mdrc
BUILDING KNOWLEDGE TO IMPROVE SOCIAL POLICY

RESEARCH BRIEF

Bringing Gender-Responsive Principles into Practice

Evidence from the Evaluation of the PACE Center for Girls

Louisa Treskon and Charlotte Lyn Bright

Girls in the juvenile justice system are different from boys — in their histories, their offenses, and their experiences in the system. This realization has prompted research on their particular risk factors and, in turn, the development of prevention and intervention programs tailored to both girls and women. Known as gender-responsive services, these programs have been promoted by policies at the state and national levels. Yet even as such programs have proliferated over the past several decades, research on their components and effectiveness remains limited. An evaluation under way of PACE Center for Girls in Florida offers an important opportunity both to describe how gender-responsive principles translate to a real-world setting and to investigate whether the program accomplishes its goals.

MDRC, a nonprofit, nonpartisan education and social policy research organization, is leading this rigorous evaluation of PACE. The study is funded by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's Social Innovation Fund, a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service; the Jessie Ball duPont Fund; and the Healy Foundation.

GENESIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROGRAMS

For more than three decades, gender-responsive programs have been part of the landscape of services provided to girls and women in, or at risk of entering, the justice system. These services arose from research showing that pathways into, experiences of, and outcomes of court involvement differ by gender. The programs, which parallel gender-responsive efforts in substance abuse treatment, are an alternative to the typical practices — such as cognitive-behavioral skill development programs — based on the experiences of boys and men,[1] who make up the majority of people in the justice system. The Center for Gender and Justice defines gender-responsive services as those that "creat[e] an environment through site selection, staff selection, program development, content, and material that reflects an understanding of the realities of the lives of women and girls and that addresses and responds to their strengths and challenges."[2] Gender-responsive programs have also been a response to an increase in girls' presence in the juvenile justice system (an increase of 92 percent from 1985 to 2002).[3] For the last few years, girls have represented about one-quarter of juvenile arrests nationwide.[4]

Some girls' risk factors for delinquency are similar to those of boys, but they may manifest themselves differently in girls. Girls in the juvenile justice system are more likely than boys to have a history of maltreatment and other trauma, running away, family conflicts, exposure to crime in the neighborhood or at school, chronic mental and physical health disorders, substance abuse, and academic disruption.[5] Their experience of abuse is striking, with reported prevalence as high as 92 percent in one study of female delin-

MARCH 2017

quents.[6] Some risk factors, such as dating much older partners and self-harm, are almost never seen in male offenders.[7]

Research conducted as far back as the 1970s focused attention on women's and girls' experiences in the court system. Research described how the juvenile court functioned to curtail girls' "acting out" behavior, in particular their sexual behavior, by sanctioning them for minor and noncriminal acts, whereas boys were sanctioned for criminal offenses.[8] Twenty years later, research documented abuses within the juvenile justice system itself: physical and sexual abuse, neglect of health care for pregnant girls, sexual harassment, and male staff members watching girls showering or observing strip searches.[9]

In recognition of gender-responsive programs as an approach to better serve girls, federal policymakers have lent their support. Federal policy support crystallized with the 1992 amendment to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, which remains in effect to this day. This amendment specifically referred to the different needs of girls and boys and acknowledged that existing services were best suited to boys. The amendment provided funding support and technical assistance for states to implement gender-responsive approaches. It also encouraged providing community-based services for girls, rather than removing them from their homes, noting that, compared with boys, they frequently exhibit a high level of need but a lower level of risk to the community.[10] In 2004, the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) created a Girls Study Group to further the research base around programming for girls.[11] OJJDP partnered with another national organization to create the National Girls Initiative, which provides training, technical assistance, and other resources to programs serving this population.[12] OJJDP also released a statement about its commitment to provide funding for research about girls in the juvenile justice system.[13]

WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT THE FIELD

Gender-responsive services are intended to address the different reasons girls and women commit crime within the context of an understanding of female development and their particular needs.[14] While "good gender-[responsive] services begin with good services"[15] — meaning that they are part of a strong program, with a competent staff — they are distinctive in bringing an awareness of girls' particular development and gender-specific issues into the program. Although there is some variability depending on the source, many descriptions of gender-responsive programming are markedly consistent. See the box on page 3 for a brief description of the most frequently articulated components.

