SCHOOL BONDING THEORY AND FEMALE JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

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Doctor of Education

By

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Dedicated to my research participants, who shared their stories and a piece of their heart, and my wife, Linda K., whose constant encouragement provided the motivation to see this project through.

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.

Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy. – Proverbs 31:8-9

“It’s an honor to listen to the truth of someone’s life” (Bass & Davis, 1993, p. 33).

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SCHOOL BONDING THEORY AND FEMALE JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

Edwin Dale Hall

Joe Donaldson, Dissertation Advisor

ABSTRACT

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.

Seven girls participated in the study. They ranged in age from 14 to 17. Two of the participants were African American and the other participants were white. Three of them were, or had been, involved in Special Education. Their hometowns ranged in size from rural areas to small cities. All of the participants had attended multiple schools before being committed to the Juvenile Justice System.

The participants took part in one interview, which was guided by a set of questions designed to allow introspective reflection of their past school experiences. The data suggest that during the early stages of their education experience the participants had a positive school experience and had a strong bond to their school. Starting in the upper elementary grades, however, this began to change such that the majority of the participants did not have a positive bond to their school.
The major themes that emerged from the data include: relationships between student and teacher, lack of community ties, effective and ineffective teaching techniques, bullying, drug abuse, and relationship issues between peers. Themes that emerged outside the realm of school bonding theory include: dysfunctional families, the inadequacy of school discipline, and the participants’ view of their future. A disconnect between the participant’s cognitive knowledge of the importance of school and their actions was also uncovered.

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.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Proem

When I started working in juvenile justice some nine years ago, I started wondering how these children ended up in the juvenile justice system. As I got to know them, I found the reasons they gave ranged from the death of a friend due to negligent discharge of a shotgun to being considered out of control by the courts. I have met youth who by appearances are among the nicest, politest people you can find anywhere and yet, if given the opportunity, it seems they would kill you in any given second. I have known others who by their appearance I would give no credence to; but, who deeply want to change and do what is considered to be “right;” but did not have the social skills to do so. I have spent time with a young man trying to come to terms with killing his parents, while they slept, to avoid further rape by the father and laughed with one who robbed a pizza delivery person for $6.00 and received a 6-year adult sentence because of that act.

In the years prior to being accepted by the Ed.D program at the University of Missouri, I started researching what scholars perceived as the underlying causes and correlates of juvenile delinquency. The most common ones given were: issues with school (not related to academics), trauma, dysfunctional families, health issues, and academic achievement. It was during this timeframe I began to notice a lack of articles concerning female juvenile delinquency, but at the time I was teaching math to a male population and did not pursue that thought.

Several months later, I was promoted to my present position as an Education Supervisor for the Missouri Division of Youth Services and began overseeing the
educational process in all seven facilities in my assigned region of the state. This is when I was introduced to the face of female juvenile delinquency. It looks different, feels different, it’s different in ways I do not think I will ever be able to fully describe and understand. The relationship between youth and staff is stricter and at the same time more flexible than what is found in similar placements for males. The education program is more structured than those found in similar male facilities. Perhaps the largest difference is the amount of time provided to the females to express and share their thoughts and feelings. Trying to understand these differences is what caused me, two years before I began this program, to start gathering literature specifically about this phenomenon in an effort to understand what I was seeing.

I realize this topic is out of the ordinary and one that many in education find uncomfortable or not relevant to their particular circumstances. I saw this demonstrated throughout my doctoral program as others in the cohort would roll their eyes, look away, look down and otherwise show a lack of interest in what I was saying as I attempted to explain what I do and why. I do not say this to show any disrespect for my cohort members; I completely respect each and every one of them for the work they do. I believe their reaction was a result of not being comfortable with the topic I was discussing or finding it irrelevant.

The work I do is not pretty and sometimes the outcomes are tragic; but, it is work that needs to be done. My ultimate hope for this study is that as a result of what was discovered the school environment will improve for those females who are most at-risk and will trickle up to provide a more respectful, accepting environments for all students. In a very real sense I did not find this study; it found me.
Background

The following information is provided to familiarize the reader with the topic of juvenile delinquency and the various laws that were enacted in an effort to control juvenile crime. Of special note to those in the education community is how the U.S. federal government’s policy of zero-tolerance has affected school policy and practice. The information presented below is not in any way judgmental of school officials. They often have limited choices based on the policies of the district and the juvenile laws of their respective states. Additionally, the primary concern of a school administrator is the safety of the entire student body.

During the 1970s, an increase in violent juvenile behavior led the public to demand that violent juvenile offenders be held accountable for their actions (Yeckel, 1997). As a result, Congress passed the Juvenile Justice and Prevention and Delinquency Act of 1974 (Yeckel, 1997). During the Clinton administration, the Gun-Free Schools Act was passed, which introduced the concept of zero-tolerance for violent behavior in schools (Martinez, 2009). The purpose of zero-tolerance is to send a message that certain behaviors will not be tolerated, by severely punishing all offenses – no manner how minor (Skiba, 2000). At the state level, similar legislation was passed that has led to an increasingly punitive juvenile justice system (Yeckel, 1997; Martinez, 2009).

The public’s perception of juvenile crime is that both the number of incidents and the levels of violence are increasing (Cauffman, 2008; Chesney-Lind, Morash, & Stevens, 2008; Gross, 2009); however, both the incident rate and violence peaked in 1996 at 2.9 million arrests and has decreased since (Gross, 2009; Puzzanchera, & Sickmund, 2008). The rate decreased until about 2003 when it began to hover at the current level
Gross, quoting Snyder, states, “by 2006, the number of juvenile arrests dropped to approximately 2.2 million” (p. 84).

Even though the overall trend in juvenile crime has decreased, a trend that continues to increase is the yearly ratio of female to male offenders per 100,000 of the total juvenile population (Gross, 2009; Puzzanchera, & Sickmund, 2008; Zahn, Hawkins, Chiancone, & Whitworth, 2008). According to an analysis by the National Center for Juvenile Justice, females accounted for 26% or 748,000 of the 2.8 million juvenile arrests reported for 1997 (Puzzanchera, & Sickmund). The index arrest rate for females more than doubled between 1987 and 1994 then fell in each of the next three years (Puzzanchera, & Sickmund, 2008). The growth in juvenile violent crime arrest rates between 1987 and 1994 was far greater for females than for males, and the decline after 1996 was less for females than males (Puzzanchera, & Sickmund, 2008). Between 1985 and 2002, the number of girls entering the juvenile justice system increased by 92% (Chesney-Lind et al., 2008). It is estimated that there were over 640,000 arrests of females under 18 in 2006 (Zahn, Agnew, & Browne, 2009). These statistics inform us of a “trend that underscores the need for better understanding of the etiology of female crime and delinquency” (Siegel & Williams, 2003, p. 71).

A topic often discussed and little understood in the field of juvenile delinquency is the issue of recidivism. Blumstein and Larson (1971) define recidivism as the commission of an offense by an individual already known to have committed at least one other offense. Recidivism is the most commonly used indicator to measure of the effectiveness of a juvenile justice program (Harris, Lockwood, & Stoodley, 2011). A problem with comparing the recidivism rates of different juvenile justice systems is that
there is not a unified American juvenile justice system, there are 54 independent juvenile justice systems, governed by the laws of their respective states or governing bodies, which may, and do, measure recidivism differently (Harris, Lockwood, & Stoodley, 2011). This means there is no national recidivism rate for juveniles (Harris, et al., 2011; Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). With this being said, the overall rate of recidivism varies by the age of the juvenile and the number of previous referrals; but, overall nearly 60% of youth involved in a juvenile justice system will return to it (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).

In response to the increase of juvenile violence, many public school systems developed and adopted a zero-tolerance policy to discipline student’s displaying behaviors that are illegal, dangerous, or disruptive in the classroom or on school grounds (Barr & Parrett, 2001; Dunbar & Villarruel, 2002; Martinez, 2009; Skiba, 2000). As schools have implemented this policy, the scope has changed from the original intent to include acts such as unauthorized use of cell phones and laser pointers to sexual harassment. (Skiba, 2000) "Over the past decade, suspension and expulsion have increasingly become the primary methods for responding to problem behaviors in schools" (Achilles, McLaughlin, & Croninger 2007, p. 33). Advocates of these policies assert that the adaptation of zero-tolerance policies provided the method to remove behaviorally disruptive students from schools, thus making these environments safer (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2002; Martinez, 2009). The implementation of zero-tolerance policies may accelerate a youth’s course of delinquency by providing the youth more opportunities to socialize with deviant peers (Skiba, 2000). If nothing else, increasing the number of suspended students increases the number of juveniles who may, and most likely will, not have adequate parental supervision on the street and provides them further
opportunities to commit delinquent behavior (Skiba, 2000). Repeated suspensions can lead to educational failure (Skiba, 2000) and educational failure may help explain patterns of delinquent behaviors (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). In turn, youth who exhibit delinquent behavior are at a higher risk for committing criminal behaviors into adulthood (Zhang, Katsiyannis, Barrett, & Willson, 2007).

When students are expelled from school, they do not disappear from society. According to Ladson-Billings (2001), the amount of time expelled students spend on the street is rarely productive and often serves to introduce them to a pattern of behaviors that may lead to incarceration. Removing students from academic and social instruction on a long term basis can help both create and intensify a student’s downward spiral and encourage activities such as drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, dropping out of school, and criminal behavior (Barr, & Parrett, 2001; Morrison, Anthony, Storino, Cheng, Furlong, & Morrison, 2001). “For at-risk students, the most consistently documented outcome of suspension and expulsion appears to be further suspension and expulsion, and perhaps school dropout” (Skiba & Knesting, 2001, p. 35).

An unintended consequence of a zero-tolerance policy may be the breaking of the bond between the student and school. Research in the field of juvenile delinquency suggests that the strength of the school bond is an important predictor in explaining delinquency (Gottfredson, & Hirschi, 1990; Hirschi, 1969; Jenkins, 1995; Jenkins, 1997; Kelly & Pink 1973). The focus of this study is school bonding theory and how the school experiences of female juvenile delinquents either increased or decreased this bond.
Statement of the Problem

The issue of female delinquency has been understudied in recent literature (Cauffman, 2008; Chesney-Lind et al., 2008; Gross, 2009; Zahn, Hawkins, Chiancone, & Whitworth, 2008) resulting in a gap of the knowledge for practitioners. Specifically, little if any, research has been done on the educational experience of females prior to entering the juvenile justice system. According to Payne, Gottfredson, and Krutterschnitt (2009), the majority of existing research does not distinguish between the effect of school-related factors on male delinquency and female delinquency; firm evidence of gender-based effects is lacking. Additionally, no qualitative study, to date, has been conducted from the perspective of the female juvenile delinquent.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the study was to explore the school experience of female juvenile delinquents prior to their commitment to the Juvenile Justice System. This study was framed around school bonding theory first presented by Hirschi in 1969. It was accomplished by asking current female juvenile offenders about their school experiences, prior to being committed to the juvenile justice system, to see, from their perspective, what activities, types of teachers, programs, obstacles, etc. they faced.

Research Question

The research question guiding this study was:

What was the school experience of female juvenile delinquents prior to entering the juvenile justice system?
Conceptual Framework

Lack of literature on the topic of Hirschi’s (1969) theory of school bonding shows that this is an area of research understudied by the educational community. This theory posits that delinquent activities can be tied to four components: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. According to Jenkins (1997), “Unsatisfying social interactions in school are believed to prevent some students from developing school ties of attachment, commitment, involvement, and beliefs” (p. 340). Hirschi concluded that students who care about their school performance and about what their teachers think of them will be less likely to commit delinquent acts. Gross (2009) suggests commitment to learning, school engagement, positive values, and social competence are factors that decrease the likelihood of a female exhibiting delinquent behaviors. It needs to be noted that this theory has not been thoroughly vetted with a female population; the assumption being made is the components of this theory, which was developed with males (Hirschi, 1969), will be applicable to females.

Another gap in the literature of both education and juvenile delinquency is research that gives voice to the participants. Smith (2000) states, “Student voices are not represented well in most delinquency and education research” (p. 299). Wehlage and Rutter (1986) suggest researchers have a tendency to view information gathered from the viewpoint of the participants to be less important, or to treat it as surface data as opposed to underlying data, which are presumed to be more valid. Smith believes there is little doubt that student’s own perceptions are a critical part of understanding the school experience. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) describe giving voice as empowering those who would otherwise be silenced. Britzman (1989) believes giving voice is an attestation of
the right to be represented. This study is a step in beginning to fill this gap. This means, it was critically important to listen to the voice of the participants so this is the approach I took in the present study.

In 1969, Hirschi published the book *Causes of Delinquency*. This book spoke to his theory on the causes of juvenile delinquency. He found that most people deviate or comply with social norms due to four variables: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief which will be explained below in terms of school bonding theory. A major advantage of Hirschi’s theory is its strong research foundation (Hindlelang, 1973). Research led by Gibbons (1979), for example, provided support for the theory and led him to conclude “there are several signs that suggest Hirschi’s theory is to be one of the more enduring contributions to criminology” (p. 121).

The concept of school bonding theory was derived from Hirschi’s (1969) theory on the causes of juvenile delinquency. This theory posits “adolescents who form a positive affiliation or bond within their school are more likely … to engage in a variety of prosocial behaviors and achieve academically and less likely to engage in problem behaviors” (Simons-Morton, Crump, Haynie & Saylor, 1999, p. 102). For many at-risk students the school system serves as a *de facto* family. Anderson, Gumus, and Edmonds (2006), citing Fischer, noted that “constructive teacher-student relationships are linked to more positive student responses in school and improved academic performance” (p. 15). The results of a study performed by Carr and Vandiver (2001) showed that non-repeat offenders have “positive attitudes toward school rules and authority” (p. 420). According to Brannigan (1997), “the contribution of school performance and school attachment… is
inversely related to delinquency and attraction to delinquent peers is directly associated with delinquency” (p. 413). According to Anderson et al. (2006):

analyses of interviews revealed a prototype or progression of communication in the girls’ account of their educational experiences with teachers and other school personnel indicate: (1) girls who are at-risk for school failure and juvenile delinquency need healthy and productive relationships with teachers and other school personnel, (2) identification of girls at-risk for school failure and juvenile delinquency needs to take place before they reach the sixth grade, (3) involvement in extracurricular activities could be a deterrent factor in decreasing at-risk behaviors in such girls, and (4) teachers and other school personnel need to be cognizant of the influence their behavior has on such girls (p. 23).

The conclusions to be drawn from these studies are that students who have a greater bond to their school are less likely to participate in delinquent behaviors.

Hirschi (1969) explained that people deviate or comply with social norms due to four variables: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. These variables when applied to the school setting comprise what is referred to as school bonding theory. Each variable is discussed below.

Attachment refers to the extent to which a person is connected to others (Hirschi, 1969). As individuals become more attached to a person, the less likely they are to engage in delinquent activities. The primary attachments and interactions are with parents, followed by peers, teachers, religious leaders, and other members of the community (Gibbons, 1979; Hirschi, 1969). The bond formed by the attachment between
student and teacher is often more important than what is being taught and what the student may learn (Lilley, Cullen, & Ball, 1995).

Commitment is the “rational component in conformity” (Hirschi, 1969, p. 20). Gibbons (1979) defines commitment as “the person’s devotion to conformist lines of conduct” (p. 120). This variable refers to the fear of breaking the law or compliance with the norms and rules of the community. When people commit a crime they risk many things including: reputation, a supportive family, and influence within the community (Hirschi, 1969). The thought of losing status within a community is enough to deter most people from committing crimes. Simply put, there is more to lose than to gain (Hirschi, 1969; Kron & Massey, 1980; Lilley et al., 1995).

Involvement is described as the amount of engagement a person has in the conventional activities of the organization (Gibbons, 1979). In the school environment, conventional activities would include involvement in activities such as band, choir, academic clubs, and sports. Hirschi (1969) asserted the more persons are involved with conventional activities, the less time they would have to engage in illegal activities. Hirschi (1969), stated “the child playing ping-pong, swimming in the community pool, or doing his [sic] homework is not committing delinquent activities” (p 187). Gibbons (1979) agrees stating, “the degree to which [person] is engaged in activities restrict the time they have available for deviant activities” (p. 120). He stated this type of person, due to time constraints, would rarely have a chance to commit delinquent behaviors. Lilley, Cullen, and Ball (1995) “acknowledge the old thesis ‘idle hands are the devil’s workshop.’”
Belief refers to the existence of a common core value system within the society whose norms are not being violated (Hirschi, 1969). The opinions and impressions of society thrive upon constant societal reinforcement comprising belief (Lilley, et al., 1995). If people believe in the social norms around them, the less likely they are to violate them. Hirschi recognized that people vary in the depth of their belief and this variation is attributed to the degree of attachment a person has to the system that represents those beliefs. As applied to the school setting, belief refers to the degree with which the student believes that participation in school is in their best interests. Students who have a high level of belief in the school system will be generally compliant with the school’s policies and procedures, thus receiving little, if any discipline, by the school. Students with a low level of belief in the school system are less compliant and often violate school policy and/or procedures which, in turn, cause them to be disciplined by the school. School discipline may escalate to removing the student from the classroom and takes the form of suspension – both in and out of school – and expulsion (the loss of the ability to attend school in that district).

Several criticisms have been lodged against social bonding theory as it pertains to school bonding theory. One such criticism came from a study completed by Kron and Massey (1980). They found Hirschi’s (1969) measure of attachment, when applied to concrete items such as specific teachers, classes, and activities were valid (Kron & Massey, 1980). But, when this measure was applied to abstract ideas, such as the grades or the concept of liking school, it lacked validity (Kron & Massey, 1980). For example, a student might like certain teachers, classes and activities, but not like school as an institution.
Kron and Massey (1980) combined the elements of commitment and involvement. The assumption is that persons do not have the time to commit deviant behavior when they are engaged in conventional activities. But as Kron and Massey point out, “this element, connected as it is to commitment, does not have the conceptual and empirical clarity of the other elements” (p. 531). In other words, commitment and involvement are so related, it is difficult to quantify the difference. According to Kron and Massey (1980), when these elements are combined it is possible to measure school related variables such as grades, attitude toward school, and academic performance as they relate to a student’s bond to a school. Although Kron and Massey (1980) combined the elements of commitment and involvement in their theoretical discussion, when they reported the results of their study these elements were reported separately.

In 1990, school bonding theory was revised by Gottfredson and Hirschi. They proposed a general theory of crime in which they argued that social control (school bonding) cannot explain juvenile delinquency on its own. The revised theory added the capacity of a person’s self-control. The revised theory was summarized by the following: “Combining the two ideas [school bonding and self-control] thus merely recognizes the simultaneous existence of social and individual restraints of behavior” (p. 87). The implications of the revised theory are that for any given level of school bonding, there still exists the possibility of the person to commit acts of delinquency based upon the level of self-control found within the individual. Therefore, if a lack of self-control rather than societal factors is the most prominent in a delinquent’s life, it indicates that school bonding influences were minimal. For the purposes of this study, however, the focus was on the original theory’s school bonding factors, rather than, or in addition, to self-control.
This study will use the original framework of school bonding as developed by Hirschi (1969) to guide data collection and analysis. The data were examined to explore factors that bonded or did not bond the participants to their schools.

**Limitations**

Several limitations are associated with this study. One limitation is the geographic location from which the population is derived. The region of the Division of Youth Services (DYS) from which the population of the facility is drawn encompasses the upper quadrant of Missouri, with the exception of the St. Louis area. This means that the home communities of the participants ranged in size from small cities to rural communities. A second limitation is that there was only one data collection site which limits the number of interview candidates. A third limitation is that I am a male and the female participants may not have felt comfortable discussing their school experiences with me.

