

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOSITY AS A PROTECTIVE FACTOR IN THE LIVES OF  
FEMALE JUVENILE OFFENDERS

by

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(Under the direction of Georgia B. Calhoun)

ABSTRACT

Research suggests that religion acts as a protective factor for adolescents that participate in at-risk behaviors. This study sought to explore the influence of religious factors for girls in the juvenile justice system that improve their adaptability and psychological health, promote readiness to change, and prevent the likelihood of the rise of cyclical delinquent behavior and violent crime. In order to examine the relationship between religiosity and variables influence on overall social emotional functioning within this sample of female juvenile offenders, a battery of self-report measures were administered, and offense data collected on all participants. Religiosity was assessed with Religious Commitment Inventory -10 and the Intrinsic Extrinsic Religiosity Revised Scale. The Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition, Adolescent Self-Report was utilized to assess participants' behavior and emotional state. A correlational analysis was performed to determine if religiosity variables, specifically, intrinsic and intrapersonal were associated with positive adjustment, and desirable attitudes towards teachers and schools. The results suggest there was a significant relationship between intrinsically religiously motivated individuals and the Interpersonal Relations subscale, and Personal Adjustment Composite subscale. A correlational analysis was conducted to determine the influence that variables of

religiosity have on readiness to change, using the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment Questionnaire. The results suggest that religiosity was not correlated with an individual's readiness to change. A correlational analysis indicated that there was not an association among demographic factors and religious salience. A correlational analysis was performed between the variables of religiosity and the levels of offense. A significant negative relationship between intrinsic religiosity and increased levels of offending was found. A regression analysis was conducted to examine the strength of the relationship. These results suggest that the more intrinsically religiously motivated an individual, the less likely they are to have higher levels of offense. These findings provide support for utilizing religiosity as a tool for treatment planning in addressing the needs of female juvenile offenders.

INDEX WORDS: Female Juvenile Offenders, University of Rhode Island Change Assessment Questionnaire (URICA), Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition, Adolescent Self-Report (BASC-2-SRP-A), Intrinsic/Extrinsic Religiosity, Intrapersonal/Interpersonal Religious Commitment, Bivariate Correlation Analysis, Linear Regression Analysis

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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my parents, Mr. Edward E. Robinson and Mrs. Joyce E. Robinson. Your love and support has been invaluable. I would not have had the courage to start this journey and stay the course without your encouraging words and prayers. As I cross the finish line, I share this great accomplishment with you. I am grateful that you continue to tell me how much you love me and how proud you are of me. I am amazed at the parents that God allowed me to borrow in this life. I hope that I continue to make you proud. I love you with all of my heart.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency has, since its inception as a construct, been defined primarily as a male issue. Gender has traditionally been one of the strongest correlates of delinquent behavior. Juvenile arrest records indicate that 73% of all juvenile arrested in 1999 were males (Snyder, 2000); however, in 2003, 29% of juvenile arrests involved females (Snyder, 2005). Law enforcement agencies made 643,000 arrests of female under the age of 18 in 2003 (Snyder, 2005). Whereas males still account for the majority of crimes committed among those under the age of 17, females are now the fastest growing segment of the juvenile justice system. Over the past two decades, there has been an exponential rise in the number of girls in detention facilities, jails and prisons. The increasing prevalence of female offending and the emerging research that draws distinctions between male and female offending has lead to consistent calls from academic and public sector entities for increased understanding of the issue. According to the recently released report *Justice by Gender*, research that contributes to an understanding of the nature and cause of girls' delinquency is critical (American Bar Association & National Bar Association, 2001).

Given the rise in rates of offending, it is important to identify and utilize protective factors that have potential for reducing at-risk behaviors. Religion, as one such factor may help these girls develop healthier self-perceptions and positively influence the decisions they make. Although research exists that examines this construct with the adult population, little research with children or adolescents is available (Sullivan, 2005). Despite its potential as a protective factor, adolescents' spirituality and religion have been relatively neglected in the

developmental sciences (King & Boyatzis, 2004). Religion may play an integral role in understanding its impact on the developmental process of youth, and the way youth perceive themselves. For example, positive links between adolescents' involvement in religion and many desirable developmental correlates have been established (e.g., Donahue & Benson, 1995; Wagener, Furrow, King, Leffert, & Benson, 2003). Religion can provide a context in which young people can feel a profound sense of connectedness, with either supernatural or human other, and awareness that "often triggers an understanding of self that is intertwined and somehow responsible to the other" (King, 2003). Although the emphasis is on religion's impact on delinquent behavior, its positive influence on antisocial behavior should be noted.

#### History of Females in the Juvenile Justice System

Historically, girls' delinquent activities were thought to be a result of defiance of the role that society had defined for them as females. During the 1950s, female delinquency was less common, involving primarily sexual misconduct. In contrast, males were committing more serious offenses thus attention was directed towards male juvenile delinquency (Calhoun & Jurgens, 1993). Historically, a female's involvement with court was based on the concerns related to her sexual behavior and subsequent charges of waywardness, or status offenses (i.e., running away, or truancy) reflected this (MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001). Theories of female delinquency in its early conception focused on sexuality as either the cause or expression of females' delinquent behavior (Hoyt & Scherer, 1998). Early studies assumed that female delinquency was sexual in nature, which unlike their male counterparts, lead to stigmatizing female juvenile offenders (Hoyt & Scherer, 1998). Therefore, girls' issues were not viewed seriously enough to encourage research that would investigate the factors that contribute to their delinquent behavior beyond those related to gender defined subservient roles.

## Present Status of Adolescent Females in the Juvenile Justice System

The juvenile justice system was founded to intervene in the problematic behaviors occurring within families and by children (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998). Gender role expectation has influenced the juvenile justice system's response to female adolescent delinquent behavior. According to Calhoun & Jurgens, (1993) considerable change has occurred in female deviance, which is illustrated by antisocial behavior, changes in attitudes, mores and gender role acceptance. These issues have brought about an emergence of a new female juvenile delinquent. Past models of female delinquency that generally emphasized status offenses and female sexuality may not have been valid and do not account for the range of delinquent behaviors exhibited by contemporary adolescent females (Hoyt & Scherer, 1998). Although these models were designed to target female behavior, they have not evolved to address issues that are specific to girls' increased rate and severity of offending at present. Ironically, current trends of treatment for female juvenile offenders are not gender specific, but gender biased with many interventions that are based on a male centered model.

The importance of understanding female delinquency is supported by the increase of female juveniles involved with the legal system. The U.S. Department of Justice (Snyder, 2005) reported that females accounted for 24% of juvenile arrests for aggravated assault and 32% of those for other assaults. Between 1980 and 2003 simple assault increased 102% for males and 269% for females (Snyder, 2005). These numbers suggest that female delinquency is becoming a problem and will have distinct adverse effects on society. Currently females are involved in armed robbery, gang activity, drug trafficking, burglary, weapons possession, aggravated assault, and prostitution (Calhoun et al., 1993). The juvenile justice system is remised in their failure to attend adequately to the increase in serious offenses committed by female delinquents through

their maintenance of a narrow, status-offense, sexuality-dominated perspective on female offending (Hoyt & Scherer, 1998). In addition, theorizing adolescent female delinquency from a restrictive perspective exacerbates the issue of inappropriate treatment for this population and the lack of vested interest of the juvenile justice system in addressing concerns specific to female juvenile offenders. Consequently, there has been a recent attempt for social scientists to correct common misconceptions about the nature of female delinquency by highlighting developmental and socioecological determinants of female delinquency (Hoyt & Scherer, 1998).

#### Protective Factors and Female Juvenile Offenders

The investigation of factors contributing to the escalation of female adolescents' involvement in delinquent activities and serious crimes has potential for identifying ways to reduce this behavior. Earls (1994) suggest that children who are exposed to or possess a set of protective factors may escape adverse consequences. This may play a key role in facilitating efficacious interventions for female juvenile offenders by categorizing specific protective factors that are unique to them, and applicable to the areas of challenge that are often encountered by adolescent female offenders.

Protective factors often facilitate resilience in youth, and females that participate in delinquent behavior need a counter to factors that contribute to their negative behaviors. Researchers have identified protective factors in resilient children that provide a barrier for at-risk behaviors, decrease the probability of engaging in problem behaviors, and often support successful development in adolescents (Carr & Vandiver, 2001). They further categorize protective factors as personal, familial, and environmental. Female juvenile offenders could potentially benefit from identifying protective factors from one or all of these categories as potential buffers for risk factors. Parker et al. (1990) found that children who were resilient and

in high stress environments had effective interpersonal problem-solving skills, demonstrated self-reliance and support-seeking behavior. Such areas support positive development in adolescents, and provide a framework for potentially facilitating a decrease in risky behaviors in female juvenile offenders.

Identifying and utilizing specific protective factors in a therapeutic setting with adolescent female offenders may prove beneficial in determining the course of treatment, and achieving therapeutic goals. Too often, the therapeutic focus is on maladjustment and not the internal or external strengths of the client. Identifying protective factors that are related to girls needs would be advantageous. One such potential protective factor is religion. Sinha, Cnaan, & Gelles (2007), found that the religious variables in their study contributed significantly to the reduction of risk behaviors beyond psychological and social variables. Many adolescents report that religion is a salient part of their lives thus making it a major consideration in determining the impact religion has on regulating their behavior.

### Significance of Study

As noted earlier, female juvenile offenders are dealing with more complex issues than in the past, which has contributed to the rise in rates of offending in most recent years. Therefore, identifying and utilizing protective factors that may potentially reduce delinquent behavior among this population is imperative. Adolescent females' issues are frequently internally motivated, and the difficulty of managing or resolving internal conflict contributes to making unhealthy decisions (Robinson, Calhoun, & Glaser, 2007). Moreover, addressing concerns related to female delinquent behavior requires developing treatment interventions, which target the unique issues specific to this population. Historically, treatment modalities have been centered around meeting the needs of the male juvenile offender, and focusing on a skill deficit

model that often includes anger management, social skills training, information processing and decision making. While such interventions are sometimes relevant in working with female juvenile offenders, they fail to take into consideration the gender specific needs of the female juvenile offender. Targeting relevant factors for this specific population can contribute to the creation of a more efficacious treatment plan.

The purpose of the current study is to highlight protective factors that are specific to female juvenile offenders that have potential for improving their lives overall, and reduce their rates of offending. More specifically this study examines the role that religion and religious variables play in promoting healthy psychological development, enhancing adaptive skills and increasing readiness to change to promote positive behavior in the female juvenile offender population. The current study is a step in furthering our understanding of appropriate interventions for girls and the personal strengths of female juvenile offenders that facilitate their overall well-being.

#### Aspirations for Counseling Psychologists

The field of counseling psychology emphasizes the importance of exploring protective and strength based factor of human development. In order to promote optimal development, counseling psychologists endeavor to identify areas of strength and growth in individuals (Wagner, 1996). Kenny (1996) states, “understanding vulnerability and risk should not lead counseling psychologist to ignore resilience and individual strength” (p.477). Understanding the complexity of the female juvenile offender, calls for an examination of protective factors that facilitate a healthy perception of the development of these girls. Positive behavior can be used to counter those behaviors that are unhealthy, and empower girls involved in the juvenile justice

system to adapt healthy behaviors. Possessing the knowledge about the strengths of these girls will help improve services that meet the unique needs of female juvenile offenders.

The field of counseling psychology is committed to education, advocacy, and program development (Wagner, 1996). Providing such services facilitates positive changes within the community as a whole. Females in the juvenile justice system have been stigmatized by their delinquent behavior, and have not been conceptualized as a population that possesses personal strengths that could empower them to be an asset to their community. These girls need the intervention and prevention services of counseling psychologists that will encourage positive behavior and provide them with skills to develop healthy responses to adverse situations. In order to create services that meet their treatment needs, counseling psychologist need to have a better understanding of female juvenile offender's development and the specific factors that separate them from non-offenders. Working collaboratively with parents, teachers, and juvenile justice professionals, counseling psychologist have the opportunity to learn more about the different aspects of female juvenile offenders and participate in providing effective services.

### Statement of the Problem

Robinson, Calhoun, & Glaser (2007), found that intrapersonal religious commitment and intrinsic religiosity were positively correlated with BASC-SRP-II adaptive subscales (Interpersonal Relations, Self-Reliance, Parent Relations, Self-Esteem, and the Personal Adjustment composite score). This study suggests the need for further research into understanding how intrapersonal religious commitment and intrinsic religiosity may serve as protective factors for female juvenile offenders (Robinson, Calhoun, & Glaser, 2007). The purpose of the present study is to examine the influence that intrapersonal religious commitment

and intrinsic religiosity have on individual differences, adaptability, and readiness to change in female juvenile offenders.

This study may allow professionals working with female juvenile offenders to better understand factors such as religion that encourage positive behaviors. Working from a strength based framework with this population will hopefully empower these girls to make healthier life choices and deter delinquent behavior. Additionally, the influence that protective factors have on psychological, emotional and social variables in the life of female juvenile offenders provides psychologists, mental health clinicians, and other professionals with a more holistic perspective when working with adolescent female offenders. The outcome of this study may further aid these professionals in developing an efficacious treatment plan for females in the juvenile justice system. Specifically, this study seeks to explore the influence of religious factors for girls in the juvenile justice system that improve their adaptability and psychological health, promote readiness to change, and prevent the rise of cyclical delinquent behavior and violent crime.

### Research Questions

Research Question 1.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of religious commitment and age?

#### *Null Hypothesis 1*

There will be no significant relationship between the age of female juvenile offenders and scores on measures of religious commitment.

Research Question 2.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and age?

