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Being a Girl Who Gets into Trouble: Narratives of Girlhood

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Abstract

In this article I focus on the narratives of girls who describe the events that shape their lives and get them into trouble. The narratives are explored against Darrell Steffensmeier and Emilie Allan's (1996) proffered Gender Theory, to consider whether it offers an adequate explanatory framework. The article adds to the body of knowledge about girlhood, gender norms, and transgression and provides fresh insight into the relevance of physical strength to girls' violence. I conclude that girls are defining girlhood as they live it and it is the disjuncture with normative concepts that leads them into conflict with institutions of social control.

Keywords

gender, norms, resistance, storytelling, transgression

Introduction

The concept of gender, as distinct from sex or sex categorization has been long discussed, with Simone de Beauvoir (1974) writing that an individual learns to become a woman and Judith Butler (1988) that a powerful cultural and structural discourse is enacted through individuals performing gender. For Candace West and Don Zimmerman gender conceptualization is active, ongoing, situated—a process of "doing" not "being" (2009:114). Understanding behaviour within a situated context therefore develops knowledge about how gender is done.

We have many accounts of how transgressive man and boy are formed (see, for example, Bourgois 2002), but few for women and girls.[1] However, this body of scholarship is growing (Althoff 2013; Batchelor 2005; Brown 2012; Jones 2010; Ness 2010), and, although small, it is important because it expands how we conceptualize

girl at a time when constructed notions of gendered identity are increasingly contested and binary definitions challenged. Hearing the voices of girls in the juvenile justice system allows us to expand our understanding of girlhood and include constructions that transgress social norms.

In 1996 Steffensmeier and Allan proposed a framework to account for gender effects on crime. This article maps the lived experience of a group of girls against that framework. In the girls' accounts we see how resistance to imposed gender norms leads to the sort of frequent and direct conflicts that bell hooks (1989) describes when gender norms are infringed. The girls' stories uncover how this happens when they behave in ways congruent with their constructions of doing gender. We see that the results are those that Judith Butler would argue should be anticipated, for those "who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished" (1998: 522).

Background

In the recent past there was a spike[2] in the number of girls entering juvenile justice systems around the world (Arnull et al. 2009, 2016; Batchelor 2005; Brown 2012; Moretti et al. 2005; Zahn et al. 2010). Discussion, focused on whether this was the result of girls behaving more like boys, was related to a presumed gender equality (Jackson and Tinkler 2007), or was caused by discrimination within the system (Arnull et al. 2009; Jones 2010; Ness 2010; Schwartz and Steffensmeier 2008; Zahn et al. 2010). Discussions rarely included girls' voices and there are few detailed accounts of how normative gender expectations are brought to bear on girls in the juvenile justice system.

In *Invisible Women: The Schooling Scandal*, Dale Spender (1982) showed how, through studying everyday interactions, sexism and patriarchy could be uncovered to show the way in which boys' voices were prioritized in the classroom.

Currently we know little about gender in relation to girls who engage in transgressive behaviour (Jackson and Tinkler 2007; Zahn et al. 2010), and this lack of knowledge is often attributed to their lower numbers in juvenile justice systems. However, as Simone de Beauvoir (1974), bell hooks (1989), and Carolyn Heilbrun (1988) have noted, a lack of voice for girls and women is an international and historical phenomenon.

Despite knowing little detail about girls' delinquent behaviour, a gender effect is used by the Ministry of Justice (2014) and Steffensmeier and Allan (1996) to explain the lower frequency of opportunities for crime, and the type and nature of offending and outcomes. Steffensmeier and Allan propose that five over-arching norms deter girls from offending although this has the potential to minimize how gender is contested and mediated by intersectional factors. Their theory presents the five gender norms as absolutes that have explanatory power and for this reason, despite their acknowledgment that the gender gap can vary, the theory is essentializing.

