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THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN, ADOLESCENT FEMALE'S EXPERIENCE OF BEING VIOLENT

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Rebecca L. Lucas
May 2000

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my best friend and husband, Barry, without whose constant, unwavering, and steadfast love and support this dream could not have been realized.

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The work that has been done over the last four years in an effort to complete this degree has been labor intensive and more time consuming than I ever imagined. Throughout that time, I have received invaluable support, encouragement, and assistance from many people.

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because the two of you have shown him through your example that there isn't a more important job. I can never forget the sacrifices you have made for us by coming across two states to help us during the crunch times.

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study was on a specific facet of youth violence that has not been addressed or studied in a comprehensive manner—the violent adolescent female; more specifically, Southern Appalachian, adolescent females. There is very little research on violent girls and even less research on violent girls living in the region of Southern Appalachia.

Ten interviews were conducted with adolescent females, ages 12-18, who lived in Southern Appalachia for at least ten years. Using phenomenological interview procedures, participants were asked to describe their experiences of being violent.

Analysis revealed that participants described themselves in the context of *self in relation to others:*

"I am a good girl, who can be bad."

"I am scared and alone."

"I am weak."

The following experiential themes described the participants' experience of being violent:

"When I am violent, I black out."

"When I am violent, I grow bigger/stronger."

"When I am violent, I explode like a ball of fire."

Taken in totality, the contextual and experiential themes comprise the meaning of the phenomenon of female adolescent violence. The meaning of this experience

appears as an episode emerging against a ground, supported by contextual themes, and the corresponding experiential themes.

Exploring girls' lived experiences of violence sheds light on a rarely studied phenomenon. By asking girls to describe their experiences of being violent, a description of what it is like for them in the moment of being violent was obtained. A description of this phenomenon from the perspective of the experiencer yields some valuable information.

The participants described specific episodes of being violent and what that experience was like for them. Ten Southern Appalachian, adolescent females were interviewed. Ten complicated, moving stories were shared yielding a single experience of being violent. Participants told of being disconnected from family, friends, and society. In the episode of violence, a connection is made although not a positive one. Each participant spoke of the importance of "family and kin." All problems discussed existed against the background of family. Also revealed was a continuing cycle of abuse/runaway/detention for many of these girls. They expressed frustration with the agencies of social control who arrest and detain them for running away from abuser and then release them to those abusers when time has been served. A final finding concerns the importance of "voice." By asking participants to describe the experience of being violent, valuable information is gained that would not otherwise be known.

These findings are discussed in the context of the impact on the systems most involved in the lives of young, at-risk girls—family, schools, and juvenile justice. The

full-service school concept is offered as a model of human service delivery that can meet the unique needs of the violent, Southern Appalachian, adolescent female. By involving schools and juvenile justice systems in a collaborative partnership—along with other agencies of social control—the desired population is served and families are impacted.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	**1**
Importance of the Topic	2
Rationale	7
Nationally	7
Locally	10
My Journey	12
The Layout	15
CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	**17**
What is Violence?	18
"Why girls do violent things"	19
Gender and Ethnicity	21
The Appalachian culture	22
The impact of gender	29
Theoretical Explanations	33
Symbolic interactionism	35
Labeling theory	37
Functionalism	41
Theories of Female Delinquency	43
Classical theories	43
Contemporary theories	45
Qualitative Research	48
Existential-Phenomenology: The Philosophy	52
Husserl's phenomenology	52
Phenomenological sociology	54
Phenomenological psychology	56
Existential-Phenomenology: The Method	57
Structure	58
Hermeneutics	59
Advantages	60
Limitations	64
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	**69**
Steps for Doing a Phenomenological Research Project	70
The interpretive research group	73
An Overview of the Study	75
Developing the question	76
Bracketing	77
Motivation	82
Participants	83

The interview process 90
Data analysis 93

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS 98
The Existential Ground 99
Contextual Themes 101
Experiential Themes 108

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION 119
Literature Revisited 120
Symbolic interactionism 120
Labeling theory 122
Functionalism 123
Classical theorists 125
Contemporary theorists 127
Gender and ethnicity 129
What Stands Out? 131
Strengths and Limitations 135
Strengths 135
Limitations 136
Implications 138
Juvenile justice system 139
Schools 140
Future Research 141

BIBLIOGRAPHY 144

APPENDICES 152
Appendix A: Parent Letter of Permission 153
Appendix B: Informed Assent Form 154
Appendix C: Statements of Confidentiality 155
Appendix D: Theme Worksheet 156
Appendix E: Sample Transcript 159

VITA 172

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1. A Comparison of Traditional Societal Values with Modern Societal Values	27
2. Merton's Model of Goals and Means	42
3. Demographic Information	83

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURES	PAGE
1. Juvenile Arrest Rates: Males	8
2. Juvenile Arrest Rates: Females	9
3. Delinquency Charges Involving Females	11
4. The Appalachian Region	23
5. Schematic Summary of the Interview Process	71
6. Thematic Structure of the Meaning of Being Violent	116

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Youth violence has become a commanding topic of discussion in the last few years. Many educators and other professionals are confused and dismayed at the frequent turn of events. They seem to be searching for clues or answers that will deliver this generation of youth from the self-destructing behaviors that appear to plague them. When we hear others speaking out about this topic, one thing goes unsaid: Youth violence seems to be gender specific, that is, specifically involving boys. As a result, many of our school programs, juvenile justice interventions, and attitudes toward violent youth neglect the needs of the violent adolescent female.

For over three years, my attention and focus has been on the experiences of young girls who are violent. This project seeks to give voice to a population accustomed to being ignored. Through this work, violent girls will be allowed to tell their stories. Violent adolescent females living in Southern Appalachia—an area that encompasses the fifty Tennessee counties in the Appalachian region—have something to say about the experience of being violent. Their stories are poignant, moving, frightening, and disturbing. I learned as much about the cultural forces at work in the lives of violent girls, as I did about the actual experience of being violent. The importance of this work can be found in the unique contribution it lends to the field. Very little research focuses on the violent, adolescent female (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998; Draucker & Madsen, 1999; Smith & Thomas, in press). Even less is

available on the study of the violent, Southern Appalachian, adolescent female. There is virtually no research focused on this phenomenon from the girls' perspective. The strength of this project results from this unique perspective. The insights gained are invaluable to those concerned with issues related to at-risk girls, gender-specific programming, and all programs aimed at promoting the health and well-being of adolescent females—particularly in schools and juvenile justice systems.

In studying this phenomenon, certain questions seem important. The questions I wish to examine include the following: What is the meaning of "being violent" to girls who are violent? What is the nature of the violence exhibited by girls? What role does culture play, specifically the Appalachian culture, in the life-world of violent girls? All of these questions come together in a single central question to be pursued in this research project: "What is the experience of being violent?" from the perspective of the violent, adolescent female who lives in Southern Appalachia.

Importance of the Topic

The questions posed are important. Is the point moot, however, if the problem alluded to—girls who are violent—does not meet someone's standard of severity? If this is perceived as a problem, what are the solutions? It is my contention that some girls are violent and that violent girls are not the same as violent boys. Girls bring unique issues to the phenomenon under study. In order to understand the needs of girls who are violent, or at-risk of becoming violent, these girls must be listened to by those able to affect change—policy makers, legislators, school board members, and parents.

Mary Pipher, a contemporary writer and clinical psychologist, discusses her experiences in therapy with adolescent girls in her book *Reviving Ophelia* (1994). Pipher reminds us that in puberty, "girls face enormous cultural pressure to split into false selves (p.38)." They face pressure from schools, magazines, music, television, advertisements, and movies. Peer pressure is also experienced. Girls can be true to themselves and risk abandonment by their peers, or they can reject their true selves and be socially acceptable. Most girls choose to be socially accepted and split into two selves, one that is authentic and one that is culturally scripted. In public they become who they are supposed to be. Pipher identifies four general ways in which girls can react to the cultural pressures to abandon the self. They can conform, withdraw, be depressed, or get angry. Most girls react with some combination of the four general ways. Girls who are violent have abandoned their true selves (Pipher, 1994).

American culture trains young women to do just that--abandon the true self. Girls have long been evaluated on the basis of appearance and caught in myriad double binds: "achieve, but not too much; be polite, but be yourself; be feminine and adult; be aware of our cultural heritage, but don't comment on the sexism" (Pipher, p.44). Girls are trained to be less than who they really are. They are trained to be what the culture wants of its young women, not what they themselves want to become. "America today is a girl-destroying place" (Pipher, p.44).

The Appalachian girl must deal with yet another layer of stereotypes and challenges making her plight even more unique and complex. Girls living in

Appalachia are isolated from many of the modern amenities that others take for granted. Thaller (1997) writes of the under-education of Appalachian children. She argues that until the structure of the educational system in Appalachia is altered, there will continue to be high drop-out rates, increasing rates of "functional literacy", persistent absenteeism, and cultural language problems. Appalachian children are stereotyped by outsiders to be culturally and intellectually inferior and are socially isolated in the school system. In Chapter 2, a comparison is made between the traditional Appalachian values and the more modern societal values. Some of those values that contribute to the complexities of the Appalachian girl's identity and her unique position as a violent female include a heightened sense of family, mistrust of outsiders, and obedience to the family patriarch. An Appalachian girl who engages in violent behavior holds a perspective not held by non-Appalachian girls or by boys from that area (or not from that area).

How do gender differences play out when the focus is on violent behavior? Loper and Cornell (1996) compared characteristics of girls' and boys' homicides between 1984 and 1993. Their work shows that girls' weapon of choice is not the same as boys'. Girls who fight or kill prefer to use a knife, where a boy's weapon of choice is a gun. In comparison to boys' homicides, girls who killed were more likely to use a knife than a gun and to murder someone as a result of conflict (rather than in the commission of a crime). Girls were also more likely than boys to murder family members (32 percent) and very young victims (24 percent of their victims were under the age of 3, compared to 1 percent of the boys' victims). (p. 328) When involved in a

peer homicide, girls were more likely than boys to have killed as a result of an interpersonal conflict; in addition, girls were more likely to kill alone, while boys were more likely to kill with an accomplice.

Throughout the early part of the 20th century, girls were frequently charged with status offenses (an offense which, if committed by an adult, would not constitute a criminal offense—running away from home, unruly behavior, truancy, and curfew violation) when in fact, sexual misconduct was suspected. Chesney-Lind (1997) states that this sexual misconduct "was usually with a single partner; virtually none had (involved) prostitution" (p. 64). While many girls were incarcerated for running away, truancy, and incorrigibility, the prevailing offense was sexual misconduct.

Although their offenses are typically less violent, girls who break the law are sometimes treated more harshly than boys who offend (Chesney-Lind, 1973; Gibbons & Griswold, 1957; Shelden, 1981). Gibbons and Griswold, for example, found in a study of court dispositions in Washington state between 1953 and 1955, that although girls were far less likely than boys to be charged with criminal offenses, they were more than twice as likely to be committed to institutions (Gibbons & Griswold, 1957, p. 109). Some years later, a study of a juvenile court in Delaware found that first-time status offenders were more harshly sanctioned (as measured by institutionalization) than males charged with felonies (Datesman & Scarpitti, 1977, p. 70). This pervasive concern about premature female sexuality and the proper parental/judicial response is evident until the mid-1970's.

With fewer community-based services for girls, girls are twice as likely to be detained, with detention lasting five times longer for girls than boys (Girls Incorporated, 1996). In addition, girls are detained for less serious offenses. In 1987, 9 percent of girls in training schools were committed for status offenses, compared to 1.5 percent of boys. Statistics show that more girls are becoming involved in the justice system, at a younger age, and some for more violent offenses. Minorities are disproportionately represented, and female delinquents have fewer placement options than their male peers in the juvenile justice system.

In the United States, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act of 1974 required that states receiving federal delinquency prevention money begin to divert and deinstitutionalize their status offenders (Chesney-Lind, 1997). Incarceration of young women in training schools and detention centers across the country fell dramatically in the decades following its passage, in distinct contrast to the patterns found early in the century. Unfortunately, girls continue to find themselves incarcerated for status offenses. Bishop and Frazier (1992) reviewed 162,012 cases referred to juvenile justice intake units during 1985-1987. They concluded, "the traditional double standard is still operative. Clearly neither the cultural changes associated with the feminist movement nor the legal changes illustrated in the JJDP Act's mandate to deinstitutionalize status offenders have brought about equality under the law for young men and women" (p. 1186). In March 1992, for the first time, the provision of services to girls within the juvenile justice

system was addressed in the hearings held in conjunction with the most recent reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act.

Although research about female delinquents has been scarce, a growing body of research is beginning to identify developmental pathways most likely to lead girls to delinquency. The body of evidence grows. Girls are treated differently by authorities and parental/societal expectations for girls are not the same as are expectations for boys. The leading authorities on youth violence have largely ignored these issues. Tragically, we must address this problem. No longer are we able to deny that it exists and that it is growing.

Rationale

Nationally. Over the last decade, increased youth involvement in violence is clearly evident from an analysis of official juvenile offending rates and victimization trends. In "Epidemiology of Serious Violence" (1997), a Juvenile Justice Bulletin, Kelley, Huizinga, Thornberry, and Loeber, point out a trend indicating that girls are increasingly involved in aggressive crimes:

- In 1995, females were responsible for 15 percent of the total juvenile arrests for Violent Crime Index offenses, with the most extensive involvement in aggravated assault arrests (20 percent).
- From 1973 to 1992, female juvenile arrests for Violent Crime Index offenses increased 108 percent, double the male juvenile increase of 54 percent (Poe-Yamagata & Butts, 1996) (see Figures 1 and 2).

The national media has also reported and chronicled recent school shootings—Pearl, MS; West Paducah, KY; Jonesborough, AR; Littleton, CO; and Conyers, GA.

Juvenile Arrest Rates: Males

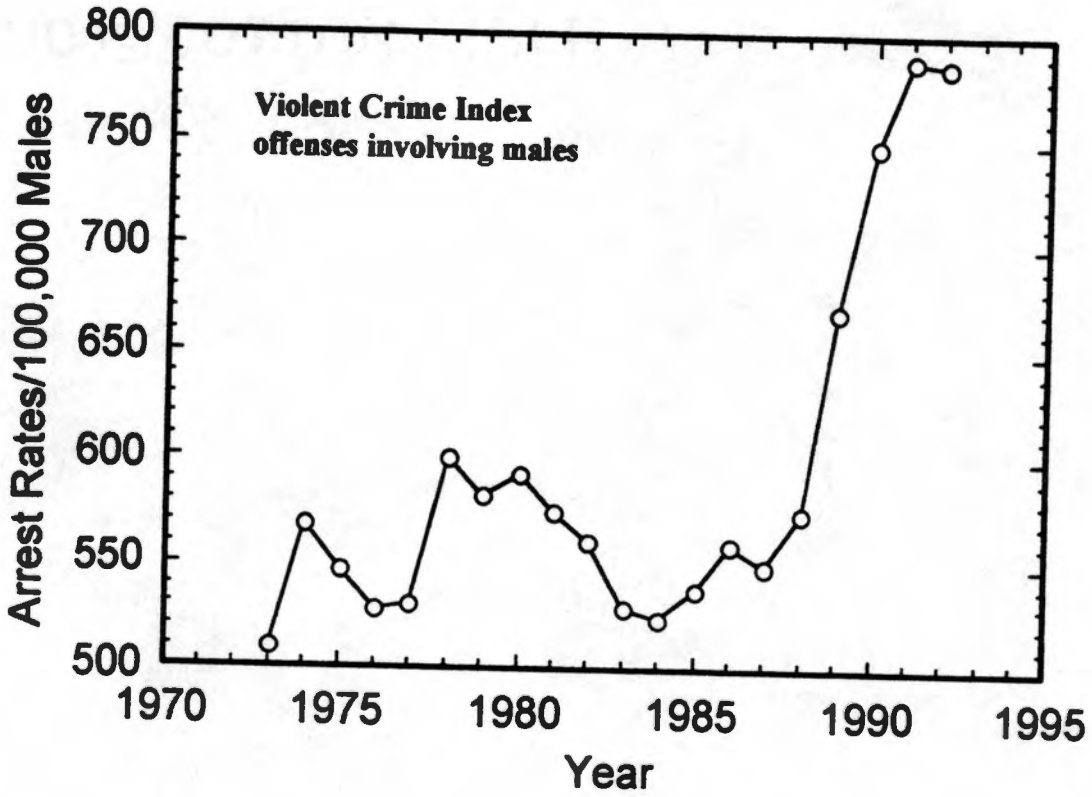


Figure 1. Juvenile Arrest Rates: Males. Between 1973 and 1992, Violent Crime Index arrests for juvenile males increased by 54%.

Juvenile Arrest Rates: Females

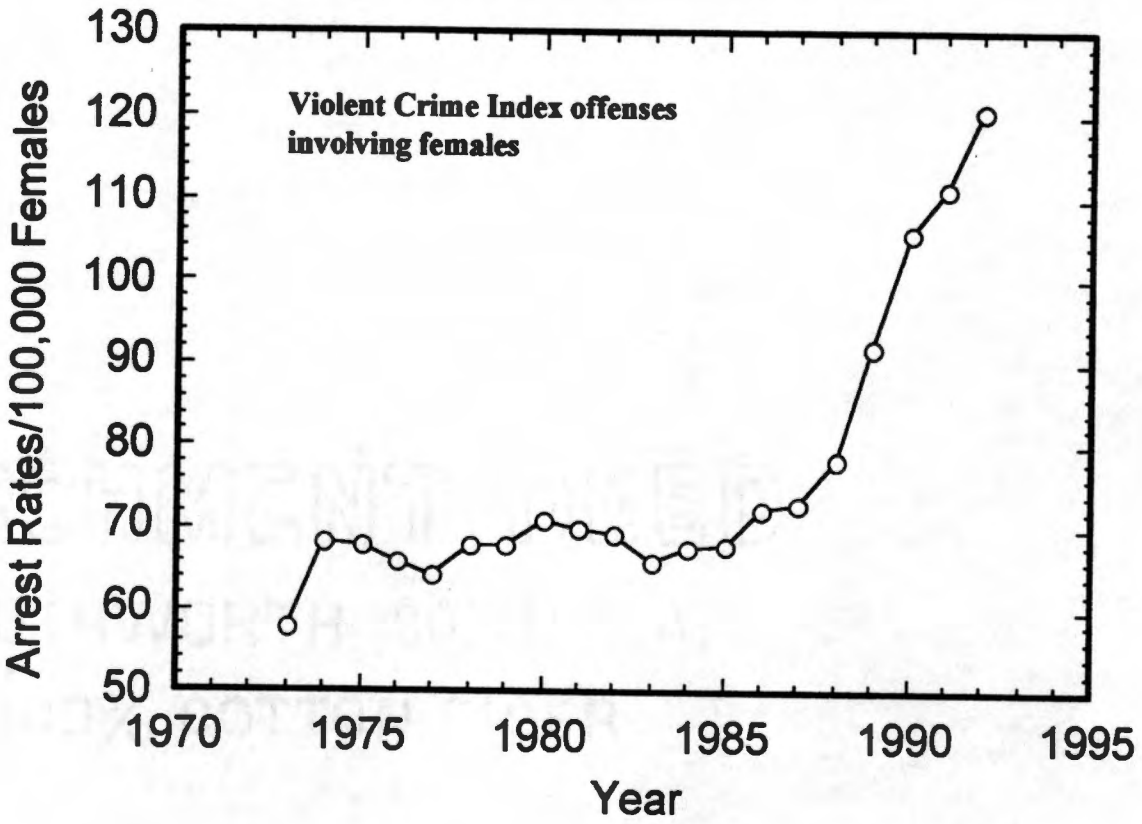


Figure 2. Juvenile Arrest Rates: Females. Between 1973 and 1992, Violent Crime Index arrests for juvenile females increased by 108%.

In that body of literature, girls are frequently the victim, and not the perpetrator. For evidence of female perpetration, I look closer to home.

Locally. In 1992 and 1993, the percentage of delinquency charges involving females in Knox County, Tennessee exceeded the national rate of delinquency charges involving females (see Figure 3). Often we are led to believe that rural and suburban areas are untouched by acts of violence particularly by female acts of violence. Beginning in early 1995, East Tennessee became the site for numerous gruesome, unexplainable acts of violence committed by adolescent females. Males were also involved in the violence, although in 2 of the 4 events, the males' role was clearly subservient to a female leader's role.

- In January 1995, Christa Pike, 18, Shadolla Peterson, 18, and Tadaryl Shipp, 17, bludgeoned Colleen Slemmer to death. Reportedly, Christa planned the attack on Slemmer because she suspected Slemmer was romantically interested in Shipp, Christa's boyfriend. This murder was popularly known as the Job Corps murder and occurred on the UTK agriculture campus (Satterfield & Mayshark, 1995).

- In December 1995, Cynthia Page, a 23-year-old UTK graduate student and pizzeria assistant manager, was shot to death by Daniel Hunley, 18, and Ashley Sellers, 17. Both were charged with first-degree murder (Jacobs, 1995).

- In January 1996, Robert Manning, 20, and Amanda Goode, 16, were captured after fleeing the scene of an execution style murder of Joe Ridings, a manager of Radio Shack. Amanda Goode waited outside the Radio Shack in a car, while Manning and another male murdered Ridings (Satterfield, 1996). (Amanda Goode is one of my former students, from South-Doyle Middle School and was apprehended in my hometown, Corbin, KY.)

Delinquency Charges Involving Females

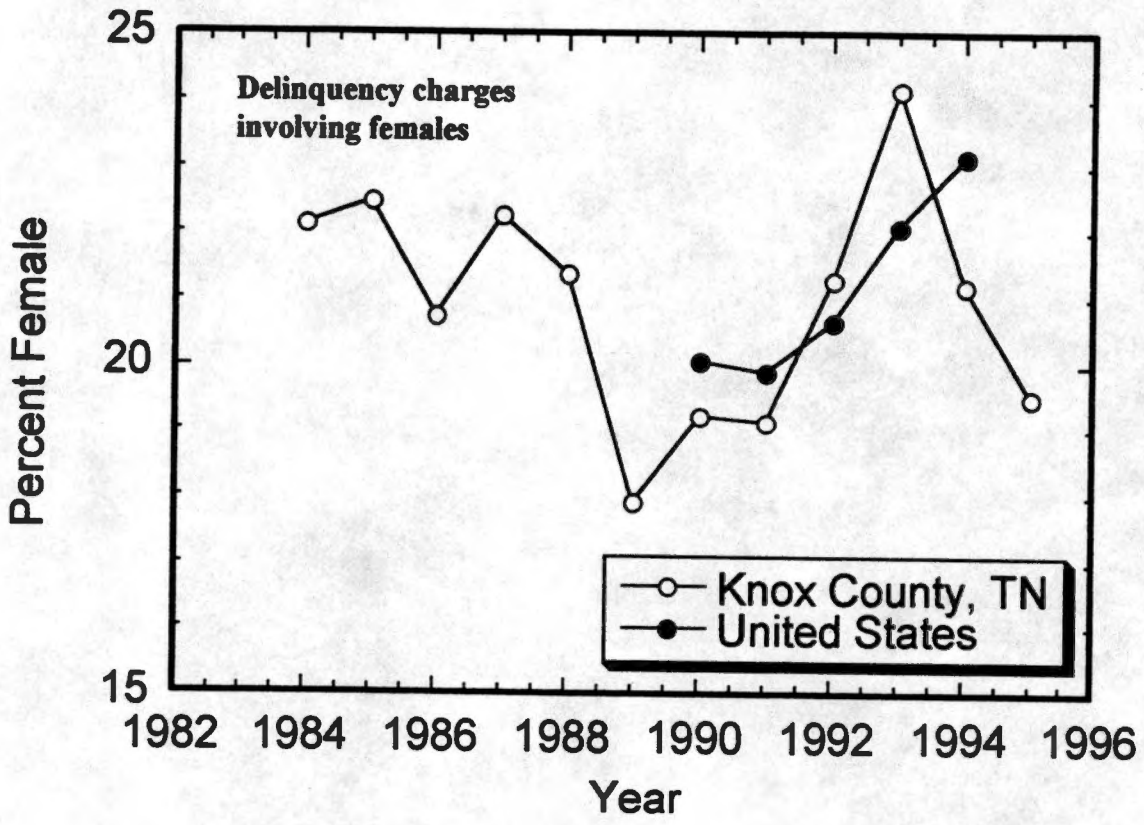


Figure 3. Delinquency Charges Involving Females. In 1992 and 1993, Knox County's arrest rate for females is greater than the national rate.

- In April 1997, perhaps the most startling, unsettling violent act of all, 3 young men and 3 young women ranging in age from 14-20 years old were charged with the shooting deaths of 3 members of the Lillelid family. Vidar and Delphina Lillelid, along with 6-year-old Tabitha were shot to death. Young Peter Lillelid was left to die, but survived the ordeal. Throughout the investigation and trial, 18-year-old Natasha Cornett was purported to have been the leader of this group (DeLozier, 1997).

My Journey

These events, with the exception of the Lillelid murders, occurred during the period of time when I was searching for possible research topics for my dissertation. I had been narrowing down the possibilities, but had not yet arrived at a decision. From at-risk youth, to conflict resolution and mediation, to females and conflict, to violent girls—I found myself working toward this topic. For many reasons, this topic captured my attention. I recognized the timeliness of the topic, with the onslaught of media events described previously. I had been reading in and around that body of literature and discovered that little was being written specifically about girls and violence, or about the unique needs of girls who are violent. I have found no studies or reports on Appalachian, violent females.

My background in teaching violent, youthful offenders in a day treatment facility provided yet another connection to the topic. At Cumberland Hall Academy (CHA), the day treatment facility on the campus of Cumberland Hall Psychiatric Hospital, I witnessed firsthand some of the problems faced by at-risk girls. While few in number compared to the boys attending CHA, each year I taught, more and more girls were being referred for treatment because of increasingly aggressive behavior that could not be addressed in the regular public school setting. I frequently witnessed

altercations involving girls that were more intense and more physically damaging than the altercations involving boys. Boy-boy fights were predictable. Girl-girl or girl-boy fights could not be predicted. Girls fought with greater intensity, were more likely to employ weapons other than fists, and seemed more invested in whatever had triggered the fight (almost always a relational event).

A tragic event occurred while I worked at CHA that I will always remember. I described this experience in my bracketing interview (a process designed to expose researcher bias that is fully described in Chapter 3), after choosing the topic "violent girls" for my dissertation. When asked to "Tell about (my) experiences with violence and young, teenage girls," I had the following to say:

> *"My first encounter with violent girls was as a new teacher. My first teaching job, I worked in a psychiatric hospital/day treatment center. There were lots of guys and a few girls, but the girls who were there were the hard-core, violent girls. I saw lots and lots of female fights. I saw lots of boy fights, but the girl fights were so much scarier than the boy fights and much more vicious. So that kind of piqued my interest in this research topic. Seeing those girls go at it like they did everyday really had an impact on me. One girl was killed that year in a fight that took place in the courtyard of her housing project—a twelve year old. She was knifed. It was on the news and they showed the bloodstained sidewalks. I went to the funeral and it was just real powerful, the whole experience kind of started me thinking about the*

magnitude of this problem. I never before thought about girls being violent. In my hometown or my high school, it was so rare for girls to get in a real fight. They might have a cat fight, with scratching and pulling hair, but I never saw anything like the fights that I saw at Cumberland Hall (CH) with those girls."

