    4. Opportunities for family involvement in program activities
  
  - Empowering girls to identify safe environments in their communities and schools.

- **Contain quality services within the program milieu that strengthen girls as hosts by:**
  
Providing an understanding of persistent messages about sex/gender roles and foster healthy gender-identification so that girls are given opportunities to see their maturity to womanhood as a positive part of their lives (Valentine Foundation, 1990).

Providing education about female psychosocial development.

Providing education about women’s health, including physical development, pregnancy, contraception, diseases and prevention.

Providing opportunities for girls to influence program design, implementation and evaluation (Valentine Foundation, 1990).

Providing culturally sensitive programming and services that tap girls’ cultural strengths rather than focusing primarily on the individual girl (i.e., building on Afrocentric perspectives of history and community relationships) (Valentine Foundation, 1990).

Providing mentors who share experiences that resonate with the reality of girls’ lives and who exemplify survival and growth.

Target the agents to which girls have been exposed and girls’ unique responses to those agents. They must help girls process these agents and provide them with the tools and skills they need to develop healthy coping behaviors. These services interrupt transmission of the agents’ effects and pave the way to healthy female development and identity formation by:

Providing psychotherapeutic opportunities for girls to:

1. Address feelings of anger and frustration that might have contributed to their criminal activity (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998)
2. Develop an understanding of their victimization and how they may continue to view themselves as victims (1998)
3. Develop an understanding that they can accept the power to not participate in abusive situations (1998)
4. Learn how to develop and maintain a value system they are comfortable with
5. Learn how to develop and maintain appropriate, healthy boundaries in relationships (1998).
Be aware of and attentive to girls' psychosocial realities and enhance their resistance to disease initiation and/or development by:

- Providing life skills, strategies, and opportunities to practice them.
- Providing opportunities for girls to define healthy sexuality on their own terms (rather than as victims) (Valentine Foundation, 1990).
- Providing opportunities to interact positively with male program participants and staff, as well as observe positive relationships and interactions between male and female staff.
- Providing opportunities for girls to develop relationships of trust and interdependence with other women already present in their lives (such as friends, relatives, neighbors, church members) (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998).
- Providing opportunities for girls to observe, create, and participate in healthy relationships of all kinds.

The following components must be built in to the program infrastructure and design in order to effectively develop, deliver, maintain, and sustain gender-specific services:

- Staff training on female adolescent development and the unique profiles and needs of at-risk and court-involved girls.
- A discharge protocol whereby girls are connected to community resources following program completion.
- Process and outcome evaluation.
- Tracking.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, gender-specific services originally developed to prevent female delinquency are arguably well equipped to prevent other maladaptive consequences such as substance abuse, violence, and teenage pregnancy. Indeed, because gender-specific services are capable of cutting across a variety of program types, they may provide a commonality across prevention and intervention programs that would otherwise not exist. For while girls may exhibit a myriad of behaviors ranging from breaking laws to abusing drugs, such behaviors are arguably different manifestations of the same inner struggle. Gender-specific services ultimately provide girls with concrete, personally meaningful tools that will help them win that struggle.
Future Directions

*Gender-specific programming strategies, if implemented correctly and system-wide, have the capacity to unite various prevention and intervention programs that serve youth* (see Figure 3). As noted earlier, behavioral outcomes such as substance abuse, gang activity, early sexual experimentation and teen pregnancy are better understood as behavioral diseases and manifestations of the same underlying agents that plague adolescent girls. For instance, many adolescent girls turn to pain-numbing drugs or begin to experiment with sex prematurely as a consequence of their victimization. Low self-esteem is a common characteristic of girls across and within a variety of juvenile delinquency prevention and intervention programs. Gender-specific strategies must comprehensively address girls' behaviors in the context of agents that have affected them. They must help girls identify, understand, and begin to resolve the feelings that are associated with the agents in their lives and are the underlying motivations of their behaviors. Finally, gender-specific strategies must help girls develop cognitive-based tools that will help them effectively deal with their feelings and channel them into healthy healing behaviors. Such strategies are effective in preventing much more than delinquency, and are serve to unite violence, substance abuse, and pregnancy prevention programs. Indeed, in times of limited funds, gender-specific strategies can foster collaborations between programs and systems that would otherwise seem impossible or illogical.

States, cities, and municipalities need to access and act on the knowledge provided by the growing research base on girls' needs and female adolescent delinquency
development. There is a severe lack of awareness, advocacy and action throughout the country. Historically the juvenile justice system has focused on the "perverse girl" and the "immoral girl," and today many are focusing on "problem girls" and "girls trying to act like boys." It is time to focus on the girl without any of the stereotypes or cultural myths that categorize and judge her. This requires a lens of awareness, truth, and objectivity, for it is only through such a lens that the real conditions faced by girls emerge. Knowing girls’ real situations allows for the construction of program strategies that are logically and directly related to their realities, and not reflective of assumptions and stereotypes.

