



Beyond Gender: Tailoring Treatment for Female Offenders to Reduce Recidivism

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Abstract: *System treats female offenders and how it should treat them. Cauffman starts by looking at past trends in how often and how long female offenders were in the youth justice system, as well as how long they were processed and arrested. She also talks about the normal adult outcomes for female criminals, pointing out that compared to male offenders, female offenders often face harsher long-term consequences for their actions, some of which can even be passed down to future generations. She also looks at things that might make women more or less likely to commit crimes, as well as common trends of crime among girls. She then talks about the results of the study on effective treatment choices for female criminals. Since many female offenders have mental health problems, successful preventative measures should focus on meeting the mental health needs of at-risk girls before they develop long-lasting behavior issues. Cauffman says that sending girls with mental health problems to community-based treatment programs would not only help them, but it would also free up the youth court system to focus on cases that are most dangerous to the public. More and more research shows that treating female offenders in ways that are specific to their gender can help them get better, especially when the program focuses on their social and family settings. It is becoming clear, though, that female offenders are not all the same. In the end, treatment should be based on the unique needs of each patient, which should be decided by factors other than gender. Even though they seem different, Cauffman says that the main reasons why men and women commit crimes are alike in a number of ways. Some people think that the best rules to stop teens from breaking the law will be those that help kids grow up in a safe and caring setting. Cauffman comes to the conclusion that female offenders will probably need ongoing help even after they are no longer in the youth justice system.*

Keywords
Problems with town planning, housing developers, and growth.

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Introduction

Since the beginning of the youth justice system, rules and guidelines have been based on how a mostly male population behaves, how they are treated, and what happens to them. In the same way, most studies on criminal behavior have mostly focused on guys. Since men have generally been much more likely to commit crimes than women, and especially more likely to commit violent crimes, it makes sense to stress this point. Since we live in a society like this, it makes sense that there would be little knowledge about women's illegal activities.

Many people are wondering if long-held beliefs and ways of dealing with juvenile crime should be rethought in light of recent changes in the number of female criminals and girls in the care of the juvenile justice system. In our society, women are thought to be from Venus and men are thought to be from Mars. It makes sense then that the juvenile justice system needs to be changed to better meet the needs of the growing number of female juvenile offenders. On the other hand, is this result really clear? Medical study has found many examples of diseases that affect men and women in different ways, such as the rates and types of infections they get. However, both men and women are given the same treatment for these diseases. Even though there are gender-neutral ways to treat many diseases, there may be better ways to avoid or find them that are specific to each gender. Different disorders show up in men and women in different ways, so they need to be handled differently for men and women.

Also, the answer to whether policy and practice should be changed because there are

more female juvenile offenders may be different based on whether the focus is on diagnosis, prognosis, prevention, or treatment. Basically, I want to give an outline of the research that has been done in these related areas, the policy implications that can be made when there is enough data, and the research that needs to be done when there is not enough data.

The first thing I do is look at past arrest rates, processing times, and experiences of female minor offenders in the juvenile justice system. I also talk about the usual adult punishments for female offenders and stress how important it is to have good policy solutions to this problem. Then I talk about common paths taken by female offenders and things that might make them more or less likely to break the law. After that, I talk about what is known and what can be logically expected about effective ways to treat female criminals. Finally, I talk about how the present research on female offenders can be used to improve policy and practice, as well as the research gaps that need to be filled before we can come to a firm conclusion.

Patterns of Youth Arrests

Men are more likely than women to break the law and do bad things, according to both government records and self-reports. Criminal behavior at the national and foreign levels is different for men and women. Official records often don't show as many crimes as they really are, but they are still used to figure out who should be in the youth justice system.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) says that 29% of all youth arrests in 2003 were made

by girls. For certain crimes, more women than men were arrested and jailed.

Even though different policies make it hard to study police records, changes in self-reported crime and the arrest rate for female teens show that gender violence is on the rise. Some people say that as the women's freedom movement grew, gender roles changed, making women act more like men and making physical violence more likely. In the years 1980 to 2003, Figure 2 shows that the number of women arrested for serious crimes like murder and robbery rose from 15% to 24%. The main reason for the general rise in the number of women involved in violent crime seems to be the rise in the number of women arrested for aggravated assault.

