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# RESEARCH NOTE

## GIRLS, GUYS AND GANGS: THE CHANGING SOCIAL CONTEXT OF FEMALE DELINQUENCY

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The historic and widely held assumption that delinquency was predominantly masculine in gender has had important implications both in the kind of theoretical work which has dominated the delinquency literature as well as in the continued choice of males as preferred subjects of empirical research. Psychological or "personal problems" explanations have generally been marshalled to explain female delinquency. It has also been assumed that sexual offenses, incorrigibility and "running away" make up the delinquent repertoire of girls, and that their involvement in more serious offenses is quite limited.

Even where sociological variables have been studied they have typically been interpreted within a psychological framework. For example, while it is widely recognized that coming from a broken home is related to a higher incidence of delinquency, this variable is thought to have an even greater impact in the case of girls. Studies show a more profound sense of loneliness and low self-esteem in girls who have a poor home life<sup>1</sup> or even a psychological reaction against the absent or inadequate father.<sup>2</sup>

Other studies may include social variables, but nevertheless perpetuate the conception that female delinquency is primarily an adaptation to personal problems. These studies deal with the theory, which was first suggested by Cohen,<sup>3</sup> that delinquency in females may be associated with a girl's inability to establish a good relationship with the opposite sex. While for males, long range goals center around achieving success and acquiring material possessions, the primary goal for females is thought to be "catching a man." Thus, the classic Mertonian model, if somewhat stripped of its structural components, can then be applied to under-

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<sup>1</sup> G. KONOPKA, *THE ADOLESCENT GIRL IN CONFLICT* (1966).

<sup>2</sup> Barker, Gordon & Adams, *Comparison of the Delinquencies of Boys and Girls*, 53 J. CRIM. L.C. & P.S. 470 (1962).

<sup>3</sup> A. COHEN, *DELINQUENT BOYS: THE CULTURE OF THE GANG* (1955).

standing female delinquency (usually sexual in character) as a form of "innovation."<sup>4</sup>

The bulk of literature, then, has perpetuated the notion that personal maladjustments characterize the female delinquent—she must have a psychological problem, be unable to adequately perform her proper sex role, or suffer from the ill effects of a bad home life. The recent large increases in both the number of adjudicated females and the apparent increased versatility of their involvement in crimes, make it far more difficult to account for all female crime in such purely psychological terms. For example, between 1960 and 1973 the arrest rate of females under eighteen years of age increased 265% for all offenses, 393% for violent crimes and 334% for property crimes. This contrasts with increases of 124%, 236% and 82% respectively for males in the same age bracket.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Two researchers have directly tested this theory, but they found that their delinquent sample actually perceived fewer obstacles to marital goals than the control group. See Sandhu & Allen, *Female Delinquency: Goal Obstruction and Anomie*, 6 CAN. REV. SOC. & ANTHROPOLOGY 107 (1969). And one researcher found that delinquents reported more dates than the non-delinquent sample, but attempted to explain the difference by reference to the "quality" of the dates the delinquents were able to obtain or the sexual favors they may have had to "bestow" in order to get the dates. See Morris, *Female Delinquency and Relational Problems*, 43 SOC. FORCES 82 (1964). Morris also compared the difference in the observers' rating of facial features, figure and grooming between delinquents and non-delinquents but found significant differences only in terms of grooming. *Id.* The importance of this finding, however, is tempered when one considers that the inferior degree of cleanliness and neatness reported may simply be a reflection of middle class interviewer standards and the result may have little to do with the criteria by which boys and girls judge each other as acceptable dating partners.

<sup>5</sup> FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, *UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS* (Table 28) (1973). The problems with official statistics are well known; however, a recent comparison of self-reported delinquency involvement by girls incarcerated at a state institution in 1960, with the level of involvement reported by a comparable 1975 sample indicates significantly greater involvement in almost every offense category by the 1975 subjects. See P. Giordano & S. Cernkovich, *Changing Patterns of Female Delin-*

*Explaining the Increase: Women's Liberation?*

A ready explanation for understanding females' involvement and, in particular, these rapidly rising official delinquency statistics is provided by "women's liberation."