**Gender-specific programming must include mental health services for girls, and the barriers that prevent their successful implementation into programs must be overcome.** The recommendation that gender-specific programs contain psychotherapeutic opportunities for girls deserves particular attention for two reasons. The first and most obvious reason is that studies on girls in need have consistently identified trauma and victimization in their life histories. It is known from the research that children and young teens still developing cognitive and emotional skills and tackling age-appropriate developmental tasks are mentally and emotionally unable to draw proper cognitive and emotional conclusions from their trauma and victimization. When victimized, they often respond emotionally by acting out or running away. Their victimization and their immature coping strategies effectively interrupt their development, and there is an acute need to help them get back on a positive mental and emotional track. The second reason is that much of the literature that references the trauma and victimization in at-risk and court-involved girls' lives falls short of addressing the critical need for psychotherapeutic
protocols that have been broadly used with and helpful to members of the general population who also have histories of trauma and victimization.

Unfortunately, the focus of current treatment includes an over-emphasis on cognitive-based approaches and a concomitant failure to attend to the psychological realities and results of sexual abuse and trauma. "Not...evaluating the antecedents of behavioral problems or identifying underlying distress" (Miller et al., 1995; Bowers, 1990)" may foster a number of misconceptions regarding the conduct of young females who are delinquent. This underscores the importance of the public health model approach, as the antecedents of disease development are clearly defined within it and addressed comprehensively through its control measures.

"There is a very real need for early screening devices to that can be systematically used to identify subclinical cases in their early stages when they might be more amenable to intervention" (Miller et al, 1995). Specific psychotherapeutic interventions must be defined and delivered. The undeniable fact that many girls in need have been disproportionately victimized, and because psychotherapeutic protocols have been validated as tools that effectively help trauma victims, gender-specific programming must include a mental health component that involves specific psychotherapeutic strategies. Research shows that trauma is linked to significant psychological and emotional distress in the form of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress. Whether it occurs within the program milieu or via referral, girls must be given concrete opportunities to process their victimization and/or abuse, and learn coping strategies to effectively deal with and recover from the associated effects of trauma. Psychotherapy provides them with the tools to do that. Indeed there is much validation in the literature on the benefits of
psychotherapy, and failing to include such a widely accepted and effective approach within gender-specific programs would be a profound injustice to the girls such programs were designed to assist.

Recent evidence suggests, however, that girls may not respond to traditional models of psychotherapy, clinical interventions or certain aspects of their application. This does not invalidate their salience, however, and instead should provide motivation for continued research on girls and therapy so that practitioners can employ gender-specific therapeutic strategies and provide therapy within girls' realities by using words and concepts that girls can identify with readily.

In Women, Girls, & Psychotherapy: Reframing Resistance, Gilligan and her colleagues report

Resistance in clinical practice has meant obscuring or burying psychological truths or avoiding key memories and feelings, and thus has been seen as an impediment to the creation of a working therapeutic relationship. Resistance is considered a particular challenge in clinical work with adolescent girls, who are known as difficult to treat precisely because of the strength of their resistance and their tendency to leave psychotherapy prematurely.

In Reframing Resistance, Gilligan (1991) and her colleagues ultimately develop the concept of resistance in the practice of psychotherapy and in the theory and literature of developmental psychology. They document both psychologically healthy and unhealthy manifestations of resistance among adolescent girls, explore the ways in which connections between women and girls can both strengthen and impede adolescent girls' efforts at resisting false relationships, and address specific clinical problems presented by adolescent girls and suggest new ways of understanding these problems and new approaches to treatment.
We acknowledge the difficulty girls face when their knowledge or feelings seem hurtful to other people or disruptive of relationships. Thus the word "resistance" takes on new resonances, picking up the notion of healthy resistance, the capacity of the psyche to resist disease processes, and also the concept of political resistance, the willingness to act on one's own knowledge when such action creates trouble. In reframing resistance as a psychological strength, as potentially healthy and a mark of courage, we draw on the data of our research which show that girls' psychological health in adolescence, like the psychological health of women, depends on their resistance to inauthentic and false relationships (1991).

It would be naïve to think that psychological models have not been unaffected by the male orientation that has been extensively referenced in this monograph (see Belenky et al., 1997). In order to make create prevention programs that are more thoroughly gender-specific practitioners need to rotate psychotherapy treatment models and regimens and orient them toward women's experiences. Underlying foundations of such models are undoubtedly the same, but practitioners must actively apply them to girls' experiences. Just as programs that serve girls require preventive strategies that are more salient for girls, psychotherapy as an effective healing process must be shifted towards girls' experiences. This reorientation is a truly public health approach as it requires broad-based thinking and vision, and a concomitant sensitivity to a population's unique needs.

