

ProDES The Program Development and Evaluation System

The Female Delinquent

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OVERVIEW

Research on delinquency and the juvenile justice system has, for all intents and purposes, been the study of male delinquency and males in the system. If there are no consistent and significant differences between the genders, either in the etiology of their delinquent behavior or the response of the system, then the predominance of the male orientation is lamentable but certainly not problematic. However, if there are important differences between the two genders, or if differences are mistakenly assumed to exist, then we need to know. Such knowledge is crucial for better understanding of the causes of female delinquency, the most appropriate types of interventions with female delinquents and in any assessment of the effectiveness of existing interventions that involve females.

There is a small but growing research literature on female delinquents. This literature paints a picture of female delinquency that we can hold up as a comparison to the situation in Philadelphia. Of course, the *ProDES* population is not a general delinquent population – it focuses specifically on those juveniles placed either in private programs as a condition of probation, or those placed directly into state funded institutions. Any differences between the national and the local image of female delinquents could therefore be due to a number of factors, including the large urban context of Philadelphia or the presumably more serious delinquents being placed by Philadelphia in private or state programs. Nevertheless, it is important to know whether any differences emerge between male and female delinquents and whether these differences are consistent with or contrary to those found on the national level. It is this gender comparison that forms the focus of this report.

FEMALE DELINQUENTS – EXPECTATIONS AND REALITY

Although there are many similarities between male and female delinquency, the literature points to some significant differences. One of the persistent findings from research in delinquency is the distinctive difference in offense rates between males and females. These rates suggest that males are substantially more criminal/delinquent overall, compared to females, and especially so when it comes to violent and aggressive types of behavior. Historically arrests of males have outnumbered those of females by about a 4:1 ratio. The male to female ratio for violent index crimes is even higher at 9:1, and males are far more likely to be arrested for such offenses as vandalism, weapons offenses and 'other assaults'. Girls in contrast are more likely to be arrested for running away from home and prostitution.

Interestingly, if we measure offending by self-report rather than official statistics we find that the male female ratio is not as large as first thought. Cernkovich and Giordano (1979) report a ratio of just over 2:1 when using self-reported delinquency, and similar findings have been reported in other such studies (Canter, 1982). In a comprehensive review of self-report

studies Steffensmeier and Steffensmeier (1980) report that male-female differences tend to be greater

for crimes of violence and serious property crimes. Cernkovich and Giordano's self-report data (1979) show boys to be more likely to report involvement in gang fighting, carrying a hidden weapon, strong-arming students and others, aggravated assault, hitting students and sexual assault. For some other offenses, such as running away and drug use, they find self-reported rates to be about the same, even though females are far more likely to be arrested. These self-reported results suggest that female delinquency is more prevalent than official statistics lead one to believe, though girls do commit offenses far less frequently than do boys.

During the past few decades we have begun to see longitudinal studies of delinquent careers – one of the most comprehensive being that of Tracy, Wolfgang and Figlio (1985) in Philadelphia. The results of this study of delinquent careers suggest that males are not only more actively involved in delinquent activity but that their "careers" go on for longer than those of females. Other studies concur with these findings and show also that male delinquents are more likely to start their careers at an earlier age.

Research points to a number of important racial differences in female delinquency. Rates of delinquency are higher for black females than white females – some studies showing rates almost as high as for white males. Evidence from the National Youth Survey suggests some caution in the interpretation of race-gender statistics. It was found that black juveniles in general tended to report more violent offenses, but there was a marked decline in both incidence (percent committing at least one offense) and prevalence (total offenses committed over time) in girls' commission of such offenses. In addition, the racial difference was stronger in 1976 than in 1980 and, though black girls had slightly more involvement in delinquency the racial differences seemed to be narrowing.

This brief review of the literature on female delinquency establishes a number of expectations. We might reasonably expect to find far fewer females than males in our sample, they should be a little older (if they begin their careers at a later age), they should be less likely to have a serious personal offense and there should be less weapons use. We may also find evidence of a race effect, with black females more involved in serious offending than their white peers. One area where we would not necessarily expect any differences is the propensity to use alcohol or drugs.

THE CURRENT DATA – SOME DETAILS

The data described in this report refer to all juveniles entering private and state juvenile programs utilized by the City of Philadelphia from January 1994 through September 1997. The data do not include any juveniles whose disposition from Family Court was for regular juvenile probation only. Because the juveniles in *ProDES* represent more serious offenders in a major urban area we can reasonably expect to find some differences between them and a national delinquent population. From the outset we should expect that the *ProDES* juveniles will have started their delinquent careers a little earlier, be a little older now, have more of a prior history of offending, have more serious offenses and have more evidence of attendant problems such as alcohol and drug abuse. However, if the court process is the same for males and females then the gender differences described above should also emerge in our data.

ProDES collects information on juveniles at three points in time. The first is intake, the time from the disposition of the case to initial entry into a program. At this intake stage we collect data from three sources – the 'official' data of Family Court's 'J' files, staff assessments of the juveniles made at the program, and a series of self-report items completed with the juvenile some time after they have entered the program. The second stage is discharge –

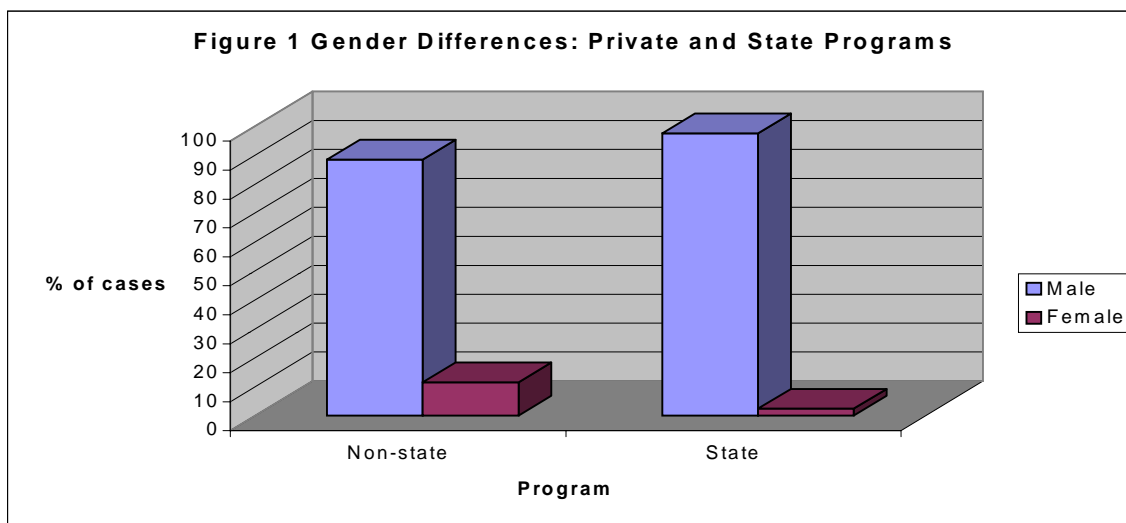
when the juvenile leaves the program (whether it is scheduled and expected or not). Two types of data are collected at this point – the staff assessed and juvenile self-report data from intake are collected again and some additional treatment description data added. The third stage is follow up, which occurs six-months after the date of discharge. Data collection comes from two main sources. The first is a record check from Family Court records – this identifies any formal petitions from the date of program entry to the follow up date. The second is interview data gathered, in the ideal scenario, from both the juvenile and a parent/guardian. Data from all three stages will be reported here.

JUVENILES AT THE POINT OF PROGRAM INTAKE

1. The Gender Balance in the System

ProDES has collected data on all juveniles entering private programs since January 1994 and on juveniles entering state programs since October 1995. The caseload sizes for the two systems – private and state – are 8,523 and 2,843 respectively. Figure 1 shows that females comprise 11.5 percent of the private program population and just 2.5 percent of the state program population. In both cases the ratio of males to females far surpasses the ratio of 4:1 identified for national samples, though it is closer to the 9:1 ratio found for more serious offenders.

Because females comprise such a small proportion of state intakes this report will focus primarily on the private program population. When data for state populations are presented they will be clearly identified.



There are significant variations in the types of programs to which male and female delinquents are sent. Table 1 shows that females are far more likely to go to Foster Care, Services to Children in their Own Home (SCOH) and Supervised Independent Living (SIL) programs. They are less likely to be found in Aftercare and Counseling programs. Using a different program classification developed by *ProDES* we find that females are more likely to go to in-community/residential, out-of-community/residential and out-of-area/institutional programs¹. Females are less likely to be found at out-of-community/institutional programs. In

¹ Residential programs are distinguished from institutional programs in that institutional programs are self contained, providing the bulk of services such as education within the facility.

other words, even though they are more likely to be placed out of home, they are less likely to be sent to in-state programs that are a distance from Philadelphia.

Table 1 Type of Program		
	Males	Females
DHS Program Classification		
Aftercare	16.4	8.9
Counseling	1.1	0.3
Day Treatment	37.8	36.6
Drug&Alcohol	9.2	7.8
Foster Care	2.7	12.6
Group Home	1.3	0.9
Institution	27.5	22.8
SIL	0.4	2.4
Mental Retardation	1.3	0.8
SCOH	2.5	7.0
ProDES Program Classification		
In Community/Non Residential	58.1	54.0
In Community/Residential (Foster Care)	2.9	12.4
In Community/Institutional	2.8	1.8
Out Community/Residential	0.3	1.2
Out Community/Institutional	22.5	12.4
Out Area/Residential	3.0	1.5
Out Area/Institutional	2.9	16.7

2. Socio-Demographic Differences

Table 2 presents a summary of the socio-demographic characteristics of the males and females entering private programs. The age of the juvenile and the marital status of their parents are about the only things that do not vary significantly between the two gender groups. The data show that females in *ProDES* are more likely to be white and less likely to be Hispanic or Asian. This is to some extent an unexpected result given the national data indicating more serious offending among black females.