Since the rates of property crimes like car theft, arson, and burglary changed similarly for men and women during this time, it seems likely that structural factors affect the rates of violent crimes committed by men and women in different ways. Analysts don't agree on what these arrest numbers mean, though. For example, Danell Steffensmeier and her colleagues say that the rise in violent crimes by women may be due to changes in the law and the way criminal justice is done. Six

The study used data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) and UCR police records to look at trends in murder, sexual assault, aggravated assault, and simple assault from 1980 to 2003. The goal was to find out if the changes were due to policy or behavior.

This is because UCR data come from police records and NCVS data come straight from crime victims. This means that NCVS data

can show criminal trends even if police policies change. Both sources say that the difference between the rates of homicide and sexual attack between men and women seems to be stable. However, the NCVS data did not show the rise in arrests for criminal assaults between women and men that the UCR data did. This means that more women are being arrested for violent crimes. This may be due in part to activities that make the criminal justice system more aggressive at the low level and the growing trend of changing simple attacks into aggravated assaults. Without a question, there are more and more female offenders in the juvenile justice system. This is true no matter if higher arrest rates are due to more violent behavior among teenage girls compared to boys or to a change in policy that favors arresting aggressive girls instead of other options.

Patterns in the way juvenile criminal cases are handled

Not only are male juvenile criminals more likely than female juvenile offenders to be arrested, they are also more likely to be petitioned, which is the same thing as being charged in juvenile court, after being arrested! Girls are less likely than boys to apply, be adjudicated (i.e., found guilty), and be sent to a residential placement as a result (27% vs. 19%).⁷ Even though less than 1% of minors don't have to go through the criminal justice system, female juvenile offenders are even less likely to be tried as adults. Only 7% of minors sent to adult prisons are girls. Even so, most of the people who break the law are still men.

Between 1985 and 2002, the number of cases involving girls rose by 92%, but the



number of cases involving boys only rose by 29%.⁹

Some studies show that women get lighter terms than men, while others show that women get harsher sentences than men. The different results have caused a discussion about whether women are treated brutally or leniently (more "chivalrous") by the system because they are seen as either too "masculine" or in need of protection. As Cecilia Saulters-Tubbs found, district attorneys were less likely to bring drug crimes against female criminals than against male offenders. Donna Bishop and Charles Frazier found that women were less likely to be in jail than men, and that men got heavier punishments for breaking the law than women did. These studies show that the criminal justice system thinks girls are less dangerous than boys. The amount ¹¹

Other study, on the other hand, shows that when legal factors are taken into account, girls are treated worse than boys in the later stages of court cases but the same in the earlier stages. The ¹² So, it's possible that earlier studies that found girls were treated more "chivalrously" didn't take into account differences in how bad the offenses were.

A lot of research is also being done on how gender affects racial and ethnic inequality as well as how race and ethnicity affect the handling of minor cases.

In general, it doesn't look like racial differences are as important for female offenders. For example, young black male defendants get much harsher punishments. In non-delinquent groups, girls are more likely than boys to have externalizing disorders, while boys are more likely to have internalizing disorders. ^{eighteen years old}

than young white male defendants. For female crimes, race has no effect on how harsh the punishments are.¹³ Things Teenagers Have Done in the Juvenile Court System

Boys and girls often have different experiences in the juvenile court system after they have been found guilty. But the direction of many experiential differences isn't clear, as different studies come to different results, just like there are differences in how men and women process information. For example, Joanne Belknap found that girls who are detained spend more time in jail than boys who are detained, even though boys are more likely to be arrested.¹⁴ In any case, a new study (figure 3) shows that guys stay longer than women. Also, female criminals who are in jail may be more hostile than their male peers. One study found that girls in institutions are more likely than boys to be violent toward workers. ^{sixteen is the number}

The Child Behavior Checklist-Youth Self Report shows that the basic structure of aggression in high-risk girls is different from that of girls in normal settings and boys in both normal and high-risk settings. This was found by Candice Odgers, Marlene Moretti, and Debra Pepler. Girls in the juvenile justice system may be different from male criminals and female non-offenders.