Another limitation in the study is that I am using interviews to collect data. Limitations of this method include: (a) that they provide indirect information, which is filtered through the views of the interviewees; (b) the researchers’ presence may bias responses; and (c) not all people are equally articulate and perceptive (Creswell, 2007).

One limitation of a qualitative study is the positionality of the researcher. It needs to be noted that I am employee of the Division of Youth Services. A perception of the participants may exist that I have an influence on how long they will stay in their current setting and may cause them to answer in ways they perceive will shorten the amount of time they will spend in their current placement. Although I am an employee, I do not have any authority over the research participants or how long they will stay in the care and
custody of DYS. I will not receive compensation for completing the study and I am not under any type of pressure which may affect the study.

**Assumptions**

An assumption of this study is that the participants have had experiences that are pertinent to the study and have the capacity to express these experiences in a manner that can be understood by the researcher. In the same vein, an assumption being made is participants will trust me enough to tell their story and that they will not fabricate a story I want to hear.

**Definition of Key Terms**

*Division of Youth Services*: The Division of Youth Services is the agency in the state of Missouri which is charged with the care and treatment of juvenile offenders.

*Female juvenile delinquent*: A female between the ages of 10 and 17 who has committed acts illegal for adults to commit, as well as any acts that are considered illegal based upon the age of the person committing the act (truancy, running away from home, school disruption, etc.) and have exhausted the resources of the circuit court and are in the care and custody of the Division of Youth Services (DYS).

*Juvenile*: For the purposes of this study, a juvenile is defined as a person between the ages of 10 and 17.

*Juvenile courts*: The Juvenile Division of the Circuit Court, also known in some circuits as the Family Court, has exclusive jurisdiction to hear certain kinds of cases including abuse/neglect, status offenses, delinquency, adoptions and commitment of persons less than eighteen years of age to the guardianship of the Department of Social Services (MJJA, 2013).
Juvenile justice system: The juvenile justice system is a generic term that encompasses the juvenile courts and the agencies which oversee the care and treatment of juvenile offenders.

Delinquency offenses: Delinquency offenses are acts committed by juveniles that, if committed by an adult, could result in criminal prosecution (Puzzanchera & Sickmund, 2008; Missouri Juvenile Justice Association (MJJA), 2013).

Status offenses: Status offenses are acts committed by individuals that are illegal due the age of the offender. Status offenses include: running away from home, truancy, school disruption (Zhang et al. 2007; MJJA, 2013).

At-risk youth: The term at-risk youth refers to a youth who is likely to fail at school. Youth are considered at-risk for a number of reasons. Examples include youth who may be:

- Homeless or transient
- Involved in drugs or alcohol
- Abused sexually, physically or emotionally
- Mentally ill
- Neglected at home or live in stressful family environments
- Lacking social or emotional supports.
- Involved with delinquent peers (National Center of School Engagement (NCSE), n.d.)

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is two-fold. First, the study will explore how the educational experiences of juvenile delinquent females, from the viewpoint of the
participant, influenced her prior to entry into the juvenile justice system. A second contribution of this study is to increase the awareness of practitioners of the needs of potentially at-risk females to provide insight about their school experiences. A third contribution of this study is to inform juvenile justice educators of the needs of females being served by the juvenile justice program of their state and to provide guidance in meeting them. Overall, I hope the information obtained from this study will increase the knowledge of current and future practitioners to decrease the number of girls and young women entering the juvenile justice system.

**Summary and Overview of Remaining Chapters**

The purpose of the study is to explore the school experience of female juvenile delinquents prior to their commitment to the Juvenile Justice System. A goal of this study is to be able to increase the awareness of current and future practitioners of the needs of at-risk females to increase the bond between school and student which, in turn, according to school bonding theory, may decrease the chances of these students engaging in delinquent behaviors.

In the following chapters, the specifics of the study are presented. In Chapter Two, relevant literature pertaining to female juvenile delinquency is discussed. In addition, school bonding theory and its four factors of attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief are further reviewed and synthesized. Chapter Three describes the selection and characteristics of research participants, types of data collected, and the multiple means for data collection and analysis. Additionally, the methodological rigor that is established through addressing credibility, transferability, dependability and trustworthiness is addressed. In Chapter Four the findings are presented and in Chapter
Five the findings are discussed in light of the literature. I will also present conclusions and recommendations in the final chapter.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

In the area of female juvenile delinquency, recent literature has examined the topics of: trauma, dysfunctional families, health issues, academic achievement (Barr, & Parrett, 2001; Chesney-Lind et al, 2008), and school bonding (Hirschi, 1969). Literature on the topic of female juvenile delinquency is sparse to non-existent. Most available literature is based on a male population and is quantitative in nature. One such gap in the literature is how the educational experience of the female juvenile delinquent has influenced her prior to entry into the juvenile justice system.

Correlates of Female Juvenile Delinquency

Although this study focuses on girls and young women bonding with their schools, I will also review in this chapter other correlates of female juvenile delinquency. These include: trauma, dysfunctional families, health issues, and academic achievement. These correlates are included due to the anticipation that the data obtained from the participants will be applicable to one, or more, of the correlates.

Trauma

Most girls in the juvenile justice system have experienced considerable trauma including sexual assaults, rapes, and sexual harassment (Zahn et al., 2008). Girls entering the juvenile justice center typically present with severe histories of physical and sexual abuse and significant symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (Gross, 2009). Studies of female delinquents completed by Sigel and Williams (2003) and Mouzakitis (1981) report that approximately half (48-53%) have been sexually abused. In California, the
number of female delinquents who have been abused by physical beating, forced vaginal
sex or sodomy is approximately 92% (Chesney-Lind et al., 2008). This abuse can be
attributed to several groups of people, including parents, romantic partners, and
caretakers in the girl’s life (Gross, 2009). Cauffman, (2008) found the majority of abuse
stems from abusive partners. A potential result of this type of abuse is that the victims
may sexually abuse other people (Cauffman, 2008, Abdulrehman & Luca, 2001; Barr, &
Parrett, 2001). A long term effect of the abuse can be the victim running away, which
often brings new forms of abuse and trauma (Chesney-Lind et al.).

**Dysfunctional Families**

Another common characteristic of girls in the juvenile system is the lack of
permanent and supportive families (Chesney-Lind et al., 2008; Morris, 1964). Many girls
who are in the juvenile justice system have had, at most, one parent or caregiver at any
one time in their lives who was significant. (Morris, 1964; Barr, & Parrett, 2001). A
result of lack of sufficient parental support is poor emotional ties to family (Barr, &
Parrett, 2001), which Cauffman (2008) shows to be strongly associated with violence in
girls. Changes in placement and other moves that are precipitated by girls running away
from their current home increases the amount of family conflict; a result of the increase
in conflict often results in increased violence on the part of the girls (Chesney-Lind et al.,
2008). It is important to understand that family structure is usually not the reason a child
commits juvenile offenses; but, it is one of the conditions often linked to it (Snyder &
Sickmund, 2006). This means that not all children who come from one-parent families
will become juvenile delinquents – most will not.
According to Gross (2009), many females regard their dysfunctional (a situation in which conflict, abuse, and neglect by parental figures occur on a regular and basis) relationship with their family as the impetus of their delinquent behavior. Morris (1964) found more female delinquents come from dysfunctional families than functional ones. Families in economic distress may lead the children to have feelings of insecurity about the possibility of their future needs being met which decreases the bonds within the family (Reiss, 1951; Barr, & Parrett, 2001). Brannigan (1997) sums it up by saying, “… crime does not come from poverty, but dysfunctional families do, and they create children to be at-risk for delinquency” (p. 143). This is not indicator that all children living in poverty will become juvenile delinquents – most will not. Poverty is simply a risk factor.

Health Issues

“Adolescent problem behaviors are associated with a host of negative health and social outcomes, including… sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, injury and death” (Simons-Morton, Crump, Haynie, & Saylor, 1999, p. 100). According to Zhang, et al. (2008), juveniles arrested for delinquent acts are at a higher risk for problems such as substance abuse and early sexual behavior. Many of the girls being served by the juvenile justice system suffer from depression, anxiety, ADHD, panic disorder, and separation anxiety disorder (Chesney-Lind et al., 2008). It is unclear if these medical conditions, or more correctly, the symptoms of these maladies are what led the girls to enter the juvenile system or if entering the system exacerbated the conditions. For the purposes of this study, the participants’ current health status is considered. The cause of the conditions is not being analyzed. An additional health issue is that a large proportion of the girls being
served by the juvenile justice system use illegal drugs (Chesney-Lind et al.). The drug abuse may be an attempt to self-medicate or it could be an attempt to escape the realities of their lives (Mulvihill, 2005).

**Academic Achievement**

Academic failure is a strong correlate of delinquency in adolescence (Walker & Sprague, 1999; Zhang et al., 2007). Hirschi (1969) has shown that when students, independent of race, gender, or socioeconomic statuses do well in school they are less likely to commit delinquent acts. The lack of academic achievement is listed as one risk factor contributing to behavioral problems in schools (Barr, & Parrett, 2001; Morrison, Anthony, Storino, & Dillon, 2001; Zhang et al., 2007). Hirschi (1969) has shown that students with a pattern of behavioral problems are more likely to commit acts of delinquency. This does not mean that all students who fail academically will commit acts of delinquency. It is, however, a risk factor.

Chesney-Lind et al. (2008) found that many of the girls and young women served by the juvenile justice system suffer academically. Most of the girls are found to be at least one grade level behind their same-aged peers (Sanger, Spilker, Scheffler, Zobell, & Belau, 2008). The results of a survey conducted by Sanger, Ritzman, Stremlau, Fairchild, & Brunken (2009) demonstrated that 50% of the female participants indicated the level of classroom instruction, usefulness of text books and related material, and clarity of information from their home school did not meet their needs.

Most of the above topics are beyond the scope of the educational practitioner. School bonding, however, is an area in which the practitioner may be influential. This
study of female juvenile delinquents is guided and informed by school bonding theory which is discussed in the following section.

**School Bonding Theory**

This study brings together two topics: namely juvenile delinquency (specifically female juvenile delinquency) and bonding (or lack thereof) to school. At the heart of this discussion is Hirschi’s (1969) theory of school bonding. Hirschi (1969) theorized a lack of “bonding” to school functions and ideals loosen youths’ overall bonds to conventional society and thus facilitates delinquent behavior. The theory posits that delinquent activities can be tied to four components: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Wiatrowski, Griswold, and Roberts (1981) found bonds are formed in part due to the educational experience of the individual. I reviewed pertinent literature in the fields of criminology, sociology, psychology, and education to see and understand how these components have been described and used in the past. The synthesis of this research follows.

**Attachment**

School bonding theory postulates that failure to attain attachment to school is related to delinquency (Hindelang, 1973). If persons feel no emotional attachment to an institution, the rules of that institution have no legitimacy (Hirschi, 1969). Attachment can be described in terms of the relationship between student and teacher. The teacher-student relationship is recognized to be a formalized interpersonal association between an authority figure and a subordinate who interact on nearly a daily basis (Bartlett, 2005; Larson, Wilson, Brown, Furstenberg, & Verma, 2002). According to Borba (1989), “The importance of interpersonal relationships in our lives cannot be overstated. We all need to
feel a sense of connectedness to another human being—particularly to those whom we consider to be important and significant” (p. 163). Blankstein (2004) believes that positive relationships are essential for a child’s development and later success in life. For students to feel attached to their school, they must feel comfortable in the instructional environment.

According to Perry (2001), the capacity of people to form and maintain relationships is one of the most important traits of humankind. Evans (1996), discussing Stack’s theory of interpersonal relationships, suggested that teachers (next to parents) are the most influential persons in the adolescent stage of a child’s life. Moos (1979) and Goodenow (1993) suggested that teachers who are personally involved with students show those students that they are respected. Wentzel, (1997), believes showing respect to a student helps to engage and motivate them toward increased positive productivity and academic achievement.

In positive teacher-student relationships, Payne (2005) stated “emotional deposits are made to the student, emotional withdrawals are avoided, and students are respected” (p.111). Hirschi (1969) theorized the influence of teachers in a young person’s life is one that will either help prevent the person from performing acts of delinquency or not. According to Payne (2001):

Relationships always begin as one individual to another. First and foremost, in all relationships with students is the relationship between each teacher and student, then between each student and each administrator, and finally, among all of the players, including student-to-student relationships. (p. 111)
For many students, their successes or failures are largely dependent upon the relationships they enjoy or fail to enjoy with their teachers. Girls who are successful in school are less likely to commit acts of delinquency (Zahn, Hawkins, Chiancone, & Whitworth, 2008). Kohn (2006) and Barr and Parrett (2001) suggests most children do not fail due to their cognitive abilities but because they feel unwelcome, detached, or alienated from significant others in the educational environment. Kemp (2011) stated that teachers who are effective with their students demonstrate that they care in a way their students understand. According to Thayer-Bacon and Bacon (1996), “Teachers who care about their students are remembered, effect change, stimulate growth, and are more likely to be successful at teaching their students” (p. 255). Senge (1990) states:

When people genuinely care, they are actively committed. They are doing what they truly want to do. They are full of energy and enthusiasm. They persevere, even in the face of frustration and setbacks, because what they are doing is what they must do. It is their work. (p. 148)

As Pianta (1999) suggests, “No amount of focus on academics, no matter how strong or exclusive, will substantially change the fact that the substrate of classroom life is social and emotional” (p. 170). Brophy and Good (1970) and Barr and Parrett (2001), assert that many teachers treat students differently based on preliminary perceptions and expectations. Students recognize these perceptions and this can affect student self-image, motivation toward learning, behavior, and relationships with the teachers and other students and adults. These results can then reinforce the teacher’s initial perception and result in perpetuating underachievement and as a result, the student attachment to school decreases.
It was once commonly believed it was not important for students to like their teachers, but respect them. Fay and Funk (1995) point to a convention of psychology that states:

Human beings will perform for the person they love. If a person loves himself [or herself], he [or she] will do it for himself [or herself]. If he [or she] does not have that high self-esteem or belief in self, he [or she] will have to do it for someone else until the time comes that he [or she] does love himself [or herself]. (p. 20)

According to Jones (1987), “If the students like you, they will go along with almost anything” (p. 191).

Effective teachers understand they can create and maintain a positive learning environment by developing positive relationships with their students (Barr & Parrett, 2001). Developing such relationships takes time, but this investment of time can set the stage for meaningful learning because students want to work hard for teachers who care for them. For Jackson and Davis (2000):

The quality of relationships between school staff members and [children], and among all the adults within the school community, makes an enormous difference in the ability of a school to mount an effective instructional program. Positive relationships based on trust and respect, nurtured over time by supportive organizational structures and norms of interaction, are the human infrastructure within a school that enables effective teaching and learning to occur. (p. 222)

Commitment

Commitment is "the rational component in conformity" (Hirschi, 1969, p. 20). Gibbons (1979), defines commitment as “the person’s devotion to conformist lines of
commitment to school “as time and energy invested by students in the pursuit of their educational goals” (p. 153). Commitment itself implies the person has something invested in an activity, in this case educational conformity (Hirschi, 1969; Kron, & Massey, 1980; Agnew, 2009). In general, it refers to the fear of law-breaking behavior. When individuals consider committing deviant or criminal behavior, they must consider the risks of losing the investment they have made in previous conventional behavior (Lilly, Cullen, & Ball, 1995; Agnew, 2009).

In this sense, youth who have spent a lot of time and energy in conforming to the ideals of their parents and teachers have a tighter bond with society and feel they have more to lose than if they were to deviate from those ideals (Agnew, 2009; Lilly et al, 1995). If persons developed a positive reputation, earned a valuable education, raised a supportive family, and/or established a strong name in the business world, they would suffer a substantial loss by violating laws (Hirschi, 1969). Wiatrowski et al. (1981) note that “Commitment is related to the aspiration of going to college and obtaining a high-status job” (p. 525). The societal accumulations one accrues throughout a lifetime represent assurance to society that a person is committed to conventional values. Not only can individuals be committed to conformity by what they have obtained, but the hope of acquiring goods through conventional means can reinforce their commitment to social bonds (Hirschi, 1969). Those committed to educational success should be less likely to commit acts of delinquency (Hirschi, 1969). A lack of commitment to the educational system in juveniles can be demonstrated by their participation in what is considered adult behaviors such as smoking and drinking (Hirschi, 1969).

Thornberry expects commitment to school to have significant direct and indirect (mediated by attachment to parents and association with delinquent peers) effects on delinquent behavior at early adolescence. He suggests that during middle adolescence commitment to school shows a greater impact on the youth’s behavior compared to early adolescence because the school environment “takes on increasing significance” (Thornberry, 1987, p. 879). One reason for the increased effects of commitment to school on delinquent behavior is that the indirect effect is through the adolescent’s association with peers rather than attachment to parents. (p. 647)

**Involvement**

How much, or how little, a juvenile is involved in conventional activities such as sports, academic clubs, school plays, and band comprises the component of involvement. Involvement in school represents an important “stake in conformity” (Gibbons, 1979; Hindelang, 1973; Kelly & Pink, 1973; Polk, 1969). According to Griswold, and Roberts (1981), “Involvement refers to activities which lead toward socially valued success and
status objectives” (p. 252). All students, especially marginalized ones, need to feel they belong to the group and are important to it and that they share common ground with their peers (Glasser, 1993; Shalaway, 1989; Tomlinson & Edison, 2003). Hirschi (1969) and Kron and Massey (1980) theorized that involvement in conventional activities would keep someone’s time too occupied to allow him/her the indulgence of deviant behavior. The thinking that “idle hands are the devil’s workshop” is the reason Hirschi (1969, p.187) stated, “[t]he child playing ping-pong, swimming in the community pool, or doing his[her] homework is not committing delinquent acts.” Hirschi (1969) thought for a person like this, the opportunity for deviance would rarely arise. Gibbons (1979) agrees stating, “the degree to which [persons] is [are] engaged in activities restrict the time they have available for deviant activities” (p. 120). The concept of involvement has generated programs that focus on positive recreational activities to occupy the leisure time of juveniles. School involvement is gauged by participation in different types of activities such as: honor society, cheerleading, sports, academic clubs, hobby clubs, and yearbook or school newspaper (Hoffman, 2002).

Belief

Belief refers to the existence of a common value system within the society whose norms are being violated (Hirschi, 1969). Lilly, et al., (1995), suggested that belief is comprised of opinions and impressions that are dependent on constant social reinforcement. Thornberry (1987) stated, “Belief in conventional values represents the granting of legitimacy to such middle class values as education, personal industry, financial success, and the like” (p. 866). Shouse (1996) describes schools as communities whose moral order is built upon respect for authority and the consistent enforcement of
these norms. In this sense, a school embodies the values of society and gives youth something concrete in which to place their belief. Kron and Massey (1980) stated that juveniles who do not hold strong beliefs in conventional values are free from this bond and more likely to commit acts of deviancy. Hirschi (1969) recognized individuals vary in the depth and magnitude of their belief and this variation is reliant upon the degree of attachment to systems representing the beliefs in question. In some respects, belief may be the rationalization of individuals’ perceptions of their world view (Hirschi, 1969).