Gendered interpretations may also be unwittingly incorporated into research (Althoff 2013), and so, for example, girls' use of physical violence is often conflated with other forms of relational aggression (Moretti et al. 2005). Violence may be used by girls when someone fancies the same person they do, has replaced them in their beloved's or friend's affections, is an adult who seeks to constrain their behaviour, or when someone insults them (Arnull et al. 2009; Batchelor 2005; Brown 2012; Jones 2010; Ness 2010). When similar conflicts arise among boys they are ascribed to status and a small body of research is now beginning to show how girls link their violent behaviour to social status (Althoff 2013; Brown 2012; Jones 2010; Ness 2010). This suggests that we should be alert to the possibility that gendered assumptions have

limited our gaze and our understanding. In this article I seek to understand better the complexity and process of being a girl who gets into trouble.

Exploring a Gendered Theory

Steffensmeier and Allan proposed in their Gendered Theory that five key areas inhibited female crime: social control; gender norms; moral development; aggression and physical strength; and sexuality (1996). Arguing that "gender differences in these areas condition gender differences in patterns of motivation and access to criminal opportunities, as well as gender differences in the type, frequency and context of offending" (1996: 475). I explore these five areas against narrative accounts of specific girls.

Following Jennifer Fleetwood (2015) and bell hooks (1989), I chose narrative methods to make visible everyday experience and uncover hidden mechanisms of personal and institutional interaction, thereby leading to a greater understanding of girls' motivations and opportunities for crime and "vocabularies used to justify" crime (Steffensmeier and Allan 1996: 484).

The seventeen girls were aged 13 to 18 years and interviewed in settings familiar to them, including juvenile justice offices and a girls' prison: four accounts were recorded in one day, and thirteen others collected across England over a year. All the girls came from England; one was black, one Asian (of Pakistani heritage) and the rest white.[3] All had completed a gender responsive programme (see Arnull and Eagle 2009) and their sentences ranged from community-based orders to custody. Two had no previous convictions but had committed the most serious offences and others had a number of previous convictions. All had convictions for assault and violence. Most had frequently truanted from school or been excluded. All the girls were from working-class or poor backgrounds and some described how poverty

circumscribed their lives. As Jane[4] put it, "The only thing you can do round here is paid activities . . . but most people can't afford to do paid activities."

My interviews with the girls' were facilitated by their justice workers and on meeting the girls I explained that I wanted to hear their accounts in the hope that more accurate information about how girls get into trouble might influence future policy and provision for girls in the justice system. I was clear that I had no power to make this happen and that it would likely not affect them personally.

I have worked and done research in the justice system for a long time and am familiar with the settings and language. My 2009 study with Eagle,[5] had shown that girls described transgressive behaviour as "trouble" and being "naughty"[6] so it was important to phrase the question using their terminology: "Why do girls get into trouble?" In the following discussion extended extracts are offered to illuminate how events unfold, the details of the storytelling girls engage in, and how their stories "are spaces of resistance, resistance to the narratives of instituted power" (Lewis 2011: 506).

Findings

Social Control

Social control was something to be resisted in direct contrast to Steffensmeier and Allan's thesis that social control "powerfully shapes women's relative willingness to commit crime" (1996: 477). Social control was experienced mainly in the settings of school and the juvenile justice system and girls' accounts relate principally to those two areas.

School was a consistent site of conflict; as Alice described it, she "wasn't quiet in school," and acts of resistance could range from silly and mischievous to what Louise called "fighting . . . or just stupid stuff like that." The girls said that

conflict might arise because teachers did not like them and Margaret Zahn et al. (2010) have argued that perceptions of fairness are particularly relevant to girls. For Serena, school staff are very unfair.

> Elaine: Are you currently going to school?
>
> Serena: I'm supposed to be, I don't go, though, because I'm sick of all the teachers giving me hassle.
>
> Elaine: Why do they give you hassle?
>
> Serena: My head of year started having a go at me straightaway and I said to him 'I'm not arguing with you,' and then he started having a go at me so I walked off and I got excluded for a week. And then I went back in a week after and … I had a skirt on … and it had a big belt on it . . . (so) I got excluded again.