Females in the sample are significantly more likely to have a history of mental health problems at the time of disposition – a finding that is in line with national data. However, they are significantly less likely to have any history of either alcohol or drug abuse (the latter finding holding true irrespective of whether we examine ‘J’ file, staff-reported or self-reported data). Again, these findings are in contrast to the national data that indicate no gender differences on these measures.

Not surprisingly, more of the females are reported to have children of their own, though the actual percentage varies somewhat depending on the source of the information.² It is clear

² The ‘J’ file data indicate 13% of females have children of their own compared to 4% of males. The needs assessments report the figures to be 10% and 9% respectively, and the self-report data indicate it to be 21% and 10% respectively.

that the 'J' files underestimate the proportion of females who themselves are mothers of young children.

Table 2 Summary of Socio-Demographic Characteristics		
	Males	Females
Age		
13 or less	9.4	10.3
14-16	59.5	64.4
17 or more	31.2	25.3
Race/Ethnicity		
White	11.5	12.7
Black	74.3	76.5
Hispanic	12.9	10.5
Asian	1.0	0.1
Marital Status of Parents		
Married	11.7	10.6
Widowed	4.9	6.6
Separated	12.3	10.1
Divorced	12.4	12.3
Never Married	58.6	59.9
History of Alcohol Abuse Problems		
Juvenile	33.9	29.4
Mother	10.4	13.2
Father	12.6	12.6
History of Drug Abuse Problems		
Juvenile	50.7	44.3
Mother	16.0	21.6
Father	12.7	12.5
Health:		
History of Mental Health Problems	13.8	24.2
M.H. Problems at Time of Offense	7.2	12.1
History of delinquency/criminality		
Sibling	26.7	31.0
Mother	3.3	4.1
Father	12.5	10.5
Living Arrangements		
Both natural parents	11.3	9.9
Natural mother only	45.7	46.2
Natural father only	3.6	3.6
Natural mother/stepfather	15.1	13.4
Natural father/stepmother	2.5	1.8
Natural mother/grandmother	3.7	3.2
Other relatives	16.1	18.1
Other	2.1	3.8

If we switch the focus from the juveniles themselves to their family environment we find there is no difference in the juvenile-reported level of paternal alcohol and drug abuse but that more females report their mothers to have an alcohol and/or drug abuse problem. This is the first indication of some difference in the perception of males and females in the nature and quality of their family environment.

3. Education and School

There are significantly fewer females attending school regularly, though there is no difference between the genders in terms of either suspensions or expulsions (see Table 3). *ProDES* has two measures of academic ability – IQ and reading assessments – and neither shows a marked difference between the genders. There is some difference in the classification of reading ability but it is mostly because females tend to be in the ‘age appropriate’ category rather than either above or below age appropriate.

Table 3 Educational Information		
	Males	Females
Educational Status at Disposition		
Attending School Regularly	45.9	38.6
Attending School Occasionally	30.9	34.0
Not Attending, Truant	13.1	15.8
Not Attending, Dropped Out	7.4	8.8
Obtained A G E D	1.2	0.7
Graduated From High School	0.4	0.3
Other	1.1	1.8
Juvenile In Special Education		
Yes	12.1	6.8
Reading Appropriateness		
Below Age Appropriate	56.6	54.5
At Age Appropriate	17.2	21.3
Above Age Appropriate	26.2	24.2
IQ Level		
Mentally Deficient	7.5	7.8
Borderline	20.7	19.9
Low Average	25.9	23.1
Average	35.5	38.5
High Average	10.2	10.7
Juvenile Been Suspended from School		
Yes	85.5	81.3
Juvenile Been Expelled from School		
Yes	15.4	19.8

In a result that's a little more difficult to explain, we find that although similar proportions of females as males are in the mentally retarded and borderline IQ categories we find significantly fewer females to be in special education programs.

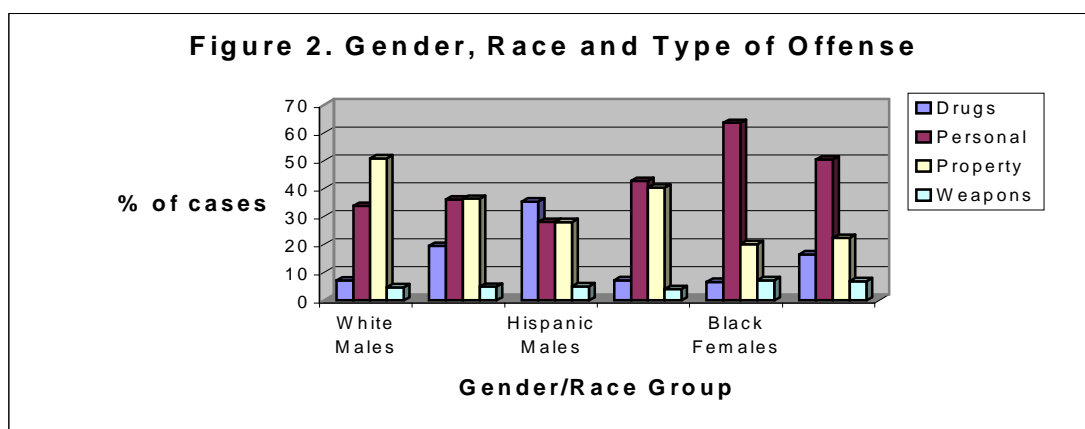
4. The Instant Offense

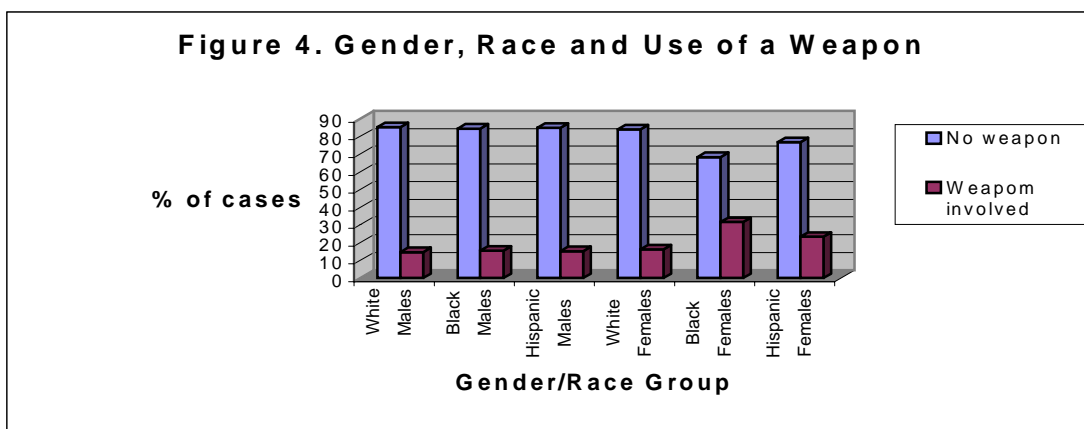
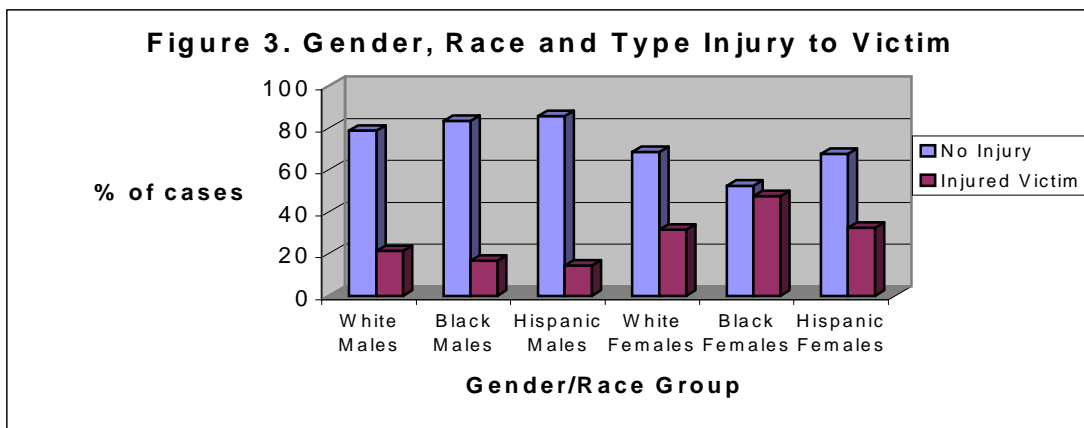
If there is one area that really differentiates the male and female populations it is type of offense. However, the nature of the differentiation is in complete contrast to the expectations established from the national level data. Far fewer females have been adjudicated for a drug or property offense and far more have been adjudicated for personal or weapons offenses (Table 4). The fact that females are involved in more serious offending is confirmed by data collected by *ProDES* on injury to victim – females are almost three times more likely than males to have

injured a victim in the commission of their offense. In addition, we find that almost twice as many have used a weapon in the commission of that offense.

