The Effect of an Arts-Based, Anger-Management Intervention for Girls Displaying Aggressive Behavior Who Are Being Reared Without Their Fathers

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Judy Shoemaker, for her unending source of patience during the dissertation process. I am grateful for the wisdom of Sonia Laird and Gerald Jarvis. More importantly, I thank the both of you for being the initial beacon to light my path on this educational journey. I also would like to thank Wildris Tejeda for her phenomenal source of support. Above all, I must express my gratitude to my family for their unwavering support. To my two daughters, Jennyffer and Bianca, I thank you for believing in me; without your love and support, I would not have been able to achieve my goals.
Abstract


This arts-based intervention program was designed to reduce anxiety and aggressive behavior in adolescent girls who were being reared without their fathers during the period of 2010–2015. The research questions were designed to investigate the scope, frequency, and severity of the problem of increased aggressive behavior and anxiety by girls being reared without their fathers; to evaluate the effectiveness of an arts-based intervention in reducing aggressive behavior and anxiety in girls being reared without their fathers; to investigate the ways that the use of an arts-based intervention might improve feelings about family relationships for single mothers and girls being reared without their fathers; and to gather observations and perceptions of all participants of the arts-based intervention regarding its impact on aggressive girls being reared without their fathers.

Eight children between the ages of 8 and 17 completed the study. Data collection consisted of administering the following surveys: the Adolescent Anger Rating Scale, the Children’s Aggression Scale, the Parent Adolescent Relationship Questionnaire, and a confirmation interview with parents. An anger-management intervention utilizing the arts as an outlet for self-expression was implemented during the winter 2013 semester.

Results showed the implementation fostered peer collaboration and resulted in reduced anger and aggression as well as increased communication and family cohesion. Expression through the arts, coupled with anger-management training, enabled girls to cope with their anger rather than acting out.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The topic. Adolescent girls being reared without their fathers have shown increased aggression or violent behavior throughout the United States (N. Morris, 2008). Avci and Gucray (2010) declared that the current dramatic increase of violence among adolescents is a present-day trend, agreeing with Chesney-Lind, Morash, and Stevens (2008) that this present trend is alarming. This concern was confirmed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Report, which documented that the percentage of arrests of adolescent girls out of the total number of juvenile arrests had increased from 20% in 1980 to 30% in 2005 nationally (Zahn et al., 2008).

According to J. Baker (2010), the current divorce rate in the United States has increased to 50%. This increase in the divorce rate appears to parallel the increase of aggressive behavior in present-day adolescents. The concern about children aggression provoked Schwartz, Sage, Bush, and Burns (2006) to document in a literature review that the lack of parental involvement was a contributing factor in bullying and other aggressive behavior found in adolescents. Moreover, as a result of data from a longitudinal study, Dey (2006) hypothesized that long-term poverty was a determining factor for antisocial behavior in children. Furthermore, Conger (2005), in agreement with Breinbauer and Maddaleno (2005), confirmed that economic stress affects the parenting skills of the poor, which adversely affects their children.

Statistics have confirmed that fatherless homes account for 63% of youth suicides, 90% of homeless and runaway children, 85% of children with behavior problems, 71% of high school dropouts, 85% of youths in prison, and well over 50% of teen mothers (“U.S. Divorce Statistics,” 2008). Various reasons may cause the absence of a father in the
home: death, incarceration, abandonment, multiple families, adversarial relationship, no model for marriage issues, or inability to maintain a relationship after the initial thrill is gone (J. Bradshaw, Stimson, Skinner, & Williams, 1999; Collier & Calloway, 2009) as well as military service, traveling for work, or even mental illness (Mancini, 2010). In their literature review, Nunes-Costa, Lamela, and Figueiredo (2009) concluded that the alarming rate of family disruption resulting from divorce was a leading contributor to the adverse psychological maladjustment and health of children. Nunes-Costa et al. further specified that the adverse impact on the children was a direct result of the risk factors caused by stressors accompanied with divorce.

Engstrom, Diderichsen, and Laflamme (2004) found that adolescents whose families were either actively receiving public assistance or who had recently received public assistance had a high frequency of interpersonal, violence-related injuries. For that reason, Hansen (2009) suggested that fathers play a restraining role in the lives of their children. Hansen further affirmed that children communicate the lack or loss of a father by acting out. Moreover, McMillan, Feigin, DeAngelis, and Jones (2006) agreed that children who feel deprived of psychological support in the home may exhibit antisocial behavior as a result. McMillan et al. elaborated that the resultant antisocial behavior from these children is generated by emotional despair caused by a feeling of helplessness; these children believe that they are alone in this world and do not have anyone on their side. Therefore, McMillan et al. surmised that children with absent fathers act out in order to generate a response from their environment. These deviant behaviors or acting out incidents include stealing, lying, and inflicting abuse on others, with a total disregard of the harm that they are causing (McMillan et al., 2006).

Numerous researchers have documented the absence of fathers and its effects on
the lives of their daughters (Mancini, 2010). Miller, Loeber, and Hipwell (2009) confirmed that the Bar Association reported that girls are quickly closing the crime gap relative to boys. Helfgott (2008) directly attributed this to the rise of single-parent households; 54% of incarcerated girls were raised by a single mother.

Rector and Johnson (2004) noted that the majority of active cases on public assistance are products of single-parent households. Additionally, Wolfe, Kaplan, Haveman, and Cho (2006) contended that 75% of families receiving public assistance were headed by single women. Moreover, 70% of Black children in America are being raised with an absent father (Rowles, 2001). The number of single-parent-headed households has doubled within the past 25 years (Plotnick, Garfinkel, McLanahan, & Ku, 2004). There are a multitude of reasons for these current trends. Recurring variables are divorce, death, incarceration, or mere abandonment by the fathers (Travis, 2005; “U.S. Divorce Statistics,” 2008). Travis (2005) opined that these single parents may be failing their children and described the absence of father figures as detrimental to future generations.

Although aggressive behavior is considered a major problem facing society, Ostrov, Crick, and Stauffacher (2006) observed that aggressive behavior in girls has not yet been studied extensively as compared to boys. Sarkadi, Kristiansson, Oberklaid, and Bremerberg (2007) determined that a father’s involvement in the life of a child more often than not generates a positive outcome for the child. These positive outcomes include enhanced positive development, decreased delinquency, and reduced economic disadvantages (Sarkadi et al., 2007).

Therefore, the purpose of this research was to investigate the impact of absent fathers on daughters and to determine if an arts-based intervention could help these girls
reduce aggression. Many of these homes consisted of preadolescent and adolescent girls with unhealthy or deviant behaviors. Such behaviors included teenage pregnancies (Mancini, 2010), high school dropouts (McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Ho, 2005), drug and alcohol abuse, crimes or incarcerations (Antecol & Bedard, 2007), obesity (Strauss & Knight, 1999), and other behaviors associated with delinquency.

The research problem. There is increased antisocial behavior in adolescent girls who are being reared without their fathers. Studies have proven that antisocial behavior in any family member is more likely to manifest if the father is absent and a nonparticipant figure (McBurnett & Pfiffner, 2007). McBurnett and Pfiffner (2007) asserted that children with nonparticipating fathers tend to have disruptive behavioral disorders, such as teenage pregnancies, drug use, and childhood rebellion. McBurnett and Pfiffner also reported that the level of academic performance for the majority of children in these single households can be 20-75% lower than that of children from intact families. Krohn and Bogan (2001) also observed that the absence of fathers in the lives of adolescent females is a major contributor to teenage pregnancy, poor academic achievement, and academic failure. Moore (1999) cited data compiled by the National Center for Policy Research showing that teenage girls raised in homes with fathers were significantly less likely to engage in premarital sex. Moore further reported that 76% of teenage girls surveyed said that their fathers were very influential over their decisions regarding sex. Notably, a report by the National Center for Juvenile Justice (Puzzanchera, Adams, & Sickmund, 2010) conveyed that between 1985 and 2007, the number of female juvenile delinquents increased by 101%, compared to a 30% increase in the male delinquents’ population.

The agency of the intended research is the Family Independence Administration.
The agency provides public assistance to people in need. Initially, these services were referred to as Aid to Dependent Children (Jansson, 2004), but changed in 1996 to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families as part of the welfare reform. This agency was first initiated under President Roosevelt’s New Deal legislation as a means to alleviate the plight of the poor (Jansson, 2004). The Family Assistance Administration as an agency provides public assistance and medical assistance to needy families and single adults (Jansson, 2004). Moreover, the agency’s mission is to bring all able-bodied consumers to self-reliance (Doar, DeMartino, Callender, & Masin, 2009; Rodgers, Beamer, & Payne, 2008). Wolfe et al. (2006) contended that needy families are often headed by a single mother, and the fathers of their children are absent.

The participants in this study were African American adolescent girls in a northeastern borough in New York who were being reared without their fathers in the household. The participants were chosen according to their disciplinary issues both in school and at home. The research took place at a local school of dance in a borough in New York City. The study investigated the effects of an arts-based program as an outlet of self-expression for aggressive girls being reared without a father present in their lives.

**Background and justification.** Bennett, Sullivan, and Lewis (2005) found that children who were victims of abuse or neglect were harboring anger and resentment. These adolescents displayed deviant behaviors towards themselves and others in their environments (Zdun, 2007). In some cases, these children were also committing atrocious crimes against their peers and against their custodial parents (Bluestein, 2001). It also has been documented that 25% of the violent crimes committed by adolescents are committed by females. This dramatic trend was clearly documented in the number of incarcerated females, which jumped from 6,000 in 1970 to 22,000 in 1985, just 15 years later (Ruiz,
2002). More recently, these numbers have skyrocketed to an alarming 90,000 in 2002, which constitutes an increase of 11% a year (Ruiz, 2002). Some of this activity can be credited to the fact that risk taking is a natural part of a teenager’s development (Neill, 2007).

Unfortunately, when these teenagers choose to take these unhealthy risks, they are jeopardizing not only themselves but also their families (Neill, 2007). Unless these teenagers learn to take healthy risks that would enable and lead them to find positive ways toward developing independence and a sense of self, the threat remains (Neill, 2007). Walker (2000) contended that data have demonstrated that women are rapidly breaking the gender line as criminal offenders. As victims of unaddressed anger, these youths are at risk of falling prey to drugs and teenage pregnancies, among other deviant behavior (Walker, 2000). In the end, these youths are at risk of becoming predators of society (Yahav & Cohen, 2008).

Moreover, Neill (2007) as well as Yahav and Cohen (2008) maintained that addressing the plight of these children will reduce the numbers of dysfunctional incidents in adolescent girls. Cecil, McHale, Strozier, and Pietsch (2008) claimed society somehow has failed to realize the mental anguish that these children face frequently because of the breakup of the traditional nuclear family. Consequently, girls in particular during preadolescence and adolescence are being victimized by the breakdown of the traditional family structure (Cecil et al., 2008). Cecil et al. (2008) posited that the current rise in dysfunctional behavior is a direct consequence of the systematic breakup of the nuclear family.

The Music Therapy Association of Georgia (2004) declared that the Joint Declaration of the 1982 International Symposium of Music Therapists described music
therapy as the therapeutic use of music in order to restore, maintain, or improve emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual health and well-being in individuals. Furthermore, according to the Music Therapy Association of Georgia, the Joint Declaration affirmed that using music as therapy can generate the creative process of moving toward wholeness in physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual self-awareness. The Joint Declaration also noted that independence, freedom to change and adaptability, balance, and integration were among the benefits to be gained when using music as therapy (Music Therapy Association of Georgia, 2004).

Smeijsters and Cleven (2006) articulated that the arts-based therapeutic process is effective because the transformation of expression that occurs in the artistic form. This creative process provides empowerment by generating insight into thoughts and feelings; as a result, artistic expression is experienced as a change of emotional strength. This impacts individuals by allowing them to work through unarticulated layers of experiences and gradually become conscious of cognitive schemes (Smeijsters & Cleven, 2006).

According to Bandura’s (1977) social learning model, new behaviors are acquired through a complex interaction between direct learning, observation, modeling, imitation, reinforcement, and cognitive processes. This is a complex pattern of behavior an individual follows when accomplishing a task, such as remembering, responding, and following a sequence as well as the consequence of an exhibited behavior. Consequently, Carr (2005) posited that the quality of experienced feelings can be shaped by the arts. Additionally, the arts can assist human cognitive evaluation as well as provide an appraisal of feelings and emotions. This emotional depth to cognition, declared Carr, is an essential element for moral development in young. Furthermore, research has proven that arts-based curricula have provided positive engagement in the activities of students.
as opposed to violence (Haner, Peppler, Cummings, & Rubin-Vaughn, 2010). Most importantly, the findings suggested that students involved in the creation and presentation of an artistic project expressed commitment to refrain from future violence.

Frydenberg (1997) asserted that coping is a set of cognitive and effective actions that arise in response to a particular concern. Frydenberg elaborated that these actions represent an attempt at either restoring the equilibrium or removing turbulence for that individual. This may be done by solving the problem by removal of the stimulus or accommodating to the concern without bringing about a solution. More specifically, Frydenberg alluded that Lazarus and his colleagues maintained that the individual and his environment are in a constant state of action and reaction. For example, a child’s negative behavior brings forth a reprimand, whereby the child becomes either embarrassed or pleased by the reaction in front of his or her peers, and the responsible adult becomes more infuriated and so on. Ultimately, Frydenberg ascertained that coping theory and cognitive behavioral theory are very much alike. Kopelowicz, Liberman, and Zarate (2006), in agreement with LeCroy (2007), suggested that cognitive behavioral group therapy is primarily used when treating social-skills deficits in children and adolescents.

Layman, Hussey, and Laing (2002) hypothesized that music therapy positively affects functioning, communication, and improved social skills. Layman et al. indicated that the nonthreatening aspect of music therapy makes it an inviting medium for children who are experiencing grief, abandonment, or conflicted emotions. Furthermore, Layman et al. claimed that the use of music therapy allows children to explore feelings and behaviors without any intimidation. Similarly, Sharer (1994) proposed that the nonthreatening property of music encouraged successful participation for individuals with various levels of ability. Consequently, music can also teach skills such as social and
leisure skills while improving aesthetic quality of life (Sharer, 1994). This was evident in research by Furman and Duke (1988), who found that music participation was able to positively impact choices made by the members of that musical organization.

In conceptualizing the cognitive behavioral theory of anger, Meichenbaum (1977) posited that the feeling of anger is first provoked by an individual’s subjective thought. The feeling of anger is first instigated, then maintained, and finally influenced by an individual’s subjective thought at the onset of any threatening or provoking situation. Moreover, anger fuels intolerance of mistakes, which creates unreasonable expectations of others; thus, the feeling of being threatened generates the need to defend the individual’s self-worth (Meichenbaum, 1977). The need to regain control fuels the aggressive behavior. The anger reaction is based on both emotional arousal and cognitive activity; therefore, Meichenbaum recommended that these individuals be provided with relaxation skills. Relaxation skills would provide them with the required control over their intentional process, thoughts, and feelings, referred to as stress inoculation. Lastly, according to Meichenbaum, once individuals were made aware that an anger trigger was cause for a solution not an attack, they were able to control their anger. The arts-based intervention in this study followed the same premise, by providing the adolescents with anger-management skills and the use of the arts as an outlet for self-expression.

In another study, Kisiel et al. (2006) found that a theater-based, violence-prevention, youth program was able to increase prosocial behavior and decrease aggressive behavior and disruptive behaviors. Urban Improv was a theater-based violence-prevention program. The study consisted of 140 fourth-grade students in eight classrooms. A total of 77 students from four classrooms received the intervention; 63 students from the other four classrooms served as controls. Out of the participants, 47.9%
were female and 52.1% were male, with all of the participants predominately minorities. The Urban Improv as an intervention in the Boston area was initially designed to serve racially and ethnically diverse inner-city youths in that community. It was an interactive theater program that had been servicing the Boston school system for the past 14 years. As a violence-intervention program, the Urban Improv addressed conflict resolution and violence within a social-cognitive framework, whereby it provided the children the interactive opportunity to rehearse conflict scenarios, thus enhancing their actual capacity to solve problems in a nonviolent manner. The program included nine weekly sessions at 75 minutes each (Kisiel et al., 2006).

The program focused on decision making, impulse control, problem solving, leadership, cooperation, assertiveness, values, and clarification. All these skills were structured in the theater-based improvisation program. The youths who participated in the program had increased prosocial behaviors, which included the prevention of the onset of aggressive behavior (Kisiel et al., 2006). The reduction of hyperactivity and internalizing symptoms among student participants was also observed. However, the nonparticipating children had an increase in aggressive behavior and hyperactivity. The youth violence-prevention program was able to offer strategies that halted the progression of aggressive behavior. In essence, much-needed coping skills were acquired (Kisiel et al., 2006).

In order to increase the coping skills and reduce domestic violence of female juvenile offenders at a Maryland detention facility, Emerson and Shelton (2001) used a psychoeducational intervention using creative arts with the goal of breaking the cycle of intergenerational transmission of violence, which almost always accompanies domestic violence. According to the social theory of learning, youth who were raised in violent homes learned to accept violence in their adult lives. Emerson and Shelton explained the
intervention was an 18-session program specifically adapted for female youth offenders. The 18 sessions addressed psychological responses such as guilt, shame, anger, and low self-esteem. Behavioral responses were addressed, such as substance abuse, dependence, and offending. Biological responses addressed included depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, hyperarousal and dissociative symptoms, and interpersonal response. Lastly, problems with intimacy and revictimization related to exposure to domestic violence were also addressed (Emerson & Shelton, 2001).

Emerson and Shelton (2001) claimed that the intervention model was intended to promote prosocial behavior. They elaborated that by using the expressive arts such as drama, poetry, art and music, movement, and games as treatment, these adolescents were able to enjoy a positive creative experience, which helped them build a more positive self-image. Emerson and Shelton confirmed a component of the self-image for the participants included their ability to successfully interact with others. Ultimately, according to Emerson and Shelton, the participating female youths became the active “I” in their lives. According to the researchers, by reexperiencing emotions and trying out new responses, they were able to take charge of their choices and in effect be responsible for the outcomes in their lives, as opposed to being the object of possible abuse of others. Finally, when the victims rejoined the world of incarcerated youths by interacting with other survivors, they were able to find forgiveness. Emerson and Shelton affirmed that the creative arts focused on the moment and therefore were nonliteral in positive effect.

Moreover, Emerson and Shelton (2001) claimed that everyone who participated was viewed as a winner, because participation in itself was rewarding, which was considered complementary to the concrete reward system, one of the conditions of the prosocial model. In the end, the youths were able to take the learned skills to their
respective communities. As a result, the creative arts were able to help them bridge the gap between the world of incarceration and the free world (Emerson & Shelton, 2001).