Students come to school with common human needs. They need to feel safe and secure both physically and emotionally (Glasser, 1993). These needs can be met by building on relationships enjoyed with their parents, if applicable, and increasing the students’ sense of belonging and acceptance at school (Evans, 1996; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to Barr and Parrett (2001), for at-risk youth who do not have a positive family relationship, a surrogate family atmosphere of support and encouragement needs to be established within the confines of the school. The extent to which these needs are met determines the level of belief the student has in the system (Deci & Ryan, 2000). As the level of acceptance increases the students will increase their level of internalization of the formally external regulations and values of society (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This internalization is expressed as greater belief in the system. This being said, Smith (2000) and Barr and Parrett (2001) suggest that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are often judged using middle class values which, in turn, causes the student to become frustrated which can lead to the rejection of said values. This rejection can lead to a decrease in their belief in the school system.
Other Studies

Recent studies in the area of school bonding have examined the gender-based differences in the relationship to school and delinquency relationship (Payne, Gottfredson & Kruttschnitt, 2009). Cernkovich and Giordano (1992) separated a cross-sectional sample of 942 12 – 19 year olds into four race/sex subgroups and found the relationship between school attachment and delinquency does not vary across the groups; meaning school attachment plays the same role in delinquency across both gender and race. A study conducted by Zweig, Sayer, Crockett and Vicary (2002) examined the association between attachment to school and delinquency by examining the risk profiles of 12,578 male and female students. The study concluded that low-risk females and males report a higher level of school connectedness than high-risk males and females (Zweig et al., 2002). Rosay, Gottfredson, Armstrong, and Harmon (2000) examined the correlation between school attachment and delinquency and drug use in two large national data sets. Attachment to school displayed a negative relationship with substance abuse by both males and females of black, white, and Hispanic origins (Rosay et al., 2000). The relationship between school attachment and delinquency were less straightforward. The relationship was similar across race and gender groups in one data set but in the other, the correlation tended to be higher for males than for females and for whites than for ethnic minority groups (Rosay et al. 2000). A study conducted by Payne and Gottfredson (2005) found significant gender and racial differences in the relationship between school attachment and various forms of delinquency. The lesson to be drawn from these studies, and others, is that the effects of gender differences and school attachment are mixed – meaning there are no firm conclusions.
Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, relevant literature pertaining to female juvenile delinquency was discussed including various correlates not directly associated with this study. The existing literature has shown the majority of previous studies related to school bonding theory have been both quantitative and male orientated, thus leaving gaps in the body of available literature. This study will help close these gaps by using the voice of female offenders to describe their school experiences.

Students who are empowered by their school experiences through attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief develop the ability, confidence, and motivation to succeed academically and usually do not present delinquent behaviors (Hirschi, 1969). Students who are disempowered by their school experiences do not develop this type of cognitive-academic and social-emotional foundation and are more likely to exhibit delinquent behaviors (Cummins, 1986; Hirschi, 1969). For some students, school may be the only place where life makes sense (Payne, 2001; Payne, 2006; Terr, 1990; Wollin & Wollin, 1993). Relationships matter and positive relationships with caring adults increase opportunities for children to succeed. It takes time to build positive relationship. Jones (1987) suggests, “From the giving and receiving of caring, helping, concern, and respect, a bond is built between two individuals that can be trusted. This bond is the basis of most cooperation and spontaneous helping” (p. 65).

Chapter Three describes the selection and characteristics of research participants, types of data collected, and the multiple means for data collection and analysis. Additionally, the methodological rigor that is established through addressing credibility, transferability, dependability and trustworthiness are addressed. In Chapter Four the
findings are presented and in Chapter Five the findings are discussed in light of the literature. I will also present conclusions and recommendations in the final chapter.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the present study was to explore the school experience of the female juvenile delinquents prior to their commitment to the Juvenile Justice System. This was accomplished using the framework of school bonding theory to see how their experiences may have strengthened or weakened the bond between participants and their previous schools. The framework of school bonding theory was used to help organize the data, make sense of data, and inform what I learned from the data.

In this chapter, the research setting and context is discussed. The selection and characteristics of research participants, types of data collected, and the multiple means for data collection and analysis is explained. Additionally, methodological rigor is established through addressing the role of the researcher and trustworthiness.

Research Setting and Context

The Division of Youth Services (DYS) is the state agency charged with the care and treatment of juvenile offenders committed to its custody by one of the 45 Missouri juvenile courts and 24 regionally operated Juvenile Justice Centers (Mendel, 2010). The primary objective of the DYS is to protect the safety of Missouri citizens by providing the appropriate services to successfully return the committed juveniles to their families and communities (DSS, 2003). DYS programs are established to provide the mandated services enumerated in Chapter 219.016 in the Revised Statutes of the state of Missouri (Missouri Division of Youth Services, n.d.). These services include assessment, care and treatment, and education of all youth committed to its care (Mendel). The agency is
committed to helping delinquent youth make deep and lasting changes that enable them
to avoid negative (criminal, anti-social, self-destructive) behaviors and to begin on a
pathway to success (Mendel, 2010). The agency’s core beliefs can be found in Appendix
E.

To provide these services, DYS operates treatment programs ranging from non-
residential day treatment centers to secure residential institutions. Additionally, DYS
administers the Interstate Compact on Juveniles, operates an accredited school program,
and maintains a statewide statistical database of juvenile court referrals (Missouri
Division of Youth Services, n.d.). DYS is administratively organized into one central
office and five regional offices.

Like many other states, DYS began with large rural training-school systems. In
the beginning there were two facilities – the Boonville Training School for Boys and the
Chillicothe Training School for Girls – which together housed approximately 800 youth
(Division of Social Services (DSS), 2003). “From 1887 until 1983, the Boonville Train-
ing School — a 158-acre campus of two-story brick residence halls — was Missouri’s
primary juvenile facility for boys, holding up to 650 teens at a time” (Mendel, 2010, p.
15). Females were held in the Chillicothe Training School for Girls, whose population
was approximately 150. The treatment of youth, especially at Boonville, was often harsh,
and violence was commonplace — resulting in a steady stream of alarming news
headlines throughout several decades about the care given at facilities.

In the early 1980s, the Division began establishing smaller regionally—based
facilities. The advantage to this was the youth could be served closer to home, which
would allow the parents to become more involved in the treatment process.
Because of a significant increase in juvenile commitments in the late 1980s, Missouri brought in several national consultants to evaluate DYS programs and make recommendations for improvements to the existing system (Division of Social Services (DSS), 2003). During this process, legislative and judicial leaders, along with DYS staff, visited juvenile systems in other states. This resulted in the implementation of new services, including a case management system and community—based services (DSS, 2003). This was made possible through assistance from the Center for the Study of Youth Policy, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, and the American Correctional Association (DSS, 2003).

The passage of the Juvenile Crime Bill in 1995 created a dual jurisdiction provision for youths adjudicated as adults, allowing them to be accepted by the Division. This provision of the law allows selected youths who have received adult sentences to receive initial treatment in the juvenile system and have their adult prison sentences suspended by a judge if they respond favorably to juvenile treatment (Mendel, 2010). The bill also eliminated the lower age limit and authorized the division to request extended jurisdiction to age 21 (DSS, 2003). That year, a statewide referendum approved by the Missouri voters authorized the construction of 200 beds in several facilities across the state (DSS). These beds helped provide the division with the resources to meet its goal of keeping youths close to their homes in small 20, 30, and 40- bed facilities.

“Missouri offers a demanding, carefully crafted, multi-layered treatment experience designed to challenge troubled teens and to help them make lasting behavioral changes and prepare for successful transitions back to the community” (Mendel, 2010, p. 5). Each youth receives a comprehensive risk and needs assessment to determine an
Individual Treatment Plan and placement status (DSS, 2003). Youths are then placed in the appropriate program or facility that provides the optimal care and supervision in the least restrictive environment. Each facility divides the youth into groups, generally based upon the number of dorms found within the facility. These groups, usually named after the dorm to which they are assigned, stay together throughout the majority of each day and are the venues for treatment and counseling.

Residential services are provided for those youth who are unable to function satisfactorily in the community. More than 30 facilities are located across the state and include: secure care, moderate care, and group homes. Each level of program varies in degree of structure as well as community involvement. Over the years the number of total beds has risen to 726. This increase in numbers allows serious offenders a longer period of treatment, reduces waiting time, and allows youth to be in facilities closer to their homes (DSS, 2003).

Secure care serves the most serious offenders, most of whom have committed felony offenses (DSS, 2003). Most of these youth require a secure and structured environment. They receive educational services, vocational guidance, and a variety of counseling services (DSS, 2003). Secure care facilities are designed with an open dormitory model that helps prevent the youth from developing an institutionalized mentality. The secure facilities are locked down and have a perimeter fence (Mendel, 2010). Typically, youth stay in a secure care facility nine to twelve months, but this stay can be extended if the young person fails to progress in treatment or demonstrates that they are not ready to be released (Mendel, 2010).
Moderate care facilities serve youth who have typically committed less serious offenses, such as vandalism or shoplifting (DSS, 2003). Some of the youth sent to these facilities have been adjudicated for felony offenses; however, they have the opportunity to spend time in the community (Mendel, 2010). The facilities are designed with an open dormitory model and do not have a perimeter fence. Educational, vocational guidance, and a variety of counseling services are provided at the facility. The typical stay in a moderate care facility lasts six to nine months (Mendel, 2010).

Group homes are the least restrictive of the residential model (DSS, 2003). The youth are monitored 24 hours a day and have a daily schedule which allows for provision of education within the facility and community interaction typically through community service and field trips (Mendel, 2010). These programs are typically 10 to 12 bed facilities and can be located within residential areas. The typical length of stay in a group home is four to six months (Mendel, 2010). The population for this study is in a group home environment.

Once youth are admitted in a residential program, a Comprehensive Individual Treatment Plan (CITP) is developed. The CITP is an overall set of objectives the youth must complete before being returned to the community. The staff at the facility work with the youth to turn the plan into a series of objectives which must be completed before the youth is returned to the community. The objectives, while unique for each youth, typically cover their committing offence, family history, anger cycle, and positive/negative influences in their lives. The objectives are presented to the rest of the staff and group members in a series of oral workshops where the youth describe, explain, and eventually take accountability for their actions.
Each night in every DYS facility, group meetings are held. During most group meetings, a member of the group presents what is called a workshop covering one of the objectives described above. Additionally, the teens participate in group-builders, which are shared activities designed to build community, discuss the impact of their crimes on victims, and help teens explore issues like trust, perceptions, and communication (Mendel, 2010). At other times, the treatment session is spent dealing with an event or issue that has surfaced in a group member’s life—a difficult family visit or phone call home, a problematic behavior that persists, an unwelcome ruling by the juvenile court, or a tension that has arisen between two or more members of the group.

On occasion, one particular youth will talk to the group about his or her life. Over the course of their stays, a young person will typically lead at least five sessions dedicated to the core exercises in the DYS treatment process (Mendel, 2010). Generally speaking, the first is a “Who am I?” exercise in which youth list their favorite people, foods, cars, movies, etc. In subsequent sessions, the topics become more personal (Mendel, 2010). One session, which may need to be repeated as the youth becomes more open, is a “life history,” the young people are asked to—and often do—talk about wrenching experiences in their lives: domestic abuse, violence, sexual victimization, and family negligence (Mendel, 2010). They are also encouraged to speak about their crimes, mistakes, and other misdeeds. Each young person completes and explains his/her “genogram,” a coded family tree detailing the incidence of domestic violence, alcoholism, drug addiction, criminality, illiteracy, and other pathologies in their families (Mendel, 2010). In the next session, the teens describe and discuss a drawing that they have traced their bodies called the “line of body,” where the most searing physical and
mental traumas they have suffered during their lives are noted (Mendel, 2010). The final session in the life series consists of a “success plan,” during which the youth nearing departure from the facility describe to their peers—and hear questions and feedback on the steps they will take to maximize their chances of success following release (Mendel, 2010).

Once the group members believe the youths have met the goals they were assigned, they are granted a group release. Group release status allows the youths to work on a transition plan to enable them to safely return to the community. When the staff believes the transition plan is feasible, the youth is granted staff release. The youth then has the ability to ask for weekend furloughs. After a number of furloughs are satisfactorily completed, a final status report is written and the regional administrator petitions the applicable circuit court to release the youth to their permanent placements. The groups have rotating entry and exit; young people leave the group and head home as soon as they demonstrate readiness for release, and new youth come in to take their place (Mendel, 2010).

In addition to the CITP, each youth has an education plan. Youths with disabilities have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) as mandated by the American with Disabilities Act. All other students have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) that summarizes the youth’s educational history to date and provides specific educational goals for the youth to work on while in residential care. For example, if the youth’s previous school transcript showed repeated failure in math, then an educational goal would be improving her/his skills in math to grade level.
When youth enter residential care, they are given a Woodcock Johnson Test of Academic Achievement and a Woodcock Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities. The results of these tests are used to determine the academic skill level of the youth and provide a basis of individualized instruction. Prior to the youth leaving the facility, a different form of the Test of Academic Achievement is given and results compared. The reason for the repeat testing is two-fold: first to give an indication of progress, or lack thereof, in the academic skills of the youth, and second to provide a measurement for determining Annual Yearly Progress as mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act. Additionally, DYS has internal procedures to provide achievement data for annual reporting to the Governor’s Office.

In 2013, the U.S. Department of Education approved Missouri's Department Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) waiver giving the state flexibility from the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (DESE, 2013). The waiver allows Missouri to use its own accountability system to become more efficient in identifying struggling schools, directing resources to the identified schools, and in recognizing schools achieving exemplary results (DESE, 2013). This waiver does not, however, exempt DYS from reporting achievement data to DESE. In this section, the research setting and context were explained. The methodological rationale is discussed in the next section.

**Methodological Rationale**

**Qualitative Approach**

Qualitative methods offer opportunities of nuance that are not as readily discerned through a quantitative approach (Merriam, 1998). “Qualitative research methods are used
to examine questions that can best be answered by verbally describing how participants in a study perceive and interpret various aspects of their environment” (Waigandt, 2003, p. 10). Because the participants subjectively construct their own understanding, multiple perspectives of truth are possible, differing dramatically from the objective, big “T” truth of the positivist paradigm. This approach follows a subjectivist ontology and epistemology (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005, p. 6).

**Research Question**

The research question guiding this study was:

What was the school experience of female juvenile delinquents prior to entering the juvenile justice system?

**Research Design**

The purpose of the study was to explore the school experience of female juvenile delinquents prior to their commitment to the Juvenile Justice System. To accomplish this purpose, I used school bonding theory as the theoretical framework of the study. I used the qualitative descriptive method as attributed to Sandelowski (2000) as my research paradigm. This process is an interpretive one which does not require researchers to move far from their original data. Researchers conducting this type of study stay close to their data and to the surface of words and events to summarize, organize and discuss the nature of the phenomena being studied (Sandelowski, 2000). Qualitative description entails “interpretation that is low-interference and likely to result in consensus among researchers (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 355). This method is especially useful in obtaining straightforward answers to questions of special interest to practitioners (Sandelowski, 2000).
In this study, the viewpoint of the participants was of particular importance. Seidman (2006) acknowledged that although much research is done on schooling in the United States very little is done from the perspective of the student. The participants had a minimum of two shared lived experiences, namely, they all went to a type of school – public, private, religious, or home schooled and were placed in the care and custody of the MO Division of Youth Services.

**Participants**

The criteria for the participants of the study was two-fold: (a) female and (b) under the care and custody of the MO Division of Youth Services. A DYS female group home facility located in central MO was populated by residents who met these criteria for this study. The residents of this facility met the requirements of purposeful sampling, which is a selection technique based upon the problem at hand and purposely seeks both the typical and divergent data to maximize the range of information obtained from the content (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). Patton (1990), described the purposeful sampling as the task of selecting information-rich participants whose study will illuminate the questions under study.

The census at the facility during participant selection consisted of 11 individuals: three were African-American and the remaining eight Caucasian. All of the residents were invited to participate and they all agreed. The diversity of the population (age, race, urban or rural residence) and their common experience of being committed to DYS ensure that maximum variation as described by Patton (1990) was established. Ultimately, the selection of participants was based upon the willingness of the resident to be a part of the study and obtaining permission from the parents/guardians of the
residents, and obtaining assent from the girls or young women. I was unable to obtain parental permission for three of the girls before they left the facility. Unfortunately, I was unable to interview one due to changing conditions within the facility brought on by the arrival of new residents. Therefore, the total number of participants was seven.

The participants ranged in age from 14 to 17, two of them were 17, two were 15, one was 16, and two were 14. One of the participants was African American, one identifies as mixed race, and the other participants were white. Three of them were, or had been, involved in Special Education. All of the participants had attended multiple schools before being committed to DYS. Two of the participants had previously spent time at the facility and had been released back to their family. They returned to the facility due to continued acts of delinquency.

The facility population was drawn from the entire central MO region, including Columbia and Jefferson City. This being said, the viewpoint of the participants ranged from small cities to rural communities.

Data Collection

“Qualitative descriptive designs are eclectic but reasonable and well-considered combination of sampling, and data collection, analysis, and re-presentational techniques” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 337). Data collections in qualitative descriptive techniques include minimally to moderately structured open-ended interviews, as well as observations of targeted events and document examination. In this study, a combination of data collection methods was used including interviews and observations to engage or encourage conversation with a purpose (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Krueger &
Casey, 2000; Merriam, 1998). The explanation and justification of these methods is found in the sections below.

Interviews

The purpose of a qualitative research interview is to discover “what people really think and feel” (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 7). Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) describe interviews as a conversation with a purpose. Interviews allow the researcher and the participant to move back and forth in time; to reconstruct the past, interpret the present, and to predict the future (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Seidman (2006), a goal of the interview is to have the participant reconstruct his or her experiences about the topic being studied. Interviews are a useful approach when participants cannot be directly observed (Merriam, 1998), in this case in their prior school, or schools, of residence, and it also allows the researcher control over the line of questioning. It is also necessary to interview when the researcher is interested in past events (Merriam, 1998), in this instance the prior school experiences of the participants.

This method was chosen to capture the experiences of the participants in their own voice. I expected to uncover data that tell the story of the participants’ experiences, both good and bad, within their school(s) that affected the bond with their home school(s). Care was taken to ensure the participant felt safe (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The interviews were held in the group meeting room of the facility with a family therapist present. The opportunity was given for the participants to stop the interview process, or not answer any specific question. It was imperative for me to keep the conversation on the topic at hand, and remain cognizant of the need to avoid a therapeutic relationship.

Although researchers and therapists may ask similar kinds of questions, “the researcher is
there to learn, not to treat the participant” (Seidman, 2006, p. 108). Initially, the plan was to conduct one interview lasting about 60 minutes, with an option of meeting again for up to another 60 minutes to obtain data clarification or to ask new questions based upon the threads of information contained within the body of data obtained from the interviews. In actuality, the interviews lasted from 35 to 90 minutes and there was an additional 30 minutes needed for clarification and the member check.

The interview was guided by a semi-structured protocol of open-ended questions – see Appendix C. The protocol was designed to allow additional probing questions to explore themes between participants, and to allow for follow-up on important topics. A strategy I used in the development of the interview questions was to ask the participants to “tell a story” about that topic, with a follow-up question, “Is there anything else?” This strategy was designed to let people talk as much as they want to about a topic and provide further details. (Johnson, Dunlap, & Benoit, 2010). It was within their “stories” that the rich data for analysis were obtained.

With this in mind, the questions centered on what the participant liked, did not like, and wished could have been better or in place in her school environment. Additional questions asked what activities – curricular and extra-curricular – the participant was involved in. The intent of the questions was to understand which part of the school experience increased and decreased the bond to the school. Data was captured by recording the interview and through the use of notes made during the interview. The recording was transcribed verbatim for review by the researcher. Recording and transcribing was chosen over taking comprehensive note taking to provide richer data for
coding, as recording captures nuances such as pacing, emotional affect, and exact wording.

Field Notes

“Field notes are accounts describing experiences and observation the researcher has made while participating in an intense and involved manner” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 4). During the course of the interview field notes were taken. The notes included the time and date of the interview, location, the mood (happy, crying, upset, etc.) of the participants as perceived by me, and data relating to the interview questions. The field notes were descriptive of what was observed, without being judgmental or disrespectful of the experiences of the participant (Johnson, Dunlap, & Benoit, 2010). An important issue regarding field notes is whether or not they clearly convey what happened and what was observed and that they need to include an interpretation of the meanings implied by words used by the participants (Johnson et al. 2010). The field notes provided documentation of the reactions of the participant as the interview progressed.