Table 4 Instant Offense		
	Males	Females
Weapon Involved		
Yes	15.5	28.8
Injury to Victim		
Yes	16.9	43.9
Type of Offense		
Drugs	19.9	7.8
Personal	34.8	59.5
Property	37.2	23.1
Weapons	4.9	6.7
Other	3.1	3.0

Our brief review of the data on female offending pointed to some differences between black and white females in their propensity to commit personal offenses. Figure 2 confirms this pattern. For males there is no real racial difference in the proportions with personal or weapons offenses as the most serious charge (41% to 38% for black and white males respectively). However, far more black than white females have these as their most serious offense (71% to 47% respectively). The result is supported with separate data on injury to victim and use of a weapon. Figure 3 shows that black males are less likely than white males to be involved in offenses in which a victim is injured (17% to 21% respectively) whereas for females the pattern is the reverse – 48% of black females injured a victim compared to 32% for white females. Figure 4 repeats the results for use of a weapon – 16% and 15% of black and white males respectively used a weapon, 32% and 16% for females. On all three measures the results for the Hispanic females tend to be between those for black and white females.





The message from these results is as unmistakable as it is unexpected – females represent a far more serious type of offender than males within the *ProDES* population. Their offenses are much more likely to have been against the person, involved a weapon, and caused injury. Furthermore, among females there is a clear race effect, with black females significantly more likely to engage in personal offending, injuring a victim and using a weapon. From the perspective of program outcome these differences point to the need to be very aware of the gender mix in any program when assessing effectiveness. It is quite likely that the programs that take only females or a significant proportion of females will face a broader array of behavioral problems than those that focus exclusively on males.

5. Prior Delinquent History

The national data showed females to begin their delinquent careers a little later than males and to terminate them a little earlier, suggesting that compared to males, females will have fewer arrests during their delinquent career. This general conclusion is counterbalanced by evidence that shows that females are more likely than males to be arrested for certain behaviors (primarily minor status offenses such as running away). The *ProDES* results seem to favor the initial expectation, showing that far fewer females have any record of prior arrests and fewer have a record of serious prior arrests (Table 5).³ Contrary to the national data we did not find females to be older at the time of first arrest (the *ProDES* data show no difference).

³ This is not necessarily inconsistent with the earlier finding of females being more serious offenders – most females in the system are first time offenders with no prior record at all.

However, we did find one measure that differentiated between the genders -- females are far more likely to have a record of prior DHS (children and youth) referrals, including referrals for abuse, neglect and other indicators of 'dependency' status. It is possible therefore that the differential system response to male and female 'delinquent' behavior that is reported in national delinquency data is not found in Philadelphia if one focuses exclusively on delinquency data. Expanding the net to include dependency information may expose that gender difference.

Table 5 Prior Offense/Referral History		
	Males	Females
Prior Arrests		
None	47.7	66.9
One	26.4	21.2
Two	14.0	7.5
Three or more	11.8	4.4
Prior Arrests for Serious Offenses		
None	77.9	82.2
One	17.1	13.9
Two	3.7	3.0
Three or more	1.3	0.9
Any Prior Out-Of-Home Placements?		
Yes	12.0	8.2
Age At First Offense		
13 or less	29.4	30.1
14-16	59.8	59.9
17 or more	10.8	10.0
Record of Prior Referrals by DHS?		
Yes	22.5	39.9

6. Staff Assessed Risk

Given the results presented earlier it is not surprising to find that the risk classification completed by program staff shows more females to be in the 'high risk' category (Figure 5). Examination of the individual risk factors shows significant gender differences for several measures – males being more likely to pick up risk points for prior arrest record and school disciplinary problems, females more likely to be scored as having prior institutional commitments (dependent and delinquent) and parental control problems (Table 6).

It would be wrong to create the impression that females are always higher risk. Though the data show more females in the 'high risk' category they also show more to be in the 'low risk' category. Clearly, females tend to be more extreme (high or low) on the risk dimension. Separate analyses show that despite the data presented above, this is not a reflection of racial differences. Black males and black females are less likely than their white and Hispanic peers to be classified as 'high risk'.

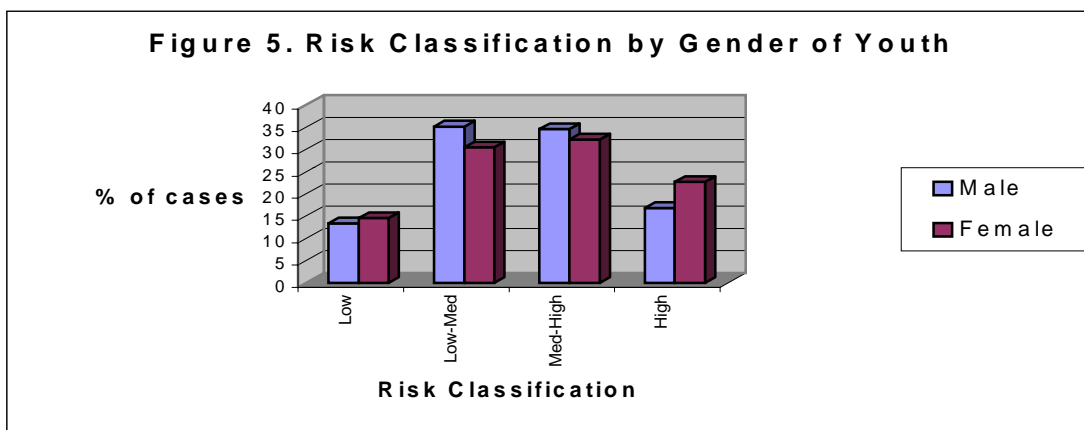


Table 6. Risk Assessment Results

Risk Item:	% Juveniles with risk points	
	Males	Females
Age at 1st adjudication	73.6	72.0
Prior delinquent behavior	68.7	55.1
Prior institutional commitments	33.2	46.2
Drug abuse problems	38.2	34.5
Alcohol abuse problems	26.6	25.7
Parental control problems	59.1	70.7
School disciplinary problems	78.9	73.7
Poor peer relations	70.2	66.2
N	4,483	571

Note: Bold figures indicate statistically significant differences.

7. Staff Assessed Need

Females are significantly more likely to be assessed by staff as being ‘high need’ clients (Figure 6). Again, examination of the individual need factors shows significant gender differences for several measures – males being assessed with more need in terms of drug abuse, females having more need in the area of emotional stability, educational adjustment and sexual adjustment (Table 7).

Separate analyses show that there is some variation in the results when considered by race. Black males are the least likely and Hispanic males the most likely to be assessed as high need. For females there is little difference between black and white females in the likelihood of being assessed as high need, though Hispanic females again are far more likely than both to be placed in this category.

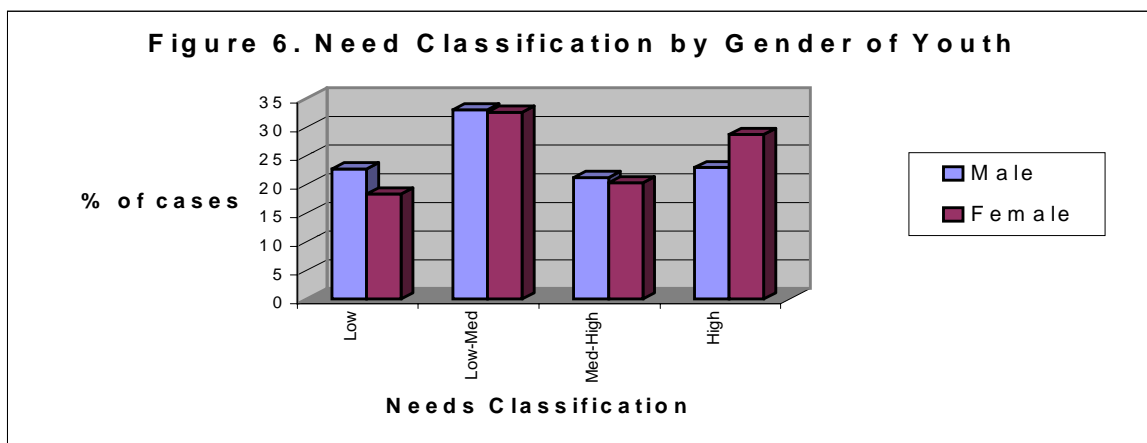


Table 7. Need Assessment Results

Need item - Part I	% Juveniles with need points	
	Males	Females
Drug abuse problems	41.3	32.9
Alcohol abuse problems	27.4	24.4
Emotional stability	40.9	54.7
Learning disability	26.1	24.3
Employment needs	49.0	46.6
Vocational skill needs	72.8	71.9
Need item - Part II		
Educational adjustment	64.3	69.4
Peer relations adjustment	70.7	70.5
Health and hygiene adjustment	28.7	29.3
Sexual adjustment	38.0	53.2

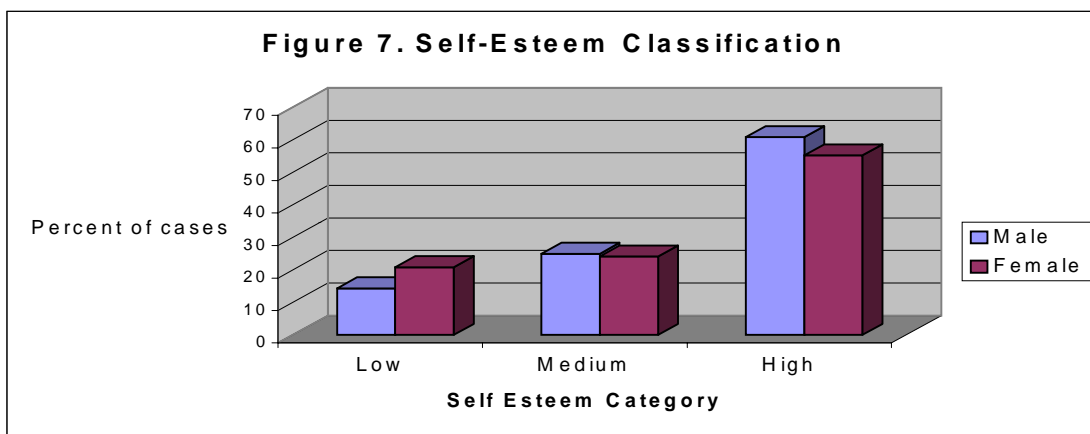
Note: Bold figures indicate statistically significant differences.