A lot of teens who end up in the juvenile court system have mental health problems.

But these results don't apply to people who are in juvenile court. A lot of study shows that female offenders are more likely than male offenders to have both internalizing

and externalizing mental health problems. This is true no matter what race or age the offenders are.

In a study of very serious "deep-end" criminals, women had more problems with both internalizing and externalizing than men did. The 20 More study showed that differences between boys and girls were more noticeable among children in jail than among kids in the general population. For example, detained girls showed more signs of mental illness than would be expected based on their gender or the place where they were kept. The study used normal tests and a group of teens from both incarcerated and community-living teens who were matched by demographics.²¹

Several possible reasons could explain why mental health symptoms and aggression among incarcerated teens and young adults are different for boys and girls. Girls are less

Who are the Women?

In order to design effective programs that match female offenders' needs, it is important to consider who they are--the demographics and history of the female population, as well as how various life factors impact their patterns of offending. A basic principle of clinical work is to know who the client is and what she brings into the treatment setting. "[I]f programming is to be effective, it must . . . take the context of women's lives into account" (Abbott & Kerr, 1995). Therefore, a review of the literature on the lives of women in the criminal justice system is presented. In

likely to be locked up by the courts and police, and girls who are locked up almost always have the worst behavior issues.²² Also, it's likely that serious mental health problems are what make women turn to crime. Because of this, girls with mental illness are more likely than boys to commit crimes.

By excluding all but the most obviously disturbed girls, police and judges might create a group of detained women who are much more disturbed than their male counterparts. This is because men don't have to be as "troubled" to commit crimes and don't have to look as "troublesome" to be detained.

Correctional systems face big problems with female offenders, who are becoming a bigger share of young prisoners very quickly.

general, female offenders can be said to differ from their male counterparts in several significant ways: Nonviolent Property Offenses First, they are less likely to have committed violent offenses and more likely to have been convicted of crimes involving alcohol, other drugs, or property. Female offenders have been found to play "no substantial role in drug trafficking" (Phillips & Harm, 1998, p. 3), as most of their drug convictions relate to using drugs. Many of their property crimes are economically driven, often motivated by poverty and/or the abuse of alcohol and other drugs. In a study of California inmates, 71.9% of

women had been convicted on a drug or property charge, versus 49.7% of men. Men also commit nearly twice the violent crimes that women do (Bloom, Chesney-Lind, & Owen, 1994). Of those females in prison for violent crimes, many of them committed their crimes against a spouse, ex-spouse, or boyfriend. They are likely to report having been physically or sexually abused, often by the person they assaulted. Thus, even violent female offenders are frequently not seen as at risk of committing violence against the general public (Browne, 1987; Denborough, 1996; Phillips & Harm, 1998). Substance Abuse Problems Substance abuse is a major problem for female offenders. In the U.S., “up to 80% of the women offenders in some state prison systems now have severe, long-standing substance abuse problems,” according to the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) (1997, p. 2). According to Snell (1994), drug violators make up 61% of women in U.S. federal prisons (up from 38% in 1986), 21% of the women in state facilities (up from 9%), and 23% of those in local jails (up from 9%). Despite the strong link between substance abuse and crime, only a fraction of female inmates receive treatment (Wellisch, Prendergast, & Anglin, 1994). For example, in California, only 3% of women inmates have access to any type

of treatment (Bloom, et al., 1994). Psychiatric Disorders Substance abuse is the most common psychiatric disorder among female offenders. A survey of female pretrial jail detainees found that over 80% of the sample met the DSMIII-R criteria for one or more lifetime psychiatric disorders. “The most common disorders were drug abuse or drug dependence (63.6%), alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence (32.3%), and PTSD [Post-traumatic Stress Disorder] (33.5%)” (Teplin, Abram, & McClelland, 1996, p. 508). Sixty percent of the subjects had exhibited drug or alcohol abuse or dependence within six months of the interview. In addition, 16.9% met the criteria for a major depressive episode. Subjects were mostly nonviolent offenders who had been jailed because they could not pay bail for misdemeanors. Poverty, Lack of Skills, and Ethnicity Furthermore, most female offenders are poor, undereducated, and unskilled. Women of color are disproportionately represented in U.S. jails and prisons. A survey of female jail inmates in the U.S. found that “over 60% were unemployed when arrested and one-third were not looking for work. Less than one-third of male inmates were similarly unemployed and less than 12% were not looking for work” (Collins & Collins, 1996).

