DELINQUENT GIRLS' DESCRIPTIONS OF PRIOR, CURRENT, AND FUTURE SELVES AND THE RELATIONSHIP OF SELF DESCRIPTIONS TO PRIOR ADVERSITIES AND CURRENT ILLEGAL AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

By

Marva V. Goodson

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Criminal Justice – Master of Science

2014

ABSTRACT

DELINQUENT GIRLS' DESCRIPTIONS OF PRIOR, CURRENT, AND FUTURE SELVES AND THE RELATIONSHIP OF SELF DESCRIPTIONS TO PRIOR ADVERSITIES AND CURRENT ILLEGAL AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

By

Marva V. Goodson

Delinquent girls have recently grabbed the attention of researchers due to their larger proportional representation of youth under supervision in juvenile courts. Among other influences, delinquency is commonly examined as the result of family dysfunction, negative peer relations, and low academic commitment. However, this approach provides limited insight into the internal struggles of girls who are deeply enmeshed in the juvenile justice system. Literature examining the self perceptions of delinquent girls, as they tackle physical and emotional development during adolescence, is limited. Specifically, little is known about the way in which self perception changes among girls as they desist from criminality and transition into adulthood. The current study explores retrospective perceptions of prior self, current self, and the attainability of positive future self of a sample of 27 girls deeply enmeshed in the juvenile justice system. Self perceptions are examined under the theoretical framework of McAdam's (1985) Narrative Identity Theory. Identifiers of self perception, gained from the qualitative interviews, are examined in relation to delinquency, adversity, and prosocial behaviors. Findings suggest that girls are increasingly positive about their self perceptions over time and different types of adversity have varying impacts on girls' perceived attainability of a positive future self.

To my friends and family for motivating me

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere thanks to my thesis committee members Dr. Jennifer Cobbina and Dr. Soma Chaudhuri for their encouragement and support. I would also like to thank my friend Elizabeth Adams for assisting with coding interviews.

I am extremely grateful for my thesis chair, Dr. Merry Morash, for reviewing my manuscript, sharing her knowledge, and providing me with guidance and support throughout the process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter 1: The Need for Research

Some criminologists identify the lack of research on females to be one of criminology's greatest limitations (Belknap & Holsinger, 2006). Early theories of crime and delinquency failed to include girls in their samples or presented sexist rationales for their behavior (Burman, Batchelor, & Brown, 2001). For example, a sexist explanation was presented by Pollack (1950) when he postulated that girls used their sexuality to receive deferential treatment and linked their criminality to the onset of menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause. Notably, today's research largely fails to acknowledge gendered differences in explanations of illegal behavior and continues to support a male-centered understanding of delinquency (Belknap & Holsinger, 2006). In acknowledgement of this pattern, some researchers have spent the last decade attempting to create an empirical foundation for gendered criminality (Tracy et al., 2009). This thesis will add to the growing knowledge about girls in juvenile court.

Recently, girls have received increased attention from researchers debating whether girls have become more delinquent (Stevens, Morash, Chesney-Lind, 2011; Steffensmeier, Schwartz, Zhong, & Ackerman, 2005), or their behaviors have simply become more heavily monitored and punished (Stevens et al., 2011; Steffensmeier et al., 2005). The convergence of girls' and boys' presence in the justice system results from a sharper drop in the arrest of delinquent boys than girls, allowing girls to proportionally account for a greater percentage of cases under juvenile court supervision (Goodkind et.al, 2009). From 1985 to 2009 the number of delinquency cases involving female juvenile offenders increased by 86% (OJJDP, 2009). The greatest overall growth in delinquency occurred from 1985 to 1997 with female delinquency caseloads increasing 101%, outpacing male delinquency caseload growth by 47% (OJJDP, 2009). A gradual decrease in male delinquency cases from 1997 to 2009 led to a 27% reduction in male

case supervision (OJJDP, 2009). However, female delinquency cases remained relatively stable during this period, with just a 1% decrease, allowing them to make up a larger proportion of juvenile caseloads than previous years (OJJDP, 2009). In other words, the increase in arrests among girls co-occurred with a much larger increase in the arrest of delinquent boys in the early 1990s and, although they are not becoming more delinquent, it is clear girls are being arrested at higher rates than before (Goodkind et.al, 2009).

National statistics such as these reveal trends in juvenile justice system involvement, but fail to expose internal states leading girls to break the law. Among the various influences on prosocial behavior, or acts which benefit others or society, the development of a healthy identity has been identified by researchers as a necessity for a happy life (McLean & Mansfield, 2011). The creation of meaning-filled stories, or a narrative identity, structures a person's positive self image and creates attainable possible selves. This development secures the psychological welfare of an individual (Forney et al., 2005). In contrast to the narrative identity approach, much of the literature investigating delinquency focuses on the youth's familial dysfunction, lack of motivation, and individual pathologies (Smith-Adcock, 2005). This negative focus leaves important gaps to be filled by research assessing girls' identity development and its relationship to (1) the emotional and psychological support necessary for positive identity formation, and (2) prosocial or illegal behavior. Furthermore, little is known about the identity of delinquent girls during their transition into adulthood.

Research suggests that formation of a positive identity is especially important in adolescent females. For example, Artz (1998) examined the identity of violent school girls with particular attention to the girls' descriptions of themselves, their families, friends, and school officials. Although several girls described themselves as "tough," they communicated desires to

improve their self-worth through male approval. Likewise, they attributed minimal positive characteristics to femininity and accepted discrimination, sexual double standards, sexual harassment, and abuse they endured as inevitable (Artz, 1998). In contrast, Like & Cobbina (forthcoming) presented findings of a less passive role for girls in violent situations and a protective role in maintaining a positive feminine identity. Preservation of one's "sexual character", or a social identity which was not perceived as promiscuous, was important to girls. At times, peers alluding to sexual promiscuity of a classmate led to conflict and/or physical altercations. Additionally, girls addressed active attempts to maintain a modest image, by wearing conservative attire, which would deter their male counterparts from perceiving them as "easy" or sexually promiscuous. These findings contradict Artz's (1998) findings of girls viewing abuse and harassment as inevitable. These contradictory conclusions could suggest a change in girls' identity or perception of femininity, over the last several decades, or suggest a variation in girls' identity relevant to different but related topics. Such research begins to fill the gap in understanding of the identities of delinquent girls. This thesis will provide additional information on how girls at the end of adolescence describe their past, present, and future selves.

This research is important because risk factors identified as the most influential for girls appear to be rooted in psychological threats to identity, traditional transitions into autonomy, and restricted attainability of a positive future self (Kerpelman & Smith, 1999; Bloom et al., 2002). Such experiences are driven by familial dysfunction and include: physical or sexual abuse, parental criminality/incarceration, witnessing domestic violence, poor familial communication, losing family members to violence, and strained parent-child relationships (Bloom et al., 2002; Belknap, Holsinger, et al., 1997; Bloom, Owen, Rosenbaum, & Deschenes, 2003; DeHart, 2008;

Schaffner, 2007). Thus, there is a need to study the connection of risk factors to identity development.

The growth in female representation in juvenile court increases the importance of understanding girls' identity development. A study that investigates the desirable and undesirable features that girls see in themselves, the families of girls who do and do not have a positive identity, and girls' view of their future selves, could reveal key factors impeding or promoting the development of a prosocial identity, that in turn relate to their potential to engage in future illegal behavior.

Chapter 2: The Existing Literature on Identity and Delinquent Girls

INTRODUCTION

Adolescent girls face a multitude of social and developmental challenges when beginning the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Peer and parental role dynamics are renegotiated and comparisons of ideal self to their true self begin to occur. Complicating this process are environmentally and/or culturally specific experiences subjectively tailoring an individual's understanding of a desirable identity. McAdams' (2013) narrative identity theory will be used to understand the identity of girls who have been involved in juvenile court.

McAdams (1985), the theorist best known for the development of narrative identity theory, proposed the theoretical conception of identity as a person's internal story, called the narrative identity. McAdams's (1985) theory presented the first complete notion of a narrative identity which built on Erikson's (1963) theory of ego identity and Elkind's (1981) theory of personal fables (McAdams, 2011). Transitioning from McAdams's (1985) initial idea of identity as simply a story, full life stories are now considered a complete understanding of self (McAdams & Cox, 2010). McAdams and Pals (2006) identify narrative identity as the third layer of personality in which adaptations and characteristics are combined into a complete portrayal of personality. A narrative identity, or linkage of significant events leading to a biography, begins during late-adolescence and the early adult years (McAdams, 2011; Hammack, 2008). The next section reviews the theoretical progression in the conceptualization of identity, delivery of self-proclaimed identity, and the creation of possible selves. Additionally, it examines the adversities that many girls in court have faced (e.g., sexual abuse, sexual assault), that may be related to identity development.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF IDENTITY

Narrative identity theory recognizes that youth participate in storytelling that communicates their identity. Storytelling begins early in adolescence and is molded by parental guidance and support. (e.g., Habermas & de Silveira, 2008; McLean & Breen, 2009; McLean, Breen, & Fournier, 2010). Research examining meaning-filled story building of adults suggests emotionally negative stories are more commonly used to identify events and behaviors of significance (e.g. Pals, 2006). Mothers tend to be more elaborative when discussing negative events with their children (e.g. Sales, Fivush, & Peterson, 2003); specifically, when discussing negative events, they express the cause of negative emotion in greater detail than when discussing positive stories. Fivush et al. (2000) suggest positive emotionally driven storytelling is important for strong self-esteem and family bonds. In contrast, storytelling driven by negative emotions manifests meaningful experiences and increases understanding of an event (Fivush et al., 2000). In their explanation, negative storytelling is used as learning opportunities and positive storytelling strengthens emotional ties between individuals.

Consistent with the identification of storytelling as a way to express one's identity, Elkind's (1981) understanding of narrative identity focused on personal fables. Personal fables address the earliest of narratives created by adolescents. They place greater emphasis on fantasy and less on the true self. As the adolescent matures, the fables are revised or completely discarded, and are revamped to represent a more realistic narrative identity that includes consideration of social constraints (Elkind, 1981; McAdams, 1985; 2011). Although personal fables are most commonly abandoned, narrative identities are similar over time due to their imaginative undertone that slightly distorts previous experiences to create thematic consistency between past and present (McAdams, 2011). Progression to a positive current identity allows for

the entertainment of a positive possible identity (e. g., a high school graduate). Similar to personal fables, possible identities are created and discarded. However, possible identities are adjusted to maintain or improve current self-esteem (Oyserman and James, 2011). Through the consolidation of possible selves and consideration of an individual's strength, weaknesses, character, and talents, the future self is representative of who that person believes she or he will become.

Imagoes are a component of McAdams (1985) narrative identity theory and represent idealized concepts of self, specific to a particular role or status in society. As adolescents transition into adulthood, imagoes are created (McAdams, 1993). Standards for the idealized self (i.e., imagoes) are built around the integration of societal expectations of the role and the behavior displayed among people who are significant to an individual. For example, girls may use parents, friends, or others as the model of the type of young woman that they want to be.

Ultimately, imagoes are created by internalizing or copying the behaviors of those around us who hold the most significance. Loving, hating, and interacting with other people crafts unconscious expectations; through this process, a greater understanding of self is gained. However, this intricate process of incorporating perceptions of others into one's identity has limitations. Some experiences have the potential to create exaggerated and one-dimensional characters. For example, in the eyes of a youth, a dysfunctional mother might only be characterized by her shortcomings, despite some positive contributions within that role. The mother's negative behaviors or characteristics would overshadow her positive characteristics. In an attempted to avoid replicating a mother's negative traits, a youth would attempt to adopt only the positive attributes. From this selection process, characteristics of a personal imago, or reflection of one's identity standards, is created. As discussed later, the determination of a role

being of significance, the level of importance of that role, and the way in which the role changes over time, are influenced by the peers and family members upholding the roles in girls' lives. It is influenced by who we believe we are, who we were, who we wish we were, or who we are afraid we will become (McAdams, 2006).

Once these imagoes, or idealized images of self, are created, individuals begin creating future identities. The positive or negative future identities individuals create are identified as possible identities (Oyserman & James, 2011). From a theoretical perspective, possible identities are significant in their representation of an end goal and because of their influence on motivation. Researchers are beginning to investigate the periods of time when possible identities are most significant and in what way. Oyserman and James' (2011) study revealed that possible identities could be implicated in current action, differ with life phases, and can have an effect on an individual's well-being. Moreover, the created future self should serve as a roadmap. Lack of current action, that should be cued by the aspiration of possible selves, could be explained by one of the following: 1) a disconnect between current self and possible self, 2) actions required to attain possible self feeling incompatible with current self, or 3) the possible self appearing unattainable, so therefore action is not required (Oyserman & James, 2011).

In summary, as shown in Table 1, the creation of a narrative identity begins early in life. During infancy a sense of "I" is established, identifying our roles as narrators and actors linking actions over time (McAdams, 2006). Around 5 years of age, children begin to understand the self-seeking influences driving the behaviors of actors. By early adolescence, personal fables are created serving as the first drafts of narrative identity (McAdams, 2006). Although grandiose, they confirm the development of autobiographical coherence. Finally, as individuals approach adulthood, from seventeen to twenty-five years of age, full life stories emerge. These stories

have thematic coherence and provide the individuals' lives with purpose (McAdams, 2006). In this process, the stories link past experiences, present experiences, and imagined future self.

Consideration of the later progression of identity development, specifically from adolescence to adulthood, raises some questions about populations that fail to transition or transition at a slower rate than suggested by the theory. When considering delinquent girls enmeshed in the juvenile justice system, there are several factors that have the potential to alter natural identity progression. For example instability within a household, strained parental relationships, victimization, and/or the witnessing of violence could make the natural development of a positive identity more difficult to attain.

Table 1: Developmental Milestones in Narrative Identity: From Early Childhood to Young Adulthood

Approximate Age	Stage	Milestones	Significance for Narrative Identity
1-2 years	Infant/toddler	Extended consciousness Autobiographical self	The consolidation of a sense of "I" as narrator/actor extending over time
4-5 years	Preschool/ kindergarten	Theory of mind	Children understand that human actions are motivated by desires and beliefs in the minds of actors/characters Children are able to understand and tell simple stories with temporal coherence
10-14 years	Early Adolescence	Personal fables	Older children and young adolescents develop biographical fantasies that serve as grandiose first drafts of narrative identity, now that autobiographical coherence has developed
17-25 years	Emerging adulthood	Full life stories	The development of skills related to casual and thematic coherence, allows young people to begin to construct internal life stories. Narrative identities provide their lives with meaning and purpose. The stories link the reconstructed past, experienced present, and imagined future.

McAdams (2006) The Redemptive Self p. 86

ADVERSITIES COMMON AMONG DELINQUENT GIRLS

Struggles with physical or sexual abuse, parental criminality/incarceration, witnessing domestic violence, poor familial communication, losing family members to violence, and strained parent-child relationships are common among girls involved in juvenile court (Bloom et al., 2002; Belknap, Holsinger, et al., 1997; Bloom, Owen, Rosenbaum, & Deschenes, 2003; DeHart, 2008; Schaffner, 2007). Running away from home is also more common for delinquent girls than delinquent boys (Siegel & Williams, 2003; Spohn, 2000). Childhood abuse has been found to be more closely related to girls' than boys' offending. Additionally, abuse lasts for longer periods of time and has an earlier onset among girls than among boys (McClellan, Farabee, & Crouch, 1997). Belknap and Holsinger (2006) examined a sample of 444 delinquent youth for gendered risk factors. They found significantly higher rates of abuse among girls for nearly all types of variables (e.g., physical, verbal, abuse from family members). This literature recognizes some of the unique challenges girls face which could impact identity development.

