Girls’ Troubles, Girls’ Delinquency, and Gender Responsive Programming: A Review

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This article begins with a consideration of the interconnected troubles and needs that research has documented for girls who become enmeshed in the juvenile justice system. Special attention is given to findings from research that gives girls in the system some ‘voice’ in explaining what services and programs they need and want. After offering some explanation of the gap in programs and services for girls, the article notes the failure of evaluation results to shed light on effective program models, and thus the importance of available documentation on programs as a guide for developing effective, gender responsive programs for girls. Available documentation is analysed, with particular attention to the fit of girls’ assessed and expressed needs to the descriptive material on programs.

Female delinquents, once dubbed the ‘forgotten few’ in juvenile justice (Bergsmann, 1989), are now entering that system in increasing numbers. Girls accounted for nearly a third (30.5%) of juvenile arrests in 2004 (FBI, 2005, p. 285). Two decades earlier, girls accounted for only about one fifth of juvenile arrests (Sarri, 1987, p. 181). This represents a 42.5% increase in girls’ share of juvenile arrests.

Parallel increases have also being seen in girls’ referrals to the nation’s juvenile courts. Between 1985 and 2002, the number of girls coming into the US juvenile courts increased by 92%, compared to a 29% increase for males (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). The increase is partly a function of girls being arrested and referred to court for nontraditional offences. ‘For females, the largest 1985–2002 increase was in person offence cases (202%).’ Referrals of girls for ‘simple assault’ increased by 238%, and female referrals for ‘other person offences’ increased by 322% (the comparable male increases were 152% and 111%) (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006, p. 160). Gendered shifts were also seen for drug offences (171% among girls versus a 156% increase in boys’ referrals) and property crimes; the male property caseload decreased 19% and the female property caseload increased 27%. Given...
these increases, one might expect a parallel growth in programs to prevent girls from breaking the law in the first place, to divert them from penetration deep into the juvenile justice system and to respond to their needs and the causes of their illegal behaviour.

The increased use of detention, however, signals the lack of appropriate alternatives either before youths are adjudicated, or after adjudication while they wait for community placements. In a pattern that threatens to undo decades of ‘de-institutionalisation’ efforts, between 1991 and 2003, girls’ detentions rose by 98%, compared to a 29% expansion in boys’ detentions. In addition to a distinctly gendered pattern in these increases, there are clear race-based differences. For example, a study conducted by the American Bar Association and the National Bar Association (2001) revealed, although White girls made up a clear majority (65%) of the at-risk population (ABA & NBA, 2001, p. 20), nearly half of girls in secure detention in the US were African American.

Further signalling the lack of needed programs for prevention and community responses, girls’ commitments to facilities increased by an alarming 88% between 1991 and 2003, while boys’ commitments increased by only 23%. As a result, girls were 15% of youth ‘committed’ to residential placements in 2003, up from 13% in 1991 (Synder & Sickmund, 2006, p. 208). Moreover, while girls can be ‘committed’ to a variety of what are called ‘residential placements’, the largest share end up in ‘long term secure’ facilities or training schools (Synder & Sickmund, 2006, p. 210).

These trends show the urgency of a focus on girls’ needs in the development of new delinquency prevention and intervention programs. Consistent with the philosophy of the juvenile courts, community-based programming would address the causes of illegal behaviour and meet needs that are more general, but that are relevant to promoting positive adolescent development and a successful transition to adulthood. Research describing girls who are entangled in the juvenile justice system provides an understanding of the situations and issues that girls’ programs should address. Such a focus is particularly necessary in girls’ programming, since girls have long been the recipients of what Ruth Wells described as ‘throwaway services for throwaway girls’ (Wells, 1994, p. 4).

Interconnected Troubles

Information on the characteristics of girls in the juvenile justice system is imperfect, at best. There has been no investment in developing a full national profile, but there is a growing body of more localised studies of girls at various points in the systems that process and house female delinquents (Acoca & Dedel, 1998; Holsinger, Belknap, & Sutherland, 1999; Lederman, Dakof, Larrea, & Li, 2004; Pasko, 2006; Tyler, Hoyt, Whitbeck, & Cauce, 2001). Certain crucial themes emerge from this research.

As a start, girls’ official delinquency differs from boys’ in that it is less ‘chronic’ and less often ‘serious’. An in-depth study of one large, urban court system showed that 73% of females (compared to 54% of males) who enter the juvenile justice system never return on a new referral (Synder & Sickmund, 1999, p. 80). That same study noted that, of the youth who came to court for delinquency offences, only 3% of females had committed a violent offence by the age of 18, compared to
10% of the boys; likewise, only 5.5% of girls (versus 18.8% of boys) had more than four referrals to court (Synder & Sickmund, 1999, p. 81). The fact that they are less serious delinquents than their male counterparts does not mean that girls have few needs; indeed a close review of their situations reveals a pattern of interconnected troubles that indicate the highly negative contexts and experiences that produce their delinquency.

**Trauma**

Girls in the juvenile justice system have experienced considerable trauma (Belknap & Holsinger, 1998; Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 2004). The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP, 1996) reports that nationally, 35% of girls in the system have histories of sexual abuse and 40% report exposure to domestic violence. Interviews and reviews of detailed case records yield fuller descriptions of the nature and extent of trauma. For instance, over 11% of California juvenile justice system girls had experienced, and in some cases witnessed, the death of one or both parents, for example due to HIV, suicide, gang assaults or drug overdose (Acoca & Dedel, 1998). Most girls at least temporarily lost relatives, siblings or boyfriends to incarceration. Also, 92% of the girls had been abused by physical beating, forced vaginal sex or sodomy. One in four girls was made a ward of the court because of parental or caretaker neglect. A case file review of girls in Hawaii arrested during 2004 revealed a similar pattern of trauma. Over half (58%) of the girls were witness to domestic violence, 38% had official records indicating they had been sexually abused, 35% had been found to be neglected and 50% had official records indicating physical abuse (Pasko, 2006).

Abuse often results in running away, which often brings new forms of abuse and trauma. Estimates of the proportion of runaway girls who were abused range from 30 to nearly 75% (McCormack, Janus, & Burgess, 1986; Tyler, Hoyt, Whitbeck, & Cause, 2001, p. 161). Youths abused at a young age run early, spend more time on the streets and use deviant strategies, including drug involvement, trading sex and affiliating with deviant peers, to survive (Chen, Tyler, Whitbeck, & Hoyt, 2004). On the street, victimisation by a ‘friend or acquaintance’ is common (Tyler et al., 2001). Early sexual victimisation followed by running away, then, leads to a pattern called, ‘risk amplification’ (Chen, Tyler, Whitbeck, & Hoyt, 2004, p. 1).

**Destructive and Distraught Families**

Girls in the juvenile justice system lack permanent and supportive families. Interviews with girls in the California juvenile justice system in the late 1990s revealed that over half of the girls (59%) felt that their relationship with parents — not substance abuse, school problems and boyfriends — was the primary influence on their breaking the law (Acoca & Dedel, 1998, p. 43). Instability in family situations involved moving back and forth between different relatives and child welfare and juvenile justice system ‘placements’ during childhood and early teen years. Placements and other moves were often precipitated by young teenage girls’ running away from disturbing parental conflict, ‘ranging from chronic verbal disagreements and fighting to violent confrontations including murders of mothers by fathers’ (p. 44). A study of girls in California, Colorado and Massachusetts between 1994 and
2005 also showed that girls in trouble had families characterised by ‘divorce, overwork, substance dependence, incarceration, mental illness, ill health, homelessness, and death’ (Schaffner, 2006, p. 87). Schaffner (2006) described the families as ‘empty’, because their members were ‘worn down, fighting their own battles, with little access to social, cultural, and economic capital, and simply unable to provide the protection and guidance their daughters need’ (p. 87). Family members’ own battles included ‘no income, no furniture, no food, involvement in the criminal and juvenile justice systems, alcohol and substance use, undiagnosed mental illness’ (p. 87).

