Although males have historically been the focus of the juvenile justice system, females now represent a quarter of juvenile arrests. Since the second wave of feminism in the 1970s, critics of androcentric policies and programming for delinquents has shifted public attention to the history, experiences, and treatment of girls in the juvenile justice system. The recent attention granted to female juvenile delinquents has spurred the creation of rehabilitation programs that offer gender-specific programming. Elements of gender-specific programming involve individualized therapy, gender-responsive staff members, community connections, and self-efficacy building. I recognize these guidelines are a step in the right direction towards a solution to reducing recidivism rates for female delinquents, but argue that an additional educational element is needed for delinquent girls. Young girls in society and especially the juvenile justice system are disadvantaged, underprivileged, and powerless in many ways. Integrating a women studies education will foster independence, enhance self-esteem, promote understanding of larger social structures and inequalities that women face in the real world, and develop positive social support. This thesis contributes to the understanding of female delinquents, while arguing that a women studies educational element should be integrated into programs that aim to benefit delinquent girls.

Key words: Delinquency, Girls, Juvenile, Rehabilitation, Women Studies, Feminism
Corresponding e-mail address: Doylea@onid.orst.edu
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Delinquent Girls: In Need of a Feminist Education for Rehabilitative Programming

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Andrea Doyle

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APPROVED:

Mentor, Michelle Inderbitzin, representing Sociology

Committee Member, Patti Watkins, representing Women Studies

Committee Member, Sally Gallagher, representing Sociology

Chair, Sally Gallagher, Department of Sociology

Dean, Dan Arp, University Honors College

I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, University Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

Andrea Doyle, Author
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Delinquent Girls: In Need of a Feminist Education for Rehabilitative Programming

Introduction

The history of juvenile delinquency is like the history of other facets of our culture in that it contains levels of discrimination and inequality. One of the most recognized and pressing issues since the birth of the juvenile court system is the presence of sexism and how this has affected boys and girls in our society. Although most attempts at explaining or alleviating delinquency in the last century have focused primarily on males, girls are being recognized as having different stories and different experiences in the juvenile court. Scholars of criminology have been able to expand beyond the “just add girls and stir” approach to female delinquency with the integration of feminist thought (Naffine 1996; Chesney-Lind 1989; Girls Inc. 1996; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1998; Belknap 2001). In addition, the attention directed to girls in the last few decades has resulted in juvenile institutions initiating gender-specific programs to rehabilitate adjudicated females. However, approaching two decades later, minimal research has been done to evaluate such standards and the programs offered to troubled young women (Chesney-Lind, Morash, and Stevens 2008; Zahn, Day, Mihalic, and Tichavsky 2009). While juvenile correctional institutions claim “gender-specific” and “gender-responsive” practices as a standard operation of the facility, research summarizing girls’ delinquency programs suggest that these practices are ineffective or in need of further examination (Zahn et al. 2009).

Undoubtedly, the idea of gender-specific attention created optimism for delinquent girls and the people with stakes in their lives. The issues and double standards
surrounding female sexuality and delinquency rates have been criticized over the years from the beginning of the juvenile court in 1899 up until the 1970s. In 1974, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act was passed by Congress; this act focused heavily on the treatment of status offenders. Status offenses are laws and sanctions that apply to juveniles that are not considered criminal if committed by adults (Lundman 2001). Status offenses vary across states, but the four major categories include running away, truancy, ungovernability, and underage liquor law violations (Zhang, Katsiyannis, Barrett, and Willson 2007). Although the purpose of the JJDP Act was not written specifically to benefit young women, the act gave them an advantage simply because girls have historically been arrested for status offenses more than boys have. The JJDP Act mandated the deinstitutionalization of status offenders.

Initially following the passing of the JJDP Act, juvenile justice systems started seeing a decline in female arrests. In 1980, only 19 percent of juveniles in any type of correctional facility were girls compared to the 27 percent in 1960 (Calahan 1986).

Although these statistics suggest the JJDP Act effectively lowered the institutionalization of girls, Chesney-Lind and Irwin point out that during the same time in the 1970s, federally funded programs aimed at supporting delinquent girls were a low priority (2005). Programs for young women on the streets were virtually absent. With little community support, girls that were victims of abuse or family dysfunction resorted to running away from home. Once found, they were taken in under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court and incarcerated. Throughout the 1970s, this developed into a pattern that sent court officials into an outcry for a return to incarcerating juvenile status offenders (Chesney-Lind and Irwin 2005). The JJDP act was revisited in 1980 and additional
legislation was added to include a narrow definition of status offender (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1998).

