“ANYBODY LISTENING?”: PERCEPTIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN GIRLS INVOLVEMENT IN A COMMUNITY-BASED DELINQUENCY REDUCTION PROGRAM

by

MARCO V. HICKS-BROWN

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Tift College of Education at Mercer University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Atlanta, GA

2020
“ANYBODY LISTENING?”: PERCEPTIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN GIRLS INVOLVEMENT IN A COMMUNITY-BASED DELINQUENCY REDUCTION PROGRAM

by

Marco V. Hicks-Brown

Approved:

Sharon Murphy Augustine, Ph.D.  Date
Dissertation Committee Chair

Lucy J. Bush, Ed.D.  Date
Dissertation Committee Member

Olivia M. Boggs, Ed.D.  Date
Dissertation Committee Member

Jane West, Ed.D.  Date
Director of Doctoral Studies, Tift College of Education

Thomas R. Koballa, Jr., Ph.D.  Date
Dean, Tift College of Education
DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and many friends. I am ever so grateful to my parents, Jimmy and Phyllis Hicks for planting seeds of love, empathy, and tenacity. The two of you created some pretty incredible humans. My sisters Tracey and Magan and my brother Michel have been consistent reminders of why I never gave up.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my three sons, Jeremy, Jordan, and Jaden. You three are the reasons I get up in the morning. I will always be appreciative to Micheal Bradshaw for seeing strength in me. To my countless nieces, nephews, cousins, friends, and colleagues thank you for being the best cheerleaders I could ever imagine. Lastly, I want to dedicate this work to the girls I’ve had the great privilege to serve and teach. I hope I’ve done you justice, for your stories deserve to be told.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF TABLES</th>
<th>viii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

### 1. THE PROBLEM

- Background of the Problem ........................................ 3
- Statement of the Problem ............................................ 7
- Purpose of Research .................................................... 9
- Research Question ....................................................... 9
- Federal and State Initiatives ........................................ 10
- Evidence-based programs ............................................. 14
  - PACE Center for Girls ........................................... 16
  - Girls, Inc. ............................................................ 17
  - WINGS ................................................................. 17
  - Georgia’s Efforts .................................................... 19
- Theoretical Framework ................................................ 20
- Methodology ............................................................... 21
- Researcher Bias ......................................................... 22
- Researcher Positionality ............................................. 23
- Summary .................................................................... 24

### 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Black Feminist Theory ................................................. 29
  - The Materiality of Theoretical Invisibility .................. 31
  - Identity Formation .................................................. 34
  - Hegemony ............................................................ 36
  - Pedagogy of Care .................................................... 39
  - Individualized Curriculum ....................................... 41
- Summary .................................................................... 44

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Research Design ........................................................ 46
TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Research</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting/Context</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context of the Study: Demographics</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context of the Study: A Community-Based Program</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Participants</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers and Founder</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recorded Sessions</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Notes and Reflective Journal</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation of Data</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcriptions</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding Procedures</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Researcher</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Mothering</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Observer</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of Trustworthiness</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmability</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. DATA ANALYSIS</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Judgement</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validation</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Founder: Ms. Bev the Other Theme</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results and Discussion of the Findings</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Results</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1: Acceptance</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: No Judgement</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3: Validation</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Between the Results and the Literature</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Between the Results and Theory</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Future Research</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. INFORMED CONSENT</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. MERCER IRB APPROVAL</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. FIELD NOTES AND REFLECTIVE JOURNAL ENTRY EXERPTS</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. ARTIFACTS</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics Unique Youth Served: Georgia Statewide Compared to Chatham County for FY 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Participant Profiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Demographics of the Founder and Volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Setting of Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Key Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Responses of Participants, Volunteers, and Founder: What Makes SYC Different from Other Groups or Services?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Responses of Participants, Volunteers, and Founder: What Makes SYC Different From Other Groups or Services?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Second step in the data analysis process: Triangulation of data.</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Triangulation of theme 1: Acceptance</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Triangulation of theme 2: No Judgement</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Triangulation of theme 3: Validation</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

MARCO V. HICKS-BROWN
“ANYBODY LISTENING?”: PERCEPTIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN GIRLS INVOLVEMENT IN A COMMUNITY-BASED DELINQUENCY REDUCTION PROGRAM
Under the direction of SHARON MURPHY AUGUSTINE, Ph.D.

Female adolescents represent a growing subcategory of the juvenile justice population. This growth is directly linked to adolescent females being disproportionately incarcerated for status offenses such as running away. The Georgia House Bill 242 has changed the way status offenders are held accountable for their actions. The bill called for more researched-based, community-based services. However, there were very few gender-specific community-based services for adolescent females and even fewer programs that address all the areas of need for a delinquent adolescent female. This study adds to the literature of “what works” for adolescent females in the juvenile justice system and establishes a long-term service that will prevent adolescent females from reoffending or violating their probation. A key component to the services provided to adolescent females is education. In this capacity, this research study sought to answer the following question: 1. How do the experiences of at-risk adolescent females in a community-based program help reduce their recidivism rates? Participants, volunteers, and the founder of Savannah Youth City, Inc. were interviewed to determine the effectiveness of SYC’s program through their lived experiences and the perception of the
participants on the program’s ability to reduce their recidivism rates. This study utilized a qualitative methodology. The participants were adamant that SYC was effective in reducing their delinquent behaviors despite some of the participants having recent judicial system involvement. It was the perception of the participants that SYC provided them with acceptance, validation, and a nonjudgmental environment.
CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Every day I teach female adolescents, primarily African American females, within a secure juvenile detention center. I was not hired to teach the females, but after witnessing the lack of programming for the females and the ill treatment by staff towards the females I requested to teach them. I wanted to provide them with education that would be informative as well as transformative. I believe that education is the key for these adolescent females because I have taught GED classes at night at the local technical college and in those classes I met a young adult female who was a product of the juvenile system. This student told me about her experience in a juvenile facility, and she stated that no one helped her through this process. Many of the officers that work at my facility state that they cannot work with the adolescent females. This attitude of not wanting to work with adolescent females is not just true for my facility but for facilities around the country.

Chesney-Lind and Okamoto (2001) addressed the difficulty adolescent females face in the juvenile justice system:

The major challenge to those seeking to address the needs of girls within the juvenile justice system remains the demonization of many girls, particularly girls of color, coupled with a considerable invisibility of these young women in the actual programming that either seeks to prevent or intervene in delinquent behavior (p. 23).

This demonization of adolescent females is one of those jaw dropping events I witnessed in my first few months working in my facility. Several staff members would openly
verbalize their displeasure with working with the adolescent females to the adolescent females. I witnessed officers telling the adolescent females at my facility, “I hate working with y’all. The boys are easier. They listen.” This demonization directly in the face of the adolescent females only encouraged their inappropriate behaviors and negative attitudes towards persons in the juvenile system.

Another reason I requested to teach the females was because many of them have been victimized. In an informal question and answer session with five of the females in the facility, I asked them if they had ever been sexually assaulted. Four of the five females stated yes. Those four female students stated that after their assault is when they became disruptive in school and began to display delinquent behaviors. One of the females stated that she wanted to become a psychologist so she could help females like her. I asked her why. She stated, “Counselors and psychologists that have never been assaulted don’t know what it is like to be me and don’t know how to help me”. I replied, “I’ve never been assaulted. Do you think I can help you?” She stated, “Yes, because you listen. You’re different”. I understood my student to mean that I didn’t hold any prejudice toward my students. I accepted them individually and showed them value by being actively engaged in who they were and could be.

Finally, I am personally attached to each one of the females because I see my little sisters in them. I have never experienced being raped, being addicted to drugs, selling my body for money, being a single parent, being a pregnant teen, being physically assaulted by my boyfriend, or taking a felony charge for my boyfriend or pimp. But my sisters
have. So for them I wanted to change the lives of these females even if for a short time. The change for these females resides in improving their education.

**Background of the Problem**

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) reported in 2000 that nationally, female juvenile arrests for violent crimes rose from below 7% in 1980 to 74% in 1999. By 2008, females constituted 30% of 1.3 million arrests (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009). Aleks Kajstura with the Prison Policy Initiative posits that women’s incarceration has grown at twice the pace of men’s incarceration in recent decades and has disproportionately been located in local jails (Kajstura, 2019). During the 2018 fiscal year, females attributed to 22% of the juvenile intakes for the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (GADJJ, 2019). Bloom, Owen, Deschenes, and Rosenbaum (2002) stated this rising trend in female juvenile arrests is consistent across state lines and more attention is being given to the nature and causes of female involvement in crime. Adolescent females are far more likely than their male counterparts to be detained for misdemeanors, technical violations of probation and parole, and status offenses such as underage drinking or curfew violations (Zavlek & Maniglia, 2007).

The National Bar Association and American Bar Association (2001) reported that status offenses have had a devastating impact on adolescent females and their increased involvement in the juvenile justice system. Status offenses under juvenile delinquent law are acts committed by a juvenile that would not be a crime if they were committed by an adult; examples of status offenses include but are not limited to truancy, running away from home, and underage drinking (Pilnik, 2014). Adolescent females are
disproportionately charged with status offenses and disproportionately detained for violations of valid court orders and contempt (Sherman, 2005). In 2010, although adolescent females were only 29% of the juveniles arrested overall, they accounted for 63% of juvenile arrests for crimes against the family and children and 67% of juvenile arrests for prostitution (Puzzanchera, 2013). Humphrey (2004) stated “girls, who make up the majority of abused runaways, are consequently punished for their attempts at survival” (p. 1). Many adolescent females that have run away from abusive homes attempt to survive by any means necessary, including prostitution. The judicial practice of charging adolescent females with status offenses and violations of court orders are commonly known as “bootstrapping” or “dumping” adolescent females into detention (Sherman, 2005). According to Humphrey (2004), the continued disparity of adolescent females as status offenders re-victimizes them and is an abuse of the juvenile code. Humphrey (2004) concluded that “as girls continue to fall victim to their perpetrators, the court system, and detention, their needs are continually ignored, and their voices silenced” (p. 11). The systematic multi-oppressed adolescent female offender has experienced oppression and exploitation from a male dominated justice system that continued to marginalize her struggle and silenced her voice for change and a chance at restorative justice.

The increase in adolescent female arrest rates caused juvenile justice specialists to question why females were becoming more involved in delinquency. This question prompted the national Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention to conduct the Girls Study Group, a team of multidisciplinary experts consisting of sociologists,
psychologists, criminologists, gender studies experts, researchers, and practitioners with legal and girls’ program development experience to address several questions pertaining to female adolescent delinquency. Among those questions were what programs are most effective in preventing female adolescent delinquency and how the juvenile justice system should respond to female adolescent delinquency.

Bloom et al. (2002) clearly established that there is a problem of increasing female juvenile arrest rates and causes of delinquent behaviors for females 10-17 in their various research studies. Researchers (Bloom et al., 2002; OJJDP, 1998; Zavlek & Maniglia, 2007) agree that a number of delinquency risk factors affect both adolescent females and males, such as family dynamics, school involvement, neighborhood environment, and the availability of community-based programs. However, other factors directly increase adolescent female risk of delinquency. These risk factors include early onset of puberty, sexual abuse or maltreatment, and depression and anxiety.

In 1998, Acoca and Dedel (1998) reported that the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) identified victimization, primarily sexual abuse, as the most critical pathway of adolescent females and young women involved in juvenile justice. The OJJDP’s Guiding Principles for Promising Female Programming also identified victimization as a key issue for juvenile female offenders (OJJDP, 1998). In a report entitled “Adolescent Girls: The Role of Depression in the Development of Delinquency,” the National Institute of Justice asserts that “57% of mildly to moderately depressed adolescent females engaged in higher levels of aggressive behavior, compared with only 13% of those who were not depressed” (Earls & Obeidallah, 1999, p. 3). The NCCD’s
researchers also indicated that family fragmentation, academic failure, and health and mental health issues as some of the greatest concerns for adolescent females and young at-risk women (Acoca, 1999). Due to these risk factors, providing appropriate prevention and programming is necessary to improving outcomes for adolescent females (OJJDP, 2010). Many states also find that these risk factors cause adolescent females to require more specialized intervention (Acoca, 1998). Researchers (OJJDP, 1998; Bloom et al., 2002; Acoca, 1998) show that more adolescent females are being detained because community-based alternatives, such as mentoring and counseling programs, are lacking. This lack of community-based alternatives is due to deficient funding and commitment (American Bar Association & National Bar Association, 2001).

Although their justice system involvement has been increasing, adolescent females have received exiguous attention until OJJDP required states to “develop and adopt policies to prohibit gender bias in placement and treatment” with Congress amending the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act in 1992 (Bownes & Albert, 1996, p. 2). These policies are meant to be preventive and restorative measures. Researchers (Bloom et al., 2002; Zavlek & Maniglia, 2007) indicate that adolescent females’ present unique challenges to the juvenile justice system, stemming in part from the fact that the system was originally organized to respond primarily to the needs of adolescent males. Many states (Florida, Illinois, Hawaii, and Oregon) have conducted their own research in addition to OJJDP’s Girls Study Group that called for better gender-responsive programming for adolescent girls. Programming as defined for this study is services provided in a juvenile facility or in the community to include mental and
behavior peer groups, individual counseling, life skills groups, victim impact groups, and education. The “what works” literature has been focused primarily on adolescent males and men, and little is known about “what works” for adolescent females.

Chesney-Lind (2001) detailed the focus programming should take:
Programs should invariably work to empower girls and advocate for change that will benefit them. This entails not only building on girls’ innate strengths, skills, and creativity to develop their voices and their abilities to assert themselves, but also identifying and challenging barriers that girls, particularly marginalized girls face in our society. A program that addresses a girl’s emotional, physical, intellectual, and relational being will empower her to find her voice. (p. 44)

Chesney-Lind establishes the first glimpse of what a potential program should aim for when addressing the needs of female juvenile delinquents. In 2007, Zavlek and Maniglia expounded Chesney-Lind’s initial ideals of what a potential program for female juvenile delinquents should encompass. Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) reported that there are five female responsive values, developed for training purposes for the National Institute of Corrections, that define the conceptual framework in which female responsive services exist. Female responsive programming should be: inclusive, relational, restorative, aware of the social context, and multileveled (Zavlek & Maniglia, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

Adolescent females in the justice system experience a multitude of risk factors, often at higher rates than their male counterparts (Zavlek & Maniglia, 2007). Delinquent adolescent females exhibit higher rates of mental health problems, exhibit more aggression toward family members and romantic partners, and suffer more negative consequences from their justice system involvement than offending adolescent males (Earls & Obeidallah, 1999). Antisocial adolescent females are less likely to access
treatment and have fewer community-based treatment options than adolescent males, despite their increased need for services. Finally, adolescent females who are formally charged are more likely to be placed in secure confinement than their male counterparts in the same situation and to act out violently once there (Acoca & Dedel, 1998; Earls & Obeidallah, 1999; Zavlek & Maniglia, 2007). The combination of these factors puts female offenders on a pathway to continued justice system involvement and long-term dysfunction that they carry on into adulthood and pass on to their children. Allowing at-risk female adolescents to have voice as it pertains to their programming and what they need to help them be productive citizens and break generational dysfunction is paramount for providing community-based programming for this population.

The problem is that there is little to no gender specific programming available to address the needs of at-risk female adolescents in or outside of a juvenile detention center. Cooney, Small, and O’Conner (2008) postulate that empirical research on the effectiveness of programs designed for adolescent females in the juvenile justice system is sparse and very little evidence-based programs exist that have been created specifically for delinquent adolescent females. One main reason for this is that research in the area of “what works” has focused on delinquent adolescent males. Cooney et al. (2008) concluded that female responsive programming should do all of the following: take a comprehensive approach; address physical and mental health needs; focus on strengths; reach out to families; hire and train staff who are responsive to the interpersonal nature of adolescent females’ development and serve as “believable” role models; rethink group-
based treatment; and maintain an environment of physical, psychological, and emotional safety.

Hipwell and Loeber (2006) highlighted in their research that there is a great need for more data on the effectiveness of specialized treatments for female juvenile delinquents. There is significant literature based on adolescent females’ pathways into criminality, but far less work has been done to evaluate what works in gender responsive programming. The OJJDP reports an apparent disconnect between the literature identifying the causes of female delinquency and the literature that focuses on the principles of effective intervention (Watson & Edelman, 2012).

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of a community-based program, Savannah Youth City, Inc., on reducing the recidivism rates of female juvenile delinquents as determined by the female participants. SYC is a non-profit organization that partners at-risk youth with a mentor for educational or job mentoring. The study examined the effectiveness of this community-based program as determined by the females and volunteers that participated in the program; based upon their experiences and opinions while in the program.

Research Question

The research question of this study aims to highlight the voices of the female participants. It is their lived experiences and perception that will determine the effectiveness of SYC in reducing their recidivism. The research question: How do the
experiences of at-risk adolescent females in a community-based program help reduce their recidivism rates?

Federal and State Initiatives

Gender specific provisions did not appear in legislation until the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act in 1992. The Act required states to include in their analysis of juvenile crime problems: an analysis of gender-specific services for the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency, including the types of such services available and the need for such services; and a plan for providing needed gender-specific services for the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency (Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, 1992).

The Act also included significant funding for gender responsive programming through a Challenge Grant program which allowed states to receive federal funding to implement reforms in particular areas of concern identified by the federal government (Watson & Edelman, 2012). Twenty-three states applied for and received funding under the Challenge Grant program under the gender bias provision.

In 1998, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention released a report that chronicled the reform efforts of the twenty-three states supported by the Challenge Grants and established guidelines for gender responsive reform efforts (Watson & Edelman, 2012). The report stated that gender responsive reform should follow five guidelines: 1. Programs should be all female whenever possible; 2. Adolescent females should be treated in the least restrictive environment, whenever possible; 3. Programs should be close to females’ homes in order to maintain family
relationships; 4. Programs should be consistent with female development and stress the role of relationships between staff members and females; and 5. Programs should address the needs of parenting and pregnant teens (OJJDP, 1998).

The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative provided support for various gender-responsive reform efforts, as documented by Fran Sherman in her 2005 piece, “Pathways to Juvenile Detention Reform – Detention Reform and Girls: Challenges and Solutions” (Watson & Edelman, 2012). In 2004, OJJDP convened a Girls Study Group consisting of researchers and practitioners to “develop a research foundation that would enable communities to make sound decisions about how best to prevent and reduce delinquency and violence by girls” (Watson & Edelman, 2012). In 2008, the Girls Study Group reviewed sixty-one gender responsive programs across the United States and found only seventeen of those had been evaluated by federal or state authorities; with none meeting the OJJDP’s criteria for effectiveness (Watson & Edelman, 2012).

Also in 2008, Hubbard and Matthews compared previous research on gender-responsive programming and the “what works” literature; they ultimately concluded that the combination of the gender-responsive literature and the “what works” literature can help bring about the most change in programming for at-risk adolescent females primarily through funding (Hubbard & Matthews, 2008).

The House Judiciary Committee’s Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security held a hearing in 2009 on “Girls in the Juvenile Justice System: Strategies to Help Girls Achieve their Full Potential” (Committee of Judiciary, 2009). In
2010, another hearing was held, this time by the House Education and Labor Committee’s Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities on “Meeting the Challenges Faced by Girls in the Juvenile Justice System” (Committee of Education and Labor, 2010). From these two hearings the National Council on Crime and Delinquency along with the OJJPD created the National Girls Institute (NGI) in 2010.

The National Girls Institute was established in order to improve understanding and use of promising and evidence-based programs and services for delinquent and at-risk adolescent females (National Girls Institute [NGI] website, 2013). The NGI is charged with developing and providing a range of training, technical assistance and resources to tribal, community, and private organizations that serve at-risk and delinquent adolescent females (Watson & Edelman, 2012).

Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Minnesota, and Oregon have enacted legislation that requires the provision of gender-specific juvenile justice programming or requires equal access to programming for female and male youth (NGI, 2013). Hawaii and California were the first states to start girls’ courts, coordinated with community-based, gender-specific programs that rely on family involvement, therapy, peer support, and special probation officers (Wiltz, 2015). Minnesota was the first state to pass legislation in 1990 requiring the state’s juvenile and criminal justice systems to provide justice-involved females with access to programming that is substantially equivalent to that available to males (Sherman, 2005). Oregon passed legislation addressing the issue of equal access for adolescent females and young women in state-funded or state-provided human services or juvenile corrections programs in 1993 (Patton & Morgan, 2002). In
2001, Connecticut passed a law “requiring the juvenile justice system to develop and implement gender specific programming to meet the unique needs of girls and boys” (Lyon & Spath, 2002, p. 2). Florida-based nonprofit organization PACE Center for Girls helped campaign the passing of the 2004 state law requiring the provision of gender-specific juvenile justice services (NGI, 2013). In 2006, Hawaii passed legislation making available gender-responsive community-based programs for female adjudicated youth and an appropriate range of opportunities to ensure that their needs are met (NGI, 2013).

