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Child Welfare's Contribution to the Adolescent Female Delinquency Population: Pathways and Dispositional Outcomes
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Research Background

Female youth are increasingly visible in the juvenile justice system

- Minor assaults (FBI)
  - ➢ girls' arrests increased by 24%
  - ➢ boys' arrests decreased by 4%
- Aggravated assault (OJJDP)
  - ➢ girls' arrests decreased by 5%
  - ➢ boys' arrests decreased by 25%

Research Background (cont.)

- **Child welfare involvement disproportionally contribute to the adolescent female delinquency population**

  ➤ Sexual abuse or physical abuse at home or in foster placement makes girls vulnerable to status offenses (Siegel and Williams, 2003).

  ➤ Girls who were sexually abused were likely to engage in theft and vandalism and exhibit delinquent behavior (Goodkind, Ng, and Sarri, 2006).

  ➤ There is a major overrepresentation of African American girls involved in both the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system (Ryan et. al., 2007).

Research Questions

1. How much does child welfare involvement contribute to the female delinquency population?

2. What risk factors help predict the overrepresentation of adolescent females from child welfare in juvenile justice?

3. Do child welfare involved females have different dispositional outcomes than those not dually involved?

Research Methods (cont.)

- **Sample:** juvenile arrests and child protection records in Los Angeles County between 2000 and 2008 (n=169,203).
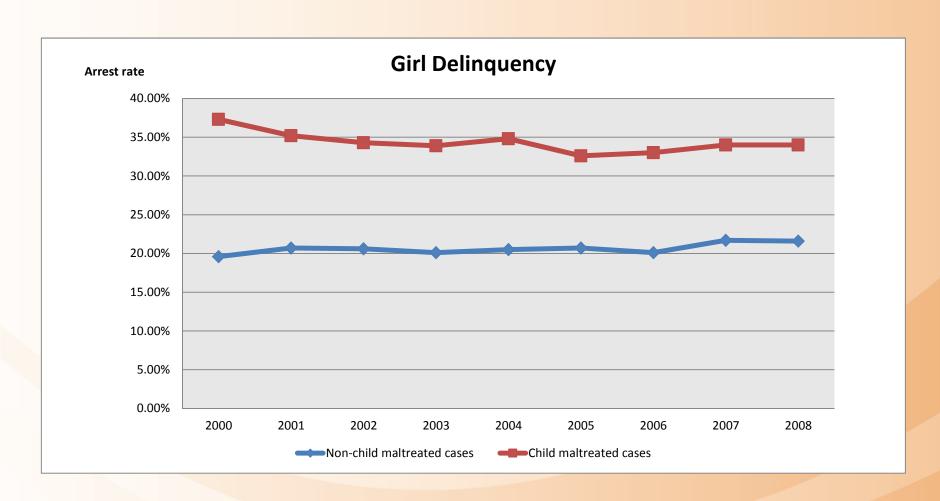
- **Measures**:

  ➤ Juvenile justice data: official arrests (offense type, dates) and case related information (e.g. dispositions).

  ➤ Child welfare data: allegation and placement records (dates, types).

- **Analysis methods:** bivariate and multivariate regression techniques (event history analysis)

Research Findings

Figure1. Arrest Rate for Girls by Years

Girl Delinquency

Arrest rate

Research Findings

1. **How much does child welfare involvement contribute to the female delinquency population?**

   In the general population, females account for 21% of all juvenile arrests. In the child welfare population, females account for 34% of all juvenile arrests.

