

2017

# Roles and Services of Probation Officers Among Rural Female Juvenile Offenders

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*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Amy Warmingham

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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2017

Abstract

Roles and Services of Probation Officers Among Rural Female Juvenile Offenders

by

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MA, University of Massachusetts at Lowell, 2008

BS, SUNY Institute of Technology at Utica/Rome, 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human and Social Services

Walden University

June 2017

## Abstract

Each year, hundreds of thousands of youth move through juvenile justice systems in the United States, and the number of female offenders is increasing. At the probation level, there appears to be a lack of services, such as mentoring, mental health services, sex education, and counseling, to meet the gender-specific needs of female juvenile delinquents in rural settings. The purpose of this study was to discover county probation officers' perceptions of girls' needs and the officers' decision-making processes related to recommending services. This case study was based on feminist criminology theory. The research questions sought to learn how probation officers working with female juvenile offenders in a rural county describe their roles in the supervision process and how they decide which gender-specific services are most appropriate. Three probation officers in a rural jurisdiction in a northeastern state were interviewed, and the responses were coded and analyzed using thematic content analysis. Findings indicated that the officers neither viewed girls differently nor felt the need to treat the genders differently, even though their responses revealed that female youth are more often subject to truancy, promiscuity, and running away than male youth. The primary recommendation resulting from the study is to implement gender-responsive programs to meet the diverse needs of delinquent girls. Such programs would offer female youth more guidance and rehabilitation, potentially reducing future offending. This study has implications for positive social change in informing those serving in the youth criminal justice field, and families involved in the system, about the gap in understanding and implementing gender-specific strategies to meet the needs of rural female youth in conflict with the law.

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my extraordinary children, Colin and Lauren, my reasons for waking up each day and pushing myself to continue to strive do to better. Thank you for making me smile, bringing joy to my life, and for giving me the greatest distractions ever from school and work when I needed it. I am proud of both of you, and am proud to be your mom. Always remember, your destination is your own; make it great and never settle. I love you both forever and always.

To my husband, Craig, you believed in me even when I did not believe in myself. Thank you for encouraging me, loving me, and never letting me give up. I must also include a thank you to Marley as well; he had to listen to all of my rants and still greeted me with a smile each day.

To my parents, Malcolm 'Bud' and Janet Harris, thank you for your unconditional love and for always being in my corner cheering me on. Thank you for teaching me to always do what is right and fair, to help others whenever you can, and to never stop learning and growing.

## Acknowledgments

I am overjoyed to finally reach the end of this long dissertation process, and I could not have done it without my chair and committee. I would like to acknowledge Dr. Gregory Hickman for agreeing to step in and take this on when I was lost. Your patience and guidance led to me to this point, and without you, I would have quit long ago. To Dr. Tina Jaeckle, thank you for your encouragement, assistance, and feedback along the way. I would also like to thank Dr. Barbara Benoliel as my URR for her guidance throughout this process.

Thank you to the agency involved in this study for allowing me into their world to conduct my research. Last, but certainly not least, thank you to my colleagues, especially Dr. Aaron Carver, for listening to and understanding my complaining, and offering knowledge and guidance to get me through this last year.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Statement of the Problem**

Juvenile delinquency is a longstanding problem in the United States (National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2014; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [OJJDP], 2015). Each year, hundreds of thousands of youth move in and out of both local and state juvenile justice systems (OJJDP, 2015). Although significant strides have been made in the juvenile justice court system and in the process of dealing with delinquent youth by the entire criminal justice system, the rate of incarceration remains high; instead, juveniles could be given services (such as mentoring, counseling, and sexual education) to help avoid the delinquent behavior, in particular, female juvenile offenders (Novero, Loper, & Warrant, 2011).

The juvenile justice system arose to make decisions on a case-by-case basis, keeping keep the best interests of the child in mind (Alarid, Sims, & James, 2011). One alternative to incarceration for delinquent youth is probation, or community supervision, with services such as counseling, mentoring, and/or sex education. Probation, or community supervision, originated in the mid-1800s and has become widely used (Klinge, 2013). Massachusetts officially implemented probation as a dispositional alternative for juveniles in 1878, meaning that juvenile probation actually was created prior to the first juvenile court (Peters, 2011). In the early 1990s, Boston, Massachusetts, was first to use a team approach to supervising at-risk youth, referred to as Operation Night Light (Alarid et al., 2011).

Probation continues to be the dominant form of community-based supervision and has been referred to as the most “radical innovation” of those reforming juvenile court, even though it was not originally grounded in any major theory (Peters, 2011). Probation officers, of all of the actors in the criminal justice system, have the most contact with offenders who enter the system since they have contact from the initial intake referral (Verrecchia & Ling, 2013). Despite their presence in the lives of offenders, I found no research on the factors probation officers use in deciding the most appropriate gender-specific services for offenders.

According to Peters (2011), probation officers were first meant to be friends of the accused who were assigned to guide wayward youth. Their role was reminiscent of a social work role. This social work method proved unsuccessful when courts realized they were unable to reduce youthful offending using such approach: 40% of delinquent youth recidivated. Moving away from a social work approach, psychodynamic theory received great support from the Commonwealth Foundation, which focused on philanthropic efforts during the 1920s and 1930s when addressing delinquency. Early reformers believed that psychological etiologies of delinquency would prove to be more effective by focusing on changing the individual rather than focusing on juvenile delinquency as a whole. By the 1970s, probation in the juvenile justice system was growing at a steady pace, and in 1975 probation officers organized themselves to form the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA). Throughout the past 25 years, probation supervision as a court disposition has risen by 34% (Maschi, Schwalbe, & Ristow, 2013).

Probation supervision was handed down to one-third of the 2.11 million youth younger than 18 years arrested in 2008 (Maschi et al., 2013).

One initial primary responsibility of probation officers is intake (Ritzer, 2014). Juvenile intake procedures for probation are meant to discover the most appropriate and least restrictive path to rehabilitating the juvenile (Ritzer, 2014). Although juvenile probation officers help promote safe communities, they often find themselves in the role of social worker; for example, they help adolescents and their families navigate their way through the juvenile justice system (Xiao, Taylor, Church, Thomas, & Wharton, 2011). In one of their most difficult challenges, they help the large number of juveniles who come from dysfunctional families (Ritzer, 2014).

Probation services are meant to serve a rehabilitative function, but the success rate has decreased in time, especially with girls and their gender-specific needs (Klinge, 2013). Parents are also seen a critical part of juvenile offender rehabilitation (Maschi et al., 2013). When a more family-focused approach is implemented in sentencing and supervision, it is more likely that family involvement will be considered at each decision point by the probation officers and the entire criminal justice system (Dizerega, 2011).

An increase in school punishments due to changes in public discourse and newly implemented crime control initiatives have increased the number of juveniles being introduced to the criminal justice system (Irwin, Davidson, & Hall-Sanchez, 2013). Simon (2007), Hirschfield (2008), and Kupchik (2009, 2010) have argued that punitive measures are becoming much more common in U.S. school systems throughout the country, along with a structural similarity in punishments (Irwin et al., 2013). Additional

local, state, and national legislative school crime control initiatives have occurred, including the 1994 Safe and Drug Free Schools Act and the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act. Since the Columbine shootings on April 20, 1999, parental fears of school crime have increased. In 2000, the Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services provided more than \$350 million for schools nationwide to hire school resources officers to help schools deal with disruptions and criminal activity (Irwin et al., 2013). School personnel and researchers alike agree that harsher punishments are best measured in terms of suspensions, expulsions, and transferring students out of the school (Irwin et al., 2013).

Before the mid-1970s, most discussions of juvenile delinquency made little mention of girls, especially regarding services provided to them at the probation level and probation officers' perceptions of them (Pasko, 2011). Today, the female juvenile population can no longer be ignored. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2008), in 1975 girls constituted only 15% of all arrests of juveniles in the United States. That ratio has increased 30 years later to nearly one-third (Pasko, 2011). In addition to the increase in referrals, during the past 30 years, adjudications of girls have increased by 300% (Pasko, 2011). In 2010, more than 9,000 girls were being held in residential placement facilities (Schaffner, 2014). Girls continue to be the fastest growing population in the criminal justice system, yet the personnel in the criminal justice system lack a true understanding of girls' troubles and lack the essential resources and services to take action (Gaarder & Hesselton, 2012; Jackson, 2009). Adolescent females have unmet emotional and psychological needs that are specific to their gender (Schaffner, 2014).

In a rural county in a northeastern state, 41 juveniles were arrested for criminal activity in 2014, of which 10 were girls. These numbers represent criminal index crimes within the county and do not include status offense incidents, such as truancy and running away (New York State Department of Criminal Justice Statistics, 2015).

According to Sherman (2013), of particular importance is the matter of gender inequality in the social structure and the juvenile justice system in the United States. Sherman (2013) indicated that the juvenile justice system tends to delay addressing girls' issues until they have given their attention to other populations or until public pressure requires forces girl's issues to be addressed. Sherman also noted that as of 2012, 20 years after the JJDP Act ordered states to evaluate each of their systems to be sure they were gender responsive, young girls are continually held for delinquent acts that do not result in equally punitive punishments for boys (Sherman, 2013).

Although the research regarding probation officers' roles in decision making about services and services put into place to reduce juvenile offending and probation violations illuminates important findings for male delinquent youth, I have found no research on the role and decision making process for appropriate services by probation officers, including their perceptions of the application of services in place, to specifically reduce female delinquency youth violations in a rural community setting. Given such, further research is warranted that examines the role and perceptions probation officers have regarding the gender-specific needs of female juvenile delinquents and the decisions and application of services being offered to them at the probation level in a rural



jurisdiction in an effort to address the documented problem of a lack of services and increasing female youth delinquency (Espinosa, Sorensen, & Lopez, 2013).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain insight into rural county probation officers' role in the decision making process for services given to youth, and perceptions of female juvenile offenders and services actually provided to them in a rural jurisdiction. I used semistructured interviews to examine the officers' perceptions with regard to their decision making role and departments' gender-specific programs and services, and thereafter establishing a link between their decisions and services provided to female juveniles in a rural jurisdiction to address their specific needs. I used the results to expand on prior research and add to the knowledge about services based on the probation officers' perceptions of successful female behavior outcomes. By addressing gender-specific services available in a rural jurisdiction, enhanced service approaches to prevent high female juvenile delinquency rates could be implemented.

Findings from this research provide more in-depth insight into probation officers' roles and decisions regarding female juvenile delinquency and the most appropriate services in place in a rural area to prevent disproportionately high delinquency rates among female juveniles (Dembo et al., 2012). I focused on delinquency among rural female youth based on behavioral issues, and the view of juvenile probation officers on known problematic, or repeat, offending. The application of the research findings promotes further research into gaps in specific services to help prevent female delinquency in a rural jurisdiction. In this sense, the study results are important for

increasing appropriate gender-specific services, which will reduce female youth delinquency.

### **Research Questions**

I used the following research questions (RQs) to guide this study:

RQ1: How do juvenile probation officers working with female juvenile offenders in a rural county describe their roles in the supervision process?

RQ2: How do juvenile probation officers working with female juvenile offenders in a rural county decide on which services will be most appropriate and gender-specific to use during supervision?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Feminist criminology theory, the framework of this study, addresses issues related to females and crime (Chesney-Lind, 1988). The predominant goal is to bridge the gender gap within the justice system. Feminist criminology theorists seek to enrich the understanding of both male and female offenders with regard to the system's way of addressing their delinquent behaviors (Chesney-Lind, 1988). The theory also includes (a) a theoretical explanation for the crimes involving females, (b) programs for female offenders, (c) responding to female offenders, (d) female probation officers in the corrections field, and (e) the special needs of females in the justice system.

The initial formation of probation within the juvenile court system was not based on any major theory. A social work approach to delinquency was the basis for dealing with juveniles, which proved ineffective. Psychological etiologies for delinquency were adopted based on reformers' realizations that it was necessary to focus on the individual

(Peters, 2011). Because a comprehensive rational practice theory is lacking, probation programs often waver between an enforcement/control function of the courts and a rehabilitative mission (Schwalbe, 2012). The shift is often due to changes in public opinion regarding current crime rates and a concern for underprivileged youth. Theories including deterrence and control theories are used in reviewing probation guidelines. Deterrence theory backs the expectations and legal regulations of the harshness of punishments that are expected for law violations (Schwalbe, 2012). The control theory is used to support interventions and boost participation and commitment levels of the probationers (Schwalbe, 2012).

The theoretical framework for this study includes the aforementioned feminist theory along with an examination of the usefulness and value of theoretically based judgement and decision-making interventions for adolescents (Knight, Dansereau, Becan, Rowan, & Flynn, 2015). The theoretical framework for the study is expanded on in Chapter 2.

### **Nature of the Study**

The research questions were investigated using a qualitative case study approach, which included interviews to obtain first-hand knowledge from probation officers in a rural jurisdiction who are directly involved with female juvenile delinquency and the status offense process of the criminal justice system. Criminal delinquency arrests, as well as status offense arrests, are included. According to the National Center for Juvenile Justice, female youth especially account for a significantly higher percentage of all classes of status offenses (Blitzman, 2015). *Delinquency* is operationalized as any act

committed by youth that would also be a criminal act if committed by an adult, regardless of gender (Mallett et al., 2011). Juveniles are referred to probation for five status offenses: (a) staying out overnight and/or running away from home without parental permission; (b) being beyond the control of parents or guardians; (c) truancy; (d) not adhering to curfew; and (e) consumption of alcohol by a minor (Mallett et al., 2011). In this study, the focus was on female juveniles, between the ages of 7 and 15 years, in one rural county of a northeastern state.

I conducted interviews with probation officers a rural county in a northeastern state who work within the juvenile justice system. By using a qualitative approach, personal feelings regarding gender-specific services in place, as well as the effect or lack of services provided, can be included in a study (Mallett et al., 2011). Three representatives from the probation department in a rural northeastern state participated. Research from the interviews sought to obtain information about probation officers' perceptions of services provided and feelings surrounding the usefulness, importance, and effect that current services and dispositions have on female youth. This study furthers existing empirical research (McKee, 2012) regarding county probation officers in association with female juvenile delinquent behavior and the lack of gender-specific services currently in place.

### **Definitions and Terms**

*Delinquency* is operationalized as any act committed by a youth that would also be a criminal act if committed by an adult regardless of gender, including but limited to burglary, rape, assault, arson, robbery, and motor vehicle theft (Mallett et al., 2011).

*Status offenses* include the following behaviors: (a) staying out overnight and/or running away from home without parental permission; (b) being beyond the control of parents or guardians; (c) truancy; (d) not adhering to curfew; and (e) consumption of alcohol by a minor (Mallett et al., 2011).

*Lack of supervision*, for the purposes of this research, is defined as a child who is inadequately overseen (or watched out for) for an extended period or who remains out of the home overnight without parental knowledge, or the parent not trying to find out where the child is (Ryan et al., 2013).

*Juvenile* is defined as persons who are between the ages of 7 and 15 years.

*Services provided* by the county probation department will be clearly identified and defined by the agency and include specific procedures implemented and used on a case-by-case basis.

### **Limitations**

One limitation to the study was a lack of generalizability to larger populations. The research included one rural probation department in a northeastern state. An additional limitation of using interviews to gather data is the ability to accurately reflect the interviewee's perspectives. I assumed that all probation officers interviewed for the study were truthful in their responses to all questions and that all interviews and notes were accurately transcribed and coded.

### **Social Change Implications**

Results of this study help to specifically distinguish the role and gender-specific decision making processes of probation officers in a rural jurisdiction who supervise

female delinquent youth and recommend services. By concentrating on the probation officers' decisions regarding services and programs to tackle the problem of delinquent female youth, those serving in the juvenile justice system could better understand and meet the unique and necessary needs of female juvenile delinquents. The implementation of more gender-specific programs has meaningful and substantial influences on a state level with regard to outcomes within the juvenile justice system, specifically for girls. A better understanding of gender-specific needs and services that affect probation officers in a rural jurisdiction provides female juveniles and their families' more access to gender-specific services vital for encouraging improved social skills and functioning, and also grow mature, strong bonds with their family, peers, and the community. Therefore, the study contributes to social change by raising the awareness of gender needs to be considered by probation officers during their decision making process for female juvenile delinquents in a rural jurisdiction.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to discover county probation officers' perceptions of girls' needs and officers' decision making process related to services provided. This qualitative study was based on feminist criminology theory and I constructed research questions to learn how probation officers working with female juvenile offenders in a rural county describe their roles in the supervision process and how they decide which gender-specific services are most appropriate. This study has implications for positive social change: It would be expected to benefit society as a whole by helping to produce and maintain productive members of society. An additional benefit of the study is that it

provides for the possibility of system-wide modifications to better address female juvenile delinquency. Chapter 2 includes an examination of prevailing literature related to female juvenile delinquency and the increased risk of recidivism for female juveniles within the juvenile justice system. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology that I used to respond to the research questions previously presented. In Chapters 4 and 5, I present an analysis, results, and conclusions from the study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate and analyze rural county probation officers' roles and decision making process regarding female juvenile offenders in a rural jurisdiction and services provided to them. Probation officers could benefit from a more detailed and exhaustive understanding of the presence of gender disparities in the juvenile justice system. Not only probation officers, but also juvenile court personnel, service providers, parents of juveniles, key personnel within the school system, and political leaders could gain knowledge from this research to better recognize and address the gender biases that exist within the system. My findings contribute to understanding how probation officers' roles and decisions regarding female juvenile delinquency are affected by gender and available services. The application of the research findings can promote further research into gender-specific services to help prevent delinquency among female offenders in rural areas and beyond. In this sense, the study results will be important for increasing appropriate gender-specific services, which could result in keeping youth out of trouble; in school; and involved with their community, peers, and family.

