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CHILD ABUSE AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY:

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Criminal Justice

by
Charlotte Center Anthony

June 1997

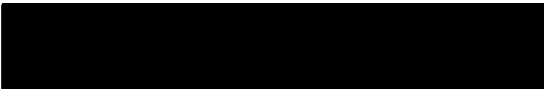
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ABSTRACT

There seems to be common agreement among practitioners and researchers in Criminal Justice that youth who are abused often become participants in the juvenile justice system. The current literature finds considerable evidence to support this position. However, some questions concerning the relationship between child abuse and juvenile delinquency remain. Specifically, how direct, or causal, is the link between the two? Are girls affected by the events differently from boys? Are different groups of youth, such as Hispanic females, uniquely affected?

There is a smaller body of work focusing on girls' experiences, and this research seems to indicate there may be some existent gender variations. Further, Latina girls may exhibit specifically cultural responses to abuse and its consequences. However, the paucity of current literature does not allow for definitive generalizations, but instead begs further exploration.

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CHILD ABUSE AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

Introduction

The link between child abuse and behaviors resulting in juvenile delinquency is one that has been examined in research and generated much interest among both sociology and criminal justice. Much of the recent study now comes from juvenile institutions of either therapeutic or custodial design. And while the literature does support the theory that relationships exist between child abuse and juvenile delinquency, there still are unresolved issues regarding such relationships that remain open to research. For example, how direct, or causal, is the connection? Do girls respond differently to the experiences from boys? Do Latina girls exhibit responses which may be identified as uniquely cultural?

These questions can be explored to examine the causal linkages between abuse and juvenile delinquency. Several areas of this problem, such as how direct are the connections, what factors are the most significant, and do abuse experiences result in different gender-based responses, can be examined. Of particular interest are the research findings in these areas for females.

Some tentative conclusions may be drawn about the relationships between abuse and delinquency and the need for further research on this topic. Much of the literature points to the powerful role of the family in these events. The dysfunctional family context may often lead to child and sexual abuse, which has a correlative effect on later acts of

juvenile delinquency and criminal behavior. (Benard, 1991; Chesney-Lind & Sheldon, 1992; Finkelhor, 1979; Hunner & Walker, 1981; Josi, 1996; Sandberg, 1989; Sechrest & Josi, 1996b).

Statement of the Problem

Some of the difficulties of establishing such a relationship may come from differing research methodologies and varying definitions of the terms. Huston and Parra (1995) cite several examples of studies done on perhaps too small a number of subjects to be useful, while noting the increase of reported child abuse (p. 166). Kercher and McShane (1984) believe that research on child sexual abuse has focused on incidence to the neglect of the prevalence of the problem. They also believe comparison of "unlike samples drawn from varied settings" does not allow for any great accuracy (p. 496). However, an examination of some recent studies regarding child abuse (Finkelhor, 1979; Huston & Parra, 1995; Kellogg, 1995; Kercher & McShane, 1984; Mennen, 1994; Sandberg, 1989; Sanders-Phillips, 1995), provides for the identification of a fairly recurrent constellation of behaviors encompassing acts of verbal and physical abuse, as well as neglect. As an example, Finkelhor (1979) is specific in limiting his definition to one of victimization, and "refers to community standards about what is exploitative . . . based on the age of the child and the . . . partner. . . . Thus our definition of victimization is based on age discrepancy" (p. 52).

While the recent studies of child abuse may identify

some common behaviors, the definitions of juvenile delinquency may encompass a somewhat broader range of behaviors, from status offenses to major felonies. Shichor and Kelly (1980) report that the Uniform Crime Report provides information regarding offenses for which juveniles are arrested, which include "crimes if committed by adults as well as the juvenile status offenses of running away and curfew violations" (p. 80). Further, Vachss and Bakal (1979) state that although there was a "rough correlation between type of offense and dispositional response, children tended to be institutionalized for activities ranging from truancy to homicide" (p. 2). These studies also seem to indicate a much wider prevalence of instances of child abuse and juvenile delinquency than had been previously assumed. Finkelhor (1979) reports in his study that "close to one-fifth of the women and one-eleventh of the men" had been sexually victimized (p. 53).