*Null Hypothesis 2*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' age and measures of intrinsic religiosity?

Research Question 3.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrapersonal religious commitment and race/ethnicity?

*Null Hypothesis 3*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' race/ethnicity and scores on measures of intrapersonal religious commitment.

Research Question 4.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and race/ethnicity?

*Null Hypothesis 4*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' race/ethnicity and scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity.

Research Question 5.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrapersonal religious commitment and level of offense?

*Null Hypothesis 5*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' level of offense and scores on measures of religious commitment.

Research Question 6.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and level of offense?

*Null Hypothesis 6*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' level of offense and scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity?

Research Question 7.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrapersonal religious commitment and scores on the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA)?

*Null Hypothesis 7*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on the URICA and scores on measures of intrapersonal religious commitment.

Research Question 8.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and scores on the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA)?

*Null Hypothesis 8*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on the URICA and scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity.

Research Question 9.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrapersonal religious commitment and the following adaptive and clinical scales of the BASC-SRP-II?

Adaptive Scales

- a. Interpersonal Relations
- b. Parent Relations
- c. Self-Esteem
- d. Self-Reliance
- e. Personal Adjustment Composite

Clinical Scales

- a. Attitude to School
- b. Attitude to Teachers

*Null Hypothesis 9*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on the adaptive and clinical scales of the BASC-SRP-II: interpersonal relations, parent relations, self-esteem, self-reliance, personal adjustment composite; and the clinical scales: attitude to school, attitude to teachers, on measures of religious commitment.

Research Question 10.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and the following adaptive and clinical scales of the BASC-SRP-II?

- a. Interpersonal Relations
- b. Parent Relations

- c. Self-Esteem
- d. Self-Reliance
- e. Personal Adjustment Composite

#### Clinical Scales

- a. Attitude to School
- b. Attitude to Teachers

#### *Null Hypothesis 10*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on the adaptive and clinical scales of the BASC-SRP-II: interpersonal relations, parent relations, self-esteem, self-reliance, personal adjustment composite; and the clinical scales: attitude to school, attitude to teachers, on measures of intrinsic religiosity.

#### Definition of Terms

##### *Female juvenile offender*

A female adolescent, under the age of 18 years of age charged with a crime, and involved in the Department of Juvenile Justice. All participants in this study are labeled juvenile offenders by the juvenile justice system.

##### *Delinquent behavior*

An act committed by a juvenile for which an adult could be prosecuted in a criminal court. Delinquent acts include crimes against persons, crimes against property, drug offenses, crimes against public order, when juveniles commit such acts.

##### *Status offense*

A nondelinquent/noncriminal offense; an offense that is illegal for underage persons, but not for adults.

- Curfew violation- Violation of an ordinance forbidding persons below a certain age from being in public places.
- Incurable, ungovernable-Being beyond the control of parents, guardians, or custodians.
- Running away –Leaving the custody and home of parents or guardians without permission and failing to return within a reasonable length of time.
- Truancy –Violation of a compulsory school attendance law.
- Underage drinking –Possession, use, or consumption of alcohol by a minor.

### *Intrinsic Religiosity*

Intrinsic orientation to religion is perceived as religion being deeply personal to the individual (Maltby, 1999), and the respondent living their religion (Allport, 1966; Allport & Ross, 1967). Allport & Ross (1967) stated that “the extrinsically motivated person *uses* his religion, whereas the intrinsically motivated *lives* his religion (p.434).

### *Religious Commitment*

Worthington (1998) defined *religious commitment* as the degree to which a person adheres to his or her religious values, beliefs, and practices and uses them in daily living. However, religious commitment has been operationalized and measured in multiple ways, which include: membership in a religious organization, church attendance, and importance of religious experience.

### *Protective factors*

Protective factors buffer risk factors, decrease the likelihood of engaging in problem behaviors, and often promote successful adolescent development (Carr & Vandiver, 2001). They can be categorized within the following framework: personal, familial, and environmental (Carr

& Vandiver, 2001). Personal protective factors may include good self-esteem, effective interpersonal skills, and self-reliance. Familial factors are identified by the positive relationship the child has with their parent(s) or guardian(s). Environmental protective factors are reflective of outside support such as having a network that encourage positive behaviors such as a minister, teacher, or general people in the community that support the well-being of the individual.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1996) have called for gender specific programming in order to address the needs of female juvenile offenders. Investigating specific variables relevant to this population can potentially contribute to reducing juvenile delinquent behavior. The efficacy of Religiosity as such a protective factor has been demonstrated with adult offenders, and its potential relevance to the female juvenile population needs to be explored. While, religion as a general construct may play a pertinent role in addressing the reduction of at-risk behaviors in female juvenile offenders, determining the level of significance religiosity has on specific female delinquent behaviors, and the way in which it affects the reduction of these behaviors is needed (Robinson, Calhoun, & Glaser, 2007). Clearly, this has potential for understanding how to best utilize this resource in developing interventions for this population.

In addition, religious variables acting as a protective factor in female juvenile offenders have the potential for enhancing adaptive skills (appropriate response to adverse circumstances), promoting resiliency, and willingness to change undesirable behavior. Robinson, Calhoun, & Glaser (2007), findings suggest that female juvenile offenders who view religion as a personal commitment and are intrinsically religiously motivated to pursue religiosity were likely to report higher levels of self-esteem, self-reliance, and better relationships with parents and others than their female counterparts. These factors potentially promote positive outcomes and facilitate reduction of at-risk behaviors in this population.

## Female Juvenile Offenders

Over the past two decades, there has been an exponential rise in the number of girls in detention facilities, jails and prisons. Research indicate that the outcomes for adolescent girls with severe antisocial behavior include various negative health and mental health risks, including participation in health-risking sexual behavior, psychiatric illness, substance dependence, school dropout, mortality, and continued criminal behavior (Leve & Chamberlain, 2004 ). Knowing that the rate of female juvenile delinquency has increased significantly over time addressing factors that may assist in reducing antisocial behavior in this population is imperative. An adolescent girls' need to resolve inner conflicts may be more difficult because of her desire for approval from relationships that are important to her and the societal pressure to be less than authentic (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Pipher, 1994). Such struggles and lack of authenticity can foster negative behavior that may in time result in involvement with the legal system.

Gender has traditionally been one of the strongest correlates of delinquent behavior. The increasing prevalence of female offending and the emerging research that draws distinctions between male and female offending has lead to consistent calls from academic and public sector entities for increased understanding of the issue.

The experience of female juvenile offenders is unique and may contrast that of their male counterparts; therefore requiring specialized conceptualization, treatment, and planning (Calhoun, Bartolomucci, & McLean, 1999). Often times adolescent females' issues are internally motivated and the difficulty of managing or resolving internal conflict leads to making unhealthy decisions.

As noted earlier, female juvenile offenders are dealing with more complex issues than in the past, which has contributed to the rise in rates of offending in most recent years. Gilligan

(1982) in her research on female development has stressed the inseparable and reciprocal role of relationships and a female's sense of self. Such conceptualizations are particularly salient for females in the juvenile justice system, whose first offenses typically include runaway, truancy, and fornication (Calhoun, 2001). These offenses are predominantly related to challenges with familial, school, and peer relationships (Yates, 1993). These relationships are problematic, are often accompanied by feelings of depression and anxiety, and often results in isolation (Calhoun, 2001). Furthermore, delinquent behavior may serve as one possible alternative to cope with their feelings (Calhoun, 2001). Therefore, identifying and utilizing protective factors that may potentially reduce delinquent behavior among this population is imperative.

Moreover, addressing concerns relating to female delinquent behavior requires developing treatment interventions, which target the unique issues specific to this population. Often times the masculine conceptualization is utilized with juvenile offenders, which focus on the behaviors exhibited by the juveniles rather than the emotions fueling these behaviors (Calhoun, 2001). Problematic relationships contributing to these behaviors are usually addressed in a male dominated model, thus focusing on reducing external issues that are not salient for the female juvenile offender. For example, Dixon, Howie, & Starling (2004), posit that adolescent girls are much more likely to experience depression and suicidal ideation than their male counterparts are. Thus, a focus for treatment needs to include depression and other internalizing problems (Glaser, Kronsoble, & Forkner, 1997). External problems are often the focus of treatment for juvenile offenders regardless of gender. This may mean that the focus on extinguishing inappropriate behavior in treatment programs for juvenile offenders may be ignoring internalizing problems that females, in particular, may be presenting (Calhoun, 2001).

## Religion

Religion may play an integral role in understanding the impact it has on the developmental process of youth, and the way they perceive themselves. For example, evidence is confirming positive links between adolescents' involvement in religion and many desirable developmental correlates (e.g., Donahue & Benson, 1995; Wagener, Furrow, King, Leffert, & Benson, 2003). Religion can provide a context in which young people can feel a profound sense of connectedness, with either supernatural or human other. (King, 2003). Although the emphasis is on religion's impact on delinquent behavior, it is apparent that its positive influence on other factors that may contribute to antisocial behavior should be noted.

The influence of religion in general has been understudied in the nationwide struggle to foster resilience in at-risk adolescents (Regnerus, 2003). In addition, statistics related to teenage crime, violence, drug abuse, and suicide in our country indicate that youth are struggling to make meaning of their lives (Miller, 2002). According to Kessler (2002), many of today's teenagers in the United States suffer from a sense of emptiness inside, a sense of meaninglessness that comes when social and religious traditions no longer provide a sense of meaning, continuity, or participation in a larger whole. Kessler (2002) believes when teenagers experience a void of spiritual guidance and opportunity in their lives during adolescence, the void contributes to high-risk behaviors. There is mounting evidence that suggesting that religious involvement can lower the risks of a broad range of delinquent behaviors, including both minor and serious forms of criminal behavior (Johnson, Larson, Li, & Jang, 2000). It is apparent that youth's engagement in religious behavior or organized spiritual activities affects the way they cope with their lives and interact with others. Recent evidence also suggests that religious involvement may have a cumulative effect throughout adolescence and thus may significantly lessen the risk of later adult

criminality (Evans, Cullen, Burton, Payne, Kethineni, 1996). Studies have made increasingly obvious the consistent and growing evidence that religious commitment and involvement help protect youth from delinquent behavior and deviant activity (Johnson, Corbett, & Harris, 2001). Adolescents searching for connection, and meaning to cope with life's challenges may participate in increased at-risk behaviors because they lack spiritual fulfillment or religious commitment to provide guidance.

Several decades of social scientific studies have shown that religion is often a factor in the lives of American adolescents, influencing their attitudes and behaviors in ways that are commonly viewed as positive and constructive (Smith, 2003). Studies that have included religion measures (especially church attendance and importance of religious faith) have found them to be inversely related to juvenile drug, alcohol, and tobacco use, and to delinquency (Smith, 2003). Religious faith appears to act as a protective influence against negative behavior, and fosters positive development in teenagers. In addition, religion may cultivate a sense of belonging among adolescents, as they are likely to be more involved with their community. According to Sinha, Cnaan, & Gelles (2007), regardless of the level of engagement with their religion, one study has concluded that results of their national sample of adolescents aged 13-17 is that unreflective involvement functions as a protective factor for a number of risk behaviors. The study by Wallace and Forman (1998) with religious U.S. 12<sup>th</sup> grade participants these youth were less likely than their peers to engage in risk behaviors (e.g., carrying weapons, getting into fights, drinking and driving, and drug use), but engage in behaviors that promote their health (e.g. proper nutrition, exercise and rest). Religiosity in this study has a two fold impact on the behaviors of these adolescents. In addition, Conversely, Smith and Faris (2002) demonstrated that religious U.S. 12<sup>th</sup> graders had significantly higher self-esteem and had more positive

attitudes about life than their less religious counterparts had. Researchers suggest that being religious and being involved in a religious community may foster positive self-esteem and self-efficacy, or impede risk behaviors through formation of pro-social norms, and provide role models and a peer environment that are risk avoiding (Ellison, 1993; & Brown, 1991). Despite its potential as a protective factor, adolescents' spirituality and religion have been relatively neglected in the developmental sciences (King & Boyatzis, 2004). Assessing family, school and peer relations are variables that are often studied and viewed as protective factors (Smith et al. 1995).

Milevsky & Levitt (2004) assessed the influence of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity in preadolescence and adolescence, and concluded that religious individuals had significantly more positive scores on the adjustment measures than those who were nonreligious. Johnson, Larson, Li & Jang (2000) define individual religiosity as the extent to which an individual is committed to the religion and its teachings, and the individual's attitudes and behaviors reflect this commitment. Youth that consider religion to be a salient part of their life and attend religious activities or services regularly, and are involved in the practices of their religion appear to have a commitment or intrinsic motivation that is significantly distinct from their counterparts. In a study conducted by Robinson, Calhoun, & Glaser (2007) findings suggest that female juvenile offenders who view religion as a personal commitment and are intrinsically religiously motivated to pursue religiosity were likely to report higher levels of self-esteem, self-reliance, and better relationships with parents and others than their female counterparts were. These youth benefit from the values of their faith that promote healthy decision-making, positive self-esteem, and foster positive relationships. Although religious adolescents engage in risk behavior, they are less likely to become involved than their peers that are less religiously active, which indicates that

increased religious behaviors and perception are generally good predictors of decreased risk behaviors (Sinha, Cnaan, Gelles, 2007). The degree of religious commitment could be a critical factor in determining the relevance of religiosity as a protective factor for specific individuals. Behavioral patterns of religious adolescents may be guided by sanctions derived from the religion to which they are committed, but the behavioral patterns of nonreligious adolescents are not subject to such sanctions (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990).