Rickson and Watkins (2003) investigated whether or not music was an effective medium to promote prosocial skills in a group of aggressive, adolescent boys in a classroom setting. The use of music therapy as an intervention for aggressive behavior in adolescent boys with social and emotional and learning difficulties positively enhanced the prosocial behaviors in these youths. The research sample consisted of 18 participants who were randomly assigned to two music therapy groups and a waitlist group. Rickson and Watkins used a client-centered, humanistic model of psychotherapy. The music therapy consisted of 16 sessions of 30–45 minutes. The goal of the program was to use the group music process to increase the adolescents’ awareness of their feelings and the feelings of others. Specifically, the program’s goal was twofold. The first anticipated goal was that by experiencing recognition as a result of group participation, the participants would develop an intrinsic feeling resulting from being an invaluable group member. The second anticipated goal was that the group setting would provide an avenue for peer relationships based on respect and trust. The participants were required to bring their own music selection; personalized songs requiring greetings and the shaking of hands among peers were encouraged. Active, rhythm-based activities through improvisation were included as well as caring for musical instruments and group song writing. The findings suggested that music therapy indeed helped adolescent, aggressive boys to develop positive relationships with peers without severe attentional deficits (Rickson & Watkins, 2003).

Gold et al. used various types of musical activities, such as singing, listening to music, or playing music, to modify behavior. They concluded that music therapy was an effective intervention in children and adolescents with psychopathology. The researchers further stated that the benefits of music therapy were most effective when various forms of music therapy were combined. Additionally, R. Larson (1995) asserted that listening to music effectively allowed adolescents to deal with stress and negative emotion by regulating their moods. Moreover, F. Baker and Bor (2008) found that music regulated emotions by temporarily allowing an escape from thoughts and feelings; validating emotions; or releasing unexpressed emotions such as anxiety, anger, and energy.

The aggressive behavior in youths today impelled Krahe and Bieneck (2012) to investigate the potential impact of music on behavior by affecting mood, cognition, and behavior. According to Krahe and Bieneck, the impact of music on behavior may be either positive or adverse. Researchers have proven that music may be viewed as pleasing or full of torture, depending on the intent of the stimulus (Krahe & Bieneck, 2012). Wigram and De Backer (1999), additional proponents of music therapy, postulated that the use of music-based therapy in children and adolescent has long been a standard practice. Smeijsters, Kil, Kurstjens, Welten, and Willemars (2011) confirmed that the use of the arts as intervention has been credited by researchers to reduce aggression, anger, and tension and to increase emotional expression, coping skills, compliance with rules, and social skills.

Another aspect of arts-based research was the use of dance as an intervention with a sample of 31 psychiatric patients who were all diagnosed with various degrees of depression (Koch, Molinghaus, & Fuchs, 2007). The investigators used a three-group, repeated design in comparing three groups. More specifically, Koch et al. (2007)
explained that one group consisted of movement only, another group consisted of
dancing without music using rhythmic jumps to evoke joy, and the third group was
assigned to dance along with music. Koch et al. found that the depression level of
research subjects who had participated in the group who joyfully danced without music
had significantly decreased. However, the depression scores for the participating subjects
in the other two groups did not change. Besides having an intrinsic impact, the prosocial
aspect of dance movements was proven in a study by Behrends, Muller, and Dziobek
(2012), who determined that the use of interactional, coordinated dance movement
increased prosocial behavior in participants who had deficits in empathy by generating
empathetic feelings within them.

Farr (1997) described Thorpe as a reputable dance historian. Thorpe (1994) stated
that dance is as natural and instinctive to Blacks as conversation. Thorpe added that
human emotions such as joy, sorrow, anger, fear, pity, and religious ecstasy are ordinarily
displayed through dance on a daily basis by African Americans. Farr noted that African
American children outnumber European American children by more than twice at state
and county psychiatric mental health facilities. These children often are diagnosed with
adjustment disorder, coupled with a lack of socialization skills and impulse control.
These children’s distress is manifested in noticeable expressions of anger and antisocial
behavior. Most importantly, Farr confirmed that culturally speaking, Blacks as a people
are intrinsically expressive both physically and emotionally. Therefore, Farr suggested
that dance therapy may be considered as a potential means of treatment for at-risk
African American youths. Granted, all Black children are not necessarily great dancers or
prone to angry outbursts. However, in order to promote the affirmation of the African
American adolescent’s struggle for success, Farr strongly recommended including dance
in an intervention program to provide a dynamic and expressive arena for restoring children’s psychosocial abilities.

**Deficiencies in the evidence.** Despite the documented increase in incidents of violent behavior by girls, Burnett, South, and Reppucci (2007) noted that the inquiry into girls’ aggressiveness has not been as extensive as that of boys’ aggression. Kostiuk and Fouts (2002) acknowledged that the reason for such a wealth of investigation of the behavior of male children as opposed to girls is the frequent physical diagnosis of antisocial behavior in adolescent boys. Kostiuk and Fouts further added that most often the antisocial acts of these adolescent boys are extremely brutal. Kostiuk and Fouts, in agreement with Nagin and Tremblay (1999), further elaborated that boys’ brutal acts were without a doubt associated with future adult criminality and violent crimes. Additionally, boys’ antisocial behavior has been shown to be more costly to society that that of girls (Fontaine et al., 2008). These concerns account for the emphasis on research aimed at understanding the male behavior. Unfortunately, girls’ aggressiveness had been underestimated due to its social nature (Bjorkqvist, 1994). Bjorkqvist (1994) further suggested that the exact social nature of girls’ aggression led some researchers to believe that girls were less aggressive than boys. However, the longstanding myth that girls are less aggressive than boys was dispelled by Vaillancourt, Brendgen, Boivin, and Tremblay (2003). Nonetheless, the lack of research on girls’ antisocial behavior has limited the understanding of the development of aggressive behavior in girls (Burnette et al., 2007; Kostiuk & Fouts, 2002).

Although all female delinquencies do not necessarily result in violence, the reasons for girls’ engagement in aggressive behavior are still being investigated (Ryder, 2007). Ryder (2007) pointed out that numerous criminological studies have focused on
adults and females; however, the trauma of childhood maltreatment is often overlooked in the analysis of juvenile violence. Ryder further articulated that much research continues to focus on males as the primary subjects. According to Jowers (2009), although some researchers have criticized the reference of relational aggression as girls’ aggression, research has proven that girls tend to act more relationally than boys. Moreover, Jowers suggested that failure to prevent or discontinue aggressive behavior leads to disruptive behavior and adverse outcomes in children’s lives, suggesting that additional effort must be made in both the prevention and intervention process of research.

According to Young, Nelson, Hottle, Warburton, and Young (2011), the limited understating of relational aggressive behavior has caused school staff to overlook it and focus only on physical aggressive behavior. Young et al. suggested that school leaders specifically renew their attention to the relational issue and not only prevent but to also design intervention programs geared at eliminating relational aggressive behavior. Moreover, the treatment of relational aggression is usually accomplished by teaching adolescents positive behaviors and by encouraging children to work in groups.

In the process of addressing aggressive behavior, researchers have long studied the used of arts-based therapy such as music and dance as catalysts to improve self-esteem, increase empowerment, and improve quality of life by increasing prosocial skills in adolescents with aggressive behavior (Davis, 1998; Pacchetti et al., 2000; Smeijsters et al., 2011; Tervo, 2001; Williams & Taylor, 2004). Ledger and Edwards (2011) stated that researchers have proven the use of arts-based methods provides a powerful conduit for exploring aspects of life such as subjective experiences and strong emotions that may not be expressed otherwise. Unfortunately, music therapy has been understudied, according
to Ledger and Edwards. Therefore, the authors maintained that researchers should proceed with caution in their investigation and ensure that the focus of arts-based research remains on expressing and reflecting the research materials as opposed to producing critically acclaimed work.

**Audience.** Studies have documented that children continue to suffer silently with the never-ending cycle of mistrust, unconstrained parental power, ego identity, role confusion, and peer pressure (Cecil et al., 2008). Breslow (1992) postulated that, from the age of puberty, adolescents need a dominant male model. The effect of the absence of a male figure in the lives of the children was the motivating stimulus for this investigation. The possible benefits of such a study would be priceless in terms of human capital, whereby both the New York Family Independence Administration and the community would benefit. The positive coping and anger-management skills acquired could serve as a catalyst for the reduction of dysfunctional behaviors in the youths involved, thus ending a life reliant on governmental dependency.

According to Jenlink (1993), in order for a child to thrive and become a productive adult in society, that child requires positive self-esteem. Jenlink contended that there are no boundaries when it comes to behavior change through music. The use of music as a form of expression is a powerful tool of expression, whereby words and sound are combined to deliver a message (Jenlink, 1993). Additionally, Jenlink pointed out that research has proven that music enhances self-concept and coping skills of children. In a research study with children who were considered at risk, Jenlink proved that the arts provided self-expression, pride, and accomplishment; as a result, the self-esteem of the children increased. Moreover, Choi, Soo Lee, and Lee (2010) proved that a music intervention was able to reduce aggressive behavior and also increase self-esteem.
in highly aggressive children.

Therefore, the hypothesis was an arts-based program consisting of music and dance would enable aggressive, adolescent girls to become independent and self-sufficient members of society in the future. Presumably, finding a positive outlet to unleash negative feelings could prevent these at-risk children from becoming social deviants or mere statistics. Furthermore, offering other alternatives and also teaching potential skills to these at-risk children should facilitate the agency’s overall mission of bringing all able-bodied individuals and consumers to self-dependency. Additionally, the empowerment of these at-risk children could enable them to develop into contributing members of society, as opposed to being potential dependents of the social-service infrastructure.

The target population was African American girls ages 8–17 with anger behavior who were being reared by a single mother. Those who benefited include the girls, who might be able to gain insight into their behavior and how it affected others. The single mothers also might acquire insight into the reasons their children were acting the way they were. As a result, custodial parents might be able to use an appropriate strategy to address the behavior before it escalated into a problem. Moreover, researchers can create intervention tools to aid these girls in not perpetuating this cycle of dysfunction. Lastly, society as a whole benefits, because if this research granted an insight into just one aggressive teen, that would be one less possible crime statistic.

Another model of intervention for violence prevention was the hip hop music-intervention used by Staszko (2005). Staszko devised an anger-coping program as an intervention for aggressive youths. The hip hop music program consisted of 12 sessions of 90 minutes each. The initial step required the participating children to form a
perception in reference to their anger trigger. The second step was for the participants to devise an appropriate reaction to address the perceived threat. Staszko posited that the cognitive emotional processing of the perceived threat followed by a planned response ultimately would lead to a positive behavioral response. Staszko indicated that the program incorporated preselected hip hop songs as a medium for discussion along with training on self-instruction, perspective, and problem solving.

**Definition of Terms**

**Absent father.** McBurnett and Pfiffner (2007) described an absent father as a father who does not participate in the rearing of his child. More recently, Mancini (2010) stated that absent fathers cover a wide array of conditions, such as separation, divorce, incarceration, and death. Military and traveling fathers are also considered as being absent fathers (Mancini, 2010). Mancini elaborated that among all of these conditions, divorce has been credited for 49% of fathers’ absence in the American home.

**Aggressive behavior.** Becker et al. (2008) stated that children with aggressive behavior react aggressively to others in various antisocial manners. Becker et al. elaborated that antisocial behavior from these children may be expressed in the form of bullying, threatening, intimidating, or initiating fights with or without a weapon. Becker et al. further noted that this violent, pushy, and cruel behavior is mostly directed at people and at times animals. Connor (2004) observed that such behavior is motivated by a disposition to dominate another by pursuing the opponent with determined energy while intentionally disregarding the rights of the other party.

**Arts-based therapy.** McNiff (1998) suggested that arts-based therapy is the systematic use of the artistic process in order to generate artistic expression, by incorporating different forms of arts in order to accomplish an individualized goal within
a therapeutic relationship. Arts-based therapy uses painting, singing, drumming, and dancing; the client is encouraged to use the medium best suited to express the particular problem he or she is experiencing. Additionally, a systematic review of research using arts-based therapy has proven that the results most often confirmed a reduction in aggression, anger, tension, cognitive distortion. Research using arts-based therapy also has confirmed an increase of compliance with rules and social skills, improvements in impulse control, emotional expression, and increased coping skills (Smeijsters et al., 2011).

At risk. Terminologies such as at risk and endangered species are used to refer to poor Black youths who are living in substandard environmental conditions, which makes them vulnerable to social and psychological dysfunction in present-day society (Farr, 1997; Gibbs, 1984, 1989).

Cognitive behavior. According to Fritscher (2009), cognitive behavior is a type of therapy that is commonly used for treating phobias. Fritscher further articulated that cognitive behavioral therapy focuses on eradicating the involuntary negative thoughts that are associated with a feared object or situation and using rational thoughts to replace the negative thoughts.

Family Independence Administration. According to the New York City Human Resources Administration (2011), the Family Independence Administration is under the umbrella of the Human Resources Administration Department of Social Services. As an organization, the Family Independence Administration coordinates the Job Center operations as well as the Food Stamps program in New York City. Its main function is to provide cash assistance, food stamps, and medical assistance as well as employment services to people in need. Furthermore, the Family Independence Administration
operates a variety of work and support programs designed to promote maximum self-sufficiency by enabling its customers to overcome any barriers preventing them from obtaining and retaining gainful employment (New York City Human Resources Administration, 2011).

**Overt or physical aggressive behavior.** Phelan (2008) stated that overt or physical aggressive behavior consists of pushing, kicking, hitting, name calling and any other blatant physical attack. This behavior is considered antisocial and therefore offensive, but it is easily observed and is more often associated with boys than girls.

**Relational aggressive behavior.** According to Phelan (2008), relational aggression is also referred to as indirect or social aggression. Relational aggression has been found to be just as volatile and harmful as overt or physical aggression. Relational aggression is a subtle and malicious form of behavior that is very difficult to notice (Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008). This type of antisocial behavior takes the form of lying, backstabbing, ostracizing others, spreading rumors, ignoring others, rolling one’s eyes, or being verbally cruel to others (Merrell et al., 2008). Moreover, Phelan ascertained that this complex adverse behavior has been recently attributed to girls who purposely choose to destroy the reputation, self-esteem, and social standing of others within their circle, while remaining anonymous. These girls do so by spreading malicious rumors (Coyne, Archer, & Elsa, 2006; Phelan, 2008).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research was to determine the effectiveness of a music- and dance-based intervention program as an outlet of self-expression in reducing anger and anxiety behavior in adolescent and preadolescent girls. Given that Hess and Hagen (2006) has proven that aggression undeterred in children continues to increase well
beyond adolescent years, it is of utmost importance to devise and implement strategies to address this growing problem. In a 30-year, longitudinal study of children with aggressive behavior, Temcheff et al. (2008) confirmed that childhood aggression was a definitive precursor to parents’ violence against their own children, hence confirming aggressive behavior as a generational cycle. Additionally, Temcheff et al. revealed that the long-lasting, negative impact associated with childhood aggressive behavior and the absence of a biological father in the lives of their daughters confirms continuity of problematic, aggressive behavior from childhood to future adulthood.

Riebel, Jager, and Fischer (2009) declared that today’s adolescents have incorporated the use of technology as a tool of violence; this new subcategory of aggressive behavior is currently referred to as cyber bullying. Riebel et al. defined this type of aggression as an unfair, repetitive, hurtful attack through the Internet directed at a less powerful individual.

Piquero, Brame, and Moffit (2005) acknowledged that 1 in 4 children who bully has a criminal record by the age of 30. Consequently, Piquero et al. certified that the tendency for violence is already formed by the end of an individual’s adolescent years. Research has proven that the onset of aggressive behavior typically occurs in the early years of a child’s life or during adolescence (Piquero et al., 2005). Furthermore, research has proven that the onset of relational aggression is evident in preschoolers; as they master verbal, social, and cognitive skills, they are able to react relationally against their peers (Crick, Casas, & Ku, 1999). According to Jowers (2009), although some researchers have criticized the reference of relational aggression as girls’ aggression, research has proven that girls do have the tendency to act more relationally than boys. Moreover, Jowers suggested that failure to prevent or discontinue aggressive behavior
leads to disruptive behavior and adverse outcomes in children’s lives, suggesting that additional effort must be made in both the prevention and intervention process of research. Moreover, Allen (2010) affirmed that when aggression is addressed at an early age, the antisocial behavior has the propensity not to escalate into a more severe problem. Lastly, aggressive behavior is very complex; this antisocial behavior can be expressed either overtly or relationally (Allen, 2010).

The research relied on key informants and the target populations. The writer introduced a music- and dance-based intervention program as a positive outlet to enable the children to unleash their negative feelings. The short-term goal was to teach the children to voice and redirect their anger to appropriate channels rather than acting out or transferring their anger inappropriately. The long-term goal was to be able to create a support program for preadolescent and adolescent girls, where they could vent and channel their anger in a safe outlet and a confidential environment, as opposed to displaying aggressive behavior among one another.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem under review was the increase of aggressive behavior of preadolescent and adolescent girls being reared without their fathers. The focus of the review was the conceptualization of the problem, followed by theoretical issues of the problem. In addition, the review covered the literature on solutions and intervention strategies others have developed to address the problem. Lastly, the chapter provides a summary and conclusion based on the literature and the research questions developed to guide this study. The review covered the last 10 years of published research.

Increase in Aggression Among Girls

According to a study by Roe-Sepowitz (2007), adolescent violence is on the rise and remains a serious problem in the United States. The problem is so severe that the Bureau of Justice Statistics (as cited in Roe-Sepowitz, 2007) reported an increase of 4.8% of murders from 2004 to 2005. Out of these offenders, 11% were females under the age of 18 (Roe-Sepowitz, 2007). From 1991 to 2000, reports noted an increase in aggressive behavior in adolescent girls globally (Zahn et al., 2010). Recently Letendre (2007) confirmed that adolescent boys were no longer the sole perpetrators of violent crimes. This phenomenon requires further investigation as to the causes of antisocial behavior in girls.

Blake and Hamrin (2007) noted that females account for 18% of violent crimes committed by adolescents. Blake and Hamrin contended that anger is a negative, destructive emotion that can be expressed in either a constructive or destructive manner. Unfortunately, research has proven that too many adolescents, more specifically girls, have chosen the latter choice (Pepler, Craig, Yuile, & Connolly, 2004). Molnar, Cerda, Roberts, and Buka (2008) affirmed the trend of increased aggressive behavior in
adolescent girls. 