Throughout the chapter, I examine literature aligned with the research topic. I begin the chapter by introducing the topic, followed by a history of juvenile delinquency and juvenile courts, probation departments and community supervision, female delinquent youth; a discussion of child labor laws, gender differences, and other demographic variables; and a discussion of theoretical viewpoints related to juvenile



delinquency, including those that shaped the theoretical context of this study. In the following sections, I look at juvenile placement facilities; incarceration rates; alternatives to incarceration (restorative justice and targeted prevention); effects of parental incarceration; mental health and delinquency; and homeless youth who are at a higher risk for delinquency.

### **Research Strategy**

The research approach for this chapter involved searching literature databases including SocINDEX with full text, ProQuest Criminal Justice, and SAGE. The databases were the main sources for gathering applicable peer-reviewed scholarly literature. I also obtained information from the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention website and the National Criminal Justice Reference Center websites. I used the Walden University online library to conduct my research, and I included a deliberate focus on articles published less than 5 years ago. A portion of the journal articles and books that I used were more than 5 years old, which increased and added to the historical backdrop of the study.

The searched the databases listed using various terms alone or in tandem using *and* as a Boolean operator. Search terms fell into the following categories: (1) *juvenile delinquency*, (2) *delinquent behavior*, (3) *juvenile family and crime*, (4) *female youth and crime*, (5) *school behavior*, (6) *youth development*, (9) *childhood neglect*, (10) *youth placement and facilities*, (11) *youth trauma*, (12) *role of probation officers*, (13) *gangs*, (14) *adolescent girl behavior*, (15) *parental incarceration*, (16) *mental health and delinquency*, (17) *probation departments*, and (18) *rural juvenile crime*. In some

instances, I performed searches using specific theory names (e.g., biological theory, differential association theory, social bond theory, social control theory, and social learning theory).

My objective in the following literature was to describe the theoretical basis of the proposed study, to provide a historical overview of the juvenile justice system, and to provide a comprehensive analysis of empirical literature related to all study variables (i.e., delinquency, family bonding and influence on delinquency, juvenile delinquency facilities, probation officers and departments, female juvenile delinquency, delinquent peers, gang relations, and homeless and mental issues with regard to delinquency).

### **Historical Significance of the Juvenile Justice System**

According to Siegle and Welsh (2011), in the early 1800s, a group of activists known as the Child Savers motivated and prompted state legislatures to craft new laws that would give courts the authority to commit children to specialized institutions if they were found to be runaways or criminal offenders. In 1825, the State of New York became the first state to open a House of Refuge to protect neglected youth and incarcerate delinquent youth (Wagner, 2013). Throughout both the 18th and 19th centuries, children aged 17 years who were of low socioeconomic status were given the same harsh treatment that adults received under the law and were made to work in industrial factories (Bell, 2011). Soon after the building of Houses of Refuge, state reform schools began to emerge to house, instruct, and rehabilitate juveniles to assist them with social adjustments (Bell, 2011; Wagner, 2013). Those refuge houses and reform schools would later serve as a model for contemporary juvenile reformatories (Bell, 2011). The child saving movement

ultimately culminated in the passage of the Illinois Juvenile Court Act of 1899. The Act aimed to treat and rehabilitate rather than punish juvenile offenders (Siegle & Welsh, 2011). Ultimately, in 1899 the Child Savers' Advocacy led to the first established juvenile court system located in Cook County, Illinois. Illinois approved and passed the Juvenile Court Act, which established the initial comprehensive juvenile justice system. This initial court was formed based on the British legal doctrine of *parens patriae*. This meant that the state took on the role of the parent, with a duty to both protect the public interest as well as to intervene to serve as the guardian of the best interests of the children involved (Siegel & Welsh, 2011).

In line with that, landmark court cases including *Kent v. U.S.* (1966), *In re Gault* (1967), and *In re Winship* (1970) have not only provided more procedural guarantees to juveniles with regard to due process, but have also brought to light the role of personal and environmental characteristics in the lives of youth (Cauffman, Piquero, Kimonis, Steinberg, Chassin, & Fagan, 2007). While significant court cases were being heard regarding juveniles' rights, the Juvenile Prevention and Control Act was passed by Congress in 1968. The Act was meant to promote the planning and development of community level delinquency prevention programs (Siegel & Welsh, 2013). In 1974, the act was replaced by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, which established the Office of Juvenile Justice and Prevention (OJJDP) and the National Institute of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (NIJJDP).

## **Probation Departments, Community Supervision, and the Juvenile Justice System**

One component of the juvenile justice system is community supervision, or probation. Community supervision originated in the mid-1800s and later gained widespread acceptance and use (Klinge, 2013). Massachusetts formally implemented probation as an alternative disposition for juveniles in 1878, which means that juvenile probation was actually created and implemented prior to the first juvenile court (Peters, 2011). Probation is the most dominant form of community based supervision and is imposed by a court in lieu of imprisonment, or placement in a detention center for juveniles (Peters, 2011). Decision making in probation, and all levels of the criminal justice system, is meant to be on a case-by-case basis keeping in mind the best interests of the child (Alarid et al., 2011). Over the last 50 years, there have been conflicting mandates on probation departments, which affect their relationships with the clients, and therefore the outcomes of the clients (Holloway, Brown, Suman, & Aalsma 2012). Since probation is a form of sentencing, law enforcement officers had a presence in juvenile probation systems almost from their beginning, all of them being male officers (Peters, 2011). Within the probation department there was a separate division created and the officers reported to a police sergeant. Officers investigated and petitioned cases involving the safety of community and property, mainly dealing with male delinquency since it was at first referred to as a “boy problem” (Peters, 2011). Now, every state has its own legislation that governs their juvenile justice system processes (NeMoyer, Holliday, Goldstein, & McKitten, 2015). The structures that probation officers operate in are continually diversifying. There are more than 2000 probation agencies in the United

States, each having their own unique characteristics based on local culture, politics, and societal concerns (Klinge, 2013).

Although probation is often referred to as the most “radical innovation” by reformers of juvenile court, it was not originally established in any major theory (Peters, 2011). The probation officers were meant to be friends who were assigned to guide wayward youth, more of a social work role. This method proved unsuccessful when courts were unable to be successful in reducing youthful offending; 40% of delinquent youth recidivated (Peters, 2011). Using a theory of social work failed to deliver a guide for effective probation intervention. Psychodynamic theory received great support from the Commonwealth Foundation, which aimed their attention on humanitarian effort during the 1920s and 1930s to address delinquency (Peters, 2011). Early reformers believed that psychological etiologies for delinquency would prove to be more effective by focusing on changing the individual.

Probation operates around four major systems of social organizations, including the correctional system, social welfare system, the community, and the treatment system. The correctional system includes law enforcement agencies and prisons that are the central holding facility for the system. The social welfare system is composed of smaller organizations all aimed at helping families and the community with work opportunities, education and training, and monetary benefits for housing and food. The treatment system is focused on health and counseling and includes both volunteers and trained professionals (Senior & Ward, 2016). Probation, in essence, incorporated components from each system. The focus and goals of probation can change due to changes in the

community and pressures from political leaders. Probation is generally delivered at the community level as a management agency to keep probationers out of the prison system. When services provided by probation departments are successful, the change is for the better for the offenders, victims, and the community (Senior & Ward, 2016).

The three primary responsibilities of probation officers include intake, investigation, and supervision. The juvenile probation intake procedures are meant to screen juveniles to determine the most appropriate and least restrictive path to rehabilitate the juvenile (Lindner, 2008). Intake is also the first contact that a juvenile has with the family court system and is the time when the intake officer interviews the youth to determine whether a formal petition should be filed with the court (Lindner, 2008). One level of probation supervision includes intensive probation supervision. Intensive supervision requires more individualized attention be given to the client, and therefore consists of smaller caseloads and often a team approach incorporating police officers and the probation officers (Alarid et al., 2011). The first team approach to supervising juveniles was developed in the early 1990s in Boston and was referred to as Operation Night Light (ONL) (Alarid et al., 2011). Juvenile probation officers help to support secure neighborhoods for youth and their families and often play the role of social workers, working with adolescents and families involved in the justice system (Xiao, Taylor et al., 2011).

One of the most difficult challenges faced by probation officers is the large number of juveniles who come from dysfunctional families (Ritzer, 2014). Although probation services are meant to serve a rehabilitative function, the rate of success has

decreased over time, especially with regard to female juveniles and their gender-specific needs (Klinge, 2013). In an effort to improve probation services, many agencies are moving to a more family focused justice emphasizing the importance of families, mainly parents, as a critical part of the juvenile offenders' rehabilitation (Maschi et al., 2013). Maschi et al. (2013) wanted to fill a gap in the literature regarding parental involvement by researching probation officers' interactions with parents of juvenile delinquents. They generated a conceptual model of what the ideal parent of youth who is involved in the juvenile justice system should act and be. According to probation officers, an ideal parent should be able to accept parental authority, properly support their child, and cooperate with probation officers throughout the probation process. The family justice approach incorporates evidence-based interventions to prompt a partnership with parents and encourage parental capacities (Maschi et al., 2013). Research (Smith, Rodriguez, & Zatz, 2009) has suggested that single parents especially are thought of as being uncooperative by justice officials, although the lack of resources made their involvement more difficult.

Maschi et al. (2013) research involved 31 PO's, mostly female (67.7%) who had a bachelor's degree or higher and reported an average 10 years of working experience with juveniles on probation. Through interviews, the officers described what their main purpose and goals of probation were, their main approach to probation, identified youth who were listed as high risk and known to have a mental health problem, identify youth case-plan goals, and describe intervention or probation strategies. Overall, the probation officers reported widespread efforts to engage the parents in a goal of ideal parenting. Findings from the research have implications for better practices and policies in the

future with regard to incorporating and working with parents of troubled youth (Maschi et al., 2013). Positive relationships with between the offenders, their families, and the agents is correlated with reduced rates of recidivism (Klinge, 2013).

In addition to more parental involvement, probation officers are now incorporating evidence-based practices (EBPs) to enhance the treatment services and the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders (Cotton & Owen, 2015). The use of EBPs is moving probation from a monitoring and control model to more of a behavioral change and treatment approach. In order to provide youth with the best opportunity to prevent future delinquency, the most appropriate intervention is critical (Cotton & Owen, 2015). EBTs are becoming more integrated into probation departments, yet there is no real empirical tested set of guidelines and recommendations for officers to follow. Cotton and Owen (2015) studied the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice's disposition matrix as it used as a disposition tool (Baglivio, Greenwald, & Russell, 2014). The matrix contains graduated sanctions ranging from alternatives to arrest to commitment in a residential facility. Four dispositional categories were within the matrix. Strict recommendations were given to choose the least restrictive alternative first for each youth. The four dispositional categories ranged from a low of below guidelines to a high of above guidelines, with optimum placement and appropriate placement falling in the middle (Cotton & Owen, 2015).

In the Florida assessment of 38,117 juvenile offenders, it was found that the average rate of recidivism within the suggested range was 19.4% while those who had dispositions outside the range had a mean recidivism rate of 38.7% (Baglivio, Greenwald,



& Russell, 2014). After assessment in Cotton and Owen's study (2015), it was found that 92% of the releases fell within the matrix's recommendations for dispositions and placements. Youth who were placed beneath the guidelines showed the worst performance and the average recidivism rate of dispositions or placements with the suggested had a 19.4% recidivism rate (Cotton & Owen, 2015). Research regarding predictors of facility placement for juveniles following a revocation of probation term have focused mainly on youth-specific factors rather than on factors such as noncompliance with court imposed probation conditions (NeMoyer et al., 2015). NeMoyer, et al. (2015), addressed that gap by using generalized estimating equation analyses with 120 youths' in archived public defender files. Even though some states spend around \$5.7 billion each year to hold juveniles, the juveniles do not receive effective rehabilitative treatment. Researchers found that youth who were re-arrested, failed to appear for review hearings, and failed to comply with school-based conditions had an increased likelihood of revocation (NeMoyer et al., 2015).

Even though girls are becoming more common in the juvenile justice system, probation officers continually perceive them in a different way than boys in the system, often taking their issues not as seriously as those with boys (Gaarder, Rodriguez, & Zatz, 2004). Researchers Gaarder, Rodriguez, and Zatz (2004) studied how psychologists, probation officers, and others in the juvenile court system perceive girls who entered the system. Research and theories focused on the social construct of gender, class, race, and culture were used. They observed how those constructions influenced the perceptions that

juvenile court personnel held and how the perceptions continued the disconnect between the images girls had and their realities (Gaarder, Rodrigues, & Zatz, 2004).

Probation officer interviews and case file narratives were able to reveal three main themes of the study. The first being a disconnect with probation officers, juvenile court personnel, and their views of the girls as being “whiny and manipulative”. The second finding was a disconnect between the perceptions of girls’ families as being “trashy and irresponsible” and the realities of the girls’ actual family conditions. The family conditions included poverty and abuse (Gaarder, Rodrigues, & Zatz, 2004). The third theme identified was the deficiency in the awareness and understanding by the probation officers regarding the cultural and gender-specific treatments. Also included in the third emergent theme was the reality of the scarce gender-specific services for girls. The main findings suggested that gender and racial/ethnic stereotypes provide few options for girls with regard to services and rehabilitative treatments within the juvenile court system (Gaarder, Rodrigues, & Zatz, 2004).

With regard to violations of probation, the overall responses to rule violations vary depending upon the department policies, offender violation, and history of the offender. Most minor violations, such as a missed appointment or a curfew violation may be totally disregarded or handled informally with the department (Klinge, 2013). Probation officers usually have discretionary power to determine what sanction will be handed down to the law violator. If the violation is significant or frequent, a formal written violation and court appearance may be required. Policymakers agree that not all conditions of probation are of equal importance. Many states have reviewed and revised

their policies to avoid official judicial reviews of violations and revocations. In 2011 North Carolina passed its Justice Reinvestment Act in response to high revocation rates. The Act allowed probation officers the power to impose short jail times without the need for judicial review. Alabama also restricted the ability of courts to revoke probation due to technical violation only. Additional states, including Louisiana, Washington, and Oregon also implemented new laws restricting the ability of decisionmakers to revoke community supervision based only on small rule violations (Klinge, 2013). A result of changes to the laws and decisionmaking policies has resulted in more graduated sanctions to better serve the offenders and the community (Klinge, 2013).

### **Female Delinquent Youth**

The idea that there are discrepancies in the criminal justice system between males and females is not a new one. An extensive study was published in 1934 by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, which focused on women prisoners in Massachusetts. The study was entitled 500 Delinquent Women and was one of the only studies to be published that focused on female offenders at that time (Mastrorillo et al., 2014). The Gluecks set forth that there were extensive failures within the community. Two of these failures included that it lacked in an effort to prevent delinquency, and that it failed to successfully organize and implement already existing community resources. The Gluecks, through their research, realized and believed that being able to support at-risk families was essential in preventing delinquency (Mastrorillo et al., 2014, pg. 44). As a result of their study, the Gluecks identified and stated the great need for courts specializing in having to deal with female offenders, specifically issue of prostitution. One of these new courts in

Chicago was referred to as “Morals Court”. These early specialized courts resemble many of today’s specialized courts, such as drug courts. Rather than putting offenders in reformatories, which, according to the Gluecks hampered rehabilitation, they proposed building “cottages” to replace institutional settings. In addition to the changes in the physical setting, they also recommended that new treatment programs be implemented along with teaching individuals a valuable skill to later used in the community (Mastrorillo et al., 2014).

The 500 women that the Gluecks studied are not that different from women offenders of today (Mastrorillo et al., 2014). Today’s criminal justice system still deals with women who are living in poverty, are low-skilled, poorly educated, have most likely have experienced some childhood trauma. The Gluecks truly believed that people have the ability to change, and that should be given that opportunity (Mastrorillo et al., 2014).

The female offender population is growing faster than any other is in the criminal justice system (Jackson, Foster, Taranath-Sanghavi, & Walker, 2009). In 2003, 15% of all juvenile offenders who were residing in placement facilities were females (Jackson et al., 2009). Jackson et al. (2009) showed in their research that the number of African American female who had entered the system for the first time in Harris County, Texas was disproportionately high as compared to the total juvenile population. Their evaluation included 18,790 female juvenile offenders who were referred to the Harris County Probation Department extending over an 11 year period, 1993-2004. The majority of females in the study revealed sexual and/or physical abuse and many indicated that they wanted to leave home due to physical abuse (Jackson et al., 2009).

Both the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 1998 and Zero Tolerance Policies are said to have contributed to the increase in female referrals (Jackson et al., 2009).

Many jurisdictions still have yet to investigate fully the role gender plays in inequalities within the system. Females are continuing to enter the juvenile justice system at an alarming pace (Sherman, 2013). Policies and procedures being changed by schools, police, and courts are adding to the rising trend of court-involved girls (Gaarder & Hesselton, 2012). Belknap and Holsinger (2006) found that there is also a gender difference with regard to juvenile crime rates, but what they are now finding is that there is also increase in girls' involvement within the juvenile justice system (Belknap & Holsinger, 2006). Prior research including Carter et al. 2009, 2011; Ge et al. 2006; Haynie, 2003; Michael & Eccles, 2003; and Natsuaki et al. 2009 has shown that girls who encounter early onset puberty engage in an increase of risky behavior and also exhibit more emotional distress than their peers of the same age who reach puberty on time or later (Carter et al. 2013). African American girls, of all girls who do have early onset puberty, were more likely to be least developmentally ready for changes that occur during puberty. Carter et al. (2013) found in his research that when studying and interpreting the timing of girl's depressive symptoms and delinquent behavior, it is important to look at the significance of different indicators of pubertal development. African American and European American girls alike who acknowledged themselves as having an early age of menarche also described increased symptoms of depression (Carter et al., 2013). The increase in depressive symptoms leads to a correlation with an increase in delinquent behavior (Carter et al., 2013).