The act was amended so that children who violated any court order would not be covered under the deinstitutionalization provisions (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1998). The change permitted judges to reclassify a status offender who violated a court order as a delinquent, therefore allowing the court to incarcerate the individual. While advocates opposed to the deinstitutionalization movement were satisfied, the new provision was once again detrimental for girls. It was not until 1992, when the JJDP Act was revisited again, that the treatment and issues pertaining to juvenile delinquency and girls became a clear focus. The passing of the reauthorization of the JJDP Act in 1992 focused primarily on gender equality in the juvenile justice system and set the agenda for a national conversation about gender and delinquency.

In 1992, the reauthorization of the JJDP Act required states to assess existing programs for delinquent girls; determine the needs for additional programming; develop a plan for providing gender-specific services to girls; and provide assurance that all youth were treated equitably (Chesney-Lind and Irwin 2005). Federal funding was provided to states that took initiative on implementing the reauthorization guidelines. The main benefit of the Reauthorization of the JJDP Act was that it provided a public forum that illuminated the court’s lack of treatment and programs for girls in the juvenile justice system (Chesney-Lind and Irwin 2005).

The court’s history of neglect for delinquent girls is also a consequence of girls’ significantly lower delinquency rates in comparison to boys. However, the disparity of arrest rates between genders should not justify a lack of attention or treatment availability
for girls. Since 1985, the number of delinquency cases involving females has increased 92 percent (Stahl 2006), bringing new attention to the research and discussion of female delinquency. Additionally, the number of female offenders in juvenile custody has increased 52 percent between 1991 and 2003, while males in custody have increased 23 percent during the same time period (Snyder and Sickmund 2006). Female juveniles are typically arrested for non-violent crimes, contributing only 18 percent to the total juvenile arrests for violent crimes (Snyder and Sickmund 2006). Girls are primarily arrested for crimes involving property or other persons. For example, females constitute 69 percent of arrests for prostitution, 59 percent of arrests for running away from home, 39 percent of arrests involving theft, and 39 percent of offenses against family and children (Snyder and Sickmund 2006). Overall, total juvenile arrest rates have been on decline for both females and males since 1997 (Tracy, Kemp-Leonard, and Abramske-James 2009). The most recent juvenile statistics compiled by Tracy and colleagues (2009) report that although delinquency rates are currently declining, females had a lower percentage decrease in arrest rates than males. Male juvenile arrests show a decrease of 22 percent from 1994-2003, while female arrests rates decreased less at a 3 percent decline (Tracy et al. 2009). However, the reporting of delinquency rates involves controversy over whether the rates of female delinquency are truly due to an increase in criminal behavior or just stricter social control and changes in arrest policies for females (Feld, 2009). Furthermore, additional research is needed to understand the subtypes of female juvenile offenders, navigating away from the idea that all female delinquents are one homogenous group (Odgers, Moretti, Burnette, Chauhan, Waite, and Reppucci 2007). This point is especially true for those girls who are highly involved with the criminal justice system.
and committing violent offenses. Failure to acknowledge differentiations between female juvenile offenders may distort our ability to understand the reasons they enter the juvenile system in the first place (Odgers et al. 2007). Having a feminist perspective can help focus on the full spectrum of girls' lived experiences, while offering criminologists more tools to work with in developing strategies for rehabilitation and prevention of female delinquency.
The Experiences of Girls

In 2004, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) funded the Girls Study Group to research, review, and establish gender specific programming guidelines to benefit females (Zahn, Agnew, and Browne 2009). The OJJDP was originally created by Congress when the first JJDP Act was passed in 1974. Since the establishment of the Girls Study Group, they have reviewed several programs aimed at preventing delinquency or rehabilitating female offenders, in addition to providing an extensive literature review regarding the history and research related to girls’ delinquency. Based on statistics provided by the OJJDP from 1985-2002, the Girls Study Group found a correlation of arrest rates to stricter policing action toward girls, explaining the rise of female delinquency rates in past years. The labeling of girls in society by people in power, like the police, continues to impact female delinquency rates and the images of social control over young women.

An effect of this stricter control from police authority is demonstrated in the different types of arrests girls undergo compared to boys. Girls are arrested more frequently than boys for less serious types of violence like status offenses and nonindex crimes (Feld 2009). Nonindex crimes include simple assault, prostitution, drug offenses, driving under the influence, and vagrancy. Police execute control during the time of arrest. Research shows that girls’ offenses have been “relabeled” during their time of arrest so that the juvenile system could retain jurisdiction over the delinquent females since the passing of the JJDP Act in 1974 (Feld 2009; Bishop and Frazier 1992; Chesney-Lind and Irwin 2005). This has had a profound impact on the perceived increase in
female violence and delinquency. Feld confirms that a “relabeling” of status offenses has occurred for females in recent decades (2009). He argues this case with the crime category of simple assault. Arrest rates for girls in the simple assault category quadrupled in 2005 since 1980 (Feld, 2009). In addition, police are arresting girls for less serious forms of violence than they did previously, and with a higher ratio when compared to boys (Feld 2009). Feld also points out that girls are experiencing simple assault arrests within domestic disputes, an area where deviating from traditional gender norms of femininity and passivity is a greater risk for girls when they express themselves with physical and verbal aggression. In previous decades when the institutionalization of status offenders was permitted, police had the authority to incarcerate girls for their non-criminal behavior. Feld explains that police must reclassify status offenders by labeling it as a simple assault crime. Feld concludes, “the juvenile justice system remains committed to protecting and controlling girls, but without responding to their needs” (2009). Instead, the failure of meeting girls’ needs has caused the juvenile system to relabel them as delinquents by charging them with assault.