8. Self Reported Self-esteem

We know from the recent work of Gilligan and others (1990) that girls of every economic status can emerge from adolescence with poor self-images, relatively low expectations from life, and much less confidence in themselves and their abilities than boys. As Chesney-Lind (1992) has noted, an understanding of how this occurs must be understood if we are ever to come to grips with girls' delinquency and its meaning.

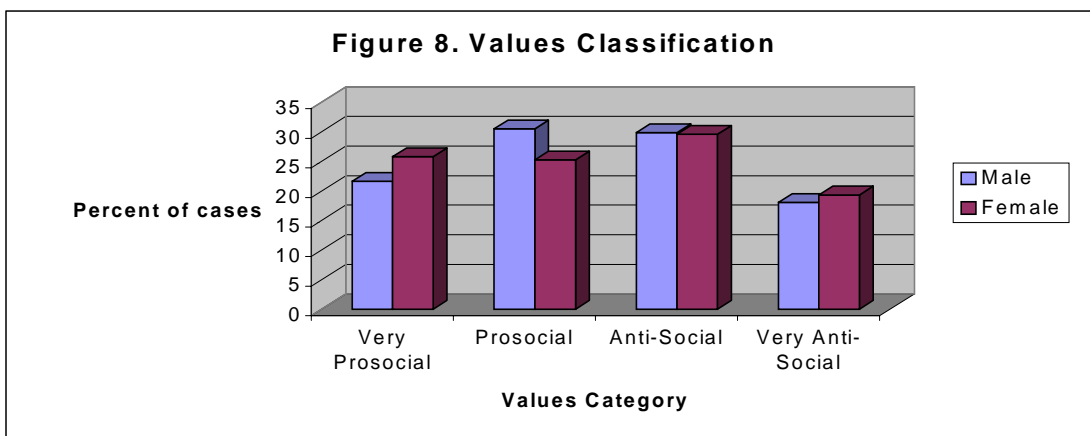
The *ProDES* results for self-esteem confirm the expectation, showing that in general females are more likely to have low self-esteem than are males (Figure 7). Black females are about as likely as white females to have high self-esteem, but are significantly less likely to have low self-esteem. Hispanic females again have lower overall self-esteem than the two other racial groups.

Overall, females do emerge with lower self-esteem scores and among females it seems that white and Hispanic girls are the most likely to have a low self-image.



9. Self Reported Values

The values orientation scale classifies juveniles along a dimension from very pro-social to very anti-social. The results show females marginally more likely to be classified into either of the extreme categories – there are more females classified as very pro-social and very anti-social (Figure 8). Interestingly, these overall gender-based results mask a significant racial difference between the two genders. Among males, Hispanic juveniles are far more likely than white or black juveniles to be classified as very anti-social yet among females there is virtually no difference at all among the three main racial groups.



10. School Bonding

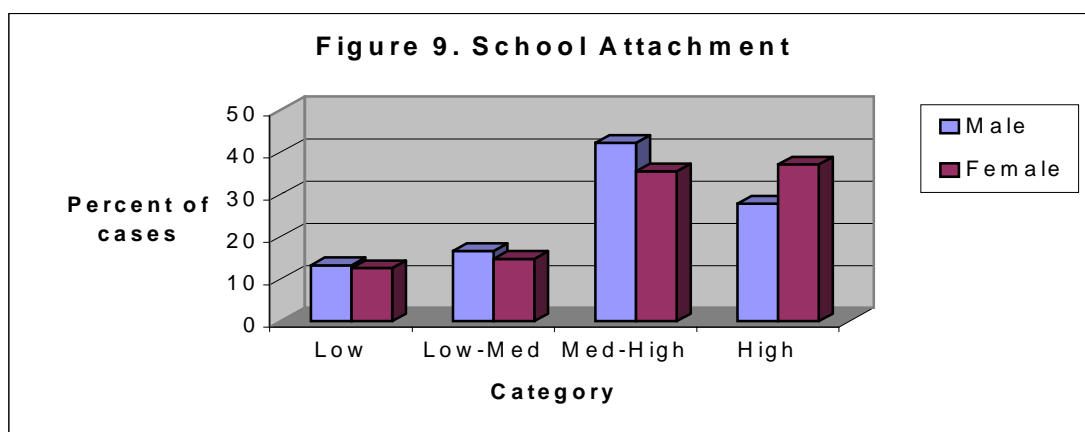
During the developmental stage of *ProDES* we tried to identify with programs those aspects of juvenile behavior and belief that were central to a program’s philosophy. We strongly believed that the information being collected to describe and assess the operation of the system should be ‘grounded’ in the goals and objectives of the programs that comprised the system. In addition to the measures of self-esteem and values already discussed, all programs said that measures of juvenile perceptions and attitudes regarding school and family were crucial to the success of any intervention. Interestingly enough, these particular dimensions parallel very closely those elements identified as theoretically important in one of the more popular theories of delinquency – control theory. In essence, this theory argues that all human beings are capable of deviant behavior, the central question therefore is not *why* certain people engage in delinquent acts, but *why not*.

The answer, at least according to writers such as Travis Hirschi (1969), is the concept of the social bond. Those juveniles with strong attachments to social groups and institutions such as family and school are the least likely to become delinquent since the bonds help to keep them “in check”. This ‘control theory’ specifically identifies four elements of the social bond as being important – attachment, commitment, involvement and belief.

ProDES collects data on delinquents only – we can at least assess the degree to which the juveniles in our population vary on these dimensions. More specifically for this report, we want to know whether or not these measures, believed to be of both practical and theoretical significance, are different for males and females.

School Attachment

This measure looks at the degree to which juveniles care about school and have positive feelings for it. Both males and females tend to have high scores on this measure, though girls are more likely to be in the ‘high’ attachment category (Figure 9). Separate analyses show that though black males are more likely than white and Hispanic males to score high on this measure there is no significant difference by race among the females.

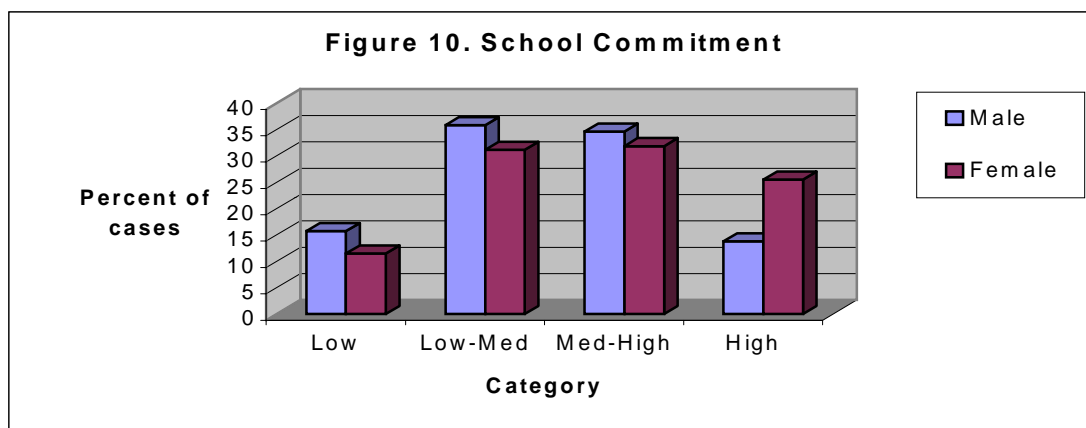


Attachment to Teachers

About one in ten juveniles score high on this measure and about half score ‘medium-high’. There is no difference in the results by gender or even by gender and race combined. Though these are not disastrous results they do suggest that juveniles have a more positive attachment to the idea of school than they do to teachers.

School Commitment

In contrast to school attachment this measure assesses the degree to which juveniles feel they have a stake in school and education – to what extent do they invest time and effort in academic activities, value good grades, and have high aspirations for future performance. It essentially asks to what degree juveniles conform to a positive, normative image of school (see Figure 10).



Perceived Opportunities

The literature suggests that males should have a more positive outlook on life than females. Our data don't support this argument showing females to have the same sort of scores as males. When we control for race we turn up an interesting result – Hispanic males score significantly lower than white and black males on this dimension, but no such divergence exists for females.

Consequences of Arrest

How damaging do juveniles feel their arrest will be to their future educational and occupational opportunities? Two results seem possible. Given the fact that more females are first time offenders one could argue that they should be less jaded in their reaction to the delinquent system and therefore feel that the arrest is very damaging. In contrast, if females really have less of a positive self-image than do males, then it is likely that the consequences of arrest will be perceived as less damaging.

Our data suggest that males and females differ somewhat on this measure, with females being less likely than males to rate the consequences of arrest as 'high'. As before, race seems to make a difference for males (Hispanics are the least likely to rate the consequences as 'low') but not for females.

