CHRISTI LYN BARTOLOMUCCI
Does the Nature of Offense Matter? An Examination of Psychological and Relationship Factors between Aggressive and Non-aggressive Female Juvenile Offenders
(Under the direction of GEORGIA B. CALHOUN)

The current study sought to distinguish psychological and relationship differences among female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses. Various demographic differences were examined between the two groups including age of first offense, length of involvement in the juvenile justice system, and number of offenses. Psychological adaptive and maladaptive factors were explored as well as the participants' relationships within their family, peer groups, and school contexts. The Behavioral Assessment System for Children (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992), the Assessment of Interpersonal Relations (Bracken, 1993), and the Family Assessment Device (Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983) were the primary instruments utilized in this study. The Relational/Cultural theory, which emphasizes the critical role of relationships in the positive development of adolescent girls and women, was used as a theoretical framework. The study sample included 120 Georgia female juvenile offenders ages 12-17. Analysis of Variance was the statistical procedure utilized to examine differences between the two groups on each factor. Findings suggest that although aggressive female juvenile offenders typically have more offenses and are involved in the juvenile justice system for a longer period of time than non-aggressive female juvenile offenders, there does not appear to be significant differences between the two groups of female juvenile offenders on a variety of psychological factors. An exploration of the critical relationships in the participants' lives yielded no significant differences between aggressive and non-aggressive female juvenile offenders in regards to their family or peer

relationships. However, female adolescents who have committed aggressive offenses expressed significantly more negative attitudes towards their teachers than female adolescents who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses. In conclusion, this study identifies several methods to address the treatment needs of aggressive and non-aggressive female juvenile offenders.

INDEX WORDS: Female Juvenile Offenders, Aggression, Adolescent Female Development, Relational/Cultural Theory, Juvenile Justice

DOES NATURE OF OFFENSE MATTER? AN EXAMINATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND RELATIONSHIP FACTORS BETWEEN AGGRESSIVE AND NON-AGGRESSIVE FEMALE JUVENILE OFFENDERS

by

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DEDICATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v

CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION 1

Adolescent Females in the Juvenile Justice System 1

Past Theories of Female Delinquency 3

Gender Bias and the Juvenile Justice System 4

Significance of Study 7

Aspirations for Counseling Psychologists 9

Statement of Purpose 11

Theoretical Orientation 12

Definition of Terms 16

Research Questions 17

Limitations of Study 21

Assumptions of Study 21

2 LITERATURE REVIEW 23

Introduction to Juvenile Offending Literature 23

Prevalence of Female Juvenile Offending 25

Female Adolescent Development 27

African American Female Adolescent Development 29

Female Developmental Pathways of Delinquency....30
Understanding Female Aggression....34
Experiences of Physical and Sexual Violence....36
Psychological Features of Female Juvenile Offenders....39
Fostering a Healthy Female Adolescent Development....42
Female Adolescent Offenders' Family Dynamics....43
Female Adolescents Offenders' Peer Relations....47
Female Adolescent Offenders' School Experience....49
Conclusion....51
3 METHOD....53
Participants....55
Procedure....56
Research Instruments....57
Research Design....63
Questions....64
4 RESULTS....69
Statistical Procedures....69
Research Findings....70
5 SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS....99
Summary....99
Discussion of Research Findings....101
Relational/cultural theory with Female Juvenile Offenders....118
Implications for Future Research....120

Implications for Practice 126

Conclusion 129

REFERENCES 131

LIST OF TABLES

Page

Table 1. A Description of the SRP-A's Clinical Maladjustment Composite Scales 59

Table 2. A Description of the SRP-A's School Maladjustment Composite Scales 60

Table 3. A Description of the SRP-A's Personal Adjustment Composite Scales 60

Table 4. A Description of the SRP-A's Unique Emotional Symptoms Index Scales 60

Table 5 A Description of the FAD Scales 63

Table 6 Means and Standard Deviations for Two Types of Offenses and Three Juvenile Justice Experience Variables 72

Table 7 Means and Standard Deviations for Two Types of Offenses and Seven Psychological Dependent Variables 74

Table 8 One-way Analysis of Variance for Effects of the Type of Offense on Seven Dependent Psychological Variables 75

Table 9 Means and Standard Deviations for Two Types of Offenses and Two Adaptive Dependent Variables 79

Table 10 One-way Analysis of Variance for Effects of the Type of Offense on Two Adaptive Dependent Variables 79

Table 11 Means and Standard Deviations for Two Types of Offenses and Six Family Dynamic Dependent Variables 82

Table 12 One-way Analysis of Variance for Effects of the Type of Offense on Six Family Dynamic Dependent Variables 83

Table 13 Means and Standard Deviations for Two Types of Offenses and Two Family Relationship Dependent Variables....87

Table 14 One-way Analysis of Variance for Effects of the Type of Offense on Two Family Relationship Dependent Variables 87

Table 15 Means and Standard Deviations for Two Types of Offenses and Two Peer Relationship Dependent Variables....89

Table 16 One-way Analysis of Variance for Effects of the Type of Offense on Two Peer Relationship Dependent Variables....89

Table 17 Means and Standard Deviations for Two Types of Offenses and Three School Related Dependent Variables....96

Table 18 One-way Analysis of Variance for Effects of the Type of Offense on Three School Related Dependent Variables....96

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

Figure 1 Mean scores on seven psychological symptoms as measured by the BASC-SRP 70

Figure 2 Mean scores on two adaptive functioning subscales as measured by the BASC-SRP-A 80

Figure 3 Mean scores on six family dynamics subscales as measured by the FAD.....84

Figure 4 Mean scores on the Relationship with Mother and Relationship with Father AIR subscales 88

Figure 5 Mean scores on the Relationship with Male and Female Peer AIR subscales....92

Figure 6 Mean scores on the Attitude towards School and Attitudes toward Teachers BASC-SRP-A subscales 97

Figure 7 Means scores on the Relationship with Teachers AIR subscale 98

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Female juvenile offenders, known as the "forgotten few", have always been present in the juvenile justice system although their presence has not been frequently acknowledged in research and treatment programming (Bergsman, 1989; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). Female adolescents are responsible for committing 25% of all juvenile offenses (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1999). Although the majority of females are adjudicated for status offenses, such as running away from home, an increasing number of female adolescents are engaging in more serious and violent crimes such as aggravated assault (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). Yet, little is known about the developmental and contextual factors related to girls' offending behaviors (MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001). Currently in the field of psychology, as well as in the professional field of criminal justice and law, there has been an increased interest in furthering the understanding of factors associated with adolescent females who engage in offending behaviors (MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001).

Adolescent Females in the Juvenile Justice System

The juvenile justice system was created as a distinct entity in 1899 by a group of women concerned about the well being and treatment of children within the larger justice system (Barnett & Simmons, 2001). The juvenile justice system was established in order to intervene in the problematic behaviors occurring within families and by children (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). In the United States, gender role expectations have

served as a significant influence on the adjudication and treatment of children and adolescents within juvenile court. It appeared that the definitions of "problematic behaviors" differed depending upon the gender of the offender. Although the primary focus of juvenile court was placed on addressing the illegal behaviors of boys and adolescent males, the juvenile justice system also expressed a concern regarding behaviors that tainted the morality of young girls. For example, beginning in the early 1900's, one women's group directed their efforts towards ensuring the safety and positive reputations of all youth, while more specifically stating a distinct mission to protect the "morality" and to prevent the "waywardness" of young females (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). Although this movement occurred over 100 years ago, current research continually suggests that the treatment of male and female juvenile offenders' behaviors within the juvenile justice system is strongly influenced by the gender of the offender (MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001). For example, although self-reports suggest that boys and girls equally engage in running away from home or exhibiting unruly or incorrigible behavior, female adolescents are much more likely to be arrested and charged for these behaviors (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998; Teilmann & Landry, 1981). It appears that although adolescent males and females may engage in similar behaviors, certain behaviors are deemed more unacceptable, or possibly unsafe, for female youth than male youth. When female juvenile offenders, and male juvenile offenders, are targeted or overlooked for specific crimes due to their gender, an accurate and thorough understanding of their problems and treatment needs may be overlooked.

Until recently, female juvenile offenders have not demanded the attention of juvenile justice and mental health professionals. Female adolescents were typically

introduced to the juvenile justice system as a consequence of family conflict (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). Females were often charged with unruly behavior after arguments with family members. Historically, the crimes of adolescent girls did not pose a serious threat to the communities in which they lived; rather they threatened the standards of moral conduct (MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001). Therefore, research and programming efforts for female juvenile offenders were not seen as a priority.

The majority of juvenile offenses, specifically the more serious and violent juvenile offenses, have been committed by adolescent males (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998; Wasserman, Miller, & Cothern, 2000). Beginning with some of the earliest theories of delinquency, delinquency was defined as a male issue (Siegal & Sienna, 1991). Consequently, many of the juvenile delinquency research projects, programs, and interventions address factors associated with male juvenile delinquency (MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001). Although the presence of female adolescents has increased within the juvenile justice system, there has been a scarcity of research, treatment programs, and interventions to address their gender specific needs. Instead, the current body of juvenile delinquency research and treatment programs designed for male juvenile offenders has been generalized to understand and treat female juvenile offenders (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). Research exploring specific factors associated with female juvenile offending behavior is needed in order to better understand female juvenile offenders and their treatment needs (Barnett & Simmons, 2001; MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001).

Past Theories of Female Delinquency

Past attempts to understand the offending behaviors of adolescent females continuously reflected society's concern with the sexuality and morality of young women

(Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). Misunderstanding the female adolescent offender and their treatment needs has been a recurrent theme throughout females' involvement in juvenile court. Early attempts at creating theories to describe female delinquency revolved around females' lesser intellectual abilities (Lombroso, 1920), female's sexual abnormalities (Bromberg, 1965) lack of femininity (Healy & Bronner, 1926), and the menstruation cycle (Dalton, 1971). In Pollak's (1950) book, The Criminality of Women, he suggested that female offenses are related to biological changes associated with menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause. For example, he suggested pregnancy might be crime promoting for females because the expectant mother may chose to murder her unwanted child. Bromberg (1965), a psychoanalytic psychiatrist, related female delinquency primarily to sex crimes such as prostitution. He suggested that all females were prone to delinquency because of their experience of sexual conflict particularly conflict surrounding sexual pleasure. Such theories serve as examples of the ways in which the societal construction of gender can influence theorists in their attempts to explain females and female behaviors.

Gender Bias and the Juvenile Justice System

Even in the 21st century, females are typically charged with offenses that violate gender role expectations (MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001). For instance, juvenile court statistics suggest there is an over-representation of males and females adjudicated in specific offenses that are not substantiated by their self-report surveys (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). For example, female adolescents are typically adjudicated with status offenses such as runaway, truancy, and unruly behavior. However, self-report surveys suggest that girls are also involved in much more serious activities and their actual

offending rates may parallel the serious delinquent activity of males (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1998). Self-reports also suggest that males commit status offenses comparable to females although they are less likely to be adjudicated. For example, females are more likely to be adjudicated for voluntary sexual activity than males. Yet, females are not the only adolescents having underage consensual sex. This type of discrepancy suggests that certain behaviors have been deemed more or less acceptable dependent on the adolescents' gender. Furthermore, this discrepancy based upon the larger society's views of what is considered acceptable behavior for male and female adolescent offenders may ignore the underlying needs of both genders. Placing an emphasis on the offense alone, juvenile court proceedings continue to overlook the antecedents of female offending, and often, ignore the dangers of their more serious behavior.

Female juvenile offenders continue to be misunderstood and neglected (MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001). Although current attempts are being made to address the needs of female offenders, a gender bias continues to exist in their treatment. Interestingly, the increase in the rates of crime among females, as well as the recent attention given to female juvenile offenders, may be more of a reflection of the way the society attends to the lives of females (MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001). For example, Barnett and Simmons (2001) suggest that the rise of female aggressive offenses may be a result of the ways in which the juvenile justice system defines and addresses the behaviors of girls. In 1992, Congress explored the gender bias occurring within the juvenile justice system as well as the scarcity of services available to female juvenile offenders (MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001). As a consequence of this meeting, states were required to fund programs to research gender-

specific treatment for female juvenile offenders (Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Amendments, 1992).

Yet, in 2001, less than half of the states, within the United States, are implementing gender specific research and programming and the states that are implementing these programs are primarily in the beginning stages of implementation (Girls Inc., 1996). Girls are still being punished for their coping mechanisms, such as running away from an abusive home (Chesney-Lind, 1989). Cries for help are frequently ignored, and furthermore, punished. A sixteen year old charged with runaway stated "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 at home." (p.1, Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998) This sixteen-year-old girl's story is not uncommon. Zedner (1991) suggests that a low tolerance for female behavior will persist until juvenile court and the larger society make a philosophical change in the manner in which they view females.

Discussions and debates regarding the treatment of females within the juvenile justice system are occurring presently (Feld, 1999). During these discussions, the efforts of the juvenile justice system are continuously challenged as to whether they are directed at the prevention and intervention of serious female juvenile offending or merely continue to enforce standards for female morality and sexuality (Feld, 1999). Societal and systemic factors related to female delinquency are not offered to excuse the behavior of female adolescent offenders, but to build a compelling argument for the need to produce research that examines the differential experiences of female adolescents.

Significance of Study

Until recently, research regarding female juvenile offenders has been scarce. The research in this area is fairly limited and primarily examines females who offend as a homogenous group (e.g. Campbell, 1990; Pepi, 1998). Most often offending girls are compared to offending males to explore similarities and differences (e.g. Calhoun, 2000). This research is necessary, beneficial, and has made substantial headway in understanding the etiology of female juvenile offending. However, as more is learned about female juvenile offenders, it becomes clear that they may not be a homogenous group and many differences may also exist between girls involved in juvenile court. In the study of male delinquency, researchers have found it beneficial to look at differences within the group. For example, researchers have begun to look at factors differentiating males who will engage in drug offenses, property offenses, or violent offenses (Glaser, Calhoun, & Petrocelli, 2001). Females also engage in a variety of different offenses ranging from minor offenses to serious and violent offenses. It may also be helpful to examine differences among females involved in juvenile court according to the types of crimes they commit in order to better understand external, relational, and psychological characteristics that contribute to their offending behavior.

Research exploring male juvenile delinquency and at risk behaviors has suggested that male juvenile delinquency is likely to be multidimensional and result from the interaction of numerous developmental, psychological, relational, as well as social factors (Calhoun, Glaser, & Bartolomucci, 2001; Henggeler & Borduin, 1990). Each of these factors is associated with the likelihood that the male adolescent will engage in delinquent behavior or may serve as protective factors against juvenile offending (Jessor, VanDen

Bos, Vanderynn, Costa, & Turbin, 1995). Although none of the mentioned studies specifically address the developmental, psychological, and social factors associated with the female offending behavior, it can be reasonably assumed that these factors would also be identified with female juvenile offending.

Research exploring the developmental, psychological, and social factors of female juvenile offenders may also produce a greater understanding of why females may engage in specific types of offending behavior. Within the female juvenile offending population, these factors may vary depending upon the type of offense the female has committed. One means of understanding differences is to examine differences between girls who engage in aggressive actions versus non-aggressive behaviors. This approach allows similarities and differences among girls to be identified rather than to contrast girls and boys experiences. Research has been produced which examines differences among boys and girls in terms of their offense histories (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998), psychological profiles (Calhoun, 2001), and their psychosocial development (Gilligan, 1993). Focusing solely on the female juvenile offending population may help to better understand the psychological, relational, and societal factors that shape girls' experiences and how these experiences relate to their offending behavior.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has identified the need for research and programming to better understand and target serious and violent juvenile offending (Wasserman, Miller, & Cothern, 2000). Although adolescent males dominate this category of offending, the female adolescent's presence is dually noted (Wasserman, Miller, & Cothern, 2000; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). The issue of aggression and violence among females raises many interesting social and psychological questions to be

addressed such as why and how female adolescents engage in aggressive acts as well as the situation surrounding their offense. In Girls, Delinquency, and Juvenile Justice, Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1998) share various opinions regarding females' involvement in aggressive crimes. For example, one view suggested violence as an expected, although not an acceptable, reaction to external forces such as family violence and poverty. The authors discuss that this explanation is accepted when discussing males who engage in violent acts. However, girls who experience these same external factors and respond aggressively, are often viewed as more abnormal, malicious, or cruel than their male counterparts although they are responding to the same external cues (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998).

A call has been made in the psychological, sociological, and criminal justice fields to better understand the lives of girls who offend (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). The purpose of the current study is not to highlight differences between male and female offenders. This approach is often taken and the results often suggest that there are many more similarities than differences (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). The purpose of this study is to better understand the role of key relationships and psychological factors related to female juvenile offending and how these factors may differentiate girls who respond to challenging situations in an aggressive from those who respond in a non-aggressive manner. The current study is a step in furthering our understanding of both the presenting treatment needs and personal strengths of girls who offend.

Aspirations for Counseling Psychologists

The field of counseling psychology stresses the importance of examining protective and strength based factors of human development. Rather than solely examining an individual and his/her pathological features, counseling psychologists strive to identify

areas of strength and growth in individuals in order to promote optimal development (Wagner, 1996). Kenny (1996) stated "Understanding vulnerability and risk should not lead the counseling psychologist to ignore resilience and individual strength" (p.477). Through the examination of protective factors and risk factors, we may develop a more holistic vision of the development of girls who become involved with juvenile court. Furthermore, as professionals, we can use this knowledge to create programs focused on empowering girls involved in the juvenile justice system to enhance their positive personal and relational assets.

Education, advocacy, and program development are each considered important duties of counseling psychologists (Wagner, 1996). Each of these roles is a form of social action that can create positive changes within the larger community. Female juvenile offenders, referred to as the "forgotten few", are a population often overlooked, misunderstood, and in need of the prevention and intervention services of counseling psychologists. Females involved in the juvenile justice system also represent a group of adolescents who have been continually labeled and pathologized due to some of their externalizing behaviors. In order to work with this population effectively, counseling psychologists need to better understand the importance of developmental, relational, and social factors associated with female aggressive and non-aggressive behaviors to truly understand, advocate for, and create services to meet their treatment needs. Through collaboration, psychologists, teachers, and juvenile justice professionals can work together to more effectively identify and better understand the needs of girls involved in juvenile court.

Statement of Purpose

The primary purpose of the current study was to differentiate and delineate the psychological and relationship factors among adolescent females who engage in aggressive and non-aggressive offenses. This study may allow professionals working with female juvenile offenders to better understand the external and psychological variables underlying the actions of female adolescents charged with aggressive and non-aggressive crimes. Consequently, the findings may aid professionals in creating effective prevention and intervention programs for aggressive and non-aggressive female juvenile offenders.

There are many ways researchers can begin to understand the experiences of female juvenile offenders as a group as well as begin to differentiate factors associated with offending behaviors among distinct groups of girls involved in juvenile court. One means of examining differences among girls is to explore differences among girls who commit aggressive versus non-aggressive offenses. Findings with male offenders have found aggression in children to be associated with juvenile offending and adult criminality (Roff & Wirt, 1984). Aggressiveness in boys tends to be a stable and continuous characteristic throughout their lifespan (Olweus, 1979). However, very little is known about the factors that contribute to the aggressive and non-aggressive acts of female juvenile offenders, the developmental pathways leading to aggressive or non-aggressive female juvenile offending, and the treatment needs of these populations. The outcome of this study may help to further our understanding of the developmental, psychological, and relational factors of females engaging in aggressive and non-aggressive acts by contributing to the scarcity of literature regarding adolescent females who offend. In addition, the findings of this project may help professionals working with female juvenile offenders more

appropriately identify and target areas in need of necessary, gender specific, prevention and intervention efforts.

The purpose of offending behaviors can be examined by exploring the relationship between individual characteristics and environmental systems including family, peers, and schools (Henggeler, 1989). The female juvenile offenders' relationships, as do all female adolescents' relationships, play a crucial role in the development of a healthy or maladaptive lifestyle (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). A self-report study suggested that the crimes girls and boys engage in do not vary significantly although the setting and victims of their crimes do vary by gender (Canter, 1982). Females tend to act aggressively towards people they know, most often family members, in familiar settings (Barnett & Simmons, 2001). This finding highlights the importance of examining key relationships of female juvenile offenders.

The experiences of the female juvenile offender must be examined within the context of her environment in order to gain an understanding of the etiology of her behavior (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). This study examines differences in the psychological characteristics and the quality of essential relationships of girls who engage in aggressive versus non-aggressive offenses. More specifically, this study examines interactions of aggressive and non-aggressive female juvenile offenders within her family, peer group, and school environment, in attempt to better understand the complexity of female juvenile offenders.

Theoretical Orientation

In order to understand the experiences of girls involved in juvenile court, it is essential to have a theoretical means of conceptualizing girls' development and

experiences. Numerous researchers in the psychology of women (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1993; Miller, 1976, Surrey, 1991) have worked to establish gender specific theories to better listen to, understand, and conceptualize girls and women's experiences. The current study utilizes a relational/cultural approach in understanding the contributing factors in the development of girls who commit aggressive and non-aggressive offenses.

The relational/cultural theory, previously named the relational theory, is a theory of woman's development which suggests that woman's self is organized and developed in the context of essential and responsive relationships (Surrey, 1991). This theory was renamed in the mid-1990's to acknowledge and embody the experiences of racially diverse groups of women. Relational/cultural theory therefore has been redefined, allowing the theory to be an appropriate means of conceptualizing and understanding the experiences of women in racially/ethnic diverse, Caucasian, and marginalized groups of girls and women (Jenkins, 1999). Relational/cultural theory proposes that the development of the capacity to engage in meaningful, connected, relationships is a primary goal of female development. Jenkins (1999) states "Relational/cultural theory is the basis for relational/cultural therapy, a clinical approach that focuses on defining and understanding connections and disconnections that restrict and block psychic growth"(p.62).

