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Determining What Works for Girls in the Juvenile Justice System

A Summary of Evaluation Evidence

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Despite increasing attention on gender-specific programming for girls involved in the juvenile justice system, not much is known about the effectiveness of gender-specific programs. The authors review the evidence base for the effectiveness of programs for girls in custody or under supervision by examining the evaluation evidence for nine gender-specific programs (which exclusively target girls) and six gender-non-specific programs (which target both girls and boys). Through this process, the authors summarize the evidence of effectiveness available to researchers and practitioners, identify barriers to determining what programs work for adjudicated girls, and make recommendations for building a solid evidence base on what works for adjudicated girls.

Keywords: *intervention and prevention programs; girls in custody; delinquency prevention; evidence-based; gender-specific programming*

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With an increasing number of girls coming into contact with the juvenile justice system, interest in gender-specific programming has increased over the past decade (Bloom, Owen, Deschenes, & Rosenbaum, 2002b). At the national level, this was spurred on by the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act in 1992, which added language prohibiting gender bias and ensuring that girls have access to a full range of services in states receiving challenge grants. The reauthorization also required states applying for federal formula grants to examine “gender-specific services for the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency” (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998, p. 32). According to Bloom et al. (2002b), at the national level, this has led to more program planning and training but little research and evaluation. Similarly, largely as a result of the reauthorization, states have increased their attention on providing equitable and unique programming for girls in their juvenile justice systems (Bloom et al., 2002b).

Empirical evidence of the different characteristics of incarcerated boys and girls is often used to support the need for gender-specific programs. For example, compared with incarcerated boys, incarcerated girls have much greater odds of having several mental health diagnoses (McCabe, Lansing, Garland, & Hough, 2002; Teplin, Abram, McLelland, Dulcan, & Mericle, 2002). In a study comparing gender differences in psychological functioning and familial risk factors in a sample of adjudicated girls and boys, McCabe et al. (2002) found that adjudicated girls had higher rates of clinical diagnoses of major depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, separation anxiety, and disruptive disorders than adjudicated boys. Furthermore, girls had significantly greater rates of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and greater rates of physical neglect than boys.

Besides higher rates of mental disorders and histories of abuse, incarcerated girls are different than incarcerated boys in several other areas as well. Incarcerated girls are typically younger than their male counterparts, stay for less time, and are more likely to have been remanded to custody for status offenses or less serious crimes (Belknap, 2001; Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). There is also some evidence that “families of delinquent girls are often more dysfunctional than those of male delinquents, and are characterized by a high incidence of mother-daughter conflict” (American Bar Association & National Bar Association, 2001, p. 12; McCabe et al., 2002). These differences, especially in the rates and severity of victimization and psychological disorders and conflicts within the family, suggest that programs designed to help incarcerated boys desist from delinquent behavior may not necessarily meet the needs of

incarcerated girls. Gender-specific programming attempts to recognize these differences and develop programs to address the unique needs of girls in the juvenile justice system.

Along with this growing attention to gender-specific programming, researchers and policy makers have increased their attention on evidence-based crime prevention. Evidence-based crime prevention is based on the ideas that “crime prevention should be rational and based on the best possible evidence” (Welsh & Farrington, 2006, p. 1). The ultimate goal of such prevention strategies, according to Welsh and Farrington (2006), is to ensure “that the best available evidence is considered in any decision to implement a program designed to prevent crime” (p. 2). However, although there has been increased attention to evidence-based crime prevention and programming for juveniles, systematic reviews of “what works” for preventing and intervening in juvenile delinquency have tended to focus on programs that deal exclusively or primarily with boys (Hubbard & Matthews, 2008). As a result, there is less knowledge about what works for girls. In fact, in their survey of program providers and juvenile justice administrators in California, Bloom, Owen, Deschenes, and Rosenbaum (2002a) found that 72.3% of the respondents indicated a need for more information about what works for girls.

In an effort to begin to fill this void, we review the evidence base for the effectiveness of programs targeting girls involved in the juvenile justice system. First, we review the evaluation evidence for gender-specific programs (those that deal exclusively with girls). Second, we review the evaluation evidence for gender-non-specific programs (those that deal with both girls and boys) that have examined gender differences in their effectiveness. We then summarize the available research on the effectiveness of gender-specific and gender-non-specific programs for girls in the juvenile justice system and make recommendations for building a stronger evidence base on what works for girls.

Methods

Gender-Specific Programs

To develop a comprehensive list of gender-specific programs, we conducted a multistep search. This process involved first searching five federal Web sites (those of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institute of Justice, the National Institutes of Health, the Substance

Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [OJJDP]) for intervention and prevention programs targeting girls' delinquency. Second, from the fall of 2006 through the spring of 2007, we searched the juvenile justice 3-year plans for all 50 states from 2000 to 2004.¹ Third, we searched the abstracts produced through the Girls Study Group literature review and conducted Google searches for the programs by name. Fourth, we performed additional Google searches for programs using terms such as *delinquency*, *girls*, *intervention*, and *prevention*, in various combinations. And finally, we incorporated a list of drugs, delinquency, and violence prevention programs for girls that were compiled by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.

The result of the multistep search was a comprehensive list of 108 programs serving only girls in the United States. For each of these programs, information was gathered on the program developer, location, setting, target population, components, description, focus, sources of funding, assessments used, and evaluation information. Of these 108 programs, 62 were determined to specifically target delinquency (e.g., drug use, prostitution, gang involvement) and/or girls involved in the juvenile justice system. These 62 programs became the working sample for our review of gender-specific programs.