Religion provides the motivation to refrain from negative behaviors. Teenagers that have religious values or participate in an organized religious institution have an accountability system that provides a framework for appropriate social behavior. Moreover, it is suggested that religion pushes youth toward “conformity” with social and legal norms, or else influences youth to associate with people (e.g., family and friends) who hold such conformist standards (Bahr et al. 1993). The decision to conform that is the deciding factor for youth to choose one behavior over another (Regenerus, 2003). The likelihood that adolescents will make healthier decisions in general is potentially impacted by the way religion functions in their lives.

### Adaptive Skills

The literature suggests that adolescent female offenders have unique needs; therefore, interventions should be customized to address characteristics of this population that will promote skills that lessen their participation in future delinquent behavior. Research has revealed that as adolescence progresses, females’ self-esteem become diminished, unlike males whose self-concept and self-esteem improve (American Association of University Women, 1991). Highly developed interpersonal skills and increased levels of self-esteem potentially foster these youth ability to adapt to their environment and circumstances better than their juvenile counterparts. Demaray & Malecki (2002) found in their study of children and adolescents there was

significant, positive relationships among perceived social support and a variety of positive indicators (e.g., social skills, self-concept, and adaptive skills). In addition, female juvenile offenders demonstrate higher levels of personal adjustment, positive interpersonal relations, and increased self-reliance when they are personally invested in learning about their religion and pursuing the practices of their individual faiths (Robinson, Calhoun, & Glaser, 2007).

### Social-Emotional Functioning

Helping girls enhance their spirituality and find their voice may offer a form of self-protection by providing a sense of belongingness and personal identity (Pipher, 1994). Social contexts and individual differences are factors that should be considered when addressing the well-being of these female juvenile offenders. Robinson, Calhoun, & Glaser (2007) posit that adolescent female issues most times are internally motivated, and girls are challenged with resolving internal conflicts; therefore, a protective factor such as religiosity may provide a means for addressing individual concerns and facilitate healthy social-emotional development.

Ryan, Rigby, & King (1993) hypothesized that the manner in which religion is internalized would have implications for mental health and adjustment. Adolescents' psychological well-being is often times assessed by their response to their academic and social environment, self-efficacy, and general health. The BASC-SRP-II evaluates these areas to determine the level of social emotional functioning in adolescents which is the instrument used in the present study to address these constructs of mental health. The convergence of religious commitment or internalization with psychological development and adjustment provides opportunity for adolescents to utilize their faith to support healthy social emotional functioning. Ryan et. al. (1993) deduces that the influence of religious orientations on adjustment is greater when it is more central in an individual's life.

Stanard, Sandhu, & Painter (2000) suggests that spirituality is emerging as a fifth force in counseling and psychotherapy, and is critical for sound mental health and effective growth and development, as evidenced by inclusion of spirituality and religious problems in the *DSM-IV*. The field of Psychology has become increasingly interested in spiritual or religious interventions, and evidence continues to support the notion that religiosity influences psychosocial adjustment, and individual behavior (Good & Willoughby, 2006); Robinson, Calhoun & Glaser , 2007; Sinha et al. 2007; Gittfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Dixon, Howie, & Starling (2004), study indicated that female juvenile offenders had more psychopathology than non-offenders. Decreasing psychological distress in female juvenile offenders by enhancing their overall social emotional development through examining protective factors such as religion potentially will be significant in altering high risk behaviors.

#### University of Rhode Island Change Assessment Questionnaire (URICA)

Greenstein, Franklin, & McGuffin (1999) explored the descriptive statistics and psychometric properties of the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment Questionnaire (URICA) with an adolescent sample that was placed into groups that were concordant with the transtheoretical model of change and found that the URICA can be used to increase understanding and facilitate empirical investigation of motivation to change in adolescents. The four-factor structure of the URICA is based on the stages-of-change model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1985). The transtheoretical model conceptualizes and measures motivation in terms of five stages of change: Precontemplation (client has acknowledged there is a problem), Contemplation (when change is acknowledged and change is actively considered), Preparation (change is intended and small changes may be pursued), Action (when concrete changes occur), and Maintenance (when changes made are sustained) (Proschaska, Norcross, & DiClemente,

1994). The URICA has been identified as a one of the primary means of measuring the stages of change within the transtheoretical framework (Greenstein, Franklin, & McGuffin, 1999). The URICA measures degrees of stage involvement using a 32-item questionnaire (DiClemente et. al., 1991).

Adolescents involved in psychotherapeutic treatment may not be highly motivated to change, and in order to identify varying stages of motivation in these clients the URICA may be helpful by determining the nature of their involvement in the stages of change (Greenstein, Franklin, & McGuffin, 1999). In addition, the URICA has the potential to provide invaluable information about adolescent clients and guide treatment planning. Providing efficacious interventions require sensitivity to all stages of change (Samuelson, 1998). Literature that has examined the stages of change recommends that different intervention strategies are related to each stage of change (Prochaska et. al., 1992). The study by Greenstein, Franklin, & McGuffin (1999) provided evidence that the URICA can be used to measure stage of change in adolescents with emotional, behavioral, and/or psychiatric problems. Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross (1992) sum up their research by stating: “We have determined that efficient self-change depends on doing the right things (processes) at the right time (stages).” The URICA facilitates the process by providing information about clients’ potential readiness to change.

#### The Religious Commitment Inventory-10

Worthington’s model addresses specific questions such as: Who does religion affect positively and under what conditions? Who does religion affect negatively and under what conditions? (Worthington, et. al., 2003). Religious commitment is the key variable in Worthington’s (1988) model, which he defined the degree to which individual’s desire to hold fast to their religious values, beliefs, and practices in daily living. These questions are important

in this particular study because of the participants' unique backgrounds, and the potential affect that religion may have on these individuals. Specifically taking into consideration their involvement in the juvenile justice system, it is integral to find protective factors that are most influential with them.

The Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10) was based on Worthington's (1988) model of religious values in counseling, and designed to be a brief screening of religious assessment and a ecumenical (universal) assessment of religious commitment. Using this instrument with adolescents is practical due to the brief administration, and pragmatic in regards to determining if the outcome of the measure will be useful as part of an intervention strategy. In addition, this instrument has been revised so that it is psychometrically sound for the use of research and counseling. Moreover, the sample population includes individuals from ethnically - diverse groups, various religions, or and those from non-religious backgrounds which would be representative of the participants in this study. Worthington et al. (2003) recommend that the RCI-10 be used in research with religious and nonreligious people. This allows for us to determine the influence that religion has on individuals and have a comparison between those that are nonreligious. In addition, it would be useful to help identify the factors that may facilitate the negative relationship of religion and delinquent behavior that has been repeatedly reported in the literature. Robinson, Calhoun, & Glaser (2007) found that the intrapersonal religious commitment subscale score on the RCI-10 was related to the interpersonal relations subscale score, the self-reliance subscale score, and the personal adjustment composite score on the BASC-SRP-II. These findings support the need to examine further the influence of specific religious commitment variables (e.g. intrapersonal) that influence adaptability, psychosocial

adjustment, emotional functioning, and individual's motivation to change which may reduce negative or undesirable behaviors.

#### Intrinsic/Extrinsic (I-E Revised)

The role that intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity play in an individual's well-being could potentially be a factor that promotes either a healthy or an unhealthy lifestyle. Particularly with adolescents, intrinsic motivation to pursue their religious beliefs and values may separate these individuals from their counterparts that are extrinsically motivated by the degree of adaptability, engagement in delinquent behavior, and readiness for change. In order to measure these constructs Gorsuch and McPherson (1989) have developed the Intrinsic/Extrinsic measurement revised edition from the original work of Allport and Ross's (1967) Religious Orientation Inventory (ROI). Allport's and Ross's (1967) concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic religion have been operationalized in several scales, but those that have developed from the original Allport and Ross work have been the most successful (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989). This instrument is useful with adolescents that are involved with the legal system. The scales are generally applicable regardless of education, and at the same time measuring the constructs it was design to measure (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989).

Intrinsic-extrinsic religious motivation has different implications for psychological health. The presence of extrinsic religious motivation may suggest that religion is used to provide justification for one's formula for living and could be less healthy than intrinsic motivation that functions as a base for one's life choices, and give meaning to life experiences (Genia & Shaw, 1991). In support of this theory, Genia & Shaw, 1991) found that the intrinsic group in their study was significantly lower in depression than the three other groups (extrinsically religious, indiscriminately proreligious, or nonreligious). Based on this evidence it

is possible that intrinsically religiously motivated adolescents would yield similar results in general area of better psychological health. Research related to religious commitment (often operationalized by “church attendance”) has shown a positive correlation with less delinquent behavior in adolescents who attend church services regularly; therefore, it could be assumed that intrinsic motivation may have as much or a greater impact on juvenile delinquent behavior. The I/E revised scales discrimination of intrinsic and extrinsic types may provide deeper insight in distinguishing the influence of religious commitment (which is often measured by an external stimulus) versus intrinsic motivation on improving mental health.

The *I* and *E* scales have received extensive use in the research literature, and may be the most used measures of religiosity aside from church attendance (Donahue, 1985). In addition, the intrinsic scale has been identified in research as a unidimensional, nondoctrinal indicant of religious commitment (Donahue, 1985). Having an instrument that has been widely used and validated by multiple research that measures religious commitment from different perspective provides a solid rationale for implementing this measure in this current study to determine the difference of religious commitment (church attendance), and the personal conviction (intrinsic motivation) related to an individual’s religious beliefs on behavior.

Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition, Adolescent Self Report (BASC-2-SRP-A) - Adaptive Scales

This measure provides significant clinical information about social emotional functioning reported by adolescent clients. The Clinical and Adaptive scales have a vast range of behavior and social indicators that are assessed across settings. The BASC (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1998) was used in the study conducted by Demaray and Malecki (2002) to assess behaviors important to school functioning (e.g., academic competence, social skills, and externalizing

problem behaviors). The BASC has a multidimensional use, and evaluates participants' adaptive and problem behaviors in home and community settings.

In another study by Kadish, Glaser, Calhoun & Ginter (2001), the BASC Adaptive scales and one Composite scale (i.e. Personal Adjustment) were used to determine if the Life –Skills Development Scale-Juvenile Form, which was designed to assess the life skills of juvenile offenders was a valid measure of life –skills. As the researchers expected there was a positive correlation validating their hypothesis. The use of the BASC in the aforementioned study supports the selection of this measure to help identify adaptive skills in juvenile offenders.

Kadish et al. (2001) noted that the primary component to providing successful treatment to the juvenile offender population is effective assessment. The psychometric properties of the BASC Adaptive scales are an efficient measure for assessing the adaptive life-skills of this population. For example, Kadish, Glaser, Calhoun & Ginter (2001), found that youth who received high scores on the Adaptive scales tended to score high on the four life-skills dimensions on the LSDS-JF; additionally youth who received high scores on the Self-Esteem subscale on the BASC-2 had similar outcomes on the Identity Development/Purpose in Life Skills scale of the LSDS-JF. Again, the BASC-2 Adaptive scales are an appropriate measure for identifying positive adaptive behaviors with the juvenile population because of its universal, multidimensional nature. The BASC-2 Clinical scales help determine how an adolescent is functioning in home, school, peer relationships, or community contexts.

#### Religious Commitment and Level of Offense

There have been studies that focused on the relationship of religious commitment or influence and its correlation to type of offenses committed. Research suggests religiosity influences various forms of delinquency. The term organic religion provides a conceptual way to

think about research that examines the relationship between measures of religiosity (e.g., attendance, activities, and other commitments) and measures of deviance (e.g., delinquency, drug use, or violent crime) (Johnson, 2007). The findings of a study by Burkett and White (1974) concluded that religious salience (measured by church attendance) has a much stronger negative relationship to victimless crimes than to victim crimes. Another study (Higgins and Albretch, 1977) also suggested that religiosity is linked to the relative seriousness of delinquent acts. Benda and Corwyn (1997) found that their results supported the hypothesis that “the measures of religion are more likely to be related to status offenses than to crimes.” The female juvenile offender population often times is charged with status offenses. Status offenses are often applied to offenses committed by minors that include but are not limited to underage consumption of alcohol or tobacco use, truancy, running away from home, or ungovernability. There appears to be strong support for the influence of religious salience on delinquent behaviors that are commonly committed by this population (female juvenile offenders).

Historically, church attendance was the primary measure that determined religious commitment, thus leading to the conclusion of religiosity having a moderate impact on delinquency. When replacing church attendance with religious influence as a measure of religion, Sloane and Potvin (1986) found that the relation between religious influence and each offense identified in their study was more often statistically significant than was the case with church attendance. In addition, religious influence is strongly affects status offenses and offenses involving substance use, but not as influential with offenses involving interpersonal violence, or fighting (Sloane and Potvin, 1986). Having multiple measures of religious, commitment may be beneficial when determining the relationship of religiosity and its influence on levels of offense.

Evidence supports religion decreasing delinquent behavior with not only minor or status offenses, but also more serious violations. In a study, involving African American youth aged 15-21 living high risk neighborhoods revealed that involvement in religious institutions buffered or interacted with the effects of neighborhood disorder on serious, but not minor crime (Johnson, Jang, et al., 2000). Measured as an individual behavioral trait, religion's effects persist over a wide range of crime (Evans, Cullen, Dunaway, & Burton, Jr., 1995). Research has generally revealed an inverse relationship between religiosity and various forms of deviance, delinquency, and crime (Evans, Cullen, Dunaway, & Burton, Jr., 1995).