Human Subjects Protection and Other Ethical Concerns

Due to the nature of the study (interviewing adjudicated minors) a complete Institutional Review Board (IRB) review and approval was completed before data were collected. As a part of the review process, a Parental Permission Form and a Child Assent Recruitment Form were developed – see Appendixes A and B. Both forms contained the following elements: the right of the participant to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time, the central purpose of the study and procedures used in data collection, specific information concerning participant confidentiality, and statements about known risks and
benefits of the study (Creswell, 2007). The purpose of these elements was to ensure that each participant had informed consent before agreeing to participate in the study.

Additionally, the study required permission from the Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS). This permission was obtained using the DSS Permission to Conduct Study/Research procedure which was reviewed and approved by the legal department of DSS. For more information, refer to Appendix D.

Other measures to ensure human subject protection included the use of pseudonyms in lieu of the actual names of the participants in reports of the research and ensuring that no descriptive information which would lead to the identification of the participants was published. In this instance, descriptive information included the following: the hometown of the participants, the committing offense, familial relationships between participants, the names of all school districts the participants had attended, the names of the parent/guardian and specific age attached to any pseudonym.

Access to the data obtained during the study was limited to the researcher, transcriber, peer coder, and faculty advisor. The data was encrypted and stored on a CD-ROM that is located in a locked file cabinet and will be destroyed 7 years after the study is completed.

**Data Analysis**

LeCompte and Schensul (1999) defined analysis as the process a researcher uses to reduce data to a story and its interpretation. Patton (1987) described data analysis as organizing and simplifying data into meaningful and manageable themes. For me, data analysis was the process of reducing large amounts of collected data to make sense of them. Patton (1987) indicated that three things occur during data analysis: data are
organized, data are categorized (coded), and patterns and themes in the data are linked and identified. The following addresses these points.

**Data Organization**

Before data collection began, the following protocols and procedures was established to ensure that the data are organized: a “data dictionary” was created, file naming protocol defined, a data tracking system created, and transcription procedures were established. These were needed to organize the “mountains of words” (Johnson, Dunlap, & Benoit, 2010, p. 648) that qualitative analysis produces.

A “data dictionary” – a term borrowed from computer programming – is a master list of codes and their definitions which serves as a classification system. Patton (1987) held that a classification system is a critical component in data analysis. The purpose of the “data dictionary” is to solidify the codes and their meanings so that the data may be consistently analyzed. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) stated, “clear operational definitions are indispensable so they can be applied consistently over time” (p. 84). The initial codes were the four components of school bonding theory: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief with their associated definitions. As the data from the transcripts and field notes were analyzed line by line and more codes are discovered, they were added to the dictionary.

“File naming protocol” refers to the method by which transcription files and coding files were named. This was needed in the development of an audit trail, which is discussed below. Transcription files were named in the following manner: pseudonym – interview number – transcription date. The file name was printed on the footer of each page of transcription. Coding files were named using the name of the code.
Transcription procedures refer to the methods used to transcribe the .mp3 files obtained by recording the interview into .doc documents as well as establishing and defining common abbreviations and symbols to be used in the transcription process. The purpose of these procedures was to aid in data analysis by providing consistency within the data.

**Data Categorization**

The goal of data categorization or coding is to break apart the data and rearrange it into categories that facilitate comparison between items in the same category and between categories as well as preserving significant statements of the participants (Creswell, 2007). Guba (1978) suggested that in focusing the analysis of qualitative data, researchers must deal with the problem of “convergence.” The problem of convergence is figuring out what things fit together and can be coded similarly. This process leads to a classification system for the data. Guba (1978) suggested several approaches for dealing developing codes and classification systems. The first involved looking for “recurring regularity” in the data. These regularities led to patterns which enabled one to classify and code data.

Classifications were reviewed for regularity by analyzing how well the pieces “dovetailed” or fit together in a meaningful way. Another approach I used when developing codes and classifications was to explore the extent to which the classifications or codes were distinct from each other. “The existence of a large number of unassignable or overlapping data items is good evidence of some basic fault in the category system” (Guba, 1978. p. 53). During the analysis the codes and the data fit together in ways that surprised me.
The initial data analysis was deductive in nature. I coded data using the initial 4 codes that were taken from the framework of school bonding theory as developed by Hirschi (1969). Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) described this process as hypothesis coding. This method was an appropriate analytical analysis of a qualitative data set (Miles et al., 2014). As the transcripts were read and data found that supported the initial 4 codes, they were highlighted and then copied to the file established for each respective code with an annotation connecting the data and transcript from which it was derived.

The interviews transcripts and field notes were analyzed inductively in the next phase of data analysis. According to Creswell (2007), inductive data analysis is the process in which qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up, by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract units of information. Patton (1987) described inductive analysis as the means by which patterns, themes, and categories come from the data; they emerge from the data rather than being defined by the researcher. The purpose of this step in the analysis was to look for themes and patterns that were outside the framework of school bonding theory. Miles et al. (2014) described this process as In Vivo coding. This type of coding uses words or short phrases found in the participant’s own language taken from the transcript codes; this type of coding is appropriate for studies that prioritize and honor the voice of the participants (Miles et al., 2014). These additional themes and patterns helped explain and aided in understanding the life experiences of the participants.

Once these themes and patterns were identified, codes were created that were defined in the “data dictionary.” Files were created for the themes to store data relevant to
them. Transcript data associated with these additional codes was highlighted and then copied into the code file for further analysis.

**Linking Patterns and Themes**

In this step in the analysis process, I looked for patterns within the codes developed earlier. The overall goal is data reduction by combining similar codes together, which aids in obtaining deeper understanding of the data. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) called this process of grouping related codes into a smaller number of patterns and themes, pattern coding.

My goal was to determine if some of the codes were related to one another forming patterns – just as being in the same “family” of codes, being associated with other data (e.g., if one is increased another one decreases), or even the possibility of some imputed cause and effect relationship as perceived by research participants. These patterns aided in obtaining deeper understanding of the data (Miles et al., 2014).

**Role of Researcher/Positionality**

I am employed by the Division of Youth Services as an Education Supervisor. My duties entail overseeing the educational programs of the six DYS residential facilities the Northeast Region of DYS. My facilities are located in Fulton, Columbia, Montgomery City and Troy, MO. Of these facilities, four house males, one houses females, and one houses a mixed gender population. My responsibilities include conducting teacher evaluations, observing classrooms, reviewing educational records, monitoring special education compliance, acting as the Local Educational Agency (LEA) representative on an as needed basis, and filling the role of Special Education Teacher in the facilities that do not have a Special Education Teacher. My duties also include validating high school
transcripts for graduation, determining who is a good candidate for both the High School Equivalency (HSE) and for using the Division’s on-line educational resources (GradPoint) for credit accrual. I oversee the Division’s in-house college/trade school grant and supervise the Title I Reading program. In addition, due to my technical background, I facilitate implementation of Smart Technologies in DYS classrooms across the state, as well as moving software platforms from PC to cloud based. In emergencies, I can take on the role of facility manager or serve as a youth specialist. This being said, I am not in the command chain that determines how long a student, in any of my facilities, will stay at his or her respective location. My scope of authority concerns only the educational aspect of the residents assigned to my facilities.

Within the scope of my duties, I act as conduit for information flow between the public schools and DYS. This includes requesting school records for new youth committed to DYS for my region and helping the public schools maintain their Missouri School Information System (MOSIS) records by supplying the data required to document student movement. Because the majority of school records come to my office, I review them for any special circumstances such as IDEA 504 Plans, and non-typical student disabilities. A portion of my duties includes visiting the facilities under my purview. In the course of my duties, I do establish a relationship with many residents, some of which, especially the girls or young women, think of me as a surrogate father, in my region whenever possible, including the participants of this study.

I realize after working for DYS for 9 years and teaching in the public school system for 5 years, I may bring preconceived ideas, philosophy, and bias to the research. Based upon my personal experiences as a troubled teenager who got a second chance in
life because of the bonds formed with close friends and teachers, I know that close bonds to others and attachment to school can be instrumental in changing lives. As I have lived my life and have gained experience as a high school teacher and a DYS employee, this belief has become stronger as I have seen lives changed because of relationships.

**Trustworthiness**

“Qualitative researchers strive for ‘understanding’ that deep structure of knowledge that comes from personally visiting with the participants, spending extensive time in the field, and probing to obtain detailed meaning” (Creswell, 2007, p. 201). The establishment of trustworthiness enables a researcher to make the claim of methodical soundness (Erlandson et al., 1993). With this in mind, the methodological integrity or rigor of the present study was particularly important to ensure the data analysis truly revealed the views of the interview participants (Erlandson et al., 1993). The qualities of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are essential in establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Erlandson et al., 1993).

**Credibility**

Credibility is the extent to which the researcher is able to create an accurate picture of the participants’ experiences during the analysis process. As such, credible research must provide reconstructions that are credible to the participants and findings that are true to their understanding of themselves and their experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility ensures the participants’ perceptions are truly captured and expressed throughout the research process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). To meet the standard of rigor for accuracy and credibility, this study relied upon methods of triangulation.
Triangulation. Triangulation is the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point (Erlandson et al., 1993; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Merriam (1998) further defines this process as the use of multiple sources of data and/or observations of the data. The greater the agreement between the various data sources, the greater the confidence in the observed findings (Erlandson et al., 1993). In this instance, the transcripts of the interviews were compared against the field notes taken during the interview.

Member check. A member check involves taking transcriptions of the interview session back to the interviewee and determining if it is accurate (Merriam, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Member checks are the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and clarifying the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying my potential biases and misunderstandings of what I observed (Maxwell, 2012). I gave a copy of the transcript to each of the participants. They each read the transcript, and showed me any words that were misinterpreted. Participants also added clarification, as needed, to the overall content of the interview. After the member check was completed and the transcript updated, if required, I annotated the date that the member check occurred.

Peer coder. This is a process in which the researcher shares data with a peer to see if the conclusions reached by both agree (Merriam, 1998). I shared with the peer coder 100% of the data for the peer coder to develop her own codes and conclusions. In
essentially all areas, the peer coder and I were in agreement with the conclusions reached.
The pervasive agreement between researcher and peer coder indicated the data was sound.

**Transferability**

Transferability is the applicability of the research findings to other participants or in other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1995). In the context of this research, transferability refers to the ability of the research findings to fit with experiences of other female juvenile delinquents and their school experiences. Ultimately, the responsibility of the researcher ends with providing sufficient descriptive data to make judgments of similarity possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To meet this responsibility, the descriptions of the participants’ experiences were provided with sufficient detail to allow practitioners and future researchers to determine the transferability of the data to their own situations and contexts (Merriam, 1998).

**Dependability**

The quality of dependability ensures findings are comparable if the research were replicated with same or similar participants and circumstances (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The dependability of this study was increased by using an audit trail to document my understanding of the categories that emerged from the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail leads to dependability by allowing an auditor to determine the trustworthiness of the study (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified six categories of audit trail materials: (a) the raw data (interview instrument, interview notes, field notes); (b) data reduction and analysis products (peer debriefing notes and the reduced data); (c) data reconstruction and
synthesis products; (d) process notes; (e) materials related to intentions and depositions; and (f) information relative to any instrument development. According to Erlandson et al., (1993) the key to an audit trail is not to report any fact without noting its source and to make no assertions without supporting data. Therefore, I developed a coding scheme that allowed me to trace quotations reported in the findings chapter back to my raw interview data.

**Confirmability**

The last aspect of trustworthiness was the principle of confirmability, meaning the conclusions obtained in this study could be traced to the original data sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Erlandson et al., (1993) the audit trail is used to ascertain confirmability by looking at the processes that were used in the study, which, in turn, enables an external reviewer to make judgments about the products of the study. With this in mind, an audit trail was established and used to track individual coded remarks to the source interview from which they originated. Additionally, post-interview reflections and coding memos were created during data analysis were available for confirmation by my advisor and committee (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

**Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore the school experience of female juvenile delinquents prior to being committed to DYS. In this chapter, I have reported the design for the study, processes for data collection, and methods of analysis. I discussed the selection and characteristics of research participants, types of data collected, and the multiple means for data collection and analysis. Additionally, the methodological rigor that was established through addressing credibility, transferability, dependability and
trustworthiness was addressed. Data were collected through interviews with the participants and from field notes taken during and after the interview.

The data were initially coded deductively using the framework of school bonding as developed by Hirschi (1969) to look for evidence of such bonding, or absence, in the data collected. Then the data were analyzed inductively to explore the presence of additional codes. These codes are outside the framework of school bonding and their purpose was to enrich the understanding of the life experiences of the participants.

In Chapter Four the findings are presented and in Chapter Five the findings are discussed in light of the literature along with conclusions and recommendations of this study.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the results from the present study that explored the school experience of female juvenile delinquents prior to entering the juvenile justice system. The study was informed by school bonding theory first presented by Hirschi in 1969. This theory posits that Bonding can be tied to four components: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Findings related to these four components and their subcategories will comprise the bulk of this chapter. In additional sections, I provide general information concerning the participants and I discuss the other themes that emerged from the data: family dysfunctions, the inadequacy of school discipline, and the future.

This chapter is divided into nine sections. The first section, The Participants, contains general information concerning the participants. The second section, Attachment, addresses the relationships among the participants and their teachers and how school transfers affected it. The third section, Commitment, discusses the time and effort the participants dedicated to getting an education and how peers, both positive and negative, and behaviors affected it. The fourth section, Involvement, discusses the participants’ involvement in activities found in and around the school environment, both school related and illegal. The fifth section, Belief, discusses the participants’ understanding of the importance of school and of the safety that the school environment provided. The sixth section, Family Dysfunction, addresses the theme that emerged from the study concerning the family lives of the participants and how it influenced their school experience. The seventh section, the Inadequacy of School Discipline, discusses
how the discipline policy and procedures of the participants’ schools ultimately failed them and in some cases made the situation worse. The eighth section, The Future, discusses the future plans of the participants and how their school experiences shaped those plans. The ninth section, Summary and Overview the Remaining Chapter, summarizes the information learned and provides an introduction to Chapter 5.

The findings presented in this chapter are, as much as possible, in the vernacular of the participants. Some edits have been made to enhance reader comprehension of the material being presented. The participants are quoted using pseudonyms which cannot be traced to their actual names. My goal in this chapter is to have the participants tell their stories, in their own voice.

**Attachment**

Attachment addresses the relationships among participants and their teachers. The data suggest that effective teaching techniques and the belief that school is a safe place for the participants increased the amount of attachment the participants had with the school. Additionally, lack of roots and the perception that teachers saw their work as just a job, or had disrespectful, judgmental attitudes tended to decrease the level of attachment the participants had with their school. Each of these topics is discussed below.

**Effective Teaching**

The relationship between students and teacher is a fundamental element in school bonding (Hirschi, 1969). If the relationship is a good one, bonding will increase (Hirschi, 1969). If not, it will decrease. Each of the participants was able to identify a favorite teacher she had during her educational experience as well as identify teaching techniques which worked, and did not work, for them. The influences of a favorite teacher and teaching techniques that worked for them increased, at least for the duration they
occurred, the attachment level they had with their school. Teaching techniques which did not work decreased their attachment to school.

**Favorite teacher.** Every participant was able to identify a favorite teacher with examples of how and why that teacher made a difference, even a temporary one, in their lives. Favorite teachers were described as welcoming, open, non-judgmental, non-threatening, and willing to listen. In some cases, the favorite teacher acted as a surrogate mother to the participant.

Ellen described how she developed relationships with teachers by stating: “I'd tell some of my teachers my stories and stuff and... some of my teachers they'd offer to get... foster people to take me in.” (Page 4) She later spoke of a relationship with a specific teacher by adding, “She said like if I ever needed a place to stay she said like I could come to her house and she kept in contact with me.” (Page 5)

Fran described how a high school teacher made her feel: “When I got in there, he actually did like, the classroom was welcoming. In most classrooms, you don't really feel the welcoming; I don't know you don't really feel welcomed.” (Page 7)

Abby spoke at length about her favorite teacher:

You tell like she really cared about me like whenever she would see [how] bad I was, was doing starting to get bad grades or ...starting to like starting to like not being able to focus or starting to do stupid stuff in class she would take me out in the hallway and say, “You are better than this, I believe in you. Like you can, like you’re a very intelligent girl; ...you can do this.” She felt like another mom to me, no I would say maybe another grandma to me ‘cause like she was really there for me. (Page 7)
Each of these participants was looking for someone to fill a void in her life and sought out teachers to fill this need. Two of the participants specifically mentioned that they thought of their favorite teacher as their mom. This speaks to the family dysfunction that was a significant part of their lives, which will be discussed below. These relationships, no matter how brief they were, made a lasting impression on the participants even years later.

**Effective Teaching Styles and Techniques.** The participants described various teaching methods and techniques they experienced in their home school(s). Methods used by teachers, such as giving detailed explanations of the subject material, being patient, making the classroom environment fun, being relevant, creative, and hands-on were described by the participants as ones that worked for them and increased their attachment to school. Other methods such as sitting and reading from a textbook did not work well and had the effect of decreasing their attachment to school.

Brenda explained teaching techniques which helped her:

He explained it to me better. He didn't get mad when I didn't know something. He didn't like shut me down ever. He helped me learn like I don't know I learned a lot more in his class than any other class. (Page 5)

Debbie described her favorite teaching methods as being fun and engaging:

The best thing about being in her class was like, every time we had math and everything that every day, or it was a holiday and we were at school, she would bring in candy and we would celebrate and stuff. And, if it were Halloween, like the day before Halloween she'd decorate her room, we, we'd all decorate it and it'd be really fun. That was really fun. (Page 4)

Fran liked classes that were relevant to her life:
Ag Class was another big favorite of mine ‘cause I got to learn about animals and different things like the different types of grasses and flowers and all different kinds of stuff that he taught us, and we got to weld and work on motors and transmissions. (Page 3)

Grace explained the teaching style of a favorite teacher like this:

She always made sure she had a relationship with everyone and then like nobody was like a leader and separated and she was like really funny and she was like really bubbly and she like she taught in different ways cause like she knew like one way wouldn't work for everyone, so like it was easy for me to learn from her cause she taught in many different ways. (Page 4)

Ellen described classes that she liked and didn’t like, “I really didn't like [many] subject[s] [other] than PE and FACS (Family and Consumer Science) class…that's where you can make…you know like materials and different things like that and make food.” (Page 3)

What the girls found effective were classes that were individualized, relevant, fun or at least not boring, and, as much as possible, hands-on.