Despite other statistics showing the increase in youth violence, Steffensmeir, Schwartz, Zhong, and Ackerman (2005) refuted these reports and attempted to demonstrate that the data showing an increase in the number of violent crimes were by no means accurate. By applying the Dickey Fuller time-series techniques in tandem with intuitive plot display, Steffensmeir et al. declared that the three major longitudinal-data reporting sources for youth violence (namely the Uniform Crimes Reports; victimization data from the National Victimization Survey; and the self-reported violent behavior survey, Monitoring the Future and National Youth Risk Behavior Survey) were reporting exaggerated data on the increase in girls’ aggression. Steffensmeir et al. affirmed that the marked increase being observed was attributed to changes in policies coupled with present-day strategies being employed by society as a result of intolerance of youth violence. In a research agenda, Cunningham (2000) proposed that the widespread increase in data is the direct result of the law’s application of punishment as a deterrent for adolescent girls from committing violent crimes.

However, N. Morris (2008) as well as Avci and Gucray (2010) have declared that the current dramatic increase of violence among adolescents is at such a disturbing level that researchers are viewing this development as a global phenomenon. Avci and Gucray indicated that this trend is so alarming that the Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Report has documented that arrests of adolescent girls have increased from 20% of the total number of juvenile arrests nationwide in 1980 to 30% in 2005. Artz and Nicholson (2002) suggested that aggressive behavior in adolescent girls may be the result of the following: father’s absence, childhood poverty, inadequate parental supervision, mental health of parent and youths, physical abuse, and attachment issues with the
custodial parent, which more often than not is the mother (Artz & Nicholson, 2002).

Ngo and Lee (2007) postulated that a plethora of research has documented that the ills facing youth are directly attributed to the adults in their lives. Ngo and Lee described these adults as producers of life stressors. For instance, an astounding 1.5 million children are products of a single-parent household due to the incarceration of one parent (Travis, 2005). In addition, the maladjustment of teens can be triggered by such life stressors as child poverty, death, relocation, drug abuse, child abuse, or divorce (Ngo & Lee, 2007). The following are the risk factors capable of adversely impacting adolescent aggressive behavior.

Factors Contributing to Antisocial Behavior in Children

Divorce. Divorce statistics in the United States are currently reported at 50%, according to J. Baker (2010), paralleling the increase of aggressive behavior in adolescents. Moreover, in a review of literature, Nunes-Costa et al. (2009) attributed the alarming rate of family disruption resulting from divorce as a leading contributor to the adverse psychological maladjustment and health of children. Nunes-Costa et al. further specified that the adverse impact was a direct result of the risk factors caused by stressors accompanied with divorce. Evidence has suggested that divorce is the key attributing factor that accounts for more single-parent households (“U.S. Divorce Statistics,” 2008). Bramlett and Mosher (2001) contended that 26.5% of today’s married women will be divorced within the next 10 years. Furthermore, according to 2001 data from the National Center for Health and Sciences (as cited in DeLucia-Waack & Gellman, 2007), 43% of first marriages will be dissolved or separated within 15 years of marriage.

Absent father. Strug and Wilmore-Schaeffer (2003) acknowledged that noncustodial fathers along with single fathers who are raising their children alone are the
fastest growing group of fathers to date. However, there seems to be a lack of focus from the scientific world on this group (Strug & Wilmore-Schaeffer, 2003). The importance of fathers to children has elicited a flood of research demonstrating that children can positively benefit from the involvement of a nurturing father in their lives. Notably, Strug and Wilmore-Schaeffer described fathers as being men who are married, divorced, separated, or cohabitating. Moreover, the term father encompasses single men who have obtained custody of their children, including unwed fathers (Strug & Wilmore-Schaeffer, 2003).

All too often, however, fathers become absent fathers. Divorce is the key attributing factor to the absence of fathers in the home (“U.S. Divorce Statistics,” 2008). According to the Canadian Children’s Rights Council (n.d.), a father in the household ensures the safety of the daughters and deters sexual abuse. Twenty percent of fathers surveyed in reference to their children’s gender reported that they felt that their daughters required protection (Rouyer, Frascarolo, Zaouche-Gaudron, & Lavachy, 2007).

Krohn and Bogan (2001) defined absent fathers as those who do not interact with their children on a regular basis. Consequently, these fathers, especially those with daughters, have failed to play a significant role in the development of their children (McLanahan & Carlson, 2004). Research has proven that the gender of a child was often a determining factor in the father’s involvement in the child’s life for both single and married fathers, according to Lundberg, McLanahan, and Rose (2007). Lundberg et al. (2007) posited that fathers were more likely to be involved with their child if the child was a son as opposed to being a daughter. Lundberg et al. also acknowledged that fathers of boys were more willing to financially support their child, take ownership of their child by providing the child with their last name, and live with their child longer during the
early years of life. Lundberg et al. suggested that the impact of a male child on the attitudes of fathers may be attributed to the fathers’ belief that they are more important to the long-term development of boys than girls.

Divorce, death, and abandonment are all forms of absences that may affect female development in different ways. McLanahan and Carlson (2004) reiterated that a large body of research has proven that the age a daughter loses her father is meaningful, influencing her future in terms of male relationships, her view of the world, and academic achievement. Other researchers concurred that the age that a daughter loses a father is significant, impacting her future relationships and academic success (Mandara, Murray, & Joyner, 2005; Rosenberg & Wilcox, 2006).

According to Hansen (2009), fathers play a restraining role in the lives of their children. Hansen also affirmed that children communicate the loss or lack of father by acting out. McMillan et al. (2006) agreed that children who feel deprived of psychological support in the home may exhibit antisocial behavior as a result. McMillan et al. elaborated that the resultant antisocial behavior from these children is generated by the emotional despair and belief that others will not provide for them. McMillan et al. established that these children act out in order to generate a response from their environment. These acting out incidents include stealing, lying, and inflicting abuse on others with total disregard of the harm that they are causing (McMillan et al., 2006).

Statistics have confirmed that fatherless homes account for 63% of youth suicides, 90% of homeless and runaway children, 85% of children with behavior problems, 71% of high school dropouts, 85% of youths in prison, and well over 50% of teen mothers (“U.S. Divorce Statistics,” 2008).

N. Barber (2004) tested an evolutionary hypothesis by predicting that countries
with a high ratio of single parents also would have a high level of mating aggression, which would translate into a high rate of incidents of violence. N. Barber credited the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) for providing data collected from 39 countries. N. Barber indicated that the independent variables consisted of the illegitimacy ratio obtained from the United Nations for 1990. The dependent variable was the number of aggressive crimes (1 million murders, rapes, and serious assaults), and the control variable was the per capita gross national product of the countries involved (N. Barber, 2004). Furthermore, the United Nations validated the murder rate with data of homicides that occurred in 27 countries during 1988, according to N. Barber. In addition, N. Barber reported that the two data sources were strongly correlated, \( r (25) = .77, p < .001 \), supporting the mutual validity of the sample. According to N. Barber, the data from Interpol were criticized for its content validity due to a lack of uniformity of data collections and definition of crimes. According to N. Barber, the validity of the data was supported by World Health Organization crime statistics. In support of the Interpol data, N. Barber confirmed that due to the statistical similarity of the United Nations data and the World Health Organization data, the Interpol data were suitable for calculating cross national hypothesis comparisons with the acknowledgement of some internal error, which could ultimately reduce effects size and invalidate negative findings.

The astounding result was a correlation between violent crimes and the lack of a father. N. Barber (2004) further indicated that these statistics were not a significant factor 18 years prior to the study. According to the Canadian Children’s Rights Council (n.d.), children reared without their fathers were 8 times more likely to go to prison, 5 times more likely to commit suicide, 20 times more likely to have behavioral problems, 32 times more likely to become runaways, 10 times more likely to abuse chemical
substances, 9 times more likely to drop out of high school, and a 10th as likely to get an A in school.

Recently, Lamb (2010) affirmed that research studies have shown children can benefit from an involved relationship with and nurturing from their fathers. Lamb further stated that the father’s status may be obtained through either paternity or social context. Bzostek (2007) compared children’s behavior and outcomes of children with a biological father as opposed to those who were being raised with a socially constructed father (e.g., a stepfather). The family structure had no bearing, because although children who were raised with a social father had better outcomes, children who were raised with their biological fathers were less aggressive (Bzostek, 2007).

Siegel and Welsh (2008) confirmed that a third of the 24 million children in the United States lives in a home without a father. Siegel and Welsh contended that the absence of a father in the home has been linked to early puberty in girls and promiscuity. Moreover, the children were tested, and a particular gene pattern with a short AR allele was associated with assaultive behavior and impulsiveness, including but not limited to sexual compulsiveness (Siegel & Welsh, 2008). The presence of the AR pattern was indicative of divorced fathers, and these absent fathers were contributing to the rate of abandonment. In addition, early puberty has genetic roots. More specifically, Siegel and Welsh elaborated that the research certified that the father passes the genes to their daughters that result in dysfunctional and antisocial behavior. Additionally, evidence has suggested that the mere presence of a father in the life of the child may provide the child with the self-regulation skills required to inhibit impulsiveness, which may be a predictor of aggressive behavior (Meece & Mize, 2008).

A father’s absence not only hinders the daughter’s ability to make sound decisions
but also triggers negative behaviors as opposed to positive ones (McLanahan & Carlson, 2004). Rosenberg and Wilcox (2006) affirmed that healthy child development was linked to the degree of the father’s importance in children’s lives. D. Larson and Dehle (2007) indicated that parental emotional support did not directly predict teen aggressive behavior; however, studies have confirmed that teen victims usually become violent offenders (Roe-Sepowitz, 2007). Research has proven that a daughter’s security is dependent on a father’s philosophy of life (Rosenberg & Wilcox 2006).

However, research also has proven that the father’s absence does not have an aversive impact on the children’s behavior before the child is 4 years old (Marshall, English, & Stewart, 2001). On a positive note, by the age of 6 there had been a significant reduction in the aggressive behavior of children with the mere presence of a masculine figure in the home (Marshall et al., 2001). In some cases, it was not even the biological father.

**Nontraditional families.** Increasingly, fewer children are being raised in a nonnuclear family. A nuclear family is a family unit consisting of a set of biological parents. This emergence of nonnuclear families can be attributed to current trends in marriage and childbearing options (Bzostek, 2007). Fry, Hawdon, Shoemaker, and Mekolichic (2010) suggested that the alarming rise in girls’ delinquency may be attributed to changes in family structure of these children.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), a family is a group of two or more people related by blood, marriage, or adoption. U.S. society has developed a more inclusive perspective of the family, making allowances for dual parents, single parents, adoptions, and gay or lesbian parents (Shankle, 2006). Heinemann (2004) suggested that there is not a wealth of data and theories of healthy development of children from
nontraditional families, more specifically the children of gay and lesbian parents. Unfortunately, the long-standing antipathy between the homosexual community and psychoanalytic community may be a restraining factor preventing homosexual parents from approaching the psychoanalytical community for help in forming and understanding their families (Heinemann, 2004). Stress can be generated by parenting in all couples (“Section VIII Panel,” 2004). Psychoeducational workshops are required in order for psychoanalysts to be able to understand issues facing nontraditional couples and to be able to provide the support needed to same-sex families (“Section VIII Panel,” 2004).

The absence of biological parents has caused a great number of grandparents to assume the role of surrogate parents to their grandchildren (Smith, Palmieri, Hancock, & Richardson, 2008). Smith et al. (2008) documented that in the Year 2000, 2.4 million grandparents were the primary care givers to their grandchildren. Furthermore, among these families, it is common to encounter psychological distress in the grandmother and maladjustment in the dependent grandchild (Smith et al., 2008). Moreover, Smith et al. confirmed that custodial grandchildren have a tendency to be poor, without medical insurance and in receipt of public assistance. Having to deal with economic stress contributes to parenting stress or even inadequate parenting (Smith et al., 2008).

Sischy (1999) contended that in the past children initially received their identity imprint through the extended family that was created through a tribal background. Therefore, Sischy indicated that the concept that one or two adults can raise children in a complex culture has turned the immediate family into an unhealthy social unit. In other words, there is truth to the old African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child” (Rodham-Clinton, 2006).

The breakdown in the family has caused great concern, as documented by
Bosman (2008) in a Father’s Day speech by Barack Obama. Then a U.S. Senator, Obama (as cited in Bosman, 2008) acknowledged that single-family households had reached a monumental number. Obama compelled absent fathers to embrace their responsibility by taking charge of raising their children. Obama (as cited in Bosman, 2008) appealed to the absent and nonparticipating fathers by informing them that in order for children to reach their fullest potential, they needed an unconditionally loving and supportive family, one able to guarantee adequate nurturing and required comfort and protection from harm. Recently, President Obama (as cited in Powell Hammond, Howard Caldwell, Brooks, & Bell, 2011) challenged African American fathers to elevate the standard of fatherhood by becoming fathers who are present in the lives of their children as opposed to being an absent father.

However, others have argued that the destruction of the Black family was orchestrated by the U.S. government. Paradoxically, McNatt (1992) acknowledged that the crumbling of the Black family was a direct result of social welfare policies. McNatt added that during the 1960s, President Lyndon Johnson declared a war on poverty by increasing welfare in the Great Society movement. However, McNatt articulated that the conservatives enacted and implemented an eligibility requirement of no man in the household. Unfortunately, during that same period, McNatt claimed, the country experienced an economical decline; thus, a low-income male wage earner who lost his job was forced to leave the family in order for the mother to receive aid for the children. These policies were so astringent that they loosely included cohabitation with another adult of family member as a reason to become ineligible to receive public funds (Batlan & Gordon, 2004).

Herman and Peterson (2008) and Sinkford (2008) echoed that in order for the
Black family to be healthy, society first must rebuild the man who is the integral part of every family unit. In doing so, fathers would be able to regain their proper position as the leaders and nurturers of their children, thus, removing government in the form of social services from their lives. Studies have proven that frequently, the absence of the father was unwilling; these fathers were forced out of the family under the guise of child-support collection (Baskerville, 2008). The impact of welfare policies on childhood poverty and fatherlessness is discussed in a later section of this literature review.

According to Powell Hammond et al. (2011), the negative stereotype of the African American father is difficult to dispel, because it has long been embedded in U.S. social-services policies. Powell Hammond et al. argued that nonresidential status of these fathers did not necessarily translate into a diminished father–child relationship. This negative reputation given African American fathers was borne out of the preconceived assumption that these fathers were less likely to pay child support, which was translated into lack of paternal involvement from the point of view of the policy makers (Powell Hammond et al., 2011).

Powell Hammond et al. (2011) further explained African American fathers have tried to participate in the socioemotional development of their children in spite of restraining structural and economic barriers. Powell Hammond et al. criticized the welfare-reform policy makers who had envisioned the improved involvement of nonresidential fathers. During the period of 1970–1990, there was an overwhelming increase in single-mother homes. Mather (2010) explained that the rapid increase in single-parent homes was perceived by policy makers as being attributable to welfare or the overall receipt of public assistance. As a result, these policy makers were prompted to reorganize the welfare system. The goals of the policy makers were to maintain two-
parent households in order to guarantee better outcomes for the children involved. Unfortunately, these good intentions have failed to lead to greater role fulfillment among fathers. In the past when it was economically crucial for the father not to reside in the family as a result of alienating social-service policies, these fathers demonstrated their effort to establish and retain emotional contact with their children (Powell Hammond et al., 2011).

Moreover, Mather (2010) further documented that during the past 30 years there has been an increase in single mothers who have never married. Mather also confirmed that 53% of single-mother homes are a direct result of divorce. Similarly, Baskerville (2008) contended that the assumption of an uncaring father is a force created by divorce lawyers and mothers. Furthermore, Baskerville (2008) cited a study showing that the majority of divorces were initiated by disgruntled mothers, who were guaranteed custody of their children along with a great deal of the father’s money. However, Siegel and Welsh (2008) reported that children being raised without their fathers were 5 times more likely to be poor.

**Poverty.** There has been a growing concern over the link between neighborhood poverty on child and youth academic performance and dysfunctional behavior (Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2009). Therefore, a research study was conducted to evaluate the stress-process model of children to exposure to violence. The research consisted of a national sample of 2- to 9-year-old children with single parents or stepparents (Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2009). Single-parent families had a higher level of child maltreatment, and these children also of witnessed more family violence than those in two-parent households (Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2009). The study suggested that youths exposed to high levels of violence in their community are predisposed to emotional numbing and desensitization,
which promotes high level of pathological behavior (Foster & Brooks-Gunn, J., 2009).

Rupp (2007) also articulated that most of the poor children residing in inner cities have witnessed a great deal of violence. Rupp reported that 47% of these children have been witness to murder, 56% have witnessed a stabbing, and 70% have witnessed a shooting. Additional research determined that out of the extreme violence witnessed by these children while living in their community, only 7% of these incidents occurred in their homes. Rupp cited a large body of research proving that minority children residing in poor communities in the United States had a greater chance of being witness to such horrific violence than did youths residing in rich suburbs. The exposure to violence causes children increased mental health issues and adverse academic and social outcomes (Rupp, 2007). Ultimately, reports have identified poverty as being one of the potential risks for dysfunctional behavior in children (Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2009).

Additional Winslow and Shaw (2007) documented factors, such as poverty and affluence within the community, impact adolescent behavior. Winslow and Shaw concluded that violent and offending behavior most often flourishes in urban areas with a high rate of poverty. These economic hardships include welfare use, government-subsidized housing, and residential instability, with a majority of residents who are of immigrant descent and minorities (Winslow & Shaw, 2007).

**Impact of social services on children of poverty.** According to Neukrug (2007), throughout the history of social services, legislation often has failed to address the individual’s needs based on his or her uniqueness; rather, the legislation passed has focused on economics and the needy as collective entities. This was the case initially in the United States during the Great Depression of 1929 (Jansson, 2004). When the family structure began to shatter as a result of poverty, the government was compelled to act
(Jansson, 2004). Jansson (2004) elaborated that for the first time in history, the plight of poverty affected every race. According to Jansson, both mothers and fathers were being forced to leave their children in orphanages at an alarming rate, due to the economic abyss of the Great Depression. Uys (2003) reported that at the peak of the Great Depression, America was plagued with 250,000 homeless teenagers who were referred to as “teenage hoboes” (p. 11). Uys explained that some of these teenagers left home because they felt that they were a financial burden on their families, whereas others left home in order to escape the trauma of their shattered families resulting from the shame of unemployment and poverty.

Meanwhile, Snyder (2004) postulated that the needs of the poor in the United States were concretely addressed during the tenure of President Roosevelt when he implemented the New Deal. According to Snyder, the New Deal’s objectives were recovery, relief, and reform. Snyder noted that President Roosevelt also instituted the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Snyder, in agreement with Jansson (2004), confirmed that this act established the responsibility of the federal government to address the social needs of its citizens. Hence, Jansson further articulated that the federal government provided relief to assist stressed persons through direct monetary payments. In addition, Jansson explained the government provided jobs and mortgage loans as measures to lift the nation out of depression. Jansson also contended that the Social Security Act of 1935, protected American workers aged 65 and over and established unemployment insurance. Lastly, Jansson confirmed that provisions were made in the legislation to provide Food Stamps and medical assistance to war veterans, their children, and their widows. This implementation meant that welfare had assumed the role of fatherhood (White, 2006). Subsequently, in the 1960s, the U.S. Department of Welfare
encouraged the disenfranchisement of the Black family unit by implementing policies to keep the father out of the home as part of eligibility requirements (White, 2006).