Although only five states have enacted laws that specifically address the needs of adolescent females and young women in the juvenile justice system, other states including Maryland, Massachusetts, and New Mexico have recently pursued similar efforts (NGI, 2013). Alabama and New Mexico have established commissions to study the problem of gender-specific juvenile justice reform and make recommendations (Watson & Edelman, 2012). Other states including Florida, Maryland, New Mexico, and Texas are now assessing and reporting on the extent to which existing programs meet both adolescent males’ and females’ needs and/or provide equitable programming for adolescent males and females (Watson & Edelman, 2012). Cook County, Illinois formed a multidisciplinary public/private steering committee called GIRLS LINK (OJJDP, 1998). GIRLS LINK piloted a gender-specific program to assist adolescent females from their initial contact with police through their release from the Department of Corrections (Roman, Naser, Rossman, Castro, & Lynn-Whaley, 2006). Other states such as Georgia, Minnesota, New Mexico, Illinois, and Massachusetts have laws aimed at reducing race and gender disparities in their juvenile justice systems (Wiltz, 2015).
The new Georgia House Bill 242, which took effect January 1, 2014, promotes the expansion of community-based programs for youth that will reduce recidivism. Claire McHugh, a columnist for the Seattle Post Intelligencer, described the need for more legislation for delinquent adolescent females’ best, “only by being proactive about this problem can legislators and policymakers ensure that the unique opportunity to help a teen…achieve a better quality of life” (McHugh, 2007, para. 8). The Urban Institute reported that community-based partnerships that involve researchers can facilitate collection of best practices and sharing of knowledge on “what works” (Roman et al., 2006).

**Evidence-based programs**

PACE Center for Girls, Girls, Inc., and WINGS are three gender-specific programs for at-risk adolescent females that have a proven history of success as it pertains to reducing recidivism of the adolescent females in their respective programs. In an inventory of best practices for gender specific programming Greene, Peter, & Associates (OJJDP, 1998) stated that “programming bridges theory into practice by combining female adolescent theory with juvenile justice practices” (p. 33). Gender-specific programming should use a comprehensive approach to female delinquency rooted in the experiences of the adolescent females (OJJDP, 1998). The Greene, Peter & Associates’ report included a national model for promising female programs (OJJDP, 1998). This model has five primary areas: (1) Administrative Functions- practices for organization and management of staff, staff training, and intake processes; (2) Life Skills-education, skills training, career opportunities, and health services; (3) Interpersonal-
problem solving, positive relationship skills, community-based initiatives, development
to womanhood, and discovery of strengths and abilities; (4) External and Social-
development of community and familial ties; (5) Outcome Measures- the provision for

Covington and Bloom (2003) pointed out that contemporary evaluation research
of gender-specific programs largely lack concepts of a continuum of care and wraparound
services for delinquent adolescent females. Many programs fail to address the substantial
and continuous mental health, substance abuse, health, academic, housing and material,
and other needs of adolescent females (Chesney-Lind, Morash, & Stevens, 2008).
Scholars (Chesney-Lind et al., 2008; Covington & Bloom, 2003) in the field of gender-
specific responsive programming for adolescent females admit that there are some
promising programs, but overall there is a lack of comprehensive and sustained
programming to meet the requirements of the girls who are most in need.

The goal of finding “what works” for delinquent adolescent females is to reduce
recidivism. Zahn, Day, Mihalic, & Tichavsky (2009) defined recidivism as being
adjudicated or adjudication withheld. The “what works” measures should focus on early
intervention more so than reacting to the current problem. The “what works” literature
seeks to evaluate the evidence available on crime prevention and treatment programs, in
order to identify the best, most effective programs and strategies (Foley, 2008). The best
programs or evidence-based programs are those with the most consistent evidence of
effect, evaluated with rigorous scientific designs (OJJDP, 1998). Practical Academic
Cultural Educational Center (PACE) for Girls based in Florida is a nationally recognized
program that has endured repeated rigorous evaluations (OJJDP, 1998; Roman et al., 2006; Sherman, 2005; Watson & Edelman, 2012; Zahn et al., 2009).

PACE Center for Girls

There are seventeen PACE centers in Florida. PACE is a community-based, gender-responsive prevention diversion and early intervention program serving adolescent females, ages 12-17. These centers fulfill the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice’s statutory requirement for prevention and gender-specific programming for girls (PACE Center for Girls Inc., 2010). PACE provides initial and ongoing assessment, individual counseling, academic education, gender specific life management skills enhancement, parental involvement, community volunteer services, career readiness, and transitional services (PACE Center for Girls, Inc., 2010). Home visits are scheduled at least once a month, and families are encouraged to get involved in females’ treatment (Zahn et al., 2009). PACE’s day treatment program provides comprehensive prevention, early intervention, and high school education (Zahn et al., 2009).

Since 1985 PACE has served over 21,000 females (Watson & Edelman, 2012). The primary way females can be referred to PACE is by the juvenile court (Gallagher, 2005). Gallagher (2005) found that of 2, 298 girls served in 2004 and 2005, a total of 77% of girls enrolled in PACE for a full year increased their academic functioning by one full grade level, and 48% earned their high school diplomas or General Education Development certificates while enrolled in PACE. Zahn et al. (2009) determined that PACE showed positive long-term effects. Gallagher (2005) echoed these findings, at six to twelve months after transitioning from PACE, 6% to 9% of the females had
PACE is a unique program because it is not just one location in one city in one state; it is an organization with several sites in several cities across a state.

Girls, Inc.

Girls, Incorporated is another nationally recognized organization that is education based and promotes positive female development with their message “inspiring all girls to be strong, smart, and bold” (Roman et al., 2006, 12). Founded in 1945 as the Girls Clubs of America, Girls, Inc. has more than 1,000 program site locations in more than 134 cities nationwide (Girls, Incorporated [Girls, Inc.], 2013). Girls, Inc. provides a wide range of programs for adolescent females ranging from Girls, Inc. Friendly PEERsuasion, where adolescent females develop skills to resist pressure to use harmful substances, to Girls, Inc. Project BOLD, where females learn skills and strategies to lead safer lives in their homes, in relationships, in their communities, and online (Girls, Inc., 2013). Girls, Inc. provides educational and experiential opportunities to empower the adolescent females in their programs (Chesney-Lind et al., 2008).

WINGS

WINGS (Working to Insure and Nurture Girls’ Success) is another example of a gender-specific program that has been rigorously and repeatedly evaluated (Chesney-Lind et al., 2008; Zahn et al., 2009). WINGS is an intensive alternative probation program that uses home visitation and community and center-based services (Zahn et al., 2009). WINGS uses individualized case plans for adolescent females and their families, who are provided with a comprehensive array of no-cost services (Chesney-Lind et al., 2008). These include mother-daughter mediation, transportation, and other programs that
address academics, drug and alcohol abuse, anger management, and vocational and career support (San Diego Association of Governments [SANDAG], 2013). In 1996, the State of California received the Challenge Grant Program from the OJJDP and created the WINGS program (SANDAG, 2013). The SANDAG website (2013) states that “the goal of the WINGS program is to reduce the number of females entering or continuing in the juvenile justice system by supporting and empowering girls and their families to access and receive community resources in a timely fashion” (para. 6).

Experts (Chesney-Lind et al., 2008; Covington & Bloom, 1998; OJJDP, 1998; Sherman, 2005; Watson & Edelman, 2012; Zahn et al., 2009) agree that adolescent females who form positive connections to individuals and programs within their communities are less likely to return to detention, but strength-based community services are unavailable to detained females. The unavailability of community-based diversion programs has meant that even when court personnel recognize that diversion programs may be most appropriate for juvenile offenders, they are not an option (Watson & Edelman, 2012). Sherman (2005) stated that agencies should develop a continuum of alternatives to detention for adolescent females. He believes that “this continuum should emphasize the principle of least restrictive alternatives, be located in and reflect females’ communities, be gender responsive in design, and respond to the specific needs identified within the population of adolescent females (i.e., substance abuse)” (p. 42).

Sherman (2005), along with the NGI (2013), believes that gender-specific programming should be comprehensive (family, community, and juvenile justice system), safe (promoting healing from trauma), empowering (encouraging leadership), community
and family focused (based in the community, promoting healthy family relationships, and community connections), and relational (supporting positive relationships with mentors, family, and peers). Bloom, Owen, and Covington (2006) suggested that gender-specific programming involve “creating an environment through site selection, staff selection, program development, content, and material that reflects an understanding of the realities of women’s lives” (p.2). PACE Center for Girls, Girls, Inc. and WINGS have demonstrated and documented successful reduction of recidivism for the at-risk adolescent female population they serve. The programs demonstrate further that this gender specific can work in community-based settings and provides a blueprint for future gender specific programming.

Georgia’s Efforts

Georgia, unfortunately, is not among the states that have instituted legislation targeting gender responsive education nor is it one of the states where one of the promising programs given by the OJJDP is located. Georgia has twenty-two Regional Youth Detention Centers (RYDC), short-term facilities, that house male and female youthful offenders and six Youth Detention Centers (YDC), long-term facilities. Only one YDC facility is for female juveniles. Georgia does not have any state endorsed community-based programs that specifically provides services for delinquent adolescent females. Georgia has made little to no collective attempts to promote gender responsive education of females in the community or in a facility.

Georgia House Bill 242 is legislation to stop the practice of boot strapping or holding girl offenders detained for status offenses. However, Georgia House Bill 242 was
all about the money. Georgia House Bill 242 was about money. Attached to this bill was the reality that housing a juvenile in a Georgia facility for one year costed taxpayers $90,000 per year (Klein, 2013). That’s $90,000 per year per child. Georgia House Bill 242 changed the way status offenders are held accountable for their actions. A youth can no longer be detained for a status offense. This drastically reduced the population in DJJ facilities across the state. Status offenses were now to be handled by the courts through community-based programs. GA House Bill 242 called for more researched-based community-based services (Klein, 2013). This was the ideal time for Georgia to implement mandates for gender-specific programming like Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Minnesota, and Oregon. However, Georgia has no such mandates.

Theoretical Framework

African American adolescent females are identified by researchers, practitioners, and various organizations as an at-risk population (Bowker & Kline, 1983; Garder & Belkap, 2004). May 2016 there were 22 adolescent females in my facility. Nineteen of those students were African American, one student was biracial, and two students were White. From my observation African American females are the majority adolescent females placed in detention. A Black feminist theoretical framework was used to address the unique experiences of African American adolescent females in the justice system and attempt to reduce their recidivism rates.

Identifying a feminist approach that would accurately address the needs of the adolescent females my study intended to impact must include addressing their gender, race, class, and the perceptions of themselves and the world around them. The effects of
triple oppression are significant when conceptualizing the problems and concerns of African American adolescent females (Holcom-McCoy & Moore-Thomas, 2001). For instance, an African American female valedictorian that attended my church did not attend college for a year after graduating from high school. When I asked her why she wasn’t going off to school, she replied “I don’t have the money right now. I’m just going to work and save up for school”. This particular adolescent female was the first valedictorian my church has ever had and yet we were not able to provide the necessary funds to send her to college. A family friend’s 19-year old daughter was retelling a story of her high school days at a privileged predominately White all girls Catholic private school. She stated that she would often be accused of stealing by her White counterparts. When asked why she thinks she was accused, her reply was “because I’m black and they (White people) think all black people are thieves”. These perceptions linked to gender, race, and socioeconomic status can ultimately lead to feelings of powerlessness among African American adolescent females (Fordham, 1993). Black feminist theory addresses racism, sexism, and classism (Thompson, 1998; Collins, 2009; hooks, 2000).

Methodology

The study determined through the experiences of volunteers and female participants if SYC’s program was successful with the aid of reducing the recidivism rates of the female participants. This study utilized a qualitative methodology. Mertens (2007) points out that qualitative methods are the “best” choice for most feminist research “because they include the use of open-ended interviewing and ethnographic data collection” (p.227). Qualitative research methods allow for an increased understanding of
the complex lives of women, African Americans, and people of low socioeconomic status (Merten, 2007). The founder of SYC, volunteers, and female participants were interviewed to assess the effectiveness of the program on reducing recidivism for female juvenile delinquents. The founder of SYC provided the researcher with a list of volunteers and female participants that were interviewed. The use of recorded open-ended questions during an unstructured face-to-face (when possible) interview was used to allow participants room to elaborate in an unrestricted manner. This format was used to ensure that the focus remained on the participant and their voice and not the researcher or any bias.

Researcher Bias

The main assumption of this research was that with the signing of Georgia House Bill 242 by Governor Deal May 2, 2013, more gender specific programming would be offered to at-risk female youth that commit status offenses and those female adolescents released from detention (Georgia State University Law Review, 2014). However, the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice Youth Offender Reentry Framework Strategic Plan (2014) did not contain or outline any gender specific programming. No such programming exists for at-risk female youth or female adolescents released from detention in southeast Georgia.

While conducting this qualitative study the researcher was aware of personal bias and moral judgments. For the researcher she was already an advocate for the potential participants of this study due to previous work with female students in the juvenile detention center. Having listened to several female adolescent students’ stories of
physical, verbal, emotional, and sexual abuse had created a “pro-participant” bias. The researcher’s awareness of bias and prejudgments was imperative to the integrity of the study and its findings. It was the responsibility of the researcher to ensure full disclosure in regard to the reason for the study, what the study entails, and the participants’ and volunteers’ rights (Creswell, 2013). The researcher was responsible for acting without prejudice and in a professional manner at all times when engaging the participants, volunteers, and founder.

Researcher Positionality

My identification as an African American female grants me access into the world of my potential research participants, African American adolescent girls. The common bond of gender and race dismantles two potential barriers for communication and relational groundwork. My desire to change the lives of African American adolescent girls in the juvenile justice system is a desire to affect a social change. This desire positions me as having a transformative paradigmatic view. Mertens (2009) stated that “a transformative world view holds that research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political change agenda to confront social oppression at whatever level it occurs” (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 9). Providing a pedagogy of care outside the classroom for social change is the underlying goal for this study. Creswell (2013) states that the transformative paradigm looks to address present day social issues, issues of oppression, empowerment, and domination. I have a responsibility to answer the call to social change for a marginalized group in our society because I have been granted the
distinct privilege of gaining access into the world of academia that is often closed to African American women.

Summary

In this chapter, I have explored the problem of female juvenile delinquency and the lack of gender-responsive programs for these juvenile delinquents. This chapter outlined “what works” literature and the lack of gender-responsive programs for at-risk adolescent females is especially identified in the state of Georgia and more specifically southeast Georgia. Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) identified five values that gender responsive programs should be to be effective with female juvenile delinquents: inclusive, restorative, aware of social context, and multileveled. Moreover, Sherman (2005) and the NGI (2013) believe that gender-specific programming should be comprehensive (family, community, and juvenile justice system), safe (promoting healing from trauma), empowering (encouraging leadership), community and family focused (based in the community, promoting health family relationships, and community connections), and relational (supporting positive relationships with mentors, family, and peers). These values and key identifiers for gender-responsive program along with target population for this study shaped the theoretical framework of this study and the research question.

In the next chapter I will discuss the theoretical framework that supported my underlining goal for social change. In doing so, this framework helped to analyze the following research question: 1. How do the experiences of at-risk adolescent females in a community-based program help reduce their recidivism rates?
CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the previous chapter I discussed the problem of adolescent female delinquency and the perplexity in finding appropriate programming that works to reduce recidivism rates for these at-risk juveniles. In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical framework that undergirded this research study and its attempt to advocate for the voice of at-risk adolescent females. Gender-responsive literature emphasizes the unique experience of being a female and asserts that females need qualitatively different types of programs and services to adequately address their delinquent behavior (Hubbard & Matthews, 2008). The National Girls Institute (2013) stated that “gender-responsive theories argue that there are gender-specific considerations regarding how girls’ behaviors and our responses lead to their justice-system involvement” (para. 1). A feminist approach to delinquency means construction of explanations of female behavior that are sensitive to its patriarchal context (Chesney-Lind, 1989). Feminist theories provide a foundational basis for a theoretical framework for this study as it intended to describe what needs to change about how female delinquent behavior is addressed in the juvenile justice system. Feminism and feminist theories are a multi-issue social movement that encompasses a variety of political tendencies (Feminism 101, 2007). Rosemarie Tong (2014) postulate that feminist thought is a diverse array of approaches, perspectives, and frameworks that help shape explanations for women’s oppression.
The second-wave feminist movement sparked by Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* never included African American women (hooks, 2000). Friedan’s famous phrase, “the problem that has no name,” was a problem that included only White middle-class married women (hooks, 2000). Friedan did not speak of the needs of women without a husband, without children, or without a home. She ignored the existence of all non-White women and poor White women. hooks (2000) postulated that at the time Friedan’s book was published more than one-third of women in the US were a part of the work force. While Friedan’s lived experience was a shared phenomenon and one that had been silenced prior to her widespread successful publication, it was also a limited lived experience. Friedan’s one-dimensional perspective on women’s reality further silenced the voices of African American women. hooks, an African American female scholar and feminist, also found widespread success with her first major publication *Ain’t I a Woman?: Black Women and Feminism* in 1981. hooks provided a counter narrative during the second wave of the feminist movement to Friedan’s narrative of the White middle-class stay at home wife and mother. hooks (2000) stated that “racism abounds in the writings of the White feminists, reinforcing White supremacy and negating the possibility that women will bond politically across ethnic and racial boundaries” (p. 2). Being a woman does not indubitably give me access to the institutions of White womanhood. I fight for the opportunity to dismantle the stereotype of the African American woman being a silent welfare recipient unable to properly care for her fatherless children.
The third-wave of the feminist movement sparked by Rebecca Walker, the daughter of famed African American female author Alice Walker, and her article entitled _Becoming the Third Wave_ opened the ground for African American women to explore their femininity through their lived experiences despite class, education, and socioeconomic status (Brunell, 2009). Third-wave feminists supported groups and individuals working towards gender, racial, economic, and social justice (Brunell, 2009). The third-wave was more inclusive of women and girls of color than the second wave had been (Brunell, 2009). This study weighed the effectiveness of a community-based program as determined by the lived experiences of the African-American females that participated in the program. The voices of the African-American female participants provided validity to this study. Third-wave feminism supports highlighting and representing their raced and gendered lived experiences to bring credibility to provide counter narratives of women often forgotten.

According to the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice descriptive statistics for Chatham County (2013), there were 186 female juveniles placed in detention in 2013 and 104 White juveniles placed in detention in 2013. There was a total of 824 juveniles placed in detention in Chatham County for 2013, 696 of those juveniles placed in detention in 2013 were African American. The GADJJ descriptive statistics for Chatham County (2013) does not give the number of African American female juveniles placed in detention, but it is deducible from the data and confirmed from observation that the majority of the adolescent females detained were African American.
African American adolescent females continue to be identified by researchers, practitioners and various organizations as an at-risk population. Researchers (Bowker & Kline, 1983; Gaarder & Belkap, 2004) conclude that this population is faced with an overwhelming number of conditions that determine their involvement in delinquent activities and future success. Factors such as poverty, lack of community programs, substance, physical and sexual abuse, poor quality of education and socialization skills have been noted as predictors of African American adolescent females’ participation in delinquent activities (Bowker & Kline, 1983; Gaarder & Belkap, 2004). The American Bar Association noted that between 1988 and 1997 delinquency cases amongst African American adolescent females increased 106% and represented 50% of the 65% increase of secured detention placements (American Bar Association, 2001; Acoca, 1998).

African American adolescent females that exhibit delinquent behaviors are measured by the rules set in place by a White male middle-class America.

Bell hooks (2000) stated,

As a group, black women are in an unusual position in this society, for not only are we collectively at the bottom of the occupational ladder, but our overall social status is lower than that of any other group…we bear the brunt of sexist, racist, and classist oppression. (p. 16)

African American adolescent females that exhibit delinquent behaviors have experienced oppression and exploitation from a male dominated justice system that has continued to marginalize their struggle and silenced their voices for change and a chance at restorative justice. Thus, it is necessary to use Black Feminist Theory in this study.
Black Feminist Theory

The Black feminist approach was famously introduced to the world by Sojourner Truth and her evangelic speech “Ain’t I Woman” (Taylor, 1998). Truth’s speech at the Ohio Women’s Rights Convention in 1851 was the first public display of feminism empowering Black women. Truth called attention to the intersection of race and gender that had never been addressed before (Taylor, 1998). Researchers (Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982; Taylor, 1998) credit Truth’s biblically rich speech with establishing the notion that “all the men are not Black, all the women are not White, Black women exist as Black women” (Taylor, 1998, p. 237). The recognition of Black women having an identity in American society was initiated by Truth but it was actualized by Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Mary Church Terrell (Taylor, 1998).

In response to a vicious attack on the character of Black women, the spread of disfranchisement, lynching, and segregation, Barnett and Terrell along with other renowned Black women educators, community leaders, and civil-rights activists in America organized the National Association of Colored Women’s Club (NACWC) in 1896 in Washington, D.C. (NACWC, 2011). The NACWC wanted to improve the lives of impoverished Black Americans and improve the image of Black women in American society (NACWC, 2011). Josephine St. Pierre one of the founding members of the NACWC set the tone when she announced that Black women have to present a positive image of the race to the world. The founding members of NACWC recognized the importance of society’s perception of Black women and Black women’s perception of the world around them. The NACWC supported the right of Black men and women to vote
and the women’s suffrage movement two years before organization of the White women’s club General Federation of Women’s Clubs (NACWC, 2011). Unfortunately, after the passage of the 19th Amendment Black women were met with hostility at the polls and the 1921 National Women’s Convention (Taylor, 1998). This dismissal of the Black women and their issues gave rise to Black feminist theory and need for Black women to advocate for themselves (hooks, 2000; Taylor, 1998).