School Involvement

We have noted above the fact that females are far more likely than males to be truant from school. The data for this measure emphasizes the extent to which all juveniles, but females in particular, seem to be completely disassociated from school activities of any sort. Compared to data collected elsewhere the *ProDES* figures show that juveniles in Philadelphia have very low school involvement scores – 58% scoring 'low' on this measure.

Though there is nothing positive in these results it is worth noting that black males do have significantly more involvement in school than either white or Hispanic males. The results are similar for females, though the differences are not marked enough to reach statistical significance.

Community Involvement

This measure is almost as bad as that for school involvement. Juveniles seem to have little investment in their local communities and girls appear to be worse off than boys. Again,

there is some evidence that black males score better on this measure than their white and Hispanic peers, but there is no evidence of such a pattern for females.

School Bonding – Some thoughts

Research by Rankin (1980) has shown that although negative attitudes toward education and school were significant in predicting delinquency in both sexes, the relationship was stronger for girls than for boys. That is, girls who perform poorly in school are more likely to be involved in delinquency than boys who perform poorly. Farnworth (1984), in her study of black delinquency, found that for girls in particular, school problems were more important than family problems in the prediction of petty delinquency and status offenses. Other research has shown that the academic performance of African American girls is systematically superior to that of African American boys. It appears that African American boys detach their self esteem from academic performance in the latter years of high school, while African American girls continue to care about how well they do in school (Osborne, 1997). We would expect, then, that delinquent girls would be more attached to school but that their academic self esteem would be lower than that of boys.

Our findings are consistent with this research. We find that proportionately more girls than boys have high School Attachment and School Commitment scores. At the same time, girls are less involved than boys in school and community activities. We know that opportunities for involvement, especially in sports, are generally less for girls than for boys. One challenge for the future is to develop the means for improving the ability of the school and the community to engage more girls in extracurricular activities.

11. Family Bonding

It has long been understood that a major reason for the presence of girls in juvenile courts was because their parents insisted on their arrest. Data from sources such as the National Youth Survey indicate that females are more likely to be arrested for offenses resulting from conflicts and disagreements between them and members of their families. One explanation for this gender difference in arrests is said to be the differential socialization process for girls and boys.

Researchers argue that parents over-socialize their daughters producing girls that are encouraged to “(over)control impulses, to be tractable, obedient, cautious, and self-sacrificing” (Block, 1984:140). One consequence of this is that girls are allowed less freedom to play away from home, have not been assigned chores that take them out of the home, have been required to return home earlier and have not been actively encouraged to choose their own activities (Komorosky, 1953; Block, 1984). The impact of this process begins to emerge around the time of puberty.

As girls approach puberty two conflicting forces begin to strengthen. Girls, like boys become far more concerned about peer group status during the high school years causing the influence of parents to wane as the peer group becomes more important. At precisely this time, when girls are becoming less adult-oriented, parents begin to exhibit an interest in monitoring them even more closely. Though clashes between daughters and parents become more likely during late adolescence the product of this long-standing sexual double standard is greater disharmony between girls and their families.

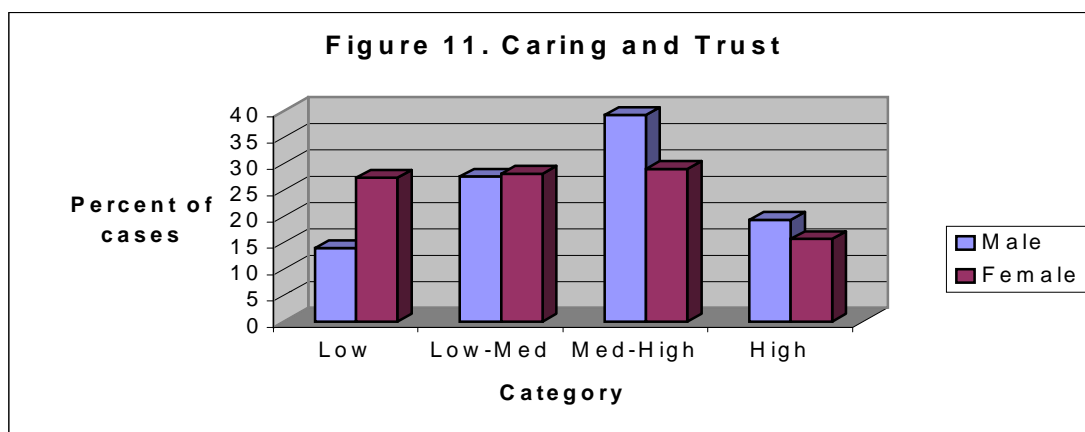
Chesney-Lind suggests that parental commitment to two standards of adolescent behavior is only one explanation for disparity in parental treatment of sons and daughters. Another, far more disturbing explanation for girls’ problems with their parents is physical and sexual abuse. Rates of such abuse among delinquent girls have been reported to be anywhere from a low of 40 percent to a high of about 75 percent.

Taken together these two sets of forces suggest we will find significantly lower family bonding scores for females than for males.

Caring and Trust

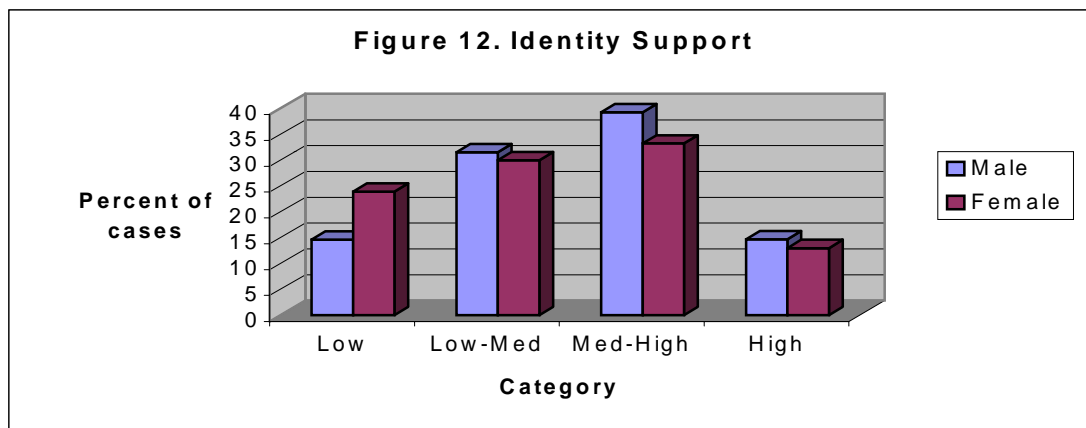
This scale measures the degree to which juveniles perceive intimacy (caring, trust and affection) in their relationship to family – perhaps the most critical area of support a family can provide. The data show that significantly more females score ‘low’ on this measure (Figure 11).

Given the race effects identified previously, we examined the data to see if there was evidence of such variation for family bonding. The results show a clear race effect for males on this measure – black males generally having more positive results than white or Hispanic males – but no such effect for females. Additional analysis was also performed to assess the significance of various measures of family structure – we looked at marital status of the natural parents, living arrangements of the juveniles, and family members in the household. With regard to female scores on caring and trust we were somewhat surprised to find no significant effects for any of these measures.



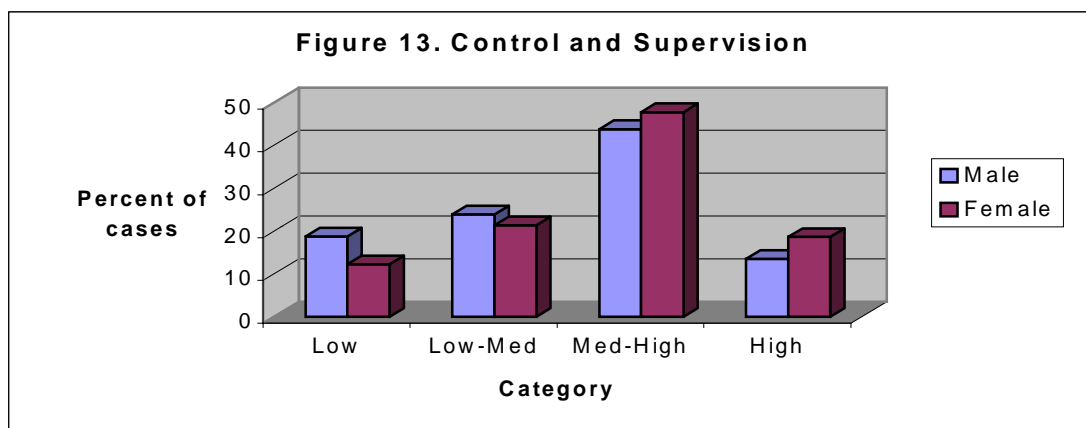
Identity Support

This measures the extent to which juveniles feel that their parents respect, accept and support them for who they are. Some researchers such as Cernkovich and Giordano argue that this dimension is particularly important during adolescence because of the uncertainties and self-doubts that characterize this period in the life cycle. The results again show that significantly more females score ‘low’ on this measure (Figure 12). Though there is some evidence that, among males, Asians score especially low on this dimension we find that race does not affect the level of identity support for females. None of the family structure variables had any significant effect on the scores.



Control and Supervision

This measures the degree to which juveniles believe their parents monitor their behavior. Given the nature of differential parenting of girls and boys described earlier we might expect that girls should score higher than do boys on this particular measure. The data conform almost perfectly to this expectation – with significantly more females scoring in the high and medium-high categories (Figure 13). There are no significant race effects on this measure for either males or females. Somewhat surprisingly, none of the family structure variables were significantly associated with control and supervision for females.



