

2016

# The Gender-Responsive Approach for the Female Delinquent

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Jeanette Martin

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2016

Abstract

The Gender-Responsive Approach for the Female Delinquent

by

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MA, Oklahoma University, 1998

BA, Fort Valley State University, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Social and Behavioral Science

Walden University

December 2016

## Abstract

The number of females arrested for violent crimes has increased. The juvenile justice system continues to be challenged with developing gender-based treatment strategies to accommodate female delinquents. The purpose of this study was to examine probation officers' perceptions of the treatment provided for female delinquents and its ability to rehabilitate, reduce recidivism, and promote successful transition among female delinquents. The framework of this study encompassed the feminist theory from a criminology perspective. Data collection included interviews with 5 probation officers in El Paso County's Juvenile Justice Detention Center. Interviews were reviewed to generate a summary of relevancy. Themes and codes pertaining to the research were identified for analysis. The 5 participants provided several recommendations for treating the female delinquent were presented. The participants also identified 2 factors that contributed to the systems' inability to provide gender-specific treatment for the female delinquent: (a) a lack of resources for gender-responsive treatment and (b) a lack of funding for gender-responsive treatment. Implementation by the Juvenile Justice Department of gender-responsive programs would respond to the varied needs of female delinquents; therefore, increasing rehabilitation, reducing recidivism, and promoting successful transition among female delinquents. This implementation would benefit society as a whole, producing productive members who are able to affect social change.

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## Dedication

Completion of this endeavor has been long suffering with unwavering support from my mother, Katherine B. Yates, and my sister, Reanette Jones. Their continued encouragement gave me the necessary strength to see this through. I am grateful for their patience and understanding while I pursued this goal. I love you both dearly.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Background**

The United States has struggled with juvenile delinquency for decades and even today our systems seem to be outpaced in our ability to prevent or intervene concerning this phenomenon. The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP, 1974) identified the need for additional prevention and intervention measures in juvenile delinquency. Juvenile delinquency is a concern in areas such as justice, law making, social psychology, learning, and development. As the United States contends with high rates of juvenile delinquency, the country cannot ignore the increased rate of delinquent activities committed by female juveniles (Guthrie, Cooper, Brown, & Metzger, 2012). Despite a decline in the arrests related to juvenile crimes since 1994, the number of females arrested for violent crimes has increased (Guthrie et al., 2012). Puzzanchera (2010) noted that more than 31 million youths entered the juvenile court in 2009, and 28% of the delinquency cases involved adolescent females. Although female delinquents remain disproportionately represented, their numbers have been increased as the U.S. crime data from 2000 to 2009 indicates (Carrington, 2013). However, the research concerning the gender-based differences and recommended interventions for female juvenile delinquency is still limited as compared to the research body concerning male delinquents (Thompson & Morris, 2013). The lack of research and knowledge base hinders the justice systems' ability to appropriately treat the female delinquent, who is often treated with male dominant treatment programs.

The system's inability to address gender-specific needs continues to manifest itself repeatedly. Guthrie et al. (2012) acknowledged that the juvenile justice system is ill equipped to address various issues faced by the female delinquent. Paraschiv (2013) noted that girls are not a priority within the juvenile justice system, and the juvenile justice system is challenged with developing gender-based strategies to accommodate females. The purpose of this research was to attain probation officers perceptions of the treatment provided to the female delinquent and the treatment's ability to rehabilitate, reduce recidivism, and promote successful transition among female delinquents.

### **Problem Statement**

There has been an increase in violent crimes among the female; however, juvenile delinquency researchers have focused solely on the male prior to 1960 (Balthazar & Cook, 2014). The number of arrests involving violent crimes by females has increased, thus narrowing the difference in delinquency rates across both genders (Balthazar & Cook, 2014). This increase in violent delinquent acts by the female raises the questions as to why and what caused the increase among this population and how should it be addressed by the justice system. According to Balthazar and Cook (2014), the juvenile justice system has limited information about the issues related to the female delinquent and the means to treat them. Wright (2014) suggested that limited resources make it difficult for the juvenile justice system to tailor programs towards female offenders because they are a small percentage of the total number of juvenile offenders. While the percentage of the overall number of female delinquents is small, this phenomenon has continued to increase on an annual basis over the last 3 decades (Balthazar & Cook,

2014). Wright noted that the advantages to implementing more gender-responsive programs within the justice system, leads to an increased opportunity for rehabilitation. When implementing gender-responsive programs, the stakeholders must consider the needs of the delinquent (male or female) and factors linked to female delinquency when developing such programs.

Although the female delinquent population is smaller than that of the male, this does not warrant ignoring the issues surrounding the female delinquent population. The justice system should implement best practices to treat the female delinquent in order to reduce the juvenile delinquency rates (Wright, 2014). The ability to better treat female delinquents decreases the likelihood of recidivism and increases the justice system's ability to decrease the rates of female crime (Wright, 2014). Implementing gender-responsive treatments in the juvenile justice system may decrease the female delinquency rate and enhance their social stability and productivity.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine gender-responsive treatment and rehabilitation programs. Wright (2014) posited that gender-responsive delinquency treatment and rehabilitation programs are necessary for success because men and women have different needs and the types of crimes committed often differ by the gender. Statistically, females are more likely to commit nonviolent crimes and are less of a communal threat than the males (Wright, 2014). Juvenile courts have dealt with boys primarily under the delinquency jurisdiction and with girls under the status offense jurisdiction, leading to variations in how female delinquents are processed in courts and



mental health facilities. The Juvenile and Delinquency Prevention Act (1974) improved these variations, but not enough to affect the development of treatment and rehabilitative programs for females (Wright, 2014). This continues to be reflected in research data presented from 2000 to 2009, as female violence increases females still remain disproportionately represented across the juvenile justice system.

### **Nature of the Study**

In this study, I used a qualitative, multiple-case study and focused on the perceptions of probation officers who work with adolescents participating in gender-responsive programs in the juvenile justice system. Probation officers provided their perceptions on treatments provided to female delinquents as well as the treatments' ability to rehabilitate, decrease recidivism, and promote successful transition into the community.

The qualitative case study provided the ability to study this phenomena, through means of recording perceptions of probation officers; who were able to provide their lived experiences concerning the juvenile systems ability to successfully treat the female delinquent. As Yin (2003) noted, the case study approach helps the researcher to understand the real-life phenomena of female delinquency in a holistic fashion while also reviewing the treatment processes for female delinquents within the justice system. Additionally, this approach provided more objective means of analyzing the data gathered from numerous individuals and also enabled an exploration and comparison of various programs mentioned by the probation officers (Yin, 2003). Comparing the experiences of actual probation officers with the literature allowed me to evaluate the

need for gender-responsive treatment programs, which could lead to rehabilitation and a reduced recidivism rate. Data collection methods included interviews with the probation officers in El Paso County's Juvenile Justice Detention Center. Before conducting interviews, information about the research was provided in order to establish rapport and trust with the interviewees. The interview method included open-ended questions, as this allowed follow-up questions to gather in-depth information.

The multiple-case approach was used to illuminate participants' views and experiences, resulting in an enhanced depth of the research while also improving the organizational knowledge concerning female delinquency (Yin, 2003). In addition, various perspectives on the use of gender-responsive treatment were obtained. Garraza, Azur, Stephens, & Walrath, (2011) proposed that girls enter the system with more problems than boys do; therefore, an increased awareness of gender-based treatment is necessary. Current programs allowing coed group sessions can interrupt female participants' healing process and may also cause them re-experience earlier traumas (Rieckmann et al., 2011). Neely-Barnes and Whitted (2011) underlined the importance of providers, within the justice system, acknowledging gender-based differences in treating females and males. This acquired knowledge of gender differences may lead to improving treatment programs, thus reducing recidivism and increasing delinquents' chances of successfully transitioning into society. This study provided insights regarding the effectiveness of gender-responsive approach since its inception.

## Research Questions

This study was designed to determine how female delinquents are served with gender-responsive programs, which can meet their developmental and specific needs, leading to improved treatment programs and reduced recidivism and resulting in successful transitioning of prior female offenders into the society. This study was designed, in part, to address evidence that shows male-centered offender treatment programs are ineffective in the case of female offenders (van der Knaap, Alberda, Oosterveld, & Born, 2012).

In this study, I investigated the following research questions.

1. What rehabilitation efforts have probation officers observed for male and female delinquents?
2. What are probation officers' perceptions regarding how current treatment could be improved to specifically meet the needs of female delinquents?
3. What are probation officers' perceptions and daily experiences regarding the impact of current treatment programs on recidivism among female delinquents?
4. How do probation officers think the current treatment influences female delinquents' transition into the community? How does this transition differ from that of male delinquents?

## Theoretical Framework

The framework of this study encompassed the feminist theory from a criminology perspective, better known as the feminist criminology theory, which addresses the issues

relative to females and crime (Chesney-Lind, 1988). The focus on crime has traditionally been associated with males, therefore, most researchers have focused on the justice system's response to male offenders while ignoring the needs of the female offenders. The overarching goal of the feminist criminology theory is to bridge the gap within the justice system. Feminist criminology theorists also aim to enhance the understanding of male and female offenders and the system's way of addressing their delinquent behaviors (Chesney-Lind, 1988). Furthermore, it provides a theoretical explanation for the crimes involving females, programs offered to female offenders, means of responding to female offenders, female probation officers within the corrections field, and the special needs of females within the justice system.

In this study, I gathered the perceptions of the probation officers who had implemented, applied, and observed the outcomes of various approaches designed for the female offenders. The sooner that factors relevant to the treatment of female juvenile delinquents are identified, the sooner more efficient treatment(s) can be developed for them (Oesterle, Hawkins, Fagan, Abbott, & Catalano, 2010). Efficient treatments will provide an increased understanding of the female delinquent, thus reducing their chances of becoming repeat offenders or being subjected to the juvenile justice system (Srsic & Rice, 2012).

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms and phrases appear in this study:

*Adolescents:* Youths who are transitioning from puberty to adulthood, ranging from 12-17 years of age.

*Behavioral health issues:* An inclusive term that includes many issues for which someone would seek help from a professional, such as suicidal behavior, substance use disorder, and domestic and relationship violence (McDonald, Curtis-Schaeffer, Theiler, & Howard, 2014). This term is used interchangeably or in conjunction with emotional and mental health issues.

*Childhood trauma:* Physical, sexual, and/or psychological abuse occurring during one's childhood (Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency [CSOSA], 2013).

*Criminal Justice System:* An institution, agency, or individual who manages or provides supervision to an offender who enters into the legal system (Andrews & Dowden, 2006).

*Gender-responsive treatment:* Creating an environment through site selection, staff selection, program development, content, and material that reflects an understanding of the realities of women's lives and is responsive to the issues of the clients (Covington, 2002).

*Mental health issues:* Having been assessed and found in need of mental health services including medication, treatment, and/or hospitalization for psychological issues (CSOSA, 2013).

*Offender:* An individual found guilty, convicted, and sentenced for a criminal act who remains under the jurisdiction of a releasing authority (CSOSA, 2013).

*Recidivism:* Having lost the privilege to remain in the community after being sentenced to a period of probation, supervised release, and/or parole due to a new arrest or conviction and/or violating release conditions (CSOSA, 2013).

*Risk and Needs Assessment:* A tool used to assess the extent to which an offender requires support services and treatment interventions (CSOSA, 2013).

### **Assumptions**

The main assumption of this research was that probation officers' experiences and observations could provide the juvenile justice system with ideas of how to better treat the delinquent, particularly the female delinquent. Wright (2014) posited that implementation of more gender-responsive programs provides an increased opportunity for rehabilitation. Stakeholders within El Paso County will be able to provide more effective ways to respond to the female delinquency and better understand its causes. Furthermore, they will be able to provide more effective services for the female delinquent.

It was also assumed that, in the multiple case study, I would identify programs that provide the best treatment and yield better results for treating the female delinquent. I also assumed I would be able to identify key points of consideration when implementing gender-responsive programs relative to treating females. The implementation would lead to decreasing the female delinquency rate and enhancing their social stability and productivity within society. These probation officers could explain their experiences and observations, so their perceptions were important.

### **Limitations**

There were limits to this study due to the qualitative research approach which involved the use of interviews. As Qu and Dumay (2011) noted, interview data may be

limited due to the distorted responses based on the competency and moral levels of the interviewees.

### **Significance of the Study**

The results of the study could provide a better understanding of what services are available for female delinquents and their success. According to Wright (2014), the justice system's limited ability to fund gender-responsive programs continues to challenge the treatment of the female delinquent. Although there have been improvements in this area, the increasing number of violent offenses by female juveniles may suggest that treatment resources are not keeping up with violent female delinquencies. In this study, I explored probation officers' perceptions regarding the treatment of female delinquents and its ability to rehabilitate, reduce recidivism, and promote successful transition into the society. Understanding probation officers' views can help determine the need for improved treatment, as well as identify areas for improvement. The study results provide juvenile justice stakeholders with a spectrum of probation officers' perspectives on treating female delinquents and decreasing the probability of female delinquency. In addition, the results increase knowledge of treatments for female delinquents, as well as program features that improve the success rate of such programs. Furthermore, the results require additional training requirements for all parties working with the delinquents.

### **Summary**

In this study, I examined the need for gender-based treatment to change the behavior of adjudicated juvenile delinquents. Furthermore, I identified the gender-

responsive needs that must be addressed to reduce delinquent behaviors among the female adolescent. A multiple case study approach was employed to explore the developmental differences between the female and the male adolescents. After identifying these differences, gender-based treatment was examined, using the feminist criminology theory (Chesney-Lind, 1988). The findings help the social services and juvenile justice court systems apply and implement more gender-responsive treatment services and programs. The provision of gender-responsive treatments, services, and programs could reduce the delinquent population within the juvenile justice system, leading to a decline in the number of the adolescents adjudicated through the juvenile court system. In this qualitative study, I sought to add to the current information in the area of female delinquency as well as to illustrate the importance of considering gender-specific treatments. Chapter 2 includes an extensive literature review in the area of female delinquency and gender-responsive treatments.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I present an analytical and synthesized review of the literature, framing the purpose and rationale of this research. The intent of this literature review is to describe the relevant literature exploring the state of female delinquency among girls ages 12-17, as well as the programs or treatment approaches that provide successful results in treating the female delinquent. Female delinquency is prevalent in many countries across the world, and assessing approaches to deal with female offenders is crucial due to the limited research body in this area.

In this literature review, I focused on the following major themes and key words: (a) *adolescents*, (b) *behavioral health issues*, (c) *childhood trauma*, (d) *criminal justice system*, (e) *gender-responsive treatment*, (f) *mental health issue*, (g) *offender*, (h) *recidivism*, and (i) *risk and needs assessments*. These terms and phrases were used to conduct a literature review that contributed to the evaluation of perceptions and the knowledge of lived experiences of gender-responsive programs within the juvenile justice system. The search process consisted of the specified terms from publications published within the last five years: (a) published dissertations and thesis, (b) peer-reviewed articles, and (c) online databases including EBSCOhost, ProQuest, SAGE. In this chapter, I review the historical background of female delinquency, juvenile justice system treatments, early intervention and treatment programs, and the treatments for females.

### **Overview of Female Delinquency**

Certain policies in the criminal justice system are targeted at the female adolescent. These gender-responsive policies provide the guidelines for addressing

trauma, substance use, economic oppression, and mental health in this population (van Wormer, 2010). However, the principles of treatment for delinquency and crime prevention are the same for both males and females. According to van Wormer (2010), the unique needs of female delinquents can be met through vocational, career development, and life skills training, which addresses women's issues and teaches them empowerment and assertiveness. The juvenile justice system is in need of improvement to adequately address the needs of female youth who might not adhere to the law (Watson & Edelman, 2012). The drivers of female delinquency include broken or dysfunctional relationships, substance abuse, and childhood victimization (Barlow, 2014). With this in mind, the drivers for female delinquency at a minimum present a start for developing gender-responsive programs.

### **Features of Female Delinquent Behavior**

After years of reviewing contributing factors to female delinquency the home dynamics remain consistent as a known contributing factor. Women tend to commit delinquent acts on a less chronic basis than the men (Chesney-Lind, 2010). The contributors to delinquency among the female adolescent include truancy and running away from home, which is often motivated by the desire to escape from physical and sexual victimization (Chesney-Lind, 2010). In running away from these various forms of victimization and illegal adult behavior at home, these female adolescents become vulnerable to behaviors that violate the law, in particular, prostitution and drug or substance abuse. Female adolescents behaviors can be understood in the context of their peer groups, experiences, communities, and family context.

## **Factors Contributing to Female Delinquency**

Researchers have identified various factors that may contribute to female delinquency. Wise (2012) listed that factors such as family dynamics, sexual abuse, early puberty, anxiety, and depression as the main risk factors behind delinquency. Sheehan, McIvor, and Trotter (2010) cited education and employment as factors that affect female delinquency rates. Other factors that contribute to delinquency include educational failures, such as expulsion, suspension, repetition of grade levels, and placement in special rooms (Pierson, 2013). According to Redding (2010), female judicial clients tend to be single parents who dropped out of school due to pregnancy, substance abuse, or dysfunctional family dynamics. OJJDP (2010) found that 64% of judicial clients claimed not to have completed high school. Broken relationships drive young women to drop out of school, forcing them to fend for themselves. Those who suffer abuse at a young age can be traumatized, and many run away from their homes (Sherman, 2012). As a result of their inability to continue education, women may end up in illegal professions such as sex work. There is a direct relationship between age and delinquency. According to Chaneles (2014) and Balthazar and Cook (2014), the peak age for delinquency is 15. Unfortunately, with the peak age being 15 one can only imagine the driving factors in between. It all stems from the dysfunctional family relationships that may have led to neglect, sexual, and physical abuse. This becomes overwhelming for any adolescent, who most likely turns to substance abuse.