Female juvenile offenders are a marginalized group of girls. Girls involved in juvenile court often share several environmental challenges such as poverty, violent neighborhoods, and lack of resources. Relational/cultural theory emphasizes the need to "…acknowledge and attend to the roles of race, ethnicity, cultural as well as internal and external events that shape identity development, relational development, and current mental

status of clients from diverse populations"(p.63, Jenkins, 1999). Furthermore, the female juvenile population is often labeled as pathological and many of their strengths and survival techniques may be ignored. Relational/cultural theory is based upon understanding the internal and external strengths and challenges of each individual/self within their relationships, embedded in a cultural context.

In relational/cultural theory, an individual or "self" is defined as a complex and collective representation of an individual's history, temperament, and life experiences (Surrey, 1991). The "self" is viewed as a "self-in-relation"; meaning the development of individuals occurs within a dynamic relation to essential others. Jordan (1989) states "Viewing development from a relational rather than self perspective, boundaries could be understood as processes on contact and exchange, moments of knowing and movement and growth. Thus, we evolve from a metaphor of a bounded self whose task is to "master" reality, to a relational self "meeting" reality and growing with others" (p.1). Jordan further states that optimal individual development occurs " …in, towards, and through relationship. Self is defined by Surrey (1991) as "…a construct useful in describing the organization of a person's experience and construction of reality that illuminates the purpose and directionality of her or his behavior" (p.52). There have been gender differences noted in how the self is constructed. Miller (1976) suggests that a "woman's sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then maintain affiliation and relationships"(p.83).

Adolescence is a time of psychological and relational crisis for girls who often become disconnected from themselves, leaving them at an increased risk for depression and trauma (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Disconnection can occur in interpersonal relationships

as well as at the societal level as a consequence of oppression and discrimination. Disconnection at any level hinders or prohibits psychological growth (Jenkins, 1999). Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan (1992), in their continuous exploration of adolescent girls voices, discovered that many girls discussed a relational crisis in which they felt forced to lose their voice in order to connect with others and maintain relationships. Furthermore, they discovered that women also dissociate from their own adolescent experiences, making it more difficult to understand and recollect the challenges of female adolescence.

Resisting the cultural expectations for young women remains as a protective factor against the silencing of girls' voices (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Girls resist the cultural pressures in numerous manners including engaging in political and personal means of expressing themselves. Other girls may rebel against a society that they believe has harmed or disrespected them. Some girls may retreat from important relationships and begin to withhold their thoughts and feelings, becoming increasingly at risk for psychological problems (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Misunderstanding of girl's development and importance of relations can lead to the mistreatment and diagnosis of girls and may lead to the perpetuation of problems. Overlooking essential relational crisis of female juvenile offenders may lead to the perpetuation of problems such as runaway, substance abuse, truancy, theft, and ultimately violence.

It is especially important to listen to the experience of girls in diverse racial/ethnic groups. Historically, the needs of racially/ethnically diverse women were overlooked and misunderstood as they faced the challenges of being a "double minority". Special consideration is given to the voices and development of adolescent girls in order to begin to understand their experiences and consequently create programs, interventions, and societal

changes that respond to the needs of racially/ethnically diverse girls. The goal of cultural/relational theory and practice is to help girls to establish healthier relationships between and among girls, to confront the ideas for mistrust and alienation, and to form meaningful connections that promote psychological healthy.

Definitions of Terms

1. Female juvenile offender

A female adolescent, under the age of 18 years of age, involved in the Department of Juvenile Justice for committing an illegal act. All participants involved in the study were identified by the Department of Juvenile Justice and labeled as juvenile offenders.

2. Aggressive offenses

All criminal charges committed by a female juvenile offender that involves the use, or threat of use, of physical violence or force by the female juvenile offender towards another individual. These offenses include serious and violent charges of aggravated assault and robbery as defined by the Office of Juvenile Justice. In addition, these offenses include fighting, simple assault, terroristic threats, and battery. Offenses are identified through the Department of Juvenile Justice database.

3. Non-aggressive offenses

All criminal charges committed by a female juvenile offender that do not involve physical violence or force towards another individual. These charges include status offenses, offenses only charged to minors, such as running away or truancy and property offenses including burglary, theft, fraud, and drug and alcohol charges. Offenses were identified through the Department of Juvenile Justice database.

4. Relationship Factors

A relationship is defined by Miller & Stiver (1998) as "a set of interactions over a length of time"(p. 26). Relationships are dynamic, interactive, and reciprocal interactions between people. Relationships are viewed as a central component in female identity development (Surrey, 1991). The self-reported quality of the female juvenile offenders' relationships with her mother, father, male peers, female peers, and teachers were assessed by the Assessment of Interpersonal Relations (Bracken, 1993).

5. Psychological Factors

The female juvenile offenders' self report of psychological symptoms including symptoms of depression, anxiety, social stress, atypicality, and somatization as measured by the Behavioral Assessment System for Children- Self Report of Personality, Adolescent (BASC-SRP-A; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992). Psychological factors also include adaptive characteristics of the female juvenile offender including self-esteem and self-reliance as measured by the BASC-SRP-A.

Research Questions

Juvenile Justice Demographics

Research Question 1

Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses and their age of first offense?

Null Hypothesis 1

There will be no significant differences in the age of first offense between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses.

Variables for Hypothesis 1

Juvenile court records will be used to determine the age of first offense of each participant.

Research Question 2
Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive female juvenile offenders and the number of offenses they have committed?

Null Hypothesis 2
There will be no significant differences in the number of offenses committed by female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses.

Variables for Hypothesis 2
Juvenile court records will be used to determine the number of offenses committed by each participant.

Research Question 3
Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses and the number of years they have been involved in the Department of Juvenile Justice?

Null Hypothesis 3
There will be no significant differences in the number of years female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses have been involved in juvenile court.

Variables for Hypothesis 3
Juvenile court records will be used to determine the number of years each participant has been involved in the juvenile justice system.

Psychological Well-Being
Research Question 4
Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses on the following BASC –SRP-A (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992) scales:

a. depression
b. social stress
c. inadequacy
d. anxiety
e. locus of control
f. atypicality
g. somatization

Null Hypothesis 4
There will be no significant differences in the self-report of depression, social stress, inadequacy, anxiety, locus of control, atypicality, and somatization between female

juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses.

Variables for Hypothesis 4
The BASC-SRP-A (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992) subscales will be utilized to measure depression, social stress, inadequacy, anxiety, locus of control, atypicality, and somatization.

Research Question 5
Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses on the following BASC –SRP-A (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992) scales:

a. self-esteem
b. self-reliance

Null Hypothesis 5
There will be no significant differences in the self-report of self-esteem and self-reliance between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses.

Variables for Hypothesis 5
The BASC-SRP-A (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992) will be utilized to measure self-esteem and self-reliance

Family Relations
Research Question 6
Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses on the following family dynamic (Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983) scales:

a. Problem Solving
b. Communication
c. Roles
d. Affective responsiveness
e. Affective involvement
f. Behavior Control

Null Hypothesis 6
There will be no significant differences between females who have committed aggressive and who have committed non-aggressive acts and their self-report of family communication, family affect, family cohesion, and relationship with mother or relationship with father.

Variables for Hypothesis 6
The Family Assessment Device (Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983)will be utilized to measure family communication, family affect, family cohesion, and general family functioning. The Assessment of Interpersonal Relations will be utilized to measure relationship with mother and relationship with father.

Research Question 7
Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses and the quality of their relationship with their mothers and the quality of relationship with their fathers?

Null Hypothesis 7
There will be no significant difference between females who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive acts and their relationships with their mothers and relationships with their fathers.

Variables for Hypothesis 7
The Assessment of Interpersonal Relations (Bracken, 1993) will utilized to measure quality of relationship with mother and quality of relationship with father.

Peer Relations
Research Question 8
Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses and their quality of relationships with their male peers and their quality of relationships with their female peers?

Null Hypothesis 8
There are no significant differences between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses and the quality of their relationships with their male peers or the quality of their relationships with their female peers.

Variables for Hypothesis 8
The Assessment of Interpersonal Relations (Bracken, 1993) will be utilized to measure the quality of relationships with male peers and quality of relationships with female peers.

School Experience
Research Question 9
Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses and their attitudes towards school, their attitudes towards their teachers, and the quality of their relationship with their teachers.

Null Hypothesis 9

There will not be a significant difference between the female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses and their attitudes towards school, their attitudes towards teachers, and the quality of their relationships with teachers.

Variables for Hypothesis 9

The BASC-SRP-A (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992) will be utilized to measure attitudes toward teachers and attitudes towards school. The AIR (Bracken, 1993) will be utilized to measure quality of relationships with teachers.

Limitations of Study

1. This study relies upon self-report instruments completed by adolescents. Although adolescents are considered to be reliable sources of information about their experiences, utilizing the perceptions of multiple informants can provide more extensive information.
2. The female juvenile offenders involved in this study were all on probation at the time of data collection. Although the participants may be involved with the Department of Juvenile Justice for various offenses and may be at varying levels of involvement with the system (i.e. informal adjustment, probation, committed to the state), none of the participants were detained at the time of the study.
3. This study is designed to examine differences among female juvenile offenders who committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who committed non-aggressive offenses. Although the full continuum of non-aggressive offenses are represented, the extremely serious and violent offenses of murder or non-negligent manslaughter are not represented.

Assumptions of Study

1. It is assumed that the self-reports of the female juvenile offenders are reflective of typical female juvenile offenders and are representative of the psychological,

behavioral, and relational factors contributing to females' involvement in juvenile court.

2. It is assumed that the participants answered the assessment instruments in a valid and truthful manner, congruent with their true feelings and experiences.
3. The instruments administered were selected, in part, due to their level of readability. The highest level of readability expected was grade six. Reading and comprehension abilities of the girls' were assumed to be at the sixth grade level. Participants were encouraged and expected to ask for assistance if they had difficulty with the comprehension of an assessment item.
4. Offense histories and juvenile justice demographics were collected from the juvenile justice computerized records and participants' individual court records. It is assumed that these records are accurate and contain complete information regarding all charges received by each participant.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the Juvenile Offending Literature

Female juvenile offenders are demanding the attention of professionals and their communities. Beginning in the 1960's, female adolescents have been increasingly charged with more serious offenses and are becoming more prevalent in the juvenile justice system (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). Their presence in this system can no longer be ignored. Female juvenile offending in general, and female violent offending specifically, is on the rise. Although the majority of violent offenses are committed by male juvenile offenders, the number of serious and violent offenses committed by female adolescents continues to increase (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). In order to gain a better understanding of adolescent female who offend, research is needed regarding both the psychological and relationship factors associated with offending behaviors (MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001).

Previously, very few girls were charged with aggressive or anti-social acts, creating little need to study this population (Kavanaugh & Hops, 1994). As a result, research examining the histories of aggressive and non-aggressive adolescents females and the nature of their offending behaviors is scarce (Artz, 1998). Currently, however, there is a noticeable increase in the prevalence of female adolescent aggressive behavior, which has created a consequent need for more research in this area (Artz 1998; Cameron, deBrijne, Kennedy, & Morin, 1994; Matthews, 1994).

There has been an increased interest in the literature that examines the predictors of violence particularly as they relate to adolescent male violent offending (e.g. American Psychological Association, 1993; Crick, Bigbee, & Howes, 1996; Hawkins, Herrenkoh, Farrington, Brewer, Catalano, Harachi, & Cothern, 2000). Numerous individual, family, school, peer-related, and community factors have been identified as predictors of violence in male delinquents (e.g. Hawkins et al., 2000; Henggeler, Cunningham, Pickrel, Schoenwald, & Brondino, 1996; Horne et al., 1990). Although some generalizations can be made from this body of literature to better understand predictors of violence within females, the research in this area remains inconsistent (Stattin & Magnusson, 1989; Williams & McGhee, 1994). Further research is needed to identify factors associated with the violent acts of adolescent females (Hawkins et al., 2000).

Due to the increasing prevalence of females' violent crimes, as well as females' continual involvement with non-aggressive offenses, it may be beneficial to understand the differences between females who engage in violent crimes and those who engage in non-aggressive criminal behavior. Attempts have been made within the male delinquency literature to profile male juvenile offenders based on typologies of criminal behavior (e.g. Glaser, Calhoun, & Petrocelli, 2000; Stowers-Wright, 2000). One means of better understanding females who offend involves understanding the psychological, familial, interpersonal, and school dynamics associated with girls who engage in aggressive versus non-aggressive criminal behaviors.

Prevalence of Female Juvenile Offending

Today, female adolescents are increasingly engaging in high-risk behaviors and are becoming more prevalent in the juvenile justice system for more serious and violent crimes (Barnett & Simmons, 2001; MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001). In 1999, 670,800 adolescent females under the age of 18 were arrested accounting for approximately one fourth of all juvenile delinquency cases during the year (Barnett & Simmons, 2001). Between 1970 and 1995, female juvenile offending rose 364% (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). More specifically, the aggressive offense of adolescent females, such as the charge of aggravated assault, has increased 112% between the years of 1980 and 1995 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1981; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1995).

Historically, females involved in the juvenile justice system have most frequently been charged with status offenses: acts that typically violate societal standards set for adolescent females (Barnett & Simmons, 2001). Status offenses represent behaviors, including running away, promiscuity, and truancy, that are considered inappropriate and illegal for minors to engage in and behaviors that are not applicable to the lives of adults. Due to the differential treatment of boys and girls within the justice system, females are more often charged with these offenses because they are viewed as threatening to their safety and morality (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). Females continually represent the majority of runaway (58% of juvenile arrests) and prostitution charges (56 % of juvenile arrests) (Syder & Sickmund, 1999). And while females have always been involved with the juvenile court for the commission of status offenses, their presence is becoming more

apparent, their crimes are becoming more dangerous, and they are requiring special attention and intervention.

While arrests rates for adolescent males have remained stable or decreased, the arrests rates for females have continually been on the rise (Synder & Sickmund, 1999). There has been a sharp increase in the violent crimes committed by females while females continue to represent the majority of status offenses such as running away. In 1997, females committed 16% of juvenile arrests for violent crimes (Synder & Sickmund, 1999). Violent crimes include murder or non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, or aggravated assault (Wasserman, Miller, & Cothern, 2000). Adolescent female arrests for carrying a weapon tripled between 1981 and 1997 while male arrests for carrying a weapon doubled during this same time period (Synder & Sickmund, 1999). From 1981 through 1997, female adolescents' arrests for aggravated assault and simple assault rose sharply (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). Furthermore, between 1988 and 1997, the number of girls detained in a secure facility increased 65%, from 36,300 girls detained in 1988 to 60,000 girls detained in 1997 (Scahill, 2000). Such data demonstrates that female juvenile offending does pose a serious problem to both the adolescent females themselves and their larger community. Yet, the data cannot explain why there is an increase in female juvenile offending, what systemic, psychological, and relational factors may be associated with female juvenile offending, and what can be done to prevent the rates of female juvenile offending from continuing to climb.

Do these statistics reflect an actual increase in the offenses of adolescent females? Is the juvenile justice system changing how they define and respond to the behaviors of adolescent females? Does the increase in female juvenile offending represents the

current juvenile justice system's professional's inability to meet and address the needs of adolescent girls? These are questions continuously asked and questions that do not yet have an answer (Barnett & Simmons, 2001). What is known through arrest statistics is that female adolescents are increasing with the juvenile justice system. Yet, little research exists to help professionals understand adolescent female offenders and the nature of their offending behaviors (MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001).

Female Adolescent Development

Adolescence is well known as a period of exploration and experimentation: a period of trial and tribulation. The majority of adolescents can be expected to experiment with high-risk behavior during this process. Erikson (1968) has characterized this period as the crisis between "identity versus role confusion" during which adolescents integrate a variety of personal domains into one identity, an "inner identity". In the simplest of terms, it is through this period of experimentation that individuals resolve the identity crisis and become confident in themselves as individuals (LaVoie, 1976). For many adolescents these experimental roles and behaviors are benign and are necessary for their healthy emergence into adulthood. However, for an increasing number of female adolescents each year, these at risk behaviors may contribute to psychological, relational, and social problems.

The ability to form and maintain intimate relationships throughout adolescence has been identified as an essential component in the positive development of girls and women (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Connectedness and the centrality of relationships in girls and women's lives are critical to healthy female development (Jenkins, 1999). Yet, when females are perceived as being too closely attached in their relationships, they can be

labeled as dependent and seen as having emotional problems. Adolescent girls strive to find a balance between remaining connected with others while maintaining their own voice to express their opinions and experiences (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Therefore, female adolescence becomes problematic as girls struggle to become individuated at the very time they need to feel a strong connection in their relationships (Gilligan, 1993). Brown & Gilligan (1992) discuss the "relational crisis" that girls begin to experience in adolescence and that continues throughout their lifetimes. Brown & Gilligan (1992) define the "relational crisis" as follows:

> " Their internal struggles with wanting authentic relationships are fearing that if they voice their feelings and thoughts they will jeopardize relationships and endanger themselves, and their external struggles against cultural images and voices that encourage them to make a series of divisions which undermine what they know through experience, announce their entrance into womanhood, or more specifically, a womanhood where staying with themselves feels selfish and actively being with others feels selfless-where it seems impossible or untenable for them to bring their voices into their relationships" (p. 176).

The adolescent developmental period becomes a fragile time for females as they become prone to disguising their true emotions in relationships and are at a greater risk for depression, suicide attempts, and some high-risk behaviors (Gilligan, 1993). This period is particularly a fragile time for early developing females who are cognitively ill-prepared to deal with many new pressures, such as unwanted sexual attention, while simultaneously feeling isolated from the support and friendship of family members and of later developing peers. The desire for connection and attention from male peers, and particularly older male peers, also creates opportunities for confusion (Bartolomucci, Calhoun, & McLean, 2001). In addition, many girls are dissatisfied with their changing bodies during this time when physical appearance is of utmost importance (Berkovitz,

1993). The result is clearly observable; a once vivacious, outspoken child may become subdued in adolescence as she becomes acutely aware of her feminine self and female gender roles (Orenstein, 1994). In School Girls (1994), Orenstein states "For a girl, the passage into adolescence is not just marked by menarche or a few new curves. It is marked by a loss of confidence in herself and her abilities, especially in math and science. It is marked by a scathingly critical attitude toward her body and a blossoming sense of personal inadequacy." (pp.xvi). It is essential to create programs for adolescent females that aid them in building confidence in themselves and in their abilities and help to prevent adolescent girls from engaging in behaviors that are self-harming (Miller, Trapani, Fejes-Mendoza, Eggleston, & Dwiggins, 1995).

African American Female Adolescent Development

The challenges of adolescence are multiplied for African American female adolescents who, as Walker (1999) states, are faced with managing the potentially traumatic interaction of racism and sexism. African American females are faced with gender and racial identity development (Stevens, 1997). By the age of 12, females of diverse race and economic classes, recognize their gender as a barrier to their goals (Orenstein, 1994). During adolescents, it becomes apparent to many African American females that they need to learn assertive methods to deal with the discriminatory and hostile environments they may encounter (Stevens, 1997). They may learn that more aggressive means are needed to confront the disrespect that they may experience (Stevens, 1997).

African American girls connection to their heritage is significant in their mental and social health (Jenkins, 1999). Jenkins (1999) stated, "…perceptions of connection

for many African American women are deeply embedded in the interdependent, collective, affiliative, and spiritual orientation of traditional African American culture"(p. 78). Positive connections and identification with other African Americans is essential in the development of positive self-image and self-esteem among African American girls (Jenkins, 1993). Perceptions of limited access to prosperous opportunities, due to gender and race, may influence some African American girls to belief that they cannot achieve their future goals and dreams (Harris, 1998). Harris (1998) suggested that African American girls' perceptions that they will not achieve their goals, might serve as a contributor to offending behavior. Therefore, connections with successful African American women role models are crucial in the healthy development of African American adolescent girls.

Female Developmental Pathways of Delinquency

Some researchers have begun to recognize similarities between the aggressive pathways of boys and girls in childhood and adolescence (Cairns & Cairns, 1994). The research of Crick and Grotepeter (1995) suggests that aggressive behavior of boys and girls do not differ greatly in early childhood. In adolescents, the majority of actual offending behaviors among girls does not differ greatly from their male counterparts and typically includes less severe acts such as petty theft and drinking alcohol to more serious acts including aggressive behaviors (Cheney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). In addition to their delinquent behaviors, teachers have noted that the presence of hyperactivity and depression are associated with aggression in girls as they are with boys (Talbott, 1997). Furthermore, research suggests that females who experience behavioral difficulties in

their childhood years are likely to continue with these behaviors throughout adolescence (Talbott, 1997; Talbott & Theide, 1999).

Adolescence poses a challenging developmental stage and it is during this time that many girls may initially engage in disruptive or aggressive behaviors. There has been an ongoing interest in exploring the pathways of children and adolescents who display problematic behaviors (Friedman, Kramer, & Kreisher, 1999; Kratzer & Hodgins, 1999; Moffitt, 1993; Silverthorn, 1996; Talbott & Theide, 1999). Moffitt's (1993) work has been some of the most extensive work regarding the developmental pathways of juvenile offenders. Moffitt (1993) studied a Swedish cohort of roughly 7,000 boys and girls from childhood to 30 years of age. Through this research, Moffitt (1993) was able to differentiate the Childhood onset of Conduct disorder and the Adolescent onset of Conduct disorder in males. Her finding suggested that boys who engage in behaviors associated with conduct disorder in childhood are more likely to continuously engage in long term patterns of anti-social behaviors.