Jansson (2004) stated that children’s poverty was recognized, leading to the establishment of Aid to Dependent Children. Unlike the other programs, it stripped the recipients of their dignity by initially allocating benefits to the children and not to their custodial parents. Many social laws were passed during the 1960s, including motions to fight the War on Poverty; the Area Redevelopment Act of 1961, which attempted to address the issue of employment; the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962, which provided funds for displaced workers; and the Public Welfare Act of 1962, which provided social services to recipients and Aid to Families With Dependent Children (Jansson, 2004). Snyder (2004) indicated that the benefit eligibility for Aid to Families With Dependent Children was not only economic; unfortunately, the recipients were measured both on need and worthiness. Snyder further certified that in order to remain eligible for public assistance the recipients were required to adhere to standards that were determined and implemented by state officials. For instance, the fathers of the children had to be completely absent as an eligibility requirement (Snyder, 2004).

Neubeck and Cazenave (2001) confirmed that in 1960 Louisiana revoked the eligibility of 6,000 families that included 22,000 children from the Louisiana State Welfare rolls. Neubeck and Cazenave elaborated that this action was a direct result of the new suitable law enacted by the state legislation. These homes were deemed unsuitable (ineligible) because the mother had given birth to an additional child out of wedlock while in receipt of public assistance (Neubeck & Cazenave, 2001).

A. R. Roberts (2004) also contended that Black welfare recipients were plagued with stereotype stigmas, such as being lazy, dependent, and depraved. According to
Jansson (2004), the aid was provided to encourage welfare recipients to work and obtain self-sufficiency, but the plan backfired. During the 1960s, welfare rolls increased significantly, because of rising divorce rates and a sharp rise in single-parent households, not to mention unemployment and underemployment (Snyder, 2004).

Snyder (2004) also maintained that during the 1980s, poverty increased as a result of President Reagan’s policies. Snyder elaborated that, President Reagan believed in the trickle-down theory of economics, referred to as Reagonomics. President Reagan reduced welfare programs by over $20 billion dollar a year, along with a drastic tax cut for the rich. Snyder declared that the results of Reagonomics were disastrous.

Conversely, Reiland (2004) documented that Reagan’s policies were credited for a 12% increase in the income of one fifth of the poorest families in the United States. In addition, Reiland affirmed that inflation was reduced from 13.5% to 1.9%. Furthermore, Reiland contended that 19 million jobs were created; the unemployment rate was 10% in 1982 and was cut in half by 1989. Contrary to popular belief, according to Reiland, that the unemployment rate for African Americans teenagers fell by 21%, and the income for the African American families earning $50,000 yearly doubled from 7% to 14% during the 1980s.

Nonetheless, Snyder (2004), in agreement with Jansson (2004), stated that major changes in the welfare system occurred in the 1980s. The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 eliminated many social programs by folding them into block grants (Snyder, 2004). According to Snyder, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act recommended budget cuts totaling $40 billion by 1982 and an additional $50 billion in cuts by 1984. Snyder suggested that the economic policies of Reagan contributed to the stock market crash in 1987 and over $1 trillion in national debt. However, Snyder pointed
out, amid all of President Reagan’s harsh economic policies for the poor, Reagan acknowledged that 15 million poor children in the United States were living in single-parent households. Hence, Reagan (1987) made Proclamation 5693, creating National Child Support Enforcement Month. However, Baskerville (2008) documented that this most notable war on “deadbeat dads” has been highly criticized. Baskerville (2008) further indicated that the fatherlessness of children has been used by the government to generate revenue rather than a substitute for welfare, as it was originally intended.

On the other hand, Schweiwart (2008) argued that Reaganomics’ negative reputation was inaccurate. Schweiwart claimed that the deficit was not caused by the tax cut. According to Schweiwart, during Reagan’s tenure, he not only reduced federal receipts by $5 billion but was also responsible for the astronomical rise in the receipts from income tax. Schweiwart affirmed that income tax receipts had risen from $122 billion in 1980 to $393 billion following the tax cuts. Moreover, Schweiwart applauded Reagonomics for the positive growth the economy experience during a period of inflation.

President Clinton’s Administration enacted a major welfare reform act, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (Loprest, 1999). This act placed a 5-year time limit on benefits. Welfare was no longer a lifetime entitlement program but became a temporary source of assistance to those in need. Welfare was renamed Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (Loprest, 1999). The New York State Division of the Budget (2004) reported that the numbers of recipients receiving assistance declined annually by 63% from March 1995 to November 2002. These numbers translated into a total of 739,351 closed cases, which was credited to the new welfare-to-work rules according to the New York State Division of the Budget.
Nevertheless, Murray (2009) observed that the current numbers of applicants has been rising steadily. This observation was further confirmed by Doar and DeMartino (2011), who documented that 2,457 new cases were added to the public-assistance caseloads in June 2011, which increased the number of active cases to 355,568. The social policies stemming from President Roosevelt through President Clinton have been the basis of the New York City Department of Social Services and Family Independence (Rowles, 2001). These policies have fallen short of meeting the goals of the Black family or any other family receiving public-assistance benefits (Rowles, 2001). Instead, these policies have been instrumental in creating dysfunctional family units within the fabric of Black society (Rowles, 2001). Rowles (2001) contended that the destruction of the Black family has been orchestrated by the U.S. government and the United Nations. In agreement with Rowles, Baskerville (2004) stated all too often the absence of the father is not intentional. On the contrary, the fathers’ absence may be attributed to life choices as well as priorities that ultimately result in the father being away from the home and being a nonparticipating father, forcing themselves out of the family (Burns, 2006).

**Poor performance in school.** Johnson, McGue, and Iacano (2009) suggested that poor performance in school is a predictor of adult antisocial behavior. This mindset motivated Luthar and Ansary (2005) to assess the dimensions of adolescent rebellion, including the risks for academic failure among high- and low-income youths. The research sample consisted of 264 high school students from both suburban (high income) and inner-city (poverty level or low income) areas. Luthar and Ansary indicated that the variables measured were school records such as English, math, and social studies grades as well as problem behavior, including use of cigarettes, alcohol, or marijuana and self-reported delinquency. The results of the research were twofold. The first result was that
the descriptive data indicated that the girls had a more positive outcome than boys (Luthar & Ansary, 2005). The second finding was that there were more similarities than differences between the two groups. Out of the two socioeconomic extremes, students showed a flagrant lack of interest in achievement, among both the rich and the poor (Luthar & Ansary 2005).

Mandara (2006) as well as Valiente, Swanson, and Eisenberg (2011) suggested that the inability for children to deal with negative emotions such as sadness, anger, and fear may impede social developmental outcome, hence limiting achievement. It is more difficult for children to cope with negative emotions than to deal with positive emotions (Mandara, 2006). The inability to process negative emotions coupled with the permissive or negligent parenting style of a single mother may be precursors of lack of achievement for these children.

**Inadequate parenting and supervision.** Rupp (2007) posited that other attributing factors to children’s antisocial behavior include parenting style, family stress, and social environment. Drexler and Gross (2005) certified that good parenting is not anchored in gender; therefore, single mothers should be able to adequately nurture their children. However, statistics have proven the exact opposite, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2010) documented that during 2007, children residing with a single mother had the lowest safety rate. Mandara et al. (2005) contended that researchers have documented that a child’s developmental outcome is contingent on a supportive and nurturing parent. Mandara et al. examined how stress impacts parenting in order to better understand how stress affects socialization skills among children, leading to a discussion of inadequate parental supervision.

Almgren, Yamashiro, and Ferguson (2002) indicated that although social-service
policies encourage mothers to become self-reliant, these mothers are finding themselves unable to care for their children. In order to make ends meet at a minimum-wage job, a single mother must labor for 16 hours a day. As a result, confirmed Almgren et al., the void of the absent parent is being fulfilled by either the media (e.g., computer games and television) or the community.

R. Morris (2001) reported that adequate parenting can be compromised even with two biological parents in the household, as documented in research by Ozawa. Ozawa (as cited in R. Morris, 2001) demonstrated that the increase in girls in Singapore committing crimes was the direct result of the traditional Asian dictatorial father and the ineffective mother in the home. The majority of the girls in the study were not products of a single-parent household. R. Morris (2001) declared that these girls were from traditional nuclear families but lacked the bonding and affection of the father. Moreover, R. Morris (2001) reported that these fathers remained bullish, distant and emotionless in their interaction with their family. These children were overly compensated by their mothers, but in reality they felt neglected by the person who mattered most to them, which was their father. Research has proven that the presence of a father enhances the self-esteem of a child, regardless of gender (Rouyer et al., 2007).

**Risk of violent behavior.** O’Shaughnessy and Andrade (2008) stated that the last 15 years introduced a great amount of research on the problem of adolescent child conduct. This concern provided a wealth of data that can be used to create and determine interventions for children and youth in accordance with their level of development. The violent adolescent is part of a heterogeneous group and has an unpredictable social and psychological profile. However, O’Shaughnessy and Andrade reported research showing a pattern of behavior in order to differentiate between the adolescents who are limited
offenders and those who will be lifelong, persistent offenders. O’Shaughnessy and Andrade agreed that the lifelong, persistent offender initially demonstrates a risk of violent behavior at an early age. This type of conduct behavior escalates throughout the adolescent years and eventually to adulthood.

Alarmed by violence among today’s youth, the U.S. Surgeon General was compelled to examine youth violence, according to O’Shaughnessy and Andrade (2008). The aim of this examination was to identify the risk of violent behavior along with the necessary protective factors from a public perspective. Most importantly, the U.S. Surgeon General (as cited in O’Shaughnessy & Andrade, 2008) required the design of an intervention program as a preventive measure to address violent behavior in children, by utilizing the findings obtained from the examination. A risk factor was simply any motivator that could be viewed as an enhancer of the youth’s probability of violence. Moreover, the risk factors were described as being either early or late onset and also differentiated as individual, family, peer, and school risk factors. The factor most capable of impacting behavior adversely was the association with antisocial peers, including gang association, as well as the lack of individual social ties of the individual (O’Shaughnessy & Andrade, 2008). Additionally, the family risk factor was a good predictor of adolescent violence. Family risk factors consisted of parenting style, the culture within the family, having been a victim of violence, being a victim of child abuse, and the lack of an authoritative father (O’Shaughnessy & Andrade, 2008). Such family risk factors can lead both boys and girls to express themselves with violent behavior. On the other hand, an authoritative mother can be a protective factor by reducing the risk of adolescent violence (O’Shaughnessy & Andrade, 2008). Overall, the treatment approach used for these violent offenders has been multisystemic therapy; however, the effectiveness of this
intervention remains inconclusive (O’Shaughnessy & Andrade, 2008).

**Mental health of parent and youths.** The mental health of adolescents, coupled with abuse, is the chief predictor of adolescent aggression (Roe-Sepowitz, D., 2007). As a result of a 15-year, longitudinal study, Fontaine et al. (2008) found that girls with hyperactive behavior attending elementary school had an increased risk of serious adjustment problems as they become older. Girls with antisocial behavior are burdened with psychiatric problems (Siegel & Welsh, 2008). Siegel and Welsh (2008) confirmed that overwhelming numbers of incarcerated females have severe mental health symptoms and psychological disturbances, compared to males. Being an adolescent is difficult; being plagued with aggressive behavior makes it a more complex problem.

The quest to understand and address aggressive conduct in adolescent youths has led researchers to establish that externalizing behavior in young children is a predictor of academic failure, peer rejection, delinquency, and future drug abuse (Miner & Clark-Stewart, 2008). Additionally, Miner and Stewart-Clark (2008) found that parental behavior was a predictor of these children externalizing behavior. Children who were exposed to maternal sensitivity and maternal responsiveness had lowered frequencies of externalizing behavior than did children who had less sensitive mothers. Moreover, children who had mothers suffering from depression, including mothers who used harsh control strategies, had a higher frequency of externalizing behavior starting from preschool age (Miner & Stewart-Clark, 2008).

Motherhood is a major development in an individual’s life (Gee & Rhodes, 2003). However, being an adolescent mother is particularly stressful. According to Gee and Rhodes (2003), adolescent mothers must quickly learn to cope with physical, emotional, and cognitive challenges posed by their developmental stage coupled with their new role
as a mother. Most often these new mothers are also facing economic hardship. As a result, Gee and Rhodes documented that 23.4% of low-income African American and European American mothers had reported symptoms of postpartum depression.

Additionally, low-income minority mothers have a high rate of depression. This depression can adversely impact the parenting skills of these new mothers, rendering them incompetent (Gee & Rhodes, 2003). Consequently, Gee and Rhodes (2003) inferred that maternal depression can lead to the child’s social and emotional problems and failure in academics. These behavioral problems only magnify as these children grow. Gee and Rhodes posited an understanding of the relationship between the adolescent mother and her social support as being essential in order to fully address the antisocial behavior of that group.

Gee and Rhodes (2003) noted that the male partner as a social support is very significant in the postpartum adjustment of these young mothers. The male partner is most often the primary social resource for these mothers; therefore, the support from the male partner is essential to the adolescent mother’s mental wellbeing (Gee & Rhodes, 2003). According to data reported by Gee and Rhodes, on average every year nearly half a million of adolescents living in the United States become parents. Of these adolescent mothers, the participation or support of the male counterpart has been found to contribute to a less angry and punitive adolescent mother. Evidence has suggested that support of the father is directly related to the diminished parenting skills of a young mother (Gee & Rhodes, 2003).

Understanding the antisocial behavior of the young is of great concern to present-day researchers (Dodge, 2006). Dodge (2006) indicated that children with antisocial behaviors are labeled as *seriously emotionally disturbed* within the environment of the
school system. However, the justice system refers to these youths as *juvenile delinquents*, and the mental health system identifies these children as *conduct disordered* (Dodge, 2006). In addition, Dodge pointed out that antisocial behavior in adolescents can remain constant for an extended period. A chronically antisocial individual in the United States can cost between $1.6 million and $2.2 million dollars during his or her lifetime. Therefore, Dodge proposed using the model of development of hostile attribution in order to determine intervention or prevention as treatment for such behavior.

In addition, the model of the development of hostile attributional style is based on the following sciences: basic science in etiology, neuroscience, social psychology, personality psychology, and developmental psychology (Dodge, 2006). Dodge (2006) asserted that although hostile attributional biases are acquired in the early period in an individual’s life, most children learn the benign attributional style. As a result Dodge perceived hostile attributional style as the inability of the children to make benign attribution.

All human beings experience aggressive behavior early in life, and some children are compelled to match intent with outcome. For example, some adolescents were able to infer intent by others as early as during the toddler years, because they had developed the assumption that a provoking threat from another individual was associated with a hostile intention (Dodge, 2006). These children bypassed a developmental learning step where they would have learned that some provocations are not necessarily hostile, referred to as benign attribution. Dodge explained that during the developmental stages in the lives of some youths, they failed to acquire the stable pattern of inferring benign intent when reacting to nonhostile provocation; this behavioral pattern is referred to hostile attributional style.
Consequently, Dodge (2006) inferred that the development of chronic, hostile attributional style is related to life experiences. These life experiences are associated with traumatic threat to the individual and a lack of secure attachment with a caring adult. According to Dodge, the tendency for an individual to retaliate when threatened is a human tendency. Guerra and Slaby (as cited in Dodge, 2006) pioneered a successful intervention to change the adolescent’s aggressive, attributional pattern of behavior. Adolescents who had been assigned to the intervention group received training on behavior and coping skills. When tested, they had reported a lower hostile, attributional bias; the aggressive behavior in the children was modestly changed (Dodge, 2006). According to Dodge, research has proven that retraining can lead to a marked reduction in attributional bias in both adults and children. Mothers can be retrained to realize and accept that infants are incapable of behaving with hostile intentions (Dodge, 2006). Mothers found to be at risk of making hostile attribution to their infants are more likely to unleash physical abuse (Dodge, 2006).

**Physical abuse.** Burnette et al. (2007) reported that the dysfunctional relationships of violent girls can be attributed to early abuse that altered their pattern of development. The American Psychiatric Association (as cited in Burnette et al., 2007) labeled the unstable relationships of these girls coupled with impairments in emotion along with such behavior as volatile, borderline personality syndrome. Furthermore, amid limited investigation of girls’ aggression (Burnette et al., 2007), psychology still remains one of the few areas where gender differences are persistently documented.

The realm of children aggressive behavior is complex. C. P. Bradshaw and Waasdorp (2009) discussed another interesting aspect of children aggressive behavior, bullying, which is sometimes associated with gang involvement. Research linking
bullying to gang affiliation has been inconclusive (C. P. Bradshaw & Waasdorp, 2009). However, C. P. Bradshaw and Waasdorp found that schools with a strong gang presence also had an increase of violent victimization, including robbery and assault. The following discussion is on attachment issues.

**Attachment issues.** Although all female delinquencies do not necessarily result in violence, the reasons for girls’ engagement in aggressive behavior are still being investigated (Ryder, 2007). Ryder (2007) pointed out that numerous criminological studies have focused on adults and females; however, the trauma of childhood maltreatment is often overlooked in the analysis of juvenile violence. Ryder further articulated that much research continues to focus on males as the primary subjects. Consequently, the goal of developmental criminology is to bring the formative years to the forefront.

Understanding the causal factors that drive an adolescent to become violent is essential for the development of appropriate theories and the development of effective intervention (Ryder, 2007). Ryder (2007) acknowledged that the numbers of adolescent girls who are entering the juvenile justice system have been proven to be the result of various forms of childhood victimization. Ryder determined that adolescent girls’ violent behavior either in the home or community was directly attributed to trauma caused by the detachment and absence of custodial or supportive caregivers. These detachment variables may be the death of a loved one, physical absence, or psychologically unavailability of a caregiver (Ryder, 2007).

Despite the documented increase in girls’ incidents of violent behavior, posited Burnett et al. (2007), the inquiry into girls’ aggressiveness has not been as extensive as that of boys’. Therefore, the limitation of thoroughly understanding the development of
aggressive behavior in girls is not at all surprising (Burnette et al., 2007).