It is important to acknowledge that girls have historically been arrested primarily for status offenses, which are mainly non-criminal, but socially unacceptable behaviors for juveniles (Feld 2009). This connects to the level of control authority figures have over youth. The higher rate of arrests for status offenses shows that girls are committing less violent crimes than boys, but are still under stricter control. This stems from the double standard of young female sexuality that has historically put girls at a disadvantage in the juvenile justice system (Alexander 1995). A study in the 1970s prior to the JJDP Act, revealed large numbers of girls were incarcerated “for their own protection” (Rogers
1972). One juvenile court judge commented about the status offense arrest numbers claiming that it was best to lock the girls up in order to decrease their chances of getting pregnant at least until age 16 (Rogers 1972). Sexist judicial attitudes regarding female promiscuity were often precursors to the treatment and sentencing of the offender (Vedder and Somerville 1970; Rogers 1972; Andrews and Cohn 1974). Even today, judicial discretion and subjectivity differ between status offenses and criminal cases (Kurlychek and Johnson 2004). There is much more gray area involving status offenders and sentencing guidelines, while criminal cases provide more structured sentencing rules. Without strict guidelines to follow and with many of the status offense cases for female juveniles involving sexual misconduct, court personnel rely on stereotypes, social sanctions, and a paternal judicial stance to treat female offenders (Feld 2009; Tracy et al. 2009; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1998; Girls Inc. 1996).

The feminist critique of criminology and delinquency rests on how people have viewed female behavior and criminal activity including the official reactions of the juvenile justice system. Labeling affects girls and boys differently because of gender roles and societal expectations. The condemnation of young female sexuality has been a repeating theme throughout the history of the juvenile court (Schur 1984). In the early part of the 20th Century, girls were institutionalized in reformatories and training schools to rescue them from corruption and put them in their “proper” place (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1998). A variation of the same social control over females is still happening in the juvenile court. From national data displaying juvenile court processing, Tracy et al. (2009) explain how court cases that are petitioned and then ultimately adjudicate delinquents happens at a higher percentage for females than males. They claim that the
juvenile court is clearly concerned about the conduct and behavior of delinquent girls to warrant such formal attention. Tracy et al. also report that since 1985, “female delinquents were substantially more likely to have been committed to a residential correctional facility as punishment for status offenses, as compared to males” (2009: 201). It was also noted that girls are being committed to juvenile facilities at a much younger age than those of males. The results of harsher sanctions on females than males suggests a “bias of paternalism-if not, a blatant overreaction by the juvenile system where girls are concerned” (Tracy et al. 2009: 202).

In addition to the consequences of labeling, Agnew’s General Strain Theory (GST) can be useful in understanding female delinquency (Agnew 1985). Using the GST to explain delinquency in females affirms that both females and males experience strain. However, research shows that the sources of strain are what differ. Agnew and Brezina (1997) found that while strain in male delinquents is often caused by economic strain, girls experience more relational strain that may lead to delinquency. This notion stumbles into stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity, but is still worth considering. It is argued that girls also experience economic strain as members of the lower class (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1998). Also, there is evidence of females having higher property crime arrests, which ties into the gender expectations of material, economic, and beauty expectations for girls in society. In 2007, 41 percent of juvenile arrests were for property crimes where females outnumbered males with 23 percent of those arrests (Tracy et al. 2009). Additional strain that may be experienced by girls more so than boys include the burden of caring for others, problems maintaining and forming
relationships, and the increase of pressure in adolescence to conforming to traditional gender roles (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1998).

The response to strain is also different between female and male delinquents. Research suggests that boys respond to strain in outward and aggressive ways, which accounts for the higher rates of delinquency and violent crimes for boys (Agnew and Brezina 1997). On the other hand, girls respond to strain inwardly with feelings of anger followed by depression, guilt, and anxiety. Agnew claims that the feelings associated with female strain may be a result of how girls are more likely than boys to blame themselves for the strains they experience in addition to having more concern about hurting others (2009). Moreover, girls experiencing feelings of anger are socially conditioned in their gender roles to consider their anger inappropriate (Agnew 2009). The responses that girls typically have in association with their strain may lead them into criminal behavior like drug use or running away from home.