Freda Adler's book, *Sisters in Crime*,<sup>6</sup> is one work which suggests a rather direct link between sex role changes and increased delinquency. While this work is important in suggesting changes at various levels of society which may be having an impact on female behavior, these ideas are obscured somewhat by an overall ideological stance which has been taken in relation to the problem. Adler sees the rising crime rate as part of the price society must pay for greater involvement by females at all levels. Women are demanding a bigger piece of the illegitimate as well as the legitimate action. While she does not go so far as to suggest that these women are aligned with the movement itself, casting her argument from a feminist perspective nevertheless imputes "feminist" or "liberated" motives to the criminals.

Like her legitimate-based sister, the female criminal knows too much to pretend or return to her former role as a second rate criminal confined to "feminine" crimes such as shoplifting and prostitution. She has had a taste of financial victory. In some cases, she has had a taste of blood. Her appetite, however, appears to be only whetted.<sup>7</sup>

We would argue that, important as these sex role changes are, it is a mistake and an oversimplification to suggest such a direct link between the "liberation" of females and increased involvement in crimes. This implies a degree of politicization and commitment on the part of the criminals to which she simply may not adhere. It appears, from what we know about the impact of social movements on various segments of society, that not only is it erroneous to suggest any kind of overt politicization on the part of most female criminals, but it is also an oversimplification to accord any kind of causal, delinquency-inducing status to most attitudinal changes generally associated with the movement. At the very least, recent empirical work demonstrates the necessity for viewing sex role

orientation or "liberation" as multi-dimensional and finds a negligible or even negative association between certain indices of liberation and reported delinquency involvement.<sup>8</sup>

*Alternative Explanations: Theories of Male Delinquency*

In attempting to understand recent changes in female crime patterns, then, it is perhaps more useful to conceive of these women and girls as recipients of the effects of broad based as well as micro-level societal changes, rather than themselves being responsible for a new era of sex role equality. We should begin to focus on the ways in which broader changes have filtered down to the point where they have affected the everyday social world of adolescent and particularly lower status girls so that delinquency is one normal outcome. A re-examination of traditionally male theories of delinquency locates particular factors which have generally been associated with delinquent activities on the part of males. To the extent that there have been social changes in the lives of females in these same areas, we should be able to understand and predict increases in female delinquent activity as well.

Aside from labeling and conflict theories which might be invoked to explain recent changes in official response to female deviance, control theory, opportunity theory and differential association (or other variations which have emphasized the importance of friendship networks) all implicitly suggest factors which could account for behavioral changes on the part of females. Hirschi's control perspective, which emphasized the notion that delinquency becomes possible when attachment to societal bonds are weakened, has obvious relevance to changing female behavior patterns.<sup>9</sup> Females have traditionally been more protected by and attached to conventional institutions, *i.e.*, school, family, church.<sup>10</sup> A weakening of these bonds to allow a wider range of behavior generally creates new opportunities where deviance is one possibility. Cloward and Ohlin's classic formulation of Delinquency and Opportunity Theory highlights

<sup>8</sup> P. Giordano & S. Cernkovich, On Complicating the Relationship Between Liberation and Delinquency (August 11, 1977) (unpublished paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Sociological Association, Research Committee for the Sociology of Deviance and Social Control, in Dublin, Ireland).

<sup>9</sup> See T. HIRSCHI, CAUSES OF DELINQUENCY (1969).

<sup>10</sup> See Parsons, *Age and Sex in the Social Structure of the United States*, 7 AMER. SOC. REV. 604 (1942).

quency (August 30, 1976) (unpublished paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Social Problems in New York).