The literature on gender-responsive programming in the criminal justice field largely focuses on components or organizing principles. Until recently, the literature on its effectiveness was extremely limited, and researchers have found it inconclusive.[16] Findings from a few new studies, described below, strengthen the knowledge base, but more work is needed. Evidence is also lacking on the design and execution of services. Recent research suggests that, as with many other social services, gender-responsive program models may not always be implemented as planned, and the programs themselves are believed to be insufficient in number and not necessarily targeted to the greatest need.[17] A clearer picture of program operations, populations served, and outcomes would aid in determining how to implement gender-responsive services effectively.

Qualitative research on how girls and staff members experience gender-responsive programs is illuminating, reinforcing indications that the components may not always be used successfully. When asked what they wanted out of the services, participants told researchers that they wanted service providers to listen to and use their opinions about program content and delivery, have caring staff members (including mentors and role

COMMON COMPONENTS OF GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROGRAMMING

Principles

Focus on relationships. Relationships are used as the basis for personal change. Because of the relational nature of female development, attention is paid to relationships between staff members and clients and between clients and important people in their lives.

Safety. Physical and emotional safety is essential, given the high rates of trauma and maltreatment in the populations served. Clients must be able to express themselves without fear of harm or reprisal.

Attention to health, mental health, and substance use. Healthy living is a focus, and attention is paid to physical, behavioral, and reproductive health issues of relevance to women.

Cultural appropriateness and competence. Services are consistent with clients' cultural values. Racism and discrimination in the broader society are recognized, and services are designed to promote equality. Given that women of color are overrepresented in criminal and juvenile justice systems, cultural competence, or the ability to interact with people of different cultures, and an intersectional approach, in which each person is understood as having a complex social identity, are particularly relevant.

Response to sexism. Female development is central to service provision, with a focus on the broader social forces that perpetuate sexism and gender-based discrimination.

Strengths-based approach. Rather than concentrating on deficits, staff members actively identify and build on clients' individual strengths to promote their empowerment.

Holistic approach. Services focus on the well-being of the whole person rather than treatment of a particular symptom or problem, in recognition of the complexities of girls' development.

Family involvement. Resolution of family conflict, common in girls' histories, and the development of positive family connections are a critical component of services. Family members are included in decisions and treatment.

Services

Treatment for abuse and trauma. Individual and group activities focus on acknowledging and responding to interpersonal trauma and maltreatment, more commonly experienced by females than males.

Life skills. Clients develop skills needed to make the transition to adulthood. This may reduce reliance on unhealthy relationships and promote women's independence.

Educational and vocational opportunities. Clients learn about and have access to educational and job-related opportunities that prepare them to pursue any field of interest, not just female-dominated professions.

Community opportunities. Connections to the wider community are encouraged through introductions and opportunities to join organizations or volunteer.

SOURCES: Developed from Chesney-Lind (2001); Dodge (2004); Grella and Joshi (2003); Iowa Commission on the Status of Women (1999); Greene, Peters, and Associates (1998); and Kerig and Schindler (2013).

SELECTED GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROGRAMS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

Girls Circle

The Girls Circle model was developed in the mid-1990s and has been used in many settings, including schools and mental health centers as well as juvenile justice. Delivered in a weekly, structured support group format, the program combines elements of motivational interviewing (an approach designed to increase desire for change), cultural responsiveness (recognition and respect for cultural differences), and trauma-informed care (understanding and responding to the signs and effects of trauma). Facilitators complete gender-responsive training and work to promote healthy relationships, resilience, and skill-building. A recent evaluation of Girls Circle with girls on probation in Illinois showed a reduction in delinquent behaviors for participants compared with girls in traditional juvenile services.

For more information, see https://onecirclefoundation.org/GC.aspx.

SNAP Girls

Stop Now and Plan (SNAP) is a set of crime prevention programs developed and used in Canada. SNAP Girls is unique in that it serves preadolescent girls exhibiting behaviors such as bullying or aggression. Its developers adapted a gender-neutral intervention that had proved ineffective for the girls they served, creating a program that promotes healthy choices and girls' development in relationship-building. The model includes individual, group, and parenting interventions as well as services to promote school engagement and success. A randomized controlled trial showed that, compared with girls on a waiting list, girls who participated in SNAP Girls had less problematic behavior, and the girls' parents showed improvements in their approach to parenting. Behavioral effects were still evident four years later.

For more information, see www.snapconnection.org.