Delinquency prevention programs need to adopt treatment models that provide girls with both cognitive and psychotherapeutic opportunities, as either in isolation does not fully address the complexities of girls' needs. Mental health treatment is particularly important as it allows at-risk and court-involved girls who have not processed their underlying motivations to offend to identify their feelings and confusion and develop effective cognitive coping strategies that will help them avoid further hurtful behaviors. Connections between precursors (agents) and outcomes (behavioral disease) must be made via therapeutic strategies that girls can relate to and benefit from.
Gender-specific programming must continue to be evaluated so that best practices can be refined and supplemented as needed, and cutting edge research that is sensitive to girls’ realities must continue and be translated into action. Juvenile justice practices that are ineffective as evidenced by empirical assessment must be eliminated from the system and its programs and replaced with protocols, models, and services that comprehensively address the specialized needs of at-risk and court-involved girls. Similarly, any systemic disorganization must be rectified, restructured, and modernized. Furthermore, relevant statutes and legal strategies that may be hindering the effective and fair treatment of girls must be revisited and revised as appropriate. For instance, the DSO strategy must be scrutinized and responded to appropriately and promptly, and its implications, including outcomes related to its implementation, must be measured and addressed.

Action must happen now. The history of the juvenile justice system has revealed a profound inattention to girls’ experiences and needs. Instead of receiving assistance, female offenders have been mislabeled and mistreated (Chesney-Lind, 1989). Institutionalizing gender-specific strategies requires that society challenge its thinking by looking at the history of juvenile justice, the present problem of escalating adolescent female delinquency, and the lack of program models that are specialized for girls, and translating new understandings about girls into sustainable system-wide changes. Changes for girls in juvenile justice have occurred unhurriedly and many practitioners and policy-makers have not considered the recent and growing evidence on female delinquency and etiology. Consequently, "the juvenile justice system and treatment
programs do not meet girls' unique needs" (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 1999).

The juvenile justice system is...based on models of male interaction and boys' development [and] the entire system is an uncomfortable fit for girls. Traditional efforts at making the system more appropriate for girls have usually consisted of switching urinals to toilets, adding medical staff to administer screening and assessment for sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy, and offering cosmetology rather than auto repair or welding. In most cases, girls are housed in separate quarters in male facilities and are offered the same programs as the boys, although "separate access" often means that they only have access to services and programs when they are not being used by boys (Brown, Guisinger, Albrecht, Cahill, & Lynn) (1999).

*Gender-specific programming cannot be developed, implemented, or sustained in a vacuum.* All providers of services and justice that serve at-risk and court-involved girls must work in concert. When different parts of a large service delivery system are unaware of one another's missions and actions, and essentially work in isolation, there are born too many opportunities for girls to "slip through the cracks" of the very system that aims to serve them. Juvenile justice professionals in Minnesota have led the way in developing and promoting a system-wide effort to institutionalize gender-specific services. Indeed, a Minnesota corrections law passed in 1994 (Minnesota Statute on Juvenile Female Offenders, 1994) requires the Department of Corrections to work together with professionals from various public and private agencies to create and maintain a continuum of comprehensive care for the girls whom they serve (MN Laws, 1994, 636-15-7). Each state must follow Minnesota's lead in developing formal and meaningful collaborations within and between systems, institutions, departments, agencies, and programs so that girls can obtain the help they need. The disorganization in juvenile justice care cannot continue, else female delinquency will (see Figure 4).
Figure 3: Gender-specific Programming: A New Perspective on Prevention. Gender-specific programming has the potential to prevent girls from engaging in maladaptive behaviors and becoming court-involved. It also provides a commonality across many prevention and intervention programs beyond delinquency prevention such as violence prevention programs, substance abuse prevention programs and pregnancy prevention programs. By addressing the underlying causes of girls' behaviors and providing them with a safe environment within which healing can commence, skills can be learned, and personal power can be discovered gender-specific programming strategies are far-reaching. Correctly employed, they address the underlying issues that are at the core of a variety of problem behaviors, and ultimately have the potential to foster resourceful collaborations between diversified prevention and intervention programs.
Figure 4: Helping Girls in Need: A Systemic Perspective. As girls move through programs, institutions, and the juvenile justice system, it is vital that these various environments are gender-specific and as such equipped to deal effectively with girls’ unique needs. Being gender-specific is not enough, however. Even the best programs, if working in isolation will fail girls if they fail to communicate with one another. Municipalities and states must develop comprehensive tracking systems so girls who enter the entire system of programs and protocols do not “slip through the cracks,” and so that effective and ineffective programs and service continuums may be identified and strengthened.
Chapter XI - Conclusion