Girls without a protective family are vulnerable to other troubles. They have high incidence of being raped or wounded (Acoca & Dedel, 1998, p. 44). Acoca and Dedel (1998) discovered that all but one girl in their California sample who reported more than six types of emotional abuse were involved with gangs, which girls described as extensions or replacements for their families, as providing protection from harm typically including serious physical and sexual victimisation (p. 60). Research in Hawaii (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995) showed that girls turned to gangs as a solution to victimisation through family violence, since the gangs provided instruction and experience in fighting back physically and emotionally. Gangs also can provide escape from gender stereotypical duties that are heaped on girls by their families, such as taking care of siblings and housework (Hagedorn & Devitt, 1999; Portillos, 1999). Again there is risk amplification, since gang membership might provide some protection, but it also puts girl members in danger due to gang fighting and sexual attack and harassment by male gang members (Acoca & Dedel, 1998).

Some of the girls who Schaffner (2006) studied relied on boyfriends more than twice their age to meet essential needs, and they were vulnerable to their boyfriends’ pressures to use drugs or alcohol or engage in other illegal activity. The girls in Hawaii who Pasko (2006, p. 20) studied were more likely to repeatedly break the law if they had relationships with older men, and 39% of them did have such relationships (p. 16). Acoca and Dedel (1998) noted that girls typically became mothers at age 14, but two out of three of them became pregnant by a man aged 20 to 40 years old. Other researchers (Lederman et al., 2004) found that for girls in a detention centre, about three quarters were sexually active, and one third had been sexually involved with a man more than 5 years their senior. Without family help and protection, girls rely on gangs or older men who expose them to additional dangers.

When girls get pregnant, juvenile justice practices often reproduce the girls’ separation from their parents and related loss and grief. Acoca’s (2004) documentation of the situation of pregnant girls in custody of the California Youth Authority revealed that, in most cases, girls and their babies were separated within hours or days and girls returned to correctional facilities with no attention to their recent loss. Trauma, loss, separation, and grief are common emotions for girls in the juvenile justice system.

Dangerous Neighbourhoods and Unsafe Schools
In a hostile San Francisco Bay area street environment, girls explained to researchers that they were violent with each other in an attempt to look tough and protect themselves (Laidler & Hunt, 2001; also see Maher, 1997). Given the
constraints of their social location, on the streets dominated by powerful males, and as lower class girls of colour within the larger society, fighting brought status and honour and made it possible for girls to confirm they were 'decent' and 'nobody's fool' (Laidler & Hunt, 2001, p. 675). Recognising the need for self-protection, families in settings that range from Maine (Brown, 1998, p. 129) to inner city Philadelphia (Ness, 2004, p. 37) to a Michigan deindustrialised town (Leitz, 2003) often support girls' violence (Tapper & Boulton, 2000). Violence ensures that people will not disrespect girls and signals that they can 'hold their own'. For girls who are violent in response to their environment, it would be critical for programming to address the environment. It would not suffice to teach girls to 'cope' or 'control their anger' without providing them a safe place.

**Substance Abuse**

Substance abuse can be a response to trauma, including the trauma from abuse at home and the magnification of that trauma for runaways on the streets. One 15-year-old explained the connection of prior sexual abuse to drug use:

> It [the abuse] ... hurt when he did that, not physically but in my head. So I do a lot of 'fat rail' [drugs]. Then I don't feel it. You think about — the stupidest shit. Sometimes I just cry all day. (Acoca & Dedel, 1998, p. 56)

The proportion of girls in the justice system who use illegal drugs is therefore high, and many girls are addicted (American Correctional Association, 1990, pp. 59–60; Holsinger et al., 1999). In Ohio, girls in the juvenile justice system more often than boys reported use of cocaine (39% versus 22.6%), PCP (17% versus 9.3%), crack (20.8% versus 7%), and heroin (11.9% versus 4.4%), and felt that they were addicted to some drug (64.7% versus 40.3%) (Belknap & Holsinger, 1998). Of girls who used, 36.8% said they had experienced withdrawal symptoms. In Hawaii, many juvenile justice system involved girls used methamphetamines (Pasko, 2006). In an Arizona juvenile court, 43% of girls were either current drug users or had a history of drug use (Gaarder, Rodriguez, & Zatz, 2004, p. 563). In California, 17% of delinquent girls were regular users of drugs other than alcohol, and 36% were chronic users; additionally, 18% were regular users of alcohol, and 26% were chronic users (Acoca & Dedel, 1998, p. 31). Despite these high proportions, just 26% of the California girls had ever received substance abuse treatment (p. 78). With 64.7% of Ohio girls indicating some programming, the picture is only somewhat better (Belknap & Holsinger, 1998).

**Health Issues**

Trauma, dangerous neighbourhoods, empty families, and/or runaway status provide reasons and settings for physical and mental health problems and risky sexual behaviour. Multiple studies support the conclusion that many girls in the system suffer from depression, anxiety, panic disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and separation anxiety disorder (Teplin, Abram, McClelland, Mericle, Dulcan, & Washburn, 2006). These problems manifest themselves in suicide attempts and self-harm and mutilation (Holsinger et al., 1999; Pasko, 2006; Rotheram-Borus, 1993). An exception to the dearth of
research on general health and risky sex practices that can compromise girls’ health is the California assessment that showed that girls had very high rates of asthma (39%). ‘The girls’ units in some juvenile halls held drawers full of asthma medications, including inhalers’ (Acoca & Dedel, 1998, p. 74). Also prevalent were yeast infections (29%) and sexually transmitted disease (27%). Connected to the abuse and violence the girls had been exposed to, 15% reported traumatic head injury.

**Academic Achievement**

Given the trauma, instability and illness in their lives, it is not surprising that girls in the juvenile justice system suffer academically. Delinquent girls interviewed in Ohio said that their use of alcohol and drugs led to their missing school (60.5%), doing poorly in school (53.9%), and resulted in ‘getting in trouble’ with teachers or the school principal (44.1%). All of the girls confined at the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility had a history of academic failure (Pasko, 2006). Three fourths of the girls had failed at least one entire school semester, and over four fifths had a history of chronic truancy (p. 16). Fifty-nine per cent of the girls were officially certified as in need of special education.

**What the Girls Say**

Research that gives girls ‘voice’ to explain their needs produces crucial evidence of the resources, interventions, and programs they might find useful.

**Someone to Talk To**

Multiple studies show that girls in the juvenile justice system search for adults to act as proxy family members who would provide care, safety and ‘someone to talk to’, on a continuing basis (Gaarder, Rodriguez, & Zatz, 2004, p. 569; Sherman, 2003). For this reason, girls were most disappointed with probation officers (and others) who only paid attention to them when they failed to observe some rule or condition or made mistakes, who ‘just kept telling me what to do’ but ‘didn’t help me’, and who threatened to lock them up (Sherman, 2003, p. 7). Based on what girls said in multiple states, Schaffner (2006) also concluded that being listened to was the resource that girls most often requested.