**There for the Job**

Three of the participants indicated that they felt that some of the teachers at schools they attended were there for the job and the money and not for the students. Brenda and Ellen describe their experiences with uninvolved teachers as follows:

Brenda stated, “[The teachers] kind of...acted like they were just there to work and get money. They didn't really interact with us.” (Page 8) Ellen said, “She cares like she's…just there for the money or the job.” (Page 5)
Abby described her experience as follows:

They didn’t treat each kid individually; they treated each kid like as just another kid. Like you come in here, we give you your school work and when you make a bad grade we write it down and that’s it. We’re not here to help you. We’re here to give you your work and get it and grade you. And then they either pass you on or fail you. (Page 10)

**Disrespect - Judgmental**

A difficult obstacle to establishing a student’s attachment to a school is overcoming a sense of pre-judgement of the student based on either prior bad acts of the family or student. Three of the participants described school experiences where they thought they were treated disrespectfully and judged on their actions or their peer’s perception of their actions. This disrespect/judgement was not aligned with race: one of the participants was mixed race and the other two were white. Grace described being judged by others – both by student and staff – the worst part of the school day. She added, “I think [that]… people judge you because of your past or just judge you in general. They just don't know you, but they judge you because of like rumors or something.” (Page 7) Debbie thought that, “Some teachers were disrespectful of me.” (Page 2)

Brenda felt she was judged on the basis of the behaviors of her brother who had attended the school in the past by saying, “I didn't feel connected there, it was like they didn't want me there because they'd always embarrass me and say that I’m just like my brother and a bunch of stuff. (Pages 9, 10)

When she was asked why she felt this way Brenda responded:
‘Cause I'm my own person I make my own decisions and I do my own thing. I'm not somebody else and I'm not my brother. And um I don't like … people judging people because I'm sure they’ve done something in the past that somebody's judged them for and they needed- they know how it feels ‘cause everybody's been judged everybody's judged somebody but it doesn't feel good to be judged. Cause you’re not… not accepted somewhere that you go to everyday. (Page 10)

Grace felt she was judged based on her prior drug use:

My teachers would make comments about like drugs or something to me in like a rude way. And uh, it's just like a big rumor and like the teachers would like treat me the same way like they would look at me differently and like I know you probably are like I'm imagining, they just like, I could just tell like they are behind I know they were trying to be like a teacher and stuff, but I know they were being judgmental to me because of like I was doing drugs in their classroom or something. (Page 7)

Lack of Roots

Attachment to school is based on having a relationship with a person associated with the school whether it is staff or student. A hindrance was “lack of roots” or having difficulty establishing and maintaining healthy relationships with other students and staff or frequently changing schools. All of the participants changed school districts several times during their academic career prior to being placed with DYS.

Grace said that, “Just this high school year … I did [names of five school districts], so five.” (Page 8). Debbie, not understanding how unusual it was to move this often said, “I know how many, cause there weren't that many [emphasis added] [as she names four schools].” (Page 7) Fran spoke of being repeatedly relocated from one school
to another, “I bounced from [redacted] to [redacted] and then back to [redacted] and then [redacted] again and then to [redacted] and back to [redacted] and that's where I stayed at ‘til now.” (Page 13)

Despite the moves they made, at least one of the participants seemed to establish friends with some members of the student body. Grace said:

Yea, like some of it like I knew a lot of them from like middle school and elementary school but like then it's a bigger school cause like other schools come into our school like all the … elementary schools come together to make one big school, but I still felt comfortable because I...knew most of them. (Page 9)

Another participant used her frequent moves and the reputation she developed to be left alone.

I was new [at this school] and...I [became] the top...girl....in that school. I mean...everybody knew [my reputation from previous schools]. It was...a preppy school [and I wasn't]. [When] I came in [to a room] ...everybody just shut their mouth. (Ellen, Page 7)

**Commitment**

In school bonding theory, commitment, refers to the amount of time and energy students devote to their education (Payne, Gottfredon, & Kruttschnitt, 2009) versus their desire to be involved in delinquent behavior. The overall thought is that if persons have devoted a great deal of time and effort to their education they would be less likely to be involved in delinquent behaviors due to the long-term consequences. In this case, the participants have already crossed the “delinquency line,” having been committed to the care and custody of DYS. This section will focus on various factors that influenced the
commitment level of the participants. The subcategories in this section are: reputation, peers, and behaviors of the participants.

**Reputation**

Each of the participants was very aware of the reputation they had with school staff. Four of them described their reputation in a negative sense. Of the remaining three, two of them had a positive reputation at school and a positive commitment to school. The remaining participant who described her reputation as being loud and in the middle of drama at school likely did not have a positive school reputation, based upon the behavior she disclosed during the interview.

Abby said, “I think they [school personnel] see a kid who is really highly intelligent, but usually falls into bad habits.” (Page 5) Fran said, “I think they'd say I'm a really hard worker.” (Page 5) Cathy thought that the school staff would say that, “I'm kind, caring, and that I had a big heart that I'm helpful.” (Page 4) Debbie believed, “[That] I was loud [laughter] umm, [and] always wanting to be in the drama.” (Page 3) Brenda thought that, “They called me an underachiever. Yeah, they'd probably describe me as like I wasn't there and I didn't do what I was supposed to do.” (Page 4) She added, “[They] probably [think] that I'm not real motivated and stuff and that I just don't care.” (Page 4) Ellen believed that, “A lot of them would say like she's not reliable.” (Page 5) Grace, when asked what her principal would say about her, stated, “Umm, they probably wouldn't say a lot of nice things because, I mean, a lot of the times I was like on drugs.” (Page 3)

**Peers**

Peers had a large impact on the lives of the participants. The choice of peers is important because adolescents tend to behave in ways that are consistent with the
behavior of their friends (Jessor & Jessor, 1977; Kandel, Simcha-Fagan, & Davies, 1986). Some peers provided a positive influence on the participants’ behavior and some a negative one. This section will consider the effects, both positive and negative, peers had on the participants’ bond to their school.

**Positive peers.** Five of the participants indicated that they, at least at some point in their education experience, had friends who made a positive impression on their lives. These friends were described as good people, who made good decisions, who did not hold grudges, and tried to hold them accountable. Positive friends provided good role models, as well as encouragement to the participants concerning the benefits of education. This modeling and encouragement helped increase their commitment to school.

Abby stated, “I do have some positive friends who really do care about me who hold me accountable like they want me to succeed.” (Page 8) Brenda said, “Well in Middle School I had good friends …people who did their work and people that…went to all the activities and stuff and those were my friends in school. They were good people, like they made good decisions.” (Page 5) Fran stated, “Some [friends] were in the popular crew with the name brand stuff and the ones that, I had a few with the jocks, I had a few with drama, it was a mixture of friends but I mostly hung out with the guys, ‘cause they don't hold grudges.” (Page 9)

Cathy preferred to spend time with family rather than friends:

I don't really hang out with a lot of people; I just stay to myself most of the time and stay at home. I'm not a person who goes out [and] hangs out with people. You know I'd rather spend time with my family besides going out and hanging out with people. (Page 6)
**Negative peers.** Of the seven participants, five acknowledged that they had negative peers who influenced their behavior. Some, if not all, of these peers were older than the participants, which may have been the way some of the participants obtained illegal drugs – whose influence is discussed later.

Debbie indicated, if she could do it again, she wouldn’t have friends:

> I wouldn't need friends, I’d have myself and my teachers because in the past the bullies [are] the friends [I had], the wanting to have friends is what got started with the bullies. (Page 1)

Abby described the influence that peers had on her behaviors:

> After fifth grade, when I started falling into negative things, I started getting more friends, and like everyone wanted to be friends with me then. It seemed that everyone cared about me and I think that was definitely one of the big reasons why [I] turned to negativity, to bad behavior because you know, I felt like … all of the sudden everyone wanted to be friends with me, so I should keep doing this. (Page 8)

Brenda spoke of her negative peers:

> I had, like, friends that were way older than me. The ones I hung out with outside of school. I had like friends that would smoke and drink and [play] games. They did a lot of bad things. Those were friends that I drew…to more than the positive friends. (Page 5, 6)

Ellen speaking about her negative peers stated, “But once I started getting older…I started hanging out with…the wrong people in school and…the wrong crowd. I mean it was like there were some people that just didn't like me or who didn't get to know me and stuff but.... I was a big bully in school.” (Page 5) Debbie said, “[I had] negative peers.
So, like if I was... tempted to do something, they would egg me on until I did it. They wanted me to do it so I could get in trouble.” (Page 5)

**Negative Behavior**

The participants displayed a variety of negative behaviors that demonstrated their lack of commitment to school. The behaviors ranged from being defiant and disrespectful to being under the influence of drugs. This section will address the general behaviors of the participants as well as drug use and the meltdown in middle school.

Ellen describing her behaviors said, “I just… mean I really didn't do the work… I'd either cheat or I would be disrespectful to the teachers you know and I would like act out” (Page 1). Brenda, discussing what she would like to change about her behavior, noted, “Not cussing them [school personnel and/or peers] out, not freaking out if they accuse me of something. Um. Not, pretty much not cuss them out and be disrespectful. [If I could do it over, I wouldn’t be] disrespectful and I'd be honest with them.” (Page 2)

Abby discussed her behavior and how it evolved:

Because [pause] well all up to fifth grade like I’ve always like I’ve always from like from preschool on always been a kid who has gotten in trouble with the principal and stuff like that  but, but, even though I was getting in trouble with the principal, being sent to the office for things like disruption in class or because I couldn’t sit still and not listening and stuff but like even though I did that I always got good grades up until fifth grade and then in fifth grade I started hanging out with negative people I started seeing like my mind, my mindset like my mind was like drawn to negative things. Everything, everything positive everything that could be positive was burnt from me. I just, I just got a thrill out of being bad, I got a thrill out of being with negative people and I and people saw I was drawn to
the negativity and so negative people. They knew I would get sucked into the
negative things easily so because they knew I was looking for that thrill of being
negative. Um, so, like I went really downhill in fifth grade because I only wanted
to do the negative things because I was getting tired of being good. (Page 6)

**Drug use.** While drug use is a crime in and of itself, and thus considered a
negative behavior, it appears drug use’s overall influence on participants was to decrease
their level of commitment to school. Three of the participants spoke of the influence
their personal drug use played in the school environment while another spoke of being
accused of having drugs in her possession and its consequences for her. The topic of drug
use will also be discussed through the lens of involvement, where it will be viewed as an
activity that the participants were involved in.

Grace described her drug use:

I go to my school classes and I'm usually like doped up or something on drugs so
I don't really like remember anything really from all my classes. One time I did a
lot of pills before school and I uh, [started] … thinking there was something
wrong with my teacher, and I, [pause] I got really violent with her. I got kicked
out of school and I…went to the counselor's office and everything and I just made
a really big scene. (Pages 1, 2)

Brenda said that, “Well whenever I got to school, my high would wear off so I'd
go get high [in] the bathroom.” (Page 1) Abby explaining her involvement with drugs
stated, “I was caught with pills, over the counter pills, and I was suspended.” (Page 2)
Ellen described one of her experiences, “There was this one time I was like sharing a
locker with this girl and she had drugs in my locker and they thought it was me and like, I
was just going wild and stuff.” (Page 2) Grace, when discussing the effect drugs had on
her stated, “Like I have two different personalities, like when I'm on drugs and when I'm
sober and I don't know if that makes any sense.” (Page 4)

**Meltdown.** Four participants experienced what I describe as a “meltdown” during
their upper elementary grades that lasted through middle school. This “meltdown” can
best be defined as extreme (in the participants’ eyes) changes in their social circle of the
associated with school which helped trigger radical changes in their behavior. The
changes ranged from losing friends because they had new and differing interests to being
bullied and/or becoming a bully to simply refusing to attend school. As these girls went
through their “meltdown” period the frequency and intensity of delinquent behavior
increased with a corresponding decrease in commitment to school.

Fran described her middle school experience, “I had more friends when I was in
middle school, but everybody started to branch off into different things, like most of them
was [sic] into sports and others were into drama class.” (Page 8) Abby speaking of her
behaviors stated, “I went really downhill in fifth grade because I only wanted to do the
negative things because I was getting tired of being good.” (Page 6)

Brenda described her Middle School experience:

Well like kind of in fourth and fifth grade I uh I didn't want to go so I played
hooky all the time. Stuff got hard like it wasn’t just all fun and games anymore.
Things got harder, and I tend to do that when things get hard, I quit. (Pages 3, 4)

Ellen spoke in detail about her experiences starting in fourth grade:

Yeah, like um when I was in fourth grade like I was bullied a lot and like I told
‘em about it that but I always felt like I was the odd one out. But once I started
getting older like I started hanging out with like the wrong people in school and
like the wrong crowd. I mean it was like there were some people that just didn't
like me or who didn't get to know me and stuff but like, like, I was a big bully in school. But fourth grade it was just terrible. (Pages 5, 6)

**Involvement**

In school bonding theory involvement is considered to be participation in school sponsored activities, such as sports, and in activities which are not school sponsored, such as drug use, bullying, and socializing. Participation in school sponsored events increases the bond a student has to the school and participation in activities such as drug abuse and bullying decreases the bond between student and school. Socializing, depending upon the peer set, can either be a positive or negative experience. The subcategories of this section are school sponsored activities, socializing, drug abuse as an activity, and bullying.

**School Sponsored Activities**

The participants were involved, or attempted to be involved, in conventional school sponsored activities such as sports and dances. Most of the participants were unable to participate in school sports due to poor grades, bad conduct and/or drug related issues. One was involved in Junior ROTC (Cathy), another in track and field (Fran), while others played soccer or attempted to participate in various school sponsored sports.

Fran spoke of her involvement in sports:

In my seventh grade year I was in track and field and I just did the shot-put and discus 'cause I was not a runner as most of the kids were, so they just allowed me to do the two and every now and then I would substitute for someone in the running events but other than that I wasn't in to anything. (Pages 3, 4)

Ellen stated that, “I went to like…dances after school. School dances and you know.” (Page 4) Grace tried to be involved in cheerleading, “Well I got kicked off the cheerleading team for selling pills at school. Umm, yea. And then I gave it up for drugs.”
(Page 3) Brenda said that, “I tried out for every sport and I would have got it but my grades were too low, [pause] ‘cause I was never there.” (Page 3) Debbie spoke of her lack of activities, “I was never involved in activities, I'm just going to be honest, but I did try out for cheerleading once, but I didn't make it. Well, I did make it, but I got kicked off the same day I got on, because of one of my blow-ups at school.” (Page 3)

**Drug Abuse as an Activity**

Normally drug abuse would be considered a behavior, not an activity. Due to the amount of time and effort the participants put in to support their drug use, I considered it an activity. Three of the participants spoke candidly of their drug use and how they planned their school day to accommodate it. Their drug use, of course, often conflicted with normal school activities and functions. Brenda, speaking of her drug use, stated, “Well, whenever I got to school, my high would wear off so I'd go get high [in] the bathroom. [I] smoked fake weed so it wouldn’t smell.” (Page 1)

Grace described how she used school as an arena for her drug use:

I'd wake up in the morning, and then I would go to school and meet up with my group of friends and we'd end up like leaving school. And, doing drugs I guess and then coming back to school and going to lunch and then we'd leave school for lunch and then going back and then, umm. I [would] go to my school classes and I'm usually like doped up or something on drugs so I don't really like remember anything at all really from all my classes. (Page 1)

Three of the participants had significant events that happened at school as a result of either their drug abuse or their association with students who did use drugs. Abby stated, “I was caught with pills, over the counter pills, and I was suspended.” (Page 2) Grace said:
Umm, one time I did a lot of pills before school and I uh, like thinking there was something wrong with my teacher, and I like I got really violent with her, and umm, I got kicked out of school and I like went to the counselor's office and everything and I just made a really big scene. (Page 2)

Although Ellen stated the drugs were not hers; the following event happened because of her association with other students who used drugs. She said, “There was this one time I was like sharing a locker with this girl and she had drugs in my locker and they thought it was me and like, I was just going wild and stuff.” (Page 2)

Socializing

A topic discussed by three of the participants was the socializing that occurred in school and how important it was to them. Brenda stated, “[The best part of school is getting] to hang out with your friends. You get to eat lunch [laugh]. I would say probably hang out with your friends.” (Pages 6, 7) Grace agreed, stating, “[The best part of going to school for me was] being with my friends.” (Page 6) Ellen stated that, “My focus [was on] some people [rather than academics].” (Page 9)

Abby, describing what she liked about school, said:

I like to be at school because I felt I could just chill there, be with all my people. I didn’t like it because I could get my education, I liked it because I got to do what I wanted to do and get away with it. I just wanted to go to school to hang out with my friends and do whatever I wanted to do. (Pages 11, 12)

Bullying

Bullying and being bullied is a well-researched activity in which students were willingly or otherwise involved. In the present study, what was noteworthy was the
amount of time the participants spent either bullying others or being bullied. I considered bullying as a negative activity, which reduced the participants’ commitment to school.

Fran explained the circle of bullying she experienced: “With the girls, it's either you're going to fight or I'm going hold a grudge with you and even if they do fight they still hold grudges against each other.” (Page 19) According to her, every slight was grounds for a fight, which did not settle the issue. Seemingly, grudges were never forgotten or forgiven which helped to perpetuate the bullying climate.

Four participants (Brenda, Abby, Ellen and Debbie) explained how they were involved in bullying. Brenda described how she was a victim of bullying:

[I was bullied for] lots of things really like for being too skinny, when I was younger cause I used to be really, really skinny. Um, not being as smart as I could um acting too… acting grown for my age like trying to act like I was 25 and I'm not. I got bullied for stuff I didn't...even do. I mean for stuff I didn't even know I did people said I did and I got bullied for it. Pretty much like rumors spread and you get bullied for like stuff you didn't even really do. (Page 4)

Abby said this about her bullying experience:

I was bullied really bad and I didn’t have that many friends maybe one or two. Like people would always make fun of me and they would and the only reason they would come up to me at school would be to cheat off me, or off my homework or stuff like that and like they would bully me and I would always sit alone at recess, during lunch and I had no one to hang out with because no one would talk to me. (Page 7)

Ellen described her bullying as follows:
I was a big bully in school. Like everybody knew was like, don't mess with her like I don't know I just, I was mean and cruel. I think a lot of that stems like from my bullying though that happened to me when I was like in fourth grade. (Page 5)

Debbie explained that she was bullied because of her race and for family secrets and gossip. (Page 1) She also explained what the bullying led her to do, “Every time the kids bullied me, I bullied, ... I picked on the teachers. I [took] my feelings out on the teachers instead of the students” (Page 1).

Belief

Belief, as used in school bonding theory, refers to believing in the importance of school as an institution. Believing in school helps a student embody the values of society and gives youth something solid in which to place their belief. The participants believed in school because of the opportunities they might have when they completed school. The participants framed their belief in school in terms of how important it was to them. The subcategories in this section are school as a safe place, social promotion/passed off and disconnects.

Abby discussed why she believes school is important:

School is important to me … it’s like the gateway to be anything you want to be. Education is very important to me, because if you don’t have education, you don’t have nothin’ [sic]. You can’t go through life not knowing anything [sic]. I feel if you want to have a good life you have to have a good education and if you want to be able to do the things you want to do in life [you] need to get your education and work for it. You just can’t sit around and expect it to come to you; it has to be something you need to work for an education, a good education, and making good grades and doing good in school and putting in effort that’s a first step unto
having good life and having happy life and successful and fulfilling life. (Abby, Page 10, 11)

Brenda said:

I learned like … if you don't have your education then you're not going to do anything. Like you're not going to know how to do anything in life. You're not going to know how to do anything in life. Even like the stuff that you don't need like the math, like you really don't need for the real world, you still need to know how to do those things just in case. You need your education, you just need your education you can't get a job and not have anything like your HiSET\(^1\) or diploma you're not going to get a job—it's all about money. (Page 8)

Debbie said:

[Education is] important to me because I feel like if I want to get a job and I want to be successful in life I have to go to college. And not only do I have to, it’s just the fact that I want a big house and I want a place where I can raise my children and myself and not be on the streets. (Page 8)

Ellen also talked about the need for schooling in order to have the nice things in life:

Like I mean sometimes like I just think that like it's so BS like you know but like now I do want to like you know have nice stuff and a nice car and stuff you know like when I get older now like I know the steps you take in order to be like a Juvenile Officer, I don't know, I just think I think it's really important now cause

\(^1\) The name of the assessment tool used by the Missouri Department of Secondary and Elementary Education (DESE) to obtain the High School Equivalence (HSE), which was previously referred to as the GED.
like I have to get through school to be able to do what I want in life. I don't know. But some days like I just I don't even feel like doing it. But I know it's what I have to do in order to get like I said what I want. (Page 8)

Fran discussed her belief in school by wanting to be a good example for her brother, “It's really important that I show my little brothers that no matter how hard it gets you can always push through it, ‘cause my one little brother wants to be a professional baseball and football player.” (Page 15)

Grace's point of view of school depended upon her state of mind:

Whenever I'm sober yeah, I mean I have a future goal I guess when I'm older what I want to be, so yea it is. I mean like I have to graduate [from high school] and go to college and stuff for my career that I want to be when I'm older. (Page 8)

**School as A Safe Place**

The need to feel safe in your environment is a fundamental need of everyone (Maslow, 1954). As persons sense of safety increases, so does the level of attachment to the environment that provides this feeling of security. Four of the participants identified school as a safe place. The participants provided various reasons as to why they felt safe in school. The reasons varied from the ability to escape from family problems to increasing the participants’ self-esteem. The idea and feeling of safety were almost always associated with a person, whether it be a favorite teacher as described above, friends, or a member of the school’s professional staff, such as the school counselor.