Past findings have been inconsistent with regard to gender in connection with post-adjudication disposition decisions (Belknap & Holsinger, 2006). Other researchers have revealed that girls did indeed receive harsher sanctions than males with regard to status offenses (Espinosa et al., 2013). The social expectations that girls should be obedient, modest, and well behaved perpetuate the continuation of structural gender bias (Sherman, 2013). Espinosa et al. (2013) also pointed out a gender difference when looking at juvenile crime rates, and that the involvement of girls is steadily on the incline within the juvenile justice system. According to Sherman (2013), of particular importance is the matter of gender inequity in our social structure and the juvenile justice system. The juvenile justice system tends to wait to address girls' issues until they have dealt with issues facing other populations or until public pressure requires it to be given more attention (Sherman, 2013). There is also a lack of understanding of girls' troubles by system personnel who are not equipped with the needed resources to properly respond to girls' needs (Gaarder & Hesselton, 2012).

One of the 1992 amendments to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act (42 U.S.C. §§5601 et seq.) included an instruction from Congress to states requiring them to evaluate their systems' provision of gender-specific services to female offenders. States were mandated to design and implement preventive services that were gender-specific (Sherman, 2013). Just over 300,000 girls were charged as delinquents and referred to juvenile courts in 1992, which constituted 20% of the total delinquency court population. By 2008 that number increased by 45 %, to 440,057 (nearly 30%) of all delinquency court referrals (Sherman, 2013). One of the most common behavior

problems among girls is running away. Seventy-five percent of runaways are female, which is the main trigger for system involvement (Sherman, 2013). Even though many girls recognize the fact that running away can push them deeper into the system, the escalated sanctions in place for running away miss the reasons girls are running. These are leading to missed opportunities for service providers to work with girls and their families to resolve the underlying issues. Currently, both domestic violence and commercial sexual exploitation are two of the greatest contributors to girls finding themselves in detention and incarceration. Sherman (2013) noted that as of 2012, which is 20 years after the JJDP Act ordered states to re-evaluate their juvenile justice systems for gender-specific responsiveness, females are continually held for delinquent acts that do not result in correspondingly punitive punishments for boys (Sherman, 2013). The prevalence of substance use disorders among incarcerated girls is also disproportionately high and a major factor for increased behavior disorders. Chesney-Lind (2001) and Prescott (1997) have both cited rates ranging from 60% to 87% in samples of girls who are incarcerated (Roberts-Lewis et al., 2010). The rate of recidivism among girls is also higher among those with substance abuse issues. More effective targeted interventions with these girls in institutional settings are needed to be implemented to better treat females' multiple and varied issues (Roberts-Lewis et al., 2010).

If, or when, a female juvenile is placed in a facility there are a host of issues that continually need to be monitored. Researchers Wolfe and Wittenborn (2012) assessed whether or not female youth who are housed in a treatment facilities relied on their counselor as a "secure base". They also examined how those same counselors'

connections might contribute to, and how extensively secure base behavior is present (Wolfe & Wittenborn, 2012). This concept is central to attachment theory (Waters & Cummings, 2000) and is recognizable from infancy through late adulthood. Prior research (Ivan & Bereczkei, 2006) has shown that when there is a lack of attachment, adolescents have an increased chance of being involved in unsafe actions such as substance use, sexual acting out, and truancy (Wolfe & Wittenborn, 2012). These high-risk behaviors can be tried by youth in order to get meet needs such as gaining attention and care that they do not receive from parents. Intervention services and juvenile justice system programs then become put into place to address various issues that landed the adolescent in treatment. This is in an attempt to decrease the risk of any more negative behaviors (Wolfe & Wittenborn, 2012).

Wolfe and Wittenborn (2012) conducted a study at a residential treatment program for female youth. As reported by the court-affiliated facility, there was an 18% rate of recidivism for those who completed the program. This percentage is low when compared to a statewide average of 55%. The program was distinctive due to the counselor spending a great amount of time with their target resident during the 9-month residential stay. The study examined the residents' bond with her counselor who could serve as a potential alternate attachment figure. Residents who had been participants for at least 4 months were allowed to partake in the study, or if they had graduated less than 3 months before the study began. Qualitative interviews were assessed for descriptions of proximity seeking, improvements in affect regulation, an increase in the amount of trust residents have in their counselor, and decreases in externalizing behaviors. Included in



the mixed-methods study were three counselors and eight residents (Wolfe & Wittenborn, 2012).

Wolfe and Wittenborn (2012) found that the attachment security level of the counselors' was directly connected to residents using them as a resource, or "secure base," during when they needed them. They also point out that residents did not experience changes related to secure base behavior when paired with an insecurely attached counselor. These same residents reported increased trust in their counselor, yet they rarely sought them out when they really needed their guidance (Wolfe & Wittenborn, 2012).

Gender differences can have a profound impact on community reentry experiences of youth who have been incarcerated. Close to 100,000 juveniles fluctuate through out of home correctional facilities. When these youth are released back into their communities they face many obstacles, such as finishing school or finding employment (Fields & Abrams, 2010). Prior research (Abrams et al., 2008) found that youth who had been incarcerated need help in establishing skills to help them achieve a healthy transition to adulthood and to become productive citizens (Fields & Abrams, 2010). There has been little research investigating what role gender plays in youths' reentry needs or experiences. Fields and Abrams were able to reveal that the majority of youth in the study expressed a want to successfully finish high school or receive their GED upon reentry, yet they also identified barriers such as a lack of knowledge regarding credits needed to achieve academic success. Females in the study expressed a slightly higher confidence level with regard to academic aspirations and goals (Fields & Abrams, 2010).

A lack of vocational training and job availability was also of more concern to the males in the study than females. Young women in the study reported their biggest barriers as being related to their living environment and home instability (Fields & Abrams, 2010).

Yeater, Montanaro, and Bryan (2015) studied the association between substance use and sexual risk among 245 adolescent females between the ages of 14-17 from juvenile probation offices. Female juveniles consistently report elevated instances of sexual pressure and use of illegal substances, yet the sequential relationship continues to be vague (Yeater, Montanaro, & Bryan, 2015). Romantic relationships, initiating and maintaining them, is important milestone for adolescent development. Those relationships become hard to successfully manage when there is dating violence (physical, sexual, or emotional) and unfortunately, dating violence has become a common and very serious problem. Dating violence has been linked to other issues, such as posttraumatic stress disorder, risky sexual acts, increased violence, and even suicidal behavior (Yeater, Montanaro, & Bryan, 2015).

Participants at the baseline of the study had degrees of association with an increased danger of substance use, pressure to be sexual active, perceived relationship control and external behavior. A follow-up at both 6 and 24 months was also completed based upon their experiences. Results showed that at baseline, less relationship control projected sexual coercion at 6 months, and that then projected an increase of sexual coercion and alcohol at the 24-month follow up (Yeater, Montanaro, & Bryan, 2015). Alcohol use was also revealed to be linked to increased risk for repeated sexual coercion.

Early intervention is the best tool for decreasing these risks and stopping the cycle of risky behavior and abuse (Yeater, Montanaro, & Bryan, 2015).

### **Using Child Labor Laws to Prevent Deviant Behavior & Remove Youth from Environmental Crime Factors**

For youth, school and the workplace are two of the most vital developmental environments (Apel et al., 2008). Adolescents often mixed their school attendance with work on the family farm or in the home or factory until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Apel et al., 2008). Criticism grew concerning adolescents being gainfully employed while still in school. In 1918 and then again in 1922 the U.S. Congress passed laws restricting child labor, yet the legislation was deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court (Apel et al., 2008). Congress finally passed the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, which the Supreme Court ultimately upheld in 1941 in the case of *United States vs. Darby Lumber Company* (312 U.S. 100). Federal labor laws began to strict the number of hours that children of school age could work so that it would not interfere with school work. The laws also were put into place due to sometimes horrific working conditions (Apel et al., 2008).

The first empirical studies regarding the consequences of adolescent work were able to prove that adolescents who were employment while attending school were showing less than adequate performance in school and increased involvement in antisocial and “pseudo-adult” behaviors (Apel et al., 2008). Greenberger and Steinberg (1986) found that adolescents were at a developmental setback when working and participated in behaviors including smoking, drinking, drug use, and early sexuality. Current research shows that early first-time work involvement (at the age 15-16) appears

to provide benefits as well as imposes costs for adolescent behavior problems.

Employment early in high school could also lead to higher dropout rates, which leads to a higher possibility of criminal behavior (Apel et al., 2008).

While using children in the labor force did have negative impacts on youth by contributing to high dropout rates, the work also kept them off of the streets when they were not in school, There are many other disadvantaged, such as racially segregated communities in America, which is one of the most prominent features of crime in the nation (Sciandra et al., 2013). One example of this can be seen when comparing Hyde Park to adjacent Washing Park. In Hyde Park, which is home to the Univeristy of Chicago, and a racially and economically mixed neighborhood, there was a homicide rate of 3 per 100,000 in 2008. During the same year in Washington Park, where 98% of the residents are African American and the majority are poor, the rate of homicides was nearly 20 times higher (Sciandra et al., 2013). According to Sciandra, et al., (2013), prior non-experimental empirical research documented that youth and adults who live in poor, disorderly neighborhoods are at a higher risk of engaging in crime. The exposure of young people to disadvantaged neighborhoods changes their advancement of academic and non-academic skills. Sciandra et al., (2013) did find that females fared better than their control group counterparts, and that males were often arrested for less violent crimes. Furthermore, the authors' findings were consistent with the premise that neighborhood settings have a significant influence on violent criminal behavior, especially for youth (Sciandra et al., 2013).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The framework of this study included the feminist theory from a criminology Perspective, also known as feminist criminology theory, which addresses issues related to females and crime (Chesney-Lind, 1988). The predominant goal of the feminist criminology theory is to bridge the gap within the justice system. Feminist criminology theorists also aim to enrich the understanding of both male and female offenders with regard to the system's way of addressing their delinquent behaviors (Chesney-Lind, 1988). The theory also 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.

The initial formation of probation within the juvenile court system was not based within any major theory. A social work approach to delinquency was the basis for dealing with juveniles, which proved ineffective. Psychological etiologies for delinquency were adopted based on reformers' realizations that it was necessary to focus on the individual (Peters, 2011). Since there is absence of a comprehensive practice theory, probation programs often waver between an enforcement/control function of the courts and a rehabilitative mission. The shift is often due to changes in public opinion regarding current crime rates and a worry for disadvantages youth. Deterrence theory and control theory are used in reviewing probation guidelines. Deterrence theory supports the legal controls and expectations of the severity of punishments normally anticipated for

violations of the law. The control theories are used to back interventions and expand the involvement and commitment levels of the probationers (Schwalbe, 2012).

Along with the above, the theoretical framework for this study will include overview of theoretically based judgement and decision-making interventions for adolescents (Knight et al., 2015). More recent theoretical advances in cognitive science have been applied to intervention research. Youth, especially in treatment facilities, exhibit problems with judgement and decision making which contributes to risky behavior (Knight et al., 2015).

### **Ecology of Human Development & Adolescent Problem Behavior**

When studying probation and juvenile delinquency one must look into how and why the child ended up at probation. Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005), a well-known child psychologist, studied children's behavior that takes place in their natural environment; this included their family, school, peer groups, and community (Brendtro, 2006). Bronfenbrenner believed that there should be at least one adult in a child's life who should be "irrationally crazy about him or her" (Brendtro, 2006, p. 163). When there is a lack of a sense of belonging and a secure, caring bond, a child can become alienated, rebellious, delinquent, and even violent. The child cannot thrive and reach their full potential without that close, caring bond. Children reared in unsettled ecologies often encounter both emotional and behavioral problems (Brendtro, 2006). The correlation between a child's surroundings and antisocial behavior increases in adolescence, which is also a time when substance use tends to become part of the problem behavior (Gartstein, Seamon, & Dishion, 2014). The shift to middle school adds to the deviance problem due

to a lack of communication with parents and teachers, more influence from peers and more unsupervised time (Stormshak, Connell, Veronneau, Myers, Dishion, Kavanagh, & Caruthers, 2011).

Bronfenbrenner mapped out what he referred to as “circles of influence” that encompass a child (Brendtro, 2006, p. 163). Within the powerful circles is the immediate life space, which includes family, school, and peer groups. Some children are also involved in youth clubs or mentoring. Surrounding that are more broad circles including cultural, economic, and political forces. Transitions within the circles of influence, especially the immediate circle, will show in the child’s behavior. Ideally, family, school, and peer groups work together within the child’s world, but when there is a conflict it translates into distress for the child. A child’s behavior is often not simply an isolated act, but a common interaction with others in their life. As a child’s ecology changes, so does the child’s behavior and fate (Brendtro, 2006). The greater ease of access to transportation leads adolescents into different environments and therefore varying peer groups and influences (Gartstein, Seamon, & Dishion (2014).

Bronfenbrenner’s research agenda was geared towards naturalistic studies that focused on a child’s relationships under common conditions. When a child’s ecology is in balance, they are able to live tranquilly not only with themselves, but with others as well. If their ecology is disturbed in any way, conflict and maladjustment is often the result (Brendtro, 2006).

## **Sociological Theory and Crime Causation**

The development of general sociological theory on criminal justice is considerably sparse compared to the immense body of theory on crime causation. Individual-level case processing has been the focus in the majority of criminal justice literature. More specifically, on how such extralegal factors such as race, social class, and gender play an influential role in the court decision-making process. Theoretical significance of past studies for criminal theory, especially at the macrolevel, is not well developed. Sampson and Laub centered their research on a macrolevel framework, which was based on the inequality and juvenile court processing. They incorporated ideas and research derived from various theories, such as conflict theory, urban poverty, and drug enforcement trends based on race (Sampson & Laub, 1993).

Hagan (1989) contended that the absence of theory has to do with criminal justice in the United States being so loosely organized which results in randomness within the system as a whole, especially in decision making (Sampson & Laub, 1993, p. 286). With regard to the juvenile justice system, the theoretical framework is even less than the adult system. It is noticeable that research is lacking with regard to the structural context of the juvenile court, especially when focusing on variations within the courts rather than between courts. Since the juvenile court is organized at the local (county) level, it gives rise to important community-level variations in juvenile justice, such as official decision making regarding budgets, personnel, and construction of detention centers. A macro-sociological perspective recommends that due to the wide systematic differences and difference in where juvenile courts are located, differences in case processing will arise.



This is mainly due to the variation in social attributes of the communities (Sampson & Laub, 1993).

The vast majority of criminal justice research has been known to focus on consensus and conflict theories of society. The consensus view is based on the assumption that there are shared morals and that the state is structured to safeguard the larger community. Criminal law is seen as a tool to protect the best interest of the community and to punish those who offend (Sampson & Laub, 1993). The opposing view of conflict theory views society as a group that has values that conflict with one another, and the state is organized to benefit the powerful, ruling class of people (Sampson & Laub, 1993). Conflict theory views criminal law as an instrument used to safeguard the interests of the influential elite classes. Punishment, for the most part, is based on non-legal variables such as race and socioeconomic status. Although conflict theory is often applied to adult criminal justice, it has been rarely applied to juvenile justice. Platt (1977), Carter and Clelland (1979) argue that the juvenile court has a history of being organized in a way to control the lower class and minority youth, which favors upper class values (Sampson & Laub, 1993). Sampson and Laub extend their argument with the contention that the poor and underclass are viewed as threats to both the political elites and 'mainstream America', both of which characterize the dominant majority in American society. As such, Sampson and Laub suggest that the system, and responses, be analyzed on a macrolevel to react better to the stereotype surrounding youth black males in poor neighborhoods (Sampson & Laub, 1993).

Sampson and Laub hope that their work in the field of theories surrounding social control, and future work on decision-making can add a new element in better comprehending the official social control of juveniles. The macrolevel structural context remains a consistently important element in understanding local patterns of juvenile justice processing across the United States. Sampson and Laub (2003) linked data collected from what some believe was the longest longitudinal study of crime up to that point. The study included an examination of offending trajectories of delinquent boys ranging in age from seven to 70 over their life course in order to make an assessment regarding a well-defined group of offenders whose crime rate remained constant with their increasing age. They also looked at childhood characteristics, individual differences, and family background influences and what their effect had on foreshadowing the risk of long-term offending. Five hundred men who had troubled backgrounds were the original subjects. In the 1940s, these men, during their youth, represented the primary group in the study by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck (1950). The men were tracked until 32 years of age by the Gluecks (1968) and then Sampson and Laub (1993) studied the men into their early and young adult lives (Sampson & Laub, 2003). Sampson and Laub's 2003 study entailed a 35 year follow up of the men which included a detail search of both crime and mortality records to the age of 70 (Sampson & Laub, 2003).

Through their research, they discovered that, sooner or later, crime declines by age for each group of offenders. Highest ages of offending vary by types of crime, but it was found that in the middle adult years offenses do in fact decline. This suggests that desistance processes are at work and the fact that childhood projections are true when

predicting crime levels (Sampson & Laub, 2003). More recent research by Casey, Galvan, and Somerville (2016) focused on changes in the adolescent brain during the adolescent years. There has been a move away from the nature versus nurture dichotomy and more towards the recognition that genetic and environmental factors are intertwined (Case, Galvan, & Somerville, 2016). Focusing on temporal changes in functional connectivity within and between brain circuits of adolescents' brains during a time of rapid changes needs to be better understood (Case, Galvan, & Somerville, 2016). Although there are advancements in understanding the adolescent brain, neuroscience is outside of the scope of this study.

Focusing on coercion theory provided a more developmental perspective with regard to when a child begins to be involved in deviant behaviors, early onset or late onset. According to Patterson (1997), early onset offending begins during childhood and continues through adulthood, whereas late onset does not start until adolescence and then the deviant behavior tapers off later in adolescence (Crosswhite & Kerpleman, 2009). The Family Check-Up (FCU) model (Dishion & Kavanagh, 2003) is used as an adaptive family-centered intervention and has been implemented in public middle schools as a way to target risk factors common during that particular developmental period. Risk factors during that period include increases in family conflict and decreases in parent-adolescent communication, involvement, and closeness (Fosco, et al., 2014). During adolescence youths misbehavior may escalate into delinquency, substance abuse, as well as risky sexual behavior. In families where there is disengagement, this disengagement provides youth with a greater opportunity for involvement in antisocial behavior with

deviant peer groups. The FCU, guided by ecological assessment and motivational interviewing strategies, is used to identify relevant parenting skills to optimize family benefit in a brief intervention format (Fosco et al., 2014).