There is scant literature investigating the influence family has on the impediment and cultivation of positive identity. Much of the literature focuses on physical, emotional, and social changes adolescents face. As exceptions, Kerpelman and Smith (1999) investigated the influence of mother-daughter relationships with particular attention to both parties' perceptions of roles. Mothers reported themes of fear related to their daughters' anger, rejection, and withdrawal as the result of disciplinary actions. Daughters reported themes of desired autonomy and independence in building their identities. The quality of mother-daughter relationships varied among the sample of girls. Many described relationships characterized by poor communication, ineffective-problem solving skills, and the tendency to yell or isolate oneself when conflicts occurred. Moreover, Kerpelman and Smith (1999) found that when discussing identity, mothers

were more likely to make negative assertions about their daughters than the daughters made about themselves. In response to negative identity assertions daughters were more likely to combat than validate the mothers' assertions. Ultimately analysis of data for the sample of 25 mother-daughter pairs revealed some patterns in the promotion and restriction of positive identity formulation. Mother-daughter relationships which limit positive identity construction are not ideal for girls' identity building.

There are important gaps in the literature exploring the identity of delinquent girls and research on whether current, ideal future, and possible future selves are connected to past adversities or to current illegal behavior. Ideally the development of positive possible selves and overall identity would promote behavior causing desistance from delinquent behavior. However, proposed theories of identity development have not been applied to understanding girls in juvenile court. Delinquent girls face much higher rates of victimization and family problems than the general population. The emotional consequences of such occurrences pose a critical need for more research inquiring about the developmental impacts of such problems on identity. Through the application of McAdam's (1985) narrative identity theory, with emphasis on imagoes, the current study was designed to examine how court-involved girls view themselves. Furthermore the study examines patterns in identity development in relation to continued law breaking and involvement in school and work, and in relation to prior adversities. Specifically the following research questions are addressed:

1a) How do girls who have exited the juvenile justice system perceive themselves? 1b) How did their perception of self change over time?

2) Do girls who have been in the juvenile justice system perceive their future/positive possible self as attainable, unattainable, or unclear?

3) What roles (e.g. mother) do girls identify as significant in their lives? How do these roles change over time?

4) How do the girls' future perceptions of self connect to their involvement in employment, education, and delinquency?

5) How do girls' experiences of victimization and family adversity connect to perceptions of current and future self?

Chapter 3: Methodology

STUDY DESIGN AND SAMPLING

A secondary analysis of an existing data set will be utilized. The qualitative data are from face-to-face interviews conducted with 27 girls who had been in contact with the juvenile justice system, and from professionals (e.g., probation officers, group home staff) the girls nominated as people who knew them well, and who girls consented to being interviewed. For the girls, the collection of the qualitative data involved a three-part interview completed in between one and three sessions. The initial study focused on girls' unique experiences of residential mobility, delinquency, life struggles, and community and family conditions. Girls also answered questions about their views of themselves at the time of the interview and about their anticipated futures (see Appendix A). For the professionals, the interview schedule asked a parallel set of questions about each girl. The 27 respondents' and 21 professionals' interviews were conducted between 2009 and 2010. Girls interviews were carried out at the participants' homes or in public places (e.g. a public library), and professionals' interviews were carried out in the professionals' offices. The audio recordings from the 27 interviews were transcribed and read into Nvivo software for qualitative data analysis.

SAMPLE: The sample includes girls in one juvenile court jurisdiction who have penetrated deeply into the justice system. Most (88%, or 22) of this sample experienced court ordered placement in a residential program. The remaining girls in the sample also had high involvement with the justice system as they were referred to intensive probation, attended a court run school, or were in foster care.

The sample recruitment involved a census of girls who had lived in a county-based group home, the most commonly used program for residential placement in the county, and a sample of girls who had not been placed in the group home but who exhibited a substantial juvenile court involvement history. Seventeen of the participants were residents of the group home, with five of those girls living in at least one additional residential facility. The remaining ten girls, recruited with the assistance of court personnel, were residents of other residential programming (5), recipients of intensive counseling and probation services (3), in foster care (1), or were in a court-run school providing extensive services (1). Girls' identified and consented to contact with 23 professionals, of whom 21 agreed to participate. Since this is a purposive sample, findings cannot be generalized to other girls in the justice system.

ANALYSIS AND QUALITATIVE DATA

The analysis used McAdam's (1993) conceptualization of imagoes to allow personality characteristics to be consolidated into categories. For example, an imago might be "lover," which would include individuals who center their lives around loving others and being loved despite circumstances; emotional and physical standards are compromised for the sake of maintaining that love, at times causing depletion of self worth (McAdams, 1993). These imagoes (categories) seemed to be appropriate for describing someone with a relatively complete and consistent understanding of self. Although the study participants are at the end of adolescence, initial review of the data suggested that they were still developing an identity, so stable imagoes were not revealed by the data. Therefore, facets of each girl's prior and current perception of self (e.g., independent, caring, outgoing) were coded independently. The interview schedule encourages each girl to identify which characteristics she liked the most about herself when considering her

personal characteristics or personality characteristics. Furthermore, girls were asked to identify anything about themselves they would like to change. If girls described themselves at other points of the interview, that content also was coded. Despite reoccurring themes (e.g., happy, positive) each description of identity remained categorically independent. Anger, as well as all other emotionally driven characteristics, were coded as a description of the participants personality only when addressed as present on a regular basis (not as an episodic emotion). Emotional responses triggered by stressful situations were not coded unless girls adopted the emotion as a part of their identity over time. Intercoder reliability was established by comparing the percentage agreement from the independent coding of five cases by two individuals. High coding reliability was achieved (82% agreement) and the remaining cases where coded independently by one coder.

Although data analysis did not identify well-developed imagoes for the girls, analysis of girls' view of the roles that applied to them provided additional information on their personality characteristics. Data on roles are from a section of the interview in which girls were asked to select the roles that applied to them from a list of possible roles. Some of the roles listed include: mother, daughter, neighbor, recovering addict, victim, and leader. In total, 21 social roles were identified during the interview. Girls were also presented with the opportunity to add roles that were not listed. This increased the number of social roles identified to 30. After significant social roles that the girls identified most closely with on a regular basis were selected, the interviewer asked the girls to rate the importance of each of the roles. Finally, girls were asked to discuss roles that had changed the most over time. This portion of the interview provides a measure of role identification, or imago, as well as descriptions of the way in which the participant believes behavior within a role has changed over time. The frequency of role selection and the mean score

indicating the importance of the role were examined to identify roles that are the most important for the sample of girls.

Data addressing the attainability of desired future self were extracted from a final section of the interview encouraging the participants to describe themselves and where they believe they would be 5 and 10 years from the time of the interview. Identification of the respondent's perception of future self is prompted by her response to the description of her dreams for the future and whether or not she believed her future identity is realistic and attainable. Responses were coded as attainable if the respondent provided: 1) a direct confirmatory statement or 2) an indirect statement implying ability to attain possible self (e.g. I believe I can reach my goals). Responses were coded as unattainable if the respondent's answer contradicted previously stated possible self. Responses were coded as unclear if the girl indicated that her ability to attain her possible self was unknown. It is expected that girls with greater academic success, in later stages of adolescence, and who have a functional family will more often report a future self which is perceived to be attainable. In summary, facets of identity were coded for the following: retrospective description of prior self; description of current self, ideal future self, and actual anticipated future self. Additionally, girls identified reasons for differences in ideal future self and their future self they believed they were likely to attain.

Functional or dysfunctional family dynamics were coded previously by the principal investigator for the initial data collection. Information from the participant, and for some girls, from professionals nominated by the girl, provided details throughout the transcripts regarding family dynamics. Data relevant to family dynamics were used to categorize families as fine, troubled, and empty. "Fine" families refer to cases in which minimal family dysfunction is

identified. “Troubled” families refer to cases in which some parental support is provided although all needs are not met. For example, the director of the residential placement facility where Girl 4 was housed described her family dynamics as follows:

> "I know that she lived with her mom in the beginning, but she really had a lot of conflict with her mom so she moved in with her dad. Her dad umm…really tried to take the reins and get control of Girl 4 but by that time she was already into drugs and doing other things so he really didn’t have much control either so I know she was kind of like bouncing between parents. They would just kind of get tired of her couldn’t take anymore so they would rotate. That’s how I understand it. I think that she would feel like wow it is that easy to give me up. I think that that greatly influenced her self-esteem - her perspective of herself worth."

The final category, “empty families,” refers to families in which parents do not provide adequate financial or emotional support for their daughter. Additionally, supervision of the respondent’s activities is inadequate. For example, Girl 5 shared her opinion of her father’s parenting style:

> "Hmm. Yeah, my dad- he’s really like, there wasn’t no rules, it was just… Probably if he [her dad] would have been a little bit more stricter I probably would have stopped doing what I was doing. My mom, she’s always been how she is, but she was an alcoholic back then, too, so it was a lot of stuff going on. My dad- I didn’t like his girlfriend, my mom was an alcoholic, and I was skipping school, it was just a lot, you know, I was pregnant; it was just a lot going on. If I probably had someone there every

day to just be like “this is how it’s supposed to be, you need to do this” I probably would have been a lot different. "

Since functional or dysfunctional family dynamics were coded previously by the principal investigator, to establish coding reliability, 10 cases were recoded for family dynamics. The initial codes were considered valid, because intercoder reliability was high (100% agreement). Similarly, types and presence of childhood adversities had been previously coded by the principal investigator of the initial study. Again, the reliability of the provided codes were verified by recoding 10 cases and checking intercoder agreement (96.5% agreement).

Missing Data

Every question was not answered by all respondents. Of the 27 girls, 88.9% (24) provided a response to the question addressing current and prior self perceptions. The three participants who failed to provide any descriptions of self stated that they were unsure of positive or negative characteristics that would accurately describe them. Of the three participants who did not respond, in a different portion of the interview, one provided a description of her character which was included in the analysis. All but one of the participants (26 of the 27 girls, 96.2%) provided a response to the question about their perceived attainability of future self.

Analysis

An additional analysis was ran to examine the relationships between independent descriptions of self provided by girls in the sample. The prevalence of the combination of negative prior and positive current self descriptions was identified. Further discussion was

provided for prior negative and positive current self combinations which represented 11 or more girls' perception of self.

Lastly, queries were ran to examine the connections between girls perceived attainability of future self and several variables. The first of this combination type involved the connection between girls' future self projections and academic success. In this, the responses of attainability and current academic standing of the participant (eg. high school, GED program) were utilized to identify trends in perceptions. Discrepancies in current academic standing and projected future self attainability, which were largely academic, led to an additional examination of the connection between thematic coherency of descriptions of future self and perceived future self attainability. Perceived attainability of future self was also examined in relation to employment and self-reported delinquency. The final relationship examined involved the connection between girls perceived attainability of future self and various adversity types.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

The sample of 27 participants includes girls with histories of delinquent behaviors leading to residential placement and/or intensive supervision. They range in age from 17 to 19, with 17 year olds making up slightly more than half of the sample. Racial diversity was represented by 51.9% (14) white participants, 18.5% (5) black participants, 22.2% (6) multiracial, 3.7% (1) Asian participant, and 3.7% (1) Hispanic participant (Table 2). Less than half (40.7%) of the participants were mothers. More than half of the sample, 51.9% (14) were no longer pursuing an education and had dropped out of school. Only a small portion (14.8%) of the sample reported current employment.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Demographic Variables	M	SD	N	%
Age (years)				
17			14	51.9
18			11	40.7
19			2	7.4
	17.6	0.0938	27	
Racial Composition				
Black			5	18.5
White			14	51.9
Hispanic			1	3.7
Multiracial			6	22.2
Asian			1	3.7
Residential Placement			22	88.0
Number of Children				
0			16	59.3
1			9	33.3
2			2	7.4

Table 2 (cont'd)				
Employment Status				
Unemployed			23	
Employed			4	85.2
Education				14.8
HS Dropout			14	
Attending high school			8	51.9
In college			2	29.6
Attending GED progr.			2	7.4
HS/GED Graduate			1	7.4

DESCRIPTIONS OF SELF

The first research question (1a) concerns the way in which girls who have exited the juvenile justice system view themselves. Data used to answer this question are drawn from unprompted descriptions of self provided throughout the interview, as well as responses to the question directly addressing perceptions of current self. Girls self perceptions were coded into 82 different themes. As shown in Table 3, the most common positive descriptions of identity were captured by the themes, mature (55.6%), positive (33.3%) caring/kind (29.6%), and independent (29.6). The most commonly identified negative descriptions of current self included depressed (37.0%), insecure (22.2%), reclusive (22.2%), and angry (18.5%). In general, participants were more positive than negative when describing their current selves, with 59 of the 82 characteristics being positive.

Table 3: Most Commonly used Descriptions of Current Self

Description of Current Self	N Total-27	%
Positive		
Mature	15	55.6
Positive	9	33.3
Caring/Kind	8	29.6
Funny/Fun	8	29.6
Self Accepting	6	22.2
Open	6	22.2
Nice	6	22.2
Negative		
Depressed	10	37.0
Insecure	6	22.2
Reclusive	6	22.2
Angry	5	18.5

Positive Current Self

In examining positive descriptions of self, maturity was identified by the sample most often (15 or 55.6%). Girls' perceptions of maturing, since initially being introduced to the juvenile justice system, were discussed in the context of family, friends, delinquency, and academics. Typically, girls expressed new found value in the stability of familial relationships. Additionally, girls explained that attempts to find a job exposed the need for a high school diploma and higher education, and understanding the need for education made them more mature. Girls also emphasized the impact of getting pregnant on their maturity level. They clearly identified changes in relationships with the father of their child as affecting their maturity. Specifically, in witnessing the father's betrayal and abandonment their parents had warned them about, girls attempted to be more responsible and independent. In general, various

types of adversity encouraged girls to mature and attempt to attain greater control over their lives.

For example, some girls attributed their maturity to the dysfunction in their household. Girl 1 stated, “Yeah, because I learned from her mistakes. I learned from my own, but I really learned from hers [referring to her mother], growing up around all of that, I don’t want it. I do not want to live like this.” She continued with sentiments shared by several other girls in the study. “I’ve always been independent, I’ve always wanted to do the stuff on my own, I’ve been paying for myself, making my own doctor appointments, doing everything myself since I was about 11 years old. It started before that, but I still had my grandpa there to help me too. Since I was about 11, I’ve been doing everything on my own. I’ve always been dependent on myself.” Like Girl 1, many felt they had to grow up too fast and were required to take care of themselves at an early age.

Similar to maturity, other desirable characteristic girls believed they possessed were commonly attached to negative experiences from their pasts. One-third of the participants described their current self as “positive.” All of these 9 girls associated being more positive, or having a positive outlook on life, with prior personality characteristics or behaviors that were less desirable. Girl 1 explains:

> I can’t do it, I can’t keep putting my emotions forth and getting stomped on because it’s causing me nothing but hurt. So I realize everything that’s causing me hurt, not just with family, but everything that’s causing me hurt and I fixed it. I’m no longer allowing it. I won’t allow negative things in my life. I just stay positive about everything, you know, there’s always a brighter day…

Girl 20 was also passionate about adopting a positive way of thinking as part of her identity:

> I find the positives in almost anything. Everything happens for a reason, so you can't think negatively about anything. Bad things are going to happen to everyone. The difference between someone that finds something negative and someone that finds positive is that it doesn't matter that there's negative happening in both things. That person that thinks positively will think that that happened for a reason. You know? The negative person will say, "Well, this sucks because someone's out to get me." No, that's a life lesson that's going to teach you to grow. It's what you've got to accept. You've got to accept the negative for a positive. I don't know if that makes any sense at all, but you learn from it."