For each of the 62 programs in our sample, we searched for evaluation materials and published research through Google searches for programs by name, examining program Web sites, the academic literature, and existing evidence-based reviews (e.g., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institute of Justice, the National Institutes of Health, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Helping America's Youth, Blueprints for Violence Prevention, and Strengthening America's Families). Through this we determined (a) if the program had been evaluated, (b) how many times the program had been evaluated, and (c) if the evaluation(s) were conducted by an independent organization (i.e., external) or by the program itself (i.e., internal). We also contacted the girls-only program directors by e-mail, requesting any evaluation information that existed. Of the 62 programs, 18 had at least one evaluation. Of those 18 programs, 9 were for girls involved in the juvenile justice system (i.e., under court supervision or in detention). Findings from these 9 gender-specific programs are reported in Table 1.

Gender-Non-Specific Programs

In addition, gender-non-specific programs that analyzed outcomes by gender were identified using the Blueprints for Violence Prevention database,

(text continues on page 277)

Table 1
Summary of Gender-Specific Programs

Program	Citation(s)	Research Design	Targeted Population	Program Description	Program Outcomes
Reaffirming Young Sisters' Excellence (RYSE)	National Council on Crime and Delinquency (2001)	Randomized controlled	Adjudicated girls, aged 12 to 17 years, predominantly African American	An intensive alternative probation program developed in response to the disproportionate number of African American girls in Alameda County, CA, that attempts to prevent girls from returning to the juvenile justice system or entering the adult criminal system. The intervention includes home visits by probation officers, individual case plans, concrete funds for emergency situations, a life skills course, teen pregnancy services, and programmatic therapy.	Relative to the comparison group receiving traditional services, RYSE girls were more than 50% more likely to complete their probation. There were no significant differences between RYSE and comparison girls in recidivism at 6 months (14.1% vs. 12.8%), 12 months (25.6% vs. 24%), or 18 months (30.1% vs. 33.3%) after program completion. RYSE girls had a lower rate of growth in recidivism between 12 and 18 months after program completion (18% vs. 39%). RYSE girls were rearrested on less serious charges. African American and Hispanic RYSE girls recidivated at lower rates, but Asian and White RYSE girls recidivated at higher rates. There were no significant group differences on risk for noncompletion of school, and the

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Program	Citation(s)	Research Design	Targeted Population	Program Description	Program Outcomes
Working to Insure and Nurture Girls Success (WINGS)	Burke et al. (2003)	Randomized controlled	Girls minimally involved in the juvenile justice system, aged 12 to 18 years, all racial and ethnic groups	An intensive alternative probation program that uses home visitation and community- and center-based services. WINGS uses individualized case plans for clients and their families, who are provided with a comprehensive array of no-cost services. These include mother-daughter mediation, transportation, and other programs that address academics, drug and alcohol abuse, anger management, and vocational and career support.	comparison group demonstrated significantly lower education problems than the RYSE girls (attributed to interviewer effects). Relative to the comparison group, WINGS girls had more protective factors and fewer risk factors at program exit. WINGS girls had a lower recidivism rate during (1% vs. 4%) and 6 months after (4% vs. 6%) program participation. WINGS girls had higher recidivism rates at 12 months (15% vs. 11%) and 18 months (18% vs. 15%) after completion (no significance test reported). WINGS girls were significantly more likely to attend school on a regular basis (70% vs. 45%) during program participation but not at 6 months after completion. During the intervention, WINGS and comparison group girls received A's and B's equally (42%), but significantly fewer

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Program	Citation(s)	Research Design	Targeted Population	Program Description	Program Outcomes
Holistic Enrichment for At-Risk Teens (HEART)	Kirk and Griffith (2004)	Pretest-posttest, in-house control group	Adolescent girls incarcerated for substance abuse offense, aged 12 to 18 years, all racial and ethnic groups	Targets girls who have intensive substance abuse treatment needs using a modified therapeutic community model. The program blends academics and treatment. Students receive treatment throughout the school day, and curricula are designed to meet educational and treatment objectives simultaneously.	WINGS girls received D's and F's than the comparison group (18% vs. 30%). There were no grade differences at 6 months after completion. WINGS and comparison girls were suspended or expelled from school equally. Relative to the comparison group, HEART girls improved more in their use of social support, perceived support of friends, and peer acceptance. HEART girls improved more in family relationships and in educational status. HEART girls improved more in school engagement, and satisfaction and grades became more substantial assets (i.e., protective factors) for HEART girls. Both HEART and comparison girls improved in social skills, self-esteem, parental support, social development, and peer relationships.