Fosco et al., (2014) examined the response to the FCU model by examining the assessment, intervention, and motivation (AIM) principle. AIM emphasizes the three interrelated processes that facilitate change in family process and child outcomes. Included in the evaluation were the contextual factors that were assessed as part of the FCU and that underlie parenting practices and intervention effectiveness, the caregiver motivation to change, and coercive family interactions that account for intervention effects on adolescent antisocial behavior. Researchers were able to find that caregiver depression and caregiver ethnic minority status were associated with an increased motivation for the youth to change. Caregiver motivation to change was positively associated with greater intervention response. It was also revealed that families with greater family resources showed less growth in conflict (Fosco et al., 2014). Families that fail to provide positive reinforcement for good behaviors and/or do not punish bad behaviors are also more likely to be coerced by the family and can predict when a youth will begin deviant behavior (Crosswhite & Kerpelman, 2009).

### **Juvenile Placement Facilities and Incarceration Rates**

Juvenile facilities are referred to by a variety of names, including detention centers, juvenile halls, group homes, residential treatment centers, and juvenile correctional institutions, among other names. The facilities can resemble adult prisons or jails, campuses, or other houses (Livers & Kehoe, 2010)). The Commission on

Accreditation for Corrections (CAC) gave accreditation to the first four correctional programs during the spring of 1978. In the beginning, the focus was on accreditation for adult correctional programs and facilities only. The Vienna Correctional Center in Vienna, Illinois was the first prison to receive accreditation just a year later. When adult facilities and prisons moved toward accreditations, the American Correctional Association (ACA) and CAC began discussions regarding the possibility of accrediting juvenile services and facilities (Livers & Kehoe, 2010).

The concept of implementing benchmarks and requirements for juvenile detention and correctional facilities is nothing new. In 1955, the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) began to look into writing standards for juvenile facilities. Unfortunately, it took nearly 20 years for the design and implementation of the accreditation process for juvenile correctional facilities. More than 80,000 copies of the standards were distributed by the CWLA between 1955 and 1978 (Livers & Kehoe, 2010). The Institute of Judicial Administration/American Bar Association Juvenile Justice Standards Project was started in 1971. The American Bar Association co-sponsored the juvenile justice standards. As a result, a governing body was formed to deliberate and write the standards. The result was a series of 21 volumes which focused on all aspects of the juvenile justice system. In 1995, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention presented a grant to the Council of Juvenile Corrections to advance performance which would enhance the environmental conditions of the juvenile detention and correctional facilities (Livers & Kehoe, 2010). The next major shift in juvenile standards came in 2009 when ACA published *Performance-Based Standards to Juvenile Correctional Facilities, Fourth*

*Edition.* Standards are now described as “expected practices” stressing on the importance of describing conditions that should be expected to be achieved and maintained. There are many reasons why writing standards for the adult corrections system is much less challenging than writing them for the juvenile corrections system. Agreeing on standards for facilities was difficult due to the philosophical disparities between juvenile justice and other corrections professionals with regard to some of the more serious issues. Incarceration of status offenders and holding juveniles in facilities meant for adults were among the issues of great debate. Due to disagreements and ever-changing times, creating guidelines and requirements for both juvenile and adult correctional facilities is an ongoing progression that will always be changing and developing (Livers & Kehoe, 2012).

The transition from a juvenile facility back into the community and school can be difficult, outcome based transition programming for incarcerated juveniles is essential (Platt, Bohac, & Wade, 2015). Effective transitioning programming should address career, health, and welfare needs. Students with disabilities make the challenge of a smooth transition even harder. Students who have behavioral and emotion behavior disorders are six times greater in juvenile justice settings. In addition, students who have been in a residential facility are sometimes seen as less worthy of educational opportunities (Platt, Bohac, & Wade, 2015).

### **Alternatives to Incarceration**

An ongoing problem is the continually high rate of young people being incarcerated (placed in a facility) rather than rehabilitated while remaining with their

family in the community (Novero et al., 2011). For each of the 100,000 juveniles in the general population in the year 2008, 263 of those juvenile were offenders in placement. Thirty-five states experiences a decrease in residential placement rates from 1997 to 2007, 10 had increases, and in five states and the District of Columbia there was minimal to no change. Studies have shown how and why youth are at risk for delinquency and removal from their home (Eddy, 2003; Murry & Farrington, 2005; Novero et al., 2011). Novero et al.'s research (2011) included a group of 459 men and women prisoners, of which about half reported having had a parent who was incarcerated. Uggen and McElrath (2014) showed in a Pew Charitable Trusts study that 2.7 million children have a parent who is incarcerated, or one in every 28 children. This number is up from one in 125 just 25 years ago (Uggen & McElrath, 2014). This is worth noting as the odds are increased of children ending up in prison when their parents have been imprisoned (Eddy, 2003). Aaron and Dallaire (2010) revealed that the more recent parental incarceration is, the more likely there is to be victimization, conflict with the family, and reports of children's delinquency by the parents. This was also after prior parental incarceration was controlled for. Siegel and Welsh (2011) reported that the nonprofit Children's Defense Fund identified the problems, policies, and systems which tend to "feed the pipeline" for children to go from infacts all the way to a prison cell (Siegel & Welsh, 2011). These include, but are not limited to: child abuse and neglect, failing schools, neighborhoods that are flooded with drugs and violence, increasing racial and economic disparities in child and youth serving systems, and a lack of positive role models in the child's life

(Siegel & Welsh, 2011). One of the main reasons behind childhood delinquency is maltreatment in the home (Yampolskaya, Amrstrong, & McNeish, 2011).

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2012) reported that the juvenile justice system processed an overwhelming 1.5 million youth through their system in 2009, and juvenile courts had jurisdiction over almost 31 million youth (Geurin, Otes & Royse, 2013). Christopher Bickel focused on the ways in which juveniles are treated within juvenile detention facilities. Bickel makes the argument that youth are ‘captives’, and members of a “permanent, disreputable category” within the juvenile detention facilities (Bickel, 2010, p. 37). His research focused on the experiences of guards within juvenile detention centers and showed how guards view and treat detained youth as unreasonable and deserving of punishment (Bickel, 2010). Bickel avoids using words such as “delinquent”, “offender”, or “criminal” because, as he states, they “reduce the humanity of children” (Bickel, 2010, p. 38). These terms are thought to lead researchers into focusing solely on the behavior of the children rather than the role that the institution has in constructing various categories of delinquency. His research proposes that facilities often subject children to status degradation and add to the structure of “captivity”, which is a “rising category of exclusion and inequality” (Bickel, 2010, p. 38).

Bickel (2010) was inside Rosy Meadows for almost two years as an ethnographic researcher. Rosy Meadows is a large juvenile detention center that is home to between 150-200 youth ranging in ages from 11-18 and is located in the Northeast United States. One noted difficulty in questioning the guards was the different ways in which they



viewed the children. Another limitation of the article is that it only focused on detention guards working in punitive environments. At the conclusion of the interviews, not one guard interviewed by Bickel thought that any of the youth received rehabilitation that they needed while in detention. (Bickel, 2010). Dmitrieva, Monahan, Cauffman, & Steinber (2012) revealed how incarceration and psychosocial maturity are connected. A 7-year longitudinal study consisting of 1,171 adolescent males was conducted to compare the effects confinement within a juvenile facilities and incarceration versus rehabilitation. The 1,171 males included 14 to 17 year olds who were adjudicated for a either a misdemeanor weapons charge or felony offense, a serious property crime, or misdemeanor sexual assault. The majority of participants were from poor families, and less than 3% of youth had parents who graduated from college. African Americans made up 42% of the participants, 34% were Hispanic, 19% White, and 5% other or biracial. They tested the effect of facility quality and age at incarceration on psychosocial maturity. Research results showed that incarceration within a secure setting, but not in a residential treatment facility, is positively associated with a short-term decrease in temperance and responsibility. Researchers found a negative effect when comparing the total amount of time in a facility, but not a secure setting (Dmitrieva et al., 2012).

In a more recent study, Barnert, et al. (2015) used interviews to obtain perceptions regarding routes to jail across the trail of juvenile offending. A detailed analysis of interviews with key informants were conducted from October- December 2013 with incarcerated youth that focused on protective and risk factors for juvenile offending. The study was completed in partnership with the Los Angeles County Juvenile Court,

Probation Department, and Department of Health Services, and with the University of California, Los Angeles. Twenty participants, 8 female and 12 males, were included. The youths explained their environments in terms of their school, home, community, and jail, as well as the social pressures that are found in those places. They discussed their internal needs, which were categorized as discipline and control, a need for love and attention, and role models and perspective. The incarcerated adolescent who participated expressed that adolescents are in environments that are “chaotic, unsafe, and unstructured” (pg. 1369). Juvenile detention may be a temporary safe haven from the chaos and dangers of their everyday life, but also continues the cycle of re-arrest and incarceration that continues into adulthood (Barnert, et al., 2015).

Starting around the late 1990s, graduated sanctions began to be adopted by many states as an answer to the developing ‘get tough’ policies. The federal government originally intended to reinforce the need for juveniles to take accountability for their actions and to ensure fair and equal treatment of all youth in custody. Data spanning across numerous jurisdictions suggested that minority youth were handed down more severe sanctions (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2012). Kalmbach and Lyons (2012) explored the issue in a group of 2,786 first-time male offenders, ages 10-17, adjudicated in 2002 who were racially and ethnically diverse. Utilizing the graduated sanctioning scheme, they wanted to uncover which variable, or group of variables, predicted them being given a more restrictive than expected sanction. Race/ethnicity was not found to be a predictor of being dealt harsher punishments. Variables that were associated with offending, including the severity of the offense, age and insufficient parental supervision were significant

predictors of such departures (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2012). Geurin, Otis, and Royce (2013) assessed the value of a partnership with the Alternative Sentencing Social Work Field Education Program and public defender attorneys. The researchers' main objective was to increase alternatives to sentences to provide better rehabilitative services to juveniles in court. Dispositions for youth who were given services by social work program were compared to youth who were given conventional public defender representation. Researchers used a hierarchical binary logistical regression analyses to test the hypothesis that juvenile offenders who have similar cases and receive legal representation with input from the Alternative Sentencing Social Work Field Education Program will have a better chance of receiving alternative sentencing decisions than those in the comparison group (Geurin, Otis & Royce, 2013). A logistical regression analysis revealed that youth who received alternative sentences were those represented by attorneys along with social workers (Geurin, Otis & Royce, 2013).

Restorative justice, which is a philosophical framework including programs that emphasize the need to repair the harm done to crime victims through a process of negotiation, mediation, victim, became a much more popular option than incarceration, and as a result, balanced and restorative language was implemented by twenty states to better define the duties of their juvenile courts (Mongold & Edwards, 2014). The theory of reintegrative shaming must be examined when focusing on restorative justice. Reintegrative shaming combines elements of labeling theory, differential association, and social bonds (Mongold & Edwards, 2014). Braithwaite (1989) differentiated between two types of shaming, one being stigmatization, and the other reintegrative. Community

stigmatization occurs when the individual becomes socially isolated with punishments, such as incarceration. Braithwaite noted that when individuals are shamed so mercilessly that they become outsiders. It is then more rewarding for them to be associated with those who are also viewed in some way as going against mainstream standards. A restorative justice approach to dealing with delinquency continually receives resistance from communities that believe deeply in a more punitive punishment. A better understanding of reintegrative shaming and the positive aspects from it could be a way of helping communities understand it and embrace the practice (Mongold & Edwards, 2014).

Restorative justice is a way to help rehabilitate juvenile delinquents without incarcerating them. Tsui (2014) focused on the City of Chicago by examining the juvenile criminal justice system and obstacles and solutions to incorporating restorative justice practices into a system that was primarily focused on detention for juvenile offenders. Restorative justice encompasses many methods, three of which are discussed in this particular article. The first method, victim-offender mediation, permits the victim to voluntarily come face to face with the offender in a safe area with an expert mediator. Family members often join in the mediation process. The second method, group conferencing, brings the victim and offender together, as well as including friends, family and other supporters of both parties. The third method incorporates the practice of peacemaking, sentencing circles, or restorative circles. The objective of circles is to bring together the victim, the offender, their respective supporters, and the community. Restorative justice is such a major topic because the incarceration rates in the United are the highest in the world (Tsui, 2014).

Focusing on a rural area in Northeastern Pennsylvania, Suehn, Yarnell and Champion (2014), examined the effectiveness of a local program referred to as Firewood Program for juvenile probationers. The Firewood Program was an initiative based on the Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) model set forth by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), which is in several other states (Kuehn, Yarnell, & Champion, 2014). The research was focused on a relatively unexplored aspect of restorative justice: the element of empathy growth during treatment of the offender in the restorative justice model (Kuehn, Yarnell, & Champion, 2014).

Juvenile probation reviews cases and offers the program in certain juvenile delinquents in order to complete community service requirements in addition to restitution payments. The current study of the program included two groups of juveniles from rural counties in Northeastern Pennsylvania, both with the same judicial district and a comparable population size, demographic, and crime rate. The two variables being examined were the length of time to complete restitution requirements, and the level of emotional empathy exhibited by juvenile delinquents both before and after the program was complete. Researchers hypothesized that County A juveniles would complete the restitution requirements in a shorter period than County B juveniles, who served probation and were ordered to make restitution but did not participate in a restorative justice based restitution program. The second hypothesis was that the empathy scores of juveniles from County A would increase upon completion of the program (Kuehn, Yarnell, & Champion, 2014).

Although the Firewood Program differed from traditional restorative justice programs, both of the research hypothesis were supported by the examination of the program. While this particular program showed positive outcomes for restorative justice initiatives, it was unable to address the underlying causes of the crimes and prevent future offenses (Kuehn, Yarnell, & Champion, 2014).

A criticism of utilizing incarceration as a response to juvenile justice is its lack of success effectively deterring youth from reoffending. The traditional model of juvenile detention is also extremely costly. The average cost incarcerating a juvenile for one year, in the 2010, was \$86,861. This cost is significantly greater within the City of Chicago, averaging \$115,831 annually per resident (Tsui, 2014). Another criticism for incarceration as a punishment is that it fails to address differences between adults and juveniles. Although restorative justice techniques have been introduced into the criminal justice system in Chicago, there has not been enough done to bring the concept to full fruition. Chicago will hopefully see a major shift if/when community members, legislators, and members of the court can effectively work together (Tsui, 2014).

As another alternative to not only removing juveniles from their homes, but also attempting to remove them from the criminal justice court process as well, pretrial diversion (PTD) was used. Pretrial diversion was a concept created in the late 1940s as a way to deal with juvenile offenders, yet it was not until 1982 with the passage of the Pretrial Services Act of 1982 that the program was implemented in the federal judiciary (Zlatic et al., 2010). Pre-trial diversion was meant to be a substitute for prosecution of criminals who were deemed to be low-level offenders (Zlatic et al., 2010). In the fiscal

year 2008, there were 98,244 pretrial services cases activated nationwide, of which 1,426 were PTD cases. This number of PTD cases was a huge decrease from the 2,716 PTD cases in 1999. Even though over the last 50 years various forms of PTD have been developed, there remains a lack of research (Zlatic et al., 2010).

In agreement with more present discoveries of reviews by Zlatic (2010) and a prior review of the federal diversion program by Moriarty (1993) it was revealed that an important part of PTD program success lies in a management style that is more of an open-system with collaboration of multiple agencies and open communication (Zlatic et al., 2010). Officer flexibility, communication, and personalized supervision are essential best practices for PTD program execution. (Zlatic, 2010).

### **Peer Dynamics: Progressing from Problem Behavior to Violence**

Dishion, Veronneau, and Myers (2010) were able to show in their research that extreme antisocial behavior (rape, assault, murder) is often committed by those who started as disruptive children, yet there are quick to point out that all disruptive children do not become serious violent offenders. Peer groups have an important role in the advancement from minor antisocial behavior to drug use and more serious delinquency (Dishion, Veronneau, & Myers, 2010).

Schools are the environments where most youths engage with their peers, therefore, schools provide an environment for the development and structure of child and adolescent adaptation. One of the most painful aspects of a child's social experience is rejection by peers. As revealed by Coie (1983) and Dodge (1983), this rejection often leads children to problem behavior in school. Children often adapt to rejection by

clustering into deviant peer groups within the school setting. This clustering can be seen as early as first grade and becomes more intense thereafter. This deviant behavior is a predictor of continued problem behavior, including substance abuse and delinquency. Adolescent deviant peer clusters are described as gangs, and the most serious crimes committed by adolescents are in the context of gangs. The more risk factors present, the higher the probability of gang membership. These include neighborhood deviance, poor adjustment in school and the child's problem behavior. Deviant peer relationships, such as gangs, provide reinforcement for problem behavior in a process known as "deviancy training" (Dishion, et al, 2010, pg. 605). One of the most factors in preventing gang-related behavior is a positive family influence. A parent's attention to a child's peer group and monitoring of the child in group activities could lead the child into deviant behavior. (Dishion et al., 2010).

### **Targeted Prevention**

Generally, preventive interventions aimed at decreasing anti-social behavior in adolescents were mainly set in urban areas. Jonkman, et al (2011) embarked on research regarding ways to more effectively deal with anti-social behavior by utilizing social crime prevention strategies. Their focus was on precise problem areas, identifying the risks connected to those areas, and finally producing preventive policies for addressing such issues (Jonkman et al., 2011).