The tone changed when girls began to describe the remaining characteristics. Self perceptions transitioned from positive characteristics driven by negative experiences to characteristics which stood relatively independent of negativity. Descriptions of being caring/kind or fun/funny were both identified by roughly 30% of the sample. Being nice, self accepting, and open were reported by slighter fewer participants, with 22.2% of girls identifying each as a positive current description of self. These characteristics were intertwined in girls' descriptions. For example when asked to identify what she liked about herself, Girl 6 included a variety of characteristics including being fun, smart, and courteous.

> I'm pretty. I'm smart. I'm street smart and book smart, so I know when to use it. I'm very---I can be very respectful, or I can be very disrespectful at the same time. I'm courteous to other people's feelings, if I know you and if I like you. That's kind of rude. [laughs]. Umm. I'm actually a fun person to be around, as long as you don't cross the line with me. I'll give people chances until they prove me not to give him the chance. So I won't come off as a bitch. I mean, some females I come off as a bitch to right off top,

> cause right when I see them I just get this vibe, like "uh-uh. I don't like her. She thinks she's a hoe. No, or she's a bitch. No, we gon fight, something" Other than that, I don't know. I like everything about myself. [laughs]. I'm really conceited.

Similarly, Girl 20 reported a variety of self perceptions which included being humorous accepting, and respectful. When asked to identify characteristics she liked about herself she stated,

> My humor, really. How I can make anyone laugh at a sad moment. I like my caring attitude, like I'm really accepting towards anybody. It doesn't matter what color you are, what your physical ailments are, whether you're preppy, whether you're gothic, whatever. It doesn't matter. I'm accepting of you. As long as you're a decent person, if you need help I'm there for you. If you've done some things that have hurt me, than I'm not going to be nice to you. Like, I'll be respectful but I won't like you. I'm very accepting of a lot of people."

Negative Current Self

Negative identifiers of self were less prominent in descriptions of current self, however more than one-thirds of the girls identified themselves as depressed. Girls attributed depression to undesirable living arrangements, legal trouble, difficulties adjusting to being a parent, and problems with family members. Commonly girls reported that they had stopped taking their prescribed medications for depression due to the side effects. Girl 11 talked about depression when she discussed her home situation,

> Yeah, I've always been depressed. I've always—I was on depression pills, but I wouldn't take them. I'd have to say the most time—There was still times when I was with Joe that I would call my mom and just be like, 'I'm so depressed' for no reason. But, honestly, the time that I lived with Joe [her boyfriend], that's the most time I wasn't depressed. When I lived at home, I was so depressed, and that's why I tried killing myself and everything like that.

Second to depression, girls struggled to cope with insecurities. When asked about characteristics they view as less favorable, six girls (22.2%) identified insecurities related to their appearances or abilities. Girl 20 shared a sense of insecurity resulting from peers making fun of her appearance,

> It's not as bad anymore, but people still poke fun of the way I look. You know? I can't help the things that are not in my control. I can't help my skin. I can't help my weight. I mean, to a certain extent I can, but you don't know if there's something medically wrong with me, so why are you making fun of me? So, I mean, not as bad as I used to, but people still stay stuff every once in awhile.

Reclusiveness, indicated by attempts to isolate oneself, was the third most commonly identified negative characteristic. Girls attributed their reclusiveness to no longer attending school, taking care of their children, or attempting to avoid delinquent peers. Girl 17 explained how she struggled to avoid maintaining delinquent peer relationships:

> G: I mean I'm not going to lie, yeah. You can't not hang out with…well you cannot hang out with somebody because of what they do but I guess you surround yourself with people who are like you. I get in trouble for fighting so of course the people I hang out

with fight. All the guys I know have something to do with drugs, so that's just what it is. And I don't like that, I really do try to surround myself by better people but I go to a probation school, I live on the south side, there's really nothing here for me to better myself at all.

Q: Did hanging out with those people, does it ever negatively affect you?

G: Yeah, and it's hard trying to be the bigger person and trying to make them realize what you realize because you know because you got locked up so many times for this, so that's why I really just try to stay to myself as much as possible. It is either by myself or with my boyfriend.

Finally, anger was the fifth most common negative descriptor of current self. Girl 6 describes her anger and frustration towards her parents and the juvenile justice system.

They thought I needed anger management. They thought I needed counseling. They thought I needed a whole bunch of stuff, a whole bunch of everything. I needed to be in school. I needed to be in counseling. I needed to tell my parents what I was holding against them. I needed to get a better self-esteem, which I always had good self-esteem. I just gave up caring, just because every time I did anything I'd get locked up for it. You're locked up; you're locked up; you're locked up. Okay, two years of my life gone because they thought everything would work. And look how I turned out---17 with 2 kids, still not in school. I'm 5 credits away, but I'm still not in school. I'm still as angry as I was, I'm just a lot angrier now. And I still got high self-esteem, but everything that they said, "oh, this will work. This will work. This will work. This will work." No, it won't work. It's not what I need. They didn't ask me what I needed. "What do you

need?" Why won't they ask, "What do you need? What do you think would help you? What can we do to work with you? Or, let's come to an understanding. We'll do this and this." And, you know, I can throw out options that I want to do.

Examination of current perceptions of self suggests girls were more positive than negative. Maturity was heavily represented among the sample. Emphasis was placed on prosocial behaviors affiliated with friendship, family interactions, and parenthood. Additionally, roughly one-third of girls adopted a "positive" outlook on life. Slightly less than one-half stated they were caring or fun/funny. Negative perceptions of self were described as a characteristic identity which was depressive, reclusive, and angry. This suggests girls' perceptions of current self were more positive than negative.

COMPARISON OF PRIOR AND CURRENT SELF DESCRITIONS

The second portion of the first research question (1b) focuses on how girls' perception of self changes overtime. This question is addressed through two analyses: 1) a comparison of girls' description of prior and current self and 2) an examination of girls' descriptions of the way the significant roles they felt applied to them changed over time. The previous section examined the way girls viewed themselves as they were exiting the justice system. This section examines girls' perceptions of what they were like at an earlier time, while involved in the justice system, and compares the description of past and current selves. The coding of negative and positive descriptions of prior self revealed a total of 70 characteristic identifiers, 38 (or 54%) of which were positive.

Positive Prior Self

Positive descriptions of prior self were much less prevalent than positive descriptions of current self. The five most commonly identified characteristics include possessing survival characteristics (18.5%), self-advocating (11.1%), self-accepting (11.1%), independent (11.1%), and outgoing (4.7 %). Table 3 shows the frequencies of each characteristic. These frequencies, which are much lower than those presented for positive current self, range from 4.7 to 18.5 percent of girls selecting each characteristic. Girls described survival characteristics as their means to obtain food, shelter, or other support through unconventional channels to survive. Although the activities are largely negative and dangerous, girls identify their ability to survive the environment as a strength.

Table 4: Most Commonly Identified Descriptions of Prior Self

Description of Prior Self	N	%
Positive		
Survival Charact.	5	18.5
Self-advocating	3	11.1
Self-accepting	3	11.1
Independent	3	11.1
Outgoing	2	4.7
Negative		
Rebellious/Combative	17	63.0
Fighter	17	63.0
“Runner”/Runaway	16	59.3
Depressed	14	51.9
Poor Attitude	8	29.6
Bad	7	25.9

Girl 8 shared how she avoided detection while on the run; she survived in what she described as a disgusting apartment where illegal activities occurred,

> I was not all that comfortable with it but at that point in time I was like ran away and what not so I just pretty much didn't say anything about what everybody was doing because I was living in their house so, but yeah I won't say I was comfortable with it I was always had my guard up I was always nervous, I was like oh my God I'm going to see my P.O. or God the cops are going to show up, so and so is going to happen. And you know actually cops did show up for things.

Girl 1's survival characteristics were related to her ability to make money in order to buy clothes, food, and other necessities. She shared her use of manipulations as a tool for survival,

> I started doing little things to make money here and there to get my own, to tell you the truth. I used to play air hockey with my best friend's uncle. He's a paranoid schizophrenic and every time he sees me, he says let's go play air hockey, and I started betting him, I started betting him like 20 bucks says I can beat you three times, and that's how I, he'd pay. I'd always beat him. I kind of took advantage, but hey, you got to do what you got to do if you need something. So I beat him in air hockey constantly, and make money here and there.

Girl 3, who was also a runaway at the time, spoke of her ability to "get up and go" and stay safe in dangerous neighborhoods.

> It was a bad neighborhood, like horrible. I mean, I went to smoke a cigarette outside in the front yard and there'd be crack heads asking me "do you have..." and I'd be like "no,

> I do not have anything you want" you now, and just like so I was very cautious and stuff, and it was fine as long as you didn't go wandering around at night or something, and I didn't make any friends or anything I kept to myself cause you know when you're running away you don't really want to draw attention to yourself. But that's why, because I was ready to leave if the police came, I was ready to leave if anybody else came, I was ready to, you know what I mean, and I guess for a little while it was just side effects of doing it for so many months.

Girls spoke proudly of the characteristic adaptations they had mastered to protect themselves or survive during the peak of their delinquency. Other girls took more traditional routes. Girls who were self-advocating highlighted their ability to acquire resources or negotiated the terms of their probation to increase their comfort level. For example, Girl 3 wrote a letter to the judge after learning she would be placed out of state; she agreed to stop absconding, which led to her being sent to a local residential placement facility. She shared the details of her experience,

> I heard that they wanted to send me to boot camp in Iowa until I was 18 and I didn't want to go there because I heard you know, there were girls with violent crimes that went there for a long time. And I was like I don't want to go, I would have had to change in order to survive in that kind of environment. That's really harsh. I wrote a letter, I heard about [a local group home] and I wrote a letter to the judge saying you know, let me go here, I promise I'll do what I'm supposed to do. And I was a high flight risk which means I had already broken off my tether which means I was liable to run away again. And I wasn't planning on it or anything. So I wrote a letter and they let me go to [a local group home].

> I never dropped a level which means I didn't really got in trouble enough to go up and then down again. I did get in trouble twice for swearing, but that's because I had to deal with some of those girls and they were driving me insane. But other than that, I kept my levels up. I went to [the group home] for 6 months. A month before I turned 17 I was put into a group home where you live and work and stuff. You live there, you have curfew. I was on probation but it wasn't through the court system.

Similar to self-advocating, three girls described their positive prior self as self-accepting or independent. Descriptions of an independent prior self were commonly affiliated with survival traits and the lack of parental support. Girl 3 explains how her time alone allowed her to evaluate herself and become more self-accepting,

> I didn't even realize I wasn't doing that until I was by myself and you really have to, it's really nice to be able to take a break from life because that's basically what I did, I completely changed my surroundings and I was basically by myself for 4 months which I mean, was kind of boring, but it was really good for me, like I figured out who I was compared to who I was trying to be, I guess, which I didn't even know I was doing. So it was really interesting cause I completely evaluated why I was acting the way I was acting, what I was doing, why I was doing it, and everything, and I figured me out, which is kind of cool, so, cause not everybody gets to do that.

These examples provide some insight into the importance of survival characteristics, self-advocacy, self-acceptance, and independence as characteristic identifiers of current self among the sample. The following section examines girls' perceptions of negative prior self.

Negative Prior Self

Unlike positive prior self, negative characteristics of prior self were consolidated into fewer categories and were representative of a larger percentage of the sample. Themes revealed by the participants are those that are commonly associated with delinquent girls. More than half (63.0%) of the sample described themselves as previously rebellious/combative or as fighters (Table 4). More than half identified themselves as "runners" (59.3%) or depressed (51.9%). Themes of having a poor attitude (29.6%) or being bad (25.9%) were also common characteristics of prior self which were selected by girls.

Combative and rebellious behaviors were coded when descriptions of such behavior was discussed by girls or was self identified. In total 17 girls fit the schema. The rebellious and combative behaviors placed girls in tough situations. As Girl 13 stated, " I was really out of control. I was abusive, verbally, physically, mentally, all above. I didn't care; I was a wild teen." Girl 15 provides an especially illustrative example of girls who identify as previously rebellious or combative:

> Definitely a little rebel, just trying to act like a tough girl. You know? Just pretending like none of this is getting to me. That was definitely how I first came in. I think I started to soften up and realize that I'm not going to get help unless I actually let these people help me. But I think that was all after the juvenile system. I actually think it was more so with this counselor, recently. And self realizing that I can't do this by myself. But, for the courts, I don't know. Maybe it was the type of person I was at the time, but I don't think they helped, for the most part.

Fighting was equally prominent in the sample, particularly with girls who identified themselves as combative. Fighting occurred in school, community, family, and romantic settings. A variety of emotions surrounded fighting including pride, fear, and confusion regarding the cause of physical altercations. Girl 1 shared her experience of fighting as a means to gaining status:

> I don't know. You know how people are. When kids hit middle school, they feel like they have to prove themselves, or get to this certain level where nobody will mess with them. I mean I grew up with it. I have an older brother and an older sister, and all we ever used to do is fight. To this day we fight. I never really needed to put myself in a place, because I'm not bragging or nothing, but I know how to fight, because I grew up getting my ass beat. Excuse my language. It was just certain people that I didn't like, or something that they did. It was really stupid and immature. It was really stupid and immature, but it was just like, whatever.

However, some girls were less comfortable with their experiences of fighting. Girl 23 was trying to help a classmate get her purse back from a boy. In the process of grabbing the student's purse, the strap broke. The classmate got angry and pushed Girl 23 while standing in line to leave class. She states "I pushed her back and it's the first fight I've ever been in and she did this! I was like, what?!" Whether fighting to gain status or defend oneself, fighting and rebelliousness were expressed as occurring concurrently among girls. It is clear that it occurred regularly in most of the girls' schools and communities. Fighting was commonly discussed as a norm in the lives of girls.

"Runner", as a description of a negative prior self, was selected slightly less than the most common identifiers, with 16 girls in the sample selecting the characteristic. The girls' identities as "runners" extended beyond absconding from a placement facility or running away from home. Although they were physically fleeing from a location many girls made a connection between running and their inability to communicate or manage situations effectively. This in turn led them to "run" emotionally and physically. However, others were simply unhappy with their living arrangements, believed they fared better alone, or feared the consequences of their drug use or delinquent behavior if they remained at home.

Depression was the fourth most common identifier of prior self. Causes for depression varied for the sample. Some girls, like Girl 4, struggled to cope with drug use, "I was depressed when I was younger and that probably had a lot to do with the drug use. I was hiding it from everybody and I didn't want anybody to know that I was smoking and I was doing coke so it just made me depressed. Just hiding away." Other girls struggled with parenting. For example, Girl 13 states, "After I had my baby, after I had Trinity I was really depressed and they had diagnosed my with anti-depressants and so they had prescribed me Lexapro and now they are saying I might have bi-polar." Girl 6 shared a traumatic experience, which triggered her depression, when her father took her daughter.