The “power-control” model of delinquency proposes another aspect of harsher social control and stressful life experiences for girls (Hagan, Simpson, and Gillis 1985). The authors of this theory suggest that girls commit less delinquency than boys do because parents more closely control the behavior of their daughters than their sons. Hagan and associates describe the patriarchal family as the prominent structure in the gender socializing process that affects delinquent behavior. They claim that girls receive stricter control from parents during adolescence that results in producing passive and compliant daughters, while boys are encouraged to take risks and be deviant. Power-control theory also attempts to explain delinquency patterns by recognizing how gender relations are passed down generationally through familial relationships. Another key
point in the authors’ arguments is that egalitarian households, where the mother works outside of the home, increases girls’ chance of delinquent behavior because of the increased absence of maternal control.

Power-control theory has undergone revisions due to feminist critics who argue against the stereotypical gender assumptions between girls and boys and the implication that women’s liberation and equality in the workplace increases female delinquency (Naffine 1996, Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1998). Power-control theory fails to consider nontraditional families in addition to blaming mothers for the delinquent behavior of youth (Tracy et al. 2009). In 1999, McCarthy, Hagan, and Woodward offered more research to revise the power-control theory, emphasizing that patriarchal families actually heighten levels of male delinquency more than female delinquency because of the dominant male characteristics in the household. Despite theoretical explanations for delinquency, current research suggests that for both females and males, family support is beneficial to mental health and reduces delinquency (Meadows 2007). The idea of close supervision requires parents to walk a fine line between too much control and beneficial support.

It is apparent that gender is not only a variable in a criminological study or theory, but an integral aspect of life that explains a host of life chances, opportunities, and experiences for women and men in our society. An understanding of how girls live in our society can help to identify reasons for their entrance into crime and the juvenile justice system. For example, in the 1970s feminist activists brought the issue of domestic violence into public conversation. As the topic became a concern and focus, research regarding female delinquents and their history of physical and sexual abuse was exposed.
Abuse is now recognized as a major correlate of female delinquency. In a study exploring subgroups of female juvenile offenders, results indicated that the most violent group of female offenders was "more likely to suffer from child neglect, exposure to domestic violence, sexual abuse, physical abuse, and witnessing violence within their schools and communities" (Odgers et al. 2007: 349). The exposure rate was at 100 percent when neighborhood violence was also considered. These results suggest that many girls in the juvenile justice system are victims as well as offenders, a significant attribute that should be considered for programming practices.

The way girls process traumatic abuse and violence differs from boys as well. Agnew claims that girls tend to blame themselves for the abuse and keep their feelings inside resulting in feelings of anger, depression, and anxiety (2009). Chronic exposure to traumatic events heightens risk-taking behaviors and the onset of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a common ailment of delinquent girls (Ariga, Uehara, Takeuchi, Ishige, Nakano, and Mikuni 2008). Mental health disorders offer justification or produce a coping mechanism for girls to self-medicate through drug use. Dembo, Schneider, and Childs added to the recognition of drug use as a coping mechanism for delinquent girls in a study measuring the correlates of female and male juvenile offender abuse experiences (2007). The authors found that being female and substance use were related to sexual victimization and the attempt to self-medicate the trauma experience (Dembo et al. 2007).

Drug use is not the only way females cope with their abusive situations. Running away from home is a common reaction for girls in that circumstance as well (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1998). Consequently, running away is one of the highest areas of arrest for female delinquents when compared to males. In 2007, female runaways were
9.2 percent of juvenile arrests, while only 3.1 percent for males (Tracy et al. 2009). Moreover, when mental health problems are combined with changing pubertal development, some girls choose to self-medicate their problems and turn to drug use or other deviant acts. Early pubertal development and timing of the onset of puberty in comparison to an individual’s peers are related to delinquency as well (Negriff, Fung, and Trickett 2008). Research found that depressive symptoms increased in individuals with the early onset of puberty. This study focused on both girls and boys, but found that more females experienced abuse in this study. In conclusion, the authors found that delinquent behavior is related to a combination of early pubertal timing and the maltreatment of depressive symptoms (Negriff et al. 2008).

The effects of abuse do not stop once a juvenile enters the system. In fact, research has shown that institutionalizing females with histories of abuse has a negative effect on their behavior and mental health. The institutional characteristics of control, lack of personal agency, and feelings of powerlessness perpetuate the trauma of abused young women while fostering feelings of dependency as well (Girshick 2000). Furthermore, since a majority of delinquent girls enter the system with feelings of depression, confinement may trigger more depressive symptoms and initiate an ongoing cycle of trauma and stress (Ariga et al. 2008). This is an argument that helped push the movement to deinstitutionalize delinquents in the 1970s, prior to the passing of the original JJDP Act.