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Table 1 (continued)

Program	Citation(s)	Research Design	Targeted Population	Program Description	Program Outcomes
Southern Oaks Girls School (SOGS) Stepping Up program	Wisconsin Department of Corrections (2005)	Pretest-posttest, in-house control group	Girls presenting with Axis I mental health issues, aged 13 to 19 years, all racial and ethnic groups	SOGS is a treatment facility that provides individualized treatment and educational programming in a residential correctional facility. The Stepping Up unit is a smaller unit within SOGS that is designed to meet the intensive and unique mental health needs of girls. It focuses on providing programs that develop independent living and healthy relationship skills.	Relative to the comparison group, fewer Stepping Up girls had at least one adult arrest within 2 years of exiting the program (0.6 vs. 4.4, offenses per girl). Stepping Up girls had fewer total charges and were charged with fewer person and felony-level offenses and had fewer direct transfers to adult prison and state mental health institutions. For the entire population at SOGS, girls gained an average of two grade levels in reading comprehension and mathematics competency during 7 months of incarceration. Eleven of 23 age-eligible girls completed high school equivalency diplomas throughout 2004-2005.
AMICUS Girls' Restorative Program	Gordon (2004)	Pretest-posttest, no control group	Female chronic juvenile offenders, aged 14 to 21 years, all racial and ethnic groups	AMICUS is a joint project with the Minnesota Department of Corrections and residential service providers. It attempts to promote accountability, inner change, healing, and	Girls reported increased self-awareness, advocacy, optimism, maturity, and motivation. Girls reported a better understanding of the impacts of their actions on others, increased compassion and

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Program	Citation(s)	Research Design	Targeted Population	Program Description	Program Outcomes
Girls and Boys Town USA (SSD Center for female juvenile offenders)	Hueffner et al. (n.d.)	Pretest-posttest, no control group	Female offenders referred by the court, aged 11 to 18 years, all racial and ethnic groups	A short-term residential program based on the Teaching-Family Model. It uses individualized treatment to teach life skills while providing a safe, abuse-free environment and structure in a general population setting.	65.1% of girls were discharged to less restrictive settings, with 34.9% discharged to more restrictive settings. 37.7% of the girls had recidivated within 4.5 years of exiting the program. The largest increases in recidivism occurred within 6 months of discharge (9.9%) and at 18 and 24 months of discharge (7.9% and 7.3%).
				justice for offenders, victims, and their families through the use of restorative justice circles.	caring toward others, and increased remorse toward others. Girls reported improved relationships with and feelings toward family members, probation officers, and county agents; decreased destructive behaviors toward others; and improved peer relationships.

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Table 1 (continued)

Program	Citation(s)	Research Design	Targeted Population	Program Description	Program Outcomes
Girls Circle	Irvine (2005)	Pre-/Post-test, no control group	Girls who had experience being detained in secure facilities, ages 9-18, all race/ethnic groups (Primarily a prevention program, we focus on juvenile justice implementation).	Girls Circle utilizes 10 weekly support groups (i.e. "circles") conducted by trained facilitators. They encourage mutual empathetic communication while performing activities along the themes of positive body image, self-efficacy, relationships, and building skills to achieve goals.	Girls demonstrated significant improvements in body image, self-efficacy, and perceived social support. Girls who had experience in the juvenile justice system were significantly more likely to demonstrate an increase in perceived social support than girls who had no experience with the juvenile court.
GEMS (Girls Empowered to Move Successfully)	Houston (2006)	Pre-/Post-test, no control group	Court involved girls, ages 13-16, all race/ethnic groups	A mentoring program that matches girls who are involved in the juvenile justice teen court system to a female adult mentor who tracks their progress in completing their sentences and develops a long-lasting supportive relationship with them.	In the four quarters from July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006 an average of 13% of the girls served were adjudicated; an average of 85.5% were reported to exhibit desired changes in antisocial behavior; and an average of 48.75% were reported to exhibit desired changes in social competencies.

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Program	Citation(s)	Research Design	Targeted Population	Program Description	Program Outcomes
Practical Academic Cultural Educational Center (PACE)	Gallagher (2005)	Pretest-posttest, no control group	Adolescent girls, aged 12 to 18 years, all racial and ethnic groups (one of the primary ways girls can be referred to PACE is through the juvenile court)	A day treatment program offering comprehensive and high school education. Individual treatment plans are developed through extensive needs assessment. Home visits are scheduled at least once a month, and families are encouraged to get involved in girls' treatment.	For girls enrolled in 2004-2005 for a full year, 77% increased academic functioning by one full grade level, and 48% earned their high school diplomas or General Educational Development certificates. Three years after transitioning from the program, 42% were enrolled in college or other appropriate educational settings, and 37% were employed. Girls demonstrated decreases in drug use (39% vs. 7%) and alcohol use (40% vs. 5%). For girls who transitioned in 2002-2003, 7% recidivated (i.e., adjudicated or had adjudications withheld) while enrolled in the program, 6% recidivated within 6 months of transitioning, and 9% recidivated within 1 year of transition.

which contains detailed write-ups of program evaluations that have been reviewed by the Blueprints staff. Blueprints is funded by OJJDP and rates programs using rigorous scientific criteria (see Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, n.d.).

The Blueprints for Violence Prevention database contains most of the programs that have appeared on the major federal government lists, such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (which is currently under reconstruction), the U.S. Department of Education, the National Institute of Drug Abuse, and OJJDP. At the time of review, there were 392 programs in the database, which contained brief information relevant for a fact sheet as well as detailed information on program descriptions and theories, risk and protective factors, audiences targeted, evaluation methodologies, outcomes, generalizability, and limitations for every evaluation study conducted on the program. Thus, many program write-ups contain information on multiple studies. Of the 392 programs reviewed, only 29 included analyses of gender effects. Of these 29 programs, 6 were programs for youth involved in the juvenile justice system (Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care [MTFC], Multisystemic Therapy [MST], Girls and Boys Town USA, the Indianapolis Restorative Justice Project [IRJP], Family Solutions, and Maricopa County Drug Court). First, we report the evaluation evidence for the 9 programs targeted for girls in custody or under supervision.