Chesney-Lind and Sheldon (1992) report "over one-third of the female victims of sexual abuse are teenagers" (p. 25). Of the subjects studied, Chesney-Lind noted that "physical and/or sexual abuse marked the lives of most of these young women" (p. 36). Further, "high rates of physical and sexual abuse have been reported . . . ranging from a low of 40 percent to a high of 73 percent" (p. 90). Hunner and Walker (1981) state that "several variables seem to be related to juvenile delinquency . . . Parental brutality or child abuse was linked to both adolescent homicide and violence" (p. 133). Finally, Sandberg (1989) believes that "early

abuse can produce a variety of . . . social deficits that set in motion a pattern of behavior that leads to delinquency" (p. 68).

And so, despite somewhat varying definitions of the terms and different methods of study that have been conducted, most researchers seem to be in agreement that child abuse frequently appears in the history of juvenile delinquents. Child abuse also is more common among this group of youth than had previously been determined. As a possible cause of delinquent behavior, child abuse now needs to be examined further.

Predictors of Delinquent Behavior

The Youth in Transition survey (Bachman, 1967-1971) may provide insight into the examination of instances of juvenile delinquency. In this study, a representative sample of high school youth was questioned as to their delinquent behaviors. Bachman stated that "delinquent or disruptive behaviors . . . are admitted by a considerable number of . . . boys," and that the resulting figures "are surprisingly (and somewhat depressingly) high" (1970, p. 164). Further, both frequency of behavior and seriousness of delinquency "showed essentially the same patterns" (1971, p. 93). Specifically, the strongest association was found between "interpersonal aggression and delinquent behavior" (1971, p. 93). Bachman looked for background factors and earlier possible predictors of delinquency. While not directly identifying child abuse, Bachman states that "only the family relations measure shows a meaningful association

High
school

with delinquency"; that is, "the better a boy gets along with his family, the less delinquency he reports" (1970, p. 165).

Get
along
w/ family

Austin and Meister (1990) build directly on Bachman's conclusion in their review of recent recommendations for children at risk. These authors report that the Child Welfare League of America urged the 101st Congress to build legislation that would "preserve and strengthen families through a broad range of supports (e.g., prevention and intervention)" (p. 43). Going even further with this suggestion, the Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship specifically recommends requiring "fathers' participation . . . as part of the required parental obligation" (p. 45). When looking at the possible predictors of juvenile delinquency, variables other than child abuse and neglect may be examined in a search for relevant correlates, such as dysfunctional families, poverty, poor school performance, substance abuse, and peer group influence (Benard, 1991, p. 2).

yes

Parental Causation as a Predictive Factor

Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck (1960) specifically identified five parental factors used as predictors of juvenile delinquency: "discipline of boy by father; supervision of boy by mother; affection of father for boy; affection of mother for boy; cohesiveness of family" (p. 233). These factors contribute to parental attention and activity as measured by discipline and affection and their relation to family cohesiveness. Benard (1991) noted that in spite of the presence of some or all of these factors

identified by the Gluecks, these conditions do not necessitate the onset of juvenile delinquency. While problem behaviors may develop, "a greater percentage . . . became healthy, competent young adults . . . in spite of severe stress and adversity" (p. 2). [Benard uses the term *Resilient* resiliency to refer to those youth who do not later engage in delinquent behaviors, and she considers these children to be the ones who work well, play well, love well, and expect well (p. 3).] Found in these resilient children are the attributes of "social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and sense of purpose" (p. 5).

With her identification of resiliency, Benard appeared to be building directly on the work of Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck (1962) who earlier determined that "32% of the 500 *nondelinquents* were also the sons of criminalistic fathers. It is obvious, then, that an oversimplified association is not adequate" (p. 113). [Continuing, the Gluecks believe that among children, "clusters of social pressures . . . and/or *Influences* the combined influence of inimical social conditions . . . influence their delinquency potential" (p. 113). However, these social factors "are perhaps the most potent influences . . . to antisocial behavior" (p. 129).