Unfortunately, Moffitt's theory (1993) has not provided a clear understanding of the pathways of female juvenile offending. Her findings have suggested that like adolescent males, adolescent females who engaged in problematic behaviors in childhood were charged with more offenses throughout their adolescence than youth whose behavior problems were limited to the adolescent years. When Moffitt's theory (1993) was applied to the females in the cohort, some differences have been found although these have not been formulated into a sound theory regarding female juvenile offending (Kratzer & Hodgins, 1999). For example, females who engaged in offending behaviors in adulthood, rather than in childhood, accounted for the greatest proportions of offenses

by females (Kratzer & Hodgins, 1999). Moffitt's well-researched body of literature appears to be effective in explaining the developmental pathway of male delinquency. As of yet, this theory has not been found to adequately explain female juvenile offending (Kratzer & Hodgins, 1999).

Preliminary research of Talbott and Theide (1999) is also beginning to examine the pathways of offending behaviors among adolescent girls. Talbott and Theide (1999) examined the behaviors of 763 girls, aged 11-17 years of age, over a four-year period. The result of their study suggested that there is continuity of aggressive acts such as fighting, disruptive behaviors, and vandalism over a four-year period. However, their results did not support the continuity of drinking, stealing, and school problems over a four-year period. Therefore, the results of this study suggest that aggressive behaviors in girls are more likely to be continuous than non-aggressive behaviors.

Although age of onset may be a significant factor in understanding the pathways of male delinquency, research regarding early behavior problems of females and later delinquency is inconsistent at best (Hawkins et al., 2000). Currently, research examining the initial age of offending behaviors of females does not appear to consistently predict future pathways of female offending. As mentioned previously, Moffitt's (1993) work was able to delineate differential delinquency pathways based upon the male's initial involvement in behavior problems. However, childhood initiation of offending behaviors or behavior problems has not been consistently linked with the length of the females' involvement in offending behaviors or the severity of her future offenses (McCord & Ensiminger, 1995; Moffitt, 1993; Stattin & Magnusson, 1989).

Early adolescence appears to be a crucial time in the development of offending behaviors and has been identified as the "Breaking Point" for adolescent females (Barnett & Simmons, 2001). It is during this age period that adolescent girls are most likely to experience family problems, school difficulties, problematic social relations, and mental health disorders (Barnett & Simmons, 2001). It is during adolescence that a noticeable difference can be seen in the increase and severity of aggressive and delinquent behaviors of girls during adolescence (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). Problematic behavior in females typically becomes evident near 13 years of age, near the onset of adolescents, and begins to decline after the age of 15 (Stone, 1998).

Unlike male juvenile offenders, females are less likely to exhibit behavior problems in childhood and more commonly begin offending behaviors during their adolescent years (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). Male juvenile delinquency literature suggests that there is a much better prognosis for boys who engage in delinquent behaviors during adolescents versus childhood (Moffitt, 1993). However, this may not be the case for adolescent females. Although females may actually initiate their criminal activities in adolescence, there is preliminary data which suggests developmental pathways of female juvenile offending which often begin in adolescence may share commonalities with the boys diagnosed with childhood onset conduct disorder (Silverthorn, 1996).

Silverthorn's (1996) research investigated the antisocial pathways of adolescent girls. Her study supports previous research suggesting the females become involved in antisocial activities during adolescents rather than in childhood. However, rather than classifying female juvenile offenders as displaying an adolescent onset of conduct

disorder, she has found the term "delayed onset" more appropriate. Her research suggests precipitating factors of serious female delinquency are similar to those found in the male juvenile offenders with childhood onset of conduct disorder.

Understanding Female Aggression

Male and female aggression may appear similar although the nature of male and female aggression may vary greatly. Female aggressive acts can often be most clearly understood within the context of their interpersonal relationships (Barnett & Simmons, 2001). Aggressive acts of females are typically related to their perceptions that a significant relationship is being threatened (Artz, 1998). Fighting, an interpersonal form of aggression is the most common, overtly, aggressive act among adolescent boys and girls (Valios, McKeown, Garrison, & Vincent, 1995). Whereas it is common for boys to act aggressively towards strangers as well as peers, female typically act aggressively to individuals close to them including family members and female peers (Valios et al., 1995). It is common for adolescent females to receive a charge of assault or battery towards a family member as a result of a family conflict in the home while adolescent males are more commonly charged with violent offenses that occur with individuals outside of the home (Barnett & Simmons, 2001; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). Destruction of property is another example of an offense committed by both male and female adolescents that is typically precipitated by very different situations. Female adolescents are typically charged with property destruction in the home while adolescent males are more commonly charged with the destruction of property at school or in a public setting (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). These examples suggest the importance of examining the relational context of female offenses.

Relational aggression has been found to be a common, but easily overlooked form of female adolescent aggression. Relational aggression occurs within the context of peer relationships. Relational aggression brings emotional harm to another individual by purposefully spreading rumors that can injure a person's reputation, intentionally damaging an important peer relationship, posing a threat to endanger a relationship, or deliberately excluding another individual (Crick, 1995). Both boys and girls can engage in relational aggression, however, relational aggression is most common among females (Crick, 1995). Crick and Dodge (1994) have examined the social cognitive attribution processes of overtly aggressive youth and have found that these youth interpret ambiguous situations as provoking aggression. Similarly, relationally aggressive youth may interpret socially ambiguous situations as intentionally harmful, exclusionary, or hostile (Crick, 1995). Although equally detrimental to its victims, relational aggression can be invisible to adults. Relational aggression may be ongoing and eventually lead to a physically aggressive encounter among girls. However, to many, the physical fight will appear isolated and be treated as a one time event while in actuality it is the outcome of continuous emotional harm to an individual among her peers (Cairns, Neckerman, Ferguson, & Gariepy, 1989).

Marsh and Patton (1986) interviewed adolescent British girls to gain a better understanding of why girls fight. Through these interviews, the authors concluded physical fighting is primarily the consequence of rumor spreading or sexual insult, or serves to protect a relationship with a male peer. Aggression in girls can take many forms; yet, almost inevitably the majority of female aggressive acts occur within a social

arena (Talbott, 1997). The social contexts of these girls must be understood in order to understand the role and development of aggressive acts in the lives of girls.

Using drugs and alcohol and carrying a weapon are activities that greatly increase the possibility that an adolescent female will engage in aggressive acts. Alcohol and drug use plays a key role in the aggressive acts among adolescents including suicide (violence towards self), and homicide, robbery, fighting, and assault (violence towards others) (Valios et al., 1995). Although alcohol and drugs may be used to help the adolescent temporarily feel relief from ongoing emotional problems, the use of drugs and alcohol heightens the possibility that the adolescent will bring even greater harm to themselves by engaging in aggressive behaviors (Barnett & Simmons, 2001; Valios et al., 1995). Interesting gender and racial differences among adolescents who commit aggressive acts have been found (Valios et al., 1995). For example, the authors found that aggression among white females was highly correlated with alcohol and illegal drug use while aggression in black females, as well as black and white males, was significantly correlated with sexual activity. It can be assumed that adolescents engaging in a variety of "at risk" behaviors such as alcohol use, drug use, and risky sexual behaviors are also more likely to engage in aggressive acts.

Experiences of Physical and Sexual Violence

The majority of adolescent females involved in the juvenile justice system are survivors of continual physical or sexual abuse (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). The experience of violence has been hypothesized as a contributor to current female juvenile offending although there has not been a clear consensus among researchers regarding its role. Research has suggested that anywhere between 32 % (Phelps, McIntosh, Jesudason,

Warner, & Pohlkamp, 1982) to 73 % (McCormack, Janus, & Burgess, 1986) of offending girls have experienced sexual abuse. The American Correctional Association (1990) estimated that over 50% of females involved in the juvenile justice system are survivors of sexual abuse. Phelps and colleagues (1982) also estimated that approximately 80% of the girls involved in the juvenile justice system experienced physical abuse. However, the actual number of girls within the juvenile justice system that have experienced sexual and physical abuse remains unclear. Young survivors of physical and sexual abuse may be more likely to runaway from home to escape the abuse, to fight against someone in the home in self-defense, or to engage in drug use to emotionally escape the effects of abuse (Barnett & Simmons, 2001). Adolescent females who experience abuse in the home are also more likely to experience anxiety, depression, school difficulties, risky sexual behaviors, and early pregnancies (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986). The experience of physical and sexual abuse has severe consequences for adolescent females and clearly plays a primary role in female juvenile offending (American Correctional Association, 1990).

The type of abuse experienced by an adolescent female may serve as a predictor of the type of offense an adolescent female will commit (Mouzakitis, 1981). The type of violence a young female is exposed to may be a predictor of aggressive or non-aggressive offending behavior. Mouzakitis (1981) found girls who were exposed to physical abuse were likely to perpetuate violence within their own lives while girls who have experienced sexual abuse are more likely to enter the juvenile justice system due to a status offense such as running away. In the later situation, an adolescent female may runaway over ten times in an attempt to escape from their traumatic home situation

(American Correctional Association, 1990). Running away may be an adolescent females only means of protecting herself from violence in the home. Due to the lack of programming available to young girls, the adolescent female is often placed back in the home or detained for attempting to keep herself safe from violence. After continually being abused, disbelieved, and punished, almost half of the adolescent females in the juvenile justice system who have experienced abuse resort to the only means they believe they have to escape their situations; they attempt suicide (American Correctional Association, 1990).

Youth who experience physical violence are more likely to resort to physical violence as a means of problem solving or conflict resolution (Owens & Strauss, 1975). This makes sense in light of Bandura's well-supported findings that a violent reaction to stress and conflict is a learned behavior (Bandura, 1977). Durant, Pendergast, and Cadenlead (1994) examined African American adolescents living in a Georgia housing development. Their results suggested that adolescents who were exposed to violence in their homes and peer groups were most likely to engage in violence themselves. Ashen (1997) stated that "…a more a subject is exposed to and experiences violence, the more "pumped up" and "powerful" she feels when engaging in violent behavior" (p.108). In the same vein, girls who experience sexual abuse may be less likely to respond violently but are more likely to be re-exposed to sexual trauma through sexually promiscuity and prostitution (Silbert & Pines, 1981).

Aggressive acts may be the result of continual exposure and personal experiences of violence (Shakoor & Chalmers, 1991). Galatzer-Levy (1993) suggests that adolescents who are exposed to continual violence may incorporate violence as a part of

their own identity. Aggression may be viewed by some adolescents as a primary means of gaining power or a means of releasing the intense frustration and mistrust they feel internally (Galatzer-Levy, 1993). Interestingly, Ashen (1997) found that girls who engage in violent acts against people outside of the home feel very powerful and respected. However, his findings suggest that these feelings are not present when the aggressive act is directed towards a family member. These results suggest that girls may be more likely to act aggressively towards individuals that they know and who do not pose a threat to their safety. Ashen (1997) concludes that adolescent females, who have experienced violence, may use violence for the very specific purposes of regaining a sense of power and control in their own lives.

Female adolescents who experience physical and sexual abuse not only have the challenges of normal adolescent development, they are also dealing with issues of negative self-image, educational and vocational ambiguity, and intimacy in relationships that accompanies such violent acts (Miller et al., 1995). There is no doubt that abused adolescents are at particular risk for juvenile delinquency (e.g. Calhoun, Jurgens & Chen, 1993). These young women learn at an early age that they need to find means to defend themselves. These means may include defiance or aggression (Harris, 1998).

Psychological Features of Female Juvenile Offenders

Adolescent females appear to be at risk for many high-risk behaviors and mental health problems during adolescents (Beyer, 1998). Silverthorn (1996) suggests that rather than triggering the onset of antisocial behaviors, adolescence may be associated with the removal of previously experienced protective factors. In elementary school, girls are observed to be vivacious, confident, and secure (Orenstein, 1994). During their

younger years, girls are identified as having less mental health issues, including internalizing problems such as depression and externalizing problems such as acting out behavior problems (Silverthorn, 1996). Girls are reported to be resilient in preadolescence and have great abilities to cope with a variety of external factors such as divorce and daycare (Eme & Kavanaugh, 1995).

However, the adolescent developmental period introduces a plethora of changes and stresses for adolescent girls. With the onset of puberty, females experience many physical and emotional changes (Harter, 1997) including a decrease in self-esteem and self efficacy (Pipher, 1994), a loss of voice (Gilligan, 1993), and an increase in depression (Wichstrom, 1999). Furthermore, feeling confident in the school environment and achieving school success may become more challenging (Orenstein, 1994). Adolescent girls may not experience the same protective factors during adolescence that previously shielded them from internalizing and externalizing problems in their earlier years (Silverthorn, 1996).

Violence and mental health issues often go hand in hand (Freidman, Kramer, & Kreisher, 1999). Adolescents who experience depression and hopelessness are more likely to engage in aggressive activities towards others (i.e. violence) as well as towards themselves (i.e. self-mutilation, suicide) (Durant, Pendergast, & Cadenhead, 1994). An increased rate of suicide attempts among female juvenile offenders is indicative of the severe level of depression experienced by many girls involved in juvenile court. Zocolillo & Rogers (1991) found that up to 50% of the female juvenile offenders they examined had made at least one suicide attempt.

Self-concept, self-efficacy, and personal agency are often closely tied to the girls' experiences of being female, the quality of their important relationships, and their perceptions of available opportunities and resources. Other females, particularly female family members and community members serve as models as to what opportunities will be available and how the girls can navigate their own lives. Examining the female adolescent offender's perceptions of her sense of power, control, and self-efficacy may yield significant insights into her offending behaviors. Numerous factors may influence the female juvenile offenders' perceptions of her ability to achieve her dreams, achieve success through socially acceptable means, and feel she has the personal power to bring about change in her life. Harris (1998) interviewed 8, 18-22 years of age, African American women previously involved with the juvenile justice system. In Harris's (1998) interviews, she discovered that the eight, young, African American women reported, as adolescents, they did not have the personal power and confidence to create their dreams and achieve their goals.

Frustration, violation, disrespect, and lack of personal power can fuel the emotion of anger. The women interviewed in Harris's (1998) study recollected why they first became involved in the juvenile justice system. They concluded that feelings of anger and rebellion, among other social factors, fueled their decision to engage in delinquent activities. An inability to find appropriate means of expressing anger and frustration were identified as underlying reasons for the participant's offending behavior. Anger can become a confusing emotion for girls, an emotion that is common in their lives and an emotion that can have grave consequences when expressed. Brown & Gilligan (1992) stated "Aware of the realities of physical violence and psychological violation, girls have

reason to fear arousing other people's anger. And their own anger, held in their bodies, unvoiced and out of relationships, loses its relational proportions and becomes in itself, frightening and unclear" (p.174). Some girls may be likely to withhold their anger, fearful to express their concerns and feelings to the appropriate others, while other girls may withhold their anger, unable to name their feeling, and then release anger within relational contexts with a vengeance and a rage.

Fostering a Healthy Female Adolescent Development

The focus on resiliency and protective factors is not meant to overlook the true devastations many children face, but to help children maximize their strengths and personal assets to secure their future success (Benson, 1997). The importance of identifying and fostering the growth of protective factors in female juvenile offender's lives cannot be emphasized enough. As Silverthorn (1996) suggested, it may be the decrease of protective factors that is associated with female offending during adolescence. The presence and absence of protective factors can be powerful predictors of adolescent psychological health and behaviors. The research of The Search Institute has evidenced the power of developing internal and external developmental assets (Benson, 1997). The external developmental assets include *support* from their families, other adults, and community members, a community that *empowers* youth, *clear expectations and boundaries* with family members, schools, communities, and peers, and many constructive and creative means of *utilizing their time effectively*. Internal developmental assets include a *personal engagement in learning*, holding *positive values* such as honesty, caring, responsibility, *social competencies* such as decision making and conflict resolution skills, and a *positive self-identity* including personal power, self-

esteem, and optimism (Benson, 1997). The nourishment of the developmental assets highlights the importance of critical relationships by requiring the support and nurturance from key family, school, and community members. Support and encouragement in significant relationships, across these primary contexts, can nourish developmental assets essential to positive female adolescent development.

Peter Benson and his colleagues at the Search Institute have identified forty developmental assets that serve as protective factors against high-risk behaviors, foster positive development, and increase hardiness or resiliency in children and adolescents (Benson, 1997). Their research has suggested that youth with many developmental assets are more likely to be happy and successful throughout their lives. Their research with youth in Albuquerque and Minneapolis, found that the more developmental assets a child possesses the less likely they are to engage in high-risk behaviors and experience psychological problems. Youth with 0-10 developmental assets were significantly more likely than the national average to engage in alcohol use, tobacco use, sexual intercourse, depression/suicide, antisocial behavior, violence, and school problems (Benson, 1997). Considering that many female juvenile offenders experience several of these behavioral and psychological problems, fostering the developmental assets of these may help to prevent further offending behavior and increase their likelihood for future success.

Female Adolescent Offenders' Family Dynamics

Female juvenile offenders report more negative experiences within their families than their non-offending peers (Kroupa, 1988). Numerous characteristics including; parental mental health problems, parent criminality, parental neglect, parental substance abuse, conflicted and coercive family relations, are common occurrences in the homes of

female adolescent offenders (cf. Hawkins et al., 2000; Yates, 1993). In addition, the experiences of financial stress and poverty are common and compound the challenges faced by adolescent female offenders and their families. The lack of financial resources places additional pressure on the family while decreasing the likelihood of positive parental interactions and discipline techniques (Conger, Conger, Elder, Lorenz, Simons, & Whitbeck, 1993).

Often, family dysfunction and parental pathology are present in the families of female involved in the juvenile justice system (Calhoun, Jurgens, & Chen, 1993). Chesney-Lind and Koroki (1985) found that the homes of violent female offenders are particularly troubled and include moving frequently, the presence of a step-parent, abandonment, death of a parent, and alcoholism. Parents of female juvenile offenders often have extensive mental health concerns of their own that interfere with their ability to parent effectively (Harris, 1998). In addition, the presence of drugs and criminality in the families can serve as the female juvenile offenders' first introduction to drugs and offending behavior (Harris, 1998).

Family conflict is a common factor among girls who become involved with the juvenile justice system (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). Female adolescents typically place a strong value on family relationships however; the family lives of offending adolescent females are greatly affected by conflicted familial relationships. Poor family interactions are believed to play an especially strong role in the cause of female offending (Figueria-McDonough, 1985). Female juvenile offenders tend to experience a great deal of conflict and little cohesion in their familial relations (Marcus, 1996). Harris (1998) conducted a qualitative study with 8 African-American women, ages 18-22, who have

been involved with the juvenile justice system as adolescents and were currently on probation as adults. Harris (1998) reported that " …all of them stated that as youths and adolescents, they were involved in constant verbal fights with their parents. These fights were characterized as bitter power struggles which exacerbated their inability to communicate, and their general frustration and anger over their conflictual and often-deteriorating family ties" (p.199). With little support or warmth at home, females may become more likely to engage in delinquent activities such as substance abuse. An indirect effect of poor family relations is the inability for the children to learn appropriate social skills to handle conflict in their own lives (Marcus & Betzer, 1996). Commonly, the female adolescent's initial court involvement is a result of her attempt to escape the family (Calhoun et al., 1993).

An adolescent female's relationships with her mother and/or father can serve as a protector factor against offending behaviors (Kroupa, 1988). However, many female juvenile offenders report challenges in their relationships with their mothers and fathers. Unfortunately, many adolescent female offenders, as well as adolescent male offenders, often perceive their fathers as rejecting, neglecting, or absent during the majority of their childhood (Calhoun et al., 1993; Kroupa, 1988). In Artz's study (1998), she found that many of the violent females she interviewed experienced violence at the hands of their fathers. In Fatherless America, Blackenhorn (1995) states that the importance of a father cannot be overlooked. He suggests that a positive father-daughter relationship helps the adolescent female build confidence in herself, her femininity, and her ability to view herself as worthy of love and respect. A negative father-daughter relationship can convince adolescent females to seek love and emotional acceptance, in various forms,

from their male peers in order to reinforce their self worth (Blackenhorn, 1995; Chesney-Lind & Korki, 1985).

Adolescent females who offend often perceive their relationships with mothers entirely differently than their relationships with their fathers. Adolescent females who offend tend to express a great deal of love for their mothers. Although they may experience conflict in their relationship with one another, adolescent girls often continue to respect mothers for caring for them and providing them with the basic necessities (Kroupa, 1988). Adolescent female offenders tend to feel close to their mothers, however, many report that their mothers' love is conditional and dependent upon their behaviors (Kroupa, 1988). Commonly, mothers of adolescent females who offend are confronted with the stress of being a single parent and having limited financial resources. Often the mother is the sole financial provider for her family and unable to spend the great deal of time with her children that is needed to provide adequate supervision (Rosenbaum, 1989). Due to the mother's own personal experiences, the mother's of adolescent females who offend often experience depression. Maternal depression has been directly associated with negative psychological development and possible behavior problems in their adolescent girls (Davies & Windle, 1997).

Domestic violence can have a severe impact on the behaviors of adolescent females. In Artz's (1998) conversations with adolescent females who engaged in violent offenses, she discovered that many of the girls reported that their mothers experienced violence at the hands of their husbands and/or boyfriends, and family of origins. Artz (1998) noted a continual theme that the violent adolescent female observed her mother being "silenced and devalued" (p.85). Observing their mothers in positions of weakness

may heighten the female adolescents perceived need for violence. In order to protect her mother and her family, females may use violence, as a means to demonstrate power.