Theory grounds how researchers identify, name, interpret, and write about adolescent African American women’s unique experiences (Stephens & Phillips, 2005). For the purpose of this study, it is important to identify a theory that reflects African American females’ social location and that of others with whom they interact in their world. I have chosen to use a Black feminist theoretical framework to address the unique experiences of African American adolescent females in the justice system and attempt to reduce their recidivism rates. Collins (1990) defined Black feminism as “a process of self-conscious struggle that empowers women and men to actualize a humanist vision of community” (p. 39). Black feminist theory recognizes the importance that knowledge plays in empowering oppressed people (Collins, 2009). Black feminist theory addresses racism, sexism, and classism (Thompson, 1998; Collins, 2009; hooks, 2000). African American adolescent females have the distinct pleasure of being a double minority, female and Black. hooks (1993) and other researchers (Blumberg, 1991; Collins, 2009; Thompson, 1998) postulate that African American women grapple with triple oppression based on race, gender, and class in which disproportionate numbers of African American women are economically disadvantaged.
Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) recounts a court case that further demonstrates the refusal of the judicial system to recognize African American women and their multi-oppressed experiences. Five African American women filed an employment discrimination-based lawsuit against General Motors Corporation in 1976 due to sweeping layoffs of African American women (Crenshaw, 1989). The court refused to allow the plaintiffs to combine sex-based and race-based discrimination into a single category of discrimination:

The plaintiffs allege that they are suing on behalf of black women, and that therefore this lawsuit attempts to combine two causes of action into a new special sub-category, namely, a combination of racial and sex-based discrimination…The plaintiffs are clearly entitled to a remedy if they have been discriminated against. However, they should not be allowed to combine statutory remedies to create a new “super-remedy” which would give them relief beyond what the drafters of the relevant statutes intended. Thus, this lawsuit must be examined to see if it states a cause of action for race discrimination, sex discrimination, or alternatively either, but not a combination of both. (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 142)

The court rejected the creation of a new classification of Black women. Crenshaw (1989) postulates that this ruling that “providing legal relief only when Black women show that their claims are based on race or on sex is analogous to calling an ambulance for the victim only after the driver responsible for injuries is identified” (p. 143). This systematic dismissal of Black women by the judicial system deems African American women legally invisible.

The Materiality of Theoretical Invisibility

The slogan “All the men are not Black, all the women are not White, Black women (girls) exist as Black women (girls)” (as cited in Taylor, 1998, p. 236) speaks to the very essence of why Black feminist theory exists. African American women are not a
subset group of women or African Americans. We are a group of people with our own experiences, identities, and unfortunate stereotypes. The Jezebel/Mammy dichotomy has shrouded Black womanhood since the abolitionist movement (Taylor, 1998). White (1985) points out that “the Jezebel excused miscegenation, the sexual exploitation of Black women,” whereas the “Mammy helped endorse service of black women in Southern households” (p.61). The denial of Black women’s “femininity” has been the main vehicle used to exploit their labor power and womanhood (Taylor, 1998). Though a seeming dichotomy, the jezebel and Mammy images were identities that confined and exploited Black women.

One of the most egregious cases of the exploitation and silencing of Black women was the case of Sarah Baartman, also known as the Hottentot Venus, an African slave in the 1800s. Sarah Baartman was taken from the coast of South Africa and placed on exhibit in London during the early and mid-1800s for her exotic body figure, becoming the icon of racial inferiority and Black female sexuality for the next 100 years (Magubane, 2001). Even after her death, Sarah Baartman remained an object of imperialist scientific investigation. In the name of science, her sexual organs and brain were displayed in the Musee de l'Homme in Paris until as recently as 1985 (Magubane, 2001). This attitude of racial inferiority and Black female sexuality being subpar is present in the American media’s ideals of beauty: blond hair, blue eyes, and thin. These depictions of American beauty further isolate and silence the voices, attitudes, and attributes of African American adolescent females. hooks (1993) posits, “the dearth of affirming images of black femaleness in art, magazines, movies, and television reflects
not only the racist White world’s way of seeing us, but the way we see ourselves. It is no mystery to most black women that we have internalized racist/sexist notions of beauty that lead many of us to think we are ugly” (p. 84). One way that this systematic internalized racism/sexism is visible is within the African American female community is their hair. Market research firm Mintel reported in 2014 that nearly six out of ten African American women in the US wear a wig, weave, or extensions (Opiah, 2014). The straightening and lengthening of African American women’s hair is an example of changing their original appearance to mirror the acceptable female images displayed in our society.

Even in my own life, these images continue to influence African American women’s identity formation. My best friend since seventh grade, who is African American woman and an educator, called me one day and told me that she had read a couple pages of her ten-year-old daughter’s diary. She stated further that her daughter was having issues again about her complexion. My best friend stated that her daughter feels that she is ugly because she has a darker complexion than her mother. Skin complexion is a societal battle African American women have dealt with for years. This light skin, dark skin societal battle continues to trickle down to our daughters and rob them of their natural beauty and confidence. My best friend reminds her daughter daily that she is beautiful through affirming her natural beauty. She often shows her daughter images of Black women like Lupita Nyong’o. Black women like Lupita Nyong’o are being recognized for being authentically beautiful by wearing their natural hair and not
having any physical alterations such as plastic surgery. Images affirming Black women in a positive aspect- is what my best friend reinforces with her daughter daily.

Identity Formation

Erickson (1968) posits that adolescence is when initial identity formation takes place. This initial identity formation, according to Erickson (1968), is “preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others rather than what they feel they are” (p. 128). The development of identity is compounded for African American adolescent females attempting to integrate a healthy sense of one’s Blackness and femaleness (Shorter-Gooden and Washington, 1996). A historical societal devaluation of African American women complicates the development of African American adolescent females by giving a negative perception of what it is to be an African American woman. The conflicting demands for African American adolescent females of racial identity and gender identity are often points that are invisible, but both their strengths and their problems receive little attention (Shorter-Gooden and Washington, 1996).

Silence and/or silencing, according to Signithia Fordham (1993) in her article, “Those Loud Black Girls”, are the “efforts to suppress” gender diversity, cultural awareness, and sexuality (p. 8). Fordham (2000) and Collins (2000) agree that “silence” plays a role in the formation of African American girls’ and women’s self-identity and revel critical factors such as African American girls’ and women’s placement in society, society’s perception of African American girls and women, and the historical image of the African American woman. By accepting this idea of White-middle class Americans being the social normality, many women of color are “compelled to silenced” and
stripped of their own self-identity (Fordham, 2000). When Fordham’s research subjects, high-achieving students in Washington, D.C., “got loud”, Fordham interpreted their noise as a rejection to such suppressions.

The high rates of status offenses among adolescent females versus their rates of criminal behavior signifies a clear indication of the court’s suppression of self-identity, sexism and paternalistic biases to make judgments around girls’ sexuality and perceived unfeminine behavior (Humphrey, 2004). Punishing or incarcerating adolescent females has become a way to keep them from expressing or acting upon their sexuality. Judges appear to feel that it is their responsibility to act as grandfathers or uncles in “protecting” adolescent females. During a disposition hearing for one of my African American female students who identified herself as gay, the older White male judge began to verbally reprimand her for her behaviors. The judge stated, “It is obvious by your appearance (the girl had a haircut like a boy) that you are confused about your sexuality. It seems that your behaviors of attacking teachers and peers also says that you are confused about who you are.” I could not help but think, how does the judge know that she is confused. How does her acting out behaviors pertain to her sexuality? The assumption on the part of the judge to “know” what my student was thinking is an example of her being denied a voice to clarify who she is or wants to be. This incident exemplified the silencing of African American girl’s self-identity/self-definition. Fordham (2000) posits that self-definitions are the ways in which African American girls and women define themselves through their own perceptions and not the perceptions of society. These self-definitions are essential to African American women’s survival in a US society that has historically and continually
refuted their intersectionality thus keeping them silent and invisible (Fordham, 2000 and Crenshaw, 1989). The inability for adolescent females, who exhibit delinquent behaviors, to have a voice validated their oppression and justified the intent of my study to empower these at-risk adolescent females to provide a social change in my community.

Hegemony

African American women have never been given any opportunity or allowed access to a socialized group to be the dominant culture in a society. hooks (2000) explains that due to this lack of access into any socialized dominant group Black women “have a lived experience that directly challenges the prevailing classist, sexist, racist social structure and its concomitant ideology” (p. 16). Semmes (1992) posits that cultural hegemony is “when groups are economically, politically, and culturally dependent, they are coerced to move away from their own collective goals in order to achieve functional goals defined by more powerful others” (p. 73). This assimilation to the dominant cultural is illustrated in Adele Morrison’s (2010) essay about hair straightening. Morrison postulates that the straightening of African American women’s hair “does to our racial identity what the chemicals of relaxers or the heat of pressing combs does to our hair—it makes us (seem) whiter” (p.88). Those of us who fail to assimilate are made invisible by stereotypes like the angry Black woman. It is my inherent right to confront and dismantle these prevailing social structures of oppression and social invisibility of the Black woman.

The dismantling of the status quo is the primary concern of Collins’s *Black Feminist Thought* (1990). Collins’s (1990) chief concern is with the relationships among
empowerment, knowledge, and Black women’s standpoint. Collins (1990) posits that the centralization of White male domination and their view of the world presents an obstacle to Black women’s standpoint in the academic world. Black women have developed a distinctive standpoint in academia and produced an alternative way to produce knowledge, a Black feminist epistemology. Black women have to face two epistemologies: one with regard to White male interests and the other represents Black feminist concerns. Collins (1990) refers to this reality in American society where two political criteria influence knowledge: the predominance of White male knowledge and the maintaining of Black feminist credibility. These two hegemonic criteria collide producing exclusion from quality educational experiences and lack of credibility which limit the Black women’s access to academia (Collins, 1990; hooks, 2000). This collision the hegemony is as a set of institutional and cultural assumptions that are primarily from White, middle-class male culture and that those are the very values Black feminism calls into question. I witness such a collision while in juvenile court with one of my students, being judge for her short hair. The assumption by the older White male judge was that she was confused about her identity. I have been afforded access into the realm of White male academia with the intention to dismantle the status quo for African American women and at-risk African American adolescent females.

The triple discrimination of racism, sexism, and classism is the plight of African American women and was identified as their plight in the early 1970s. Beale (2008), a founding member of the Women’s Liberation Committee of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) introduced the term “double jeopardy” to describe the
African American woman’s plight. Beale (2008) wrote concerning Black women, “As Blacks they suffer all the burdens of prejudice and mistreatment that fall on anyone with dark skin. As women they bear the additional burden of having to cope with White and black men” (p. 93). King (1988) concluded that the vast majority of Black women in poverty or earning low wages signifies their third jeopardy, economic class oppression. These simultaneous oppressions multiply the discrimination and exploitation of African American women and girls. Thus, leaving many African American women to feel hopeless and become silent whipping post, hooks (2000) stated that “being oppressed means the absence of choices” (p. 5). In their silence African American women and girls see few options, thus solidifying their foothold in oppression.

Black feminist theory provides a choice for the multiple oppressed African American women. Researchers (Humphrey, 2004; Zavlek & Maniglia, 2007; Sherman, 2005) agree that girls are further victimized and oppressed through institutionalization and incarceration. Humphrey (2004) concluded that “as girls continue to fall victim to their perpetrators, the court system, and detention, their needs are continually ignored and their voices silenced” (p. 11). Black feminist theory looks to shape our consciousness and knowledge of the world through the eyes of the oppressed Black female. hooks (2000) gives a proclamation and a call to action for all African American women when she states,

It is essential for continued feminist struggle that Black women recognize the special vantage point our marginality gives us and make use of this perspective to criticize the dominant racist, classist, sexist hegemony as well as to envision and create a counterhegemony. (p. 16)
African American adolescent females in the justice system are plagued with the multiple oppressions of sexism, racism, classism, and ageism. Their voices have been silenced. I answer the call to action that hooks has so eloquently given. I press to find a pedagogy that will help educate my silenced adolescent female students and help them find their voice.

Pedagogy of Care

Black feminist theory pays close attention to the issue of race, gender, and class (Thompson, 1998). bell hooks (1994) tells of her love for school prior to integration in her book *Teaching to Trangress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. She states that the teachers knew her. hooks (1994) posits that prior to integration the Black teachers “knew our parents, our economic status, where we worshipped, what our homes were like, and how we were treated in the family” (p. 3). The commitment by hooks’ African American teachers to know their students and be a part of the community was an act of love and care. Thompson (1998) states that the first step in school practice under a Black feminist thought is for teachers to get to know and understand their students’ situations. Thompson (1998) postulates that “a student’s situation does not disappear when she enters the classroom” (p. 541). It is common knowledge that our students enter our classrooms with their entire world on their shoulders and minds. Through a Black feminist lens, teachers make a conscious effort to take interest in their students’ world.

The privilege of being a Black female cannot be ignored simply because it is an uncomfortable subject. Thompson (1998) illustrates that it is impossible for students to trust teachers who (knowingly or unknowingly) ignore their cultural history, the good
(Martin Luther King, Jr.’s ‘I have a dream Speech’), the bad (the violence of the Civil Rights Movement), and the ugly (slavery). Nel Noddings (1995) accedes this notion of mistrust when she states “I am arguing here that it is morally irresponsible to simply ignore existential questions and themes of care; we must attend to them” (p. 678). It is the responsibility of the teacher to help their students develop and pursue questions that matter to them (Thompson, 1998).

Black feminist thought for caring is an understanding of the overarching responsibility to family and community (Thompson, 1998). Thompson (1998) postulates that Black feminist theory “represents a full-bodied view of womanhood encompassing outrageous, audacious, courageous and inquisitive behavior” (p. 536). One of the most important aspects of care through the Black feminist lens is the commitment to survival (Thompson, 1998). Not an individualized survival but the survival of the community at large. Within the community resides real relationships for African Americans. There is an old saying that if one wants to know what is going on in the Black community go to the barber shop or the beauty salon. An expression of love and trust for African American students is in the relationship. Teachers tiptoeing around the issues of real relationships and conflict are a betrayal of trust for African American students because it denies them attainment of real relationships (Thompson, 1998). The denial of relationships which is advocated in the Black community may leave Black students to determine that school has nothing to offer them.
Individualized Curriculum

In addressing gender responsive programming for African American female juveniles, it is important to understand what is valuable to them. Illeris (2003) makes a dynamic statement that connects to much of Black feminist thought’s refusal to accept the status quo: “most great steps forward in the development of mankind and society have taken place when someone did not accept a given truth or way of doing or understanding a thing” (p. 404). I believe that the understanding of one’s truth drives an individual’s curriculum. What is it that my students need to know to discover their truths? Schunk (2012) defines learning as “an enduring change in behavior or in the capacity to behave in a given fashion resulting from practice or other forms of experience” (p. 494). I continue to believe knowing one’s self is the best knowledge one could ever obtain. Taylor (1998) agrees with my belief and states that “Black women empower themselves by creating self-definitions and self-valuations that enable them to establish positive, multiple images and to repel negative, controlling representation of Black womanhood” (p. 235). I believe further that each person has an individual truth and a society has a collective truth. As an African American woman my truth lies in my experiences and perception of the world around me. This view of my truth is not unlike my students. St. Pierre (2000) illustrates that post-structuralism teaches that the thought process is entirely healthy because it is fluid and dynamic. All the time that humans are thinking, their views and beliefs can change. St. Pierre (2000) states that post-structuralists are skeptical of questions that look to find what “exactly” is going on.
Learning as defined by Schunk (2012) allows me to change and shape my experiences and perception of the world around me thus changing and shaping (reshaping) my truth. If learning produces a continuous change, the revelation of truth is ever changing. The discovery of individual truth then becomes secondary to the identification of a collective truth. Schunk (2012) defines theory as a “scientifically acceptable set of principles offered to explain a phenomenon” (p. 499). Theory is the identification of a collective truth. As an African American woman, I identify with the Black feminist theory. It aligns more so than any other theory to my personal truths. Black feminism takes into account that my experiences, my perception of the world around me, and how I am perceived by society are shaped by my identification as Black, female, and middle class. Collective truths are formed by self-identifications and experiences. I have similar experiences as other Black women because I am identified as a Black woman.

In the classroom my audience is primarily African American females. My knowledge base is much greater than my students, thus my perception of the world around me is different. As Schunk (2012) defined learning as having the ability to change one’s beliefs it also has the ability to change one’s perception of the world around them. My view of the world is broad. Many of my students cannot see, or some refuse to see, the world as bigger than their neighborhood or city.

The participants of this study were African American females that were rating the effectiveness of a community-based program based off their lived experiences as they participated in that program. The theoretical framework of Black feminism aligns with
my participants because it considers the unique position of being Black and a woman. Black feminist theory further recognizes that African American women face a triple oppression that the judicial system has failed and refuses to recognize. Not only can my participants align themselves with Black feminist theory but so can I because I am a Black middle-class woman. My experiences are based on the fact that I am a Black middle-class woman. My personal truths are deeply rooted in my lived experiences just as it is for the participants of this study.

The acknowledgement of mankind’s struggle is complex and drives an individual’s desire to learn what they believe to be important. I believe that Illeris (2003) summed up the complexity of finding (learning) one’s truth best, “a very complex process involving both biologically founded psychological and societally founded social elements which follow different sets of logic and work together in a complex interaction” (p. 398). For me as an African American woman I agree with Taylor (1998) that it is my job to confront and dismantle the “overarching and interlocking structure of domination in terms of race, class, and gender oppression” (p. 235). It is my job not for self-gratification, but for the realization of a collective truth, a truth that can be realized through my African American female students.

The collective truth that needs the most attention, for my students and the participants of this study, is that the most valuable attribute for African American women is our knowledge through our experiences and the experiences of other women like us. To solidify my belief of knowledge being created through experiences, Stephens & Phillips (2005) posits,
Human action and interpretations are considered historical by-products of collective experience. As a field of inquiry that emerged from both feminist and critical race theories, Black feminist thought validates the experiences of Black women in the creation of knowledge. (p. 39)

Black feminist theory allows the identities and experiences of my students and the participants of this study to create their knowledge foundation. It gives them a lens to look at education through. Black feminist theory provides a praxis for education to be relational and relevant to my students and the participants of this study in their struggle for survival.

Summary

Black feminist thought was born from the “failure of the civil rights and the White women’s movements to address the special needs and concerns of Black Women” (as cited by Williams, 1996, p. 38). Georgia’s House Bill 242 presents the state a great opportunity to provide needed gender responsive programming for at-risk female juvenile offenders while they are in the community. The goal of House Bill 242 is to reduce recidivism and the money associated with detaining youthful offenders (Klein, 2013). It is the goal of this bill to provide youthful offenders with research-based community-based intervention (Klein, 2013). Thus, I propose examining how an existing community-based program has effectively reduced the recidivism rates of at-risk female youth as perceived by the female participants through their lived experiences.

In regard to examining how a mentoring and tutorial program would reduce recidivism rates for at-risk female youth, one aim of my research was to exam the postures and cerebrations of the at-risk female youth of their involvement in the program. In accordance with House Bill 242, this research provided the needed research-based
evidence of the validity of a community-based program for delinquent adolescent females. This research will help to add to the body of literature about “what works” with delinquent adolescent females. This study aimed to fulfill the mission of the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice by describing and analyzing a program to reduce recidivism and return the youth to their communities as productive citizens. I believe that every adolescent female deserves the right to be heard and a chance to change. I believe that a mentoring and tutorial program would provide adolescent females with the ability to become empowered through their education and self-realization through a good role model. My goal was to take what I do in the classroom and expand it to the community. My desire was to help the adolescent female that got arrested for the first time; to help her successfully complete the terms of her probation agreement. Providing a pedagogy of care outside the classroom for social change was the underlining goal for my research.

This study intended to be beneficial to each participant but also to the community at large. A Black feminist approach to this study considers the community a necessary and critical component to the success of each participant. In the next chapter, I discuss the methodology that was used in this study.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapters, I have discussed the problem of female juvenile delinquency, the difficulty of finding what works with these at-risk female delinquents, and the theory of Black feminism. In this chapter, I will discuss the specifics of my research study: the research design, setting and context of the study, data collection, participants, data analysis, and the role of the researcher.

Research Design

My research interest was in finding an effective program that allows at-risk girls to find their voice by accessing their curriculum for empowerment. My study used a qualitative approach to examine how a community-based program for at-risk adolescent females reduced their recidivism rates as perceived by the participants. The purpose of my study was to determine the characteristics of a community-based program in reducing the recidivism rates of female juvenile delinquents as perceived by the female participants. The objective of this study was to examine the perceptions of delinquent girls on the effectiveness of Savannah Youth City, Inc. in reducing their likelihood of reoffending or committing a new crime. SYC is a non-profit organization that partners at-risk youth with a mentor for educational or job mentoring. Pairing academic support with a mentorship utilizes the five female responsive values defined by Zavlek and Maniglia.
(2007), developed for training purposes for the National Institute of Corrections, that define the conceptual framework in which female responsive services exist.

This study determined if the program utilized the five female responsive values: inclusive (multiple perspectives that encourage advocacy), relational (acknowledge the roles that relationships play in the development of healthy life skills), restorative (providing an opportunity to experience meaningful accountability to their victims and restore their own broken relationships), aware of the social context (assist girls in becoming critical consumers of media and other forms of social influence), and multileveled (confront systemic environments and system policies that hinder the ability to assist girls and young women in the work that they need to accomplish) as recommended by Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) for successful gender-specific programs.

The effectiveness of this community-based program is determined by the participants and their experiences while in the program.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is there is little to no gender specific programming available in southeast Georgia to address the needs of at-risk female adolescents in or outside of a juvenile detention center. The Urban Institute reported that community-based partnerships that involve researchers can facilitate collection of best practices and sharing of knowledge on “what works” (Roman et al., 2006). Despite juvenile justice reform and the signing of Georgia House Bill 242, there is a lack of comprehensive and sustained programming to meet the needs of at-risk girls in southeast Georgia. Georgia has made
little to no collective attempts to promote gender responsive education of females in the community or in a juvenile detention center.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this study was to determine the characteristics of a community-based program, SYC, on reducing the recidivism rates of African American female juvenile delinquents as determined by the female participants. SYC is a non-profit organization that partners at-risk youth, male and female, with a mentor for educational or job mentoring. The study examined the characteristics of this community-based program as described by the females and volunteers that participated in the program. Their responses were based upon their lived experiences and opinions while in the program.