Intimate Communication

This variable is concerned with the extent to which families share their private thoughts and feelings. It is thought to be an important measure of attachment – one of the key elements of the control theory described earlier. Our results showed there to be no gender differences on this variable. In addition, race and family structure were not significantly associated with scores on this measure for either males or females.

Instrumental Communication

This last family bonding measure gets to the question of quality and content rather than the quantity of communication between juvenile and parents. The evidence is not

overwhelming, but it does seem that females are more likely than males to score high on this measure. There is evidence that black males do score higher than white or Hispanic males on this measure, though no such differentiation by race exists for females.

12. What Discriminates Among Male and Female Delinquents?

To this point we have discussed the relationship of gender and a range of individual attributes. However, these individual attributes vary in their importance and some become redundant once others are taken into consideration. The question that remains, therefore, is what mix of variables seem to be the most important in truly differentiating among male and female delinquents?

To answer the question we conducted an analysis that allows all the variables we have discussed to be considered together. The single most important variable in discriminating between males and females is identified, and then we search for the next most important variables. Eventually, we have a 'model' that identifies those variables that are most important for different sub-groups of the population. Figure 14 (appended at the end of this document) shows the results of the analysis.

The model shows several variables to discriminate between male and female delinquents. The higher on the tree diagram the variable appears the more important it is in differentiating the two groups. For example, the single most important measure is injury to a victim. Given an overall proportion of 9% females, we find that females number 6% of those who did not injure victims but 22% of those who did injure victims. For both new sub-groups – injured victims and didn't injure victims – the next most important variable is prior record. In both instances females comprise a larger percentage of the groups with less prior arrests. From this point on the model tends to diverge, with different variables becoming important for the various sub-groups. Though Figure 14 provides the detail we identify those variables and summarize their impact below:

- Prior referrals to DHS – females are more likely to have prior referrals
- History of family violence – females are more likely to have such histories
- Community involvement – females are more likely to score low on this
- Use of a weapon in instant offense – more likely for females
- Weapons offense – more common among females
- Living arrangements – females more likely to be with both parents
- Perceived opportunities – females more likely to score low on this
- Problems at home – females more likely to have them
- History of drug abuse – females less likely to have one

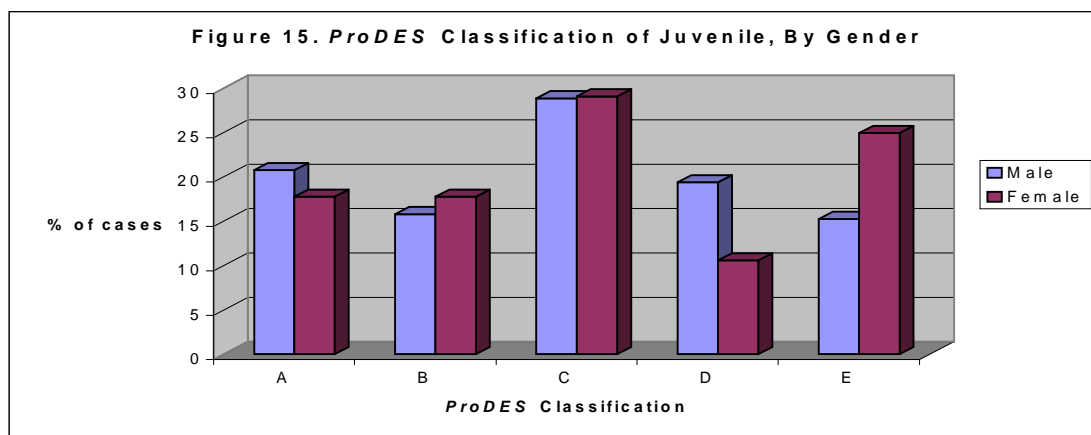
Combining all these variables together results in a number of juvenile groups in which the proportion of females varies from as little as 3% to as many as 44%. These results are important for a number of reasons. First they identify those variables that are significantly different between male and female delinquents. Second, taken together these variables provide an image of the female delinquent population that is quite different to that of males. In some respects this image concurs with our expectations from national research but in others it is clear that the Philadelphia *ProDES* female population is quite unlike that being described elsewhere.

13. Gender and the Juvenile Typology

Earlier reports describe work we have completed on the development of a juvenile typology based upon the fourteen self-report scale data we have (self-esteem, values, school and family bonding). The typology we have developed does not incorporate gender in the construction of the categories though it is quite possible that the gender balance varies across each group. Table A.1 provides a brief description of the five types of juvenile we have identified, focusing primarily on the variables that formed the basis of the classification. Here we look at the extent to which gender varies across the typology – are females over-represented in some categories and/or under-represented in others?

Figure 15 provides a clear answer to our question – females are very under-represented in Type ‘D’ and, to a lesser extent in type ‘A’ categories; they are over-represented in type ‘E’ and, to some degree in type ‘B’. Type ‘D’ juveniles are labeled as ‘autonomy oriented’ and are characterized by high self-esteem, average values orientation and some detachment from school, family and community. Type ‘E’ juveniles, in contrast, are labeled as ‘Neurotic Anxious’ and are characterized by anti-social values, below average self-esteem and positive attachment to school but extreme detachment from family.

These differences by gender are important for a number of reasons, not least of which is the fact that our research shows that certain types of programs seem to have very positive results for certain types of juveniles but quite poor results for others. The implication of this, of course, is that we can improve the matching of juveniles and programs by knowing in advance the type of juvenile and the success rate of the program in the past with this type.



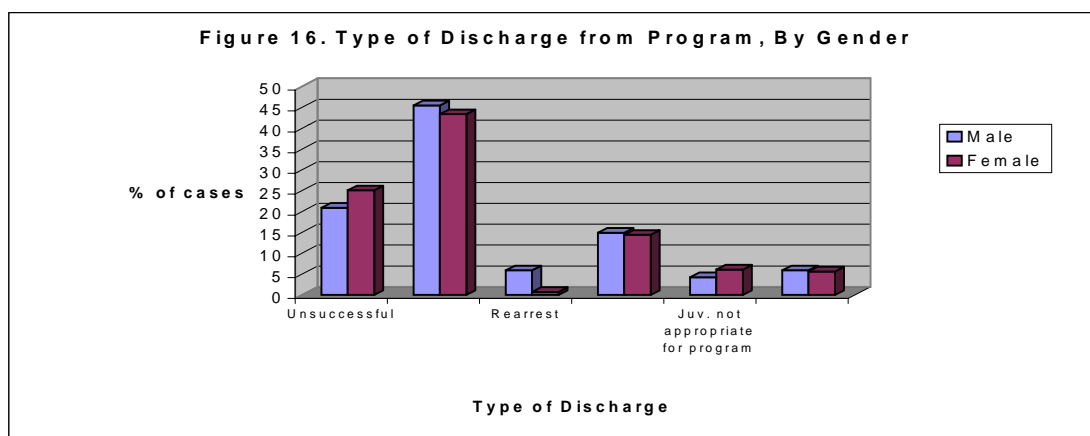
The differences between male and female delinquents beg the question of whether any of this matters in terms of program outcomes. Are females more or less likely to stay in the program? Are they more or less likely to succeed? It is to questions such as this that we now turn.

JUVENILES AT THE POINT OF PROGRAM DISCHARGE

14. Type of Discharge

We have information on slightly more than half the juveniles who enter private programs. Since it is more likely that discharge information will be missing in cases where things did not work out as planned, we need to be aware of the fact that our discharge results, if anything, paint a rosier picture of the system than actually occurs.

Based on the results we have we know that gender significantly affects the type of discharge. Females are just as likely to complete a program successfully, but they are also far less likely to be discharged because of an arrest, and far more likely to be discharged following unsuccessful program intervention (Figure 16).

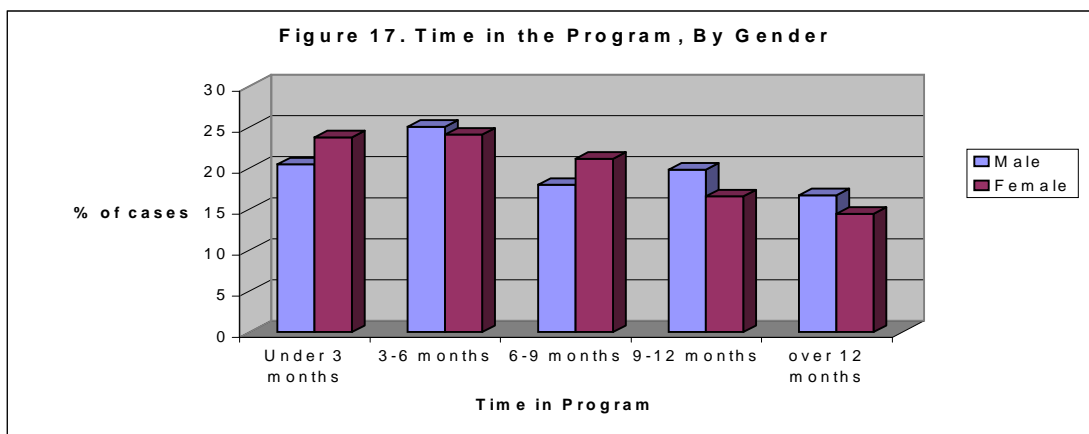


15. Appropriateness for the Program

At the point of program discharge we ask staff to assess, knowing what they now know, whether or not the juvenile was an appropriate placement. Given that females are said to be more violent, more likely to have a history of mental health, a history of family violence and overall greater risk and need we might reasonably expect programs to be more likely to assess them as inappropriate placements. In fact the opposite is true -- the data show that females are significantly *more likely* to be assessed as appropriate placements.