Substance abuse is also associated with female criminal activity. The abuse of drugs such as alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and miraa (also known as khat) affects family

relationships and mental health; consequently, the users might violate the law. There is a significant association between adolescent delinquency and the use and abuse of heroin, cocaine, alcohol, and marijuana (Whitesell, Bachand, Peel, & Brown, 2013). Drug users might engage in criminal activities including prostitution, suicide, and stealing from relatives or friends. The women might use drugs to forget their problems, and drug use is also often linked to sexual, physical, and emotional abuse.

Women might also participate in criminal activities due to mental health issues (e.g., anxiety, depression; Latessa, Listwan, & Koetzle, 2014). Abuse at the hands of family members and friends increases the risk of female delinquency. Women exposed to high stress levels often exhibit risk-taking behaviors (Chesney-Lind, 2010). Most of the women in the female juvenile justice system have a history of sexual or physical abuse and neglect (Morizot & Kazemian, 2014, p. 406). The maltreatment breaks down the relationships between female adolescents and their parents and romantic partners. In a study concerning the relationship between an offending behavior and the child maltreatment, Topitzes, Mersky, and Reynolds (2011) concluded that childhood abuse is a contributing factor in female crimes. Put, Lanctôt, Ruitter, and Vugt (2015) found that the victims of sexual and physical abuse, neglect, and other types of maltreatment frequently commit violent offenses. Good, bad, or indifferent the contributing factors to female delinquency are unlike that of their male counterparts. The noted factors along further denotes the necessity for gender-responsive programs, and reasons to prevent the inevitable for this gender that is at a loss before their birth.

The phenomenon of juvenile delinquency is bred early and without early intervention the justice system will continue to trail its means of permeating across the United States. Wanamaker (2015) attributed female and male adolescent violence to poor parental supervision, parental aggression, and conflicts (e.g., harsh discipline). Female adolescents are frequently the victims of physical and sexual abuse, and scholars have shown that women who exhibit antisocial behavior might have suffered sexual abuse in the past (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2013). Similarly, those who engage in violence generally have a history of experiencing violence. Violence among young women mostly involves fighting with siblings or parents at home or in school (Feld, 2014). Women with deficient social bonds are often exposed to antisocial influences (Morizot & Kazemian, 2014, p. 406). The trauma resulting from different types of abuse motivates women to run away from home and their families, and some who become involved in abusive relationships engage in criminal activity and seek revenge against the perpetrators of the abuse (Sherman, 2012). A continued vicious cycle that an ill-equipped justice system cannot rectify without appropriately addressing appropriately.

In addition to the female delinquent's contributing factors such as unstable homes, relationships, etc., development during puberty has also been discussed as a contributing factor. Javdani, Rodriguez, Nichols, Emerson, and Donenberg (2014) posited that early onset of puberty is a contributing factor to female violence. Javdani, Rodriguez, Nichols, Emerson, and Donenberg (2014) identified a link between early puberty and family dysfunction. When combined with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, mental health disorders, and emotional and cognitive deficiencies, the results of early puberty are

negative behavioral outcomes. Early physical maturity poses a risk for young women due to inconsistency between their physical signs of development and the development of their emotional and cognitive systems (Javdani, Sadeh, & Verona, 2011). Young women who mature early are more likely to engage in delinquency and high-risk behaviors and have an increased likelihood of exposure to violent intimate partners. Most adolescent girls ages 12-17 experience a maturity gap (Chesney-Lind, 2010). Those who engage in delinquent behaviors might be attempting to achieve autonomy and independence and to escape parental control.

Family influences also contribute to the criminal activity. Women, throughout their lives, are connected to their family, which acts as a protective source. Children and adolescents receive protection from delinquency through parental monitoring and supervision. When the protective familial bonds weaken due to violence, instability, sexual abuse, and/or inadequate parental supervision, young women are likely to engage in high risk behaviors, leading to delinquency. Ineffective parenting practices (e.g., constant fault finding, inconsistent discipline) might also drive youths into criminal activities. Additionally, family members and relatives (e.g., siblings, mothers, fathers, cousins) who engage in a criminal activity may also encourage young women to perform similar behaviors. Parental drug abuse and deviance also expose female adolescents to criminal activities.

### **Gender-Appropriate Treatment for Female Delinquents**

The juvenile justice system can benefit from various gender-responsive programs aimed at addressing the needs of female adolescents (Walker, Munoz, & Sullivan-

Colgazier, 2012). Increased empirical and theoretical attention to delinquency among female youth could provide information on treating mental health issues and various types of abuse (physical, mental, and verbal). According to the Berkeley Center for Criminal Justice (2010), California has gender-responsive programs, funded with \$3.5 million provided by the state's Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act. California's female population in the juvenile justice system has high rates of childhood traumatic events, and researchers have examined interventions related to traumatic events. Smith, Chamberlain, and Deblinger (2012) found that most community-based interventions have limited capacity to treat female delinquents. However, Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC), a worldwide community-based intervention program designed for chronically delinquent adolescents, has had successes in treating delinquents (Smith et al., 2012). Like most programs, MTFC was originally designed to treat male delinquents, but was later adapted to treat female delinquents.

Increased knowledge and implementation of gender-responsiveness programs will pay huge dividends for society as a whole. Wright (2014) posited that gender-responsive programs serve as rehabilitation tools. Male and female teenagers have different needs and tend to commit different crimes. Launched in 2013, Project Uncaged targeted young women in the juvenile system. The women in detention learn art (e.g., visual arts, prose and poetry writing) and better ways of dealing with their emotions in order to create future plans, reflect on past mistakes, and develop strategies to improve their lives (Wright, 2014). The participants learn to express themselves and communicate their feelings in a safe environment. A focus on productive activities helps them develop a

positive outlook. In addition to providing fun activities, the program teaches coping techniques to participants to deal with their issues. The participants are encouraged to establish positive relationships with their guardians or parents and are treated to a special dinner upon completion of the program where the participants share food and their artistic creations. The environment that is conducive to free sharing creates a safe space for the participants.

Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) schools offer Title I programs aimed at helping disadvantaged children achieve academic success. This alternative program helps the adolescents within the juvenile detention programs transition into public school programs (Wright, 2014). In the program, certified teachers provide year-round daily instruction in language arts, math, science, and social studies (Wright, 2014). Ultimately, it provides a second chance to the delinquents who have had struggled. In addition, the female offenders in the juvenile justice system can participate in 360 Project where they receive training in dog care and learn values such as patience and empathy (Wright, 2014). Adolescents engaged in delinquency can also take part in a diversion program called Reading for Life, which aims to foster good learning skills.

The JJC endeavors to improve its services to meet the needs of female youths and adults who respond to social influences in different manners (Feld, 2014). Mentoring is a common method for addressing the needs of at-risk youth, including female offenders in detention centers and on probation. DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, and Valentine (2011) reported that 5,000 mentoring programs serve 3 million youths. Youths who have mentors are less likely to skip school, drink alcohol, or engage in violence (Feld, 2014).



Intervention programs focus on children who have been confined by their parents, neglected or abused, live in abject poverty, have disabilities, are pregnant or parenting early, and participate in the JJC. Mentoring can be informal (e.g., teachers and other adults engaged with youth), formal (e.g., volunteers interacting with youths), community-based (e.g., participation in such as activities as sports and visits to museums), and school-based (e.g., presence of positive role models; DuBois et al., 2011). This concept is one that has been proven to work, involving communal stakeholders, who often fill the parental gaps necessary for developmental and stability needs of delinquent adolescents.

Education can help women access mental health services, employment, housing, and legal assistance in cases of sexual harassment, as well as navigate the juvenile justice system. Courts, specifically for the female juveniles, include the First Judicial Circuit (Hawaii), Second Judicial Court (Nevada), Juvenile Drug Court (Texas), and the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court (South Dakota; Schaefer, 2008). On set dates, female juveniles go to treatment centers that provide services aimed at restoring justice in the community (Schaefer, 2008). These female-only treatment days have proven to be highly cost-effective.

Researchers working on gender responsiveness within the juvenile justice system have recommended that staff members receive training in order to better respond to female-specific needs (Berkeley Center for Criminal Justice, 2010). Female offenders are likely to engage in early sexual activity; thus, juvenile justice programs and services should address parenting, pregnancy, and reproductive health, and staff should use assessment tools that have been designed with female populations in mind. According to

Brumbaugh, Walters, and Winterfield (2010), risk assessment tools are used to assess the likelihood of outcomes such as attendance at court appearances and the potential for reoffending on the basis of factors such as criminal histories, participants' education level, substance abuse problems, mental health issues, and number and types of previous offenses. The use of such tools predicts future violence based on past violence. The effective use of these tools decreases the likelihood that females with aggressive and antisocial behavior tendencies may repeat such behaviors again. Need-based or treatment-focused tools can also help treat disorders.

In some cases, detention might not address the main causes of female delinquency, such as separation from family members (Berkeley Center for Criminal Justice, 2010). Detention facilities that might retraumatize female delinquents must be changed. Detention centers should employ mental health professionals and other support workers to meet the mental and physical needs of those who have suffered physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. Disciplinary techniques such as isolation, physical confrontation, and restraint might cause retraumatization (Berkeley Center for Criminal Justice, 2010). In addition, detention environments characterized by isolation, loss of privacy, and insensitivity from staff members might increase negative feelings and lead to a loss of self-control. Community-based programs are best at treating problems, such as familial trauma and psychological disorders, and offer a less traumatic way of providing services to female offenders. The JJC has increased its community-based alternatives to allow female youth to receive treatment in their communities. Such programs encourage communication, provide physical and emotional safety assurance,

and create meaningful relationships (Wright, 2014). The development of these relationships create opportunity for recovery for these youths and opportunity presents second chances in life and within society.

### **Increased Rate of Female Delinquency in the Juvenile Justice System**

Female criminal behavior is perceived as less serious than male criminal behavior. Historically, women have committed minor offenses as compared to men on the average (Chesney-Lind, 2010); but, women's participation rate in violent crime has been rising (Banarjee, Islam, & Khatun, 2015). A drive to implement gender-responsive programs has emerged in response to the increasing number of female offenders. Kerig and Schindler (2013) reported a decade-long rise in the female arrest rate, which has generated interest in understanding the gender differences that drive delinquency. This trend has prompted the implementation of many gender-responsive interventions to reduce antisocial behaviors among female youth. Questions about the assumptions that guide gender-responsive approaches toward female youth in the juvenile system have also arisen. These questions include the following:

- Does evidence support the claim that gender differences in risk-taking behaviors cause female youth to commit acts of delinquency?
- Are delinquency interventions less effective for male than female offenders?
- Do interventions targeting female youth have different levels of effectiveness?

The phenomenon of female delinquency continues to permeate across states with little attentiveness and with minimum motivation to properly address due to its ratio in comparison to the male delinquent. From 1990 to 2004, the number of female arrests increased until female youth accounted for at least 30% of all juvenile arrests (Redding, 2010). The female offenders accounted for only 11% of all juvenile arrests in the United States in 1980; but, this percentage had risen to 18% by 2000 (Redding, 2010). In 2008, California saw 58,843 female arrests, which included 3.5% of the state's female population ages 12–17 (Berkeley Center for Criminal Justice, 2010). In addition, there were 58,195 referrals for probation, resulting in the filing of 20,525 petitions in juvenile courts (Berkeley Center for Criminal Justice, 2010). The rising number of arrests puzzled the juvenile justice system experts who wondered why female youth were increasingly involved in delinquency.

### **Nature of Female Crimes**

Women tend to commit crimes such as shoplifting, larceny, and writing bad checks (Redding, 2010). A nationally representative study found 71.9% of women in a California prison had been convicted of these crimes compared to 49.7% of men (Bloom & Covington, 1998). Other common offenses among women include fraud, prostitution, and drug trafficking. The Berkeley Center for Criminal Justice (2010) reported prostitution is the most common offense among female youth on probation. In 2008, 696 female offenders received probation referrals after arrests for prostitution. However, most women receive convictions for drug-related crimes. Many have relationships with men who engage in drug-related crimes and these women may serve as subordinates to

the men. The women may act as couriers during drug distribution, putting themselves at risk of violating the law. When women sell drugs on their own, they tend to conduct small trades. But multiple transactions in pursuit of higher earnings expose women to higher risks of detection.

The crimes women commit tend to entail a relational element: they first get involved in crime as a help to a male partner and later branch out on their own. Fifty percent of women, who are criminal offenders, commit the crime in collaboration with a male partner. Between 1996 and 2005, women participated in violations of liquor laws (driving under the influence of alcohol), embezzlement, and transactions involving stolen property (Redding, 2010).

Although women tend to commit less violent crimes than men, the percentage of reported assaults involving female assailants has increased over the last decades as a result of compulsory arrests in domestic violence cases (Muftić & Baumann, 2012). In addition, substance abuse is a main contributing factor towards women committing major crimes. In 2010, 32.6% of the incarcerated women had abused drugs (Lima, 2014) and this rate is, especially, high among women who commit homicide. Evidence suggests women with personality disorders or substance abuse addiction tend to be violent. When women use drugs, they might feel ashamed and blame themselves. Among the incarcerated women who have committed violent crimes, 29.7% killed or assaulted a partner or a relative (Lima, 2014). As far as homicide incidents are concerned, most female offenders have either killed children (25.7%) or other family members (Lima,

2014). Lima (2014) posited that 45% of the women have killed their partners due to instances of physical abuse.

Little research has been conducted on serial murders committed by women due to the small number of female serial killers in the judicial system. Women rarely commit murder but when they do, their crimes differ from those of men (Lima, 2014). Women rarely torture their victims and tend to inflict less pain or physical damage. They may lure the victims and sometimes poison them. Female serial killers tend to come from dysfunctional families or might have suffered abuse at an early age (Lima, 2014).

### **Early Intervention and Prevention Programs**

Juvenile crime affects every U.S. citizen (Samimsky, 2010) including parents, teachers, neighbors, families, victims, bystanders, and perpetrators. Some programs aimed at reducing delinquency rates have succeeded while others have failed. Programs that start after a person has committed a deviant act tend to be less successful because the individual has already developed anti-social behavior. Effective interventions must occur before the occurrence of a delinquent behavior. They should be comprehensive and address the mediators of certain target problems. The younger children are when they participate in such programs, the greater the reduction in crime that might be achieved. Saminsky (2010) defined early intervention programs as those that take place before birth through early adolescence before children exhibit delinquent behaviors.

Most schools in the United States have adopted social and emotional learning (SEL) programs which teach students self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, and relationship skills. According to the

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2014), these programs foster the development of essential competencies such as understanding and managing emotions, setting achievable goals, making responsible decisions, and forming and maintaining relationships. Once children have developed these competencies, they achieve higher academic performance, experience less emotional stress, create fewer problems, and exhibit more positive social behaviors (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

Durlak et al. (2011) examined the effects of SEL on conduct problems (e.g., non-compliance, disruptive classroom behavior, delinquent acts, bullying, and suspension from school). After analyzing the results of 112 studies, Durlak et al. (2011) found that students who took part in SEL programs were involved in fewer conduct problems than those who had not. Durlak et al. (2011) also analyzed the effects of SEL programs on internalizing behavior, particularly the mental issues of depression, anxiety, social withdrawal, and stress. The meta-analysis of 49 studies showed that student participants in SEL programs experienced low levels of emotional distress (Durlak et al., 2011).

Due to increased instances of bullying in schools, anti-bullying interventions have emerged. Bullying leads to fear, harm, and distress, and youths may display undesirable behaviors including punching, hitting, psychological abuse (e.g., social exclusion), and verbal abuse (e.g., teasing, name calling) (Gladden, Alana, Merle, & Corey, 2014). In 2010–2011, 27.8% of the American students reported experiencing bullying and 9% reported experiencing cyber bullying (Roberts, Jana, Jennifer, & Thomas, 2013). Cook et al. (2010) and Mishna, and Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla, and Daciuk (2012) estimated that

the rates of bullying and cyber bullying among children are 10–50% and 30%, respectively. Intervention programs which target bullying include conflict resolution, therapeutic treatments, curricular approaches, and efforts to raise awareness among the stakeholders (Stop Bullying Now, 2010).

Sargent Shriver, an appointee of President Lyndon B. Johnson to handle his Great Society programs in the 1960s, launched the Head Start program which aimed to provide opportunities to economically disadvantaged Americans to pull themselves out of poverty (Bailey & Duquette, 2014). Head Start begins early in the lives of children and uses a comprehensive, holistic approach to deal with various aspects of their lives including health services, education, social services, parental involvement, and nutritional guidance. Within 50 years, more than 22 million children have enrolled in the program, mostly by meeting income criteria. The program's aim is to improve the academic performance and intellectual capacity of children from low-income families (Bailey & Duquette, 2014). The program prepares underprivileged children for school and its primary long-term goal is to reduce school drop-out rate.

Researchers working on the effectiveness of early intervention recruited 23 male and 13 female adolescents who had been identified as having intellectual disabilities at a teaching hospital from 2001 to 2005. The difference between the two tests was used as an indicator of the effectiveness of early intervention. The research showed that the implementation of an early prevention program leads to improved academic achievement, intelligence, social behavior, and self-esteem. The research also found that early intervention programs can improve the IQ of children with intellectual disabilities, and



the earlier the children are exposed to intervention programs, the better (Lai, Chiang, Hou, Liu, Yao, Guo, & Tseng, 2014).

One other successful early intervention program is My Baby & Me. Some states' family and children's services departments offer this early intervention program for adolescent and adult mothers. Trained professionals (e.g., nurses) meet with mothers, many of whom are teenagers from low-income background and who also belong to high-risk population groups. These meetings occur during pregnancy and when the child reaches the age of 24–36 months. During the visits, mothers receive support and information about environmental hazards, substance abuse, conduct problems, and nutrition for themselves and their children. Parenting is crucial for the healthy childhood development, and professionals conducting home visits usually demonstrate good parenting behaviors to mothers (Guttentag, Landry, Williams, Baggett, Noria, Borkowski, & Ramey, 2014).