Girls rarely recalled or differentiated between the sanctions they received, but were aware they might be perceived negatively because of their involvement in the justice system. Jane said, "I sound like a right dosser[7] don't I? I been on all of them me." Nonetheless, girls could and would resist social control.

> Amy: "Oh it were shit being on a tag[8] and that . . . you can't go out on a tag at 7pm and I like to go out and party with me mates . . . so it were just shit."
>
> Elaine: Did it change your behaviour?
>
> Amy: Not when I was younger.
>
> Jane: No coz you don't give a fuck what anyone thinks do you when you're younger? An order aint gonna slap you back into shape is it?

Or, as Jane said, "When I was younger when a juvenile worker came . . . I used to go out the back door . . . he would knock on the front and I would go out the back door." Other forms of social control included detention in police cells.

Jane: Not been into prison . . . been locked up.

Amy: It's horrible ain't it?

Jane: Yeah . . . tag . . . I breached it and got arrested on a Friday night.

Amy: It's horrible … aint it?

Jane: Breached it . . . got locked up . . . worse thing I'm 16 now but I were only 14 and they kept me in all fucking weekend.

Their continued resistance was strongly evidenced.

Amy: If they would just let you out for a cig I wouldn't even be arsed . . . and give me a nice quilt not a horrible blanket.

Jane: I know! Have you seen the state of them?

Jane: I used to take me hairgrips out and in the corner bit scrape my name.

Elaine: Did you like doing that?

Jane: Well there weren't nowt[9] else to do were there?

Amy: I was . . . locked up for assault and I took the wires out of me bra and in the morning I got released and then I got called back up and they said I were up for graffiti and criminal damage in the cell.

The girls "relative willingness to commit crime" (1996: 477) was not shaped by social control as Steffensmeier and Allan argue. Rather, they resisted and subverted it and sought not to be contained.

Gender Norms

Steffensmeier and Allan state that the "cleavage between what is considered feminine and what is criminal is sharp" (1996: 476). And Cindy Ness notes there are few studies examining girls' violence as "a source of pleasure, self-esteem and cultural capital" (2010: 33). And yet in girls' stories there is no sharp cleavage and trouble is related to enjoyment, status, and friendship networks.

Amy: I used to have some right good laughs . . . I do miss it . . . I really do miss it . . . you'd be out active every day . . . I wouldn't even go home at night like.

Maintaining status and resisting control could lead to conflict with adults in institutions of social control.

Serena: I weren't well and I passed out at break and then this teacher kept going on at me . . . And she came right in my face and I felt like 'uh' so I smacked her and ran and then I was on the phone in the corridor and this teacher just grabbed me and I said, 'What are you doing?' and he goes, 'Give me your phone,' and I said, 'Don't be silly I'm not giving you my phone,' and he says, 'Yeah you are,' and I says, 'No I'm not,' and he says, 'Well I'll take it from you,' and he goes to take it, and he sort of pulled me and I tried to get out of it and I went [makes hitting sound] and walked off.

Similarly, in response to social services interventions Amy's mother attempted to limit what Steffensmeier and Allan call her "access to criminal opportunities" (1996: 47), but this was also resisted. Her mother "used to lock the doors . . ." but Amy explained how she "used to climb out the window . . . jump off the roof."

For Liz, if opportunities presented, they were embraced. She said, emphatically, "If someone says, 'Are you coming on a sesh?'[10] then you're going to go."

Girls' descriptions of interactions with other girls were clearly related to self-esteem and cultural capital.

Amy: It got me angry coz she were showing off in front of lads . . . that's what got me really angry.

Elaine: Is it ok for girls to fight?

Amy: Um . . . not really . . . we shouldn't be fighting . . . but . . . like if someone is gonna have you on your toes … like if a lass is . . . you gotta stand up for yourself don't you? Like if there's a load a people and a load a lads you're not gonna make yourself look like a cunt are you?

Alice: I've changed a lot . . . when I met her the juvenile justice worker says I was a challenge . . . but I've changed a lot . . . I won't lie to you . . . I've been kicked out of school . . . it was just being big in front of your friends really.