The girls who Sherman (2003) interviewed identified places where they did and did not find ‘someone to talk to’. They felt that mental health services in their communities were ‘safe’ and staff treated ‘everyone like family’ (p. 9). But many girls cannot access such services. In Ohio, 46.1% of the girls in Holsinger et al.’s (1999) study wanted help with depression or other mental health problems, but only 12.4% said they received them. Also, 57.5% said they wanted individual counselling, but just 21.1% received it. Girls who Schaffner (2006) studied also talked about the unavailability of counsellors to discuss priorities with, to discuss control of temper, and to generally know ‘what is happening’ (pp. 12–13). Mental health services may be available in some communities, but whether girls are locked up in facilities or not, the desired resources appear to be unattainable for many.
Specific Types of Counselling and Education

Girls specifically point to the lack of counselling for abuse, education about sex and sexuality, and services relevant to childbirth and parenting. In the Ohio sample, 43% of girls wanted counselling for emotional abuse, 35% for sexual abuse and 34% for physical abuse (Holsinger, Dunn, & Belknap, 1999). In contrast, fewer than 10% of the girls had received counselling for each of these trauma-producing experiences. Although 48.4% of Ohio girls wanted sex-education services, and 21.1% said they received them. Sherman’s (2003) multistate study showed that girls (along with judges and attorneys) felt that one of the most significant gaps in probation and community services for girls in trouble is education about sex and sexuality. The girls Sherman (2003) interviewed also talked about the lack of placements for girls with babies, and the lack of education on parenting (see also Holsinger et al., 1999).

Other Gaps in Services

In the most extensive ‘gap analysis’ for services wanted and received, Holsinger et al. (1999) identified numerous other areas where services were unavailable:

- 70.3% of girls wanted job and career skills, 8.7% received them
- 69.3% wanted to learn to have good relationships, 5% received relevant services
- 66.2% wanted sports, health or fitness training, 6.25% received it
- 64.1% wanted to learn how to ‘live on my own’, and 5% felt they received such help
- 62.3% wanted help with anger management, 9.3% received it
- 60.9% wanted to learn to be a better student, 3.1% received such help
- 55.5% wanted to learn problem-solving skills, 9.3% said they did
- 54% wanted family counselling, 13.7% said they received such counselling
- 53.8% wanted general health education, 8.2% received it.

Sherman (2003) also found that girls who wanted training to work in traditionally male-dominated fields, like construction, were unaware of resources in their communities for obtaining vocational and educational training. When girls have been interviewed, they have communicated that the help they want is rarely received.

The gap between services needed/desired and available is confirmed by a study of staff who worked with girls who were adjudicated delinquent (Freitas & Chesney-Lind, 2001). When workers were asked about resources available for girls, the most common reaction was ‘none’. The few programs that did exist were limited, most notably they did not provide postincarceration services, gay and lesbian counselling programs, service for young girls with children, safe and sober housing and treatment for eating disorders.

There is often a mismatch between services needed and services delivered. Arizona probation officers sometimes just could not deliver or recommend resources that matched girls’ needs (Gaarder, Rodriguez, & Zatz, 2004). For example, a pregnant girl with no stable place to live was referred to community service work and parenting classes (p. 559). Another girl whose family was homeless had probation violations for not attending drug treatment and for not staying in contact with
her probation officer. The probation officer suggested counselling (p. 569). A proba-

tion officer explained, ‘[t]he lower middle-class or working poor make $20,000 and
don’t qualify for welfare or have medical benefits. They can’t pay $50 per hour for a
counsellor’ (p. 562). Minority neighbourhoods were often located at too great a
distance from services. Thus, a system of eligibility rules related to income, along
with the location of services, created spotty availability of programs.

There are many reasons to be concerned about the services gap. Services avail-
able need to be better than the ‘help’ that girls can get from gangs, from exploita-
tive older men and generally ‘on the streets’. By and large, many girls in the system
do not feel they are getting various types of crucial help. Even physical activity and
general health are areas of unmet need. It is difficult to imagine how girls can grow
into self-sufficient women with so many critical areas of adolescent development
compromised by the limits of available help and resources.

Explaining the Lack of Services for Girls

The lack of programs to prevent and help delinquency in girls is part of a broader,
historically rooted pattern in the United States. A 1989 review of 75 private
foundations revealed that funding ‘targeted specifically for girls and women hovered
around 3.4 percent’ (Valentine Foundation 1990, p. 5). General recreational
services appear to be no better; a 1993 study of the San Francisco Chapter of the
National Organization for Women found that only 8.7% of the programs funded by
the major city organisation funding children and youth programs ‘specifically
addressed the needs of girls’ (Siegal, 1995, p. 18). Not surprisingly, then, a 1995
study of youth participation in San Francisco after school or summer sports
programs found only 26% of the participants were girls (Siegal, 1995, p. 20).

Delinquency intervention programs have typically overlooked girls since ‘young
men tend to be more noticeable and noticed than young women’ (Alder, 1995, p. 3).
When girls go out, they tend to move in smaller groups due to greater proscriptions
against girls ‘hanging out’, and because girls are justly fearful of being on the streets at
night. The greater domestic expectations for girls than for boys also may keep them
confined to their homes. Because the majority of delinquency prevention programs
are co-ed, the girls who are substantially outnumbered within most programs are
either short-changed or simply ignored.

Single-sex delinquency programs provide far more options for boys than for girls.
In fact, a list of ‘potentially promising programs’ identified by the Office of Juvenile
Justice and Delinquency Prevention cited 24 programs specifically for boys in
contrast to only 2 programs specifically for girls (Girls Incorporated, 1996).
Ironically, one program geared for incarcerated teen fathers had no counterpart for
incarcerated teen mothers.

Often the programs that do exist tend to miss the ‘at-risk’ years for girls. A
comprehensive survey of 112 individual youth-oriented programs (for both delin-
quent and nondelinquent youth) showed less than 8% provided services to girls
between the ages of 9 and 15, the crucial determining years of adolescence, and the
years when girls’ self-esteem plummeted (AAUW, 1992). Rather, services and
programs tended to serve girls younger than the age of 9 and teenagers between 14
and 21 years of age.
The few programs for girls also tend to address single issues, often teen pregnancy and mothering, and occasionally other problems like substance abuse or gang behaviour. This pattern is largely a result of issue-specific funding initiatives. Unfortunately, as this article has documented, at-risk girls possess tremendous overlap in services needed; thus, girls who are drug addicts may also have histories of being abused, suicidal tendencies, academic difficulties and be in need of gainful employment. Some research has suggested the importance of interagency, interdisciplinary collaborations to address these needs (Arella, 1993). However, patterns of multiple service needs, beyond programming available within any one given program or system, are increasing just as public funding to meet these needs has proportionally decreased.

Ms. Foundation for Women's study on girls' programs (1993) found that most programs typically respond to the outcome or symptom of girls' distress, rather than addressing the underlying, structural problems of inequality and poverty that affect many young women. In additional, few programs addressed the special problems that girls of colour experience. Likewise, programs geared specifically to the needs of lesbian and bisexual girls and girls with disabilities are virtually nonexistent. In general, programs rarely provide services within a context that acknowledges the realities of sexism, racism, classism and heterosexism as problematic forces in girls' lives (Ms. Foundation for Women, 1993). More broadly, programs for girls need to consider ongoing disadvantage that results from sexism, poverty and racism that affect girls in the juvenile justice system (Greene, Peters & Associates, 1998, p. 33).