Abby described school as her safe place, “I felt that school was my escape from that [home] and I felt that school was the only place I could go to and just get away from all of it for a couple of hours of the day.” (Page 9) Grace spoke of needing reassurance,
“Getting away from that would like help me like just going to my friends would be…just a reminder that like everything’s going to be okay.” (Page 6)

Fran spoke of school being a safe haven:

I felt really connected with the school because like I said during that time I had a lot of things going on and it was kind of like a safe haven for me to go from 8:05 to 3:15. Umm, ah, I felt like nothing could really hurt me there or if I needed to talk to someone all I really needed to do was go to the Guidance Counselor or one of my teachers or one of my close friends. (Page 17)

Debbie spoke of a teacher who made her feel safe:

She … made me feel safe; [so that] I wasn't scared of myself when I did those blow-ups by holding me… she would give me a hug or fist bump or high five. She would tell me things will be okay. She was kind of like my mom at school though and she was just really cool. (Page 4)

**Social Promotion/Passed Off**

A part of belief in school is that persons have to earn their grade to succeed. Obtaining good grades and being promoted based on the actual work completed by the student is something the participants seemed to value. Social promotion --- being promoted despite what little work completed – appears to have had the effect of cheapening the value of education for them. Additionally, being passed off to another agency affected participant’s beliefs about school, contributing to their belief that school had given up on them.

Debbie had the experience of being at a school where she was given the answers to problems – she specifically mentioned math -- instead of working them out for herself. She said, “I've been to schools where they just gave you the answers, I've been to schools
where the students just came up and wrote on my paper and gave me the answer” (Page 4).

Abby believed that an education is something for which you work to succeed:
You just can’t sit around and expect it to come to you; it has to be something you need to work for an education, a good education, and making good grades and doing good in school and putting in effort that’s a first step unto having good life and having happy life and successful and fulfilling life. (Page 11)

Ellen believed she was passed off to other agencies to avoid dealing with her:
They just passed me so they didn't have to like deal with me. And they, I don't I know, they would just say like they didn't want me in their school or something. They'd rather try and send me to the Juvenile Office and have them deal with me and like they're not going to put up with me, they have already have enough defiant kids. (Page 4)

**Disconnects**

As the data were analyzed, it was apparent that there were disconnects between the way the participants spoke of their belief in school and their behaviors. It is not known if this disconnect came about as a result of their experiences in the juvenile justice system, or if they always believed in school but chose to behave differently.

The following examples illustrate this disconnect:

Abby, speaking of the importance of school, said, “School is important to me … it’s like the gateway to be anything you want to be. Education is very important to me, because if you don’t have education, you don’t have nothin’ [sic]. (Page 10) So apparently important as school was to Abby here is how she described her behavior while in school: “I just got a thrill out of being bad, I got a thrill out of being with negative
people and I and people saw I was drawn to the negativity and so negative people. They knew I would get sucked into the negative things easily so because they knew I was looking for that thrill of being negative.” (Page 6)

Brenda, explaining why school is important to her said, “I learned like … if you don't have your education then you're not going to do anything. Like you're not going to know how to do anything in life.” (Page 8) However, Brenda also realized her bad behavior had intensified throughout her school experience with the result of her wishing that her behavior had been different while in school: “Not cussing them [school officials, teachers, and peers] out, not freaking out if they accuse me of something. Um. Not, pretty much not cuss them out and be disrespectful. [If I could do it over, I wouldn’t be] disrespectful and I'd be honest with them.” (Page 2)

Ellen explained why school was important to her: “I just think I think it's really important now ‘cause like I have to get through school to be able to do what I want in life. I don't know. But some days like I just I don't even feel like doing it. But I know it's what I have to do in order to get like I said what I want.” (Page 8) This contrasts with descriptions of her actions, “I just… mean I really didn't do the work… I'd either cheat or I would be disrespectful to the teachers you know and I would like act out.” (Page 1)

Grace said, “I mean like I have to graduate [from high school] and go to college and stuff for my career that I want to be when I'm older.” (Page 8) However, at school she was usually under the influence of drugs as she states, “I go to my school classes and I'm usually like doped up or something on drugs so I don't really like remember anything really from all my classes. (Page 1)

Debbie said that, “[Education is] important to me because I feel like if I want to get a job and I want to be successful in life I have to go to college.” (Page 8) At school
she had negative peers who, “would egg me on until I did it [unstated bad behavior]. They wanted me to do it so I could get in trouble.” (Page 5)

Although these disconnects will be further discussed in the next chapter, it is apparent there was a real tension between what the participants knew to be the correct thing to do and their actual behaviors. Also, as stated above, it isn’t known if this tension came about as a result being committed to the care and custody of DYS, which gave them an opportunity to reflect on their previous behaviors, or if the participants always knew what was expected of them by society and chose to do otherwise.

**Family Dysfunction**

Five of the participants, to some extent, discussed their home lives in a negative sense. They described themselves as being worried about getting into another fight with their parents, having family problems, family secrets, charges of educational neglect, and dealing with grief. The feelings were so strong that even after being away from home for a significant period of time, several of the participants teared up during this part of the interview.

The following quotations describe the participants’ home lives:

Me and my mom we had a really bad relationship. I really don’t want to talk about it, but me and my mom just had a really bad relationship with each other. When I was home like I had to worry about everything. I had to worry about whether or not I was going to get into an argument or if I was going to be in trouble again and all that stuff. (Abby, Page 9, 12)

Sometimes like whenever I was having a lot of family problems like going, getting away from that would like help me like just going to my friends would be like, like just a reminder that like everything’s going to be okay and like even if I
didn't have my phone if I wasn't allowed to like hang out with anyone like I could get away from my family. At least for a little bit and like from my parents I guess and then be able to see my friends at school and get away from like everything that's going at home. (Grace, Page 6)

Um, [Long pause.] [Crying.] I was having a lot of family issues back then with my whole um, cause my great-grandpa died around then and I was trying to get over the fact that that was happening and then the same year my mom and her mom and her ex-husband were getting a divorce and he was kind of using me to get back at her and telling me all these lies and I didn't really know who to believe so I was, I was getting in a tug of war and then when I finally found out the truth it kind of broke me down and I was having a lot of home issues and it didn't really help the fact that the previous year, my best friend committed suicide and I kind of blame myself. (Fran, Page 5)

The girls and young women came to school with insufficient family support. As a result, they turned to people they thought they could trust; e.g., teachers, to provide some of the support they were lacking and in many ways act as a surrogate parent. They also turned to friends to provide an emotional safety net which, in effect, allowed them to be the adolescents they really were. The point to understand is that these feelings and emotions were on the hearts and minds of the participants before they entered the daily school environment and had an effect on the behaviors they displayed.

**Safety**

In addition to the family dysfunction, the participants may not have lived in a safe environment. Two of the participants Ellen and Abby specifically sought out teachers to be their surrogate mother. Ellen speaking of this relationship said, “She said like if I ever
needed a place to stay she said like I could come to her house and she kept in contact with me.” (Page 5) Abby said the following, “She felt like another mom to me, no I would say maybe another grandma to me ‘cause like she was really there for me. (Page 7) Abby also described the need to escape from home, “I felt that school was my escape from that [home] and I felt that school was the only place I could go to and just get away from all of it for a couple of hours of the day.” (Page 9) These participants may have been seeking out a woman to confide abuse issues to.

Three of the participants spoke of the how much they relied on their friends. Brenda stated, “[The best part of school is getting] to hang out with your friends. You get to eat lunch [laugh]. I would say probably hang out with your friends.” (Pages 6, 7) Grace agreed, stating, “[The best part of going to school for me was] being with my friends.” (Page 6) Ellen stated that, “My focus [was on] some people [rather than academics].” (Page 9) Additionally, Grace spoke of needing reassurance and seeking it from her friends, “Getting away from that would like help me like just going to my friends would be…just a reminder that like everything’s going to be okay.” (Page 6) This reliance on friends provided an emotional safety net that they needed to get through their day.

**Inadequacy of School Discipline**

A typical school’s disciplinary system is predicated upon the idea that students want to succeed in school. For students to succeed in school they must attend class on a regular basis. The typical consequence of school discipline is removal of students from the classroom. The expectation is that removing students from the classroom will cause their behavior to improve in an effort to avoid failure. School discipline had little, if any effect, on the behavior of the participants.
Three of the participants described the school discipline they received and how it was not successful in curbing further misbehavior and may in fact have contributed to it. Abby when describing the consequences of being caught with pills at school stated:

In my school whenever you get suspended from school...they try to help you out by sending you to an alternative school where everyone, who gets in trouble goes and so until they’re done with out of school suspension and um when I went to alternative school because I was suspended I met a lot of very bad people and that's like, that's a big part of where I went downhill. Because of um, because there's high school’ers in out-of-school suspension and a whole bunch of really bad people and like I feel like if I had never of brought the pills to school I would never have got suspended, I would never have sent to alternative school and I would never have made some of the decisions that I made. (Page 3)

Later in the interview she expressed her disdain of the disciplinary system by stating: If I got into trouble, what were they going to do, send me to In School Suspension (ISS) for the day? (Abby, Page 12)

Ellen when discussing the best part of school stated:

To be honest being in ISS all day. Like I enjoyed ISS like it was a time to kick it and it was a time to just...ISS that was basically it. I didn't enjoy doing my work or anything, I just wanted to be lazy. I slept a lot. And I didn't really pay attention. ISS, it's kind of I don't know it was like, I don't know like getting expelled, if you acted up in ISS well you got expelled and that’s all I really wanted. I got Out of School Suspension (OSS) a couple of times. And that's
what led up to me um, you know not going to school and you know getting into trouble. (Ellen, Page 6)

Debbie when describing an incident in school stated:

Well I was there at the rural district, then I got kicked out and I went to the alternative [school]. And then I flipped out at the alternative; well no, I flipped out at the district and broke a window and then I went to [the] alternative [school], and then after alternative, or at alternative I flipped out and at alternative they couldn't do it anymore ‘cause it was repetitive and I [pause] got kicked out. So I don't know if I'm going to the high school or not, I don't know if I'm going to be home schooled, I don’t know. (Debbie, Page 9)

Two of the participants believed that the overall effect of the school’s disciplinary procedures was to increase the frequency and intensity of their bad behaviors. The more they were in trouble at school, the more attention they received from their negative peers, which resulted in them wanting to get into more trouble so that they could continue to receive that level of attention. Brenda's bad behaviors began to intensify in fifth grade which resulted in more school discipline. The end result was worse behavior: “Cause I liked being, I liked being defiant and I liked, I mean I acted like hurting people in a way.” (Brenda, Page 6)

Abby had similar experiences:

[As a result of being in trouble all the time,] everything, everything positive everything that could be positive was burnt from me. I just, I just got a thrill out of being bad, I got a thrill, I got a thrill, out of being with negative people … and people saw I was drawn to the negativity and so negative people. They knew I would get sucked into the
negative things easily so because they knew I was looking for that thrill of being negative. (Page 6)

**Truancy**

Truancy is an area which falls under the school’s disciplinary system. Three of the participants’ openly discussed their prior truant behavior with no mention of school discipline. Brenda stated, “I never went to school. Well like after middle school, I didn't go to school. Well like kind of in fourth and fifth grade I uh I didn't want to go so I played hooky all the time.” (Pages 3, 4) Ellen described an incident with her principal, “There was this one time I was at school and um the principal he was making me mad or something and well I was choosing to get mad, but he was making me mad that time and I just left; I just walked out of school.” (Pages 1, 3) Grace described a typical day at school, “I'd wake up in the morning and then I would go to school and meet up with my group of friends and we'd end up like leaving school. And doing drugs I guess and then coming back to school and going to school and then we'd leave school for lunch.” (Page, 1)

Ellen discussed her choice of truancy as follows:

I think that...my mom, before I got locked up again, ...my mom was going to get me enrolled in school again and I just … refused to go and like go get enroll with her and stuff and...I wasn't being productive and...that's what I regret; because that's partially why I came back and...I could have gone to a new school, new start, everything like, but I chose to do what I wanted to do. (Pages 1, 3)

**The Future**

Towards the end of the interview, the participants were asked about their future plans. The purpose of the question was to gain an understanding of how their educational
experiences influenced their future career goals. All of the participants indicated a desire to work in a service- and/or people-orientated field. Brenda said, “[I want to] go to college, for like, ten or eleven months to get my cosmetology license.” (Page 8) Debbie stated, “I told you I like cheer leading, so I'm going to be like a cheer leading coach or gymnastics coach or be a cheerleader on a football team. That’s what I want to do.” (Page 8) Abby said, “After high school I want to, I want to go to college and I want to get my I want to go to college to get either four or five years to be a uh either [a] politician or either a federal agent, like the DEA.” (Page 11)

Ellen stated:

When I get older I [want to take] the steps [needed in] order to be like a Juvenile Officer. Because I know how it is to be like defiant and stuff and I just I want to let them know like they're not alone. Like [what] I’ve been through. Not be there to like punish them, but letting them know there are people that care you know and there are good people in the world. (Pages 8, 9)

Fran discussed becoming a Social Worker:

I want to get my Social Work degree so I can work at a DYS facility ‘cause I know how they either the boys or the girls feel to be in here and have to go through the changing process and have to be away from their family and everything. (Page 16)

Grace plans to counsel troubled youth:

I want to go to college so I can be umm, either a probation officer or a substance abuse counselor. I've experienced the same things and I want to be able to like tell kids my story [and how] I overcome my problems. I want to be able to help them and like maybe if I overcome like drug abuse and I overcome like all my
problems that I have I can help them and tell them like how I did it and maybe like be an inspiration to somebody. (Page 9)

Cathy wants to have a military career:

[I want to join the Army because] I think it's a good thing for me, ‘cause I like working out and listening to people and helping other people. That's just one of my big things; I wanna [sic] go into the Army or the military. (Page 3)

Summary

Chapter Four described study findings. Common themes emerged from the girl’s experiences and each theme was defined and illustrated with examples from the data.

Chapter Five will feature a summary of the findings. Then, I will answer the research question, and present conclusions and implications for education and practice. Finally, I will discuss recommendations for future research in light of the findings and conclusions from this study.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter begins with a summary of the findings, followed by a discussion of the findings in the context of existing literature. Limitations of the study are then presented. A discussion of the implications and recommendations for practice, education and future study follow. Finally, conclusions of the research are given.

Summary of Findings

The summary of the findings of this study are presented here. They are organized around the research question that guided the study which was:

What was the school experience of female juvenile delinquents prior to entering the juvenile justice system?

As reported in Chapter 4, a majority of themes that were gleaned from the data was within the four tenets of School Bonding Theory. Such a list, while useful in its own right, does not fully describe the school experience of the participants.

The majority of the participants simply wanted to get through their school day with a minimum amount of trouble from both school officials and peers, while understanding that they would face, and in some instances instigate, bullying, as well as endure disrespectful teachers and administrators, participate in classes they considered boring, and be involved with interpersonal drama among peers. They often had to deal with the consequences of their reputations or those of a family member. Some of the participants had teachers who participants believed viewed their position as simply a job and had little interest in helping students. An additional factor they faced was the lack of permanence in any location long enough to develop community ties. They tried to be
involved in positive school activities, such as sports and cheerleading; but were prohibited from doing so due to grades and inappropriate behavior(s). Some of the participants had what I termed “a meltdown” starting in upper elementary and lasting through middle school which set the stage for future school failure. As a result, they had little, if any bond to their school but tolerated it as a place to socialize with their friends, or, in some cases, to satisfy the requirements of their Juvenile Officer.

Some of the participants used school as a venue for their drug use and as a way to be involved with and to be accepted by others. I believe that many of those who used drugs did so as a means of self-medication in an effort to deal with and escape their problems, both at home and at school. For at least two participants, drug abuse was the highlight of their day.

On a more positive note, each participant was able to name an important teacher in their lives and why that teacher was important. These teachers truly made a difference in the lives of the participants, even if it was just for a season. This suggests that at some point, they had a good school experience and some bond to the school. Another positive note is that several of the participants viewed school as a safe place to be and, I believe, attended school partly for the sense of safety it provided.

**Discussions of Findings**

The findings of this study are discussed in light of the literature surrounding School Bonding Theory. When Hirschi (1969) first presented this theory that was related to the causes of juvenile delinquency, it was broken down into four main tenets of attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. The factors he found that affected each tenet were discussed with respect to that tenet only. This is the approach that I am taking when summarizing the finding of the present study. In addition, the themes that
emerged from the data that are not directly related to School Bonding Theory are
discussed.

**Attachment**

In school bonding theory, attachment refers to the interpersonal relationships
between individual students and school staff (Hirschi, 1969). Numerous studies indicate
that the teacher-student relationship is recognized to be a formalized interpersonal
association between an authority figure and a subordinate who interact on nearly a daily
basis (Bartlett, 2005; Larson, Wilson, Brown, Furstenberg, & Verma, 2002). The data
from this study suggest that effective teaching and the idea that school is a safe place for
the participants increased the amount of attachment the participants had with the school,
while lack of roots and the idea that teachers were there strictly to do a job or had
disrespectful, judgmental attitudes tended to decrease the level of attachment the
participants had for the school. Each of these topics is discussed below.

**Effective teaching.** Each of the participants had at least one teacher who
connected with them at some point in their educational experience. The reasons the
participants gave included the teacher taking a special interest in them, acting as a
surrogate mother, being welcoming, open, non-judgmental, non-threatening, and willing
to listen. These relationships were very important to the participants and made lasting
impression even years after the fact (Wolin & Wolin, 1993). It appears the participants
were looking for a positive influence in their lives. The two participants that described
their favorite teacher as a mother were looking for a positive female influence in their
lives, a person they could trust, a person perhaps they could tell their secrets to. In any
event, these teachers, at least for an interim, increased the attachment the participants had
with the school. However, this increased level of attachment was not enough to overcome
the other negative factors found in their school environment.

The participants described teaching techniques and methods that helped them to
engage in class. These methods were often individualized and considered to be relevant
and “hands-on.” Classes described as being fun also tended to draw in the participants.
These methods increased the level of attachment the participants had with the school.

Lack of roots. Attachment to school is predicated upon having a relationship with
a person at the school whether it is a student or a member of the school’s staff
(Goodenow, 1993; Moos, 1979). A hindrance to establishing a relationship with a person
is the lack of time spent with them. When a student moves several times during a school
year, it is very unlikely that a supportive relationship can be established. This was a
common factor with all of the study’s participants. Jackson and Davis (2000) found that
the quality of the relationships between a school’s staff and its students are vital in
developing an effective instructional program and that these relationships take time to
develop and nurture. The frequent moves and school changes experienced by the
participants inhibited the development of meaningful relationships between the
participants and their teachers which, in turn, decreased the attachment to the school they
were attending.