The experience of working with at-risk youth contributes to my desire to understand violent girls. Then, and now, as I reflect on the relationships and the interviews involving violent girls, certain characteristics stand out. My experience in relating to them, either in day-to-day encounters or a one-time interview, could be described as ordinary or typical. To the outsider observing our interaction, there were no overt signs or behaviors signifying the propensity for violence. Each girl presented herself in a fashion common to other adolescent females. They were sometimes funny, sometimes sad, sometimes outgoing, and sometimes shy. All the girls participating in this study outwardly behaved in a completely nonviolent, nonthreatening manner. Often I found myself doubting their ability to behave in the ways described to me by them.

I hope I have presented a clear, coherent argument for the importance of this study. I wanted to show that this is a problem gaining the attention of educators, parents, and juvenile justice officials. The number of girls involved in committing violent acts is small compared to the number of boys involved, but appears to be increasing and is worthy of our attention. The experiences of girls are unique to their gender and (as boys do) deserve gender specific consideration in treatment, programs,

and consequences. As I stated earlier, the first step is a small one but a necessary one. Those of us interested in the issue of girls and violence must first come to understand "what it is like for someone (adolescent females) to experience something (violence)" (Polkinghorne, p.58).

The Layout

In the chapters that follow, I discuss the relevant literature that influenced this study, describe the methodology chosen, describe the research project, discuss the findings of the study, and conclude with a discussion of implications for educators and other human service professionals who work with at-risk youth.

Various bodies of literature are related to the topic of violent, Southern Appalachian, adolescent females. Chapter 2 begins with the question, "What is violence?" Several definitions are presented and commonalties are evident. However, what matters in this study is not the textbook definitions of the phenomenon, but the participant's definition of violence and her perception of what it means to *be violent.* Also explored in Chapter 2 are the topics of deviance theory, female delinquency, and Appalachian culture. Chapter 2 concludes with a review of qualitative research and existential-phenomenology.

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the research study. The project is reviewed from the development of the research question to the final data analysis. Also discussed are bracketing, motivation, selection of participants, and the interview process.

In Chapter 4, the analysis of the results of this study are presented and discussed. From the participant interviews, several themes emerge. Each theme is discussed and textual support from actual interview transcripts is included. The meaning of what it is like to be violent is compared to the textbook definitions provided in Chapter 2. The implications held for this study are extensive. Many programs exist and are being developed to meet the needs of the at-risk, adolescent female. Few of these programs seek out or listen to the individuals being served. With this study, girls who are violent have been heard.

Chapter 5 concludes this body of work with a discussion of what the future holds for violent, Southern Appalachian girls, how educators and other human service professionals can become proactive in the development of programs for girls at-risk, and how the findings of this research can be used in that development.

CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

American citizens—young and old, rich and poor, black and white, male and female—are all too familiar with a culture of violence. The society in which we live is a violent one. Some argue that our society merely mirrors the violence that we see in the movies or on television. By placing blame on others we are able to absolve ourselves of blame. Can we place blame on the media? The television programs, music videos or movies we watch, the radio personalities we listen to, and the music we buy represent facets of American society that portray violence. Too often the portrayals make us believe that violent behavior is the norm, not unusual, and even accepted. Movies of an excessively violent nature are often box office successes and the more questionable the lyrics of any rap music release, the greater potential for becoming an overnight hit. There are plenty of objections to these vehicles of expression—school personnel, parents, and politicians—although those objecting seem to be fighting a losing battle. Is there a specific point in time that we began to accept a level of violence not tolerated before? Are there areas of the country untouched by violence? Is society truly more violent now than 100 years ago or even 10 years ago? What are the best measures of violent crime? Who are the violent people in our culture? Why are some cultures more violent than others? Should we be concerned about the level of violence in our nation? Our schools? Our

neighborhoods? What are the stereotypes associated with violent behavior? How does society explain the culture of violence? What is violence?

These are just a few of the questions that come to mind as the complex, global, and encompassing phenomenon called *violence* is contemplated. This chapter will examine the role of violent behavior in American culture. The social ramifications of violence as enacted by the people who make up modern day society will be explored. Specifically, this chapter will define violence, examine the impact of gender and culture on violent girls growing up in Southern Appalachia, trace the history of the violent female offender, explore the theoretical explanations associated with violent behavior, and finally, present the basic tenets of qualitative inquiry and existential-phenomenology.

What is Violence?

Violence has been studied and defined by many researchers and organizations. Although the definitions are varied, many commonalties exist. When examined, we see that certain terms and concepts are common to several of the definitions. The following definitions were selected from the literature in fields concerned with the escalation of youth violence.

- **Violence**—the exertion of physical force so as to injure or abuse (Woolf, 1974).
- **Violence**—the overt expression of physical force against others or self, or the compelling of action against one's will on pain of being hurt or killed (Murray, 1973).
- **Violence**—behavior that violates another individual. Violence describes a variety of destructive personality, traits and anti-social behaviors

(Brendtro, 1995).

- **Violence**—acts of aggression that result in feelings of anger and the intent to hurt or harm (Cricke, 1996).

- **Violence**—the Violent Crime Index measures offenses of murder/non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault (National Center for Juvenile Justice, 1997).

- **Violence**—behavior by persons against persons that threatens, attempts, or completes intentional infliction of physical or psychological harm (American Psychological Association, 1993).

From the chosen definitions, the words "physical force," "harm," "intent," "anger," and "abuse" are all related to mainstream society's perceptions of violent behavior. Those terms will serve as the major components of an operational definition of violence. While the definitions of the term *violence* may be varied and diverse, our fears and trepidation when confronted with violence are not. Typically, we do not attribute our fears and trepidation to young girls. A girl who becomes violent does not fit the stereotype of the violent youth. When adolescent males behave violently, no one is surprised. Repeated stories of school violence have inundated us with media pictures of the angry, young male. When a young girl's behavior is violent, we behave as if there is nothing more outlandish or exotic. Sometimes we demand to know why.

"Why girls do violent things"

According to a national survey conducted by the Center for Women Policy Studies (CWPS), the following were listed as the 5 most frequent reasons "girls do violent things:"

1. They have been victims of violence (54%),

2. "They want to look tough" (50%),
3. "They do not have a good family life" (43%.),
4. They want "to get even with someone" (41%),
5. They "need to protect themselves" (38%) ("Girls Talk," 1996, p. 11).

Most of the research concerning risks for delinquency has focused on boys, making it difficult to assess how the risks for girls differ from those for boys. Several factors, however, are consistently associated with delinquency in girls. Researchers now have a better understanding of the risk factors girls face because of their gender, which can derail or delay their healthy development. For example, girls are three times as likely as boys to have experienced sexual abuse, which is often an underlying factor in high-risk behaviors that lead to delinquency (Peters, 1998).

A review of the literature yields several factors associated with delinquency in girls. Poverty, racism, unemployment, substance abuse, easy access to weapons, inadequate or abusive parenting practices, academic failure, teen parenthood, mental illness, media influences, early victimization, witnessing violence in the home, and lack of religious training have been identified by several researchers as contributing factors to girls' delinquency (DuRant, 1994; Loper, 1998; Powers, 1995; Walker, 1995; Wolfe, 1994). Draucker and Madsen (1999) may offer the most disturbing finding. In their study, women and girls are said to be "dwelling with violence" (p. 329). This seems to be the reality for many of the girls interviewed for this study. Many of them tell about lives cloaked in layers of violence. In the State Legislative

Report (CWPS, 1998), Beth Ritchie, a sociologist studying young, incarcerated women in New York, illuminates the travesty of victimization. She says that the women in her study report that they have been victimized "by their father and their brothers and their codefendants and their parole officers and their teachers at school and other girls and their mothers" and the extent to who victimizes them seems endless (CWPS, 1998, p. 5).

Gender and Ethnicity

Gender and ethnicity are not easily understood concepts and even less easily defined. Gender is typically discussed as a dichotomy—male or female. Gender cannot be assumed to be the variable of most importance in all women's lives (Julia, 2000). The female subject is characterized not only by her sex, but also by ethnicity, class, age, and sexual preference. In everyday life, people categorize themselves and each other on the basis of sex and ethnic membership and behave accordingly. Ethnicity is more than a distinction defined by race, religion, national origin, or geography. "The norms, values, customs, and roles that are referred to as *culture* are handed down from one generation to another and may be defined as the collective sense-making of members of social groups—the shared ways they make sense of reality" (Julia, 2000, p.3). Culture is also defined as accepted and patterned ways of behaving—the basis for individuals to become humanized.

Because ethnicity and gender are simultaneous, interconnected, interdetermining processes, rather than separate systems, discussing them separately requires an artificial construction. Even though attention is given to each construct

individually, the importance of the two occurring together cannot be overlooked. This discussion examines the simultaneity of the dimensions of gender and ethnicity in understanding the Southern Appalachian girl's experience of being violent.

The girls participating in this study have constructed individual identities. Each identity has been shaped and molded over time and has been influenced by important societal factors. Of specific interest to me, as I completed this study, was the societal impact of gender and ethnicity. Being female in the Appalachian culture holds unique meaning for the participants. What does it mean to be an Appalachian female? Are there challenges for girls of Appalachian descent that young women of other cultures do not face? What are the significant aspects of being a violent, Appalachian female not shared by females of other cultures? How does the Appalachian culture influence boys and girls differently? Are girls from Appalachia at a greater risk for being violent? The answers to these questions do not come easily.

The Appalachian culture. Appalachia, as defined in the legislation from which the Appalachian Regional Commission derives its authority, is a 200,000-square-mile region that follows the spine of the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to northern Mississippi (see Figure 4). It includes all of West Virginia and parts of twelve other states: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia (ARC, 1998).

The Appalachian Region



Figure 4. The Appalachian Region. Appalachian Regional Commission. 1998. About ARC [On-line]. Available: http://arc.gov/aboutarc/region/counties.htm

About 22 million people live in the 406 counties of the Appalachian Region; 42 percent of the Region's population is rural, compared with 20 percent of the national population. The Region's economic fortunes were based in the past mostly onextraction of natural resources and manufacturing. The modern economy of the region is gradually diversifying, with a heavier emphasis on services and widespread development of tourism, especially in more remote areas where there is no other viable industry. Appalachian people have been cursed by the riches of their land. Outsiders buy up land or mineral rights for nearly nothing and man the work effort with locals who receive little compensation. Those who prosper are the literate outsiders (as opposed to the large number of illiterate Appalachians), because they are able to understand the process of bureaucracy (Thaller, 1997). Coal remains an important resource, but it is not a major provider of jobs. Manufacturing is still an economic mainstay, but is no longer concentrated in a few major industries.

There is some disagreement regarding the distinct boundaries that separate Southern Appalachia from Northern Appalachia and even some argument for the establishment of a Middle Region. In each discussion, however, it is agreed that the fifty Appalachian, Tennessee counties lie in the Southern Appalachian Region. These counties are Anderson, Bledsoe, Blount, Bradley, Campbell, Cannon, Carter, Claiborne, Clay, Cocke, Coffee, Cumberland, De Kalb, Fentress, Franklin, Grainger, Greene, Grundy, Hamblen, Hamilton, Hancock, Hawkins, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Knox, Loudon, McMinn, Macon, Marion, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Overton,

Pickett, Polk, Putnam, Rhea, Roane, Scott, Sequatchie, Sevier, Smith, Sullivan, Unicoi, Union, Van Buren, Warren, Washington, and White.

In Caudill's study of Appalachian Kentucky (as cited in Thaller, 1997), a list of cultural traits were identified:

- Sense of place—a strong attachment to the land.
- Clannishness—a strong attachment to a small community of close, intermarried families.
- Childlike trust in others—a factor that allows outsiders to rob and exploit them.
- Ignorance of the nature of the land itself—a factor that allows highlanders to misuse and abuse the land without realizing how disastrous consequences may be.
- Deeply rooted mistrust of government.
- Disregard of education—one of the factors that has kept highlanders naïve and vulnerable to the problems of the outside world (as cited in Thaller, 1997, pp.254-255).

Cultural identity is important to all cultures. "By knowing one's culture, one becomes intellectually and spiritually freed" (Ferguson, as cited in Thaller, 1997, p.13). One of the difficulties in Appalachia is that often there is still no recognition of Appalachians as a separate cultural or ethnic group (Thaller, 1997). This is especially important in the development of the adolescent girl's identity, as she struggles with issues of self, place, others, and time.

The Appalachian area is vast. There are urban areas in Appalachia as well as rural areas. Some areas are diverse while others are not. Characteristics of the people living in Appalachia are varied, as well. Because Appalachians are in many ways

similar to mainstream America—white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant—Appalachians have become one of the most neglected of minority groups. The name Appalachia often invokes images reminiscent of the stereotypical hillbilly portrayed in television programs such as *Hee-Haw* or *The Beverly Hillbillies*. These representations emphasize the "poverty (and) unemployment... the paucity of quality health care, education, housing, and public services" yet these characteristics do not differentiate the region from many other areas of the nation (Ralson, 1993, p. 116). In addition, such a limited representation fails to contextualize these singular traits within the richness and depth of Appalachian culture as a whole. Will Wallace Harney, in his article "A Strange Land and a Peculiar People" describes Appalachia as a "simple neighborhood;" one in which the land, the customs, even the people themselves were somehow irreconcilably different from typical America (McNeil, 1989, p. 55). Even within Appalachia, there are disagreements among the Appalachians. No consensus exists regarding the boundary between Northern Appalachia and Southern Appalachia, nor is there an agreement on the correct way to pronounce "Appalachia." The sense that Appalachia is "other" cannot be mistaken and the differences are visible when compared to the dominant culture. The value orientations and behavior patterns are often directly in opposition with those of the dominant culture. Compare the traditional values of Appalachia with the modern values of the dominant culture in Table 1 ("Caring Communities," 1996).

Table 1
A Comparison of Traditional Societal Values with Modern Societal Values

Traditional	Modern
Family and Kin	Individualism
Sense of Place	Abstractness (universalism)
Stability	Growth
Tradition	Progress
Continuity	Change
Fatalism (faith)	Rationalism (science)
Person Oriented	Object Oriented
Independence	Dependence
Time as cyclical	Time as linear
Egalitarianism	Professionalism (status)
Soft Technology	High Technology
Regional Markets	International Markets
Local Politics	National politicization
Dispersal of Power	Concentration of Power
Rural focus	Urban focus
Agriculture	Industry
Republican Ideology	The Broker State
Commonwealth	Individual wealth
Civic Virtue	Private Virtue
Citizenship	Political Apathy

The idea of patriarchy still exists in Southern Appalachian families. Patricia Beaver (1986, p. 85) found that "sex role differentiation begins at birth as daughters in pink and sons in blue begin their indoctrination into American adulthood." Frank Riddel (1974, p. 78) states "regardless of economic level, women (of Appalachia) are taught to serve men and to consider themselves somewhat inferior. Men are taught to consider themselves the superior sex. Wives keep the home in order, control the children, and satisfy the man's sexual needs." One way males maintain this domination is by not allowing the women outside the home. Some men of rural Appalachia think that men not only uphold the "work" of the community, but they go so far as to keep their wife isolated entirely from the public sphere. Ergood (1983) argues that, in some cases the wife has had little opportunity to operate as a responsible, independent individual in the wider world. In local phrasing, she has been kept 'barefoot and pregnant;' the only life she knows is keeping house, bearing and rearing children, and soothing everyone's hurts.

Historically, violence in the Appalachian culture has been an accepted means of resolving conflict. Poverty, limited opportunities, low self esteem, mistrust of outsiders, intense pride, and social isolation are just a few of the barriers challenging the men and women of Appalachia. This cultural climate can contribute to the despair felt by the inhabitants. The resulting hostility is not unexpected or unaccepted. Men and young boys engaging in physical fistfights were, and maybe still are, accepted. Also accepted in many Appalachian communities is domestic violence. One study by Gagne (1992) of rural Appalachia suggests that rates of domestic violence in some

rural areas may be higher than city rates. Wives are more frequently the victims of domestic violence. Men who have been taught that they are superior and that women must be dominated are also taught that they are responsible for keeping their women in line. Physical, sexual, and psychological abuse may be employed, if necessary.

The impact on the children of these households can be devastating. Young girls begin to think that they too must submit to abuse. The young girl in that environment may begin to feel that life is oppressive and lack hope for the future. The combination of these circumstances occurring in adolescence may propel her toward a path of delinquency. Compounding the problem is the lack of educational opportunity for Appalachians. "Children in Appalachia have unique problems because teachers and principals held strong attitudes against their culture, especially concerning the children's attitude toward education" (Thaller, 1997, p. 248).

The impact of gender. How does gender affect the propensity for violence? Traditionally, it has been thought that females are significantly less violent than males, and rightly so. Violence is a predominantly male behavior. The Uniform Crime Reports, 1960-1990, compare the male and female arrest rates for violent crime across the 30-year time period. Males account for 83% of all homicide arrests in 1960 and 89% of all homicide arrests in 1990 (Steffensmeier & Allan, 1995).

In *Criminal Behavior: Gender and Age*, Steffensmeier and Allan (1995) indicate that the factors contributing to criminality are generally the same for females and males. Female offenders are typically of low SES, poorly educated, under- or unemployed, and disproportionately from minority groups. The greatest difference

between female offenders and their male counterparts is the presence of dependent children in the home. Certain characteristics or traits affect men and women differently in terms of willingness and ability to commit violence—gender norms, moral development, social control, and physical strength (Steffensmeier & Allan, 1995).

In this culture, society expects women to marry and have children. Goals of educational or occupational advancement are secondary. A woman's identity is derived from her husband and whether or not she has children. Females are socialized to perform these roles without question and are rewarded for their ability to accept these roles. Full-time child-rearing responsibilities constrain the desires of a potential would-be criminal and offer one explanation for the low rate of women offenders, in comparison to male offenders.

Because women are more relational and interpersonal, it is argued that they are more likely to refrain from behavior that could be injurious to others. Moral decisions made by women are more influenced by empathy and compassion (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Jack, 1999). In contrast, men are conditioned to win at all costs and aggressive behavior is expected. It has been argued, however, that boys have been stereotyped as loners, action-oriented, and not very relational, when in fact, boys do crave close personal relationships and are capable of intimate moments of relating (Pollack, 1998).

Boys get mixed messages regarding what it means to be a boy. Just as girls are held to a double standard, boys are told "to be manly but empathetic, cool but open, strong yet vulnerable" (Pollack, p. xviii). Pollack (1998) describes his research with

boys and contends that boys' style of relating is different than girls' style. He discusses what he calls the "Boy Code," the rules and expectations that come from outdated and highly dysfunctional gender stereotypes. Also, Pollack purports that boys seek attachment, just as girls do, but do so by trying to bring it about indirectly or through action. (Pollack's work seems to be the boy-equivalent of Pipher's work with girls. An earlier discussion of Pipher's work (1994) highlighted the cultural pressure experienced by girls and the threat to abandon their selves.)

Young girls experience more parental supervision and control. They have less objective freedom to engage in delinquent behavior, while boys are more often allowed to go out after dark, keep later curfews, and be left home alone. For males, this results in greater risk-taking behaviors. For girls, it leads to greater attachment to parents and teachers, which in turn reduces the likelihood of influence by delinquent peers. Why are girls more likely to be arrested than boys for running away from home? There are no simple answers to this question. There is some evidence to suggest parents and police may be responding differently to the same behavior (refer to Chapter 1's discussion of this double standard on p. 3). Parents may be calling the police when their daughters do not come home, and police may be more likely to arrest a female than a male runaway youth. Another reason for different responses to running away from home speaks to differences in the reasons boys and girls have for running away. Girls are, for example, much more likely than boys to be the victims of child sexual abuse, with some experts estimating that roughly 70 percent of the victims of child sexual abuse are girls (Finkelhor & Baron, 1986). Not surprisingly,

the evidence is also suggesting a link between this problem and girls' delinquency, particularly running away from home.

Yet another difference between males and females is physical strength. Strength and aggression facilitate violent behavior in two ways. First, physical strength, prowess, and speed are useful when committing crimes that are categorized as traditionally male. Second, these attributes are useful for protection, for enforcing contracts, and for intimidating victims. Real or perceived female weakness in strength and lack of aggression limits female ability to engage in certain types of crime. A strong cultural emphasis on male violence generates expectations and rewards that increase the likelihood of male involvement in aggressive behavior.

The adolescent female commits far fewer crimes than her male counterpart. Girls account for one of four arrests of young people in America each year. Detailed studies of youths entering the juvenile justice system in Florida have compared the "constellations of problems" presented by girls and boys entering detention (Dembo, Williams, & Schmeidler 1993, 1995). In these studies, it was found that female youths were more likely than male youths to have abuse histories and contact with the juvenile justice system for status offenses, while male youths had higher rates of involvement with various delinquent offenses. Further research on a larger cohort of youths (N = 2104) admitted to an assessment center in Tampa concluded, "girls' problem behavior commonly relates to an abusive and traumatizing home life, whereas boys' law violating behavior reflects their involvement in a delinquent life style" (Dembo, Williams, & Schmeidler, 1995, p. 21).

Theoretical Explanations

Social scientists have been trying to explain aberrant behavior since the beginning of time. The construct of violence is similar to the constructs of crime, deviance, or delinquency and will be examined using a similar style. Because my interest lies in the socially constructed identity of the Southern Appalachian, adolescent female, the theoretical focus will be upon explanations developed in sociological schools of thought.

Any time two or more individuals co-exist in the same locale, norms are established. Those in the group not behaving in a manner similar to the majority are viewed as "different," "abnormal," or "deviant." Society at large establishes the baseline of appropriate behavior and then judges those who deviate from that established norm as "other."

Most would agree that violent behavior is not normal, nor appropriate. Is violent behavior abnormal? Non-violent members of society identify those behaving violently as deviant. In studying the causes or explanations of violence, I believe we are justified in examining the historical positions of prominent social scientists. The theories developed by these individuals or groups are most closely associated with the study of crime or deviance. Having already argued that violent behavior is different from the norm, and often of a criminal nature, I see a clear link between theoretical explanations of crime or deviance and theoretical explanations of violent behavior. At times, I may refer to 'deviance' but the intended or implied meaning is 'violence.'

Each theory to be discussed values the actions or behaviors of society. The theorists emphasize not only action, but also the reaction of society to those actions. It should be noted that sociological theories are not the only attempts made by scientists to address this phenomenon. Biological and psychological theories have also been developed, but my interest here is in the sociological explanations.

For three decades, the Chicago School dominated sociological research in the area of deviance. Included in the list of theorists attempting to explain deviance are many well known social scientists of the 20th century. I notice that each theorist may be well known in one area, but is just as likely to have contributed in another area. Social scientists actively involved in research evolve and change much like society does. Through interaction, interpretations, and reactions to society, we are constantly revising and reformatting our beliefs. These revisions lead to the development of new theories of social reality. While not all will agree with the groupings presented here, I have attempted to link theorists to a theoretical perspective for which they are most widely known.

Symbolic interactionism, Labeling theory, and Functionalism present compelling arguments for the disruption of social order in the form of violence and have been chosen as points of focus. Symbolic interactionism, a theory of human behavior, gained recognition through the work of Charles H. Cooley (1902), George Herbert Mead (1934), W. I. Thomas (1967), and Herbert Blumer (1969). Labeling theorists include Edwin Lemert (1951), Erving Goffman (1959), and Howard Becker (1963) and present the position that society defines, or labels, human behavior.

Functionalism examines the individual's drive to achieve the 'American dream' through the accomplishment of culturally determined goals. Theorists associated with the Functionalist perspective include Talcott Parsons (1937), Robert K. Merton (1938), and Emile Durkheim (1951). Merton's theory of anomie is of special interest to those who study deviant behavior.

Symbolic interactionism. In the process of interaction with others, we are "analyzing their oncoming acts by our instinctive responses to their changes of posture and other indications of developing social acts" (Mead, 1910, p.403). These "social acts" might be referred to as roles. As individuals, we play a role. Role theorists argue that the perception of expectations determines one's behavior (called self-fulfilling prophecy by labelists). Cooley argues that the roles we play, or the selves we portray, are created based on our perception of how others see us. He further notes that the self we present is mirrored back to us by those individuals with whom we interact. The 'looking glass self' becomes the public self, the one we share with others, the one reflected back to us.

According to Mead, significant symbols become the foundation of language for human beings. This leads to human thought made possible through internalized conversation of gestures (Schellenberg, 1978). The symbolic interactionist sees meaning as social products, creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact. Blumer (1969), considered the founder of *social interactionism*, held three premises of symbolic interaction:

1. Humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them.

2. Meanings derive out of social interaction.

3. These meanings are handled in an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things that are encountered.

People create shared meanings through their interactions, and those meanings become their reality (Patton, 1990) or as similarly stated by Thomas, "It is not important whether or not the interpretation is correct—if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas, 1928, p. 572). The reality of violence can only be termed 'violence' when those interacting, sharing a reality, or interpreting social situations define it as such. As we interact socially with others, we are analyzing and interpreting their actions or behaviors. Role theorists argue that the perception of expectations determines one's behavior.

Gang members are expected to behave violently. Society is dismayed, but not surprised, to read of gang wars, drive-by shootings, or deadly gang initiation ceremonies. The reality shared by members of a gang is socially constructed by them and those in society with whom they interact. Gang violence is not perceived as such when the recipient of the intended violence does not perceive the interaction as violent. For example, a Blood notices a male teen dressed in blue walking toward him. The Blood assumes the teen belongs to a rival gang, the Crips, because he is wearing the Crips' color. The Blood wishes to challenge or intimidate the alleged Crip and walks directly into the path of the teen, who in fact has no gang affiliation. Unless one of them veers off course, they will walk into one another. The self-confessed

gang member knows the rules of the street and that to step aside or around an oncoming rival shows weakness. The other fellow, oblivious to the potential, impending altercation, steps out of the way, politely says, "excuse me", and continues on his way. The perception and expectation of the non-gang involved youth create an event with meaning. Through this interaction, meaning was created and shared. Subsequently, the reality shared was one absent of violence. Not true, had the ordinary fellow been a gang rival. As the symbolic interactionists would argue, the potential for violence in this example was avoided because one of the actors did not interpret the actions of the gang member as threatening or intimidating. Using Cooley's theory of the looking glass self, we can argue that because a violent persona was not mirrored back to the gang member, his behavior reflected the teen's expectation that there was no threat.

Labeling theory. Labeling theory has been influenced by the works of Howard Becker, Erving Goffman, and Edwin Lemert (Schur, 1971). A label is a socially constructed definition. Goffman's work with the mentally ill reports the pain experienced by those stigmatized or labeled and is easily applicable to the practice of identifying handicapped children for special education. Becker is well known for his statement, "deviant behavior is behavior that people so label" (Schur, 1971, p.23). Lemert contributes the differentiation between primary deviance and secondary deviance. With secondary deviance, the actor becomes engulfed in the role as deviant. The deviant behavior becomes salient in the overall personal identity.

Labeling theory is an approach used to explain behavior labeled as deviant or 'not normal.' Schur (1971) writes that labeling theorists stress the ways in which deviance is "created" on the basis of processes of social definition and rule-making and through processes of interaction with individuals and organizations, including agents and agencies of social control, that affect the development of deviant self-concepts among individual rule-breakers. An emphasis is placed on the rules that audience members evoke when they evaluate any set of interactions and the reaction of the audience to such interactions.