A relationship exists between antisocial behaviors and impulse control problems such as aggression and anger. Parental and family factors such as large family size tends to lead to reduced parental monitoring and influence, allowing peers to exert strong influence on children. In addition, parental economic difficulties and depression can lead to a lack of teenage nurturing and, consequently, increased negative peer relations (Olds, Kitzman, Knudtson, Anson, Smith, & Cole, 2014). Delinquency acts tend to increase with a rise in the risk factors. A relationship also exists between increased parental negligence and other risk factors and future violence. To prevent delinquency, nurturing and effective discipline are necessary.

The purpose of home visitation programs is to improve parenting. The effects of visitations are reduced child maltreatment, family size, closed-spaced pregnancies, and reduced probability of tobacco smoking and substance abuse during pregnancy. Nurses have also reported home visits lead to lower levels of irritability among infants. In addition, improved diet and reduced maternal smoking result in better temperaments in children. Other benefits of visitations include fewer social problems and improved academic performance, healthcare encounters, school readiness, and educational and employment opportunities.

Interventions also target children, adolescents, and young adults who live or work on the streets. According to Coren, Hossain, Pardo, Veras, Chakraborty, Harris, & Martin (2013), some youths stay in homeless shelters, others return to their families, and some undergo human trafficking or forced labor. Intervention programs for such youths in the juvenile system are intended to increase their literacy, promote a healthy lifestyle, facilitate access to education, job opportunities, and training, reduce the risks resulting from exposure to street life such as substance abuse and early sexual activity, and foster a sense of inclusion in the society. Social inclusion of these youths includes equal access to an acceptable standard of living, respect for cultural diversity, and efforts to reduce inequality (Coren et al., 2013). Children should live in an environment which supports recreation, spiritual and personal growth, physical safety, nutrition, counseling, medical care, and economic opportunities. Interventions that may improve the lives of children on the streets include vocational training and family therapy. In particular, HIV prevention programs aim to increase knowledge about sexually transmitted diseases and

the risk factors behind it such as engaging in unprotected sex or sexual intercourse with multiple partners and sharing needles while using drugs.

Coren et al. (2013) conducted a three-part, three-month study to determine how the intervention programs that target street youths improve family functioning and found that intervention programs are positively linked to family cohesion. An analysis of mental and behavioral health after six months showed that the intervention programs had reduced participants' depression levels. However, the analysis did not find a reduction in criminal delinquency after 12 months. Moreover, the psychological functioning also remained the same after the intervention.

Although few studies have investigated the impact of preventive interventions on the overall protection of the community, research indicates community-based interventions can help prevent behavioral and health problems among youth (Oesterle, Hawkins, Fagan, Abbott, & Catalano, 2014). Designers of these programs aim to reach and influence all youths in communities equally. Oesterle et al. (2010) examined the Communities That Care (CTC) program which is aimed at preventing substance use, minimizing various delinquent behaviors, and helping communities promote the development of healthy youth and reduce violence, drug use, teenage pregnancy, delinquency, and school dropout. The planning and management of prevention activities in CTC occur at the community level. After studying 4,407 student participants, Oesterle et al. (2014) found that CTC reduced drug and substance abuse and delinquent behaviors. According to Welsh and Farrington (2012), CTC consists of five stages:

- (a) An assessment of the community's preparedness regarding collaborative prevention efforts
- (b) Formation of a diverse prevention coalition which is representative of all community members
- (c) Use of epidemiologic data to assess prevention needs and to identify protective and high-risk factors related to substance abuse
- (d) Selection of evidence-based programs and prevention policies targeting local needs
- (e) Implementation of new programs and policies to meet the set objectives

Shapiro, Oesterle, and Hawkins (2015) also evaluated the CTC program using data from 12 coalitions who followed community prevention strategies. Researchers assessed CTC members' organizational linkages, prevention knowledge, attitudes towards CTC, acquisition of new skills, and means of influencing organizations. The results indicated that the communities developed capacities such as knowledge acquisition and networking, thus, the intervention programs had a high probability of succeeding (Shapiro et al., 2014). Coalition capacities enable the wider adoption of science-based prevention strategies for success (Shapiro et al., 2014).

Kim, Oesterle, Catalano, and Hawkins (2015) concluded community initiatives that boost protective factors should start at an early stage. According to Kim et al. (2015), CTC programs improve social skills development, prosocial peer interaction, and involvement in school as well as the community. Horn, Fagan, Hawkins, and Oesterle

(2014) concluded on the basis of an analysis of data from 14,099 students in grades 8–10 that CTC led to reduced alcohol intake among 10th-grade students.

### **Gender-Responsive Treatments for Female Adolescents with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders**

Female youth have different prevalence rates of emotional and behavioral disorders such as depression and anxiety due to increased internalizing behaviors (Srsic & Rice, 2012). Few researchers have examined the female-specific experiences and characteristics of emotional and behavioral disorders. Consequently, female and male intervention programs are mostly the same. However, the literature on female-specific mental behavioral characteristics has been growing. One existing intervention strategy is to use support groups to enhance female youths' emotional development. For example, the Girls Study Group and the OJJDP have attempted to understand female delinquency patterns and gaps in the related research as well as identify ways to implement effective interventions and effectively communicate research findings. Girls Circles, another intervention strategy, aims to create positive relationships. This program focuses on female development needs and mentors female participants ages 9–18 in support groups. Welch-Brewer, Stoddard-Dare, and Mallett (2011) argued it is crucial to identify disorders early and conduct gender-focused treatments.

### **Feminist Criminology Theory**

Given the gender differences in male and female crime, feminist criminology theory studies criminal justice and crime to understand how gender and sex shape the

social world (Chesney-Lind, 1988). There are certain beliefs which guide the feminist criminology inquiry:

- a) Gender includes diverse historical, social, and cultural products and is not restricted to biological sex differences.
- b) Gender and gender relations order social institutions and life in basic ways.
- c) Gender relations and the elements of femininity and masculinity are not symmetrical. They embody the principle that men are superior and should socially and politically dominate women.
- d) Current systems of knowledge reflect how men view the social and natural worlds.
- e) Women must be at the center of intellectual inquiry.

Feminist criminology scholars examine the nature of gender relations and how they function. Feminist criminology scholars view gender as highly important to understanding crime and criminality. This research makes women the focus of inquiry to build on existing knowledge.

### **Summary**

This review of current and relevant literature is intended to provide scholarly and descriptive insights into gender-responsive approaches for handling female delinquents. The research questions in this qualitative, multiple case study center on the lived experiences of the probation officers and the ability of the treatments to rehabilitate female offenders, reduce recidivism among them, and promote their successful transition into the communities. The literature review revealed the gaps in the empirical research

exploring the experiences of female delinquents as they transition into the communities after rehabilitation. The literature review also examined the feminist criminology theory.

Chapter 3 discusses the approach, method, and the design of the present research. The description also focuses on the study sample as well as the data collection and analytic processes employed.

## Chapter 3: Research Design and Methods

### **Introduction**

In this study, I examined the need for gender-responsive prevention and intervention juvenile delinquency programs. I conducted using personal interviews that covered the successes and shortfalls of the gender-based programs within the El Paso Juvenile Detention Center. The success of the programs was reflected in the female delinquent becoming a law-abiding and employed citizen of the society and displaying no further signs of continued delinquent behavior. The shortfalls of the programs were reflected in the female delinquent's inability to live as a productive citizen of the society and her continuous display of delinquent behaviors. I used the collected data from the interview sessions to provide further insights concerning the need for gender-responsive prevention and intervention programs within the juvenile justice system.

The following topics are covered in this Chapter 3:

1. Procedures used to recruit participants and information on the instruments for data collection
2. Participants in the study, research design, and role of the researcher
3. Methodology used for collecting, describing, and analyzing data provided by the probation officers within the El Paso Juvenile Justice Detention Center
4. Ethical procedures implemented to guarantee the credibility, validity, and the trustworthiness of the study



### **Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of probation officers concerning treatment services provided to female juvenile delinquents in El Paso County. Furthermore, I examined the probation officers' perceptions concerning the factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency among the female adolescent and the necessity for gender-responsive treatment and rehabilitation programs. Wright (2014) posited that gender-responsive delinquency treatment and rehabilitation programs are necessary for success because men and women have different needs and, moreover, the types of crimes committed often differ by the gender. Statistically, females are more likely to commit nonviolent crimes and are less of a communal threat than the males (Wright, 2014). Juvenile courts have dealt with boys primarily under the delinquency jurisdiction and with girls under the status offense jurisdiction, leading to variations in as to how female delinquents are processed in courts and mental health facilities. The Juvenile and Delinquency Prevention Act (1974) improved these variations, but not enough to affect the treatment and rehabilitative programs for females (Wright, 2014). A description of the probation officers' perceptions could help in informing the juvenile justice system on means of improving their treatment services provided to female juvenile delinquents.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The framework of this study encompassed the feminist theory from a criminology perspective, better known as the feminist criminology theory, which addresses the issues

relative to females and crime (Chesney-Lind, 1988). The focus on crime has traditionally been associated with males; therefore, most research have focused on the justice system's response to male offenders while ignoring the needs of the female offenders. This study was designed to determine how female delinquents are served with gender-responsive programs that can meet their developmental needs, leading to improved treatment programs and reduced recidivism and resulting in successful transitioning of prior female offenders into the society. This study was designed, in part, to address evidence that shows male-centered offender treatment programs are ineffective in case of female offenders (van der Knaap et al., 2012).

In this study, I investigated the following research questions.

1. What rehabilitation efforts have probation officers observed for male and female delinquents?
2. What are probation officers' perceptions regarding how current treatment could be improved to specifically meet the needs of female delinquents?
3. What are probation officers' perceptions and daily experiences regarding the impact of current treatment programs on recidivism among female delinquents?
4. How do probation officers think the current treatment influences female delinquents' transition into the community? How does this transition differ from that of male delinquents?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The qualitative method that was used for this study was a multiple case study. In this study, I explored the perceptions of probation officers concerning the treatment services provided for the female delinquent in El Paso County's Juvenile Justice Center. This approach allowed the participants to discuss and tell stories (Creswell, 2009) regarding the problem of treatment services provided for female delinquents in El Paso, Texas.

The case study approach allowed insight into the real-life phenomena of female delinquency holistically, as the participants were able to provide a greater overview of the treatment processes for female delinquents within their justice system. This is the understanding in which Yin (2003) noted. Furthermore, this approach enabled the necessary exploration and comparison of the noted programs, allowing for an appropriate analysis of the data gathered. The flexibility allowed by the case study approach provided opportunity for me to evaluate the need for gender-responsive treatment programs, which could lead to rehabilitation and a reduced recidivism rate. Data collection included interviews with the probation officers in El Paso County's Juvenile Justice Detention Center. Detailed information about the research was provided in order to establish rapport and trust with the interviewees, prior to the scheduled interviews. The interviews included open-ended questions, allowing follow-up questions to gather in-depth information.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Acting as the interviewer, I took an active role as a researcher as instrument due to the adjacent similarities with the participants (Huberman, Miles & Saldana, 2014, p.42; Mikėnė, Gaižauskaitė, & Valavičienė, 2013). Having a degree in criminal justice played a role in building rapport and camaraderie and helped form a rapport with the participants (Mikėnė et al., 2013). My role as a researcher was to build trust with each participant and to ask open-ended questions with the intent of understanding the experience of the probation officers. Judgment and interpretation were put aside, and I encouraged the participants to explain experiences and perceptions in the interview. Due to the nature of the qualitative study and the shared culture, it was expected that there would be some immersion of the researcher and this did intensify and/or confirm biases already in place (Watkins, 2012). I clarified my own perceptions, experiences, and biases to the participants involved during the interview as topics arose, and it felt natural to do so. I also self-reflected and wrote in a paper journal after the interviews as well as made notes throughout the coding process and other segments of the data collection to recognize the researcher as an instrument role. There was a continuous challenging of views throughout the process with this use of researcher reflexivity (Morrow, 2005). By recognizing and discussing my role as researcher, trustworthiness is maintained to the readers of the research analysis (Watkins, 2012).

## **Methodology**

### **Logic for Selecting Participants**

I interviewed probation officers who had direct contact with female adolescents within the El Paso County Juvenile Justice Detention Center. The probation officers who chose to participate in this research were engaged daily in the field of juvenile justice. The description of interviewed participants is depicted via Table 1. I inquired about their programs' services and the success and unsuccessful rates among their female delinquents. I initiated contact with the prospective interviewees in-person with a consent form (see Appendix A) to confirm their interest in the research project.

The qualitative data were gathered through face-to-face, recorded interviews from probation officers with at least 1 year of experience with the juvenile justice system in El Paso, TX, producing diverse perspectives and various methods to improve the gender-responsive prevention and intervention programs provided at this center. In the interviews, I focused on the participants' experiences with the processes, procedures, necessity for incorporating gender-responsive programs, and treatments. Furthermore, in the interviews, I focused on the history of their programs and their overall performance assessment.

### **Instrumentation**

This study consisted of qualitative interviews that took place face-to-face. All interviews consisted of open-ended questions; all had the same topics. This allowed for a more in-depth discussion about the programs. If the participants felt uncomfortable at any point during the interview, they had the right to stop the interview or dismiss

themselves at their own discretion. Furthermore, the participants were also allowed to decline to respond to any questions they may not be comfortable with. The participants were allowed to respond at their own pace in order to create a comfortable environment for fluent communication. This small sample size did not mean that all programs warrant reformation; however, it did shed light on the fact that all programs' treatment services should be reviewed.

### **Sample**

My interest was in reviewing the responsiveness to gender-based programs among female and male juvenile delinquents and the importance of implementing them in juvenile delinquency treatment services. In light of the purposeful sampling, I chose this facility to afford a better understanding of the research problem and the phenomenon of the study. The sample was defined as the El Paso County Juvenile Justice Detention Center. The sampling units were the programs within the Detention Center.

### **Sampling Procedure**

The intended research consisted of typical case sampling strategy. A typical case sampling was most appropriate; it facilitated comparing the operations and structured objectives of gender-responsive programs while providing insights into the need of gender-responsive programs. With the inclusion of three leveled programs, a typical case sampling allowed for sufficiency in my sample population (Suri, 2011).

The sampling procedures were collected via purposeful selection; the site and individuals were selected for this study (Suri, 2011). The intent of purposefully selecting is to identify and select probation officers, documents, and so on that best provide

understanding of the problem or research questions at hand. This procedure allowed for collecting data from various sources. All aspects of this study were volunteer-based and limited to five participants. The disadvantage to conducting a purposeful sampling procedure is the possibility of research data saturation during the early stages of the interviews (Suri, 2011). The use of open-ended questions mitigated early saturation and created opportunity for additional information throughout the interview process.

This study was not a longitudinal study; but, retaining the participants was important; therefore, contact numbers and addresses were obtained from each participant in order to allow follow up. In this study, I focused on the development of gender-responsive programs that service juvenile delinquents, while providing means of rehabilitating and decreasing recidivism, in hopes of motivating the key stakeholders of the El Paso, Texas Detention Center and the participants to reform the gender-responsive programs within their center.

### **Audio Tape Recording Transcription**

Each participant was provided with a consent form (see Appendix A) and advised that the interviews would be recorded. All protocol was vetted and approved through the institutional review board (IRB). The names and any information that may identify the interviewees were kept confidential throughout the report via code names.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Procedure**

Data collected via interviews were reviewed to generate a summary of relevancy. Themes and codes pertaining to the research were identified for further analysis.

The interviews were conducted at the El Paso Detention Center in a secure conference room. Before participating, the participants were provided information on the purpose of the study and also were advised on the possible implications of the study (see Appendix B). Upon the completion of the interviews, the recordings were transcribed and interview notes were typed.

The inductive approach was used to analyze the interviewees' transcripts and questionnaire notes to identify patterns and themes introduced during data collection (Patton, 1980). Furthermore, I used the comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to review transcribed interviews and questionnaire notes line-by-line and analyze sentences and paragraph segments to determine appropriate codes revealed by the data. The interview data had the greatest weight in the analysis. Each code was compared to all other codes to identify likes, differences, and general patterns.

In summary, data were reduced and analyzed by means of thematic codes and concepts in a two-level process. Themes gradually emerged as a result of becoming intimate with the data, making logical associations with the interview questions, and considering what was learned during the initial literature review. These emerging themes and patterns, with substantive feminist criminology theory, became the major findings of my study.

### **Study Design**

The qualitative approach of multiple case study was used. Tellis (1997) described a case study as a qualitative strategy in which researchers make general or theorized



findings based on interaction with and views of participants during a study. This approach enabled me to

- Evaluate change and present innovation
- Include diverse perspectives
- Have flexibility in collecting the data

This study included interviews and reviews of their programs' successes and shortfalls. I outlined topics of discussion to be addressed during the interviews to minimize biases. Additionally, I pursued flexibility to ensure my questions were worded appropriately, depending upon the participants. I explored the participants' responses as necessary to enable a natural flow of conversation. I also noted potential mistakes that could have occurred during the data collecting process, such as the bias of the interviewee(s) and unintentional errors during transcription or coding (Tellis, 1997).

The qualitative method was the best method for the study because it allowed the opportunity to collect data about the programs within the El Paso County Center. Furthermore, the qualitative method allowed me to develop trust and rapport, thus, increasing the prospects of other favorable opportunities such as one-to-one interaction with the participants. Additionally, the opportunity to observe the historical successes and shortfalls and other aspects of the programs presented, thus, enhancing developmental findings and theories and improving research quality.