Understanding Girls' Realities

Current research mirrors historical evidence showing that females in general were treated differently as they moved through the juvenile justice system and stereotypes determined what charges were placed upon them and what dispositions (sentences) they received. (Figueira-McDonough, 1987; Rosenbaum & Chesney-Lind, 1994). Stereotypes also helped determine the structure of the programs to which they were sent. In other words, the way girls entered the system was biased, the options they received were biased, and the treatment they ultimately received was biased. This situation translated into many girls exiting the system still in need, and sources refer to the experience of young women in the juvenile justice system as being very different that that of young men. Various studies have identified the need for new program models for women and girls. Efforts to construct an appropriate model of female delinquency must be sensitive to the needs of girls as a unique population. Work by pioneers in the field of female delinquency such as Meda Chesney-Lind and Randall Shelden, and female development such as Carol Gilligan must continue. Failure to a) consider existing evidence on girls' lives, b) conduct further research on their unique growth pathways and needs, and c) draft policy that reflects such knowledge, can lead to stereotypical thinking and theoretical dead ends (Chesney-Lind, 1989). The research base on female delinquents has grown in both quantity and quality and empirical findings have practical applications to the development and implementation of research-based gender-specific strategies and ultimately, to the prevention of adolescent female offending (status or criminal offenses) and recidivism.
Results of several studies in the areas of education and mental health have confirmed what has become increasingly clear both anecdotally and through well-established academic research - that girls experience life differently than boys. Girls' different experience of life is often coupled with what is seen in study after study as different approaches and different reactions to many life situations. Conclusions that girls are "just different," however, reflect ignorance and foster complacency. Girls' experiences and reactions are heavily influenced by the sociocultural environment in which they live and develop. They possess risk factors and personal histories that render their delinquent behavior a contextual response to adverse life conditions. "Failing to take a critical look at the contexts of [girls'] experiences does a disservice to the girls, who are in desperate need of emotional, educational, psychological, and economic assistance and nurturing" (Schaffner, 1999). Indeed, "...we must contextualize the social logic which affects girls' behavior" (1999). Correct gender-specific programs are aware of girls' surrounding environments, the effects of these environments, and ultimately aim to provide girls with the skills they need to effectively deal with and interact within them. They make connections between precursors and behavioral outcomes (negative agents and behavioral diseases), acknowledge "delinquency" as one of many behavioral diseases that are affecting and infecting all youth, and develop program components that address the public health triangle of behavioral disease development. Precursors to disease behavior must be developed, not the behavior in isolation.

Fortunately, many misconceptions about the level, nature and etiology of female delinquency have dissipated, and a growing literature based continues to broaden our understanding of young girls' unique needs. Psychologists, sociologists, and service
providers are gaining a more thorough understanding of female delinquency, and treatment options are being designed to meet the needs of young girls as a distinctive subgroup. It is important to note, however that states, cities, municipalities, justice systems, and programs have in no way completed the vast undertaking of understanding female delinquency and applying such understanding to its alleviation. Knowing is definitely half the battle, but society must forge ahead with the greater task at hand - translating knowledge regarding female delinquency into concrete, substantive, measurable change at all levels.

Remembering the Boys

Gender-specific treatment for girls is particularly important because girls have been distinctive victims of gender bias. For instance, "young women are...more likely to be affected by societal influences, such as being unable to earn wages comparable to males when working in jobs characterized by predominantly female staffing...[and] insufficient wage earning opportunities can lead to dependence on others or the welfare system." Clearly, young women are adversely affected by subtle yet potent discriminatory societal practices that are more likely to impact women and girls, and such practices have permeated institutions and programs. The contention that the juvenile justice system is "gender-specific for boys," however, is not necessarily true. While much of the research on juvenile delinquency has focused on males, including theory and program development, the program strategies that have been developed in accordance with male-oriented research are not devoid of problems.

Boys too are adversely affected by the stereotypes that, on the surface, seem to favor them. As a consequence, the ramifications though very real, have been less overt.
While most programs are designed for boys at the neglect of girls’ realities, many are based on stereotypes and labels that can adversely impact at-risk and court-involved boys as well. For instance, Greene, Peters & Associates (1998) posits that because juvenile males are often placed in anger management groups, they tend to receive the often unintended message that anger is the only emotion that they can appropriately express. This relegation of adolescent boys to groups based on gender-bias and stereotypes sends negative messages to both males and females of all ages that resonate profoundly in their lives. Therefore, although it is beyond the scope of this paper, an understanding of the pressures that males face throughout their growth and development is very important (see Kindlon & Thompson, 2000), and an understanding of how juvenile delinquency prevention programs are inattentive to their needs is essential as well.