There for the job. As reported in Chapter 4, three of the participants indicated
that they experienced unsatisfactory interactions with some of their teachers. The
common descriptions included: the teacher only being present to work and get money, a
failure to interact with the students, and the students not being seen and treated as an
individual. If positive relationships as described by Thayer-Bacon and Bacon (1996)
increase a student’s attachment to school, then, negative relationships would have the effect of decreasing the students’ attachment to school.

**Disrespect – judgmental.** Three of the participants felt that they were in some way judged by either their own actions or the actions of family members. This is supported by Brophy and Good (1970) and Barr and Parrett (2001), who assert that many teachers treat students differently based on preliminary perceptions and expectations. Part of the issue as Smith (2000) and Barr and Parrett (2001) suggest may be that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are judged using middle class values (Payne, 2005). The attitudes demonstrated by these teachers would be perceived by the students involved as a lack of respect. If showing respect to a student as described by Wentzel, (1997), increases a student’s ability to engage and be productive in the classroom, then any disrespect, real or perceived, would likely decrease the student’s classroom engagement and productivity. The end result was resentment on the part of the participants, which lowered their attachment to school. Most children do not fail due to their cognitive abilities but because they feel unwelcome, detached, or alienated from significant others in the educational environment (Kohn, 2006; Barr & Parrett, 2001).

**Commitment**

In school bonding theory, commitment is regarded as the amount of time and effort students dedicate to getting an education (Payne, Gottfredon, & Kruttschnitt, 2009) which, in turn, would reduce the likelihood of the person to break the law because of the potential to lose all that they have attained. In Chapter 4, commitment was discussed in the context of the various influences the participants faced during the school day and what effect these influences had on their long-term educational goals. The data suggest
several things affected the participants’ level of commitment and each will be discussed below.

**Reputation.** As reported in Chapter 4, each of the participants was very aware of the reputation they had with school staff. The reputation of the participants seems to have shaped the school’s expectations of them. Lilly et al. (1995) and Agnew (2009) suggest that youth who conform to the wishes of their parents and teachers have a tighter bond with society with more to lose than if they were to deviate from those ideals; however, this is predicated upon positive influence and high expectations of both parents and teachers. This was not true in the case of the participants; the parental expectations, if they existed at all, were at best a mixed message and at worst low; the expectations of the teachers, due to the students’ reputation were low. As a result, the participants had little to lose by engaging in delinquent activities. The resultant delinquent activities resulted in a lower commitment to school and an overall lower bond to the school as a whole.

**Peers.** Peers were influential in the lives of all of the participants. The original theory posited by Hirschi (1969) described the relationship between juvenile delinquents and negative peers, showing that delinquent acts are seldom done in isolation and that the delinquents’ peers approved and often played a role in their actions. Five participants discussed negative peers who influenced their various behaviors. Some, if not all, of these peers were older than the participants which may have been the way some of the participants obtained illegal drugs – whose influence will be discussed later. Thornberry (1987) and Brannigan (1997), found that the overall effect of negative peers was increased delinquent behavior with a corresponding decrease in school commitment.

Although positive peers are not discussed in the original theory, it can be surmised that positive peers can have a positive influence on an individual’s behavior.
This is indicated in the findings, in which three of the participants indicated that at some
time in their educational experience, they had positive peers who were described as good
people who made good decisions, who did not hold grudges, and tried to hold participants
accountable. Positive friends provided good role models, as well as encouragement to the
participants concerning the benefits of education. This modeling and encouragement
helped increase their commitment to school.

**Negative behavior.** The participants displayed a variety of negative behaviors
which demonstrated their lack of commitment to school. The behaviors ranged defiance
and disrespect to being under the influence of drugs. Their behaviors were a result of
many factors in their lives and may be related to lack of academic achievement (Barr, &
Parrett, 2001; Morrison, Anthony, Storino, & Dillon, 2001; Zhang et al., 2007). Hirschi
(1969) has shown that students with a pattern of behavioral problems are more likely to
commit acts of delinquency.

**Drug use.** While drug use is a crime in and of itself, the overall influence of drug
use tended to decrease the commitment level of the participants who chose to engage in
that behavior. Abuse of drugs may be an attempt to self-medicate anxiety or depression
or it could be an attempt to escape life’s realities (Mulvihill, 2005).

**Meltdown.** As stated in Chapter 4, four of the participants experienced what I
describe as a “meltdown” starting in upper elementary and lasting through middle school.
The transition to middle school is more difficult for students who have academic and
social deficits (Simons-Morton, Crump, Haynie, & Saylor, 1999). During this period of
“meltdown” there were extreme changes in the behaviors of the girls and may have been
the start of their delinquent activities. Thornberry (1987), suggests that during middle
adolescence commitment to school shows a greater impact on the youth’s behavior.
compared to early adolescence because the school environment becomes increasingly important. Additionally, Thornberry (1987) expects commitment to school to have significant direct and indirect (mediated by attachment to parents and association with delinquent peers) effects on delinquent behavior at early adolescence. As these girls went through their “meltdown” period, their frequency and intensity of delinquent behavior increased with a concurrent decrease in commitment to school. Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming, and Hawkins (2004) suggest that the abrupt changes in teaching practices, such as changing classes hourly, having multiple teachers, and the school environment changing from student-centric to teacher-centric in middle school are partially responsible in the decrease in school commitment, which results in a decreased bond to the school.

Involvement

The participants were involved, or attempted to be involved, in activities which appealed to their interests and ability. As reported in Chapter 4, one was involved in Junior ROTC, another in Track and Field, while others played soccer or attempted to participate in various school sponsored sports. Some were successful; most were not. Some chose drug abuse and abusive behavior over team sports. All students, especially marginalized ones, need to feel they belong to the group and are important to it and that they share common ground with their peers (Glasser, 1993; Shalaway, 1989; Tomlinson & Edison, 2003). Factors which inhibited involvement in school sponsored activities were their drug use and disciplinary records. As a person’s involvement in socially accepted activities increase, the bond they have for the institution sponsoring the activity will increase; but when a student cannot participate in an activity due to such matters as drug use, an opportunity to provide a positive influence in that person’s life is lost.
Overall, it appears, their level of involvement in socially accepted activities was very low, which decreased the bond between them and their school.

**Socializing.** For three of the participants socializing was essentially the reason they came to school. I believe that this experience allowed them be the adolescents they were and not act like the adults they were expected to be at home. Further, socializing offered them a setting in which they could trust others and also provided participants a stable environment. Socializing gave them a reason to come to school, which increased their involvement in school; but, it was not enough to curtail their delinquent activities.

**Belief**

Belief refers to the existence of a common value system within the society whose norms are being violated (Hirschi, 1969). Lilly, Cullen, and Ball (1995), suggest that belief is comprised of opinions and impressions that are dependent on constant social reinforcement. Believing in school helps a student embody the values of society and gives youth something concrete in which to place their belief. A part of the belief system of school is an understanding of why things are done the way they are and an understanding of respect for authority figures. The participants, in a cognitive sense, understood that success in school would help them to fulfill their various dreams and give them the ability to take care of themselves. Thornberry (1987) stated, “Belief in conventional values represents the granting of legitimacy to such middle class values as education, personal industry, financial success, and the like” (p. 866). Shouse (1996) describes schools as communities whose moral order is built upon respect for authority and the consistent enforcement of these norms. The belief the participants had in school did not extinguish their delinquent behaviors which is contrary to exiting literature. This is further discussed in the theme of disconnects.
School as A Safe Place. Four of the participants described school as a safe place for them. The idea of safety was associated with a person, whether it be a favorite teacher, friend, or a member of the school’s administration, such as the school counselor. This may be partially attributed to the need to find a surrogate family which could provide the atmosphere of support and encouragement that was missing from their home environments (Barr & Parrett, 2001). According to Deci and Ryan (2000), the way these needs are met determines the level of belief the student has in the system. This feeling of safety increased the level of belief the participants had in their school.

Social Promotion/Passed On. Two of the participants were of the opinion that they were socially promoted through school, or passed off to other agencies, in an effort for the school to not have to deal with their behaviors. This opinion decreased the credibility of the school in the mind of the participants affected, which in turn, decreased the level of belief they had in the school system.

Summary

In many respects, School Bonding Theory can be likened to a scale with all negative on the left end of the spectrum and all positive on the right end. When this metaphor is applied to the study’s participants, for five participants of the scale was tilted
in the negative direction. For one participant, the scales favored the positive end. For another, the scale was somewhat balanced.

**Additional Themes**

In this section, the additional themes not directly connected to School Bonding Theory will be discussed as they emerged from the data.

**Disconnects**

All of the participants were able to verbalize the importance of school. However, the behavior many participants displayed was not congruent with their cognitive knowledge. I do not know if they were telling me what I might have wanted to hear, or perhaps their involvement in the juvenile justice system had instilled in them the belief of the importance of school. Another option, which I believe is the most likely based on the way they discussed it during the interview, is that their “espoused theory” (Argyris, 2002) is that school is important; but their “theory-in-use” (Argyris, 2002) is that school is not important; as demonstrated by their behavior. A challenge for school leaders is to help at-risk students change their “theory-in-use” to one of acceptance of the belief that success in school will facilitate success in life.

**Family Dysfunction**

According to Snyder and Sickmund (2008), it is important to understand that family structure is primarily not the reason a child commits juvenile offenses; but it is one of the conditions often linked to it. This is supported by the data obtained from this study. Five of the participants, to some extent, discussed their home lives in a negative sense. They described themselves as being worried about getting into another fight with their parents, having family problems, family secrets, charges of educational neglect, and dealing with grief. The feelings were such that, after being away from home for a
significant period of time, several of the participants teared up during this part of the interview. The important point to realize is that before the school day began, home issues were on the hearts and minds of the participant, which, in turn, negatively, affected their behavior at school.

**Safety**

Four of the participants provided indications that when they were not living in a safe environment. They turned to school to find the safety they were lacking both physically and emotionally.

**Inadequacy of School Discipline**

As reported in Chapter 4, three of the participants had long histories of being involved in the school discipline process. Not surprisingly, increasing the level of discipline received did not extinguish the unwanted behaviors and may have in fact contributed to them. Removing students from academic and social instruction on a long term basis can both help to create and then intensify a student’s downward spiral and encourage activities such as drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, dropping out of school, and criminal behavior (Barr, & Parrett, 2001; Morrison, Anthony, Storino, Cheng, Furlong, & Morrison, 2001). At least one of the participants used the school discipline process to, in effect, not attend classes. She often went to school with the sole purpose of receiving in-school suspension for the day so that she could do what she wanted to do. “For at-risk students, the most consistently documented outcome of suspension and expulsion appears to be further suspension and expulsion, and perhaps school dropout” (Skiba & Knesting, 2001, p. 35).
The Future

All of the participants indicated they wanted to pursue a career in various forms of helping others. The majority of the responses revolved around law enforcement, although one wanted to become a hair stylist. These responses were unexpected; however, I believe it is because individuals who are employed at these types of occupations have, up to this point, been among the most influential people in participants’ lives. As seen by their language usage (i.e., incomplete sentences, lack of age appropriate vocabulary, and lack of formal register) they have many obstacles to overcome to be successful in these occupations.

School Bonding Theory – a reflection

When this study began, I knew that School Bonding Theory would provide a good starting point in helping to understand the school experiences of the participants. I knew that along the way I would find signs of some, if not all, of the correlates I listed in Chapter 2. What I did not expect to find was how much family dysfunction and its resulting trauma affected the school experiences of the participants. These experiences brought on feelings of lack of safety and security and were the basis of the lack of trust found in the lives of the participants. The participants sought to fill these deficits in their lives through relationships at school. They found teachers to act as surrogate parents and used their relationship with peers as a means to help provide the emotional safety lacking in their lives.

Another unanticipated finding was the concept of “espoused theory” vs. theory-in-use” (Argyris, 2002). The actions of the participants did not match their stated belief in school. I do not know if the belief they expressed came about after their commitment to
the Juvenile Justice System, or if it was a reflection of how society views the value of education.

I believe it is in these unexpected findings that the literature of School Bonding Theory has been expanded and would be a worthwhile endeavor to pursue.

Limitations

The limitations of this study should be considered when considering the findings, drawing conclusions, as well as stating implications for future research and practice. What follows is a discussion of limitations related to the method, context in which the study occurred, and the researcher.

Limitations Related to Methods

Some limitations are specifically related to the methods employed in the study. The number of participants, setting, and lack of prior research to inform the inquiry constituted limitations that are discussed below.

**Number of participants.** The first limitation was the number of participants involved in the study. The experiences of the individuals within the study varied and it is reasonable to assume the experiences of individuals in the general population of female juvenile delinquents would vary as well. However, the details regarding their school experiences before entering the juvenile justice system have been shared so that others might determine the degree and suitability of transferability to another situation. The participants were seven young women who ranged in age from 14 to 17 who lived, prior to their DYS commitment, across central Missouri.

**Setting.** All of the participants were committed to the same juvenile justice facility.
Lack of prior research. Another limitation of the study is the lack of qualitative research on School Bonding Theory in general and specifically the school experiences of female juvenile delinquents prior to entering the juvenile justice system. The shortage of available information pointed to a need for the study, but this research only serves to establish a starting point for future studies. Potential findings that were unnoticed in this study will be revealed only by further research.

Researcher-Related Limitations

Finally, my own limitations as the researcher created potential limitations for the study. First, my status as a male studying the school experiences of female juvenile delinquents is a potential limitation. My life experiences, though similar in some respects, are completely different from that of the participants. As a male, I will never fully understand the effect of the various traumas experienced by the participants. Second, my assumptions upon engaging the study are important for determining transferability of this study to other contexts. As noted in Chapter One, an assumption of this study is that the participants had experiences that are pertinent to the study and have the capacity to express these experiences in a manner that can be understood by the researcher. In the same vein, an assumption being made was participants trusted me enough to tell their story and did not fabricate a story I want to hear.

Although any qualitative study captures the specific experiences, thoughts, and feelings of the participants at a given moment, this study may be limited by the relatively small number of interviewees and by the selection process, essentially a convenience sample of female juvenile delinquents that were committed in my region of Division of Youth Services. A more geographically and culturally diverse sample may have yielded different findings. Further, it is possible that the participants’ perceptions and memories
of their prior school experiences were shaped by their prior commitment and length of
time they were committed to DYS.

**Conclusions**

The major conclusions from this study are the following: (1) Bonds are easier the
break than they are to make. All of the participants started their school experience
seemingly well bonded to their school, yet by Middle School this bond had largely been
broken. (2) Students come into the juvenile justice system with a limited or nonexistent
bond to school. This creates a significant barrier for juvenile justice educators to
overcome and may ultimately lead to school failure. (3) Students in the juvenile justice
system may have an espoused theory versus a theory in action. They may say that they
believe in school and cognitively may understand the value of school; but, their actions
often prove otherwise. (4) Ultimately, all students, especially those who have experienced
family dysfunction and the trauma which may result from said dysfunction, need to feel
and be safe in their educational environment.

**Implications for Research**

School Bonding Theory has been primarily studied from a quantitative viewpoint.
While valuable in its own right quantitative research tends not to focus on the individuals
participating in the study. Therefore, I believe that more qualitative studies need to be
completed, using the framework of School Bonding Theory, with the goal of capturing
the stories of participants. Implications for future research include a larger number of
participants and involving multiple locations. Additionally, more research needs to be
completed in the areas of female-on-female bullying, on the effect of the transition from
elementary school to middle school on at-risk students, and how family dysfunction in
their prior and current lives affects classroom management. Future research in this area
should focus on the trust and stability that school, teachers, and peers provide to at-risk students, particularly girls and young women.

**Implications for Practice**

So what can we, as school leaders, take from this study? First, and perhaps most important is to realize there are no specific steps an administrator or teacher leader can take to prevent a student from being committed to the Juvenile Justice System. We cannot and should not attempt to control every aspect of a student’s life.

With that being said, there are several important takeaways from this study. I believe the most important takeaway is that all school personnel, from the superintendent to the custodian, need to be able to separate the difference between the student and their various behaviors. Instead of an “Us” against “The Student and Their Behaviors” attitude, we need to adopt an attitude of “Us and the Student” against “Their Behaviors,” in effect following the Special Education model of separating a child from their disability. Each student, especially ones the most at-risk for failure, needs to be valued and respected as a person and not judged based on her actions or the actions and reputation of family members. We, as educators need to realize that perhaps the loud, defiant students, or the quiet ones sitting in the corner by themselves, may be facing unimaginable trauma every day and the behavior being displayed is the coping mechanism they use to survive. We need to talk less and listen more.

At-risk girls do have several specific needs that school personnel can meet. The findings from this study support the work of Anderson et al. (2006) which are:

1. girls who are at-risk for school failure and juvenile delinquency need healthy and productive relationships with teachers and other school personnel,
2. identification of girls at-risk for school failure and juvenile delinquency needs
to take place before they reach the sixth grade, (3) involvement in extracurricular activities could be a deterrent factor in decreasing at-risk behaviors in such girls, and (4) teachers and other school personnel need to be cognizant of the influence their behavior has on such girls (p. 23).

To further amplify these remarks, once a girl has been identified as at-risk for school failure or juvenile delinquency, interventions need to be started to provide her with the support she needs to be successful in the school environment. These interventions need to stay in place as long as needed. The more successful she is in the school environment, the less likely she will enter the Juvenile Justice System.

All school personnel need to understand that they are quite likely the most stable influences in the lives of at-risk students, particularly girls, and the students will cling to every word, positive or otherwise, that is spoken to them. Many times the behaviors they exhibit are purposeful, consciously or not, with the goal of gaining attention, positive or otherwise. With this in mind, I believe that all students, especially those we deem as at-risk, be given a mentor – an adult the student can talk to – to help the student through the difficult transitions that occur as they move through the educational system. Mentors may serve as persons in whom the students can trust, as well as provide a source of constant stability in their lives. This mentoring relationship may act as a preventative measure to stop young people from entering the Juvenile Justice System.

Second, all students have a story; each is different and each deserves to be heard and valued. Third, the disciplinary system used by most school districts is broken, if it ever truly worked before. Suspending and/or expelling a student who does not want to be at school reinforces the behaviors that preceded the discipline, meaning that alternatives must be identified to address the student’s underlying issues. Fourth, when students,
especially young ones, are assigned to an alternative setting, for an extended period of
time, they need to have support in the form of counseling both to see how they are doing
emotionally and to minimize the adverse effect that older students will potentially have
on the student (or, in lieu of that, provide adequate funding to minimize multiage
grouping). Fifth, the citizenship requirements for extracurricular activities such as sports
or music may prevent some students from participating because of prior involvement in
the school discipline system. This, in turn, may push at-risk students into becoming
involved in delinquent activities by default. Sixth, I know from both research and practice
that many of the young adults – both male and female – who are adjudicated to the
Juvenile Justice System will ultimately end up in the adult correctional system. I also
know from research and practice that secondary educational completion (high school
diploma, HSE, GED, etc.) is one factor that may have the ability to stop this from
occurring. We, as educators, need to ensure that as many students as possible attain this
completion. Seventh, we need to understand that school is often the safest place for
students and that providing a safe environment can be the most important thing we can
accomplish.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore the school experiences of female juvenile
delinquents prior to their commitment to the Juvenile Justice System. To my knowledge,
little, if any research exists that focuses on the female population and uses their voice to
describe their experiences. The data from this study call into question many current
practices used in Secondary Education, including the way students are disciplined, the
criteria used to determine eligibility for participation in school sponsored teams and
clubs, and the instructional delivery methods used in the classroom. Further research is
needed in the areas of female bullying, on the transition from elementary school to middle school and to high school, and how family dysfunction affects classroom management. My hope is that this research will provide a small stepping stone to improve the school climate for those students who are the most at-risk, which will, in turn, improve the climate for all students.
References


APPENDIX A

Parental Permission Form

I am requesting permission to interview your daughter for a research project called School Bonding Theory and Female Juvenile Delinquency. The interview will be used as a part of my dissertation research, which is required to complete my doctorate degree at the University of Missouri. The project is about her experiences in school before coming to DYS. The purpose of the project is to explore the school experiences of the participants and to compare and contrast them against what is known as School Bonding Theory.