Friendship groups were linked to trouble. Jo explained, "It's just that you're . . . hanging round with wrong crowd." But while neighborhood effects on delinquency are studied, our knowledge about gender effects are limited (Zahn et al. 2010). Prospective studies, however, indicate that parental supervision and poverty are relevant to female offending (Farrington and Painter 2004), and girls' descriptions draw out the role of neighbourhood, friendship groups, and a lack of money in shaping their behaviour.

Sue: . . . wrong crowd and that.

Elaine: But you were choosing to hang around with the wrong crowd?

Sue: Well they're your mates . . . most of the time I got in trouble I were pissed . . . or I wanted some money.

For boys being drunk and wanting status and money is normalized, but Jennifer Schwartz and Darrell Steffensmeier suggest these are irrelevant to girls "because of the lesser relevance of success/profit goals" (2008: 57). The danger for girls who do not share this gender norm is that their behaviour is problematized and pathologized (Brown 2012). As West and Zimmerman argue, "The oppressive character of gender rests not just on difference but the inferences from and the consequences of those differences" (2009: 117).

Moral Development

The girls had clear conceptions of the role of family and its role in their development—moral and otherwise. So for example, when I asked Jane, "Why did you get into trouble?" she replied,

> Well my dad's been in and out of prison all his life and that and I've looked up to my dad and followed the road my dad's been in . . . and like my older brother . . . 'cause he got sent down as well.

Amy added, "It's not like you want to get locked up (laughing) . . . my brother's just got 16 years."

Unlike Steffensmeier and Allan's contention that "gender differences in moral development . . . restrains women from violence and other criminal behaviour injurious to others" (1996: 476), the use of violence was widely discussed and strongly linked with the need to stand up for oneself, a concept reinforced by family regardless of gender. This moral concept focused on the importance of learning self-protection. Men would show girls how to look after themselves and girls' stories suggest that men and boys encouraged this behaviour, not to make them like men, but to make them strong, respected, and successful girls.

> Jane: Me dad dragged me up by the hair to lasses' house and told me to kick the fuck out of the three of them or he would kick the fuck out of me . . . I'm fucking having 'em.

Amy told a similar story of having been taught this lesson by her sister.

> You have to be that way . . . I remember when a girl, two girls, come up and like they were showing off in front of lads and dragged me on the floor and I went and got me sister and me sister stood there . . . and I don't know what

come over me and I had a fight there . . . and I felt good in myself . . . really good . . . she didn't say owt[11] after.

The girls' descriptions are closely aligned to sociological work describing status as a key part of violence (Bourgois 2002), and often attributed to masculinity. However, for Susan Batchelor, girls placed a "high premium" (2005: 24), on respect and a growing body of work strengthens this interpretation (see Althoff 2013; Brown 2012; Jones 2010; Ness 2010; Phillips 2003). The following longer transcript illustrates the issues perceived to be at stake.

> Emma: It's like other weekend when I was drunk, there was this lass started me, she'd been saying she was gonna for ages, and she started and was like 'Why are you scared?' and I was like, 'I'm not scared of you,' . . . and she tried to batter me and I was like, 'I'm not going to fight you,' and she was like, 'Why?' and I walked away and was like . . . 'I'm not getting locked up for her.' I sat down and started talking to my friends and she tried to push me over the fence! I'm stronger than her, I had a grip on the fence and she weren't getting nowhere and she let go, and I got up and started skipping backwards and she started, so I was like, 'Go on then, go on then but I'm not going to fight you,' then I thought, 'What am I doing? I'm going to have to get myself out or I'll end up fighting her.' I tried running and I fell and got cuts on me. I got back up and I fell again. Apparently she kicked me but I didn't feel it so that was alright. The next day someone came up to me and was, 'Have you been stabbed?' and I was, 'Eh?' and she said 'Elizabeth said that she stabbed you,' and I was like, 'No I fell.' So I rang that girl and said, 'Why have you been saying you stabbed me?' and she was, 'Oh I didn't stab you, I was gonna.'