SOURCES: Gies et al. (2015); Kerig and Schindler (2013).

models), offer practical life skills and services to heal the effects of maltreatment, and focus on treatment rather than punishment.[18] For their part, program staff members wished they had better training to address trauma, resources to provide sex education and build relationship skills, more funding and policy support, and guidance on implementing elements of the gender-responsive model.[19] In sum, although gender-responsive components are relatively well defined in literature, implementation of these components requires ongoing and additional support.

Some recent studies have attempted to address the question of whether gender-responsive services are effective, and if so, for which groups. A study reporting on three randomized controlled trials of community-based programs for girls in or at risk of entering the justice system found that gender-responsive programs showed short-term gains in treatment persistence and completion and in school attendance and achievement, and a decline in new offenses. In two of the groups the effect diminished over time, but one program showed long-term (four-year) success in reducing behavior problems.[20] That program, SNAP Girls, is highlighted in the box above. Another study found that gender-responsive services for women in prison may be most effective for women with histories of being abused, especially in reducing depression and substance abuse.[21] In a third study, both boys and girls participated in either gender-responsive or traditional behavior-reinforcement programs in a detention facility. The study setting was unique in providing single-gender, gender-responsive services focusing on safety, strengths, and empowerment to both boys and girls. Outcomes of this study were that girls with trauma histories, mental health symptoms, and health-related complaints benefited more from gender-

responsive services than girls with only behavioral risk factors or boys regardless of risk factors.[22] In other words, girls and women with common risk factors for female offending may be the most appropriate target for gender-responsive services, and those with only behavioral risk factors may benefit from traditional interventions.

THE PACE EVALUATION

In response to the need to better understand gender-responsive services, the PACE evaluation aims to provide evidence on the implementation and effectiveness of PACE Center for Girls. Fourteen PACE centers participated in the evaluation during the two-year study enrollment period, from August 2013 through October 2015.[23] This brief highlights the key findings of the implementation study; a forthcoming report describes PACE's implementation of its full set of services in greater detail.[24]

PACE has been using these findings to inform its ongoing program improvement efforts. More broadly, the evaluation makes a crucial contribution to knowledge on gender-responsive programs by providing a rich description of how PACE implements gender-responsive elements in its day-to-day work and comparing outcomes for girls randomly assigned to PACE with outcomes for a control group. The evaluation will also produce a cost-effectiveness analysis.

PACE's Gender-Responsive Model

PACE Center for Girls currently operates 19 nonresidential, year-round program sites across the state of Florida. Girls eligible for PACE, a voluntary program, are between the ages of 11 and 17, are typically struggling academically, and may exhibit behavioral problems, along with other risk factors for delinquency. PACE is unusual among gender-responsive programs in that it is a prevention and early intervention model, serving those at risk as well as those already involved with the justice system. Girls live primarily at home and attend PACE daily during normal school hours and receive academic and social services. See Figure 1 for further details about the program model. Girls typically plan to attend PACE for approximately one year and often move on to other schools in their communities to complete their education.