> My dad kidnapped her, took her to Grand Rapids. And then PS [Protective Services] took her, and they said I couldn't have her back because he lied and said that I was popping pills, I was suicidal, and I was all this other crazy shit. It wasn't true, but that's what he said. And that's why my PS worker said, just told my mom today, that I get my kids back. Well, I can have my daughter back, but my son, she's not taking away from

me cause she has nothing on me to do it. Cause I've been dropping for her clean—or, yeah, I've been dropping clean for her. I've been blowing for her, and they did a blood test to see how far back I smoked and drank and everything, and I was clean. It's passed, a long time. I don't know how long it was, but she said I'm clean, and I get them back. I get her, my daughter, back in a couple of days.

Descriptions of negative prior self were more commonly reported than positive characteristics. Additionally, more comprehensive themes allowed for description of negative prior self to be more representative of girls self perceptions as a sample. Rebelliousness/combativeness, fighting, running away, and being depressed all provide a description of girls which would be anticipated for a delinquent sample of girls during the peak of their delinquency.

Prior Self vs. Current Self

This section compares positive and negative characteristics for prior and current self. Table 5 displays a comparison between characteristics most commonly identified for prior and current self. There is a clear shift in description of self from mostly negative to mostly positive within the sample. It is important to note girls were much more verbal about their current self, reporting 239 descriptions, compared to 149 responses to questions regarding their prior self. In comparison, not only did girls identify fewer positive characteristics of prior self, but positive characteristics were more commonly associated with functions of perseverance rather than characteristics of a pleasant person. For example, when describing their positive prior self, girls reported functions of perseverance such as: 1) having the ability to find meals or make money in unconventional ways (survival characteristics, 18.5%), 2) advocating for themselves to improve

their probationary programming (self-advocating, 11.1%), 3) accepting who they were as a person or the problems they had faced (11.1%), and 4) having the ability to meet their basic needs without adequate support from a parent (independent, 11.1%). In contrast, when describing their positive current selves, girls identified characteristics affiliated with being a pleasant or kind person. For example, with the exception of maturity, the remaining top 5 characteristics reported include being positive, funny, nice, and open. This illustrates the girls' shift from seeing themselves as having characteristics needed to overcome the negative circumstances they encountered during their involvement in the juvenile justice system to being mature and positive, and having a likeable personality.

Table 5: Comparison of Positive and Negative Descriptions of Current and Prior Self

Description of Self	N (Prior)	%	N (Current)	%
Positive				
Fun/Funny	2	7.4	8	29.6
Independent	3	11.1	5	18.5
Mature	2	7.4	15	55.6
Nice	0	0.0	6	22.2
Open	0	0.0	6	22.2
Outgoing	2	7.4	5	18.5
Positive	0	0.0	9	33.3
Self-accepting	3	11.1	6	22.2
Self-advocating	3	11.1	3	11.1
Survival Charact.	5	18.5	2	7.4
Negative				
Angry	5	18.5	5	18.5
Bad	7	25.9	0	0.0
Depressed	14	51.9	10	37.0
Fighter	17	63.0	3	11.1
Insecure	5	18.5	6	22.2
Poor Attitude	8	29.6	0	0.0
RebelliousCombative	17	63.0	2	7.4

Table 5 (Cont'd)				
Reclusive	4	14.8	6	22.2
"Runner"/Runaway	16	59.3	0	0.0

Simultaneous examination of the negative descriptions of prior and current self revealed the nature of positive changes in self perceptions. For example, 17 (63.0%) girls identified their prior self as a fighter, or someone who had been in a physical altercation, however only 3 (11.1%) participants described themselves as a "fighter" when they described their current identity. Similarly, rebellious or combative personality characteristics were reported and/or exhibited by 17 (63.%) girls in describing their prior self but only identified in 2 (7.4) girls' descriptions of their current identity. Notably, descriptions of a prior self as being bad (7), having a poor attitude (8), and running away (16), all eluded selection as a current self characteristic for the sample. However, some negative characteristics increased in representation for two girls. Descriptions of an insecure self slightly increased for current self perception by one participant. Reclusiveness increased by two participants. Thus, there were exceptions to the general trend for girls to see themselves as having less negative and more positive characteristics over time.

There were also interesting findings about characteristics identified less often by participants. For example, descriptions of anger, as an identity characteristic, were identified by five girls, for both prior and current self. There was only a one case overlap in participants who selected "anger" meaning there were a total of 9 girls who identified anger as being representative of their prior or current self. Anger as a description of current self was related to hardships and adversity. Anger led girls to create negative self perceptions. For example, Girl 11 stated,

> I guess I sort of have a little anger problem, too. I won't kill someone or hurt—I might get mad. Everyone will get mad and want to punch someone in the face or something. I don't know why, but little stuff just frustrates me. I just wish that I wasn't like that because I didn't used to be like this. It's just everything going on. There's too much crap in my freaking head. It's just hard to deal with it all. That's why, when people say stuff—That's another reason I don't want to go to school. If people say stuff, and I know it's not true, it makes me so mad that I don't even know what I'll do! I'll tell them to frick off and do what else I have to do. I've just been through so much. I know so much. That's what I'm saying. Like, I know too much for my age. For everything I've gone through, I should be at least frickin 30.

Other lasting events contributing to the girls anger included a mother's failure to protect her daughter from a live-in boyfriends sexually assaulting her, having several children at a young age and failing to complete high school, and one girl's family's lack of emotional support which, according to the girl, causes her to be overbearing and clingy in romantic relationships. Furthermore, girls' adoption of the characteristic at differing stages may present some understanding of the way in which events during certain developmental periods impact identity.

Negative Prior and Positive and Current Characteristic Combinations

In addition to examination of the frequency of girls selecting a characteristic, the frequencies of characteristic combinations were examined. Table 6 displays the connection between the most commonly used descriptions of negative prior self and the most commonly used descriptions of positive current self. The percentages are calculated with the denominator of 27, the total number of girls in the study. Current descriptions of maturity and positivity appear

to be highly connected with negative identifiers of prior self. For example, as shown previously in Table 5, 15 girls described their current self as mature and 17 described their prior self as rebellious or combative. Of the 17 girls, 11 identified with both descriptions. These numbers were identical for the connection between a mature current self and a prior self who was a fighter. Several of these combinations occur because girls identify their positive current selves as a result of no longer engaging in a negative behavior. For example, Girl 7 first speaks about her rebellious and assaultive prior self, “I got into a fight with this girl, and I was supposed to go to the office. Instead of me going to the office, I went to the cafeteria and got into another fight. And the security guard told me to stop, which I didn’t listen. And then, after that, he put his hands on me, and me, and I punched him in the face.”

Table 6: Frequency and Number of Combinations of Prior Negative and Current Positive Self Characteristics

	Positive Current Self						
Negative Prior Self	Caring Kind	Funny	Mature	Nice	Open	Positive	Self-Accepting
Bad	7.4% (2)	7.4% (2)	18.5% (5)	7.4% (2)	7.4% (2)	11.1% (3)	3.7% (1)
Depressed	14.8% (4)	11.1% (3)	33.3% (9)	11.1% (3)	18.5% (5)	22.2% (6)	14.8% (4)
Fighter	18.5% (5)	11.1% (3)	40.7% (11)	11.1% (3)	18.5% (5)	25.9% (7)	18.5% (5)
Poor Attitude	11.1% (3)	11.1% (3)	22.2% (6)	11.1% (3)	11.1% (3)	3.7% (1)	14.8% (4)
Rebellious/combative	18.5% (5)	14.8% (4)	40.7% (11)	14.8% (4)	11.1% (3)	29.6% (8)	14.8% (4)
Runaway	18.5% (5)	3.7% (1)	33.3% (9)	11.1% (3)	14.8% (4)	22.2% (6)	14.8% (4)

Later in the interview she described herself as more mature. She states, “Like, to know that I have to stop here, and that now that I’m older I can’t be doing all of the crazy things that I did, like throwing stuff, stealing out of stores. I’m older now, and if I do those things, I’ll go to jail or go to prison for life if I do something like that. Hit somebody or fight somebody, I could go to jail for it.” Girl 7’s account of her maturity is representative of the subset of the sample which selected combinations of mature or positive current selves and fighting, rebellious/combative, or absconding prior selves. An overarching theme of gaining a greater understanding of consequences which would be enforced if delinquent and a desire to become self-sufficient motivated the girls to improve their negative behaviors by means of maturity and positive perspectives.

ATTAINABILITY OF POSITIVE FUTURE SELF

The second research question focuses on whether girls who have been in the juvenile justice system perceive their future/positive possible self as attainable. Of the 27 participants, 26 provided responses reflecting the attainability of future self. Participants were initially asked who they would like to be in 5 and 10 years. They were then asked to address whether or not their future self was realistic and attainable. The majority of the responding sample (65.4% or 17) believed their future self was attainable, a much smaller percentage (11.5% or 3) believed their future self was unattainable, and (23.1% or 6) were unsure of the attainability of their future self. Desirable future selves were most commonly associated with college, stable employment, companionship, motherhood, and overall independence.

Most girls believed these goals were attainable. When describing her desire to become a journalist Girl 20 states, “Most definitely, yeah. I have plans. I have goals. If I continue to do the same thing I’m doing with school, then I will accomplish anything I want to. I’ll be anything

I want to be." However, other girls were less optimistic about their futures. Responses coded as unattainable most commonly reflected feelings of depleted self confidence and the depiction of a future self that was negative by the participants' standards. For example, Girl 8 initially described her ideal future self as someone who was happy, healthy, lived comfortably, received a strong education, and was a famous singer. As the questions progressed she expressed less confidence in her ability to attain her desired future self. When asked who she thought she would be in 5 years, Girl 8 stated "… I can't be sincere and say I think that's going to happen…like I said I have a lot of doubts but I won't get into that. I just see myself at an okay point." Then when asked where she would be in 10 years, she only addressed her hopes of being married and becoming a mother. Finally, when asked who she believed she would realistically be in the future, she stated:

> "Hmm, well I'm not really big on school so I'm probably just going to try to hurry through to get that all done, I won't even lie. Probably still struggling, I know I'll be struggling a lot probably my whole life I'll be struggling. I see myself at least okay and on my own, but still not doing that great but at least okay. I'll be able to live, I won't be struggling really bad but I just think…the one thing I didn't really want to talk about with myself is kind of just controlling that and like not letting it take over me, some of my feelings, just emotions but I think I'll be okay…hopefully, God willing.

Ultimately, Girl 8 significantly reduced her expectations for a desired future self when comparing who she would like to become to who she believed she was likely to become. Similarly, other respondents who believed their future selves were unattainable expressed disappointment with their current situation, which reduced their perceptions of an attainable

positive future self. These participants represent a less desirable self perception but provide clear consideration of thematic coherence, representative of a complete narrative identity. In other words, their negative self perceptions were derived from an understanding of their environment and the overwhelming obstacles they would have to overcome to become successful. Responses coded as unsure commonly involved direct statements of uncertainty regarding attainability of future self.

Each girl had a different vision of who she would like to be in the future. Some aspired to pursue higher education while others wanted to be a great mother to their children. For example, Respondent 9 had an ideal or possible self which most people would perceived to be more difficult to attain than Respondent 8. Despite the rarity of becoming a billionaire, respondent 9 reported an attainable future self, but Respondent 8 did not feel becoming self-sufficient was realistic. Respondent 9 said, "I'll be a billionaire. We're gonna probably be in the Bahamas somewhere or in Cancun, Mexico or in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, or something. Somewhere." Respondent 8 had less extravagant aspirations, but did not feel she could attain them. She explained, "My dream is to be a singer. Honestly at this point in time, the way things are going for me, I'm not really doing the greatest, but I can see myself just, I won't say living comfortably, but getting to that...transitioning to that point where I'm starting to get my own place…" These two examples illustrate differing aspirations and perceptions of attainability. Additionally, they raise further interest in understanding the conditions which promote or impede thematic coherency in projected identities.

Table 7 displays the differing aspirations of the girls in the study. More than half of the girls identified college, employment, or starting as family as important components of their positive future self. Interestingly, nearly all of the participants who did not have children

identified starting a family as a part of their desired future self. Slightly less than half identified independence (e.g. renting an apartment or possessing the ability to pay bills without assistance) as an important component of their future self. Generally girls' held traditional aspirations such as marriage, motherhood, and employment when considering who they would like to be in 5 and 10 years.

Table 7: Frequency of Future Self Descriptions

Future Self Quality	N	%
Employed	18	66.7
Higher Education	17	63.0
Married with Children	16	59.3
Independent	13	48.1
Professional Career	11	40.7
Move Away	10	37.0
Happy	5	18.5
Entrepreneur	4	14.8
Good Mother	3	11.1
Rich/Famous	2	7.4

N=26

In examining girls' perceived attainability of future self, a small portion (11.5%) of the participants perceived their future self to be unattainable. The majority of the sample (65.4%) was optimistic about their ability to attain their desired future self. Slightly less than one-quarter (23.1%) were unsure of the attainability of their future self. Girls provided various descriptions of a desire future self. More than half of the girls identified marriage, employment, and/or education as important components of their future identities. The final research question will

explore the relationship between attainability of future self and adversity, academics, and delinquency.

SIGNIFICANT ROLES

The third research question inquires about the roles which girls identify as significant in their lives and the way in which the selected roles change over time. Although well developed imgoes, as defined in McAdams' (1985, 2006) Narrative Identity Theory, did not emerge in girls' descriptions of self, an examination of the roles each girl identified with most closely in their daily lives serve a similar purpose. Standards for the idealized self (i.e., imagoes) are built around the integration of societal expectations of the role and the behavior displayed among people who are significant to an individual. In this framework, role changes provide some insight into the girls perception of the idealized self within a role and ultimately the imago which has been developed for that role.

Traditionally, research has examined imagoes through the identification of themes throughout a life narrative (McAdams, 1985;1993). Thus, girls' identification of significant roles, the importance of a role, and the way in which it changes over time, does not serve the same purpose. However, the examination of these roles provides a unique perspective. In the descriptions of the roles, which participants felt were significant, the imago is portrayed. Girls discuss how the role shaped who they are, who they were, and who they fear they will become. By examining the importance of each role, the motivation for what girls perceived to be "positive traits," and why they saw these characteristics as positive is gained. The following section highlights girls' discussion about significant roles when interviewers asked each participant to describe herself in the roles they engage in daily.

Table 8 displays the frequency of each role selected by more than half of the participants. Of the twenty-nine roles identified, the following five roles were selected the most often: daughter, leader, friend, neighbor, and intimate partner. The roles of a daughter and friend were most common for the girls in the sample. All of the girls (27:100.0%) selected the role of a daughter as significant in their lives. All but one of the girls, 26 or 96.2%, identified with the role of a friend. The role of a leader was selected by nearly three-quarters of the sample.

Each role is rated for importance on a scale of 1 to 3. A score of one represents a role of little or no importance. A score of three represents a role of strong importance to the participant. As shown in Table 8, the mean score reflecting importance is highest for the role of a daughter. Girls' perception of the importance of their role as a daughter were largely positive with 74.1% feeling the daughter role was very important, 22.2% rating the role as somewhat important, and 3.7% rating the role of little importance. Three-quarters of the sample felt the role was very important to them with only one participant rating the role as having little importance.

Table 8 presents the five most commonly selected roles. Girls rated the role of a friend as the most important (M=2.81) to girls. Although more than half of the girls identified with the role of a neighbor, the role received the third lowest mean score of importance (M=1.89) of all twenty-nine roles.