### Religious Commitment and Race

Often times the profile of the adolescents involved in the juvenile justice system are from ethnic minority groups with disadvantaged backgrounds. Religious salience or commitment across different races may vary. Researchers appear to be interested in protective factors that help remit crime or delinquent behavior amongst specifically African American youth who tend to have increased involvement with the legal system. Family structure, school and peer relations have been the factors most studied (Smith et.al. 1995); however, religiosity is becoming a major consideration that may be more of a protective factor for black youth. Johnson, Larson, Li & Jang (2000) reported that the data collected from a representative sample of high-risk youths, specifically black males dispelled the notion by previous researchers that youth's religiosity did not have a direct effect on deviance. The samples that previous studies employed tended to include a large number of youth living in a rural or prosperous urban community (Johnson, Larson, Li & Jang, 2000). The sample population appears to make a difference in the results yielded in respect of the influence of religiosity on deviant behavior. Specifically the findings in the study by Johnson, Larson, Li & Jang (2000) suggested that individual religiosity may be a

strong factor in insulating young black males from various forms of deviance often associated with inner-city poverty tracts. The larger numbers of juvenile offenders are often from urban areas and ethnic minority groups which provides a different perspective when considering the degree of the role religion plays with these populations.

Although African American youth are usually at an increased risk of deviant behavior, Hispanic adolescents are also at a significant risk. Religion for these groups appear to have a greater impact on the delinquent behavior they get involved with than their white counterparts. A study conducted by Bernardin (2006) indicated that African Americans and Hispanics scored higher on religiosity and lower on drug use than Caucasian youth. In addition, other issues such as suicide are also affected by religiosity and the impact religion on between whites and non-whites that are dealing with suicidal ideation. Stack, Wasserman, and Kposowa (1994) observed that African Americans who attended church more often reported more negative attitudes about suicide. Historically, the church has been an integral institution for the African American community to address challenges with regard to their status in society and a place of comfort to deal with the adverse conditions related to racism. By design, the church acted as protective factor in past times for blacks, and still has a major impact today on the issues that are unique to the black community. Church attendance buffers the effects of neighborhood disorder on serious crime among black youth; therefore, suggesting that the more involved black youth are in church (attending church) the less harmful affect disordered neighborhood crime has on these youth (Johnson, Lang, De Li, & Larson, 2000). The role of the church especially in black communities may play a greater part in helping to reduce crime amongst this population and act as protective factor for these youth as well as other social influences such as family life, and school. Institutions such as churches, mosques, or synagogues could provide relational networks of

social and emotional support that would protect those involved in these institutions from negative behavior leading to criminal activity (Burkett and Grasmick, 1993).

#### Religious Commitment and BASC- 2- SRP-A (Adaptive and Clinical Scales)

The Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition, Adolescent Self-Report Form (BASC-2 SRP-A) assesses numerous facets of the client's behavior and emotional state - both positive and negative aspects (BASC-2; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004). The BASC-2 consists of Clinical scales and Adaptive scales that compare a child with peers of his/her same age. Whereas the Clinical scale is used in an attempt to identify maladaptive behaviors (ex. Externalizing / Internalizing problems), the Adaptive scale focuses on positive or desirable behaviors demonstrated by the child. There are five adaptive scales: Interpersonal Relations, Self-Reliance, Parent Relations, Self-esteem, and Personal Adjustment Composite. Adolescents who view religion as a personal commitment may have better adaptive skills than their female counterparts, which potentially could be a protective factor for at-risk behaviors. Good and Willoughby (2006) religiosity and psychosocial study suggest that adolescents that attended church weekly had more positive scores on measures of academic orientation, relationship with parents, parental monitoring, friendship quality, sexual activity, substance abuse, and perceptions of risk than their peers that did not attend church regularly. Church attendance represents religious commitment in many studies and continues to be positively correlated with desired behavior and negatively correlated with delinquent behavior. In addition, the more adaptive these youth are the less likely they are to pursue undesirable behavior or be involved with the legal system.

Benda and Corwyn (1997) found that strong attachment to parents, high commitment to achievement, more involvement in school, high religiosity, and less peer associations with

delinquents enhance beliefs in the moral validity of societal norms and laws. These positive behavior and social indicators have the potential of acting as a buffer for at-risk activities. The BASC-2 –SRP –A Clinical scales: Attitude to School, and Attitude to Teachers, identify psychological adjustment in youth across settings. Specifically, adolescent females tend to have difficulty with interpersonal relationships, which may lead to delinquent behaviors such as fighting or being ungovernable.

Calhoun (2001) reported that female juvenile offenders who completed the BASC-SRP-A had higher levels of stress than males, indicating increased levels of social stress regarding interpersonal relationships. In addition, female juvenile offenders perceived themselves as less valued in their family, which was indicated by the scores on the relations with parent scale, and reported significantly lower self-esteem than the males on the scale measuring self-esteem (Calhoun, 2001). Females have offenses that are often times related to their challenges with interpersonal dynamics and self-esteem. Having positive experiences in these areas which are critical to their development may act as protective factors.

### Religious Commitment and Age

Religious commitment may be a protective factor for adolescents who are at different developmental stages in their lives. Youth who are younger are very impressionable and may not have the psychological or emotional maturity to decide about their personal commitment to a religion. Adolescents at the latter part of their development are establishing some level of autonomy and possibly have better insight than younger teenagers about the role religiosity plays in their lives or not. Sinha, Cnaan, & Gelles (2007) reported that age was a significant factor in the explanation of risk involvement, participating in deviant behaviors increased with age. Inversely, age was not a factor when teens reported religion to be important in their lives and

participated in religious activities were less likely to engage in risk behaviors (Sinha, Cnaan, & Gelles, 2007). Although this study suggests that age appears not to be significant in respect to religious commitment, its impact on delinquent behavior, religion could be a useful factor that keeps lowers recidivism rates in young offenders, and lessen the offending rates of older youth.

According to Sinha, Cnaan, & Gelles (2007) research shows when teens reach the age of 16 their practiced religiosity decreases, and simultaneously their involvement in risk behaviors increases. At this stage of the developmental process teenagers are experiencing a significant amount of change which include having more responsibility, and more exposure and experience with the world; however, regardless of age (Sinha, Cnaan, & Gelles, 2007) found that continued involvement in a religious group reduced the probability of engaging in risky behaviors. Age is a variable that potentially will be significant in determining when religious commitment is most effective as a protective factor for prevention and intervention strategies. Age may not have a direct correlation with religious commitment's influence on at-risk behaviors, but is a factor that allows us to pinpoint where in the adolescent developmental cycle religious influence is effective or least effective on those participating in delinquent behaviors.

#### Religious Commitment and the URICA

Therapy is most effective when the appropriate intervention has been implemented to address client issues and reach therapeutic goals. For example, religious salience may be a major component in facilitating a client's motivation to change, when it has been determined to be an important part of the individual's life. Religiosity in the therapeutic process can be paired with the stages of change. Tailoring the therapy relationship to the stage of change can enhance outcome (Prochaska & Norcross, 2001).

The University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA; DiClemente & Hughes, 1990) assesses readiness to change is based on the transtheoretical model of change. Religious salience may have a positive correlation with the action stage of the model because in some research it has had a positive relationship with adaptability. The participants in this study that have good adaptive skills and high religious commitment may not repeat delinquent behaviors; therefore, assuming that they are more likely to be ready to change. The URICA has been used with an adolescent sample and is a valid measure for assessing readiness to change in this population. The results yielded from this questionnaire facilitate the type of psychotherapeutic intervention needed based on the client's motivation to change (Greenstein, Franklin, & McGuffin, 1999).

#### Intrinsic Religiosity and Level of Offense

Adolescent delinquent behaviors take many forms where some offenses are more serious than others. Juvenile offenders who commit crimes involving victims are perceived as more of a danger to society than their counterparts that commit offenses that are victimless. Research shows that religious commitment appears to be greater in youth that do not participate in delinquent behaviors that involve victims. Taking into consideration that religious commitment is most times measured by "church attendance" it can be assumed that youth who are identified as religiously committed are dependent upon an external locus of control that has a significant influence on either decreasing their at-risk behaviors or being a factor that helps them stay out of trouble. There could be a different outcome for those that have a greater internal locus of control illustrated by their internal motivation to live their lives according to their faith, which is an indicator of intrinsic religiosity. Elifson, Petersen, & Hardaway, (1983) suggests that a definite relationship exists between religious salience, personal prayer, and delinquency, and that these

measures of religiosity are more important than church participation in predicting conventional as well as victimless delinquent behavior. Moreover, the study conducted by Elifson, et. al. (1983) found that students who attend church frequently are significantly more likely to score low on measures of delinquent behavior than the less frequent attendees, however, this relationship is relatively weak compared to the measures of religiosity that are representative of intrinsically religiously motivated youth.

Religious salience (intrinsic motivation) is believed to have a greater influence on degrees of delinquent behavior than extrinsic variables (church attendance). Pearce et. al. (2003) findings suggest that internal mechanisms of religion (i.e., indicators of private practices may have more profound effects on problematic behavior than do external mechanisms (e.g., church attendance). The degree to which adolescents internalized religion, evidenced by self-initiated private religious behaviors, resulted in demonstrable decreases in problem behavior over time (Pearce, et al., 2003). Internalized moral beliefs and values might result in greater social and moral constraints leading to less violent types of crime or no criminal behavior at all. Youth who reported higher levels of private practices also reported less of an increase of conduct problems over time (Pearce, et. al., 2003). There is also the potential for an inverse relationship of religious salience and crime, where researchers have indicated that youth who engage in conduct problems are less likely to hold religious beliefs through a process of cognitive dissonance (Benda, 1997).

National survey results have indicated that religion is an important part of the lives many youth: 95 % of American teens aged 13 to 17 believe in God or a universal spirit, 69% consider themselves to be religious, 42% pray alone frequently, and 49% attend worship services weekly (Gallup, 1999). These statistics are an indication that youth have intrinsically motivated religiosity and extrinsically motivated religiosity that are influential in their lives; however,

Ellison & Levin (1998) suggests that internalized beliefs become a part of self-identity, along with associated feelings of guilt and shame when they break a religious norm, and this may function to constrain the behavior of youth. Where external mechanisms of religion help to constrain deviant behavior these external regulators may or may not be readily assessable to youth when they are at a critical place of decision whether to participate in at-risk behaviors. African American youth aged 15-21 residing in high risk environments revealed that external religious mechanisms such as religious institutions buffered or interacted with the effects of neighborhood disorder on serious, but not minor crime (Johnson, Jang, et al., 2000). Intrinsically religiously motivated youth may have an advantage over their counterparts who depend on external regulators to help them stay out of trouble.

#### Intrinsic Religiosity and Age

Internalized religious beliefs may help deter delinquent behavior among youth in different phases of development in their adolescent years. Research show that early-onset delinquency specifically for girls is attributed to a parent's involvement in the legal system. Girls in the adolescent phase in life tend to find their identity in relationships and it is not unusual that they identify with their parents and mimic their deviant behavior. If identity is shaped by internalized religious beliefs then youth who are intrinsically religiously motivated may be at less risk for offending in the earlier phases of life. Criminal behavior begins in early adolescents and peaks between ages 15 and 17(Blumstein, Cohen, Roth, & Visher, 1986)

#### Intrinsic Religiosity and Race

Crime statistics and research findings show that African American youth usually have more problems with the legal system than Caucasian and Hispanic adolescents do. In a study conducted by Pearce et. al. (2003) Hispanic youth reported fewer conduct problems (present and

past) compared with Caucasian youth, whereas African American youth reported more past conduct problems compared with Caucasian youth. External mechanisms of religion appear to be a protective factor for African American youth in particular. The church has long been the pillar of the black community so it is no surprise that it is a deterrent for delinquent behavior; however, it is surprising that black youth offend at alarming rates. Although, external religious sources act as a buffer to deviant behavior, internal mechanisms of religion may be an important factor that may be more significant in discouraging at-risk behaviors in a particular ethnic group.

Pearce et al. (2003) reported that private religious practices had a unique effect in decreasing conduct problems over a 1-year period. Additionally, research suggests that for high-risk urban youth ( usually minority youth) both parent involvement and private religious practices play roles in diminishing risk for conduct problems(Pearce et. al., 2003). There is the possibility that these youth's religious salience are measured by external mechanisms (church attendance) and that other dimensions of religiosity are not considered that could be beneficial in helping them integrate the beliefs they have internalized into their present lifestyle.

#### Intrinsic Religiosity and Scores on the URICA

The University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA) assesses motivation to change. This instrument has been used with an adolescent sample validating its appropriateness for measuring readiness to change in this population. The transtheoretical model provides a theoretical structure within which motivation can be conceptualized and measured in a reliable and valid manner (Prochaska, Norcross, & DiClemente, 1992). The juvenile offender population is often mandated clients and the motivation to change is not always clear. Some of these youth are more receptive to counseling, and those that are less receptive are likely to be non-compliant to treatment. The difference may be due to where the client is within the stages of change

(precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance) that sheds light on whether personal investment is present in the therapeutic process.

Greenstein, Franklin & McGuffin (1999) reported that their adolescent sample strongly endorsed Contemplation items on the URICA, and Precontemplation items were the least strongly endorsed. These adolescents acknowledged as a whole that they had problems that they were considering changing. This is an encouraging sign that teens are have some insight about their challenges and believe that they need to change; however, adolescents that have been involved in delinquent behavior were not a part of this sample and the attitude about acknowledging their need to change problematic behavior may not be highly endorsed. These adolescents (who have been involved with the legal system) tend to externalize and avoid taking responsibility for their actions. They may be identified as precontemplators that are unaware or under-aware of their problems and when they present for therapy, they often do so because of pressure from others (Prochaska & Norcross, 2001). Although this appears to be the case for most juvenile offenders, there are those individuals that have beliefs and values that motivate them to take personal ownership of their behavior. Religious influence usually shapes the belief and value system of most youth. Teenagers have reported in high numbers that many of them have religion as an important part of their lives and are affiliated with a religious institution. Youth that have reported participating in at-risk behaviors also report that they are religious; therefore, it may not be uncommon for some juvenile offenders to acknowledge there need to change if they have religion as an influential factor in their lives.