The disregard for girls in programming is mirrored by the lack of any national, detailed research on girls' needs, and by the failure to use science to show 'what works' for girls in the justice system. As an example, an exhaustive review of literature on delinquency prevention and intervention programs found a concern about girls almost completely absent. A study of 443 delinquency program evaluations done since 1950 revealed that 34.8% of these programs only served males and 42.4% served primarily boys. Conversely, only a meagre 2.3% of delinquency programs served only girls, and 5.9% served primarily girls (Lipsey, 1992).

Even when girls do get into trouble with the law, most of their delinquency is not as great a threat to public safety and property as that of their male counterparts. Girls needs have been, in short, easier to ignore. Lacking a powerful constituency within the juvenile justice system, what has emerged, as we noted earlier, was a pattern of 'throwaway services' (Wells, 1994) for girls who were an afterthought in a juvenile justice system designed for boys in trouble. In an effort to assess the current availability of promising models, we now turn to an examination of contemporary documentation on girls' programs that have tried to address the services gap and inattention.

**The Fit of Assessed Needs, Expressed Needs, and Program Descriptions**

Researchers and girls paint a picture of complex needs that include the daunting problems of lacking a family that can support adolescent development or provide basic safety, dangerous neighbourhoods, individual trauma from sexual and other abuse, involvement in prostitution, relationships with older men with high potential for exploitation, academic failure, substance abuse and lack of preparation to
earn a living and live on one’s own. Services must be comprehensive and adapted to a particular girl’s family and neighbourhood context, and they must be available to girls before they penetrate deeply into the juvenile justice system, during those vulnerable years from 9 to 14, and after they are in serious trouble.

This all seems a tall order for social service and juvenile justice systems that are just beginning to feel their way into gender responsive delinquency programming, but fortunately we do have a few promising gender specific programs to review. The programs selected for this analysis are those girl-specific programs that have been the subject of formal evaluations and were found to be effective in preventing or intervening in certain aspects of girls’ delinquency. The programs that met these criteria are summarised in Table 1. We should add that the list is far shorter than one would hope (particularly given the focus on girl’s programming since the reauthorisation of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act in 1992) (see Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008), and it speaks again to the need to develop more robust girls’ programs, as well as the necessity of setting aside funds to rigorously evaluate those programs.

In order to provide meaningful role models and programming relevant to youths in particular types of communities and school settings by virtue of their gender, race, ethnicity, and geographic location, all of the programs that were assessed concentrated their efforts on girls, and several of them were for girls of particular racial and ethnic groups. Thus, the programs could be gender- (and sometimes racial and ethnic group) responsive, as girls did not have to compete with boys for emphasis in the focus of the program or for staff time and attention; also staff could be selected to provide the appropriate range of women and men with different knowledge and experience to be matched to the actual situation and needs of the girls. The race and gender specificity was found in Urban Women Against Substance Abuse, Project Naja, Reaffirming Young Sisters’ Excellence, and Movimiento Ascendencia. Although it is encouraging that there is this set of gender and apparently race and ethnic group responsive programs, this small set of programs leaves many groups ignored by any readily available model in the literature. As just one example, no particular programs for Native American girls, a group that is at high risk for both victimisation and involvement in the juvenile justice system, are included; and many age and other groups are not among the participants in programs that have been evaluated (see Table 2). The next section considers the set of identified, evaluated programs in relation to how they address the gender-related needs described in the first section of this article, and in so doing it considers how the programs are gender responsive.

Someone to Talk To
Multiple sources agree that what girls want most is ‘someone to listen to me’, ‘someone to talk to’. Program documentation reveals some strategies for giving girls permanence in supportive relationships, but that solutions available to the neediest girls are often impermanent and lack intensity. They do not fill the gap left by ‘empty familie’, at least not for long, and they do not repair the damage caused by abuse and neglect.
### TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program target</th>
<th>Group and location</th>
<th>Core elements and strategies</th>
<th>Other elements and strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls Inc. Friendly PEERsuasion®</td>
<td>Girls at risk for substance abuse ages 11 to 14 in Birmingham, Alabama, Clearwater, Florida, Rapid City, South Dakota, or Worcester, Massachusetts.</td>
<td>Girls learn about the short- and long-term effects of substance abuse, learn healthy stress management techniques, how to recognize peer and media pressure to abuse substances, and practice skills for making decisions about drug use.</td>
<td>After completing the curriculum, they are certified as PEERSuaders and gain leadership skills by planning and implementing sessions about substance abuse prevention for PEERsuade-Me’s (children ages 6 to 10).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Women Against Substance Abuse (UWASA)</td>
<td>Puerto Rican, African-American, Latino, and Caribbean girls ages 9 to 11 years old in the Hartford, Connecticut area and their female caregivers</td>
<td>Monthly mother/daughter sharing sessions</td>
<td>Art projects, recreational and cultural activities, home visits, referral service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earlscourt Girls Connection</td>
<td>Families of girls under 12 years old who display aggressive or problem behavior in the The Greater Toronto Area</td>
<td>Twenty-two sessions divided into three components: anger management and skill-building sessions for girls, anger management and skill-building sessions for parents, and a group for girls and their mothers</td>
<td>Advocacy, tutoring, family counseling, and individual befriending on a case-by-case basis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Naja</td>
<td>African-American girls ages 10 to 13, who are older siblings and who live in low income, high-crime communities in Washington, DC</td>
<td>Three phases: an overnight retreat to ease group bonding; a 1-year phase focusing on the development of prosocial attitudes, gender and ethnic identity, and drug and sex refusal skills; a 9-month peer-led phase which allowed girls to gain leadership skill</td>
<td>Discussions of gender-specific topics, presentations by women from the community, and each girl was paired with a staff member who maintained contact with her between sessions</td>
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<td>Working to Insure and Nurture Girls’ Success (WINGS)</td>
<td>Girls aged 12 to 17 on probation in San Diego, California</td>
<td>A Home Visitor who develops a comprehensive case plan</td>
<td>Mother–daughter mediation, transportation, and programs that addressed anger management, vocational/career support, substance abuse, and education</td>
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TABLE 1 (CONTINUED)
Program Descriptions