Using a qualitative, multiple-case approach, this study focused on perceptions of the necessity for gender-responsive treatment programs for juvenile delinquent females. The study also reflected upon the importance of gender-responsive treatment services and

programs towards reduced adjudication and recidivism rates among juvenile females as well as successful transition into the society. The methods of data collection included probation officers' interviews and a review of the successes and shortfalls of their programs.

Before conducting the interviews with the probation officers, I established a rapport and gained their trust; I provided the necessary background about the research. The preferred method used was asking open-ended questions which gave the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the underlying topic. This approach also made it easier to analyze and compare notes. As I reviewed transcripts from the received information, I compared the materials about the programs for juvenile delinquents who were enrolled and determined the impact of the programs on treating female delinquents. This review provided specific information concerning processes which work and processes which did not work.

This study presented key factors concerning the programs' methods used to treat juvenile delinquents and determined whether the results are influenced by the delinquent's gender. Furthermore, it also presented research perceptions of factors necessary to increase the success rate of gender-responsive programs established for juvenile delinquents within the juvenile justice system. This study's use of the term adolescent refers to youths between the ages of 12 and 17. Additionally, the programs reviewed refer to the El Paso County Juvenile Justice Detention Center Programs.

The overall goal was to determine whether gender-responsive programs improved efforts to rehabilitate male and female juvenile delinquents while also reducing the

recidivism rate among juvenile offenders making them more productive members of the society. The El Paso County Detention Center was chosen because it embraces the gender-responsive program concept for its male and female residents. The participants are probation officers who have experience of at least a year working with female delinquents.

This facility was evaluated holistically, with focus on its programs, particularly, gender-responsive ones and their treatment services. The sampling base is purposeful sampling. Furthermore, typical case sampling was used to evaluate the Detention Center's Programs (Suri, 2011). This study utilized the cooperation of probation officers who can identify the typical, average, or excellent implemented programs or treatments for male and female delinquents. I reviewed and analyzed the information provided concerning trends across each program and validated my sampling choice. This overall sampling strategy and size yielded the necessary information to support the inference that poor juvenile intervention programs are relevant to the recidivism rates among juvenile offenders, both male and female, due to the programs' inability to provide appropriate intervening factors.

In this study, interviewing and reviewing interview transcripts was appropriate because they enhanced the ability to assess the effectiveness of the Center's programs. Moreover, the interview data collection approach enabled me to ask open-ended questions that supported my research questions and sought clarity concerning the responses as necessary. Interviewing was an invaluable approach; it helped provide

reinforcement of the data attained through experienced observations noted by the probation officers.

I documented via transcription and recorded interviews of the participants, as permitted. Recording enabled me to document everything that might not have been noted via transcripts, providing additional means to maintain collected data (Tellis, 1997).

### **Trustworthiness**

#### **Validity**

All research presents potential threats of validity. The validity threats in this research included interviewer bias and coding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) noted two forms of threats to validity, (a) internal and (b) external. They referred to internal validity threats as experiences, experiments, or treatment of the participants that may threaten the researcher's ability to complete his or her research. With this in mind, I noted that this study presented an internal threat to the validity of the research; I had no control over the individuals chosen to stay or leave midstream during the study. To counter this threat, the participant pool consisted of five selected participants. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) defined external validity threats as threats that infer erroneous conclusions based on the sample, setting, or timing of the study. The identified external threat to validity of this study included generalization of the results; to reduce this threat, I ensured that I was cognizant of possible biases and stereotypes. Additionally, I ensured that I was aware of the importance of the interviewees' body language, tone of voice, and facial expressions while conducting interviews. To further enhance the study's validity, I was aware of social desirability and the possibility of the

participants altering their responses to conform to what they thought I wanted to hear. To prevent transcribing errors and possibly increase the comfort level of the participant, each interview was recorded.

### **Reliability**

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) defined reliability as the ability of the researcher to ensure that consistency is maintained throughout the interviews, as much as possible. In doing so, I ensured that the interview topics were the same per interviewee and incorporate a follow-up email to discuss findings, as necessary. This enhanced the consistency among all stakeholders and increased the reliability of the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

### **Ethical Concerns**

There are several ethical concerns related to this study pertaining to the research participants' welfare and rights to privacy. I will protect the participants' welfare and rights to privacy pertaining to the American Counseling Association's (ACA) *Code of Ethics* and the *Code of Ethics for Social Scientists*. Initially, a copy of this proposal was sent to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to seek approval for conducting this research. Second, any information that was disseminated during the course of this research study was reviewed to ensure that participants remain anonymous and their information remains confidential (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

### **Summary**

The goal of the research was to examine perceptions of the effects current treatment programs have on rehabilitating delinquent juveniles and investigate whether

these programs can be reformed by including gender-responsive treatment and services. This could lead to decreased juvenile delinquency and reduced recidivism rates in the United States, particularly among females. The study focused on two areas: (a) programs and their treatment services and (b) the treatment services successes or shortfalls.

The information gathered in both focus areas provided the necessary data to determine which treatments or services work best on the basis of the gender of the delinquents. This knowledge will provide the justice system and social services communities with an opportunity to reform the juvenile delinquency treatment programs as necessary, resulting in reduced recidivism and delinquency rates among juveniles.

## Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter, I presented the primary data from the transcribed interviews with participants who responded to a study concerning gender responsive programs of the juvenile justice system. I employed a qualitative, multiple case study design. Data were collected during face-to-face interviews. The participants were probation officers who were questioned about the treatments and services available to female juvenile delinquents. The interviews were recorded and transcribed using verbatim transcription, after which codes and themes were developed for analysis. In the processing of the data, I focused on the determination of how and whether female delinquents received treatment that was gender-responsive and could serve to meet their specific, developmental needs. The focus was on improved treatment programs for the female delinquent that can reduce recidivism and support the successful transition of female offenders back into their homes and communities.

The research questions posed in the interviews and used in the data analysis were the following:

1. What rehabilitation efforts have probation officers observed for male and female delinquents?
2. What are probation officers' perceptions regarding how current treatment could be improved to specifically meet the needs of female delinquents?
3. What are probation officers' perceptions and daily experiences regarding the impact of current treatment programs on recidivism among female delinquents?

4. How do probation officers think the current treatment influences female delinquents' transition into the community? How does this transition differ from that of male delinquents?

The research questions allowed for further exploratory questions based on the participants' answers. Further inquiry afforded the participants the opportunity to provide more personal experiences. The overall strategy of the research was participant-focused with an emphasis on diverse perspectives and various methods to improve gender-responsive prevention and intervention programs. The goal was to understand the participants' experiences with the processes and procedures and to determine the necessity of incorporating gender-responsive programs and treatments. Furthermore, in the interviews, I focused on the history of gender-responsive programs at this site, their curriculum, and overall assessment of the performance of the programs.

The results from the data collected during the study are presented in this chapter. A review of the participant recruitment, sampling method and size, as well as interview setting and procedures is included. The participants' demographics are discussed. The data analysis process is included with a review of the transcriptions and coding procedures that resulted in the emerging themes. Additionally, there is a confirmation of the process whereby credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are supported.

### **Study Setting**

After agreeing to participate and signing the informed consent form (see Appendix A) to confirm participation, the participants were met on-site at a confidential,



secure, quiet conference room at the Detention Center. The semistructured interviews lasted for approximately 45 minutes with each participant.

The interview was guided by the main research questions; however, the questions were only used as a baseline. Their intended use was to lead to a conversational style interview. Thus, the probation officers had the opportunity to discuss anything they liked about their experiences with the varied gender-responsive delinquency programs, particularly their experiences with female delinquents. They were advised of their right to decline to discuss any topic and withdraw from the interview or the study at any time by advising me of their decision to withdraw. The interviews were digitally audio-recorded to facilitate collection of information and later transcribed for analysis and data management purposes. The audio equipment was visible at all times and was only used after the participant had granted his or her consent at the time of the interview. When the allotted time had passed or the participant agreed that they had disclosed all they cared to share, the face-to-face interview was terminated. Once the interview was considered complete, the audio recording device was turned off.

### **Recruitment Procedure**

Participants were recruited by the El Paso County Juvenile Detention Center Director of Probation Services that was contacted via e-mail and phone and provided with the study's purpose and significance via a letter of cooperation. The recorded interviews took place at the El Paso County Detention Center in a secure conference room. Prior to commencing with the interviews, each participant was provided with a

consent form (see Appendix A) and advised that they could cease the interview at any time if they became uncomfortable.

### **Description of Participants**

There was a total of five probation officers who participated in the interviews. These individuals were probation officers at the El Paso Juvenile Justice Center in El Paso County. Four out of five of the participants were female, while one participant was male. The range of work experience as a probation officer (PO) was from 3 to 20 years. Two participants were working in the Serious Habitual Offenders Comprehensive Action Program (SHOCAP), one participant was working in the Intensive Supervised Probation (ISP) program, and the other two participants working with the Level III programs. Additionally, participants reported knowledge and experience in other programs including the Challenge Academy (Formerly known as Boot Camp), the Justice of the Peace program, and the Special Needs Diversionary programs listed in Table 1.

Table 1

*Description of Participants*

Characteristics	Number
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	1
Female	4
<b>Position</b>	
SHOCAP probation officer	2
Level III probation officer	2
ISP probation officer	1
<b>Work experience</b>	
0-5 years	1
6-10	2
11-15	1
16-20	1
<b>Previous programs worked with</b>	
Challenge Academy Program	2
Special Needs Diversionary Program	1

**Data Analysis****Transcriptions**

The strategies used to deduct data included listening to the digital audiotaped interviews immediately after the interview. Each interview was then transcribed into a Word document. The interviews were listened to again, and the transcriptions were simultaneously reviewed to correct any mistakes. Transcriptions were then read once again, and filler words such as “um” and “you know” were removed for clarity. These transcriptions were then sent by e-mail to the participants for a member check. This member check was used as a means to confirm the accuracy of the interview or to add or

clarify any points. This helped ensure the credibility of the information (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). This member check confirmed the participant as not only an informant but as a researcher as well (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). All participants approved the interview and authorized usability before interpretation began. No follow-up interviews were requested by either party and no changes were made to the transcripts.

### **Coding Procedures**

The inductive approach was used to analyze the participants' transcripts and questionnaire notes to identify patterns and themes introduced during data collection (Patton, 1980). I used the comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to review transcribed interviews and questionnaire notes line-by-line and analyzed sentences and paragraph segments to determine appropriate codes revealed by the data. Each code was compared to all other codes to identify likes, differences, and general patterns.

Initial coding consisted of recognizing various terms and labels used by the participants. This assisted with establishing prominent themes and inferences about the data overall (Huberman et al., 2014). The second step consisted of deciphering the themes into manageable information (Huberman et al. 2014, p. 86). Additionally, I used some memoing techniques in which I documented personal thoughts while organizing the data (Huberman et al., 2014).

Through the coding procedures described above, a total of 20 nodes were yielded. These nodes were revised after a brief period of reflection involving memoing and

additional reviewing of the transcriptions for any missed information. These nodes are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Second Cycling Revised Nodes*

Node Name
1) Same services for females and males
2) No gender-specific services
3) Male population higher than female delinquents
4) In-home services (rehabilitating and transitioning)
5) Treat the family
6) Lack of resources for female specific programs
7) Lack of funding for additional programs for female delinquents
8) Drug Court best for males
9) Family dynamics
10) Assess juvenile needs
11) Gender considerations
12) Cultural awareness
13) More services for female delinquents
14) Probation officers and counselors
15) Family services (decrease recidivism)
16) Female specific treatment
17) Outside agencies involvement
18) Level III programs (Initial Basic Level)
19) Level IV programs
a. Intensive Supervised Probation (ISP) program (Level IV)
b. Serious Habitual Offenders Comprehensive Action Program (SHOCAP)
c. Special Needs Diversionary Program (SNDP)
d. Drug Court program

- 
- e. Moral Recognition Therapy
  - f. Multi-Systemic Therapy through the Emergence Health Network Program
  - g. Mental Health Support Services (MHSS) program
  - h. In-home services

20) Level V programs (Secure Placement and Aftercare Programming)

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- a. Challenge Academy (Formerly Known as Boot Camp)
  - b. Aftercare Program
- 

### **Themes and Research Questions**

After further examining each node for likes and differences, 20 nodes were yielded based on their relevancy to the overall research questions. Further exploration of these nodes led to 10 overarching themes:

- Theme #1: Same treatment services (males and females)
- Theme #2: Population density (male and female)
- Theme #3: Family dynamics
- Theme #4: Gender considerations
- Theme #5: Level III programs
- Theme #6: Level IV programs
- Theme #7: Level V programs
- Theme #8: Lack of resources / services
- Theme #9: Program success probation officers / counselors
- Theme #10: Family involvement.

A breakdown of the 20 nodes and their cross points are shown in Table 3:





Table 3

*Node Configuration within Final Themes*

Same services for females and males	Theme #1: Same treatment services (males and females) Theme #4: Gender considerations Theme #8: Lack of resources / services
No gender-specific services / gender considerations / female specific treatment	Theme #1: Same treatment services (males and females) Theme #4: Gender considerations Theme #8: Lack of resources / services
Lack of resources for female specific programs / more services for female delinquents	Theme #1: Same treatment services (males and females) Theme #4: Gender considerations
Lack of funding for additional programs for female delinquents	Theme #8: Lack of resources / services
Male population higher than female delinquents	Theme #2: Population density
Family dynamics	Theme #3: Family dynamics Theme #10: Family involvement
Treat the family / family services (decrease recidivism)	Theme #3: Family dynamics
Cultural awareness	Theme #6: Level IV programs
Gender considerations	Theme #10: Family involvement Theme #4: Gender considerations
More services for female delinquents	Theme #1: Same treatment services (males and females) Theme #4: Gender considerations Theme #8: Lack of resources / services
Assess juvenile needs	Theme #1: Same treatment services (males and females)
Same services for females and males	Theme #7: Level V programs
Challenge Academy program	
Aftercare program	
No gender-specific services	Theme #4: Gender considerations
Outside agencies involvement	Theme #5: Level III programs Theme #6: Level IV programs
Same services (male and female)	Theme #1: Same treatment services (males and females) Theme #4: Gender considerations
No gender-specific services	Theme #1: Same treatment services (males and females)
In-home services (rehabilitating and transitioning)	Theme #3: Family dynamics
Treat the family	Theme #4: Gender considerations

Drug Court best for males	Theme #5: Level III programs
Family dynamics	Theme #6: Level IV programs
Family services (decrease recidivism)	Theme #10: Family involvement
Cultural awareness	
Lack of resources for female specific programs	Theme #8: Lack of resources / services
Lack of funding for additional programs for female delinquent	
Programs' success probation officers and counselors	Theme #9: Case workers (success and unsuccess)

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### **RQ1: Observed Rehabilitation Efforts**

The participants revealed that the Juvenile Department had 11 responsive programs that are used to deal with different groups of juvenile offenders, both male and female. All 11 programs were relevant to the initial research question: What rehabilitation efforts have probation officers observed for male and female delinquents? This initial question was intended to open discussion concerning means of treating juvenile delinquents. The participants' experiences varied in their dealings with select juveniles; however, their outcomes appeared to be similar whether the delinquent was male or female and whether the program was considered a Level III, Level IV, or Level V program, as noted in Themes 5, 6, and 7.

With this in mind, the first, second, and fifth participants noted that there are no gender-specific programs for females, the first participant acknowledges this limitation by stating:

The same services that are offered for the males are offered for the females.

There's nothing specific, both of them – we have a lot of counseling that's offered to them here at our department, even on the outside where they're mixed. Males

and females receive the same services. Now whether they're going to require more needs, I wouldn't even be able to answer you that, ma'am, because what I've seen over the years is that it's open to both males and females, whatever services we offer.

The second participant noted:

Oh there's a lack of resources when it comes to treating females. Whether or not in my opinion, females are way more sensitive to a lot of issues. You cannot treat a – a kid can be acting out and people will look at it as just a behavior. You cannot look at the behavior. You have to look at so what's causing the behavior. In a lot of the times when they see a female that's being defiant, oh she doesn't want the treatment, she doesn't want the treatment; oh cancel, it's done. So, I think we need to look more into developing some sort of, I don't know, more services. We need more services for them because it's not the same. Girls are a lot more sensitive. We go through a lot more issues than boys do, so I just don't think there's enough.

The fifth participant noted:

In my experience I feel like the female population is the more difficult one to work with. And I think a lot of times and most recently I have experienced a lot of females and worked with a lot of them that have been involved in human trafficking. And that, I think has made it difficult to work with them. We don't have a lot of services in the community to address the issues of that type of client

I guess. And a lot of times we end up having to send them out home to placement. Unfortunately, they return and there are not a lot of services to give them when they've returned. I don't want to say the same environment but in the same location where the abuse happened.

Some of the programs mentioned in the findings included the Intensive Supervised Probation (ISP) program, the Serious Habitual Offenders Comprehensive Action Program (SHOCAP), the Challenge Bootcamp program, Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) through the Emergence Health Network, the Mental Health Support Service (MHSS) program, the Aftercare program, the Drug Court program, and the Special Needs Diversionary Program (SNDP). The SNDP was mentioned by four of the five participants as the most successful programs. The Challenge Bootcamp program along with other Level III programs was also noted as being successful by two participants.

## **RQ2: Perceptions of Current Treatment**

Themes 4, 7, and 9 are relevant to the second question: *What are probation officers' perceptions regarding how current treatment could be improved to specifically meet the needs of female delinquents?* The first, fourth, and fifth participants confirmed the need for more female focused programs within the juvenile justice system.

Participants responded as follows:

The first participant stated:

I think we have a lack of treatment options, ma'am. I think over the years, that's

one thing that I've noticed is that I wish that we could contract with more facilities eventually, it ends up being a bidding war at the end. I think that we should have more in-home service providers. I think that we should have more agencies out there in the community that we can contract with that we can provide services. Now you look at the areas of town here in El Paso, ma'am, we have – it's pretty wide open. And sometimes just having the lack of resources is what hinders a lot of the process on the kids.