Josi (1996) found earlier risk assessment projects that stated behavioral factors of "parental control and family relationship history" result in "the deterioration of pro-social skills" (pp. 38, 39). And while none of these correlates has been demonstrated to be directly causal, it is

often shown that clusters of these variables will appear when one examines the background of juvenile delinquents. Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck (1960) reported that "however crude or subtle are the 'causal' influences, the fewer the pressures toward antisocial behavior, the lower the chances of its occurring" (p. 121). As "these factors of family life are . . . interrelated" then examination would help to reveal the "various patterns and mechanisms which make for . . . family disintegration" (p. 121). In fact, Hunner and Walker (1981) go so far as to assert that "the primary cause of the troubled child syndrome . . . is parental" with *Values* "lack of appropriate values, attitudes and discipline" to be the "primary subfactor in parental causation" (p. 237).

Josi (1996) concluded that "interactment of family life *Greatest* is the greatest predictor of adolescent delinquency" (p. 49). Supporting these statements may be the work of Miccio-Fonseca (1996) in her work with sexual abuse victims and their families. She determined that violence presents a genuine threat to these individuals, with "beating someone within the family . . . the most frequently reported" (pp. 77, 78). There was a "significant finding of lethal violence" within these families, so the "the level of personal safety of the individual and family members must be considered" (p. 79). *Threatened* Clearly, parental causation may be a definite risk factor here for abuse, and those victims show a significant "history of law enforcement involvement" with experiences in a "variety of institutions, such as jails, juvenile halls and psychiatric hospitals" (p. 80).

Regarding discipline in particular as a factor in parental causation, Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck (1962) believe ["almost all delinquents have experienced poor disciplinary practices"], and "a relationship does exist between erratic discipline . . . and delinquency-related traits" (p. 135). Physical punishment was also discovered to have a "proportionally greater" impact on delinquency among boys (p. 135). Further, Josi (1996) reported that "such familial practices as verbal and physical abuse" and "parental *parental violence* violence" become "learned behavior that the juvenile considers an appropriate response" (p. 50).

Parental causation may well include the broadest range of variables directly resulting in delinquent behaviors. Of these variables, the one of specific concern is that of child abuse and neglect. Child abuse appears frequently in the background of juvenile delinquents, whether or not the history of the events has been determined to be causal in nature or not (Chesney-Lind & Sheldon, 1992; Hunner & Walker, Eds., 1981; Sandberg, 1989). Giving support to this position in their research, William and Joan McCord (1959) reported that "the pattern is consistent: if both parents *Both parents* were deviant or neither was loving, high criminality resulted" (p. 115). The authors postulate that "when any two of these negative factors (deviant model or absence of love) are present" the results are "greatly increased criminogenic tendencies" (p. 115). Regarding discipline, it is encouraging that "consistent discipline generally negates the influence of deviant models" (p. 116). Hunner and Walker

(1981) noted that "child abuse and juvenile delinquency . . . have several associated variables in common," and the authors point specifically to "severe parental discipline, child abuse, and marital discord" as producing a "high aggression level" among delinquent youth (p. 140). Specifically among women, Neumann, Houskamp, Pollack and Briere (1996) have reported that the "familial context of child abuse is important," and may be "more harmful" than acts of abuse perpetrated by adults outside the immediate family (p. 12).

Findings of Earlier Studies

While earlier studies examining child abuse did not always examine any relationships between the acts of abuse and later patterns of delinquent behavior, these studies did contribute to the field by finding a much wider prevalence of child abuse than was previously assumed. Finkelhor (1979) for example, in his surveyed population of college-age students in New England, had enough evidence of instances of child abuse to recommend "a search for at least a rough estimate of the true prevalence of sexual victimization" (p. 53). Also, as indicative of the perhaps somewhat curious patterns of instances of child abuse, Finkelhor discovered a previously unidentified distribution of child abuse among Irish male youth. "Boys from Irish-American backgrounds reported an unusually large numbers of experiences of sexual abuse" and were "almost three times as likely to have had a childhood experience" as boys from different ethnic backgrounds in his study (p. 114). Further, while admitting this finding was

"surprising and unanticipated," the high rate of abuse among Irish boys is attributed to "a large number of homosexual experiences with older *unrelated* men" (p. 114).