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Table 1. Bivariate analysis

	All N=42,348	Non-dually involved n=38,069(89.9%)	Dually involved (Case Open) n=4279(10.1%)	Dually involved (OHP) n=2818(6.7%)
Age at arrest	15.45(1.6)	15.47(1.6)	15.48(1.6)	15.58(1.5)
Ethnicity***				
Hispanic	22218(52.5%)	20479(53.8%)	1739(40.6%)	1031(36.6%)
African American	*11457(27.1%)*	*9543(25.1%)*	*1914(44.7%)*	*1395(49.6%)*
Caucasian	6141(14.5%)	5685(14.9%)	456(10.7%)	305(10.8%)
Asian	819(1.9%)	778(2.0%)	41(1.0%)	19(0.7%)
Other	1713(4.0%)	1584(4.2%)	129(3.0%)	65(2.3%)
Charge				
*Violence****	*11101(26.2%)*	*9567(25.1%)*	*1392(32.5%)*	*1004(35.6%)*
*Weapon****	*5728(13.5%)*	*4853(12.7%)*	*783(18.3%)*	*567(20.1%)*
Property***	19566(46.2%)	17732(46.6%)	1643(38.4%)	1183(42.0%)
Substance Abuse	5182(12.2%)	4667(12.3%)	451(10.5%)	340(12.1%)
Other***	16051(37.9%)	14049(36.9%)	1784(41.7%)	1150(40.8%)
Number of Arrest	*1.99(2.2)*	*1.92(2.1)*	*2.31(2.4)*	*2.55(2.6)*

$p<.05*$ $p<.01**$ $p<.001***$

Research Findings (cont.)

2. **What risk factors help predict the overrepresentation of adolescent females from child welfare in juvenile justice**

   Regarding risk factors, I analyzed a subsample of girls (age 7-16) with at least one spell of substitute care placement between 2002 and 2004 (n=5,363). And, I followed their arrest records until 2008.

Table 2. Cox Regression: Predicting arrest rate for female youth

	Coefficient	SE	Odds Ratio
Age at Out of Home Placement	.324	.020	1.383***
Race			
Black	-	-	-
White	-.457	.124	.633***
Hispanic	-.294	.087	.746**
Maltreatment Type			
Neglect	-	-	-
Sexual Abuse	-.418	.184	.658*
Physical Abuse	.126	.120	1.135
Emotional Abuse	-.074	.198	.929
Caregiver Absence	.311	.094	1.365**
Other Maltreatment	.123	.278	1.130
Placement Type			
Group Home	-	-	-
Foster Home	-.530	.154	**.589****
Relative Home	-.809	.169	**.445****
Other placement	-.529	.323	.589
Number of Placement			
One Placement	-	-	-
Two Placements	-.040	.129	.960
Three Placements	.070	.183	1.072
Four and More Placements	.524	.110	**1.689****

Research findings (cont.)

3. Do child welfare involved females have different dispositional outcomes than those not dully involved?

	All N=42,348	Non-dually involved n=38,069(89.9%)	Dually involved (Case Open) n=4279(10.1%)	Dually involved (OHP) n=2818(6.7%)
Disposition(initial)***				
No disposition	*19736(46.6%)*	*18244(47.9%)*	*1492(34.9%)*	*915(32.5%)*
Dismissal	2184(5.2%)	1901(5.0%)	283(6.6%)	197(7.0%)
FFE	2228(5.3%)	1985(5.2%)	243(5.7%)	151(5.4%)
Probation	9251(21.8%)	8153(21.4%)	1098(25.7%)	753(26.7%)
Correctional placement	1592(3.8%)	1372(3.6%)	220(5.1%)	156(5.5%)
Other	7357(17.4%)	6414(16.8%)	943(22.0%)	646(22.9%)
Disposition(ever)				
Dismissal	5270(12.4%)	4604(12.1%)	666(15.6%)	482(17.1%)
FFE	8939(21.1%)	7535(19.8%)	1404(32.8%)	942(33.4%)
Probation	14750(34.8%)	12959(34.0%)	1791(41.9%)	1182(41.9%)
Correctional Placement	*5510(13.0%)*	*4481(11.8%)*	*1029(24.0%)*	*717(25.4%)*
Other	15357(36.3%)	13408(35.2%)	1949(45.5%)	1365(48.4%)

Conclusions

- Child welfare is a significant contributor to the growing population of girls in juvenile justice system; this referral pathway is exacerbating the overrepresentation of African Americans.

- Prevention efforts should focus on adolescent girls in congregate care.

- Juvenile courts must develop dispositional alternatives for girls simultaneously involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, as they are more likely than other girls to experience the most punitive juvenile justice sanctions.