The persistent discrimination that girls must face does not negate the realities of boys' lives. Boys and men also experience pressure to conform to socially created images and expectations of "maleness." Indeed, as discussed earlier, males are discouraged from expressing stereotypically "female" qualities that, though often perceived as weaker, are inherently valuable and more appropriately viewed as strengths. Too often such qualities are viewed as inferior, and men are pressured to exhibit stereotypically "male" qualities instead. Such categorizing and stereotypes have persisted at the expense of both boys' and girls' psychosocial development. Society must learn to emphasize the value of both "male" and "female" qualities and create opportunities for girls and boys to express a wide range of characteristics. Social pressures only encourage and reward youth for developing qualities that coincide with stereotypes as opposed their developing a spectrum of characteristics that will contribute to a more whole and complete identity.
Gender-specific strategies for adolescent girls replace inferior perspectives about girls and women with empowering ones that can serve to liberate both males and females. The way in which society places undue and stereotyped expectations on young boys leads to their profound lack of motivation to develop certain aspects of their being that are stereotyped as “female” and “non-masculine.” Indeed, research is making it quite clear that the skills that are largely underdeveloped in males such as communication and emotion identification have contributed to boys’ and men’s empirically shown maladjustment and inability to effectively employ such skills. Unsurprisingly, such skills are precisely those skills that are remanded to and devalued in women. Males and females are not being afforded opportunities to develop wholly as humans. Justice programs that hinder males’ development must be identified and changed, and they must take the initiative and provide developmental opportunities for boys and girls that correct inappropriate societal judgements expectations.

Translating Awareness into Concrete and Measurable Change

National policy encourages the development of gender-specific programming that is designed to get and keep adolescent girls on a positive developmental track (Greene, Peters, and Associates, 1998). The federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 as revised in 1992 now requires that states applying for federal formula grant dollars include in their analysis of juvenile crime "an analysis of gender-specific services for the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency, including types of services available and the need for services for females; and a plan for providing needed gender-specific services for the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency" (Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, 1992). It is imperative that practitioners,
administrators, and policy makers respond to the federal mandate for gender-specific programming and the growing body of empirical and practical research that led to its development and incorporation into federal law.

As a significant social problem, female adolescent delinquency is not being addressed as a public health issue with programmatic and systemic gender-specific strategies. Research has revealed that many women currently serving sentences report that they can see a link between their adult offense behavior and their history of sexual victimization, drug abuse, and prostitution (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998; Belknap, 1996). Research dating back as early as the 1940s and 1950s highlights the same issues in girls lives, namely family dysfunction and victimization, that in this monograph, have been more specifically and appropriately targeted as precursors to female delinquency development and continuation. Over a half a century later, programs are still not targeting the agents in girls’ lives that lead to behavioral disease, and in the meantime both the agents and the disease are significantly altering girls’ healthy development. It is not surprising that currently, female delinquency is increasing at unprecedented rates.

It is time to take a comprehensive public health approach to delinquency and actively attend to the realities that are present in studies, books, and statistics that have remained on the shelves for far too long. Too many studies show that for women currently housed in prison, victimization, violence, discrimination, and family dysfunction are issues that have gone unaddressed and untreated since childhood. This lack of attention to girls’ needs cannot persist, and programs cannot effectively serve girls unless gender-specific principles are incorporated into their design according to the public health principles of disease development and control. Inattention to girls would
not persist if their needs came in the form of physiological ailments or the traditional notions of disease. Girls from all over the country, from diverse ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds are ailing. Indeed many of them are dying. Juvenile delinquency is not an everyday ubiquitous problem, and it is not a normal byproduct of an increasingly complex and diversified society; nor are rising female delinquency rates tragic or mysterious. Tragic instead, is the persistent, institutionalized, and culturally accepted failure to respond. Over the last decade, research on and awareness about girls, including those who are at-risk and court-involved, has provided a solid foundation of knowledge and information that can be translated into meaningful and substantive changes in the lives of girls and their communities. "A research-base now exists that describes how girls develop, what they need, who they are, and what risks they face because of their gender" (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998). Practitioners, administrators, and policy makers must now become social and political leaders, and advocates and implementers of gender-specific systems and programs.