There has been a great deal of scientific attention and past research regarding the detection of socially disruptive behavior (Rutter et al 1998; Loeber and Farrington, 1998, 2001; Loeber et al., 2008; Junger-Tas et al., 2008), and it has shown an connection



between the prevalence of socially disruptive behavior and later socially disruptive behavior. The relationship between neighborhood characteristics and anti-social behavior of youth is indirect and direct as well. Direct influences include crime and drug abuse. More indirect influences include poverty and a lack of attachment in the community. Youth who live in more unfavorable living conditions eventually see crime as being a normal phenomenon, and, therefore, anti-social behavior becomes attractive to them. Often, the law-abiding citizens who reside in these neighborhoods decide to move away, which leads to a decrease in social control. Big cities often have increased violence, more juvenile delinquency, as well as other risk behavior such as school dropout and teen pregnancy. Research by Jonkman et al., (2011) analyzed data from the city of Rotterdam and then created a predictive model that targeted the deterrence of delinquent behavior among youth. Anti-social behavior exhibited in 33% of youth in Rotterdam. Researchers determined that preventive strategies have an increased ability when they are targeted, which was successful in lowering the level anti-social behavior in Rotterdam by 3.6 percent. Findings also suggest that in order to tackle anti-social behavior effectively, the focus should be on specific problem areas, should identify the closest risk factors connected to the area, and then policies and interventions should be produced (Jonkman, 2011).

### **Effects of Parental Incarceration and Neglect**

Past researchers (e.g., Aaron & Dallaire, 2010; Cauffman et al., 2007; Dannerbeck, 2005; Eddy, 2003; Uggen & McElrath, 2014; Yampolskays, Armstrong, & McNeish, 2011) have emphasized the importance of controlling for many variables, such

as race, family trauma, and social influences (school, family, and peer influences), but have yet to account for variables such as a parents' prior placement out of the home as a juvenile and the proper services that need to be in place to prevent placements and recidivism. Prior researchers have shown a link between child maltreatment and problem behavior, adult criminality, and delinquency (Uggen & McElrath, 2014). These same authors also pointed the need for more awareness of the role of trauma in juvenile delinquency within the juvenile court system as a whole. There is also a need to change the system to better identify and support youth involved in significant childhood trauma. Smith, Ireland, and Thornberry (2005) and Widom (1989) described a positive relationship between child maltreatment and eventual adult criminality. McKee (2012), focusing on Gottfredson and Hirschi's self-control theory (1990), found that effective monitoring by parents relates directly to self-control in youth, which also related to less delinquency (Yampolskays et al., 2011).

Incarcerated parents' children are exposed to a majority of factors placing them at a greater risk for delinquency. One study by Aaron and Dallaire (2010) examined an archival dataset from a study which included 10-14 year old children and their parents/guardians. The parents/guardians reported their children's risk experiences including poverty and parental substance use, family processes such as victimization, and children's delinquent behaviors at two separate points in time. A history of parents who have been incarcerated was able to predict family victimization and delinquent behavior of children. This was well above the child's demographic features and other experiences.

Parental incarceration that was more recent predicted child delinquency as reported by the parents as well as family conflict and victimization, (Arron & Dallaire, 2010).

To support Aaron & Dallaire's research, Hannon and DeFina (2012) based their research on prior research focusing on the collateral consequences of the wars on crime and drugs. They also hypothesized that an increase in adult incarceration is associated with an increase in juvenile delinquency. The hypothesis was tested using data for North Carolina counties during 1995-2009. Counties were a good unit of analysis because objective was to understand the community effects while reducing the ecological fallacy problem in any non-individual data. The study implied that rates of adult imprisonment are linked to juvenile delinquency in what has been referred to as "mass imprisonment" or "hyper-incarceration" (Hannon & DeFina, 2012, pg. 475). Researchers focused on previous studies which were based on the three major processes that impact juvenile delinquency. These processes include disruptions in the family and negative impacts on child development, social disorganization and low social control in the community and juveniles taking the place of older offender (Hannon & DeFina, 2012). The research outcomes supported the theory family units and communities are upset by mass incarceration. It is noted in the study that future research should consider utilizing NIBRS (National Incident-based Reporting System) data to generate different ways of measuring juvenile crime apart from arrest statistics (Hannon & DeFina, 2012).

Throughout criminological literature, parental monitoring is frequently identified as influential in the development of juvenile offending (Ryan et al., 2013). Parent neglect is one of the most frequently investigated allegations by child protective services. Lack of

adequate supervision, or also referred to as a lack of parental monitoring, is a strong predictor of juvenile delinquency. There are a majority of juveniles who enter the system with a history of neglect. Approximately one-third of those juveniles remained active in the child welfare system at the time of their arrest (Ryan et al., 2013).

A more recent study by Williams and Smalls (2015) focused on relationships between the level of parental involvement and rates of recidivism of juveniles currently in a detention facility. The goal of the study was to inform policy makers, criminal justice practitioners, as well as legislators about identifying possible ways to reduce rates of recidivism among juveniles by realizing and applying more supervisory-based community programs. It is also the hope of researchers that study results would help to clarify the role of family dynamics with regard to future programs. Williams and Smalls were looking at four particular questions, focusing on a possible relationship between the level of parental monitoring and rates of recidivism among juvenile offenders in a juvenile detention facility; positive parenting techniques and recidivism; and any relationship that might exist with inconsistent discipline (Williams & Smalls, 2015).

The Alabama Parenting Questionnaire was used to measure parenting style. The questionnaire was dispensed to 91 parents, all of whom had juveniles being held at a detention facility in located in South Carolina. The parent population included first-time offenders and repeat offenders ranging in age from 12 to 17. Contained within the questionnaire were 32 items that measured parenting styles based on four constructs including parent involvement and monitoring, positive parenting techniques, permission supervision, and varying discipline techniques. Of the 91 parents participated in the

survey, 25 indicated that they were fathers, 64 were mothers, and two indicated other (Williams & Smalls, 2015). Questionnaire results revealed that most of parents scored higher in a lack of parental monitoring and inconsistent discipline. Parents also stated that they very rarely involved in their child's activities (such as sports or clubs) (Williams & Smalls, 2015).

### **Mental Health and Delinquency**

Mental health is yet another variable that comes into play when dealing with juvenile delinquency, and is a major factor with regard to the implementation of appropriate services. Erickson, (2011) identified the systemic elements that add to the unsuitable incarceration of youth who have serious mental illness. Many of these youth have committed non-violent acts or were held due to a lack of treatment resources. According to Erickson, youth with serious mental illness experience juvenile justice contact at a rate that is 3 times as high as other youth, and that the data is lacking regarding the numbers associated with serious mental illness among these incarcerated youth (Erickson, 2011).

To better deal with these youth, several inquiries and national reports (IOM 2006; New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2003; USDOJ, 2005; USDHHS, 1999) determined that systems change is needed immediately to reduce the number of incarcerated youth who suffer from mental illness. The United States incurs a large financial burden, in addition to the social cost, of incarcerating youth with serious mental illness. One reason for the lack of treatment is a lack of health insurance. Insurance companies have continued to reduce how much they will cover for treatment of mental

disorders. In an effort to offset services and costs, a wraparound program was put in place in Milwaukee using a strengths-based approach to provide customized services to youth who are at risk for delinquency. The Mobile Urgent Treatment Team delivers 24-hour intervention services to youth and their families to aid in crisis situations, which could result in removal of youth, from their home without their help. Milwaukee has been able to show a 50% reduction in recidivism after 1 year with the program as compared to prior to program entry.

Juvenile mental health court is a model used to help youth with serious mental illnesses avoid incarceration due to delinquent behavior or a violation of a status offense. Mental health courts serve as a diversion program that works by offering alternatives to incarceration for those in need of services that are more specific. Mental health courts provide services to youth who have a serious mental illness, a brain injury, autism, or mental retardation. Although over 100 adult mental health courts exist, as of 2006 there were only 11 juvenile mental health courts in the United States. Erickson concludes by stating that collaboration between the juvenile justice system and mental health facilities and caretakers need to conduct ongoing program evaluations their further program planning (Erickson, 2011).

Perkins, et al., (2014) focused their study on incarcerated youth who are exposed to violence exposure (VE), cognitive processing (CP) deficits, and mental health (MH) problems. The study participants were male incarcerated youth offenders. The offenders completed standardized self-reports of MH and VE. CP which were measured with academic assessments as well as executive functioning tasks. Researchers used person-

centered Ward's Squared Euclidian Distance cluster analysis to evaluate the unique patterns of CP and VE. Five clear-cut outlines of MH functioning, CP, and VE rates within the incarcerated adolescent population were identified by a cluster analysis (Perkins et al., 2014).

Although the study did reveal an association between a history of violence exposure and CP deficits along with MH problems, it was not decided if a past history of VE coupled together with CP deficits does in fact predict an increased rate of mental health problems. The first hypothesis was that an increased occurrence of VE together with CP deficits would be positively linked to MH problems. For this study, CP is identified in academic achievement terms and EF. In this study achievement, CP and history of VE were used to determine if groups of juveniles with shared experiences can be positively ascertained. Hypothesis 2 was that groups exist within the population regarding VE, EF, and intellectual and academic functioning. Hypothesis 3 was that typology from hypothesis two will vary in MH functioning (Perkins et al., 2014).

The study was strong due to the extensive diversity within the population, including ethnicity and in family history. In addition, high rates of disabilities and CP deficits were also found (Perkins et al. 2012), which suggested that suitable control groups are needed that would include multiple risk youth. There was some missing data that could have skewed the results. The data suggested that the majority of incarcerated males had both high rates of prior VE and low CP. They also had increased rates of MH problems, which shows that some incarcerated youth could be helped with trauma-informed interventions. A better perspective is needed that incorporates interpersonal

trauma, complex trauma and its effects on EF and cognitively processing. The implication that CP and MH functioning are interrelated is a strong result of the study. Throughout the country over 100,000 children receive services during their time in residential placement, and focusing CP problems within that population is justified. This research supports the fact that there is a great deal of diversity within incarcerated populations and that there needs to a variety of services available (Perkins et al., 2014).

Along with mental health issues, delinquency in youth is connected to being at risk for things such as early substance abuse, failing in school, and an increase of violence and arrest. (Stambaugh et al., 2010). Behavior disorders include authority defiance, failure to follow rules, aggression towards others, property damage, lying, and stealing. Demographic variables including age and gender as well as clinical variables which include a history of substance, physical, or substance abuse and depression are all linked to behavior problems. The children in the services system often show mental health comorbidity and, therefore, their service needs are higher. Stambaugh, et al. (2010) embarked on a study assessing the correlates of offending which included 2,554 youth entering community-based treatment. Data used in the study was taken from the National Evaluation of the Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program, which is funded by the Center for Mental Health Services. The analysis was designed to define and explain the heightened level of offending amid adolescents at risk for behavior disorders during poignant developmental stages in adolescence (Stambaugh et al., 2010). The 2,554 youths were in the program from 1999 – 2003 at 22 sites in rural areas and urban areas covering a large geographical area. Youth



were excluded if it was indicated on the intake report that they had comorbid autism or mental retardation. They were also excluded if they had incomplete data (Stambaugh, et al., 2010).

Results from the study revealed that stealing and vandalism was committed most often by youth at risk for behavior disorders. Findings from the regression showed that family and school risk, and service systems involvement were associated with delinquency in early/middle adolescents but not associated with youth in late adolescents. Researchers further point out that there could be other options for more effective intervention in younger adolescents. The main strength of the study was the large sample size and diverse sample (Stambaugh, et al., 2010).

### **Homeless Youth at a Higher Risk for Delinquency**

It has been reported that more each year over 2 million youth experience homelessness in the United (Whitbeck, 2009). These youth become disconnected from orthodox institutions and mainstream society, and can lead to involvement in illegal activity earn money, obtain food or shelter needs, or to enable their substance use. Basic social control theory seeks to explain criminal behavior through the function of an individual and their social connections. Social control theory suggests that individuals are inherently disposed to committing crimes to meet needs that are not able to be fulfilled in other ways and also seek gratification. However, staying connected to traditional social institutions (e.g., jobs, education, and stable relationships) can make criminal behavior intolerable and reduce deviance. Social bonds initiate and promote more attachments, commitments, and beliefs that deter individuals from committing crimes. With regard to

homeless youth, their disengagement from conventional society and institutions is due to a lack of parental and prosocial monitoring of delinquent behaviors. Factors such as a history of homelessness, involvement in the criminal justice system, employment status, and mental illness are all related to criminal behaviors and are also related to social control theory (Ferguson et al., 2011).

Ferguson, et al. (2011) looked at five cities and identified correlates of homelessness, substance use, employment, and mental health in homeless youths' arrests. Included in the study were 238 youth from Los Angeles, Austin, Denver, New Orleans, and St. Louis. According to the authors, criminal activity by street youth has been understudied. This is mainly due to bias in reporting illegal behaviors (Greene et al., 1999) as well as little or no access to detained homeless youth (McCarthy & Hagan, 1992).

Ordinary least squares regression results were able to show that arrests for criminal activity is positively linked to length of homelessness, history of juvenile detention and incarceration, obtaining income from theft, substance abuse, and mental illness. Being able to better understand both situational and health related factors associated with homeless youths' delinquent activity could add to mental health and substance abuse services (Ferguson et al., 2011).

### **Youth Gang Involvement**

An estimated 25,000 gangs exist in the United States alone, with nearly 750,000 members, of which 30-40% are adolescents. A great deal of research (Marvin and Thornberry, 2008) up to this point has focused mainly on factors associated with initial

gang involvement, which includes neighborhood context, peer influences availability of drugs, and family dynamics. Boduszek et al. (2015) built upon the prior research and focused their research on continued gang involvement and the factors linked to rejoining a gang after having been incarcerated (Boduszek, 2015).

Researchers (Moore and Hagedorn, 1996; Valdez, 2007) have been able to link running away from home at least once to youth gang involvement. These youth run away from home and join gangs for protection from abusive and/or dysfunctional family environments. Although a link has been established between running away and gang involvement, research had not examined the relationship between running away and the duration of gang involvement/desistance (Boduszek, 2015).

Youth gang affiliation is of especially great concern with regard to minority youth. Ethnic minority youth are disproportionately represented in gangs, particularly Hispanic/Latino (46%) and African-American (35%) youth. Also, of importance is the fact that ethnic minorities' gang involvement persists longer. Peer delinquency is one of the most convincing predictors of individual delinquency. Gang involvement is most related to relationships with delinquent peers. The intention to remain connected to a gang and rejoin after incarceration varies according to the level social embeddedness, or position, within the gang. It is often more difficult for core members, those with leadership positions, to leave a gang than peripheral members. The number of friends of young offenders who were not involved with gangs is also a significant factor related to youth rejoining a gang. The lack of "normal" friends means an increased chance of rejoining a gang (Boduszek et al., 2015).

One approach to examining criminal gang behavior is the life-course importation model of inmate behavior (DeLisi, 2013). DeLisi et al. (2013) found that “involvement in gangs at the street gang level, prison gang/security threat group level, or both is one of the prime risk factors for dangerous misconduct and continued offending behind bars” (pg. 603). Youth gang involvement was of utmost importance in DeLisi et al.’s study (2013). Having family members who are involved in gangs proved to be the main predictor of a youth having a gang-affiliation when entering a detention facility. Given such, delinquent youth views themselves as “half in, half out” of the gang life from an early age. Correctional staff and administrators need to recognize the multifaceted nature of gangs within the group of institutionalized youth (DeLisi et al., 2013)

### **Summary**

Research has demonstrated a connection between child maltreatment, a lack of appropriate gender-specific services, problem behavior, adult criminality, and delinquency (Uggen & McElrath, 2014). The literature review indicated reliance on secondary data, the benefits of which being that it enables examinations of the history of youth delinquency about a wide range of social and environmental variables. It also reveals the lack of insight into female juvenile delinquency and the continued lack of appropriate services in place to prevent continued conduct disorders (Dembo et al., 2012).

The goal of this qualitative research is to promote further research into probation officer decision making processes and services to help delinquent female youth in rural areas. In this sense, the study increases the awareness for gender appropriate services that

could reduce female youth delinquency and help keep youth in school and involved with their community, peers, and family.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain insight into rural county probation officers' roles and decision making processes regarding female juvenile offenders in a rural jurisdiction. I included dispositions and services provided to the same population. The problem that I addressed in the study was a lack of understanding and conceptualization by criminal justice personnel regarding the gender-specific needs of female juvenile delinquents. High rates of female juvenile offenders are not being provided with proper services, especially at the probation level (Novero et al., 2011). This case study approach allowed the probation officers' perspectives to be central to the analysis of the case (see Yin, 2003). I focused on decision making processes associated with delinquency among female youth based on the view of juvenile probation officers on known problematic offenders. The study results are important for increasing insight into probation officers' roles and decisions focused on female youth delinquency in a rural jurisdiction. In Chapter 3, I outline the methodology that I applied for this study. I focus on the research method and design, research questions, the setting and sampling, data collection and analysis, instrumentation, and protection of participants.

### **Research Method and Design**

In this qualitatively case study, I used semistructured interviews within one rural probation department to obtain first-hand knowledge from probation officers who are directly involved in the female juvenile delinquency criminal justice process. I used a case study design to review services and answer the *how* and *why* questions surrounding

the current probation level services in place for female juveniles and the probation officers' perceptions of the effectiveness of services. A case study allows for an investigation of similarities and differences within and between cases and probation officers' perceptions and decisions as well as to analyze same within the setting (Yin, 2003). Research data collected included probation officer responses to preset interview questions regarding dispositions and current services provided to female juvenile delinquents and a review of services of probation cases. For this study, the focus was specifically on probation officers who were in contact with female juveniles in one rural county in a northeastern state. I conducted interviews with officers working in a rural county probation department.