Additionally, intrinsically religiously motivated religious adolescents internalize the beliefs of their faith and potentially incorporate them into their daily lives and decision-making process. These youth would probably be more invested in the therapeutic process and benefit

from therapy, in order to have congruency with the expectations of their religion and their behavior. Although this might be the case, Prochaska & Norcross (2001) suggest that individuals in the contemplation stage (aware that a problem exists; seriously thinking about overcoming it) commonly remain stuck in this stage for extensive periods. Intrinsically religiously motivated youth may have the greater potential for progressing to the next stage quicker than those youth that are extrinsically motivated, which could be identified by their URICA scores.

#### Intrinsic Religiosity and the BASC-2-SRP-A (Adaptive and Clinical scales)

Davis, Kerr, & Robinson Kurpius (2003) stated that religious beliefs can cultivate a belief in adolescents that their life has meaning. Research has shown that teenagers are searching for the purpose of their lives. According to McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter (1993), a lack of perceived purpose for adolescents often results in them engaging in risk behaviors such as unsafe sex, delinquency, substance abuse and suicide. Therefore, religious beliefs may have psychotherapeutic value because it helps adolescents attach meaning to their existence (Davis, Kerr, & Robinson Kurpius, 2003) According to Sinha, Cnaan, & Gelles (2007) teens who exhibit low self-esteem are assumed to also exhibit self-rejection and are willing to engage in risky and illegal activities. When adolescents have purpose they are more likely to have increased self-esteem, and self-reliance which provides them with the confidence to allow for more positive interactions with others decreasing the chances of participating in delinquent behavior that results from lack of internal locus of control.

The BASC-2 Adaptive and Clinical scales assess adolescents ability to adapt, and social emotional functioning; therefore, measuring behaviors that increase overall personal adjustment. These scales are representative of characteristics of an individual who is well adjusted, and has strong internal regulators that encourage positive behaviors associated with these areas.

Furthermore, what the client utilizes as internal controls is developed from a belief system that they have embraced, such as a religious orientation. When religious commitment is intrinsically religiously motivated, individuals personally invest in the belief system, and religion becomes a significant contributor to establishing characteristics that lead to behaviors that are more desirable. Smith and Faris (2002) showed that religious 12<sup>th</sup> graders had significantly higher self-esteem and held more positive attitudes about life in general than their less religious counterparts. Thus, valuing religions may foster positive self-esteem and perception of self-efficacy (Ellison, 1993).

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

The research question of the present study seeks to ascertain whether constructs of religiosity such as intrinsic motivation and intrapersonal religious commitment influence factors that potentially decrease at-risk behaviors within a sample of female juvenile offenders. Examining correlations between religiosity and multiple variables: age, race, level of offense, stages of change, adaptive skills, and social-emotional well-being will help validate religion's role as a protective factor. The Bivariate Correlations procedure was employed which computes the Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine the strength of the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The linear regression procedure examined the relationship between dependent variables and a set of independent variables that were significantly correlated.

#### Participants

Participants in the present study consisted of 66 female adolescents sampled from a juvenile justice system located in northeastern Georgia. The data used in the study was gathered as part of the screening procedure for participation in either the G.I.R.L.S. Project, a psychoeducational group program for female juvenile offenders, or the Juvenile Counseling Assessment Program (JCAP), a program designed to provide counseling and assessment services for juvenile offenders. These girls ranged in age from 12 to 17, with a mean age of 14.73. The racial composition of the participants consisted of 36% Caucasian, 55 % African American, 6 % Hispanic, and 3% Multiracial. The instruments, Behavioral Assessment System for Children-Self Report of Personality-Adolescent, Second Edition (BASC-2-SRP-A)

(Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004, Religious Commitment Inventory -10 (Worthington et al., 2003), the Intrinsic Extrinsic Religiosity Revised Scale (I/E-R Scale), and the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA) were administered as a part of the standard intake process. A demographic information sheet was also included in the packet. Additionally, information regarding each participant's juvenile justice history was gathered from the computer database system. The participants' juvenile court history was entered along with the scored results of the instrument into an SPSS version 14 database.

Selection of the participants was facilitated through juvenile court. Probation officers and juvenile court judges ordered participants and their families to attend an intake session for individual counseling or a screening session that was a part of entry into the G.I.R.L.S. group program. Graduate level clinicians met with the girls and their parents at the appointed time and administered the instruments and demographic sheet. Participants were not required to take part in research, though completion of the instruments was required for participation in either individual or group therapy. Parents of the girls' included in the sample consented to allow results of the intake process and screening session to be used in research. The intake sessions for individual counseling included the identified client, parent(s) or legal guardian(s), and a clinician administering instruments during each session. The screening sessions for group counseling (G.I.R.L.S. group) consisted of between five and ten girls and their parents with two clinicians administering instruments during each session. These clinicians were trained in appropriate informed consent procedures and administration guidelines for all intake and screening instruments. The parents and participants were informed of the ways in which data would be used, and a consent signature for use of the child's responses in research was received from the parents. Additionally, the project participants signed an assent form. During the period in which

this data was gathered a large majority of the females involved in the juvenile justice system were being mandated to receive counseling services from JCAP and G.I.R.L.S. group, however, this number was not exhaustive and did not include every female involved in the juvenile justice system. Efforts were made to include every girl being served by this system.

### Procedure

The current study's data is part of a larger set of data gathered during the intake session and screening process of the G.I.R.L.S. Project and JCAP. These projects were designed to deliver counseling services to juvenile offenders in either an individual format or gender specific counseling groups. The nature of the instruments, research questions, and methodology in the current study are strongly related to the overall emphasis and goals of the G.I.R.L.S. and JCAP projects. Both projects aspire to provide a set of skills that promote healthy decision making, encourage positive behavior, and facilitate psychological well-being in this population by identifying factors that will affect the change process amongst this population.

The Institutional Review Board of the University of Georgia initially approved the G.I.R.L.S. and JCAP projects. A separate IRB approval was received for the specific use of the subset of data necessary for the present study. After the data needed for the present study was pulled from the larger set of G.I.R.L.S. and JCAP data, the new database was completely de-identified. During the collection of the original set of G.I.R.L.S. and JCAP data, every effort was made to ensure confidentiality. Only the projects' graduate clinicians and two faculty members having access to the database and physical research files, which were stored in a secure room.

### Research Instruments

The Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition, Adolescent Self-Report Form (BASC-2 SRP-A) was utilized to assess numerous facets of the client's behavior and

emotional state - both positive and negative aspects (BASC-2; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004). The BASC-2-SRP-A consists of three separate components, the Parent Rating Scale (PRS), the Teacher Rating Scale (TRS), and the Self-Report of Personality (SRP). The BASC-2-SRP-A consists of Clinical scales and Adaptive scales that compare a child with peers of his/her same age. Whereas the Clinical scale is used in an attempt to identify maladaptive behaviors (ex. Externalizing / Internalizing problems), the Adaptive scale focuses on positive or desirable behaviors demonstrated by the child. A child's social and emotional state is evaluated by analyzing T-scores and percentile ranks generated by the rater's responses on the BASC-2. A T-score provides a quantitative measure of a child's functioning in specific areas compared to his/her peers. On the Clinical scales, scores that fall within the range 60 – 69 imply that an individual is “at-risk” for encountering future difficulties in a particular area. Domain scores of 70 and above are considered “clinically significant” and typically indicate a need for immediate intervention on the child's behalf. On the Adaptive scales, conversely, “at-risk” scores are those within the range 31 – 40, whereas “clinically significant” scores are those that are equal to or below 30. On the BASC-2, the Emotional Symptoms Index (ESI) is the most general measure of an individual's social and emotional functioning, combining individual Clinical and Adaptive domains into a comprehensive score. Additional data is obtained by analyzing the results of Clinical and Adaptive composite scores, and more specifically, the individual correlating scales. To safeguard against bias, the BASC-2 -SRP-A generates an F Index score that alerts the examiner to suspicions of extreme subjectivity on the part of the rater. This instrument's General norms are based on a large national sample that is representative of the general population of U.S. children with regard to race/ethnicity, parent education, geographic region, and clinical or

special education classification. The child is compared with those of the general population of the same age. (Reynolds & Kamphaus, (2004).

The Self- Report of Personality (SRP) of the BASC-2 is a personality inventory that contains a *True/False* response and a rating on a four-point scale of frequency ranging from *Never* to *Almost Always*. The four-point scale has been added to the BASC-2-SRP-A because this adds reliability and helps to measure the score range extremes. The BASC-2-SRP-A takes about 20-30 minutes to complete and is on a third grade reading level. The SRP has separate forms at three different levels: child (8 through 11), adolescent (12 through 21), and young adults attending postsecondary school (18 through 25) (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004). In addition, the BASC-2-SRP-A has English and Spanish forms.

Again, the Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition, Adolescent Self-Report Form consists of Clinical scales and Adaptive scales. The Clinical scales which assess maladjustment and high scores on these scales represent behaviors that impair functioning in home, school, peer relationships, or community contexts; however, analyzing the Adaptive scales of the BASC-2(SRP-A) and specific subscales of the Clinical scales was the focus for the purpose of this study. The Adaptive scales measure positive adjustment with high scores representing positive or desirable characteristics. The four scales of the adaptability include: Interpersonal Relations, Relations with Parents, Self-Esteem, and Self-Reliance. There is a composite scale, Personal Adjustment that is derived from the four adaptive scale scores that provide good indications of global problems of personality and behavior (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004). The Clinical subscales identified for this study include Attitude to School, and Attitude to Teachers.

Table 1

Definitions of the SRP-A Adaptive Scales

Scale	Definitions
Interpersonal Relations	The perception of having good social relationships with and friendships with peers
Relations with Parents	A positive regard towards parents and a feeling of being esteemed by them
Self-Esteem	Feelings of self-esteem, self-respect, and self-acceptance
Self-Reliance	Confidence in one's ability to solve problems; a belief in one's personal dependability and decisiveness

Definitions are adapted from Reynolds and Kamphaus (2004)

Table 2

Definitions of the SRP-A Clinical Scales

Scale	Definitions
Attitude to School	Feelings of alienation, hostility, and dissatisfaction regarding school
Attitude to Teachers	Feelings of resentment and dislike of teachers, beliefs that teachers are unfair, uncaring, or overly demanding

Definitions are adapted from Reynolds and Kamphaus (2004)

The Intrinsic/Extrinsic-Revised (I/E-R Scale; Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989) measures religious orientation. Orientation can appear as either extrinsically oriented (i.e. I go to church because it helps me make friends.) or intrinsically oriented (i.e. I enjoy reading about my religion). The revised I/E scales were developed from Allport's and Ross's (1967) concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. The "Religious Orientation" scale (Allport & Ross, 1967) was designed for the adult population to measure Allport's Extrinsic (*E*) and Intrinsic (*I*) religious orientation. From this, Gorsuch & Venable (1983) developed the "Age Universal" form which measures extrinsic and intrinsic religiosity in children and adolescents beginning with 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

Gorsuch & Venable(1983) reported that the Age Universal scales has internal consistency reliability coefficients (i.e., alpha coefficients, Cronbach, 1951) of .66 for *E* and .73 for *I* which

compare favorably with alpha coefficients on the Allport-Ross scales of .70 for *E* and .73 for *I* on the same subjects. The correlation between the Allport-Ross *I* and *E* scales was -.38, while the Age Universal *I* and *E* scales correlated

-.39. As a result, the Age Universal scales are able to be used as alternate forms for the Allport-Ross scales.

Gorsuch & McPherson (1989) concluded that the Age Universal *I* and *E* scales needed to be revised because the factor analyses showed that there were two subcategories of extrinsic religiosity; identifying extrinsic items concerned with social relationships (“*Es*”) and with personal benefits (“*Ep*”). The analyses of these two categories resulted in a revised intrinsic scale, an *Es* scale, an *Ep* scale, and three single items which may also be used for measuring these constructs (original item 16 for *I* – “My whole approach to life is based upon my religion); original item 10 for *Ep* (“What religion offers me most is comfort in times of trouble and sorrow”); and original item 17 for *Es* (“I go to church mainly because I enjoy seeing people I know there”). The *I/E-R* scales have reliabilities equal to that of the original scales. This instrument was appropriate for use in this present study because it specifically identifies other constructs of religiosity that are related to intrinsic religious motivation may differ from religious commitment.

The Religious Commitment Inventory -10(RCI-10; Worthington et al., 2003) is a brief assessment of religious commitment. For the purposes of this instrument, religious commitment is defined as the degree to which a person adheres to his or her religious values, beliefs, and practices and uses them in daily living. The reading level was adjusted for this population on this instrument from a 7<sup>th</sup> grade level, and is readable at a 6.7 grade level. Utilizing Microsoft word

functions each item was adjusted to meet the 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. The JCAP research team reviewed the altered assessment items to ensure the integrity of the questions was maintained.