This monograph provides a historical, theoretical, and practical framework to which practitioners, administrators, and policy-makers in juvenile justice can refer in efforts to serve the neglected and growing population of at-risk girls. Without a keen understanding of at risk girls and their concomitant needs, and an accompanying understanding of the importance of gender specific treatment and its applications, female delinquency will persist in both magnitude and severity. Furthermore, failure to address girls' needs as a subgroup will render efforts to assuage global delinquency trends futile. And, perhaps most importantly, inaction will perpetuate the suffering of at-risk girls and their families, a consequence that has immeasurable implications.
Appendix A – ACTNOW: A Strategic Plan for the City of Hartford

*Act Now*

**A**cknowledging the realities of girls’ experiences

**C**orrecting practices that hinder their development

**T**ransforming **N**otions **O**f **W**omanhood

**Background**

The City of Hartford contains a variety of programs and services that are geared toward enhancing the lives of the City’s roughly 44,000 youth. While many, if not all, of the youth programs represent a commitment to preventing youth from being court-involved, too many youth are still entering the juvenile justice system. Moreover, recent statistics reveal the troubling reality that girls, while entering the juvenile justice system in overall lower numbers, are entering the system at higher rates than their male counterparts. Noted growth in adolescent female offending in nationally and within Connecticut renders expedited change critically important.

Statistics reveal that young girls are becoming court-involved at higher rates, even higher than young boys. Between 1993 and 1997, increases in arrests were greater for girls than for boys in nearly every offense category (Snyder, in press). In 1986, girls younger than 18 years of age comprised 22% of all juvenile arrests; in 1997 they comprise 26% of all juvenile arrests.

Juvenile delinquency has been viewed as a male problem for decades. Such a misconception has had many consequences for girls, not the least of which was the lack of attention to their unique treatment needs. Girls were neglected in research and in the development of juvenile delinquency prevention programs, and because research on juvenile delinquency focused predominantly on males, indicators of a female problem remained unknown. Fortunately, many of the misconceptions about the level, nature, and etiology of female delinquency have dissipated, and a growing literature base continues to broaden our understanding of girls’ needs. For instance, research has consistently identified *victimization* – physical, sexual, and emotional – as the first step along females’ pathways to into the juvenile and criminal justice systems (OJJDP, 1998; Greene, Peters & Associates, 1998). Accordingly, girls show specific types and patterns of offending that differ from that of boys. It is not surprising then that national sources and recent research posit that girls have a unique set of needs that must be addressed to prevent further victimization, deter court-involvement, and foster success and productivity.
Problem

There is a lack of institutionalized gender responsiveness and gender-specific services for at-risk and court-involved girls in the City of Hartford.

Solution

Translate the past two years of work completed via the collaboration between the City of Hartford Department of Human Services (HDHS) and the University of Connecticut School of Medicine's Graduate Program in Public Health into practical and meaningful changes for girls in the City.

Transform cutting-edge research and knowledge about gender-specific treatment for at-risk and court-involved girls into citywide strategic actions that will collectively result in the development, implementation and institutionalization of appropriate systemic and programmatic responses to girls' needs.

Rationale

Hartford is in a unique position to undertake the critical task of addressing the specialized needs of at-risk and court-involved girls throughout the City for the following reasons:

1. Major efforts to understand the City’s youth have increased awareness of the challenges that adolescents face daily and the barriers that prevent them from developing into healthy, successful adults. The City of Hartford Department of Human Services (HDHS) has researched and analyzed the status of youth in the City via a variety of indicators including, but not limited to school enrollment, school dropouts, teenage births, DCF referrals, and poverty. As recently as 1998, the HDHS published the results of its Youth Services Research Project, a study commissioned by the City of Hartford’s Court of Common Council to provide neighborhood-based information of available public and private recreation and youth services in the City. The HDHS undertook this project with the expanded scope of identifying service capacity and proposing a long-term plan for improved quality and delivery of youth services.

2. Breaking the Cycle, a strategic partnership of the City of Hartford, the Hartford Public Schools and the Hartford Action Plan on Infant Health, Inc., has successfully begun to reduce Hartford’s unacceptably high number of births to teens.

3. Juvenile justice programs in the City, developed and managed by the Court Support Services Division of the state Judicial Branch, are part of a statewide continuum of alternative sanctions for which the State of Connecticut is nationally recognized and emulated.
4. The HDHS has developed a five-year strategic plan, of which the development and implementation of a state-of-the-art a delinquency prevention plan for adolescent girls is a major part. Indeed, the inclusion of a gender-responsive plan for the City is in response to the growing knowledge base on female adolescent delinquency and girls’ unique needs.

History

In 1998, the City of Hartford and the University of Connecticut School of Medicine's Graduate Program in Public Health combined forces to research the concept of gender-specific programming as a critical component of delinquency prevention programs, and to explore opportunities to enhance services for at-risk and court-involved girls in the City. The collaboration resulted in two years of extensive research that has created a firm foundation for the development of a comprehensive female delinquency prevention plan based on empirical research, nationally recognized models and best practices.