Research Question

The research question of this study aims to highlight the voices of the female participants. It is their lived experiences and perception that will determine the effectiveness of SYC in reducing their recidivism. The research question: How do the experiences of at-risk adolescent females in a community-based program help reduce their recidivism rates?

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research can be effectively used to gain insight into the motivations and lived experiences of the participants of this study (Atkinson, 1998). Tillman (2002) posits that “qualitative methods are used to investigate and capture holistic contextualized pictures of the social, political, economic, and educational factors that affect the everyday existence of African
This study documents how a delinquency reduction program works for African American girls, and it aims to provide a solution to the problem of rising arrest rates among African American adolescent females. This study utilized underpinnings of a transformative paradigm directly addressing the oppression of at-risk African American adolescent females.

A transformative paradigmatic viewpoint speaks to the importance of social issues of the day, issues such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, alienation, and suppression (Creswell, 2013). Mertens (2007) posits that “the transformative paradigm’s central tent is that power is an issue that must be addressed at each stage of the research process” (p. 213). Transformative research provides a voice and philosophical framework for feminist researchers, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and queer communities, Marxists, persons with disabilities, racial and ethnic people, and indigenous and postcolonial peoples (Creswell, 2013).

A transformative paradigm provides the foundation for a qualitative approach to this research study. Transformative research provides a voice for participants that have been silenced through oppression and raises their consciousness to critically think and participate in society. The participants’ voice that the researcher seeks to identify provides the credibility for this study because this study seeks to identify what works for the participant. Black feminism puts the voices and experiences of Black women at the center; this study follows that path by putting the attention on the participants voices and experiences to provide a counternarrative to the lack of programs and initiatives to help Black women who come in contact with the juvenile justice system.
Setting/Context

The state and local demographics as well as the information on the organization SYC as a community-based organization are provided to help establish context of the study and because they may influence the transferability of my findings. The demographics of the study and the participants are important and provide information that pertains to the transferability of the study. Mertens (2009) defines transferability as the “reader’s ability to make judgments based on similarities and differences when comparing the research situation to their own” (p. 259). Mertens also contends that “extensive and careful description of the time, place, context, and culture provides a thick description” (p. 259) of the study, which further helps in the study’s transferability.

The organization utilized in this study was the SYC. SYC was established in 2012 and is a 501(c)(3) organization that aims to address young people in the Savannah community who are ordinarily overlooked and under-served by traditional social service efforts (SYC, 2016). The goal of the program is to create a supportive environment for young people who are looking for partners in their own success (SYC, 2016).

Context of the Study: Demographics

According to the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice’s (2013) descriptive statistics for Chatham County, 186 (22.6%) female juveniles and 104 (12.6%) White juveniles were placed in detention in 2013. There was a total of 824 juveniles placed in detention in Chatham County for 2013, 696 (84.5%) of those juveniles placed in detention in 2013 were African American. The GADJJ descriptive statistics for Chatham County (2013) do not give the number of African American female juveniles placed in
detention, but it is deducible from the data and confirmed from observation that the majority of the female juveniles detained were African American.

Table 1 is a comparison of Chatham County statistics compared to the Georgia statewide statistics for youth served during the fiscal year 2013. The table is given to further help with transferability of the study. The table includes the demographics for youth committed to the state. A state commitment is when legal custody is transferred temporarily to the State of Georgia to plan treatment and rehabilitation. A standard commitment order is good for two years but can be as long as five years (GADJJ, 2014).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics Unique Youth Served: Georgia Statewide Compared to Chatham County for FY 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Georgia Statewide</th>
<th>Chatham County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>24,319</td>
<td>638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>10,627</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>13,434</td>
<td>981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>18,788</td>
<td>3,579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1,983</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth Committed to the State: Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>4,310</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td>85.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>783</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth Committed to the State: Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1,983</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Context of the Study: A Community-Based Program

Using Foster and Louie’s (2010) definition of a grassroots organization, SYC is a democratically governed, values-driven process that builds upon the power of individuals to work collectively to make the changes they want to see in their communities. SYC is changing their community by impacting the lives of the youth that live in that community through educational tutoring, job tutoring, and mentoring. As stated by one of the participants, SYC is a group of insiders making the change inside our own communities.

SYC has four major community events each year. The Ignite Campaign happens over a span of 3-4 weeks. SYC targets neighborhoods with the most violent crimes. The founder obtains a police map that identifies the “hot spots” of violent crime. SYC gets the local radio station to come out with a DJ and provides a cook-out for the neighborhood. All are welcome to listen to the music, meet their favorite local DJs, and eat free hamburgers and hotdogs. SYC hosts two to three of these events a week during the Ignite Campaign. The Back to School event is another community gathering event where SYC gives out book bags filled with school supplies and free food. During these two events SYC founder and volunteers are able to develop contacts with people in that neighborhood and build partnerships with those community members.

The Gun Buy Back Program is a continuous event and partnership with the Savannah City government to get guns off the streets of Savannah. According to a US Today Network and AP analysis of Gun Violence Archive records from 2014 to June 2017, Savannah, Georgia has the third highest rate of teens injured or killed by gun violence yearly in the U.S. (Linderman, Horn, Parra, & Fenn, 2017). SYC seeks to
change this national statistic through their Gun Buy Back Program. Anyone may turn in a
gun and receive cash no questions asked. Lastly, SYC holds an annual fundraiser, their
SYC Gala, where participants, volunteers, and community partnerships are recognized
and celebrated.

The Participants

The convenience sampling method was used to select participants for this study.
As defined by the Laerd Dissertation Online Textbook (Lund Research Ltd, 2012),
convenience sampling is selecting participants that are the easiest to access. Convenience
sampling was used to gather the data from a desired specific group of people. The
founder of SYC provided the researcher with a list of female participants to contact for an
interview to determine the effectiveness of their community-based program. Participants
met the following criteria to participate in this study: (a) participants should be between
the ages of 18-25 years, and (b) participants should be African American female. African
American females are preferred participants in this study; pulling from the African
American female demographic was ideal for this study because it is reflective of the data
in Chatham County and coincides with the Black feminist theory being used in this study.
Volunteers were any person, regardless of age or gender that volunteered with SYC. The
founder of SYC is 46-year-old Bev Trotter, a native of Savannah.

Table 2 was developed to provide a brief description of each participant.
Participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect the identity of each participant and
maintain the level of confidentially indicated in the consents and spoken disclosure
statements. The at-risk females in this study were all over the age of 18 years old. The
delinquent acts identified in the table were noted by the participants as the activities they participated in or were thought to have participated in the first time they were arrested as well as services they received during their time in the judicial system.

Table 2

*Participant Profiles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Current Age</th>
<th>Delinquent Act</th>
<th>Age When First Arrested</th>
<th>Services Rendered Through Judicial System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Shoplifting</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Online reform course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alisha</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Truancy</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jade, aged 18 years, started her involvement with SYC during the organization’s Ignite Campaign summer of 2016. The Ignite Campaign is the primary recruiting method of SYC. During the month of July SYC hosts a community party in Savannah. At these community parties’ citizens receive free food from the cook-out, free educational material, free school supplies, and listen to music and meet local radio DJs. Jade noted that the first time she was arrested she was 17 years old and the person she was with was younger. Jade noted that the person with her was ‘popping tags’. The term ‘popping tags’ means to swap one price label for a cheaper price label in the store. She stated that she did plead guilty, but she believes it was for something she did not do. Jade was going through court proceedings at the time of her interview and this study window.

Mary, aged 18 years, started her involvement with SYC during the organization’s Ignite Campaign summer of 2016 as well. She noted that while in middle school she was arrested for fighting in school. Mary stated that she had to go to court and her mother had
to pay a fine. Mary noted that she has had no involvement with the judicial system since her first incident.

Alisha, aged 25 years, started her involvement with SYC at a back-to-school drive the fall of 2016. Alisha noted that she was first arrested at age twelve or thirteen for truancy. Since House Bill 242, truancy is no longer a detainable offense. Alisha was placed on house arrest and probation for one year. She noted that she did not receive any services during her time on probation. However, her parent paid for her to receive psychological services. Alisha stated that she had been arrested again at age 21, 23, 24, and 25. During her interview, Alisha stated “trouble has a way of finding you”.

Maria, aged 23 years, started her involvement with SYC through her financial need. She was given the number of the organization’s founder to receive aid to stop an eviction. Maria noted that SYC paid her back rent and her water bill. Maria noted further that she was first arrested for assault when she was 16 years old. She stated that she did not receive any services through the judicial system.

Lynn, aged 25 years, started her involvement with SYC during the organization’s Ignite Campaign summer of 2015. Lynn noted that she was first arrested at age 13 for fighting in school. She stated that she has never received any services through the judicial system.

The female participants were all between the ages of 18-25 and were all African American. This demographic coincides with the make-up of at-risk adolescent females in Chatham County according to the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice descriptive statistics for Chatham County as seen in Table 1 (2013). Zavlek and Maniglia (2007)
posit that in order for a gender-responsive program to work effectively it must address how “gender, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, religion, and other social categories and individual life experiences are interconnecting to the shaping of a girl’s self-identity” (p. 59). Therefore, there were no exclusion or rejection of participants based on race or sexual orientation.

Volunteers and Founder

Further participants in the study were volunteers and the founder of SYC. Due to availability and access, only four volunteers were interviewed. Age, gender, race, educational background, and socioeconomic status were recorded for the volunteers and the founder of SYC. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics U.S. Department of Labor, age, gender, race, educational background, and socioeconomic status are directly related to who volunteers in organizations (BLS, 2016). Volunteers with higher levels of education and older Americans had higher percentages of volunteering in the US than other groups (BLS, 2016).

Bev, a 46-year-old African American woman is the founder of SYC. She noted that she started SYC four years ago to address the rise in gun violence in Savannah involving youth. Bev personally experienced the death of her nephew due to gun violence in the city. This experience and the experience of the justice system as it pertains to African American youth prompted her to take action in her community.

Peter, a 54-year-old African American man and pastor of a well-known church in Savannah has been a volunteer with SYC for at least two years. Edith, a 45-year-old
African American female is also a pastor that has been volunteering with SYC for more than a year.

Table 3

Demographics of the Founder and Volunteers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Educational Background</th>
<th>Socioeconomic Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bev</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>Middle class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>Middle class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>Lower middle class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>Middle class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neal</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>No college</td>
<td>Middle class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tracey, a 24-year-old African American woman is a college student that began volunteering with SYC when the Ignite Campaign came to her neighborhood the summer of 2015. Neal, is a 68-year-old retired African American man that began volunteering with SYC after he needed the organization’s assistance with his grandson in 2015.

Convenience sampling was used to gather the data from the participants. The founder of SYC provided the researcher with a list of female participants, past and present, to contact for an interview to determine the effectiveness of their community-based program. The founder and four volunteers were also interviewed for their
perspectives regarding the effectiveness of SYC on reducing recidivism for at-risk adolescent females to help this study’s transferability for future studies.

The researcher’s initial assumptions were that each participant would have engaged in some level of delinquent behavior resulting in involvement with the judicial system. The researcher’s assumptions were accurate as each of the participants’ responses reflected they had directly participated in at least one delinquent activity that resulted in their involvement with the judicial system. The participants also provided their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the community-based program SYC. Each participant, volunteer, and founder participated in a one-to-one interview lasting a minimum of 10 minutes with the longest interview being 45 minutes. Participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect the identity of each participant and volunteer. Using pseudonyms also maintained the level of confidentiality indicated in the consents and spoken disclosure statements. Thus, the participants, Alisha, Maria, and Lynn, were all formerly served by SYC; whereas, Jade and Mary were current participants of SYC. Participants, volunteers, and founder were African American and resided in the Savannah-Chatham County area.

Data Collection

The methods of data collections have been set to contribute to the overall aim of this research study; to empower at-risk girls to advocate for themselves through access to their curriculum and mentoring services. Participants were interviewed by the researcher to extrapolate their opinions and determine the effectiveness of the SYC program. Audio recording was used during the individual participant and volunteer interviews. Artifacts
such as the organizations website, Facebook page, published flyers, and pamphlets were used to provide insight into the social organization SYC. Field notes and a reflective journal were used by the researcher to provide further insight into the social organization, assumptions of the researcher, and observations. Culturally sensitive research approaches, such as those used in this study, use qualitative methods with a wide range of data collection methods such as interviews and observations (Tillman, 2002). It is important that in a qualitative study that respect to site is given much consideration in order not to impact or disrupt the physical setting (Creswell, 2013). The recorded interviews were transcribed using denaturalized transcription capturing whole words and phrases while removing idiosyncratic elements of speech (every utterance, pause, and nonverbal vocalization). Emails, Facebook posts, flyers, and the SYC website were used as artifacts (See Appendix F). Field notes and reflective journal entries were used to provided further insight into the social organization, assumptions of the researcher, and observations.

**Interviews**

The founder of SYC, four volunteers, and five female participants were interviewed to determine the effectiveness of the community-based program SYC in reducing recidivism of at-risk female juveniles. The individual interviews were conducted face-to-face and were a mix of structured and unstructured. The first set of questions in the interview were structured to gather information about the participant or volunteers background. The second set of questions in the interview were unstructured (see appendix B) and allowed for the development of on the spot questions through dialogue and interactions (Glesne, 2011). Chesney-Lind (2001) posits that delinquent adolescent girls
are looking for someone to listen to them and hear what they have to say about their current situation. Individual face-to-face interviews were chosen because it is the best method to extrapolate a broad range of responses, which may provide a greater opportunity to obtain an in-depth understanding of the participant’s lived experiences. Individual interviews increased the participants’ level of comfort and ensured a greater level of confidentiality. Face-to-face interviews provided the researcher an opportunity to observe the participant, gaining both verbal and nonverbal information. The use of structured and unstructured face-to-face interviews allowed the participant to feel empowered by utilizing their own voice. It was the intent of this study to empower girls to use their voice and think critically. Black feminist theory advocates for the empowerment of African American woman based upon their perception of the world around them and their experiences. Mixed structured and unstructured face-to-face interview evokes this freedom allowing the responses to be more candid without the element of harm that can be noted in research settings like focus group interviews (Mertens, 2009). Structured face-to-face interview questions are short direct questions usually used in job interviews to gather necessary information, as in the class of this study needing to know background information about the participant and the volunteer. The structured interview questions were used to ascertain the level of judicial involvement the participant had engaged in and what services she received. For the volunteers the structured questions were used to gather their involvement with SYC and other community-based programs; their educational background; and their profession. The unstructured face-to-face interviews allowed participants and volunteers to answer
open-ended questions and there was room to elaborate. This freedom to elaborate is not evident in structured interviews due to the questions being closed ended and restrictive. The researcher believes that being an African American female, a native of the South, and having professional and personal experiences with female juvenile delinquents, increased her ability to provide a comfortable environment that encouraged participants to share their experiences, feelings, and opinions.

The researcher conducted the one-to-one interviews and transcribed all the information obtained. The researcher engaged in a continuous process of going back and forth into each individual interview as they occurred to identify, compare and categorize the similarities and differences presented (Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Associates, 2002). Eight out ten of the interviews were recorded. Two of the participant interviews were conducted over the phone due to the participants not being able to meet personally with the researcher. The two phone interviews were not recorded but field notes were used to transcribe these interviews. All recorded interviews were transcribed and were typed by the researcher. The recorded interviews were transcribed using denaturalized transcription capturing whole words and phrases while removing idiosyncratic elements of speech (every utterance, pause, and nonverbal vocalization).

Initial contact with potential participants was made in October 2016. By the end of February 2017, I had only been able to interview three participants, four volunteers, and the founder. In accordance with the outlined methodology, at least two more participants needed to be interviewed. One potential participant expressed a desire to be interviewed but unfortunately had been arrested two separate times between October and
February. Another potential participant expressed an initial desire to be interviewed but was unable to find the time between work and her children’s schedules. She later stated that she could not participate due to her obligations to her job and children. Three of the fifteen potential participants given to the researcher had contact phone numbers that were no longer in service. The founder even went to a potential participant’s job to contact her about participating in the study.

Another limitation of the study that involved the participants and volunteers was location. Finding a location that was convenient for the participant and volunteers was challenging. Some of the issues included conflicting schedules, lack of transportation, and finding a place that was conducive for the interview. The interview with volunteer Peter was conducted in the basement of a church while a group of singers practiced for a musical that was to take place in the church that evening. The interview with participants Jade and Mary were conducted during SYC’s Christmas gathering in a side room of the Culver-Brownville Community center. The interview with the founder had to be rescheduled three times before we were finally able to meet in a community barbershop for the interview.

The interviews were scheduled and held at the convenience of the participant (See Table 4). Before participating, the participants, volunteers, and founder were provided information on the purpose of the study and were advised on the possible implication of the study (See Appendix A). During all interviews the researcher made notes on the interview questionnaire. Field notes were taken after the interview about the setting of the
interview; body language of the participant, volunteer, or founder; and overall tone of the
interview.

Table 4

*Setting of Interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Place of Interview</th>
<th>Date/Time of Interview</th>
<th>Length of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bev</td>
<td>Founder</td>
<td>Liberty City barbershop</td>
<td>Thursday, January 12, 2017 around 7 pm</td>
<td>Approximately 18 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>First African Baptist Church during a musical celebration</td>
<td>Friday, January 20, 2017, around 6:30 pm</td>
<td>Approximately 8 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Georgia Preparatory Academy @ Savannah RYDC</td>
<td>Monday, January 9, 2017 around 12:30 pm</td>
<td>Approximately 25 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Agape Ministries</td>
<td>Friday, December 2, 2016 around 1 pm</td>
<td>Approximately 15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neal</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Mailbox Café</td>
<td>Tuesday, November 22, 2016 around 6 pm</td>
<td>Approximately 32 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Culver-Brownville Community Center during SYC Christmas Party</td>
<td>Wednesday, December 21, 2016 around 6:30 pm</td>
<td>Approximately 12 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Culver-Brownville Community Center during SYC Christmas Party</td>
<td>Wednesday, December 21, 2016 around 6:45 pm</td>
<td>Approximately 10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alisha</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Bull Street Library</td>
<td>Wednesday, February 8, 2017 around 5:30 pm</td>
<td>Approximately 15 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Location of each interview was decided at the convenience of each participant. The founder of SYC had to reschedule her interview with the researcher twice. On one occasion the founder and the researcher agreed on a place, time, and date. The founder was a no show to this interview. Finally, on the third scheduled interview the founder was available, so we met at a neighborhood barbershop. Because it was a school night, she had her son and the researcher had her two younger sons. The voices of the children playing, and the shop patrons could be heard in the background of the recorded interview. The interview for volunteer Peter was held at his church, historic First African Baptist Church, during a birthday celebration musical. The interview was conducted outside volunteer Peter’s office because someone was using it. A choir was rehearsing in the area where the interview was conducted. Participants Jade and Mary were interviewed at Culver-Brownville Community Center during SYC’s Christmas party. There were no rooms to move to for a quieter environment. The interview with Tracey, a volunteer, was conducted in my office at the Savannah Regional Youth Detention Center. The interview with Neal was conducted at a downtown Savannah business, the Mailbox Café. Customers were coming in and out of the business. There were even a few people that entered the business that knew Neal or the researcher. These interruptions were recorded. The two interviews with very little noise and interruptions were with Edith a volunteer and Alisha a participant. Edith’s interview was conducted in her office at Agape Ministries. There was no one present other than Edith and the researcher. Alisha’s interview was conducted at the Bull Street Library. We were able to get a small study room on the second floor in the adult book section. Despite all the activity, surrounding
noise and distractions, participants appeared to be engaged in the interview and there was flow of dialogue and conversation.

The interview protocols were guided by the research question; however, the interview questions were only used as a baseline. Their intended use was to lead to a conversational style interview. Thus, the participants, volunteers, and founder had the opportunity to discuss anything they liked about their experiences and varied involvement with SYC. They were advised of their right to decline to discuss any topic and withdraw from the interview or the study at any time by advising the researcher of their decision to withdraw. The interviews were digitally audio-recorded to facilitate collection of information and later transcribed for analysis and data management purposes. The audio equipment was visible at all times and was only used after the participant had granted his or her consent at the time of the interview. When the allotted time had passed or the participant agreed that they had disclosed all they cared to share, the face-to-face interview was terminated. Once the interview was considered complete, the audio recording device was turned off.

Recorded Sessions

Individual participant and volunteer interviews were recorded using audio-recording equipment. The audio-recording helped protect the identities of the participants while providing evidence of the participants’ attitudes and opinions of effectiveness of the planned intervention (Creswell, 2013). The audio-records were able to capture data to preserve for later analysis (Creswell, 2013). Names and any identity marks will be eliminated from the transcription of the audio recordings.
Audio recordings are more beneficial for this study because the focus was not on the visual but on the voice of the participant and the voices of the interaction of the participants and the investigator. Llorens (1998) postulated that loss of voice for adolescent females involves learning that the female role is not valued in our society.

The transcription of the audio recordings was done with care and integrity to ensure that the participants were represented accurately while maintaining anonymity. A key aim of this study was to empower at-risk female adolescence with a voice to advocate for themselves and to make their reality known to others. With this aim in mind, a denaturalized transcription was done for all interviews. Denaturalized transcription captures whole words and phrases while removing idiosyncratic elements of speech (every utterance, pause, and nonverbal vocalization). Cameron (2001) posits that denaturalized transcription suggest that within speech are meanings and perceptions that construct our reality. Denaturalized transcription upholds the theoretical framework of this study.