The interview will be conducted in the group meeting room at the Rosa Parks Center. I will ask her questions for about 2 hours. The time will be broken down into 2 sessions of about an hour apiece. The interview will be audio recorded and later transcribed into a computer document. After the interview is transcribed, I will show it to your daughter to see if it is correct. If she agrees that it is correct, I will use the applicable parts to complete my study.

I am a mandated reporter which means that I am required to report any information that discloses abuse of any type. Additionally, I am required to report any information concerning the commission of a felony offense.

Before I interview your daughter, I will ask her permission or assent. She has the right to say no. She can stop the interview when she wants to and does not have to answer any questions she doesn’t want to. If it is decided later to not use her data, I won’t. The data, with the exception of her name, will be kept for 7 years after the study is completed.

The interview period will be between September and December 2014.

Before you decide whether or not to let me interview her, I need to explain how I will use the information she provides me and how I will protect her rights.

- Nobody will know her name but me.
- Instead of her name, I will use a pseudonym (a totally different name) in my dissertation.

To summarize:

- Your daughter does not have to do this.
- The interview will be audio recorded.
- She can stop anytime she wants.
- She does not have to answer every question.
- If she or you decide later to not use her data, I won’t.
- The data she provides will be used in my dissertation.
- The data, with the exception of her name, will be kept for seven years after the study has been completed.
- Nobody but me will know your daughter’s name.

If you have any questions:

- You may send me an e-mail at Edwin.Hall@mail.missouri.edu or my advisor at DonaldsonJ@missouri.edu.
- You may call me at any of the following numbers:
  - 573-449-2939 (office)
  - 573-544-6748 (cell).
- You may call my advisor Dr. Joe Donaldson at 573-289-0725.
- If subjects have questions about their rights as a human subject participant, they can call the Campus Institutional Review Board at 573-882-9585 or email umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu.

If I have your permission to interview your daughter, please print your name on the next page and sign it on the bottom.
I, __________________________, give permission for my daughter __________________________ to be a part of the study titled School Bonding Theory and Female Juvenile Delinquency being done by Edwin Hall.

I understand that:

- Your daughter does not have to do this.
- The interview will be recorded.
- She can stop anytime she wants.
- She does not have to answer every question.
- If she or you decide later to not use her data, I won’t.
- The data she provides will be used in my dissertation.
- The data with the exception of her name will be kept for 7 years.
- Nobody but me will know your daughter’s name.

Signed: _______________________________________ Date: __________________
APPENDIX B

Child Assent Recruitment Form

I am asking you to help me with a research project titled School Bonding Theory and Female Juvenile Delinquency. Your help is needed to help me complete my dissertation research, which is required to complete my doctorate degree at the University of Missouri. The project is about your experiences in school before coming to DYS. The project is about how connected, or close, you were to your last public school. I hope to put all of the answers given to me by everyone together in a type of a story that I can show others to let them know how you feel about school. I will not ask any questions about why you are in DYS.

I am a mandated reporter which means that I am required to report any information that discloses abuse of any type. Additionally, I am required to report any information concerning the commission of a felony offense.

I will ask you questions for about 2 hours. The time will be broken down into 2 sessions of 1 hour apiece. When I am asking questions, I will record your answers. I will take your answers and make a story with them. I will ask you to read the story to see if it is correct. I will take your story to see which parts match what I am studying. This will be what is in my report.

You do not have to do this. You do not have to answer any question you don’t want to.

I will ask questions from September to December 2014.

Before you decide to let me ask you questions, I need to explain how I will use the answers you give me and how I will protect your rights.

- I will not tell anybody your name.
- Instead of your name, I will use a code in my report.
- Nobody will know your code except me and my advisor.

To summarize:

- You don’t have to do this.
- Your answers will be recorded
- You can stop anytime you want.
- You don’t have to answer every question.
- If you decide that you don’t want me to use your answers, I won’t.
- Your answers will be used in a report.
- Nobody but me will know your name.

If you have any questions:

- Your staff may send me an e-mail at Edwin.Hall@mail.missouri.edu or my advisor at DonaldsonJ@mail.missouri.edu.
- You or your staff may call me at any of the following numbers:
  - 573-449-2939 (office)
  - 573-544-6748 (cell).
- You or your staff may call my advisor Dr. Joe Donaldson at 573-289-0725.
- If you have questions regarding your rights as human subject participant, you or your staff may call the Campus Institutional Review board at 573-882-9585.

If you want to help me please write your name on the next page and sign it on the bottom.
I, __________________________, want to be a part of the research project called School Bonding Theory and Female Juvenile Delinquency being done by Edwin Hall.

I understand that:

• I don’t have to do this.
• I can stop at any time.
• I don’t have to answer every question.
• My answers will be in a report.
• My name will not be used in the report.
• My answers will be kept for 7 years after the study is completed.

Signed: _________________________________ Date: ______________

Thank you.
Edwin D. Hall
573 – 544 – 6748
Edwin.hall@mail.missouri.edu
APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

1. Tell me a story that would help me understand what it was like for you at school.
   a. Is there anything else?

2. Tell me a story about a good day at school you would like to do over.
   a. Is there anything else?

3. Describe a day at school you would like to do over? What was it about that day you would like to do over?

4. What was your favorite class?
   a. Why was it your favorite?

5. What was your least favorite?
   a. Why?

6. What activities were you involved in?

7. If we asked your teachers and principals to describe you, what do you think they would say?

8. If your friends were to describe you, what do you think they would say?

9. Tell me a story about your favorite teacher.
   a. Why were they special?
   b. Is there anything else?

10. Tell me about your friends in school.

11. How many different schools did you attend?

12. If you attended more than one, which one did you like one best? Why?

13. Is school important to you? Why or why not?
Edwin Hall
Education Supervisor
Northeast Regional Office
1240 East Brown School Road
Columbia, Missouri 65202-9454

Dear Ed:

I am in receipt of your application to conduct research on School Bonding Theory and Female Juvenile Delinquency. I have reviewed your proposal and support the research project you have submitted.

Thank you for your commitment to providing quality education services to the young people in our custody.

Sincerely,

Phyllis Becker
Interim Director
APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH/STUDY
PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT LEGIBLY - ATTACH ADDITIONAL PAGES AS NECESSARY

TITLE OF STUDY
SCHOOL BONDING THEORY AND FEMALE JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

RESEARCHER(S)
Edwin D. Hall (Ed.D. candidate) and Dr. Joe Donaldson (advisor)

ORGANIZATION
University of Missouri

PHONE NUMBER
(573) 449-2939

FAX NUMBER
(573) 449-8766

ADDRESS

BEGIN DATE
08/01/2014

END DATE
12/01/2014

PUBLICATION INTENTIONS
Dissertation and possibly professional journal articles

ENDORSEMENTS

A. GENERAL INFORMATION REGARDING STUDY (ATTACH ADDITIONAL PAGES AS NECESSARY)

1. ARE YOU A TENURE-TRACK OR FULL-TIME RESEARCH FACULTY MEMBER AT AN ACREDITED INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION ENGAGED IN SCHOLARLY RESEARCH?

☐ Yes Institution/University: ____________________________

☐ No

2. HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY RECEIVED APPROVAL FOR THIS RESEARCH PROJECT FROM AN INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)?

☐ Yes Institution/University: I am awaiting the needed forms to complete the MU IRB process (PLEASE ATTACH A COPY OF THIS APPROVAL)

☐ No

3. HAVE YOU RECEIVED A LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM A DIVISION DIRECTOR WITHIN THE MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES?

☐ Yes From: ____________________________ (PLEASE ATTACH A COPY OF SUPPORT LETTERS)

☐ No

4. DESCRIBE THE PURPOSE/GOAL OF THE STUDY:
The purpose of the study is to explore the school experience of the female juvenile delinquents. This study will be framed around school bonding theory first presented by Hirschi in 1969. This will be accomplished by asking current female juvenile offenders about their school experience to see what activities, types of teachers, programs, and etc. drew them closer to school and which did not.

5. DESCRIBE THE METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:
I am using school bonding theory as the theoretical framework of the study. I am using the qualitative descriptive method as attributed to Sandelowski (2000) as my research paradigm. This process is an interpretive one which does not require researchers to move far from their original data. The researchers conducting this type of study stay close to their data and to the surface of words and events to summarize, organize and discuss the nature of the phenomena being studied. See 14

6. DESCRIBE THE SPECIFIC DATASET INFORMATION (INCLUDING TRANSACTION CODES, IF APPLICABLE) THAT IS REQUESTED.
The only identifying data collected will be first name and perhaps last initial (in case of two participants with the same first name). This information will be used to assign pseudonyms and will not be used in any other manner.

The data that will be published will be obtained from the interviews.

MO 865-454 (9-11)
The only identifying data collected will be first name and perhaps last initial (in case of two participants with the same first name). This information will be used to assign pseudonyms and will not be used in any other manner.

The data that will be published will be obtained from the interviews.

All personnel associated with the study have had Human Subject Research Protection training as mandated by MU.

The following measures will be in place to ensure the confidentiality of the participants: pseudonyms in lieu of the actual names of the participants will be used any reports and/or publication of the research; access to the raw data – which will contain pseudonyms – obtained during the study will be limited to the researcher, transcriber (if used), coder, and faculty advisor. The resultant data obtained during the study will be encrypted, stored in a safety deposit box and will be destroyed 7 years after the study is completed.

The table linking the pseudonyms and first names will be electronically destroyed (erased and scrubbed).

The results of the research that will be released will not contain any personal identifying data. Additionally, no descriptive information which would lead to the identification of the participants will be obtained. For the purposes of this study, descriptive information includes the following: the hometown of the participants, the committing offense, familial relationships between participants, the names of the parent guardian, and the specific age attached to any pseudonym. It is anticipated that the name of the school district(s) the participants attended will be obtained during the interview. This information will not be used in any report and or publication that are derived from the data obtained during the study.

Taking into consideration the safety of the group, all residents will be asked to participate. Parental permission will be obtained before the residents will be asked to participate. The recruitment process will begin by the Primary Investigator recruiting the potential participants.

Then, on a following day, each potential participant will be asked individually by the Primary Investigator accompanied by a Youth Specialist (who has no influence on student participation), if they wish to be a part of the study. They will be assured that whatever decision they make will be respected.
11. Describe what will be requested of the Department of Social Services (personnel, resources, etc.) to comply with your request.

It is requested that the group meeting room at the Rosa Parks Center will be available to conduct interviews, a member of the Northeast Region's Family Therapy group sit in on the interviews and a Youth Specialist to assist as needed (very little assistance is anticipated).

12. Describe the expected benefits of this study (to clients, agency, society, etc.).

Benefits to society will involve a deepening understanding of how the school experiences of females who are potentially at-risk affect their lives and influence their decision making.

13. Describe any potential risks (psychological, physical, confidentiality, etc.) that may be experienced by the participants and how these risks will be minimized.

There should be minimal risk associated with this study.

14. Additional comments that may prove helpful in the review of this request.

Qualitative description entail "interpretation that is low-interference and likely to result in consensus among researchers" (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 355). This method is especially useful in obtaining straightforward answers to questions of special interest to practitioners (Sandelowski, 2000). In this study, the viewpoint of the participants is of particular importance. Seidman (2006), acknowledges that although much research is done on schooling in the United States very little is done from the perspective of the student.

B. HIPAA Assurances and Protections (Attach additional pages as necessary)

1. Is it possible to conduct the research with data that does not identify the individuals?

☑ Yes If your research can be accomplished with all the individual identifiers, down to a three-digit zip code level deleted, then the data does not contain individually identifiable health information and HIPAA requirements do not apply. Please briefly explain how this will be accomplished.

☐ No Please continue

2. Is it possible to obtain the informed consent of those participating?

☑ Yes ☐ No

3. If data is being requested, is it possible to obtain informed consent of the participants prior to OSS releasing data?

☐ Yes Please include, with this request, the HIPAA compliant authorization form to be used to get individual authorizations from the clients (or guardian, if minor) to release their information.

☐ No Please provide a brief explanation and continue.
A. HOW WILL YOU PROTECT THE IDENTITIES OF THE PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION (PHI) AGAINST IMPROPER USE AND DISCLOSURE?

No PHI will be collected.

B. WILL IT BE POSSIBLE TO ELIMINATE THE INDIVIDUAL IDENTIFIERS IN THE DATA AT ANY TIME IN THE RESEARCH PRIOR TO THE COMPLETION OF THE RESEARCH? IF SO, PLEASE DESCRIBE HOW AND WHEN THIS WILL BE DONE.

No individual identifiers will be collected.

C. IF THIS REQUEST IS APPROVED, I AGREE AND ASSURE THAT THE PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION WILL NOT BE REUSED OR DISCLOSED TO ANY OTHER PERSON OR ENTITY, EXCEPT AS REQUIRED BY LAW OR FOR AUTHORIZED OVERSIGHT OF THE RESEARCH STUDY.

☑ Yes I agree with this statement. ☐ No I do not agree with this statement.

By signing this document, you agree to carry out research precisely as stated in this application. You further agree that no changes in the research design or use of the data provided by the Department of Social Services may be made or implemented without the prior, written consent of the Department of Social Services. You acknowledge and understand that any information or data provided by the Department of Social Services is or may be confidential as a matter of law. You understand that unauthorized disclosure of confidential information provided by the Department of Social Services may be subject to significant civil liability and/or criminal prosecution. You agree that you and your institution shall be solely responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of the information and you shall be responsible for the actions of your agents, employees, students and other persons who may be working with this data. You agree that in the event the confidential information has been disclosed to unauthorized persons or entities you will immediately notify the Department of Social Services and all persons who may be impacted by the unauthorized disclosure and to take all reasonable measures to mitigate any harm caused by the unauthorized disclosure of confidential information. You further agree that you and your institution will be responsible for the payment of any damages, costs, penalties, fines, including attorneys' fees and litigation expenses, which may arise out of the disclosure of confidential information provided by the Department of Social Services. You also agree that you will defend, pay, indemnify and hold the State of Missouri and the Department of Social Services harmless from any and all claims, damages, fines, assessments and other liabilities including attorneys' fees and litigation costs, which may be charged against the State of Missouri or the Department of Social Services as a result of any improper release or disclosure of confidential data provided by the Department of Social Services. If approved, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) may also be required.

PRINTED NAME OF INDIVIDUAL SUBMITTING APPLICATION
Edwin D. Hall

TITLE
Education Supervisor

DATE 4/23/2014

C. DSS USE ONLY

DIVISION
YOUTH SERVICES

DIVISION DIRECTOR OR DESIGNEE
Phyllis Brice

DATE 9/30/14

DSS PRIVACY BOARD

DATE 31 July 2014

DSS PRIVACY OFFICER OR DESIGNEE

MO 850-2454 (5-11)
APPENDIX E

DYS Beliefs and Philosophy

Safety and structure are the foundation of treatment –
Meeting youth's basic needs and providing physical and emotional safety is the foundation of treatment. Youth need to know that staff cares enough about them to expect them to succeed. This is demonstrated by staff's ability to provide safety and structure.

Each person is special and unique -
Services and supports are individualized. Through this process youth recognize the value and strengths of self and others, and are challenged and inspired to reach their full potential.

People Can Change -
While change is often difficult and naturally leads to resistance and fear, people more readily embrace change when included in the process. Youth need to be guided and supported to try new behaviors, practice, succeed, and learn from mistakes as they internalize positive changes.

People desire to do well and succeed -
All youth need approval, acceptance and the opportunity to contribute. Programs and services are structured in a manner that taps into and builds upon these universal needs.

Emotions are not to be judged -
Feelings are not right or wrong. Personal disclosure and reconciliation of life experiences are important for healing and personal growth. As a part of the treatment process youth explore behaviors, thoughts, and emotions.

All behavior has a purpose and is often a symptom of unmet needs -
Challenging behavior is often symptomatic of core issues or patterns. Services are designed to help address these needs and assist youth in investigating and understanding their history, behavior, healthy alternatives, and facilitate internalized change.

People do the best they can with the resources available to them -
Youth often come to the agency with limited resources and a lack of knowledge and awareness of their behavioral and emotional options. In the situations they have experienced, their behavior may have seemed logical and understandable.

The family is vital to the treatment process -
Families want the best for their children. Services provided to youth must take into account the values and behaviors established within the family system. Family expertise and participation is essential in the youth's treatment process, and facilitates system change within the youth's family.

True understanding is built on genuine empathy and care -
Respect and appreciation for the inherent worth and dignity of self and others forms the foundation of safety, trust, and openness necessary for change to occur. Demonstrating respect and appreciation for the worth of youth and families is essential.

We are more alike than different -
Everyone has fears, insecurities, and basic needs including safety, attention, and belonging. Programs and staff normalize and attend to these needs, assisting youth in meeting their needs in positive and productive ways.

**Change does not occur in isolation – youth need others.**

Treatment is structured to assist youth in experiencing success through helping others and being helped. This need is also addressed through accessing community resources and enabling youth to develop healthy supportive relationships with peers, adults, family, and in their neighborhoods and communities.

**We are a combination of our past and present -**

Youth have learned through a wide variety of experiences. It is through investigation and linking past and present experiences that youth develop the knowledge, skills and emotional capacity to succeed in home and community.

**Respect and embrace diversity -**

services, supports, and interactions demonstrate respect for and build on the values, preferences, beliefs, culture, and identity of the youth, family, and community. Diversity in expression, opinion, and preference is embraced.
Edwin D. Hall was born in Lebanon, Missouri, February 10, 1957, and was a resident of Linn Creek, Missouri. He graduated from Camdenton R-III High School in 1975. In 1994, he received his Bachelor of Science in Computer Information Systems from Columbia College, Columbia, Missouri. He received his Master of Business Administration from William Woods University in 1997 and his Master of Arts in Teaching from Columbia College, Columbia, Missouri in 2007. He received his Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, conferred in December, 2015, from the University of Missouri.

He joined the U.S. Navy directly out of High School and served on active duty for seven years. During his Naval Career he went to Boot Camp at Orlando, FL, attended ET A and C School at Great Lakes, IL, Nuclear Power School at Orlando, FL, and Nuclear Prototype Training at Ballston Spa, New York. He served abroad USS Texas (CGN-39) and was a plank owner on USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70). His highest rank/rate was E-6/ET1.

After his Naval Career, he was employed by Union Electric to work at the Callaway Nuclear Power Plant in Fulton, MO. After 15 years, he left Union Electric to pursue other interests.

In 1997, he became an adjunct professor for Saint Charles Community College, in Saint Charles, Missouri and taught a number of computer and related classes. In 1999, he became an adjunct professor for William Woods University and taught both business and computer related classes in both the undergraduate and graduate programs.

In 2000, he began substitute teaching for several local school districts and eventually became a High School Mathematics teacher for the New Bloomfield school
district. After five years of service he became employed by the Division of Youth Services to teach mathematics at the Montgomery City Youth Treatment Center. After a year of teaching he was promoted to Education Supervisor for the Northeast Region of the Division of Youth Services. In this role, he oversees the educational component for all the Division of Youth Services treatment facilities in the region.

In 1976, he married Linda Kay Vandermotten of Marshfield, MO. They have two children, Curtis Gregory and Stephanie Leigh; a granddaughter Addison Michelle and a grandson Hudson Gregory. He lives in Fulton, Missouri.