Table 8: Percent and Number Identifying with Each Role and Mean Rating on Importance of the Role Selection

Role	N	VI	%	SI	%	OLI	%	Mean
Daughter	100% (27)	20	74.1	6	22.2	1	3.7	2.7037
Friend	96.2% (26)	22	81.5	3	11.1	1	3.7	2.8077
Leader	74.1% (20)	14	51.9	4	14.8	2	7.4	2.6000
Neighbor	70.4% (19)	4	14.8	9	33.3	6	22.2	1.8947
Partner	62.9% (17)	14	63.0	0	0.0	3	11.1	2.6471

VI=Very Important SI=Somewhat Important OLI= Of Little Importance

As stated previously, the role of a daughter was rated as highly important by girls; however, there were not uniformly positive emotions associated with being a daughter. For example, Girl 1, a foster child, identified the lack of reciprocity in her family values from her biological family. When asked how her role as daughter changed over time she stated:

> I've always been a granddaughter and a daughter, but to my real family, it's like they don't value that, they don't care – I mean they care because they love me, I know they love me, but they're just like whatever. You're your own person. Do whatever you do. When I came here (her foster home), it was like, they cared about – not just because of the fact because I'm their quote, daughter, [quote marks with fingers], or granddaughter, like my foster grandparents, they're like they are there for me, they're my parents, they're my grandparents, no matter what, they're there for me. If I need something, I know I can run to them. Whereas my real, my biological, she's not my biological grandmother, but, even my biological grandma, or my other grandma, they're like whatever, you're old enough to pay for whatever you need.

Unfortunately, girls who rated their role as a daughter as low in importance to them did not elaborate on their reasons for the lower ratings. However, several girls identified ways in which the juvenile justice system had helped to strengthen their relationships with their mothers and increase their perceived importance of the role. Two girls' perceptions of how their roles had changed follow,

Girl 4

> I used to be so disrespectful to my parents. I had no respect for authority or anything that wanted to be in my life and now I cherish being a daughter. I love my mom's and my relationships, my dad and thing, so definitely my relationship with my family.

Girl 15

> Well I definitely used to think my mom was an enemy. Even though me and her do share a lot of different views and even different personalities, I do know no matter what she only cares about my best interests. She does love me, so yeah.

The role, "friend" had the highest mean score of importance (M= 2.81) among the most frequently selected roles. From a developmental perspective, teen girls perceiving their role as a friend as most significant, supports psychologists theories of changes in social ties. As shown by Table 1, twenty-two (or 81.5%) of participants rated the role as very important to them, three (or 11.1%) participants rated the role as somewhat important, and one (or 3.7%) participant rated the role as of little or no importance. The role of a friend was salient in the selection of roles as well as within coded passages in which girls described their perceptions of self. When considering the

influence of peers in the sustainability of a delinquent identity, friendships play an important role in who a person is and who they become.

Twenty participants identified "leader" as a role. Slightly more than half of those respondents rated their leadership role as having great importance, four rated it as somewhat important, and only two rated it as of little importance. The girls' identity as a leader over time is interesting. Commonly the girls recognize their transition from a leader of antisocial behavior, such as deviance or fighting, to prosocial behaviors. When asked how her leadership roles had changed since first coming in contact with the juvenile justice system, Girl 6 stated:

> I used to lead people in a negative way, and now I lead them in more positive. Like, one of my friends wanted to fight a girl. I be doing, "Nah! Nah, nah!" And I'll be just acting retarded, trying to change their mind and make them in a good mood. Be like, "Nah, nah! You can't do that! Can't do that!" I'll just be like switch their mind up, like "Nah, we got more drink. You can't fight yet! We got to drink all the drink first!" And then, by then they'll be too drunk to even fight. I'm leading them negatively, but positively at the same time. I get them more drunk, but they don't fight! [laughs].

She continues by stating that she interferes because she is "sick of the drama." Notably, her strategy to diffuse situations is not to discuss the problem but to instead distract her friends from fighting. This allows her to minimize the amount of violence she is surrounded by without addressing her wavering desire to engage in or witness such behavior. She acknowledges she is replacing violent acts with behaviors that are still delinquent. She views this as progression toward a more positive current self as it relates to her role as a friend.

Relationships with intimate partners also play an important role in identity development. Of the 27 girls, 17 (or 63.0%) identified the role of a partner as significant. Of those individuals,

82.4% felt the role was very important and 17.6% felt the role was of little or no importance. Girl 6 shared her experience with an emotionally abusive man she was dating when entering the juvenile justice system,

Q: How has being a girlfriend changed since coming in contact with the courts?

G: Cause, when I first got in contact with the courts, I was dating someone who was abusive and mean. And he really didn't care about me. I mean, even if he did, he didn't know how to show it. And now I finally don't put up with nothing. If I don't get a phone call when I'm told, I make it known that I'm pissed off, and before I used to be scared to even act mad. So, now it's changed.

Q: What do you think caused that change?

G: My baby daddy. Actually, people say, "oh, you should hate him for everything he's done to you." And I don't hate him. I thank him for it. Everything he did to me, I'd rather have it happen when I was young than happen when I was older. Cause the older you get, the more deeper feelings you could get for someone, the more you realize what you feel is real or not real. And I'd rather it happened while I was young and dumb to say, than older and smart and still get my heart broke, because that'd make me feel 10 times worse. So, actually, yeah, he actually taught me that one.

Girls' roles as teen mothers were also important to the sample. Of the 11 (40.7%) girls who were teen mothers, all 11 (100%) girls selected the role of a mother as a significant role. Collectively the role of a mother was very important to girls. This was represented by all 11 girls identified the role as very important, yielding a mean importance score of 3.0. Girl 25 shared her

experiences regarding her pregnancy, preparation for motherhood, and her perceived importance of the role.

> I'm gonna become one, and that's scary because I gave my mom hell and I never realized how hard it was to be a mom and just, especially, like, with my nieces and stuff, they'll be like "I hate you, aunt A." and it's like, it makes me want to just break down and if my kid says it to me, it's like "ohh, oh my goodness" and it's…. yeah, I'm gonna become a mom and it's scary. And I understand how mothers are with their babies now, it's so weird. Like I love, like, my baby so much and I don't know what it is, I don't know if it's a boy, girl, what, nothing. I don't know if it's going to live, you know what I mean, how long it's going to, I don't know anything, but I love it so much and it's just the weirdest thing. It's so weird.

She continues by identifying motherhood as a unique experience that has changed every aspect of her life. When attempting to explain her motivation to be a better mother she states, "I think it just comes on its own. I guess it's hard to understand or explain until, you know what I mean, until it happens. It's just really strange how everything happens with becoming a mother." Finally, when asked how becoming pregnant had affected her she stated:

> In many different ways, it's, it's a journey, it's brought me to think about my life, the life that I have to live now. I cannot be a kid no more. I didn't have a childhood so I thought "ok, I'm 18 I can't be a kid now and just have fun," but now it's not like that. And it's depressing at times, and it's emotional at times, and it's just a whole mixture of different feelings.

In this thesis significant roles are utilized to illustrate the development of imagoes. Girls most commonly identified the role of daughter, friend, leader, neighbor, and partner as roles in which they engaged in daily. Of these five roles, girls identified the role of a friend as the most significant with a mean score of 2.81. The remaining roles' ranking of significance are as follows: daughter (2.70), partner (2.64), leader (2.60), and neighbor (1.90). Similar to girls' independent descriptions of self, discussion regarding the significance of selected roles appeared to be linked to negative experiences. Specifically, the negative experience, or fear of a situation repeating itself, motivated girls to attempt to improve their identity within a role and increased their perception of the role's importance. For example, Girl 1, a foster child, valued the role of daughter because her biological family, in her opinion, did not value family. Girls 4 and 15 both identified increases in their value for the role of a daughter as a result of acknowledged their parents' loyalty during the peak of their delinquency. When considering leadership and partner roles, participants still created a link with a negative prior self or event which motivated them to value the roles more than before. Girl 25, as well as other teen mothers in the sample, had increased value for the role of a mother role and feared experiencing the behaviors which their parents had endured.

However, valuing a role did not always produce prosocial behaviors. Although girls valued a role, at times more so than before, many struggled to adopt prosocial behaviors within that role. For example, Girl 6 valued her role as leader. She stated that she had become a positive leader and attempted to deter her peers from in engaging in deviant behaviors. By attempting to prevent fights from occurring between her peers, she demonstrated an understanding of the positive behaviors of a leader. Despite her understanding of the characteristics of a positive leader, she still struggled to eliminate delinquent behaviors from her leadership role. Such

conflicts impeding positive current identity development could be unique to the population. Imagoes may be more heavily reliant on who girls were in their past which would make societal influences less influential. If true, girls could create imagoes which were less delinquent, and improved within a role, yet still fail to adopt a prosocial identity or meet societal standards of a desirable mother, daughter, friend, leader, or neighbor.

Role Changes

The second portion of question three (3b) concerns the girls' role changes over time. Although the previous sections provided some elements of change in the discussion of the significant roles girls valued, data from this section are draw from explicit requests for the identification of the roles which had changed in the girls' lives. Changes in the roles reflect how girls identify themselves, how they change within a role, and why they change their role over time. As shown in Table 9, girls most commonly identified the role of a friend (37.0%) as changing over time. Girls primarily described three ways in which the role of friend had changed: 1) they became more open to friendships (3), 2) they became a better friend to their peers (2), or 3) they chose fewer and less delinquent peers (5). Commonly girls associated their prior self with a negative peer group and their current self as possessing a positive social network or becoming more reclusive to avoid temptation of engaging in delinquent acts with friends. Girl 5 shared how her friendships had changed over time,

> G: I don't have very many friends. I have a few of them, but not like I used to. I had a lot of them when I was going to school or before I got in the court system, but now that I been through all that, I don't know, I've learned to choose my friends better, I guess you

could say. I don't put myself with the bad crowd. Well maybe not (laughs and points at her boyfriend's friend who's visiting).

Q: What led up to your change in friends? Did you make the decision, did it gradually happen?

G: No, I made the decision to change my friends.

Q: Did you have to stop talking to people?

G: It wasn't really hard because I was gone for a long time, so, I mean, people moved, people went to different schools, so I mean, they just kind of fell off. I didn't really need 'em anyways, they were just kind of acquaintances, I mean they weren't friend-friends, I guess you could say.

Q: How has this change affected you?

G: I guess not very much. I don't miss them or anything. I guess it's made me better to think about who I need to, you know, choose my friends to hang out with. Who's gonna influence me to do better things and what they were influencing me with.

Girl 5 also shared her perspective on being more selective in choosing her peer network: "I don't have very many friends. I have a few of them, but not like I used to. I had a lot of them when I was going to school or before I got in the court system, but now that I been through all that, I don't know, I've learned to choose."

Table 9: Frequency of Identification of Change in Role		
Role	N	Percentage
Friend	10	37.0
Daughter	9	33.3
Mother	8	29.6
Student	7	25.9
Girlfriend/Partner	4	14.8

The role of a daughter was the second most commonly identified role which changed over time (9: 33.3%). Changes in the role were associated with greater appreciation and respect for parents. None of the 9 girls reported a negative change. All relationships were said to have changed for the better, with girls perceiving themselves as nicer and better daughters. Girl 25 described how her involvement with the juvenile justice system helped her gain a greater appreciation for her mother: “Being locked up and going through counseling and just realizing how hard my mom works and she’s never gave up on me, and I think that’s the biggest thing that’s changed is she never gave up on me. No matter how bad I hurt her, she was always there. And that just was like, “Wow, you’re amazing.” My mom’s amazing.” Thus, the role of a daughter was important to girls and was progressively positive for girls who selected it as a changing role.

Becoming a teen mother was the third most common identified role change (8: 29.6%). Of the eleven teen mothers in the sample, 8 reported a change in their role as a mother. Although the other types of roles changed, some girls discussed becoming a teen mother as an entirely new

role. Others felt becoming a mother made them mature, discontinue delinquent behaviors, or gain a greater appreciation for their mothers. Literature examining the impact teen pregnancy has on the identity of girls is consistent with the samples' sentiments. For example, Shanok and Miller (2007) conducted a study of 80 pregnant and newly parenting teen mothers to examine their transition to motherhood. Similar to the study participants, girls reported changes in their relationships with significant others, friends, physical altercations, and use of drugs and alcohol.

Rentschler's (2003) qualitative study of 20 teen mothers revealed three themes also expressed by the teen mothers in the sample, which included: 1) adapting to unexpected changes, 2) redefining peer, familial, and intimate relationships, 3) and envisioning themselves as a mother. Commonly when girls addressed their maturity, in relation to motherhood, it was affiliated with one of these themes. For example, when girls realized they would now be responsible for someone else's life, it prompted desires for education, employment, and overall stability. Girl 13 stated, "It affected me a lot because I realize I'm not just living for myself. I am living for someone else so it helps me value my life more." When discussing the way in which they had changed as students, girls stated they were more focused, reenrolled in school, attended school more often, or valued education more than they had previously, which has also been supported by previous literature (Rentschuler, 2003).

In examining pregnancy and delinquent behaviors, Shanok and Miller (2007) found that 68% of the 41 participants responding to the questionnaire, reported a physical fight prior to their pregnancy, however only 30% reported a physical fight since becoming pregnant. The sample reported a similar trend with half of the teen mothers (5) reporting fighting prior to their pregnancy and none following the pregnancy. Although the Shanok and Miller (2007) reported

the absence of drug use following the participants' pregnancy, 20% of the current sample continued drug or alcohol use after becoming pregnant. Motherhood appeared to promote positive changes in delinquent behavior, self-perception, academic investment, and peer associations.

Finally, intimate relationships were the fifth most commonly identified role which changed for girls. Of the four participants who identified a change in their roles as a girlfriend or partner, all of them reported positive changes. Girl 25 explained how her personal relationships have grown:

> I respect people more, like my boyfriend and stuff, because when I was with D he was disrespectful and taught me to be disrespectful kind of, to my parents. But now that I've been with J [her current boyfriend] it is just like, I love and respect him so much just for the person that he is. Like I don't care if he had a job or he was a bum on the street, he is just a good person and I respect that.

When examining all of the roles there is a theme of maturity affiliated with changes identified by girls. In exploring each role, the protective and risk factors commonly identify by criminologists emerge. Selecting prosocial peers and developing positive parental relationships can aid in the development in a prosocial identity and provide support in the abandonment of a delinquent identity.

SELF PERCEPTIONS AND EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, AND DELINQUENCY

The fourth research question concerns girls' perceived attainability of positive future self and the way in which projections relate to employment, education, and delinquency. The section

begins by examining projected attainability of future self and academic success. The thematic coherency of the samples' projections of future self attainability are explored to gain a greater understanding of the girls' narrative identity development. The section continues with an examination of the relationship between projected future self attainability and employment and closes by examining the relationship between projected attainability of future self and self-reported delinquency.

Positive Future Self and Academic Status

Most girls associated a positive future self with attending college and pursuing a professional career. Interestingly, as shown in Figure 2, slightly more than half of the sample (51% or 14) were high school dropouts. All of the participants who were in college or a GED program viewed their future self as attainable. Of the 8 student who were still enrolled in high school, 5 believed their future self was attainable and 3 were unsure.