Elaine: So you're not frightened of her?

Emma: I'm just waiting . . . I'm prepared.

Elaine: How are you prepared?

Emma: Well I've got a little screwdriver.

Emma had attempted not to respond to provocation but her status was now dependent on her taking action. She was prepared to carry a weapon and to alert family and friends to the tensions and they agreed that she should do this.

> Emma: Like my step dad said if she starts with us, it's her step dad that's going to get battered and my mum's going to go for her mum and then if I end up in hospital, I've got friends who can . . . they're right protective of me. Where my family come from . . . it's right rough.

Moral development with regard to violence was not gendered and girls rarely differentiated between sexes when they talked about trouble, young people, and the use of violence. Self-control could be exercised only up to a point; social norms strongly advanced the idea of the need to protect oneself and the support of family in times of trouble was a moral imperative (see also Althoff 2013). In the girls' experience, using violence was "an unavoidable aspect of life growing up in a rough neighbourhood" (Batchelor 2005: 25).

Girls also saw young people's naughty behaviour as motivated by a search for fun and freedom; Amy, who turned 18 that day, laughingly and approvingly noted,

> It's like the younger generation now their next generation doing it . . . I see all the little kids doing it . . . right little bastards doing it . . . you see all kids running over fences and being chased by police . . . laughing.

And sometimes one just did naughty things. As Jane made clear, "If you're walking down street and probably one of my mates'd probably punch someone and I'd just

join in." Jane's story illustrates the way in which girls' violent behaviour and strong peer relationships are linked, a relationship unexpectedly found in a randomized control trial (see Shlafer et al. 2012). And this excerpt from my conversation with Judy shows how trouble may not be viewed in a moral light, but just represented as fun.

> Judy: Last thing I did? Nicked a policeman's phone without realising!
>
> Elaine: How did you do that?
>
> Judy: I were out with my mates and there's the policeman who goes around town . . . He was outside the shops and we were shouting, arguing with him, we were only having a laugh, I went round and nicked his hat, next thing I had his phone in my pocket. We were walking up this road, we went through this garden and jumped over a fence, went behind the church and it started ringing and Janet was like, 'Turn your phone off!' and I was like, 'It's not mine!'
>
> Elaine: Did you take it?
>
> Judy: Yeah. The police came and sat me in the back of the cop car and were like, 'Did you take PC something or other's hat?' and I was like, 'Yeah I did why?' then he was like, 'Did you take his phone?' so I went, 'No, why?' and they were like, 'Oh his phone's gone missing' and I was like, 'I don't know nothing about it.'
>
> Elaine: So what happened?
>
> Judy: Nowt. I didn't get caught for it.

Aggression and Physical Strength

Aggression was common in the way feelings and experiences were communicated, and confrontation was not necessarily a negative part of relationships.

Amy exclaimed, “I do love arguing with my boyfriend . . . I always win,” and Jane agreed, “I used to get a buzz off it.”

Friendships and socializing were key places for aggression to play out between girls and this extended extract highlights the tensions and dynamics.

> Rosie: And she brought up something really personal . . . she brought it up about my rape. That actually brought a tear to my eye. I wiped the tear away, I went downstairs and I says, ‘Right, I want to talk this through. What’s so wrong with you? You slept with my boyfriend?’ She said, ‘I didn’t sleep with your boyfriend,’ and she’s there proper giving me some crap, but then one of my mates, not the one who hit her with me, this other one pushed me into her. I tried to apologise for that, but she wouldn’t have it and she pushed me back. So I pushed her out of my personal space, she pushed me again. She’s come up, punched me, so I’ve blocked it off and I’ve head butted her and that’s when my mate’s come into it and we’re setting about her face and whatever, and we fractured all the side of her jaw, we fractured her jaw.

Relational and status elements in this narrative show how important it is to protect oneself and one’s relationships from those who threaten them, especially in front of others. Friends may back you up and join in.