Each participant was provided with a consent form (See Appendix A) and advised that the interviews would be recorded. All protocol was vetted and approved through the institutional review board (IRB). Participants and volunteers were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identities as per the approved IRB.

Artifacts

The researcher used SYC’s website, Facebook page, printed flyers and pamphlets as artifacts during the collection of data. Document reviews are not new to qualitative research. Document reviews are used in supporting school improvement programs and is
a part of the school accreditation process. Bowen (2009) posits that document reviews are often used in combination with other qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation of data to breed credibility to a phenomenon. A review of the Facebook page of SYC revealed the reach of the organization. The Gun Education event dated April 1, 2016 had nearly 700 guests per SYC’s Facebook page. The Ignite Change Tour 2017 had nearly 500 guests. Both SYC’s Facebook page and website provides information about how to get involved with the organization and point of contact. Testimonials are written by participants and volunteers on the organization’s Facebook page and website. The Facebook page chronicles the organization’s activities and events with pictures and videos.

While working with SYC the researcher was given flyers about upcoming events and pamphlets about what the organization is about. SYC’s motto that is posted on all its flyers, website, and Facebook page is “Breaking Cycles”. One of the focuses of the SYC that is visible through a review of its documents/artifacts is that it provides at-risk youth opportunities of change through education and positive empowering experiences.

Field Notes and Reflective Journal

The researcher recorded personal reactions and suppositions in a reflective journal (See Appendix D and Table 5). The researcher recorded descriptions of events, interviews, and beliefs of the participants in field notes (See Appendix D and Table 5). Thorpe and Holt (2008) define field notes as being notes of observations or conversation taken during the conduct of qualitative research. Burgess (1991) states that “field notes are meant to be read by the researcher to produce meaning and an understanding of the
### Table 5

**Key Observations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Field Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Journal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neal</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>- Neal was early. He was waiting on me to arrive.</td>
<td>Neal told a story about how Bev (founder) helped his grandson. He expressed passion for the work Bev was doing. Neal is obviously a community leader. He knew nearly every person that entered the coffee shop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- We sat in chairs need the entrance of the coffee shop.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Neal was pleasant and greeted everyone that entered the coffee shop.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>- Agape Ministries is located in an industrial area in Savannah</td>
<td>Agape Ministries is a non-denominational church for persons that identify or are a part of the LGBT community. Edith is gay and is one of the pastors at this church and is married to the lead pastor a female ordained minister. Agape Ministries is the only church in the Savannah area that advocates for the LGBT community through training and ordaining same-gender loving individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The building did not look like a typical church</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Edith was passionate about being inclusive of the LGBT community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>- Jade presents as a petite young lady</td>
<td>Jade was very friendly. She asked for my number after the interview. She stated that she was going through issues with her current court case and need some mentoring. My response to her was that I needed to speak with Bev to ensure that it would be okay for me to interact with Jade using my personal cell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- She was eager to talk with me once Bev introduced us</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- There several small group sessions going on during the interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- We sat close to each other and laughed about not being able to hear one another</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>- Mary presents as a short younger looking (younger than Jade) young lady</td>
<td>Mary was friendly but very shy. Her answers were very short and to the point. She appeared embarrassed when she discussed her involvement with the judicial system. She spoke about being the oldest daughter and that she and her younger sister were involved with SYC I was unable to speak with her sister because she was not 18 years old and did not meet the requirements set forth by my IRB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Mary was very shy and made very little eye contact with me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- We sat close to each other due to the noise in the building, but I often had to lean in to hear Mary when she would speak. I would also have to ask her to repeat herself. I think this may have caused the interview to be shorter than Jade’s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Field Notes</td>
<td>Reflective Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>- Tracey was the youngest volunteer I had interviewed</td>
<td>Tracey was very energetic and conveyed her passion for working with young people that look like her family. She spoke of her aspirations and how she looked up to Bev (the founder). Tracey is a college student and single mother. She spoke about how those identities shape her decisions to work with SYC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Tracey was very relaxed during the interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The interviewed seemed to flow much better than previous interviews. There was a lot of laughter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Tracey was very articulate and conveyed her passion for working with SYC very well.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bev</td>
<td>Founder</td>
<td>- third time scheduling an interview with Bev</td>
<td>Bev is very busy. It was hard getting her in for an interview. The interview site happened by convenience. Her son and my sons played on their phones and tablets during the interview. The boys would get up and look at what the other was doing and comment and laugh. Bev’s answers were blunt and to the point. She appeared less interested in talking and more interested in working with the youth within SYC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- she had her son with her, and I had my two younger sons with me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Bev was very laid back, relaxed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>- There was so much activity in the church that evening</td>
<td>After the interview I went upstairs to the sanctuary where the birthday musical was happening. I sat near the back of the church. The church was filled with mostly an African American audition. There was a Caucasian man sitting in the middle aisle about four rows ahead of me. He looked a little dirty and out of place. I watched the pastor of this prestigious church, Peter, make his way to this man. They obviously knew each other by the way they greeted each other. Peter made it his business to sit next to this “out of place” man and interact with him. I thought to myself that Peter might just be the man he spoke about during his interview. A man for the left out and left behind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- We sat in the basement of the historical First African Baptist Church.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Due to a choir practicing in the basement we sat near each other and had to speak loudly to hear one another</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Peter was more than happy to speak to me about SYC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- He appeared proud of the work of SYC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Field Notes</td>
<td>Reflective Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Alisha    | Participant | -Alisha presents as a female that appears to dress masculine. Short bald fade and wore loose fitting jeans, shirt, and jacket  
-Alisha appeared preoccupied during the interview. She kept checking her phone  
-We asked for a private room at the main entrance desk (Bull Street Public Library). We were directed to the second floor, the adult section. | Alisha stated that she didn’t have much time but wanted to help Ms. Bev. She stated that her mother sent her to see a psychologist when she was a teenager, but the juvenile court did not provide any services. Alisha stated that “trouble seems to find you”. I believe this may be a true feeling for her because she has been arrested six times and the most recent arrest happened last year. |
| Maria     | Participant | -I had called Maria more than ten times when I called her Saturday morning, March 4, 2017.  
-Maria stated that she could not meet with me because she was headed out of town with her children.  
-I asked if she could speak to me now for about 10 minutes. Maria replied yes. | Maria’s story about the first time she was arrested at age sixteen and that she was pregnant at the time made me reflect on an incident that happened with my sister and the vulnerability my sister felt at the time. Maria is a single mom that works hard to support her children. She doesn’t have much time for a lot of interaction with SYC due to work but acknowledge she would like more interaction with them, and the interaction has been offered to her. |
| Lynn      | Participant | -I had spoken to Lynn a month prior to the interview March 9, 2017.  
-Lynn’s number had changed since my first contact with her in October 2016.  
-Ms. Bev found her for me and got her new contact information  
-When I called from my cell Lynn did not answer. However, when I called her from my office (state number) she answered the phone. | Ms. Bev explained to me during our time of trying to find Lynn, that Lynn was a single mom and a hard work. She encouraged me not to give up on finding Lynn. Once located, Lynn explained that she was having financial issues and was working two jobs. She stated that she didn’t know when she could have a sit-down meeting with me. I asked if she was able to talk now. She stated yes, she had a little time. The interview was short, but she appeared pleasant over the phone. |
culture, social situation or phenomenon being studied” (p. 192). Field notes revealed emergent themes. Identifying these emergent themes while still in the field allowed the researcher to shift attention in ways that resulted in a more developed investigation of emerging themes (Burgess, 1991). Richards and Lockhart (1996) postulate that a reflective journal is a way of thinking in a critical and analytical way about your work in progress. It shows how different aspects of our work interconnect (Richards & Lockhart, 1996).

The first contacts to potential participants and volunteers happened October 14, 2016. This was ten days after I received IRB approval to proceed with my study. The last interview was not completed until March 9, 2017. It took nearly five months to conduct ten interviews. The trials and difficulty with contacting and meeting potential participants and volunteers was extremely time consuming. Bev, the founder, was instrumental in locating participants and volunteers with the goal of meeting the requirements outlined in the approved IRB. According to the approved IRB at least five participants above the age of 18 but not to exceed 25 years old were to be interviewed. This population for this study set by the approved IRB criteria was extremely small and transient. The field notes and reflective journal allowed the research to document this task of locating participants for the study.

Data Analysis

Mertens (2009) describes qualitative data analysis as an ongoing process. Triangulation of the data collected, interviews, audio-recorded interviews, field notes, and reflective journal were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program to reduce
recidivism rates among the target population. Cohen and Crabtree (2006) define methods of triangulation as using multiple methods to facilitate a deeper understanding of a phenomenon. The data were organized and prepared for analysis using an constant comparison analysis method (Creswell, 2012). This process begun with transcribing the audio-recorded interviews and typing the field notes. All data was organized and coded to establish themes or descriptions that answer the research question of what works to reduce recidivism rates among African American adolescent females as perceived by the participants. The five values outlined by Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) of a female response program were used during coding. Key words or synonyms that were spoken by the founder, four volunteers, and the five participants were used to code them as one of the five values: inclusive, relational, restorative, aware of social context, and multileveled (Zavlek & Maniglia, 2007).

According to Trochim and Donnelly (2008), a unit of analysis is the major entity analyzed in a study. This study sought to examine the effectiveness of a gender responsive program to reduce the recidivism rates of at-risk female juveniles. Therefore, the unit of analysis for this study was the evaluation of the effectiveness of this program as seen by the participants. SYC’s program effective in reducing the recidivism rates of its participants is the unit of analysis.

In accordance with the identified unit of analysis, examining each participant’s responses was the primary focus of data analysis. The information gathered from the responses was coded, categorized, examined for patterns, re-categorized, and compared (Creswell, 2013). The researcher allowed themes to emerge thus resulting in a coding and
categorization system for analysis. The common themes presented during the data analysis process were acceptance, no judgement, and validation (See Table 6). Using the Black feminist theoretical lens, the researcher seeks potential action from the juvenile justice system to implement a program that is gender, race, and class specific to reduce recidivism rates among African American girls.

The credibility of this study resides in the perspective of the participant and was the unit of analysis of this study (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of SYC’s community-based program to reduce the recidivism rates of at-risk adolescent females as perceived by the participants through their participation in the said program. The credibility or believability of this study was reliant upon these participants perspective of whether the intervention was effective. The participants are the only legitimate judges of credibility because the intervention is an attempt to change their current behavior (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008).

Triangulation of Data

The triangulation was used to analyze the collected data. The researcher identified and categorized each of the themes that emerged across several types of data collected. The researcher used a constant comparison analysis method. The transcribed data, reflective journal, and field notes revealed that while, each participant described here had their own mean-making of effectiveness of SYC, three common themes were present and the researcher’s goal to obtain their perceptions was accomplished. These three common themes were acceptance, no judgement, and validation.
Table 6

Responses of Participants, Volunteers, and Founder: What Makes SYC Different from Other Groups or Services?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identifier</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>5 Value Category</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Ms. Bev speaks life into the youth. I want to do the same thing she’s doing.</td>
<td>Restorative</td>
<td>Validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>It’s fun and Ms. Bev wants and likes to help with the youth to get them on the right path.</td>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alisha</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Ms. Bev is in tune with the streets. She can relate to us and gives of herself.</td>
<td>Restorative</td>
<td>Validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Regardless of your situation, they look at the need. Regardless of how you got there or your income, they give you the help you needed. They care.</td>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Ms. Bev understands me without judgement.</td>
<td>Aware of social context</td>
<td>No judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bev</td>
<td>Founder</td>
<td>We are not a traditional service provider. You can’t walk in our door. And second of all we don’t have those things that would qualify you or disqualify you from getting help. Everybody is welcomed.</td>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Many groups like to have a model of success. What I mean by that is they only really want to have people in who are going to help the group look good. SYC takes on folk who would quote unquote make the group look bad for the purpose of helping the community to look good.</td>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>SYC is more of a partnership not a mentoring organization. The relationships between participants and volunteers is like a huge family. People can’t tell who’s the participant and who’s the volunteer. It’s not super structured.</td>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusive Restorative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifier</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Response</td>
<td>5 Value Category</td>
<td>Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Everyone is welcomed. No one is left out. Everyone is included regardless to appearance, belief, gender, or sexual orientation. Everyone is welcomed.</td>
<td>Relational Inclusive Restorative and Aware of social context</td>
<td>Acceptance No judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neal</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>No one is turned away. It doesn’t matter what you look like or how difficult your situation is, you’re accepted. We’re just a community of people helping each other to better ourselves and for the next generation.</td>
<td>Relational Restorative</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The constant comparative method (Boeije, 2002) was used to review transcribed interviews, reflective journal and field notes line-by-line and analyze sentences to determine appropriate codes revealed by the data. The interview data had the greatest weight in the analysis. Each code from the interviews was compared to the codes generated by field notes and reflective journal to identify likes, differences, and general patterns. Themes gradually emerged as a result of the researcher thoroughly examining the data, making logical associations across interview participants, and considering what was learned during the initial literature review.

Throughout the complex and continuous process of data analysis the written and recorded notes assisted in keeping information accurate and the categories in focus. The categories that emerged during the data analysis were what made SYC different from other organizations or previous services received, who was the difference maker, and what about the difference maker made a difference (See Appendix B). The interviews provided a wealth of information which increased the researcher’s knowledge about the lived experiences of the participants. The common themes presented during the data analysis process identified by the participants of the effectiveness of SYC addressing at-risk African American females were acceptance, no judgement, and validation. Another common theme or difference maker for all the participants and volunteers was the mentorship and leadership of the founder.

These themes were categorized to provide a review of the data collected during the one-to-one interviews with five African American females, the founder, and four volunteers regarding the effectiveness of SYC at reducing recidivism rates of at-risk girls.
The interview transcripts and field notes obtained were examined, coded and categorized in relation to the research question. How do the experiences of at-risk adolescent females in a community-based program help reduce their recidivism rates?

The data analysis section is presented to provide a review of the data collected during the one-to-one interviews with five African American females, the founder, and four volunteers regarding their lived experiences in relation to the effectiveness of SYC addressing at-risk girls’ delinquent behavior. The most prominent theme was no judgement and the mentorship and leadership of the founder. Each participant and volunteer spoke highly of their involvement in SYC and of the impact of the founder on their lived experiences. Her leadership and mentorship were infectious, causing others to desire to help others and make better life choices. All but one participant stated that the founder was the difference maker and the main reason SYC was effective in reducing their recidivism. Participants and volunteers professed that the founder’s ability to make everyone feel welcomed, accepted, and valued was infectious throughout the organization. The participants noted that they did not receive formal mentoring from the founder. However, they all described the founder as a mentor and one other volunteer as a mentor.

Transcriptions

The strategies used to deduct data included listening to the digital audiotaped interviews. Each interview was then transcribed into a Word document. The interviews were listened to again, and the transcriptions were simultaneously reviewed to correct
any mistakes. No follow-up interviews were requested by either party or no changes were made to the transcripts.

Coding Procedures

Initial coding consisted of recognizing various terms and labels used by the participants. The participants words were categorized based on Zavlek and Maniglia’s (2007) five values of a female responsive program. This assisted with establishing prominent themes and inferences about the data overall (Huberman et al., 2014). The second step consisted of deciphering the themes into manageable information (Huberman et al., 2014, p.86). Additionally, the researcher used some memoing techniques in which personal thoughts were documented while organizing the data (Huberman et al., 2014).

Role of Researcher

It is incumbent upon the researcher to seek out those who are silent and involve those who are marginalized (Mertens, 2009). Creswell (2013) posits that the role of the researcher is to act as an instrument in obtaining information. Mertens (2009) suggests the validity of a study is based upon the integrity, accuracy, competence level and credibility of the researcher. She (Mertens, 2009) states that the researcher’s judgment will guide the way in which the study will be conducted. In each girl I could see myself or my sisters. I am the daughter of a clinical psychologist. My father worked with adults that needed day treatment, medication monitoring, and vocational training. My sisters were adolescent delinquents. I have also had the privilege of mentoring high school girls with an organization called For All Our Daughters. I have also taught GED classes at the local technical college. I’ve always wanted to provide my students with an education that
was informative as well as transformative. These experiences led me to this topic of juvenile justice reform for adolescent girls.

Other Mothering

Despite there being no formal mentoring of the participants by the volunteers or the founder, the participants noted that they were inspired by the founder and other volunteers of SYC. One participant stated that she did receive mentoring services from a volunteer. Mentoring programs are often promoted to help adolescents develop and mature and to reduce problematic behavior (Sullivan, 1996). I am currently a mentor with a community-based program called For All Our Daughters (F.A.O.D.). Through F.A.O.D., I have been able to experience the joy of mentoring an African American adolescent girl from middle school to college. The experience as a mentor in the community and the work I do with the girls inside the juvenile detention center provide me with first-hand knowledge and access to the potential participants of this study. Sullivan (1996) states that “from the perspectives of cognitive, educational, and career development, urban girls may indeed benefit from greater access to the kinds of instrumental support provided by the mentor relationship” (p. 229). Girls that are involved in the juvenile justice system often lack the skills to establish and maintain positive relationships with adults and peers (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). Sullivan (1996) postulates that African American girls find pleasure and support in the connection with a woman who listens to her, who is interested in her, and whose experiences resonate with her own.

This connection between African American girls and African American women is also known as “other mothering” (Collins 1990, p. 128). Collins (1990) posits that
“othermothers often help to defuse the emotional intensity of relationships between blood mothers and their daughters” (p. 128). Girls that are involved in the juvenile justice system often feel oppressed at home by family members; at school through academic failure; in the community by the community’s inability to focus or see them for a valid population (Zavlek & Maniglia, 2007; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998; Acoca, & Dedel, 1998). For at-risk girls “relationships with women they can trust in and talk with play a vital role in sustaining and supporting their psychological health and resilience” (Sullivan, 1996, p. 241). Gilligan (1990) emphasizes the need for transparency in a mentor-mentee relationship by stating “the temptation to model perfection by trying to be perfect role-models for girls, women take themselves out of the relationships with girls, in part to hide their imperfection” (as cited by Sullivan, 1996, p. 241). Klaw, Rhodes, and Fitzgerald (2003) concluded that “the most important protective factor for promoting education attainment was the intervention by one person during a critical period in the life of each student” (p. 229). This study determined through the experiences of volunteers and female participants if SYC’s partnerships between at-risk youth and a mentor for educational or job mentoring were effective.

Participant Observer

The first time I interacted with SYC was at a meeting at a local radio station. Bev, the founder, and a young lady who identified as a male named “T” were at the meeting to represent the organization. The purpose of the meeting was to get the local radio station to participate in the organization’s Ignite Campaign that summer. Before going into the meeting Bev introduced me to T. Bev then began to encourage and coach T on how to
handle the meeting. Bev told T that she was in control of the meeting and that she had to represent for all of SYC. However, she stated to T for her not to worry because she would be right by her side. This interaction between T and Bev was relational, inclusive, multileveled and aware of social context (Zavlek & Maniglia, 2007). There were several times during this meeting I wanted to speak up and advocate for the group. I had to remind myself that I was only there as an observer. When Bev, was encouraging T, I gave T a supportive nod and pat on the back. I was an observer, but I was also a participant.

During the 2016 Christmas party Bev introduced me to several volunteers and participants of SYC. She had asked me if I would attend the party and bring a covered dish. I did. I found myself talking to more than just the young ladies I intended to interview. I made my way around the room speaking to many groups of young people, mainly young African American men that appeared to be between the ages of 12-16. Bev’s nature of wanting to help and change her community was infectious and I could feel it at every event I attended. Buckingham-Howes (2007) states that the participant observer becomes involved with the group itself while still maintaining his or her status as an observer. The group is aware that the observer is studying them, but the members become comfortable with the observer so that the observer eventually sees the real behaviors of the members rather than only seeing socially acceptable or atypical behaviors (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Buckingham-Howes, 2007). Jade, a participant became very comfortable with me. One morning about a month after our interview in December of 2016, Jade texted me and asked for my support. She wanted me to go to court with her. Unfortunately, I was working and was unable to get off. I did reach out to
Bev to inform her that Jade was looking for additional support. Bev arranged for someone to be in court with Jade. It was and is clear to me that supporting these at-risk youth takes an entire community of people dedicated to change.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Data triangulation was used to conduct the data analysis to establish credibility. There was corroboration between the data collected from study participants (interviews) and the supporting documents (field notes, artifacts, and reflective journal entries). This supported the themes that emerged and aided in the establishment of credibility of my data. In addition, the use of descriptions in the participants own words aid in credibility (Patton, 2003). The ability to integrate the participant’s words proved to add a richer and more realistic feel to the findings. The triangulation of data was employed to provided credibility and validity to the show how SYC was perceived by the participants to reduce their recidivism. All data was organized and coded to establish themes that coincide with the five values outlined by Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) of a female responsive program in order to answer the research question of what works to reduce recidivism rates among African American adolescent females as perceived by the participants themselves. While there were themes and patterns that emerged, participants found different values and had different experiences with SYC. All information aided in the telling of the complete story of the participant’s experience with SYC.

Dependability

Dependability was addressed throughout the entire process of the research study. The interviewing of multiple participants in conjunction with information gleaned from
the supporting documents provided triangulation. Committee chair feedback and the IRB process of Mercer University ensured the research question was clear. Adhering to the coding process outlined and approved by the committee chair and IRB ensured integrity during coding.

Confirmability

To ensure the conclusions were free of biases, the data presented was the data provided by the participants. Based on the data provided by participants are all conclusions. During the data collection and process stage, I maintained field notes of the process so that I could articulate the findings accurately.