**Relational Aggression**

Aggressive behavior by girls is typically relational aggression. Artz, Riecken, MacIntyre, Lam, and Maczewski (1999) defined aggressive behavior as behavior that is hurtful and harmful to others. Physical aggression includes acts that are directed at another individual with the sole purpose of causing harm, such as kicking, pushing, and hitting (Baillargeon et al., 2007). Baillargeon et al. (2007) noted that aggressive behavior in children development is being recognized at a much earlier age, as early as the age of 1. However, according to Baillargeon et al., toddlers exhibiting frequent outbursts of physically aggressive behavior are not the norm for the general population. Baillargeon et al. claimed that children who continue to exhibit frequent physical aggression well beyond the toddler years are doomed to a life of aggression. Baillargeon et al. implied that since these children will not yield to a more loving and nurturing type of parenting style, they will undoubtedly be nurtured by a much firmer, disciplined type of parenting, which essentially will create a more overall aggressive environment for them.

However, Crick, Bigbee, and Howes (2008) documented research proving that whereas boys tend to harm others physically or verbally, girls’ violence is most often covert. Lee (2009) concurred that the violence expressed by girls is most often covert or indirect. At first glance the aggressor may appear innocent (Lee, 2009). However, the appearance does not to minimize the intent to harm another, destroy a friendship, or manipulate a relationship (Lee, 2009).

Additionally, the spreading of rumors or even silence can be used as a weapon to victimize another adolescent girl (Lee, 2009). Granted, relational aggression is not physical; however, the impact from such behavior is just as damaging to the victims (Lee,
Lee (2009) further indicated that the use of relational aggressive behavior by girls is sometimes viewed as a rite of passage of girls to womanhood. On the other hand, the notion that boys will harm physically or verbally is supported by research, according to Lee. The fact still remains that girls will exercise social aggression in order to victimize their target (Lee, 2009).

However, girls’ violence is most often covert (Crick et al., 2008). In essence, girls’ actions can damage another child’s relationships through emotional and mental distress. Girls tend to use tactics such as making another child feel excluded from a social group or the playground and at times intentionally hurting another child (Crick et al., 2008). Hence, the relational aspect of aggression is evident in children as young as 3 years of age (Crick et al., 2008).

Young et al. (2011) defined relational aggression as the intention to cause harm in a relationship though the use of indirect bullying and strong, dissociative manipulation. Young et al. elaborated that social exclusion, silent treatment, or even threatening to take away a friendship are all examples of relational aggressive behavior. Previously, relational aggressive behavior was looked upon as an aspect of socialization; unfortunately this has been proven otherwise. Relational aggression is as dangerous as physical aggression in today’s adolescents (Young et al., 2011).

According to Young et al. (2011), the limited understating of relational aggressive behavior has caused school staff to overlook it and focus on physical aggressive behavior. Young et al. suggested that school leaders specifically renew their attention to the relational issue and not only prevent but to also design intervention programs geared at eliminating relational aggressive behavior. Moreover, the treatment of relational aggression is usually accomplished by teaching adolescents positive behaviors and by
encouraging children to work in groups.

**Literature on Solutions**

Recent strategies and solutions have been developed to address the problem of aggressive behavior based on anger. Data obtained from a longitudinal study of an intergeneration continuum revealed that parents transmitted their aggressive behavior from one generation to the next (Serbin & Karp, 2003). Therefore, Serbin and Karp (2003) recommended early interventions to any parents witnessing aggressive behavior in their children. In another study consisting of 99 two-year-olds, Calkins and Dedmon (2000) determined that aggressive behavior in childhood is a reliable precursor to future aggressive behavior. Adolescent anger is being addressed by an increasing number of researchers, indicated Kellner and Bry (1999), due to increased concerns.

Blair, Colledge, Murray, and Mitchell (2001) conducted a study on the sensitivity of children to sadness and fear. The processing of emotional expression is fundamental to normal socialization and interactions, and thus the reduction of responsiveness suggested that these children had psychopathic tendencies. Moreover, according to Blair et al., this dysfunction leads individuals to commit a disproportionate amount of crime without any remorse.

In order to address the possible trauma caused by divorce in the lives of female adolescents, DeLucia-Waack and Gellman (2007) examined the efficacy of a children-of-divorce group using music as an intervention, as opposed to the traditional psychoeducational discussion or therapy. At the 3-month, follow-up assessment after the group had ended, DeLucia-Waack and Gellman determined that the group using music had much more improved levels of anxiety, depression, and irrational beliefs about divorce.
According to Hilliard (2007), grief for children as a result of loss causes emotional problems, poor school performance, drastic mood changes, and disruptive behavior. Hilliard maintained that if this grief remains unaddressed, it may result in serious psychiatric issues. In an 8-week pilot study using music in cognitive behavioral therapy sessions, Hilliard demonstrated a significant improvement in the behavior of school-age children in a bereavement group. Hilliard acknowledged that Orff-based music therapy had been used previously in bereavement therapy for children.

The stressors in the daily life of an adolescent are many (Yahav & Cohen, 2008). Yahav and Cohen (2008) stated that possible adolescent stressors include peer relationships; family environment; and separation individuation, which is a developmental process. Yahav and Cohen acknowledged that the possibility of life stressors for an adolescent is endless, but a rich repertoire of coping strategies is the best possible tool. Such strategies guarantee coping psychologically with a stressful situation rather than gravitating to negative coping methods such as drugs and alcohol.

In an effort to empower overly aggressive children, Choi et al. (2008) sought to reduce overly aggressive behavior in 48 children while increasing their self-esteem with the use of a 15-week music intervention. The results proved that aggressive behavior could be reduced and self-esteem increased with the use of music (Choi et al., 2008); results were better than those of a control group. Moreover, Choi et al. stated that music is a sound stimulus capable of generating emotions and feelings, which is useful in self-organization and group organization. Choi et al. confirmed that the use of music in children’s groups facilitated their communication process.

Currie and Startup (2012) determined that using a music-intervention program for adolescent boys may contribute to the lowering their risk of negative adult outcomes.
Currie and Startup evaluated the efficacy and effectiveness of an intervention program entitled Doing Anger Differently. The intervention program was designed to address reactively aggressive behavior in young boys 12–15 years old. The design consisted of using percussion exercises as treatment. In addition, the evaluation compared the results of two studies. The first study was undertaken with 54 participants, and the second study was composed of 65 boys. Currie and Startup described the treatment as a 10-week intervention. The result of the first study showed a reduction in anger, reduction in aggressive misbehavior, reduction in depression, and a rise in self-esteem.

Moreover, the reported changes in behavior were maintained up to a 6-month follow-up. Currie and Startup (2012) acknowledged that the second study did not show the same level of reduction in aggressive emotions as the initial study. However, Currie and Startup articulated that the effect size of the studies remained close, although not identical. The researchers further maintained that the reduction of aggressive behavior found at the 6-month follow-up for both studies suggested a lengthy period of reduction in school misbehavior, which could translate into a lower risk of suspension and being discharged from school. Overall, Currie and Startup confirmed that the program lowered the risk of negative behavior outcomes, which most often is the result of a child being discharged from school.

**Summary and Conclusion**

According to Roe-Sepowitz (2007), adolescence violence is a serious problem in the United States. Increasingly, behavioral experts blame the increase of crime, drug abuse, and teen pregnancy on the breakdown of the family; however, the divorce industry, child-support enforcement, and child welfare have been major contributors to the breakup of the family unit. These three factors have played a significant role in the
removal of the fathers from the lives of children who are at risk, thus never breaking the cycle of anger (Smith et al., 2008; “U.S. Divorce Statistics,” 2008; White, 2006).

Factors that impact aggressive behavior among adolescents, and particularly female adolescents, include single-mother households, absent father, poverty and related welfare policies, and inadequate parenting and supervision. Further variables that increase risk of violent behavior include mental health of the parent and child, abuse, and attachment issues. Those female adolescents who do not act out violently may resort to relational aggression. Solutions to aggression among adolescents include teaching emotional coping skills using an arts-based intervention. The quest to address aggressive behavior in children prompted Haner et al. (2010) to create arts-based curricula as prevention for bullying. The researchers proposed that the arts have the distinctive ability to change hearts and minds. Therefore, by developing empathy, the aggressive children were able to contain their anger and frustration. Furthermore, Haner et al. contended that the children’s ability to communicate and form friendships also increased. In a literature review, Smeijters et al. (2011) documented research proving that arts-based interventions reduce aggression, anger, stress, and cognitive distortion. In addition, according to Smeijters et al., research has proven that arts-based therapy increases impulse control, emotional expression, and coping skills. Moreover, according to Smeijters et al., the participants’ ability to adhere to rules was increased and social skills improved.

In another study, Williams and Taylor (2004) implemented an 8-week, arts-based intervention program at the Iowa Correctional Facility for Women for over 600 incarcerated women who were serving 1 year to life. The blended, arts-based program proved to increase coping skills, improve social interaction, and increase self-actualization of the participants. Appendix A shows a summary matrix of research results
on aggressive behavior in girls.

Research Questions

Based on the literature review and available instruments, this study was guided by the following four research questions:

Research Question 1. What are the scope, frequency, and severity of the problem of increased aggressive behavior by girls being reared without their fathers? This question was important because previous research documented a myriad of potential adverse impacts of aggressive behavior on children. Therefore, identifying the severity, scope, and frequency might provide a tool of deterrence for possible teenage pregnancies, high school dropouts, and possible future violence towards others.

Research Question 2. In what ways will the use of an arts-based intervention reduce aggressive behavior and anxiety in girls being reared without their fathers? This question was important to the research because recognizing the cause and triggers of the aggressive behavior problem might provide the participants the option to self-manage their outbursts.

Research Question 3. In what ways will the use of an arts-based intervention improve feelings about family relationships for single mothers and girls being raised without their fathers? This research question was important because answering it would provide an insight into the family communication by eliminating harmful behavior.

Research Question 4. What are the observations and perceptions of all participants of the arts-based intervention regarding its impact on aggressive girls being reared without their fathers? This research question was important because the result would provide additional insight to the body of knowledge regarding aggressive behavior.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Participants

The purpose of this positivist case study research was to explore the phenomenon of increased aggressive behavior in girls being reared with an absent father. The research had a quantitative, experimental design. According to the Texas Statewide Leadership for Autism Training (2011), the cognitive behavior model has often been used to address aggressive behavior and limited self-control, which includes poor social problem solving. Therefore, it is within the same context that an arts-based intervention was used, whereby the participants monitored their behavioral change by using various types of arts to promote self-control. The intervention consisted of both active and passive music activities (Horton, 2005). Krahe and Bieneck (2012) confirmed that music is a conduit capable of affecting mood, behavior, and cognition. The goal of this research was to rely on key informants and a target population. Hence, the facilitator introduced all types of art forms as an outlet of self-expression as opposed to detrimental reactions to anger.

The focus of this study was on reducing aggression and anxiety in preadolescent and adolescent girls. The literature review confirmed an increase in aggressive behavior among girls being reared without their fathers (N. Barber, 2004; Bzostek, 2007; Hansen, 2009; D. Larson & Dehle, 2007; McMillan et al., 2006; Siegel & Welsh, 2002; Vaden-Kiernan, lianlongo, Pearson, & Kellman, 1995). The arts-based intervention was expected to reduce anger in the target population by providing the participants with impulse control in order to avoid conflict, coping skills to recognize and manage anger triggers, and problem-solving skills necessary to handle conflict in a nonviolent way.

Two flyers explaining the research study were distributed in order to recruit participants. The first invitational flyer was distributed within the dance school, and the
second recruitment invitation was placed in the neighborhood newspaper within the community. The flyers invited the potential participants wishing to volunteer in the study to contact the principal investigator. The sample consisted of single mothers or custodial parents who were raising girls without a father present in their lives. Single parents and girls between the ages of 8 and 17 were the target population. A total of 12 participants were randomly selected from within the school of dance or the community in a northeastern borough of New York. According to City-Data (2014), the majority of this neighborhood population is Black. Furthermore, 31.9% of these homes are headed by a single female parent raising adolescent children. Therefore, the neighborhood demographics were in line with the research study. Moreover, the majority of these single parents patronizing the dance school are Black or Hispanic women. Some women are employed, and some are unemployed or underemployed and in receipt of public assistance. Some parents are also employed with the New York City Human Resources Administration in the Department of Social Services.

The dance studio is a private school of fine arts created by a retired teacher from the New York City school system in collaboration with her daughter, who is a choreographer and dance teacher and also is employed at the Human Resources Administration. On average, the school enrollment ranges from 50–60 students between the ages of 3 1/2 and 17. Further 95% of the students are girls and 5% boys, according to the school director. The school functions all year. Children are able to attend the school as an extracurricular activity after school hours for a nominal fee. However, there is only one main recital in June showcasing the annual achievement of the students. The school offers all types of dance and art lessons at a nominal weekly fee and at the time of the study had operated for 8 years. The objective of the school is to bring fine arts to children
in the community at minimum cost. The philosophy at the school of dance is to expand the horizons of young girls and mold confident young adults through the use of the arts.

According to the school director, most parents of students at the school complain of behavior issues with their children, which she attributed to turbulent teenage years. The school director also confirmed that about 80% of the students live with a single parent.

Although the school in itself is not a social program, according to the school director, children and families who patronize the school could be considered as targets for the dissertation research. Nevertheless, in order to recruit potential participants from a wider pool of volunteers, the investigator distributed flyers within the school and within the community. The recruitment flyer for the community was advertised in the neighborhood newspaper. The random sampling method was chosen because it added credibility to the study; furthermore, it was both convenient and cost effective (Litwin, 2002). The researcher intended to seek more in-depth insight into the nature of girls’ aggressive behavior by surveying the children and their parents using established and reviewed surveys retrieved from the Buros Institute of Mental Measurements (n.d.) website.

**Instruments**

A triangulation method of data collection was used, which consisted of surveys, observations, and semistructured interviews addressing the demographics and feelings of the participants (McConaughy, 2005). The target population was asked to complete surveys (Blake & Hamrin 2007). Litwin (2002) observed that a survey is the best method of data collection, because it is cost effective and is an appropriate tool to examine feelings, opinions, and values of people. Additionally, Litwin affirmed that a survey method is best suited for a minimum amount of participants. The survey questionnaires
had been published and reviewed; they were age appropriate and would not be intimidating. Participants were encouraged to give honest and complete responses because they would not be judged by their responses, and their responses would remain anonymous.

**The Adolescent Anger Rating Scale (AARS).** The AARS (Burney, 2001) was administered to the children in the study. The AARS measures the aspect of anger from children between the ages of 11 and 19 years. Therefore, the AARS was administered to the children within that specific age range only. The AARS was used to measure the scope of anger being experienced by the adolescent girls who were being reared without their fathers. The AARS is a 41-item survey for assessing children’s frequency and intensity of anger expression. The survey collects quantitative data using a 4-point Likert-type scale. Three subscales measure student expression of anger: (a) Instrumental Anger, (b) Reactive Anger, and (c) Anger Control. According to Burney (2001), the normative sample used to develop the scale included 4,187 adolescents of five ethnic groups. Internal consistency coefficients ranged from .81 to .92, with good test–retest reliability.

**The Parent Adolescent Relationship Questionnaire (PARQ).** The PARQ (Robin, Koepke, Moye, & Gerhardstein, 2009a, 2009b) was designed to assess the parent–adolescent relationship in children between the ages of 11 to 19 and their custodial parents or mothers. The PARQ is a self-reporting survey used to examine the relationship between parent and adolescent in order to determine the most appropriate intervention or treatment. As a tool, the PARQ provides a multifaceted, comprehensive understanding of the relationship between parent and adolescent children with behavior or emotional problems, such as attention-deficit and hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiance disorder, and anxiety and mood disorders (Robin, Koepke, & Moye, 1990). The
survey was originally designed in the 1980s and revised in 2009. Ultimately, as a tool the PARQ was used to measure the feelings and emotions the participating adolescents had towards their families.

The PARQ parent questionnaire consists of 152 true–false items, and the adolescent PARQ has 168 true–false items. Furthermore, each questionnaire consists of 13 clinical scales, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Scales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict and Skill Deficits</td>
<td>Global Distress, Communication, Problem Solving, School Conflict, Eating Conflict, Sibling Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Malicious Intent, Perfectionism, Ruination, Autonomy, Unfairness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Structure</td>
<td>Cohesion, Conventionalization, Coalitions, Triangulation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The domain of Conflict and Skill Deficits refers to negative communication and ineffective problem solving, which promotes arguments. Belief scales refer to inappropriate expectations including errors in parent and adolescent reasoning. The domain of Family Structure refers to extreme disengagement, overinvolvement, or taking sides by either parents or adolescents. Robin et al. (2009a, 2009b) asserted that adolescent–parent conflict is the result of these three dimensions at the adolescent stage of development. Moreover, data collected from a normative sample consisting of 602 children between the ages of 11 and 19, 332 mothers, and 292 fathers confirmed the test–retest stability as being excellent for both parents and adolescents and remained significant, \( p < .01 \). According to Robin et al. (2009b), the current version of the PARQ has an internal consistency with 70–80% of coefficient alpha scores greater than .70.
The Children’s Aggression Scale. The CAS (Halperin & McKay, 2008) was administered to the custodial parents of the target population in order to measure the scope, severity, and frequency of aggressive behavior of the girls. More specifically, the parent rating form includes the four scales of Verbal Aggression, Aggression Against Objects and Animals, Physical Aggression, and Use of Weapons. Five CAS clusters are Provoked Physical Aggression, Initiated Physical Aggression, Aggression Against Family Members, Aggression Against Nonfamily Members, Aggression Towards Peers, and Aggression Towards Adults. A total aggression score is also calculated.

The CAS (Halperin & McKay, 2008) was designed to evaluate aggressive behaviors in children. Aggression is considered distinct from defiance or hostility. The CAS tested well for reliability, with internal consistency coefficients ranging from .63 to .94 (Halperin & McKay, 2008). Test–retest stability for the CAS with parents ranged from .69 to .99, with an interrater reliability coefficient of .87 for the parents (Halperin & McKay, 2008).

Interviews. The assessment will include a confirmation interview for the parents (McConaughy, 2005). The parents’ attitudes towards raising their children were assessed at the final phase of the intervention using a 14-question interview protocol (see Appendix B). The researcher-created interview protocol was used to ensure consistency among interviews and thereby minimize threats to reliability. The interview protocol was developed with the researcher’s dissertation chair in order to ensure the clarity and appropriateness of the questions.

Journal. Moreover, a journal was provided to everyone involved in the research project. The journal provided some qualitative data to corroborate and strengthen the data from the quantitative instruments. The facilitator also provided a keyboard to the
participating children in order for them to continue practicing piano lessons introduced to them. Lastly, the children, their parents, the instructors, and the researcher were required to maintain a journal in order to document any possible behavior change, including any acting-out incidents (aggressive behavior). The operational definition of acting-out incidents includes talking back, screaming at peers or adults, being hostile to others, being defiant to the custodial parent, or being rude and inpatient. Moreover, the participants were asked to record their anger outbursts and also to describe which coping mechanism they used to control their anger. For example, they had the option of using one of the following coping mechanisms whenever they felt compelled to display aggressive behavior: singing, listening to music, practicing a dance routine, practicing on the keyboard, making a journal entry, or simply drawing (arts and crafts).