According to labeling theorists, persons who are deviant are so labeled by the conforming members of society. Those determining the labels hold power, prestige, or privilege and represent moral society, while those receiving the labels suffer negative consequences or stigma (Elliott, 1988). Certain groups lacking power or status are more likely to be labeled. These include women, minorities, and the poor. One criticism of the labeling perspective is that labeling helps to perpetuate deviant, undesirable behavior. Several studies conducted during the 1960's and 1970's document how criminal justice agents helped to perpetuate certain kinds of criminal behavior (Werthman, 1967; Chambliss, 1975). Perpetuation of deviance can be illustrated in the case of the first time juvenile offender. Perhaps he/she has fallen in with the wrong crowd and becomes implicated in a robbery. If this offender is sentenced to confinement for a period of time, the likelihood of perpetuating deviance is increased. Within the constraints of confinement, the young, first-time offender spends every hour of every day with other, more experienced offenders. His/her time

is spent learning to survive in that hostile, volatile environment. The skills learned and the abuse suffered in that environment translate back into the civilized community in a way that only reinforces the deviance and pushes the juvenile further over the line of normalcy.

In addition to the negative consequences associated with labeling, sociologists and social psychologists have discussed the stigma that results when individuals are labeled. Stigma is the burden that individuals must carry as a result of a certain label. Students taking special education classes are stigmatized, as are criminals, mental patients, and successful, business women. Goffman's (1963) work on stigma emphasizes how labels influence our identity as well as our perceptions of others. Goffman also discusses the critical nature of context to our understanding of events, other people, and ourselves. The context in which others are known to us affects our attributions about their appearance or behavior, and it influences how we "label" them.

The face of violence changes over time because of the labels we use to describe violent behavior. *West Side Story,* a popular musical of the 1950's, depicts New York street gangs as very different from what we envision modern day street gangs to be. During that time, society constructed a definition of violence that basically encompassed physical assault and heated, verbal exchange. If weapons were used, they most likely took the form of knives or fists. Not so today, where drive-by shootings are the norm and gang wars take place on school campuses.

In the symbolic interactionism example used above to describe role expectations of gang members and society's willingness to accept gang behavior, the

concept of self-fulfilling prophecy, a labeling concept, is illustrated. Suppose the unsuspecting teen recognized that the approaching youth was a member of the gang, Bloods. This burden of knowledge brings with it a network of labels pertaining to gangs or gang members (volatile, dangerous, criminal, ruthless). Instinctively, the teen begins processing the potential danger of the situation, based on the labels used to define 'gangs.' The outcome of this event is likely to change if the teen decides to meet the forthcoming challenge with a challenge of his own—"I refuse to be intimidated and therefore, will not move." Results of this scenario are likely to be violent, bloody, and lethal. A major problem of labeling theory, as illustrated by this scenario, concerns the possibility of various perspectives (Warren & Johnson, 1972). The teen's perspective of the approaching gang member coupled with the perspective of the approaching gang member determines the outcome of this situation. This shows a very different outcome from the previous example, but according to the labelists, one that is representative of the labeling process.

The problem illustrated highlights the significant role played by individual perspective. In labeling theory, labels take on meaning based on the perspective of the social order constructing the label. The labels received from others affect our perceptions and reactions to the world. Problems arise when perspectives clash. When behavior is labeled as deviant, although socially it is no longer abnormal, conflicts may exist between the powerful, social order determining labels and those being labeled. Examples include interracial relationships, homosexuality, and abortion. For members of past generations, both are morally unacceptable and

deemed deviant. For many in today's society, decisions made related to these issues are personal and not abnormal at all.

Less popular in the labeling realm, is the "self-labeling" process—or the process of "labeling from within." Kelly's (1955) Personal Construct Theory emphasizes an individual's own constructions, or rules, by which he or she creates his or her own personality and world-view. Kelly's Role Construct Repertory Test is based on the idea that people construct their world by labeling and defining themselves as well as other people in their lives. Kelly believes that "man creates his own ways of seeing the world in which he lives; the world does not create them for him" (p.12). Too often labeling theorists assume that we simply "passively receive" labels, without noting that we in fact do label ourselves, and often actively seek out others who will confirm those labels.

Functionalism. Robert K. Merton's work shares commonalties with both symbolic interactionism and labeling theory. Merton recognized that sometimes social interactions are dysfunctional. The dysfunction of interaction hinders social equilibrium, a concern for the symbolic interactionist deriving meaning from social interaction of individuals. According to Merton, social disequilibrium results in strain or frustration for the individual. Variations on this perspective are derived from the works of Cohen (1955) and Cloward and Ohlin (1960) with a focus on the explanation of juvenile delinquency.

Merton was Talcott Parsons' student. Parsons is more widely associated with the functionalist perspective. Together, Parsons and Merton explored the nature of

deviance. As the labelists stressed deviation from the norm, Merton was concerned with violation of (or conformity to) the norms. This relationship is illustrated in Merton's model of Goals and Means, also known as the theory of anomie (see Table 2). The concept of anomie, borrowed from Durkheim by Merton, refers to the inconsistencies between societal conditions and opportunities for growth. According to Merton, integration between culturally defined goals and the legitimate means to achieve such goals does not equally exist for everyone (Sheldon, 1997). The resulting frustration creates strain within certain individuals, who respond with various forms of deviance.

Table 2
Merton's Model of Goals and Means

	Culture Goals	*Institutionalized Means*
I. Conformity	+	+
II. Innovation	+	-
III. Ritualism	-	+
IV. Retreatism	-	-
V. Rebellion	±	±

Merton identified five levels (labels) or categories of response, to the norms of society: Conformity, Innovation, Retreatism, Ritualism, and Rebellion. These are schematically presented in Table 2, where (+) signifies "acceptance," (-) signifies

"elimination," and (±) signifies "rejection and substitution of new goals and standards." Each level represents an individual's acceptance of both goals and means of society (conformity), acceptance of neither (retreatism), nor acceptance of one or the other (innovation and ritualism). The level of Rebellion lies outside the model and is characterized by the rejection of society's entire format and an active desire to replace it, such that neither its means nor its goals will be relevant to the equation any longer (Elliott, 1988).

Cohen suggests that the response of rebellion explains the origins of lower-class juvenile gangs (Agnew, 1995). Delinquents set up an alternative status system that values everything the middle-class condemns. In the delinquent subculture, high status is accorded to individuals who engage in violence, theft, and vandalism. The delinquent's expression of hostility is legitimized by placing a positive value on behaviors opposed by middle-class society (violence, destruction of property, drug use, and property crime).

Theories of Female Delinquency

Since the late 1800's, men and women have been theorizing about the causal agents of female delinquency. Included in the list of important works are Lombroso and Ferrero (1895), W. I. Thomas (1907, 1923), Pollak (1950), Konopka (1966), Adler (1975), and Chesney-Lind (1993, 1997). The theories represent various perspectives and diverse beliefs.

Classical theories. Cesare Lombroso, viewed as the "founding father of the biological-positivistic school" of criminology (Smart, 1976, p. 28), was strongly

influenced by the evolutionary theories of Darwin. His biological theory of deviance differentiated between criminals and noncriminals based on the presence or absence of physical stigmatas or anomalies. Offenders who exhibited four or more such anomalies (large jaws, long arms, hairiness, large cheekbones, etc.) were considered atavastic, or biological throwbacks to a subhuman type designated by Lombroso as born criminals. When Lombroso and Ferrero applied this theory to a study of deceased female prisoners the findings did not coincide. The reason female prisoners did not typically possess four or more identified anomalies, Lombroso and Ferrero argued, was because they have evolved less than men. Women are less primitive and less evolved as a result of the very conservative, noncerebral, sheltered lifestyles they lead, believed Lombroso and Ferrero.

Thomas' earlier work, *Sex and Society,* shows the influence of Lombroso's biological approach to deviance. Thomas discusses the concepts of "katabolic" male and "anabolic" female in accounting for different social and criminal behavior between the sexes. He later negates the notion of a biologically, predetermined propensity for deviance. In *The Unadjusted Girl,* Thomas introduces the concept of sociological influence on deviant behavior. Social environment, together with inborn instincts, make up an individual's total behavior. Thomas studied troubled, immigrant adolescent girls and attempted to understand their problems while focusing on the need for individual treatment. Four human wishes were identified as motivators of behavior—the desire for security, the desire for response, the desire for recognition,

and the desire for new experiences. Society regulates the manner in which these desires can be met. Deviance occurs when the societal norm is ignored.

Pollak's work does not rely solely on a biological explanation in the way that Lombroso and Ferrero's analysis did. Although, the attribution of a biological and physiological basis to female criminality is fundamental to his work. Like Thomas, Pollak recognizes that social factors play a role in the delinquency of females. Pollak contends that females are masterminds at 'masking' their criminality. This is achieved in three ways. First, female crimes are underreported. Second, compared to male offenders, detection rates are lower for female offenders. Third, male police officers, judges, and juries are more lenient when women are involved. All of this is only possible through the deceitful nature of the female, according to Pollak.

The classical studies cited here lay important groundwork for the studies that follow. Each presents the female in an unflattering, undesirable manner. Female delinquency is clearly equated with sexual promiscuity. Thomas does, however, deliver a significant contribution to modern day society through the impact his study made on social welfare organizations that deal with young, female offenders. As a result, institutions are concerned with individuals and situations rather than a theoretical understanding of the relationship between behavior and the entire socio-economic and political structure of society.

Contemporary theories. Konopka's theory on female deviance depends on the notion of individual pathology. Girls become delinquent when they are unable to conform. This delinquency is traced directly to a specific emotional response—

loneliness. In *The Adolescent Girl in Conflict*, Konopka reports on the experiences of institutionalized delinquent girls. Using an anecdotal approach, rather than an analytical one, Konopka describes the misery and loneliness of the girls. Konopka argues that female delinquency must be dealt with on a psychological level, using therapy geared to their needs as future wives and mothers. They should be helped to adjust. Konopka's theory has been questioned for its disregard of the importance of economic and social factors. Also questioned is the assumption made by Konopka that the institutionalized girls are representative of all delinquent girls—that all delinquents come from poor or broken homes with insufficient parental guidance and a lack of education.

Adler's *Sisters in Crime: The Rise of the Female Criminal* suggests that as women become more equal to men, their crime patterns will more closely resemble those of men. Crime is linked to opportunity. Adler sees girls adopting male roles and committing more male-oriented juvenile crimes. Teen-age girls of today face a dire plight in terms of role in relation to opportunity. We offer boundless opportunities and encourage ambition, yet the availability of those opportunities is circumscribed. Gender and opportunity are linked to the subordinate position of females in the social structure and to the denial of both legitimate and illegitimate opportunities. Like other role theorists, Adler contends that a person is most likely to become delinquent when legitimate means of reaching social goals are closed but illegitimate means are open.

For the last 20 years, Meda Chesney-Lind has been studying female delinquency and reporting the results. Her most recent works, *Girls, Delinquency, and the Juvenile Justice System* and *The Female Offender: Girls, Women, and Crime,* present a contemporary portrait of the female delinquent. Chesney-Lind argues that girls in trouble are invisible. In 1994, girls accounted for 24% of all juvenile arrests. While the number is small compared to the number of boys arrested, it is still a substantial number of girls—girls whose needs are not being addressed. Despite the fact that a considerable number of girls are arrested, they are being held in a system designed for boys that shows little concern for their problems. Chesney-Lind has worked to illuminate the unique needs of the female offender. Girls' needs are different than boys' needs because the experiences of girls' are different from the experiences of boys'. Their needs are different so programs must be different. Gender specific programming is essential if we are to adequately address the issue of female delinquency. Chesney-Lind urges educators, justice officials, parents, and communities to focus on how gender shapes the lives of young people and to make an effort to understand the lives of the young women who offend—to listen to their stories.

From discussions of the theoretical literature, we move to methodological literature. Theories focused on human interaction, deviance, and female delinquency have been examined. Explanations of human behavior are meaningless unless we are able to understand that behavior. The focus of this study, understanding the Southern Appalachian, adolescent female's experience of being violent, is only clear if the

phenomenon can be captured in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative inquiry provides the desired vehicle for accomplishing that goal.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research means different things to different people. There are as many definitions as there are researchers doing qualitative research. From the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), a generic definition is offered: "Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter" (p. 2). Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Strauss and Corbin (1990) define qualitative research as "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (p. 17). Examples offered by Strauss and Corbin (1990) include research about persons' lives, stories, and behavior, but also about organizational functioning, social movements, or interactional relationships.

Qualitative studies have only recently gained the respect of being rigorous and systematic. For many years, research was not respected or valued unless conducted in a quantitative manner. There was the argument that quantitative research was the only way to conduct research because that was the type of research funded in academia. A slow and gradual shift has taken place. More and more qualitative studies are being completed, being funded, and earning much deserved respect.

The research methods we choose say something about our views on what qualifies as valuable knowledge and our perspective on the nature of reality. In general, the positivist or scientific paradigm supports quantitative methods. A positivist worldview is one that relies on observable, measured facts. In contrast, qualitative methods are generally supported by the interpretivist paradigm, which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing.

The different assumptions about the nature of the world affect not only the approach or research methods used, but also the purpose of the research and the roles of the researcher. Quantitative researchers seek explanations and predictions that will generalize to other persons and places. Careful sampling strategies and experimental designs are aspects of quantitative methods aimed at producing generalizable results. In quantitative research, the researcher's role is to observe and measure. The researcher avoids "contaminating" the data through personal involvement with the research subjects. Researcher "objectivity" is of utmost concern.

Qualitative researchers deal with multiple, socially constructed realities. They regard their task as coming to understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them. To make their interpretations, the researchers must gain access to the multiple perspectives of the participants. The qualitative study focuses on in-depth, long-term interaction with relevant people in one or several sites. The researcher becomes the main research instrument as he/she observes, asks questions, and interacts with research participants. The concern with researcher objectivity is replaced by a focus on the impact of subjectivity on the

research process. Qualitative inquiry is evolutionary, with a problem statement, a design, interview questions, and interpretations developing and changing along the way. The open, emergent nature means a lack of standardization; we do not know of and thus do not provide clear criteria packaged into neat research steps (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Many argue that research problems should define whether one chooses a qualitative approach or a quantitative one. I agree with Glesne and Peshkin (1992) in their assertion that "we are attracted to and shape research problems that match our personal view of seeing and understanding the world" (p. 9). In qualitative methods, there is the opportunity for human connection—between participants and researcher; between researcher and research group; and sometimes, between participants and research group. Only in that connection can we find great comfort, satisfaction, and validation. In my quantitative experiences, that connection was not even a possibility.

Qualitative research methods offer certain advantages or benefits to the researcher interested in human experience. I seem to gravitate toward projects best studied using qualitative methods. In the past, when I have studied human behavior using quantitative tools (surveys, questionnaires, inventories), I always felt that an important piece of the research puzzle was missing—the voice of the participant. It is this integral component that pulls me to embrace qualitative modes of inquiry.

In this study of girls who are violent, one of my main concerns is the participants' well being. I am asking a great deal of them when I ask them to share with me personal information. I want the girls to feel safe throughout the interview

process. Asking that they complete a questionnaire seems cold, intrusive, and accusatory in some way.

Using the qualitative, phenomenological interview, I am given the opportunity to connect with the girls I interview. The open structure of the interview allows the participant to determine what she will share, when she will share it, and how much she will share. The participant is guiding the interviewer through her field of experience. We will go only where she chooses to go. That is an empowering experience for someone accustomed to subservient behavior, as many of the girls from this culture are.

Another advantage of the qualitative interview is that the girls I interview will gain a voice. The girls are likely to have experienced oppression growing up in volatile homes. Some of the girls interviewed for the pilot study had been so beaten down by verbal taunts and abuse that feelings of self-worth did not exist. Speaking out against the conditions that shaped their violent behaviors may be of benefit. Hutchinson, Wilson, and Wilson (1994) emphasize benefits of research interviews to participants. They describe catharsis, self-acknowledgment, sense of purpose, self-awareness, empowerment, healing, and providing a voice for the disenfranchised as the sometimes-unanticipated benefits reported by interview participants.

I am not an uninvolved researcher. I care about this topic and I care about the girls willing to participate in this study. I seek understanding of the experience of being a violent, adolescent female living in Southern Appalachia, but only if my participants are safe, feel valued, and gain some benefit as a result of being involved.

By using a phenomenological approach, chances are good that my goals can be accomplished.

Existential-phenomenology: The Philosophy

Existentialism, as a formal philosophy, seeks to understand the human condition as it manifests itself in our concrete, lived situations. Existentialism is associated with the 20th century works of Heidegger (1927), Schutz (1932/1967), Sartre (1943), and Merleau-Ponty (1962). Before them, Kierkegaard is regarded as the founder of existential philosophy (Valle & Halling, 1989). "For Kierkegaard, it was imperative that philosophy address itself to the concrete existence of the individual person and attempt to elucidate the fundamental themes with which human beings invariably struggle" (Valle & Halling, 1989, p. 6). As these thinkers grappled with the inability of natural, scientific thought to deal with existential issues, they turned to a method of phenomenology, developed by Edmund Husserl (1913).

Husserl's phenomenology. Phenomenology can be traced to the philosophical contributions of Husserl for whom the study of phenomenology meant "the rigorous and unbiased study of things *as they appear* so that one might come to an essential understanding of human consciousness and experience" (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989, p. 6). A contextualist worldview focusing on the totality of human existence is represented by existential-phenomenology. Husserl directed those who would learn about phenomena to go to "the things themselves"—to elicit the direct experiences of phenomena and describe its essential makeup (Hammond, Howorth, & Keat, 1991). This philosophy influenced the methodology that would study primary,

naïve, pre-interpretive impressions of the world. The meaning a person makes of experience—*the experienced meaning*—is the reality of that experience for that person. In uncovering that meaning, the phenomenologist develops a thematic portrayal of the phenomena under study.

Situated freedom, the freedom of making choices within, and oftentimes limited by, a given situation that has been presented by the world, is another important characteristic of existential-phenomenology. People are not completely determined by the environment nor do they have complete personal freedom. Instead, we have situated freedom. The world is constantly acting on people presenting situations. We respond by making choices—choices influenced by or limited by the presented situation.

Husserl's view of *consciousness* gives us another important concept found in existential-phenomenology. He focused not on the world as interpreted and thus created by scientific fact and theory, but on the world of everyday experience as expressed in everyday language. Consciousness is the forum through which phenomena show themselves or are revealed—the process of making present. We are always *conscious of* something. Consciousness is said to be intentional in nature. When speaking of consciousness we implicitly or explicitly refer to its intended object, as well.

The *Lebenswelt,* or life-world, is the starting point or ground for the existential- phenomenologist. The life-world is the foundation upon which existential-phenomenological thought is built. The life-world is not a construction of

consciousness: it is co-constituted or co-created in the dialogue of person and world. The world of lived experience does not always correspond with the world of objective description because objectivity often implies trying to explain an event as separate from its contextual setting (Pollio, 1982).

The existential-phenomenologist describes the life-world "as being of a prereflective nature (as giving birth to our reflective awareness)" (Valle & Halling, 1989, p.10). The *Lebenswelt* is both independent of knowledge derived from reflective thought processes, and yet, it is also the indispensable ground or starting point for all knowledge.

Moving from the natural attitude of scientific thinking to the transcendental attitude of phenomenological thinking is called *reduction.* Husserl describes the process of bracketing as an attempt to suspend one's personal biases or preconceptions. Through the process of bracketing, reduction can take place. To bracket, one must make explicit the biases and assumptions held regarding the given phenomenon. The process of bracketing never ends, so a complete reduction is not a possibility. The bracketing interview is one way to make explicit the biases and assumptions we have regarding a phenomenon and is described in greater detail in the next chapter.

Phenomenological sociology. Alfred Schutz—philosopher, lawyer, banker, economist, and sociologist—spent much of his life's work searching for a consistent methodological foundation for the social sciences (Schutz, 1967). His work contributed to a phenomenologically-based sociology. Schutz recognized certain

shortcomings in Weber's key ideas concerning methodological issues (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973). As vocalized by Schutz:

> *"(I) became convinced that while Weber's approach was correct and that he had determined conclusively the proper starting point of the philosophy of the social sciences, nevertheless his analyses did not go deeply enough to lay the foundations on which alone many important problems of the human sciences could be solved"* (Schutz, 1967, p. xxxi).

In combining Weber's ambiguous sociology with Husserl's phenomenological method, these shortcomings were eradicated. Schutz believed that Weber failed to "state clearly the essential characteristics of understanding (*Verstehen*), of subjective meaning (*gemeinter Sinn*), or of action (*Handeln*)" seriously compromising the foundations of interpretive sociology (Schutz, 1967, p. xxi). The ambiguity of Weber's theory drove Schutz in search of a consistent theory of meaning. "By applying Husserl's concept of meaning to action he was able to recast the foundations of interpretive sociology, in other words, to give the latter a phenomenological grounding" (Schutz, 1967, p. xvii).

Interpretation of human experience must begin with a description of the everyday life-world, contend Schutz and Luckmann (1973) in the posthumous publication, *The Structures of the Life-World*, released after Schutz's untimely death. Husserl's phenomenology gave Schutz a method for interpreting this lived experience of social beings that he so desired. In examining the life-world of the violent, Southern Appalachian girl, Schutz would argue that the researcher must interact "imaginatively with subjects to reconstruct their experiences...by listening to what

they say, and by attempting to grasp the 'essence' of such activity—that is to say what it means to members of the group" (Scott & Douglas, 1972, pp. 83-84). As Schutz and his contemporaries progressed a phenomenological sociology, Merleau-Ponty is closely aligned with his ideas of a phenomenological psychology. An examination of foundational concepts of phenomenological psychology follows, also appropriate in the study of the experience of girls who are violent.

Phenomenological psychology. Valle and Halling (1989) point out that in terms of the natural scientific viewpoint and its underlying assumptions, existential-phenomenological psychology would be a bad science. Furthermore, Valle and Halling argue, it can be viewed as "that philosophical discipline which seeks to understand the events of human existence in a way that is free of the presuppositions of cultural heritage, especially philosophical dualism and technologism, as much as this is possible" (p.6). It is Merleau-Ponty who is credited with having the insight to recast existential-phenomenology, the philosophy, as existential-phenomenological psychology—"a psychological discipline that seeks to explicate the essence, structure, or form of both human experience and human behavior as revealed through essentially descriptive techniques including disciplined reflection" (Valle & Halling, 1989, p.6).

At the center of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is his description of the "lived body." Existential-phenomenologists refer to the interrelationship of the individual and his or her world. People are not viewed as just objects in nature. Without the individual there is no world and without the world there is no individual. It is through the world that the very meaning of the person's existence emerges, both for the person

and for others. It is also conversely true that only through the existence of individuals does the world have meaning. Each individual and his or her world are said to *co-constitute* one another. This notion of co-constitutionality is one of the foundational concepts of existential-phenomenological psychology.

As the name suggests, existential-phenomenology is a combination of two philosophies, one concerned with a certain perspective on human existence and the other with a certain mode of investigating that existence. "What is sought by both existentialism and phenomenology is a rigorous description of human life as it is lived and reflected upon in all of its first-person concreteness, urgency, and ambiguity. For existential-phenomenology, the world is to be lived and described, not explained" (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997, p.5).

Existential-phenomenology: The Method

Existential-phenomenology seeks to describe experience as it emerges, or as it is lived. Phenomenologists do not concern themselves with cause and effect of behavior. To attain rich, detailed descriptions of experience phenomenologists avoid theoretical abstractions that force the respondent to move away from experiential descriptions. Asking "Why?" questions achieve that result. Instead, the phenomenologist focuses on the first-person description of the phenomena as lived (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). By asking the question "What?," the phenomenologist seeks to reveal the structure of experience through descriptive techniques. Description through dialogic reflection replaces the experiment as

method, whereas structure replaces cause-effect relationships as the content of existential-phenomenological psychology.

Existential-phenomenology is a paradigm that blends the philosophy of existentialism (a label applied to a number of similar *philosophies*) with the methods of phenomenology (a label applied to a number of similar *methodologies*) (Valle & King, 1978). The result is a contextually based, holistic psychology that views human beings in non-dualistic terms and seeks to attain a first-person description of experience (Giorgi, 1983).

Phenomenology seeks to describe experience as it emerges in some context or, to use phenomenological terms, as it is "lived." Bracketing, the process of identifying presuppositions, is a concept described by Husserl as an attempt to grasp, rather than impose, meanings emerging from the dialogue.

Structure. The structure of a particular phenomenon is made present to us as *meaning.* Phenomena reveal themselves in different ways, depending on how we look at them in our many, varied perspectives and life situations. Regardless of the variations revealed at any given time, the phenomena are seen as having the same essential meaning when perceived over time in many different situations. As described by Merleau-Ponty (1963), a structure or form is the "...total processes which may be indiscernible from each other while their "parts," compared to each other, differ in absolute size; in other words the systems are defined as transposable wholes" (p.47).

Using an existential-phenomenology method the researcher seeks to understand someone's experience of some phenomenon. Participants who have experienced the phenomenon are interviewed. After rigorous and careful interpretation of the interview texts, a structure (or the essence) of the experience emerges. It is this structure of experience that makes the meaning of the life-world clear to others. The structure, or meaning, of the Southern Appalachian, adolescent female's experience of being violent is fully described in Chapter 4.

Hermeneutics. "Hermeneutics is the interpretation of experience" (Draucker & Madsen, p. 328). The structure can only be obtained through the process of a determined study of the interview text. This task of understanding or interpreting texts can be defined as hermeneutics. Hermeneutics seeks to elucidate and make explicit our practical understanding of human actions by providing an interpretation of them. This is done by means of a "careful reading and laying out of that which presents itself" (Valle & King, 1978). Gadamer (1975) is most closely associated with the careful interpretation of texts. Gadamer studied with Heidegger who described his approach to the study of human existence as hermeneutical. Heidegger viewed humans as inseparable from an always already existing world and as always finding significance and meaning in their world. He claimed that human activities do not necessarily involve consciousness or awareness, but rather everyday skillful coping. He called our basic activity *being-in-the-world.* According to Heidegger, we can increase our understanding of human experiences and practices by using hermeneutic methods (Draucker & Madsen, 1999).

In approaching a text, we first see or read only a part of it, and lacking a sense of the whole, partly or completely misunderstand the text. Only as we come to understand the whole can we come to a reliable understanding of the part. The process of repeatedly moving from the parts to the whole is called the *hermeneutical circle.* This refers to both single interview texts, as well as, groups of interview texts.

In this particular study of the Southern Appalachian, adolescent female's experience of being violent an interpretation of each interview text was completed, constantly relating part to whole. Each individual interview was interpreted, hermeneutically and then an across text analysis was conducted, interpreting each interview in the context of all other interviews. This and other practical applications comprise the phenomenological research method.

Advantages. I believe there are numerous advantages of using the phenomenological approach to study violent girls. A phenomenological study allows the researcher to focus on a phenomenon, but does not discount or dehumanize the participant in the process. The participant serves as a co-researcher in the project, directing the interview by only going where she wants to go, never being made to feel that responses are inadequate or incorrect. The participant guides the conversation. The phenomenological interview allows the participant to talk about the experience freely. Marginalized populations gain a sense of empowerment as they are encouraged to speak freely about a topic that may not be discussed, otherwise.

Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to potential risks posed by participating in a research study. They want to please adults and may submit to

research tasks not in their best interests. Great measures are taken by ethical researchers to protect the interests of vulnerable populations. One of the advantages of conducting a phenomenological study is that special consideration is given to the participant's well being. Skilled interviewers are able to approach very delicate topics while maintaining a level of respect, showing concern, and allowing the participant to "go where he/she wants to go." A desire to understand the human experience conveys a message of humanness that is genuine. Even when studying abhorrent behavior, the researcher is expected to focus on the phenomenon being discussed rather than on the person discussing it.