Summary

This chapter provided an outline of methods and procedures for the study. The significance of this research is to provide evidence of whether a comprehensive community-based program works for delinquent girls. This evidence will help define the “what works” literature and to put into practice a culturally sensitive theoretical framework. Answering the research question of how at-risk girls will rate the effectiveness of participating in a community-based program aimed at reducing their recidivism rates. The findings of this study are needed to provide a more in-depth understanding of African American female adolescents in relation to the strategies being used to address their delinquent behavior. It was the aim of the study to provide evidence of a successful praxis for reducing recidivism rates for all girls, particularly African American girls.
CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

This study was conducted in order to understand and analyze the perception of at-risk adolescent females on the reduction of their recidivism rates due to their participation in a community-based program, SYC. This chapter presented the data garnered from ten interviews using a mix of structured and unstructured questions. I employed a qualitative study design through the theoretical lens of Black feminism. Data were collected during face-to-face interviews and phone interviews. The participants were past and present African American female participants of SYC, volunteers of SYC, and the founder of SYC. Analysis of the researcher’s reflective journal, field notes, and artifacts were also used to triangulate the data and develop themes to address the research question of the study: How will at-risk adolescent females rate the effectiveness of their experiences in participating in a community-based program aimed at reducing their recidivism rates? Emerging themes supported by reflective journal entries, field notes, and artifacts are connected to the five values of a female-responsive program (Zavlek and Mangilia, 2007).

The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of SYC’s community-based program to reduce the recidivism rates of at-risk adolescent females as perceived by the participants. The researcher engaged each interview from the theoretical framework of Black feminism. Black feminist theory advocates for the empowerment of
African American woman based upon their perception of the world around them and their experiences. Collins (1990) defined Black feminism as “a process of self-conscious struggle that empowers women and men to actualize a humanist vision of community” (p. 39). Black feminist theory recognizes the importance that knowledge plays in empowering oppressed people (Collins, 2009). Black feminist theory addresses racism, sexism, and classism (Thompson, 1998; Collins, 2009; hooks, 2000). African American adolescent females have the distinct pleasure of being a double minority, female and Black. The interview questions presented during each one-to-one interview were designed to keep the interviews focused and within the framework of the study. The research question: How do the experiences of at-risk adolescent females in a community-based program help reduce their recidivism rates? The following information provides explanation and discussions regarding each emerging theme in relation to the effectiveness of SYC on reducing recidivism of at-risk adolescent females.

Data Analysis

For the data analysis of this study, I employed a qualitative content analysis. Triangulation was used to analyze the data collected; transcribed interviews, field notes, reflective journal entries, and a review of artifacts (organization’s website, flyers, and Facebook page). The purpose of triangulation in qualitative research is to increase the credibility and validity of the results (Cohen and Manion, 2000). Triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources (O’Donoghue and Punch, 2003). The triangulation of data was employed to provided credibility and validity to the unit of analysis, the evaluation of the
effectiveness of SYC’s program as perceived by the participants on reducing their recidivism. All data was organized and coded to establish themes that coincide with the five values outlined by Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) of a female responsive program in order to answer the research question of what works to reduce recidivism rates among African American adolescent females as perceived by the participants themselves.

The first step in the data analysis process was to ensure that the five values outlined by Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) were clearly and precisely defined. Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) stated that a gender responsive program targeted to address female adolescent delinquent behavior. The five values of a female-responsive program were developed by the National Institute of Corrections as part of its training efforts for female adolescent offenders include: inclusive, relational, restorative, aware of the social context, and multileveled (Zavlek and Maniglia, 2007). According to Zavlek and Maniglia (2007), inclusive is the integration of treatment approaches in ways that allows for multiple perspectives and encourages advocacy concerning all forms of oppression. Covington and Bloom (2006) posits that the acknowledgement of gender differences indicates the successfulness of developed and delivered services and treatment of female offenders. Relational is the awareness that relationships are the glue that hold girls lives together (Brown and Gilligan, 1992). The context of relationships is where girls define their own self-identity; looking to others’ perceptions when shaping their own ideas about the world (Zavlek and Maniglia, 2007). Covington and Bloom (2006) postulate that when the concept of relationship is incorporated into policies, practices, and programs, the effectiveness of the system or agency is enhanced.
Restorative is focused on the harm done to the victims of the crime. Adopting a female-responsive philosophy means both allowing them the opportunity to experience meaningful accountability to their victims and restore their own broken relationships (Zavlek and Maniglia, 2007). The awareness of social context is the attempt to assist female adolescents in becoming critical consumers of media and other forms of social influence (Zavlek and Maniglia, 2007). Multileveled refers to systemic environments and system policies that hinder the ability to assist female adolescents in the work that they need to accomplish (Zavlek and Maniglia, 2007).

The second step in the process was to categorize the data based on key words and phrases (See Table 6) from the participants during their interviews to establish common themes. The themes were initially extracted from the participants’ interviews. Review and categorization of field notes, reflective journal entries, and artifacts supported the themes extracted from the participants’ interviews (See Figure 1). The emerging themes initially extracted from phrases spoken by the participants were later triangulated with reflective journal entries, field notes, and artifacts; the themes that emerged were no judgement, acceptance, and validation.

The third step in the data analysis process was to determine what support could be given to the themes extracted from the participants words. Figure 1 shows the beginning of this process. Support from reflective journal entries, field notes, and artifacts would give credibility and validity to words of the participants and the themes extracted from their words.
Figure 1. Second step in the data analysis process: Triangulation of data.

Lynn Participant: “Ms. Bev understands me without judgement.”
Field Notes: Lynn was difficult to locate. Ms. Bev continued to look for her until she was found.
Reflective Journal: Ms. Bev stated that Lynn was a single mother and a hard worker despite having difficulty financially.

Mary Participant: “It’s fun and Ms. Bev wants and likes to help with the youth to get them on the right path.”
Field Notes: The group includes all youth regardless of age, gender, color, or sexual orientation.
Reflective Journal: Volunteer Tracey was very energetic and conveyed a passion for working with young people that look like her family.

Alisha Participant: “Ms. Bev is in tune with the streets...she can relate to us.”
Field Notes: Alisha presents as a female with a masculine dress appearance.
Reflective Journal: The interaction between Bev and T before the meeting with the local radio station. Bev encouraged T that she was in control.
Figure 1 is an example of the process of triangulation and emergence of themes. Participant Lynn spoke the words “without judgment” that led me to my field notes of Ms. Bev’s persistence to find Lynn. My reflection of a conversation with Ms. Bev about Lynn further led me to the theme of no judgement, when Ms. Bev stated that despite Lynn’s challenges, she was a hard worker. Participant Mary stated that “Ms. Bev wants and likes to help (all) youth to get them on the right path”. My field notes indicated that all youth regardless of their age, gender, color, or sexual orientation were accepted to participate in SYC. This infectious behavior was seen by Volunteer Tracey and noted in my reflective journal. Tracey was passionate about helping youth that looked like members of her own family. From that collection of data the theme acceptance emerged. Participant Alisha stated that Ms. Bev “can relate to us”. In my field notes I noted that Alisha presented as a female with a masculine dress appearance. This led me to my reflective journal entry about Ms. Bev’s interaction and encouragement of T at the local radio station. Ms. Bev gave T a pep talk and encouraged her to advocation for not just herself but for all the youth of SYC. T was empowered by Ms. Bev. From this data collection the theme validation emerged.

Themes were extracted from the words spoken during the interviews of the participants, volunteers, and founder. Those themes were supported by additional data: field notes, reflective journal entries, artifacts (SYC website, Facebook, emails, and flyers). Once those connections were made then the themes identified were connected to one or more of the five values of a gender-responsive program by Zavlek and Maniglia (2007). No judgement, acceptance, and validation were the themes that were consistent
across all data and directly connect to one or more of the five values of a gender-responsive program (See Table 7). The initial themes that emerged in Figure 1 were triangulated with specific quotes from participants and with Zavlek and Maniglia’s five values (2007).

Table 7 demonstrates how the triangulation of supportive data was used to provide further credibility of emerging themes. Each theme extracted from the participants words and supported by additional data artifacts was connected to one or more of the five values of female-responsive programming identified by Zavlek and Maniglia (2007). The definition of each value is determined by Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) was applied to the triangulation to answer the research question. Figures 2, 3, and 4 demonstrate how each theme connected to all data collected with a primary indicator being the participants words.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identifier</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Response*</th>
<th>5 Value Category</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Triangulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Ms. Bev speaks life into the youth. I want to do the same thing she’s doing.</td>
<td>Restorative</td>
<td>Validation</td>
<td>*Ignite Campaign goals (flyer): Bottom up empowerment – strengthening target community assets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>It’s fun and Ms. Bev wants and likes to help with the youth to get them on the right path.</td>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>*Ignite Campaign goals (flyer): Educate our target communities on community ownership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alisha</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Ms. Bev is in tune with the streets. She can relate to us and gives of herself.</td>
<td>Restorative</td>
<td>Validation</td>
<td>*Reflective journal entry: Peter stated in his interview that Ms. Bev was taking her own money and working with youth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Regardless of your situation, they look at the need. Regardless of how you got there or your income, they give you the help you needed. They care.</td>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>*Reflective journal entry: During the meeting with the local radio station, Ms. Bev pointed out the neighborhoods that would be a part of the Ignite tour. She had a map that had been provided to her by Savannah Police Department that illustrated high crime areas. Those were the areas that were the target areas for the Ignite tour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Ms. Bev understands me without judgement.</td>
<td>Aware of social context</td>
<td>No judgement</td>
<td>SYC website/email: SYC organized a gun buy back program. This program was a no questions asked program. The idea was to get the guns off the street without judgement or punishment. This was to be done voluntarily. The program garnered attention from local news stations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifier</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Response</td>
<td>5 Value Category</td>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Triangulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bev</td>
<td>Founder</td>
<td>We are not a traditional service provider. You can’t walk in our door. And second of all we don’t have those things that would qualify you or disqualify you from getting help. Everybody is welcomed.</td>
<td>Relational Inclusive Restorative and Aware of social context</td>
<td>Acceptance No judgement</td>
<td>*Reflective journal entry: SYC is inclusive with their work with the LGBT youth in Savannah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Many groups like to have a model of success. What I mean by that is they only really want to have people in who are going to help the group look good. SYC takes on folk who would quote unquote make the group look bad for the purpose of helping the community to look good.</td>
<td>Relational Inclusive Restorative and Aware of social context</td>
<td>Acceptance No judgement</td>
<td>Reflective journal entry: Peter walked the talk he gave me about being accepting of everyone when he made sure to seat next to the only Caucasian man in the audience at the church. From their exchange, it was clear they knew each other, and a great rapport was established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>SYC is more of a partnership not a mentoring organization. The relationships between participants and volunteers is like a huge family. People can’t tell who’s the participant and who’s the volunteer. It’s not super structured.</td>
<td>Relational Inclusive Restorative</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>*SYC Facebook page: Pictures of their 2016 Ignite tour showed participants of all ages. Many of the pictures were taken in public housing areas (projects).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7—continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identifier</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Responsea</th>
<th>5 Value Category</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Triangulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edith</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Everyone is welcomed. No one is left out. Everyone is included regardless to appearance, belief, gender, or sexual orientation. Everyone is welcomed.</td>
<td>Relational Inclusive Restorative and Aware of social context</td>
<td>Acceptance No judgement</td>
<td>Reflective journal entry: Bev’s encouragement to T (the female that identified as a male) to take charge of the meeting and be an advocate for SYC was inspiring and empowering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neal</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>No one is turned away. It doesn’t matter what you look like or how difficult your situation is, you’re accepted. We’re just a community of people helping each other to better ourselves and for the next generation.</td>
<td>Relational Restorative</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Reflective journal entry: At the Christmas party 2016, the party was filled with kids that look like they just need a place to go on a pretty cool evening.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Triangulated with supporting data: reflective journal entries, field notes, and artifacts.

a Exact words of the participant
Figure 2. Triangulation of theme 1: Acceptance.

Acceptance

From the interview question about what makes SYC different, the theme of acceptance emerged. Tracey, a volunteer, stated “SYNC is more of a partnership not a mentoring organization…like a huge family. People can’t tell who’s the participant and who’s the volunteer.” These words directly point to the relational value of female-responsive programming (Zavlek and Maniglia, 2007). Bev and Edith both stated that
“everyone is welcomed.” Four out of five of the participants were introduced to SYC through its community campaigns. It was at those welcoming campaigns the participants became involved with SYC.

Volunteer Tracey stated, “We develop relationships with the girls. Holding each other accountable. Knowing them and accepting them.” Participant Mary stated that she communicates with one of the volunteers almost every day via social media, demonstrating the relationship and acceptance that volunteer Tracey described during her interview. Participant Mary stated, “Ms. Bev and the volunteers are dependable and trustworthy. They are there when you call them. You’re never alone.” The relationships built through SYC between participants and volunteers are a strength-based community service that allows female participants to make positive connections and build interpersonal skills.

Each Ignite campaign is held in neighborhoods that have high crime rates. Ms. Bev works with Savannah Police Department to get a make of high crime areas. This is how she maps out her Ignite neighborhood tour. Based on that crime map, Ms. Bev picks spots to set up and make relationships. One of the goals of the Ignite campaign is to “cultivate positive environments in order to engage and heal the community and the relationships therein” (SYC, 2016). Embedded into the fabric of SYC’s Ignite campaign is relationships.

Participant Mary and her sister are members of SYC. Mary stated that one of the SYC volunteers was her mentor. Mary stated that she “gets advice” from her mentor and that her mentor was “a big sister” to her. Jade stated that her relationship with her mom
had improved because of SYC. She stated that her mother “thinks SYC is positive and keeps me on the right side”. With every interaction and every interview, it was apparent that relationships matter to SYC.

The theme of acceptance also included the value of inclusion. The words “everyone is welcomed”, “no one is turned away”, and “everyone is included” were phrased spoken by the participants during their interviews. The value of inclusion or the allowance of multiple perspectives was clear in SYC’s letter to community partners for their 2016 Ignite Campaign:

Ignite wants other communities to inspire other communities to Ignite love, healing, peace, hope, and bottom up empowerment in an effort to curb the acts of violence. This campaign will target turbulent neighborhoods and the areas that need positive reinforcement throughout the Savannah-Chatham Georgia area (SYC, 2016).

SYC works with all youth regardless of socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or gender identification. Volunteer Peter echoed this idea of inclusion and multiple perspectives when he stated, “Many groups like to have a model of success. What I mean by that is they only really want to have people in (their group) who are going to help the group look good. SYC takes on folk who would quote unquote make the group look bad for the purpose of helping the community to look good”. The acceptance of everyone and anyone into SYC was felt throughout the words of the volunteers and participants and my interactions with the organizations.

No Judgement

All the female participants indicated a degree of embarrassment surrounding their delinquent behavior. They also indicated that despite their various situations SYC
provided a non-judgmental environment. All participants, volunteers, and the founder were asked what makes SYC different from other services in or around Savannah or previous services received. Tables 5 and 7 show their responses.

Participant Lynn stated that what makes SYC different from previous services she had received was that Bev, the founder, understood her without judgement. Participant Lynn identified herself as lesbian. Volunteer Edith, a pastor of a predominantly lesbian
congregation was asked an additional question about how SYC is helping the lives of at-risk females in our community. Volunteer Edith stated:

SYC welcomes everyone and because of that welcoming spirit it allows people to be accepted for who they are without judgement or fear of judgment. Bev has this unique ability to communicate with the youth. There is no comparison. She’s the only one that can get through to the youth. Many at-risk LGBTs have been victimized and judged for their orientation. They no longer have trust in anyone. SYC removes judgement and builds relationships to ensure a foundation of trust is built. But it starts with the relationships being formed and built. That’s where the trust comes in.

Volunteer Edith demonstrated further that no judgement was a common theme for this study.

It was the intent of this study to empower girls to use their voice and think critically. Their responses to this interview question and the other questions, empowers them as the decision makers of the effectiveness of SYC on their lived experiences. Black feminist theory advocates for this type of empowerment based on the perspectives of the participants as African American females. Two of the five female participants stated that no judgement was the difference maker. One of the Ignite campaign goals for 2016 was bottom up empowerment—strengthening target community assets.

Restorative justice is empowerment. Restoring a girl’s voice empowers her to advocate for herself and others around her without falling victim to predators and societal pressures. The ability to participate in SYC without judgement is not only restorative but aware of social context. SYC has a gun-buy-back program. This is a “no questions asked” gun-buy-program. In a 2016 email to stakeholders, Bev stated “we are going to buy them (guns) off the streets from young people, destroy them and provide gun education
workshops that will include conflict resolutions across Savannah” (B. Trotter, personal communication, November 20, 2016).

The part of the mission statement of SYC is, “we are dedicated to helping young men and women become greater and help their communities”. The gun-buy-back program as well as the mission statement are all about providing a non-judgmental environment to restore and empower people and communities. SYC is also aware of the social context of the issues on the streets of Savannah. Participant Jade stated, “Ms. Bev speaks life into the youth. I want to do the same thing she’s doing”. Participant Mary stated, “It’s (SYC) fun and Ms. Bev wants and likes to help with the youth to get them on the right path”.

One of the most empowering interactions I watch with my time with SYC was with T and Ms. Bev. We were there to meet with a radio station about helping with the Ignite campaign. T a young female that appear masculine (short haircut, baggy jeans, and a collard shirt). In the parking lot of the radio station Ms. Bev gave T an extremely empowering pep talk. Ms. Bev told T to take charge of the meeting. She told T “this is for your neighborhood, you know what y’all need”. Ms. Bev told T she had this and that she was representing SYC. T responded with head nods and looking directly into Ms. Bev’s eyes. SYC demonstrates the ability to give participants pride in their city and neighborhood while holding them accountable for cleaning it up and making it a better place for future generations.
Validation

During my interview with the founder she stated that her experience with SYC has been a learning experience. When asked “what works” she answered “listening.” Actively listening to the youth without immediately offering a solution to their problem, just giving them an ear, was described by volunteer Tracey. She stated that “SYC doesn’t have the savior mentality.” SYC ensures that each participant is heard. It empowers them to have a voice. Volunteer Tracey stated that SYC encourages everyone to be a leader.

Participant Mary’s comment about the founder and the volunteers being dependable and never being alone speaks to the feeling of belonging. I attended SYC’s Christmas party and was able to experience this validation of the participants firsthand. The participants of SYC were repeatedly told by volunteers and community leaders that night how important they were to the city and to their communities. The founder went from table to table reminding the youth that every volunteer and community leader that was in attendance had taken time out from their lives to invest in them. All of the volunteers and community leaders were deeply engaged with the youth during this event. There were no all adult or youth tables. Volunteers and community leaders made a vested effort to sit and get to know the youth in that building.

Participant Maria spoke about her recent experience with SYC. She stated that she was about to be evicted and reached out to the founder for help. She stated that SYC accepted her as she was and not just her, but also her children. Maria explained further how she was immediately put at ease and given the help she needed. Participant Maria stated that she was “accepted with no judgment and felt a sense of belonging” all in that
one encounter with SYC. She continued that ever since that encounter she has become a volunteer to help others and to make others know that they have a place where “they are understood and they belong.” Volunteer Tracey described the feeling of belonging and validation when she described SYC as a “huge family.”

Figure 4. Triangulation of theme 3: Validation.

In an email about the gun-buy-back program Ms. Bev stated, “with a young person dead everyone to two hours from gun violence, waiting for the perfect solution
may not be in our best interest” (B. Trotter, personal communication, November 20, 2016). Ms. Bev continues in her email to be aware of multileveled issues that plaque the young men and women she attempts to build up and restore. She notes in that same email that the Chief of Police will have to return the guns to the streets if they give the guns to the police. Ms. Bev stated, “we partner with young people with turbulent backgrounds who have had or have a relationship with the judicial system…what we do is for our future, their future” (B. Trotter, personal communication, November 20, 2016). This email conveyed a strong understanding of the situation the at-risk youth in Savannah’s poverty areas face and the systemic injustices that await them. Ms. Bev also speaks of community helping community. Volunteer Neal stated, “we’re just a community of people helping each other to better ourselves and for the next generation”. Neal understood this to be true because SYC and Ms. Bev had helped his grandson get on the right path and away from the “wrong crowd”.

The Founder: Ms. Bev the Other Theme

The prominent theme in every interview was the founder, Ms. Bev. Her name was mentioned throughout every interview. Volunteer Peter spoke about how he first learned about SYC

Some time ago I heard people talking about a lady who was helping a lot of kids a lot of young people who basically nobody else would help. And she was using her own resources to do it. And I heard one story after another story after another story. I had no idea who they were talking about. Then one day I actually met this lady who was spending her money helping these kids in depressed areas and in areas where people really don’t go. And for the most part these young people don’t go to church. And she was just out there with them.
Participant Jade stated that “Ms. Bev speaks life into us. I want to do the same thing she does.” Participant Mary stated, “Ms. Bev wants and likes to help with the youth to get them on the right path.” Participant Alisha stated “Ms. Bev is in tune with the streets. She can relate to us.” Participant Lynn stated that “Ms. Bev understands without judgement.” Participant Maria stated, “When I called Ms. Bev, she helped me without judgement or questions.” Volunteer Edith stated “I met Bev at a community event about a year ago. I had heard about SYC and I wanted to help. She was helping my target population, the LGBT community. People who had been tossed aside by mainstream church and society.”

Many times, when the participants and volunteers would talk about Ms. Bev or SYC, they would use them interchangeably, like she was SYC and SYC was Ms. Bev. Probably one of the most compelling stories about Ms. Bev came from volunteer Neal.