16. Time in the Program

Although similar proportions of males and females complete their respective programs we find that females on average spend less time in 'treatment' than do their male peers (Figure 17).



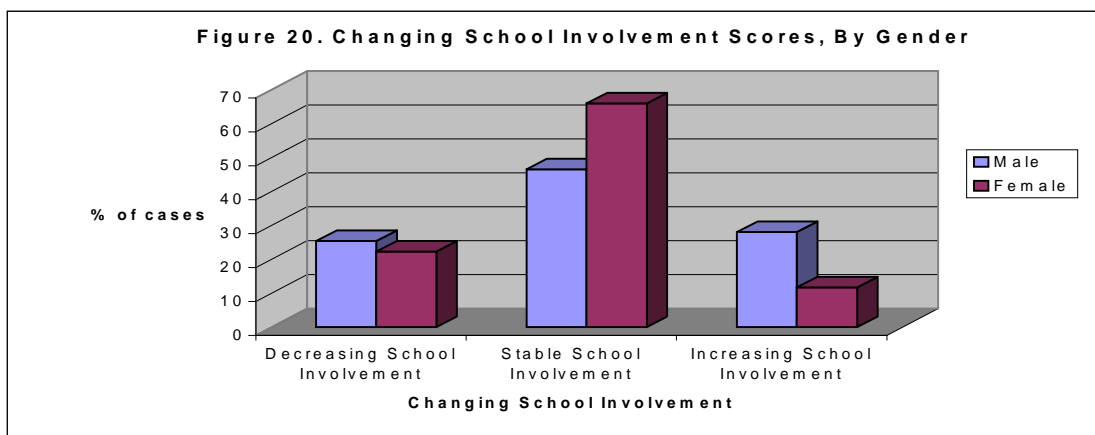
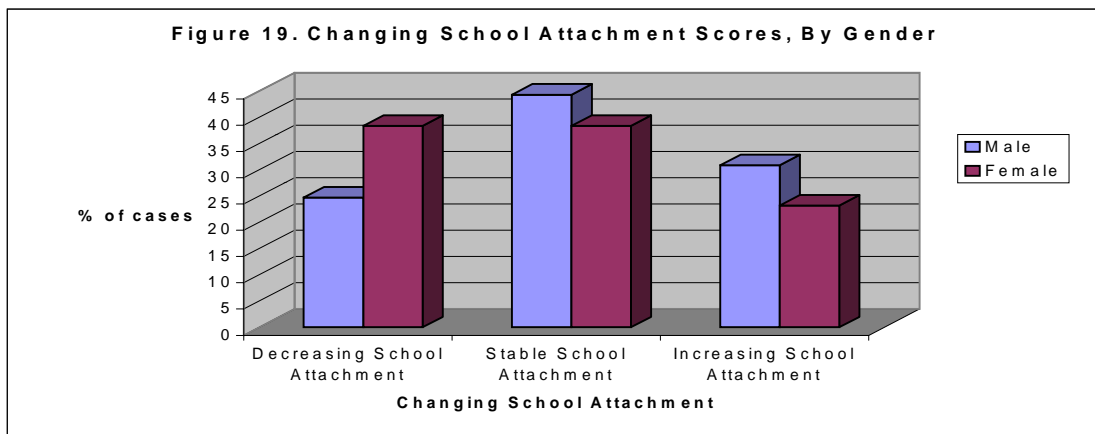
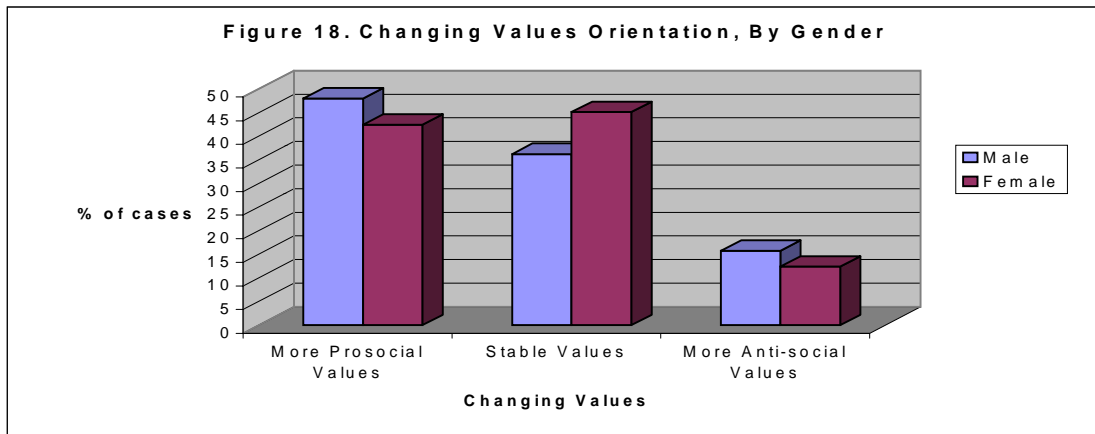
17. Do the juveniles change? Does gender make a difference?

One of the fundamental goals of all programs is to bring about some positive change in the juveniles they receive. Consequently, we would hope to find that the pre-post measures of self-esteem, values, school and family bonding collected by *ProDES* are becoming more positive, or at least remaining stable. For a host of reasons it is very difficult to collect the pre-post measures in anything like the number of cases one would wish. We have pre-post measures for the two staff assessed scales in about one-third of all cases where we receive discharge forms; for the self-report scales the proportion is closer to 15%. Not only are these proportions small, they are very likely to be biased toward the more successful juveniles. In reviewing the results presented below, we remind you that these very likely represent an extremely positive image of the changes actually occurring among the juvenile population.

The pre-post results show that although some change does occur on all measures, it is not as common as one might expect (for most variables the pre-post scores for between one-third and one-half of juveniles remain unchanged), and it is not always in the direction one would expect. Figure 18 illustrates the point. About 36% of males and 45% of females do not change significantly in their values orientation from intake to discharge; another 48% and 43% respectively have developed more pro-social values, and about 16% and 12% respectively have developed more anti-social values. This is a fairly typical result, with evidence of more positive than negative change, a good deal of stable scores, and gender differences that are not large enough to be statistically significant.

There are four variables where gender does seem to matter. *School attachment* was one of the variables where females had more positive scores than males at the point of intake. As Figure 19 shows, the pre-post results show females to be significantly more likely to have declining school attachment. Though there are many reasons why this is to be expected (regression to the mean is just one that comes to mind), the fact remains that it is a result that should not be happening. The same result is evident for *school commitment*.

The other two variables – *school and community involvement* – offer slightly different though equally disappointing results. Significantly lower scores for females at program intake characterize both these variables. The pre-post results show that females are no more likely than males to have lower scores at discharge (this would hardly seem possible given their very low levels of involvement at intake). However, they are less likely to be increasing their involvement in either school or community as a result of the intervention (see Figure 20). If this is one area where females in particular have problems then it seems not to be one that programs can or do affect positively.



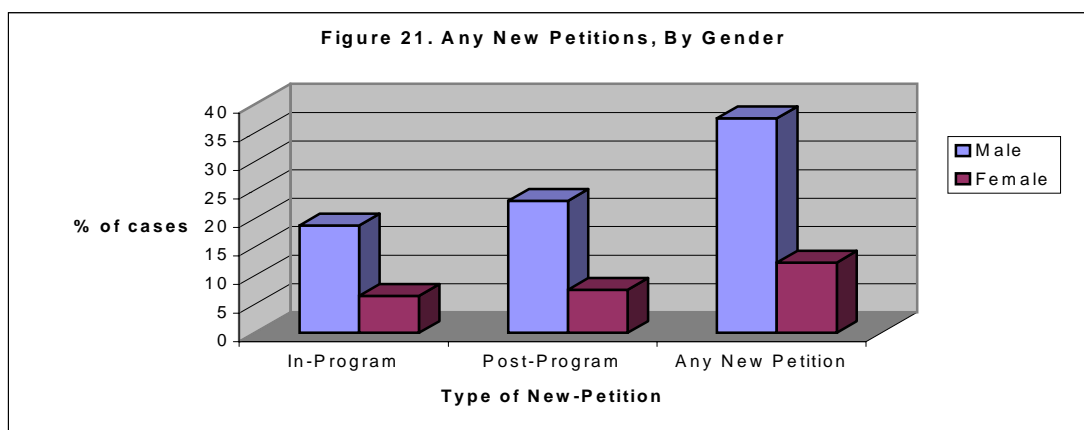
18. AWOL's and re-arrest

Two outcomes that are of particular interest to DHS and individual programs concern AWOL and re-arrest rates. The data suggests that there is a significant gender effect on both – with females being significantly less likely to go AWOL (25% compared to 30% for males) and to be arrested while in the program (6% compared to 14% for males).

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THEY LEAVE? FOLLOW-UP RESULTS

19. New Petitions

Six months after the date of discharge from a program *ProDES* initiates a two part follow-up study – interviews and court record checks. The review of court records (juvenile and adult) looks for evidence of any new petitions received by the juveniles at any time from the date of program intake to six months following program discharge. For purposes of analysis we divide this period into two parts – from intake to discharge (described as in-program new petitions) and from discharge to the six-month point (post-program new petitions). A third measure – any new petitions – combines the two. The results from the record check are very clear – females are far less likely than males to receive a new petition, either while they are in a program or after they have left a program (Figure 21).