Phenomenological studies also are supported by a system of checks and balances. Participants should never be surprised by the results of a particular project in which they were involved. One of the ways to check for "accuracy" of interpretation is to return to the participant, ask for clarification of unclear transcript passages, share the description of the experience developed, and elicit feedback. This allows the participant to be a co-researcher on yet another level; it also gives the researcher valuable information and prevents him/her from describing the experience in a faulty or inaccurate manner. If the goal is to understand the experience, who better to affirm one's understanding than the experiencer?

There is some concern that interviews addressing delicate topics (death, battering, infidelity) may result in emotional traumas that leave the participants without closure. While there may be instances of trauma, a skilled interviewer knows how to gently guide the interview back to safer ground, if that is where the participant

chooses to go. This is a valid concern for novice researchers with little experience conducting a phenomenological interview. However, several studies do suggest that definite benefits are derived by those participating in the "telling of stories" through interviews (Coles, 1989; Kubler-Ross, 1969; Morse, 1988; Sandelowski, 1991). The phenomenological interview gives the participant the unique opportunity to speak freely about his or her experience of a phenomenon, while the interviewer's only obligation is to listen attentively. The participant controls the content of the interview and may speak as much or as little as he or she wishes. There is no pressure to explain motivations for behaving in a certain manner or to justify one's actions. The interviewer makes no judgements and must remain neutral regarding any issues discussed, no matter how controversial. Most participants would agree that the phenomenological interview allows them to reflect and process events known only to them.

Interviews allow the participant to tell the stories that they want to tell. There is no pressure to tell them a certain way. There is no interviewer agenda, only a desire to capture the essence of the experience from the perspective of the participant. There are few leading questions (especially if the interviewer has bracketed successfully) forcing the participant to conform to the researcher's whim. What does take place in the phenomenological interview is an interviewer's request that the participant "Tell about a time when...;" a first-person description of the experience; a dialogue between researcher and participant—not a question and answer session; a listener who is accepting and engaged; a true, human connection between researcher and participant;

a sense of empowerment; an avenue for the voiceless to find a voice; and the emergent meaning of the experience, allowing the participant to make sense of that experience.

There are several specific benefits of using an interpretive research group. As discussed earlier, the interpretive group facilitates and enforces the bracketing process; the group challenges interpretations to ensure accuracy; the group relates each emergent theme to the earlier sections of a transcript; using a group helps to maintain a fresh perspective (patterns not noticed by a single researcher may be seen by the group); the group offers a means of managing an overwhelming amount of data; and finally, the dynamic of the group has an energizing effect on the interpretive process and brings the transcript to "life" (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989).

Each of these phenomenological advantages applies to my proposed study of girls who are violent. Volunteers participating in the study were asked to "Tell me about a time when you were violent." As I have learned in pilot interviews, this topic is delicate and may elicit strong, emotional reactions. As I seek to gain understanding of the violent girl's life-world, I am aware of her vulnerability, my vulnerability, my responsibilities, of the potential to do harm, and the potential benefits to be gained.

Brody (1987) suggests that storytelling, or the dialogue situated within the phenomenological interview, heals both the teller and the listener. Violent girls, telling stories of their experiences of being violent, make sense and meaning of violence in the act of telling the whole story. "The interviewee...starts to see new connections in (her) life-world on the basis of her spontaneous descriptions..." Healing for the researcher takes place in the form of newly acquired understanding.

By understanding the experience described, researchers socially construct new knowledge through the discourse of dialogue.

Limitations. I will give equal time to the methodological limitations of the phenomenological interview, but am aware of my need to bracket personal biases or preferences for phenomenological interviewing. I find this method/philosophy to be especially appropriate in the study of violent girls. Through interviews, I am able to connect with participants, to empower young women, and to understand their struggles and plights. In an effort to produce a quality product, however, it is essential that I identify the potential limitations of phenomenology so that my work is rigorous and relevant. I am well acquainted with the limitations described below. Preliminary interviews conducted by me in my project epitomize perfectly, the pitfalls experienced when using a faulty research instrument.

Always my first concern, when conducting an interview, is the potential to do harm. Human behavior is unpredictable. Within the discourse of dialogue there is the danger of the unknown. We can't predict how someone is going to react to feelings or thoughts that emerge in dialogue. An inexperienced interviewer may unintentionally do harm by asking inappropriate questions ("Why...?"), by ending the interview abruptly without facilitating closure, or by ignoring obvious signs of distress.

Kavanaugh and Ayres (1998) propose guidelines for conducting interviews on sensitive topics that minimize harm to respondents. Researchers must first be aware of the sensitive nature of the research topic—"research that intrudes into a deeply personal experience; research that is concerned with deviance and social control;

research that impinges on the vested interests of powerful persons; and research that involves things sacred to those being studied" (Lee & Renzetti, 1990, p.512). Other guidelines include the following:

- Assess respondent behaviors during the entire study,
- Recognize and encourage respondent-initiated coping strategies,
- Provide researcher-initiated strategies to minimize harm,
- Evaluate respondent characteristics that influence their responses (Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998).

Limitations identified by Polkinghorne (1989) include the inability of the researcher to hold or examine under a microscope a participant's experience; the distance of the data (articulated reflection) from the actual experience; the requirement that the observation of the experience be described in a language (a language that some may not grasp).

The limitations that I have personally dealt with include many of the previous ones, but also some not found in the literature. Interviewing for the first time is an intimidating experience. Knowing that you have asked the wrong question, asked too many questions at one time, or that you have failed to bracket can sabotage a researcher's confidence. The unpredictability of participants can be unnerving. Especially when interviewing volatile individuals, you can't be sure when a question might be too personal or too close to an event that triggers an outburst of some kind. The girls participating in this study behaved appropriately at all times. None of them seemed uneasy or capable of violence during the interviews. It can be just as

unnerving to realize your own unpredictability. Not being able to anticipate your own reaction to the participant's story can elicit feelings of anxiety. On several occasions, I was moved to emotion in response to the stories told.

Questions regarding the comprehensiveness of the transcript sometimes arise in the research group. Should we interview participants more than one time? Are we able to capture the essence of an experience in a single interview? Often it has been asked, "Wouldn't it be better to video tape the interview, so we know exact intonation, facial expression, and other bodily expressions?" This sounds reasonable, but we must remember that the only thing we are interested in is our participant's experience of the phenomena. The dialogue gives us that without the distraction of visual representations.

A major limitation identified by natural scientists is that this methodology does not reflect the Cartesian attitudes so valued in the realm of the Cartesian scientist. Phenomenology, and other qualitative inquiries, are not highly regarded or respected in many of the 'hard science' disciplines. The argument being that purely descriptive techniques cannot possibly be rigorous in revealing cause-and-effect relationships. They also fail to recognize that the phenomenologist does not seek cause-and-effect relationships.

Another concern frequently voiced relates to the trustworthiness of the interview data. How can we be sure participants are "telling the truth" and that their perspective is an accurate representation of events? While there are no guarantees, the

existential-phenomenologist believes that reflections emerging in dialogic context will be commensurate with those emerging in another context.

The final limitations describe characteristics of the research instrument used in the phenomenological interview—the researcher. Again, human beings are not machines. Researchers are vulnerable to forces acting upon them, as is the participant. Stress, illness, and fatigue affect the researcher's ability to conduct a quality interview. An interview conducted by someone distracted by the throes of nausea will not glean a quality experiential description. The human frailty of the research instrument creates a special set of limitations.

An inexperienced researcher also presents a unique limitation or barrier to obtaining a quality description, one rich in detail and meaning. The novice lacks skills necessary to protect the participant from potential harm. In the phenomenological interview, the participant is the expert and should lead the discussion. The interviewer's job is to follow the interviewee closely, providing short, descriptive questions and clarifying statements that encourage the participant's lengthier and detailed descriptions. An inexperienced interviewer may unintentionally sabotage the interview by asking "Why?" questions, by dominating the discussion, by leading the participant, by taking on the role of expert, by failing to bracket, or by attempting a causal analysis of the experience.

With many advantages and limitations, phenomenological research can and should be used as a means of describing the lived experience of participants. I chose the phenomenological research method because it seems the most natural way to

conduct a study of girls' experiences. It "fits" my goal, it "fits" the girls, and it "fits" my style.

Chapter 2 addressed the issues related to the topic of study—violent, Southern Appalachian, adolescent females—in an effort to support the structure that follows. An operational definition of violence, as accepted by the mainstream social order, was given. Issues of gender and ethnicity were discussed. The importance of being female and Appalachian is considered. Several theoretical explanations of deviance are offered followed by a discussion of the classical and contemporary theories of female delinquency. In conclusion, Chapter 2 presents the foundational tenets of qualitative inquiry and existential-phenomenology—the philosophy and the method. Chapter 3 will define the study from inception to completion. A comprehensive discussion of the methodology utilized to richly, rigorously, and accurately describe the life-world of the violent, Southern Appalachian, adolescent female is presented.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The phenomenon under investigation in this study was explored using the open-ended dialogic interviews with participants. This process is described and explained in this chapter. My effort to examine this problem began with a reflection. I first examined the motivations for tackling this topic. I then weighed the costs and benefits of studying a topic with great personal, emotional discomfort. Finally, I searched for the best approach or method that would enable me to understand the experiences of the violent, Southern Appalachian, adolescent female. That approach is through qualitative inquiry and more specifically, using the phenomenological research method.

Included here are discussions of the phenomenological process, the interpretive research group, and the design of the research project—the development of the research question, the bracketing process, the motivations for choosing this topic, the selection of participants, the interview process, and the data analysis. While this assertion may imply a linear progression from beginning to end, the actual process was anything but linear. Interviews took place early on in the study and culminated only weeks before the completion of the study, with textual analysis occurring all along the way. Examination of presuppositions (bracketing) also occurred continually and in numerous settings—not simply in the context of the bracketing interview as might be assumed. And finally, issues of ethics pervaded the study from the earliest point to the final act of reporting.

Steps for Doing a Phenomenological Research Project

Figure 5 shows a graphical depiction of the following research steps (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997). The flowchart depicts the process utilized in this study of the adolescent, Southern Appalachian, violent girl.

1. A phenomenological project begins with a focus on the self. A topic is chosen and a bracketing interview is conducted.

2. Participants are identified and interviewed.

3. Interviews are transcribed.

4. Hermeneutic analysis of transcripts takes place within the context of the research group. Transcripts are individually read using a part to whole dialectic. As subsequent transcripts are presented the hermeneutic act of relating part to whole continues, in each individual transcript as well as for the set of transcripts. Analysis of individual transcripts is constantly related back to the set of previously analyzed transcripts.

5. Initial themes are clustered.

6. Thematic structure is developed.

7. The structure is presented to the research group. If group agrees that the proposed structure describes the experience of the phenomena as presented in the context of the transcripts, the structure is then reported to the participants.

A final report is prepared when participants report that, indeed, the developed structure represents a good description of the phenomena described. In this study, participants could not be located and the structure was subsequently not shared with them. Ideally, a follow-up visit would occur with the structure presented and feedback gained from participants. The transient nature of this population prevented a follow-up visit.

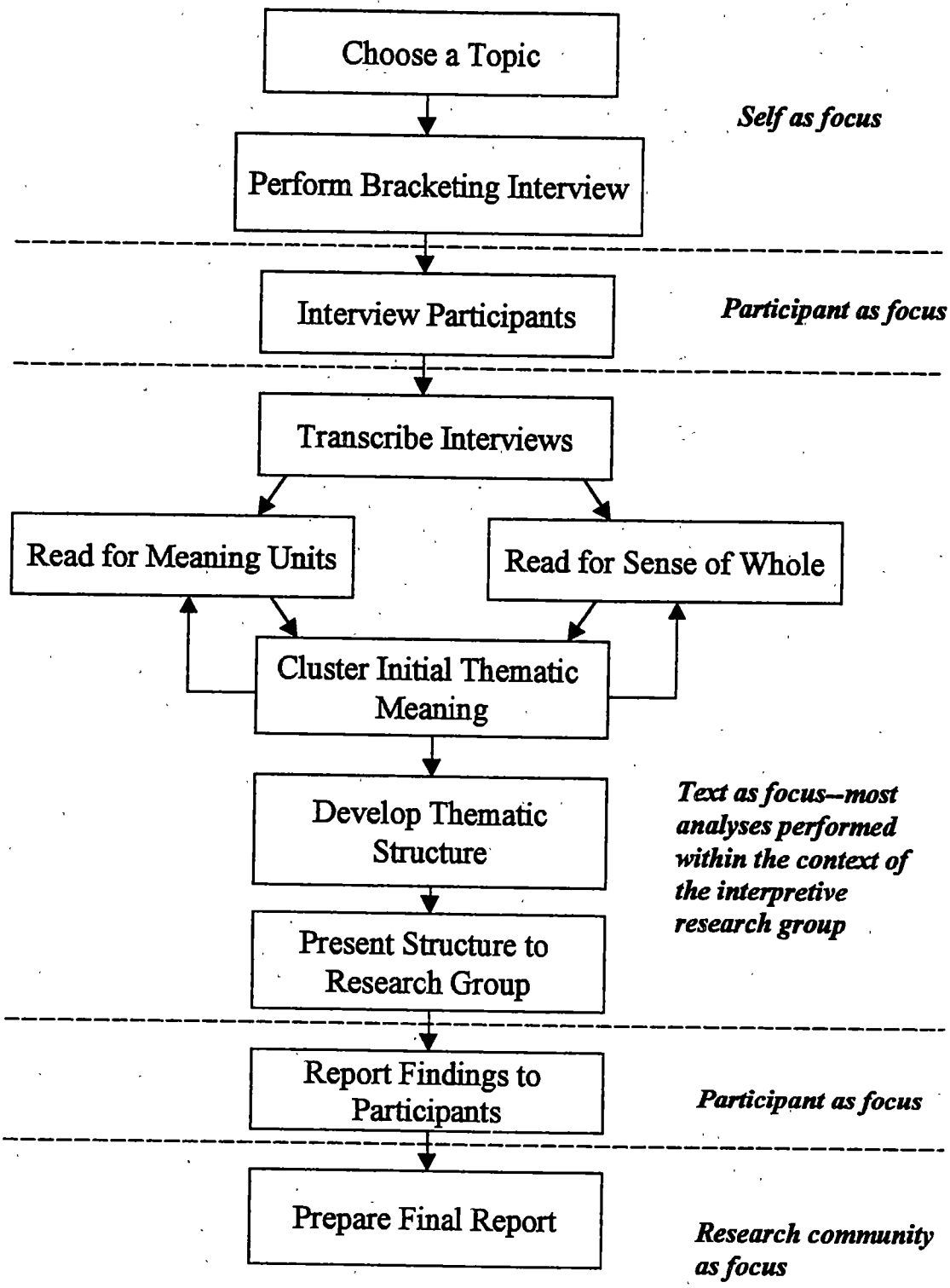


Figure 5. Schematic summary of the interview process (as described by Pollio, Henley, and Thompson, 1997, p.60).

Ihde would argue that my approach to phenomenology is perfect. In *Experimental Phenomenology*, Ihde states, "Many disciplines are better learned by entering into the doing than by mere abstract study" (Ihde, 1977, p. 13). What I have learned in 3 years as a member of the interpretive research group practicing phenomenology at the University of TN-Knoxville (UTK), I have learned by osmosis or by doing, by listening to those with experience, and by watching. Skills learned in the research group have been field-tested with varying levels of success.

Given that the goals of natural science are to establish, reveal, or demonstrate cause-effect relationships, the criterion that science be "experimental" makes sense. In "doing phenomenology" or in conducting phenomenological research, the goals of research are different. Phenomenologists study human experience without proposing and testing hypotheses and without experimental testing of cause-effect relationships. For the phenomenologist, only that which is based in naïve experience is "real;" therefore, only that which is revealed or disclosed as pure phenomena is of interest.

Polkinghorne (1989) suggests some general guiding principles for phenomenological research:

1. Gather a number of naïve descriptions from people who are having or have had the experience under investigation.

2. Engage in a process of analyzing these descriptions so that the researcher comes to a grasp of the constituents or common elements that make the experience what it is.

3. Produce a research report that gives an accurate, clear, and articulate description of an experience. The reader of the report should come away with the feeling that "I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that" (p. 46).

The interpretive research group. The Phenomenology Group is an interpretive research group that has been meeting for a number of years. Group members include graduate students and professors from various academic disciplines–nursing, psychology, education, human ecology, child and family studies, and sociology. Members meet weekly for the group interpretation of an interview text. The major requirements for group participation or membership are that group members are willing to commit the time and effort to interpret a series of interviews and that they seek to apprehend experiences as described in interview dialogues. Each week, a member volunteers to prepare individual copies of a transcribed interview to be interpreted in the group setting. By the time someone is ready to bring a transcript to the table, he/she has already developed a research question that reflects the phenomenological approach, conducted and interpreted his/her bracketing interview, interviewed one or more participants, and transcribed the interview text to be presented.

Group members come each week prepared to participate on a continuum of levels. The interpretive group facilitates bracketing by conscientiously questioning the assumptions each member employs. Group members support the process by questioning proposed interpretations. A theme must emerge from participant descriptions rather than from abstract or theoretical conjectures. This is accomplished by showing in the transcript where the participant's own words support the proposed interpretation. All interpretations or themes must be taken in context of the whole

interview. Interpretation is a continuous back and forth process of relating parts to the whole. In Chapter 2 hermeneutics was defined and this "back and forth" process was referred to as the hermeneutical circle.

A hermeneutical approach to interpretation takes place in a typical meeting. A transcript is read aloud, with two people reading, pausing frequently to discuss potential meanings and possible interrelationships among meanings. The researcher returns to the group periodically with preliminary thematic descriptions. The group discusses whether or not the descriptions are supported by the data.

There are several advantages to using an interpretive group for interpretive analysis (Pollio et al., 1997; Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997; Thompson et al., 1989). Bracketing is enhanced. Group members gently illuminate assumptions or preconceptions of other members concerning the experience being described. Having multiple perspectives available facilitates identification of themes and patterns. By bringing data to the group, the workload for one individual is lightened. The group shares the burden of managing massive amounts of data. A single interpreter could easily become overwhelmed. "Two heads are better than one." This is also true when trying to remember details of past transcripts in relation to a current one. Finally, group interpretation can be an affirming experience for the researcher. When presenting an interpretation, the researcher gains confidence in her ability when that interpretation is confirmed.

For this study, four transcripts were presented to the interpretive research group. The process of interpreting through the act of reading the transcript was

conducted. A hermeneutical analysis was performed, as described earlier in this section. For each of these four transcripts, a summary of emergent themes and a description of the totality of the experience for each individual interview is given at the end of the analysis.

An Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the experience of being violent from the perspective of the Southern Appalachian, adolescent female. For many of the girls who volunteered to talk with me, the experience of sharing these stories was as uncomfortable and difficult as the experience of living these stories. At times, *hearing* these stories was extremely uncomfortable and difficult.

A qualitative design was chosen as the most appropriate manner in which to explore the phenomena of violent girls. The research problem I chose to tackle was that of describing the meaning of being violent from the perspective of the violent adolescent female—specifically, those violent girls living in Southern Appalachia. There are few studies devoted to the unique problems and the resulting unique needs of this population. In wanting to learn more about these needs, it seemed only natural to approach the problem by engaging participants in open-ended dialogic interviews, where they are asked to describe the phenomenon of being violent. Again, the most natural way to obtain this description was to ask the girls themselves to describe that experience from their point of view. It is true that I could have conducted an ethnographic study, physically observing girls in aggressive situations and reporting on my observations, but those descriptions would lack the essential first-person

perspective. My perspective of what *appeared to be* the experience of violent girls would be just that, my perspective. This study attempts to fill a void in the research literature by allowing the voice of the participant to be heard.

Developing the question. The phenomenological investigation began with a question. In order to elicit thick, rich descriptions of a phenomenon, careful consideration was given to the development of the question. This project began with a presentation to the interpretive research group.

Through a question and answer session designed to illuminate my motivations, colleagues helped me develop a research question. This original question, "Tell me about your *experiences of violence*," eventually evolved into the more specific question, "Tell me about your *experience of being violent*." Several interviews were conducted using the initial question. During this pilot research, inquiring about girls' *experiences of violence* did not yield the description I sought. In four of those initial interviews, two girls spoke about their experiences of *being* violent and two spoke of more general experiences of *witnessing* violence. While the original question would indeed yield interesting data on girls' experiences of violence (How would girls interpret the question?), the resulting focus of the study might not be clear and somehow be compromised. In the end, I chose the more specific, explicit phrasing of the question.

All interviews began with the developed question. The research question was the only pre-scripted question. As an open-ended, unstructured interview, the participant directed the flow of the interview. I followed her through the terrain of her

experience asking questions only for clarification or to provide prompts, encouraging her to *"Tell me more about that."*

Bracketing. Briefly discussed in Chapter 2, bracketing is a process designed to assist the researcher in identifying personal biases or presuppositions related to the phenomenon under study. A bracketing interview followed the development of the research question. In the bracketing interview, a colleague from the research group experienced in phenomenological interviewing, asked me to describe my experience of violence.

I described my experience of losing a 12-year-old student, Christy (a pseudonym), to violence and was surprised by the detail-oriented description I offered. The description is included here to illustrate the potentially powerful tool of phenomenological interviewing. By allowing the respondent (in this case, me), to lead the interviewer back to "the things themselves," we gain description so concentrated and rich in detail that the experience almost becomes visual and is easily shared by the interviewer.

> *"She was in the day treatment program so she would go home at night and lived in the housing projects. She and an older girl, I think the other girl was 18, were fighting over a boyfriend. Christy was on her front porch and the older girl came into the courtyard. They exchanged words. I'm sure they were profane, not very nice words. So they were going at it with words and one of them stepped over the line and dared the other one to "say that to my face." So Christy came off*

the porch and jumped on this girl, started beating on her. Somehow the girl, who had a knife already, just pulled it around and stuck it in her stomach and sliced her up. Right there in front, you know all the other children were playing. You can imagine a housing project courtyard, where all the kids are outside playing. It was after school. These two girls had gotten into it. Christy was lying on the sidewalk. Blood was everywhere. The news reports showed where she had lain and the blood. There was a lot of blood. I was surprised by the amount of blood. I went to her funeral later. It really affected me. I went to this funeral and it took place in the back room of a store. Like a small grocery store. It was a predominantly black neighborhood. Poverty level was low. So I go in and Christy is lying in—I wouldn't call it a casket–I would call it a cardboard box. It looked like a refrigerator, a small refrigerator box or something. It did not look like, you know, even a wooden; it didn't look like even a wooden box. It looked like a cardboard, appliance box and that's what she was in. She was wearing a hospital-type gown; I guess that they put on her when she was taken to the emergency room by the ambulance people. She was still wearing her gown. I remember her fingernails with chipped nail polish. She was always doing her fingernails in class. I remember the color. Seeing that color nail polish on her the last time I had seen her at school. It was chipped and caked with blood

underneath the nails. I was thinking "why didn't they clean this girl up, what is she doing like that, why couldn't somebody have cleaned her up." Why didn't the parents insist that she be cleaned up, that her fingernails, the blood be cleaned out of them? There was still blood on her forearms. It looked like she had, they had picked her up off the sidewalk, put her in this box and carried her to the back of the store. So that uh, that just really affected me. I didn't go back to school the next day the same person. You know, I was really upset by what I had seen."

A final selection taken from my bracketing interview shows, in a very personal way, how I came to be interested in violence. This is yet another link or connection to the topic that I was not aware of, until I heard myself telling the story.

"This is probably my first encounter with violence other than playground scuffles in elementary school. But I remember when I was 10 or 12, sometime before I was a teenager but old enough that I knew this was wrong. My parents were divorced. They divorced when I was just a baby, so I never lived with my dad that I remember. So my sister and I were older, like 3 and 4, and my dad's parents wanted us to come and visit them. My mom would let us go visit and we would stay with my grandparents. For a few years we did that and then my dad remarried a very nice woman, and we were allowed to go stay with him and his wife. She eventually had children, 2 little boys. We enjoyed

going to visit in the summertime. We would go for a week in the summer. One summer we went and uh, I remember... It was a large family. There were lots of brothers and sisters, so I had lots of aunts and uncles and cousins. They lived on a mountain in a rural area. Lots of farm stuff to do and uh, we were all going to go on a picnic. So the rest of the family drives up in the front yard in a pickup truck. Lots of people in the back of the truck, you know, kind of hillbilly looking, Beverly Hillbilly kind of thing. They had all this stuff; they were ready to go. My stepmother, Connie, and my dad were getting ready to go. I remember my dad in the front yard and Connie came out of the house. She had a basket of food, all kinds of food. She was carrying it to the truck. And I was almost to the truck, I wasn't to the truck yet, and I heard my dad yelling at her and, cussing, I heard him cussing, I don't remember what he said. I'm sure he probably called her a bitch or a slut or something that I wasn't used to hearing. So I turned around. He was upset with her because she was wearing shorts. He said the shorts were too short and she was going to go in the house and change into jeans. She said no she wasn't going to change into jeans, she was wearing shorts. It was too hot to wear jeans and she proceeded to walk on past him to the truck. And he walked up behind her and pulled her by her hair and pulled her backwards. Knocked her down and knocked all the food out of her hands and told her she was going to go change

clothes. After that I don't have any memory of what happened. I don't remember if she changed clothes or if she went on, but I remember him throwing her around the yard by the head of her hair [phrase transcribed as stated] because she wouldn't change her shorts. After that my sister and I didn't want to go back again."

Thematic analysis of my bracketing interview yielded several themes. In my experience of violence: violence is unpredictable, victimizers can't be trusted, and fathers are more likely than mothers to behave violently. These are the biases that I recognize I bring to this project.

After several preliminary interviews with violent girls, I discovered that they, too, often witness and sometimes are victims of domestic violence at an early age. Research cited in Chesney-Lind (1997) supports the contention that persistent, prolonged abuse, as described by many of the participants in this study, causes "more severe trauma and dramatic short- and long-term effects in victims" (p. 25). A study comparing violent and nonviolent girls reveals the "multiple and diverse instances of violence as a girl grows up" (Smith & Thomas, in press, p.7). These researchers cite chilling statistics on the early abuse and victimization of girls. The following facts are reported: 52% of the victims of child maltreatment were females (according to Child Protective Services data for 1997); Finklehor, Hotaling, Lewis, and Smith reveal that one in four girls experiences childhood sexual abuse; and females are more likely than boys to be sexually abused by family members, also from Finklehor et al. (as cited in

Smith & Thomas, in press). This pervasive victimization of girls ensures vulnerability and desperation, as frequently expressed by the participants of this study.

Ideally, the bracketing interview should take place prior to conducting any participant interviews. Sometimes valuable learning can occur when the ideal is ignored. In my situation, the opportunity to conduct my first participant interview arose *before* I was able to schedule the bracketing interview. As a result, I learned the importance of identifying personal biases and preconceptions before conducting participant interviews.

Through the interpretive research group, my bracketing interview was analyzed and shortly thereafter, I presented an interview conducted before the bracketing interview took place. As the participant interview was read aloud in the group, I heard myself, over and over again, leading the participant to discuss issues related to my personal agenda, while ignoring her desire to discuss the issues of significance to her. To my chagrin, the importance of the bracketing interview became painfully clear. To the delight of the research group, they were able to say, "See, we are right about that one."

Motivation. Only after I completed the bracketing interview, did I realize that I am more personally invested in this study than I had initially admitted. The bracketing interview made clear to me the personal issues involved in my interest in this topic. I recognized that, to some degree, I identify with girls who are violent. Many of these girls grow up in single parent homes, as I did. Many of them reported that they witnessed domestic violence, as I have. This identification with violent girls

and girls at-risk of becoming violent has fueled my pursuit of learning more about the lives of these girls.