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<tr>
<td>Reaffirming Young Sisters’ Excellence (RYSE)</td>
<td>African–American girls aged 12 to 17 adjudicated delinquent in Alameda County, California</td>
<td>Home visits by probation officers who were generally bilingual in Spanish and English and similar in race and ethnicity to program participants, case plan development, life skills courses, pregnancy and parenting services, leadership opportunities, and therapy for any identified special needs</td>
<td>Special events which were generally African–American in orientation, including mother–daughter tea, Midnight Basketball, African–American Women on Tour, gardening, trips to local African–American plays, African–American leadership conferences, and trips to professional sporting events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Chrysalis</td>
<td>Girls aged 14 to 17 in the Portland, Oregon area who have been a victim of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse</td>
<td>School-based support groups facilitated by counsellors and therapists, which discussed topics including recovery techniques, the impact of sexual abuse on sexuality, risky coping strategies, and the causes/effects of abuse</td>
<td>Physical challenge courses, self-defense training, an amusement park trip, individualised case management, outside speakers on topics such as HIV/AIDS education, alcohol, tobacco, and other drug education, and eating disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimiento Ascendencia</td>
<td>Latina girls aged 8 to 19 involved in gangs or at risk for involvement in gangs and substance abuse in Pueblo, California</td>
<td>Mentorship, case management, recreation activities, organised sports, leisure activities, and the U<em>R</em>IT component, which included training on topics such as personal grooming, self-defense, personal safety, pregnancy prevention, sexually transmitted diseases, sexuality, relationships, emotions, loss and grief, self-esteem, career goals, tutoring, and homework support</td>
<td>Discussions of gender-specific topics, presentations by women from the community, and each girl was paired with a staff member who maintained contact with her between sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters Rising</td>
<td>Girls at high risk with no and low incomes who are aged 13 to 24 in the San Francisco area</td>
<td>Girls are hired to work 4 hours, 4 days per week, earning a living wage and receiving benefits, job training, child care, housing assistance, leadership opportunities, and peer support</td>
<td>A technology centre with 10 personal computers, research skills training, office skills and software training, a political awareness education component where girls identify and develop their own project to address a community issue, study groups, tutoring/GED preparation, and assistance as girls apply for financial aid, scholarships, grants, and childcare, a library, a resource room, a wellness room for massage, psychotherapy, and acupuncture, a spiritual circle, information on housing, employment, health care, and other resources, an 8-week professional externship program, and an open door policy for graduates of Sisters Rising</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Several programs require that girls have families intact enough to participate in the intervention. For instance, *Reaffirming Young Sisters’ Excellence* included parenting education and support groups, organised mother–daughter activities (e.g., a ‘tea’), and the presence of siblings at the girls’ graduation ceremonies (Day, Haynes, & Tichavsky, 2006). Similarly, *Urban Women Against Substance Abuse* focused on strengthening mother–daughter communication and relationships through interventions for the girls, a parallel curriculum for mothers, and monthly mother–daughter sharing sessions (Day et al., 2006; Centers for the Application of Prevention Technologies, 2006). *Working to Insure and Nurture Girls’ Success* had a mandatory family group counselling session that could be relationship counselling, mother–daughter mediation, anger management or conflict resolution (Burke, Keaton, & Pennell, 2003; Day et al., 2006). *Earlscourt Girls’ Connection* had a mother–daughter relationship building group. The families that these interventions rely on, and provide services to, are very different from those that Schaffner (2006, p. 87) described as challenged by ‘divorce, overwork, substance dependence, incarceration, mental illness, ill health, homelessness, and

### TABLE 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target areas identified in research</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Targets girls during their ‘in risk’ years (ages 9 to 15)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/ethnicity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addresses histories of abuse</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches healthy sexuality</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Includes general health education</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepares girls to address sexism, racism, or harassment</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides housing assistance</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides jobs for girls</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides job training or career support</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support among girls</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides girls with a long-term relationship with an adult/mentor</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not require a parent</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes wraparound services</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1 = Girls Inc. Friendly PEERSuasion © 2 = Earlscourt Girls’ Connection 3 = Urban Women Against Substance Abuse (UWASA) 4 = Project Naja 5 = Reaffirming Young Sisters’ Excellence (RYSE) 6 = Working to Insure and Nurture Girls’ Success (WINGS) 7 = Project Chrysalis 8 = Movimiento Ascendencia 9 = Sisters Rising
death’. They also are not the families in which girls are continuously traumatised by abuse and neglect. Such families may not even be able to benefit from Urban Women Against Substance Abuse’s accommodation, that a significant female relative could take the place of unavailable mothers. There is certainly a pressing need for the family-oriented and inclusive programs. But, these are not the program components aimed at the most troubled girls, in the most troubling circumstances.

One strategy is to make the relationship of a staff member or a volunteer in the program with girls a central program feature. At Movimiento Ascendencia, a female mentor spent at least 2 hours per week for 9 months with each girl. Typical activities were shopping, talked on the phone, eating out, playing sports, hanging out at home, or attending community events. Reaffirming Young Sister’s Excellence involved probation officers with small caseloads of about 25 girls, matched by ethnicity and language. Even these relationships seem quite temporary and limited in relation to the lack of structure, material resources and family in some girls’ lives. It is not clear that the program could come close to matching what is offered by an attentive (though exploitative) older male or by gang members. The documentation, for instance, did not describe permanent and safe living situations, say where teen parents or girls with traumatic histories could grow towards independence, with a wide range of supports. Perhaps some of these programs include referrals to long-term group or independent living facilities, but this type of referral is not central to the program documentation or to the evaluations discussed below.

Improving Relationships With Peers

Another strategy that is less often noted for filling the void left by empty or abusive families is to build on girls’ capacity to relate to and assist each other. Several programs used this strategy. Freitas and Chesney-Lind (2001) found that youth workers in programs for girls capitalised on the value that girls placed on relationships, especially with peers, as a way to access key girls who could promote healthy messages to each other (p. 77). Movimiento Ascendencia did provide a ‘safe haven’, a place for girls to go in their community (Day et al., 2006.). Project Chrysalis offered support groups in which girls could tell their stories of abuse and develop trusting relationships with each other. These groups provided emotional support and validated girls’ feelings (Day et al., 2006). Going even further than other programs that use and build girls’ support of each other, The Center for Young Women’s Development trained and employed girls to meet each other’s needs as they developed a committed community of their own (Schaffner, 2006; Zeldin, Kusgen-McDaniel, Topitzes, & Calvert, 2000). This program, which is located in San Francisco, was unique in that it gave girls financial resources to help each other on a sustained basis.

Sex, Sexuality, Pregnancy, Parenting, and Relationships With Intimate Partners

Program descriptions reflect alternative strategies: education and support for abstaining from sex, avoiding risky sex or having sex within healthy relationships. Some (Project Naja, Urban Women Against Substance Abuse) taught girls how to
refuse sexual activity. Avoiding sexual activity seems contrary to research that suggests that girls need to recognise and fulfil their sexual desires (Tolman, 1994). The abstinence strategy also ignores that girls with less social capital have less to 'bargain' with in negotiations with boys and men, who may be meeting the girls' material and emotional needs, giving the males the 'upper hand' in the 'sexual bargaining process' (Miller, Sabo, Farrell, Barnes, & Melnick, 1999, p. 370). In either case, it is questionable whether the abstinence message is the best, or the most feasible one to communicate to girls in the juvenile justice system, many of whom have been sexually active and who have born children.

Some program documentation presents alternatives or supplements to the abstinence message. There were groups on healthy lifestyles and programming for pregnant or parenting teens (Working to Insure and Nurture Girls' Success; Burke et al., 2003; Day, Haynes, & Tiachavsky 2006; Reaffirming young Sisters’ Excellence, (Day et al., 2006). With an emphasis on sexual health, Project Chrysalis had several sessions that brought in speakers on topics such as HIV/AIDS education, and one of the Earlscourt Girls' Connection mother–daughter activities focused on sexual health (Day et al., 2006). Programs tend to cover the physical/medical aspects of sexual activity, like avoiding disease and avoiding pregnancy, and a few give pre and post-natal support and education. An exception was Movimiento Ascendencia, which included broader education about girls and women forming relationships and dealing with emotions (Day et al., 2006.) In general, though, there is not much attention to sexuality and sexual relationships as part of a healthy relationship, a program component that is recommended by the Valentine Foundation (1990). Strong societal and governmental, prohibitions against taking this next step with girls may be the reason.

For girls ‘in the system’ who are already sexually active, either because they are forced or pressured by others, or by choice, it is questionable whether they would benefit from abstention programming. Also, it is important to consider girls’ decisions to have relationships, including sexual relationships, with particular people in the context of whether they would lose material or emotional support. Freitas and Chesney-Lind (2001) found that juvenile justice staff members were disturbed when the girls worked in places like strip clubs. It would be important that programs provide girls who are surviving by selling or trading the sight or use of their bodies with alternatives that include a decent and safe place to live and opportunities to earn money.