The fourth participant stated:

I think it would be better to address depression. I've seen a lot of the girls suffering from depression and low self-esteem. That's what I've noticed a lot with the girls. I guess with the new generation, with the Facebook and Twitter and I know one of the little girls said, "Oh, well, it's because I post stuff on Facebook and they start putting, 'Rate her,'" and then they start taking score of how pretty she is or how cute she is or who would date her, and I've seen that. I tell her, "Just take down the Facebook. You guys don't need Facebook. " *[Laughs]* I think Facebook was meant for adults to connect, but the kids tend to use it more to hurt other individuals.

The fifth participant stated:

Well I think one population where we can improve would be being able to offer more services to the females that I told you here recently we've had a lot of which is the human trafficking victims. Because yeah, we can take them out of the

environment and send them to placement but eventually they're gonna have to return. And we need to be able to provide services for them so that they can continue doing good and being able to have that support system when they return back to their home environment.

Additionally, the first, second, and fourth participants highlight the population imbalance of males and females within the system. The first participant stated, "So you can actually say that we provide services to both. But as per numbers, we will have more males than females". The second participant stated, "I have had actually the three years that I've been here, I've only had one female in my caseload". The fourth participant stated, "The majority that I've had is more males than females".

The participants were asked about the existing treatments and efforts to rehabilitate female juvenile delinquents. The reported initiatives included contracting with various agencies within the Probation Services Unit. It was reported that some counselors in the Department are POs who conduct counseling. However, the male population has historically been higher in the El Paso County Juvenile Justice System, and POs rarely have a caseload comprised entirely of females. Indeed, there are currently 39 juveniles on the caseload for El Paso County Juvenile Justice and only one of these juveniles is a female. The participants reported that in-home counseling services are provided to families as well as community-based counseling programs, which are contracted programs. According to the participants' responses, male juveniles generally receive individual counseling for substance abuse, cognitive skills, emotional regulation, and anger management as well as Family Therapy, Challenge Academy (which can last

up to seven months) and behavioral modification. Females are reported to receive the same services. However, the third participant reported:

What I like to do is kind of link the female juveniles to certain counselors. I know some of them will do better with – and I hate to kind of put it like that, but some females will do better with the more therapeutic type of counselor, the more heart-to-heart talks. And then you have the other girls that are kind-of like you need to be on them, structure, discipline. And so I've seen – if I do that, if I kind-of be creative with them and see where or who I can link them up with, I mean the results are awesome as far as them not coming back into the system, or at least getting the help that they need. So I mean, I try doing it that route. But as far as if I just refer them to basic counselors or to just receive regular, individual counseling, I don't see any progress or any help that they receive.

She further noted:

I would say more the individual that deals with their self-esteem. There's some of the counselors where they deal with them as far as health issues, are you exercising? How do you feel today? What's going on in school? And I think with them, I think it's more as far as their appearances, their self-esteem. I'm thinking more for the girls, it's that route.

The fourth participant noted:

Best results. I think it would be more of a psychological evaluation and then proceeding with the recommendation there. Because the psychological evaluation that we have contracted with the agency, they're very thorough in reference to

emotional anger, IQ, and then what they think would be in the best interest of the juvenile, how we can deal with it. I've noticed that when I do the psychologicals for the girls, it gives me a thorough review, saying, "There's this going on in the house. This is going on. This is going on. Her needs may be best met at this area." Also had to do with the counselor. I have other counselors that they do see the kids on a weekly basis. I have other counselors that, "Oh, I want to see them just once a month." Also having that relationship with a counselor – I know there's a good one and at whatever point we call and say, "Hey, you know what? I'm having issues with her. " There's issues at school. There's issues at home. They're getting divorced or domestic violence. Or even a positive UA, just calling and saying, "I know you're providing her substance abuse, but yesterday drug tested her and she tested positive." So I think that relationship also works out. The juvenile does not go to the therapy and say, "Oh, everything's fine and dandy. No issues." Because usually the kids, they tend to do that. But he is really good about, "Well, your probation officer called yesterday. What happened? She told me this and this and that."

The fifth participant reported:

I would say for the female it would be special needs because even though there comes a point where they close out the case, they still continue with aftercare. I don't know how long of a period but they do. And for males, that one I don't know. I really don't know on that. There is also the Special Needs Diversionary Program (SNDP), which focuses on mental health issues in juveniles. The



SHOCAP focuses on juveniles involved in gang activity and serious offenders. There is also the regular intensive supervised probation, which is for juveniles who are in need of more supervision. This is in cases where the households are chaotic. There is the Challenge Program, which is like a military program lasting seven months. All programs are for both genders; there are no gender-specific programs.

The fifth participant stated:

In my experience I feel like the female population is the more difficult one to work with. and I think a lot of times and most recently I have experienced a lot of females and worked with a lot of them that have been involved in human trafficking. And that, I think has made it difficult to work with them. We don't have a lot of services in the community to address the issues of that type of client I guess. A lot of times we end up having to send them out home to placement. I think that overall we have better success results with the males' rehabilitation. I don't know if maybe sometimes their needs are a little different than the females. And I feel like the programs that we have, there are so many more options for them. And for some reason I think the females have more issues, having to do with sexual assaults, rapes, things like that. And that makes it difficult. I mean it would be great if there was actually a program or a business of some type that opened up in El Paso locally that could maybe not only offer them maybe temporary shelter or a place to go to feel safe, but also to continue with services, whether it's counseling services or counseling for the whole family. Just

someone that they could be linked with that specializes in that type of trauma.

Additionally, the participants provided their thoughts concerning the most effective program in which they have observed relative to decreasing recidivism in female juveniles:

The second participant noted:

Like it's everybody. I think it can't just be the juvenile. It can't just be the parent. It can't just be the therapist. I think that it's all of our responsibility to ensure that this happened. I can set up in-home services at the home, and if they show up and the therapist is in a bad mood and don't wanna talk to the kid. The kid's pissed off; the mom's not there. I think that it's a conjunction of everybody's willingness to help this kid. We're gonna get that resistance from the kid, so as a group we have to gather ourselves. And in my cases I do a lot of talking with the parents, like hey, help me. Okay, this is 16 years that you've had your kid. I know things about your kid that you've never known in 16 years; that's a problem. So I need you to help me so he can be good. I'm not always gonna be there. So I think establishing that from the very beginning and maintaining that firmer communication with everybody in the very beginning it's like huge.

The third participant stated:

What programs would decrease recidivism? I know that we have – I don't know if the officers will mention we have our short-term and long-term boot camp. I've seen that a lot of children that go into our 45 to 60-day program. And once they're released, they come out kind of in shock in some way. And especially the girls. I mean it's kind of like a reality check for them. So, I feel like that program

helps them out a lot as far as the restructuring and kind of putting them back – not on track but in line as far as what they need to do. And I have seen a lot of girls that go in there and they come out, they do a complete change. And they're more motivated. They want to continue doing physical training that they were doing while in the program. So I think that would be one of the programs that I would say would help with the recidivism.

The fourth participant responded:

Right now we have the Special Needs Diversionary Program that they focus with the kids that have a lot of mental health and they have their own therapists. They have their own psychiatrist and they have their own judge. And then they have their own two probation officers. They go and visit these kids about two or three times a week. They come to court and see the judge twice a month. If there's any issues or problems with him not taking his medication, him not complying, the therapist goes out to the home and they have therapy in the home. It's been an awesome program. I like to introduce that. I mean, with medication compliance, they have their psychiatrist. After they complete their probation, they're placed in aftercare just to check up on them. Then before they get released from probation, they link them up with services. The family gets empowered about, these are services that are going to help you in case there's a crisis, in case you need any medication, in case you need to see a psychiatrist, this is where you can go

The fifth participant reported:

I haven't seen any data or anything but based on just my opinion, I'd probably say the Special Needs Diversionary Program. I think that because there are so many

people involved with the family. There's a case manager, probation officer, there's a therapist, there's a psychiatrist and then the judge constantly reviewing the case every two weeks, I think that just gives the professionals that are working with that individual the opportunity to actually be in the home and hear not only what's going on with the juvenile but also with everybody that's involved in the home. And that gives them an opportunity to provide services for everybody in that household. And I think it better prepares the whole household as a whole to be able to work on that problem or be able to help that juvenile continue to go down the right path. Though there comes a point where they close out the case, they still continue with aftercare.

The fourth and fifth participants identified the SNDP to be the most successful in decreasing recidivism among the female delinquents, followed by in-home services and the Challenge Boot Camp programs, noted by the second and third participants.

The fourth participant noted the following concerning the success of the SNDP:

For the Special Needs, it's actually a voluntary program. The court can't order them to go in. We actually present it to the family. The family, if they show interest, then we start with the SNDP program. The judge doesn't take a vote though. It's only the probation officer, the therapist, county attorney, and the public defender actually. We stop the case and say, "This juvenile has mental health." We tell them everything about the family dynamics and everything. And then they take a vote. "I think he would be a good candidate for SNDP," or, "No, his needs are not that bad or his need's more towards Drug Court." At that time, if

they do decide, then we let the family know, "You have to come in for a family suitability interview," and if the family approved, then they sign a contract, because they have to come in every two weeks. Then saying that you're gonna open your doors to your house to the therapist, to the probation officer, and then you're gonna follow any recommendation that the court thinks is in the best interest of your child.

Among all participants, in-home counseling services were perceived as being an effective rehabilitation effort for both male and female delinquents. The fourth participant noted:

I think it worked when in-home services go in there, because the therapy can actually be engaging with the whole family and the other kids say, "Hey if there's any issue that bother me then I can approach also the therapist at that time."

Also, noting the significance of the in-home counseling services, the third participant noted:

I've seen a lot of the family counseling that's needed – especially because of the home environment or things that have happened in their lives, traumas.

Behavioral counseling and individual assessments were rated as the second most effective rehabilitation efforts for both male and female delinquents followed by community-based counseling and probation with detention as the last resort.

### *Considerations of Gender in Assigning Programs and Services*

The second participant noted:

Yes. And you have to take in consideration you know the gender, because there

are some services that you can send a male to that a female might just not feel as comfortable with. You have to look at the juvenile and the female and kind of understand her a little bit more and kind of dig deeper as her issues and her actions and her wellbeing in order to try to link her to services. In my opinion, I try to be extra careful with them because you do not wanna put a female that's been abused in any way, shape, or form by anyone, I mean to include a male, with a male therapist; she might feel intimidated by it. So I kind of try to look into that.

The third participant reported:

I know that we usually link up a lot of the families depending on their needs. Both male and female, we will refer mostly for counseling. If it has to do with an individual, maybe family, I've seen a lot of the family counseling that's needed – especially because of the home environment or things that have happened in their lives, traumas.

The first participant echoed the lack of gender-specific services:

I think like I said, ma'am, the services that the department provides is for both genders. There's nothing specific. I mean, both of them – I mean we have a lot of counseling that's offered to them here at our department, even on the outside where they're mixed. Males and females receive the same services.

***Services Most Effective in Rehabilitating Male and Female Juveniles***

The first participant reported that there are two services that are effective in rehabilitating both male and female juveniles: (1) in-home counseling services and (2) Moral Recognition Therapy (MRT), which some probation officers offer. He responded:

There's two of them. I believe a lot of in-home services, where the counseling is actually provided to not only the juvenile at hand but also to the families. Not only to the parents, but also to siblings that are in the home. So I'm a strong believer that in-home services is probably one of the best things, as they will have a case manager. They will have a therapist. And they work with the entire family. Another counseling that I've seen that over the years I've seen to be very successful in my eyes is our MRT counseling, which is the moral recognition therapy. That therapy is actually offered by some of our probation officers here. They do – the kids do have to come once a week and they have to complete 12 steps of that program. Everything that they do, they have to do it according to how they progress, how they complete their steps. But it's more of a cognitive skills-based type counseling which I believe is very successful.

The second participant only had one female juvenile and stated that the juvenile did not report any abuse. However, in-home interaction and seeing the home dynamics with the juvenile's parents revealed many issues. While the juvenile had not been physically or sexually abused, the probation officer reported that there were some abandonment issues in relation to the juvenile's father (who had left the juvenile's mother for a younger woman of a similar age as the juvenile). This had created a huge issue that needed to be worked on with the juvenile. In relation to this issue, the second participant said:

And in essence I mean she later on kind of shared with me that “Hey maybe I needed some attention, and maybe I’m acting out because I need that protection from my father and I was seeking it elsewhere.”

When the second participant was asked about what services could be provided or were provided in order to give the juvenile a better means of dealing with her situation, the participant answered that this juvenile was referred for in-home counseling services. She noted:

I actually referred her for in-home counseling services. This is a therapist who will meet with her on a weekly basis not only in the home, out in the community and at her school. I felt that putting her with a female therapist would be a great advantage to us due to the fact that she viewed mom as a friend, not a parent. So it was more like okay we need to establish healthy boundaries between you and mom, so then let’s start working towards that goal. Me being a female officer and actually supervising her I was able to gain a lot of ground with her, because now she knew – I mean we bump heads a lot and she would tell me, “I just have to tell I mean I’ve never been used to anybody kind of calling me out on my behavior. And now that I was doing it and it was me it was like oh okay now I get it.” So I think it was beneficial for her because she started to open up a lot more about her issues whereas in the past she used to just act out on her feelings and not talk about them. So it helped out. When the second participant was asked what produced the best results for male juveniles, she said:

The best results oh I can tell you. In my caseload it’s predominantly males. A



big percentage – and we work with the serious offenders, so these are kids that continuously violate probation. With our parents I do a lot of – I'm not a therapist by any means, but I do a lot of communication with them. I kind of try to explain to them like hey, okay this was the action as a parent, what did you need to do, let's dissect the situation. And then they kind of start thinking oh yeah. I give them an option, hey put yourself in my shoes. I'm just a PO that's following the court orders and I need you to help me to make sure that this gets followed. So without your help I'm not gonna do any good for you or your family. So kind of give them their place, and working with them in conjunction with both together I think that we do get a better result with the male ones. Furthermore, with them I've found that they're from single-parent homes; they're a broken home. I actually had a kid who told me, "I wanna thank you because you've been my mom and my dad." And I did tell him that, and I said, "Look, my job is to protect you. I have to protect you from everybody that's around there. So, if you ask me for permission to go to a party, I'm gonna be very hesitant to do that, because I'm your mom and your dad right now. Okay, I'm doing it by myself, so I wouldn't do that to you." And I think that for me to develop effective communication skills with them and you have to be able to talk to them. You can't use extensive vocabulary with a lot of the kids because they don't understand what you're saying. A lot of the times you have to come down to their level and hold that conversation with them and say, "Hey, look, this is what I mean." And then I ask them, I will tell them my spiel and then I say, "Did you understand what I said?" Well – in your words, tell me what I said. And then he'll tell me and say okay, so we're good, we're on the same page. So I feel that

in me working with them on their communication skills and helping them develop their communication skills it's been a big impact.

When the second participant was asked whether the in-home services work well for both male and female juveniles, she answered:

For our population yes for the fact that they are low-income families. Nine times out of ten they don't have the moneys to travel. I don't want to hinder their probation just because they can't make it to a counseling appointment. So I try to help the family get as much out of our department while at home and kind of empower them. I want them to kind of get their will back within the home, because that's their sanctuary; this is where we live. And having a therapist come over and engaging in the family and being in the home environment I think that that makes a big impact.

The normal timeframe for in-home counseling services is ongoing until termination of the juvenile's probation. In-home services are reported to be best for juveniles because the parents are held accountable as well as the juvenile. Additionally, the parents are empowered to be a parent rather than a friend, and this is considered to be extremely important.

The third participant reported that two provider agencies were contracted: (1) Mental Health Support Services (MHSS), which are behavioral support services, and (2) Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) through the Emergence Health Network. MHSS go in-home with the assigned probation officer and act as a mentor. The probation officer visits the home and assists the female juvenile with self-esteem. This may include going walking or running with them in order to motivate them and improve their health and

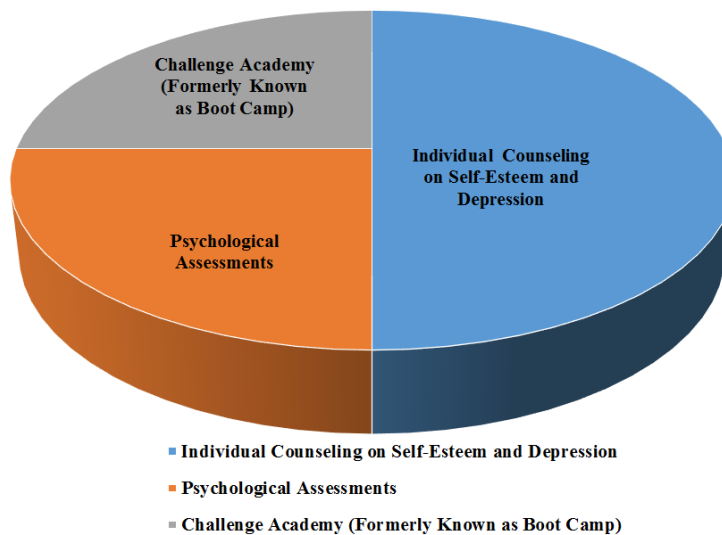
self-image. The participant reported that MST through the Emergence Health Network deals with family surroundings and with parents. It helps parents with rewards and consequences. These programs grow and expand based on the family growth and comprehension of the issues.