Analysis of Gender-Specific Evaluations

Drawing conclusions regarding the effectiveness of these nine gender-specific programs faces many challenges. First, most programs have not been evaluated with highly rigorous research designs. Of the nine gender-specific programs identified, two used randomized controlled research designs (Reaffirming Young Sisters' Excellence [RYSE] and Working to Insure and Nurture Girls Success [WINGS]) whereby girls were randomly assigned to receive the gender-specific program or be a part of a comparison group receiving traditional services. The majority of the programs used before-and-after measures on selected variables. Two of these incorporated in-house comparison groups (Holistic Enrichment for At-Risk Teens [HEART] and Southern Oaks Girls School) whereby individuals within the same facility, but not receiving the specific intervention, were selected for comparison. Five of the programs did not include control

groups (the AMICUS Girls' Restorative Program, Girls and Boys Town Staff Secure Detention [SSD] Center, Girls Circle,² Girls Empowered to Move Successfully [GEMS], and the Practical Academic Cultural Educational Center [PACE]) and only measured pretest and posttest outcomes.

Second, the emphases in the programs differ widely. Although most programs address multiple risk factors for delinquency, such as dysfunctional families, poor school performance, and antisocial peers, others address limited factors and/or ones that have less direct relationships to delinquency (e.g., self-esteem). Furthermore, the outcome measures for the programs are highly variable. Some programs focus on behavioral changes such as recidivism rates, drug and alcohol use, and school performance, whereas others focus on psychological measures such as self-efficacy, improved self-esteem, optimism, and the like. The two behavioral measures that were most consistently used were recidivism and school success, although even here, the manner of measurement was variable, making cross-study comparisons difficult. Finally, sample sizes varied considerably, making generalizability and comparisons with other evaluations difficult. The following section describes the varying outcomes reported in these different types of program evaluations.

Randomized Controlled Designs

Of the nine gender-specific programs, RYSE and WINGS were the only two that used randomized controlled research designs to evaluate their effectiveness. Both are gender-specific probation programs targeted at preventing girls from returning to the juvenile justice system or entering the adult criminal system. Both are comprehensive in targeting multiple risk factors, including family, school, and peers, and both incorporate individualized treatment plans. The RYSE program also targets African American girls and was developed with a predominately African American orientation to address the disproportionate representation of African American girls in Alameda County, California.

The RYSE program. Girls participating in the RYSE program were 50% more likely to complete their probations during the intervention period than a comparison group of girls who received traditional probation services. In terms of recidivism (measured as rearrest), there were no significant group differences at 6 months (RYSE: 14.1%; comparison: 12.8%) 12 months (RYSE: 25.6%; comparison: 24%), or 18 months (RYSE: 30.1%; comparison: 33.3%) after completing the program. This indicates that the RYSE

program worked no better or worse than traditional services in keeping girls from recidivating. However, the rate of growth between the second and third follow-up periods (12 and 18 months) was 39% for the comparison group but only 18% for the treatment group. RYSE girls who made it 12 months without being rearrested were less likely to be rearrested than similar girls in the comparison group. Girls who participated in the RYSE program were also rearrested on less severe charges than those in the comparison group. RYSE also appeared to work better for African American and Hispanic girls, who recidivated at a lower rate than their corresponding comparison group. The opposite was true for Asian and White girls (National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2001).

In terms of school performance, of the RYSE girls entering the program, 61% exhibited school attendance problems, 55% were performing below grade level, and 36% had been expelled or suspended within the previous year. Greater improvement in educational measures, such as attendance, and performance were expected for the treatment group over the comparison group. Two items from the Comprehensive Adolescent Severity Index, risk for noncompletion of school and educational problems, were used to measure educational outcomes. The index was administered by National Council on Crime and Delinquency staff members to the control groups and by RYSE probation officers to the treatment group. Contrary to expectations, there were no significant differences between the girls in the treatment and comparison groups in risk for not completing school. Furthermore, girls in the comparison group showed significantly greater improvement for educational problems than girls in the treatment group. They attributed these unexpected findings to interviewer effects (National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2001).

The WINGS program. The WINGS program was also rigorously evaluated with a randomized controlled research design and measured recidivism and educational outcomes (Burke, Keaton, & Pennell, 2003). In terms of recidivism, when WINGS girls were compared with a group of girls receiving traditional probation services, the results were mixed. At 6 months after program completion, WINGS girls appeared to recidivate less than the comparison group (WINGS: 4%; comparison: 6%). However, at 12 and 18 months after program completion, WINGS girls actually appeared to recidivate more than the comparison group (WINGS: 15% and 18%; comparison: 11% and 15%). Because the evaluation did not report significance tests, at the very least, these results demonstrate that WINGS girls did no better than comparable girls receiving traditional probation services.

Burke et al. (2003) also measured school success as an outcome. This included measures of school enrollment, school attendance, school suspensions and expulsions, and school grades. WINGS girls were significantly more likely to attend school on a regular basis than the comparison group (70% vs. 45%) during the program intervention; however, there were no differences between the WINGS girls and girls in the comparison group in school attendance at the 6-month follow-up. There were no significant differences between the groups in number of girls suspended or expelled, and although an equal percentage of girls in the WINGS and control groups got A's and B's on average (42%), significantly fewer WINGS girls got D's and F's than the control group (18% vs. 30%) during the intervention. However, there were no differences between the groups on grades at the first follow-up. While enrolled in the program, the WINGS participants showed significantly strong school success rates compared with their controls. However, the effects were not long term.