### **Setting and Sample**

I selected to conduct interviews with three representatives from a rural county probation department in a northeastern state. I accomplished this study by researching probation level services at the designated site. Using a case study method allowed the potential for including the ability to study the social phenomenon related to gender-specific services provided to female youth at the probation level. The rationale for this sample size was based on prior research study outcomes (McKee, 2012; Schwalbe, Hatcher, & Maschi, 2009; Yampolskaya et al., 2011). I used these interviews to gain information from the probation officers about their decisions and roles during the initial referral, dispositions (reasons, outcomes), services provided, commitment levels of families, and factors influencing the officers' decisions regarding services, as well as

open-ended questions regarding their feelings surrounding the usefulness, importance, and effects that services have on female juveniles and their specific cases.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

I collected data through interviews to study probation service programs and the role of probation officers at the probation office. I used a case study approach to aid in exploring probation officers' perceptions of gender-specific services, and my approach offers significant potential for the capability to study the significance and effect associated with programs in place to deter female juvenile delinquency. I chose a qualitative approach to better understand the effects of services on female youth from the probation officers' perspectives on the case. Yin (1989) pointed out that case methods are best used when *how* and *why* questions are posed; when the investigator has little control over the events; and when there is a focus on a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context. I relied on personal experiences and explanations from the probation officers to better describe their perspective regarding services in place for rural female youth. A case study provides the researcher the opportunity to study the effects of gender-specific programming within a bounded system. One of the most essential parts of a case study is the ability to identify the case itself, and therefore identify a bounded system with certain features that are specifically occurring as well as features outside of the case (Laws & McLeod, 2004). A qualitative method using interviews with probation officers is the most logical approach for evaluating probation officers' roles and perspectives on juvenile justice cases and services provided to female youth. I also used this method to understand



a larger issue of gender-specific services provided to female youth and the implications for improved services (Cole & Cohen, 2013).

Descriptive coding was used during the analysis phase to interpret the data and compose sets of evidence that are defined by themes or codes (Cole & Cohen, 2013). The themes are identified as consistent phrases, ideas, or expressions common among the participants. The codes are labeled in a way that supports the theme. Any portion of data related to a code topic is coded with a corresponding label. NVivo 11 will be used to assist the researcher in coding and organizing the qualitative data by identifying emergent themes and calculating a frequency report on same. I then identified themes within the data.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical matters within the present research study were considered. Receipt of informed consent was essential to conduct research involving human participants (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). I received informed consent with regard to data collection from probation offices providing the services to juveniles and their families. Interviews were conducted at a location and time that was convenient to the probation officers. IRB approval was sought and granted prior to any gathering of data. Interviews lasted no longer than 30 minutes each. Participating probation officers in this study were treated as accomplished professionals with the understanding that anonymity is crucial.

## **Summary**

This qualitative case study consisted of information gathered from interviews with representatives from a rural probation department who work with female juveniles. This study furthers existing empirical research (McKee, 2012) by producing new research regarding gender-specific services provided to female juvenile delinquents and the lack of services in place to support female youth from becoming involved in further delinquent behavior. The remaining chapters of the study contain data analysis, findings, and recommendations.

#### Chapter 4: Data Collection and Analysis

I conducted this qualitative study to gain insight into rural county probation officers' perceptions of female juvenile offenders, the decision-making process regarding services provided, and services available to the juveniles to better understand the lack of gender-specific services provided. In this section, I present the data obtained from three face-to-face interviews with probation officers currently working in a rural county in a northeastern state. The interviews each lasted 15 to 20 minutes. I recorded and had each transcribed using verbatim transcription through Transcribe Me services. I focused on a review of services to answer the *how* and *why* questions surrounding the current probation services in place for female juveniles and the probation officers' perceptions of their effectiveness. This allowed me to investigate similarities and differences within and between cases and probation officers' perceptions and decisions. I conducted the interviews to answer the following RQs:

RQ1: How do juvenile probation officers working with female juvenile offenders in a rural county describe their roles in the supervision process?

RQ2: How do juvenile probation officers working with female juvenile offenders in a rural county decide on which services will be most appropriate and gender-specific to use during supervision?

The research questions were answered based on the analysis of probation officers' responses during the interviews. The study was participant focused with an emphasis on varied perspectives. During the interviews, the focus was the history of service programs

offered, currently employed services, and an overall assessment of the quality of services, and need for more gender-specific services.

### **Study Setting and Demographics**

The study setting was a rural county in a northeastern state. Participants provided consent via a research form and an informational handout (Appendix A) sent by postal mail and e-mail. The participating county had an estimated population of 63,100 in 2015, of which 21% were younger than 18 years and 94% were Caucasian. The median household income as of 2014 was \$45,649, and 16% of individuals were living in poverty (census.gov). The juvenile population ages 7 to 15 years was 6,939, and 3,422 of juveniles were female. There were 41 arrests of juveniles for criminal activity, of which 10 were female juveniles. The participating probation officers included two male and one female officer who had experience working with juvenile delinquents in rural jurisdictions. The interviews I conducted took place in a conference room at the probation department, and each lasted 15 to 20 minutes.

Participants' knowledge and duties included intake process procedures, decision-making regarding services, and deterring future delinquent acts among juveniles. Participants were interviewed face-to-face using a semistructured interview with open-ended questions and were told that they could decline further participation at any point. The research questions served as a guideline for the interviews; however, interview questions (Appendix B) were only used as a baseline for a more conversational style interview. Each probation officer had the opportunity to add anything he or she felt was

important regarding services for juvenile delinquents. I used a digital recorder for all interviews and was on the table in plain view of the interviewees at all times.

### **Data Analysis**

This study included personal experiences and explanations from participants to describe their perspectives regarding services provided to and available for rural female delinquent youths. The study provided me the opportunity to study the perceptions and effects, if any, of gender-specific programming has on juvenile delinquents within a bounded system. I used a qualitative method including interviews with probation officers to explore probation officers' regarding juvenile cases and services available to delinquent girls. This case study enabled me to understand the larger issue of gender-specific services provided to female youth and the implications for improved services (see Cole & Cohen, 2013).

All interviews were recorded with a digital recorder and were sent to Transcribe Me for transcription services. I used NVivo 11 software to encode the transcribed interviews for analysis. Filler words such as "um" and "you know" were removed for clarity. No follow-up interviews were conducted and no changes were made to the transcripts. Participants did not request to review transcripts. A computer software package was employed for content analysis to derive meanings from text using computer software.

The first level coding was a manual line-by-line analysis in which I highlighted portions of similar phrases, sentences, or sections. The second-level coding involved more detailed indexing and enabled me to create visual index trees to identify sub-

categories for the data. The last process was the repeated checking and questioning of emerging themes to substantiate the derived themes and identify supportive quotations from the transcript.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

No known organization or personal conditions influenced the participants or their experience during this study. The interview questions (Appendix B) were geared toward services the agency provides to juveniles and how each participant determines which services are appropriate. I informed the participants that their participation in the study could yield results and recommendations to assist female delinquent youth with better treatment services. To enhance credibility, I used previous empirical research for the study's theoretical framework and development of interview questions.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is the degree to which research findings can be applied in different settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Research goals and strategies were clearly explained to participants. I described the study to participants and provided an informational handout prior to the interviews. After the interviews were transcribed, the participants were allowed to review the transcripts if they desired to enhance their validity. Due to this study being qualitative in nature with only three individuals interviewed, transferability was limited.

### **Dependability**

To establish dependability, the researcher must be mindful during data collection, interpretation of findings, and reporting of results. Dependability was achieved by

showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated. To enhance dependability, I took brief notes while recording the interviews, and also used two recording devices to increase the likelihood of accuracy. Study findings may be advantageous to other researchers interested in conducting research on gender-based services offered at the juvenile probation level of the criminal justice system.

### **Confirmability**

To establish confirmability and remain neutral, I made sure that data collected were consistent with the peer-reviewed literature. Confirmability is ensured when the study outcomes are a direct result of the data and not sentiments of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Objectivity was maintained throughout the entire process. All biases were set aside and only the data collected was analyzed.

### **Presentation of Findings**

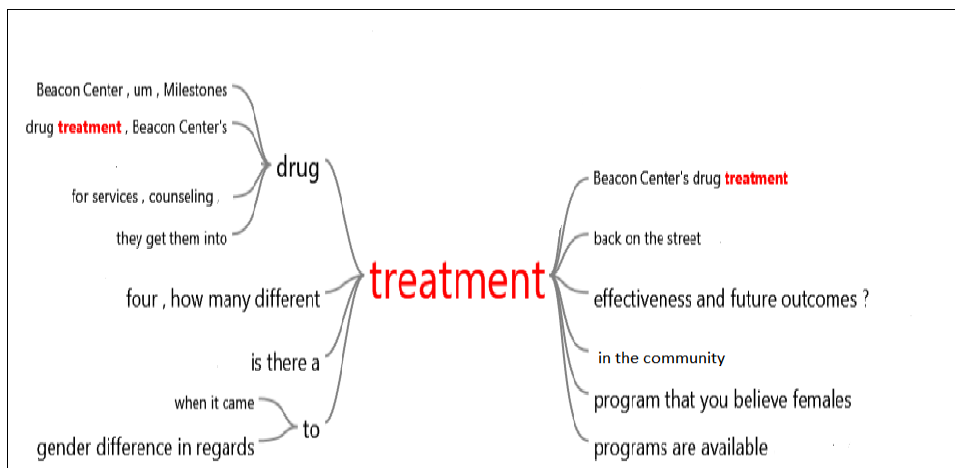
The findings include a summary of the perceptions and experiences of participants with a focus on female juvenile delinquents in rural areas. Data analysis revealed three main themes from the responses of the participants. These themes were used to answer central research questions.

#### **Theme 1: None of the participants considered the juveniles' gender when determining the services they were given or how they were treated.**

Figure 1 below shows the treatment options for male and female juvenile delinquents in the probation department; there are no different treatment options for boys and girls who are delinquent. Participants stated that how they treat females does not differ from how they treat males, and gender is not a deciding factor when it comes

to services they recommend. There is a wide variety of treatment options available to all juveniles who enter the probation department, such as mentoring services, therapy, and other educational services. The theme emerged from responses, which included "When I refer a child it doesn't matter whether they're male or female; it's based on the child and their personality. And I try to think of, you know, who do I think would build a better relationship and work more effectively with the child, not whether they're male or female", and "We treat both males and females the same." When specifically asked the question "Are there different requirements, guidelines and/or specifications to follow when a female juvenile is referred?" Responses were as follows: Probation Officer 'A': "No." Probation Officer 'B': "I mean, for the most part it-- when it comes to visits, we kind of use the same protocol even with the male we go in usually home visits with two people. Obviously drug screening, it's gender appropriate. I'll ask one of the female probation officer to bring them down to drug screen. When we make referrals for mentoring or behavior management, obviously we try to keep females for the most part with females." Probation Officer 'C': "No. I feel-- I mean, we treat both males and females the same."



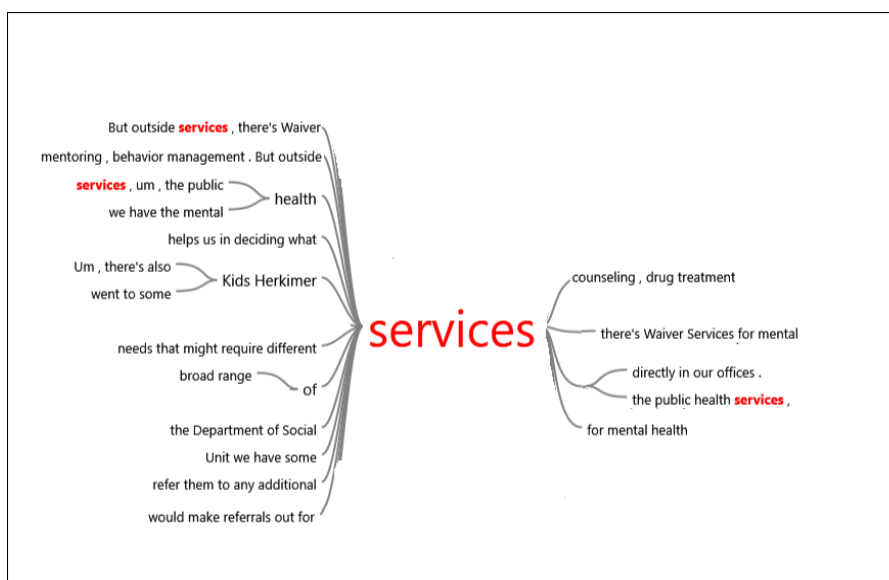


*Figure 1.* Treatment options available to all juveniles at the probation level.

## **Theme 2: There are numerous services available to boys and girls.**

The second theme (Figure 2 below) revealed what services are currently available and used to help prevent further juvenile delinquency. All probation officers agreed that there are many service options available, however, in rural areas families often have difficulty traveling to various offices to receive the services they need. Services available include mental health services, mentoring, counseling, referrals [to outside agencies], and behavior management. One officer stated, “the Department of Social Services, Child for Family and Life and Recovery. When it comes to services, I mean, we have a broad range of services. I mean, we have a preventive worker that works through, the PINS Unit. Gender specific, I would say no. She works with both males and females. Then we have two probation officers that do the diversion part of the program”. Another officer also

added, "... mentoring, behavior management. But outside services, there's Waiver Services for mental health issues with children, County Mental Health, Beacon Center, Milestones drug treatment, Beacon Center's drug treatment. There's a ton of agencies within the community that we refer out to as well".



*Figure 2.* Coding outcomes of services available.

**Theme 3: An acknowledgement that more services specifically geared towards sex education, prenatal, and abuse for females would be beneficial.**

For the third and final theme (Figure 3 below), which details specific services that should be available for females specifically, the following responses contributed.

Probation officer A stated that, "Maybe some teen prenatal. We do have a lot of teens that

do come in and, you know, a lot of teens are sexually active.” Probation Officer B agreed by adding, “... more educated on things [such as] diseased you can get things like that, so that they’re a little bit more aware”.

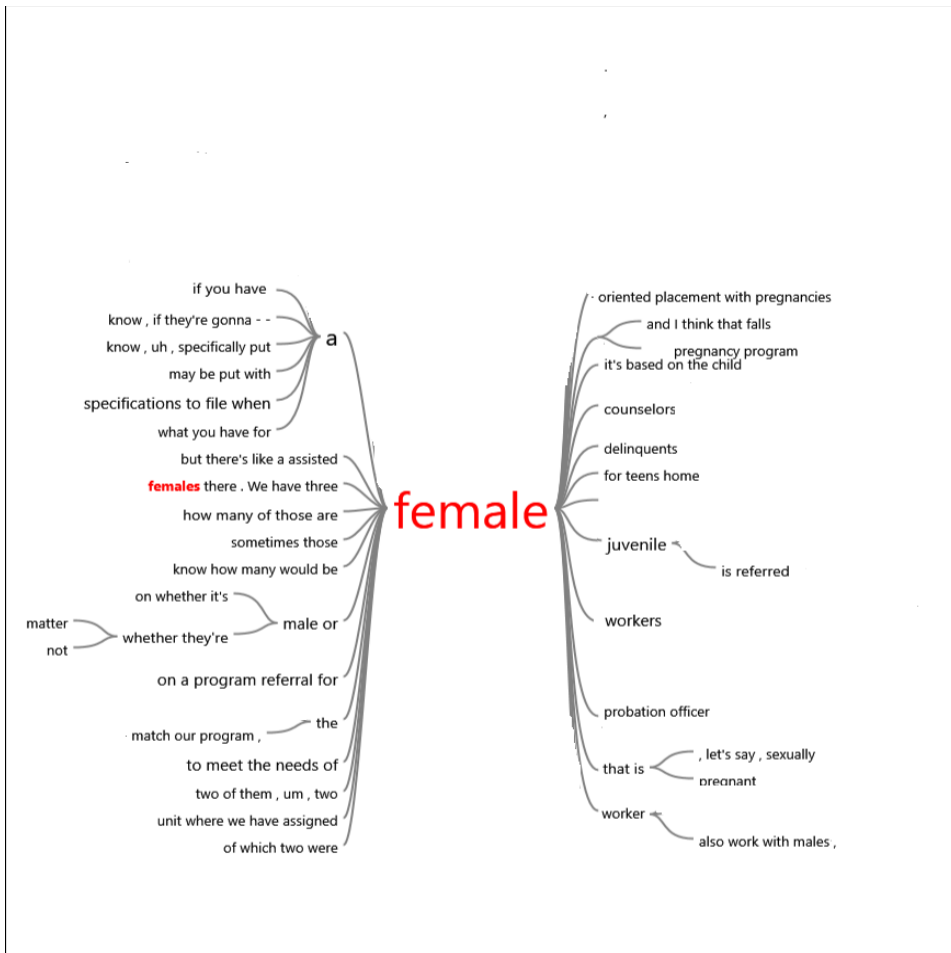


Figure 3. Services available specific to female juvenile delinquents.

**RQ1: How do juvenile probation officers working with female juvenile offenders in a rural county describe their roles in the supervision process?**

All three probation officers interviewed described their role in the same regard. None of the officers changed their role and procedure based on the juveniles' gender. Probation officers interview the juveniles and their parents/guardians to gather information about behavior, family, education, and any other concerns that may arise. From this information, they are able to determine the least restrictive path to rehabilitating the juvenile and providing both the juvenile and the family (if needed) with best services and treatment options available. There are a wide variety of services and treatments available to all juveniles, regardless of gender. Upon initial review, none of the probation officers considered gender when listing the services available. There was a disregard for gender-specific needs. Probation Officer A: "We supervise juveniles whether they be PINS or JD, both male and females, based on referrals. They can be referrals from parents, police, schools, or they can be referred down from family court, court ordered on probation or not. We refer them to any additional services that they may need. We also involved with the families and any referrals that the families may need, a support system. I also monitor the electronic monitoring as well for juveniles." Probation Officer B: "I work as a juvenile probation officer. I supervise cases that are both juvenile delinquent and PINS cases. Juvenile delinquent being that they were charged with a crime, but they are under the age of 16. I do intakes when they first come in, assess the case, [and] case management. We would make referrals out for services, counseling, drug treatment, things like that. Whatever services we see are needed. We do a risk assessment

which helps us in deciding what services they need.” Probation Officer C: “I’m the Senior Probation Officer for the PINS Unit and also supervise two probation officers that are in the PINS Unit. I do all of the PINS intake and also all of the JD intakes that come in. I go to court a lot when it comes to petitioning cases, the schools petitioning or the parents petitioning to court. I go to a lot of school meetings and a lot with truancy programs here.”