Also absent from available program documentation are descriptions of how programs connect girls’ own traumatic sexual abuse to the development of sexual identity, healthy relationships and so on. If the reviewed program documents ‘hid’ some interventions or referral patterns, perhaps services in this area are more widespread than it seems. Only the description of Project Chrysalis, a program for abuse survivors, highlighted an intervention that specifically addressed histories of sexual abuse. Support groups addressed the impact of sexual abuse on intimacy and sexuality, the causes and effects of abuse, risky coping strategies and recovery strategies. They used exercises and instructions to reduce cognitive distortions, offered a place for girls to tell their stories, provided validation, allowed girls to express their feelings in a nonjudgmental environment, decreased isolation and taught coping skills (Day et al., 2006.) The emphasis on the connection of prior
abuse to current and future relationships is sorely needed by girls in the juvenile justice system with related histories of sexual abuse and subsequent victimisation (Green, Peters & Associates, 1998).

Empowerment

The program documentation included two approaches to empowering girls. One was to prepare girls to address sexual harassment or assault. Three programs (Project Chrysalis and Movimiento Ascendencia, Working to Insure and Nurture Girls’ Success) had assertiveness and self-defence and safety classes (Burke et al., 2003; Day et al., 2006.), and Earls court had mother–daughter sessions on how to address sexual harassment. Another empowerment strategy was to develop leadership opportunities and skills; for example, through participation in leadership conferences or skill building groups (Reaffirming Young Sisters Excellence, Earls court Girls’ Connection; Day et al., 2006). The ‘peer-led rites of discovery’ phase of Project Naja, which lasted 9 months, allowed girls to ‘gain leadership skills’ (Day et al.). Girls Inc. Friendly PEERsuasion® certified girls as PEERsuaders, who could gain leadership skills by planning and implementing sessions about substance abuse prevention for PEERsuade-Me’s (children ages 6 to 10; Day et al., 2006; ‘Girls Incorporated Programs: Girls Inc., 2000; Harvard Family Research Project, 2005; The Communication Initiative, 2004). All of these experiences are no doubt valuable in promoting positive youth development. They are educational and experiential opportunities. But workshops on leadership and practice at leadership in relationship to young children are at best first steps in taking some control of one’s life.

Just as critical in promoting empowerment is linking girls (and their families) with community resources. Working to Insure and Nurture Girls’ Success employed ‘home visitors’ with no more than 20 cases who provided information on available community services. Most important, the worker facilitated access to those housing, medical and mental health services, and the program could be extended for up to six months (Burke et al, 2003; Day et al., 2006). Reaffirming Young Sisters’ Excellence provided concrete empowerment in the form of funding for emergencies. However, documentation for many programs did not detail how numerous critical services, especially mental health and health services, which are particularly hard for poor and ‘family-detached’ girls to access due to lack of insurance, were made available to girls.

In the long run, empowerment for any girl rests on preparation for a good job, and related academic success. Several programs — for example, Working to Insure and Nurture Girls’ Success, Reaffirming Young Sisters’ Excellence, Movimiento Ascendencia (Burke et al, 2003; Day et al., 2006) — provided tutoring, instruction, special education and/or referral and advocacy to access community education resources; . The program descriptions revealed very limited resources to make girls truly independent in terms of getting a job. Urban Women Against Substance Abuse delivered a curriculum that explored possible career options (Day et al., 2006; Centers for the Application of Prevention Technologies, 2006). Reaffirming Young Sisters’ Excellence included a short term career readiness intervention (Day et al., 2006). Working to Insure and Nurture Girls’ Success had mandatory sessions
on vocational and career planning (Burke et al., 2003; Day et al., 2006). The limited preparation to ‘make it’ in the job force is perhaps due to the myriad of other needs that programs had to attend to, the immediate need for girls to improve academically, and the girls’ being adolescents.

Multiple Needs and Wraparound Services

Wrap-around services have been recognised as essential for meeting the needs of people who are involved in the justice system and who have multiple goals and needs that need to be met in a coordinated way, and through coordination among various services providers (Covington & Bloom, 2003, p. 1; Reed & Leavitt, 1998). A ‘wraparound’ approach to services is needed for many girls, including those without families to provide immediate material support and a place to live, sometimes at a very young age. Girls cannot wait to have some needs addressed but others ignored. The Center for Young Women’s Development stands out because it is a program for girls who are isolated from their families and from school (Zeldin, Kusgen McDaniel, Topitzes, & Calvert, 2000). It offered a place to work and gain job skills, a place to spend time, referrals and advocacy, and direct programming (for example, education about ‘street law’). Girls and young women who have been trained as staff run the program, which includes a Girls’ Detention Advocacy Project, the Sisters Rising Project (for employment), and the Nelly Velasco Project for young, queer women of colour (Schaffner, 2006, p. 188). The program is linked to a network of related services. The Center for Young Women’s Development trains girls to go out and start and staff programs of their own, and it is unique in that it does provide crucial earnings, training and myriad other services to girls without family resources needed to take part in some of the other sorts of programs we have described.

Assessed Needs, Expressed Needs and Contemporary Program Evaluations

Formal assessment of a small number (8) of contemporary evaluations (listed in Table 3) of programs for girls at risk for involvement in the juvenile justice system shows that knowledge of what works for girls has been little advanced from when Lipsey (1992) examined the literature and showed minimal relevant evaluation research. Consistent with previously noted conclusions of the Ms. Foundation for Women (1993) and Greene, Peters & Associates (1998), contemporary evaluations often include measures of the outcome and symptoms of girls’ distress, but do not usually measure changes in underlying problems or whether programs meet the needs of girls of colour and girls who are not heterosexual. Some evaluations look at outcomes for a unique population of girls, but we only identified one evaluation that considered whether the program was equivalently effective for different groups.