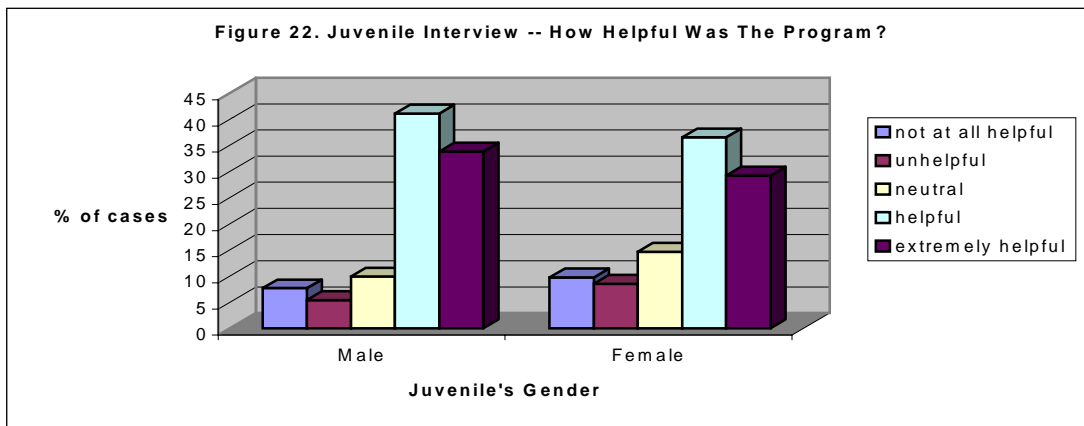
Additional analyses show that, among those juveniles that are petitioned, females are significantly more likely to be petitioned for a personal offense (the same result found for the original offense) but are not any more likely to be petitioned for an offense involving the use of a weapon.

20. Client Satisfaction Measures

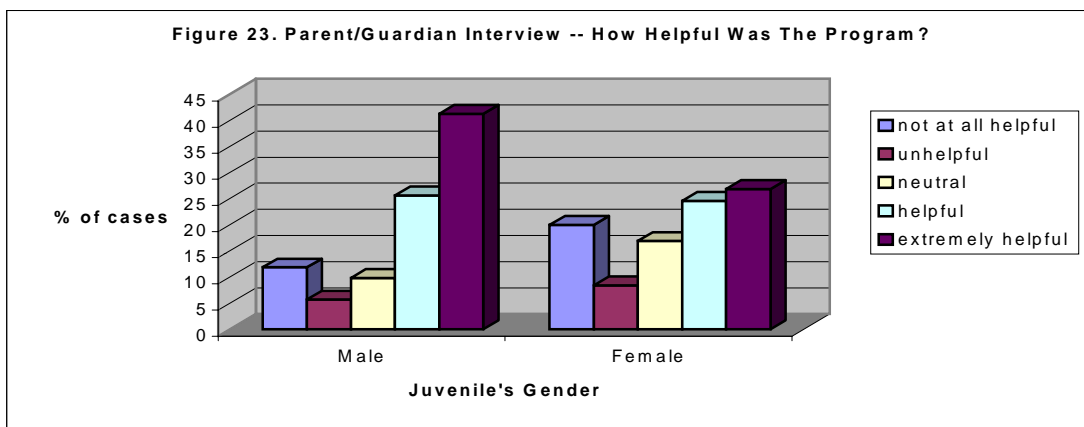
The follow-up stage includes an attempt to complete a phone interview with the juvenile and a parent or guardian. Despite the inordinate difficulty involved in locating juveniles and parents and completing such interviews *ProDES* has completed juvenile interviews in approximately 15% of cases and parent interviews in about 35% of cases (a total of over 2,000 interviews).

The feedback from the juveniles is generally very positive – almost three-quarters said the program was helpful in some way (see Figure 22) and slightly more than three-quarters said they would recommend the program. For both these measures there was no difference between males and females. Asked to rate satisfaction with their probation officer we find a similarly large percentage of juveniles with positive results – though here there is a significant

gender difference. Females are far more likely to be dissatisfied with their probation officer than are males.



Similar questions were asked of parents/guardians though the results are quite different. Fewer parent/guardians rated the programs as helpful and there was a very clear distinction by gender of the juvenile – the parent/guardians of females were significantly less likely to be positive about the program (see Figure 23). Anecdotal evidence obtained from the parent interviews suggests that although some parents feel that programs were not helpful they recognize that the lack of positive change in their child is not necessarily the fault of the program. This impression is supported by the fact that almost 80 percent of parent/guardians interviewed said they would recommend the program. However, once again we find a significant gender effect, with the parents of females being less likely to say they would recommend. Finally, almost two-thirds of parent/guardians (irrespective of whether they had a son or daughter) said they were ‘very’ or ‘extremely’ satisfied with their child’s probation officer.



SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

We began this report by repeating the axiom that there are many similarities between male and female delinquency but there are also many differences. We have described some of the differences identified in the literature and, where possible, tested those against our own

data for Philadelphia. The two images did not always agree. Within the *ProDES* population we find that compared to males the **females are less likely to:**

- Abuse alcohol or drugs (according to 'J' file)
- Have a prior record of any arrests
- Have positive self-esteem
- Perceive the consequences of their arrest
- Be involved in school or community activities
- Perceive their family as providing 'care and trust' or 'identity support'
- Go AWOL while in a program
- Have a new petition while in the program or after they leave a program
- Stay in a program for more than 3 months
- Be 'satisfied' with job done by their probation officer

In contrast, **females are more likely to:**

- Have a history of mental health problems
- Have children of their own
- Have committed a personal or weapons offense, carried a weapon and injured a victim
- Have a prior DHS referral
- Have prior placements (any kind)
- Report their mothers as having alcohol and/or drug abuse problems
- Be in Foster Care, supervised independent living or SCOH programs
- Be assessed 'high risk' by staff of program
- Be assessed 'high need' by staff of program
- Have 'high' pro-social values scores
- Have higher school attachment and school commitment scores
- Perceive their family as providing 'control and supervision' and 'instrumental communication'
- Be assessed as 'appropriate clients' by staff of the programs they attend
- Have lower school attachment and school commitment at discharge than at intake
- Have parents who say they will not recommend the program

If we put these findings together we can draw a number of valuable conclusions.

First, the image of the female delinquent one finds in the literature does not accurately portray the female delinquents in the *ProDES* population. Of course, we are dealing with offenders who are considered to be beyond regular probation, though many are first time offenders. It is likely therefore, that it is the selection process of Family Court rather than anything peculiar to Philadelphia that has skewed the results. Nevertheless, if the image developed in the literature is one of females as status offenders, as less serious or violent, and with fewer of the attributes associated with problematic and delinquent behavior then it is important to know that the image does not totally apply to the *ProDES* population.

Having made this general statement we must also recognize that the literature does point to a number of key characteristics of females that our data confirm – the poorer self-image, lower expectations, greater family issues are some examples. We also find the race effects suggested by some studies.

Most important of all, when compared to the males in the population we find some very marked differences on a whole range of issues. Such findings are more than simply descriptive, they make one question whether or not it is appropriate to assess programs or the system as a whole as if there were a generic delinquent. That is, we tend to look at program intakes, interventions and outcomes as if their populations were interchangeable. In fact, this

report suggests that two similar programs taking similar numbers of juveniles could be expected to have very different challenges, experiences and outcomes simply because the gender mix was different. This isn't to say only gender is important, it's simply to say gender is important enough to take into account. A better understanding of the efficacy of our juvenile system requires that we consider how it works for different groups. It is worth remembering the advice of the poet Adrienne Rich (1976) who said that the feminist perspective is best undertaken by asking "But what was it like for women?"

In this report we have shown that females come to the court with a different set of issues – many more serious and more problematic than the boys – and they go to different types of programs than the boys. From what we can tell, there is not a great deal of change that occurs in the programs in terms of the key indices identified by programs as being important – self-esteem, values, school and family bonding. Nevertheless, the females are far more likely to remain in the programs (AWOL rates are lower) and they are far less likely to re-offend – either in the program or during the six month follow-up. When asked to assess their experiences, the females tend to be a little more negative than males about the role of their probation officer, and the parents of females tend to be more negative about the helpfulness of the programs themselves.

If we step back from the details and try to form a more global picture it is evident that our image of female delinquents is a little different depending on the source we utilize. If we rely on the 'J' file, the 'official' view, then there are some rather stark differences between the genders – with the females looking a lot more threatening and troublesome. If we rely on the staff assessments of risk and need we reach a similar conclusion – the females are significantly higher on risk and need. When we come to self-report measures – taken directly from the juveniles themselves – we still find differences, but they are not of the same order. For example, where the prior two sources note lower drug and alcohol abuse among females the self-report reports it to be comparable. Where the prior two sources show females to have poorer scores on school measures (more suspensions and expulsions from the 'J' file, more with severe truancy and discipline problems from the needs assessment) the school bonding scales show some positive results (higher school attachment and school commitment). Where the prior two sources tend to point to more family problems (needs assessment shows more to have little or no parental control) the family bonding scores again show some bright spots (higher control and supervision and instrumental communication). Could it be that we in the juvenile justice system see more differences than really exist because of our different expectations of either gender? The present data can do little to address such questions but there are enough differences between the images from 'J' file, staff and self-report to make us look at the gender issue more carefully.

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