Finally, the message given to girls as they mature is that of dependence and subordination to males. Social institutions of our society consistently convey ideas of sexism that affect the lives of young girls. The juvenile court system is only one piece of
this social phenomenon, but nonetheless perpetuates the same ideology. With law enforcement having a high employment of males (Reaves and Hickman 2003 and 2004), who are in positions of power and control in these girls’ lives, the message that men are dominant to women is repeated. In addition, the vocational training offered to girls within juvenile facilities is limited to skills like cosmetology and clerical work that are associated with underpaid and unstable jobs (Lahm 2000; Mathews and Hubbard 2008b). In an overview of available community based programs for girls in the U.S. the authors state, “the program descriptions revealed limited resources to make girls truly independent in terms of getting a job” (Chesney-Lind et al. 2008: 16). When girls are involved in gender-neutral job skills and activities like sports, such involvement provides a significant protection from delinquency and helps them to make choices independently and confidently (Booth, Farrell, and Varano 2008).

Also related to issues of dependency is how female delinquency is affected or influenced by their peers or male dating partners. This argument identifies with feminist theory of power and male privilege by promoting the idea that since females have less access to influential power and status than males, they attach themselves romantically to boys and depend on their male privilege (Haynie, Giordano, Manning, and Longmore 2005). Research centered on romantic relationships and delinquency was initiated because of the importance of peers and relationships in adolescence. Haynie et al. (2005) found that the association between romantic partner involvement with minor delinquent behavior like underage drinking and smoking, had a stronger correlation for females than males. Furthermore, Haynie and colleagues recognize that female delinquency is not a product of the “bad boyfriend,” but an extension of previous research discussing how an
individual's association with delinquent peers increases their chance of involvement in delinquent behavior (2005). In 2009, Lonardo, Giordano, Longmore, and Manning conducted a study to investigate romantic relationships and involvement in delinquency. Their results only indicated a partial support for a gendered pattern, where the romantic partner's delinquency was more strongly correlated with females. Yet, they did have significant results when measuring for higher delinquent involvement with delinquent peers for both females and males (Lonardo et al. 2009).
Programs for Girls

The factors that explain girls’ lives leading up to delinquency and how they enter the court system may offer a foundation for creating programs to help young women, instead of simply punishing them. Feminist scholars advocate for programs to acknowledge the broader sociological concerns and oppressive systems that propel girls into crime. Hubbard and Mathews highlight this point in their overview of “gender-responsive” and the “what works” literature, saying that whether the “approach is perceived as ‘fixing’ girls or ‘empowering’ girls is left to the readers interpretation” (2008a: 246). However, empowering and fixing girls are two different outcomes because the definitions of fixing or empowering remain subjective. Fixing to whose standards? Empowering in what ways? Despite their review of feminist literature, neither of the Hubbard and Mathews’ articles claims that a women studies education for delinquent girls should be a guiding element for rehabilitation programs. They do however, offer guidelines threaded with girl-specific elements.

Hubbard and Mathews (2008a) comprehensively write about the arguments of the two theoretical “camps” regarding gender-specific and evidence-based treatment. They argue that instead of contradicting each other, the groups can work cohesively to support future programs to help delinquent girls. In a similar article, they point out five specific rehabilitating elements that would benefit delinquent girls based on recommendations and research from both feminist criminologists and evidence-based researchers (2008b). Their guidelines offer practitioners a foundation for creating or implementing “gender-specific” treatments for girls. The first of their five guidelines suggests a comprehensive
and individualized assessment process, which recognizes the objective risk factors that bring girls into detention centers along with the measurement of personal and individual characteristics of self-esteem and personal narratives to satisfy feminist criminologists. Secondly, Hubbard and Mathews recommend building therapeutic alliances to foster a girl’s positive psychological change, as well as helping girls build healthy connections with peers and the community. They highlight a significant area of opportunity in girls making alliances with correctional staff, citing research where male staff members negatively characterize the girls they serve. Hubbard and Mathews suggest female staff members are better allies for the girls within the detention centers in addition to having external mentoring relationships. “The goal is to surround a girl with social support that insulates her from adverse circumstances that may lead to risky or antisocial behavior” (Hubbard and Mathews 2008b: 497). A gender-responsive cognitive-behavioral approach is also recommended. The gender-responsive aspect of this therapy includes opportunities for girls to create intimate connections with others and informal conversation to explore their feelings. This suggestion is upheld in other research, claiming that group therapy treatments are not the best avenue for girls because it prohibits intimate trust and exploration of feelings (Covington and Bloom 2007). Finally, programs need to accommodate for gender-specific differences, meaning the differences that girls have in how they relate to others and how they respond to interventions. This element recognizes the mental health concerns for female delinquents and the need for program staff members to receive education on disorders such as depression and PTSD (Covington and Bloom 2007; Trupin, Stewart, Beach, and Boesky 2002).