In terms of risk and protective factors, WINGS participants had more protective factors at exit, with the biggest changes in self-control, prosocial adult relationships, peer pressure management, and organizational involvement. They also had fewer risk factors at exit, including truancy, delinquent friends, distressing habits, drug use, and social isolation. However, as noted above, WINGS girls over the long term were no less likely to refrain from delinquent activity.

Pretest-Posttest Designs With In-House Comparison Groups

HEART. The HEART program for girls incarcerated for substance abuse offenses is one of the two programs that used pretest-posttest designs with in-house comparison groups. As indicated in their 2004 year-end report to the OJJDP, Kirk and Griffith (2004) collected data on girls incarcerated in the Samarkand Youth Development Center. Girls diagnosed with substance abuse issues were assigned to the HEART program or the comparison group. Although recidivism was not measured, other outcomes based on changing scores on standardized scales measuring several domains of risk and protective factors (e.g., family and peer relationships, self-esteem, educational success) were used to gauge the success of the program. The evaluators used *t* tests to compare HEART girls' scores on the standardized assessment instruments with the comparison group's scores across multiple outcome measures during different levels of participation.

Both the treatment and comparison groups showed large improvements in social skills, self-esteem, parental support, social development, and peer

relationships. Girls in the HEART program demonstrated improvements in their use of social support, perceived support of friends, and peer acceptance, whereas the comparison group showed little or no change in these areas. Compared with the girls in the comparison group, those in the HEART program experienced greater increases in their levels of life skills mastery in all areas. Family relationships improved for girls in the HEART group but not for those in the comparison group.

The HEART girls showed moderate to substantial improvements in educational status over the comparison group and also demonstrated substantial improvement in school engagement (increasing from 33% to 62%) and improvements in grades as an asset (i.e., protective factor), whereas the comparison group actually showed a modest decline. For the HEART girls, school engagement, school satisfaction, and grades became more substantial assets, whereas the control group either did not improve or showed modest declines.

Southern Oaks Girls School. The other program that used a comparison group with a pretest-posttest design was Southern Oaks Girls School, a residential correctional facility for delinquent girls that provides a comprehensive array of services, including individualized treatment, educational programming, and mental health services (Wisconsin Department of Corrections, 2005). Although Southern Oaks Girls School has a variety of programs, the only program evaluated using a comparison group was the Stepping Up program. The comparison group was composed of similar girls who were at Southern Oaks prior to the opening of the Stepping Up unit, which is a smaller unit designed to meet the intensive and unique mental health needs of juvenile girls and provides intensive treatment interventions for girls presenting Axis I mental health issues. The Stepping Up unit focuses on providing programs to develop skills in the areas of independent living and maintaining healthy relationships.

Southern Oaks measured recidivism (i.e., additional adjudications or subsequent legal charges) as one outcome. The percentages of girls who had at least one adult arrest within 2 years of their release was much lower for the girls who participated in the Stepping Up program than the girls in the comparison group. The rate of reoffending per girl (0.6 offenses per girl) was lower than in the comparison group (4.4 offenses per girl), and most rearrests of Stepping Up girls were for relatively minor, nonperson offenses. Relative to the comparison group, Stepping Up girls were charged with fewer total charges, fewer person offenses, and fewer felony-level offenses and had reductions in direct transfers to adult prison and state mental health institutions.

Although no comparison group was used in assessing improvements in educational outcomes, all students who entered the Southern Oaks Girls School underwent intensive educational assessment and evaluation, using achievement tests, classroom observation, and reviews of academic records. Girls gained an average of two grade levels in reading comprehension and mathematics competency during an incarceration period of approximately 7 months. Eleven of 23 age-eligible girls completed their high school equivalency diplomas throughout 2004-2005.

Pretest-Posttest Designs With No Control Groups

Most programs that were evaluated used pretest-posttest designs without control groups. These programs include the AMICUS Girls' Restorative Program, Girls and Boys Town SSD Center, Girls Circle, GEMS, and PACE. Program evaluations that used pretest-posttest designs but did not use control groups are individually discussed below.

AMICUS Girls' Restorative Program. AMICUS (now called RADIUS) is a restorative justice program that attempts to provide girls with successful transitions back into the community through the use of restorative justice circles (Gordon, 2004). After completing the program, girls reported increased self-awareness, advocacy, optimism, maturity, and motivation; a better understanding of the impacts of their actions on others; increased compassion and caring behavior toward others; and increased remorse toward others. The girls also reported improved relationships with and feelings toward family members, probation officers, and county agents as well as decreased destructive behaviors toward others and improved peer relationships (Gordon, 2004). Finally, of the 16 girls who had completed AMICUS in 2003 and were located, 11 had maintained successful transitions back into the community as of January 2004 (Gordon, 2004).

Girls and Boys Town SSD Center. Girls and Boys Town SSD Center for girls is a short-term residential program based on the Teaching-Family Model that uses individualized treatment to teach life skills while providing a safe and abuse-free environment and structure in a general population setting. Hueffner, Xia, Teare, and Davis (n.d.) focused on girls' placement after discharge, their rearrest rate for up to 4.5 years, and the change in risk factors from the time they entered the program. They found that 65.1% of the girls were discharged to less restrictive settings (i.e., the homes of natural parents, residential treatment centers, the homes of relatives, group

homes, foster care, or independent living), and 34.9% were discharged to more restrictive settings (i.e., youth correctional facilities). Within 4.5 years of discharge, 37.7% of the girls in Girls and Boys Town SSD Center had recidivated. Measured at 6-month intervals, the largest increases in recidivism occurred immediately after discharge (9.9% recidivated within 6 months) and at 18 and 24 months after discharge (7.9% and 7.3%). The best predictors of recidivism were the evaluations made by program staff and a girl's number of prior arrests (Hueffner et al., n.d.).