Via the collaboration, theoretical research has been conducted on:

1. The problem of growing female delinquency with specific references to past and current research.

2. The history of girls’ treatment in the juvenile justice system including a review of the work of well-known scholar Meda Chesney-Lind.

3. The unique developmental pathways of adolescent girls and how they differ from those of young boys, including a review of the work of well-known feminist theorist Carol Gilligan.

4. The concept of and need for gender-specific treatment for at-risk and court-involved girls in the context of their different responses to trauma, different offense patterns, and different developmental pathways.

5. What it means to be an at-risk adolescent female, including an overview of female delinquency development.

6. The treatment needs of at-risk and court-involved girls and the levels of services available to meet their needs.

Practical research was conducted on:

1. Delinquency prevention programs and the availability of gender-specific services in the City of Hartford (via the execution of a preliminary Needs Assessment).

2. National efforts geared toward alleviating the growing problem of female delinquency, including best practices and appropriate treatment models for at-risk and court-involved girls that are tailored to meet their needs as a unique subgroup.
And, the following was developed:

1. A profile the availability and provision of delinquency prevention services for at-risk girls in Hartford, Connecticut.

2. Recommendations for treatment protocols and services that are sensitive to the specific needs of at-risk and court-involved girls based on empirical research, best practices, and Hartford's unique needs.

Proposal

To translate knowledge gained from the aforementioned activities into practical changes in Hartford that will improve the City's awareness of and attentiveness to the needs of at-risk and court-involved girls, the following Project Proposal is suggested:

**Project Proposal: Act Now**

Submitted by: Alyssa D. Benedict, University of Connecticut, MPH

Acknowledging the realities of girls' experiences

Correcting practices that hinder their development

Transforming Notions Of Womanhood

**Target population: At-risk girls in the City of Hartford**

At-risk girls in the City of Hartford are defined as adolescent girls who are exhibiting behaviors, such as truancy and failure at school, that have been shown by research to precede juvenile court involvement. (At-risk girls also include adolescent girls who have not exhibited overt risk behavior but who are identified as having been exposed to risk environments such as emotionally and/or physically abusive homes and/or violent homes.)

For the purposes of this project, the former population will be targeted, or, those adolescent girls who have exhibited overt risk behaviors that render them likely to become court-involved. The network of services in the City, hereafter referred to as the “system,” can identify this population of adolescent girls and is positioned to facilitate concrete, substantive, and expedited interventions from which girls can significantly benefit.
The target population for this project is best understood when divided into 3 distinct subgroups:

1. Girls that have exhibited high-risk behaviors that have not been court-involved.
2. Girls that have just begun to be court-involved, meaning, they have offended one or two times.
3. Girls that have a history of court-involvement.

The broad-based goals for each of the aforementioned subgroups are as follows:

1. Prevent adolescent girls that have exhibited high-risk behaviors but have not offended from becoming involved with juvenile court.
2. Prevent girls that have begun to be court-involved from re-offending.
3. Prevent girls that have a history of court-involvement from re-entering the juvenile court.

Developing a City wide plan requires a broad-based approach to delinquency prevention that is sensitive and attentive to all indicators. Therefore, while the project’s major efforts will focus on preventing any onset of court-involvement, specific, actions will be taken to work with other relevant parts of the system to deter further court-involvement.

**Vision:** Translate the theoretical and practical research completed on gender responsiveness and gender-specific programming for at-risk and court-involved girls (via collaboration with the University of Connecticut Medical School’s Graduate Program in Public Health) into substantive, concrete, and meaningful changes in lives of girls living in Hartford.

**GOAL 1:** Develop a model of systems collaboration within the City of Hartford that will facilitate the delivery of comprehensive services for at-risk girls between the ages of 11 and 14.

**Objectives:**

a. Develop working and sustainable relationships with all agencies, departments, government and non-government entities to whom at-risk girls come in contact including the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Court Support Services Division (CSSD), the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Hartford Police, and the Department of Education through the creation of a Task Force on At-risk Girls.

b. Create a structured environment within which the aforementioned entities can interact and communicate on a regular basis and discuss their roles in the City, and, in particular, their roles as they relate to the provision of services for at risk girls.
c. Determine immediate opportunities to provide better services for at-risk and court-involved girls in the City (example, provide the directory of services for girls developed via the collaboration with the University of Connecticut to juvenile court so that probation officers can improve their referrals for female offenders).

**Expected Outcome(s):**

- A 15 member *Task Force on Girls* is created that includes representation from the aforementioned parties, and is committed to creating gender-responsive system of services for girls in Hartford.

- A resource base for the development and implementation of immediate strategic actions is identified and utilized to better serve the target population.

- A system-wide response to the unique needs of the target population is created.