There are few successful programs for delinquent girls that acknowledge the
inequalities and obstacles girls face when developing key practices for rehabilitation (Chesney-Lind et al. 2008; Hubbard and Mathews 2008; Zahn et al. 2009). This is evident despite the federal standards promoting gender-specific programming in the Reauthorization of the JJDP Act in 1992. The National Institute of Corrections has defined gender-specific programming and practice as “Creating an environment through site selection, staff selection, program development, content, and material that reflects an understanding of the realities of women’s lives and addresses the issues of the participants” (Bloom, Owen, and Covington 2003: 2). Included in this definition are approaches that address social and cultural factors like poverty, race, class, and gender inequality as well as therapeutic interventions (Bloom et al. 2003).

Zahn and colleagues did a summary of evaluation evidence for programs that specifically target girls and programs that target both genders (2009). They acknowledge that gender-specific programs offered for girls do not have established methods and measures for the best evaluation, but there has been some evidence of the potential positive effects. Specifically, areas of education, employment, relationships with family and friends, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, are important side effects of gender-specific programming aside from just reducing recidivism. Chesney-Lind and her colleagues also did a comprehensive summary of gender-responsive programs in order to highlight successful characteristics of programs and areas of opportunity for future delinquency programs for girls (2008). Their recent summary of gender-specific programs includes specific target areas identified in delinquency research that are ideal for gender-specific programs. These target areas include: reaching girls during their “in risk” years (ages nine to 15); emphasizing race or ethnicity; preparing girls to address sexism, racism, or
harassment; addressing histories of abuse; providing jobs for girls; providing job training or career support; teaching healthy sexuality; including general health education; providing housing assistance; giving support among girls; teaching leadership skills; providing girls with long-term relationships with an adult/mentor; not requiring parental involvement; and including follow up services. Key programs supported in both overviews (Chesney-Lind et al 2008; Zahn et al. 2009) that have shown these effects and model gender-specific programming are as follows: Girls Inc. PEERsuasion, Reaffirming Young Sisters’ Excellence (RYSE), Working to Insure and Nurture Girls’ Success (WINGS), and Practical Academic Cultural Educational Center (PACE).

The Girls Inc. PEERsuasion program is part of the larger Girls Incorporated outreach program that has over 900 program sites in the country that primarily serve girls ages six through 18 (Girls Inc. 1996). The PEERsuasion program is only offered in four major cities across the country for young women that live in risky neighborhoods characterized by low income and high crime rates. The program helps young women to avoid substance use by “providing accurate information, practicing refusal skills, and developing, healthy fun ways to reduce stress” (Girls Inc 1996: 31). The young girls who are involved in the program teach what they have learned to younger children. This aspect provides them with leadership skills by planning and implementing sessions about substance abuse prevention (Chesney-Lind et al. 2008). The significant outcomes of this program are that the younger program participants were less likely to begin using drugs and keep associations with drug-using peers (Chesney-Lind et al. 2008). Attendance to the program also reduced incidences of drinking alcohol and increased the likelihood of the girls to leave situations where substances were being used (Chesney-Lind et al. 2008).
Although there are positive results for girls involved in this program, it is not inclusive of the target areas that Chesney-Lind and colleagues identified through analysis of the prominent research regarding delinquent girls (2008). PEERsuasion does target girls during their “in risk” years, provides leadership skills, and does not require a parent for attendance, but several areas for comprehensive rehabilitation are not provided in this program.

Another promising program is RYSE. RYSE is an intensive probation program that focuses on preventing African American and Hispanic girls from returning to the juvenile justice system or entering the adult criminal system (Zahn et al 2009). It is an intervention program that includes home visits by probation officers; individualized case plans; a life skills course; teen pregnancy services; monetary funds in case of emergency; and counseling (Zahn et al. 2009). The RYSE program is successful at incorporating more target areas identified by the Chesney-Lind group. In that summary, the components of the RYSE program fell into five out of the 14 target areas (Chesney-Lind et al. 2008). A positive result of the RYSE program shows that more than 50 percent of the girls completed their probation when compared to a group of girls who received the traditional probation services offered by the juvenile court (Zahn et al. 2009). However, there were no significant differences between RYSE and comparison girls in recidivism at six months (14.1 percent versus 12.8 percent) or 12 months (25.6 percent versus 24 percent) after completing the program (Zahn et al. 2009). The promising effects of this program are based on racial comparisons, where African American and Hispanic RYSE girls recidivated at lower rates, but Asian and White RYSE girls recidivated at higher rates (Zahn et al. 2009).
WINGS is a program also identified as promoting gender-specific practices. The WINGS program is also an alternative probation program for girls that involves home visitation and individualized case plans (Zahn et al. 2009). The WINGS program places an emphasis on improving mother-daughter relationships while offering additional family services at no cost such as anger management classes, vocational and career support, transportation, and academic help (Zahn et al. 2009). WINGS girls had lower recidivism rates during the program when compared to girls on probation that were not WINGS participants (Zahn et al. 2009). Participants also reported feeling safe at home and at school, with regular school attendance being much higher for girls in the WINGS program (Chesney-Lind et al. 2008). WINGS captured five of the 14 target areas in the Chesney-Lind evaluation including a unique component of follow up services once the girls were no longer in the program. The follow-up, or “wraparound services,” WINGS provides connects the girls and their families to other community services (Chesney-Lind et al. 2008).