Girls Circle. Girls Circle is a program geared toward improving girls' psychological well-being by connecting them to others through weekly support groups or "circles." Although it is most widely used as a prevention program, one study evaluated its effects on girls with histories of involvement in the juvenile justice system (i.e., girls who had experience being detained in a secure facility; see Irvine, 2005). After completing the 10-week program, girls demonstrated significant improvements in body image, self-efficacy, and perceived social support, with no differences by race, age, or location. Compared with girls completing the program who had not been court involved, court-involved girls were significantly more likely to demonstrate increases in perceived social support (Irvine, 2005).

GEMS. The GEMS program is a mentoring program that matches girls involved in the juvenile court system with female adult mentors who track their progress in completing their court sentences and develop a lasting and supporting relationship with them (Houston, 2006). In the program's quarterly reports to OJJDP from July 1, 2005, to June 30, 2006, Houston (2006) found that an average of 13% of the girls served in each quarter were adjudicated, an average of 85.5% were reported as exhibiting desired changes in antisocial behavior, and an average of 48.75% were identified as exhibiting desired changes in social competencies. However, one should use caution in interpreting these results, because not all of the youth served participated in the educational workshops offered. In fact, an average of 51.66% of the girls served by GEMS mentors in each quarter participated in at least one educational workshop.

PACE. Finally, PACE is a statewide day treatment program in Florida that provides individualized treatment and home visits for girls and their families. Although the program serves many different populations, one of the primary ways girls can be referred to PACE is by the juvenile court

(Gallagher, 2005). Gallagher (2005) found that of the 2,298 girls served in 2004 and 2005, a total of 77% of girls enrolled in PACE for a full year increased their academic functioning by one full grade level, and 48% earned their high school diplomas or General Educational Development certificates while enrolled in PACE. Three years after transitioning from PACE, 42% were enrolled in college or other appropriate educational settings, and 37% were employed.

Girls participating in the PACE program also demonstrated decreases in drug and alcohol use after exiting the program (39% vs. 7% for drug use and 40% vs. 5% for alcohol use). Of the girls who transitioned from PACE in fiscal year 2002-2003, 7% recidivated (i.e., were adjudicated or had adjudications withheld) while enrolled in the PACE program. At 6 and 12 months after transitioning from PACE, 6% and 9% of the girls had recidivated.

From the above review, the current state of evaluation evidence offers mixed support for the effectiveness of gender-specific programming. The overall pattern regarding school success, although variously measured, seems to show that, at least during times of program intervention, there is a general increase in school success, including attendance, bonding, and grades. Studies that did not have control groups, such as PACE, showed positive long-term effects, but without a control group, it is impossible to determine if that is a result of the program or the result of girls' maturation or other factors. The randomized controlled studies did not demonstrate long-term effects, but here too there are some measurement problems, making the drawing of conclusions more tentative. For the most part, these programs do have positive effects in the areas of educational success and improvements in relationships. The effects on recidivism are mixed and in the most rigorous studies do not demonstrate long-term success. Better measurement and the use of control groups in all studies are necessary to fully gauge long-term outcomes.

As previously noted, the ambiguity in the results of the evaluations of gender-specific programs is due in part to the varying measures, methods, research strategies, and their relatively recent development. However, a primary argument regarding the need for gender-specific programs is that they are more in tune with the unique needs of girls resulting from different socialization and development in a gendered society (Hubbard & Matthews, 2008). As a result, it is assumed that a general program that addresses both boys' and girls' problems will likely be limited in its effectiveness in dealing with girls. With that in mind, we examined programs that target boys and girls who are involved in the juvenile justice system.

Analysis of Gender-Non-Specific Evaluations

Analyses by gender are not often reported in studies examining gender-non-specific programs. Researchers have generally assumed that when an evaluation showed effects for the entire sample, the program was working equally well for both male and female participants. The Blueprints for Violence Prevention database was used to identify programs that had included analyses of gender effects. Of the 392 programs reviewed, only 29 had conducted analyses by gender, and only 6 of those programs involved youth in the criminal justice system. Of these 6 programs, 5 demonstrated no differential effects by gender on at least some of their outcomes, indicating that they worked equally well for both boys and girls (MTFC, MST, Girls and Boys Town USA, Family Solutions, and the IJRP). Only one program, Maricopa County Drug Court, demonstrated effects only for girls. The program evaluations that included analyses by gender are discussed below.

Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care is a Blueprints “model” program that uses behavioral management methods to provide therapeutic and structured foster care to youth with histories of chronic and severe criminal behavior at risk for incarceration. Evaluations of MTFC have demonstrated effects for both genders as well as specific effects for boys and girls. In a study designed to ferret out the differences in treatment needs between boys and girls who participated in the MTFC program (with no control group), MTFC was found to be equally effective for reducing the prevalence rates of arrests for status, property, person-to-person, and drug offenses for both genders (Chamberlain & Reid, 1994).