In relation to the most effective rehabilitative programs the fourth participant stated:

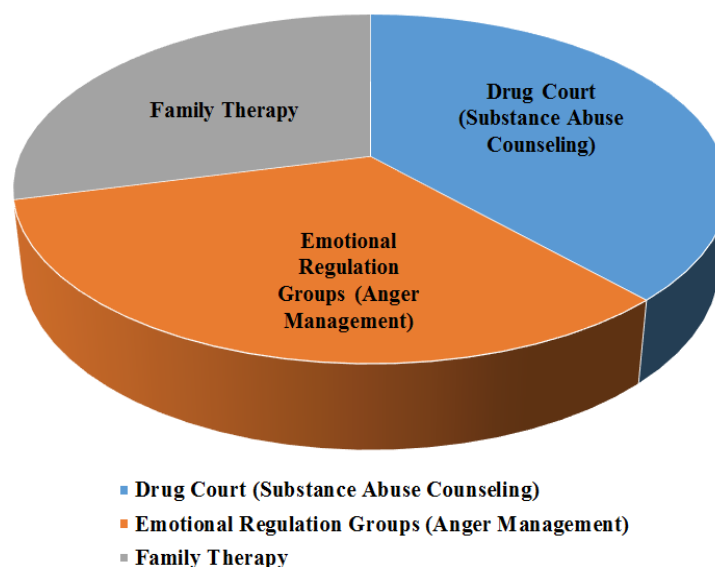
Best results. I think it would be more of a psychological evaluation and then proceeding with the recommendation there. Because the psychological evaluation that we have contracted with the agency, they're very thorough in reference to emotional anger, IQ, and then what they think would be in the best interest of the juvenile, how we can deal with it.

Figures 1 and 2 show the responses for the most effective treatment for female and male juveniles at this site and the achieved results.

*Figure 1: Effective Treatment Programs for Female Delinquents*



*Figure 2: Effective Treatment Programs for Male Delinquents*



As shown in the two figures, the treatment efforts identified for male delinquents vary from those mentioned for female delinquents. The findings show that female delinquents were perceived as in need of individual counseling that deals with their self-esteem while the main treatment program for male delinquents was identified as individual counseling on substance abuse. Two participants put this into perspective. For instance, supporting the need for individual counseling on self-esteem for female delinquents, the third participant noted:

Well with males, I try to be a little more structured with them. Especially because a lot of the males that we deal with are impulsive. And with the girls, it's more dealing with self-esteem issues. A lot of the girls, with bullying, things like that.

The fourth participant added:

Then sometimes that female might be absent and then the other female will be like, "Okay, I'm surrounded by guys." They think differently. They think about

makeup and self-esteem and all of this. Then the guys are all about making money and being gangster and driving the fastest cars.

In contrast, the first participant stressed the impending substance abuse issue among male delinquents. He noted:

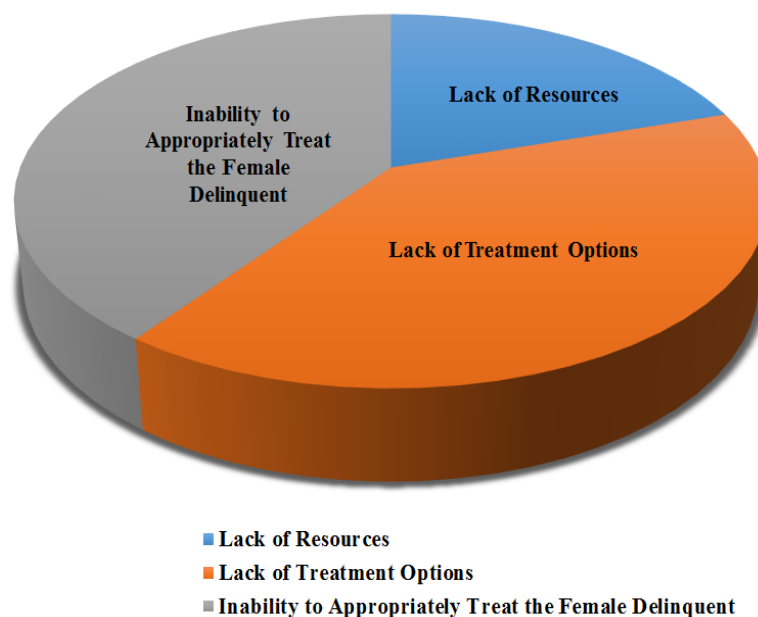
I think substance abuse is an issue at hand, you know, the amount of kids that actually come to the department, reporting and admitting the use of drugs, the use of a lot of illicit substances. I think that is one of the main things that I think where we should focus in. I think that if the roles were reversed and we had more females and less males, I think the same type of treatment would be provided to both males and females. It's just that eventually in the counties of El Paso, ma'am, our numbers are higher with the male population

MST through the Emergence Health Network program and the SNDP were also identified as effective treatment efforts for rehabilitation.

### *Challenges and opportunities in these programs*

The participants were asked to list some challenges that hinder the effectiveness of these rehabilitation efforts, and the following results emerged.

*Figure 3: Challenges that Hinder the Rehabilitation Efforts*



As shown in Figure 3, lack of treatment options and the inability to appropriately treat female delinquents were identified as the most challenging aspects. Lack of resources (mostly financing) was also identified as a major hindrance to the success of these programs. Interestingly, some participants argued that the sensitive nature of female delinquents hinders the success of the treatment. For instance, the first and second participants linked the two challenges of insufficient treatment options and the sensitive nature of female delinquents.

#### ***Perceptions of Treatments and How They Could Be Improved***

When participants were asked about their perceptions of the current treatments and what could be done to improve them, there were various responses. The first participant noted that there is a lack of treatment options, stating it would be better if they could have contact with more facilities:

It ends up being a bidding war at the end. I think we should have more in-home service providers. I think that we should have more agencies out there in the community that we can contract with that we can provide services. Now you look at the areas of town here in El Paso, ma'am, we have – it's pretty wide open. And sometimes just having the lack of resources is what hinders a lot of the process on the kids.

The third participant noted:

As far as like our outside agencies, I know a lot of them don't really sit down and focus or kind-of – they're not in the home to kind-of picture, okay, what's going on here? What is their day-to-day-life like? I know that MHSS, for example, is in the home so they get to see their surroundings, the way the mom or the parents deal with the juveniles. And I think a lot of it, it's – when they go to the agencies, it's a lot of hearsay. What the parents are complaining about, or what the parents are saying, or vice versa. What the juveniles are complaining about. But a lot of the in-home services, I think it's – I say that they're able to be in the home and see more. And that's kind-of what we do. We're in the home, and we kind-of figure out and know what's going on, figure out what the problem is and who the problem is. So I think that's, I mean, one of the things that they can kind of change is maybe go out there and do school visits or home visits and figure out what's going on with them.

The fourth participant noted:

I think it would be better to address depression. I've seen a lot of the girls

suffering from depression and low self-esteem. That's what I've noticed a lot with the girls. I guess with the new generation, with the Facebook and Twitter and I know one of the little girls said, "Oh, well, it's because I post stuff on Facebook and they start putting, 'Rate her,'" and then they start taking score of how pretty she is or how cute she is or who would date her, and I've seen that. I tell her, "Just take down the Facebook. You guys don't need Facebook. " *[Laughs]* I think Facebook was meant for adults to connect, but the kids tend to use it more to hurt other individuals.

When I asked this participant if there should be more focus on self-esteem, she confirmed:

Yes. Because I have a lot of girls that they don't, I guess, believe in themselves, that they're capable of getting to be a successful woman, being an attorney, being a doctor. I have more of the girls they don't even – when I ask them, do you think that you're gonna graduate high school. "Well, I don't know. I'm very behind in school. " What about your GED? "I don't know. " They have no goals. Even at 16 or 17 I ask them, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" And I have some girls that'll be like, "I don't know." In two years, you're gonna be an adult. We need to know what you want to do. We need to make that goal. Come on. I think more empowering. That's what we need to do. More empowering of the girls. You can do it. It's not a male dominant world. Us females can succeed and we can do whatever any man can do.



The second participant responded concerning improvements needed in treating female juveniles:

Oh there's a lack of resources when it comes to treating females. Whether or not in my opinion, females are way more sensitive to a lot of issues. You cannot treat a – a kid can be acting out and people will look at it as just a behavior. You cannot look at the behavior. You have to look at so what's causing the behavior. In a lot of the times when they see a female that's being defiant, oh she doesn't want the treatment, she doesn't want the treatment; oh cancel, it's done. So, I think we need to look more into developing some sort of, I don't know, more services. We need more services for them because it's not the same. Girls are a lot more sensitive. We go through a lot more issues than boys do, so I just don't think there's enough.

### ***Reasons for Stated Improvements***

When participants were asked why they would recommend the improvements that they stated, they highlighted that many juveniles can be targeted for services. There is a lack in service providers in El Paso County. While juvenile delinquents can be sent to the same counseling programs as other youth, there are considerations that some of them live on the west side of town and do not have transportation to come all the way to the central facility. Due to their different locations, it would serve well to contract with different counseling agencies all over town to make the services more accessible to all juveniles.

### ***Implementation of More Services or Opportunities***

When asked about recommendations for implementing more services or opportunities, the first participant stated:

I think over the years, that's one thing that I've noticed is that I wish that we could contract with more facilities eventually, it ends up being a bidding war at the end. I think that we should have more in-home service providers. I think that we should have more agencies out there in the community that we can contract with that we can provide services.

When asked about the daily experiences of working with various programs and the impact on recidivism, the first participant answered:

You know, ma'am, it's funny that you're saying this. But my argument has always been that we do an awesome job of supervising the kids. I think we do an awesome job when we have to send them out of home placement. I think we do an awesome job of referring them out. I think we do an awesome job on that – this other part. But we never fix the problem at home. And I think we have a lack of parenting building skills that we should provide, or long-term parenting classes. I mean, we do offer one here but it's limited. I mean we never actually fix what goes on at home. And when you really think about it, some of these kids– the average juvenile probationer is going to be between the ages of 14 through 16. So, sometimes we get the kids and we really can't fix what 14 or 16 years have created. And we can supervise them. We can send them to places, to residential treatment centers, ma'am. But at the end of the day, they're going to go back to the same home environment. And if that home environment is not

fixed, ma'am, now it puts you to think. Are we setting that child up for failure? Or are we hoping that he's going to use the skills he learned to be a productive citizen? So it's a balancing act in my opinion.

According to the second participant, more research needs to be conducted on the issues that females are facing in the home:

For example, in my home, we're Hispanic; we're Mexican. And in our culture my mom treats the boys different than she treats the girls. The girls you do this, you do this, you do that. You don't cry, you make it happen, and that's it. The boys are catered to. I think that there needs to be a study on how culture actually affects the upbringing of the female. Females are gonna be brought up a certain way so when they're out in society they're gonna act a certain way, which puts them at risk of being taken advantage of nine times out of ten, and then they don't realize that they're being taken advantage of because that's all they know. So I think that needs to be looked at.

**RQ3: What are probation officers' perceptions and daily experiences regarding the impact of current treatment programs on recidivism among female delinquents?**

During this segment of the interviews, I inquired concerning the treatment program they would identify as best serving to decrease recidivism among delinquents. The first participant answered:

That it was the substance abuse treatment program. He added that substance abuse is the primary issue that they are dealing with regarding juvenile delinquents. The participant stated that the juveniles come to the Department and report the use of drugs and a great many illicit substances. He also stated that substance abuse treatment should be the number one focus.

The third participant's response was:

What programs would decrease in recidivism? I know that we have – I don't know if the officers will mention we have our short-term and long-term boot camp. I've seen that a lot of children that go into our 45 to 60-day program. And once they're released, they come out kind-of in shock in some way. And especially the girls. I mean it's kind-of like a reality check for them. And so I feel like that program helps them out a lot as far as the restructuring and kind-of putting them back – not on check but in line as far as what they need to do. And I have seen a lot of girls that go in there and they come out, they do a complete change. And they're more motivated. They want to continue doing physical training that they were doing in the back, keep up with that. So I think that would be one of the programs that I would say would help with the recidivism.

The success rate for females who do Boot Camp is approximately 85% according to the third participant. She further noted:

And I don't know, for some reason when they come out from the boot camp, it's

“Yes, ma’am. No, ma’am,” which they weren’t doing before. I don’t know if it’s so much the structure or maybe like I said, the discipline. They show them discipline and responsibility.

I asked the first participant what specifically about the substance abuse program makes it the best program for decreasing recidivism. He stated:

Because I think with a lot of that, it goes back to peer pressure, ma’am. They have to learn how to say no. They have to learn the dangers of it, the effects of it. It’s easier said than done, ma’am. But I’m a strong believer again, ma’am, if the way they’re going to be taught, the way they’re going to be counseled, I think that’s going to have a lot of impact. At the same time, ma’am, I’m not only talking substance abuse treatment for the kids at hand that are in the community, but also involving the parents on it to make them stronger parents. Because it starts at home. It starts at home, and I know that sometimes we don’t have control. They leave to school, they are out in the community, those kids. We have no control over that. Not even the parents have control over that.

In relation to reducing recidivism, the second participant reported that appearing to be successful is a wraparound service for the juveniles within the family. Additionally, she noted:

It is important that everyone is treated with respect because once their respect is earned, behavior changes and this includes every individual in the home. It is important to understand the kid not only their behavior but every aspect of the kid including their feelings and emotions since kids act out of their emotions. It is

like peeling an onion. The kid will not admit to you about what they have done but if their trust is earned, they will eventually open up and talk and they can be assisted in making better decisions. She further added, that there has to be good communication with the therapist. If the therapist has an issue with the juvenile and something they are doing, then this has to be talked about with them. It may be because of how they are feeling that they then violated some rule or law. Thus, discussing the feelings of the juvenile in relation to the action is important. The participant reported that in-home services were probably the best, and stated that the factors that made these services better for juveniles was the realization that it was not just the parent or the juvenile. What is required is that everyone work in collaboration and be willing to discover what will help the juvenile. It is a group initiative. The parents are informed that if they assist the therapist, then the juvenile can receive assistance. The therapist can inform the parent that while they have had their child for many years, the therapist knows things about the child that the parents do not even know. It is important to establish firm communication with the parents and the juvenile. It is also a community effort.

The third participant stated:

That creativity among the officers in working with juveniles also contributed to success because it cannot be a cookie cutter type program because not one size fits all so to speak. The juveniles start out with Level I but Level IV officers are able to be more creative. The focus has to be not only on the juveniles but also on their family. Sometimes, the juveniles need to be placed somewhere other than

back in their home, so again, creativity is required in placing them elsewhere so that they can be successful or so that they can be placed in necessary rehabilitation programs. Also, it is cultural in some cases to not discuss certain things, and culturally it is difficult to admit to other family members that they feel depressed and the like. Therapists are not considered as an option in many families. Hurt feelings are also not open for discussion in many families.

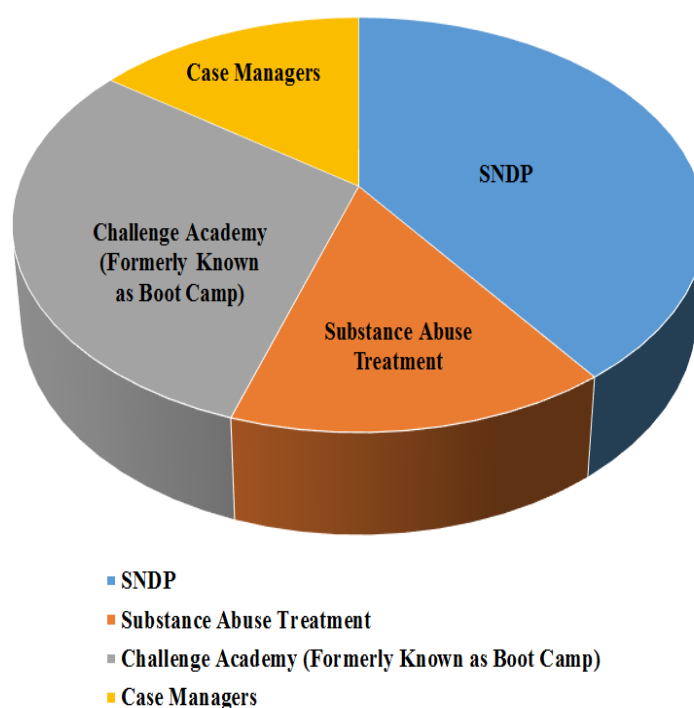
When the fourth participant was asked about what was successful in decreasing recidivism, she proposed:

The Special Needs Diversionary Program (SNDP), which focuses on juveniles with mental health issues and assigns individual therapists. Additionally, this program has its own psychiatrist, judge, and POs who visit these juveniles several times a week. The juveniles go to see the judge twice a month. If there is any issue with non-compliance or not taking medication, the therapist visits the juvenile's home and conducts therapy there. The SNDP has medication compliance. After completing probation, the juveniles are placed in Aftercare and linked with other services. In addition, the family is informed about the available assistance. "This is the best program in decreasing recidivism".

She further reported, that this group is a "tight group" and the therapists "build rapport every two weeks with the probation officer" and sit together in conference to discuss the juvenile. The judge attends these meetings as well so they all work in collaborative effort in assisting the juvenile. The court is open so the whole family can attend. The family is empowered and the judge asks what is going on

in the juvenile's life. The judge is highly informed about the different aspects from which the juveniles suffer including ADHD, bipolar, depression, and other mental health issues. The following chart shows the most effective treatment programs in reducing recidivism.

*Figure 4: Most Effective Treatment Programs in Reducing Recidivism*



As shown in Figure 4, the participants perceived the SNDP as the most effective treatment program for reducing recidivism among female delinquents. Equally, the effectiveness of Challenge Academy in reducing recidivism among female delinquents was noted. For example, the third participant argued that the Boot Camp program had an 80-100% success rate. The Boot Camp program was described as motivating and a life-



changing experience for most female delinquents, and hence, very effective in curbing recidivism. She further noted:

And once they're released, they come out kind-of in shock in some way. And especially the girls. I mean it's kind-of like a reality check for them. And so I feel like that program helps them out a lot as far as the restructuring and kind-of putting them back – not on check but in line as far as what they need to do. And I have seen a lot of girls that go in there and they come out, they do a complete change. And they're more motivated. They want to continue doing physical training that they were doing in the program. Most of the females that are in probation, I notice that a lot of them tend to be very lazy, unmotivated. When they're at school, it's kind-of like they're disrespectful. And when they're in here, they tend to teach them, okay, you can't be disrespecting authority figures or older people for that matter. And I don't know, for some reason when they come out from the Boot Camp, it's "Yes, ma'am. No, ma'am," which they weren't doing before.