Finally, the PACE program for girls is a comprehensive day treatment program for prevention of further delinquency (Zahn et al. 2009). One way that girls may enter the program is through referral from the juvenile court. It is based in Florida and has 17 centers statewide (PACE 2009). The program provides academic education, counseling, home visits and relationship building in families, career planning, monthly community service projects, and follow up services up to three years after girls have finished the program (PACE 2009). PACE also includes what they call “Spirited Girls,” a gender-specific life management skill-building program that focuses on the life experiences and needs of girls. The overview of this program distributed by Girls Inc. in 1996, describes
the gender-specific curriculum as “promoting cultural awareness.” Zahn et al. evaluated the program with praise for having gender-specific practices, but claimed that the program contained mixed support because of the absence of a control group when measuring the effectiveness of results (2009). In 2008, PACE revealed their outcome measures report stating that 94 percent of girls did not recidivate while enrolled in PACE and 95 percent of those girls were not adjudicated six months after leaving the program. The PACE girls had similar success rates in education as well as a decrease in experiences of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse while enrolled in the program (PACE 2009). This program was not included in the Chesney-Lind report but it promotes activities that cover a majority of the target areas. The only target areas not identified through my own analysis of the Zahn evaluation and the public website is not providing housing for the young women and the fact that parents are typically required to participate. Otherwise, the PACE program seems to be an extremely well rounded, successful program for delinquent girls. PACE was recognized by the Girls Study Group as the most effective program in the nation for reducing recidivism (Zahn et al. 2009). The difference behind the PACE program compared to the other mentioned programs for delinquent girls is that it is not a program that works simultaneously with the school system or probation office, but rather it is a comprehensive program that meets daily, while sending a consistent message to the girls in need.
A New Feminist Education

In looking at education research, we can see the impact that women and gender studies can have on an individual, especially young women. Lee (1993) reported that the knowledge received by students in her women studies class enhanced confidence and gave students a sense of empowerment. Additionally, Stake affirmed these findings stating, “Students have shown increased levels of social activism while enrolled in WGS (Women and Gender Studies) classes, and these heightened levels of activism were maintained in nine-month follow-up studies” (2006: 207). Understandably, the circumstances and backgrounds for delinquent girls differ from the life of a young woman experiencing a women studies class in college, but the effects of such an education could be similar. Comparable research between the two groups would be useful in exploring this issue. But in both cases, empowerment, community involvement, and social support are positive outcomes to work for in young women. We can apply the same life-altering education to young women in a different context.

Chesney-Lind et al. have recognized the need for empowerment in programs for delinquent girls, defining it in two ways: preparing girls to address sexual harassment or assault and developing leadership opportunities and skills for success (2008). It should be in the framework of this definition of empowerment that girls learn about the larger social structures that shape their lives. Furthermore, girls in the juvenile justice system are at the prime developmental stage of adolescence making them a captive audience for implementing lessons of empowerment and self-efficacy and influencing how they view the world and their environment.
The discipline of women studies emerged during the second wave of feminism in the 1970s. Women studies involve the study of gender as a central aspect of human life, where women's status in society and women's experiences and achievements are addressed (Shaw and Lee 2007). The main objective for incorporating women studies education into college campuses was to "rebalance the curriculum," shifting it from a male-centered traditional academic curriculum and giving attention to women's lives and concerns (Shaw and Lee 2007). It focuses on issues of power and privilege, work and employment, family and parenting, sexuality, reproductive rights, and violence against women (Shaw and Lee 2007). Additionally, women studies seeks to question traditional social values and inequities in society. The study and focus of women turned into a social movement that has successfully brought about social change in legal policy, women's status in society, and higher education. While the benefits of the second wave of feminism are present today, the oppression of women and imbalances of power remain. bell hooks writes about educating women about feminism claiming that "feminist education has become institutionalized in universities via women's studies programs," but she believes that "a positive praxis for any academic would be offering women studies courses at a local community center, YWCA, YMCA, church, etc." (2000: 111). Her argument stresses that feminist theory needs to be more accessible to more women of different ages, races, and educational levels. In agreement, I stress the importance of providing this education to delinquent girls.

Included in a women studies education are topics that involve the same hardships as those of delinquent girls. A feminist education would address male domination and how that influences patterns of domestic and sexual violence. It would also discuss
heterosexism and the minimal attention to lesbian and gay rights, possibly providing a much needed outlet for discussion and support for adolescent girls in the juvenile justice system. Unattainable beauty standards projected through the media and reinforced by parents and peers can be connected to the prevalence of eating disorders of delinquent girls (Ho, Kingree, and Thompson 2006). Learning about the wage gap and women being the majority of people in poverty could help girls realize the benefits of continuing their education and being economically independent. For these reasons, incorporating a feminist education in programming practices for delinquent girls could be a vital step in their rehabilitation and successful reentry into society. Furthermore, through a feminist education they may form bonds with other young women, which may in turn increase their own self-esteem and provide them with positive emotional support. This education may spur them towards activism and connection within their community once they reenter society to make changes so that other girls do not experience the same hardships.