The dance teacher, the piano teacher, the art instructor, the custodial parent, and the participant recorded both positive behavior (coping behavior) and negative behavior (aggressive behavior outburst) of the participants in the journal. The participants therefore were required to record the behavior of interest, aggressive behavior, and the associated stimuli (Kennedy, 2005). The instructors could provide an objective assessment of the problem. Litwin (2002) described the journal, or codebook, as a safeguard to document the multitude of ideas and decisions undertaken during the entire process. Kennedy (2005) confirmed that collecting data while observing the session is very efficient.

Validity and reliability. Barlow, Nock, and Hersen (2009) declared that validity refers to the extent to which the data represent the phenomenon being assessed. In order to safeguard the integrity of the intervention, the investigator used data triangulation as well as statistical analysis. The reliability of a method relies on the stability and
consistency in obtaining data during any research process (Barlow et al., 2009; Kennedy, 2005). Litwin (2002) certified that, in the process of research, it is imperative that any survey tool first be validated through testing for its accuracy. Therefore the researcher used survey assessments that had been tested, published, and deemed reliable: the AARS (Burney, 2001), the PARQ (Robin et al., 2009a, 2009b), and the CAS (Halperin & McKay, 2008).

A convenience sample (Litwin, 2002) was chosen from the dance school and the community, to include 12 random girls with behavior issues. The demographics of the population for the project were children between the ages of 8 and 17 being raised by a single parent and without a father in the household. The objective of the research was to test the effectiveness of the method of intervention by monitoring and comparing the rate of incidence of aggressive behavior with the target population. The pre- and postsurveys and the journals were used to measure the number of outbursts before, during, and at the end of the intervention. In effect, this measuring process determined whether or not anger was reduced. All entries were calculated using SPSS software.

In the data collection process, there is almost always some error, but the goal is to minimize the amount of possible error (Litwin, 2002). Moreover, Litwin (2002) categorized the errors as either random or measurement error. Descriptive statistics was the method used to simplify collected data. The first to be addressed was the probability of random error, which is more prevalent in a small sample than a larger sample, according to Litwin. Unfortunately, a larger sample is not always cost effective. Thus, Litwin certified that in order to compensate for the random error, the facilitator customarily assigns a probable value to the error possibility with the use of statistics. If the result of the calculations falls below the set limit, then the null hypothesis is rejected.
Barlow et al. (2009) contended that the notion of reliability involves the stability of the methods used to obtain the data. More specifically, Todman and Dugard (2001) elaborated that reliability is the extent to which the obtained difference in a treatment is dependable. The instructors were on staff at the school. The intervention remained consistent in order to safeguard the integrity of the program.

**Procedures**

**Design.** The design of the study involved use of pre- and postsurveys and included mixed-methods data. Rueda, MacGillivray, Monzo, and Arzubiaga (2007) indicated that design analysis develops the purpose of the research, which includes the rationale for the implementation. The overall short-term goal was the reduction of anger and anxiety in adolescents by teaching them to voice and redirect their anger to appropriate channels rather than acting out or transferring their anger. The long-term goal was to be able to create a support program for girls to vent their anger in a safe and confidential environment.

Both visual and performing arts were used as a mode of intervention, an outlet for self-expression. A triangulation method of data collection consisting of survey questionnaires, semistructured interviews for the parents, journals, and observation was used in order to obtain the required data. A teaching model helped the children actualize new behavior. In addition, an integral part of the research was role-play, which included improvisation. The only anticipated constraints were the commitment of the children and their custodial parents to complete the project.

**Intervention.** According to N. Barber (2004), an analysis of the prison population documented that children being reared by a single mother have a greater risk of incarceration than do children in a two-parent household. Children being reared with an
absent father are 7 times more likely to be incarcerated than children in a two-parent household (N. Barber, 2004). According to Vaden-Kiernan et al. (1995) a longitudinal study has proven 63% of youths who commit suicide, 85% of children with behavioral disorders, and 71% of high school dropouts were being reared without any fathers. These alarming figures suggest that the children being raised by a single parent may be experiencing an insurmountable amount of pent-up aggression that many adolescents seem to feel when they have an absent father. This aggression causes these teenagers to retaliate in negative, self-destructive ways.

Therefore, a forum was created with the use of both visual and performing arts as a viable tool of self-expression. The program involved various activities, such as anger-management workshops and weekly workshops in both visual and performing arts. Lessons in painting, singing, piano and keyboard, and dance were implemented. Additionally, the children were introduced to the visual arts. Such exposures might offer these girls with other options for embracing accomplishments, rather than subjecting themselves to internal rejection and anger. The void of the male model might be compensated or redirected and channeled into positive behaviors. The long-term goal was for the girls to become empowered with a good sense of self-esteem, thus becoming master of their universe as opposed to being captive to their unresolved and unaddressed anger.

The instructional materials used included music, dance, and visual arts. The task was to teach the adolescents to express their anger in positive, aesthetic ways. All the built-up hostility and anger that they might feel could be channeled into doing something more constructive rather than destructive.

**Step 1.** The subjects for the purpose of this investigation were 12 African
American girls between the ages of 8 and 17; they were experiencing aggressive behavior and anxiety, which included any acting-out incidents. The facilitator conducted the experiment out in the community, at a neighborhood school of dance in northeastern New York City. Prior to data collection, the participants were given a letter to explain the purpose of this research, and once the parent and child agreed to participate, a contract was signed by the guardian of the subjects, the subjects, and the facilitator of this program. The girls were required to sign an assent form, and the adults were required to sign an informed consent form. Following the completion of the consent and assent forms, the participants were asked to complete the surveys (the CAS, PARQ, and AARS). The surveys were administered to the children and to their custodial parent as presurveys on Week 1 and later as postsurveys on Week 12. Most importantly, the surveys were administered to both the guardians and the subjects in an unbiased atmosphere. Additionally, the parents were required to complete a 14-question interview protocol. Furthermore, a journal was provided to all participants involved in the research. Each child participant was provided with a keyboard, which the child did not have to return at the end of the program.

**Step 2.** The implementation process consisted of painting, dancing, piano or keyboard playing, singing, modern and jazz dancing, and anger management. As part of the program, the facilitator gave a keyboard to each participating subject. The keyboard was provided for the purpose of availability of a musical instrument for continued practice. The director of the school of dance, the dance teacher and choreographer, the art instructor, and the piano teacher were among the participants of the research project. All participants were required to complete a journal. The instructors were required to record participation and any observable behavior, including stimulus used during each session.
on their journals, which were compared at the end of data collection. The journal entries along with the parents’ confirmation interview were used as qualitative data as an additional mean of strengthening and corroborating the findings from the quantitative data instruments. The program ran for a period of 12 weeks, for 3 hours every Saturday. The first 45-minute period was designated for piano or keyboard and voice lessons, followed by a 15-minute break. The program resumed after the break with 45 minutes of dance lessons. After a second 15-minute break, the session concluded with 30 minutes of painting and 30 minutes of anger management.

The purpose of the program was to reduce anger by replacing adolescents’ impulsive behavior with rational behaviors. However, Bailey, Perkins, and Wilkins (1995) suggested that program facilitators remained alert to the possibility of any parent who is concerned about a child’s persistent, negative behavior pattern. If negative behavior persisted, such behavior might require professional help.

**Step 3.** The students were monitored weekly for a 12-week period, in order to observe the effectiveness of the intervention program and assess whether or not for the short period of time the desired behavior change occurred, reduction of anger. One of the potential limitations of the research was the possibility that some of the children would not complete the program. Another limitation was the possibility that a participating parent might have felt she no longer needed to discipline her child for bad behavior, since this program was designed to help with behavior. During the intervention, the parent, child, and instructors in the project recorded any incidents of aggression as well as related stimuli in their journals. This investigation was intended to provide the required communication skills in order for the children to control or reduce their anger. The objective was intended to be reached through implementation of support systems; hence,
the program was expected to foster an appreciation of self, building healthy behavior in girls with absent fathers.

**Step 4.** At the end of the intervention, participants completed the CAS, PARQ, and AARS as postsurveys along with a parent confirmatory interview using the 14-questions protocol. Additionally, journals were collected from all participants, and the quantitative data were processed with SPSS.

**Data analysis.** Following the data collection, a statistical analysis examined the frequency and percentage of the distribution. The calculations also included rating the effectiveness of the prevention method. In addition, the rate of incidence of aggressive behavior within the target population was characteristically assessed, including responses pertaining to the scope of the problem (the increase of aggressive behavior within girls who are being reared without their fathers) and the causes and potential solutions that were to be found. In this analysis, the arts-based intervention was viewed as the independent variable, and the effect on the girls’ aggressive behavior was viewed as the dependent variable.

Research Question 1 was the following: What are the scope, frequency, and severity of the problem of increased aggressive behavior and anxiety by girls being reared without their fathers? This question was answered using quantitative data from the AARS, CAS and PARQ. Pre- and postsurvey scores were compared to determine any change following the intervention.

Research Question 2 was the following: In what ways will the use of an arts-based intervention program reduce aggressive behavior and anxiety in girls being reared without their fathers? This question was answered by comparing pre- and postsurvey responses to the AARS, CAS and PARQ. Additionally, data from journals were
qualitatively analyzed in order to determine any change in the number and intensity of aggressive behaviors.

Research Question 3 was the following: In what ways will the use of an arts-based intervention improve feelings about family relationships for single mothers and girls being reared without their fathers? This question was answered using data from pre- and post intervention administrations of the PARQ to parents and children.

Research Question 4 was qualitative in nature: What are the observations and perceptions of all participants of the arts-based intervention regarding its impact on aggressive girls being reared without their fathers? Data from journals and the response from parents’ interviews were used to answer this research question and to add depth to the quantitative findings from the surveys. Limitations of the study are presented in Chapter 5.
Chapter 4: Results

An arts-based intervention program was designed to reduce anxiety and aggressive behavior in adolescent girls who were being reared without their fathers during the period of 2010–2015. The target population was children between the ages of 8 and 17. Data collection consisted of administering the following surveys to the target population: the AARS (Burney, 2001), the CAS (Halperin & McKay, 2008), the PARQ (Robin et al., 2009a, 2009b), and a confirmation interview with parents. An anger-management intervention utilizing the arts as an outlet for self-expression was implemented during the winter semester of 2013. The objective was for the participants to use the arts as a vehicle of positive self-expression. In addition, the goal was to teach the participants anger-management skills along with positive socialization skills for human interaction. Implementing those skills was expected to foster peer collaboration and also enable them to cope with their anger rather than acting out. The research questions were as follows:

1. What are the scope, frequency, and severity of the problem of increased aggressive behavior and anxiety by girls being reared without their fathers?

2. In what ways will the use of an arts-based intervention reduce aggressive behavior and anxiety in girls being reared without their fathers?

3. In what ways will the use of an arts-based intervention improve feelings about family relationships for single mothers and girls being reared without their fathers?

4. What are the observations and perceptions of all participants of the arts-based intervention regarding its impact on aggressive girls being reared without their fathers?

The Program

The dissertation did not deviate from the protocol. The project began December 7,
2013, and closed March 22, 2014. Over this time period, 12 weekly sessions took place, skipping a few weeks for weather. Twelve parents and their daughters initially participated in the arts-based intervention program. The intervention was conducted for 3 hours on Saturdays. Music (keyboard) lessons were provided by a formally trained and experienced musician for the first 45 minutes. The intervention followed a protocol. The music sessions began by teaching the children the basics of music theory. In addition, assignments were provided to them. The painting session was conducted by an art instructor. Besides the painting and sketching, the children had the opportunity to make crafts. The dance instructor and choreographer conducted 45-minute sessions, with a 15-minute break between sessions.

Overall, the children were eager to learn, except for one girl who was often found nodding off during the keyboard session. Although she did not demonstrate any aggressive behavior during the process, she was observed as being disinterested to the point that the music teacher woke her up twice during Week 3. The following week she did not return. The participants started to drop out by Week 3. One parent claimed an employment schedule issue, and another cited a family illness. The third found a new job and needed to sleep in the morning. One parent could not come with the child consistently, so the child dropped out of the program. The researcher attempted to contact both the child and parent; they did not give a reason for not attending the program. They were no longer interested without an explanation. Thus, the program was completed by only eight children.

By Week 6, the remaining children functioned as a team, whereby the overall theme was to bring each other to the same level of expertise, be it the keyboard, dance routines, or art project. According to the instructors’ notes, the children’s support of each
other was overwhelming.

Observationally, the music and dance components yielded the most positive results. Day 1 of the project, the music instructor introduced the children to the keyboard. He also provided the children with copies of music sheets. All of the participants seemed very eager and immediately engaged with the music instructor. The instructor had promised the children that by the end of the program they would be able to read sheet music and play a piece as a group. The first 3 weeks were spent on basics. Some of the children questioned if they would ever be able to play a music piece by simply learning basic music theory.

By Week 3, the instructors stressed that not all of the participants were at the same level, and as a group it was imperative that everyone kept the same pace. It was impressive to witness the turnaround as the children united and the three oldest participants requested to come earlier on the following week in order to practice their keyboard assignments and dance steps with each other, in essence asking to help the children who were still struggling. Both the music and dance instructors had specified that everyone would move to the next lesson as a group following mastery of present assignments. Hence, this teamwork and collaboration might be attributed to higher levels of impulse control and other factors as well.

During the dance session, the participants wanted to prove themselves so much, their intensive focus was observable by everyone concerned. However, by the fourth session the participants became a well-defined unit on the dance floor. The art instructor had completed two arts-and-crafts projects with them, and they began painting Week 4.

The anger-management component included relaxation techniques such as breathing. Children were taught passive thoughts and social skills such as cooperation,
communication, and problem solving. They were taught expression of feelings by listening to music, playing music, writing in journals, or drawing and painting. As part of the anger-management program, the children were encouraged to make changes in their lives that would help them reduce stress, such as setting short-term goals and being organized by being cognizant of time and making good use of it. Social skills lessons were included in the curriculum during Week 3 (Lohmann, 2009)

**Descriptive Statistics of the Participants**

Data analysis for the research project was performed using SPSS describing trends and tendencies of collected data. A total of 12 African American preadolescent and adolescent girls and their parents participated in the study. Frequencies and percentages for average grade, friends’ behavior, and residency (custodial parent with whom the child lived) are presented in Table 2.

Most of the children lived with their mothers and just over half reported their friends’ behavior was “Ok.” Children ranged in age from 8–16, with an average age of 11.75 ($SD = 2.80$). For the number of times suspended, participant responses ranged from 0–2, with an average response of 0.50 ($SD = 0.80$). Children reported having 2–6 friends, with a mean of 3.50 ($SD = 1.45$).

**Results of the CAS**

For the parents, the four CAS scales were examined at pretest and posttest and were Verbal Aggression, Aggression Against Objects and Animals, Physical Aggression, and Use of Weapons. Also for the parents, the five CAS clusters were examined at pretest and posttest: Provoked Physical Aggression, Initiated Physical Aggression, Aggression Against Family Members, Aggression Against Nonfamily Members, Aggression
Towards Peers, and Aggression Towards Adults. A total aggression score was also determined from parent data at pretest and posttest.

Table 2

*Frequencies and Percentages for Grade, Friends’ Behavior, and Residency*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends’ behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ok</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster aunt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Due to rounding error, percentages may not add up to 100.

Possible scores on the CAS range from 39–110, with scores 60–69 indicating mildly elevated aggression. Scores of 70–79 are moderately elevated and suggest great clinical concern (Halperin & McKay, 2008). Scores over 80 indicate a child’s extreme tendency to aggression. Results of the pretest and posttest are shown in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.

The CAS scale was also given to the students’ art, music, and dance teachers (only once at the end of the program). Posttest scores for the art teacher are shown in Table 5. Posttest scores for the music teacher are presented in Table 6, and those for the dance teacher are presented in Table 7.
Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics for Parent Pretest Scores on the Children’s Aggression Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Aggression</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>84.58</td>
<td>23.88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression Against Objects &amp; Animals</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>64.42</td>
<td>23.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Aggression</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>72.75</td>
<td>24.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Weapons</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>63.75</td>
<td>26.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provoked Physical Aggression</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>66.92</td>
<td>17.72</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiated Physical Aggression</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>76.75</td>
<td>22.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression Against Family Members</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>72.58</td>
<td>21.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression Against Nonfamily Members</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>93.92</td>
<td>19.17</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression Towards Peers</td>
<td>49</td>
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<td>22.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggression Towards Adults</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>84.08</td>
<td>25.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total aggression</td>
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<td>110</td>
<td>77.75</td>
<td>21.83</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $N = 8$. Scores based on a range of 39–110. Scores over 60 suggest elevated aggression.

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics for Parent Posttest Scores on the Children’s Aggression Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Aggression</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>51.63</td>
<td>10.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggression Against Objects &amp; Animals</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of Weapons</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>47.75</td>
<td>3.54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cluster</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>7.17</td>
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<td>Aggression Against Family Members</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>5.53</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression Against Nonfamily Members</td>
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<td>53.75</td>
<td>11.79</td>
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<tr>
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<td>63</td>
<td>46.88</td>
<td>8.10</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $N = 8$. Scores based on a range of 39–110. Scores over 60 suggest elevated aggression.
Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics for Art Teacher Posttest Scores on the Children’s Aggression Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal Aggression</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>44.17</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
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<td>47</td>
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<td>47.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Aggression</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45.92</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Weapons</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
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<td>Cluster</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provoked Physical Aggression</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45.92</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiated Physical Aggression</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47.92</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression Towards Peers</td>
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<td>0.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggression Towards Adults</td>
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<td>44.17</td>
<td>0.58</td>
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</table>

*Note.* $N = 1$. Scores based on a range of 39–110. Scores over 60 suggest elevated aggression.

Table 6

*Descriptive Statistics for Music Teacher Posttest Scores on the Children’s Aggression Scale*

<table>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Aggression</td>
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<td>58</td>
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<td>4.60</td>
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<td>Aggression Against Objects &amp; Animals</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Aggression</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45.83</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Weapons</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provoked Physical Aggression</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45.83</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiated Physical Aggression</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47.83</td>
<td>0.39</td>
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<td>Aggression Towards Peers</td>
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<td>46.00</td>
<td>4.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression Towards Adults</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>46.25</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total aggression</td>
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<td>63</td>
<td>45.92</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $N = 1$. Scores based on a range of 39–110. Scores over 60 suggest elevated aggression.
Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Dance Teacher Posttest Scores on the Children’s Aggression Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Aggression</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td>10.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression Against Objects &amp; Animals</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>51.42</td>
<td>8.71</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Aggression</td>
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<td>82</td>
<td>51.67</td>
<td>11.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Use of Weapons</td>
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<td>49.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>11.64</td>
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<td>58</td>
<td>48.67</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>50.75</td>
<td>10.38</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Aggression Towards Adults</td>
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<td>83</td>
<td>50.92</td>
<td>10.86</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total aggression</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>49.25</td>
<td>9.39</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 1. Scores based on a range of 39–110. Scores over 60 suggest elevated aggression.*

Results for the PARQ

The next measure parents completed was the PARQ scale. Descriptive statistics for parent responses to the PARQ on the pretest and posttest are shown in Tables 8 and 9. Participants who were 11 years old and older also completed the PARQ scales. Pretest and posttest results are shown in Tables 10 and 11, respectively.