**RQ4: How do probation officers think the current treatment influences female delinquents' transition into the community? How does this transition differ from that of male delinquents?**

Participants were asked about their thoughts concerning present treatments insofar as influencing the transitioning of male and female delinquents. Participants stated that they believe that they are receiving the same types of services. Many POs are reported

to think outside of the box and to tailor services to the specific child. The first participant again emphasized the dynamics of the home in developing intervention programs for juveniles in El Paso County.

He further noted:

What is successful for one child may not work for another child. The actual provider determines the intervention and makes the choice of the best fit for the child based on the individual's background and other options. The first 30 days is – you have to really start looking at all the options. Because when you start developing your case plans and start identifying the needs, the risk factors for the child. At the same time, you start looking at the protective factors. What can actually work for this young man or this young lady that we can actually utilize?

When asked about transitioning the child back into the community, the first participant responded:

For each child, the plan is different based on the specific factors for the child. He also noted that the best that can be done is to attempt to provide the child with the necessary tools to go back into the home and community since the root of the problem – the child's home environment – has not been fixed.

In relation to success in the transitioning of the juveniles, the third participant stated:

Here in our department, we have our intensive supervised probations, which include SNDP, ShoCap, ISP, or drug court. And then of course our after care. The after care program that we have here, I think it works with them very well

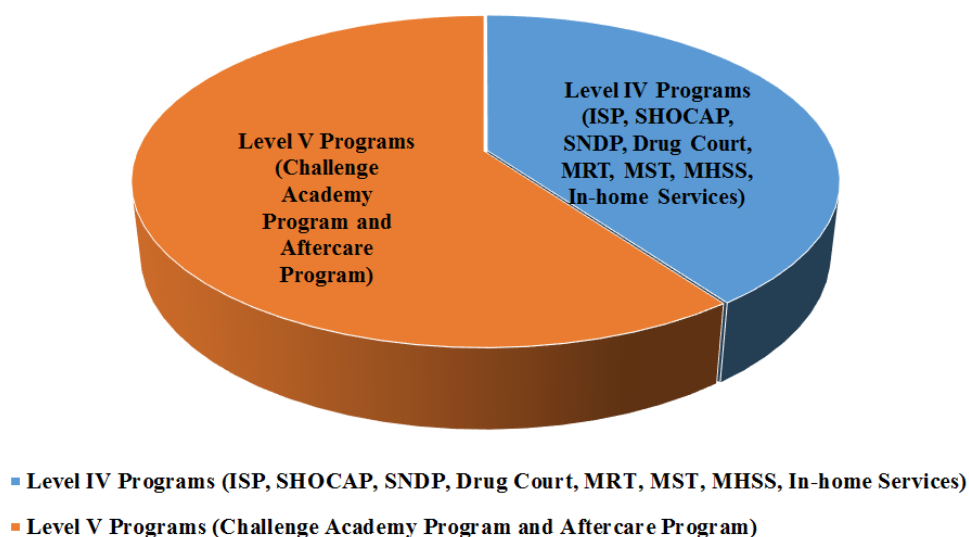
because they link them up to services after. And usually they go out to placements, or even to our challenge program. They do, like, two months of after care. And that's kind of tying them into the community to make sure, you know, that they have a job, continuous school. If they're done with school, they link them up to as far as college classes, different things like that. So I would say more the ISP programs or if not, our after care programs.

The fourth participant stated:

Okay. I think the Special Needs is the one that provides the best results. Their stats, they're very good stats that they have. They also have a low recidivism rate.

The thematic analysis in this study identified two common treatments that were regarded as effective in helping female delinquents transition into the community (as shown in Figure 5).

*Figure 5: Most effective treatments for transitioning*



The intensive supervised probation programs such as SHOCAP, Drug Court, SNDP, and ISP were the most commonly identified treatment methods. These programs were identified as effective because they focus on communication skills, critical thinking, and establishing healthy boundaries. Aftercare program was also identified as effective.

According to the fourth participant:

But even after they get released over there, they're placed in either SHOCAP or either in some type of after care that ensures that they actually are applying their skills that they learned at the rehabilitation.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to confidence in a study's results. Trustworthiness lies in the fact that the research is ethically sound and there is a level of understanding and objectivity within the evidence (Creswell, 2009). Hoffman (2010) indicated that to ensure trustworthiness, a researcher must demonstrate thorough understanding of the underlying context that guides the research. Trustworthiness involves not only a level of transparency in reflexive journaling, and recognizing biases and discussing them, but also in the study's transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is the ability to apply the findings of a study to contexts similar to the study's context (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992). To maintain transferability, I attempted to give a full report on the participants' perceptions, which necessitated rich and detailed descriptions. Nastasi (n.d.) reminds a researcher to ask him or herself if the conditions

will be similar enough to make the finding applicable. The current research focused on one particular, focused group – probation officers with specific criteria – and their words alone. With member checks confirmed, this data was used as evidence of emerging themes, and there is solid confidence that transferability was obtained. The focus on probation officers' perceptions through their collective words helped fulfill transferability to other probation officers and their experiences with female juvenile delinquents. The intent was to inform the research, so the rich accounts of probation officers' experiences and perceptions are significant in terms of transferability to a wider context.

### **Dependability**

Dependability accounts for such factors that may instigate instability or change within the natural context (Natasi, n.d.). As the researcher, I took full responsibility for describing any changes as well as the consistencies that occurred within the context of the data, such as streamlining themes to more manageable pieces, and how these changes affected the way I approached the study (Trochim, 2006). I documented the natural occurrence of the phenomenon studied through the use of meta-coding, memoing, and audit trails. The audit trail consisted of the progression by which the data was analyzed, including all process notes based on my own reflections before, during, and after data collection (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). This was to ensure that all steps remained transparent and that the conclusions drawn were displayed as a natural deduction (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). This audit trail, along with recording both the data's stability and possibilities for change, secured dependability (Natasi, n.d.). Multiple breaks from the data, re-reading of the transcripts, and recoding helped adhere to

dependability standards. Building up documentation, which included everything from initial interpretations, to instincts about the data, to observations about the context of the data, all helped to ensure the overall dependability of the research (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992).

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability is the ability to authenticate the internal coherence of the data, along with the findings and interpretations (Natasi, n.d.). Credibility in multiple case study research is shown by attained and prolonged contact with the stakeholders and participants of the study (Creswell, 2009). I continually questioned my conclusions and was careful to respect the inductive and deductive reasoning within the descriptions themselves (Polkinghorne, 1989). This included being honest with my participants about my position to ensure that it did not interfere with their recounting of subjective experiences. A level of trust was established with the participants based on the context that we shared, which increased the credibility of the research itself. Credibility was also maintained through the assurance that data collection conveyed the correct meaning intended by the participants. This was ensured through the use of Word document transcriptions of the interviews that were approved by the participants themselves.

### **Summary**

The main findings of this study focused on the effect of rehabilitation efforts on recidivism and transition into the community among female delinquents. The findings show that the probation officers perceive the rehabilitation efforts employed by the Juvenile Department as very effective in reducing recidivism and helping female

delinquents transition into the community. In the next chapter, the results are discussed and interpreted in relation to Chesney-Lind's (1988) feminist criminology theory and the findings from the review of the existing literature that was appraised in chapter two of this study.

This study has examined the views of probation officers about gender-responsive programs for female juveniles in El Paso County. This study finds that there are no gender-responsive programs for female juveniles in El Paso County. This is problematic because female juveniles have specific and specialized needs that are not being met. Several of the probation officers (POs) in this study noted that they use creativity in matching female juveniles with services. This is commendable in light of the lack of services that are specifically focused on female juveniles. However, the fact is that there is a need for female gender-responsive programs because of the gender-specific issues that female juveniles are dealing with in the home and community.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, Conclusions

In this multiple case study, I sought to examine gender-responsive treatment and rehabilitation programs in one location. More specifically, I aimed to understand perceptions of POs who worked with delinquent female adolescents and have had the opportunity to observe varied treatment programs offered to the female delinquent. I sought their views on treatments and services provided to female delinquents, as well as the ability of the treatment to rehabilitate, decrease recidivism, and promote successful transition into the community for this population.

This study encompassed five POs working within the El Paso Juvenile Justice Center in El Paso County, Texas. Four out of five of the participants were female, while one participant was male. The range of work experience as a PO was from 3 to 20 years. Two participants were working in the SHOCAP, Level IV; one participant worked in the Intensive Supervised Probation (ISP, Level IV) program; and the other two participants worked with the Level III programs. Additionally, participants reported knowledge and experience in other programs including the Challenge Academy Program, the Justice of the Peace program (both are Level V), and the Special Needs Diversionary program (Level IV).

Data collection was through the use of digital audio taping during face-to-face interviews with all participants. The strategies used to deduct themes included listening to the digital audiotaped interviews immediately after the interview. Each interview was then transcribed into a Word document. The interviews were listened to again, and the transcriptions were simultaneously reviewed to correct any mistakes. Transcriptions



were then read once again and were then sent by e-mail to the participants for a member check.

The inductive approach was used to analyze the participants' transcripts and questionnaire notes to identify patterns and themes introduced during data collection. The comparative method was used to review transcribed interviews and questionnaire notes line-by-line, and I analyzed sentences and paragraph segments to determine appropriate codes revealed by the data. Each code was compared to all other codes to identify likes, differences, and general patterns. Repetitive reviews and coding and memoing of the transcripts led to 10 overarching themes. The themes included the following: Theme #1: Same treatment services (males and females); Theme #2: Population density (male and female); Theme #3: Family dynamics; Theme #4: Gender considerations; Theme #5: Level III programs; Theme #6: Level IV programs; Theme #7: Level V programs; Theme #8: Lack of resources / services; Theme #9: Program success probation officers / counselors; and Theme #10: Family involvement.

The goal of Chapter 5 is to explore the results through discussions, recommendations, and a conclusion. This included an interpretation of the findings through the theoretical lens of the feminist criminology theory that laid the foundation for the research questions. Limitations and recommendations are also included along with implications.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The results of this multiple case study confirmed alignment with the literature concerning the juvenile justice system's ability to appropriately treat the female

delinquent. Furthermore, I highlighted the juvenile justice system's continued inability to provide female delinquents with the necessary treatment programs or services to assist in gaining a footing to resituate their lives following their contact with the system. Walker et al. (2012) posited that the juvenile justice system can benefit from various gender-responsive programs aimed at addressing the needs of female adolescents. Furthermore, increasing the system's ability to respond appropriately to the varied abuses in which female delinquents often encounter is imperative (Put et al., 2015). Additionally, this study supports the use of home visits with the family and the delinquent to contribute to behavioral changes (Guttentag et al., 2014). The participants were asked four foundational questions, which opened the lines of communications and allowed them to discuss their perceptions concerning treatment of the juvenile delinquent.

The participants in the present study had varying levels of experience in dealing with juvenile delinquents. The first, second, third, and fourth participants noted that their caseloads predominately consisted of males and that their experience with female delinquents was minimal. This lack of experience remains consistent with comments by Muftić and Baumann (2012) concerning the rate in which females commit crimes compared to their male counterparts.

The first question asked was the following: *What rehabilitation efforts have probation officers observed for male and female delinquents?* Among all five participants, a total of 11 programs were presented and identified as being used to respond to the needs of the juvenile delinquents; however, none of these programs were designed to treat the female juvenile delinquent. Additionally, the first, second, and fifth

participants noted that the only specialization available was derived from the creativity of the POs or case workers who put forth effort in attempting to help the female juvenile delinquents.

The second question asked the following: *What are probation officers' perceptions regarding how current treatment could be improved to specifically meet the needs of female delinquents?* The first, fourth, and fifth participants confirmed the need for more female-focused programs within the juvenile justice system. Furthermore, as noted by Watson and Edelman (2012), the second, fourth, and fifth participants acknowledged that the juvenile justice system is in need of improvement to adequately address the needs of female delinquents.

The second participant stressed the importance of addressing the needs of the female delinquent. She stated:

And you have to take in consideration you know the gender, because there are some services that you can send a male to that a female might just not feel as comfortable with. You have to look at the juvenile and the female and kind of understand her a little bit more and kind of dig deeper as her issues and her actions and her wellbeing in order to try to link her to services.

The fourth participant stated, "I think it would be better to address depression. I've seen a lot of the girls suffering from depression and low self-esteem. That's what I've noticed a lot with the girls."

The fifth participant acknowledged

In my experience I feel like the female population is the more difficult one to

work with. And I think a lot of times and most recently I have experienced a lot of females and worked with a lot of them that have been involved in human trafficking. And that, I think has made it difficult to work with them. We don't have a lot of services in the community to address the issues of that type of client I guess. All three of the participants' comments support findings by Wise (2012), who noted various factors such as family dynamics, sexual, abuse, early puberty, anxiety, and depression as the reasons delinquency exists among the female population.

The third question asked the following: *What are probation officers' perceptions and daily experiences regarding the impact of current treatment programs on recidivism among female delinquents?*

The third, fourth, and fifth participants noted the Special Needs Diversionary Program as the most effective in decreasing recidivism among the female population in which they have serviced. This is characterized by frequent informal interaction with the judge, intensive in home services, psychiatric services, and so on. This is a Level 4 program within the El Paso County Detention Center, similar to Communities That Care (CTC) mentioned by Oesterle et al. (2010), which are intended to provide opportunity for minimizing various delinquent behaviors and helping communities and families promote the development of healthy youth and reduce violence among delinquents. Shapiro et al. (2014) posited that CTC programs develop capacities such as knowledge acquisition and networking; therefore, they are often successful. The fourth participant noted the following:

Right now we have the Special Needs Diversionary Program that they focus with the kids that have a lot of mental health and they have their own therapists. They have their own psychiatrist and they have their own judge. And then they have their own two probation officers. They go and visit these kids about two or three times a week. They come to court and see the judge twice a month. If there's any issues or problems with him not taking his medication, him not complying, the therapist goes out to the home and they have therapy in the home. It's been an awesome program. I like to introduced that. Equally, the effectiveness of Challenge Academy (Level V) (formerly called Boot Camp) in reducing recidivism among female delinquents was discussed.

The third participant noted:

I feel like that program helps them out a lot as far as the restructuring and kind-of putting them back – not on check but in line as far as what they need to do. And I have seen a lot of girls that go in there and they come out, they do a complete change. And they're more motivated. They want to continue doing physical training that they were doing in the back, keep up with that. So I think that would be one of the programs that I would say would help with the recidivism.

The fourth question posed the following? How do probation officers think the current treatment influences female delinquents' transition into the community? How does this transition differ from that of male delinquents? The Level IV programs such as SHOCAP, Drug Court, SNDP, and ISP were the most commonly identified treatment

methods that provide the greatest success to assisting female delinquents with transitioning back into their communities.

Alienation from support systems has been shown to be a primary factor in the development of criminal activity among females. Especially when raised in abusive families, these females often feel as if they have no-one to turn to when they are in trouble, and with minimal self-preservation skills, they are more likely to turn to crime in order to solve their problems, whether emotional or financial (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2013). Strength-based programs have shown particular promise in the rehabilitation of female delinquents; many turn to crime because they feel helpless to do anything else.

The fourth participant noted the importance of providing programs that teach the females self-worth and further enhance their self-image. Van Worner (2010) noted that the unique needs of the female delinquent can be met through vocational, career development, and life skills training which addresses female's issues and teaches empowerment. The third participant noted that programs addressing the self-image of female juvenile delinquents are integral to addressing the problems of female juvenile delinquents and in assisting them in establishing a better way of life. This further lends credibility to research by Lai et al. (2014) acknowledging that the implementation of early prevention programs leads to improved academic achievement, intelligence, social behavior, and self-esteem among female delinquents.

The fourth participant noted that female juvenile delinquents have the need to establish life goals for themselves. It was noted that the female juvenile delinquents in

this study were not able to visualize themselves graduating from high school or even attaining a GED therefore, there is a need for programs such as these to assist female juvenile delinquents in visualizing a better way of life. In order for this to occur, the female juvenile delinquents must be provided treatment and services that will appropriately meet their needs. While probation officers are doing the best they can with the resources available, simply are not enough to provide the needed assistance to female juvenile delinquents.

Put, Lanctôt, Ruiter, and Vugt (2015) confirmed that female delinquents are often times dealing with sexual and physical abuse, neglect, and other types of maltreatment contributing to their delinquency. This further adds to the systems inability to appropriately address the female delinquent needs. The fifth participant noted:

And for some reason I think the females have more issues, you know, having to do with sexual assaults, rapes, things like that. And that makes it difficult.

Female delinquents have significantly higher rates of mental health concerns than do males of similar ages and circumstances (Latessa, Listwan, & Koetzle, 2014). This is most likely due to the difficulties they experienced in their lives prior to offending, such as the increased probability of having been abused. When the victims of mental or emotional disturbances are also abusing drugs or alcohol, their dual diagnosis status puts them at increased risk of not only offending again, but of spending their entire lives in and out of the prison system. Whitesell et al. (2013) noted that there is a significant association between an adolescent delinquency and the use and abuse of heroin, cocaine, alcohol, and marijuana and delinquency. In particular, the female might use drugs to

forget their problems and the drug use is also often linked to sexual, physical, and emotional abuse.