More recently, Kercher and McShane (1984) indicated some prevalence of child sexual abuse among a broad sample of adults in Texas. Of the 79 respondents to their survey who reported sexual abuse as children, "females, Hispanics and whites were most often represented as victims" (p. 498). The estimated rate of child sex abuse as reported by these victims showed a victimization rate per 100 of 9.8 for white females, 10.4 for black females, and 21.7 for Hispanic females (p. 498). The total number of female respondents reporting abuse was 65; of this number 12 of the 55 Hispanic females participating in the survey reported child sex abuse (p. 498). While these figures seem "disproportionally large for females, the breakdown of victims by race/ethnicity paralleled that of the Texas census" (p. 498). Based on this information, the authors are able to formulate a projected number of adult victims of child abuse in the Texas population. For those groups reporting child abuse most often in their past, Kercher and McShane project 405,986 white female adult victims in the Texas population based on a victimization rate per 100 and the 1980 Texas census figures (p. 499). For Hispanic females, the projected number of adult victims in the Texas population is 194,641, and for black females the projected number is 61,220 (p. 499). The authors conclude that these findings "provide a much needed corrective in the direction of greater representativeness"

(p. 500). The totals reported from both Finkelhor's work and Kercher and McShane's study are found in Table 1. From these figures it is not difficult to understand some researchers' beliefs that child abuse has been a more widespread occurrence among females than had been previously reported. These findings also may support the hypothesis that child abuse appears frequently in the history of juvenile delinquents, particularly delinquent girls.

Linking Child Abuse and Juvenile Delinquency

Closer examination of child abuse as a linking variable in the cluster of behaviors concomitant with juvenile delinquency seems to demonstrate some frequency between the two experiences. A study of particular relevance may be that of Sandberg's (1989) when he examined the work of the Mayor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect in New York City. This study conducted in the 1970's found that "as many as 50 percent of the families reported for child abuse and neglect had at least one child who was later taken to court" (p. 109). Sandberg believes the report demonstrates that "a significant percentage of abused and neglected children have later involvement with the court" (p. 110). Sandberg also conducted qualitative research while at Odyssey House in New Hampshire in the 1970's. This work is of some interest because Sandberg is careful to explore many different dimensions of the child abuse-juvenile delinquency connection. Sandberg speaks with counselors, psychiatrists, attorneys, researchers, and a former judge of the juvenile courts to assess their experiences. Consistently, the

Table 1

Prevalence of Reported Sexual Abuse:
Comparison of Studies

Study	n	Sex		Combined
		Male	Female	
Finkelhor (1979)	530 266	8.6%	19.2%	
Kercher & McShane (1984)	79	3.0%	11.0%	
Gilfus (1988) ^a	NA		55.0%	
Sandberg (1989)	99 51	4.0%	37.3%	
American Correctional Assoc. (1990) ^a	NA		54.3%	
Criner & Young (1994)	100			27.0%

^a Reported in Chesney-Lind (1992).

conclusions appear to be the same. As examples, from a counselor: "I feel there is a clearcut connection between the abuse and the girls' delinquency" (p. 43). A psychiatrist believes that "it seems clear that abuse is linked to juvenile delinquency and delinquency to abuse, though neither is the sole cause of the other" (p. 68). Speaking directly to the question, a researcher replies to Sandburg, "the most important abuse-delinquency research questions lie in understanding what interrupts the link" (p. 72).

Sandberg also included his empirical findings from Odyssey House in the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect report on "The Role of Child Abuse in Delinquency and Juvenile Court Decision-making" from 1983. Sandberg's findings are reported in Table 1. In the group of youth Sandberg studied, he found that 66 percent of the residents had a history of child abuse, with physical abuse being the most common (61 percent), followed at some distance by sexual abuse (16 percent) (p. 129). However, Sandberg's figures may belie the observations he records in the qualitative sections of his research, where more frequent instances of child sexual abuse seem to be reported.

There is some research of interest in this area reported by Criner and Young (1994) in their work examining child abuse among patients at Patton State Hospital in southern California. Of a sample of 100 patients, 33 were reported to have been abused, the abuse "evenly distributed among three major types: physical, sexual and severe emotional" (p. 23).