Another study of women prisoners found that of those women who had been employed before incarceration, many were on the lower rungs of the economic ladder. Barriers to visitation such as the isolated locations of women's prisons and lack of transportation exacerbate the problems of maintaining family ties and reunifying with children. 4 Physical and Sexual Abuse Many women in prison also have histories of physical and sexual abuse. One study found that nearly 80% of female prisoners had experienced some form of abuse. Twenty-nine percent reported being physically abused as children and 60% as adults, usually by their partners. Thirty-one percent experienced sexual abuse as a child and 23% as adults; 40% reported emotional abuse as a child and 48% as an adult (Bloom et al., 1994). Another study found that 23% of female inmates had experienced incest or rape as juveniles; 22% had been sexually abused as adults; and 53% had been physically abused (Brennan & Austin, 1997).

Summary:

minority, aged 25 to 29, unmarried, has one to three children, a likely victim of sexual abuse as a child, a victim of physical abuse, has current alcohol and drug abuse 5 problems, multiple arrests, first arrested

with only 37% working at a legitimate job. Twenty-two percent were on some kind of public support, 16% made money from drug dealing, and 15% Brennan and Austin (1997) characterize the "typical" female offender in U.S. prisons as: probably probably minority, aged 25 to 29, unmarried, has one to three children, a likely victim of sexual abuse as a child, a victim of physical abuse, has current alcohol and drug abuse 5 problems, multiple arrests, first arrested around age 15, a high school dropout, on welfare, has low skills, and has held mainly low-wage jobs (p. 3). In short, the females in the correctional system are mostly young, poor, and undereducated women of color who have complex histories of trauma and substance abuse. Most are nonviolent and are not threats to the community. Survival (of abuse and poverty) and substance abuse are their most common pathways to crime (Chesney-Lind & Bloom, 1997). Their greatest needs are multifaceted treatment for drug abuse and trauma recovery as well as education and training in job and parenting skill around age 15, a high school dropout, on welfare, has low skills, and has held mainly low-wage jobs.

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Other study, on the other hand, shows that when legal factors are taken into account, girls are treated worse than boys in the later stages of court cases but the same in the earlier stages. The 12 So, it's possible that earlier studies that found girls were treated more "chivalrously" didn't take into account differences in how bad the offenses were.

A lot of research is also being done on how gender affects racial and ethnic inequality as well as how race and ethnicity affect the handling of minor cases.

In general, it doesn't look like racial differences are as important for female offenders. For example, young black male defendants get much harsher punishments than young white male defendants. For female crimes, race has no effect on how harsh the punishments are. 13 Things Teenagers Have Done in the Juvenile Court System

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Poverty, Lack of Skills, and Ethnicity Furthermore, most female offenders are poor, undereducated, and unskilled. Women of color are disproportionately represented in U.S. jails and prisons. A survey of female jail inmates in the U.S. found that "over 60% were unemployed when arrested and one-third were not looking for work. Less than one-third of male inmates were similarly unemployed and less than 12% were not looking for work" (Collins & Collins, 1996).



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Summary:

This article explores the necessity of gender-specific treatment programs for female offenders to effectively reduce recidivism rates. Despite advancements in correctional practices, the unique needs and experiences of female offenders have often been overlooked, resulting in higher rates of recidivism among this demographic. By examining the gender-specific risk factors and pathways to offending, this article argues for tailored interventions that address the underlying causes of female criminal behavior. Drawing upon empirical research and theoretical frameworks, it highlights the importance of trauma-informed care, gender-responsive programming, and holistic approaches to rehabilitation in reducing recidivism among female offenders. Moreover, the article emphasizes the significance of collaboration between criminal justice agencies, healthcare providers, and community organizations in implementing comprehensive treatment strategies that support the successful reintegration of female offenders into society.

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