While approximately 30% of arrests and incarcerations are currently comprised of females, only 4% of intervention programs are designed to treat only female, while 87% serve all or mostly men (Day & Tichavsky, 2015). This disparity could be in part because of the relative recent increase in female-committed crimes, or it could be because females are less likely to receive the treatment which they need to improve themselves and their situations. In fact, most female delinquents are probably not even aware of what would help them to improve their lives. That is why clinicians and people working with female delinquents must be aware of the needs of the young females they work with, in which the second participant noted during her interview. This is the main reason that most interventions created specifically for female delinquents stress the importance of relationship creation: the support of other people is not likely to be something which female delinquents are used to or are comfortable with, and yet is what they mostly need the most to remain law-abiding in their lives after release from the legal system. The second participant further noted that wraparound services for the entire family yield best results in dealing with female delinquents. All that is known about the differences between the needs and strengths of girls and boys, both through observation and formal study, should be considered in the design of gender-responsive programs in order to provide maximum effectiveness. At the same time, those involved in designing,



implementing, and running gender-responsive programs must be sure that gender-based services do not turn into sexist services.

### **Limitations**

There are specific limitations that are presented in the present study. The initial limitation is the lack of female juvenile delinquents in the El Paso County system by which to specifically analyze the interventions being utilized by case workers and probation officers. However, this did not bar the acquisition of information that is integral to understanding the needs of female juvenile delinquents in the juvenile justice system. The second noted limitation is the provision of responses of the participants who only have limited experience in working with female juvenile delinquents.

### **Recommendations**

Arising from this study are recommendations that the juvenile justice system conducts a review of the programs that are being successfully utilized throughout the United States in assisting female juvenile delinquents in order to choose a program or programs that can better serve the female juvenile delinquent population worldwide. Some of the programs that are successful have been reviewed in this chapter based on this present study. It is recommended that stakeholders within the Juvenile Justice Community take these programs along with others under review and establish a program or programs that is focused on assisting juvenile female delinquents in what will be a gender-responsive program for those females who are in such great need of this type of support in support of their successful transition into society. It was noted in this study that probation for female juvenile delinquents, enrolled in level four, consists primary of

home visits instead of the female juveniles actually reporting to the department. The probation officers in this present study noted that they visit the female juvenile delinquents in their homes either once or twice per week depending on the conduct of the juvenile. The juveniles are provided with counseling and are given drug testing as well as being involved in other activities outside of the home such as community service. The participants in this study noted that one of the case workers visits the home and goes walking or running with the female juveniles in order to help them feel better about their health and appearance which is noted to be very important for treatment of the female delinquent. Additionally, reported in the present study was the use of psychological evaluations in order to determine if the juvenile is in need of psychiatric assistance.

The present study noted that there are no gender-specific programs in the county in this study and it was noted by the participants that there is a great need for gender-specific programs for female juvenile delinquents. This need has been noted throughout the literature covered in this present study. However, while some areas of the United States are responding effectively most have not, whether it is due to the lack of contracted services or financial constraint, as noted by the first participant, the female delinquent continues to be 'under' treated. Watson and Edelman (2012) in their work entitled "Improving the Juvenile Justice System for Girls: Lessons from the States" reported that there are variations between boys and girls in regards to their "patterns of offenses and the way that those offenses are processed" stating that females are much more likely than are males to "be detained for non-serious offenses" (p.7). Female juveniles are additionally to be detained for violation of probation more often than males. Watson and

Edelman (2012) reported that juvenile justice experts in the field of justice reform for females largely agree that there is a requirement for a radical expansion of community as well as public resources for “prevention and front-end diversion programs” (p.7). It is reported that the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) reports that programs that are gender-responsive should be: (a) all female when possible; (b) females should be given treatment in the environment that is least-restrictive; (c) should be in closer proximity to homes of females so that family continuity can be maintained; (d) consistent with development of female individuals and emphasize the role that relationships play between females and members of staff; and (e) should address needs of parenting for females who are expecting or already have children (Watson & Edelman, 2012). Watson and Edelman’s work makes recommendations that include: (a) establishment of a stakeholder group that is representative in formulating ideas for reform and for implementation; (b) assessment of the manner of processing females of the juvenile justice system and gender-specific services that exist; (c) creation of programs that are specific for response to gaps in services; and (d) provision of training to staff in the area of female development (Watson & Edelman, 2012). It is clear from the information gained during the interviews in this present study that the goals set out by the OJJDP are not always being met.

This study provided experiences, perceptions, and ideas that were experienced by the participants interviewed. Perceptions provided by the participants were passionate but lend confirmation to what has been noted about the juvenile justice system for years. All participants agreed that more needs to be done to address the female delinquent needs

and most have an idea as to what treatment services should be provided. The analysis of the interviews yielded ten overarching themes; however, there are eight noted in which the participants unanimously acknowledged as being important in considerations of their treatment services during their interviews:

Theme #1: Same treatment services (males and females);

Theme #2: Population density (male and female);

Theme #4: Gender considerations;

Theme #5: Level III programs;

Theme #6: Level IV programs;

Theme #7: Level V programs

Theme #8: Lack of resources / services;

Theme #10: Family involvement.

With the results provided via this study, I recommend that county systems consider the following in order to improve their treatment services provided to the female delinquent: (a) review legislative relative to gender-responsive programs; (b) capitalize on current services that have some success with meeting the needs of female delinquents and identify their service gaps; (c) develop a strategic plan detailing means of decreasing the gaps according to legislation; (d) continue collaborative effort between community organizations and the juvenile justice agency; (e) consider specialized training for probation officers and probation officers in approaches that are gender-responsive; (f) consider public investment of a significant nature in the area of funding for juvenile justice programs and specifically gender-responsive programs; and (g) commitments

from possible organizations to assist with funding of such programs and seeking reform in the area of female juvenile justice programs.

Furthermore, counties should consider creating a Diversion Committee that focuses on providing female-gender specific services to female juvenile delinquents. Additionally, a committee that focuses on alternatives to detention that are gender responsive is needed. A committee or task force that provides gender-responsive training to probation officers and probation officers who will be working with female juvenile delinquents. It is by the fifth participant that the female delinquent is difficult to work with which is due to the lack of gender-responsive programs. Additional gender-responsive programs will assist in the reform of female juvenile delinquents who present have no programs that are specifically designed to address their diverse needs. The fifth participant further noted, female juvenile delinquents are often dealing with having experienced sexual assault as well as rape making it problematic presently for female juvenile delinquents to be placed in services and programs that provide assistance for coping with these issues. Additionally, she mentioned that many of the female juvenile delinquents have been involved in human trafficking which also presents diverse needs for female juvenile delinquents that are not presently being addressed by the programs and services available.

The fifth participant noted that in addition to more programs and services for female juvenile delinquents that there is a need for a female gender-specific shelter so that female juvenile delinquents have somewhere safe that they can live while they are receiving programs and services. To return home for many of these juveniles would

mean that they are returning to the same circumstances and conditions that led to their becoming a delinquent in the first place. While the in-home services are effective for some of the female juvenile delinquents, for those who are experiencing sexual assault and abuse in the home, returning them to this environment even when receiving counseling services and other support visits from their probation officer and probation officer only sets the female juvenile delinquents up to reoffend. The fifth participant stated:

I mean it would be great if there was actually a program or a business of some type that opened up in El Paso locally that could maybe not only offer them maybe temporary shelter or a place to go to feel safe, but also to continue with services, whether it's counseling services or counseling for the whole family.

Coordinating a group home environment with training and education would further assist female juvenile delinquents in gaining a solid footing to reenter society and would enable them to avoid returning to home environments that are negatively impacting their safety and wellbeing both physically and psychologically.

### **Implications**

From studying the success and shortfall of existing gender-focused interventions for female delinquents, it is possible to draw conclusions regarding what is important to include in any new attempts to create similar interventions in the future. The programs with the highest success rates seem to focus on assisting females with their social connections and support systems; drawing on research that female delinquency is often driven by broken or dysfunctional relationships, substance abuse, and childhood

victimization (Barlow, 2014). By increasing the support systems available to females exiting the legal system, both in the form of social support, family support, and therapeutic support, it is hoped that these females will have the ability to ask for or seek help if they are tempted to reoffend. Programs which focus on increasing self-esteem, assertiveness, and substance abuse intervention will also be of help to female delinquents, as members of this group have been shown to have a high level of abuse in their past, and often are again abused as adults. This cycle of abuse repeats itself through the adulthood of the female delinquent and continues to foster criminal activity

While substance abuse treatment is not typically considered to be a gender-specific intervention, the way that it works in females is very different from the way it works in men (Whitesell, Bachand, Peel, & Brown, 2013). While the mechanics might be similar, females tend to receive the information in a more personal way; Lima (2014) noted that they are more likely to blame themselves for their addictions, they are also more invested in their own recovery. In this area, at least, female delinquents' tendency towards self-recrimination and –blame can be used to the benefit of the person in treatment.

For female delinquents who have had children removed from their care because of incarceration or suspected abuse or neglect, parenting skills training can be their best hope of being reunited with their dependent children, if this is deemed appropriate. Even if this is not possible, many delinquents are still of an age where they might still bear more children, and the parenting classes would be helpful in raising any children the delinquents might have later in life.

van Wormer (2010) acknowledged that the lack of opportunity in the career field for poor, uneducated or undereducated female, job training and the ability to receive further education are also of utmost importance. As mentioned previously, most crimes committed by females are crimes of survival—shoplifting, petty theft, and fraud being a few of the most common (Redding, 2010). These offenses could all be seen as a way for a poor woman with no other perceived options to keep herself alive, as would prostitution and trafficking drugs. If the desperation to survive can be removed, and legal methods of survival introduced, the motivation to commit crimes should, by default, be eliminated.

Although the rate of increase in the arrest and incarceration of females over the last decades is undeniable, the fact that females are still outnumbered in the justice system leads some administrations to be reluctant to spend money on gender-focused interventions for female delinquents. Coupled with a general lack of understanding about how, exactly, female's motives and reasons for committing crimes differ from that of males by many authority figures in the prison community, and it just seems easier to try to make female delinquents fit into the male-oriented treatment programs than to develop all new treatment programs that are geared towards female delinquents from the beginning.

Another issue with funding gender-focused interventions for females is that, in most people's eyes, female delinquents are not as important to rehabilitate as are male delinquents. This is largely due to the fact that crimes committed by females tend to be nonviolent and minor, and do not frighten the general public, or even prison administrators, in terms of the threat of recidivism (Wright, 2014). Most people would



be more likely to want to pay for the rehabilitation of a murdered than of a prostitute; prostitution, they would argue, is a victimless crime. Unfortunately, this is not true. Although the issue of prostitution is complicated, it is not a victimless crime—the perpetrator herself is the victim. Not only is she the victim of her current situation, but she is also likely to be repeating her victimization from her childhood (Barlow, 2014). Her children are victims, if they go into foster care or are placed with the same family members who abused their mother and contributed to her criminal activity. And society is also the victim, in that if she is arrested and incarcerated, she is one more person incapable of supporting herself or her family, and society must pick up that bill.

Again, according to the participants in this study, their location does not have the needed programs and services that are geared toward assisting the female gender. The female gender is noted to have many areas that interconnect creating unique needs for female juvenile delinquents however, their needs are not being met. While the probation officers and case workers are well aware that the needs are not being met for female juvenile delinquents and while the probation officers and probation officers are trying to creatively meet their needs with the present programs and services it is not feasible to provide the type of support and assistance to female juvenile delinquents that is required in this specific location.

### **Conclusions**

As more and more females are being arrested and incarcerated, it is necessary for clinicians and prison officials to finally recognize the differences in how male and female delinquents experience the world, and how that experience affects the way they approach

their offenses and whether or not they will choose to reoffend. Only by tailoring rehabilitation services and programs to the needs of female delinquents can this segment of the incarcerated population be served successfully. It is not enough to simply make minor adjustments to programs designed for male delinquents; the differences in how males and females react to situations are far too different for this method to be affective. In order to truly help female delinquents to avoid reoffending, programs must be created from the ground up, taking the needs of females into account. It has also been shown that programs which treat females exclusively are more effective than co-educational groups in preventing recidivism in female delinquents. Whether this is due to the females' natural, learned inclination to follow the lead of males in the group or whether females just feel more comfortable utilizing all of the tools in the group when in a homogenous situation, this should be taken into consideration when constructing gender-reflective groups.

While the rehabilitation of females might not be seen as important, due to their generally non-violent offenses, their crimes still cost society millions of dollars each year, both in lost revenue and in incarceration costs. Also, if these female continue to offend, one must consider the loss of productivity, the effect on any children involved, and the general waste of human potential. The children of mothers who spend a great deal of time in and out of jails, prisons, and treatment centers are more likely to grow up in foster care and turn to crime when they age out, especially if the child is female. Children raised in foster care are also less likely to graduate from high school, more likely to abuse

drugs and alcohol, and less likely to have a stable home environment as adults. This perpetuates the cycle of abuse which leads generation after generation to offend.

By focusing on the differences in the type of programs which have been shown to be effective in treating female delinquents, and not just putting females into traditionally male programs, it is more likely that recidivism will decrease and that female delinquents will learn to lead productive, law-abiding lives once they are released from the justice system. This benefits not only the delinquents, but everyone who comes into contact with them for the rest of their lives. This should not be seen as an issue that affects only female criminal delinquents. It should be seen as an issue that is important to every member of society who might someday become victim to a female delinquent who is released from detention without being rehabilitated. The monetary costs alone make this a consideration, and if the trend towards more violent crimes being committed by females continue, the cost of ignoring the specific needs of detained females becomes even higher. This is not an issue in which society can afford to ignore.

In conclusion, this study has noted and confirmed that gender-responsive programs are lacking in their ability to assist female juvenile delinquents and while the probation officers and probation officers are doing their best creatively to assist these juvenile delinquents, at present the odds are stacked against the female juvenile delinquents, the probation officers, and probation officers that are attempting to help the female juvenile delinquents due to the lack of specific female-oriented programs and services. Specific conclusions based on the information gained from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is that programs and services that

are all female should be developed and that these female juvenile delinquents should be provided treatment in the 'least-restrictive' environment and in programs and services that are in close proximity to their home to maintain family continuity as well as being consistent with female development with an emphasis on the relationship that is formed between the female juvenile delinquents and the program and services staff. Finally, the programs and services should address the education, training, and parenting skills of female juvenile delinquents as appropriate to each individual female. There are variations in reform but what is important is that the reform focus on the development of female gender-responsive programs, services and interventions for the female juvenile delinquent. This reformation not only provides rehabilitation, reduces recidivism, and promotes successful transition for female delinquents into their communities; it further increases the number of productive citizens within society.

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## Appendix A: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study about gender-based treatment for female juvenile delinquents. The researcher is inviting practitioners who have at least one year of experience working with female juvenile delinquents, in positions with the least frequent turn-over rates to be in the study. I obtained your name/contact info via the El Paso Juvenile Justice Center. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Jeanette Martin, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to determine the importance of implementing gender based treatment for treating juvenile delinquents.

### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- You will be asked to conduct a semi-structured audio recorded interview session lasting approximately 45 minutes to discuss your experience with current treatment methods provided to female delinquents, while detained.
- You will be asked to conduct this interview once; however, if needed I would like to have the option to re-visit only if required for clarity purpose, etc.

Here are some sample questions:

What rehabilitation efforts have you observed for male and female delinquents?

What is your perceptions regarding how current treatment could be improved to specifically meet the needs of female delinquents?

What is your perception and daily experiences regarding the impact of current treatment programs on recidivism among female delinquents?

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one within the El Paso Juvenile Justice Center will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time

### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, stress, or anxiousness. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing. The study results will provide juvenile justice stakeholders with a spectrum of practitioners' perspectives on treating female delinquents. In addition, the results will increase knowledge of successful treatments for female delinquents with the possibility of implementing better programs which may lead to decreased recidivism.

**Payment:** There is no compensation for participation.

**Privacy:**

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by use of code names and a password protected database. The data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone or [jeanette.martin@waldenu.edu](mailto:jeanette.martin@waldenu.edu). If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.**

Please print or save this consent form for your records.

**Obtaining Your Consent**

If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision about it, please indicate your consent by: replying to this email with the words, "I consent"

## Appendix B: Information Letter: Invitation to be Interviewed

To Whom It May Concern,

You are invited to take part in a research study about gender-based treatment for female juvenile delinquents. I am inviting practitioners who have at least one year of experience working with female juvenile delinquents, in positions with the least frequent turn-over rates to be in the study. I obtained your name/contact info via the El Paso Texas Juvenile Justice Department.

This study is being conducted by a researcher me as a doctoral student at Walden University.

### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to determine the importance of implementing gender based treatment for treating juvenile delinquents.

### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- You will be asked to conduct a semi-structured interview session lasting approximately 60 minutes to discuss your experience with current treatment methods provided to female delinquents, while detained.
- You will be asked to conduct this interview once; however, if needed I would like to have the option to re-visit only if required for clarity purpose, etc.

Here are some sample questions:

What rehabilitation efforts have you observed for male and female delinquents?

What is your perceptions regarding how current treatment could be improved to specifically meet the needs of female delinquents?

What is your perception and daily experiences regarding the impact of current treatment programs on recidivism among female delinquents?

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at Walden University or within the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, stress, or anxiousness. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

The study results will provide juvenile justice stakeholders with a spectrum of practitioners' perspectives on treating female delinquents and decreasing the probability of female delinquency. In addition, the results will increase knowledge of treatments for female delinquents as well as program features that improve the success rate of such programs.

**Payment:** Not Applicable

**Privacy:**

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by use of code names and a password protected database. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone or [jeanette.martin@waldenu.edu](mailto:jeanette.martin@waldenu.edu).

**Obtaining Your Consent**

If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision about it, please indicate your consent by: replying to this email with the words, "I consent"

Sincerely,

Jeanette Martin  
Walden University Doctoral Student