Next, mean changes in scores from pre- to posttest on the PARQ were computed for both parents and adolescents. Mean scores for all scales for both parents and adolescents all decreased on the posttest, compared to the pretest. These score decreases are shown in Table 12. Decreases in PARQ scores indicate improved relationship behavior.
Table 8

*Descriptive Statistics for Parent Pretest Scores on the Parent Adolescent Relationship Questionnaire*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pretest domain and scale</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conflict and Skill Deficits</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Distress</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>80.86</td>
<td>7.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>81.00</td>
<td>7.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>81.29</td>
<td>8.18</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>71.57</td>
<td>8.58</td>
</tr>
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<td>Sibling Conflict</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>73.60</td>
<td>22.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating Conflict</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>64.86</td>
<td>14.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beliefs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malicious Intent</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>82.57</td>
<td>7.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionism</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>66.29</td>
<td>14.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruination</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>77.29</td>
<td>8.69</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Family Structure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>13.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 5.*

Table 9

*Descriptive Statistics for Parent Posttest Scores on the Parent Adolescent Relationship Questionnaire*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posttest domain and scale</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conflict and Skill Deficits</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Distress</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>67.00</td>
<td>6.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>58.40</td>
<td>11.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>63.00</td>
<td>11.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Conflict</td>
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<td>73</td>
<td>62.20</td>
<td>10.38</td>
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<td>72</td>
<td>57.75</td>
<td>9.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating Conflict</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>50.80</td>
<td>9.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beliefs</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>85</td>
<td>75.40</td>
<td>10.69</td>
</tr>
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<td>74</td>
<td>62.60</td>
<td>14.42</td>
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<td>58</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>68.20</td>
<td>7.01</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>62.60</td>
<td>9.91</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 5.*
Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for Adolescent Pretest Scores on the Parent Adolescent Relationship Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pretest domain and scale</th>
<th>Min</th>
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<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td><strong>Conflict and Skill Deficits</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Global Distress</td>
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<td>1.77</td>
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<td>58.43</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Communication</td>
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<td>74</td>
<td>71.71</td>
<td>4.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>58.43</td>
<td>3.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother Problem Solving</td>
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<td>75</td>
<td>71.71</td>
<td>4.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Conflict</td>
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<td>58</td>
<td>53.00</td>
<td>6.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother School Conflict</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>64.00</td>
<td>11.55</td>
</tr>
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<td>91</td>
<td>83.00</td>
<td>8.97</td>
</tr>
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<td>Eating Conflict</td>
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<td>86</td>
<td>57.86</td>
<td>16.09</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>69.86</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** N = 5.

**Results of the AARS**

AARS scores were assessed at pretest and posttest on total anger, instrumental anger, reactive anger, and anger control. Five students completed the pre- and posttest AARS. The AARS total scores were computed for student responses. Scores over 70 represent a very high level of anger. Scores of 60–69 represent a moderately high level of anger. Scores of 41–59 indicate an average level of anger. Scores of 34–40 indicate a moderately low level of anger. Scores under 30 are considered a very low level of anger.
Table 11

*Descriptive Statistics for Adolescent Posttest Scores on the Parent Adolescent Relationship Questionnaire*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posttest domain and scale</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict and Skill Deficits</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Distress</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>68.80</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
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<td>62</td>
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<td>5.59</td>
</tr>
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<td>66</td>
<td>58.60</td>
<td>6.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>57</td>
<td>52.80</td>
<td>2.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother Problem Solving</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>62.80</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>55</td>
<td>49.40</td>
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<td>45.60</td>
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<td>7.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>43</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>53.80</td>
<td>14.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
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<td>Autonomy</td>
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<td>77</td>
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<td>11.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>61.80</td>
<td>7.95</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 5.*

Table 13 shows descriptive statistics for student scores on the AARS both pre- and posttest. Table 13 also shows the mean changes in score. Students showed decreased scores (improvement) on all measures except Anger Control.

**Results for Research Question 1**

What are the scope, frequency, and severity of the problem of increased aggressive behavior by girls being reared without their fathers? This question was answered using quantitative data from the AARS, CAS and PARQ.
Table 12

*Mean Decrease From Pre- to Posttest of Parent and Adolescent Scores on the Parent Adolescent Relationship Questionnaire*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posttest domain and scale</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th></th>
<th>Adolescents</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M decrease</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M decrease</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conflict and Skill Deficits</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Distress</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>13.93</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>4.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>25.20</td>
<td>18.53</td>
<td>9.20</td>
<td>10.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Communication</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>13.80</td>
<td>8.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>19.60</td>
<td>18.31</td>
<td>8.80</td>
<td>6.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Problem Solving</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>11.60</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Conflict</td>
<td>12.20</td>
<td>14.24</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother School Conflict</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>6.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling Conflict</td>
<td>24.25</td>
<td>15.90</td>
<td>20.75</td>
<td>17.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating Conflict</td>
<td>14.80</td>
<td>7.19</td>
<td>13.20</td>
<td>11.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beliefs</strong></td>
<td>17.40</td>
<td>17.29</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malicious Intent</td>
<td>13.80</td>
<td>9.15</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionism</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>13.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>10.40</td>
<td>9.40</td>
<td>13.20</td>
<td>12.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruination</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>12.60</td>
<td>4.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Structure</strong></td>
<td>23.40</td>
<td>12.22</td>
<td>11.60</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Parent $N = 5$; adolescent $N = 5$.

Table 13

*Descriptive Statistics for Student Pre- and Posttest Scores on the Adolescent Anger Rating Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th></th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th></th>
<th>M decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Min</td>
<td>Max</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>62.57</td>
<td>9.20</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental Anger</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>55.57</td>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive Anger</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>50.71</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger Control</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>45.29</td>
<td>12.39</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $N = 5$. 


Pretest scores demonstrated the problem among girls. On the AARS, scores over 70 represent a very high level of anger, scores of 60–69 represent a moderately high level of anger, and scores of 41–59 indicate an average level of anger. Pretest scores included a maximum total anger score of 81 and a maximum Anger Control score of 68. Means indicated a moderately high total level of anger. The individual scale scores showed average levels of anger on the pretest.

On the PARQ, higher scores indicate greater problems. On the PARQ pretest, parents and adolescents both indicated above average scores on the scales of Global Distress and Sibling Conflict. Parents indicated above average scores on the scales of Communication, Problem Solving, Malicious Intent, Ruination, and Cohesion. Parents indicated elevated scores on School Conflict. Adolescents indicated above average scores on Autonomy and Fairness and elevated scores for Mother Communication, Mother Problem Solving, and Ruination.

On the CAS, parent pretest scores included extremely high scores for the scales of Aggression Against Nonfamily Members, Verbal Aggression, Aggression Towards Adults, and Aggression Towards Peers. Scores on Physical Aggression, Initiated Physical Aggression, Aggression Against Family Members, and total aggression were moderately elevated. The remaining scales showed mildly elevated scores. Scores of 60–69 on the CAS indicate mildly elevated aggression. Scores of 70–79 are moderately elevated and suggest great clinical concern (Halperin & McKay, 2008). Scores over 80 indicate a child’s extreme tendency to aggression.

**Results for Research Question 2**

In what ways will the use of an arts-based intervention reduce aggressive behavior and anxiety in girls being reared without their fathers? This question was answered by
comparing pre- and postsurvey responses to the AARS, CAS and PARQ. Additionally, data from journals were qualitatively analyzed in order to determine any change in the number and intensity of aggressive behaviors. In general, scores dropped on the AARS posttest for total anger, Instrumental Anger, and Reactive Anger. Anger Control scores increased on the posttest. Decreases show less anger. On the PARQ, mean scores decreased on every scale for both parents and adolescents, indicating improvement. Teacher scores on the posttest CAS were much less than parent pretest CAS scores.

Due to limited data, the variables were tested using a nonparametric test equivalent to the paired t test, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The Type 1 and Type 2 error probabilities for each variable pair subjected to the Wilcoxon signed-rank tests are presented in Table 14. As the confidence level set was 95%, making the significant p-value .05, the Type 1 error probability or alpha value was .05 for all tests.

Table 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable or scale</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Type 1 error probability (α)</th>
<th>Power (1 – β)</th>
<th>Type 2 error Probability (β)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent: Communication</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent: Problem Solving</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent: Sibling Conflict</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent: Cohesion</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent: Communication</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent: Problem Solving</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent: Mother Problem Solving</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent: Cohesion</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent: Malicious Intent</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent: Perfectionism</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent: Ruination</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total anger</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total aggression</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**PARQ data.** The following scale scores were subjected to the signed-rank test: parent scores for Communication, Problem Solving, Sibling Conflict, and Cohesion and adolescent scores for Communication, Problem Solving, Mother Problem Solving, and Cohesion. The significance of the changes in scores are presented in Table 15. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that after the arts program intervention, the scales of Communication and Cohesion elicited statistically significant changes in scores ($Z = -2.032, p = .042$; and $Z = -2.023, p = .043$, respectively). As such, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed a statistically significant decrease in parents’ Communication and Cohesion scores after the arts program intervention.

Table 15

*Results of Tests for Significance in Change in Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable or scale</th>
<th>$Z$</th>
<th>Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent: Communication</td>
<td>-2.032</td>
<td>.042*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent: Problem Solving</td>
<td>-1.826</td>
<td>.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent: Sibling Conflict</td>
<td>-1.826</td>
<td>.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent: Cohesion</td>
<td>-2.023</td>
<td>.043*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent: Communication</td>
<td>-0.813</td>
<td>.416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent: Problem Solving</td>
<td>-1.490</td>
<td>.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent: Mother Problem Solving</td>
<td>-1.483</td>
<td>.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent: Cohesion</td>
<td>-1.219</td>
<td>.223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent: Malicious Intent</td>
<td>-1.761</td>
<td>.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent: Perfectionism</td>
<td>-0.944</td>
<td>.345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent: Ruination</td>
<td>-1.826</td>
<td>.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total anger</td>
<td>-2.032</td>
<td>.042*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total aggression</td>
<td>-2.521</td>
<td>.012*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05.

**AARS and CAS data.** Data gathered using the AARS and CAS were analyzed.

The following variables were subjected to the signed-rank test: total anger and total
aggression. As observed, for the variable of total anger, all five participants had higher total anger scores before the arts intervention program. For the variable of total aggression, all eight participants had higher total aggression scores before the arts intervention program. The significance of the changes in scores are presented in Table 15. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that after the arts program intervention, the variables of total anger \((Z = -2.032, p = .042)\) and total aggression \((Z = -2.521, p = .02)\) elicited statistically significant changes in scores. As such, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed a statistically significant decrease in participants’ total anger and total aggression scores after the arts program intervention.

**Results for Research Question 3**

In what ways will the use of an arts-based intervention improve feelings about family relationships for single mothers and girls being reared without their fathers? This question was answered using data from pre- and postintervention administrations of the PARQ to parents and children. All scale scores on the PARQ showed a decrease for both children and parents, indicating improved relationship behaviors. As shown above, there was a statistically significant decrease in parents’ scores for Communication and Cohesion, with no statistically significant changes in the other scale scores.

**Results for Research Question 4**

What are the observations and perceptions of all participants of the arts-based intervention regarding its impact on aggressive girls being reared without their fathers? Data from journals and the response from parents’ interviews were used to answer this research question and to add depth to the quantitative findings from the surveys. The qualitative data from the participants, instructors, and researcher were collected at the end of the intervention. The self-reported journals and the parents’ 14-question interview
protocol (Appendix B) helped the custodial parents to share their observations and perceptions of the phenomenon by discussing the meaning of their lived experiences answering open-ended questions (Creswell, 2007).

All of the eight remaining custodial participants were African American. According to their responses from the questionnaire, two were employed with the New York City Department of Social Services. In addition, another parent was employed with the Board of Education as a school safety agent. One parent stated that she was a home attendant, and another parent indicated that she was a bartender. The other three parents were unemployed. Of these, one parent confirmed that she is a laboratory technician, currently on a worker’s compensation leave. The other two unemployed parents were receiving public assistance. The following are the compiled answers from the parents’ interviews.

**Increase in aggressive behavior.** Participants were asked, “In your opinion, has there been an increase in aggressive behavior among the children who are being raised without their fathers?” The emerging theme was negative. One parent answered defensively, noting, “I did not choose to be a single parent, life happens. Besides, like every teenager, my daughter has a little problem controlling her anger. It has nothing to do with a father being there.”

Participants were asked to describe how they first realized their child’s behavior was aggressive. In answer to the question, the themes that emerged were school, followed by family members. Most striking was the answer of the parent of a preadolescent: “Although my daughter always had an attitude problem since she was a baby, but I always believed that the teachers and other students simply did not like her.” She added, “I always thought they were all picking on her.” However, the custodial parent further
explained that one day following a dance class, to her disbelief, the director of the school of dance suggested that she and her child be interviewed for the research program. According to the participant’s detailed response, she initially felt insulted at the suggestion. The participant further detailed that, after voicing her disappointment with dance school to her oldest son who still lives at home, he blurted out, “You don’t really know her,” referring to the daughter, his sister. The participant’s son further exclaimed, “She is getting out of control, you better do something.” Her son informed her that her daughter was displaying aggressive behavior behind her back.

**Being a single parent.** Out of the eight custodial parents, seven responded that were never married. The foster aunt responded that she was divorced prior to obtaining custody of her niece. Three participants stated that they became parents before the age 20, including one parent reporting that her first child was born when she was 17. Three had their children in their 20s, and one answered that she had her child in her 30s. The emerging theme was failed relationships as the reason for their single-parent status. One mother stated that her common-law husband, her daughter’s father, was in prison. All of the custodial parents were the sole provider for their children. In addition, all of the participants viewed the task of parenting as challenging, and some described it as overwhelming at times.

A shocking and unanticipated theme emerging from three of the mothers was the regret of becoming a parent. One mother stated,

> Having to go to work and provide for my child is already stressful enough, but when I come home and all I would hear is complaint about my daughter, it used to make me lose my temper when I disciplined her.

She explained, “I stopped paying attention, and I feel better now. I am hoping that she changes as she gets older.”
Parents were asked, “How do you see yourself today in terms of a single parent dealing with your child’s anger?” The emerging theme conveyed by the parents was embarrassment, followed by guilt over their child’s behavior. Mothers were asked, “To what extent do you consider yourself an involved parent?” The majority of the parents interviewed reported that they were thoroughly involved in their child’s life. However, the parent self-report data also showed evidence of behavior that amounted to a permissive parenting style.

**Cause of aggressive behavior.** Participants were asked, “What does having an aggressive child means to you? Do you feel you are to blame for her behavior?” The emerging two themes from this question were frustration and despair. However, one parent firmly denied that she was the cause of her daughter’s bad behavior. Another parent stated, “I know it has to be my fault, but I don’t know what to do anymore.”

Mothers were asked, “Do you feel that the lack of a father contributes to a child’s aggressive behavior?” The overall data from the journals and interviews with the custodial parents showed they agreed. All of the parents agreed that their daughters’ aggressive behavior was attributable to the lack of the father’s participation in their children’s lives as a result of the father’s absence.

Participants were asked how the community affects the children’s behavior. Parents expressed frustration with the school officials, community, friends, and family for questioning their parenting skills whenever their child behaved aggressively. Furthermore, two parents conveyed their disappointment with the community for its failure to provide any recreational activity for children. One parent answered, “My daughter always seems so miserable, I wished they had some free activity in the neighborhood to keep her busy.” She added, “I can’t afford to do anything extra with her;
I know that’s why she’s acting this way.”

**Results of aggressive behavior.** Participants were asked, “Can you describe any particular difficulties or traumatic experiences that the aggressive behavior has caused your child?” The emerging theme was that the parents believed that no one liked their children. The youngest parent admitted in her response that she no longer gets invited to family functions because she always finds herself defending her child’s behavior with other family members. One parent answered that she was ashamed whenever she was called into the school. She further added that at times she feels her child’s behavior is some type of punishment.

When asked, “What, if anything, would you change about your child?” the emerging theme was for the children to confide, trust, and communicate with their parents. The quantitative results of surveys indicated a statistically significant increase in parents’ communication skills following the intervention. This increase might be attributed to the parent being less anxious when interacting with the child, by the mere fact that the child was participating in an intervention program.

**Expectations of the arts-based intervention.** Participants were asked if they expected the arts-based intervention to help them and their children communicate and in turn reduce aggressive behavior. The emerging theme was that the parents wanted to communicate with their children. Six of the parents wanted their children to emerge feeling happy as opposed to always being angry. The qualitative results that were obtained from the participants’ self-reported observations as well as the observations from the instructors and that of the researcher confirmed an increase in the children’s positive and prosocial behavior and an increase in self-esteem. According to qualitative reports from all participants, the intervention molded the children’s attitudes during the
weeks of implementation and positively enhanced their behavior at every level. Notably, the parents of the children who completed the program reported a decrease in their child’s overall aggressive behavior. Furthermore, a decrease in aggression was reported observationally by parents and instructors according to the journal entries.

The participants’ expectations must have been communicated to other parents. During Week 3 of implementation, the researcher arrived at the intervention site and was shocked to find a group of women waiting with their daughters. They were all begging to be placed on a waiting list for the program.

Notably, data from the children’s journals showed they were happy attending the program. Two of the children articulated that they had attended previous anger-management counseling; however, they had felt as if they were being punished for their behavior. In contrast, as one child wrote, “Going to the program was all fun and no judgment.”
Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview of the Dissertation

The goal of the study was to reduce anxiety and aggressive behavior in preadolescent and adolescent girls by replacing impulsive behavior with rational behavior, using an arts-based anger-management intervention program. The investigator expected that given a forum to positively express pent-up aggressive behavior and anxiety, the level of aggressive behavior in girls might be reduced as communication increased. Dysfunctional behaviors such as aggressive behavior, violent behavior, drug addiction, and teenage pregnancy long have been associated with low self-esteem (Reynolds, 1995). In the process of addressing aggressive behavior, researchers have studied the used of arts-based therapy such as music and dance as catalysts to improve self-esteem, increase empowerment, and improve quality of life by increasing prosocial skills in adolescents with aggressive behavior (Davis, 1998; Pacchetti et al., 2000; Smeijsters et al., 2011; Tervo, 2001; Williams & Taylor, 2004).