From reviewing the literature, the Spirited Girls component of the PACE program is the closest educational component to what a women studies education currently looks like to young women in the juvenile system (Zahn et al. 2009; Chesney-Lind et al. 2008; Girls Inc. 1996; PACE 2009). The Girls Study Group reports that the Spirited Girls curriculum is made up of six educational modules that teach girls to use appropriate language; appreciate cultural differences; study career awareness and planning; learn to make healthy decisions regarding sexual activity, nutrition, drug and alcohol; identify the cycle of violence; and learn to make decisions peacefully (Girls Study Group 2008).

The PACE program recognizes many of the qualities stated in a potential feminist curriculum. PACE addresses the cycle of violence and how power plays into the
traumatic experiences of girls. The program teaches about healthy sexuality and nutrition as well, implying a discussion of beauty standards and negative body images in adolescent girls. The discussion of career awareness and planning addresses realities of inequalities in the work force for women and how education can be an important asset for future success. Although the program cites an appreciation of cultural awareness, it is not clear whether this includes a discussion on sexual identity, or is limited to topics on race and ethnicity. Even with limited knowledge of the details of the PACE curriculum, it is conveyed through the organization’s guiding principles that an education that focuses on the lives and needs of girls is a fundamental part of the rehabilitation process. PACE describes that, “honoring the female spirit” and “focusing on girls’ strength” is a key component to their operation (PACE 2009). It is programs like PACE that need to be replicated and fine-tuned with an integration of a women studies education.

It is possible that the lack of defining empowering programs or gender-responsive practices for delinquent girls as feminist rests in the negative association a majority of people still have in our society regarding feminism, including inconsistent definitions of feminism itself (Tong 1998; Shaw and Lee 2007). Combined with the fact that the juvenile justice system is a government entity, the label of feminism may imply that a government agency is appearing too liberal or progressive. Nonetheless, there needs to be a focus on changing society, not just changing individuals. Changing the individual through rehabilitation is too simplistic because in reality, if patriarchy and the oppression of women were combated, we would have fewer girls involved in delinquency. There have been arguments going the other way about the concept of social equality and its effects on females, hypothesizing that the rise in women’s liberation would free females,
giving them the same opportunities as males and thus exposing girls to higher chances for crime and delinquency (Alder 1975; for an overview see Tracy et al. 2009). Despite the liberation hypothesis, contemporary feminist researchers acknowledge the inconsistency of this argument. Chesney-Lind and Shelden state, “It seems peculiar, for example, that so many academics would be willing to consider a hypothesis that assumed improving girls’ and women’s economic conditions would lead to an increase in female crime when almost all the existing criminological literature stresses the role played by discrimination and poverty in the creation of crime” (1998: 97). While we cannot necessarily change the social systems and structures overnight, we can create programs that offer explanations to girls about the pervasiveness of oppression pertaining to their own lives.
Conclusion

In my time volunteering as a tutor in a girl’s juvenile facility, I frequently discussed with the girls the troubles they faced in their lives leading up to their incarceration. Their real stories are reflected in many of the scholarly research articles that have been overviewed in this paper. However, the effect is what differs. Instead of simply reading about the lives of delinquent girls, I was witnessing their struggles first hand. I noticed the negative tension between staff members and girls as a result of policies that heavily focused on boundaries and limited personal support. I heard about frustrations regarding what is offered to the girls and what they want, or feel they need to be successful once they leave the institution. I witnessed emotions of anger, sadness, and despair as girls talked about their families or the neighborhoods they would return to one day. I saw pictures of their children who are kept in foster care until they can prove they can be adequate parents. Most of all, I saw the need for change. I believe that exposing the girls to an education that attempts to explain their location in a world of disadvantaged social structures and that offers them empowering and skill building opportunities could serve the original purpose of the juvenile court: to care for and reform children on a path of delinquency and crime.

The original advocates for a separate court system for children were a group of reformists known as the child savers. The child savers are described as primarily middle and upper class women with the time and means for philanthropic involvement (Platt 1977). Although the movement for a juvenile court system started due to the efforts of women, it has taken a century to untangle the underlying restrictions regarding moral and
social control that have been placed on women and girls. There is no better education
and no better way to empower young women in society than to provide them an
education centered on the teachings that value, empower, and support women and girls.


Stake, Jane E. 2006. “Pedagogy and Student Change in the Women’s and Gender Studies Classroom.” *Gender and Education* 18: 199-212.