**RQ2 – How do juvenile probation officers working with female juvenile offenders in a rural county decide on which services will be most appropriate and gender-specific to use during supervision?**

All participants revealed that their department used a variety of service programs, which are available to all juveniles regardless of gender. Some service programs are only suitable for certain ages or certain offenders based on their crime and history within the juvenile justice system. All three participants also agreed that none of the programs are gender specific, therefore, gender does not play a role in the decision making process. There was one exception in the case of prenatal care and sex education services. This revealed that the lack of understanding and acknowledgement of gender-specific needs could be contributing to more female delinquency.

Probation Officer A stated that, “Maybe some teen prenatal. We do have a lot of teens that do come in and, you know, a lot of teens are sexually active.” Probation Officer B agreed by adding, “... more education on things [such as] diseases you can get things like that, so that they’re a little bit more aware”. Probation Officer B: “In

some ways they (females) respond better to counseling, sometimes the boys do not want to open up and talk about things where the girls sometimes when they meet with their counselor, even their mentor for little bit, you start hearing more from them.”

“We have a lot of these females that are attracted to older guys that have issues and we end up getting a lot of them, even if they didn’t get pregnant, they are having relationships with these guys that are a lot older and probably criminally involved, using drugs, which puts them in a bad situation. So more education on that part, and more teen pregnancy programs.”

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Chapter 4 discussed and presented the data collected and findings from the three interviews conducted for this study. In addition, throughout the gathered interviews, I carefully studied and analyzed the knowledge, perceptions, and experiences of the participants with regard to how the utility of preventive services programs aid in reducing recidivism for female delinquent youth in one rural county in a northeastern state.

Chapter 4 also logically presented the data gathering, who the participants of the study were, the data analysis, thematized findings with proper descriptions to aid in understanding the results of the interviews, and the relevance of the findings. I then was able to develop three main themes, all pertaining to the research questions formed in the early stages of the study.

The findings developed all underpin the fact that there is a lack of understanding, conceptualization, and acknowledgement regarding the specific needs to female juvenile offenders. There is a need for more gender-specific services to aid female youth in rural

areas. The themes that emerged in particular were the following: (a) None of the individuals interviewed let the juvenile's gender determine the services they were given or how they were treated; (b) There are numerous services available to both male and female juveniles; and that (c) More services specifically geared towards sex education, prenatal, and abuse for females would be beneficial. The next chapter, Chapter 5, presents further the discussion of the results and the overall conclusions of the study.

## Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### Overview of the Study

The goal of this study was to obtain information about probation officers' perceptions of services provided and feelings surrounding the usefulness, importance, and effects that any current services and dispositions given to female delinquent youth have on them. One specific problem that emerged from this research was the lack of understanding and conceptualization by criminal justice personnel regarding the gender-specific needs of female juvenile delinquents. High rates of female juvenile offenders are continually not being provided proper services, especially at the probation level (Novero et al., 2011). This study furthers existing empirical research (McKee, 2012) regarding county probation officers in association with female juvenile delinquent behavior. A clear lack of understanding and acknowledgement emerged during the study regarding gender-specific services currently in place in a rural county, which is leading to the increased delinquency.

Although prior research (Novero et al., 2011; Pasko, 2011; Sherman, 2013) regarding probation officers' roles and services in place to reduce juvenile offending and probation violations illuminated important findings for male delinquent youth, I found no research that specifically examined the role and decision making process for appropriate services by probation officers, including their perceptions of the application of services in place, to specifically help female delinquent youth in a rural community setting. Given such, further research was warranted to examine the lack of understanding and



acknowledgement by probation officers regarding the gender-specific needs of female juvenile delinquents and the decisions and application of services offered to them at the probation level in a rural jurisdiction.

Many jurisdictions have yet to investigate fully the role that gender plays in inequalities within the criminal justice system (Sherman, 2013). Girls are continuing to enter the juvenile justice system at an alarming pace (Sherman, 2013). In 2009, 578,500 girls were taken into custody in the United States (Barrett, Ju, Katsiyannis, & Zhang, 2015). Policies and procedures (such as zero-tolerance policies and strict attendance policies) implemented by schools, police, and courts are adding to the rising trend of court-involved girls (Gaarder & Hesselton, 2012). An increase in school punishments due to changes in public discourse regarding school safety and newly implemented crime control initiatives have increased the number of juveniles introduced into the criminal justice system (Irwin et al., 2013). In a report from the American Bar Association and National Bar Association, research showed that there was, and continues to be, a lack of prevention, diversion, and treatment alternatives for girls in the juvenile justice system (Barrett et al., 2015).

One alternative to incarceration for delinquent youth is probation, or community supervision, with services such as mentoring, counseling, sex education, or family therapy (Klinge, 2013). Probation is the most dominant form of community-based supervision (Peters, 2011). Decision-making in probation, and all levels of the criminal justice system, is meant to be on a case-by-case basis keeping in mind the best interests of the child (Alarid et al., 2011). Officers investigate and petition cases involving the

safety of community and property, historically mainly dealing with male delinquency because juvenile delinquency was at first referred to as a “boy problem” (Peters, 2011). Now, every state has its own legislation that governs their juvenile justice system processes (NeMoyer et al., 2015). The structures that probation officers operate in are continually diversifying. More than 2000 probation agencies exist in the United States, each having their own unique characteristics based on local culture, politics, and societal concerns (Klinge, 2013).

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to better understand and conceptualize probation officers’ perceptions regarding the gender-specific needs of female juvenile delinquents. There continue to be high rates of female juvenile offenders not being provided with proper services, especially at the probation level, and it is important to understand what services could be implemented to help deter them from engaging in delinquent behavior such as running away, truancy, and petit theft (Novero et al., 2011). A realization and acknowledgement of the specific gender differences and needs of female juveniles could lead to improved program options and services for female juveniles and their families, and more access to gender-specific services vital for encouraging improved social skills and functioning. Improved program options and services could also help female juveniles grow mature, strong bonds with their family, peers, and the community. Although significant strides have occurred in the juvenile justice court system and the process of dealing with delinquent youth, an ongoing problem is the continually high rate of young people being incarcerated rather than rehabilitated and given proper services to combat delinquent behavior, in particularly

female juvenile offenders (Novero et al., 2011). The majority of professionals in the field of criminal justice argue that most female delinquency cases should, and can be, diverted from formal court proceedings (Barrett, 2015).

I relied on personal experiences and explanations from three probation officers to describe their perspective regarding gender-specific services, if any, in place for rural female youth. By using the case study method, I had the opportunity to study the effects of gender-specific programming within a bounded system. This study could help in understanding a larger issue of gender-specific services provided to female youth and the implications for improved services (Cole & Cohen, 2013).

I reviewed the detailed data gathered from face-to-face interviews and evaluations collectively for emerging themes. Facilitation of qualitative data analysis of the information I gathered subjectively described the effects of varied services currently provided to juvenile delinquents in rural jurisdictions. To establish more credible and reliable findings from voluminous data, I used the computer software program NVivo 11 to analyze and code text from the data sources. I also used the program to maneuver data and graphically present the themes.

For this study, I selected three probation officers who have experience with female juvenile delinquents. My basic overall strategy for conducting this research was participant focused with an emphasis on their varied perspectives. During the interviews, my focus was the history of service programs offered, currently employed services, as well as an overall assessment of the quality of services and need for more extensive services that are gender-specific.

I established three dominant themes from the responses of the participants. I gathered and interpreted the responses from participants who have experienced the issue of female juvenile delinquency firsthand. These themes are all central to the research questions presented earlier in the paper.

The themes that emerged were the following: (a) none of the individuals interviewed let the juveniles' gender determine the services they were given or how they were treated; (b) there are numerous services available to both male and female juveniles; and that (c) more services specifically geared toward sex education, prenatal education and care, and counseling services for abused girls would be beneficial.

These themes were consistent with the following research with regard to the importance of services given to female delinquent youth in a rural area. Gender-specific services are important tools for probation officers when trying to keep youth out of placement facilities. Prior research (Benda & Tollet, 1999) has shown that one of the greatest predictors of future recidivism for juveniles is a prior commitment to a detention center (van Wormer and Campbell, 2016). Holman and Ziedenberg (2006) reiterated this by stating that re-offense rates are higher for youth who have served time in a detention facility. Further research (Chung, Little, & Steinber, 2005; Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006; Mendel, 2009) stated that youth who have been incarcerated experience lasting negative effects such as a disconnect from school and family, depression, and negative peer association (van Wormer and Campbell, 2016).

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

I begin this section by interpreting the findings in relation to the theoretical lens of the study. I then present the findings from the current study in relation to the two research questions presented in the previous chapters, followed by a presentation of the limitations and recommendations for future research. The findings were derived from the following research questions:

RQ1 – How do juvenile probation officers working with female juvenile offenders in a rural county describe their roles in the supervision process?

RQ2 – How do juvenile probation officers working with female juvenile offenders in a rural county decide on which services will be most appropriate and gender-specific to use during supervision?

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The framework of this study included the feminist theory from a criminology perspective, also known as feminist criminology theory, which addresses issues related to women and crime (Chesney-Lind, 1988). The predominant goal of the feminist criminology theory is to bridge the gender gap within the justice system. Feminist criminology theorists also aim to enrich the understanding of both male and female offenders with regard to the system's way of addressing their delinquent behaviors (Chesney-Lind, 1988). The theory also provides a theoretical explanation for the crimes involving girls, programs offered to female offenders, means of responding to girl

offenders, female probation officers within the corrections field, and the special needs of girls within the justice system.

The probation system based within the juvenile court system was never based on any major theory (Peters, 2011). A social work approach to delinquency was the basis for dealing with juveniles, which proved ineffective (Peters, 2011). Psychological etiologies for delinquency were adopted by criminal justice professionals based on reformers' realizations that it was necessary to focus on the individual (Peters, 2011). Since there is not a comprehensive rational practice theory in place for probation departments within the criminal justice system, probation programs often waver between an enforcement/control function of the courts and a rehabilitative mission (Schwalbe, 2012). The shift between the enforcement/control function and rehabilitation mission is often due to changes in public opinion regarding current crime rates and a concern for underprivileged youth. Criminal justice professionals use deterrence and control theories to review probation guidelines (Schwalbe, 2012). Professions in the field use deterrence theory to back the expectations and legal regulations of the harshness of punishments expected for law violations (Schwalbe, 2012). Criminal justice professionals, including probation officers, use the control theory ideals to support interventions and boost participation and commitment levels of the probationers (Schwalbe, 2012).

The theoretical framework for this study included the aforementioned feminist theory along with an examination of the usefulness and value of theoretically based judgement and decision-making interventions for adolescents (Knight et al., 2015).

Based on the responses during the interviews, I determined that the probation officers working in this particular probation office focus on the individual and their current situation as a juvenile delinquent. The probation officers often approach delinquents using deterrence and control theories when deciding on the best services for each youth. The services correct behavioral problems and prevent further delinquent behavior.

The aforementioned research findings and subject matter aligned with the literature presented in the literature review in Chapter 2, relating to the juvenile justice system's inability to provide appropriate gender-specific services and treatment to female juvenile delinquents. Walker et al. (2012) highlighted that the juvenile justice system can benefit from various gender-specific programs specifically focused on the needs of female juveniles. Barrett, et al. (2015) added that there is a scarcity of gender-specific programs having empirical support to address prevention and treatment-related challenges. I was able to determine, through consistent responses from the participants, that although the probation officers involved with this study felt that certain situations should require gender-specific services, those services do not exist in this particular rural jurisdiction. When asked "Of the programs you have in your department, do you think there are elements specifically tailored to meet the needs of female delinquents or do you think there is a need for that?", Probation Officer B replied, "I think there's probably more of a need for that. There seems to be a lot of abuse issues that may be specific to females".

Probation programs often waver between an enforcement/control function of the courts and a rehabilitative mission (Schwalbe, 2012). This reasoning for focusing on the individual was evident in the probation department used in this study from the themes that emerged. Officers focus on each juvenile delinquent and what their needs are, regardless of gender. When asked, “What is the driving factor, if any, when deciding on a program referral for female juveniles?” Probation Officer A stated, “There is none. When I refer a child, it doesn’t matter whether they’re male or female; it’s based on the child and their personality”. Probation Officer C concurred by stating, “All the programs are geared for males and females. I know there are some programs out there, if girls are pregnant or something maybe, they would be tailored to a different sort of placement”.

While this approach of treating boys and girls equally upon initial review ensures that each juvenile comes in on equal ground in the eyes of the probation officers, it also suggests that the probation officers are unintentionally overlooking gender differences. All three probation officers stated that girls often have more needs with regard to sex education, relationships with older individuals, as well as prenatal care. Probation officer C: “If you have a female that is pregnant, if you have a female that is, let's say, sexually active around males, you know, maybe you would look at things differently when it came to services”. Probation officer B also stated that, “I think there’s probably more of a need for that, there seems to be a lot of abuse issues that bay be specific to females. I see a lot of bullying with the cases I get with females”.

The issue of sexual relationships and education to address those relationships was a consistent emerging theme among the probation officers interviewed. Yeater, et al.



(2015) determined that adolescent girls are at a particular risk for sexual coercion. Sexual coercion is also linked to negative psychological, emotional, and behavioral outcomes, including a risk for sexual revictimization (Yeater, et al., 2015).

In order to assess the main issue affecting the juveniles' behavior, and if sexual coercion may be an issue, when girls arrive at the probation department they go through an initial intake process. The juvenile probation intake procedures are meant to screen juveniles to determine the most appropriate, least restrictive, path to rehabilitating the juvenile (Ritzer, 2014). A disposition of probation supervision was handed down to one-third of the 2.11 million youth under 18 years of age who had been arrested by law enforcement agencies in 2008 (Maschi et al., 2013). Probation officers incorporate evidence-based practices (EBPs) to enhance the treatment services and the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders (Cotton & Owen, 2015). The use of EBPs is moving probation from a monitoring and control model to more of a behavioral change and treatment approach. In order to provide youth with the best opportunity to prevent future delinquency, the most appropriate invention is critical (Cotton & Owen, 2015).

**RQ1 – How do juvenile probation officers working with female juvenile offenders in a rural county describe their roles in the supervision process?**

Over the last 50 years, there have been conflicting mandates on probation departments that affect their relationships with the clients, and therefore the outcomes of the clients (Holloway, Brown, Suman, & Aalsma 2012). Since probation is a form of sentencing, law enforcement officers had a presence in juvenile probation systems almost

from their beginning (Peters, 2011). Every state has its own legislation that governs their juvenile justice system processes (NeMoyer et al., 2015). The structures that probation officers operate in are continually diversifying. There are more than 2000 probation agencies in the United States, and each as their own unique characteristics based on local culture, politics, and societal concerns (Klinge, 2013).

Overall, all three probation officers interviewed for this study described their basic duties as being generally similar to each other. None of the officers change their approach to the juveniles based on gender, they do not view gender as an important factor. Each takes the time at intake to determine the best services to put in place for that particular juvenile, regardless of gender. In an effort to improve probation service outcomes, a move towards family focused justice has emerged. Criminal justice professionals see parents as a critical part of juvenile offender rehabilitation (Maschi et al., & Ristow, 2013). The following are responses from the probation officers regarding the above issue:

Probation Officer A: “We supervise juveniles whether they be PINS or JD, both male and females, based on referrals. They can be referrals from parents, police, schools, or they can be referred down from family court, court ordered on probation or not. We refer them to any additional services that they may need. We also involved with the families and any referrals that the families may need, a support system. I also monitor the electronic monitoring as well for juveniles.”

Probation Officer B: “I work as a juvenile probation officer. I supervise cases that are both juvenile delinquent and PINS cases. Juvenile delinquent being that they were

charged with a crime, but they are under the age of 16 in New York State. I do intakes when they first come in, assess the case, [and] case management. We would make referrals out for services, counseling, drug treatment, things like that. Whatever services we see are needed. We do a risk assessment which helps us in deciding what services they need.”

Probation Officer C: “I’m the Senior Probation Officer for the PINS Unit and also supervise two probation officers that are in the PINS Unit. I do all of the PINS intake and also all of the JD intakes that come in. I go to court a lot when it comes to petitioning cases, the schools petitioning or the parents petitioning to court. I go to a lot of school meetings and a lot with truancy programs here.”

With regard to initial law violations and violations of probation, the overall responses from the officers to rule violations vary depending upon the department policies, offender violation, and history of the offender. In alignment with the literature presented in chapter 2, minor violations, such as a missed appointment or a curfew violation may be totally disregarded or handled informally with the department (Klinge, 2013). Probation officers usually have discretionary power to determine what sanction will be handed down to the law violator. If the violation is significant or frequent, a formal written violation and court appearance may be required. Policymakers agree that not all conditions of probation are of equal importance. Many states have reviewed and revised their policies to avoid official judicial reviews of violations and revocations(Klinge, 2013).

**RQ2 – How do juvenile probation officers working with female juvenile offenders in a rural county decide on which services will be most appropriate and gender-specific to use during supervision?**

As mentioned in chapter 2, even though girls are becoming more common in the juvenile justice system, probation officers often perceive them in a different way than boys in the system, often taking their issues not as seriously as those with boys (Gaarder, Rodriguez, & Zatz, 2004). Researchers Gaarder, Rodriguez, and Zatz (2004) studied how psychologists, probation officers, and others in the juvenile court system perceive girls who entered the system. Research and theoretical approaches focused on the social construct of gender, class, race, and culture were used in this study. The researchers observed how those constructions influenced the perceptions that juvenile court personnel held and how the perceptions continued the disconnect between the images girls had and their realities (Gaarder, Rodrigues, & Zatz, 2004).