The RCI-10 is based on Worthington's (1988) model of religious values in counseling, which describes a highly religious person as one who evaluates the world through religious schemas and integrates religion into much of his or her life. This instrument is designed to be used in research, counseling, and health psychology, and to be most efficient and psychometrically sound; and is a shorter version of the RCI-17 (Worthington, et. al., 2003). The RCI-10 was based on a diverse population ranging from university students attending secular and explicitly Christian colleges, adults, single and married people, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, and people who respond none to their religious preference; and therapists and clients at secular and explicitly Christian counseling agencies (Worthington, et. al., 2003). Worthington, et. al. (2003) reported validity evidence for the full-scale and two subscales on the RCI-10. This instrument has been proposed to be used as a brief global assessment survey, which allows the therapist to determine the religious salience of a client and integrate their religiosity into the treatment plan (Worthington, et. al., 2003).

The University of Rhode Island Change Assessment Questionnaire (URICA) (McConaughy, Prochaska, & Velicer, 1983). The URICA is a 32-item self-report measure that includes 4 subscales measuring the stages of change: Precontemplation, Contemplation, Action, and Maintenance. (There is also a 24-item version) Responses are given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strong disagreement) to 5 (strong agreement). The subscales can be combined arithmetically (C + A + M - PC) to yield a second-order continuous Readiness to Change score that can be used to assess readiness to change at entrance to treatment. Administration time for this measure is about 5 to 10 minutes.

Included in the URICA, are four 8-item subscales for the 32-item version, and four 6-item subscales for the 24-item version, which is pencil and paper self-, administered. Internal consistency for each scale (Coefficient Alpha) ranged from .88 to .89. The URICA was first used with an adult outpatient psychiatrist sample, and it demonstrated solid psychometric properties for scale composition and theoretical consistency (McConaughy et. al., 1983). While the URICA was initially used with adult outpatients, Greenstein, Franklin, & McGuffin, 1999) used it with an adolescent sample who were inpatients at a private psychiatric facility. The result of the study provided evidence that the URICA can be used to measure stage-of-change in adolescents with emotional, behavioral, and/or psychiatric problems (Greenstein, et al., 1999).

### Research Design

The present study employed the Bivariate Correlations analysis which computes the Pearson's correlation coefficient. The linear correlation coefficient  $r$  measures the strength of the linear relationship between the paired  $x$ - and  $y$ -quantitative values in this sample (Triola, 2005). Correlations coefficients range in value from -1 (a perfect negative relationship) and a +1 ( a perfect positive relationship). This procedure determines if a significant relationship exist between the two groups of independent variables (Intrinsic/Extrinsic Religiosity; Interpersonal/Intrapersonal Religiosity) and several dependent variables. In addition, the linear regression equation was used to examine the relationship among those independent and dependent variables that were significantly correlated.

### Research Questions

Research Question 1.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of religious commitment and age?

*Null Hypothesis 1*

There will be no significant relationship between the age of first offense of female juvenile offenders and scores on measures of religious commitment.

Research Question 2.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and age?

*Null Hypothesis 2*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' age and measures of intrinsic religiosity?

Research Question 3.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of religious commitment and race/ethnicity?

*Null Hypothesis 3*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' race/ethnicity and scores on measures of religious commitment.

Research Question 4.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and race/ethnicity?

*Null Hypothesis 4*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' race/ethnicity and scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity.

Research Question 5.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of religious commitment and level of offense?

*Null Hypothesis 5*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' level of offense and scores on measures of religious commitment.

Research Question 6.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and level of offense?

*Null Hypothesis 6*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' level of offense and scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity?

Research Question 7.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of religious commitment and scores on the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA)?

*Null Hypothesis 7*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on the URICA and scores on measures of religious commitment.

Research Question 8.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and scores on the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA)?

*Null Hypothesis 8*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on the URICA and scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity.

Research Question 9.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrapersonal religious commitment and the following adaptive and clinical scales of the BASC-SRP-II?

Adaptive Scales

- a. Interpersonal Relations
- b. Parent Relations
- c. Self-Esteem
- d. Self-Reliance
- e. Personal Adjustment Composite

Clinical Scales

- a. Attitude to School
- b. Attitude to Teachers

*Null Hypothesis 9*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on the adaptive scales of the BASC-SRP-II: interpersonal relations, parent relations, self-esteem, self-reliance, personal adjustment composite, attitude to school, attitude to teachers, and scores on intrapersonal measures of religious commitment.

#### Research Question 10.

Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and the following adaptive and clinical scales of the BASC-SRP-II?

- a. Interpersonal Relations
- b. Parent Relations
- c. Self-Esteem
- d. Self-Reliance
- e. Personal Adjustment Composite

#### Clinical Scales

- a. Attitude to School
- b. Attitude to Teachers

#### *Null Hypothesis 10*

There will be no significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on the adaptive and clinical scales of the BASC-SRP-II: interpersonal relations, parent relations, self-esteem, self-reliance, personal adjustment composite; and the clinical scales, attitude to school, attitude to teachers, and scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity.

#### Limitations of Study

This study sampled a population of females serving probation sentences in a juvenile justice system in northeastern Georgia between August 2005 and June of 2007. The female offenders that completed the BASC-SRP-II, URICA, I/E-Revised scales, and the RCI-10 did so as part of either the intake interview to receive counseling services from JCAP or a screening process for the G.I.R.L.S. group intervention for female juvenile offenders. There was no randomization of the sample, due to the referral nature of the instrument administration. Every

effort was made to refer every girl possible to these programs and the intake interview and group screening assessment. However, not every girl involved in this particular juvenile justice system was referred for counseling services by JCAP or G.I.R.L.S. group program or administered the instruments used in this study.

There were no controls implemented for religious or non-religious affiliation, offense history or demographic background factors. All of the data collected from the measures used in this study were of a self-report nature; the only effort to corroborate this data with behavioral observations consisted of gathering offense histories of each participant. Inherent in using official judicial data is the rough nature of such data, which may not accurately reflect the frequency, and intensity of actual behaviors in the lives of the participants. The graduate clinicians involved in the G.I.R.L.S. Project and JCAP intake and screening process were unaware of the specific research questions contained in the present study.

### Assumptions

The results may not generalize fully to the complete spectrum of female juvenile offenders. Rather, the results are most applicable to girls who are committing offenses of a moderate nature, and are appropriate for services offered by the JCAP and G.I.R.L.S. projects. Therefore, the sample does represent to some degree girls that are involved in the juvenile justice system in multiple ways. For the purposes of interpreting the results of this study, it is assumed that the youth in the sample are representative of a larger national group of female juvenile offenders serving probation sentences in their communities. Additionally it is assumed that all of the youth understood the administration instructions provided and responded in an accurate and truthful manner.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

In order to determine the significance that religiosity variables have on female juvenile offenders adaptability, readiness to change, severity of charges committed, and the relationship with age, and ethnicity, the Bivariate Correlations procedure was employed which computes the Pearson's correlation coefficient. Correlations measure how variables are related. The linear correlation coefficient  $r$  measures the strength of the linear relationship between the paired  $x$ - and  $y$ -quantitative values in this sample (Triola, 2005). Correlations coefficients range in value from -1 (a perfect negative relationship) and a +1 ( a perfect positive relationship). A relationship of 0 indicates no linear relationship. In addition, values were assigned to offense categories to assess the level of offense ranging from 1-34.80 with a mean of 9.88 and standard deviation of 8.28. The level of offense was determined by summing each participant's offenses (Table 10). In addition, the linear regression procedure examined the relationship between dependent variables and a set of independent variables that were significantly correlated. The use of the equation of the regression line is employed only when there is a linear correlation (Triola, 2005).

#### Bivariate Correlation Analysis

Correlations were conducted between measures of religiosity and dependent variables determining the strength of these relationships. A two-tailed test was employed and a  $p$  value of .01 and .05 was required for significance and these analyses are presented in Tables 3, 4, and 5. The results of these analyses were utilized to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1. Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of religious commitment and age? The results indicated there was

not a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of religious commitment and age. The findings are reported in Table 3.

Research Question 2. Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and age ? The results indicated there was not a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and age. The findings are reported in Table 3.

Research Question 3. Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrapersonal religious commitment and race/ethnicity? The results indicated there was not a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of religious commitment and race/ethnicity. The findings are reported in Table 3.

Research Question 4. Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and race/ethnicity? The results indicated there was not a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and race/ethnicity. The findings are reported in Table 3.

Research Question 5. Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrapersonal religious commitment and level of offense? The results indicated there was not a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of religious commitment and level of offense. The findings are reported in Table 3.

Research Question 6. Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and level of offense? The results indicated there was a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and level of offense. The negative relationship between severity of charges and individuals who are intrinsically religiously motivated suggests that female juvenile offenders

who had lower scores on severity of charges were more intrinsically religiously motivated than their counterparts who had increased levels of offenses. The relationship was significant at a 0.05 level. The findings are reported in Table 3.

Table 3:

Correlations between Measures of Religiosity and Demographic Variables

Client Variables	I/E-R		RCI-10	
	Intrinsic	Extrinsic	Intrapersonal	Interpersonal
Age	.014	-.067	.044	-.014
Race/Ethnicity	-.102	.063	.012	-.154
Level of Offense	-.314*	-.089	-.197	-.102

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Research Question 7. Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrapersonal religious commitment and scores on the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA)? The results indicated there was not a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of religious commitment and scores on the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA). The findings are reported in Table 4.

Research Question 8. Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and scores on the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA)? The results indicated there was not a significant relationship between

female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and scores on the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA). The findings are reported in Table 4.

Table 4:

Correlations between Measures of Religiosity and Stages of Change

URICA	I/E-R		RCI-10	
	Intrinsic	Extrinsic	Intrapersonal	Interpersonal
Precontemplative	-.002	.094	.095	-.001
Contemplative	.088	.094	.069	.179
Action	.143	.264	.166	-.109
Maintenance	.045	.100	.089	.093
Readiness for Change	.117	.122	.076	.077

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Research Question 9. Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrapersonal religious commitment and the following adaptive and clinical scales of the BASC-2-SRP-A? The results indicated there was not a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrapersonal religious commitment and the following adaptive and clinical scales of the BASC-2-SRP-A: Adaptive Scales: Interpersonal Relations, Parent Relations, Self-Esteem, Self-Reliance, Personal Adjustment Composite ; Clinical Scales: Attitude to School, Attitude to Teachers. The findings are reported in Table 5.

Table 5:

Correlations between Measures of Religiosity and BASC-2 Adolescent

Self-Report Adaptive Scales and Clinical Scales

BASC-2 SRP-A	RCI-10	
	Intrapersonal	Interpersonal
<b>Adaptive Scales</b>		
Interpersonal Relations	.227	-.004
Parent Relations	.218	.013
Self-Esteem	.058	-.120
Self-Reliance	.129	-.008
Personal Adjustment Composite	.214	-.062
<b>Clinical Scales</b>		
Attitude to School	-.238	-.006
Attitude to Teachers	-.114	-.012

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Research Question 10. Is there a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and the following adaptive and clinical scales of the BASC-2-SRP-A? The results indicated there was a significant positive relationship between intrinsic religiosity and Interpersonal Relations and the Personal Adjustment Composite Adaptive subscales indicating that intrinsically religiously motivated individuals have better social relationships and friendship with peers, and are overall better –adjusted than their female

juvenile counterparts. There was not a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and the following adaptive and clinical scales of the BASC-2-SRP-A: Adaptive Scales: Parent Relations, Self-Esteem, and Self-Reliance; Clinical Scales: Attitude to School, Attitude to Teachers. The findings are reported in Table 6.

Table 6:

Correlations between Measures of Religiosity(I/E-R) and BASC-2 Adolescent Self-Report Adaptive Scales and Clinical Scales

BASC-2 SRP -A	I/E-R	
	Intrinsic	Extrinsic
<b>Adaptive Scales</b>		
Interpersonal Relations	.261*	.252
Parent Relations	.149	.061
Self-Esteem	.101	-.057
Self-Reliance	.247	.094
Personal Adjustment Composite	.259*	.157
<b>Clinical Scales</b>		
Attitude to School	-.115	.018
Attitude to Teachers	-.133	-.072

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

## Linear Regression Analysis

In order to examine the relationship of the significant linear correlations the linear regression procedure was employed. The results of research question #6 indicated there was a significant relationship between female juvenile offenders' scores on measures of intrinsic religiosity and level of offense. A linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the prediction of the intrinsic religiosity score on the overall rate of offending for female juvenile offenders. The results of the regression equation demonstrated that the more intrinsically religiously motivated the individual the less severe the charge. The findings are reported in Table 7.

Table 7:

Regression Analysis Summary for Attitude to School and Intrinsic Religiosity

Predicting Severity of Charges

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	$\beta$
Attitude to School	.156	.080	.238
Intrinsic	-.350	.141	-.302*

*Note.*  $R^2 = .135$  ( $N = 59, p < .01$ ). \* $p < .05$

There was a significant relationship was found in research question #10 between intrinsic religiosity and the Interpersonal Relations subscale on the BASC-SRP-A-II. The results of the regression equation indicated that intrinsic religiosity was not a predictor of better Interpersonal Relations. The findings are reported in Table 8.

Table 8:

Regression Analysis Summary for Religious Variables Predicting

Interpersonal Relations

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	$\beta$
Intrinsic	-.036	.418	-.021
Extrinsic	.359	.285	.204
Interpersonal Religious Commitment	-.475	.681	-.140
Intrapersonal Religious Commitment	.673	.635	.267

*Note.*  $R^2 = .010$  ( $N = 50$ , NS). \* $p < .05$

A significant relationship was found between intrinsic religiosity and the Personal Adjustment Composite subscale. The results of the regression equation indicated that intrinsic religiosity was not a predictor of increased Personal Adjustment. The findings are reported in Table 9.