The evaluation of Movimiento Ascendencia is an example of an evaluation that did not study what changes in resources or personal attributes explained achieving final objectives, like reduced substance abuse and delinquency. Movimiento Ascendencia did have the multiple goals of increasing high risk girls’ educational,
TABLE 3
Evaluation Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program target</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Dependant variables</th>
<th>Significant outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls Inc. Friendly PEERSuasion ® — Reviewed in Smith and Kennedy, (1991) and Weiss and Nicholson (1998)</td>
<td>Recruitment from local schools; beginning n = 354 (program = 152; comparison = 202)</td>
<td>Random assignment to treatment or control group; individuals surveyed at entry into the program and three times posttreatment</td>
<td>Substance use; avoidance of substance use; leaving situations where peers were using substances</td>
<td>Short-term effects (at program end): attendance reduced onset and incidence of drinking alcohol and decreased favorable attitudes toward drinking alcohol; attendance increased the likelihood of leaving situations where substance were being used; younger program participants were less likely to begin using harmful substances during the study period and less likely to keep associations with substance-using peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Women Against Substance Abuse (UWAWA) — Reviewed in Bery (2000)</td>
<td>Random cluster sample of households; unknown sample size</td>
<td>Random assignment to treatment or control group; groups matched by race/ethnicity; individuals surveyed upon entry into the program, following exit from the program, and at 6- and 18-months follow-up</td>
<td>Individual substance use attitudes; alcohol, tobacco, and other drug resistance; self-efficacy; school bonding; all scales from the cross-sites NYS; HIV/AIDS protective knowledge; attitudes and sexual self-efficacy</td>
<td>Short-term effects (at program end): attendance increased knowledge about HIV/AIDS, healthy substance use attitudes, sexual self-efficacy, and mother–daughter communication. Long-term (at 18-month follow-up): Program group girls maintained the same level of healthy use attitudes through follow-up; the control group experienced a deterioration in both substance use and substance use attitudes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earlscourt Girls’ Connection — Reviewed in Walsh, Pepler and Levene (2002)</td>
<td>Girls referred to the program by either parents or teachers; beginning n = 98</td>
<td>No comparison group; data was gathered from girls and caregivers at entry into the program, and at 6- and 12-months follow-up</td>
<td>Externalising disorders (subscale — conduct disorder, oppositional, and hyperactivity); internalising (subscale — over-anxious, depression, and separation anxiety); how well the girl relates to other children, teachers, and family members</td>
<td>Long-term effects (at 6-month follow-up): externalising disorders (including the conduct disorder and oppositional disorder) decreased from admission; compared to admission, girls related better with other children, teachers, and family members. Long-term effects (at 12-month follow-up): externalising disorders (including the conduct disorder and oppositional disorder) decreased from admission; compared to admission, girls related better with other children, teachers, and family members.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONTINUED OVER
TABLE 3 (CONTINUED)
Evaluation Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program target</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Dependant variables</th>
<th>Significant outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Naja — Reviewed in Belgrave (2002); Belgrave, Chase-Vaughn, Gray, Dixon Addison and Cherry (2002)</td>
<td>Eligible volunteers recruited from elementary and high schools in a low-income ward; ( n = 147 ) (program = 55; comparison = 92)</td>
<td>Girls from four schools were assigned to the treatment group; girls from two schools were assigned to the control group; data gathered at entry into and exit from the program</td>
<td>Africentric values (3 scales — collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, and self-determination); ethnic identity; self-esteem (subscales — behaviour, intellectual, school status, physical appearance and attributes, anxiety, popularity, and happiness and satisfaction); sex roles (subscales — masculinity, femininity, and neutrality)</td>
<td>Short-term effects (9 months into the program): attendance increased Africentric values, racial identity, and the physical appearance subscale of the self-esteem subscale; the program group maintained the same cultural beliefs and self-esteem scores, while the mean scores for the control group decreased over the course of the program. Long-term effects (program end): attendance decreased alcohol use and increased peer intimacy and Africentric values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaffirming Young Sisters’ Excellence (RYSE) — Reviewed in Le, Arifuku and Nunes (2003)</td>
<td>Random selection of eligible girls under supervision; ( n = 350 ) (program = 286; comparison = 64)</td>
<td>Random assignment to treatment or control group; individuals assessed at 12-month follow-up</td>
<td>Recidivism</td>
<td>Long-term effects (at 12-month follow-up): both the treatment group and comparison group recidivated equally; compared to their comparison group counterparts, African–American program participants recidivated at a lower rate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimiento Ascendencia — Reviewed in Williams, Curry and Cohen (2002)</td>
<td>Program participants and comparison group gathered through school and juvenile justice contacts; ( n = 122 ) (program = 61; comparison = 61)</td>
<td>Random sample of program participants, with a comparison snowball sample; interview-based surveys conducted at entry and during the final 12 months of the program</td>
<td>Delinquency; program participation and impact</td>
<td>Short-term effect (at final 12 months of program): attendance reduced delinquency (including throwing objects, damaging property, running away, buying, selling or holding stolen goods, and stealing goods worth more than $50); although participants had significantly poorer grades than comparison group member at entry into the program, this gap narrowed and was no longer statistically significant.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**TABLE 3 (CONTINUED)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program target</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Dependant variables</th>
<th>Significant outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working to Insure and Nurture Girls—Success (WINGS) — Reviewed in Burke, Keaton, and Pennell (2003)</td>
<td>Eligible girls under supervision; n = 570 (program = 171; comparison = 399)</td>
<td>Randomly assignment to WINGS services or regular probation services; data gathered at entry into program and at 6-, 12-, and 18-month follow-up; data gathered through observation, reports from official agencies, formal evaluation, and self-report information from the girl, family members, and third parties</td>
<td>30 protective factors (e.g., communicates well with parents, family support, having a person to confide in, caring school environment, family support, unconditional regard from a parent); 20 risk factors (e.g., alcohol and other drug use, abuse, poor academic achievement, poor parental relations, truancy, social isolation); Recidivism; probation status</td>
<td>Short-term effects (at program end): Attendance increased the likelihood of having protective factors; treatment participants were more likely to have each other 30 protective factors; attendance decreased number of risk factors; the change in protective factors was larger than the change in risk factors; attendance increased the likelihood of visiting a health care professional, and reporting feeling safe at home and at school, and regular school attendance; attendance decreased the likelihood of having an institutional commitment. Long-term effects: Attendance increased the likelihood of completing probation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Chrysalis — Reviewed in Brown and Block (2001)</td>
<td>Eligible volunteers recruited through advertisements; unknown sample size</td>
<td>Random assignment to treatment or control group; individuals surveyed upon entry into the program, following exit from the program, and at 1- and 2-year follow-up</td>
<td>Attitudes about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs; alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use; risky sexual practices; depression and suicide behaviours</td>
<td>Short-term effects (at program end): Attendance increased depression and decreased risky sexual practices. Long-term (at 1-year follow-up): Attendance increased healthy attitudes about alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana and decreased alcohol and marijuana use. Long-term (at 2-year follow-up): Attendance increased healthy attitudes about alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana and decreased marijuana use and suicide risk; time spent in case management decreased the likelihood of ever having tried alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
social and human capital; their knowledge of sex and sexuality; and providing a safe place for girls in the community. Unfortunately, the evaluation did not consider whether achieving these or some other goals explained the lower delinquency in the experimental group (Williams, Curry, & Cohen, 2002). Similarly, for African American girls, Reaffirming Young Sisters’ Excellence produced lower levels of recidivism in comparison to a control group, but for Hispanic, Asian and Caucasian participants, there were no differences between treatment and control group girls. Why these outcomes occurred is not explored through the research. The Project Naja evaluation (Belgrave, 2002; Belgrave, Chase-Vaughn, Gray, Dixon, Addison, & Cherry, 2000) measured many possible explanations for outcomes, including some that are race- and gender- specific, and revealed that participants used less alcohol and had increased Africentric values and peer intimacy. Unfortunately the volunteer nature of the program raises questions about whether the girls most in need would be similarly affected, and the connection of the various changes to long-term success in school and avoiding serious delinquency are not explored. It is important to measure and study not just final outcomes of reduced juvenile justice system penetration and contact, but also interim changes that are suggested by the needs of girls in the system and theories of why girls break the law. Otherwise, it is impossible to know why a program worked, and thus what program elements are crucial for producing desired outcomes.

Three of the eight contemporary evaluations are narrowly focused on substance abuse and sex-related attitudes and activity, and one is focused primarily on psychological disorders of quite young girls. For instance, Smith and Kennedy’s (1991) study of 152 girls participating in Girls Incorporated Friendly PEERsuasion® examined the program’s effect on substance use. The research revealed the modest findings that the treatment group drank less alcohol at an early age than did the comparison group, and that the treatment group was more likely to leave situations where substances were being used. The evaluation of Urban Women Against Substance Abuse (Berg, 2000) found short-term increases in knowledge about HIV/AIDS, healthy substance use attitudes, sexual self-efficacy, and mother–daughter communication, and at 18 months, continued healthy substance use attitudes and lower substance use in comparison to a control group. Finally, the Project Chrysalis (Brown & Block, 2001) evaluation showed that the program affected depression, risky sexual practices, healthy attitudes about substance use, substance use, and suicide risk in positive ways, and some of these changes persisted up to 2 years. The Earlscourt Girls’ Connection (Walsh, Pepler, & Levene, 2002) showed reductions in disorders like conduct disorder and oppositional disorder and better interactions with teachers, peers and family members through a before-and-after study. Although healthy sexual behaviour, reduced substance use, better psychological functioning and positive interactions are laudable goals, failure to achieve them is often a symptom of underlying structural and contextual problems, which for the girls in the juvenile justice system also need to be addressed by programming.