Participants. Ten adolescent females agreed to participate in this study. All of the girls have lived in the Southern Appalachian area of East Tennessee over 10 years. Some of them were born in this area and have not lived anywhere else. Girls were 12-18 years old at the time of the interview. Four were Caucasian and six were African American. Socio-economic status was unknown. (See Table 3 for demographic information.) A brief biographical sketch of each participant follows.

Table 3
Demographic Information

PARTICIPANTS	AGE	RACE
Rena	14	Caucasian
Jana	16	Caucasian
Sherita	16	African American
Tawana	14	African American
Tina	17	Caucasian
Shana	14	African American
Sara	17	Caucasian
Portia	18	African American
Selena	12	African American
Krista	13	African American

Rena: Rena was 14 years old at the time of the interview. She is Caucasian. The interview took place in a study room of a public library. Rena described living in a psychiatric hospital for a period of time before coming into DCS custody. In state's custody, she was sent to live in the group home, where she resided at the time of the interview. She formerly lived at home with her dad, stepmom, and younger sister. Rena shared that her parents were "too strict," "overprotective," and "fussed on (her) about things that really didn't matter." Rena reported she had no friends, was depressed, and engaged in self-mutilation. The violent episodes she described included physical fights with her father ("...he'd hit me in the head where I'll have big ol' bumps." "Throw me on the floor, throw me across the furniture...") and fighting with peers ("Usually it's big boys that I do the fights with.") Rena's casemanager also shared that Rena had assaulted a police officer attempting to transport her to the group home placement.

Jana: Jana was 16 years old at the time of the interview. She is Caucasian. The interview took place in the dining room of a local restaurant. Jana had been in DCS custody since she was 12 years old. At the time of the interview, she was living in a group home and had been in that placement over 1 year. She described her exposure to violence beginning at an early age. At 4 ½ years old, she remembered her father beating her mother ("He had hit her over the head...and she was bleeding everywhere.") In that same episode, she recounts that her father sexually abused her. Jana tells about being depressed and hating "everybody," "everything," and herself. She discusses being isolated from peers, using drugs to escape the pain, and at age 11,

having a 32 year old boyfriend with whom she was sexually active. Episodes of violence included fighting with her mother ("...mom backhanded me. I grabbed her by the shirt and I raised my hand at her.") and beating up peers ("I started hitting her and hitting her and hitting her...broke this girl's nose and busted her lip, gave her a black eye, and broke her arm and that was it.").

Sherita: Sherita was 16 years old at the time of the interview. She is African American. The interview took place in an office at the juvenile court detention center. Sherita lives at home with her mother and 17 year old sister. I met Sherita through her probation officer with the juvenile court. Sherita reported a history of fighting peers in her neighborhood and at school. At the time of the interview, she had been charged with the physical assault of a peer. Sherita had been detained in juvenile detention on one other occasion for fighting.

Tawana: Tawana was 14 years old at the time of the interview. She is African American. The interview took place in an office at her school. The school guidance counselor referred Tawana to this project. The guidance counselor worked with Tawana in a school-wide conflict resolution program that targeted physically aggressive students. Tawana was one of four females involved in this program. Tawana said she lived in a neighborhood where "drive-bys happen all the time." She described personal episodes of violence that occurred both at school and in her neighborhood. Tawana reported that she had only been suspended from school one time because of fighting.

Tina: Tina was 17 years old at the time of the interview. She is Caucasian. The interview took place in the an interview room at the juvenile detention center. Tina lived at home with her natural parents and a younger sister until she ran away in August 1999. Since that time she has been "on the run" and "living with friends or sleeping in vacant cars." Tina has been in juvenile detention several times before our meeting. She talked about living in a home where her parents "screamed at each other a lot, but never hit the kids." Tina shared that she was being treated for depression, "smoked a lot of dope," and was sexually active at an early age. Her violent episodes included physical fights with males and females. She recounted stories of "chasing (a man) with a baseball bat" because he stole from her, meeting girls at night to fight so they wouldn't get in trouble at school, and being mistreated by juvenile detention officers, having no choice but to fight them off. Tina was apprehended while "on the run" by police and charged because she had severely injured a female peer in a physical fight. She talked about the fight and denied that she could have done that much damage "cause I didn't use nothing but my fists." Tina was sentenced to serve 19 months in Woodland Hills, a lock down, correctional facility.

Shana: Shana was 14 years old at the time of the interview. She is African American. The interview took place in an office at her school. Shana lived at home with her "momma and daddy." She has an older brother and sister who live outside the home. Shana reported that she lives near a housing project where violence occurs frequently. The guidance counselor referred Shana to this project and reported that she had been involved in several school fights. During the interview, Shana did not

discuss her involvement in any fighting. She talked about shootings in her neighborhood, hearing drive-bys at night, and the violence that occurs to other people. Compared to other participants, Shana did not respond to the research question as expected and gave short, succinct responses throughout the interview.

Sara: Sara was 17 years old at the time of the interview. She is Caucasian. The interview took place in the living room of her grandmother's home. I met Sara through her probation officer at the juvenile court. Sara had been in a school fight with another girl. She was charged with assault and suspended from school. Sara lived in a very small home with her mother, stepfather, stepsister, stepbrother, stepbrother's girlfriend, and stepbrother's child. Sara shared that she was being treated for depression, abused drugs in the past, and became sexually active at a young age. She told of being raped by her best friend's boyfriend. Sara also reported being sexually abused by several family members and friends. Sara described growing up with brothers and frequently fighting with them. She and her mother have engaged in physical fights on numerous occasions.

Portia: Portia was 18 years old at the time of the interview. She is African American. The interview took place in the day room of the treatment facility where Portia resided. Portia was in DCS custody at the time of the interview and was temporarily being held in a diagnosis and evaluation treatment center. Portia recounted numerous, violent episodes that included assaults of peers, adults, and figures of authority. She described the most recent episode as having occurred just two days prior to the interview. She told of becoming angry with staff at the treatment

facility. Portia believed she had been treated unfairly and "that made (her) really mad." She said, "I start going off, I start cussing and stuff. And she just slammed it (Portia's head) into the wall...I just popped her dead in her mouth."

Selena: Selena was 12 years old at the time of the interview. She is African American. The interview took place in an office at her school. The school guidance counselor worked with Selena in a school-wide conflict resolution program that targeted physically aggressive students. Selena was one of four females in this program, who were referred by the guidance counselor involved. Selena reported learning to fight at an early age. In her neighborhood, "you have to protect yourself." She lived at home but was not clear about how many extended family members live in the home. She mentions her mom, stepfather, uncle, and a younger sister. She described fighting with another girl whose mother urged her (Selena's opponent) to use a broken bottle. Selena also talked about living in a neighborhood where drive-by shootings were common. Selena said, "Usually in my neighborhood they just shoot up in the air. I don't know why. It happens a lot...and I be scared because bullets don't have no eyes."

Krista: Krista was 13 years old at the time of the interview. She is African American. The interview took place in an office at her school. Krista participated in the conflict resolution program and was referred to this project by the guidance counselor. She lives at home with her mother, older brother, and younger sister. Krista talked extensively about the violence she witnessed in the housing project in

which she lived. She shared that she was afraid of gangs, drive-bys, and drug dealers. Krista did not discuss times in which she was physically violent.

According to Colaizzi (1978) and Polkinghorne (1989), the essential criteria for selecting participants for a phenomenological interview are that the potential participants have experienced the phenomenon (in this case, the experience of being violent) and are able and willing to speak articulately about their experiences. Criteria for participation in this study include those mentioned in addition to the following:

- Parental permission must be secured prior to the interview.
- The girls must participate voluntarily.
- They must be between the ages of 12-19 years.
- They must give their assent to participate.
- The must identify the Southern Appalachian region as the region where they live.
- They must describe themselves as being violent, or behaving violently, at some time.
- They must be willing to discuss the experience of being violent.
- They must possess the necessary language skills to articulate their experience.

I obtained participants through a networking process. As a former special education teacher, I know many principals, guidance counselors, and social workers. An internship with the TN Department of Children's Services (DCS) allowed me to make numerous contacts in that organization. The Knox County Regional Administrator of TN DCS was instrumental in providing access to case managers

responsible for monitoring children in state custody. In addition to DCS case managers, colleagues, supervisors, friends, and acquaintances supplied names of potential participants.

A director of a group home, probation officers with the Knox County Juvenile Court, DCS juvenile justice case managers, and a middle school guidance counselor referred participants for this study. The individual making the referral contacted parents or guardians initially. Parents agreeing to give permission were asked to sign the Parent Letter of Permission (see Appendix A). With parent/guardian permission, I then approached the girls to seek their participation. Initial meetings took place in schools, at the juvenile court, or at the place of residency (residential home, group home or detention center). All girls approached agreed to participate, signed Informed Assent forms (see Appendix B), and interviews were scheduled. The girls interviewed wanted to tell their stories and seemed to appreciate my willingness to listen. Many of them expressed thanks verbally. No one was paid to participate in this study. Participants received no compensation in any form.

The interview process. Single interviews were scheduled at the discretion of each participant. Most interviews lasted about one hour. Interviews took place in locations suggested by and familiar to the participants in an effort to make them as comfortable as possible. Interviews occurred in participant's homes, at a public library, in an office at the Juvenile Court, and in schools. To ensure accuracy and facilitate interpretation, interviews were audiotape recorded and subsequently transcribed by a hired transcriptionist or me. One of the goals of this project is to

capture the words of the participants. This can be done only if the interviews are recorded. None of the girls objected to being recorded. By conducting the transcription myself, I had the opportunity to *hear* the data a second time as well as the opportunity to engage in the textual analysis of the data. This is one way the researcher can become immersed in the data, an important strategy in performing interpretive analysis of texts.

Before, during, and immediately following interviews, notes were recorded (sometimes in a notebook, sometimes with a dictaphone) regarding personal impressions of the setting, participant's appearance, and any other items of perceived import. The recording of field notes facilitated recall of the circumstances of each interview and also aided in providing visual cues. Connecting individuals to interview content even after a long period of time had passed was possible, as a result.

Using the qualitative phenomenological interview, I can connect with the girls I interview. The open structure of the interview allows the participant to determine what she will share, when she will share it, and how much she will share. Each interview began with the question *"Tell me about a time when you were violent."* Subsequent questions were not specified in advance with the interviewer posing questions only to clarify, validate, or summarize. The participants guide the interviewer through her field of experience. We go only where she chooses to go. That is an empowering experience for someone accustomed to subservient behavior, as are many of these girls.

Participants signed an Informed Assent form prior to participation. They were asked not to discuss any incident for which juvenile charges were pending. Had anyone shared an incident that was yet to be dealt with in juvenile court, that portion of the interview tape would have been erased and the participant cautioned to discuss only nonpending incidents. Permission to audiotape the interview was addressed in the assent form. Participants received a copy of this form and were encouraged to contact me should questions arise later regarding this project.

Participants' parent also signed letters of permission. Prior to the interview, in the initial scheduling meeting, I stressed to the participants that their participation was voluntary and at no time would they be asked to proceed if they indicated they wanted to stop the interview. It was also stressed that should they reconsider their decision after completing the interview, they would not be forced to participate. Anyone wishing to back out of the study was ensured destruction of her interview tape and transcript.

Confidentiality was promised to participants. All identifying information was masked through the use of pseudonyms or removed from the transcripts. Each participant was informed verbally and in the assent form that should any crime or other illegal activity be revealed, I was obligated to report such information to the authorities. Statements of confidentiality (see Appendix C) were signed by all members of the interpretive research group and by the transcriptionist hired to transcribe the interview tapes.

Data analysis. The only way to understand the girls' experience of being violent is through the phenomenological interview. By asking violent girls to describe being violent, I am able to develop, with their help and with the assistance of an interpretive research group, a thematic structure that captures the meaning, or essence, of the phenomenon. The importance of being prepared to hear cannot be overstated. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) urge scholars to work toward an attitude of openness so that we are capable of being surprised. Belenky et al. describe this attitude in *Women's Ways of Knowing:*

> *"We proceeded inductively, opening our ears to the voices and perspectives of women so that we might begin to hear the unheard and the unimagined." (p. 11)*

Through careful, rigorous, and repetitive analysis of the interview transcripts, as *pieces* of the body of data and as the *whole* body of data, a thematic structure for the meaning of "being violent" began to emerge. As discussed and described in Chapter 2, a hermeneutical analysis of the interview texts was conducted. This analysis was an ongoing process that took place within the interpretive research group and as an individual endeavor, in which I categorized, re-read, and studied *(listened to)* the data outside of the group.

In addition to the interpretive group analysis, described in the section titled "Interpretive research group," I met regularly with Dr. Bob Kronick, chair of my PhD committee, to discuss and compare transcript interpretation. He attended meetings of the interpretive research group, as well as on days that I presented data. This system of member checking confirmed or denied interpretations taken up by me and provided

an outsider's perspective. Dr. Kronick's interpretations were not influenced by the interpretive group and offered yet another means of obtaining rigor.

Much of the analysis and integration of analysis is conducted alone. My goal was to describe the phenomenon of being violent from the Southern Appalachian, adolescent female's perspective. I repetitively read the transcripts searching for the themes from which to develop a meaning structure. Each transcript presented specific nuances and meaning units that were also present in many of the remaining transcripts. It was at this point that I began to recognize several potential themes.

After analyzing individual transcripts, I began the process of identifying common themes in the experience of being violent to be found across all participant transcripts. This can be described as the hermeneutical process of moving between and within transcripts, from part, to whole, to part. Preliminary themes were identified. I then searched each transcript for textual support or evidence of each identified theme. Using a color-coding system of physically marking, or circling, text units, I worked through each transcript. Each theme was assigned a color. As statements were found in the text that supported a particular theme, that section of text was circled in the corresponding color.

For example, one of the themes concerned participants' assertion "I am a good girl." The color red was assigned to denote that theme. Each transcript was read closely in an effort to locate all statements related to that theme. Statements reflecting participants' feelings that "I am a good girl" included:

"You know I pray and stuff everyday."

"And I, you know, I'm a good person. I don't like to do that to nobody."

"...I really didn't do anything wrong. I did things wrong, but I didn't do no crime or anything."

In each of the transcripts, those passages were circled in red. This process of searching and marking continued over all transcripts for each of the identified preliminary themes. Using a word processing program, I was then able to cut and paste each participant's statement(s) related to the individual themes into a visual summary called a *theme worksheet* (see Appendix D). The summary was divided into theme groups. Each theme group was further divided into sections devoted to individual participants. Each participant section contained all the statements found in her individual interview transcript that supported the designated theme. The resulting document allowed efficient and comprehensive analysis of all evidentiary statements supporting individual themes.

With a preliminary thematic structure prepared, I returned to the interpretive research group for verification. I presented the preliminary themes and offered evidence in the form of participants' statements—excerpts taken from the transcripts. Through a discussion of the participants' experience as discovered through the transcripts, the group made suggestions, offered insights, and verified the preliminary impressions that I held.

In the final step of data analysis, a comprehensive description of the meaning of being violent for the Southern Appalachian, adolescent female was developed,

based on the experiential life-worlds described in the 10 interviews. The structure of the experience is presented here both linguistically and diagrammatically.

The resulting, emergent structure consists of three contextual themes that occur against the ground of *self in relation to others—"Who I am in relation to violent and nonviolent others."* There are also experiential themes that define the meaning of being violent for the ten, Southern Appalachian, adolescent females. The participants describe the experience of being violent as a response to a stimulus (perceived injustice) expressed in the statement *"I feel attacked."* The reactions to this stimulus (perceived injustice) are described in the three experiential themes and occur only when *"I feel attacked:"*

"When I am violent, I black out."

"When I am violent, I grow bigger/stronger."

"When I am violent, I explode like a ball of fire."

Each of these themes occurs against the socio-cultural context of the participants' sense of self in relation to *violent* others. The *self in relation to others* provides the ground against which the contextual and experiential themes exist. The contextual themes that make up the ground represented by *self in relation to others* are:

"I am a good girl, who can be bad."

"I am scared and alone."

"I am weak."

In the existential ground there are 2 classes of *others* represented in the life-world of the violent girl: *violent others* and *nonviolent others*. Both classes exist as part of the ground of *self in relation to others.* The presence of the *violent other* precipitates the violent act and creates a situation in which the participant feels *"bad," "scared and alone,"* and *"weak."*

A complete and comprehensive discussion of these findings takes place in Chapter 4. Also presented is a diagrammatic structure of the Southern Appalachian, adolescent female's experience of being violent. The chapter concludes with a narrative summary of what it is like to be violent from the perspective of the Southern Appalachian, adolescent female.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter examines the meaning of being violent, as described by the study participants. Merleau-Ponty (1962) states "it is a matter of describing, not explaining or analyzing" (p. viii). While I may refer to *analysis of the data,* the intent of this chapter is to describe the essence of the meaning of the phenomena under study—the Southern Appalachian, adolescent female's experience of being violent. In this context, analysis refers to the process used in obtaining that description. The final analysis included multiple steps and a circuitous path. The procedures have been described in Chapter 3. Presented here is an examination of the thematic structure of that meaning.

From the descriptions given by the participants, themes have emerged and a thematic structure has been created. First, the individual components of the structure are described. The emergent structure is composed of two classes of themes. The first class of themes emerges against the existential ground and is called *contextual themes.* The second class of themes refers to the experience of being violent and is called *experiential themes.* The existential ground, the context from which all themes emerge, is *self in relation to others.* The essence of being violent, for these girls, is one made up of an existential ground, the supporting contextual themes, and the corresponding experiential themes. The resulting structure can be represented linguistically and diagrammatically. This chapter concludes with a narrative summary

of what it is like to be violent from the perspective of the Southern Appalachian, adolescent female.

The Existential Ground

The existential ground of *self in relation to others* provides the primary context against which the themes of the experience of being violent become figural. Each participant described a life-world in which violent experiences are common. Each participant shared stories of living a life in which violence, abuse, or maltreatment exists. A *culture of violence* permeates the existence of all participants and represents a prominent subtheme of the experience of being violent. Eight of the girls recount in explicit detail their experience of "dwelling with violence"—a phrase coined by Draucker and Madsen (1999)—from an early age. Jana described being victimized and abused at an early age and being a witness to abuse in her home. Jana pointed out to me that violence is "a lot more that just physical abuse." Portions of her interview include:

> ***P:*** *Violence or violent people lead to a lot more than just violent physical abuse.*
>
> ***I:*** *So sometimes violence is not physical. Sometimes it is something else?*
>
> ***P:*** *It's everything. It's mental, it's physical, it's sexual, it's everything.*
>
> *(*P=participant, I=interviewer)*

Throughout this interview, episodes of being abused or witnessing abuse were shared. Visibly depressed, Jana described her violent life-world in the following passage:

I: *Can you talk to me about a specific incident that you remember?*

P: *Yeah. The first time, uh, he ever, ever done anything, I was 4 1/2 years old and I can remember to the day, you know. He had been drinking a lot. He was an alcoholic. And uh, he had hit my mom a couple of times and I had kicked him, you know. And he slung me up against this glass. We lived in a trailer and the glass he slung me up against kinda cracked. And uh, he proceeded to do awful things, you know, and, kept on and kept on. And the only thing that I knew was that my mom was laying there with a... He had hit her over the head with a big ol' fifth of Wild Turkey, that's what he drunk was Wild Turkey. And a piece of glass was sticking out of her head and she was bleeding everywhere. I had her blood on me. He hit me and hit me and hit me and told me it was for her own good. He, you know, he uh sexually abused me then. It's when it first started.*

For many of the participants, this experience was common. Details differ, but the flavor of the experience remains the same. Depression affects many of the participants, as reported by them. Even for the girls who do not discuss episodes of being victims of abuse, episodes of witnessing abuse are consistent through all interviews. It should be noted that this differential regarding the locus of the violence seems to be specific to race. None of the African American participants shared stories of childhood victimization (some alluded to abuse, but did not detail abuse), although, they did detail being witness to violence, both in the home and in the community. All Caucasian participants told stories of being abused by family members or friends. They described suffering all forms of abuse—physical, mental, and sexual—for long periods of time. It is also interesting to note that there is seldom a single abuser in the lives of these girls. Not only do they suffer prolonged, persistent abuse, but also they

are victimized by fathers/stepfathers, mothers/stepmothers, mother's boyfriends, grandmothers, brothers, cousins, uncles, and friends. The extent to which these girls are abused is boundless and vast.

Throughout all participant interviews, the experience of being violent was described only in terms of "Who I am" or "Who I become" as that relates to the others in the participant's life. The *others* could be described as violent, nonviolent, or invisible. In all situations, participants experience themselves as *scared/alone* and *weak*. They experience themselves as being *good* in a life-world of nonviolent others and experience themselves as being *bad* in a life-world of violent others. Participants spoke about early, frequent, and persistent episodes of abuse at the hands of a violent other. The described *self* existed in relation to *violent others* or *nonviolent others*. During this nonviolent phase, the *self* is at-risk. "Who I am" is someone who is *good, scared/alone,* and *weak*. She feels vulnerable to the threat of attack. Should the attack be realized, the girl who is *good, scared/alone,* and *weak* will be a victim. Jack (1999), in her study of 60 aggressive women, determined that an aggressive, violent self is created "to protect the caring, vulnerable self that has been betrayed" or attacked (p. 165). The contextual themes discussed below define "Who I am" in this phase of experience.

Contextual Themes

Over the course of this study, one theme above all others was expressed over and over again. In defining "Who I am," participants told me in various ways that in the absence of violent others, they are *"good girls," "girls who are scared/alone,"*

and *"weak girls."* The *"I am a good girl"* theme emerged most frequently and was voiced most indignantly. Recognizing that they are good girls doing "bad things"—according to several participants—I was struck by the paradox represented by their statements. They shared stories and testimonies to their "goodness," sometimes only seconds before or after describing beating someone so badly that the other person was "bloody and shaking." The following transcript excerpts show some of the ways participants defined themselves as being good:

"I am a good girl"

"I was a honor roll student, 1st honors, 2nd honors, made A's and B's, didn't make no D's or F's on my report card. Was just a good child, a good child having a good child life."

"And I, you know, I'm a good person. I don't like to do that to nobody."

"So I try to stay home a lot and be nice and respect people cause I want to be respected."

The other supporting themes of *"I am scared/alone"* and *"I am weak"* also exist against the ground of *Who I am in relation to others*. Both of these themes occur regardless of the *other* present. The girls experience being *scared/alone* and *weak* when in the presence of violent and nonviolent others. The feelings do not change. They are constant. Supporting evidentiary statements from the transcripts include:

"I am scared and alone"

"I don't know, cause I don't never be around. I be scared. They end up saying I said it. Some people don't talk to the police because they be scared too. They don't want to go to court and stuff. When people get out of jail, they going to be looking for you."

"I just close my eyes and tell the Lord, "Please don't let no bullet come through the window". My mom will be in bed and she don't even hear it. I'll be in bed too, but it just wakes me up. Like one day, my auntie was having a party. They was shooting. I was praising the Lord that nobody would shoot my momma or shoot nobody that was at the party. Cause it's like a yellow house up there. And they be having a party up there. And they be outside too. And they can have a drive-by quick."

"I felt like I was not wanted. I felt pretty bad."

"I just wanted a momma and a daddy. You know, I didn't want nothing else. And sometimes, you know, I would think well maybe he could be this way (crying softly). You know, I think maybe he could be this way. It never would happen."

"I am weak"

"I don't really think I've changed I guess. I guess I still see the little kid in me, you know. That little hurt kid or whatever, you know."

"They'll make fun of me and stuff. And I'll try and get them back."

"I cried all the time. Sometimes I would scream out at him and tell him to leave my mom alone and my brother was never really around. I mean I think he touched my brother too you know, so my brother stayed gone all the time. So it was really just me and my mom there, and we're just two girls, and he's way bigger than us, so."

"As long as he's still alive I'm going to be worried. I mean, and he got put in jail like a month or something for molesting some other kid."

"After about the thing I told you my dad beating me up and stuff, well, whenever I get in trouble, I say don't tell my daddy cause I'm afraid he'll beat me up. I only said it cause I'm afraid he'll beat me up. I mean, he really didn't abuse me or anything, but he beat me up a couple of times. I mean, where I had bruises and stuff."

These are the girls' feelings no matter who is present—*violent or nonviolent other*. The experience of being *good* transforms when the violent other appears. This presence is perceived as an attack. The *good, scared/alone,* and *weak* girl becomes the

bad, scared/alone, and *weak* girl who reacts to the situation in which she finds herself. In a study of women "dwelling with violence," Draucker and Madsen (1999) found similar experiences and feelings. They studied women's experiences of sexual violence. Like the girls in this study, abuse was a salient aspect of their lives, even at times when they themselves were not experiencing overt violence. As a result, the women in Draucker and Madsen's study describe ways of "being-in-the-world when their immediate life-worlds pose a threat to their well-being" (1999, p.330). Draucker and Madsen describe a theme of living-in-exile—very similar to the girls' descriptions of being *scared/alone* and *weak.* Like Rena and other participants in this study, the adult women describe being mistreated as children, being banished from their families, and being sent away. Both groups of participants shared stories of being outcasts. Being outcast or being *disconnected* is a subtheme in the experience of being violent. In Rena's story, she says:

> *"Well, my dad made fun of me being overweight and me being this and me being that. He actually made fun of me. My mom, I don't know, she's so mixed up it's pathetic. My grandma... My stepmom has said a bunch of things to hurt me too. I'd go to school so hurt, I mean. It would hurt me, I mean, and people would say at school, "Oh Rena's this and Rena's that wuwuwuwu. I was like the outcast. I felt like, I feel like I'm a outcast. A lot of times, in my, I've actually had a teacher, I've gotten so mad in class. A lot of times, I've gotten mad, I thought people were staring at me. ...I've gotten the wrong impression on people a lot of times. Because I'm so used to being made fun of."*

The pain experienced by the study participants is clearly evident in their stories. From being *good, scared/alone,* and *weak,* these girls describe a transformation that takes place when they feel attacked or threatened. In that situation,

it is no longer possible for them to retain their *goodness*. They feel forced to respond in a "bad way." In addition to assertions of goodness, the participants decried "Why me?" The girls seemed to be asking themselves (and me) "How can a good girl behave in ways that are so bad?" and "Why have bad things happened to me when I am a good girl?" These feelings of confusion produce a sense of disequilibrium regarding participants' sense of self, or identity. Examples from the transcript that illustrate the experience of being *bad* follow and show the resulting disequilibrium:

"I am a good girl, who can be bad"

"People know me at the sheriff's department and they never arrested me. I've never been arrested. Only 2 times they came out to my house, not the sheriff's department, but the police department. One time was to talk to me. To get me calmed down. One time was to take me to the hospital because, to the emergency room because I, I tried to kill myself. I pulled a knife on myself. Cause things were getting so bad."

"I mean cause I've dealt with it a lot of times and got myself in trouble cause I've gotten in fights with them. I have beat up a couple of people. I mean, scratched 'em. I had long fingernails at one time and I scratched one boy. Usually it's big boys that I do the fights with. And I usually win the fight, in all honesty. Cause I'm very violent and stuff."

"Cause I had done the bad thing. I was supposed to go to juvenile and stuff but it was self defense, even though she had brass knuckles and stuff."

"When I woke up she was laying in the corner bloody and just shaking and had to go to the hospital."

These sentiments hold true only when the violent other is present. In the presence of violent others, the good girl is forced to become the bad girl. She is vulnerable (*good, scared/alone* and *weak*), feels attacked, and reacts to the situation instinctively. The only way she can cope with the threat of attack is to become *bad.*

She remains *scared/alone* and *weak,* but in the context of being *bad* she can survive. Survival consists of protecting herself. One participant from Jack's (1999) research speaks of herself as a fighter and a survivor. "Fighting back" is a tool of survival in a world filled with violence. This is equally true for the girls in this study. They tell stories of fighting back, but only in response to perceived injustice and as a means of self-protection.