In terms of male-specific effects, in a randomized study with an all-male sample, boys had fewer arrests and criminal activities (general delinquency, index offenses, and felony assault) at 12 months after baseline and were less likely to commit violent offenses at 24 months than a comparison group of boys receiving “group care” (Chamberlain, 1997; Chamberlain & Reid, 1998; Eddy, Whaley, & Chamberlain, 2004). In a randomized study implemented with delinquent girls, at 24 months after baseline, MTFC demonstrated significant reductions in criminal referrals, self-reported delinquency, and days spent in locked settings compared with a control group of similar girls receiving traditional services (Chamberlain, Leve, & DeGarmo, 2007; Leve & Chamberlain, 2006; Leve, Chamberlain, & Reid, 2005).

Multi-Systemic Therapy targets juvenile offenders and their families for an individualized and comprehensive treatment program that addresses

multiple factors related to delinquency across multiple social settings (i.e., family, peer, school, and neighborhood). Of the six programs found in the Blueprints database, MST is perhaps the most widely studied. It is also one of the 11 model programs identified by Blueprints as having rigorous evaluation evidence demonstrating effectiveness in reducing adolescent violent crime, aggression, delinquency, and substance abuse. In terms of gender, MST appears to work equally well for both female and male juvenile offenders across multiple sites and samples. That is, although multiple studies have shown MST to significantly reduce recidivism, behavior problems, psychiatric symptomatology, and days in incarceration, these did not differ by gender (Borduin et al., 1995; Henggeler, Melton, & Smith, 1992).

At least one study found that gender moderated the effects of MST. In a randomized study, Henggeler, Pickrel, and Brondino (1999) found that MST decreased alcohol and marijuana use for girls compared with a comparison group of girls receiving “usual” services during program intervention (i.e., from pretest to posttest) but that the MST girls deteriorated in terms of alcohol and marijuana use at 6 months following the completion of the program, whereas girls in the comparison group improved. Overall, however, MST is found to work equally well for both girls and boys.

Girls and Boys Town USA illustrates a program that worked for both genders but also showed some effects in a noncontrolled study conducted in a Philadelphia detention center for girls (discussed above as a gender-specific program, Girls and Boys Town SSD Center). This residential program, which uses a “family-style” method of treatment by encouraging bonds of trust between caregivers and children, demonstrated significant (pretest to posttest, without a control group) reductions in rearrest, problem behaviors, and substance abuse for both boys and girls (Larzelere, Daly, Davis, Chmelka, & Handwerk, 2004). In terms of recidivism, Larzelere et al. (2004) found that 9.8% of girls who had been arrested prior to entering Girls and Boys Town were rearrested within 3 months of being discharged. Similarly, 9.4% of boys who had prior arrests were rearrested within 3 months of discharge. Although the reduction in arrests was significant within both groups, they found no significant gender differences in rearrests.

The Family Solutions program is a family-based intervention and group support program targeted at first-time juvenile offenders operated at the Department of Child and Family Development at the University of Georgia. Quinn and Van Dyke (2004) found positive results for Family Solutions on recidivism. Those juveniles who completed the program had a significantly lower recidivism rate (19.9%) than both Family Solutions dropouts (36.6%)

and those who received traditional probation services (54.7%). In their multivariate analyses, along with the treatment condition, age at first offense and race were also significantly associated with individuals' recidivism. However, gender was not, indicating that Family Solutions worked equally well for male and female first-time juvenile offenders.

The Indianapolis Restorative Justice Project uses restorative justice conferences as an alternative to traditional juvenile justice sanctions. Using a randomized controlled research design, researchers found that offenders undergoing the IRJP reported that the program had helped solve problems and also that the IRJP had a significant effect on recidivism (McGarrell, 2001). At 6 months after participating in the program, a significantly smaller number of youth who had completed the IRJP had been rearrested (12.3%) compared with youth in the control group (22.7%). Although there was still a difference at 12 months after program completion, the difference between groups (23.2% for the treatment group vs. 29% for the control group) was no longer statistically significant. These recidivism differences between the treatment and control groups were found for both girls and boys, with boys and girls in the treatment group being less likely to recidivate than those in the control group. Although researchers found that this difference was greatest for girls, they did not report the significance of this difference and suggested that the program works well across genders (McGarrell, 2001).

The Maricopa County Drug Court, a program established to cope with the increasing number of juvenile drug offenders in Maricopa County, Arizona, was the only program out of the six for youth in contact with the juvenile justice system that did not work equally well for both girls and boys on some outcomes. Rather, the program demonstrated effects for girls only. Although an evaluation of the full sample found that drug court youth were less likely than those in the comparison group receiving standard probation to commit subsequent delinquent acts, it also found that the number of days spent in the program significantly increased the number of delinquent offenses and that drug court youths were 2.7 times more likely than those in the comparison group to test positive for cocaine during treatment. Also, no significant differences were found between drug court youth and those in the comparison group in marijuana use (Cooper, 2002; Rodriguez & Webb, 2004). In contrast to the mostly negative effects in the full sample, girls were less likely than boys to commit delinquent offenses and use marijuana while in treatment. Caution should be used in deriving conclusions from these results because of the high levels of attrition (60% of the original sample was lost through attrition) and the large proportion of boys in the sample (84%).

The analysis of programs offering services to both girls and boys in contact with the juvenile justice system suggests that most programs targeting both boys and girls work equally well for both in reducing subsequent arrests and self-reported delinquent activity. It is also worth noting that although only 6 programs involving youth in the criminal justice system are reported in this article, findings from the other 23 programs that had conducted analyses by gender show that nearly all of the programs worked equally well for both boys and girls.