The evaluation of Working to Insure and Nurture Girls’ Success (Burke et al., 2003) has a number of strengths. It did measure changes in risk and protective factors that theoretically could account for reduced involvement in the justice system and eventual self-sufficiency. Protective factors measured included
involvement in a supportive school environment and involvement in a community organisation, places where youth could increase their network of support and resources, and individual capacities to manage peer pressure and self-control. Risk factors measured included truancy, delinquent friends, drug use and social isolation. At program end, the treatment group had more protective factors and fewer risk factors than did the comparison group. They were also less likely to have an institutional commitment at the end of the program. The 18-month follow-up showed that the program increased the likelihood of successfully completing probation. Thus, this multifaceted program, which was closely tailored to each girl’s needs, brought about multiple positive changes, some of which were in the contexts (e.g., school and community organisations) where girls spent time.

The contemporary formal evaluation literature provides very limited evidence of effective programming to meet the multiple needs of girls in the juvenile justice system. At best, it suggests that some intensive programs addressing multiple needs seem effective for some populations of girls, and that there are some useful strategies to promote positive psychological development, and healthy substance use and sexual attitudes and behaviour among girls. Yet, the full range of programming that would be connected to documented needs of girls in trouble with the law, and the program elements designed to address toxic and dangerous contexts, have by and large not yet been evaluated, certainly for the diverse groups of girls who find themselves most often in the juvenile justice system. The power of girls’ multiple troubles has not been matched by powerful evaluations that use control groups, consider key and multiple needs and outcomes, and follow girls over time through and after adolescence.

**Conclusion**

Largely missing from the program descriptions and ignored by contemporary evaluation research are the concepts of a continuum of care (Covington, 1998) and wraparound services (Covington & Bloom, 2003). Thus, there is little attention to programs that can start ‘in the street’ and that end in the job force that would address the substantial and continuous mental health, substance abuse, health, academic, housing and material, and other needs of girls. Some promising programs have carved out age periods, racial and ethnic groups, or other pieces of the girls in trouble issue, but overall there is a lack of comprehensive and sustained programming to meet the requirements of the girls who are most in need, and even when there are program descriptions, evaluations are limited and inadequate. Girls in trouble with the law have a daunting set of interconnected troubles. Their families are damaged and damaging, their neighbourhoods dangerous and without good schools, and their own lives filled with trauma, abuse and depression. Added to the mix for many young girls are the ravages of racism and heterosexism as well as economic marginalisation. These are serious challenges for any new program to face.

Perhaps it would be possible (and no doubt, it is done in some places) to reinvent the role of the juvenile probation or parole officer to emphasise being a broker of services rather than an ‘officer’ of the court, who monitors compliance and ‘consequences’ those girls who fail to measure up (Chesney-Lind, 2006). That
said, truly responsive youth programming, particularly gender responsive youth programming, faces real challenges. There is a limit to the time and other resources that juvenile justice personnel can expend on any one ‘client’. If probation and parole officers act as brokers of such services, rather than direct providers, what sorts of programs can they rely on? What programs and resources will be there when supervision ends?

Many of the programs profiled here have proven effective in helping girls facing considerable risks to negotiate adolescence, successfully. For that reason, those working with girls should seek to emulate their successful approaches. It is no surprise, though, that few of these programs can address the most difficult of the problems girls face. Programs that enable young girls to obtain secure housing for themselves and their children are also largely absent. With the possible exceptions of The Center for Young Women's Development and Movimiento Ascendencia, we found no model for a full set of services within a community that can pull multiple resources together for the girls with the greatest challenges in terms of the aftermath or continuation of abuse, status and developmental needs of adolescents, educational deficits, in some cases children of their own, and no permanent place to live and to develop.

Girls who come into the juvenile justice system have found what one scholar in the area has characterised as ‘partial justice’ (Rafter, 1990), since the history of the court is littered with efforts to ‘save’ girls and young women. Indeed, so problematic is this history that some scholars have concluded that the juvenile justice system’s long history of paternalism and sexism makes it a problematic site for gender-specific services (Kempf-Leonard, 1998). Certainly, the existence of such ‘services’ should not be used as justification for incarcerating girls, and girl-specific programming should never be an excuse to return to the good old days of girls’ institutions where working-class girls were trained in the womanly arts.

There are, though, larger issues at stake in this debate about the need for gender-specific programming within the juvenile justice system, particularly given the growing evidence that the ‘de-institutionalisation’ efforts that once greeted female delinquency are being replaced by more punitive responses, including detention and incarceration. In 1992, Congress acknowledged that the juvenile justice system had not done well by girls when it reauthorised the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act and required that states generate gender-specific plans to deal with delinquency (see Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008).

In the decade and a half since that recognition, the situation for girls in the juvenile justice system has become more dire. Now, the challenge is that the juvenile justice system, which is seeing increasing numbers of young women, will simply treat girls as if they are violent boys, something that recent incarceration trends suggest. The programs briefly profiled here, though, provide a start on an alternative approach to gender justice for girls. While these programs all fall short of all that is needed by these girls, they also point the way to gendered approach to the prevention and intervention of girls’ delinquency.

Perhaps the best case we have seen for gender responsive programming is made by a poem written by a young woman in a girl’s program in the juvenile justice system in Chicago; it is a reminder about the humanity, energy, and talent that
girls in our systems can offer the world if we can help develop those undeniable talents and go boldly forward into the world that awaits them.

**Boys Can't Talk Girl Talk**

Boys can’t talk girls talk  
because you talk about things  
boys shouldn’t know  
or have no right to know  
but maybe they need to know?  
or do they?  

Boys can’t talk girls talk  
because women and men are different  
but men need to know some things  
about women in order to have a  
relationship or do they?  

Boys can’t talk girls talk  
because boys would take all of  
the attention away from the girls and  
would demand it for themselves,  
is it their security or our insecurity  
no more  
whatever it is  
boys can’t talk girls talk

**Endnotes**

1 We would like to thank the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Girls Study Group headed by Dr Margaret Zahn for sharing their compilation of program descriptions with us (see Day et al., 2006).

2 The one exception to the evaluation criteria is our inclusion of Sisters Rising. While Sisters Rising has not been formally evaluated to date, it is part of a unique broader program that is run by girls for girls. Moreover, it focuses on girls’ need for employment, and it also works specifically on issues regarding girls in the juvenile justice system. It is also of interest because it is featured in the influential DVD, Girl Trouble (Leban & Szajko, 2004), and is recommended by Laurie Schaffner, author of, Girls in Trouble with the Law (2006).

3 We have specifically not attempted to review gender-neutral programs, which have similarly been evaluated as effective (e.g., the eleven programs identified in the Blueprints for Violence Prevention developed by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence). Our preference here was to devote limited space to an assessment those programs that are self-consciously girl oriented and evaluated as effective either in delinquency prevention or intervention. Retrieved from http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/

4 Although it had a focus on the development of mothers’ parenting skills, Earlscourt Girls’ Connection also met the need for someone to talk to through by having a staff member or volunteer befriend girls as deemed useful on a on a case-by-case basis (Day et al., 2006.).

References