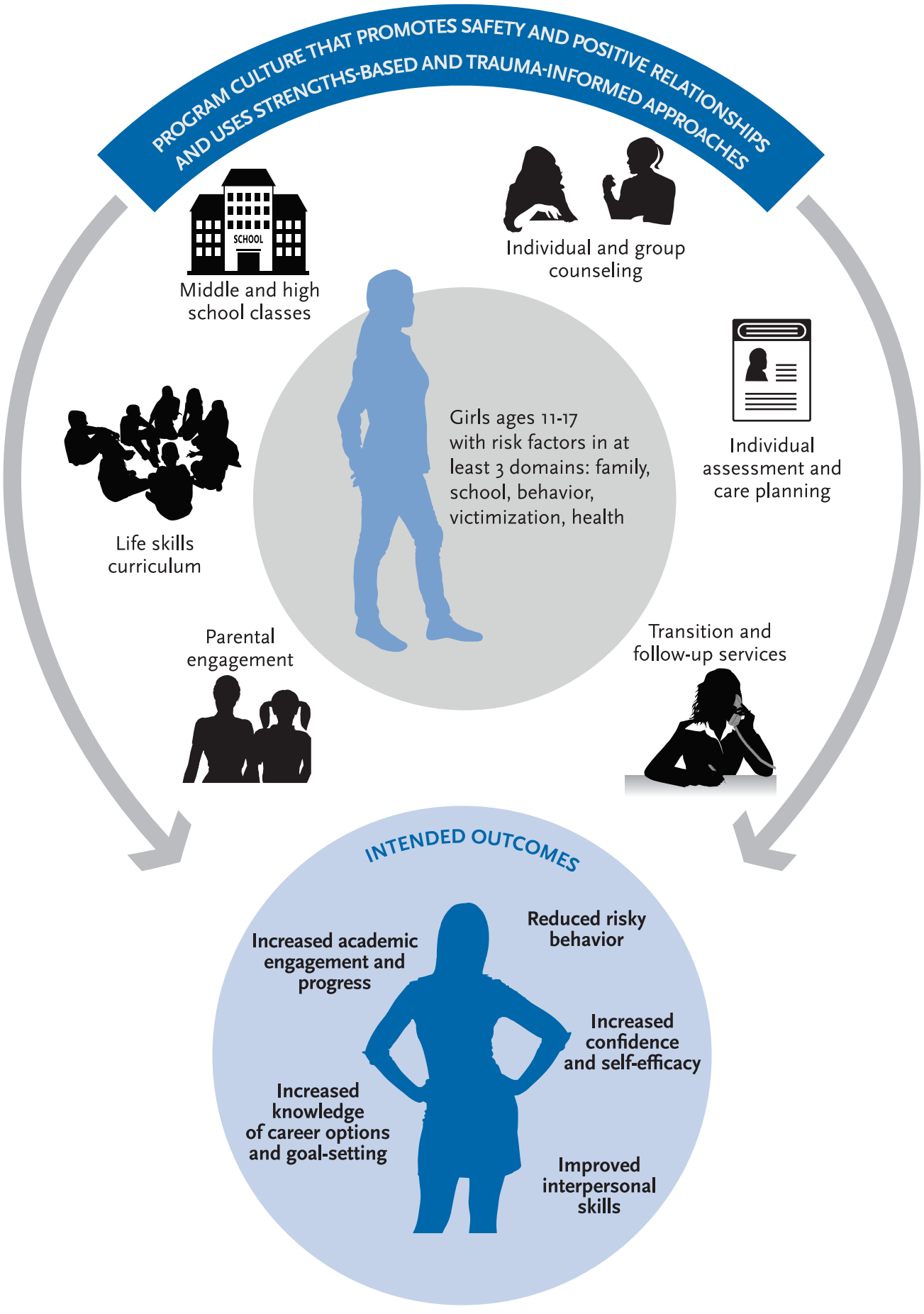
PACE was founded in 1985 on the idea that girls involved in the juvenile justice system need different services from boys. At the time, the literature on gender-responsive programming was slim. PACE has adjusted its gender-responsive model over time to align with emerging research. In 2009, PACE began what its president and CEO described as "a year-and-a-half process of really making sure that the model was linked to the literature and was linked to the theory on what works with girls," and PACE still focuses on continuous quality improvement in an effort to improve services. This section describes the central components of PACE's gender-responsive approach at the time the research was conducted, providing examples of how these components were put in practice and of girls' experiences in the program.

PACE's model is specified through a set of broad principles that articulate the organization's overall mission and approach and a manual that provides particulars about how services should be provided. PACE provides its staff — managers, counselors, teachers, and support staff — with comprehensive training on its model and conducts ongoing quality assurance. The examples below show how PACE was able to enact many of the principles of gender-responsive programming described on page 3. Key to its success is how it defines these principles, weaves them into all aspects of service delivery, and focuses on training its staff to deliver the services.

Program Culture

PACE's program culture is the foundation for its gender-responsive services. PACE seeks to provide girls with a program that is safe and that integrates a focus on relationships, a strengths-based approach, and an understanding of trauma in all aspects of program

FIGURE 1. PACE Program Model



delivery. PACE promotes its culture primarily through a set of values and guiding principles. New staff members receive training on these principles and the practice of gender-responsive services, strengths-based behavior management, and trauma-informed care, as discussed below. PACE is unique among gender-responsive programs in that it provides academic services alongside social services, and the gender-responsive approach is incorporated into academic services as well. As a result, PACE must train its teachers, whose professional backgrounds are different from those of counselors, on gender-responsive approaches that they may not have had exposure to.

The evaluation found that each PACE center in the study reflected a program culture that was consistent with PACE's values and guiding principles. Overall, staff members demonstrated a solid understanding of the principles of gender-responsive programming. Teachers who were newer to PACE and had less of a clinical background tended to show the least knowledge of these principles. This finding indicates that staff turnover, and the need to train new staff members on the program environment, can be a barrier to providing the intended culture.