Summary and Conclusions

With the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act in 1992 and a growing body of literature suggesting their need (Acoca, 1999; Belknap, 2001; Bloom et al., 2002a, 2002b; Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004), the number of gender-specific programs for girls in custody has increased over the past decade. However, the evidence base for their effectiveness to date is sparse. From 2006 to 2007, we collected and reviewed evaluations of programs that exclusively targeted girls in custody or under court supervision. Evaluations of nine such programs were found, of which two used randomized controlled designs, two used pretest-posttest designs with in-house control groups, and five used pretest-posttest designs without control groups. We also reviewed evaluations of six additional programs targeting both boys and girls in custody that examined the effects of the program by gender in their analyses.

On the basis of this evidence, comprehensive programs targeting multiple risk factors appear to work best in reducing subsequent delinquency whether they specifically target girls or both genders. In other words, gender-non-specific programs, when rigorously evaluated (e.g., MTFC, MST, and Girls and Boys Town USA), appear to be effective in reducing recidivism for both boys and girls. This supports the position that “good gender-specific services begin with good services” (Maniglia, 1998, p. 8). Although it appears that gender-non-specific programs work equally well for girls and boys involved with the juvenile justice system, this does not necessarily mean that gender-specific programs are ineffective or unnecessary. Relative to programming for boys or for both genders, gender-specific programming has only recently garnered attention from scholars, practitioners, and policy makers. As a result of their relatively recent innovation, the established methods and measures may be ill equipped to provide thorough and sound evaluations of them.

Hubbard and Matthews (2008) discussed this issue in their recent review of the controversy between the “what works” and gender-specific and gender-responsive programming literatures. They suggested that scholars in the two different literatures tend to emphasize different program goals. In the what works literature, scholars give primacy to the reduction of recidivism in determining the goals of any program. This is contrasted to the gender-specific and gender-responsive programming literature, in which scholars place more importance on girls’ empowerment and quality of life in determining program goals (Hubbard & Matthews, 2008).

Although they have been less rigorously evaluated, evidence on gender-specific programs has pointed to potential positive effects on outcomes such as education, employment, relationships with family and friends, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and other social-psychological outcomes (e.g., self-awareness, body image, social development) that may empower girls and improve their overall quality of life. Such outcomes show that gender-specific programs are having important effects aside from reducing recidivism.

Although these positive outcomes are known to be negatively associated with delinquency (i.e., reduced risk factors, increased protective factors, and less serious charges on subsequent offenses), minimal evidence exists to support their effectiveness at reducing overall recidivism. This was the case for the two programs that were evaluated rigorously with randomized controlled research designs (RYSE and WINGS). The lack of evidence for long-term effects on recidivism suggests that programs work while girls are enrolled but are not effective after girls leave. This suggests a need for follow-up in programming (i.e., “aftercare”) and for continuity to be built into programs for both boys and girls.

Furthermore, although some programs are geared toward strengthening a specific ethnic or racial identity (e.g., RYSE), very few program evaluations complete analyses to determine for which girls the programs work best. The social location of program participants (i.e., race, class, and language) may be affected differently by program components. RYSE, a program focused on African Americans, was assessed for its effectiveness for girls of different racial and ethnic groups. Although it worked well at reducing recidivism for African American girls, it did not work for White and Asian girls (National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2001). Evaluating not only what works for girls, but for which girls programs work, is a necessary next step for future research to take.

Furthermore, evaluating which components of a program are most important according to the social location of individual youth is a gap in the evidence-based research that has not been addressed. Some components,

such as increasing self-esteem or self-efficacy, may be more important for girls than for boys, given girls' social location in a patriarchal society (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004). Conversely, communication skills and building relationships with family and peers are believed to be especially important for girls, but little assessment has been made on the effectiveness of such outcomes for boys.

Finally, along with the different theoretical foundations, goals, and components, the gender-specific programming literature has proposed different assessment and therapeutic approaches from the what works literature (for a review, see Hubbard & Matthews, 2008). This indicates that gender-specific and gender-responsive programming implies a fundamentally different implementation than general programs or those that are geared specifically toward boys.

Bloom, Owen, and Covington (2006) suggested that gender-responsive programming involves "creating an environment through site selection, staff selection, program development, content, and material that reflects an understanding of the realities of women's lives" (p. 2). As a result, research evaluating gender-specific and gender-non-specific programs should examine their implementation strategies along with their outcomes. This will help determine what aspects of gender-specific and gender-responsive programming may be unique for girls and demonstrate what implementation processes are more or less effective.

The present review has revealed various limitations of evidence base for the effectiveness of gender-specific programs. There are a limited number of rigorously evaluated programs, as evidenced by the lack of studies that used control groups. Future evaluation efforts should correct for this limitation. Also, outcomes thought to be gender specific should be clearly specified in evaluations and simultaneously evaluated with program implementation and fidelity needs. Furthermore, the social location of individual youth should be an important consideration in the design of programs, the development of program components, and the measurement of program outcomes. By correcting for these limitations, programs have the potential to be targeted more specifically to the needs of the clients they serve and ultimately benefit all youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system.

Notes

1. Some 3-year plans ranged from 2000 to 2002, 2001 to 2003, or 2002 to 2004.
2. Although Girls Circle is generally a prevention program, it is included here because its use has been evaluated for girls who have been involved with juvenile courts.

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