Female juvenile offenders' homes and parental relationships are typically wrought with conflict, abuse or neglect, parental mental health and parenting issues, and financial difficulties. These family characteristics may make it difficult for young women to develop healthy intimate relations, to engage in proactive activities, and plan for the future, which can place them at a greater risk for delinquent and/or psychological problems (Davies & Windle, 1997).

Female Adolescent Offenders' Peer Relations

Peer relationships gain increasing importance through the adolescent years. Adolescent females who have experienced conflict and abuse in their homes, may particularly feel the need to experience acceptance and a sense of belonging from their peer group. Female juvenile offenders typically associate with other offending youth, however it is unclear the role of the delinquent peers in the onset of delinquent activities (Keenan, Loeber, Zhang, Stouthamer-Loeber, & Van Kammen, 1995). Caspi, Lynam, Moffitt, and Silva (1993) suggest that youth with a history of behavioral problems may choose friends who also engage in these behaviors. Females tend to become involved in delinquent activities with their peers and maintain these behaviors within their peer group (Caspi, et al., 1993). Harris (1998) found that the peers of female juvenile offenders are commonly involved in delinquent activities and females often commit offenses with their peer groups or boyfriends.

Early maturing female adolescents may have the greatest propensity to become involved in delinquent activities with their peers. Female juvenile offenders, who appear

physically more mature, are more likely to become involved with older peers, particularly older male peers, who appear more self-assured and independent than themselves. Older peers may serve as models of delinquent behavior for younger females entering into the experimental, developmental period of adolescence. Older peers often introduce younger female adolescent to criminal behaviors (Harris, 1998). Interactions with peers can involve activities that the female is not cognitively prepared to handle, such as sexual coercion.

Harter's (1997) research suggests that girls are most likely to suppress their own thoughts and values with the opposite sex and consequently experience a decrease in self-esteem and self-confidence. Offending female adolescents may be influenced by older peers and feel uncomfortable voicing their opposition to delinquent activities without fearing negative consequences such as peer rejection. They choose to accept the status quo of their peers rather than defend their personal beliefs. Many girls do not recognize that their method of seeking emancipation from parental and societal constraints may actually jeopardize their freedom and place them in dangerous situations. Orenstein (1994) articulates this behavior as she states that adolescent females are unable to "…distinguish between liberation and domination" (p.206). Female juvenile offenders, like the majority of adolescent girls, experience a need to please others and are willing to sacrifice their own identity, and safety, to do so.

Female juvenile offenders, as do most adolescents, have a need to belong to a peer group and experience acceptance amongst their peers. Females involved in juvenile court may seek peers who have similar experiences and behaviors in order to feel accepted and understood. When girls surround themselves by people who share

similar social norms and behaviors, they do not receive negative feedback for their actions, and the adolescent's self concept is not negatively affected within the peer group (Barton & Figueira-McDonough, 1985). Adolescent females, unlike adolescent males, can maintain very close relations with best friends while their other relationships may be more confrontational (Marcus & Betzer, 1996). This is a particularly important asset for females who tend to place an emphasis on their personal relationships.

Female Adolescent Offenders' School Experience

Schools can serve as a primary context to support and encourage the positive development of female adolescents (DeZolt & Henning-Stout, 1999). Yet, traditionally, schools have not been prepared to address the concerns of females and promote the success of females (AAUW, 1992). The school context often mirrors the ideas and values of the larger community and can often perpetuate gender stereotypes of girls and women. For example, there is an observable lack of educational materials about women as well as racial/ethnic minorities presented to youth in schools (AAUW, 1995). Even more so, many schools may shy away from, or prohibit, addressing important issues of violence, sexuality, and personal safety that present as pressing issues for adolescent girls as well as adolescent boys.

School achievement is an essential factor in the healthy development of adolescents. School achievement has traditionally been important to females and is associated with popularity (DeZolt & Henning-Stout, 1999) while school failure is strongly associated with female offending (Hawkins et al., 2000). Experiences of poor success in school can lead to discouragement, drop out, and delinquency (Adler, 1987).

Poverty amplifies the likelihood of school difficulties (Figueria-McDonough, 1984). Orenstein (1994) believes that girls who are able to succeed in school, against gender types, are more likely to assert themselves outside the classroom as well. Females who become involved in delinquent activities and act against the gender status quo may not find the support and understanding of school officials and peers. Lacking appropriate resources, the female offender may choose not to participate in the academic setting or simply refuse to attend school. Delinquent behaviors in girls have been associated with poor academic performance.

A positive relationship between an adolescent female and her teachers can provide a wonderful source of support (DeZolt & Henning-Stout, 1999), serve as a protective factor against school failure (Casteel, 2000), and promote the healthy psychological development of adolescent females (Calhoun & Smith, 2001). Pomeroy (1999) suggested that a student's relationship with their teachers is one of the most salient characteristics of student's school experiences. The quality of relationships with teachers is continually found to be a crucial factor in the success of students (e.g. Calhoun & Smith, 2001; Casteel, 2000; Dezolt & Henning-Stout, 1999). Relationship with teachers has been suggested to be a primary factor in the success of students; therefore, students who have negative attitudes towards teachers are more likely to be less successful in the school arena (Casteel, 2000).

Females involved in the juvenile justice system may be a specific group of individuals who often experience the misunderstanding of their teachers. Teachers are in the position to reach out to students experiencing challenging personal and academic situations and establish a genuine relationship as a role model and mentor (Pomeroy,

1999). In an examination of the major relationships in the lives of female juvenile offenders including relationships with parents, male and female peers, and teachers, the quality of relationships with teachers were continually found to be related to the psychological adjustment of adolescent girls involved in the juvenile justice system (Bartolomucci, Calhoun, & McLean, in review). Yet, teachers often report that they struggle to identify and understand the severity of the issues endured by delinquent and aggressive girls throughout middle and high school. Talbott (1999) found that teachers were less likely to identify girls as "disturbed" who were hospitalized for anti-social behaviors. Talbott (1999) hypothesized this may be due to the instruments used to understand and target girls' behavioral and emotional problems or possibly that much of girls aggression may be in the form of social aggression and go unnoticed by teachers.

Understanding the importance of adolescent female's relationships with their teachers may be an interesting area of research. Teachers are in a primary position to serve as a support and role model for their adolescent female students. The connection between a teacher and student may help to serve as a protective factor and counter the many of the negative experiences that the offending adolescent female is experiencing throughout the various contexts of her life.

Conclusion

Female juvenile offending has become increasingly more prevalent and violent in today's communities (Barnett & Simmons, 2001). This increase has raised the interest of researchers and professionals to better understand factors associated with female juvenile offending and particularly to determine factors associated with more aggressive forms of offending (Hawkins et. al, 2000). There has been a recent attempt to understand the

psychological and relational factors associated with female juvenile offending. Understanding the key relationships of female juvenile offenders is necessary when exploring the gender specific pathways of female juvenile offenders. In order to differentiate psychological and relational factors of girls who commit aggressive and non-aggressive acts, it is helpful to examine the psychological aspects of self, including strengths and weaknesses, as well as the quality of relational experiences within the home, school, and peer contexts of the female juvenile offender.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The research questions of this study were designed to determine whether there are significant differences among female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive and non-aggressive offenses on various juvenile justice demographic factors, psychological factors, as well as differences between the quality of family, peer, and school relationships. Specifically, this study examined indices on the BASC self-report of personality for adolescents (BASC-SRP-A; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992), the Family Assessment Device (FAD; Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983), and the Assessment of Interpersonal Relationships (AIR; Bracken, 1993). This study may contribute to the body of literature regarding female juvenile offenders and help to specify if differences exist among female juvenile offenders based upon the type of offense that is committed.

Data was collected from female adolescents involved in the juvenile court system as part of a therapeutic group screening process. The data utilized in this study is part of a federally funded grant, titled Gaining Insight into the Relationships for Lifelong Success (The G.I.R.L.S. Project), which is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of a relational group approach with offending females. The instruments were administered by graduate level clinicians participating in the G.I.R.L.S. Project. All participants were grouped according to their offense histories collected from the juvenile justice system's offense database.

The research design for this study utilized one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine significant differences between two groups of female juvenile offenders. Participants were grouped in the aggressive group if they had a history of one or more aggressive offenses according to their juvenile justice court record. Participants were grouped in the non-aggressive group if the female juvenile offender did not have a previous aggressive charge according to their juvenile justice court record. The ANOVA statistical method is most appropriate when there is one independent variable with more than one level (Green, Salkind, & Alkey, 2000). In this case, the independent variable is type of offense. The independent variable has two groups: female juvenile offenders who have committed an aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have committed solely non-aggressive offenses.

Multiple dependent variables can be examined in order to determine if there is a significant difference between the means of each group on each given dependent variable. In this study, the dependent variables consist of juvenile justice demographics such as age of first offense, number of total offenses committed, and number of years of juvenile justice involvement, as well as subscales from the BASC-SRP-A (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992), the FAD (Espstein et al., 1983), and the AIR (Bracken, 1993).

These instruments were selected in order to provide an examination of the psychological and relationship factors associated with female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive or solely non-aggressive offenses. Relational/cultural theory emphasizes the importance of examining psychological and behavioral challenges within the context of meaningful relationships. Variables from these instruments were selected to provide a thorough examination of the experience of psychological symptoms and the

quality of meaningful relationships, as they are associated with type of offense. An exploration of clinical symptoms and relationship factors are also necessary to examine this theories usefulness in determining its usefulness in explaining female juvenile offending and their specific offending patterns.

While incorporating a large number of variables is useful in exploring psychological and relationship factors among female juvenile offenders, it becomes necessary to statistically account for the number of variables being examined. When examining multiple dependent variables it is necessary to adjust the level of significance in order to reduce the likelihood of making a Type I error (Keppel, 1991). Bonferroni adjustments were conducted to reduce the possibility of making a Type I error (Keppel, 1991). However, correcting for a Type I error does increase the possibility that a Type II error will be made and possible significant findings may be overlooked (Keppel, 1991).

Participants

Participants in the study included 120 female adolescents identified through a juvenile justice system located in northeastern Georgia. The age range of the subject population was between 12 and 17 years of age with a mean age of 14.88 (SD=2.26) years of age. The racial composition of the participants was 72% African American adolescent females, 26% Caucasian adolescent females, and 2% Hispanic adolescent females. Each participant completed the three assessment instruments utilized in this study as well as a demographic information sheet. This information was gathered as part of the screening process for the G.I.R.L.S Project therapeutic groups for female juvenile offenders.

Demographic information was gathered from each participant including age and race/ethnicity. Information regarding the participants' court involvement and the type of offense was gathered from the Juvenile Justice System's computer database. This information along with the results of completed instruments was compiled into a separate computer database.

Participants for the current study were identified by the probation officers in each of the participating Juvenile Justice Systems. Probation officers instructed each of the adolescent females on their caseload to come to the Juvenile Justice office to complete the assessment battery in order to be considered for the G.I.R.L.S Project therapeutic groups. Graduate level clinicians met with the female adolescents and their parent/legal guardian to explain the G.I.R.L.S. project, to gain the parent/guardian's consent and the participants assent, to administer the assessment battery, and to answer questions regarding the procedures or assessments. The meetings between clinician and participants occurred individually or in small groups and lasted for approximately 1.0 to 1.5 hours. At the time of data collection, every participant was on probation with the Department of Juvenile Justice. Every effort was made to collect data from each female on probation with the Juvenile Justice System, however, not all females involved in the juvenile justice system participated due to numerous environmental barriers such as transportation or work schedules.

Procedure

This study has been created out of a larger study, the G.I.R.L.S. Project, designed to deliver therapeutic group services to females involved in the Juvenile Justice system as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of these services. The participants, assessment

instruments, and data collection procedures used in this specific study are congruent with goals, objectives, and methods of the G.I.R.L.S. Project. The G.I.R.L.S. Project was approved by The Institutional Review Board of The University of Georgia. Each participant gave her assent to participate in the study in addition to her parent/guardian's consent to ensure she understood the terms of her participation and to demonstrate respect to the participants. Every effort was made to protect the confidentiality of all participants.

Research Instruments

The Behavior Assessment System for Children- Self Report of Personality-Adolescent (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992)

The Behavior Assessment System for Children-Self Report of Personality-Adolescent (BASC-SRP-A; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992) was developed to identify the personality and emotional/psychological functioning in adolescents. The BASC-SRP-A (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992) consists of several different forms including a child self report (ages 8-11), an adolescent self-report (ages 12-18), a parent report, and a teacher report. The development and standardization of the BASC was comprehensive and systematic to ensure the instrument's reliability (Flanagan, 1995). The items on the BASC were tested three times, then arranged into appropriate scales, and examined for ethnic biases (Kamphaus, 1999). For the purpose of this study, the adolescent self-report (BASC-SRP-A) was utilized.

The norms for the BASC-SRP-A were developed from a sample of 4,448 male and female adolescents from throughout the United States and Canada (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992). Clinical samples were collected from self-contained classrooms, residential schools, juvenile detention centers, community mental health centers, and

outpatient mental health clinics within universities and hospitals (Flanagan, 1995). The standardization sample is representative of the general population of adolescents in the United States with regard to sex, race/ethnicity, and clinical populations (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992). The racial/ethnic make-up of the BASC-SRP-A standardization sample is 16% African American, 11% Hispanic, 70% Caucasian, and 3% Other. The internal consistency coefficients for each BASC-SRP-A subscales averaged near .80. The test-re-test reliability coefficients have a median value of .76 (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992).

The BASC-SRP-A is an easily administered, true or false self-report instrument, which can be completed within 10-20 minutes (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992). The 186-item instrument creates 14 different scales including 10 clinical scales and 4 adaptive scales. The 14 scales collapse into 4 composite scales: Clinical Maladjustment, School Maladjustment, Adaptive Scales, and the Emotional Symptoms Index.

The Clinical Maladjustment Composite is a measure of psychological internalizing characteristics and consists of five scales: Anxiety, Atypicality, Locus of Control, Social Stress, and Somatization. The School Maladjustment Composite is a measure of the adolescent's adaptation to school and consists of three scales: Attitude to School, Attitude to Teachers, and Sensation Seeking. The Personal Adjustment Composite measures positive levels of adjustment and consists of four scales: relations with parents, interpersonal relations, self-esteem, and self-reliance. The Emotional Symptoms Index identifies severe emotional concerns and consists of two scales from the Clinical Maladjustment and Personal Adjustment Composites: Social Stress and Anxiety (Clinical Maladjustment scales), Interpersonal Relations and Self-Esteem (Personal

Adjustment scales). The ESI also includes the Depression scale and the Inadequacy scale that are not represented in the composite scales. In addition, the BASC-SRP-A (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992) has three validity indices (F, L, and V) that indicate if the adolescent approached the test in a valid manner.

The mean of the BASC-SRP-A (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992) scales is 50 with a standard deviation of 10. Scores one standard deviation above the mean (T=60) are identified as "at risk" and scores two standard deviations above the mean (T=70) are identified as "clinically significant". Scores on the adaptive scales and Personal Adjustment Composite that are one standard deviation below the mean (T=40) are identified as "at risk" and scores two standard deviations below the mean (T-30) are identified as "clinically significant."

Table 1

A Description of the BASC-SRP-A's Clinical Maladjustment Composite Scales

Scales	Descriptions
Anxiety	Feelings of nervousness, worry, and fear; the tendency to be overwhelmed by problems.
Atypicality	The tendency towards gross mood swing, bizarre thoughts, subjective experiences or obsessive-compulsive thoughts and behaviors often considered odd.
Locus of Control	The belief that rewards and punishments are controlled by external events or other people
Social Stress	Feelings of stress and tension in personal relationships; a feeling of being excluded from social activities
Somatization	The tendency to be overly sensitive to, experience, or complain about relatively minor physical problems and discomforts

Table 1. Adapted from Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992

Table 2

A Description of the BASC-SRP-A's School Maladjustment Composite Scales

Scales	Descriptions
Attitude toward School	Feelings of alienation, hostility, and dissatisfaction regarding school
Attitude toward Teachers	Feelings of resentment and dislike of teachers, beliefs that teachers are unfair, uncaring, or overly demanding.
Sensation Seeking	The tendency to take risks, to like noise, and to seek excitement

Table 2. Adapted from Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992

Table 3

A Description of the BASC-SRP-A's Personal Adjustment Composite Scales

Scales	Descriptions
Interpersonal Relations	The perception of having good social relationships and friendships with peers
Relations with Parents	A positive regard towards parents and a feeling of being esteemed by them
Self-Esteem	Feelings of self-esteem, self-respect, and self-acceptance
Self-Reliance	Confidence in one's ability to solve problems, a belief in one's personal dependability and decisiveness

Table 3. Adapted from Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992

Table 4

A Description of the BASC-SRP-A's Unique Emotional Symptom Index Scales
(Excluding those from the Clinical Maladjustment and Personal Adjustment Composites)

Scales	Description
Depression	Feelings of unhappiness, sadness, and dejection; a belief that nothing goes right
Sense of Inadequacy	Perceptions of being unsuccessful in school, unable to achieve one's goals, and generally inadequate

Table 4. Adapted from Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992

Assessment of Interpersonal Relations (AIR; Bracken, 1993)

The Assessment of Interpersonal Relations is a 175 item, self-report instrument which assesses the quality of adolescent relationships with mothers, fathers, male and female peers, and teachers (Bracken, 1993). The AIR consists of 5 subscales that examine the youth's perceptions of their relationships with their mother, father, male peers, female peers, and teachers. Each subscale consists of 35 four-point Likert scale items, written on a third grade reading level. The items address 15 factors that are associated with quality of relationships including companionship, emotional support, guidance, emotional comfort (mutuality), reliance, trust, understanding, conflict, identification (sameness), respect, empathy, intimacy, affect, acceptance, and shared values (Bracken, 1993).

The standardization sample consisted on 2,501 children ranging in age from 9-19 (Bracken, 1993). The sample was gathered from 17 sites across the United States. The sample was approximately 47% male and 53% female. The racial/ethnic make-up of the standardization sample was approximately 10% African American, 82% Caucasian, and 8% other. Thorough reliability and validity research has been conducted on this instrument (Bracken, 1993). Regardless of age or gender, the individual subscales and Total Relationship Index have an internal consistency and test/re-test reliability exceeding the .90 level (Bracken, 1993).

Scores are classified as follows: Very positive relationship (126 and above), Moderately positive relationship (11-125), Average relationship (90-110), Moderately negative relationship (76 –89), and Very negative relationship (75 and below) (Bracken, 1993). Therefore, the higher the relationship score, the more positively the adolescent rated the specific relationship.

Family Assessment Device (FAD; Epstein et al, 1983)

The FAD is a 60-item self-report instrument that measures seven dimensions of family functioning: Problem Solving, Communication, Roles, Affective Responsiveness, Affective Involvement, and Behavior Control (Epstein et al., 1983). A General Functioning dimension score is produced to assess the family's global level of healthy functioning. The FAD is based upon the McMaster Model of Family Functioning that focuses upon the transactional patterns within the family (Westley & Esptein, 1960). Each item is answered on a four point Likert scale from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (4). A mean score of 2 or above on a dimension is an indication that the majority of items represented problems to the adolescent. The FAD can be used for clinical and research purposes and has been found to effectively discriminate between perceptions of healthy and pathological family functioning (Miller, Epstein, Bishop, & Keitner, 1985).

The FAD was developed and normed based on the total responses of 105 families yielding the total responses of 503 individuals. Of the 503 individuals, 294 of the individuals represent 112 families that were identified through students in an advanced psychology class, children in a psychiatric day hospital, and patients in a stroke rehabilitation unit. The remainder of the sample was identified through patients in an inpatient adult psychiatric hospital (Epstein et al, 1983). The norming population represents non-clinical, psychiatric, and medical populations (Kabacoff, Miller, Bishop, Epstein, & Keitner, 1990). Information was not provided regarding the racial and ethnic make-up of the norming population. The FAD has adequate test-re-test reliability ranging from .66 -.76 on the FAD subscales (Miller et al., 1985).

Table 5

A Description of the FAD Scales

Scale	Definition
Problem Solving	Family's ability to solve problems at a level that maintains effective family functioning
Communication	Exchange of information through clear and direct verbal messages among family members
Roles	A clear establishment of behavior patterns that indicate how specific family functions including providing resources, nurturance, and support will be conducted responsibly
Affective Responsiveness	Family's ability to experience appropriate affect regarding to a wide range of external stimuli
Affective Involvement	Family's interest in and value placed on each other's activities and concerns.
Behavior Control	How family members' express and maintain standards for family behavior and behavior of each family member

Table 5. is adapted from Epstein et al., 1983.

Research Design

The current study examined differences between female juvenile offenders who had committed and been charged with aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who had committed and solely have been charged with non-aggressive acts based upon juvenile justice court records and self reported psychological, behavioral, and relationship factors. Juvenile Justice court records were used to individually examine the offense history of each participant and place her in the appropriate group: the aggressive offense group or non-aggressive offense group. The two sample groups were normally distributed, and had equal variances. The aggressive offender group consisted of 56 female adolescents involved in the juvenile justice system and had a mean age of 14.68.

The non-aggressive offender group consisted of 64 female adolescents involved in the juvenile justice system and had a mean age of 15.05.

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical procedure was utilized in this study in order to examine significant differences between the two groups, aggressive and non-aggressive, of female juvenile offenders. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 10.0 package was utilized for all analyses. It is assumed that both samples are representative of the larger populations of female juvenile offenders who have committed and have been charged with aggressive and non-aggressive acts.

Research Questions

Juvenile Justice Demographics

Research Question 1
Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses and their age of first offense?

Null Hypothesis 1
There will be no significant differences in the age of first offense between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses.

Variables for Hypothesis 1
Juvenile court records will be used to determine the age of first offense of each participant.