Table 10: Connection of Academic Status and Attainability of Future Self

		Future Self Attainability			
		Attainable	Unattainable	Unsure	Total
Academic Status	In High School	62.5% (5)	.0% (0)	37.5% (3)	100.0% (8)
	In GED Program	100.0% (2)	.0% (0)	.0% (0)	100.0% (2)
	Dropped Out	53.8% (7)	23.1% (3)	23.1% (3)	100.0% (13)
	High School/ GED Grad	100.0% (1)	.0% (0)	.0% (0)	100.0% (1)
	In College	100.0% (2)	.0% (0)	.0% (0)	100.0% (2)
Total		65.4% (17)	11.5% (3)	23.1% (6)	100.00% (26)

N=26

Girls who were high school dropouts were less likely (53.8%) to report an attainable future than those who were attending school (62.5% of those in high school, 100.0% of those in a GED program) or who had graduated (the 1 girl who graduated). Examination of their responses revealed high occupational aspirations, including becoming a billionaire, special education teacher, journalist, therapist, and lawyer. Of the girls who had dropped out of high school, 23.1% felt their desired future self was unattainable, and 23.1% were uncertain about attainability. Of those who had dropped out of school prior to graduating, half (7) believed that their future professional self was attainable despite academic status, 3 believed their future self was unattainable, and 3 were unsure.

Table 11: Connection of Academic Status and Attainability of Future Self Condensed

		Future Self Attainability			Total
		Attainable	Unattainable	Unsure	
Academic Status	In School	76.9% (10)	.0% (0)	23.1% (3)	100.0% (13)
	Dropped Out	53.8% (7)	23.1% (3)	23.1% (3)	100.0% (13)
Total		65.4% (17)	11.5% (3)	23.1% (6)	100.00% (26)

N=26

Providing an even clearer picture of the differences between dropouts and other youth, Table 11, shows a condensed version of the findings. Academic status is broken into two categories: 1) Attending school (including GED programs and college) or a high school/GED graduate and 2) discontinuing high school prior to completing high school. As shown in the condensed chart, showing the connection of academic status and future self attainability, a larger

percentage of girls who were in school perceived their future self as attainable (76.9%) than those who had dropped out (53.8%).

Future Self Attainability and Thematic Coherency

The girls in the sample were optimistic about their futures and identified more positive than negative characteristics. Findings from the examination of attainability of future self and academic achievement are that more than half of high school drop outs perceiving their future self as attainable. Participants who perceived their future self as having a professional career, and who saw this future self as attainable, despite disenrollment from high school, bring into question thematic coherency of their narrative identities. This was true for 7 participants. Girls' beliefs that their future professional selves are attainable although they are not pursuing an academic route required for such a career, raises questions about their ability to: 1) connect their current self and possible self, 2) feel the current self and future self are compatible, which would prompt action, or 3) perceive their possible self as attainable. These potential explanations for the inconsistency in the connection of current and future identity are suggested by Oyserman and James' (2011) article, as previously stated.

The sample was coded for these themes identified by Oyserman and James to determine whether or not they played a role in girls' attainability and future self. Of the 27 girls, 6 identified a disconnect between their current and future self, 3 suggested the steps required to attain their future self were incompatible with their current self, and 1 viewed her possible self as unattainable, eliminating the need for action. The 17 girls whose responses did not reflect reasons for discontinuity between current and future identity largely aspired to raise a family and gain employment. As Girl 15 notes when discussing her desire to do so, "I know I definitely

don't have anything out-of-the ordinary, like to be an actress on VH1 or something. I definitely have something that's realistic and easy to obtain." In contrast, Girl 7 wanted to own a clothing store and notes that her boyfriend wants to be a rapper. When discussing the realities of her future self she provides a response filled with uncertainty, " No....Somewhat, in a way, but some dreams don't come true. So you have to think of other ways to make a dream come true, instead of you just fantasizing." In this response. she identifies a disconnect in her current and future self.

Table 12: Self Perceived Thematic Coherency and Attainability of Future Self

		Future Self Attainability			
		Attainable	Unattainable	Unsure	Total
Thematic Coherency of Future Self	Disconnect	50.0% (3)	16.7% (1)	33.3% (2)	100.0% (6)
	Incompatible	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)	.0% (0)	100.0% (3)
	Unattainable	100.0% (1)	.0% (0)	.0% (0)	100.00% (1)
Total		60.0% (6)	20.0% (2)	20.0% (2)	100.0% (10)

When comparing the thematic coherency of girls' assessment of the attainability of the future self, categorized by Oyserman and James' (2011) proposed reasons for inaction, there is limited data (Table 12). Only 10 girls had responses coded as reflecting one of the three inaction themes when discussing their future self or its attainability. As shown in previous charts, 3 girls in the sample perceived their future self as unattainable. Of those 3 girls, one identified a lack of connection between current self and future self, and one felt the steps required to attain the future self were incompatible with their current self. Of the 6 girls who still perceived their future self

as attainable, despite identifying disconnections between current and future self, one girl (Girl 21) alluded to the lack of action needed due to the unattainability of her future self. When asked who she wanted to be (what she will be working towards) in the future she states,

> My own place. I really want me own place. That's in [the next town], somewhere far away from here. These people make me want to get far away from them. That's why I smoke so much. They get on my nerves, so when I don't smoke I get mental. I don't like acting crazy on these people because they don't want to see that. So I just smoke in my room and close the door. Don't be bothered.

Then when asked what she will realistically doing in five years she states, " Probably the same shit. Just in my own place." This provides an example of how a girl could state that her future self is attainable but also suggest a lack of action needed to attain the goal. There may be reasons besides those suggested by Oyserman and James for the disconnect between current and future identity. It is possible that a girl has not accepted her current circumstance, whether no longer in school or unemployed, as part of their current or future identity. For example, if a girl isn't in school but believes she will reenroll and continue to pursue a career, the discrepancy would be more closely related to the individual not adopting their circumstance as part of their current identity than a lack of thematic coherency. However, this finding also brings into question the stage of identity developmental the girls are engaging in. Although most of the girls are late-stage adolescents, their possible selves which lack thematic coherency were representative of personal fables, more common in early adolescence.

Employment and Attainability of Future Self

Although exactly half of the sample was no longer enrolled in school, only 15.4% of the girls were employed at the time of the interview. Table 13 examines the relationship between

employment and perceived attainability of future self. Of the four girls who were employed, 3 (or 75.0%) believed that their future self was attainable and 1 (or 25.0%) believed her future self was unattainable. Due to the small number of participants who were employed at the time of the interview, it is difficult to draw conclusions from the findings. However, it does appear that girls who were employed had a greater understanding of their ability to attain their future self; none of them reported they were unsure. Additionally, several of the girls desired to gain employment but jobs were limited or they were attempting to finish school. However, most of the girls' parents were still meeting their basic needs.

Table 13: Connection of Employment Status and Attainability of Future Self

		Future Self Attainability			
		Attainable	Unattainable	Unsure	Total
Employment Status	Employed	75.0% (3)	25.0% (1)	.0% (0)	100.0% (4)
	Unemployed	63.6% (14)	9.1% (2)	27.3% (6)	100.0% (22)
Total		65.4% (17)	11.5% (3)	23.1% (6)	100.00% (26)

N=26

Delinquency and Future Self Attainability

The final portion of question four concerns the relationship between delinquency and attainability of future self. Participants were asked to describe their current delinquent behavior. Notably, the majority of the sample (15 of 26, or 57.7%) stated they were still engaging in delinquent acts. The severity of the offenses ranged from cow-tipping to assault. It is also important to note that girls' self-reported delinquency reflects both undocumented acts of

delinquency as well as those girls or professionals said the girls were formally charged with committing.

Table 14: Connection of Delinquency and Perceived Attainability of Future Self					
		Future Self Attainability			Total
		Attainable	Unattainable	Unsure	
Self-Reported Delinquency	Delinquent	60.0% (9)	20.0% (3)	20.0% (3)	100.0% (15)
	Lawful	72.7% (8)	.0% (0)	27.3% (3)	100.0% (11)
Total		65.4.% (17)	11.5.% (3)	23.1% (6)	100.00% (26)
N=26					

Table 14 displays the connection between delinquency and attainability of future self. Girls who reported lawful behaviors were optimistic about their futures, demonstrated by 72.8% of lawful girls reporting an attainable future self. The remaining three girls, who had not engaged in delinquent behaviors, were unsure of the attainability of their future self. Girls in the sample who continued engaging in delinquent behaviors, were less optimistic about their attainability of future self. Of the 15 girls who were still engaging in delinquent behaviors, 9 (60.0%) believed their future self was attainable, 3 (20.0%), believed their future self was unattainable, and 3 (20.0%) were unsure of the attainability of their future self. Thus, all reports of an unattainable future self and half of responses of a perceived unsure attainability of their future self, were by delinquent youth. When considering the influence of academic status, employment, and delinquency on girls' perceived attainability of future self, an attainable future self was more

commonly reported for girls who were still in school (76.9%), were employed (75.0%), and had discontinued delinquent behaviors (72.7%).

ADVERSITY AND IDENTITY

The fifth research question concerns the influence of various types of adversity on girls' attainability of future self. This section begins by identifying the prevalence of adversity type among the sample (e.g. emotional abuse or neglect), continues by examining the relationship of each type of adversity to perceived attainability of future self, and closes with a collective measure of adversity (family dynamics) and explores its relationship to attainability of future self.

Commonly the lack of parental supervision and guidance allows for girls to be exposed to increased experiences of physical and sexual victimization. Literature examining girls and victimization shows alarming rates. For example, Miller (2008) examined a sample of thirty-five girls, 54% of whom reported experiences of sexual coercion or assault. Of those who had been victimized, 11(or 30%) reported several incidents of victimizations. The current sample of girls reported similarly concerning rates with one-third (9) of the sample reporting incidents of sexual assault (as shown in Table 15).

As shown in table 15, more than one-third of the sample had experienced emotional abuse or neglect (44.4% or 12), been a victim of intimate partner violence (40.7% or 11), or had witnessed violence in their community or school (40.7% or 11). One-third were exposed to abnormal deaths (e.g., drug overdose, gun violence) of family or peers, had been kicked out of their home, or had been sexually assaulted. Fewer than half of the sample had experienced

several sexual abuse incidents (26.9% or 8), mutual domestic violence with a parent (25.9% or 7), or experienced physical abuse from a parent (18.5% or 5).

Table 15: Frequency of Adversity Type	
Adversity Type	N
Emotional Abuse and/or Neglect	44.4 % (12)
Intimate Partner Victim	40.7 % (11)
Saw violence in Community/School	40.7 % (11)
Kicked out	33.3% (9)
Not Normal Passing	33.3% (9)
Sexually Assaulted	33.3% (9)
Sexual Abuse Incidents	29.6% (8)
Mutual Domestic Violence with Parent	25.9% (7)
Parent Physical Abuse	18.5 (5)

Table 16 compares the sample's perceived attainability of their future self and the type of adversity experienced. The previous section provided examples of the ways in which these events had negative impacts on the lives, and arguably the identities, of the girls. From those examples, it is easier to understand why girls who had been sexually assaulted (9 or 33.3%) reported the lowest frequency of attainability of their future self. Of the girls who had been sexually assaulted, 44% believed their future self was attainable, 11% believed their future self was unattainable, and 44% were unsure. Several of the girls alluded to feelings of helplessness or feeling isolated, following the event. It is possible their inability to manipulate the event, in a way that would create thematic coherency in their narrative identities, prevented them from

envisioning an attainable positive future self. Furthermore, experiences of sexual abuse are often silenced by fears of judgment, rejection, and disbelief. Consequently, the experience would also damage a girl's ability to construct a desirable imago in which victimization is accepted. The lack of knowledge of other women facing similar issues and not having the peer/familial support to cope with the experience, could prevent a person from seeing themselves as the imago, or idealized self, they have created; thus a positive future self may seem unattainable.

Table 16: A Comparison of Perceived Attainability and Adversity Type

Adversity Type	Attainable	Unattainable	Unsure	Total
Emotional Abuse and /or Neglect	50.0% (6)	25.0% (3)	25.0% (3)	100.0% (12)
Intimate Partner Victim	54.5% (6)	9.1% (1)	36.4% (4)	100.0% (11)
Saw violence in Community/School	54.5% (6)	18.2 % (2)	27.3% (3)	100.0% (11)
Kicked out	77.8% (7)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	100.0% (9)
Not Normal Passing	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	100.0% (9)
Sexually Assaulted	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)	44.4 % (4)	100.0% (9)

There was also a negative relationship between experiences of emotional abuse and/or neglect and perceived attainability of future self. Of the 12 girls who had been emotionally abused or neglected, half perceived their future self as attainable, one-quarter believed their future self was unattainable, and the remaining quarter was unsure. Again, girls' descriptions of the related events exposed the emotional devastations and imposed by the incidents. Emotional

abuse was imposed by family members, intimate partners, and peers. Girl 27's residential placement coordinator spoke about the lasting consequences of Girl 27's mother's emotional abuse.

> Her family really broke her heart. Her mom disowned her, and [Girl 27] always had this fantasy that her mom was going to start, like it was all of a sudden going to click in for her and [Girl 27] was going to be as important as she should be to her mom. But her mom always let her down. The reason why she came to [residential placement] is because her mom called, I guess, and was like, 'Why don't you meet me at this place. I'll pick you up and take you away and live happily ever after.' So [Girl 27] pretty much ran away from her grandpa's and did whatever she had to do to meet at like a [convenience store], and her mom never showed up. And then she ended up running into some people and went to a bad neighborhood and kinda got wrapped up in things, but it was a fantasy of having that relationship with her mom. So she had a lot of disappointment and heartbreak just by not having that love and attention from her own family.

In contrast, more positive reactions to adversity were observed in the sample for girls who had been kicked out of their homes. Roughly 78% of the 9 participants who had been kicked out of their home believed their future selves were attainable. Participants' dialog surrounding the topic suggests being kicked triggered a sense of independence and maturity. In surviving the experience, they had an increased confidence in overcoming difficult situations. These findings suggest that different types of adversity have differing impacts on identity and perceptions of future self attainability. In the present sample, the types of victimization and violence exposure most related to not feeling the ideal self is attainable are emotional abuse

and/or neglect, and sexual assaults. Half of the girls facing these two types of adversity where unsure of the attainability of their future self or felt it was unattainable.

Family Dynamics and Attainability of Future Self

Considering the prevalence of adversity types, it is not surprising that, of the 27 respondents, only 2 (or 7.4%) were from families that were categorized as "fine," 11 (or 40.7%) were from families categorized as "troubled," and 14 (or 51.9%) were from families that were categorized as "empty." When examining the relationship between attainability of future self and family dynamics, the two participants from families with limited problems both believed their future self was attainable. Additionally, a lower percentage of girls with troubled and empty family types believed that their future self was attainable.

Table 17: Connection of Family Dynamics and Attainability of Future Self

		Future Self Attainability			
		Attainable	Unattainable	Unsure	Total
Family Dynamics	Fine	100.0% (2)	.0% (0)	.0% (0)	100.0% (2)
	Troubled	54.5% (6)	18.2% (2)	27.3% (3)	100.0% (11)
	Empty	69.2% (9)	7.7% (1)	23.1% (3)	100.0% (13)
Total		65.4% (17)	11.5% (3)	23.1% (6)	100.00% (26)
N=26					

Overall, except for the two girls without apparent family problems feeling their future selves were attainable, girls with troubled and empty families were similar, with slightly over half feeling their desired selves were attainable, and about one quarter unsure. These findings support previous connections highlighting the individualized impact of adversity types on perceptions of self and perceived attainability of future self.

Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to identify the way in which girls exiting the juvenile justice system perceive themselves and explore how these perceptions relate to adversity, academic achievement, family type, and perceived attainability of a desired future self. The thesis utilized McAdams' (1985) narrative identity theory to explore imagoes, self perceptions, and how self perceptions change over time. Emphasis was placed on the way in which current perceptions of self impacts an individual's positive and negative perceptions of their future self.