Protection is the second theme identified by Draucker and Madsen in their work with adult women who were victims of sexual violence—they use the phrase sparing and preserving. Draucker and Madsen's participants speak of "protecting that which is essential to their nature and ensuring that some part of themselves was spared from the violence around them" (1999, p.331). This theme is similar to the feelings expressed by the adolescents as they described feeling attacked and the need to protect themselves, their relationships, or their reputations. Sara spoke frequently of needing to protect herself. She shared the following:

> *"Well, I did get in another fight before because this girl, she came up to me and was like yelling at me and everything else. I got to fight her. And that was just like whoa, yeah, whatever. Go ahead and yell at me. I don't care. And I was walking off and as I was walking off she came up behind me and grabbed my hair, and then I was like uh-uh. And I turned around and I started hitting her in the face and fighting back, so. That was at school too. I've always tried to fight back. I like to be able to know I can protect myself."*
>
> ***I:*** *Do you often have to protect yourself?*
>
> ***P:*** *Not really.*
>
> ***I:*** *When do you feel like you need to protect yourself?*

P: *Like in situations like when I'm fighting. I mean I wouldn't use weapons or anything. Just myself, I mean, because I don't, I mean, think I should have to, you know, really hurt somebody. But I mean just hurt them to let them know to leave me alone, you know. But I mean, I don't know.*

"Because she's never there for me now. So I pretty much had to take care of myself, and I just want to be able to protect myself now because I couldn't then you know. From, I don't know."

Portia described a time that she protected her reputation by fighting back when someone "disrespected" her. She told me:

"Dude, like um, when I've had fights at like in my neighborhood and stuff, like somebody disrespected me or something, said something to make me really angry, I'd get mad and hit them or something like that."

She continues to describe a recent episode in which she felt her rights had been violated by the female staff of the treatment center. Portia perceives an injustice and strikes out in an effort to restore justice.

"Yeah, um, it was just this Sunday, I was in here and um what it was, was I was talking and well I had got my level dropped and staff was telling me about getting my level dropped and I was so mad because it was like two hours before my visit and I hadn't seen my Momma like you know what I'm saying, like three weeks, two to three weeks, or whatever. And I had worked really hard to get on Level 1 you know to get off set-down or whatever and get on Level 1 so I could see her. ...And, uh, one of the staff, like the supervisor for the weekend or whatever, she tried to come and take my hands and put my hands behind my back and stuff. I guess it's called restraining me or whatever. But, I always thought that they couldn't restrain you unless you were like fighting with somebody else or you, you know, started fighting with them or something. You know what I'm saying? So that's why I started, you know, like kind of resisting to put my hands behind my back. Anyway, so when she done that, or whatever, you know I was kind of resisting, you know, to put my hands behind my back or whatever, and then, next thing you know, uh, like, about three different women staff just came over and they all were on me and I was like

pushing them off me and stuff and moving their hands off me and stuff. And then at one time, the supervisor, she tried to take my, she tried to push me up against the wall, and I guess hold me there. But, you know what I'm saying, it's kind of hard and like in between that, I don't know, how it was a mistake, but she claims that it was a mistake, I don't believe it was, but she took the back of my head and she just slammed it into the wall, and I had like hit my head on the corner of the door and got this big old knot or whatever. And then after that, I just turned around and I popped her dead in her mouth, I hit her with my fist as hard as I could in her mouth and she just, everything just stopped, and she just fell to the ground and started crying. ...Well then, uh, she gets up off the ground and comes back over there and tries to restrain me again. You know, like she didn't get enough or whatever. And I was like, you better get off me or I'll pop you in the mouth again. You know what I'm saying, whatever whatever. And, she didn't, she just, you know, just kept trying to put her hands on me or whatever. And the next thing you know, this male staff, he come over and he goes, slams me on the ground, so I got restrained and I got like this big carpet burn on my face, so whatever. ...That's basically what, what happened."

Other stories of protection include accounts of fighting to protect a relationship with a boyfriend, fighting back when physically attacked, and fighting to prevent humiliation. It is clear when reading the participants' stories that they simply react to the attacks of the violent other in an effort to protect themselves. They do not choose to fight. They feel they have no choice. The experiential themes that emerge in the episode of being violent are described in the next section.

Experiential Themes

In the episode of being violent, the participants describe "Who I become." The "Who I become" is the same as "Who I am" with some minor deviations. The existential ground of *self in relation to others* continues to exist for the violent girl. When an attack is perceived there is only one *other* represented—*a violent other*—the

nonviolent other has no place in the moment of violence. All that occurs, occurs against the ground of *self in relation to a violent other.* In the violent life-world, the participant experiences herself as *scared/alone, weak,* and wanting to be *good,* but knowing that "If I am good, I will be destroyed (by the violent other), so I am going to be *bad.*" Stated from the perspective of a participant—"Being bad is not who I really am, I disconnect (or black out) in order to cope with who I have become."

The "Who I become" is someone who *blacks out, explodes,* and *grows bigger and stronger.* In this experience, the participants spoke of themselves in a remarkably physical manner. They describe several disconnections that take place in the moment of being violent. Disconnection may be the common thread running through the lives of all the participants. Disconnection is related to the destructive aggression exhibited by girls participating in this study.

> *"Destructive aggression arises out of the psychological pain of disconnection from others. Such aggression seeks to alter painful feelings and bridge separateness by affecting those from whom a person feels disconnected. Hurting those who are perceived to have caused the painful feelings is also an attempt to gain some sense of control when one feels powerless. In women's accounts, their harmful aggression derives from loss, the threat of separation, shame, obstacles to fulfillment of goals, or other dangers to their self-concepts" (Jack, 1999, p.156).*

The disconnection between the good girl and the bad girl illustrates the difficulty these girls have in accepting who they become. Returning to the early years of childhood, several of the participants reported feelings of family disconnection.

> *"But they'll say 'Oh Rena, she's nothing but the devil.' And that has hurt me so bad (crying). I mean, it's actually made me hate myself.*

My family has actually feed a bunch of stuff into me, to actually make me hate myself. It was awful, you know."

"The woman I loved and thought she apparently cared about me could care less (long pause, soft crying)."

"And I just started getting more depressed and everything because I mean, I've never had a chance to get close to my mom and she never listens to anything I have to say. And every time I try to talk to her about something or tell her what's going on in my life she just yells at me about something or starts bitching at me or something, and then she's always like you only hibernate in your room and come out when you need something or want something, duh, duh, duh, duh. And it's just like what's the point of even trying to talk to her or get close to her."

Then later, during the school years, the girls describe peer disconnections.

"I'd go to school so hurt, I mean. It would hurt me, I mean, and people would say at school "Oh Rena's this and Rena's that wuwuwuwu. I was like the outcast. I felt like, I feel like I'm a outcast."

"I don't have much friends because of that, and I don't like friends either. I don't, I mean it's sad, but I don't. I have never had a friend in my life. Besides my Momma, or like family members, but not nobody that's not my blood has really ever been my friend. And when I'm at home, I don't even hang with females or anything. I hate females. I hate all females."

"I mean, there's people I talk to that I need, or whatever, but there's no special person like I can could say I almost love. You know what I'm saying? And I think that someone would have to care about a person and love a person in order to be their friend. And half of my associates, I don't care about. You know what I'm saying?"

There is also a disconnection between body and mind. This could be described as an integration of all the experiential themes. When these themes are taken in totality—*I black out, I explode,* and *I grow bigger/stronger*—the body becomes the figural unit. Each of these themes describes a bodily reaction to the threat of being

attacked and subsequently of being violent. In the moment of being violent, there is no conscious thought or awareness. There is only "jumping," "crushing," "hitting," "beating," "kicking," "scratching," and "popping."

In describing the experience of being violent, the participants agree that after they recognize or perceive an attack, they *black out*. Participants described blacking out as a suspension of awareness. The suspension can be complete or sporadic. One participant reported that she "blinks in" and out of conscious awareness. She sees nothing but blackness and then "blinks in" and can see what is happening. Participants have also described this sensation as "blocking out." Sara said that she has "blocked out most of the things that happened to (her)." Other phrases used to signify *black out* include "everything just stops," "I couldn't feel nothing," "the lights start flickering," and "I lose everything. I had stuff blocking my mind." Portia spent most of her interview time telling me about the black outs she experiences when she fights:

"I black out"

I: *What was it like when you blacked out?*

P: *I was just blacking out. I could see but I, it would be all black for a minute. Then I could blink my eyes and then I could probably see for a minute, but I'd still be fighting. I couldn't stop fighting. Then I black out, I couldn't see for a minute again. I still feel myself fighting and jumping on top of this girl. My whole body was jumping on top of this girl and crushing her skull and head and stuff and then I blinked in one time and I seen she was on the floor in the corner bleeding and shaking. Then that's when I stopped myself. I could stop myself and backed up off of her.*

Blacking out corresponds to the contextual theme of *good/bad.* In the moment of violence, the participant becomes someone who can be *bad.* Being bad is antithetical to whom she perceives herself to be—*"I am a good girl."* By *blacking out* in the moment that she is being *bad,* she can preserve her *good* identity or sense of self. This is another way to self-protect or preserve what is valued. There is a loss of control in a physical altercation; a sense of losing one's self, and a loss of awareness. Blacking out may be a means of coping with loss—an experience with which these girls are all too familiar.

In addition to *blacking out,* the participants *"explode like a ball of fire."* Participants described exploding as losing control and having no power to contain built up anger. Sherita told of a time in 6th grade when a bully tried to push her down and was warned to "please quit pushing me." When the bully refused to stop pushing, Sherita grabbed her by the hair and "started beating her up." Sherita describes how she felt:

> *"I explode"*
>
> *"Most of the time I just stop, I just stop and then walk away. But sometimes my temper just, you know, it just gets where I cannot control myself. And sometimes when it's something like that I just walk away from most of it. But sometimes I just can't. I can't walk away sometimes."*

Selena's experience is a similar one to Sherita's, except Selena talked of a slow buildup before the explosion. She gave this description of what it is like to explode:

> *"I don't start nothing with nobody, but if somebody starts something with me then I just be sitting there, and I be thinking, and I just be thinking, then all of a sudden I start getting heated and all sorts of*

things be crossing my mind then the next thing you know I might be walking up towards a girl and just "Boom" knock her out."

Krista told of feeling like a "big ball of fire" when she released her anger instead of choosing to hide her feelings.

"Cause I mean if I'm hiding my feelings, I'm not getting them out of me, right? And if they're in me, then they're just not, they're just progressing, or like you know, what'd they say, revolvement or so like a big ball of fire or whatever. And it's like, if you are very angry and you don't have nothing but anger inside of you and it just keeps building up, then what do you think's going to come out to the other person? Nothing but anger, right? And that's how it is."

The theme of *explosion* is related to the contextual theme of *scared/alone*. The act of exploding prevents me (participants) from feeling *scared and alone*—at least for the moment that I am in the episode of being violent. The act of exploding only happens in the presence of the violent other (I am no longer alone). When participants explode others perceive them as being anything but scared. In the explosive moment of the violence, they are fearless.

The explosion is precipitated by suppression of anger or feelings. Several of the participants talked about hiding their feelings to avoid confrontation or of allowing anger to build up over a long period of time. Campbell (as cited in Jack, 1999) characterizes anger suppression in this way: "The most remarkable thing about the socialization of aggression in girls is its absence. Girls do not learn the right way to express aggression; they simply learn not to express it" (p. 62). Especially for the girls who grow up in volatile homes, it is important to avoid disrupting the peace. The culture of violence supports the family message that anger is dangerous and better

repressed. In this culture, there are no models for positive ways to bring anger into a relationship in order to resolve disagreements or restore closeness (Jack, 1999).

Another reason girls may suppress their aggression or feelings of anger was described by Jack (1999) as a desire to be different from past abusers. This was especially true for Jana in this study.

> *"And I got really, really upset. And we kept on and kept on at each other. My mom is, well, I'd called her a bitch. And my mom backhanded me. She slapped me. I grabbed her by her shirt and I raised my hand at her. And she looked at me and said "Are you going to be like your father now?" I just let go and walked away. That's when I first realized that I was getting to be like him. You know it just, it scared, it scared the hell out of me. I didn't know, you know, I was like God amighty, I'm going to grow up to be like him."*

The final experiential theme is that of *"I grow bigger and stronger"* when I feel attacked. The corresponding contextual theme is *"I am weak."* In growing *bigger and stronger*, the vulnerable girl does not feel *weak* any longer. In the episode of being violent, the participants were able to describe feelings of being larger than they really are. Rena tells of fighting bigger boys and of "usually winning, in all honesty." Krista describes the strength that she finds in praying—"Lord, please don't let no bullet come through my window." Portia recounts taking on three women staff and of being subdued only when the male staff intervenes. Sara, a very petite young woman, said:

> *"I grow bigger/stronger"*
>
> *"I didn't know I could be so mean, I don't know. It was just like whoa. I feel like **big**, like whew!"*

Sherita's description includes references to both size and strength.

"I still feel myself fighting and jumping on top of this girl. My whole body was jumping on top of this girl and crushing her skull and head and stuff...I was jumping on her with my whole body. I used to be big. I used to weigh 220-225. I was young. I was about 14, 13. She was pretty big, too. She was pretty good size."

Being bigger and stronger allows the participants to fuel an anger of despair, a distinction made by Bowlby (as cited in Jack, 1999), that often arises from "a feeling of being powerless or when hostility over separation has replaced the bonds of attachment" (p.159). The aggression of despair serves to make a connection that is not possible in the context of a positive relationship. The study participants use their size and strength to make badly needed connections. Unfortunately, these are destructive connections and, to the participants, destructive connections are better than no connection at all.

The experiential themes discussed make up the structural framework of the meaning of being violent for the Southern Appalachian, adolescent females participating in this study. Figure 6 depicts this meaning structure diagrammatically. This diagram represents one possible configuration of the meaning of this experience.

The violent girl experiences herself against the ground of others. The ground of others is divided into those who are violent in this world and those who are nonviolent in this world. Regardless of the others present, the violent girl experiences herself as having these characteristics:

"I am a good girl, who can be bad."

"I am scared and alone."

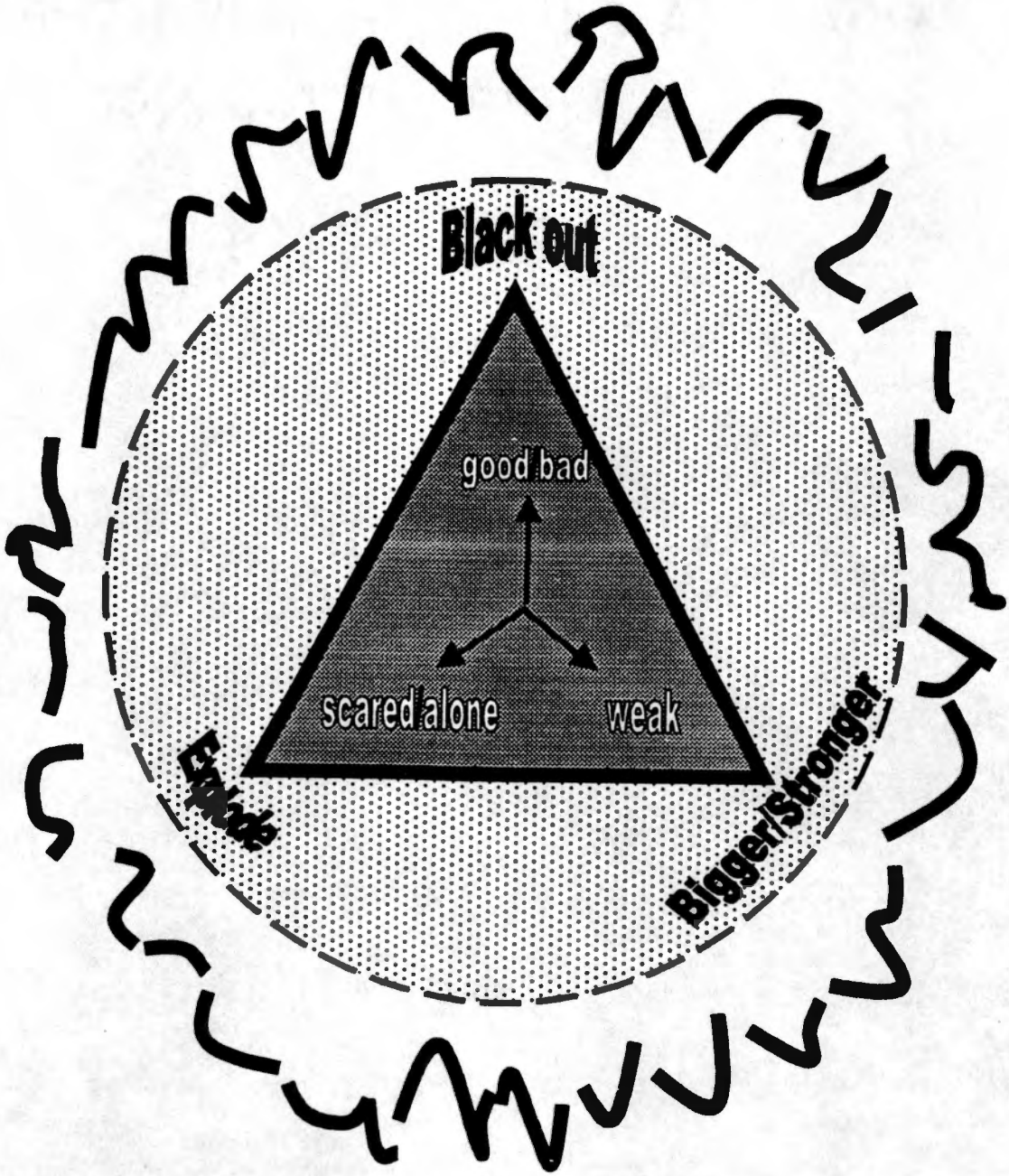


Figure 6. Thematic structure of the meaning of being violent.

"I am weak."

The episode of anger emerges against a ground of "Who I am" which is configured against the violent and nonviolent others in her world. In either case, the participant experiences herself as *scared and alone* and *weak.* In the presence of the violent other, she experiences herself as *bad* rather than *good.* In the presence of the violent other, she perceives herself as *bad, scared and alone,* and *weak.* As a result of feeling *bad, scared and alone,* and *weak* she believes she is vulnerable and feels attacked.

In the episode of violence, the ground remains unchanged—"Who I am in relation to violent or nonviolent others." For the participant, the violent other is perceived as a threat and the nonviolent other no longer exists in this situation. The girl who is violent becomes violent *if and only if* a threat of being attacked by a violent other exists. Others in the world who are perceived as nonviolent do not pose a threat and disappear from the conscious awareness of the participant in the moment of the violent episode. The violent girl experiences herself as *bad, scared and alone,* and *weak (vulnerable).* She responds by *blacking out, exploding,* and *growing bigger and stronger.* In the moment of being violent, she *blacks out.* Possibly initiated by the refusal to accept being *bad.* She *explodes like a ball of fire.* In the explosion, there is no fear and loneliness *(scared and alone).* Finally, she *grows bigger and stronger* and is no longer experiences herself as *weak.* This reaction is justified because the violent girl feels vulnerable and under attack.

This is the thematic structure for the meaning of being violent for the ten, Southern Appalachian, adolescent females participating in this study. The meaning of this experience appears as an episode emerging against a ground, supported by contextual themes, and the corresponding experiential themes. Exploring girls' lived experiences of violence sheds light on a rarely studied phenomenon. By asking girls to describe this experience, a description of what it is like for them in the moment of being violent has been obtained. The subjective description from the perspective of the experiencer has yielded some valuable information. These findings will be discussed and implications explored in the final chapter, Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to obtain a description of Southern Appalachian, adolescent females' experience of being violent in terms of the experiences that stood out for them. Ten girls, 12-18 years of age, described their experiences of this event in an in-depth, open-ended, unstructured interview. Interviews were transcribed and these transcriptions served as the primary source of data. Analysis revealed the following contextual themes that exist against a ground of *self in relation to others:*

"I am a good girl, who can be bad."

"I am scared and alone."

"I am weak."

The following experiential themes were revealed in addition to the contextual themes:

"When I am violent, I black out."

"When I am violent, I grow bigger/stronger."

"When I am violent, I explode like a ball of fire."

Taken in totality, the contextual and experiential themes comprise the meaning units of the phenomenon under study. The discussion of results produced by this study will proceed as follows: First, the findings will be reviewed in terms of their

relationships to previous research. Second, events that stood out to me over the course of this project are discussed and the procedure used for this study is evaluated with attention to its strengths and limitations. Finally, practical applications of the current findings as they relate to education and juvenile justice and suggestions for further research will be discussed.

Literature Revisited

It is most satisfying to me, as this study comes to a close, to realize the integral role played by the sociological theorists discussed in Chapter 2—Cooley, Mead, Thomas, Blumer, Lemert, Goffman, Becker, Parsons, Durkheim, and Merton. Many of the points raised in the discussion of symbolic interactionism, labeling, and functionalism are reified by the participants' descriptions of their experiences. The importance of the sociological concepts represented by the theories cannot be overstated. In the life-world of the violent girl, reality is socially constructed by the "good" *self* and a threatening *other*.

Symbolic interactionism. Participants frequently described the roles they played based on their perceptions of others' expectations. In many interviews, the participants tell about times when injustice is perceived and they respond or react to this injustice with physical violence. In the culture of violence where they dwell, this response is expected. They act *bad* when they are attacked because their social group expects that. The symbolic interaction that occurs in a violent altercation involves interpretation of the actions or remarks of the *other* and "definition, or conveying indications to another person as to how he is to act" (Blumer, 1966, pp. 537-538).

Cooley defines the public self (the *bad* self responding to a perceived attack) as the self reflected back to us by those individuals with whom we interact, or as the 'looking glass self.'

Blumer's three premises of symbolic interaction were also supported by the participants' experiential descriptions.

1. *Humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them.*

Violent girls respond to perceived attacks based on the meaning that *attack* has for them. They detail the importance of self-protection in situations where they feel vulnerable, or attacked. It is essential for them to protect themselves, their family/friends, or their belongings in threatening situations. The response to such attacks is based on the meaning they attach to the experience of being attacked.

2. *Meanings derive out of social interaction.*

The meaning of the experience of being violent only becomes figural in the context of a social interaction. Without the *violent other,* there is no threat, no response, no interaction, and no meaning constructed. The act of violence does not occur in the absence of social interaction (or others).

3. *These meanings are handled in an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things that are encountered.*

From the perspective of the violent girl, a meaning is interpreted—*"I feel attacked."* A threat is perceived, or interpreted, within the context of a social interaction with a violent other. The meaning constructed results from the

interpretative process used by participants in their attempts to deal with the threats they encounter.

Labeling theory. Many of the labeling concepts directly apply to the violent girl's description of her life-world. The participants report labeling others as threatening or not threatening and behaving accordingly. If an *other* is defined or labeled as a threat (a violent other), then participants feel forced to respond with violence as a means of self-protection.

The participants also report the traumas of stigmatization, as described by Goffman (1963). They have been stigmatized, or labeled, as *bad* girls by agents and agencies of social control. Other labels include delinquent, violent female offender, oppositional/defiant disordered individual, and criminal. The meaning of those labels is based on the perspective of the social order constructing the label. The conforming members of society—those who hold power, prestige or privilege and represent moral society—determine which nonconforming members of society will receive labels. To the mainstream culture, the participants' behaviors and reactions to perceived threat are indeed deviant; however, in the life-world of the violent girl the reaction to threat is the norm—not deviant at all. The labels they receive influence their construction of identity as well as their perceptions of others. For many of these girls, deviance becomes a salient component of their personal identity and results in role engulfment (1959, 1974).

An interesting side note to labeling theory is Kelly's (1955) Personal Construct Theory and the assertion that people construct their world by labeling and defining

themselves. To what extent have the study participants labeled themselves? They talk about the good girl and the bad girl identities they hold, but can we be certain that these are labels applied by others? The possibility that the girls label themselves and simply portray the self-labeling construct is an intriguing idea worthy of further study.

Functionalism. Merton's premise regarding social disequilibrium as a result of frustration or strain seems especially appropriate in the context represented by the participants' life-world. Merton's theory of anomie presents a social structure that "exerts definite pressure upon certain persons in the society to engage in nonconformist rather than conformist conduct" (Merton, 1938, p.672). As long as equilibrium exists between the two phases of social structure—culturally defined goals and acceptable modes of achieving these goals—strain is not experienced by individuals. Merton describes the theory of anomie and opportunity structures as a complimentary theory to Sutherland's theory of differential association—individuals learn deviant behavior by associating with deviants (Merton, 1997). Anomie theory does not address the social mechanisms for transmitting patterns of behavior as does Sutherland's theory. Merton's theory of anomie holds that "rates of various types of deviant behavior are high in a society where the culture places a high premium on economic success and upward mobility for all its members, although large numbers of people located in the lower reaches of the social structure have severely limited access to legitimate resources for achieving those culturally induced or reinforced goals" (Merton, 1997, p.519). Merton's description of society is illustrated by the proliferation of the "American Dream" mindset. Violent girls exist in a culture of

violence that is seeped in dysfunctional social interactions. Culturally defined goals are presented to violent girls, but the legitimate means for achieving such goals do not exist. In schools too large, girls without legitimate means are taunted by the intensity of the societal goals—designer clothing, the 'right' haircut, manicured nails, expensive cars. Even behavior has been culturally defined with socially accepted responses to conflict being dictated by the norm. The girls participating in this study lack appropriate models of behavior and become nonconformists through no fault of their own. For some of the girls, this experience was identified and resulted in feelings of pain and embarrassment.

Jana, Sara, Krista, and Rena dreamed of idyllic, middle-class lifestyles, with lots of friends, a happy family, a safe neighborhood, and opportunities to participate in the band or the cheerleading squad. Jana said:

> *"You know, I used to dream everything I wanted. Still sometimes today (I dream). I just wanted a momma and a daddy. You know I didn't want nothing else. And sometimes, you know, I would think well maybe he could be this way (crying softly). You know, I think maybe he could be this way. It never would happen."*

Sara had similar feelings.

> *"I just sit there and I think about stuff. Like things that have happened to me and I just wonder about things and wish that my life was different. See nobody in the house, nobody has been through anything I've been through, so they don't understand."*

The inconsistencies between societal conditions and opportunities for growth are evident. In a dysfunctional family, "momma and daddy" may not be capable of providing the stable, nurturing home life so desired by the participants in this study.

Many of the societal goals—nice home, wealth, fancy cars and clothing, community involvement—are not within the realm of possibilities. The frustration experienced by the participants creates strain and forces them to respond with various forms of deviance. The study participants represent Merton's levels of Innovation or Rebellion.

The Innovators cling to and accept societal goals, but have no means of obtaining them. The Rebellion stage signifies a rejection of society's entire format and an active desire to replace it. Some of the participants rejected society's goal statements and substituted a series of new goals and standards related to the context from which they exist, the culture of violence. (Refer to Table 2, p. 42.)

The sociological theories of deviance provide important doctrines supporting the conclusions of this study. This confirmation was expected, but not to the extent discovered. Moving from the sociological theories of deviance to the classical and contemporary theories of female delinquency, several important theorists will be revisited.