Research Question 2
Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive female juvenile offenders and the number of offenses they have committed?

Null Hypothesis 2
There will be no significant differences in the number of offenses committed by female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses.

Variables for Hypothesis 2
Juvenile court records will be used to determine the number of offenses committed by each participant.

Research Question 3
Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses and the number of years they have been involved in the Department of Juvenile Justice?

Null Hypothesis 3
There will be no significant differences in the number of years female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses have been involved in juvenile court.

Variables for Hypothesis 3
Juvenile court records will be used to determine the number of years each participant has been involved in the juvenile justice system.

Psychological Well-Being

Research Question 4
Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses on the following BASC –SRP-A (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992) scales:

a. depression
b. social stress
c. inadequacy
d. anxiety
e. locus of control
f. atypicality
g. somatization

Null Hypothesis 4
There will be no significant differences in the self-report of depression, social stress, inadequacy, anxiety, locus of control, atypicality, and somatization between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses.

Variables for Hypothesis 4
The BASC-SRP-A (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992) subscales will be utilized to measure depression, social stress, inadequacy, anxiety, locus of control, atypicality, and somatization.

Research Question 5
Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses on the following BASC –SRP-A (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992) scales:

a. self-esteem
b. self-reliance

Null Hypothesis 5
There will be no significant differences in the self-report of self-esteem and self-reliance between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses.

Variables for Hypothesis 5
The BASC-SRP-A (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992) will be utilized to measure self-esteem and self-reliance

Family Relations

Research Question 6
Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses on the following family dynamic (Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983) scales:

a. Problem Solving
b. Communication
c. Roles
d. Affective responsiveness
e. Affective involvement
f. Behavior Control

Null Hypothesis 6
There will be no significant differences between females who have committed aggressive and who have committed non-aggressive acts and their self-report of family communication, family affect, family cohesion, and relationship with mother or relationship with father.

Variables for Hypothesis 6
The Family Assessment Device (Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983) will be utilized to measure family communication, family affect, family cohesion, and general family functioning. The Assessment of Interpersonal Relations will be utilized to measure relationship with mother and relationship with father.

Research Question 7
Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive

offenses and the quality of their relationship with their mothers and the quality of relationship with their fathers?

Null Hypothesis 7
There will be no significant difference between females who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive acts and their relationships with their mothers and relationships with their fathers.

Variables for Hypothesis 7
The Assessment of Interpersonal Relations (Bracken, 1993) will utilized to measure quality of relationship with mother and quality of relationship with father.

Peer Relations

Research Question 8
Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses and their quality of relationships with their male peers and their quality of relationships with their female peers?

Null Hypothesis 8
There are no significant differences between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses and the quality of their relationships with their male peers or the quality of their relationships with their female peers.

Variables for Hypothesis 8
The Assessment of Interpersonal Relations (Bracken, 1993) will be utilized to measure the quality of relationships with male peers and quality of relationships with female peers.

School Experience

Research Question 9
Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses and their attitudes towards school, their attitudes towards their teachers, and the quality of their relationship with their teachers.

Null Hypothesis 9
There will not be a significant difference between the female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses and their attitudes towards school, their attitudes towards teachers, and the quality of their relationships with teachers.

Variables for Hypothesis 9

The BASC-SRP-A (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992) will be utilized to measure attitudes toward teachers and attitudes towards school. The AIR (Bracken, 1993) will be utilized to measure quality of relationships with teachers.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The present study was designed to examine the quantitative differences between adolescent females who have committed aggressive offenses and adolescent females who have committed non-aggressive offenses. Differences were examined across psychological variables as well as across each group's relationships within the family, peer, and school contexts. The total sample was divided into two groups depending upon offense histories. The juvenile justice offense database was used to examine offenses and place participants into one of two categories: aggressive and non-aggressive. Participants were categorized as aggressive if they were charged with at least one aggressive offense according to the juvenile justice system's database or categorized as non-aggressive if they had not been charged with an aggressive offense according to the juvenile justice system's database.

Statistical Procedures

A between-groups design was utilized to examine the quantitative data in order to determine if significant differences exist between adolescent females who have committed an aggressive offense and adolescent females who have committed an offense that is non-aggressive in nature. The between-groups design contained only one independent variable (nature of offense: aggressive or non-aggressive) therefore; a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was employed for each dependent variable under examination.

Research Findings

Research Question 1

Is there a significant difference in the age of first offense between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses?

An ANOVA was completed to evaluate the relationship between the age of a female juvenile offender's first offense and the nature of the offense, either aggressive or non-aggressive, committed by the female juvenile offender. The dependent variable in Research Question One is the age of the female juvenile offenders' first offense. The results of the ANOVA demonstrated that the age of the aggressive female offender's first offense (M= 13.41, SD= 1.6) was not statistically, significantly different from the age of the non-aggressive female offender's first offense (M=13.88, SD = 2.3) at the .05 level of significance, F (1,117) = 1.59, p = .210 (see Table 1). This finding suggests that the average female juvenile offender involved in this study initially became involved in the juvenile justice system near the age of thirteen regardless of the type of offenses they will commit.

Research Question 2

Is there a significant difference in the number of offenses committed between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who committed non-aggressive offenses?

An ANOVA was completed to determine if there is a significant difference between the number of offenses committed by female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses. The dependent variable in Research Question Two is the number of offenses committed. The results of the ANOVA demonstrated that the number

of offenses committed by the aggressive female offender (M = 7.29, SD = 4.7) was statistically, significantly different from the number of offenses committed by the non-aggressive female offenders (M = 4.30, SD = 4.1) at the .05 level of significance, F (1,117) = 12.68, p = .001 (see Table 1). This finding suggests female juvenile offenders who have committed at least one aggressive offense have committed significantly more charges throughout their experience in the juvenile justice system than female juvenile offenders who have not committed an aggressive offense.

Research Question 3

Is there a significant difference in the number of years of involvement in the Department of Juvenile Justice between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses?

An ANOVA was completed to examine if there is a relationship between the type of offense committed by female juvenile offenders and the number of years they have been involved in the juvenile justice system. The participants' total number of years of juvenile justice involvement was determined by an examination of their juvenile justice court records. The dependent variable in Research Question Three is the number of years of juvenile justice involvement. The results of the ANOVA showed that the number of years aggressive female juvenile offenders were involved in the Department of Juvenile Justice ((M = 2.57, SD = 1.23) was statistically, significantly different from the number of years non-aggressive female offenders were involved in the Department of Juvenile Justice (M = 1.86, SD = 1.22) at the .05 level of significance, F (1,117) = 9.85, p = .002 (see Table 1). This finding suggests female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses tend to be involved significantly longer in the juvenile justice system than female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses.

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations for Two Types of Offenses on Three Juvenile Justice Experience Variables

	Aggressive offense N=56		Non-aggressive offense N=64	
Variable	M	SD	M	SD
Initial age	13.41	1.6	13.88	2.3
Number of offenses	7.29	4.7	4.30	4.1
Length of involvement	2.57	1.23	1.86	1.22

Research Question 4

Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who committed non-aggressive offenses on the following BASC –SRP scales:

a. Depression
b. Social Stress
c. Inadequacy
d. Anxiety
e. Locus of Control
f. Atypicality
g. Somatization

Seven ANOVAs were completed to examine the relationship between the type of offense committed by the female juvenile offender and numerous psychological characteristics as measured by the Behavior Assessment System for Children-Self Report of Personality- Adolescent form (BASC-SRPA; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992). The independent variable, type of offense, again included two levels: aggressive offense and non-aggressive offense. The seven dependent variables are depression, social stress, inadequacy, anxiety, locus of control, atypicality, and somatization. The Bonferroni

correction was employed to adjust the level of significance to account for the analysis of seven variables and reduce the likelihood of performing a Type I error. Thus, a p value equal to or less than .007 (.05/7) was required for significance. As noted in Table 7, none of the ANOVAs conducted were significant. Psychological factors did not vary significantly between female juvenile offenders who have committed an aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have not received a charge for an aggressive offense.

Research Question 4 explored if significant differences existed between a sample of female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses on seven BASC-SRP-A clinical subscales: depression, social stress, inadequacy, anxiety, locus of control, atypicality, and somatization. Seven separate ANOVAs were conducted and all analyses yielded non-significant results. The results of these analyses suggested that there are not significant differences between the self-reports of female juvenile offenders who have committed at least one aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have not been charged with an aggressive offense on the psychological characteristics of depression, social stress, inadequacy, anxiety, locus of control, atypicality, and somatization as measured by the BASC-SRP-A.

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations for Two Types of Offenses and Seven Psychological Dependent Variables

	Aggressive Offense N = 48		Non-Aggressive Offense N = 50		Norm Group N=54	
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Depression	52.55	10.79	53.54	11.68	47.4	6.9
Social Stress	49.33	11.23	52.24	10.90	48.4	9.5
Inadequacy	52.98	9.96	52.19	11.01	47.6	8.6
Anxiety	47.41	11.04	51.71	9.93	48.0	10.0
Locus	51.57	10.00	55.36	10.94	46.9	7.5
Atypicality	50.65	12.05	51.29	11.24	47.9	9.5
Somatization	52.78	12.60	52.07	10.07	49.1	8.7

Table 8

One-Way Analyses of Variance for Effects of the Type of Offense on Seven Dependent Psychological Variables

Variable and source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Depression					
Between groups	1	26.35	26.35	.207	.650
Within groups	107	13601.05	127.11		
Social Stress					
Between groups	1	229.49	229.49	1.877	.174
Within groups	107	13079.95	122.24		
Inadequacy					
Between groups	1	16.77	16.77	.151	.698
Within groups	106	11777.89	111.11		
Anxiety					
Between groups	1	500.64	500.64	4.572	.035
Within groups	107	11716.37	109.50		
Locus of Control					
Between groups	1	390.52	390.52	3.535	.063
Within groups	107	11819.91	110.47		
Atypicality					
Between groups	1	11.33	11.33	.084	.773
Within groups	107	14467.66	135.21		
Somatization					
Between groups	1	13.89	13.89	.108	.743
Within groups	107	13716.35	128.19		

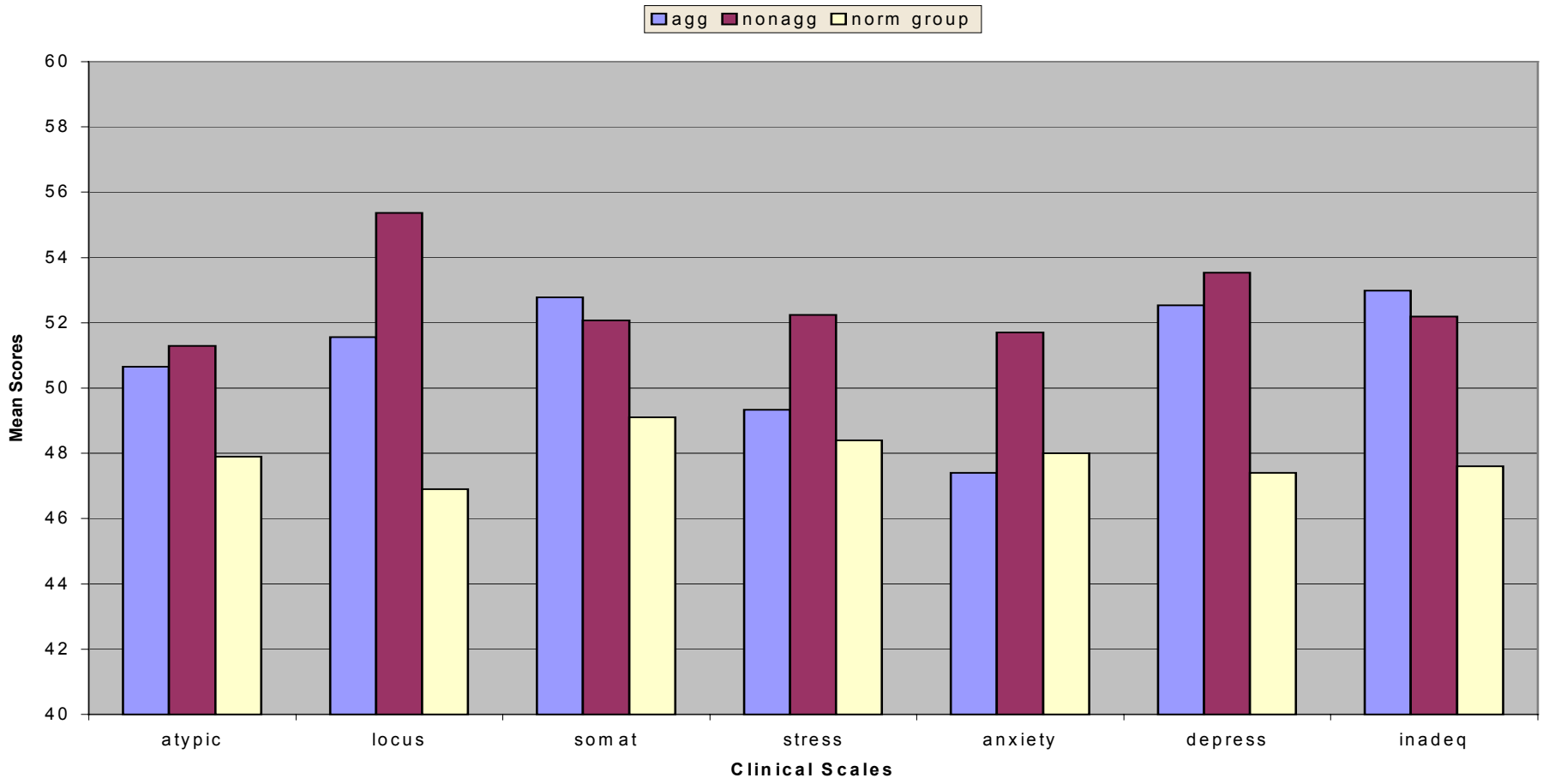

Figure 1. Mean scores on the BASC-SRP-A clinical subscales for female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses (n=48), non-aggressive offenses (n=50), and the BASC-SRP-A norm population (n=54).

Research Question 5

Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses on the following BASC–SRP-A adaptive scales:

a. Self-esteem
b. Self-reliance

Two ANOVAs were completed to evaluate the relationship between the nature of the offense, either aggressive or non-aggressive, committed by the female juvenile offender and the adaptive characteristics of self-esteem and self-reliance. The independent variable was again the nature of the offenses committed by the female juvenile offender and has two levels: aggressive or non-aggressive. The dependent variables in Research Question Five were self-esteem and self-reliance. The Bonferroni correction was employed to adjust the level of significance to account for the analysis of two variables and reduce the likelihood of performing a Type I error. Thus, a p value equal to or less than .025 (.05/2) was required for significance. The first ANOVA completed to explore if there was a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who committed at least one aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses and their self-report of self-esteem. The results of the ANOVA showed that the self-esteem of aggressive female juvenile offender (M = 53.23, SD =8.61) was not statistically significant from the self-esteem of female juvenile offenders who committed non-aggressive offenses (M = 51.72, SD = 9.8) at the .025 level of significance, F (1,107) = .723, p = .397. This finding suggests female juvenile offenders who have committed an aggressive offense do not report a significantly different level of self-esteem than female juvenile offenders' that have committed non-aggressive offenses as measured by the BASC-SRP-A.

The second ANOVA completed examined if there was a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who committed an aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses and their self-report of self-reliance on the BASC-SRP-A. The results of the ANOVA showed that the self-report of self-reliance of female juvenile offenders who have committed an aggressive offense (M=49.65, SD = 10.92) was not statistically significant from female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses (M=50.67, SD = 11.37) at the .025 level, F (1,107) = .229, p= .633. This finding suggests that female juvenile offenders who have committed an aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses do not report different levels of self-reliance as measured by the BASC-SRP-A.

Question five explored if significant differences between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses on two BASC-SRP-A adaptive subscales: self-esteem and self-reliance. Two ANOVAs were conducted and both analyses yielded non-significant results. The results of these analyses suggest that there are not significant differences between the self-reports of female juvenile offenders who have committed at least one aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have not been charged with an aggressive offense on the adaptive characteristics of self-esteem and self-reliance as measured by the BASC-SRP-A.

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations for Two Types of Offenses and Two Dependent Adaptive Variables

	Aggressive Offense N=51		Non-Aggressive Offense N=58		Norm Group N=54	
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Self-Esteem	53.23	8.61	51.72	9.8	52.4	8.8
Self-Reliance	49.65	10.92	50.67	11.37	52.2	7.9

Table 10

One-Way Analyses of Variance for Effects of the Type of Offense on Two Dependent Adaptive Variables

Variable and source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Self-Esteem					
Within Group	1	61.97	61.97	.723	.397
Between Groups	107	9176.76	85.76		
Self-Reliance					
Within Group	1	28.53	28.53	.229	.633
Between Groups	107	13332.42	124.60		

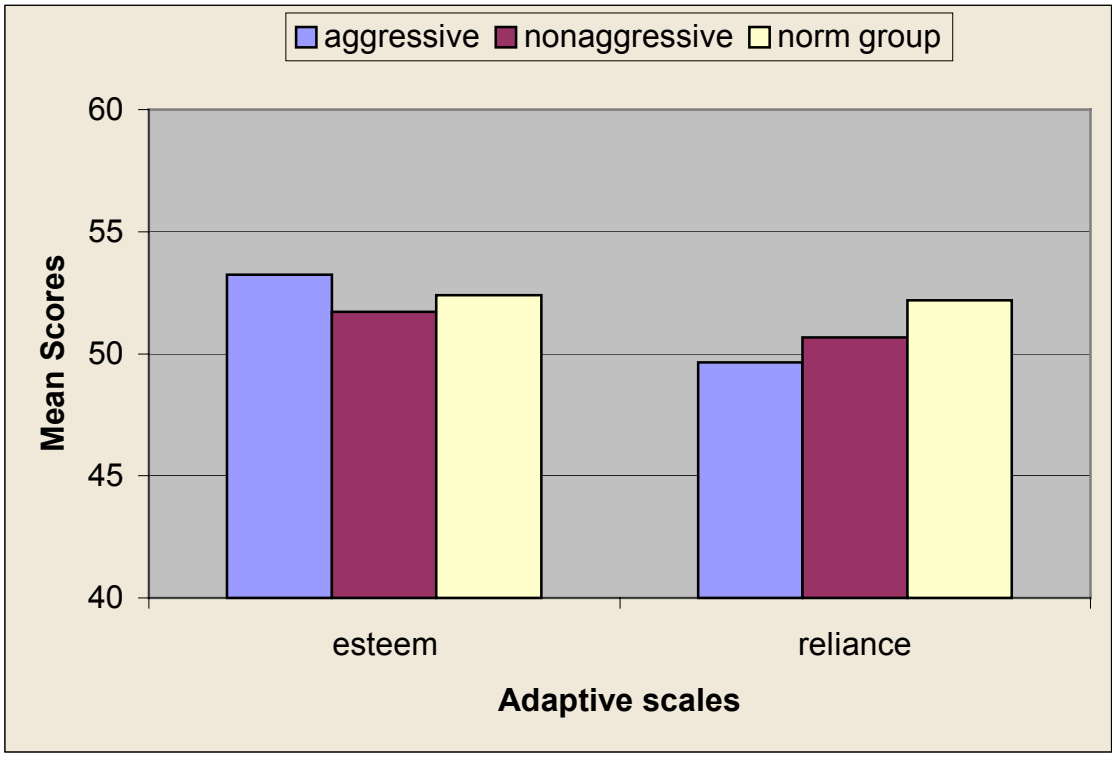

Figure 2 . Mean Scores on the BASC-SRP-A Adaptive subscales for female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses (n=51), non-aggressive offenses(n=58), and the BASC-SRP-A norm group (n=54).

Research Question 6

Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses on the following FAD scales:

a. Problem Solving
b. Communication
c. Roles
d. Affective Responsiveness
e. Affective Involvement
f. Behavior Control

Six ANOVAs were conducted to examine the relationship between the type of offense committed by the female juvenile offender and numerous family dynamics as measured by the Family Assessment Device (FAD). Again, the independent variable, type of offense, included two levels: aggressive offense and non-aggressive offense. The Bonferroni correction was utilized to adjust the level of significance to account for the analysis of six variables and reduce the likelihood of performing a Type I error. Thus, a p value equal to or less than .008 (.05/6) was required for significance. The six dependent variables are Problem Solving, Communication, Family Roles, Affective responsiveness, Affective involvement and Behavior Control. As noted in Table 11, none of the ANOVAs conducted were significant. Family Dynamic factors did not vary significantly between female juvenile offenders who have committed an aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have not received a charge for an aggressive offense as measured by the FAD. The results of these analyses suggest that there are not significant differences between the self-reports of female juvenile offenders who have committed at least one aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offense on six family dynamic subscales as measured by the FAD.