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has shown that nearly one-third of all delinquency case referrals are for girls. In addition to the increase in referrals, over the past three decades the number of adjudicated girls increased by 300% (Pasko, 2011). Girls continue to be the fastest growing population within the criminal justice system, yet criminal justice system personnel lack a true understanding of girls' troubles and lack proper essential resources and services to take action (Gaarder & Hesselton, 2012; Jackson, 2009). More specifically, adolescent girls have very gender-specific unmet emotional and psychological needs (Schaffner, 2014).

Through the interviews with the officers and subsequent themes that emerged, I was able to conclude that none of the participating probation officers felt as though gender played a role in their decision making process regarding services for juvenile delinquents. The overwhelming response from the officers was that there are a great number of services available for both boys and girls, yet none seems to be more or less effective when gender is considered. Therefore, the officers do not see a need to consider gender at all when recommending services. If any additional services could be put into place, they should consist of prenatal education, sexual education, and counseling for abuse victims. I agree with all of them that what is needed is increased sexual education, gender-specific abuse counseling, and prenatal education. Girls have very specific needs, especially at a young age, and could benefit from services that cater to those needs. Proper interventions could help adolescent girls learn how to manage their risk would be an important contribution the field with regard to delinquency prevention (Barrett, et al., 2015). The continued failure to adequately address the problem of female delinquency continues to have substantial repercussions, particularly due to the link between female delinquency and issues such as teen pregnancy, school failure and later mental health problems (Barrett, et al., 2015). Increased alcohol use is also associated with sexual coercion, possibly as a mechanism to cope with the consequences of the victimization (Yeater, et al., 2015). In response to this issue, Probation Officer A stated: “Maybe some teen prenatal. We do have a lot of teens that do come in and, you know, a lot of teens are sexually active.” Probation Officer B agreed by adding, “... more education on things [such as] disease you can get things like that, so that they’re a little bit more aware”.

Probation Officer B responded by stating, “In some ways they (females) respond better to counseling, sometimes the boys do not want to open up and talk about things where the girls sometimes when they meet with their counselor, even their mentor for little bit, you start hearing more from them. We have a lot of these females that are attracted to older guys that have issues and we end up getting a lot of them, even if they didn’t get pregnant, they are having relationships with these guys that are a lot older and probably criminally involved, using drugs, which puts them in a bad situation. So more education on that part, and more teen pregnancy programs.”

Probation Officer C: “There are some programs out there that if girls are pregnant, they would be tailored to a different sort of placement, female-oriented placement with pregnancies. If you have a female that is pregnant, [or] if you have a female that is, let’s say sexually active around males, maybe you would look at things differently when it came to [services]”.

Yeater, et al., (2015) stated that a difficulty with being able to respond assertively in sexual relationships (low relationship control) increases female juvenile offenders’ risk for sexual coercion. In addition, previous sexual coercion could also increase the risk for future victimization (Yeater et al, 2015). Yeater, Montanaro, and Bryan (2015) found that female juveniles (ages 14-17) consistently report elevated instances of sexual pressure and use of illegal substances, yet the sequential relationship continues to be vague (Yeater, Montanaro, & Bryan, 2015). Romantic relationships, initiating and maintaining them, is important milestone for adolescent development. Those relationships become hard to successfully manage when there is dating violence (physical, sexual, or

emotional) and unfortunately, dating violence has become a common and very serious problem. Dating violence is linked to other issues, such as posttraumatic stress disorder, risky sexual acts, increased violence, and even suicidal behavior (Yeater, Montanaro, & Bryan, 2015). The results of the interviews with the officers agreed with this information and reiterated the need and importance of early intervention for at-risk female youth before they find themselves deeper in the criminal justice system and end up being victims of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The major limitation to the study is the lack of generalizability to larger populations. The research included interviews with only three probation officers in one rural county probation office in a northeastern state with a relatively small juvenile delinquency population. The ability to compare and contrast data to other jurisdictions would provide a better overall picture of the juvenile delinquency gender issues found throughout the country. This study eluded the role of psychological, school and home factors in relation to juvenile delinquency, particularly female delinquent and anti-social behavior. A further study including these factors would provide a greater understanding of probation officers' decisions regarding juvenile delinquency services they provide. An additional investigation into the victimization of the female juveniles would also add to the research and possibly reveal other needed services.

An additional limitation of using interviews to gather data is the ability to accurately reflect the interviewees' perspectives. It is assumed that all probation officers

interviewed for the study were truthful in their responses to all questions and that all interviews and notes were accurately transcribed and coded.

### **Recommendation for Future Research**

An initial recommendation for future research would be to extend the scope of this study by considering conducting the research within a larger population or comparing various populations in different geographic locations. While qualitative methods produce detailed data, there is a need to lift the limit of generalizability. To fulfill this, a recommendation is to follow up and expand upon these current findings. Several other demographic variables such as educational attainment, family background, and social status may also help in developing a set of best practices aimed at helping female delinquent youth. By examining programs within a wide variety of different populations, various mechanisms specifically targeting the female juvenile population can be implemented to reduce youth-involvement in the juvenile justice system.

The present study revealed that that there are no current gender-specific programs and/or services in the county which participated. This study also revealed that the probation officers do not treat girls any differently than their male counterparts, which is a contributing factor to the females not receiving the gender-specific needs they require to be successful. If this were true with other jurisdictions, then that would help to explain the number of female juveniles who are being underserved in our criminal justice system. Interventions are needed with girls at an early age to help them both cope with and avoid victimization (Yeater, et al., 2015). It was also noted by the participant probation officers that there is a need for gender-specific programs for female juvenile delinquents, such as



pre-natal and sex education as well as mentoring services and abuse counseling. This need was established throughout the literature covered in this present study. A lack of contracted services and financial constraints by states and counties are factors in the lack of gender-specific services. With the results provided via this study, I recommend to county probation offices that they should consider reviewing the current literature relative to the importance of gender-specific services, take full advantage of current services that show success with meeting the needs of female delinquents, and identify any gaps in their current service and program options. Future qualitative research would be to determine how the juveniles themselves, as well as their families, respond to and participate actively in services provided to them. Receiving feedback from the juveniles, particularly females, on additional services they would like to see implemented would also be a benefit of future research.

Further research involving a jurisdiction that currently does have a variety of gender-specific services available would also be a positive contribution to the literature and social change. A study delving into the outcomes of gender based services specifically for females versus jurisdictions not utilizing gender based services would contribute to positive social change by showing agencies what works best.

Additional positive outcomes of research on services specifically aimed at female juveniles may prompt policy makers to revisit the current juvenile justice system and change it to be more accommodative of the programs to influence the youth offender's behavior and increase their involvement in the community. Similarly, these programs

should be explained thoroughly to victims and the community to make them more receptive to this approach on juvenile justice.

### **Social Change Implications**

The majority of discussions regarding juvenile delinquency before the mid-1970s did not include a concentration on females, more specifically the services provided to them at the probation level. Today, the female juvenile population is growing and can no longer be ignored. Over the past three decades, female youth adjudications have increased by 300% (Pasko, 2011). The female offender population is growing faster than any other is in the criminal justice system (Jackson, Foster, Taranath-Sanghavi, & Walker, 2009). Significantly reducing the number of girls who commit status offenses and/or delinquent acts can have an impact on society as a whole. For every girl who stays out of the criminal justice system, stays in school, and becomes a productive citizen, the government saves money by not having to detain the youth for continued criminal behavior. Even though girls continue to be the fastest growing population within the criminal justice system, yet criminal justice system personnel lack a true understanding of girls' troubles and lack proper essential resources and services to take action (Gaarder & Hesselton, 2012; Jackson, 2009). Victimization among young girls has become more common, and has obvious negative consequences for their development (Yeater, 2015).

Espinosa et al. (2013) pointed out a gender difference when looking at juvenile crime rates, and that the involvement of girls is steadily on the incline within the juvenile justice system. There is a lack of understanding of girls' troubles by system personnel

who are not equipped with the needed resources to respond to girls' needs (Gaarder & Hesselton, 2012).

Results of this study help to specifically distinguish the role and gender-specific decision making processes of probation officers in rural jurisdictions who supervise female delinquent youth and recommend services. Results from the study revealed that there are no programs available at that specific probation office set up to meet the needs of delinquent girls. By concentrating on the probation officers' decisions regarding services and programs to tackle the problem of delinquent female youth, the juvenile justice system could better understand and meet the unique and necessary needs of female juvenile delinquents. The implementation of more gender-specific programs would have meaningful and substantial influences on a state level with regard to overall outcomes within the juvenile justice system, specifically for girls. A better understanding of gender-specific needs and services that impact probation officers in rural jurisdictions could provide female juveniles and their families' more access to gender-specific services vital for encouraging improved social skills and functioning, and also grow mature, strong bonds with their family, peers, and the community. Gender-specific programs need to have easily understood and clearly defined outcome measures and provide opportunities for delinquent female youth to receive treatment based on a model that is designed for them alone. These models should address trauma and other gender-specific issues that are evident in the female juvenile population.

Therefore, the study contributes to social change by raising the awareness of gender needs to be considered by probation officers during their decision making process

for female juvenile delinquents in rural jurisdictions. Additional services offered should include prenatal education and aid, sex education, abuse education and counseling, as well as mentoring services.

### **Reflection of the Researcher**

The study of services, or lack thereof, provided to delinquent girls is beneficial to the community at large. In the past years, juvenile delinquency has peaked despite the harsh punitive justice that serves the community. Just over 300,000 girls were charged as delinquents and referred to juvenile courts in 1992, which constituted 20% of the total delinquency court population. By 2008 that number increased by 45%, to 440,057 (nearly 30%) of all delinquency court referrals (Sherman, 2013). One of the most common behavior problems among girls is running away. Seventy-five percent of runaways are female, which is the main trigger for system involvement (Sherman, 2013). Even though many girls recognize the fact that running away can push them deeper into the system, the escalated sanctions in place for running away miss the reasons girls are running. These are leading to missed opportunities for service providers to work with girls and their families to resolve the underlying issues. Currently, both domestic violence and commercial sexual exploitation are two of the greatest contributors to girls finding themselves in detention and incarceration. Female juvenile offenders constitute a high risk, vulnerable, and understudied population. They report high rates of both substance abuse and sexual victimization (Yeater, et al., 2015).

This study revealed that there is not a definitively gender centered approach to providing services to juvenile delinquents in rural jurisdictions. There is a need for

increased prenatal education, sex education, as well as gender-specific mentoring and help for abuse victims. This research offers a new body of knowledge and reveals the need to improve gender-specific services, particularly in rural areas.

### **Conclusion of the Study**

I focused this study on identifying themes that clarified how and why services are in place for female juveniles at the probation level in a rural jurisdiction. Face-to-face interviews were conducted alongside the document review. I presented grounds for future research together with the reflections of the researcher, which includes the need for gender-based services and further research in this area. The improvement of the themes that emerged, whether it is supplementary or contradictory to what it proclaims, is greatly needed. I anticipate the application of the findings to broaden the body of knowledge on gender-specific services for juveniles and increase awareness of the need for gender-specific services.

Put, Lanctôt, Ruiters, and Vugt (2015) substantiated that female delinquents are often experiencing and trying to deal with sexual and physical abuse, neglect, as well as other types of maltreatment, which contributes to their delinquency. This study illuminated the potential benefit that increased gender-specific services for youth in the juvenile justice system could have for families and the community at large. This goal can be achieved by concentrating on and addressing existing challenges with finding and implementing effective programming in rural communities. Moreover, the study may be a driving force for juvenile justice agencies, policy makers, and practitioners to

understanding characteristics of successful probation programs for female youth in rural communities.

Recommendations from this study imply that the juvenile justice system could benefit from a review of programs that are being successfully used throughout rural jurisdictions that are assisting female juvenile delinquents in order to choose a program, or programs, that can better serve the female juvenile delinquent population in all jurisdictions. Stakeholders within the juvenile justice system should review and establish services and programs that are 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. It is noted in this study noted that there are no gender-specific programs in the county that participated in this study, yet it was noted by the participants that there is a greater need for gender-specific programs for female juvenile delinquents. This need has been noted throughout the literature covered in this present study.

This study offered experiences, perceptions, and ideas held by the three participants interviewed. Perceptions provided by the participants confirmed what has been known about the juvenile justice system for years. All probation officers agreed that more services need to be implemented in order to address the female delinquent needs. As more young females are being arrested and incarcerated, it is necessary for the juvenile justice community to recognize and acknowledge the differences in male and female delinquent behavior, their offenses, and services that will best service each gender. Specific programs and services need to address the education, training, and parenting skills of female juvenile delinquents as appropriate and necessary.

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## Appendix A: Informational Handout

Probation Officers:

My name is Amy Warmingham and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. Thank you for allowing me to inform you about my research.

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted in partial fulfillment of my Ph.D. in Human and Social Services. The study seeks to gain insight into county probation officers' roles in the decision-making process of services provided to female juvenile offenders in rural jurisdictions.

The Probation Director has been kind enough to allow me to conduct this research. The Director is aware that the data collected in this study is confidential. Your name or personal information will not be directly linked to any data. Confidentiality will be maintained as allowed by law. All audio tapes will be destroyed after 5 years. The transcripts and recordings will be stored in a safe.

I understand your concerns about communicating outside of your department. I can assure you that I will protect your participation with all legal means. I can also assure you that I will not report anything that may create harm to the community or the department. There are two other probation departments involved in this study.

This research involves an interview. I will ask you about your thoughts and knowledge of the issues in the study. The interview will take approximately 20 minutes.

If you are interested in participating or learning more about this study, please contact me at 315-292-8159 or amy.warmingham@waldenu.edu. The interviews will be at the time and place of your choice.

Thank you.



## Appendix B: Individual Interview Questions

1. Describe your role/duties in the supervision of juveniles as defined by your department.
2. How many cases are currently on your caseload? Of those, how many are female?
3. Are there different requirements, guidelines and/or specifications to follow when a female juvenile is referred?
4. How many different treatment programs are available through your office for consideration that focus on reducing the rate of juvenile recidivism? How many of those are meant to be gender specific? How many are age specific?
5. Do you believe it is important to have a variety of effective programs available when considering the placement of a juvenile offender, yes or no and why?
6. Thinking about the programs that focus on reducing juvenile recidivism to which you refer juveniles, what elements are specifically tailored to meet the needs of female juvenile delinquents, if any?
7. What is the driving factor(s) when deciding on a program referral for female juveniles?
8. Do you believe that there is a gender difference with regard to treatment effectiveness and future outcomes? Do you have evidence of this?
9. Is there a treatment program that you believe females would benefit from that you do not currently offer?

## Appendix C: IRB Application Approval Letter

Dear Ms. Warmingham,

This email is to notify you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your application for the study entitled, "Juvenile Probation Officers' Role with Female Juvenile Offenders in Rural Counties," conditional upon the approval of the research partners, as documented in the partners' signed letters of cooperation, which will need to be submitted to the Walden IRB when obtained. The researcher may not commence the study until the Walden IRB confirms receipt of those letters of cooperation.

Your approval # is 10-14-16-0073980. You will need to reference this number in your dissertation and in any future funding or publication submissions. Also attached to this e-mail is the IRB approved consent form. Please note, if this is already in an on-line format, you will need to update that consent document to include the IRB approval number and expiration date.

Your IRB approval expires on October 13, 2017. One month before this expiration date, you will be sent a Continuing Review Form, which must be submitted if you wish to collect data beyond the approval expiration date.

Please note that this letter indicates that the IRB has approved your research. You may **NOT** begin the research phase of your doctoral study, however, until you have received official notification from the IRB to do so. Once you have received this notification by email, you may begin your data collection. Your IRB approval is contingent upon your adherence to the exact procedures described in the final version of the IRB application materials that have been submitted as of this date. This includes maintaining your current status with the university. Your IRB approval is only valid while you are an actively enrolled student at Walden University. If you need to take a leave of absence or are otherwise unable to remain actively enrolled, your IRB approval is suspended. Absolutely NO participant recruitment or data collection may occur while a student is not actively enrolled.

If you need to make any changes to your research staff or procedures, you must obtain IRB approval by submitting the IRB Request for Change in Procedures Form. You will receive confirmation with a status update of the request within 1 week of submitting the change request form and are not permitted to implement changes prior to receiving approval. Please note that Walden University does not accept responsibility or liability for research activities conducted without the IRB's approval, and the University will not accept or grant credit for student work that fails to comply with the policies and procedures related to ethical standards in research.

When you submitted your IRB application, you made a commitment to communicate both discrete adverse events and general problems to the IRB within 1 week of their occurrence/realization. Failure to do so may result in invalidation of data, loss of academic credit, and/or loss of legal protections otherwise available to the researcher.

Both the Adverse Event Reporting form and Request for Change in Procedures form can be obtained at the IRB section of the Walden website: <http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/orec>

Researchers are expected to keep detailed records of their research activities (i.e., participant log sheets, completed consent forms, etc.) for the same period of time they retain the original data. If, in the future, you require copies of the originally submitted IRB materials, you may request them from Institutional Review Board.

Both students and faculty are invited to provide feedback on this IRB experience at the link below:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qHBJzkJMUx43pZegKlmdiQ\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qHBJzkJMUx43pZegKlmdiQ_3d_3d)

Sincerely,  
Libby Munson  
Research Ethics Support Specialist  
Office of Research Ethics and Compliance  
[irb@waldenu.edu](mailto:irb@waldenu.edu)  
Fax: [626-605-0472](tel:626-605-0472)  
Phone: [612-312-1283](tel:612-312-1283)

Office address for Walden University:  
100 Washington Avenue South, Suite 900  
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Information about the Walden University Institutional Review Board, including instructions for application, may be found at this link: <http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/orec>

## Appendix D: Confirmation of Cooperation with Community Research Partner

Dear Ms. Warmingham,

This email confirms receipt of the letter of cooperation for the community research partner. As such, you are hereby approved to conduct research with this organization.

Congratulations!

Libby Munson  
Research Ethics Support Specialist, Office of Research Ethics and Compliance

Leilani Endicott  
IRB Chair, Walden University

Information about the Walden University Institutional Review Board, including instructions for application, may be found at this link: <http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/orec>