Of these 33 cases, 15% had suffered from both physical and sexual abuse (p. 19). The findings are summarized in Table 1. Criner and Young believe there is a "significant relationship" between "maltreatment" and "aggression, delinquency and social withdrawal" (p. 5). Further, in dealing with adolescent males Criner and Young (1994) identify a "transmission process" between those youth who had "experienced parental violence and behaved violently themselves" (p. 5). Also in southern California, Jamieson and Mikels (1996), looking at sexual abuse and its effects report the "long-term impact of sexual abuse evidenced by . . . sexual delinquency, prostitution, and molestation of younger children" (p. 3). A particularly discouraging finding in Jamieson's and Mikels' research was that the "mean age of onset of sexual abuse was 3.3 years" (p. 20). Jamieson and Mikels believe that "child sexual abuse affects one's ability to self-regulate behavior, affect, and mood" (p. 5). Chesney-Lind (1992) in her work with delinquent girls, notes two studies, each showing a rate of over 50% for reported sexual abuse. Both Gilfus (1988) and the American Correctional Association (1990) indicate that sexual abuse has occurred among the girls studied in the majority of cases, as shown in Table 1. The recorded instances of sexual abuse among different studies as shown in Table 1 vary from over half of the females reporting sexual abuse, to a low of less than 20%. Despite the difficulty of locating comparable data, Table 1 seems to demonstrate that more recent research indicates a higher rate of abuse being reported.

Girls and the Effects of Sexual Abuse

While all this research contains much valuable detail concerning both sexes, it is also important to consider the body of work that examines girls and the effects child abuse may have had in terms of any connection with juvenile delinquency. While a direct connection appears not to have been studied, there are several efforts which have looked at the later behavioral and emotional consequences of child abuse on girls (Mennen, 1994; Mennen & Meadow, 1993; Sanders-Phillips, 1995). Recent research (Neumann, Houskamp, Pollock & Briere, 1996) has indicated a "particularly marked" relationship in women between "revictimization and post-traumatic stress responses" from those subjects who reported a history of childhood sexual abuse (p. 13). While child abuse is not her direct focus, Chesney-Lind (1992) completed some rather extensive work on female juvenile delinquents which indicated that a broad range of abusive causal factors may exist in the backgrounds of girl delinquents. Chesney-Lind stated, "victimization (both sexual and physical) of young women who find themselves in the juvenile justice system is extensive" (p. 90). Her findings on a small population of subjects are reported in Table 2. Further, "A very large proportion (61.2 percent) had experienced physical abuse . . . nearly as many (54.3 percent) had undergone sexual abuse" (p. 147).

Adopting a feminist perspective, Chesney-Lind concluded that "young women's victimization and their response to it is shaped by their status as young women," and that as many as

Table 2

Abuse Reported by Female Juveniles:
Comparison of Studies

Study	n	Type of Abuse	
		Physical	Sexual
Chesney-Lind (1992)	10 ^a	8	6
Ramirez & Vega (1996)	14 ^b	-	14
Sandberg (1989)	51	32	19
Sechrest & Josi (1996)	32 ^c	15	12

^a Chesney-Lind reports each type of abuse separately.

^b Ramirez and Vega did not record physical abuse; all their subjects reported sexual abuse.

^c Sechrest and Josi also report mental abuse, and have totaled each type of abuse separately.

"three-fourths of sexual abuse victims are females" (p. 91). The conclusion reached is that "abuse was very much a part of the girls' lives" (p. 179). Sandberg (1989) reports that of the 150 youth he examined, "the girls experienced significantly more . . . abuse traumas (2.4 avg.) than the boys (1.7 avg.)" (p. 130). His work with girls is shown in Table 2. Among adult women, Neumann, Houskamp, Pollock and Briere (1996) make the broad assertion that "across methodologies, samples, and measures, child sexual abuse is a general risk factor" for "later psychological disturbance" (p. 11). Earlier, Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck (1960) in their study on predictive factors in delinquency looked at the background of female offenders. These authors believe their work was the first to examine predictive factors and "the behavior of women offenders" (p. 88). They also indicate that there is some evidence that "environmental influences have a greater bearing on the course of behavior of female offenders than of male" (p. 96). When examining the behavior of female offenders, the authors identify five predictive factors affecting females: "mental disease or distortion; school retardation; neighborhood influences; steadiness of employment; economic responsibility" (p. 230). While not all of these factors may be environmental, there is an attempt to look at the previous experiences of female offenders to identify any causal links or correlations.