Classical theorists. While Lombroso (1895) and Pollack (1950) bring important perspectives to this topic, it is the work of W. I. Thomas that I wish to focus on in this section. Thomas (1928) recognized the importance of social factors in the development of deviant behavior. In *The Unadjusted Girl (1928)*, Thomas called attention to aspects of female delinquency that had not been discussed before. This work pointed out "two major themes: 1. Through early intervention girls could be saved, particularly from their sexuality and 2. During

that time, nearly all female delinquency was an expression of sexual problems" (Chesney-Lind & Sheldon, 1998, p.76).

Thomas further states that the definition of young women as sexual property is culturally determined:

> "The role which a girl is expected to play in life is indicated to her by her family in a series of aesthetic-moral definitions of the situation. Civilized societies have endowed the young girl with a character of social sacredness. She is the subject of far-going idealization. 'Virginity' and 'purity' have an almost magical value" (Thomas, 1928, p.98).

Thomas also contributes four motivators, or wishes, of behavior that seem to apply to the situation described by study participants. The four human wishes are the desire for security, the desire for response, the desire for recognition, and the desire for new experiences. Each of the participants yearns for security (in the home, at school, in relationships), response (meaningful connections with peers and loved ones), recognition ("Recognize that I am good—so I don't have to be bad."), and new experiences ("WHY DOES HE DO IT? Why does he do it? Why does he have to get violent with me anyway? [crying]")

Like Merton's theory of anomie, deviance occurs when the societal norm is ignored. Society regulates the manner in which the desires, or wishes, can be met. Without acceptable models of behavior, the girls participating in this study are at a distinct and sizable disadvantage for wish-attainment. Not only are they precluded from knowing how to appropriately and acceptably behave in working toward these desires, but they are also locked into a culture of violence and dysfunction that ensures they will never have access to the desires they so badly wish to obtain.

desires, but they are also locked into a culture of violence and dysfunction that ensures they will never have access to the desires they so badly wish to obtain.

Contemporary theorists. The contemporary theorists discussed were Konopka, Adler (1975), and Chesney-Lind (1993, 1997). Each contributes to the discussion of the phenomenon under study.

Konopka argued the importance of dealing with delinquent girls on a psychological level. Evident in this study is the need to address adolescent, female depression. Of the ten participants, five discuss being treated for depression or manic-depression. Depression compounds the problems of disconnection experienced and vocalized by the participants. Several talked of feelings of despair and hopelessness regarding their situations and of the relation between these feelings and their violent behavior. They shared stories about times when they could have avoided physical altercations but felt they had nothing to lose by fighting and nothing to gain by walking away. The same sentiment was echoed when they talked about their families. Tina had been on the run for five months just prior to the time that our interview took place. She told me that a 12-month, determinate sentence for assault was no worse than being sent home. Essentially, she felt that she could only be free if she were running from authority (juvenile justice officers and parents). Konopka (1966) would argue that Tina's delinquency can be directly traced to a specific emotional response—her loneliness—and that therapy geared toward her needs as a future wife and mother would help her adjust (views consistent with Southern Appalachian attitudes). Konopka lends valuable insights to the problem regarding the importance of the

psychological health of violent girls, but ignores the societal impact so stressed by Thomas.

Adler (1975) traces delinquency to the illegitimate means of reaching social goals that are open to girls of today. Boundless opportunities are available in our contemporary society, but for the Southern Appalachian, adolescent female these opportunities are many times out of reach. We encourage girls to pursue educational opportunities, follow their career dreams, and to become self-reliant. In the culture of Southern Appalachia, these dreams are just that—dreams. Families in Appalachia value familial roles more than occupational roles, especially in relation to their daughters. Girls in Appalachia are not encouraged to pursue careers or opportunities that may remove them from the home region. For girls who do pursue outside opportunities, it may be difficult to find a means of transportation that will enable them to leave the mountainous home region.

Perhaps the most important work being done today in the area of female delinquency is by Meda Chesney-Lind (1993, 1997). Chesney-Lind has trumpeted the unique needs of the female offender and argues for gender specific programming in our schools and systems of juvenile justice. She urges us to focus on how gender shapes the lives of young people and to make an effort to understand the lives of the young women who are violent.

What are the needs of the violent female? From the results of this study, we are better able to understand those needs. The study participants described what it is like when they are violent. From this study, we know that these girls only behave

violently when they perceive an attack. What can we do to combat this pervasive feeling of vulnerability they describe? This seems to be an issue that can be addressed through several venues. The girls also describe the pain of suppressing feelings of anger and frustration to the point of an unavoidable explosion. From an early age, society stresses to girls the need to avoid conflict and confrontation. We contend that it is not ladylike to express anger or frustration. Can we not teach and model appropriate behaviors for expressing our feelings—even feelings of anger? Girls and boys need to see parents and other significant adults involved in resolving conflict through nonviolent means. Also revealed in this study is the difficulty girls have in accepting themselves as individuals who can be both good and bad. Adolescent females struggle with identity development. They seem to be telling us that identity is important. Having a negative identity as someone who can be bad is better than having no identity at all.

Identified as a subtheme of this research was the importance of connection for the participants. Chesney-Lind describes the invisibility of the adolescent, female offender. The girls in this study tell us that they are invisible because they are not connected—to themselves, to their families, to their peers, or to their communities. As a societal group who cares about at-risk youth, we must provide opportunities for connection. These needs and others will be discussed more fully in the section titled "Implications and Further Research."

Gender and ethnicity. Gender and ethnicity impact the life-world of the violent girl in significant ways. The combination of being both female and

Appalachian places the participants in a population of doubly marginalized individuals. Identity is constructed for each participant through a series of social processes that occur within the culture of Appalachia and against a ground of gender.

The female Appalachian holds certain values and beliefs that have traditionally been upheld by previous generations. In this study, all participants reported living in the Appalachian area for an extended period of time (at least ten years). Throughout the interviews, many of the Appalachian cultural values were discussed—mistrust of authority, faith, sense of place, and stability. One value appeared over and over again and was attributed a high standing by all of the participants. The importance of "family and kin" (refer to Table 1, p. 27) was evident across all interviews. Even when the girls described their families in unflattering ways, they continually expressed the importance of the family unit. None of the participants described intact, nuclear families where life was mostly happy and uneventful. All girls told of some level of dysfunction in both families of origin and in the extended family. Most of the girls described high levels of dysfunction that included frequent incidents of domestic violence involving mother and father/stepfather/boyfriend, repeated abuse (mental, physical, and sexual), volatile relationships, and exposure to violence in the community.

Inhabitants of Appalachia face barriers of poverty, limited opportunities, low self-esteem, mistrust of outsiders, intense pride, and social isolation. Violence has been an accepted means of resolving conflict in a culture where there is continual conflict in one form or another. Young girls growing up in this culture begin to feel

despair when they realize they are expected to serve men, remain socially isolated, and suppress any desire for educational or occupational advancement.

The greatest impact made by gender in the needs of the violent girl is that females bear children. While that fact may seem unrelated to the needs of violent girls, it can never be overlooked. As long as females are made to feel submissive and powerless in situations with males, the risk of pregnancy is real. The resulting implications for gender specific programming lies in the fact that as long as programs are geared toward the needs of non-childbearing males, the needs of the female are ignored.

Girls are more likely than boys to be the victims of child sexual abuse (Finkelhor & Baron, 1986). There is a link between this problem and girls' delinquency, particularly as runaways. As reported by several of the participants, the abuse suffered by them was persistent, frequent, and at the hands of multiple abusers. It should be no surprise that after years of abuse they sometimes run away in an attempt to escape the abuse. With this situation, the risk of pregnancy is real. For the girls who are detained as runaways and other girls, gynecological and obstetrical health needs must be addressed.

What Stands Out?

The task of the phenomenologist is to describe an experience or a phenomenon. As this study moved toward completion, I contemplated a question similar to the one posed to participants. "What stands out to me as I reflect on this study and the work completed?" There are five topics identified as "standing out."

Throughout the study these topics present themselves as needs or areas of importance. They are:

1. The need for connection
2. The importance of "family and kin"
3. The acceptance of violence as "normal"
4. The cycle of abuse/runaway/detention
5. The implications of "voice"

The need for connection refers to each participant's obvious and desperate need to connect with others. The participants live in a violent lifeworld where connections are often skewed, dysfunctional, or fractured. Being connected to family and friends is important. Participants speak often of wanting to be loved by abusive parents. They yearn for supportive friendships and nurturing relationships with adults. Dwelling in a culture of violence teaches them that even the most revered connection/relationship—that of parent and child—is sometimes hurtful, manipulative, and wrought with shame. As they reflect on needing to connect, participants describe their failed attempts at establishing appropriate peer relations, repeated school failures and resulting teacher disappointments, and finally on the pervasive abuse suffered in their homes and communities.

The outcome of this failure to develop positive connections is one of negative connection. Participants feel forced to connect in whatever manner is available to them. In the episode of violence, a connection is made. The connection made is not

the type of connection sought by most, but it is the only connection she feels she is able to make.

The importance of "family and kin" illustrates participants' connection to their Appalachian heritage. "Family and kin" were identified previously as one of the cultural values of the Appalachians. All participants described themselves in the context of the family. Sometimes that family included immediate family members living in the home, extended family consisting of aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents, or the family of origin if participants lived outside the home.

Each participant shared stories depicting the importance of family and their desire for safe, stable, happy lives. Several participants wished that the family of origin could be healthy again so they could return to the home. Each of those participants identified the problems of barriers preventing them from returning home and voiced their confusion regarding family members' unwillingness to change--for the sake of a normal family.

The family problems relate directly to the acceptance of violence as "normal." Participants were able to recognize violent behavior in the home as being abnormal. They may have been exposed to domestic violence (on some level) on a regular basis, but still they knew or sensed that some families did not live that way. Even though there was a sense that violence is not normal, the conditioning of behavior was set. One participant, Rena, spoke of "wanting to be different." She identified behaviors acted out by her father as behaviors she did not want to emulate. Ultimately, when faced with provocation she could not refrain from reacting with the same violence she

so reviled in him. Rena said, "I couldn't handle it. I just, you know, I started hitting her and hitting her and hitting her...but afterwards, I just, you know it just kept running through my head like 'you're going to be just like him, you're going to be just like him.' You know, if anything or anybody or anyone, I don't want to be like my father. Cause I know the pain and the hurt and the way he made me feel."

The girls who live these lives everyday and see their parents and other important adults behaving violently begin to accept the unacceptable. They begin to believe that violence is not only the normal reaction to name calling (or other perceived injustices) but it is expected.

Many participants had been detained in a juvenile detention facility at least once for delinquency charges—unruly, truant, runaway. The girls spoke of their frustrations with helping professionals. The cycle of abuse/runaway/detention is never ending. In our present juvenile justice system, girls are arrested for running away from abusive environments. Typically, they run away from the abuser who files the delinquent petition against them. If and when they are caught, they are placed in detention for a period of time and then returned to the abuser. This cycle begins again. The girls interviewed for this study asked me "why does he get away with this?" "Why can't he change?" The more appropriate question might be "Why do we (society) allow this cycle to continue?"

The final, figural topic identified is that of "voice." Perhaps the greatest strength of this study is that participants are given a "voice." Only by giving participants the opportunity to respond to questions of concern can we begin to

adequately meet their needs. By asking these girls to describe their experiences of being violent, a description is obtained. That description—from the participants' perspective—can only be obtained when we allow them to speak. One of the added benefits of seeking description is that the describer feels valued, empowered, and involved. For this study, one of the goals was to identify the needs of violent, adolescent females. Giving voice to participants is one way to ensure participant involvement and engagement. In working with the very population we wish to serve, potential for success seems more likely.

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths. There are several strengths of this study that should be recognized. The most gratifying strength is the "goodness of fit" represented in the choice of methodology and the theoretical foundations discussed. At the conclusion of this study, I realize the importance of matching researcher's method of inquiry to the theoretical foundations established. Qualitative research arises from an interpretivist paradigm that focuses on a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and everchanging. Qualitative researchers deal with multiple, socially constructed realities. The task of the qualitative researcher is to understand and interpret how participants in a social setting construct the world around them. I would argue that in this study that task has been accomplished. Access was gained to the multiple perspectives of the participants and an understanding of their experience was achieved and articulated.

Also recognized are several parallels between phenomenology and symbolic interactionism. In phenomenology, Husserl instructs us to study things as they appear. In symbolic interactionism, reality is what we perceive it to be. In phenomenology, consciousness is the world of everyday experience as expressed in everyday language. In symbolic interactionism, language is the symbol or gesture used to express experience. In phenomenology, *Lebenswelt* is a co-created life-world. In symbolic interactionism, reality is socially created.

The life-world, or the reality, of the violent girl is the indispensable ground or starting point for all knowledge. "Knowledge," Berger and Luckmann (1966) contend, is a socially constructed phenomenon. They further posit that everything that passes as "knowledge" is thoroughly and fundamentally a product of social interchange. The multiple realities, as discussed by Berger and Luckmann, have been experienced by the participants of this study and reinforce the doctrines of phenomenology and symbolic interactionism.

A third and final strength of this study is that it allowed girls to describe their experiences in their own words. Girls were given the opportunity to vocalize stories they chose to share. They were not enticed or persuaded to discuss any topic not comfortable to them. This interview experience gave them the power to guide, to choose, to share, and to conceal. In addition to controlling the direction of the interview, they were listened to—intensely, attentively, and completely.

Limitations. One possible limitation to the study is that follow up interviews were not possible. Due to the mobility of the participants, it was impossible to locate

them, following transcription and analysis, to check for accuracy of the transcript and for accuracy of the interpretive analysis. Ideally, a follow up meeting would take place allowing the participant to read through the transcription, offering clarification and filling in omissions when faulty recording prevented accuracy. This is also a time to present the analysis of the interview and solicit feedback regarding the accuracy of the interpretive description of the experience.

Based on the information shared by participants regarding childhood abuse, certain questions arise. All of the Caucasian participants detail prolonged, persistent episodes of childhood abuse and incidents of domestic violence. None of the African American participants vocalized this experience, but did allude to possible abuse ("Do you think he should be allowed to lay his hands on us?"). This concern regarding barriers in open rapport between a Caucasian researcher and African American participants was discussed during an interpretive research group meeting. African American colleagues questioned the likelihood that a Caucasian researcher could indeed obtain accurate, detailed descriptions of the experience. It is possible that rapport and trust were not established with the African American participants. Other possible explanations for the discrepancy in disclosure might include the acceptance of certain parental behaviors in that culture and the propensity to avoid discussions of that behavior with an outsider. I have no way of knowing if the descriptions were incomplete, but I rely on my methodological guides that tell me participants will disclose those experiences that are figural to them in the context of the interview setting. I do feel confident that those figural events were described.

Implications

In Chapter 1, the importance of this study is located in the arenas of education and juvenile justice. Educators, juvenile justice officials, community members, and parents will be given the opportunity to understand and to respond to this experience through the dissemination of this research. Ten Southern Appalachian, adolescent females have described what it is like when they are violent. They describe existing in a world populated by violent and nonviolent others. They characterize themselves as generally being good, weak, and scared/alone. They tell us that when they feel attacked, or vulnerable, they become bad. Being bad means they black out, explode, and grow bigger/stronger. How can communities respond to what these girls have shared? In asking them to trust, to open up and tell about their experiences, to risk betrayal yet again by figures in authority, we ask a lot. It is now the responsibility of communities to respond.

Youth violence is a multidimensional problem requiring a multidimensional solution. Historically, programs targeting violent youth focus on the needs of violent, male youth. To address the trauma and stress associated with living in a culture of violence, both school based and community based programs are needed. The human service model provides the context for which the needs of violent girl must be addressed. Programs must address the needs of the violent and violence-exposed adolescent female. These programs should offer a variety of services: recreation, pregnancy prevention, alcohol and drug abuse education and prevention, gang prevention, tutoring, vocational services, mental health services, nutrition education,

and stress reduction. A model of human service delivery should include: a generic focus, an integrated service system, a problem solving approach, treating the whole person, and be accountable to the consumer (Woodside & McClam, 1998).

Juvenile justice system. In juvenile justice systems, several areas must be addressed. Roush (1996) identifies three levels at issue in designing gender specific juvenile justice programs. First, the number of girls entering the system is greater today than ever before. Second, the number of female staff in all areas of juvenile institutions is increasing. And third, there are trends moving toward feminizing the juvenile justice environment. Roush contends that juvenile justice systems do have gender specific services; they are gender specific to males. He urges officials to examine the gender biases against girls, which are automatically built into a system that is designed for boys but houses girls.

In order to serve girls and meet their unique needs, there must be an understanding of the dynamics of gender bias in the system and in society. Issues to be examined include clothing, girls' reactions to being searched, menstruation, male/female interactions, physical restraint, sexual harassment, and the dynamic of power.

Goldstein (1990) suggested that juvenile justice researchers combine a valuable source of ordinary knowledge—juvenile offenders' first-person accounts of their experiences—with theory and research. Goldstein's assumption was that the more you know about juvenile offenders and why they commit crimes, the better you will be able to work with them.

From what was learned in this study, juvenile justice systems could better meet the needs of girls by recognizing and listening to the stories of juvenile offenders, develop educational programs that focus on communication and interpersonal skills, include a strong counseling component, involve families of the juvenile and work to strengthen the family unit, and target the developmental needs of the adolescent.

Schools. In Southern Appalachia, many at-risk females live in rural, isolated areas. Access to services is not easily available. Long travel times and difficulty obtaining transportation are some of the barriers these young women may face. A collaborative partnership between human service organizations and public school systems is a concept gaining lots of attention, as a means of meeting needs in nontraditional communities.

The school-community partnership has resulted in the formation of family resource centers, full-service schools, and community schools (Dryfoos, 1998). For the purpose of this discussion, the partnership will be called a full-service school. The premise of the full-service school is to reduce fragmentation of services targeting children and their families. Full-service schools are school-based programs designed to meet the needs of the community. Members of the community determine what services they need and want. Community partnerships are fostered and developed as the full-service school takes form. The full-service school may house social service agencies, health professionals, mental health professionals, extended day care agencies, after school art enrichment programs, recreational sports leagues, and any other organization determined by community members.

The full-service school eliminates duplication of services, allows families to receive needed services efficiently and without stigmatization, and enhances the delivery of services by being school-based (Kronick, 2000). The needs of violent, adolescent females living in Southern Appalachia can be met utilizing this model of service delivery. A full-service school could provide mental health counseling to those girls suffering depression. Other needs include pregnancy prevention, alcohol and drug education, anger management, programs that focus on self-image (art, recreation), and parenting classes. Juvenile court services could also be provided on-site for girls who are court involved. The concept of streamlining services, integrating services, and developing collaborative partnerships between schools and human service organizations is a concept worthy of our attention.

Future Research

The argument for future research in this area of delinquency is strong. Violent females represent a growing population. The phenomenon of violent girls is one that has not been studied extensively. There is little research being done, currently or in the past. The studies that have been completed are typically quantitative in nature and fail to address the quality of the adolescent female's experience of being violent. Several specific areas of research are warranted and will be discussed here.

First, there must be more qualitative studies that allow the girls to tell the stories of their experience. Descriptions from their point of view are needed. Qualitative studies including all methods of inquiry—ethnography, case studies, focus

groups—would be illuminating and allow researchers to examine this problem more closely and comprehensively.

Second, comparative studies of the experiences of violent girls and violent boys are needed. An examination of the commonalties and differences according to gender would provide important information to program designers and counselors.

An important similarity was discovered between this study and a phenomenological study of men who batter (Redden Reitz, 1998). The experience of the male batterer as described by Redden Reitz in her study of 15 violent men is surprisingly similar to the experience described here of the violent, adolescent female. In that study, Redden Reitz identified three relational themes that described comparisons the batterers made of themselves with their partners that encompassed the experiences of being Big or Little, Good or Bad, and Winning or Losing. Those experiences formed the context for violent activity that was described by a second set of themes, called the Themes of Violence. Themes of Violence included descriptions of feeling In Control or Out of Control, a sensation of Pressure, and a sensation of Exploding. Each of these themes was evident in the experiences of the violent girls. The Good or Bad theme corresponds to the *"I am a good girl, who can be bad"* theme identified in this study. The Big or Little theme closely correlates with the contextual theme *"I am weak"* and the experiential theme *"When I am violent, I grow bigger/stronger"* from this study. Also common is the experience of feeling pressure and exploding stated in this study as the theme *"When I am violent, I explode like a*

ball of fire." More phenomenological studies of violent individuals might reinforce the evidence presented here indicating common experiences.

Third, studies examining the dynamics of the family systems of violent girls are especially needed based on the findings of this study. The family unit played an unexpected role in the life-world of the violent female. Of special interest would be more studies of violent, Appalachian girls and other ethnic groups. Are there similarities across marginalized ethnic groups regarding the experiences of violent, adolescent females?

Finally, more information is desperately needed in the area of resiliency research. Are there identifiable traits or characteristics found in girls who grow up in a culture of violence, as described by these participants, but become productive, positive members of the community? This question brings me full circle to the beginning of this journey. I perceive myself as a productive, positive member of my community and am able to identify (on various levels) with the life-worlds described by many of the participants in this study. How are we different? More importantly, how are we the same?

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Parent Letter of Permission

We would like to invite your daughter to participate in a research study. She will be asked to describe a time when she was violent. The purpose of this study is to understand the experience of violence as described by girls living in Appalachia who can identify times they were violent.

This will consist of participating in an interview, lasting approximately 1 hour, in which your daughter will be asked to talk about the experience of being violent. Your daughter's casemanager will be present during the interview. To make sure I have her exact words, the interview will be tape-recorded. Her identity will be protected through the use of a pseudonym (a fake name) on typewritten accounts of the interview. The typewritten accounts of the interview will be shared with members of a research group at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Your daughter's name will not appear in the transcript. Research group members will be asked to sign a form stating that they agree to guarantee confidentiality. All materials (tapes, typewritten copies, assent forms) will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the University of TN-Knoxville. Three years following the completion of the project all materials will be destroyed-tapes erased and documents shredded.

By volunteering to participate in this confidential interview, your daughter may become upset, distraught, or uncomfortable. In the event she does become uncomfortable or uneasy about the interview, we can stop the interview. With the presence of the casemanager, your daughter has immediate support, if needed. Participation is voluntary and the interview may be stopped at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

It is my hope that in sharing information about this experience, your daughter is able to clarify and understand the experience. She may gain a sense of empowerment by being able to talk about this experience with someone genuinely interested in hearing her story.

Any questions or concerns about this study can be made to Dr. Robert Kronick at (865)974-2321 or to Rebecca Lucas at (865)974-2321.

****

I understand that my child has agreed to participate in a confidential research interview. I understand that the interviewer is interested in learning about girls' experiences of being violent. My daughter, _____, has permission to participate.

_____Name (Please print)
_____Signature
_____Date

Appendix B

Information Sheet and Assent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study. You will be asked to describe a time when you were violent. Permission from your parent/guardian is required and must be obtained prior to your participation. The purpose of this study is to understand the experience of violence as described by girls living in Appalachia who can identify times they were violent. *Your participation is voluntary. You may stop the interview at any time. You may withdraw from the interview at any time. There is no penalty to you for withdrawing.*

Your part in this study will consist of an interview, lasting approximately 1 hour, in which you will be asked to talk about your experience of being violent. To make sure I have your exact words, the interview will be tape-recorded. Your identity will be protected through the use of a pseudonym (a fake name) on typewritten accounts of the interview. The typewritten account may be shared with a research group at the University of TN-Knoxville, working with me on this project. Each member of the group agrees to guarantee confidentiality. All materials (tapes, typewritten copies, assent forms) will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the University of TN-Knoxville. Three years following the completion of the project all materials will be destroyed-tapes erased and documents shredded. *Your participation is voluntary. You may stop the interview at any time. You may withdraw from the interview at any time. There is no penalty to you for withdrawing.*

By volunteering to participate in this confidential interview, you place yourself in a potentially vulnerable situation. There is some risk that you will become upset, emotional, distraught, or uncomfortable. Your casemanager will be present during the interview and available should he/she be needed. Please remember, you have been asked not to share information about committing a crime or other illegal activities for which you have not been previously charged. *Your participation is voluntary. You may stop the interview at any time. You may withdraw from the interview at any time. There is no penalty to you for withdrawing.*

A final report will be prepared when this project is completed. Anyone with access to the University of TN's library can obtain a copy of the dissertation. I will share results of the study with my professors at the University of TN-Knoxville and the administrators of Tennessee's Department of Children's Services. Remember that your identity will be protected. A pseudonym (a fake name) will be used and all indentifying information will be removed or masked.

Your willingness to help is greatly appreciated and it is my hope that in sharing information about your experience, you are able to clarify and understand the experience for yourself. You may gain a sense of empowerment by being able to talk about your experience with someone genuinely interested in hearing your story. *Your participation is voluntary. You may stop the interview at any time. You may withdraw from the interview at any time. There is no penalty to you for withdrawing.*

Any questions or concerns about this study can be made to Dr. Robert Kronick at (865)974-2321 or to Rebecca Lucas at (865)974-2321.

Thank you,

Rebecca Lucas

****

_____Name (Please print)

_____Signature

_____Date

Appendix C

Confidentiality Statement of Research Group Member

As a member of the Phenomenology Research Group in the College of Nursing under the direction of Drs. Sandra Thomas and Howard Pollio, at the University of TN-Knoxville, I agree to guarantee confidentiality to subjects who participated in the study entitled The Southern Appalachian, Adolescent Female's Experience of Being Violent.

I will not publicly or privately divulge information that I learned.

Signature_____

Date_____

Confidentiality Statement of Transcriptionist

I, _____, agree to guarantee confidentiality to subjects who participated in the study entitled The Southern Appalachian, Adolescent Female's Experience of Being Violent. I will not publicly or privately divulge information that I learned during the transcription of the interview tapes.

Signature_____

Date_____

Appendix D
(Theme Worksheet)

"I'm a good girl"

SHERITA

(1:23-24) After all that, we had went to court and it was self defense what I had done to her.

(1:25-26) I was supposed to go to juvenile and stuff but it was self defense...

(1:27) I don't like to fight and stuff a lot.

(1:30) So I try to stay home a lot and be nice and respect people cause I want to be respected.

(2:32) I don't want to kill nobody.

(4:21-24) It's just having respect for one another and living good on this world and trying to make it where you want to be and stuff. Cause my momma, we was raised up in church.

(4:37) You know I pray and stuff everyday.

(5:18-19) ...we ain't violent. We don't get in no trouble. I don't, I shouldn't even have a juvenile record.

(5:21-23) The teacher had came up between us and had asked me to come to the office with her. So I turned around and came up to the office with her. I didn't give her no trouble.

(5:28-29) So I was still sitting there, looking the other way.

(6:2-3) I ain't done nothing.

(7:5) See, I used to do good in school.

(7:9-10) I was a honor roll student, 1st honors, 2nd honors, made A's and B's, didn't make no D's or F's on my report card. Was just a good child, a good child having a good child life.

(7:34-37) ...cause everytime I fight they's a reason why I'm fighting. I know cause I don't start nothing cause I don't start nothing with nobody cause I wouldn't want nobody starting nothing with me or my family. I don't start nothing with nobody, but if somebody starts something with me then I just be sitting there...

(8:1-2) I try to do right so won't nothing get done wrong to me.

RENA

(1:29-31) ...because I made straight A's at school, people thought it was strange that I acted this way. They thought I was doing drugs and drinking and stuff, which I haven't.
I wasn't doing anything, like that.

(2:22-23) I actually didn't do no crime. I had no charges put on me. I only had a petition.

(2:32) My parents believe that I sneak out of the house, which I don't. They believe, I mean, a bunch of stuff that's not true about me.