Relational Approach

At PACE, staff relationships with girls are seen as central to implementing a gender-responsive approach and also to maintaining safety. To facilitate these relationships, PACE has a small staff-to-student ratio, averaging one staff member for every three girls. In interviews, staff members said that these relationships should be "loving," "family-like," "positive," and "supportive," and they emphasized the importance of knowing each girl and her background. Staff members model positive relationships through their interactions with each other and with the girls, and use peer mediation to help resolve conflicts between girls in the program. In addition, counselors work with girls on strategies to promote healthy relationships with their families and in their romantic relationships.

Strengths-Based Approach

A strengths-based approach, a concept that originated in the social work field, focuses on building on a girl's strengths and assets to help her achieve her goals. PACE incorporates a strengths-based approach throughout its activities. During one-on-one sessions, counselors help girls identify their strengths, and they refer back to those strengths when working with girls to address the challenges in their lives. Counselors also discuss girls' particular strengths in meetings with their parents or guardians. Staff members provide immediate recognition when they see a girl exhibiting positive behavior, like volunteering to help a classmate, and each center uses a rewards system to acknowledge girls' achievement of goals, such as maintaining good attendance.

Trauma-Informed Approach

A trauma-informed approach describes the way in which an organization operates to respond to the needs of those who have experienced trauma. PACE's trauma-informed approach includes many elements of the best practices described by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.[25] PACE staff members are trained to understand the impact of trauma on a person's life, recognize the symptoms of trauma, and interact with girls in a way that avoids further traumatizing them and supports their healing. PACE's assessment process is used to identify potential sources of trauma in a girl's history. This information is used both to determine what support a girl might need to manage prior traumas and to understand the impact of trauma on a girl's behavior. Staff members described it as viewing a girl's behavior in the context of her experiences outside of PACE. If a girl is being disruptive in class, staff members try to understand whether there is an issue at home driving the behavior as opposed to taking a punitive approach.

Safety

PACE defines safety as an environment free from both physical and emotional threats. To promote physical safety, girls must check their personal belongings at the front desk when they arrive at PACE, and all visitors are screened before they can enter the facility. To prevent altercations among girls, staff members practice "sight and sound" supervision, ensuring that all girls are within hearing or sight of a staff member at all times. Preventing bullying is a particular focus; centers provide antibullying education through the life skills classes.

In interviews, staff members emphasized the importance of knowing the girls and their current situations as a way to maintain safety. When a girl enrolls, PACE evaluates her needs through a comprehensive assessment process to identify her risk factors and strengths. Daily communications among the staff provide updates on emergent issues with, or between, girls in the program. Staff members said they would pay close attention to girls they knew were in crisis. PACE tailors its approach to behavior management to each girl and her circumstances, but staff members consider the safety of all girls in the center when making decisions.

Life Skills Training

To support their well-being and transition to adulthood, PACE offers girls life skills education, including health topics such as physical and reproductive health, drug and alcohol abuse, and managing stress. At most PACE centers, girls attend life skills class, which is called Spirited Girls!, on a regular basis. PACE uses the Girls Circle curriculum (see box on page 4), which incorporates relational theory and trauma-informed and strengths-based approaches.[26]

PACE also provides opportunities for career exploration and volunteer service. Girls take a career assessment and learn about possible career options, and the program works to strengthen girls' academic and "soft" skills (interpersonal skills and good work habits) to support work readiness. Spirited Girls! covers such topics as résumé writing and interviewing. Girls also participate in a volunteer service project each semester to promote self-esteem, build work readiness skills, and contribute to the community.

Family Engagement

PACE builds family engagement into its program in several ways. Parents and guardians participate in intake activities, including visiting the center before a girl's enrollment. Once a girl is enrolled, counselors conduct a home visit within 30 days to assess the home environment. Counselors then meet monthly, ideally face to face, with a parent or guardian to provide updates on the girl's progress. Staff members also check in with parents if issues emerge.

In interviews, staff members said that parental engagement could be challenging. For example, some parents are part of their daughter's struggles, but the parents do not want to see or acknowledge their role. To encourage parental engagement, staff members try to help meet parents' needs, connecting them to resources such as food stamps or counseling. Counselors reported being flexible with meeting locations to accommodate parents' schedules. Staff members would also reach out to parents with positive news about their daughters. These positive reports could be a new experience for parents accustomed to hearing from school only when their daughter was in trouble. Parents mostly described positive interactions with the staff at PACE and appreciated the progress updates and scheduling flexibility.