I’ve known Bev for about three years. About two years ago, we were having trouble with my grandson with gangs and all. I was told that Bev could help. She came and spoke to my grandson and then helped him even through his court case. She stuck with him. Bev has a way of talking to these kids that they need. They understand it and appreciate it. After that I told her that I would help her with anything. She was a blessing to our family.

From the interviews it was apparent that Ms. Bev, the founder of SYC, was and is a change maker for countless families, youth, and communities in and around Savannah. She is the key to SYC being a grassroots community-based organization and a program for change. SYC’s slogan is “Breaking Negative Cycles.”

Summary

Participants, volunteers, and the founder were interviewed to answer this study’s research question: How do the experiences of at-risk adolescent females in a community-
based program help reduce their recidivism rates? Based on the interviews, artifacts (emails, flyers, organization’s website, and Facebook), reflective journal entries, and field notes, I concluded that the participants of SYC perceived the program to be effective in reducing their delinquent behavior, thus having the potential to reduce their recidivism rates. Not one participant, volunteer, or anyone I met during my interactions with the organization, whether it was at the Christmas party or the radio station had anything negative to say about SYC or Ms. Bev.

While the five participants, four volunteers, and founder expressed the common themes of no judgement, acceptance, validation, and Ms. Bev’s involvement as reasons SYC was effective in reducing their delinquent behavior, their levels of participation in the program varied as did their level of previous delinquent activities. A goal of this study was to ensure that the voices of the participants were heard. Empowering the participants to be the sole indicators of effectiveness of the community-based program, SYC, utilized the underlying theoretical framework of the Black feminist approach to bring out the fundamental goal of social change.

Triangulation of the data and how the emerging themes connected to the five values of a female-responsive program as outlined by Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) provide further credibility to the efforts of SYC in reducing the recidivism rates of African American female adolescents. Chapter 4 has presented the findings of the current investigation. Chapter 5 will present limitations, overall conclusions, discussion, and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of SYC, an existing community-based program at reducing the recidivism of at-risk female juveniles as perceived by the participants of the program. Awareness of the participants’ perceptions was needed to begin to expand the researcher’s perceptions of the participant and attempt to close the gap in existing literature. This study examined the effectiveness of SYC as determined by the female participants, volunteers, and the founder; based upon the lived experiences and opinions while participating in this community-based program.

The rationale of the study was the intent to add to the literature of “what works” for adolescent females in the juvenile justice system and establish a long-term service that will prevent adolescent females from reoffending or violating their probation. A key component to the services provided to adolescent females is education. In this capacity, this research study sought to answer the following question: 1. How do the experiences of at-risk adolescent females in a community-based program help reduce their recidivism rates? Participants, volunteers, and the founder of SYC were interviewed to determine the effectiveness of SYC’s program through their lived experiences and the perception of the participants on the program’s ability to reduce their recidivism rates.

African American adolescent females are identified by researchers, practitioners, and various organizations as an at-risk population (Bowker & Kline, 1983; Gaarder &
Belkap, 2004). A Black feminist theoretical framework was used to address the unique experiences of African American adolescent females in the justice system and attempt to reduce their recidivism rates. Black feminist theory advocates for the empowerment of African American women based on their perception of the world around them and their experiences. Black feminist theory addresses racism, sexism, and classism (Thompson, 1998; Collins, 2009; hooks, 2000). Sherman (2005) and the NGI (2013) believe that gender-specific programming should be comprehensive (family, community, and juvenile justice system), safe (promoting healing from trauma), empowering (encouraging leadership), community and family focused (based in the community, promoting health family relationships, and community connections), and relational (supporting positive relationships with mentors, family, and peers). These values and key identifiers for gender-responsive program along with target population for this study shaped the theoretical framework of this study and the research question.

The research question of this study aims to highlight the voices of the female participants. Using a qualitative research methodology helped to effectively gain insight into the minds of the participants of this study (Atkinson, 1998). The participants were adamant that SYC was effective in reducing their delinquent behaviors despite some of the participants having recent judicial system involvement. Their voices were heard and felt through their interviews, artifacts (flyers, Facebook, and the SYC’s website), researcher reflective journal notes, and researcher field notes. Three themes were identified by the participants, volunteers, and founder that made SYC effective in reducing the recidivism of the African American female participants. The emerging
themes are no judgement, acceptance, and validation. Triangulation of the data and how the emerging themes connected to the five values of female-responsive programming as outlined by Zavlek and Magilia (2007) provide further credibility to the efforts of SYC in reducing the recidivism rates of African American female adolescents.

The current chapter will reveal the results of the data collection and analysis, propose conclusions that can be drawn from the data, present limitations, overall conclusions, discussions, and suggest recommendations for gender responsive community-based programs and future research.

Results and Discussion of the Findings

All data was organized and coded to establish themes that coincide with the five values outlined by Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) of a female responsive program in order to answer the research question of what works to reduce recidivism rates among African American adolescent females as perceived by the participants themselves. Based on the interviews, artifacts, researcher’s reflective journal and field notes, the researcher concluded that SYC was effective in reducing the female participants’ delinquent behavior thus reducing their recidivism rates as perceived by the participants. Two out of the five participants interviewed had current cases open within the judicial system. Participant Jade had an upcoming court appearance for her shoplifting offense. Participant Jade stated that her mother thinks SYC is a positive influence, “it keeps me on the right side”. Participant Alisha had an upcoming court appearance for driving with invalid license. Participant Alisha also believes that “trouble finds you”. Indicating that she is somehow always in trouble with the law.
The researcher arrived at conclusion that the participants perceived that SYC did help to reduce their recidivism rates. It also became clear that each participant experienced a feeling of belonging and acceptance within the organization that promoted a change in their behavior and the desire for a better future for themselves and their families. While the five participants, four volunteers, and founder expressed the common themes of no judgement, acceptance, validation, and Ms. Bev’s involvement and influence as reasons SYC was effective in reducing the participants delinquent behavior, their levels of participation in the program varied. Only one of the five participants had been involved with SYC for a year. Additionally, one of the five participants had only received financial assistance from the organization. She had not been involved in other activities due to her work schedule.

National Institute of Justice (2014) defines recidivism as “criminal acts that result in rearrest, reconviction or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the prisoner’s release.” As determined by the participants SYC was successful with reducing their delinquent behavior; however, a true result of a reduction in recidivism is measured through no delinquent behavior over at least three years. None of the participants interviewed have been involved with the organization that long.

Summary of the Results

This study answered the following research question: How do the experiences of at-risk adolescent females in a community-based program help reduce their recidivism rates? The data revealed that the outcomes of the lived experiences utilized to address the delinquent behaviors of these African American females differed from one participant to
the next. While each participant was able to identify positive changes the level of behavioral modification also varied. All the participants recognized and expressed that SYC had a direct impact on their behavior. The feelings of acceptance and validation were expressed by all the participants. All the volunteers and founder stated that everyone is welcomed to participate in SYC. This willingness to accept all who come into contact with SYC is one of the organization’s unique qualities that set it apart from other community-based organizations in the area. Acceptance, no judgement, and validations were the themes that were consistent across all data and directly connect to one or more of the five values of gender-responsive programming as outlined by Zavlek and Mangilia (2007).

Theme 1: Acceptance

SYC has no criteria for involvement or membership with the organization. The founder, Ms. Bev, stated that the organization was non-traditional. She stated further “you can’t walk in our door and you can’t walk out our door. We don’t have those things that would qualify you or disqualify you from getting help.” A review of artifacts revealed this same theme of all people are welcome to participate in SYC. One Ignite campaign flyer stated that one of the goals of the campaign was “bottom up empowerment-strengthening target community assets”. This theme of acceptance was felt in the words of one participant, Mary, when she stated that because of Ms. Bev and the volunteers, she is “never alone”.

Edith, a volunteer, stated “SYC removes judgement and builds relationships to ensure a foundation of trust is built.” The relationships built through SYC between
participants and volunteers are a strength-based community service that allows female participants to make positive connections and build interpersonal skills. Volunteers and participants who recognized that SYC has a direct impact on participants’ behavior identified a common sub-theme. The common sub-theme: positive relationships were directly related to their outcomes. Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) postulate that community-based programs that honor relationships the female has in their lives as well as how to form new ones is needed for that program to be gender specific and successful for the female juvenile.

Relational. Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) postulate that an effective gender responsive program should be: inclusive, relational, restorative, aware of social context, and multileveled. Sherman (2005) and the NGI (2013) also believe that one major component of a successful gender responsive program is that it is relational. hooks (1994) posits that prior to integration the Black teachers “knew our parents, our economic status, where we worshipped, what our homes were like, and how we were treated in the family” (p. 3). Like hooks participant Jade saw these same qualities in the SYC program. She stated that her mother thinks SYC is a positive and helps to keep her on the right track. SYC was described by at least two volunteers as a family or community of people helping one another for future good. One participant stated that she admired the founder so much that she wanted to do the same thing the founder was doing “speaking life” to the members of the organization.

The experiences participants had with the SYC program demonstrated a Black feminist pedagogy of care existing through an understanding of the overarching
responsibility to family and community (Thompson, 1998). SYC has programs in the community with volunteers from that same community that identify with their participants on a socio-economic level, racial level, and a gender bias level. The founder, volunteers, and participants of SYC are persons cut from the same cloth and are able to relate to one another because of this unique circumstance. A foundation of trust is built because there is a mutual understanding that the founder and volunteer understand where the participant comes from culturally, morally, and socio-economically.

SYC ensured that relationship building stayed at the forefront of the organization by having community events in the communities of the youth in the program. SYC’s 2016 Christmas party was held at the Cuyler-Brownsville Community Center. The Cuyler-Brownsville community is where many of the SYC participants live. It is also where many of the crimes identified by the Savannah Chatham County police’s “hot spot” sheet given to Ms. Bev happen. Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) stated that “involving the family and a girl’s community as part of the recovery is an important element of treatment and rehabilitation” (p. 61). Being present in the community they intended to impact is what SYC accomplished during their Ignite campaigns. Showing up is the first step in relationship building. Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) and hooks (1994) emphasize building relationships for positive self-identity.

Mentors. One out of five of the participants stated that she had a mentor. Participant Mary stated that one of the volunteers was her mentor. She stated that they communicated several times a week via text messages or social media. Participant Mary stated that the volunteer was like her big sister, always willing to listen and offer advice
when needed. Participant Jade stated that she did not have a mentor but would like one. Participant Alisha stated that she doesn’t “really” have a mentor but she calls Ms. Bev whenever she needs advice or someone to talk to. Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) posit “that programs that have mentors that can relate to the girls’ experiences and provide opportunities for girls to develop relationships of trust and interdependence with other women already present in their lives is essential for effective gender-specific programming for adolescent females” (p. 63). Although there are no formal mentoring services offered through SYC, positive relationships are evident.

Theme 2: No Judgement

Participant Lynn was the first to utter the words of no judgement with a simple statement “Ms. Bev understands me without judgement”. This theme goes hand and hand with acceptance but reaches further to include restoration. It is the intent of SYC to empower female adolescents to use their voice and think critically about themselves and the world around them. Navigating through a societal pressure of social media and reality can have profound effect on how a female adolescent perceives herself and her perceptions of the world around her. A nonjudgmental environment like SYC cultivates and empowers female adolescents to be uniquely themselves. Black feminist theory advocates for this type of empowerment based on the perceptions of the participants as African American females.

Restorative justice is empowerment. Restoring a girl’s voice empowers her to advocate for herself and other around her without falling victim to predators and societal pressures. The ability to participate in SYC without judgement is not only restorative but
aware of social context. Ms. Bev was persistent in locating Alisha. Ms. Bev believed that Alisha had something special and valuable to say and contribute to this study. Ms. Bev’s determination to have Alisha, whose appearance would be concerned masculine, demonstrated an inclusive behavior. Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) posit that successful gender-specific programs “allow girls and young women to understand gender, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, religion, and other social categories and individual life experiences as all interconnecting to shape their self-identity” (p. 59).

SYC’s gun-buy-back program, the Ignite campaign, and my interactions with many members, volunteers, and the founder I saw judgement being withheld and acceptance always granted.

During one of my interactions with SYC, I met a female participant that identified herself as T and was masculine in appearance and dress. T was the spokesperson for the organization at a meeting with a local radio station. The purpose of the meeting was to get the radio station to volunteer their DJ services during SYC’s Ignite Campaign. T and Ms. Bev, the founder, met with the director of community programs for the local radio station. The researcher was present as an observer and offered no input or suggestions. Prior to the meeting, Ms. Bev encouraged T to speak up and represent SYC. Ms. Bev expressed to T that she was the face of SYC. It was obvious that these words encouraged T. She appeared to beam with pride. She carried a notebook of her ideas. During the meeting, T introduced the ideas while Ms. Bev added only supporting details. The radio station director fully engaged and interacted with T and Ms. Bev.
In this one encounter T was given a voice to advocate for herself and her community. Her opinions and ideas were accepted and valued. This level of acceptance, encouragement, and validation was echoed by Volunteer Edith:

SYC welcomes everyone and because of that welcoming spirit it allows people to be accepted for who they are without judgement or fear of judgement. Bev has this unique ability to communicate with the youth. There is no comparison. She’s the only one that can get through to the youth. Many at-risk LGBTs have been victimized and judged for their orientation. They no longer have trust in anyone. SYC removes judgement and builds relationships to ensure a foundation of trust is built. But it starts with the relationships being formed and built. That’s where the trust comes in.

Mrs. Bev did in this moment with T what Crenshaw (1989) posits that African American females need affirmation for self-identification. T was accepted and empowered by Ms. Bev. Ms. Bev chose T to be an advocate for SYC demonstrated Zavlek and Maniglia’s (2007) inclusive value. Ms. Bev had an establish rapport and relationship with T despite her appearance demonstrated Zavlek and Maniglia’s (2007) relational and aware of social context values. Ms. Bev empowering pep talk to T, encouraging her to be the voice for SYC demonstrated Zavlek and Maniglia’s (2007) restorative and multileveled values.

Mrs. Bev made herself the community that T needed to affirm her so she could find her identity and her voice. In this one encounter, Zavlek and Maniglia’s five values are at work.

Theme 3: Validation

Collins (2009) defines validation as the affirmation of a person’s feelings and opinions. During my interview participant Alisha stated that “Ms. Bev is in tune with the streets…she can relate to us.” Empathy is being able to put yourself in someone else’s shoes or place. Volunteer Tracey stated that she could see her family members in the
faces of the youth of SYC Volunteer Neal stated that they were a community trying to help better themselves and the next generation. SYC’s ability to be empathic to their youth is evident in their ability to affirm their participants and encourage them beyond what they can see right now.

Ms. Bev and the volunteers of SYC ensure that each participant is heard. SYC empowers their youth to have a voice, not just to be heard but to lead. Volunteer Tracey stated that SYC encourages everyone to be a leader. I saw this lived out with my experience with Ms. Bev and T at the radio station. SYC’s mission statement is “…to build up young men and women through engagement, inspiration, accountability and the removal of institutional and environmental barriers.” Ms. Bev stated in her interview that the difference between SYC and other programs was that they “listen”. Youth that participate in SYC know that what they have to say will be heard and action will follow. The organization’s follow through was seen in the many different programs and undertakings by SYC from the Christmas party to the Gun-buy-back program. The heart of the organization was revealed in the funds they spent to ensure that the needs and opinions of the youth it served where heard and acted upon. As a researcher participant, SYC was seen, heard, and felt throughout the neighborhoods they worked with to create a sense of community. Zavlek and Maniglia (2007) postulate that programs that allow adolescent females opportunities to experience meaningful accountability to their victims and communities restores their own broken relationship. SYC’s ability to be seen, heard, and felt in communities where female participants lived, whether it was at the Ignite Campaign, the Gun-buy-back program, or the Christmas party, help their female
participants restore relationships with their communities. This restoration to the female participants’ communities is a validation that not only do the communities matter but so does the participant.

Relationship Between the Results and the Literature

A review of existing literature revealed that no study has been done regarding determining the effectiveness of community-based gender responsive programming and understanding the perceptions of African American female adolescents regarding programming that could aid in reducing their recidivism rates. In this section, various studies identified in the literature review are revisited. There are several studies in the literature that emphasized the value of adolescent females forming positive connections to individuals and programs within their communities as likely to reduce their recidivism rates (Chesney-Lind et al., 2008; Covington & Bloom, 1998; OJJDP, 1998; Sherman, 2005; Watson & Edelmann, 2012; Zahn et al., 2009). The results of this study confirmed the results of Sherman (2005) who stated that least restrictive alternatives should be in and reflect females’ communities and respond to the specific needs identified within the population of adolescent females. All the participants stated that they were first introduced to the program through a community event in their neighborhood.

Sherman (2005) and the NGI (2013) believe that gender-specific programming should be comprehensive (family, community, and juvenile justice system), safe (promoting healing from trauma), empowering (encouraging leadership), community and family focused (based in the community, promoting healthy family relationships, and community connections), and relational (supporting positive relationships with mentors,
family, and peers). All of these characteristics were ones that participants recognized as part of what made Ms. Bev and SYC important and successful in the community. Mary, a participant, stated that she and her sister joined SYC at the Ignite Campaign when it was in their neighborhood. She stated further that her mother loves the program. She was the only participant that stated that she had a mentor while in the program. Tracey, a volunteer, stated that the program empowers participants and volunteers to have leadership roles and roles of authority through various community outreach projects throughout the year. The researcher participated in one of SYC’s programs during the Christmas season. Several community leaders were present at this very informal event. Sitting next to at-risk youth and building relationships with them were health professionals, pastors, and state senators. The presence of these professionals, pastors, and state senators showed the SYC participants that they were important and deserving of their time. Zavlek and Maniglia (2007), Collins (2009), and hooks (2000) emphasize the need for positive relationships for youth for their own self-identity.

This study affirmed Bloom, Owen, and Covington’s (2006) study that suggested that gender-specific programming involve, “creating an environment through site selection, staff selection, program development, content, and material that reflects an understanding of the realities of women’s lives” (p.2). Tracey, a volunteer, stated that SYC is more like a family than a typical community-based program. Tracey stated further that most people can’t distinguish volunteer from participant, which speaks to their willingness to be inclusive and relative to the community they serve.
In summary, the results of this intervention qualitative study have displayed that the SYC provides positive connections for their female participants in relation to their communities and their families. SYC also meets the guidelines of OJJDP (1998) by being close to the participants’ homes in order to maintain family relationships and it is also the least restrictive environment, their communities. The program has uniquely partnered with community leaders to provide an informal and relaxed environment that is not intimidating to the participants, making it conducive to their central value of creating and empowering the youth. One aim of this study was to add to the literature of “what works” for reducing recidivism for female juveniles. The founder stated that what works is listening. Peter, a volunteer, stated that what works for SYC is acceptance. He stated that there are pre-qualifications to be a member or participant of SYC. Alisha, a participant, and Ms. Bev demonstrated that what works for SYC is relationships. Ms. Bev ensured that Alisha was included in the study because of the value she placed on Alisha’s lived experience. Alisha, although being busy, stated that she “wanted to help Ms. Bev”. Jade, a participant, stated that what works for SYC is its ability to empower others. Jade stated that she wanted to do what Ms. Bev does “speak life” to young people. Neal, a volunteer, stated that what works for SYC is community. He stated that each volunteer and participant were just neighbors helping neighbors. What works for SYC is its ability to bring a community together to help each other without the need for a savior.

Relationship Between the Results and Theory

Black Feminist theory was used in the study to explain and support the perceptions of African American adolescent females and their involvement with the
hooks (1993) and other researchers (Blumberg, 1991; Collins, 2009; Thompson, 1998) postulate that African American women grapple with triple oppression based on race, gender, and class in which disproportionate numbers of African American women are economically disadvantaged. The perceptions linked to gender, race, and socioeconomic status can ultimately lead to feelings of powerlessness among African American adolescent females (Fordham, 1993). African American adolescent females that exhibit delinquent behaviors have experienced oppression and exploitation from a male dominated justice system that has continued to marginalize their struggle and silenced their voices for change and a chance at restorative justice.

All five participants stated that they did not receive any services through the justice system to address their delinquent behavior. One participant stated that she saw a psychologist, but this was done by her parents. Participant Jade stated she was having a problem with getting the money for the restitution and the class she was ordered to take by the courts. SYC was helping Participant Jade find a job and fulfill her community service hours. The founder of SYC described the program as an organization that wants to give young people affected by the judicial system another chance by creating opportunities and changing traditions.

The founder described an experience with a young lady in the program that had intellectual challenges. This young lady was homeless. SYC provided her with financial help and academic support to get her GED and a job. This young lady is now employed and lives in Macon, Georgia. Collins (1990) postulated that Black women have developed a distinctive standpoint in academia and produced an alternative way to
produce knowledge, a Black feminist epistemology. In Collins’s *Black Feminist Thought* (1990) the chief concern is the relationships among empowerment, knowledge, and Black women’s standpoint. Participant Jade stated that the founder speaks life into the youth. She further declared that she wanted to do the same thing. Volunteer Tracey stated that the founder of SYC creates opportunities for leadership and roles of authority within the organization. Participant Mary stated that she communicated with her mentor, one of the volunteers, via social media or text almost daily.

All the volunteers and the founder described themselves as middle class Americans. Volunteer Tracey stated that she is not far removed from the participants as it pertains to socioeconomic status. Volunteer Peter stated that he wanted to help with SYC because it is helping the least, the last, and the lost. All the volunteers stated SYC turned no one away creating an environment of acceptance and validation. Volunteer Edith stated that everyone is included regardless of appearance, belief, gender, or sexual orientation. Volunteer Edith continued that SYC removes judgement and builds relationships to ensure a foundation of trust is built. Maria, a participant, stated that regardless of her situation, SYC looked at the need and helped her without judgement.