Physical strength was rarely discussed in relation to conflict and aggression because inflicting real harm is rarely the objective as other studies have also found (see Ness 2010); the key objective is standing up for oneself and close others.

> Lilly: This girl, she’d been bullying my mate and my mate’s not one of those people who can fight, she’s small, quiet and I found out about it. Loads of people had seen her . . . I just smacked her and the police caught me and they

said, ‘How many times have you hit her?’ and I said. ‘Only once.’ . . . I’d just whacked her face and realised she was pathetic and so I’d walked off.

Amy recognized the gendered implications of fighting with a man. "I were fighting him back an all . . . but obviously a man is always gonna overpower you." But in contrast to Steffensmeier and Allan she did not consider “physical prowess” a prerequisite (1996: 477). Girls would fight even where they acknowledged they would come off worse.

Jane: Obviously I’d rather get beaten off a load of little slags than . . . like get a beating off me dad . . . you know what I mean?

Amy: You can’t win violence no . . . you can’t win fights . . . my boyfriend’s about 10 foot bigger than me.

Physical strength was therefore gendered but girls would fight if they had to because they would not let themselves be bullied or pushed around. Successful girls in their social groups used aggression when needed and this, as Coretta Phillips (2003), has noted, may be more common than is supposed. Girls would do so in front of boys, friends, and family and their behaviour was socially legitimated. In a discussion with Emma who indicated that she was carrying a weapon, I asked, “Would you stab someone do you think?” and she replied, “If she stabbed me I would.”

Aggression is deliberately used for a social end. It can communicate independence and show one is not dominated by institutions or agents of social control, boyfriends, community members, or other girls. Unlike Steffensmeier and Allan’s argument that girls may “be perceived by themselves or others as lacking the violent potential” (1996: 477) girls suggested aggression was acceptable and in keeping with girlhood. As Ness (2010) also found, violence confers cultural capital

and demonstrates cultural competence; girls' stories illustrate how those norms are taught.

Physical strength is, however, highly gendered. It is attributed to males, in keeping with gender norms, but the relative lack of importance accorded to how it might limit one's behaviour differs from those norms. This differentiation in the role and use of aggression and physical strength and its relevance in girls' lives and, as an aspect of girlhood, is critical. The relative unimportance of physical strength in girls' violence has been shown, but has not been properly understood to date. Physical strength is unimportant because inflicting serious harm is not the purpose of using violence; what is communicated is independence, resistance, and standing up for oneself.

Sexuality

Sexuality was not seen to limit girls' behaviour and they talked with an assumed heterosexuality, reflecting wider social and cultural norms, so that "the prize in the game is a boyfriend" (Brown 2012: 74). In spheres over which they had control, they noted few inhibitors. However, as Jane described, adult men represented a potential threat.

> I don't like working with boys (referring to male workers) . . . I don't like getting a lift . . . I don't feel comfortable with boys . . . No I'd feel like . . . no, no way . . . I've been sexually assaulted when I were younger by a worker me . . . so nah . . . not a chance.

Their conversations highlighted how men working within the justice system were sometimes predatory and their examples reinforced why men were to be treated with caution. In their stories their sexuality became an issue when they had no power or control or when a girl could be made to feel uncomfortable, exposed, and powerless.

> Jane: I was put in a cell where there were no toilet for some strange reason . . . you have to go into this thing and there's this half a thing where they can see you . . . and you're like, yeah, no mate.

Alongside this, sexual offending was reviled, strongly associated with men, and the courts were considered not to treat it seriously.