Findings of Recent Research in Southern California

Some of the work that has looked at girls and their experiences with child sexual abuse has been completed in

southern California. Mennen (1994) indicates among the girls he studied that there appeared to be no differences in the kind of abuse suffered, but that there seemed to be a trend for white girls to suffer abuse for a longer duration of time (p. 119). It is important to the study of childhood sexual abuse in girls that Mennen is able to obtain information regarding the racial or ethnic breakdown of the girls studied, as it may be possible to discriminate among the girls' experiences according to race or ethnicity. In fact, Mennen's work may have revealed a finding of some worth in this area. He stated, "there is a significant interaction effect with Latina girls . . . according to the kind of abuse they suffer (p. 121). Mennen's work shows that "Latina girls who experience penetration abuse have significantly higher . . . levels . . . of depression [and] anxiety . . . than Latina girls who are abused without penetration" (p. 121). This information leads Mennen to conclude that "Latina girls who suffer penetration abuse are much more likely to be seriously distressed" and that "the traditional emphasis on purity and the importance of virginity . . . may influence this disparity" (p. 122). Ramirez and Vega (1996) may somewhat contradict this finding in their study of teen mothers in southern California. Unfortunately, an ethnic breakdown of the data were not generated, but Ramirez and Vega report that there "appears to be no discrepancy between non-contact and contact sexual abuse and the pregnancy outcome" (p. 30), with "child sexual abuse" often resulting in "adolescent pregnancy" (p. 38).

Here may be a cultural discrepancy worthy of further examination.

Mennen and Meadow (1993) have also looked at a small population of emotionally disturbed girls in Southern California to see if a history of childhood sexual abuse would differentiate them from other emotionally disturbed girls. While all these subjects were residents of a treatment facility, it was noted that there were "higher rates of substance abuse in sexually abused clinical populations" (p. 326). Also dealing with a residential population in southern California, Criner and Young (1994) seem to have uncovered a finding of considerable interest among the females. In the population of 100 patients, 50 were female and "in this sample, only females committed crimes against their own children" (p. 17). Criner and Young believe this information is "a compelling finding" as the males did not show having "committed crimes against their own children" and that there is a need "to find out more about this population" (p. 21). Data from both these studies, however, are quite limited in their generality due to the small treatment populations that were examined.

Ramirez and Vega (1996) also report some evidence of earlier child abuse. While noting that "a correlation may exist between child abuse and adolescent pregnancy" (p. 11), Ramirez and Vega state that an earlier study of 127 cases found "42 (33%) . . . reported that they had been physically or sexually abused prior to conceiving" (p. 11). Their results are reported in Table 2. Among the girls Ramirez and

Vega studied, "these abused girls" are also "more likely to have experimented with drugs and alcohol" (p. 12). Not only was this experimentation a risk factor, but "for many, keeping the secret" of abuse precipitated "eating disorders, prostitution, domestic violence, and depression" (p. 38). Of those 14 girls who had given birth before age 18, their ages at their first pregnancy ranged from 12 to 17, and the number of pregnancies varied from one to seven, with ten girls having been pregnant only once (pp. 16 and 23). Ramirez and Vega conclude that "sexual abuse can precipitate the high risk behaviors that often lead to adolescent pregnancy" (pp. 30, 31) and that the "symptoms of child sexual abuse . . . have a bearing on the sexual behaviors that often lead to adolescent pregnancy" (p. 32). Table 2 presents some of these findings among different studies with female juveniles; consistently physical abuse is reported more frequently. A problem with many of the populations studied is their size; it seems frequently that results are reported which may be valid only for the subjects studied. Table 2 may be indicative of this problem, as shown by the low totals represented in the n column. There is a need for researchers of female juveniles to search diligently for sizeable enough populations to make their generalizations viable possibilities.