(3:23-24) And I really didn't do anything wrong. I did things wrong, but I didn't do no crime or anything

(4:5-6) People know me at the sheriff's department and they never arrested me. I've never been arrested.

(4:21-22) They didn't even like my friends. They didn't even like, I mean, I was in the band. They made me quit band because of it.

(4:32) Which most of the time I make honor roll anyway.

JANA

(2:6-7) You know, I'd never in my life ever felt like I'd done anything wrong. You know I might have. I might not've.

PORTIA

(1:15-16) And I had worked really hard to get on Level 1...

(5:11-13) But, stuff like, like smoking drugs, smoking weed or something, smoking weed or being in a gang or something like that. I mean, that wouldn't be considered a crime to me.

SARA

(:54-59) Well, I did get in another fight before because this girl, she came up to me and was like yelling at me and everything else. I got to fight her. And that was just like whoa, yeah, whatever. Go ahead and yell at me. I don't care. And I was walking off and as I was walking off she came up behind me and grabbed my hair, and then I was like uh-uh. And I turned around and I started hitting her in the face and fighting back, so. That was at school too.

(:214) Well, I don't really fight anybody really. You know, I've only been in like two fights.

(:226-229) Just 'cause of everything that's happened to me anyways. Well, like last year I was raped. And then just like when I was sexually molested it went on for years. It wasn't just one time, I mean it went on for years, so. And then I watched my mom get beat like every day by the same guy that was molesting me, so.

(:359-360) And why did it happen to me? I didn't do anything. Now and it's like, it's like more bad things are still happening to me and... Like when I was raped.

(:482-483) It makes me mad because it's like, okay, I made it up, you know, yeah. I wish I made it up because I wish it wouldn't have happened to me, you know, but I mean.

(:513-515) I wish I wouldn't have done any of that because I think that I would have done better in school and I'd probably still be in school and stuff right now if I wouldn't have done all the drugs I did, because I just wouldn't go to school.

(:632-638) This is what I think. They must just be jealous of me. Obviously. Because what have I ever done to them? I've not done anything. And I guess I'm just a better person than they are, so they're jealous. I mean I don't have anything that they don't have. I mean, they all are rich girls that have more money than I do and probably haven't been through half the things I've been through and they're all drug girlies, and preppie you know, pretty, prissy girls. I really don't know why they would be jealous of me but that's all I can think because I've not done anything to them.

(:693-694)...my mom thought I was skipping school last year, and I didn't skip any school at all last semester. I just get depressed

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TAWANA

(1:42) My momma and daddy don't allow me down in them projects.

(3:38-39) I'd be out of the projects. I wouldn't be near violence and stuff.

(5:40) No, I'm not allowed to go down there.

Appendix E

(Sample Transcript)

SARA 2/00

Interview took place in Sara's home. House was very dilapidated. Lots of old furniture on the porch. Yard and house cluttered with years of trash. Both porches were filled with wind chimes. Couch was covered with a bedspread and very dirty. It looked like it was covered in food crumbs or sand. Sara sat on the couch.

I: I want you to tell me about a time when you were violent in as much detail as possible. Can you think of a time?

P: Like where I hit someone, or what?

I: I guess whatever you think of as being violent. Can you think of a time when you think you were violent?

P: When I got in a fight.

I: Okay, tell me about that.

P: I was just like really, really mad. And I hit this girl in the face. And I mean I guess I really hurt her a lot.

I: Can you tell me more about the fight?

P: Well I was already, I had already been like mad or whatever for like two weeks because I'm a manic depressive. So I was already very irritated with everything. And then just like, I mean that day I was just like really just mad and then I found out like a bunch of stuff or whatever, and then I went up to her and said something and she got all smart with me and everything, and so I was really more mad. And I hit her. I don't know.

I: Did you just hit her once?

P: No. Well, I hit her once in the face and then I pushed her up against the wall and I kicked her.

I: Anything else?

P: Huh-uh.

I: What was that like?

P: It was weird.

I: Tell me what that means.

P: Like I didn't know I could be so mean, I don't know. It was just like whoa.

I: You were surprised?

P: Uh-huh.

I: Has it ever happened before that?

P: Well, I did get in another fight before because this girl, she came up to me and was like yelling at me and everything else. I got to fight her. And that was just like whoa, yeah, whatever. Go ahead and yell at me. I don't care. And I was walking off and as I was walking off she came up behind me and grabbed my hair, and then I was like uh-uh. And I turned around and I started hitting her in the face and fighting back, so. That was at school too.

I: Were you surprised that time, that you could do that?

P: Not really, because I was just defending myself really, so.

I: What's it feel like when you're fighting?

P: Um, I haven't really felt anything but just like get away from me, you know, just like leave me alone. But I mean I was hitting her. I don't know.

I: What's it feel like when you're mad? You said you get" really, really mad," and you'd been mad for a while. Like two weeks.

P: I was getting really irritated and I was thinking about like everything that's like happened to me for, I mean I guess I make myself get mad. I don't know.

I: You said you think about things that have happened before.

P: Like when I was a kid and stuff. And like just things and all.

I: Can you tell me about them, like when you were a kid and stuff?

P: Well, I was like sexually molested and stuff.

I: So that comes back?

P: I just get real mad.

I: So you think about that, when you're fighting or?

P: No. Just like when I'm getting mad and stuff.

I: So that's kind of on your mind? Are you just remembering or is it something else?

P: I don't know. I just got very anxious and I get mad at the fact that I guess, that it happened to me. And I just get real mad.

I: Uh-huh. What does it feel like when you're real mad?

P: Well, I feel like big, like whew.

I: Really? That's interesting.

P: I don't know, it's like, I grew up around boys you know, so, I've always been kind of mean anyway. Because my brothers always beat me up, my stepbrothers and stuff. They used to beat me up all the time.

I: Really?

P: They were really mean to me.

I: Play fighting or real fight?

P: Play fights and sometimes real fights.

I: Did you fight back then?

P: I've always tried to fight back. I like to be able to know I can protect myself.

I: Do you often have to protect yourself?

P: Not really.

I: When do you feel like you need to protect yourself?

P: Like in situations like when I'm fighting. I mean I wouldn't use weapons or anything. Just myself, I mean, because I don't, I mean, think I should have to you know, really hurt somebody. But I mean just hurt them to let them know to leave me alone you know. But I mean, I don't know.

I: Did you feel like you needed to protect yourself the last time you needed to fight?

P: No, no.

I: How was that different?

P: Because I went at her.

I: Tell me again what happened that you got angry with her.

P: Well, I guess I was already irritated enough anyway, like I was taking antidepressant medicine, and they had upped my dosage of medicine and I had got even more depressed. I was crying all the time and just I was going crazy, and then like some girl comes up to me and said that she had been talking to my boyfriend, and like gave my boyfriend her number and they met up somewhere, and I went up to her and I asked her. I asked her and she was like, her attitude with me and everything was just like, uhhhh, you know, and I was like okay, whatever. And I was so mad I screamed. Like, I'm so mad! And everybody at the locker bay, it was just like, shut up! That made me even madder. And it was just like everything, it was just making me madder and madder and madder and madder, and I just took it out on her I guess.

I: Did, I don't want to put words in your mouth. Let me think of a way to ask this. Could you tell that you were getting madder and madder and madder? Were you aware that was happening?

P: Yeah. I was already mad that morning when I got up. It wasn't her. I mean I was already mad that morning when I got up. I was just ready to kick somebody or something, just to get out my anger. I had just been upset and depressed for a while and that morning I woke up and I was just like I guess

mad because I woke up. I don't know. Sometimes I'm like that in the morning. I'm like, oh I'm awake again. I don't know.

I: Is it better to be asleep?

P: No, I mean, . . . no.

I: How did the fighting end in the locker bay?

P: Well, we didn't fight there. I stood outside and waited for her to come outside.

I: Was this a lot later or was it soon after?

P: It was later.

I: So you screamed at her in the locker bay and you got...

P: I didn't really scream at her.

I: You said you screamed.

P: When she walked away I screamed.

I: Oh, okay. So she walked away and then you screamed.

P: So she didn't hear me or anything I don't think.

I: So how did that lead up to the fight?

P: I just got in my classroom and I got madder and madder and madder and madder. So. I mean after I hit her and everything I felt bad and I wanted to apologize to her and stuff you know. But I felt better to have got all that anger out of me.

I: So you hold your anger in for a long time? Tell me about that.

P: Well, 'cause I don't always, I mean I don't always say something or I don't know, I just usually keep it inside. I don't know.

I: But you choose to do that?

P: I guess. I don't really know.

I: What's it like when you finally let it out?

P: It's like I get lighter and I feel better. I get happier.

I: What do you mean you get lighter?

P: Like I feel like I have like so much weight on me because I'm like always crying and I'm always depressed and everything. And I talk about it with my counselor or something you know, and get all that stuff out, I just feel like, you know, much happier.

I: So it's better to let it out? Just now you said when you talk about it to your counselor that makes you feel better. And then earlier you said when you fight that's like getting it out too. So are those the same?

P: Well, I don't really fight anybody really. You know, I've only been in like two fights.

I: But for that time when you hit the girl it felt better?

P: Yeah, that time. But I mean I had talked to my counselor that day too. I talked to her and, but I mean I just felt better because I had so much built up, and when I hit her it was just like, I don't know.

I: Do you think just the first hit gave you that relief, or was it after the whole fight was over and then you felt better?

P: I guess it was after the whole fight was over. I mean because I had a lot of anger in me. I mean I still do, you know. Just 'cause of everything that's happened to me anyways. Well, like last year I was raped. And then just like when I was sexually molested it went on for years. It wasn't just one time, I mean it went on for years, so. And then I watched my mom get beat like every day by the same guy that was molesting me, so.

I: Was that your dad?

P: Huh-uh. It was one of her boyfriends. She was with him from, I was like almost seven, and then they broke up when I was almost twelve.

I: So he was abusing you.

P: He didn't have sex with me.

I: He was molesting you, touching you?

P: (answers phone call) . . . at my house.

I: Are you and your mom close?

P: No.

I: It sounds like you all have been through a lot together.

P: I guess. I don't know.

I: But it didn't make you all closer.

P: No. I hate her. I mean I just, I don't hate her, but I mean, I don't know. Because like when I told her what was going on she didn't believe me. And then she'd leave me home with him every day and I'd blame it on her.

I: Does she know how you feel now?

P: No. It kind of makes it hard because every time she's around I get angry. Really mad.

I: So that didn't stop until she broke up with that guy and left him?

P: She left him for the man she's with now, and then she believed me.

I: How does that make you feel?

P: Mad. Upset and angry. Because she's never there for me now. So I pretty much had to take care of myself, and I just want to be able to protect myself now because I couldn't then you know. From, I don't know.

I: Did you ever get to confront that guy?

P: No. In like, he met her in California because that's where we lived when my mom and dad got divorced. And we moved here like in 1991, March 1991, and he moved with us up here. So, I mean he could be out there anywhere. I could run into him one day you know, and that's kind of scary.

I: You never know. Do you think about that a lot?

P: Sometimes. I mean I can't sleep with my door open because I have nightmares.

I: What was that like for you?

P: That was hard. I cried all the time. Sometimes I would scream out at him and tell him to leave my mom alone and my brother was never really around. I mean I think he touched my brother too you know, so my brother stayed gone all the time. So it was really just me and my mom there, and we're just two girls, and he's way bigger than us, so. And then the cops never did anything about it. Like my mom would have like a busted nose and everything and they would just be like give him a warning. They wouldn't even take him to jail.

I: That's frustrating. Is it better now?

P: I mean it was good for a while. I mean me and Amanda we fight and everything, but we're stepsisters you know. And then like Sam let his son and then his girlfriend and their kid move in, and then she had another kid and they still live up there. And I just started getting more depressed and everything because I mean, I've never had a chance to get close to my mom and she never listens to anything I have to say. And every time I try to talk to her about something or tell her what's going on in my life she just yells at me about something or starts bitching at me or something, and then she's always like you only hibernate in your room and come out when you need something or want something, duh, duh, duh, duh. And it's just like what's the point of even trying to talk to her or get close to her.

I: So you keep trying.

P: Not any more.

I: Do you feel alone?

P: Yeah.

I: Even though it sounds like it's pretty crowded up there, I guess you can still be alone. What's it like?

P: It's hard. It's just hard, I don't know.

I: What do you do when you're alone?

P: I just sit there and I think, about stuff. Like things that have happened to me and I just wonder about things, and wish that my life was different. See nobody in the house, nobody has been through anything I've been through, so they don't understand. And my mom thinks that I make everything up and that I'm just a liar, but she didn't tell me. She told my dad and I overheard her talking to my dad on the phone about this. And she's like, because her and my dad, they're making me move to England to live with him, my dad. And I overheard her talking to him over the phone about me and telling him that she didn't believe anything that I said and that he shouldn't because I'm nothing but a liar, and all kinds of stuff like that. So ever since I heard that it's just like whatever.

I: Have you talked to your dad?

P: Uh-huh. I told my dad that I heard what she said and I was like I can't believe she'd say stuff like that about me, but.

I: Does he know what happened?

P: Yes.

I: He believes it?

P: Yeah, he tried to take me away from my mom because of it.

I: And that didn't happen?

P: My mom got me back and I just went back into the situation I was in. She thought I made it all up.

I: How do you deal with that?

P: I don't really. I just try, I try my hardest not to think about it. And I try to think about other things but it's hard when I'm all alone.

I: You do a lot of thinking when you're alone. Is that what you think about?

P: Most of the time.

I: What are your thoughts? Just replaying what happened, or trying to think of ways you could have...

P: And why did it happen to me? I didn't do anything. Now and it's like, it's like more bad things are still happening to me and... Like when I was raped.

I: What happened there?

P: There was three people and one was the girl, and she was supposed to be my friend. But like she like drugged me, and then like her boyfriend raped e, and I don't know if anybody else did anything to me because I was drugged and I was in the bathroom puking and he came in there and like pushed me down to the ground and took advantage of me because she had come in there the time before and took off my clothes to put me in the shower, and the next thing I know there's three people in the shower with me and I was like whatever, and I got out, because I just wanted to puke. And then I remember I got drug to the room and I felt uhh, and then I went back to the bathroom to get sick again and then her boyfriend came in there. And then she walked in and saw it and started beating him up, and then he said it was me. It was all me that wanted to do it, and...

I: You didn't know they had given it to you?

P: Huh-uh. Well I knew they gave it to me because it was supposed to be like a Valium.

I: So you took it thinking it was something else?

P: Thinking it was a Valium but I think it was something else.

I: Then you were kind of out of it.

P: Yeah, then I was like drinking a little bit. And I don't remember how to get there or anything, but sometimes it was like I'll just be sitting there and I'll remember then. And I'll start to remember more things.

I: Where did that happen, at her house?

P: It's one of the guy's house. And my mom got mad because I didn't press charges against them, but it's like three people's words against mine. And what can I do? I mean she wouldn't do anything when something was happening to me you know. When I wanted to do something about it, and I mean it's not like that those people probably wouldn't even have got in trouble. They would just make me look like a fool. And I would have got more angry and more depressed because they wouldn't have got in trouble for it you know. I'd just rather leave it alone.

I: You've been through enough. You must be a really strong person. Do you think you're strong?

P: I don't know. I guess, I mean because I've already been through the phase where I turned to drugs and I did drugs and I drank and I took pills and I smoked weed every day. And did all of that and I would never do it again. And I've already quit smoking and will never do it again. I just quit it like two months ago. And I've been smoking since I was eight.

I: That's a long time. That's what? Nine years.

P: I was smoking Newports. I did everything my brother did because I always wanted to get out of my house and go hang out with him and his friends to get away from everything. And he'd always beat me up and go on, go tell mom.

I: Where is he?

P: He lives in Maynardville. He's engaged and they've got a kid.

I: Do you get to see him much?

P: Not really. I get to see my nephew more than I do him.

I: Are you close to your brother?

P: Not really. Because he doesn't like the way I treat my mom. But he turns around and treats her just the same. So I mean, I think he feels the same way I do about a lot of things, but he don't, so.

I: Have you ever gotten physical with your mom?

P: I mean there's been like one time she smacked me, and I smacked her back, and she smacked me and I smacked her back, but I mean if she hits me or something I just sit there. I mean I don't even feel it, I'm just like whatever. Most of the time I just block her out, like if she's talking to me and stuff I'm

just like, and then she asks me why I hate her so much, and why I don't like her. It's like, think about it. She thinks I'm just supposed to get over all this I guess, I don't know.

I: Is there anything else, when you said everything that's happened, you tell me about when you were a little girl, you tell me about the rape last year. Is there anything else that?

P: Yeah.

I: Can you tell me?

P: Well not only was I molested by my mom's boyfriend, I was molested by my cousin and one of y brother's friends and my mom's boyfriend's brother.

I: Is this all at different times?

P: yeah, different times. Like I would go, like one time I remember I spent the night over at my mom's boyfriend's house, over at his mom's house. Over there to kind of get away from him and then his brother was there and I was sleeping and he came in there and started touching my private areas.

I: Is this the old boyfriend's brother?

P: Uh-huh.

I: So that whole family was kind of...

P: Yeah. Or I would go to my granny's to get away and my cousin would be there, and I don't know if he was just doing it because he was, he's my brother's age, and he was just a kid and whatever. I don't know if that's why he did it or what his problem was. So
I: How old was he?

P: He was about fourteen, thirteen.

I: And how old were you?

P: About six, seven, because me and my brother are four years apart and they're about the same age. And then one of my brother's friends. I think he was like obsessed over me anyways, because he was always like pull your hair up, put it in a ponytail on top of your head, because you look pretty like that and stuff. Well, at that time my mom was separated from the other guy and we were living with him and he lived in a little apartment at that time. My mom doesn't know about all these things either.

I: Have you told anybody?

P: My counselor. I mean I tried to tell my mother one time about my cousin, but it was like whatever, she wouldn't believe me, so.

I: What do you feel when people say they don't believe you?

P: It makes me mad because it's like, okay, I made it up, you know, yeah. I wish I made it up because I wish it wouldn't have happened to me, you know, but I mean.

I: So all that happened, started when you were about six and then when did it all finally end?

P: Like when I was eleven or twelve. And then I think when I was like 13 or 14 I started doing drugs, so.

I: What did you start off with?

P: Smoking weed. That's what I started off with.

I: Was it hard for you to get?

P: No.

I: How'd you get it?

P: Well the first time I got it was with my brother's girlfriend, and then most of the time I just like smoked it with him or I would go over to my friend's house, and then I got this boyfriend and he was like this big drug guy. You know, was with him everyday and I started drinking and my stepbrother is old enough to buy beer, so he would you know, buy it or my brother would get somebody to buy it. And we just, I would drink all the time and then Jennifer, she's like a pill-head still right now today. And I started taking pills all the time. I guess it made me feel better but then when it was all over it was like I was depressed, and I was just like, okay. But then it got to where I was smoking the weed and I was getting more depressed and I was starting to have panic attacks. So I said forget this, I quit. Forget drinking. What's the point? I mean I stopped smoking weed first. And then I started hanging out with this girl that partied all the time, that's all she did, and I started drinking. I would be drinking so much I'd start smoking weed and didn't realize it and I'd get sick and then just start drinking again. Or take pills and most of the time they were pills that make you like energetic and stuff. But then I think about it now and it's like, I wish I wouldn't have done any of that because I think that I would have done better in school and I'd probably still be in school and stuff right now if I wouldn't have done all the drugs I did, because I just wouldn't go to school. I would skip school. I'd stay in bed or I would sneak up to my brother's who lived right behind us at the time. I'd sneak up there and stay up there. I mean it wasn't like I was skipping school with anybody else. I was just by myself most of the time because I didn't, so I didn't really learn that much and I didn't really pay attention when I was in school. I always got in trouble.

I: When did you start missing school? What grade?

P: I'd say eighth grade.

I: I know you're getting homebound right now. Will you graduate?

P: Well my dad wants me to come to England and live with him for like eleven months to finish up school there and everything, but I don't want to be gone that long. You know I just plan on going up there and hopefully finishing up this year, like this school year and coming back this summer.

I: When are you going to England?

P: I find out Thursday.

I: Really?

P: Yeah, I'll be leaving probably next week or something.

I: Wow. Are you excited?

P: No. I don't want to go. But they're forcing me to go so. I mean I don't want to go because my dad wants me to live with him for that long. But I mean if I don't go he's going to be all upset about it and everything you know. And I also don't really know my dad. And I remember there was a point when I wouldn't sit in the room alone with my dad because I'm scared to you know. I don't want to go but I do want to go, because 30 years from now I'm going to wish I did go for the experience, so I think if I just went up there for like a couple of months and was like Dad, I want to go back home, you know.

I: You said you remember being afraid to sit in the room with your dad?

P: Like when I would go visit and stuff, because of what was happening to me, I was afraid that he would touch me and stuff, so.

I: But your dad has always been kind to you?

P: As far as I can remember. I've blocked out most of the things that happened to me.

I: Do you ever remember living with your dad when your mom and dad were together?

P: Not really.

I: They split up when you were really little.

P: Six.

I: And then she went with this other guy?

P: It wasn't really long after it, because they weren't really together that much anyways, my mom and my dad, because he's military, so he's mostly gone all the time and she was at clubs all the time. And we always had babysitters and I guess she thought we were too young to know what was going on, but I kind of remember some stuff. Because I remember we had babysitters all the time. And so it was like she was probably out being a ho or something, and my dad was always gone anyways. So they just split up and we moved to California and you know, she started dating and then she just really liked him. Me any my brother never liked him because the first day that he was there, and I remember, because we were living with my Aunt Brenda at the time, because we didn't have a place. That he put a movie in and he sat down on the couch and like I was laying across his lap and that was the first time he ever started touching me and stuff and I told my brother. And me and my brother told my mom we didn't like him and we didn't want her to date him and she was like well I really like him and I really don't care what you all think.

I: So it happened almost immediately? Did it happen every day?

P: Pretty much. And then he would like, after he was done, he would like give me things. Like it would be like candy or money or something. A really sick man.

I: You think he's still around here somewhere?

P: My mom thinks that he's like in California, back in California with his mom and everything. But it's like, whatever. As long as he's still alive I'm going to be worried. I mean, and he got put in jail like a month or something for molesting some other kid. It was like, I don't know, I'm always scared that when I go out, what if I run into him, if I see him in the car and he recognizes me and I don't recognize him or what if I recognize him and he don't recognize me. And would I say something to him? Should I say something to him? I mean I have dreams because he's like, he's got braces on his legs. You

know, have dreams like I see him in like grocery stores or something you know, and I just go up to him and I kick him. You know.

I: He probably wouldn't recognize you because you've probably grown a lot since you saw him, changed.

P: I don't really think I've changed I guess. I guess I still see the little kid in me, you know. That little hurt kid or whatever, you know. And it's like I think he would recognize me, even though I'm older now and everything.

I: So all these things together, when you've been mad and have fought people, those things are still kind of bubbling inside and you're thinking about them? You've only been in two fights?

P: Uh-huh.

I: Is that why you're not in school?

P: Yeah. And plus seeing how I'm moving to England, they just said they'd put me in homebound. I guess they're afraid I'm going to beat somebody else up, but...

I: Was the other girl hurt?

P: Not really. From what I heard she wasn't really hurt. And the first fight I got into was just self-defense. I wasn't going to fight her, so. What really bothers me is I saw her the other day, and we used to work together, and we were all cool with each other, whatever. Like, she started flipping me off. This was Friday, I was like, and you know, I was thinking, I was like, you're really cool, you know, really cool. And I just smiled. I was like, whatever. What's the point of flipping somebody off, whoa. But what made me mad about that was like if she was going to flip me off when she was in her car driving off why didn't she just say something to me when she walked by me twice in the mall? Why didn't she say something to me then? I guess her and her friends are scared of me.

I: Or it's safer in the car when you're driving away.

P: This is what I think. They must just be jealous of me. Obviously. Because what have I ever done to them? I've not done anything. And I guess I'm just a better person than they are, so they're jealous. I mean I don't have anything that they don't have. I mean, they all are rich girls that have more money than I do and probably haven't been through half the things I've been through and they're all drug girlies, and preppie you know, pretty, prissy girls. I really don't know why they would be jealous of me but that's all I can think because I've not done anything to them.

I: What about the girl, when was that fight that you?

P: Recently, before Christmas.

I: And you didn't tell me, you said you went on to class and you got madder and madder and madder. When did the fight ever happen?

P: After school. Because it was last class period. I waited for her to come out of the school and I just went up to her and hit her. She turned her head, then I grabbed her hair and just threw her against the wall. And I was just thinking, god, if this was Bob I'd kill him. So I stopped. I stopped, like when I started kicking at her, because I felt really, really, really mad. I was like I've got to stop. Because I would have probably got really, really violent with her. Because I have so much anger in me anyways, you know. I probably would have got really violent.

I: Who's Bob?

P: Bob's the guy.

I: The first boyfriend?

P: Yeah.

I: So you were thinking she's Bob, is that what you said?

P: Well, I was kind of thinking about it in a way. I was just like wheeee, so really mad. I was like I can't, so I stopped fighting her. I just looked at her and I stopped fighting her. When I started kicking her I was like, oh, because I didn't think I could do something like that and then, so.

I: What made you stop? What thought went through your head?

P: I shouldn't be doing this.

I: Really.

P: So I stopped.

I: So did she come after you when you stopped?

P: Huh-uh, she started crying.

I: Was she laying on the ground?

P: Yeah, she was like, my head, oooh, and she started crying. I didn't cry until I got home, and my boyfriend broke up with me. And reality hit and I realized what I had done, what the consequences were for doing what I did, and I mean I cried for like two days, two or three days I cried.

I: What were the consequences?

P: Well, my mom called my dad and, or my dad called or something, and this whole thing about moving to England happened, and I got kicked out of school and I didn't get to get my credits and my mom thought I was skipping school last year, and I didn't skip any school at all last semester. I just get depressed and I just don't want to go to school or I have a sleeping problem and I sometimes stay up until five or four in the morning, just crying or thinking, and I can't sleep because I have nightmares, or just stupid dreams. So I don't want to get up in the morning or sometimes I'm just so irritated in the morning because she's the first voice I hear and I don't like her anyways that much you know, and it's like I hear her and I'm already irritated because I heard her voice. I'm like whatever, and she'll start bitching at me first thing in the morning and my whole day's ruined if I have a bad morning. It's like the whole day's ruined.

I: Can you think of anything else you want to tell me about your experience?

P: I don't know. Only I think it happened for a reason. But, because it changed my life. I mean I have a new boyfriend now. I'm going to England. I've learned a whole lot more than what I have in school, from being homebound. But then again I'm kind of irritated because

END OF TAPE

Vita

Rebecca L. Lucas was born in Alexandria, Virginia on September 8, 1964. She grew up in Corbin, Kentucky and lived there until she graduated from Corbin High School in 1982. Rebecca received her B.S. in Exceptional Childhood Education in 1988 from Western Kentucky University. She worked as a Clinical Educator with Seriously Emotionally Disturbed adolescents in 1988-90 at Cumberland Hall Psychiatric Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1990, she and her husband, Barry Lucas, moved from Nashville, Tennessee to Knoxville, Tennessee. For the next six years, Rebecca worked in the Knox County Schools. In 1991, she developed and implemented a Cooperative Behavior Program for behavior disordered middle school students. Her work as a special education teacher continued until 1994. From 1994-96, Rebecca worked as an Educational Diagnostician in Knox County Schools performing academic assessments with children referred for special education services. In 1996, she began her doctoral studies in the College of Education, University of Tennessee—Knoxville. Currently, Rebecca lives in Knoxville, Tennessee with her husband Barry and their children—Noah, Caleb, and Abigail.