Table 11

Means and Standard Deviations for Two Types of Offenses and Six Family Dynamic Dependent Variables

	Aggressive Offense N=48		Non-Aggressive Offense N=50		Norm Group N=627	
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Problem Solving	2.29	.57	2.22	.61	1.91	.40
Communication	2.21	.43	2.28	.43	2.09	.40
Roles	2.26	.36	2.30	.46	2.16	.34
Responsiveness	2.33	.35	2.35	.54	2.08	.53
Involvement	2.38	.53	2.36	.57	2.00	.50
Behavior Control	2.05	.44	1.86	.42	1.94	.44

Table 12

One-Way Analyses of Variance for Effects of the Type of Offense on Six Dependent Family Dynamic Variables

Variable and source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Problem Solving					
Between groups	1	.16	.159	.453	.301
Within groups	96	33.75	.352		
Communication					
Between groups	1	.11	.108	.591	.444
Within groups	96	17.47	.182		
Roles					
Between groups	1	.04	.044	.256	.614
Within groups	96	16.55	.172		
Affective responsiveness					
Between groups	1	.01	.008	.041	.841
Within groups	96	19.95	.208		
Affective involvement					
Between groups	1	.00	.000	.002	.968
Within groups	96	28.70	.299		
Behavior Control					
Between groups	1	.84	.844	4.672	.033
Within groups	96	17.34	.181		

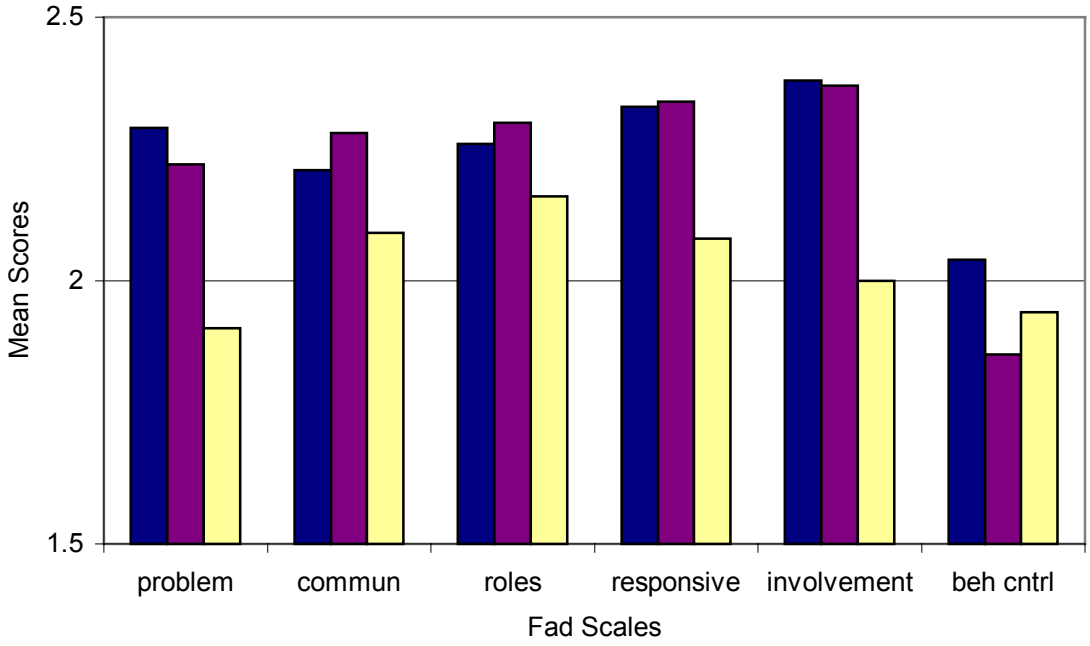

Figure 3. Mean Scores for the Fad subscales for female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses (n=48), non-aggressive offenses (n=50), and the norm group (n=627).

Research Question 7

Is there a significant difference in the quality of the relationships with mothers and the quality of relationships with fathers between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders?

Two ANOVAs were completed to evaluate the relationship between the nature of the offense, either aggressive or non-aggressive, committed by the female juvenile offender and the quality of relationships with mothers and the quality of relationships with fathers. Again, the independent variable is the nature of the offenses committed by the female juvenile offender and has two levels: aggressive or non-aggressive. The dependent variables in Research Question Six were relationship with mother and relationship with father. The Bonferroni correction was utilized to adjust the level of significance to account for the analysis of two variables and reduce the likelihood of performing a Type I error. Thus, a p value of less than .025 (.05/2) was required for significance.

The first ANOVA explored if there was a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who committed at least one aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses in the quality of relationship with their mothers. The results of the ANOVA showed that the aggressive female juvenile offenders' quality of relationship with their mother (M= 96.32, SD=11.37) is not statistically significant from female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses in the quality of relationship with their mothers (M= 95.38, SD=14.63), at the .025 level of significance, F (1,103) = .133, p=.716.

This finding suggests that there are not significant differences in the self-report of quality of relationship with mother between female juvenile offenders who have committed an aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses as measured by the AIR.

The second ANOVA explored if there was a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed at least one aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses in the quality of relationship with their fathers. It is important to note that only 78 of the total number of participants completed the relationship with father scale due to participants' separation from their fathers or the death of their father. Forty of the participants categorized as non-aggressive responded to this scale and 38 of the participant categorized as aggressive responded to this scale. The results of the ANOVA showed that the aggressive female juvenile offenders' quality of relationship with their fathers ($\underline{M}$= 91.26, $\underline{SD}$=11.68) is not statistically significant from female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses' in the quality of relationship with their fathers ($\underline{M}$=94.63, $\underline{SD}$= 14.12), at the .025 level of significance, $\underline{F}$ (1,76) = 1.305, $\underline{p}$= .257. This finding suggests that there is not a significant difference in the self-reported quality of relationships with father between female juvenile offenders who have committed an aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses as measured by the AIR.

Table 13

Means and Standard Deviations for Two Types of Offenses and Two Dependent Family Relationship Variables

	Aggressive Offense N=48		Non-Aggressive Offense N=47		Norm Group N=321	
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Mother	96.32	11.37	95.38	14.63	111.91	19.33
Father	91.26	11.68	94.63	14.12	102.52	21.94

Table 14

One-Way Analyses of Variance for Effects of the Type of Offense on Two Dependent Family Relationship Variables

Variable and source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Relationship with Mother					
Between groups	1	23.05	23.05	.133	.716
Within groups	103	17881.86	173.61		
Relationship with Father					
Between groups	1	220.224	220.24	1.305	.257
Within groups	76	12822.743	168.72		

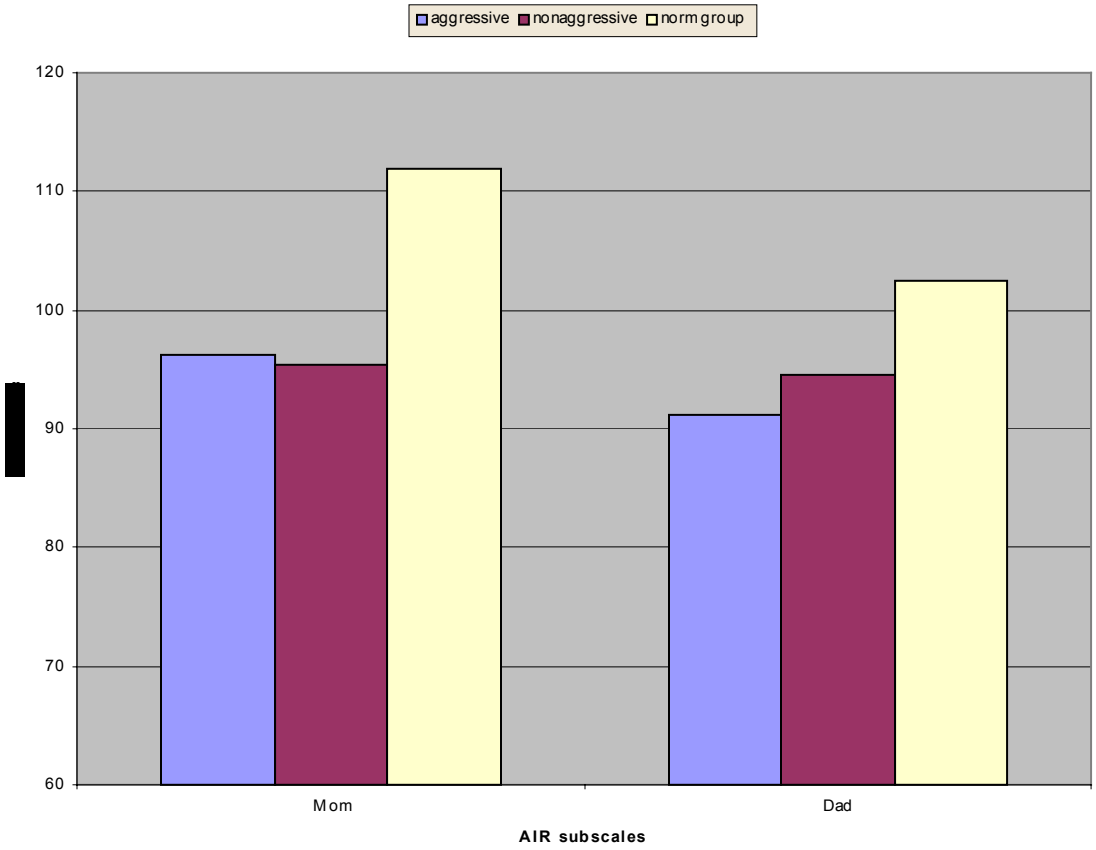

Figure 4. Mean scores for the Relationship with Mother and Relationship with Father subscales on the AIR for female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses (n=48), non-aggressive offenses (n=47), and norm group (n=321).

Research Question 8

Is there a significant difference in the quality of relationships with female and male peers between female juvenile offenders who committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who committed non-aggressive offenses?

Two ANOVAs were completed to evaluate the relationship between the nature of the offense, aggressive or non-aggressive, committed by the female juvenile offender and the quality of their relationships with female peers and the quality of their relationships with male peer. Again, the independent variable is the nature of the offenses committed by the female juvenile offender and has two levels: aggressive or non-aggressive. The dependent variables in Research Question Eight were relationship with female peers and relationship with male peers. The Bonferroni correction was utilized to adjust the level of significance to account for the analysis of two variables and reduce the likelihood of performing a Type I error. Thus, a p value of less than .025 (.05/2) was required for significance.

The first ANOVA explored if there was a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who committed at least one aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses in the quality of relationship with their female peers. The results of the ANOVA showed that the quality of relationship with the female peers of females who committed an aggressive offense (M=87.73, SD=13.64) was not statistically significant from the quality of relationships with female peers of female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses (M= 90.73, SD =15.03) at the .025 level of significance, F (1,102) = 1.123, p= .292.

This finding suggests that there are not significant differences between the self-reports of female juvenile offenders who have committed at least one aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses on their self-reports of the quality of their relationships with their female peers as measured by the AIR.

The second ANOVA examined if there was a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who committed at least one aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses in the quality of their relationships with their male peers. The results of the ANOVA showed that the quality of relationship with male peers of female adolescents who have committed an aggressive offense ($\underline{M}$= 100.60, $\underline{SD}$=13.22) was not statistically significant from the quality of relationships with male peers of female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses ($\underline{M}$= 102.39, $\underline{SD}$ = 13.25) at the .025 level of significance, $F(1,103) = .472$, $p = .494$. This finding suggests that there are not significant differences between the self-reports of female juvenile offenders who have committed at least one aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have not been charged with an aggressive offense on their self-reports of the quality of their relationships with their male peers as measured by the AIR.

Table 15

Means and Standard Deviations for Two Types of Offenses and Two Dependent Peer Relationship Variables

	Aggressive Offense N=48		Non-Aggressive Offense N=57		Norm Group N=321	
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Relationship with Female Peers	87.73	13.64	90.73	15.03	114.93	13.92
Relationship with Male Peers	100.60	13.22	102.39	13.25	96.73	18.25

Table 16

One-Way Analyses of Variance for Effects of the Type of Offense on Two Dependent Peer Relationship Variables

Variable and source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Relationship with Female Peers					
Between groups	1	233.08	233.08	1.123	.292
Within groups	102	21166.46	207.51		
Relationship with Male Peers					
Between groups	1	82.73	82.73	.494	.494
Within groups	103	18050.99	175.25		

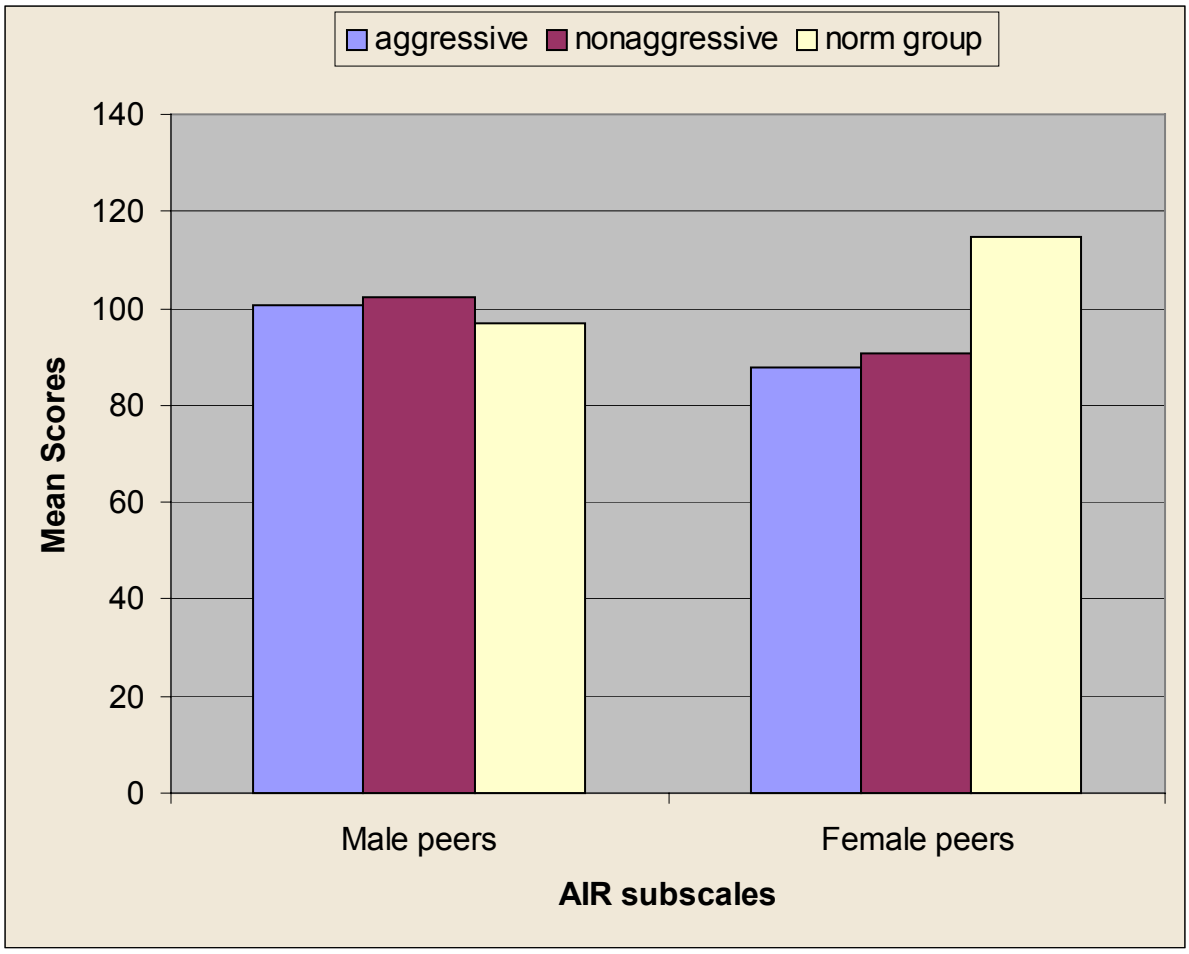

Figure 5. Mean scores on the Relationship with Female Peers and Relationship with Male Peers on the AIR for female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses (n=48), non-aggressive offenses (n=57), and norm group (n=321).

Research Question 9

Is there a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses on the following school related factors:

a. Attitudes towards school
b. Attitudes towards teachers
c. Quality of their relationship with their teachers

Three ANOVAs were completed to evaluate the relationship between the nature of the offense, either aggressive or non-aggressive, committed by the female juvenile offender and three school related factors including attitudes towards school and attitudes toward teachers as measured by the BASC-SRP-A and quality of relationship with teachers as measured by the AIR. Once again, the independent variable is the nature of the offenses committed by the female juvenile offender and has two levels: aggressive or non-aggressive. The dependent variables in Research Question Nine are attitudes toward school, attitudes toward teachers, and quality of relationships with teachers. The Bonferroni correction was utilized to adjust the level of significance to account for the analysis of three variables and reduce the likelihood of performing a Type I error. Thus, a p value equal to or less than .016 (.05/3) was required for significance.

The first ANOVA explored if there was a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who committed at least one aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses and their attitudes towards school. The results of the ANOVA showed that the attitude towards school of female adolescents who have committed an aggressive offense (M= 51.74, SD=12.22) was not statistically significant from the attitudes towards school of female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses (M= 50.72, SD =9.69) at the .016

level of significance, F(1,106) = .232, p= .631. This finding suggests that there are not significant differences between the self-reports of female juvenile offenders who have committed at least one aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non- aggressive offenses and their attitudes toward school.

The second ANOVA explored if there was a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who committed at least one aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses and their attitudes towards school. The results of the ANOVA showed that the attitude towards teachers of female adolescents who have committed an aggressive offense (M= 52.76, SD=11.02) was statistically significant from the attitudes towards teachers of female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses (M= 47.90, SD= 9.70) at the .016 level of significance, F (1,106) = 5.95, p= .016. This finding suggests that there are significant differences between the self-reports of female juvenile offenders who have committed at least one aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non- aggressive offenses and their attitudes towards their teachers as measured by the BASC-SRP-A.

The third ANOVA examined if there was a significant difference between female juvenile offenders who have committed at least one aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses and the quality of their relationships with their teachers. The results of the ANOVA showed that the quality of relationships with the teachers of female adolescents who have committed an aggressive offense teachers (M= 96.64, SD=15.22) was not statistically significant from the quality of relationship with the teachers of female juvenile offenders who have solely

committed non-aggressive offenses (M= 103.55, SD = 15.75) at the .016 level of significance, F (1,101) = 5.113, p= .024. This finding suggests that there are not significant differences between the self-reports of female juvenile offenders who have committed at least one aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non- aggressive offenses and the quality of their relationships with their teachers as measured by the AIR.

Table 17

Means and Standard Deviations for Two Types of Offenses and Three Dependent School Related Variables

	Aggressive Offense N=50		Non-Aggressive Offense N=58		Norm Group N=54	
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
*Attitudes toward school	51.74	12.22	50.72	9.69	48.7	9.3
*Attitudes toward teachers	52.76	11.02	47.90	9.70	48.4	8.2
**Relationship with teachers	96.64	15.22	103.55	15.75	93.84	17.29

*Subscale on the BASC-SRP-A (n=54)
**Subscale on the AIR (n=321)

Table 18

One-Way Analyses of Variance for Effects of the Type of Offense on Three School Related Dependent Variables

Variable and source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Attitudes toward School					
Between groups	1	27.71	27.71	.232	.631
Within groups	106	12669.21	119.52		
Attitudes toward Teachers					
Between groups	1	635.13	635.13	5.948	.016
Within groups	106	11318.50	106.79		
Relationship with Teachers					
Between groups	1	1227.46	1227.46	5.113	.026
Within groups	101	24248.65	240.09		

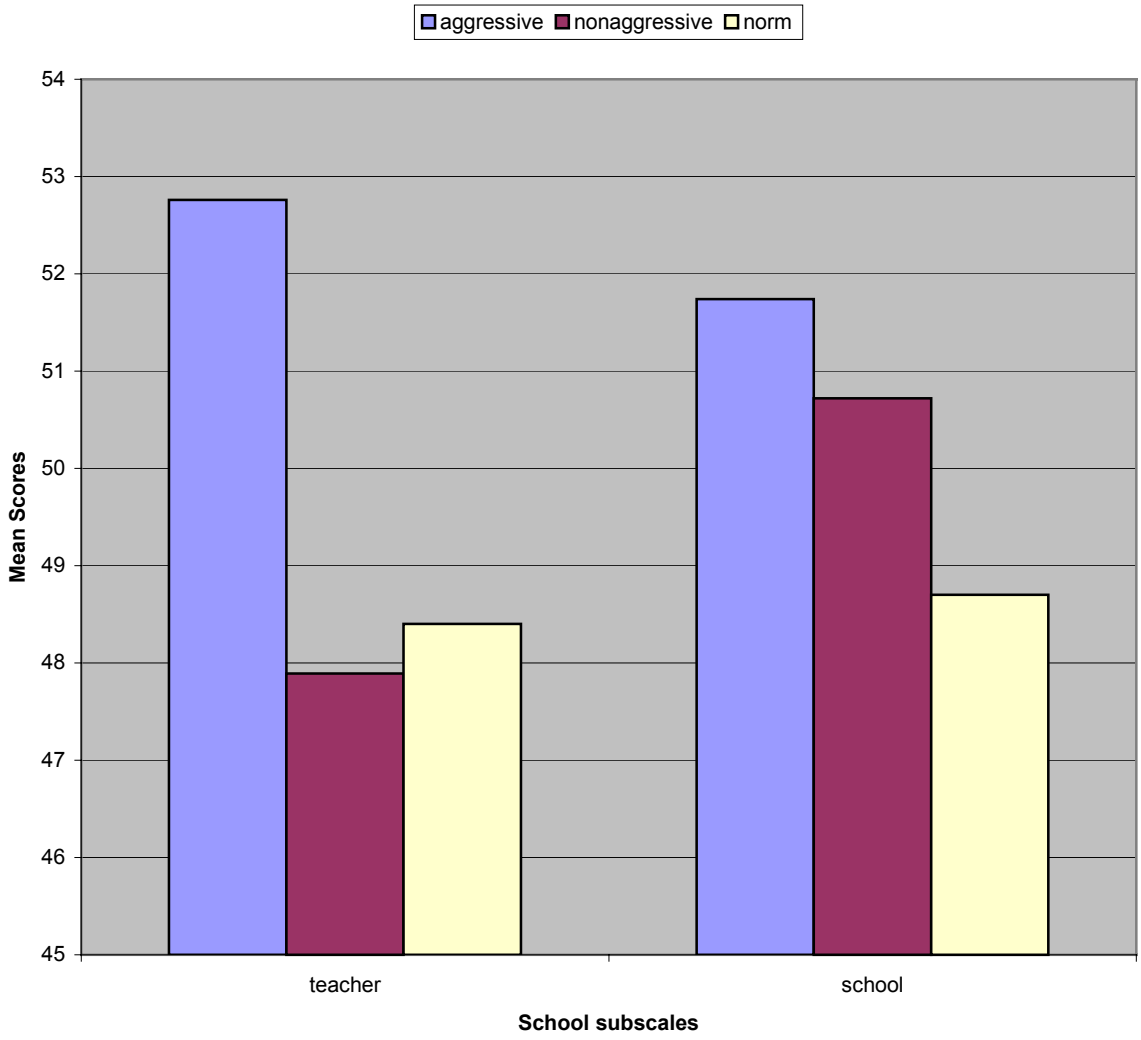

Figure 6 . Mean scores on the Attitudes toward School and Attitudes toward Teachers subscales on the BASC-SRP-A for female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses (n=50), non-aggressive offenses (n=58), and the norm group (n=54).