Girls' Experience of Gender-Responsive Programming

The PACE evaluation gathered information about girls' experiences in the program and their perspectives on gender-responsive components. These data indicate that, overall, girls at PACE experience the gender-responsive culture as PACE intends. Most girls described PACE as a safe place, a place

they felt cared for, and they told of positive relationships with the staff at PACE. Girls enjoyed the small class sizes and individual attention. Most girls also enjoyed the Spirited Girls! class. They said that the counseling they received at PACE helped them recognize positive qualities about themselves and gain self-esteem. Nearly all girls interviewed said there was at least one PACE staff member with whom they could discuss personal issues. One girl said, "You have people to talk to. Even if your mom's not around, they make you feel like you have a home [at PACE]."

Not all girls enjoyed the program. Some girls interviewed disliked or felt awkward with the way staff members related to them; for example, some girls felt babied.[27] The minority of girls who did not like Spirited Girls! expressed discomfort with the topics discussed and the group discussions. The data suggest that not getting along with other girls in the program could contribute to a girl's early departure.[28] Some girls said that they came to PACE because of problems with other girls at a previous school, so this finding may not be a product of the single-sex environment at PACE.

LEARNING FROM PACE

PACE provides one example of how gender-responsive principles can be put into action. The research found that PACE was successful in implementing its model as planned, owing to an approach that specified the intended program components and focused on training staff. PACE also benefits from stable sources of funding: a line-item appropriation in Florida's state budget through the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, and per student funding from local school districts. Consistent funding allows it to maintain a relatively stable staffing structure from year to year.

The implementation research on PACE, detailed in a separate report, has shown that gender-responsive principles can be put into operation.[29] The impact study of PACE will address the question of the program's effectiveness. Results to be released in 2018 will include PACE's impact on important outcomes for girls, such as school success, delinquency, relationships, and mental health, as well as the cost-effectiveness analysis. This will add to the body of knowledge about the effectiveness of gender-responsive programs for a population at risk of delinquency and other negative outcomes.

NOTES

1 Boxer and Goldstein (2012).

2 Covington and Bloom (2017).

3 Chesney-Lind, Morash, and Stevens (2008), Snyder and Sickmund (2006).

4 FBI statistics available at https://ucr.fbi.gov/ucr-publications.

5 Chesney-Lind, Morash, and Stevens (2008).

6 Acoca and Dedel (1998).

7 Chesney-Lind, Morash, and Stevens (2008); Belknap, Holsinger, and Dunn (1997).

8 Chesney-Lind (1973).

9 Acoca and Dedel (1998).

10 Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2017).

11 Zahn, Hawkins, Chiancone, and Whitworth (2008).

12 National Crittenton Foundation (2016). National Girls Initiative was formerly known as the National Girls Institute.

13 Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2017).

14 Miller et al. (1995); Chesney-Lind and Shelden (2014).

15 Maniglia (1998); see "Female Psychology and the Study of Difference."

16 Hubbard and Matthews (2008).

17 Chesney-Lind, Morash, and Stevens (2008).

18 Garcia and Lane (2013).

19 Hodge, Holsinger, and Maziarka (2015); King and Foley (2014).

20 Kerig and Schindler (2013).

21 Saxena, Messina, and Grella (2014).

22 Day, Zahn, and Tichavsky (2015).

23 The evaluation employs a random assignment design. Data sources for the study include program participation and cost data; a survey of PACE staff members; observations of program activities; interviews with staff members, girls, and parents; focus groups with girls; and a follow-up survey to the study sample of girls 12 months after study enrollment.

24 Treskon, Millenky, and Freedman (2017).

25 SAMHSA's description of a trauma-informed approach includes a focus on safety, trustworthiness, and

transparency; a focus on collaboration and relationships; a strengths-based approach; and recognition of cultural, historical, and gender issues. See Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014).

26 One Circle Foundation (2012); Gies et al. (2015). Until recently, PACE had used an Spirited Girls! curriculum developed in-house in the 1990s.

27 In the study's 12-month follow-up survey, 19 percent of girls who had attended PACE said they felt misunderstood by PACE staff members.

28 In the study's 12-month follow-up survey, nearly one-third of girls who had left PACE said that not liking or getting along with other girls in the program was a contributing factor in their departure from the program.