Concluding Thoughts: Girls Doing Gender Differently

In reflecting on why girls get into trouble, these girls told stories that highlighted the mechanisms and interactions that led to their being girls who got into trouble. They talked at length about being out and about, friends and socializing, and not obeying rules. Trouble is a discourse of liberty and resistance; and, as hooks (1989) and Butler (1998) described decades ago, trouble comes because of resistance and emancipation from restraint and restriction. This is important because it enables us to build theory that develops our understanding of "power . . . knowing and representation" (Doucet and Mauthner 2008: 336). In these girls' stories conflict with institutions arose from attempts to be self-determining. The conflict was exacerbated because institutions of social control had different expectations of gender-enacted norms. The conflict was gendered and classed. Consequently, girls who used low-level violence were judged to be abnormally aggressive (Arnull et al. 2009; Brown 2012), leading girls to experience a clash between normative gender conceptions and their own situated, culturally gendered norms. The conflict creates resistance, for, as Marlene Brown puts it, there is a "permeable membrane between having been victimized by violence and having perpetrated it" (2012: 70). In enacting gender as they do, girls are supported by family and community. Their way of doing girlhood emphasizes the importance of self-respect and self-protection, realized through the use of aggression when necessary. In asserting self and their values they are not relying on "the working class

being positioned as the moral constitutive limit" (Skeggs 2005: 978), but are, instead, defining themselves as moral actors reflecting cultural values.

The five elements proposed by Steffensmeier and Allan (1996) as inhibiting girls' involvement in offending do not concur with girls' accounts. Girls' narratives relate to those elements and four of the five recur, but their explanatory power is related to *how* girls got into conflict. Four of the elements, proposed as gender-enacted norms responsible for diverting females from trouble, are precisely what got them into trouble. This is, I suggest, critical. The conflict highlights the lack of reciprocity about what it is to be a girl. Steffensmeier and Allan's (1996) proposed theory may offer some explanatory value for girls who stay out of the justice system, but cannot account for girls found within it.

The findings suggest that a binary definition of gendered delinquency is too narrow and restricting to encompass the real world experience of girls. Girls' narratives suggest a continuum in which trouble has many non-gendered features. Gender norms enacted through institutions are deeply resisted and one is not less of a girl if one can fight. Violence and aggression are resources to draw on, they give power and establish one in a hierarchy.

Girls' resistance to normative gender concepts demonstrated through their use of aggression compounds their offence in the eyes of the justice system (Arnull et al. 2009). This is one of the "silent actions that form the core of gendering practices" (Czarniawska 2013: 62). Girls brought into the system for low-level violence are involved in a conflict that has a distinct, gendered and classed effect because they do gender differently from institutionally and culturally preferred norms.

Bio

Elaine Arnull, formerly a Probation Officer, is a Reader in Social Policy and Social Work at Nottingham Trent University. She is involved in international collaborative research on young people and delinquency and her work focuses on foregrounding the voice of the researched. Her most recent book (with Darrell Fox, 2016) takes a comparative cultural approach to critique current discourse and consider future constructions of delinquency at a local and global level. Elaine has published in journals such as *Journal of Drugs*, *Education, Prevention and Policy* and *Journal of Criminology and Social Integration*. Email: Elaine.Arnull@ntu.ac.uk

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Notes

[1] See, for example, Jackson and Tinkler 2007.

[2] In global trend data young people are often conflated into one category and boys make up the majority of those convicted and imprisoned. Women are reported separately and the Penal Reform Report 2015 suggests that the number of women prisoners has increased by 40 percent globally (see http://www.penalreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/PRI-Prisons-global-trends-report-LR.pdf.) Since the age of majority differs around the world it is difficult to untangle girls from this group but numerous researchers have reported a rise in the number of girls entering juvenile

justice systems even where numbers of young people coming into the system are falling (see, for example, Zahn et al. 2010).

[3] Most girls in the UK juvenile justice system (88 percent) are white (see Arnull and Eagle 2009).

[4] All the girls have been given pseudonyms.

[5] The interviews with girls in prison were undertaken with Susannah Eagle.

[6] Naughty used in this context in the UK does not have sexual connotations as it may in the US.

[7] Dosser is slang for an idle person or tramp.

[8] Tagging or wearing a tag refers to electronic monitoring of curfews, conditions of prison, or court orders. See https://www.gov.uk/electronic-tags

[9] Nowt is a colloquial term for nothing in the North of England.

[10] Sesh is slang for session associated with socializing and drinking.

[11] Owt is a colloquial term for anything in the North of England.