Thompson (1998) postulates that Black feminist theory “represents a full-bodied view of womanhood encompassing outrageous, audacious, courageous and inquisitive behavior” (p. 536). One of the most important aspects of care through the Black feminist lens is the commitment to survival (Thompson, 1998). SYC is a family standing and fighting together. Volunteer Neal stated that “we’re just a community of people helping each other to better ourselves and for the next generation.” Volunteer Tracey stated that
outsiders can’t tell the difference between the volunteers and the participants of their program.

Limitations

There are specific limitations that are presented in this study. The initial limitation is the lack of female participants in SYC by which to specifically analyze the interventions being utilized by the founder and volunteers. However, this did not bar the acquisition of information that was integral to understanding the needs of at-risk adolescent females in community-based programs. The second noted limitation was the researcher’s inability to contact many of the past and present female participants of SYC.

Discussion

Hipwell and Loeber (2006) highlighted in their research that there is a great need for more data on the effectiveness of specialized treatments for female juvenile delinquents. Often at-risk females who participated in delinquent behaviors have experienced oppression and exploitation from a male dominated justice system that has continued to marginalize their struggle, silenced their voices, and deny them a chance for restorative justice. The overarching all five participants noted that they had all had involvement with the juvenile court system, some repeatedly, yet none of them had received any services and/or counseling through the juvenile court system.

In the case of Participant Alisha, she continued to get arrested thus her rate of recidivism did not decrease despite her involvement in SYC. Participant Jade has a pending case for shoplifting. Though each participant stated that they believed that SYC
directly impacted their delinquent behavior positively, only three of the five participants interviewed had not been arrested or violated probation for more than two years.

Participant Lynn had been involved with SYC for about two years at the time of her interview. Participant Alisha had been involved with SYC for a little more than a year at the time of her interview. The other three participants had less than six months of involvement with SYC. Longevity or the duration in which a participant participated in the program had not been established in regards to the participants’ involvement with SYC. However, the participants all expressed that their involvement with SYC was a positive experience.

During the course of this study and the various events that I attended it was clear that the founder, Ms. Bev was the centerpiece and glue of the organization. The volunteers and participants identified Ms. Bev as the difference maker. Volunteer Peter stated:

And for the most part these young people don’t go to church. And she was just out there with them. And I found out that they had an organization to what is called SYC. And from, you know, her reputation of just helping folks without questions without any regard for who they are but that they needed help. I decided that that was something I wanted to be a part of. To help her do that.

Ms. Bev’s leadership, selflessness, and ability to inspire and encourage the youth of SYC is an immeasurable part of what the organization is and why it was founded. Ms. Bev embodies what Collins (1990) describes as “other mothering.” She supports the female participants in the organization to defuse the emotional intensity of relationships with blood relatives.
The absence of formal mentoring services has not diminished the SYC’s ability to make relational connections with their female participants. SYC has been able to do what Sullivan (1996) recommends: to form relationships with women they can trust and talk with and to support their psychological health and resilience. The only drawback is that most of this relational building and connection resides with one person, Ms. Bev the founder. The reliance on one person to hold the connections for an organization is less than recommended. If something happens to Ms. Bev, then what would happen to SYC? This was the question I repeatedly thought of during my interactions with volunteers, participants, and at SYC events. There is no one that can hold the organization together like Ms. Bev did. SYC’s reliance on Ms. Bev negatively impacts the organizations longevity. There needs to be someone that can provide the relational building and connections like Ms. Bev in order for SYC to have lasting presence in the community in the coming years and decades.

Recommendations for Future Research

This one qualitative study shows how one program is doing “what works” for reducing recidivism for African American juvenile females. Thus, this researcher recommends that this study be replicated across other community-based programs or expanded quantitatively to include other aspects of gender-responsive programming. For example, due to the various lengths of involvement in the community-based program and the length of time free from judicial system involvement, the researcher recommends that a larger predictive correlation study that examines program involvement and judicial system involvement as variables within the context of “what works.” The participants
perceived that SYC had a positive effect on reducing their delinquent behaviors despite two of the five participants with recent judicial involvement. The connection between the volunteers’ engagement and the active participation of the participants toward successfully reducing their involvement in delinquent behaviors might also be explored further. Thus future research might include more quantitative and qualitative inquiries exploring the connection between the factors leading the participant to acknowledge their delinquent actions, their implementing positive social skills, and their ability to effectively utilize the assistance of the community-based program within the context of finding “what works” to reduce their recidivism rates.

The connection of how the participants’ involvement in this community-based program affected their academic life was not examined. Further research could explore connections between participation in a community-based program and academic success of an adolescent female. Furthermore, triangulation of involvement in a community-based program, academic progress, and reduced recidivism could be explored to add to the “what works” literature for gender responsive programming.

Since all the participants in the study were African American, a question emerged regarding similarities and differences in programming among diverse ethnic groups. Researchers might consider conducting a similar study with female adolescents from diverse ethnic or cultural backgrounds. Similarly, since this study had no male participants, factors that might be compared between adolescent boys and girls may include the impact on self-esteem, motivation to actively participate in a community-based program and utilize strategies learned, and the various aspects associated with the
delinquent acts leading to their involvement of a community-based program designed to reduce their recidivism rates.

Despite the reduction of adolescent females being arrested since the passing of HB 242, there is still much to be studied in order to effectively provide gender responsive programming for at-risk adolescent females. Further research is needed to understand the external and societal factors that contribute to adolescent female recidivism. Because each participant’s level of involvement in the community-based program varied and their involvement in delinquent activities also varied, future research might be conducted to compare the outcomes among participants with different levels of involvement in a community-based program and delinquent activities. There is much to be learned from the experience of these participants whom have participated in this community-based program as a method of intervention to address their participation in delinquent activities.

Summary

Overall, this qualitative study indicated that the community-based program, SYC, had positive effects on the African American female participants and their reduction of delinquent behavior as indicated by the participant. The participants are the only legitimate judges of credibility because the intervention, their participation in the community-based program, is an attempt to change their delinquent behavior (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). The findings of the current study add to the previous research literature by providing an alternate perspective to the existing literature by having a more in-depth understanding of these girls in relation to strategies being used to address their delinquent behavior. The knowledge of their lived experiences will give some insight to program
providers as they move forward in developing gender responsive programming. The absence of this knowledge may diminish the ability of a program provider to meet the specific needs of African American female adolescents engaged in services. For the five participants, four volunteers, and the founder of SYC the current study identified the following themes: acceptance, validation, and a non-judgmental environment, all of which may also be common themes for others who embark upon the gender responsive programming journey. While only a beginning, this study has helped to begin to fill a gap in the research literature regarding the population and has provided program providers with a more in-depth understanding regarding the lived experiences of a sample of five participants regarding gender responsive programming as well as questions for future research.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT
Informed Consent
Reducing Recidivism of Delinquent Girls in a Community Based Program

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators
Marco Hicks-Brown is the investigator and she holds a BS in Biology, Med in Special Education and an EdS in Curriculum and Instruction. Marco Hicks-Brown is a doctoral candidate at Mercer University's Tift College of Education PhD Curriculum and Instruction Program. Dr. Sharon Augustine is her faculty advisor. Marco Hicks-Brown can be reached at 478-301-5394 or 1501 Mercer University Drive, Stetson 108 Macon, GA 31207.

Purpose of the Research
This research study is designed to put evaluate a comprehensive community program for delinquent girls to reduce their likelihood of re-offending or committing a new crime.

The data from this research will be used in my completion of my doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction through Tift College of Education at Mercer University.

Procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in one audio recorded interview session with the primary investigator, Marco Hicks-Brown. You will be asked questions about your involvement with the juvenile justice system and Savannah Youth City.

Your participation will take approximately one to three hours.

Potential Risks or Discomforts
A foreseeable risk is that the interview may rehash memories of possible victimization and/or mistreatment.

Potential Benefits of the Research
There are some potential benefits for you. You may find it rewarding to speak about how much you have changed from a life of being an at-risk youth to now being a productive adult citizen of Georgia.

Confidentiality and Data Storage
All information obtained and/or medical records will be held in strict confidentiality and will only be released with your permission. The results of this study may be published but

1501 Coleman Avenue • Macon, GA 31207-0001
(478) 301-2677 • (478) 301-2572 or (478) 301-2575 • FAX (478) 301-5416
your information such as your name and other demographic information will not be revealed. The results of this study will be kept in a locked file within a secure location for 3 years.

Incentives to Participate
The only incentive for adult participants in this study is the benefits of knowing that you may be able to help someone in the future because of your involvement with Savannah Youth City.

Participation and Withdrawal
Your participation in this research study is voluntary. As a research subject you may refuse to participate at anytime. To withdraw from the study please contact Marco Hicks-Brown or Dr. Sharon Augustine.

Questions about the Research
If you have any questions about the research, please speak with Marco Hicks-Brown, 478-301-5394, marco.hicks-brown@live.mercer.edu, or Dr. Sharon Murphy Augustine, 478-301-2677, Augustine_sm@mercer.edu

Reasons for Exclusion from this Study
An adult participant may be excluded from this study if they have pending adult criminal charges.

In Case of Injury
It is unlikely that participation in this project will result in harm to subjects. All expenses associated with care will be the responsibility of the participant and his/her insurance.
******************************************************************************
This project has been reviewed and approved by Mercer University’s IRB. If you believe there is any infringement upon your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Chair, at (478) 301-4101.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and these have been answered to my satisfaction.

Signature of Investigator: ____________________ Date: __8-5-14__

Rev. 08/19/2010

-----------------------------------------------------------------------
Mercer University IRB
approval Date: ______________
Protocol: ______________
Expiration Date: ______________
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS
(Participants)

Background Information
1. How old were you when the first time you were arrested?
2. What were you charged with at the time?
3. Were you adjudicated as a juvenile? If yes, answer questions 5-8. If no, answer question 4.
4. What was the outcome of your adjudication?
5. Were you on probation with juvenile court or Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice?
6. How long was your probation?
7. While on probation did you receive any services and what were these services?
8. Given a scale 1 to 10, one being the not effective and 10 being extremely effective, how would you rate the effectiveness of these services?
9. Did you spend any time at a youth detention center? If so, how long was your time there? If so, did you receive any services (group counseling, individual counseling, mentoring services, etc.) you believe were helpful to you while you were there? If so, how were these services helpful to you? Given a scale 1 to 10, one being the not effective and 10 being extremely effective, how would you rate the effectiveness of these services?

Interview Questions
10. As a participant, how did you get involved with Savannah Youth City?
11. How long have you been involved with Savannah Youth City?
12. What makes Savannah Youth City different from previous services you received?
13. Did you receive support from a mentor?
14. As a volunteer, how did you get involved with Savannah Youth City?
15. How long have you been a volunteer with Savannah Youth City?
16. What has been your involvement and experience with Savannah Youth City?
17. Why did you want to be a volunteer with Savannah Youth City?
18. What makes Savannah Youth City different than other groups or services in and around Savannah?
19. How do you believe Savannah Youth City is affecting the lives of at-risk females in our community?
(Volunteer)

**Background Information**

1. What is your educational background?
2. What is your socio-economic background?

**Interview Questions**

3. As a volunteer, how did you get involved with Savannah Youth City?
4. How long have you been a volunteer with Savannah Youth City?
5. Why did you want to be a volunteer with Savannah Youth City?
6. As a volunteer, what has been your experience with Savannah Youth City?
7. What makes Savannah Youth City different than other groups or services in and around Savannah?
8. How do you believe Savannah Youth City is affecting the lives of at-risk females in our community?
(Founder)

**Background Information**

1. What is your educational background?
2. What is your socio-economic background?

**Interview Questions**

3. As the founder, why did you create the program Savannah Youth City?
4. Describe your vision, purpose, and mission for Savannah Youth City?
5. How long has Savannah Youth City been in operation?
6. As the founder, what has been your experience with Savannah Youth City?
7. What makes Savannah Youth City different than other groups or services in and around Savannah?
8. How do you believe Savannah Youth City is affecting the lives of at-risk females in our community?
(Participants)

**Background Information**

1. How old were you when the first time you were arrested?

2. What were you charged with at the time?

3. Were you adjudicated as a juvenile? If yes, answer questions 5-8. If no, answer question 4.

4. What was the outcome of your adjudication?

5. Were you on probation with juvenile court or Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice?

6. How long was your probation?

7. While on probation did you receive any services and what were these services?

8. Given a scale 1 to 10, one being the not effective and 10 being extremely effective, how would you rate the effectiveness of these services?

9. Did you spend any time at a youth detention center? If so, how long was your time there? If so, did you receive any services (group counseling, individual counseling, mentoring services, etc.) you believe were helpful to you while you were there? If so, how were these services helpful to you? Given a scale 1 to 10, one being the not effective and 10 being extremely effective, how would you rate the effectiveness of these services?

**Interview Questions**

10. As a participant, how did you get involved with Savannah Youth City?

11. How long have you been involved with Savannah Youth City?

12. What makes Savannah Youth City different from previous services you received?

13. Did you receive support from a mentor?
14. As a volunteer, how did you get involved with Savannah Youth City?

15. How long have you been a volunteer with Savannah Youth City?

16. What has been your involvement and experience with Savannah Youth City?

17. Why did you want to be a volunteer with Savannah Youth City?

18. What makes Savannah Youth City different than other groups or services in and around Savannah?

19. How do you believe Savannah Youth City is affecting the lives of at-risk females in our community?

Why? The volunteers + Mr. Berulder + dependable work + trust their clients. They are never alone. My mom loves it.
APPENDIX C

MERCER IRB APPROVAL
Tuesday, October 8, 2016

Mr. Marco Heiko-Brown
Tift College of Education
Tift College of Education
1500 Coleman Avenue
Macon, GA 31207-0003

RE: Reducing Recidivism of Delinquent Girls in a Community-Based Program [18010248]

Dear Mr. Heiko-Brown:

On behalf of Mercer University’s Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, your application submitted on 23 Sep 2016 for the above referenced protocol was reviewed in accordance with Federal Regulations 21 CFR 56.115(b) and 45 CFR 46.115(b) (for expedited review) and was approved under category (i.e.) 6, 7 per 63 FR 60564.

Your application was approved for one year of study on 04-Oct-2016. The protocol expires on ... if the study continues beyond one year, it must be re-evaluated by the IRB Committee.

Item(s) Approved:

This research study is designed to examine the effectiveness of a community-based program for delinquent girls to reduce their likelihood of reinventing or committing a new crime, use of audio recordings and interviews.

NOTE: Please report to the committee when the protocol is initiated. Report to the Committee immediately any changes in the protocol or consent form and all accidents, injuries, and serious or unexpected adverse events that occur to your subjects as a result of this study.

We at the IRB and the Office of Research Compliance are dedicated to providing the best service to our research community. As one of our investigators, we value your feedback and ask that you please take a moment to complete our Satisfaction Survey and help us to improve the quality of our service.

It has been a pleasure working with you and we wish you much success with your project! If you need any further assistance, please feel free to contact our office.

Respectfully,

Ava Chamberlain, M.Ed., CIP, CI-M
Associate Director of Human Research Protection Programs (HRPP)
Member
Institutional Review Board

"Mercer University has adopted and agrees to conduct its clinical research studies in accordance with the International Conference on Harmonization’s (ICH) Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice."
APPENDIX D

FIELD NOTES AND REFLECTIVE JOURNAL ENTRY EXERPTS
Field Notes Exert

12/21/16 SYC Christmas Party held at the Cuyler-Brownsville Community Center @ 6:30 pm

- No private rooms for interviews
- 50 people adults and youth
- Interview at a table of girls with Jade
- Jade presents as a petite young lady
- She’s eager to talk with me once Bev introduced us
- Very pleasant and happy to be at the Christmas party
- Around us are small groups happening
- We had to sit close to each other to hear one another

Reflective Journal Entry

12/21/16 After the SYC Christmas party:

On my way to the party I did not feel like going but I had promised Bev I would bring a cheese roll. I was surprised by the large turnout. Once I entered everyone was so friendly and welcoming. Bev was buzzing around the room talking and checking on people to make sure they were alright. It was noisy in the building but not loud. Bev introduced me to a table of young ladies. I sat with them and begin to talk to all of them. The ranged in ages from 12 to 18 years old. They were all nice. Bev told Jade and Mary that I would interview them about SYC. This announcement caused other girls to ask if they could be interviewed. I laughed and told them that I was only here to interview Jade and Mary. However, I was there to meet all of them. Jade was very friendly. She appeared more mature than Mary. Jade asked for my number after the interview. She stated that she was going through issues with her current court case and need some mentoring. I told her that I wanted to check with Ms. Bev to ensure that it would be okay for me to interact with her using my personal cell. Jade continued to talk to me and ask me about my life and I found it refreshing and I no longer didn’t want to be there. I had to cut my conversation short with Jade to interview Mary. Mary was also friendly but very shy. Her answers to my questions were very short and to the point. Mary seemed to be embarrassed when she talked about her involvement with the judicial system. She spoke about being the oldest daughter and that she and her younger sister were involved with SYC. I was able to meet her sister that night. Mary’s sister is one of the young ladies that asked to be interviewed but was too young. I stayed at the party about an hour after I finished the interviews. I watched older men talking to tables of boys. I walked around to different tables and introduced myself. I asked one table of boys why they liked SYC. One boy said because SYC gives him something to do. The other boys agreed.
APPENDIX E

ARTIFACTS
Hey y'all! Our beloved community organization Savannah Youth City Inc. is going to the STATE CAPITAL on March 8, 2017. They will receive a Resolution for the work they have done and will be leading a conversation on Violence, Gangs and Prevention among young citizens across Georgia.

Let’s show them some community love!

For your donation they will send you a postcard and a picture from the STATE CAPITAL! You can donate online at the SYC link below or meet them at Super Studios next Friday March 3, 2017 @ 6pm to 8pm.

Let’s turn it out for Beverlee Capers-Trotter, Elder Enika R. Hurdnett and the other amazing folks behind this our Savannah organization.

The goal is $2500.00 by March 4, 2017.
Parent University with Savannah Youth City

Saturday
APRIL 01, 2017 @ 9am

Avoiding & Preventing GUN VIOLENCE

GIVEAWAYS
RAFFLES
EDUCATION

Beach High School 3001 Hopkins St, Savannah, GA 31405
Savannah Youth City, Inc.

***Founded 2013***

Dear Community Partners,

Savannah Youth City, Inc. will be conducting its Third IGNITE Change Campaign Tour 2016 with its partner for 2 years Cumulus Broadcasting Media.

“SYC Ignite Change Campaign”

- Featuring -

“In These Streets Tour 2016”

Starting July 18th through July 29th, the weekend SYC Inc will be embarking on a 10 day Campaign via SYC and Cumulus Broadcasting Media. Savannah, GA is to “IGNITE” positive change in our community and the kick off will not be a pretty picture but we endeavor a reality.

Ignite wants other communities and other communities to IGNITE love, thinking, peace, hope, and bottom up empowerment to curb the acts of violence.

This campaign will target turbulent neighborhoods and the areas that need positive reinforcement throughout the Savannah-Chatham Georgia area. We will provide raffles tickets, prizes, live entertainment and refreshments as well as resources to make positive change to targeted communities.

We will be dispersing relevant information to process as well as solutions to our everyday situations as a community and what we could realistically do as a whole to come together and achieve a better quality of life for present and future generations.

I am writing you today, because Savannah Youth City, Inc. needs your support. We are a non-profit with a 501 C-3 Status with the IRS. In order for us to be successful in our “IGNITE Change Tour 2016”, we need donations, monetary or in-Kind (items) see attach list.

We thank you so much for your willingness to give, and for your support. All sponsorships and community partners will be listed on all event materials and on our T-Shirts.

Continued strength,

Beverlee Trotter, Director

Beverlee Trotter, Director

www.savannahyouthcityinc.com 1305 ½ Barnard Street, Suite #16, Savannah GA 9128447812
Savannah Youth City, Inc.  
***Founded 2013***
“SYC Ignite Change Campaign”
-Featuring-
“In These Streets Tour 2016”

Starting July 18th – July 29th excluding the weekend, SYC Inc., will be embarking on a ten-day campaign via SYC’s “Ignite Change Campaign” throughout the greater Savannah area to “IGNITE” positive change in our community and the entire state of Georgia.  It’s a noble endeavor a reality.

Ignite wants our communities to inspire others to understand to IGNITE love, health, healing, peace, hope, entrepreneurship, education, vocation training, and curb the acts of violence.

This campaign will target turbulent neighborhoods and the areas that need the most Community Healing throughout every corner of Savannah Georgia. We will provide refreshments as well as bottom up empowerment, and resources to make positive change to targeted communities.

We will also be dispersing relevant information to process as well as solutions to our everyday situations as a community and what we could realistically do as a whole to come together and achieve a better quality of life for present and future generations.

Target Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekday</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>07/11/16</td>
<td>Frazier/Kayton Homes</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>07/12/16</td>
<td>39th and MLK</td>
<td>Street lot next to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.savannahyouthcityinc.com: 1305 ½ Barnard Street, Suite #16, Savannah GA – 9128447812
Savannah Youth City, Inc.
***Founded 2013***

Savannah Youth City, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission: To build up young men and women through engagement, inspiration, accountability and the removal of institutional and environmental barriers.

"Breaking The Cycle"

"Breaking The Cycle" represents the core of how Savannah Youth City. We have decided that solutions may not make sense of those most negatively affected by the changes of poverty and poor education. That's why we're committed to working with the Savannah community.

We are dedicated to helping young men and women become greater and help their communities.