The racially diverse sample of 27 girls, ranging from 17-19 years of age, were deeply enmeshed in the juvenile justice system. The majority (88.0%) of the sample had been placed in a residential placement facility, 14.8% were employed, 40.7% were teen mothers, and slightly more than half (51.9%) had discontinued high school. When asked to describe their current selves, girls produced 23 negative and 59 positive descriptive characteristics. The largely positive descriptions were dominated by themes of maturity (55.6%), positivity (33.3%), caring/kindness (29.6%), and humor (fun/funny; 29.6%). Negative perceptions of self were less heavily concentrated in the identified themes. Slightly more than one-third (37.0% or 10 girls) identified their current self as depressed. Other commonly identified negative perceptions of self addressed included insecurities (22.2%) and reclusiveness (22.2%). Current descriptions of self largely reflected girls' self perceptions as they were exiting the juvenile justice system and began transitioning into adulthood.

In contrast, descriptions of prior self reflected girls' current perception of who they were during the peak of their delinquency and involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Descriptions of prior self produced 70 identifiers, 38 (54.0%) which were positive. Although fewer characteristics were identified, there was a greater consensus among the sample regarding the identity of their prior selves. Five of the identified characteristics of prior self represented more than half of the sample. In comparison, only one prior self characteristic represented more than half of the sample. Girls' negative perceptions of prior self were consistent with characteristics commonly associated with delinquency. These descriptions included being rebellious/combative (63.0%), a fighter (63.0%), a "runner" (59.3%), and/or depressed (51.9%). Positive characteristics were less heavily concentrated, with the most commonly identified characteristic, "survival characteristic," reported by only 18.5 % of the sample. Additionally, 3 girls in the sample (11.1%) selected being self-advocating, self accepting, and independent as characteristics which describe their positive prior self.

A comparison of current to prior self suggests that girls identified increasingly positive and decreasingly negative descriptions of self over time. Additionally, there was a decrease in reports of physical altercations. Overall, attitudes associated with their delinquent identity such as being bad, having a poor attitude, or running away all decreased. There were also interesting findings within themes that were selected less frequently by participants in regards to their prior and current self. For example, unique motives for anger as a description of current or prior self were revealed. Additionally, when examining the combination of current and prior identities, trends were identified in the selection of a mature or positive current self and a prior self who was a fighter, run away, or rebellious/combative. The identification of rebellious behavior appeared to be central to girls' comparison of prior and current self. Although many girls were still transitioning to a prosocial identity, comparing who they were as a juvenile offender to their

current state illuminated their growth and maturity. This allowed maturity to be the most frequently report description of positive current self.

After addressing their perception of prior and current self, girls were asked to identify an ideal future self and their perceived ability to attain that identity. Employment (66.7%), education (63.0%), marriage (59.3%), and independence (48.1%) were of greatest importance to the sample, when envisioning their future selves. Of the 26 girls providing a response, 65.4% believed their future was attainable, 11.5% did not believe their future was attainable, and 23.1% were unsure of the attainability of their future self.

McAdams' narrative identity theory identifies imagoes as the standard for the idealized self. Imagoes are created through the integration of social norms and the mimicking of the behaviors of individuals who are important to us, within our immediate environment. This concept is operationalized with the use of significant roles (e.g. mother, daughter). Girls identified which roles were of significance, the degree to which they viewed the role as important, and changes which had been imposed on that role over time. Of the 30 social roles, girls identified most closely with the role of a daughter (100.0%), friend (96.2%), and leader (74.1%). The role of a friend, daughter, and leader were also of greatest importance among the sample. Notably, the importance of a role appeared to be influenced by the negative experience girls had encountered in their pasts. This could help explain how girls could become less delinquent yet fail to adopt a prosocial identity. Girls desired to become prosocial in their roles, however the discontinuity between the role in which they perceive to be positive and who they were caused them to fall short. Consequently, girls improved behaviors as result of perceived

increase in importance of a role but still failed to completely develop the imago which they desired.

The change in a role over time also revealed various things about girls' identities and formation of imagoes. The role of a friend (37.0%), daughter (33.3%), and mother (29.6%) were most frequently selected as receiving modification over time. Girls primarily described three ways in which the role of friend had changed: 1) they became more open to friendships, 2) they became a better friend to their peers, or 3) they chose fewer and less delinquent peers. Behaviors of desistance, demonstrated by the girls changing the dynamics of their peer relationships, were consistent with Paternoster and Bushway's (2009) proposed theory of desistance. This theory suggests that an offender's "working" or functional identity remains intact until benefits of their behaviors no longer outweigh the costs (Paternoster and Bushways, 2009). Once feelings of failure or dissatisfaction become associated with the offender's identity, projections of an undesirable future self prompts the desire for a change in one's identity (Paternoster and Bushways, 2009). In other words, an offender's identity changes prior to the offender's deciding to change his or her social network in a way in which prosocial identities are supported and/or mirrored. This desistance literature helps to conceptualize the role identity plays in delinquency and the importance of roles, or imagoes, changing over time. Similar to changing their role as friends, girls reported positive changes to their roles as a daughter. Over time girls gained a greater appreciation for their parents, which resulted in them being nicer, and perceiving themselves as better daughters. Lastly, becoming a mother gave girls a greater sense of importance and increased their desire to graduate high school.

After gaining information about self perceptions and roles over time, the relationship between various factors were investigated. Specifically, the fourth research question concerned

the way in which future perceptions of self related to employment, education, and delinquency. Unfortunately, only a small percentage (15.4%) of the sample was employed which in turn provided minimal insight into the connection between employment and attainability of future self. However, academic investment appeared to be connected to perceived attainability of future self. Girls who were high school dropouts were less likely (53.8%) to report an attainable future self than those who were attending school (62.5% of those in high school, 100.0% of those in a GED program) or had graduated (the 1 girl who graduated). There also appeared to be a connection between self-reported delinquency and attainability of future self. Girls who reported lawful behaviors were optimistic about their futures, which was demonstrated by 72.8% of lawful girls reporting an attainable future self. Girls in the sample who continued engaging in delinquent behaviors were less optimistic about the attainability of their future self. Of the 15 girls who were still engaging in delinquent behaviors, 9 (60.0%) believed their future self was attainable, 3 (20.0%), believed their future self was unattainable, and 3 (20.0%) were unsure of the attainability of their future self.

The final research question concerned the role of adversity on the attainability of future self. As a general measure of adversity, family types were examined. Of the 27 respondents, only 2 (or 7.4%) were from families which were categorized as fine, 11 (or 40.7%) were from families categorized as troubled, and 14 (or 51.9%) were from families that were categorized as empty. Interestingly, of the 17 girls who perceived their future self as attainable, 15 or 88.2% of the girls were from “empty or “troubled” families. These findings support previous connections highlighting the individualized impact of adversity types on perceptions of self and perceived attainability of future self.

Specific measures of adversity (e.g. emotional abuse) yielded both positive and negative connection between differing adversity types and perceived attainability of future self. Roughly 78% of the 9 participants who had been kicked out of their homes believed their future selves were attainable. Participants' dialog surrounding the topic suggests being kicked out triggered a sense of independence and maturity. A negative connection was represented by only half of girls who were emotionally abused viewing their future self as attainable. These findings suggest that different types of adversity impose differing impacts on identity and perceptions of future self attainability.

The high frequency of girls reporting an attainable future self, despite adversity and disadvantage, led to further examination of the thematic coherency in girls' comments about attainability of future selves. As stated previously, girls aspired to become professional women who were employed, highly education, independent, and married with a family. When examining the impact academic status had on perceived attainability of a desired future self, more than half of girls who had dropped out of school still perceived their future self as attainable. Additionally, when examining the relationship between family type and future self attainability, girls from "empty" families were more likely to report an attainable future self than those from a "fine" or "troubled family." This brings into question why girls who seem to be the most disadvantaged have the most optimistic perceptions of their future self. These findings undermine the thematic coherency, which according the narrative identity theory's development progression, girls should possess. It would be difficult to conceptualize an attainable future identity of a professional person when the individual is unemployed and/or failed to complete high school. Coupled with 40.7% of the sample being teen mothers and all girls identifying several types of adversity, the optimism of future self appeared to be more consistent with a personal fable.

Improvements could be made in the thematic incoherencies of future identity projections among girls, through the implementation of programming which puts greater emphasis on engaging girls in the steps needed to attain a goal rather than only exposing them to career options. In doing so, clear connections could be made in how girls with their current level of education, location, and/or financial status would go about attaining such a goal. By focusing on the steps instead of strictly the end goal, discontinuity would become more readily apparent for girls when constructing their future identities. Potentially, girls would modify their future identities to entail equally commendable future selves which are thematically coherent and better tailored to their strengths, interests, and resources. Thus, they will become cognizant of the steps needed to achieve an identity and still view the future identity as attainable.

Examination of the thematic coherency of girls' account of their attainability revealed 10 cases which one of the three themes were identified. Interestingly, 6 of the 10 girls believed their future self was attainable despite their identification of thematic incoherency. It is possible that eliminating this subset of girls from the attainability category, and instead coding them as unsure, would allow connections between academic achievement and delinquency to yield findings which are more consistent with what is expected for the population's circumstances. Overall, these findings provide an abundance of knowledge about girls' self perceptions but also identifies the need for more research examining the connection between self perception, adversity, and delinquency. In this, the study has some limitations.

LIMITATIONS

Some features of the design threatened the validity of findings. Initial examination of girls' current self, which resulted in a drastically differing positive to negative ratio (59:23),

raised question about the influence of the question's phrasing. The first question requesting positive information was detailed and assumed there were things the respondent liked about herself. Specifically, the interviewer asked,

When you think about your personal characteristics or personality characteristics, which of your characteristics do you like the most? Are these characteristics that you had when you were young or did some of these characteristics develop in the past few years?

In contrast, the question to elicit descriptions of negative characteristics did not convey the expectation that girls would identify negative characteristics. That question asked, "Is there anything about yourself that you would like to change?" Interviewers probed for additional information when girls' answered, "yes." However, examination of the girls' descriptions of prior self produced a more equal positive to negative ratio (38:32). This could suggest that the phrasing of the question was minimally influential. It appears girls simply perceive their current self to be more positive than their prior self.

It is also important to note that McAdam's (1993) Narrative Identity Theory is centered-around an individual's reflection in storytelling of their existence. Stories of greatest importance are highlighted while less influential events remain suppressed. The interviewing instrument did not allow for an open-ended reflection of each girl's life but instead prodded for information on specific events relevant to residential placement, frequent residential mobility, and experiences within community environments. Consequently participants who strictly answered the questions spoke significantly less, offering less insight into that individual's identity. Discussion of several less favorable life events could have also influence the number of positive characteristics identified.

Additionally, the current study attained retrospective information from girls regarding their current perception of their prior self during the peak of their delinquency. It is possible these descriptions of prior self do not reflect the self perceptions which would have been provided if girls were asked during the peak of delinquency. However, the theoretical structure of a narrative identity is most compatible with a developing identity which adjusts prior behaviors to allow for thematic coherency of in a description of current self. Future research could conduct a longitudinal study which would provide current perceptions of self throughout the development of a narrative identity. Lastly, the study's sample is relatively small and purposive in nature. For this reason generalizability of the findings are limited.

CONCLUSION

Despite these limitations, this study provided unique and important insight into the way in which girls perceived themselves. In some ways the findings are consistent with a large body of literature identifying the academic struggles, familial dysfunction, unemployment, premature parenting, and heightened rates of victimization experienced by girls in the juvenile justice system. Additionally, several researchers and have examined the emotional and psychological consequences of exposure to such a great degree of adversity and negative impact it has on the healthy identity development among youth. Previous studies have taken note of the influence of parent-child relationships and girl perceptions of their femininity or overall identity as it relates to delinquency. This thesis is unique in its account of girls self perceptions over time and the way in which adversity influences perceptions of an attainable positive future self. Specifically, it provides insight into girls struggle to adopt a prosocial identity and how such discontinuity in developing or desired identities may transpire.

In this study, the diverse needs of girls are apparent. The varying impacts adversity, education, and overall self perceptions makes it clear that no one set of guidelines can meet the needs of all girls. Juvenile offenders are a subset of an offending population which is still small enough to manage in a more individualized fashion. Some would argue risk assessment skills serve this purpose. However, these assessments largely highlight familial, educational, and social behaviors which this thesis suggests has varying impacts on the girls' current delinquency and current and/or future perceptions of self.

Girl 6 produced the "they thought" narrative (page 28), providing a passionate account of what practitioners thought they knew about her and identifying the way in which they had failed to meet her needs. Perhaps, the study implications are not only for practitioners to become more cognizant of the emotional needs of girls. Instead it appears that after exiting the juvenile justice system girls feel lost and need more support to become productive citizens. They are aware of their need for more education, the disadvantages of having children at an early age, the implications of unemployment, and the lasting consequences of delinquency and adversities. However, despite this knowledge, the study continuously identified disconnections in the girls' current self perceptions or behaviors and their ability to take steps toward becoming their desired identity. By assisting girls in creating current identities, which are less dependent on girls' comparisons to their prior delinquent self, greater progression can be made in producing a population of previously delinquent youth who are lawful and possess the skills to attain a positive identity. Practitioners can assist in this area by provided prolonged support for girls exiting the system and utilizing the skills they have acquired during times of adversity to assist in their complete development of a prosocial identity.

Furthermore, the role of the juvenile justice system, in formalizing a delinquent identity, should be considered. Girls rarely related maturity or desistance from delinquency to court-ordered programming and relationships with court affiliates. Instead, change was prompted by personal relationships, motherhood, or other life changing events. In this, the samples' desire to adopt prosocial behaviors at times appeared to be complicated by the labels and experiences introduced while under supervision. This sample represented girls who were deeply enmeshed in the juvenile justice system which suggest supervision was needed. However, for girls who are engaged in less serious or moderately delinquent acts, greater interest should be taken in exploring the identity which is being adopted. It is possible that such experiences, which occur as a result of being involved in the juvenile justice system, are assisting girls in creating delinquent identities which will be difficult to transition away from when entering adulthood. In other words, the criminalizing nature of the juvenile justice system may be having a negative impact on the healthy identity development girls. Consequently, girls will struggle to personify their imagoes and progress towards their positive future selves.

APPENDIX

Codebook: Self Perceptions, Family Dynamics, and Attainability of Future Self

Descriptions of Prior and Current

All adjective describing a personality characteristic (e.g. outgoing, fun, strong listener, beautiful) or self perception (e.g. smoker, angry, depressed) are coded independently for responses involving prior and current self. Such responses are taken throughout the interview although select questions specifically address perceptions of previous and current self. Adjectives are obvious indications of self perception, however some descriptions are not as straight forward. Throughout the coding process prior and current characteristics are examined and coded independently. Two tree nodes were created with identical subcategories were used to execute distinct separation of prior and current self. The following categories have been created to address common themes of self perceptions:

Caregiver – providing assistance to an ill family member and recognizes behavior as an desirable or undesirable characteristics

Cautious/Observant – adjustment of behavior in response to neighborhood or environmental influences – (e.g."I didn't leave after dark")

Employee - Currently employeed by an organization

Family Oriented – Attachments to family activities and relationships

Fighter – Physical altercations with parents, peers, ect

Foster child - formal removal from home and placed with a foster familt

Homeless – lacking a stable living accommodations (e.g. “I was house flopping”)

* This does not include residential placement or group homes

Impressionable – identified eagerness to comply with the behaviors or views of immediate peers (e.g.“ I started acting differently and dressing differently”/ “I’m not sure why I did it. I guess because everyone else was.”)