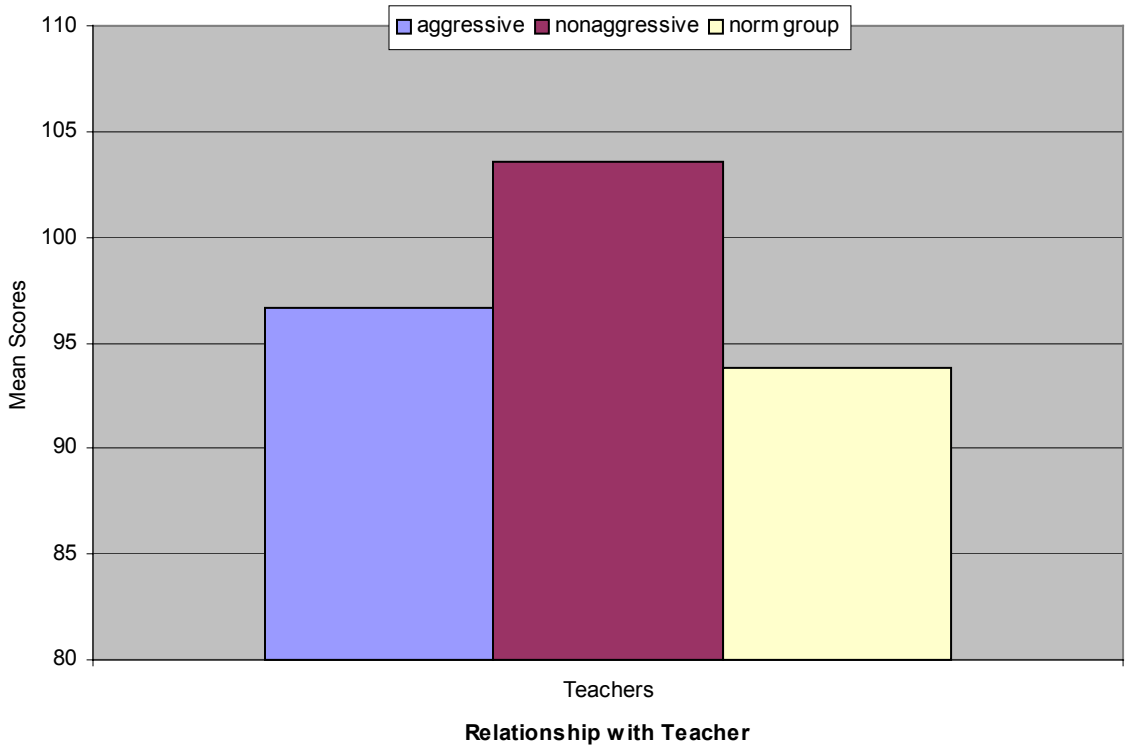

Figure 7. Mean scores on the Relationship with Teachers subscale on the AIR for female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses (n=50), non-aggressive offenses (n=58), and the norm group (n=54).

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

The increase of female adolescents in the juvenile justice system has caused many professionals to begin to question the etiology of female juvenile offending (e.g Barnett & Simmons, 2001; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998; MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001). Until recently, research regarding female juvenile offenders has been scarce. The research regarding juvenile delinquency focuses primarily of male offenders and when it does examine female offenders, it commonly examines females who offend as a homogenous group (e.g. Campbell, 1990; Pepi, 1998). As more is learned about male juvenile offending, it becomes clear that juvenile offenders may not be a homogenous group who experience similar psychological and relationship factors. In the study of male delinquency, researchers have found it beneficial to look at differences within the group. For example, researchers have begun to look at factors differentiating males who will engage in drug offenses, property offenses, or violent offences (Glaser, Calhoun, & Petrocelli, 2001). Is it possible that differences also exist among adolescent girls who are involved in juvenile court? If so, what are these differences?

Female adolescents also engage in a variety of different offenses ranging from minor offenses to serious and violent offenses. These offenses can often become unofficial labels that are used to categorize and describe the females involved in the juvenile justice system. It is not uncommon to hear statements from within the juvenile justice system such

as this is a “She is really bad”, “She is dangerous”, or “This girl is crazy”. Female juvenile offenders themselves, within the G.I.R.L.S Project therapeutic groups from which this data was collected, have shared with us their perceptions of themselves and others involved in the juvenile justice system such as “They are hoodlums”(14 year old African American female), “They will nut up on you” (17 year old African American female), and “They are a bunch of bad kids” (15 year old African American female). While some girls truly do experience severe psychological challenges and may have committed dangerous acts, do these labels help to explain why they are involved in the system or aid in the identification of their treatment needs? Do the offenses themselves help to describe the psychological, environmental, and relationship factors experienced by these female youth?

This study was designed to examine if behaviors and the consequent labels associated with them, such as aggressive or non-aggressive, are significant in identifying factors related to each group of girls. Can the nature of an offense be useful in helping to identify areas of need and treatment issues? The current study examined potential differences among females involved in juvenile court according to the types of crimes they had committed, either aggressive offenses or solely non-aggressive offenses. The purpose of this study was to determine if the type of offense can help to explain female juvenile offenders’ involvement in the juvenile justice system as well as the psychological and relationship factors associated with their offending behavior. More specifically, this study examined interactions of female juvenile offenders, who had committed aggressive and non-aggressive offenses, within the family, peer group, and school environment, in an attempt to better understand the complexity of female juvenile offenders.

The research questions for this study were designed to determine whether there were significant differences between aggressive and non-aggressive female juvenile offenders in the areas of self-perception, family relationships, school relationships, and peer relationships. In order to explore these possible differences, three instruments were utilized including the BASC self-report (BASC-SRP; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992), the Family Assessment Device (FAD; Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983), and the Assessment of Interpersonal Relationships (AIR; Bracken, 1993). The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was the primary statistical procedure utilized in this study to explore significant differences among girls who committed aggressive offenses and girls who solely committed non-aggressive offenses. The results of this study may be useful in furthering the understanding of female adolescents who commit aggressive and non-aggressive offenses.

Discussion of Research Findings

Research Questions 1, 2, and 3

The first three research questions examined the relationships between aggressive and non-aggressive female juvenile offenders and their involvement within the juvenile justice system in order to better understand each groups' experiences within the system. These first three research questions explored the initial ages that female adolescents became involved in the juvenile justice system, the numbers of years spent in the system, and the number of offenses committed. These questions were designed to explore if female adolescents who have committed aggressive offenses differ from female adolescents who have committed only non-aggressive offenses in terms of their overall involvement in the system. Our findings suggest that although the majority of girls

become involved in the juvenile justice system around the age of 13 years, girls who commit aggressive offenses are typically charged with more offenses and involved in the juvenile justice system significantly longer than girls who solely commit non-aggressive offenses.

The current discussion in the literature regarding the pathways of female juvenile offenders sparked questions regarding the initial age of involvement, number of years involved in the system, and number of total offenses of female juvenile offenders who had committed an aggressive offense and female juvenile offenders who had committed a non-aggressive offense. Female juvenile offenders, unlike male juvenile offenders, may be more likely to begin their offending behaviors in early adolescents rather than in childhood (e.g. Kratzer & Hodgins, 1999; Silverthorn, 1996). This finding was also true for the current sample of female juvenile offenders. Regardless of what type of offenses they have committed, aggressive or non-aggressive, the average female adolescent in this study became involved in the Department of Juvenile Justice system near 13 years of age. The findings of this study supports the body of literature which suggests that the initial age of offending behaviors of females does not appear to consistently predict future pathways of female offending.

The age of 13 appears to represent a challenging time for all girls (Stone, 1998), and a particularly important time for identifying girls who may become involved in delinquent behaviors. As Stone suggested, 13 years of age appears to be the "magic age" in which the majority of girls are likely to become involved with the juvenile justice

system. Although initial age of court involvement cannot predict the future severity of offending behaviors, this finding is important in raising an awareness of this crucial time for the prevention of future problems.

Gilligan and Brown (1992), Johnson, Roberts, & Worell (1999), Pipher (1994), and Wichstrom (1999) discuss the critical time of early adolescence for girls. It is during this time that young female adolescents become at an increased risk for low self-esteem (Piper, 1994), body image and eating disorders (Striegel-Moore & Cachelin, 1999), depression (Wichstrom, 1999), school difficulties (Orenstein, 1994), dating violence (Harway & Liss, 1999), as well as delinquent behaviors (Stone, 1998). Adolescence poses an interesting, and challenging, period for young girls.

Resiliency factors and personal challenges are often influenced by important relationships in girls' lives (Debold, Brown, Weseen, & Brookins, 1999). Girls place a strong emphasis on their relationships and their relationships can serve as important protective factors in the lives of girls (Debold et al, 1999). However, during adolescents, most youth are encouraged to separate from their family relationships (Gilligan, 1992). Maybe it is this removal of positive influences that places girls at an increased risk during adolescence (Silverthorn, 1996) and which leads female adolescents' disconnection from significant adult influences (Debold et al, 1999).

Yet, there are always two sides to every coin. The challenges of adolescence are clearly defined. Adolescence provides both new challenges for girls as well as new opportunities (Eccles, Barber, Jozefowica, Malenchuk, & Vida, 1999). What are the strengths and opportunities that emerge during female adolescence? A possible hypothesis is that the onset of adolescence also brings a sense of personal power and

personal agency. Females involved in the juvenile justice system are typically not defined in terms of their personal power, instead, they are often stigmatized by their juvenile justice criminal labels.

It may be that during adolescence, girls have increased personal resources in which they feel they can do something to change their current situations. For instance, girls who have been continually mistreated at home may feel they have established the personal resources to runaway and survive in the outside world. Girls, who have experienced physical abuse in the home, may feel they have the personal strength to defend themselves or handle a challenging situation through fighting. Feelings of continual misunderstanding and disrespect can lead young girls to vehemently attempt to gain respect outside of the home. However, their means to seek respect and independence may only serve to create more problems, more disrespect, more stress, and less independence. As Debold and her colleagues (1999) state "Poor girls…do not make stupid choices; they make the best of tough situations in which they are faced, with few real options for psychological growth and long-term well-being" (p.183).

The findings of Research Questions 2 and 3 suggest that females charged with an aggressive offense are likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system for a longer amount of time and are charged with more offenses than females charged solely with non-aggressive offenses, respectively. There are several possible explanations for these findings. A logical conclusion may be that aggressive offenders are more serious offenders and therefore represent a more dangerous and pathological population of

female juvenile offenders. Thus, the more serious the offense, the longer the female will be involved in the juvenile justice system. Their involvement in the system may be extended by more intensive interventions such as incarceration.

Interestingly, as noted in the results, these groups do not vary significantly on the majority of relationship and psychological factors. On most self-report dimensions, the two groups of girls do not look different from one another. If no significant differences exist between adolescent females who commit aggressive and non-aggressive offenses on psychological and relationship factors, what contributes to the type of offenses committed by girls? Why do some girls run from home while others assault a family member? What are the potentially significant variables, not included in this study that may provide a greater understanding of why female juvenile offenders commit specific types offenses?

Although there may be some exceptions, girls who have committed aggressive offenses may not represent a more pathological group as often assumed when examining serious and violent offenders. If this is indeed true, the first hypothesis that aggressive girls are more pathological and dangerous to society may not be an accurate statement. Instead, one possible alternative hypothesis could be made that once a female is identified for an aggressive offense and given a longer probation term in the juvenile justice system, she is more likely to be charged with offenses that maintain her status in the system. Whereas adolescent females who are charged with non-aggressive offenses, and given shorter probation sentences, may be less likely to be further pathologized through the juvenile justice system. These statements represent possible hypothesis to explain the lack of differentiation between female juvenile offenders who commit aggressive

offenses and who commit solely non-aggressive offenses. However, these are only a few of many possible explanations.

Research Question 4 and Research Question 5

Research Question 4 and Research Question 5 explore the differences on numerous psychological strengths and challenges among adolescent females who have committed aggressive and non-aggressive offense. Research Question 4 explored psychological clinical factors, as measured by the BASC-SRP-A, of depression, social stress, inadequacy, anxiety, locus of control, atypicality, and somatization. Research Question 5 explored adaptive characteristics of self-esteem and self-reliance as measured by the BASC-SRP-A.

An ANOVA was conducted to examine if significant differences existed among aggressive and non-aggressive female juvenile offenders on each clinical and adaptive factor. No significant difference was found between the groups on constructs measured by the BASC-SRP-A. Among each group of participants, there was a wide range of variability of scores. This means that there is variability within the groups of girls who commit aggressive offenses and girls who solely commit non-aggressive offenses. The nature of the offenses did not help to identify what types of psychological strengths and challenges they may experience.

Adolescence is noted to be a challenging time for most young females. However, not all young females are identified and become involved in the juvenile justice system. Many girls, who engage in similar activities such as skipping school, sexual behavior, drug and alcohol use, shoplifting, may never be identified by the system or may be protected from the system by their family members. Debold and her colleagues (1999)

stated that it is important to study the psychological and relationship factors of girls experiencing difficulties because "…we can learn much about what kinds of support and care girls need to negotiate their struggles to develop identities, to take on adult roles, and to integrate sexuality into their sense of self from those who succumb to depression, attempt suicide, dropout of school, engage in risky sexual behaviors, experience lowed self-worth, self-mutilate, or abuse themselves through food".

The findings of the current research questions allow the conclusion to be made that offense type is not an indicator of the psychological strengths and challenges experienced by individual adolescent females involved in the juvenile justice system. Individual participants in this study, regardless of the type of offense they commit, express a wide range of scores on the psychological factors such as depression. It may be more helpful to examine the individual differences of girls involved in the juvenile justice system within their own contexts rather than attempt to categorize them by the offenses they have committed.

Girls and women are commonly known to experience more internalizing problems, such as depression, rather than externalizing problems such as fighting and stealing (Wichstrom, 1999). Yet, female juvenile offenders are a group of girls whose challenges are manifested in outward displays by their behaviors. These are girls who are voicing their concerns, even if unintentionally, through their actions. Their external actions can be viewed as symptoms of the internal and environmental challenges they may experience. Yet, neither the aggressive or non-aggressive girls are accepting of their situations, they are attempting to find means to express their needs, although their means of doing so may not lead to healthy outcomes.

During the G.I.R.L.S. Project therapeutic groups for female adolescents in the juvenile justice system, it is common for group members to express a genuine concern about the important people in their lives. Delinquents are often associated with the psychological terms of Conduct Disordered and possibly even Antisocial. Yet, through exploration of juvenile justice court records as well as disclosures within group therapy, symptoms of these disorders such as cruelty to animals and the inability to care for others as defined by the Diagnosis and Statistical Manual, 4th edition (American Psychiatric Association, 1995) are not found. In fact, often a very different picture of young women who experience deep emotions, may take extreme measures to protect loved ones, even when it means sacrificing the self to do so is observable. Rather than selfishness among these girls, there appears to be selflessness among these girls regardless of the type of offense they commit.

The self-esteem and positive self-concept of female adolescence has been studied and broad generalizations of have been made about the decrease in self-esteem through the middle school and high school years (Piper, 1994). However, these findings appear to more accurately describe the adolescent experience of Caucasian females than the experiences of African American female adolescents (Eccles et al, 1999). The sample population of this study is predominantly African American. African American girls commonly report higher self-esteem than their white adolescent female counterparts (Eccles et al, 1999).

In this study, differences among female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses and aggressive offenses are examined. Type of offense is the factor that divides female adolescents who offend into two groups. Thus, the focus is

placed upon the girls' behaviors and the not precipitating psychological factors. When psychological and relationship factors are examined, the two groups are indistinguishable.

These findings may suggest that the type of offense, aggressive or non-aggressive, does not give insight into the treatment issues of female juvenile offenders. Each group of female juvenile offenders' reports a wide range of scores on each self-report measure. The current findings support Eccles and her colleagues (1999) who concluded from their studies of gender and racial differences that it may be more common to find differences within groups rather than between groups. These findings may imply that the psychological factors of each participant should be examined within the female's individual context in order to identify their personal strengths as well as treatment needs

Research Question 6 and Research Question 7

Regardless of the type of offense that a female juvenile offender commits, the results of this study suggests that she does not report significant differences in the quality of relationships with her mother or father as measured by the AIR (Bracken, 1993) or in her self-report of numerous family dynamics as measured by the FAD (Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983). Self-reports on neither instrument yielded significant differences among adolescent females who have committed aggressive offenses or who have only committed non-aggressive offenses.

The definition of family often varies from individual to individual. Some consider a family a nuclear family consisting of a mother, father, and possibly siblings. In some cultures, when family is discussed it is implied that they are speaking of the entire extended family. Throughout the G.I.R.L.S. Project therapeutic groups, female

adolescents involved in the juvenile justice system frequently describe their families as primarily consisting of their mother or grandmother, and possibly their siblings or their own children. There is a noticeable absence of fathers in the results of this study. Over half of the participants in each group were unable to complete the questions regarding the quality of their relationships with their father.

Often, when females involved in the juvenile justice system speak about family, they are speaking about their mothers, aunts, and grandmothers. The majority of female juvenile offenders are being raised in single parent homes, where the mother or grandmother is primarily responsible for the care taking of her children. Mothers, or other women who fill the mothering role, are often blamed for problematic behaviors displayed by their children (Caplan & Hall-McCorquodale, 1985). Placing blame on the mother does little to promote change in the lives of girls. Mothers may be blamed because they are often the sole caregiver to their children. Simultaneously, mothers have been identified as a crucial component to the development of resiliency and hardiness in adolescent girls (Debold et.al, 1999). Mothers also can serve as the primary source of support and caregiving to their children. Females involved in juvenile court tend to report their relationships with their mothers most positively when they feel their mothers care about their well-being and express an interest in their daily activities (McLean, Glaser, Calhoun, & Bartolomucci, 2001). It may be more important to examine the perceptions of the mother-daughter relationship, what they like about their relationship and about each other, and how they can identify areas of challenge to improve upon and grow together.

In exploring the important role of mothers in the lives of girls, it may also be helpful to considers the many other women who may help care, support, and nourish the development of the female adolescent. In many African American communities, the "mother" role is often complimented by "othermothers" (Collins, 1991). "Othermothers", who have been identified in various cultures including white American cultures, are crucial women in the community such as grandmothers and aunts who serve an important caretaking and supportive role in the lives of children (Debold et al, 1999). The forming of a close, emotional attachment to one parent, typically the mother, has been related to healthy adjustment (Wentzel & Feldman, 1996). However, when there is a great deal of psychological and environmental challenges faced by a single parent, as commonly found in the homes of female adolescent offenders, it may be more beneficial for young females to establish positive relationships with numerous adults to defend against the pressures of adolescence. The old cliché "It takes a whole village to raise a child" may be more appropriate in describing how to help nourish the development of adolescent females (Debold et al, 1999).

Family relationships are critical in the early development of girls (Harter, 1997) as well as the ongoing psychological health of all girls and women (Eccles et al, 1999). The family particularly serves as one of the greatest protective factors for girls of color. Vasquez and de las Fuentes (1999) state " Perhaps the most resilient factor common to all ethnic minority groups is the identification with family and community. The bonding and sharing of values for people of color can provide strength and resources for adolescent girls of color struggling with the challenges of uncertainties, conflicting expectations, and

rejection based on color, language, and class" (p. 159). The family can serve as a safe haven against environmental stressors such as oppression and racism.

The majority of female juvenile offenders in this study reported positive family relationships, yet, research suggests it is many of these same homes that have been ridden with abuse and/ or neglect (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). Regardless of the difficulties experienced, there appears to be an unwritten code among the girls that they continue to protect their family members. Although at other times, in moments of intimate disclosures within the G.I.R.L.S. Project group therapy, there are also reports of hurt feelings and quests for parental love and attention. During these times, there are also feelings of anger. Numerous participants of this study have disclosed in the clinical setting that they are hurt and angry, for example, that their mothers have chosen drugs over them. Yet, in less intimate discussions and on their self-report instruments, female juvenile offenders continue to present their families, particularly their mothers, in a positive light. As one group member stated "It doesn't really matter that she always forgets about me, she does give me a place to live and gives me food to eat…She's my mother" (14 year old, Caucasian female).

Research Question 6 and Research Question 7 examined the quality of relationships with each parent as well as family dynamics of female adolescents who have committed aggressive offenses and female adolescents who have committed only non-aggressive offenses. The self-reports of family relationships and family dynamics do not differ significantly from one another based upon the nature of offense. Again, examination of individual differences in family relationships and family dynamics may yield more fruitful results that cannot be identified when grouping participants by the

type of offense they have committed. In conclusion, the type of offense committed by female adolescents, aggressive or non-aggressive, is not useful in furthering the understanding of female juvenile offenders experiences within their families.

