

Public Abstract

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Title:SCHOOL BONDING THEORY AND FEMALE JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

This study focused on the school experiences of juvenile delinquent girls before they were admitted to Missouri's Juvenile Justice System. The theoretical framework of the study centered on School Bonding Theory which was developed by Hirschi in 1969. The research question guiding this study was: What was the school experience of female juvenile delinquents prior to entering the juvenile justice system?

This study is unique, in that virtually all studies involving this theory are quantitative in nature, and few, if any, focus on females. Due to the nature of this study it captures the voice of the participants and values it.

The findings of the study show that each student, especially those at most risk for failure, needs to be valued and respected as a person and not judged solely on the basis of their actions or the actions and reputation of family members. The findings also indicate the need to: (1) re-evaluate long term disciplinary placements decisions with regard to the individual's age; and (2) review eligibility requirements to admittance into school sponsored activities such as sports. The findings also indicate the need to identify at-risk girls as early as possible in their educational career to help minimize the potential for entry in the Juvenile Justice System.

Implications for research include: (1) the need for further study in the areas of female-on-female bullying; (2) the effect of transition from elementary school to middle school on at-risk students; and (3) how family dysfunction affects classroom management.

Implications for practice include: (1) the need to separate the differences between the student and their various behaviors and to treat each accordingly; (2) an examination of discipline procedures to find more effective methods; and (3) an examination of long-term suspensions policies and the effect it has on younger students.