Lacking strong communication skills – inability to effectively express emotions or concerns

Mature – progressive psychological development (e.g. “I grew up”/“ I stopped wanting to do those things”)

Negative social network – Delinquent peer associations

Positive social network – Productive peers

Reclusive – lacking desire to engage in social interactions. Statements such as “I don’t talk to anyone in this area.” or “ I stay in the house” woul dbe coded into this category.

- Statements that reflect a lack of social interaction to avoid engaging in delinquent acts are also included in this category.

Recreational Delinquency/Vandalism – Non violent delinquency for fun (e.g. Toilet papering homes, sneaking into hot tub, ect)

Risk taker – excitement/approval expressed regarding deviant behaviors which are illegal or life threatening. (e.g. “We did stupid things” “we walked the train tracks in the middle of the night”)

Runaway – absconding from home or residential placement

Self acceptance/pride – “I like who I am now”

Self-advocating- Active attempts to improve circumstances through positive channels (e.g. “I wrote the court a letter to be placed at different facility”)

Student – Enrolled in an educational institution, attending GED classes, or home schooled.

Survival Characteristics – Meeting needs through nontraditional or illegal channels (e.g.. “ I knew how to get what I need”)

Transition - Statement(s) that acknowledge motives or events leading to transition onto current self

*Coding is based on explicit characteristics that are stated verbatum or which serve as a synonym of the established category. Themes of a category, such as maturity, exhibited through out the transcipt should NOT be included.

Descriptions of Prior and Current Self: Special Adjectives

Adjectvies which are emotions (such as: happy, angry, or depressed) are only coded when the participant adopts the emotion as part of their identity. Following examples have been provided for clarifications.

Example 1: " When I was on probation I was an angry person. The court stressed me out"

In example one, neither adjective would be coded as they represent an emotion during a specific event.

Example 2: "I am an angry person"

In example two, "angry" would be coded as a description of self. It doesn't represent frustration with a specific situation but instead reflects how the participant typically views herself.

Identity Questions: Prior, Current, Future Self Perceptions

PRIOR SELF

How would you describe yourself when you first came into contact with the Juvenile Court or the police? What were your strengths and weaknesses, and what was your personality like?

[As part of the question about current self] Are these characteristics that you had when you were young or did some of these characteristics develop in the past few years?

CURRENT SELF

At this time, how would you describe yourself?

Is there anything about yourself that you would like to change?

When you think about your personal characteristics or personality characteristics, which of your characteristics do you like the most?

THE IDEAL FUTURE SELF

What are your dreams for your future?

The actual anticipated future self

Where do you see yourself in 5 years? Ten years?

Realistically, how would you describe the kind of person you will actually be and what you will be doing in five years?

Reasons for differences in ideal future self and actual future self

If they are different, why?

Attainability of Future Self

Determinations of the attainable of the participant's future self was taken from the following series of questions:

The ideal future self

What are your dreams for your future?

The actual anticipated future self

Where do you see yourself in 5 years? Ten years?

Realistically, how would you describe the kind of person you will actually be and what you will be doing in five years?

Reasons for differences in ideal future self and actual future self

If they are different, why?

Responses from the final question addressing who the respondent believed they would realistically was used to caegories a future self as attainable, unattainable, or unknown.

CODING PERCIEVED ATTTAINABILITY OF FUTURE SELF

Attainable –

Direct: "Yes"

Indirect: Repeating perception of future self or stating perception of greater caliber; expressing potential to attain desired self (e.g. “If I work hard I believe I can be a …”)

Unattainable –

Direct: “No”

Indirect: Changing perception of future self to an identity that is of less significance or achievement than the repondent initially states.

Unknown -

Direct: I don’t know

Indirect: (e.g. “Who knows what I’ll be doing”)

Adversity: Interview Questions

1. Here is the life calendar made from your last interview, with different places you were living, who you were living with, and so on. [Interviewer and Participant discuss the life calendar, and examine it together.]

1a. Is this accurate, or do we need to make some changes? [Interviewer makes any needed changes.]

2. Were there times when it felt like your life was really a struggle and things were really not going too well? What was going on, and where on the life calendar were these happening?

3. Next, to be sure we have not missed anything, I will go through a list, and ask you if any of these things should be on the calendar. If some of them happened before the middle school years, let me know and I will note those things were before the calendar for adolescence begins.

Table 18: Adversity Interview Questions	
Problems	Improvements
Your basic needs for a safe place to live, food, and clothing were not met.	Your needs were met.
You were in a romantic relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend. How old was this person? What was good about this relationship? Was there anything not-so-good about it? What was not good about it? Were you ever emotionally or physically hurt by this person? In what way?	A negative relationship improved, ended, or you broke it off.

Table 18 (cont'd)	
You saw violence or death. If yes, was this a relative or friend?	You recovered from seeing violence or death.
You were pressured or encouraged to do sexual things with a relative or an adult.	You recovered from sexual involvement and abuse.
You were raped or sexually attacked in some other way.	You recovered from this.
You were using drugs or alcohol regularly. If any, what were the negative affects on your health, work or school, and day to day activities? How much of a typical week did you see such negative effects, and for how long a period?	You stopped using drugs or alcohol.
You were getting into trouble with the police or the Juvenile Court. What did the police or the courts say you had done?	You stopped getting into trouble with the police or the Court.
Any other obstacles or difficult situations you have had to face? What?	You overcame these obstacles or difficulties.
Any other obstacles or difficult situations you have had to face? What?	You overcame these obstacles or difficulties.

4. Did you do things to help yourself that made a positive difference? What did you do? How did it make things better? What changes did you make in yourself?

MEASURES OF ADVERSITY

1. Emotional abuse or neglect

2. Intimate Partner Victim

3. Kicked out

4. Mutual domestic violence with parents

5. Not normal passing

6. Physical abuse (parent)

7. Saw violence in community or school

8. Sex abuse incident

9. Sexual assault

Current illegal and prosocial (school,work) behavior: Interview Questions

Right now, how are you doing?

Are you using any illegal drugs, or drinking a large amount of alcohol? Can you describe any negative effects on your health, your day to day functioning, and work or school?

In the last year or two, have you done things that could or did get you in trouble with the police or the Courts? What kinds of things in general? Did you get in trouble? What happened?

Are you working? What are you doing for work? Do you make adequate money for rent or a mortgage, for food, and for basics? Do you make adequate money for extras, like entertainment? How certain are you that you will not become unemployed?

Are you going to school? What are you studying, and how many courses are you taking? Are you in a full time or part time program?

Significant Roles: Interview Questions

Next I'm going to asks you how you might describe yourself in the roles that you now have in your day-to-day life. Here is a list with names of some social roles. Please look carefully through the whole list. Keep in mind that this is not a list of all possible roles. First, do we need to add some important roles to this list for you?

Table 19: Significant Roles Interview Questions

	Check if Yes	How Much You Value this Role			How Much General Community Values this Role		
Mother		1	2	3	1	2	3
Abuse survivor		1	2	3	1	2	3
Worker/employee		1	2	3	1	2	3
Student/learning job skills/intern		1	2	3	1	2	3
Friend		1	2	3	1	2	3
Victim		1	2	3	1	2	3
Mental Health Care Consumer/Recipient		1	2	3	1	2	3
Community or political organizer/activist		1	2	3	1	2	3

Table 19 (cont'd)							
Athlete		1	2	3	1	2	3
Person of faith, spiritual person		1	2	3	1	2	3
Leader		1	2	3	1	2	3
Addict/alcoholic		1	2	3	1	2	3
Daughter/granddaughter		1	2	3	1	2	3
Neighbor		1	2	3	1	2	3
Writer/Artist/Musician		1	2	3	1	2	3
Mentor		1	2	3	1	2	3
Recovering person		1	2	3	1	2	3
Facilitator/networker		1	2	3	1	2	3
Person with a disability		1	2	3	1	2	3
Partner/Wife		1	2	3	1	2	3
Volunteer		1	2	3	1	2	3
Other:		1	2	3	1	2	3
Other:		1	2	3	1	2	3

You value [this role]

None=1 Somewhat = 2 A lot =3

Since your first contact with the Juvenile Court, which roles have changed the most?

For the five roles that have changed the most,

Role 1: _____

How has this role changed?

What events or decisions led up to this change?

Did a program, a person, or yourself bring about the change?

How has this change affected you?

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

Artz, S. (1998). Sex, Power, and the Violent School Girl. Teacher's College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Ave., New York, NY 10027

Belknap, J. & Holsinger, K. (2006) The gendered nature of risk factor for delinquency. Feminist Criminology. (1)1, 48-71.

Belknap, J., Holsinger, K., & Dunn, M. (1997). Understanding incarcerated girls: The results of a focus group study. The Prison Journal, 77, 381-404.

Bloom, B., Owen, B., Deschenes, E., & Rosenbaum, J. (2002). Moving toward justice for female juvenile offenders in the new millennium: Modeling gender-specific policies and programs. Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice, 18, 37-56.

Bloom, B., Owen, B., Rosenbaum, J., & Deschenes, E. P. (2003). Focusing on girls and young women: A gender perspective on female delinquency. Women & Criminal Justice, 14, 117-136.

Burman, M. J., Batchelor, S. A., & Brown, J. A. (2001). Researching girls and violence. British Journal of Criminology, 41, 443-459.

DeHart, D. D. (2008). Pathways to prison: Impact of victimization in the lives of incarcerated women. Violence Against Women, 14, 1362-1381.

Elkind, D. (1981). Children and Adolescents (3rd ed.) New York: Oxford University Press

Erikson, E. H. (1963) Childhood and Society (2nd ed.). New York: Norton

Fivush, R., Brotman, M., Buckner, J., & Goodman, S. (2000). Gender differences in parent–child emotion narratives. Sex Roles, 42, 233–253.

Forney, W., Forney, J., Crutsinger, C. (2005) Gender, Delinquent Status, and Social Acceptance as Predictors of the Global Self-Esteem of Teens. Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal, 33(3), 208-219.

Gerber, G. L., Cronin, J. M., & Steigman, H. J. (2004). Attributions of blame in sexual assault to perpetrators and victims of both genders. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 34(10), 2149-2165.

Goodkind, S., Wallace, J., Shook, J., Bachman, J., O'Malley, P. (2009) Are girls really becoming more delinquent? Testing the gender convergence hypothesis by race and ethnicity, 1976-2005. Children and Youth services Review, 31, 885-895.

Habermas, T., & de Silveira, C. (2008). The development of global coherence in life narratives across adolescence: Temporal, causal, and thematic aspects. Developmental Psychology, 44, 707–721.

Hammack, P. (2008). Narrative and the cultural psychology of identity. Personality and Social Psychology Review,12, 22-247.

Holsinger, K., & Holsinger, A. M. (2005). Differential pathways to violence and self-injurious behavior: African American and White girls in the juvenile justice system. Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 42, 211-242.

Kerpelman, J. L., Pittman, J. F., & Lamke, L. K. (1997). Toward a microprocess perspective on adolescent identity development: An identity control theory approach. Journal of Adolescent Research, 12, 325-346.

Kerpelman, J. L., & Smith, S. L. (1999). Adjudicated adolescent girls and their mothers: Examining identity perceptions and processes. Youth and Society, 30(3), 313-347.

Like, T. & Cobbina. J. E. (forthcoming). Gendered Discussion of Violence among Urban African American Girls. Crime and Delinquency.

McAdams, D. P. (1985). Power, intimacy, and the life story: Personological inquiries into identity. New York: Guilford Press.

McAdams, D. (1993). The stories we live by: personal myths and the making of the self. The Guilford Press.

McAdams, D. P. (2011). Narrative identity Springer Science + Business Media, New York, NY

McAdams, D. & Cox, K. (2010). Self and identity across the life span. In R. Lerner, A. Freund, & M. Lamb (Eds.), Handbook of lifespan development (Vol. 2, pp. 158–207). New York: Cambridge University Press.

McAdams, D., & Pals, J. (2006). A new Big Five: Fundamental principles for an integrative science of personality. American Psychologist, 61, 204–217.

McAdams, D. P., & McLean, K. C. (2013). Narrative identity. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 22(3), 233-238.

McClellan, D. S., Farabee, D., & Crouch, B. M. (1997). Early victimization, drug use and criminality: Acomparison of male and female prisoners. Criminal Justice and Behavior, 24, 455-476.

McLean, K. C., & Breen, A. (2009). Gender differences in adolescent meaning-making. Developmental Psychology, 45, 702–710.

McLean, K. & Mansfield, C. (2012) The Co-Construction of Adolescent Narrative Identity: Narrative Processing as a Function of Adolescent Age, Gender, and Maternal Scaffolding .Developmental Psychology, 48(2), 436-447.

McLean, K. C., Breen, A. V., & Fournier, M. A. (2010). Constructing the self in early, middle, and late adolescent boys: Narrative identity, individuation, and well-being. Journal of Research on Adolescence, 20, 166–187.

Miller, J. (2008). Getting Played: African American Girls, Urban Inequality, and Gendered Violence. New York University Press.

National Center for Juvenile Justice. (2009). National Estimates of Delinquency Cases. Retrieved October 19, 2013, from http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/njcda/

Oyserman, D. & James, L. (2011) Possible Identities. Handbook of Identity Theory and Research (vols 1 and 2) 130-145, New York, NY.

Pals, J. (2006). Narrative identity processing of difficult life experiences: Pathways of personality development and positive self-transformation in adulthood. Journal of

Paskiewicz, L. S. (2001). Pregnant adolescents and their mothers: A shared experience of teen mothering. American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing, 26, 33–38.

Paternoster, R., & Bushway, S. (2009). Desistance and the "feared self": Toward an identity theory of criminal desistance. The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, 99(4), 1103-1156.

Pollack, O. (1950). The criminality of women. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania

Press.

Rentschler, D. D. (2003). Pregnant adolescents' perspectives of pregnancy. American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing, 28, 377–383.

Sales, J., Fivush, R., & Peterson, C. (2003). Parental reminiscing about positive and negative events. Journal of Cognition and Development, 4, 185–209.

Schaffner, L. (2007). Violence against girls provokes girls' violence: From private injury to public harm. Violence against Women, 13, 1229-1248.

Siegel, J. A., & Williams, L. M. (2003). The relationship between child sexual abuse and female delinquency and crime: A prospective study. Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 40(1), 71-94.

Smith-Adcock, S. & Kerpelman, J. (2005). Girls' self- perception of reputation and delinquent involvement. International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 12(4), 301-323.

Spohn, R. E. (2000). Gender differences in the effect of child maltreatment on criminal activity over the life course. Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research, 2, 207-23.

Steffensmeier, D., Schwartz, J., Zhong, H., & Ackerman, J. (2005). An assessment of recent trends in girls' violence using diverse longitudinal sources: Is the gender gap closing? Criminology, 43, 355-405.

Stevens, T., Morash, M., & Chesney-Lind, M. (2011). Are girls getting tougher, or are we tougher on girls? Probability of arrest and juvenile court oversight in 1980 and 2000. Justice Quarterly, 28(5), 719.

Tracy, P., Kempf-Leonard, K. & Abramoske-James, S. (2009) Gender Differences in Delinquency and Juvenile Justice Processing: Evidence From National Data. Crime and Delinquency, 55, 2, 171-215.