Sechrest and Josi (1996) recently surveyed a population of incarcerated adult females in Riverside County, California (see Table 3). The research provided a "base inmate profile" for adults and juveniles in the detention facilities in

Table 3

Abuse Reported by Female Juveniles and Young Adults:
Riverside County, California

Type of abuse	n	Age			Total
		Below 21	21	22-25	
Mental	30 ^a	4	3	6	13
Physical	30 ^a	2	4	9	15
Sexual	31 ^b	2	2	8	12

Note. Total number of females surveyed in these age groups = 32

(Sechrest & Josi, 1996).

^a Number of missing observations = 2.

^b Number of missing observations = 1.

Riverside County (1996a, p. 2). The information regarding adult females was collected in the county's two holding facilities for females, the Banning Correctional Facility and the main jail facility. A total of 156 females was surveyed (1996a, p. 7). When this population was broken down to examine levels of abuse among 32 females between the ages of 17 and 25, the percentages of those respondents indicating such experiences seemed to support the connection between abuse and later delinquent behavior. Specifically, Sechrest and Josi (1996) show rates of 43 percent of this group reporting earlier mental abuse, 47 percent reporting prior physical abuse, and 38 percent reporting past sexual abuse (unpublished raw data). These figures seemed to demonstrate a relationship between abuse and later anti-social behavior in female populations. Table 3 shows the breakout of specific responses within this group of young women in detention facilities in Riverside County; it is of interest to note that the oldest among them report the most abuse. Sechrest and Josi (1996) were also able to survey juvenile females held in Riverside County's two Juvenile Halls, one located in the city of Riverside, and one in Indio, California, in the eastern end of the county (1996b, p. 2). The total number of girls surveyed in these two facilities was 19; among this small number child abuse also appears to be a large part of these girls' lives (1996b, p. 7). Results are discussed further in the following section on Hispanic youth. While child abuse appears in many of these studies, abuse remains just one of many factors related to parental

neglect and family dysfunction.

Hispanic Youth

One subpopulation that seems particularly difficult to study or to obtain reliable data on is that of Hispanic youth. Cultural and linguistic barriers may present particular challenges; however, even these difficulties have been overcome in research to determine if indeed there are specific child abuse victimization patterns or resulting consequences that could be attributed to cultural differences (Huston & Parra, 1995; Kercher & McShane, 1984; Mennen, 1994). However, there does not appear to be a large body of work detailing child abuse experiences specifically in Hispanic girls and resulting patterns of juvenile delinquency. Besides Mennen's work with sexually abused girls showing a difference among Latinas, Kercher and McShane (1984) earlier seem to have reported higher victimization rates for Hispanic females (p. 498). Also in Texas, Huston and Parra (1995) worked with a predominantly Mexican-American population, and they also note the paucity of studies on this population group. "This study represents the largest series of Mexican-American children in a retrospective review of child sexual abuse" (p. 166). Findings of importance for the Mexican-American population include the fact that these children are the most likely "to be abused by an extended family member" (p. 167), and perhaps unfortunately, these children "presented after a longer interval" for evaluation (p. 169). Both Huston and Parra believe that "the tendency for the perpetrators . . . to be more closely related to the

Mexican-American children" led to the result that these children "were also more likely to delay their disclosure of sexual abuse" (p. 173).

Some very recent research conducted by Sechrest and Josi (1996) among Hispanic girls in Riverside County, California, also shows a high incidence of previous child abuse experiences in an incarcerated population of juvenile females. Sechrest and Josi (1996) report that in the Riverside County, California, juvenile detention facilities, Hispanics tend to be over represented in the population at 54 percent; however, that percentage is consistent with the 1990 Census figures of the county (1996b, pp. 5 and 7). For the girls, again the preponderance of the population was Hispanic at 52 percent (p. 7). For this group of girls, Sechrest and Josi indicate that rates of "mental, physical, and sexual abuse reported suggest problems in these areas" (1996a, p. 6). It is unfortunate that for this subpopulation of juvenile females the total number of respondents surveyed is 19, as any generalizations may therefore be open to question (1996b, p. 4). However, such a small total figure serves to reinforce the difficulty of locating and working with such populations. Data available, as shown in the tables contained in this report, seem to point to the paucity of reliable and comparable information available to researchers.