**GOAL 2: Determine issues related to gender responsiveness that are unique to the City of Hartford and specific barriers to the implementation of gender-specific programming protocols.**

**Objectives:**

a. Share theoretical and practical research (conducted via collaboration with the University of Connecticut) on gender responsiveness and gender-specific programming for at-risk and court-involved girls with various stakeholders.

b. Seek testimony from providers, state agencies, courts, law enforcement, other agencies and organizations, and, most importantly, from consumers of services (the girls themselves) regarding existing services and met/partially met/unmet needs of the target population.

c. Facilitate the exchange of information between those giving testimony and the *Task Force on At-risk Girls*.

d. Organize information obtained into a report on the "Needs of At-Risk Girls in Hartford, Connecticut."

**Expected Outcome(s):**

- Stakeholders will become familiar with the concept of gender responsiveness and gender-specific programming for at-risk and court-involved girls.

- Stakeholders will begin to critically evaluate gender-responsiveness and the role it plays or could play in their particular areas of work.
• The City of Hartford preliminary Needs Assessment (conducted via collaboration with the University of Connecticut) will be made available to stakeholders.

• The Task Force will identify long term strategic actions for implementation of gender-specific services and protocols within the City.

GOAL 3: Identify a common language, consistent wherever possible with that used nationally, through which issues related to gender responsiveness and gender-specific programming may be communicated in the City.

Objectives:

a. Identify a vocabulary with the Task Force to be used that will define terms such as “gender responsiveness,” “gender-based,” and “gender-specific.”

b. Identify and pilot test appropriate measures of gender specific services and protocols such as the Gender Specialization Rating (GSR) on a sample of 10 youth programs in the City.

c. Codify best practices developed via the University of Connecticut collaboration.

Expected Outcome(s):

• Measures of gender-specific services become an institutionalized part of the delivery of delinquency prevention services in the City.

GOAL 4: Develop strategic actions for the institutionalization of gender responsiveness and gender-specific services in the City.

Objectives:

a. Work with the Task Force to translate empirical research and best practices into a standardization of the City's services for girls.

b. Identify best practices that already exist within the City and build upon existing programmatic, systemic and institutional strengths.

d. Identify hindering practices within the City not supported by “best practice” research and work to replace them with best practices.
e. Develop **action steps** to fill gaps in service, eliminate duplication of services, and incorporate “best practices” into all existing programs.

**Expected Outcome(s):**

- Programs will develop internal evaluations that will allow them to compare their existing service delivery packages with the City’s codified best practices.

GOAL 5: **Formally educate providers in the City about how to implement best practices in gender-specific services for at-risk girls in the City.**

**Objectives:**

a. Develop a curriculum regarding gender specific treatment and services for at-risk girls that will be offered to providers in the form of an educational workshop and/or training series.

b. Utilize the curriculum to help providers integrate gender-specific treatment for at-risk girls into their current service delivery package.

c. Publish and disseminate a resource directory for providers of services to girls.

**Expected Outcome(s):**

- 70% of area providers attend workshop/training

- A Training of Trainers (TOT) is established.

GOAL 6: **Develop a mechanism whereby at-risk girls in the City can be identified and appropriately referred to programs that can specifically and successfully meet their needs.**

**Objectives:**

a. Develop a system-wide protocol within the City schools that will allow for the identification of at-risk girls and their appropriate referral to the services they need.

b. Develop a tracking system with area providers wherein girls can be followed through their utilization of services.

**Expected Outcome(s):**
50% of the high schools in the City will develop with HDHS a protocol within their institution to identify, refer, and track at-risk girls through the system.

A school-based identification and referral program will be created.

Note:

Gender-specific protocols for girls must be implemented at all levels of the juvenile justice system in order to comprehensively and successfully address girls' needs as a unique subgroup, and ultimately ameliorate female delinquency. The vision, then, is to ensure that girls enter a juvenile justice system wherein there is an institutionalized response that is both aware of and attentive to their particular needs. This gender-responsive juvenile justice system will therefore be gender-responsive and equipped to appropriately assess and refer juvenile girls. Similarly, the programs to which girls are ultimately referred by the justice system, or any other entity, must be equally responsive to gender via the development, enhancement, and delivery of gender-specific services.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, gender-specific services originally developed to prevent female delinquency are arguably well equipped to prevent other maladaptive consequences such as substance abuse, violence, and teenage pregnancy. Indeed, because gender-specific services are capable of cutting across a variety of program types, they may provide a commonality across prevention and intervention programs that would otherwise not exist. For while girls may exhibit a myriad of maladaptive behaviors ranging from breaking laws to abusing drugs, such behaviors are arguably different manifestations of the same inner struggle. Gender-specific services ultimately provide girls with concrete, personally meaningful tools that will help them win that struggle.

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