Table 9:

Regression Analysis Summary for Religious Variables Predicting Personal Adjustment

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	$\beta$
Intrinsic	.234	.339	.171
Extrinsic	.023	.231	.017
Interpersonal Religious Commitment	-.215	.550	-.080
Intrapersonal Religious Commitment	.298	.513	.149

*Note.*  $R^2 = -0.15$  ( $N = 49$ , NS). \* $p < .05$

Table 10:

Offense Levels

Status Offense	Level (1-1.9)	Misdemeanor	Level (2-2.9)	Felony	Level (3.0-3.9)
unruly, ungovernable, truancy, curfew violation	1.0	Violation of Probation, disorderly conduct, traffic violation, prevent/disrupt lawful meetings, criminal trespass, false name to law officer	2.0	False statement/fraudulent documents, theft by shoplifting, 1 <sup>st</sup> degree forgery	3.0
Runaway in county, violation of aftercare	1.2	Disrupting public school, contempt powers of juvenile court, theft by receiving stolen property	2.2	Interference government property, escape	3.2
Runaway out of state	1.5	Traffic/hit run, theft by shoplifting,	2.3	2 <sup>nd</sup> degree Criminal damage to property, criminal attempt (arson), theft by taking >\$500	3.3
		Possession marijuana, fighting in public place	2.5	Drugs(manufactured, intent to distribute/dispense), terroristic threats/acts, weapon at school, carrying a concealed weapon,	3.5
		Reckless conduct/causing bodily harm	2.6	Aggravated Assault Aggravated Sexual Battery	3.9
		Simple Assault	2.7		
		Simple Battery, Affray	2.8		
		Battery, Obstruction of an Officer	2.9		

### Description of Sample

The female juvenile offenders in this study were not significantly different than the normative sample of the assessments used to measure religious salience, emotional and social behavior, and readiness to change. Interestingly, these girls were comparable to the norm groups, with the exception of participants that were outliers' potentially increasing variance. Although, female juvenile offenders are a population that is classified as at-risk their group profile in this study demonstrated the positive characteristics of these youth, and the protective factors that improve successful adaptation to their environment.

The sample in this study was below the average in intrinsic religiosity, but slightly above the mean on extrinsic religiosity. The religious characteristics of the female juvenile offenders in this sample are demonstrated in Table 11.

Table 11:

Mean Content on subscales of Measures of Religiosity

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	M	SD
Intrinsic Religiosity	28.27	7.18
Extrinsic Religiosity	29.33	6.71
Interpersonal Religiosity	10.56	4.99
Intrapersonal Religiosity	16.90	5.16
Religious Commitment	27.43	8.75

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These girls reported extrinsically motivated religiosity, which involves participation in religious activities of a social and external nature. The female juvenile offenders' profile of extrinsic

religiosity is similar to non-offenders in respect to have increased external motivation to participate in religious activities. Although these girls reported being below the mean in intrinsic religiosity on the I/E- R Scales, there was a distinction on the RCI-10 Inventory where religious salience is assessed as a full scale score. The girls in this study demonstrated increased religious salience compared to the normative sample. In addition, the females indicated higher intrapersonal and interpersonal religious commitment based on a secular sample of participants. The girls profile on the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment was below the means for every stage. The descriptive of this population on this assessment is not surprising considering they are involved in at-risk behaviors and are in environments that likely perpetuate the lack of motivation to change. The readiness change data group profile is represented in Table 12 below:

Table 12:

Mean Content on subscales of the URICA (Stages of Change)

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URICA	M	SD
Precontemplative	2.84	.80
Contemplative	3.73	.85
Action	3.33	.74
Maintenance	3.66	.68
Readiness for Change	7.88	2.43

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The BASC-2-SRP-A captures the social and emotional functioning of adolescents. The profile for female juvenile offenders in this sample illustrated positive adjustment. The mean for these girls' demonstrated average behavior or attitudes that is likely to facilitate healthy functioning in an academic environment. The participants as a group showed an impressive above average score on the Interpersonal Relations subscale demonstrating the ability to engage in good social relationships and friendships with peers. The social and emotional functioning of this sample is represented in Table 13.

Table 13:

Mean Content on subscales on BASC-2 –SRP-A Adaptive and Clinical Scales

BASC-2 SRP-A	M	SD
Adaptive Scales		
Interpersonal Relations	51.44	11.68
Parent Relations	41.55	12.92
Self-Esteem	48.49	10.77
Self-Reliance	45.52	10.28
Personal Adjustment	45.50	10.08
Composite		
Clinical Scales		
Attitude to School	53.84	12.87
Attitude to Teachers	54.68	11.49

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

#### Summary

Research examining male delinquency has suggested that criminal behavior is multidimensional and results from the interaction of numerous developmental, psychological, relational, as well as social factors (Calhoun, Glaser, & Bartolomucci, 2001; Henggeler & Borduin, 1990). Male delinquent behavior is associated with these risk and protective factors related to offending (Jessor, VanDen Bos, Vanderym, Costa, & Turbin, 1995). Although the research for female juvenile offending is scarce, these variables associated with male delinquency have potential applicability to female delinquency.

Research exploring the developmental, psychological, and social factors of female juvenile offending and protective affect of such factors contribute to the development of such interventions that can deter delinquent behavior. Focusing solely on the female juvenile offending population may help to provide an understanding of the protective factors that uniquely affect these girls delinquent behavior, and support the rationale for services to be tailored to their needs. According to MacDonald & Chesney-Lind (2001), most states are still in the early stages of understanding the needs of girls in the juvenile justice systems and have applied to receive challenge grant funds to gather data on the basic needs of the girls in their systems. Increased research in this area would facilitate the process of acquiring funds to support specific programs for female juvenile offenders, and provide information about in order to help establish efficacious programming to improve the psychological, emotional, and social welfare of adolescent female offenders.

The issue of elevated rates of offending among females, particularly violent offending raises concerns about the aggression that appears to be pervasive with female juvenile offenders. There are social and psychological ramifications that result from factors that encourage negative behavior. The lack of understanding about potential protective variables that buffer female delinquency will likely contribute to the increase of offending and recidivism. Moreover, the female juvenile offender population is often disregarded within society. These girls continue to be subjected to gender biases by those in the juvenile justice system with attempts to explain their behavior emanating from outdated theories. The failure of such theories to have any relevance for the modern day female offender contributes to a system that is in the beginning stages of understanding and meeting the basic needs of girls. A call for gender specific programming has been made in the psychological, sociological, and criminal fields in order to facilitate a better understanding of the lives of girls who offend (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998).

Efficacious treatment for the female juvenile offender might best be provided through the utilization of a strength based approach to treatment, which facilitates positive attitudes and desirable behaviors in these girls. Identifying protective factors that support the existing skills of these girls may potentially provide a sense of personal investment that can be used to motivate these youth to make decisions that lead to healthy outcomes. Religiosity has been associated with the reduction of risk behaviors in adolescents, thus acting as a protective factor. Positive adjustment in adolescents may be promoted by their religious beliefs and behaviors (Good & Willoughby, 2006).

Girls often face difficulties in interpersonal relationships. It is not uncommon to find such relationship difficulties at the heart of offending behaviors that lead to involvement with the

juvenile justice system. These girls also experience a lack of support from important relationships that promote positive psychosocial adjustment such as strong connections with parents, peers, and teachers. Research suggests that adolescents who participate in delinquent behavior have negative perceptions of the support available to them from their family, peer group, and their school (Garnefski & Diekstra, 1996). How these youth view their support systems, underscores the value of highlighting protective factors that will act as conduit for accessing support systems in a healthy manner.

The association of religiosity with positive psychosocial functioning could influence factors such as age and race that may contribute to antisocial behavior. Females under age 18 comprise one of the fastest growing segments of the juvenile justice population, with their arrests accounting for 27% of total arrests during 1999 (Leve & Chamberlain, 2004). Early –onset antisocial behavior has a profound impact on future behavior leading to adolescent girls’ participation in serious criminal behavior. The integration of a protective factor such as religiosity at the earlier stage of adolescence could provide a buffer against delinquent behavior. Research suggests that younger teens report a higher rate of weekly religious attendance compared to older teens; however, both groups reported similar rates of the importance of religion in their lives (Sinha et. al., 2007). The investment in religiosity is an indication that younger youth embrace religiosity, and have the intrinsic motivation to incorporate the principles and values in their lives and utilize these factors to make decisions that benefit their overall well-being. Additionally, researchers found that ethnic minorities, who tend to offend at higher rates, may benefit from the influence of religiosity even more so than their white counterparts. Johnson et. al. (2001) posits that religious commitment among urban black youth protects them from drug use and other illegal activities. Traditionally, the black church has been a safe haven for at-risk

youth of color and the potential for these youth benefiting from religious salience may be increased. In addition, Hispanic youth have reported a stronger investment in religiosity compared to their white counterparts (Bernardin, 2006). Positive ethnic identity formation has been linked to youth who participate in religious programs. Such identity formation have been found to decrease stress, aiding acquisition of school and work related skills, and encourage positive relationships (Sinha et. al., 2007). Black and Hispanic populations have multiple risk factors in their lives, but religion promotes the development of positive or desirable behaviors.

Risk factors are often associated with offender status, and less attention has been given to the protective variables that influence or affect the severity of delinquent behavior. The presence of protective factors in offenders has serious implications for acting as a deterrent for more aggressive criminal behavior. Protective factors promote coping skills, improve psychosocial adjustment, and foster positive interpersonal relations, which buffer risk factors that might otherwise elevate the severity of problematic behavior. Personal religiosity has been associated with less severe forms of criminal behavior and research confirms an inverse relationship between religiosity and measures of crime or delinquency (Johnson et. al. 2001). Religiosity has been proven to be a variable that will minimize risky conduct and cultivate desirable behavior.

Psychotherapeutic interventions for adolescents can facilitate and foster positive behavioral, cognitive, and emotional change. At-risk youth are often subjected to multiple approaches aimed at changing their delinquent conduct; however, their readiness to change could impact the therapeutic intervention. Protective factors support positive outcomes in youth, and more specifically religiosity is a catalyst that evokes transformation. Youth in America have reported that religion is important in their lives, thus increasing pro-social behavior and nurturing variables that are associated with motivation to develop attitudes and skills that lead to positive

self-esteem, and perception of self efficacy (Ellison, 1993). More importantly assessing an adolescent's motivation to change informs the clinical treatment plan and helps facilitate an efficacious psychotherapeutic intervention.

The present study seeks to determine whether constructs of religiosity such as intrinsic motivation and intrapersonal religious commitment influence factors that potentially decrease at-risk behaviors within a sample of female juvenile offenders. Examining correlations between religiosity and multiple variables: age, race, level of offense, stages of change, adaptive skills, and social-emotional well-being will help validate religion's role as a protective factor.

Participants in the present study consisted of 66 female adolescents sampled from a juvenile justice system located in northeastern Georgia. The data used in the study was gathered as part of the screening procedure for the G.I.R.L.S. Project, a psychoeducational group program for female juvenile offenders, and the intake process for those receiving services through the Juvenile Counseling Assessment Program (JCAP), a program designed to provide counseling and assessment services for juvenile offenders. These girls ranged in age from 12 to 17, with a mean age of 15. The instruments, Behavioral Assessment System for Children-Self Report of Personality-Adolescent, Second Edition (BASC-2-SRP-A) (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004), Religious Commitment Inventory -10 (Worthington et al., 2003), the Intrinsic Extrinsic Religiosity Revised Scale (I/E-R Scale), and the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA) were administered as a part of the standard intake process. A demographic information sheet was also included in the packet. Additionally, information regarding each participant's juvenile justice history of offenses was gathered from the computer database system belonging to the juvenile justice system with which the researchers were collaborating. Offense levels were categorized according to severity, assigned a ranking, and compiled for each participant with an

overall sum (Table 1). The participants' juvenile court history was entered along with the scored results of the instrument into an SPSS version 15.0 database.

A previous study conducted by Robinson, Calhoun, & Glaser (2007), who examined religiosity's influence on female juvenile offenders' social and emotional functioning, suggesting the need for further research into understanding how intrapersonal religious commitment and intrinsic religiosity may serve as protective factors for female juvenile offenders. Research into these religious factors has the potential contribute to our understanding of the female juvenile offender population and guide the development of more efficacious therapeutic interventions.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of the current study suggest intrinsic religiosity acts as a protective factor for female juvenile offenders. Intrinsically religiously motivated female juvenile offenders had less severe charges than their counterparts who were extrinsically motivated by their faith, and had increased levels of psychosocial functioning. The BASC-2 -SRP-A examined personal adjustment through a composite of subscales that measured adaptive skills of adolescents. The inverse relationship associated with religious intrinsic motivation and severity of charges in this population also speaks to the importance of identifying factors of religiosity that promote desirable behaviors.

Intrinsic religiosity focuses on the individual's internalization of their faith and how religiosity is applied to daily living. Intrinsic religiosity was found to have a positive impact on adaptability of these youth. Females are likely to find themselves involved with the juvenile justice system because of struggles with personal regulation when attempting to manage their familial and social environments. The subscales on the BASC-2-SRP-A that measure the extent adolescents are able to exhibit behaviors that are healthy and advantageous to their personal

well-being that were positively associated with intrinsic religiosity were Interpersonal Relations and the Personal Adjustment Composite. Intrinsically religiously motivated female juvenile offenders demonstrate good adaptation in terms of personal interactions and overall sociability.