Research Question 8

Research Question 8 examined female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and female juvenile offenders who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses and their relationships with their male and female peers. Once again, no significant differences were found between the two groups of female juvenile offenders and their relationships with their male and female peers.

Female juvenile offenders, as do most adolescents, have a need to belong to a peer group and experience acceptance amongst their peers. Peer groups may serve to normalize the emotions and behaviors of its group members. Caspi, Lynam, Moffitt, & Silva (1993) suggest that youth with a history of behavioral problems may choose friends who also engage in these behaviors. Females tend to become involved in delinquent activities with their peers and maintain these behaviors within their peer group (Caspi et al, 1993). Females involved in juvenile court may seek peers who share similar experiences and behaviors in order to feel accepted and understood. When girls surround themselves by people who share similar social norms and behaviors, they do not receive negative feedback for their actions, and therefore, the adolescent's self concept is not negatively affected within the peer group (Barton & Figueira-McDonough, 1985).

Peer groups may play a role the acceptance and perpetuation of offending behaviors. Harris (1998) found that the peers of female juvenile offenders are commonly involved in delinquent activities and females often commit offenses with their peer

groups or boyfriends. Along this line of thinking, it would be plausible to hypothesize that girls who commit aggressive acts may associate with other girls who also condone overt aggression. For example, a non-aggressive peer group would be less tolerant of one of its members constantly fighting because fighting behavior may be looked upon negatively.

The findings of Research Question 8 highlight the important role of acceptance among a peer group. The peer groups of participants in this study were not examined and therefore conclusions cannot be made regarding the type of behaviors and belief systems permeate the group members. We can assume from the findings that regardless of whether female juvenile offenders commit aggressive or non-aggressive acts, they may associate with peers who are accepting of their behaviors. When peers exert a positive influence on the participant, their acceptance can be beneficial to females as a source of support, caring, and nourish a positive psychological development (Crick, 1996). Yet, as in youth gangs, peer groups can normalize dangerous behaviors and beliefs that are also detrimental to the female adolescents and serve as barriers to their healthy development.

Research Question 9

Research Question 9 examined female juvenile offenders attitudes toward school and relationships with their teachers. Once again, participants were divided into two groups, those who have committed an aggressive offense and those who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses. The current study explored numerous psychological and relationship factors of adolescent females who had committed aggressive and non-aggressive offenses, and the school context was the only social arena where significant differences have been identified between the two groups.

Research Question 9 investigated attitudes toward school and attitudes toward teachers as measured by the BASC-SRP-A (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992) and the quality of relationships with teachers as measured by the AIR (Bracken, 1993). There was not a significant difference found between the two groups' attitudes toward school, however, attitudes toward teachers appeared to be significantly different between girls who have committed aggressive offenses and girls who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses. Although the quality of relationship with teachers was not significantly different between the two groups, the significance of the finding was extremely close to the stringent significance level selected, strengthening the finding that teachers serve a pivotal role, particularly with female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses.

The quality of relationships with teachers is continually found to be a crucial factor in the success of students (e.g. Calhoun & Smith, 2001; Casteel, 2000; Dezolt & Henning-Stout, 1999). Dezolt & Henning-Stout (1999) stated "When adolescent girls talk about their experiences with teachers, they tell stores about their relationships that include an interpersonal caring connection in the context of facilitation of academic rigor" (P. 257). Relationship with teachers has been suggested to be a primary factor in the success of students; therefore, students who have negative attitudes towards teachers are more likely to be less successful in the school arena (Casteel, 2000). The current findings are interesting in light of previous research that emphasizes the importance of positive relationships with teachers in the healthy and successful development of students.

The student-teacher relationship may serve as an important positive influence and mentoring role for many students who do not have extensive support in other social contexts. Pomeroy (1999) suggested that a student's relationship with their teachers is one of the most salient characteristics of student's school experiences. Females involved in the juvenile justice system may be a specific group of individuals who often experience the misunderstanding of others, including their teachers. Teachers are in the position to reach out to students experiencing challenging personal and academic situations and establish a genuine relationship as a role model and mentor (Pomeroy, 1999).

Relationships with teachers have been found to have a significant impact on the self-reported levels of depression and anxiety among female juvenile offenders (Calhoun & Smith, 2001). In an examination of the major relationships in the lives of female juvenile offenders including relationships with parents, male and female peers, and teachers, the quality of relationships with teachers were continually found to be related to the psychological adjustment of adolescent girls involved in the juvenile justice system (Bartolomucci, Calhoun, & McLean, 2001).

The race and ethnicity of participants in this study may also serve as an important indicator of why the attitudes toward teachers variable is the only variable of marked significance in the current study. Overall, African American adolescent female have been found to be most successful of all racial/ ethnic groups in maintaining a positive self-esteem through adolescence (AAUW, 1991). However, African American females have been found to have the most significant difficulties in the school arena (AAUW, 1992). Casteel (2000) found that African American students in general have stated that

many teachers, particularly Caucasian teachers, do not understand them or relate well to them. Furthermore, Jacobson (2000) concluded that many teachers might not be aware of how culture, race, and past academic experiences interact causing some students to be at a greater risk for academic difficulties.

The results of the Research Question 9 suggest that girls that have committed aggressive offenses are more likely to experience negative attitudes toward their teachers and have more negative relationships with their teachers than girls who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses. Girls who have committed aggressive offenses may be more likely to develop a negative reputation among teachers at school. Teachers, as do all individuals, are likely to form impressions of their students and are likely to have more positive relationships with some students than others. A vicious cycle may develop in which the behaviors displayed by more aggressive youth may make it more challenging for teachers to reach out to the adolescent female, thereby reinforcing to the aggressive adolescent female that her teachers do not understand, support, or encourage her.

Female aggression is relational in nature (Jack, 1999) and typically occurs within personal, social arenas (Talbott, 1997). Aggressiveness can often serve as a defensive mechanism to protect an individual from the emotional harm that they may expect to experience in their personal relationships (Jack, 1999). Therefore, it may not be surprising that adolescent females, who commit aggressive offenses, may also appear "tougher" or more aggressive in the school context as well. Sometimes, it may be possible that aggressive girls do such a great job of defending themselves the emotional harm of others that they actually perpetuate feelings of negativity within potentially

positive relationships. This is a possible hypothesis to explain the significant difference among adolescent females who commit aggressive offenses and those who commit solely non-aggressive offenses and their attitudes towards their teachers.

Relational/Cultural Theory with Female Juvenile Offenders

The current study was based upon the Relational/cultural theory. As Jenkins (1999) states, the purpose of this theory and practice is on "…defining and understanding connections and disconnections that restrict and block growth" (p.62). Although this theory has not been specifically used to conceptualize the development of adolescent females involved in juvenile court, it has been developed to examine the development of women, girls, and marginalized groups within the context of their relationships. Therefore, relational/cultural theory may also be useful in specifically understanding the development of female juvenile offenders.

Theoretically, due to the external display of problematic behaviors, female juvenile offenders would be likely to experience more negative relationships than female adolescents not identified by the juvenile justice system for behavioral difficulties. The behaviors of female juvenile offenders can be viewed as external reflections of internal distress due to their experience of challenging relational experiences. It was hypothesized that adolescent females, who become involved in the juvenile justice system because of their behaviors, were a specific group of females that experienced relational difficulties.

When exploring the quality of relationships between female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive and non-aggressive offenses to the instruments' norming populations, there was an apparent difference in the quality of relationships and

experiences of psychological symptomology. Female juvenile offenders who commit aggressive offense or solely non-aggressive offenses experience more psychological and relational difficulties than are noted in the norm groups of adolescent females. As relational/cultural theory suggests, less positive relationships are often associated with feelings of disconnection from others, thus inhibiting positive psychological development. Therefore, the results support relational/cultural theory; young girls who have been identified for problematic behaviors are likely to have developed these behavioral and psychological difficulties within more challenging relational dynamics of their critical relationships.

Interestingly, as noted in the results, aggressive and non-aggressive female juvenile offenders do not vary significantly from one another on the majority of relationship and psychological factors. On most self-report dimensions, the two groups of girls do not look different from one another. However, the current study does not provide information regarding the specific challenges faced within the female juvenile offenders' interpersonal relations and how these challenges may or may not differ from adolescent girls not involved in the juvenile justice system. Relational/cultural theory stresses the importance of examining connections and disconnections within meaningful relationships. Although it appears that all female juvenile offenders experience more relational challenges than the typical adolescent, these relational challenges may not clearly be associated with a specific type of offense.

Females involved in the juvenile justice system may experience a wide range of relational dynamics that cause relational disconnections such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect that are not examined within this study. Although female adolescents

who commit aggressive or solely non-aggressive offenses report almost equally problematic significant relationships, the current study does not explore what type of characteristics and dynamics are associated with their perceptions of specific relationships. For example, consider that both aggressive and non-aggressive female juvenile offenders report an average relationship with mother while the norms suggest most girls the same age report moderately positive relationships with their mothers. Why is this? Does the daughter feel ignored or neglected by the mother? Does continual conflict arise between mother and daughter because they share very similar or different personality characteristics? Does violence exist in the relationship between the mother and daughter that makes the relationship negative? There are a great deal of possible explanations why aggressive and non-aggressive female juvenile offenders report more negative relationships in many of their critical relationships than their peers. Yet, no conclusions can be made from this study regarding the nature of offense and the quality of relationship, without consideration of relationship characteristics and dynamics, from a relational/cultural perspective.

Implications for Future Research

There is a critical need for more research to understand the lives of young girls who become involved in the juvenile justice system. The current study attempted to examine if the type of offense committed, aggressive or non-aggressive, provided insight to and a greater understanding of the psychological and relationship issues of female juvenile offenders. The results, in general, suggested that offense type alone is not sufficient in explaining the psychological and relationships of girls involved in the juvenile justice system.

There is great variability in the quality of relationships and psychological well-being among both groups of girls, and therefore, among all girls involved in the system. But what leads these girls to become involved in the juvenile justice system at all? What leads some girls to commit violent offenses while other girls commit offenses such as running away? Several hypotheses have been suggested in the current study, but further research is needed to understand female juvenile offenders' experiences. Glaser, Calhoun, Bradshaw, Bates, and Socherman (2001) have stressed the importance of gathering information from multi-observers of the child's behavior as well as stressed the importance for effective treatments to target each major context of the child's life. It would be helpful to gather qualitative information from female juvenile offenders, their family members, peers, and teachers, to create a more comprehensive context in which to understand the quantitative results of the current study.

New and fascinating work is beginning regarding the developmental pathways of females who become involved in the juvenile justice system (Silverthorn, 1996; Talbott, 1998). Although this body of literature is fairly new and inconclusive, this type of longitudinal research may yield crucial information regarding the early precipitators of female juvenile offending. Can it be predicted which girls in childhood may be more likely to become involved in juvenile court during adolescence? And if so, how can we as professionals help to create prevention programs that will support and nourish the protective factors and developmental assets of these young girls?

Previous research has demonstrated that female adolescents involved in the juvenile justice system commonly experience abuse and neglect and have encountered numerous relationship and environmental challenges throughout their young lives. Yet,

as researchers and professionals we have a limited understanding of what their abuse experiences are like and why female juvenile offenders may act out and are identified by the juvenile justice system while other girls with similar experiences turn inwards against themselves. We know that the abuse and neglect in their lives occurs at many levels such as in their homes and neighborhoods, yet we are unsure of how these experiences have affected the thought process and relational patterns of girls involved in juvenile court.

As emphasized throughout the current study, the relationships of female juvenile offenders continually serve as critical factors in how the female defines herself and how she will navigate her present and future. The current study examined female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses and non-aggressive offenses across numerous family, school, peer, and psychological variables in order to examine the quality of reported relationships and psychological well-being of two groups of female juvenile offenders. Due to the number of variables included in this study, a stringent level of significance was utilized to ensure that a Type I error was not produced. Therefore, several variables closely approached the statistical significance level were not considered statistically relevant. However, due to the stringent significance level, there is an increased likelihood of creating a Type II error. That is, there is an increased likelihood that variables in this study were deemed not statistically significant in error. Although it is important to adhere to the stringent statistical levels, it is also interesting to identify several possible trends and future areas of research as informed by the current data. A plethora of research is needed across the areas of family, peer groups, and school contexts to better understand the relational worlds of female adolescents involved in the juvenile justice system. This study, as do most studies, introduced many more questions. Several

of those questions and possible areas of research are listed below as they relate to the psychological well-being, family, peer, and school lives of females involved in the juvenile justice system.

Psychological Well-Being

Anxiety and Locus of Control.

Female juvenile offenders who have committed non-aggressive offenses report higher levels of anxiety than female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenders. Interestingly, non-aggressive female juvenile offenders also reported a more external locus of control than female juvenile offenders who have committed aggressive offenses. It may be possible that girls that do not respond violently in challenging situations, experience more anxiety in challenging situations and feel they have less power in confronting or changing their situation. External locus of control, as measured by the BASC-SRP-A, can indicate a sense of helplessness. For example, this may be the case in situations where female juvenile offenders attempt to continually escape situations, such as in running away from an abusive home, yet are continuously returned to the problematic situation without hope of change. More research is needed exploring the sense of personal power and control female juvenile offenders feel they have over their lives as well as how feelings of anxiety are related to feelings of helplessness among female juvenile offenders.

Family Relations

The families of female juvenile offenders may serve as a rich arena for study. Gathering information from parents regarding the female's behaviors and interactions within the family may be helpful in creating a more comprehensive view of the female

and provide insight into the familial factors that have influenced her development of offending behaviors, that may exacerbate her current psychological and behavioral issues, and to identify familial factors that serve to promote resiliency. Furthermore, longitudinal studies are needed to examine the development of the female within her family and to examine the many factors that may serve as protective or risk factors for juvenile offending. Qualitative research regarding the female juvenile offenders' experiences within her family may provide rich information regarding her psychological development and relational interactions as well as provide insight into her pathway into the juvenile justice system.

Peer Relations

This study presents findings regarding the female juvenile offenders perceptions of her peers. The current sample of female juvenile offenders, regardless of offense, report moderately negative relationships with their female peers while the norm population means are in the moderately positive range. There is a sharp contrast in the quality of female juvenile offenders' relationships with their female peers and the typical female adolescents' quality of their relationship with their female peers. Yet, female juvenile offenders, regardless of offense, report positive relationships with their male peers, as does the AIR norm population. It appears that females involved in the juvenile justice system are disconnected from female peers their age and do not benefit from the intimate friendships of their same sex peers. Why is there a negative perception of engaging in same sex friendships? What experiences have occurred between the female juvenile offender and her female peers that have led to this disconnection? How and why does the female juvenile offenders' relationships with her male peers remain positive?

A considerable amount of research is needed regarding the intimacies of female friendships (Brown, Way, & Duff, 1999) and particularly females who are involved in the juvenile justice system. Very little is known about the peer groups of female juvenile offenders such as the extent of her peer group, if her peers also engage in offending behavior, how her peers serve as sources of support, if her peers aid in the perpetuation of her offending behavior, and how her peers perceive her and her behaviors. These are only a few areas in which researchers could explore in order to gain a better understanding of female juvenile offenders, both aggressive and non-aggressive, within their peer relations.

School

Considering the influence of teachers on students' future academic success, the relationship between females involved in juvenile court and their teachers may serve as an important area of investigation. It appears that positive relationships with teachers can serve as protective factors against academic failure and drop out. The findings of the current study suggest that girls who are more aggressive have more difficulties with their teachers, however, it is unknown at this time how their attitudes toward teachers influences their school attendance and school academic performance. This may present an interesting area of study. In addition, it may be useful to gather quantitative and qualitative information from the girls' teachers in order to create a more comprehensive view of school interactions only possible when utilizing multi-informants.

Overall, continual research in the identified areas will help to gain a better understanding of adolescent females who become involved in the juvenile justice system. Further understanding of female juvenile offenders' strengths and challenges can inform

the creation of prevention and intervention efforts. In the present time, there is a call being made to create gender specific programming for girls (Johnson, Roberts, & Worell, (1999), especially girls involved in the juvenile justice system (MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001). Currently, many more questions than answers exist regarding the lives and treatment needs of adolescent females within the juvenile justice system. Yet, there is an obvious commitment from numerous professionals to work together with girls involved in the juvenile justice system in order to hear their voices and to better understand, encourage, and support these young women in creating healthy lives and future dreams.

Implications for Practice

There are numerous opportunities to establish prevention and intervention programs for adolescent females involved in the juvenile justice system. Calls are being made to create special programming for adolescent girls in general (Johnson, Roberts, & Worell, 1999) and for adolescent females in the juvenile justice system (Barnett & Simmons, 2001; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). Building meaningful connections with others is essential to the healthy psychological development of adolescent females and is an essential component in the treatment programming for adolescent girls (Debold et al, 1999; Gilligan, 1993).

The purpose of this study was to examine female adolescents who have committed aggressive and non-aggressive offenses across psychological and relationship factors. This approach was utilized to emphasize the importance in examining female adolescent juvenile offenders in the context of their important relationships. In utilizing the relational/cultural theoretical approach, the female juvenile offenders' development is considered within the context of her relationships and culture. From this perspective, it is

continually important to include the female juvenile offender as well as other meaningful individuals in her treatment.

Family, friends, and teachers can serve as powerful influences in the girls' lives and each of these individuals can be included in prevention and intervention efforts. Bringing girls together with their peers and adults in their community may be a powerful means of confronting personal struggles and barriers to success (Debold et al, 1999). In addition, bringing girls involved in the juvenile justice system together with their peers and professionals can allow the girls to establish genuine relationships and create a safe and confidential space to discuss personal experiences, both at the individual and societal levels (Debold et al, 1999). Prevention and intervention efforts for females involved in the juvenile justice system could help to build meaningful connections with important individuals such as family, peers, and teachers as well as to help create a sense of belonging within meaningful contexts.

In addition, prevention and intervention treatment programming could be collaborative and multidimensional. For example, teachers could be invited to participate in the female 's treatment by inviting them to serve as a source of support, to open lines of communication, and to provide meaningful feedback to adolescent females involved in the juvenile justice system. In working collaboratively with schools, the treatment of adolescent females could include engaging girls in activities and providing educational support so that the school context is an open and inviting environment that nourishes the girls development. As Peter Benson (1997) addressed in All Kids are Our Kids, connection to school and school personnel serves as an essential developmental asset in the lives of youth today. The primary purpose of this type of collaboration is to expand

the opportunities for meaningful relations, new opportunities, and to create positive resources and outlets for girls who commonly experience many personal and environmental challenges.

An understanding of the critical relationships in female adolescents' lives is needed to understand the role of problem behaviors exhibited by the females (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Without this understanding, girls can easily be misunderstood and mistreated, while their true needs go unnoticed. Female adolescents involved in the juvenile justice system are a unique population. They are a population identified because of their behavior "problems" and frequently labeled negatively. While addressing the "problems" in these girls lives is a necessary part of treatment, it is also important to help girls recognizes their strengths. As Debold and colleagues (1999) stated "By exploring the critical importance of relationships within girls' lives, we intend to shift the focus from girls' alleged failures to the relational and environmental contexts that too often cannot fully support them in ways that have been considered to be health promoting" (p.183).

In recognizing personal strengths and their meaningful relationships, young girls may feel they have more resources to confront the challenges in their lives. Female adolescents, and specifically those involved in the juvenile justice system, typically attempt to make the best choices they can with the options and opportunities they perceive available to them (Debold et al, 1999). Helping girls to expand their problem solving options, to create new educational and societal opportunities for them, and to connect girls with mentors and adults that can help them navigate through the ebb and flow of live may be useful in creating effective prevention and intervention strategies.

The results of this study emphasize that there are differences among all girls involved in the juvenile justice system, and that for the most part; their offense behavior does not adequately define differences among girls involved in the juvenile justice system. Each participant's experience within her family, school, and community is unique. Each adolescent brings with her unique strengths and personal resources as well as challenges they face. It is important to consider each adolescent female within her personal context in order to make sense of her behavior, her choices, as well as her strength to confront challenges present in her life (Debold et al, 1999). Treatment interventions can bring females involved in the juvenile justice system together, in a collaborative manner, with their peers, family, community members and professionals to address gender specific issues encountered by female adolescents and to foster the development of positive relationships, and in turn, a positive healthy development.

Conclusion

The current study was designed to explore how the aggressive or non-aggressive nature of a female juvenile offender's offenses was related to her psychological and relationship well-being. This study is a preliminary examination of the role of offending behaviors, particularly those aggressive in nature, in the lives of adolescent girls. Currently, female aggression is still known as an "unfamiliar territory" to both society and to girls and women themselves (Jack, 1999). Aggression in girls can take many forms; yet, almost inevitably the majority of female aggressive acts occur within a social arena (Talbott, 1997). The social contexts of these girls must be understood in order to understand the role and development of aggressive acts in the lives of girls.

The current study explored the psychological and relationship factors of adolescent females involved in a Northeast Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice. In order to determine if the participants' type of offense was related to specific psychological and relationship factors, participants were divided into two groups: girls who have committed aggressive offenses and girls who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses. Psychological factors such as depression, anxiety, and social stress were explored. Adaptive characteristics such as self-esteem and self-reliance were explored. Relationships with family members, peers, and teachers were explored. In examination of all of these variables, there was only one significant difference between girls who have committed aggressive offenses and girls who have solely committed non-aggressive offenses, their attitudes toward their teachers.

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