29 Treskon, Millenky, and Freedman (2017).

REFERENCES

Acoca, Leslie, and Kelly Dedel. 1998. *No Place to Hide: Understanding and Meeting the Needs of Girls in the California Juvenile Justice System*. San Francisco, CA: National Council on Crime and Delinquency.

Belknap, Joanne, Kristi Holsinger, and Melissa Dunn. 1997. "Understanding Incarcerated Girls: The Results of a Focus Group Study." *Prison Journal* 77, 4: 381-404.

Boxer, Paul, and Sara E. Goldstein. 2012. "Treating Juvenile Offenders: Best Practices and Emerging Critical Issues." Pages 323-340 in Elena L. Grigorenko (ed.), *Handbook of Juvenile Forensic Psychology and Psychiatry*. New York: Springer.

Chesney-Lind, Meda. 1973. "Judicial Enforcement of the Female Sex Role." *Issues in Criminology* 3: 51-71.

Chesney-Lind, Meda. 2001. "What About the Girls? Delinquency Programming As If Gender Mattered." *Corrections Today* 63, 1: 38-45.

Chesney-Lind, Meda, Merry Morash, and Tia Stevens. 2008. "Girls' Troubles, Girls' Delinquency, and Gender Responsive Programming: A Review." *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 4, 1: 162-189.

Chesney-Lind, Meda, and Randall G. Shelden. 2014. *Girls, Delinquency and Juvenile Justice.* New York: Wiley.

Covington, Stephanie S., and Barbara E. Bloom. 2017. "Center for Gender and Justice." Website: http://centerforgenderandjustice.org/.

Day, Jacob C., Margaret A. Zahn, and Lisa P. Tichavsky. 2015. "What Works for Whom? The Effects of Gender Responsive Programming on Girls and Boys in Secure Detention." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 52, 1: 93-129.

Dodge, Kenneth A. 2004. "Public Policy and the 'Discovery' of Girls' Aggressive Behavior." Pages 302-312 in Martha Putallaz and Karen L. Bierman (eds.), *Aggression, Antisocial Behavior, and Violence Among Girls: A Developmental Perspective*. New York: Guilford Press.

Garcia, Crystal A., and Jodi Lane. 2013. "What a Girl Wants, What a Girl Needs: Findings from a Gender-Specific Focus Group Study." *Criminology & Penology* 59, 4: 536-561.

Gies, Stephen V., Marcia I. Cohen, Mark Edberg, Amanda Bobnis, Elizabeth Spinney, and Elizabeth Berger. 2015. *The Girls Circle: An Evaluation of a Structured Support Group Program for Girls*. Bethesda, MD: Development Services Group, Inc.

Greene, Peters, and Associates. 1998. *Guiding Principles for Promising Female Programming: An Inventory of Best Practices*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice.

Grella, Christine E., and Vandana Joshi. 2003. "Treatment Processes and Outcomes Among Adolescents with a History of Abuse Who Are in Drug Treatment." *Child Maltreatment* 8, 1: 7-18.

Hodge, Jessica P., Kristi Holsinger, and Kristen Maziarka. 2015. "Assessing the Status of Gender-Specific Programs Through the Lens of Juvenile Justice Staff." *Women & Criminal Justice* 25, 3: 184-200.

Hubbard, Dana Jones, and Betsy Matthews. 2008. "Reconciling the Differences Between the 'Gender-Responsive' and 'What Works' Literatures to Improve Services for Girls." *Crime & Delinquency* 54, 2: 225-258.

Iowa Commission on the Status of Women. 1999. *Providing Gender-Specific Services for Adolescent Female Offenders: Guidelines and Resources*. Des Moines: Iowa Commission on the Status of Women, Iowa Department of Human Rights.

Kerig, Patricia K., and Sheryl R. Schindler. 2013. "Engendering the Evidence Base: A Critical Review of the Conceptual and Empirical Foundations of Gender-Responsive Interventions for Girls' Delinquency." *Laws* 2: 244-282.

King, Erica, and Jillian E. Foley. 2014. *Gender-Responsive Policy Development in Corrections: What We Know and Roadmaps for Change*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Corrections, U.S. Department of Justice.

Maniglia, Rebecca. 1998. "Juvenile Female Offenders: A Status of the States Report." Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice. Website: www.ojjdp.gov/pubs/gender/.

Miller, Darcy, Catherine Trapani, Kathy Fejes-Mendoza, Carolyn Eggleston, and Donna Dwiggins. 1995. "Adolescent Female Offenders: Unique Considerations." *Adolescence* 30, 118: 429-435.