Intrinsic religiosity's association with level of offense and two of the factors that assess psychosocial functioning was highly correlated which lead to an examination of the relationship between these two variables controlling for attitude to school. With respect to intrinsically religiously motivated individuals their internal drive to pursue their faith convictions and make practical application to their daily lives the less likely they are to commit crimes of a severe nature or to reoffend. However, being more intrinsically religiously motivated was not a predictor of successful social and emotional adaptation specifically related to the two subscales, Interpersonal Relations, and Personal Adjustment Composite on the BASC-2-SRP-A. Although, there exist a positive and significant relationship among these variables indicating the influence intrinsic religiosity has in facilitating good adaptation and resiliency.

Readiness to change variables, and demographic factors were not found to be significantly impacted by religiosity. Extrinsic and interpersonal religious variables were not associated with decreased levels of offending. Interestingly, intrapersonal religious committed individuals did not have lower offense levels as their intrinsically religiously motivated counterparts. These constructs are similar in assessing the individual's personal religious commitment level. In addition, psychosocial factors identified by the BASC-2 –SRP-A adaptive and clinical scales were not influenced by extrinsic, interpersonal, or intrapersonal religious variables. Again, intrapersonal religiosity did not demonstrate a significant correlation with positive social emotional functioning as did intrinsic; specifically associated with interpersonal engaging, and overall personal adjustment.

### Limitations to Internal Validity

There are limits to internal validity of the analyses within the present study. Ideally having a larger sample size would have improved the power of the analyses and helped control for type I errors; however, in regards to the correlations analysis employed the two-tailed test method, which controlled for these errors. In addition, internal validity may be compromised because of the use of self-report methodology of the measures used in the present study. The instruments rely upon the participants' to accurately portray their behaviors or psychological functioning, which are inherently subject to error. However, the BASC-2-SRP-A, which assesses social emotional functioning, generates an F Index score that alerts the examiner to suspicions of extreme subjectivity on the part of the rater safeguard against bias. With respect to the I/E and RCI-10 Inventory and URICA are subject to rater bias and potentially allow participants to “fake good” or “fake bad.”

The administration of the instruments was not standardized. The administrators may have developed therapeutic relationships with some participants and not others possibly affecting the way the individual completed the assessment. Depending upon the circumstances the client or participant may have been affected by the material presented or environmental factors.

### Limitations to External Validity

The sampling procedure used in the present study was not randomized and involved gathering a sample from a group of girls who had already been referred for a structured group therapy intervention, or individual clinical services, which included counseling and psychological testing. While, during the time data was gathered the juvenile justice officials involved were making every effort to refer all girls on their caseload to either the G.I.R.L.S. group, or the JCAP project could not be verified completely possibly omitting participants that

represented another subculture of the juvenile justice system. Therefore, there could be an effect related to the participants' status as youth being referred for treatment that confounded the final results, as well as an effect related to the sampling having not been random in nature.

### Implications for Future Research

Intrinsic religiosity was associated with safeguarding the population in this sample against committing severe offenses, and promoting desired behavior that improved interpersonal dynamics and personal adjustment. Multiple variables were not influenced by religiosity, but are known to act as protective factors as well. Peers, school, teachers and parents are protective factors for youth. There is the potential that youth who have these support systems in place and perceive them in a positive manner are engaging religion in a meaningful way thus translating to how they manage their world. Examining the variables that these protective factors potentially have in common may provide valuable information about ways they may be associated in safeguarding these youth from adverse circumstances.

The nature of these females involvement in the juvenile justice system should be explored as they may be responding to hostile or neglectful environments. Gathering qualitative information by conducting interviews would provide a more comprehensive picture of how these girls' offenses may be confounded by their circumstances and not solely a lack of personal responsibility. This study highlights their strengths, but is limited in how it is demonstrated. The perception of these girls is usually negative because of their delinquent activity, but there is something to be said about their resilient nature as they face less than favorable circumstances. Integrating a measure that assesses psychological or ego strength may also help provide information about the characteristics of those girls who internalize their religion and are motivated to apply these values and make healthy decisions.

Interestingly in this study, behavior management was associated with intrinsic religiosity. Most of the youth in this present study self-reported that they were from western faiths, and the nature of these value systems promotes behavior regulation. Investigating the various beliefs and how they impact self-regulation would be important when examining the relationship between intrinsic religiosity and decreased risky behaviors.

Readiness to change among this population was not impacted by their religious salience, and neither were demographic factors such as age and ethnicity. In addition, religiosity may not safeguard against low self-esteem. Female juvenile offenders' behaviors are often viewed as analogous to their identity when they are involved in the juvenile justice system. Again, interviews could be used to provide a richer picture to determine why intrinsically religiously motivated youth are experiencing success in some psychosocial areas and not in others. An important question to explore would be how these youth view themselves in the context of the world and what embracing religiosity means to them. Exploring Fowler's Stages of Faith may provide valuable information about adolescents' perspective on faith during various stages of their development. Specifically, Fowler's Synthetic/Conventional Stage suggests during stage three of the six stages young people are forming a self-image and identity, and God is viewed as the supreme Friend, companion and Personal Reality who affirms the individual's identity as someone valued and loveable (Fowler, 1981). An adolescent's connection to their religion potentially shapes their worldview, and influences how they manage relationships and their environment.

Including a comparison group of non-offenders in the sample population would help determine the extent to which intrinsic religiosity serves as a protective factor for youth overall, and provide a sense for why intrinsic motivation is specifically effective for the female juvenile

offender population. The present study assessed the extent of religious salience for the female juvenile offender population, as they need more support systems in place to manage daily life, which may not hold true for those youth that come from backgrounds that are more nurturing and conducive to feeling accepted and belonging. The female juvenile offender population may use religiosity as means of survival, which may encourage them to adapt the values of their faith and readily put them into action when lacking other support systems; however, the ability to compensate for shortage of resources may speak to the resilient nature that allows them to function successfully under less than favorable conditions.

Some of the previous studies that have explored at-risk behaviors were looking at males and not females; this study examines females, which offer a different perspective. Females tend to be more introspective, and in this population, they are concerned about interpersonal relations. So exploring the differences among males and females and their religious salience would help identify the unique differences among the genders that need attention called to in research. The intrinsic motivation of these girls is promoting their success to become well-adjusted individuals.

#### Implications for Practice

This present study emphasizes the importance of identifying protective factors that promote successful adjustment among female juvenile offenders. Many times these youth will transcend their early mistakes and adverse circumstances and become well-adjusted adults. Female youth offenders in this study demonstrate that the presence of a protective factor such as religiosity has some relevance to their adaptability and behavior regulation. Specifically, the intrinsically religiously motivated female youth offender fared better than her counterparts who were less intrinsically religiously motivated which provides an opportunity for her to respond more favorably to interventions that would be designed to enhance her present ability to relate

well to others and choose better behaviors. These girls have a protective factor in place that fosters resilience. In order to successfully navigate less than favorable life conditions they will benefit from being resilient.

Therapeutically, female youth offenders would profit from an intervention model that emphasizes their strengths. Counseling psychology promotes a strength based model an important consideration when addressing the needs of these girls who are often perceived negatively, and treated for pathology. These girls have support systems, but may have difficulty knowing how to effectively access them. As they are reaching inward as evidenced by their intrinsic approach to their faith, the framework for responding to their needs should be interpersonal and humanistic at best. The juvenile justice system has approached the intervention or treatment plan for female offenders from a behavioral perspective that appears to fit for males in addressing aggression. The female juvenile offender population is dealing with issues that are intrapersonal in nature and that lead to significant interpersonal consequences. The internal connection with religion affords these youth the opportunity to borrow from an internalized value system and make practical application to their external lives leading to optimal decision making, and increasing resiliency. Investing in a humanistic approach in working with the female juvenile offender leads to development and acquisition of competencies that increase personal attainment, and accomplishment.

With respect to increased interpersonal relations and personal adjustment, these characteristics encourage positive school behavior and academic achievement, and facilitate better coping skills. These girls often come from adverse circumstances and experience stressors that exacerbated risk factors. Facilitating the development of factors that are safeguards for female juvenile offenders would potentially derail a trajectory to adult criminality or future

delinquent behavior in their youth. Mental health providers, social service workers, and juvenile justice system officials have an alternative to implementing treatment plans that focus primarily on correcting behavior, by improving upon the positive characteristics of these girls that presently exist.

When thinking about these girls one should ponder what they have the potential to do when they are often faced with what they cannot do. Reframing the perception of these girls will help alter the way we respond to them. They are often told what they are not able to access or how broken they are, but not valued for what they possess. In some instances, positive personal resources and skills facilitate individual responsibility. I believe the process of developing strategies or services to help female juvenile offenders would be less of an arduous task if we invested in their strengths. The areas that are valued by these at-risk youth should be respected and build upon to facilitate improved interpersonal skills, academic motivation, and increase emotional health.

The focus has to be on the protective factor that is associated with their success. Religion or religiosity is often times a controversial subject; yet what religion offers these girls is what needs to be taken into consideration. As practitioners, and social service providers opening our perception to what preserves at-risk youth from the cruelty of some of their environments has the greater meaning. We can utilize the protective factors to help us meet these young women at the crossroads of life. Female juvenile offenders are a unique group of youth that would benefit from help crossing over and using what they have to transcend the ruptures in their lives.

Research suggests that resilient children have a network of support that fosters trust (Carr & Vandiver, 2001). These girls potentially will respond to interventions or services that offer a trustworthy approach, which involves reciprocated trust from the provider. Again, a change of

perception about who these girls are facilitates the process of focusing on their competence and utilizing the resources in place that work for them. The resilient literature posits that protective factors endorse positive characteristics in youth that increase self-esteem, promote effective interpersonal problem-solving skills, and is associated with fewer behavioral problems (Carr & Vandiver, 2001; Parker et. al. 1990; Werner, 1989).

In addition, religiosity's role as a protective factor is important in aiding in the maintenance and enhancement of personality and mental health (Bergin, 1991). The significance of identifying religiosity's protective nature provides rich information about the practical implications specific variables of religiosity will have in therapeutic environments with female at-risk youth populations. With respect to this study's findings of the association of intrinsic motivated individual's religiosity with better overall personal adaptability and behavioral management, there should be consideration on how to integrate the protective factor of religiosity in the intervention process with these clients. Deci & Ryan (2000) suggests that internalization of external regulations (religious beliefs) into more self-determined ones moves an individual away from heteronomy toward autonomy; therefore, adapting these as a personal values and carrying them out on their own. The more self-determined individuals are that embrace religiosity as their own the more likely they are to be motivated to use it as a way to cope effectively in negative circumstances, or to promote more positive outcomes in their lives. These girls are likely to have a positive response to interventions that are designed to enhance their psychological well-being.

Although, religiosity is important in the general scope of identifying another protective factor for at-risk youth, religion's specific impact on these girls cannot be ignored, as programs are developed to help this population. The values and morals that religion offers promote pro-

social behavior. Including these facets of religion in treatment intervention potentially facilitates opportunities for female adolescents who are at risk to explore various ways to incorporate the beliefs of their religion to cope with adverse circumstances. Investing in services linked to religiosity as a resource to facilitate positive behavior in these girls would likely motivate them to take advantage of what is offered and feel a personal investment versus feeling mandated to be a part of something that was not put together with them in mind. As youth are searching for the meaning of their lives, interventions developed to help them explore personal identity would be appropriate. Religiosity plays a key role in connecting youth to their inner being and apparently, this has had a significant enough affect that is altering negative behavior and increasing desired behavior. The antiquated behavioral laden approach to addressing concerns with at-risk is not enough in a society of youth that are demonstrating that their religious salience is a major influence in their lives and indicative of them having a deeper or richer perspective about life than the surface behavioral management need. Girls especially are finding themselves in a different place in today's culture where they are facing gender role evolution. Increased opportunities for females have expanded that once were male constricted, however, as girls act out in ways that are ever evolving to look more "male" than female the approach to meeting their needs is still dated and very male focused. These girls continue to be shortchanged as the legal system addressed the offender issue as a male problem because of the emphasis that continues to be placed on male juvenile offenders and yet there is a call for help for females to be heard in this time and age.

### Conclusion

The present study sought to identify variables of religiosity that influence individual differences, adaptability, and readiness to change in female juvenile offenders. Results suggests,

that intrinsically religiously motivated individuals were less likely to have increased levels of offending, and had better interpersonal skills and overall personal adjustment than their female counterparts. However, intrapersonal religious commitment did not yield a significant score when correlated with the same variables as intrinsic religiosity. The reasons for these findings are unclear, but could be related to the potential differences in what the construct for intrinsic and intrapersonal were measuring although appearing similar may have some distinct differences. There was not a significant association of religiosity found in regards to demographic factors of this population. In addition, these girls' readiness to change was not impacted by their religiosity. The adaptive and clinical scales on the BASC-2-SRP-A that were identified and assessed psychosocial variables with exception of the Interpersonal Relations subscale and Personal Adjustment Composite were not impacted by these girls religiosity.

As mentioned earlier in the study, the purpose of the current study is to highlight protective factors that are specific to addressing concerns of female juvenile offenders that potentially will improve their lives overall, and reduce their rate of offending. More specifically this study identified the role that religious variables such as intrinsic religiosity has on promoting healthy psychological development in this population, enhancing adaptive skills and promoting positive behavior. However, future research must go further in determining to what extent religious salience influences translates to influencing psychosocial factors in this population and regulate at-risk behavior. Deci and Ryan (2000) suggests that how religious a person is impacts psychological well-being and this consideration will be important when examining the religion's role in facilitating a healthier development in an individual who has existing risk factors. In addition, exploring the extent to which existing protective factors

mitigate the influence of intrinsic religiosity may help when trying to identify what is helpful for youth that do not have the existing safeguards in place.

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