An anger-management intervention program was presented to 12 girls. Four dropped out due to family complications, and eight completed the project. Eight parents completed the 14-question interview protocol. They all believed that the arts-based anger-management program could reduce aggressive behavior in their child. Further, all of the children who completed the project agreed to continue exercising anger management in their daily activities.

The girls in the intervention demonstrated increased peer collaboration. This increased prosocial behavior is contingent on anger being interceded by empathy among the participants (W. Roberts, Strayer, & Denham, 2014). W. Roberts et al. (2014) explained empathy is an emotional process generated by understanding the feelings of
others. The collaboration among the participants was evidence of acquired prosocial behavior as opposed to disrupting or even terminating their interactions.

The quantitative data analysis yield statistically significant improvements in four areas: parent-reported communication, family cohesion, overall anger, and overall aggression. The qualitative data revealed positive results. The qualitative data were obtained from the observable results of the instructors coupled with the self-reported results from the participants’ journals and the parents’ interview protocol. These results, all in concert, demonstrated a notable decrease in anger and anxiety, fostering a remarkable increase in prosocial behavior. The reported data supported previous studies suggesting that an arts-based intervention could positively impact behavior of aggressive children in a single-parent household.

**Relationship of Findings to the Literature**

**Absence of a father.** The parents were not in agreement in this study as to whether the absence of a father caused the girls’ aggressive behavior. According to the overall data from the journals and questionnaires obtained from the custodial parents, all agreed that their daughters’ aggressive behavior was attributable to the lack of the father’s participation in their children’s lives as a result of the father’s absence. Yet, in an earlier interview question, the mothers denied an increase in their children’s aggression after their fathers left. Hansen (2009) described the overall trauma a child can suffer as a result of her father’s absence. The absence of the father causes a void in the child’s life (Mancini, 2010).

Summers and Backken (2006) indicated that children who were living in a home without their father were 11 times more likely to display aggressive and violent behavior. Furthermore, children who were residing with a single unmarried parent were 6 times
more likely to display aggressive and violent behavior. Eastin (2003) confirmed that the presence of a father in the home could control aggressive behavior in children as well as prevent possible delinquency in adolescents. Moreover, Eastin stated research had proven that children reared in a single-parent household had overwhelmingly worse outcomes as opposed to children in a two-parent home.

All of the participants viewed the task of single parenting as challenging and even overwhelming at times. One mother stated,

Having to go to work and provide for my child is already stressful enough, but when I come home and all I would hear is complaint about my daughter, it used to make me lose my temper when I disciplined her. . . . I stopped paying attention, and I feel better now. I am hoping that she changes as she gets older.

There may be a multitude of reasons for children’s negative behavior, but according to Hardaway and Cornelius (2013), economical hardship was found to be a cause of maternal psychological distress, which negatively impacted parenting skills. This adverse impact on the parents ultimately was also associated with the children externalizing behavior (Hardaway & Cornelius, 2013). Moreover, Kalil and Ryan (2010) confirmed that the majority of single mothers had low income and were viewed as mothers in fragile families. The single parents experienced a higher rate of poverty due to health, psychological, or emotional problems. Ehrenreich and Piven (2002) confirmed the economic hardships of single mothers, contributing to difficulty in properly nurturing and providing for an aggressive child.

**Parenting style.** Consequently, parental influence on children outcomes was further documented in recent research (Dabney, 2013) investigating the barriers to success and positive outcomes of single mother’s families. Some participants in this study expressed regret at having a child. These results confirm those of Dabney (2013),
who found that the social challenges experienced by single parents caused them to view their children as both a blessing and regret. In addition, the participants in Dabney’s study reported feelings of frustration, depression, sadness, and anger towards the absent parent. Dabney acknowledged a wealth of research depicting single parents as the root of dysfunctional and problematic behavior but also a lack of research providing statistics to evaluate the barriers to positive parental outcomes in single-parent families. Therefore, Dabney suggested that the investigation of the lived experiences of the participants might have provided details that would help improve future conditions for these single parents. Wahl and Metzer (2012) affirmed that most adolescents who commit acts of violence were already aggressive as children; therefore, parents should be included in early intervention to prevent aggressiveness.

Regarding being a single parent dealing with their child’s anger, the emerging theme conveyed by the parents was embarrassment, followed by guilt over their child’s behavior. Participants conveyed frustration and despair. However, one parent firmly denied that she was the cause of the child’s bad behavior. Meanwhile, another parent stated, “I know it has to be my fault, but I don’t know what to do anymore.” The majority of the parents interviewed reported that they were thoroughly involved in their child’s life. However, the parent self-report data also showed evidence of behavior that amounted to a permissive parenting style. Researchers have proven that parental structure by providing supervision, monitoring, and rule setting are all conducive to positive adolescent behavior outcomes, provide a measure of behavioral control, and effectively prevent antisocial behavior (B. K. Barber, Stolz, Olsen, Collins, & Burchinal, 2005).

Georgiou and Stavrinides (2008) posited that research proved that children’s aggressive behavior was reduced by parents who paid attention and monitored their
children’s behavior. Moreover, Spieker et al. (2012) warned that research had proven that children’s aggressive behavior was most often generated by a permissive or authoritarian parenting style, an inadequate level of parent–child communication, and the use of physical violence. Ultimately, conflict between mother and child was a definite predictor of aggressive behavior. Additionally, a permissive parenting style was found to be directly associated with internalizing and externalizing behavior (Alizadeh, Abu Talib, Abdullah, & Mansor, 2011).

In the current study, all of the other participants acknowledged that they were aware of their child’s aggressive behavior. However, at least two of them had to be informed of it by family members or school staff. They indicated that they did not like the suggestions that were being offered by the school officials and family members. All of the custodial participating parents conveyed a unilateral helplessness at their child’s behavior. This is consistent with previous research by Vaughan, Finn, Bernard, Brereton, and Kaufman (2012) finding children with behavioral problems posed an added challenge to the task of parenting, contributing to parenting stress.

**Communication.** Spieker et al. (2012) identified an inadequate level of parent–child communication, specifically conflict between mother and child, as a definite predictor of aggressive behavior. In the current study, parents indicated in interviews they wanted their children to confide in, trust, and communicate with them. The quantitative and qualitative results indicated an increase in the parents’ communication skills. This increase might be attributed to the fact that the parents were less anxious when interacting with their child, by the mere fact that the child was participating in an intervention program.

In essence, the use of music can help increase communication skills by proving to
be an essential conduit of communications for individuals working with personal issues (Gadberry, 2010). In the current study, having used the arts as an anger-management tool, participants experienced a communal bond through their shared experiences playing the keyboard, dancing, and painting. This confirms findings by McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, and Brooks (2004), who observed increased empathy among children using the arts as a shared experience. Moreover, the instructors in the current study reported increased cooperation and patience, which are considered crucial skills for communication. Shields (2001) reported participation in the arts had positive effects on potential dropouts. In addition, Shields confirmed that music and arts participation fostered increased social interaction, camaraderie, and feelings of satisfaction and success among the participants.

Rubin (2008) stated that the arts are the soul of human existence, as music gives birth to emotion and emotion gives birth to music. Brand and Bar-Gil (2010) acknowledged music as an immeasurable social interaction medium. They further expressed that music is not only a medium for personal expression but has long been used as a tool of tolerance and open-mindedness as well as being a tool to mitigate the acceptance of difference in others. More succinctly, in a review of arts-based research, McCarthy et al. (2004) confirmed the intrinsic and instrumental therapeutic ability of incorporating the arts as therapy. Moreover, McCarthy et al. declared that the arts have impacted attitudinal and behavioral benefits by improving behavior, self-image, and prosocial attitudes among youths at risk.

Parents wanted to communicate more with their children in this study. Six of the parents also stated they wanted the intervention to lead to their children feeling happy as opposed to always being angry. Quantitative data showed statistically significant
improvements in parents’ communication with their children after the intervention. Children also showed statistically significant reduction in anger as well as aggression. Observational and interview data supported the quantitative findings. The therapeutic value of an arts-based program has been proven, according to Ager et al. (2011). Ager et al. implemented an arts-based initiative with children in a war-torn area of Uganda. The intervention also included parental support and community involvement. The well-being of the children increased as well as their resilience.

Conclusions

The goal of the anger-management program was to teach the participants how to identify their anger and to use strategies to appropriately deal with the anger. Evidently, the participants had embraced these concepts that were introduced to them. According to the reaction of the participants, an immediate impact in the girls’ behavior was experienced, whereby they became a unit, by helping each other to master their music and dance assignments.

Positive effects of the art-based intervention included statistically significant improvements in children’s level of anger and aggression on posttests of the AARS and CAS, respectively. Parents reported statistically significant improvements in communication and family cohesion on the PARQ. The decrease in anger should increase the children’s overall mental well-being (Daykin, Deviggiani, Pilkington & Moriarty, 2012).

Other positive effects observed according to the journals of the program instructors as a result of the intervention were peer cooperation, empathy, and impulse control. Findings support previous research that dance possesses the ability to increase confidence, social tolerance, appreciation, and group social development, which can help
reduce anger (Catteral, Dumais, & Thompson, 2012). Similarly, Franklin, Fernandez, Mosby, and Fernando (2004) declared that painting, music, dance, and drama indeed positively impacted the brain in terms of conceptual, analytical thinking skills and problem-solving ability. Furthermore, engaging in the arts reduced stress and enhanced motivation. Franklin et al. described the impact of the arts on the brain as rewiring the brain. Consequently, it has been documented that music lessons had the power to increase spatial reasoning.

The positive results as reported on the surveys were supported by positive behavioral outcomes as a result of the arts-based intervention program. In research using music as intervention, Nance (2014) postulated that the decrease of aggressive behavior observed during the implementation process by the program instructors could be attributed to an increase in impulse control, empathy, and cooperative behaviors acquired by the participants as a result of the music component piece of the intervention.

The prosocial behavior of the girls who completed the program in this study increased across all measures. Notably, Evancho (2013) contended that, when children participate in an organized and supervised activity, often the end result is a decrease in problem behavior, an increase in educational achievement, and an increase in heightened psychosocial competencies.

According to the journal entries, the children observed that attending the program provided them with a sense of purpose. Furthermore, two of the children articulated that they had attended anger-management counseling in the past; however, they had felt as if they were being punished for their behavior. Conversely, they stated that they were happy attending this program.

One of the custodial parents noticed an immediate change in how her child
interacted with her sibling. The parent observed that her child was proud of her new musical skills. The parent observed the participant was often teaching her siblings to play as opposed to the constant physical and verbal arguments they used to experience prior to the program. Self-esteem is a monitor of social competence as opposed to rejection (Heatherton, Wyland, & Lopez, 2003).

To change a dysfunctional behavior, an option must be provided. Aggressive behavior among girls between the ages of 8 and 17 who were being reared without their fathers was reduced through the use of all art forms as an intervention measure and anger management. These girls were exposed to a venue where they were able to voice their frustrations and express their emotions through their chosen art form. Negative behaviors were quickly replaced by positive social skills. According to Heatherton al. (2003), self-esteem is generated when an individual’s outcomes surpasses his or her projected goal on a specific dimension of choice. The students’ performance did exceed their expectations, positively increasing their self-esteem.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation was funding; as a result, the number of participants was very limited. The sample was further reduced by participants who did not complete the program. The study was limited to a small population in a specific geographical area; therefore, the number of participants was too small to generalize results.

In addition, having used a nonexperimental design, there was no comparison sample. As a result, the mere lack of comparison created limitations. As a case study, this researcher investigated a phenomenon. However, the researcher was not involved in either controlling or manipulating the variables. The research focus remained on seeking an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and its context (Darke, Shanks, &

Using the same instruments for the pre- and posttest might have given participants knowledge and affected posttest results. The process of testing and retesting can influence people’s behaviors, thereby confounding internal validity (Babbie, 2001). The process of observation had limitations, in that observations were filtered through the values, biases, attitudes, and expectations of the researcher.

**Recommendations**

Aggressive behavior results from unresolved frustrations. By being empowered with better communication skills, a new belief system, and enhanced impulse control and cooperation skills, the girls in this study decreased their anger and aggression. They demonstrated increased prosocial skills and communication. Families showed more cohesion. According to the custodial parents who had more than one child, the only major problem they experienced as a result of the intervention was a bit of resentment and sibling rivalry from other siblings who wanted to be part of the intervention project. In addition, at Week 3, many parents and their daughters were begging to be put on a waiting list for the program. Due to time constraints and limitation of funds, the participation in the project was limited to a bare minimum. The program is recommended to be implemented on a much larger scale.

The results indicated an increase in parents’ communication skills after the intervention. Further results indicated parents felt helpless and often demonstrated a permissive parenting style. Thus, good parenting skills should be included in the program.

The literature review has corroborated the fact that the absence of the father causes great harms to children in general, not only girls. Therefore, the intervention also
should include boys. A culture is as strong as its children; therefore the needs of these children at risk should immediately be addressed to provide future healthy adults.
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Appendix A

Matrix of Primary Studies From Literature Review
### Matrix of Primary Studies From Literature Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Treatments</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N. Barber (2004)</td>
<td>The role of single parenthood in predicting violent-crime rates (murders, rapes, assaults) in 39 countries.</td>
<td>Observing the trends of violent crime with those with a parent in a household versus the contrary.</td>
<td>Adults aged 15–64</td>
<td>Violent crime and a single parent household are directly related.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blake &amp; Hamrin (2007)</td>
<td>The negative effect that anger has on youth, including its manifestation into mood disorders and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.</td>
<td>Random division in three groups: (a) experimental attribution retraining program, (b) attention training, and (c) no-attention control group; therapy-based interventions</td>
<td>Children in Grades 3–6, aged 5–17</td>
<td>Therapeutic techniques such as relaxation training, cognitive restructuring, problem-solving skills, social-skills training, and conflict resolution can teach children how to effectively deal with their anger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Larson &amp; Dehle (2007)</td>
<td>Observing family influences in rural adolescent aggression; multimethod measurement (self-report, parent report, and behavioral observation)</td>
<td>The direct association between parental emotional support and rural adolescent aggression.</td>
<td>Rural adolescents and their mothers or stepmothers</td>
<td>Parental emotional support has an indirect influence on adolescent aggression, whether positively or negatively.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Treatments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mandara, Murray, &amp; Joyner (2005)</td>
<td>1. Observing behavior of African American children raised without father in household.  2. A study given to junior high boys.</td>
<td>1. Observing the behavior of African American children and their lives.  2. Asked to rate each other on 15 words associated with masculinity</td>
<td>1. African American girls and boys  2. Forty African American boys in junior high school</td>
<td>1. Girls showed no obvious difference.  2. Boys who were raised with fathers tended to be more masculine than boys raised without their fathers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McLanahan &amp; Carlson (2004)</td>
<td>The important role that fathers play in children’s lives and how public policies affect childbearing and father involvement</td>
<td>Observing the role that a father plays in the life of a child and how public policies are affecting this role.</td>
<td>Children living in father-absent families</td>
<td>Facilitation of fathers’ overall involvement and support the centrality of the mother–father relationship is vital for children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ngo &amp; Lee (2007)</td>
<td>The effects of social and cultural stressors on different Asian youth</td>
<td>Children exposed to violence are at an increased risk for demonstrating antisocial behavior</td>
<td>329 Cambodian, Chinese, Lao/Mien, and Vietnamese youths aged 10–18</td>
<td>Chinese reported lowest levels of stressors; Cambodian and Lao/Mien reported higher levels of stressors, emotional hardship, and physical abuse in comparison to the Vietnamese.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Treatments</td>
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<td>Roe-Sepowitz (2007)</td>
<td>Examination of (a) 29 adolescent girls who had committed murder in Florida and (b) 33 adolescent boys who had committed crimes.</td>
<td>The reasoning behind the violent crimes these girls committed, drivers in the boys’ childhood that may have driven them to do these acts</td>
<td>29 adolescent girls charged with murder or attempted murder, 33 male delinquent youths</td>
<td>The interaction between parental problems and parental dysfunction and a history of past violence was a trend observed.</td>
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<td>Rosenberg &amp; Wilcox (2006)</td>
<td>An investigation on the relationship a father has with members of the household and the effects, both positive and negative, of a father</td>
<td>Observing the relationships that fathers have with various individuals.</td>
<td>Children with actively involved fathers involved in their lives versus children who do not have actively involved parents in their lives.</td>
<td>A father is significant to a child, whether the father is actively involved in the child's life or not. Children with actively involved fathers from birth tend to be more emotionally stable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rouyer, Frascarolo, Zaouche-Gaudron, &amp; Lavanchy (2007)</td>
<td>The involvement of fathers in child rearing and various aspects of the child’s life.</td>
<td>How a father’s involvement affects childhood, and does involvement differ with the sex of the child</td>
<td>147 Swiss fathers of 18-month-old children (65 girls and 82 boys) completed questionnaires.</td>
<td>Globally, the fathers took on few responsibilities, which were largely devolved to mothers. Fathers of boys were more involved in child care than fathers of girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travis (2005)</td>
<td>To see the effects on children of an incarcerated parent, including signs of negative development</td>
<td>Observing the effects of an incarcerated parent on a child</td>
<td>Adolescents girls and boys with incarcerated parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Single Parenthood as a Predictor of Cross-National Variation in Violent Crime, by N. Barber, 2004, *Cross Cultural Research, 41, 343-358; Current Approaches to the Assessment and Management of Anger*
Appendix B

Parent Interview Protocol
Parent Interview Protocol

Interview#_____

1. Could you please describe yourself by providing your age and gender and whether or not you are currently employed? If employed, what is your job title, and what is your yearly income? If unemployed, how do you support yourself and child?

2. Which ethnic race do you consider yourself?

3. In your opinion, has there been an increase in aggressive behavior among the children who are being raised without their fathers?

4. Can you describe how you first realized that your child’s behavior was aggressive?

5. Can you describe how you first became a single parent?

6. How do you see yourself today in terms of a single parent dealing with your child’s anger?

7. What does having an aggressive child mean to you? Do you feel that you are to blame for her behavior?

8. Can you describe any particular difficulties or traumatic experiences that the aggressive behavior has caused you or your child?

9. Do you feel that the lack of a father contributes to child aggressive behavior?

10. Can you describe how the community affects your child’s behavior?

11. To what extent do you consider yourself an involved parent?

12. What, if anything, would you change about yourself and your relationship with your child?

13. How does the rest of your family view your child’s aggressive behavior?

14. In your opinion do you feel that an arts-based intervention could help you and
your child communicate and in turn reduce her aggressive behavior? In your own words, what do you expect would happen to your child’s aggression as a result of participating in this program?

Thank You For Your Participation!