National Crittenton Foundation. 2016. "National Girls Initiative." Website: www.nationalcrittenton.org/what-we-do/national-girls-initiative.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 2017. "Girls and the Juvenile Justice System." Accessed January 30. Website: http://www.ojjdp.gov/policyguidance/girls-juvenile-justice-system/.

One Circle Foundation. 2012. "Girls Circle." Website: https://onecirclefoundation.org/GC.aspx.

Saxena, Preeta, Nena Messina, and Christine Grella. 2014. "Who Benefits from Gender Responsive Treatment? Accounting for Abuse History on Longitudinal Outcomes for Women in Prison." *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 41, 4: 417-432.

Snyder, Howard N., and Melissa Sickmund. 2006. *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2014. *SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach*. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance and Mental Health Services Administration.

Treskon, Louisa, Megan Millenky, and Lily Freedman. 2017. *Helping Girls Get Back on Track: An Implementation Study of the PACE Center for Girls.* New York: MDRC.

Zahn, Margaret A., Stephanie R. Hawkins, Janet Chiancone, and Ariel Whitworth. 2008. *The Girls Study Group — Charting the Way to Delinquency Prevention for Girls*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The PACE evaluation is made possible through the support of many individuals and organizations. It is funded by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the Corporation for National and Community Service, the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, and the Healy Foundation. At the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, we are grateful for the leadership of Teresa Power and Gabriel Rhoads.

The authors would like to thank the staff members of the PACE centers that are participating in the evaluation for providing collaboration on this project while working tirelessly to provide services to girls in their communities. The PACE headquarters staff was also critical in supporting the evaluation and providing feedback on this brief. In particular, we are grateful to Mary Marx, Shana Brodnax, and Lymari Benitez.

At MDRC, we thank Megan Millenky, Ginger Knox, Dan Bloom, Christopher Boland, and Samantha Wulfsohn for their comments on the brief. Hannah Wagner provided research assistance. Carolyn Thomas designed the graphic of PACE's program model. Jennie Kaufman was our editor. Finally, we are grateful to the young people who agreed to participate in the research and who made this study possible.

This material is based upon work supported by the Social Innovation Fund, a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's Social Innovation Fund includes support from CNCS and 15 private co-investors: The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Duke Endowment, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The JPB Foundation, George Kaiser Family Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, Open Society Foundations, The Penzance Foundation, The Samberg Family Foundation, The Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, The Starr Foundation, Tipping Point Community, The Wallace Foundation, and the Weingart Foundation.

Dissemination of MDRC publications is supported by the following funders that help finance MDRC's public policy outreach and expanding efforts to communicate the results and implications of our work to policymakers, practitioners, and others: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Ford Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, Daniel and Corinne Goldman, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc., The JPB Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, Laura and John Arnold Foundation, Sandler Foundation, and The Starr Foundation.

In addition, earnings from the MDRC Endowment help sustain our dissemination efforts. Contributors to the MDRC Endowment include Alcoa Foundation, The Ambrose Monell Foundation, Anheuser-Busch Foundation, Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Ford Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, The Grable Foundation, The Lizabeth and Frank Newman Charitable Foundation, The New York Times Company Foundation, Jan Nicholson, Paul H. O'Neill Charitable Foundation, John S. Reed, Sandler Foundation, and The Stupski Family Fund, as well as other individual contributors.

The findings and conclusions in this report do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of the funders.

For information about MDRC and copies of our publications, see our website: www.mdrc.org.

mdrc
BUILDING KNOWLEDGE TO IMPROVE SOCIAL POLICY

16 East 34th Street
New York, NY 10016-4326

Bringing Gender-Responsive Principles into Practice

Evidence from the Evaluation of the PACE Center for Girls

Louisa Treskon and Charlotte Lyn Bright

For more than three decades, gender-responsive programs have been part of the landscape of services provided to women and girls in, or at risk of entering, a justice system traditionally geared toward males. These single-sex programs — born out of research showing that girls' risk factors and pathways into the justice system are different from boys' — focus on girls' unique needs and strengths. But while policies at the state and national levels support such services, research on their components and their effectiveness is limited. This brief describes the principles of gender-responsive programs, summarizes the literature, and presents highlights of MDRC's implementation study of PACE Center for Girls. The PACE evaluation offers an important opportunity to describe how gender-responsive principles are put into operation in a real-world setting — across 14 locations in Florida — and to investigate the effects on girls' lives.