It is interesting to note that while "Hispanic youth in Riverside County seemed to be one of the highest 'at risk' groups," they also report "relatively more stable families" (1996b, p. 6). Here it seems that exploration of a possible

discrepancy between a high risk group and perception of a stable family may bear more review. The Hispanic girls, in particular, while representing a smaller proportion of the youth studied in Riverside County detention, seem to demonstrate similar findings, and 53 percent of the total girls surveyed report growing up with their natural parents (1996b, p. 11). Sechrest and Josi point out, however, while Hispanic youth indicate somewhat less "deviance by parents," such underreporting may come from a tendency not to recognize "family problems in Hispanic families" or from not reporting any abuse that does occur (p. 6).

When this small sample of Hispanic females is compared with the data available in Female Offenders in the Juvenile Justice System (Poe-Yamagata & Butts, 1996), the information gathered is consistent with the more generalized findings compiled by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. It would therefore appear that Sechrest and Josi's work, while representing a small population, still provides reliable data in the area of ethnicity for Hispanic female youth (Sechrest & Josi, 1996a, 1996b; Poe-Yamagata & Butts, 1996).

The recent research conducted by Sechrest and Josi (1996) reaches conclusions similar to those researchers who have worked with juvenile delinquents and who believe child abuse may be an important factor in the later patterns of delinquent behavior that are identified. Sechrest and Josi recommend that one of the "principal avenues" for helping these youth "will have to be early intervention and

*Early
Intervention
Prevention*

prevention" (1996b, p. 12). Further, from their work with detained juveniles in Riverside County, Sechrest and Josi suggest that "a population of particular interest should be Hispanic youth" as "they make up a substantial portion of the detention population" (p. 12). Consistent with these conclusions, the question remaining is "how to address the needs of these populations" (p. 12).

Summary and Conclusions

The information regarding child sexual abuse and juvenile delinquency appears to be available, as well as studies looking at female populations of juvenile delinquents. The studies examined here have seemed to have shown relationships between family and parental factors, specifically abuse, and later juvenile delinquence. There is also research regarding ethnic groups and child abuse. Again, studies have shown relationships existing between acts of abuse and ethnically based responses to these acts. However, here the availability of data becomes a problem. Data are not readily accessible by ethnicity and sex; most studies provide a breakdown either by ethnicity or sex, not both. It would be of greater use to have the results of any particular study available by both ethnicity and sex, then perhaps much more could be gained by examining differences among these various groups. Data examined were frequently not comparable, which hindered any attempt at meta-analysis across the research. Once differences were accounted for, there were not much substantial data remaining for any viable cross-referencing. Work specifically regarding Latina girls'

experiences with child sexual abuse and any later delinquent behaviors seems scarce, and further study may be of benefit both to researchers and their subjects to assist in providing improved services to these girls needing help dealing with these challenging life experiences.

Research would benefit from more detailed examination of how different factors interact with the nexus of parenting variables, types and duration of abuse, and cultural background. The population of Latina girls suffering from the related problems of child abuse and juvenile delinquency have so far apparently received less attention in the literature. While some of the material presented reports on recent research regarding Latina girls here in southern California, what is discussed appears to be much of what research is currently extant. The data appear to be somewhat limited, and narrow in scope. There may well exist a need to focus on this group of young women to determine what specifically cultural behaviors exist, what responses to these problems may be particular to the group, and what needs of these girls may most effectively be met to improve the quality of their lives. Feminist theory applied to juvenile delinquency may offer some particularly salient views on the connections between abuse and female delinquency.

Longitudinal studies of females, Hispanic females, and female juvenile offenders may well determine the importance of sexual abuse as a variable in the relationships between abuse and delinquency. All of these areas are open to examination and research to the benefit and increased social welfare of

the subjects as well as the expansion of knowledge available to researchers in the field. It would seem the improvement of young girls' lives may demand further study in these areas of concern.

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