<sup>6</sup> F. ADLER, SISTERS IN CRIME: THE RISE OF THE NEW FEMALE CRIMINAL (1975).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 15.

the fact that opportunity in the legitimate as well as the illegitimate arenas is differentially available.<sup>11</sup> A relaxing of curfew and other tight constraints on females creates a whole host of situational contexts in which delinquency may occur (e.g., driving around in a car, going to local hang-outs, going to bars "unescorted"). This should have particular relevance in understanding increases in crimes such as drinking, vandalism or drug use where situational factors assume such a crucial role. Jensen and Eve did examine the impact of control variables on female involvement in delinquency, and while such factors were associated with it, they did not completely account for male-female differences.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, their use of a sample obtained in 1964-65 may limit the ability to generalize their findings to present day patterns.

However, perhaps most crucial to an understanding of female participation in minor as well as more serious crimes is the role of the *peer group* in transmitting definitions favorable to the violation of law. The importance of group influence on male involvement in delinquency has been amply demonstrated in classic research studies.<sup>13</sup> But the peer group continues to be important in more recent studies. For example, Hirschi's own findings, though emphasizing control variables, suggest the importance of peer influences.<sup>14</sup> The assumption has been that these friendship networks are non-existent or at least not as important in the lives of adolescent girls. This may have always been a somewhat inaccurate view of the social world of adolescent girls,<sup>15</sup> but clearly peer associations must assume a central role in any attempt to understand recent changing patterns of delinquency involve-

ment. Increases in casual cross-sex socializing (not on a dating basis) could provide reinforcement for behaviors which are illegal, as well as provide opportunities for learning more specifics about some kinds of delinquency. This initial learning may occur in connection with males, but it is hypothesized that there would also be a slowly developing tradition of delinquency among female peers as well. Thus, important changes may be occurring not only because girls are being increasingly exposed to delinquent behavior by learning about it, but also because of their perception that there would be peer approval for their engaging in unlawful behavior. It is suggested that at the very least the more delinquent, aggressive girls are receiving some kind of reference group support from other females, and possibly from other reference groups as well. This is contrasted with the traditional situation where girls may have curtailed their behavior in part because of concern over what the other girls thought, or because their boyfriends would disapprove.

This article presents the results of a study which examines (in the tradition of countless male-based research efforts) the role of the peer group in understanding the nature of female delinquency. It is hypothesized that it is within the everyday social context of the friendship or gang networks that we can see perhaps the greatest evidence of change, and that these changing peer associations will have a more immediate impact on female crime patterns than that evidenced by any kind of ideological or attitudinal liberation.

## STUDY

### *Methodology*

The focus of the present study is largely descriptive. It is concerned with the social context in which females participate in delinquent acts, their perception of the attitudes of others toward their violating the law and the association, if any, between the perceived acceptability of certain kinds of acts and actual involvement in delinquency. A longitudinal design would have been an ideal way to assess the extent of change in female friendship patterns; however, as discussed previously, the few early studies involving females tended to emphasize psychological variables. It is nevertheless thought to be important to determine, using a present day sample, what type of social network seems to be associated with high levels of delinquency involvement on the part of adolescent females. To accomplish this, questionnaires were administered to the

<sup>11</sup> See R. CLOWARD & L. OHLIN, *DELINQUENCY AND OPPORTUNITY: A THEORY OF DELINQUENT GANGS* (1960).

<sup>12</sup> See Jensen & Eve, *Sex Differences in Delinquency: An Examination of Popular Sociological Explanations*, 13 *CRIMINOLOGY* 427 (1976).

<sup>13</sup> See C. SHAW & H. MCKAY, *JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AND URBAN AREAS* (1969); E. SUTHERLAND, *PRINCIPLES OF CRIMINOLOGY* (1934); F. THRASHER, *THE GANG* (2d ed. 1936); Cohen & Short, *Research in Delinquent Subcultures*, 14 *J. SOC. ISSUES* 20 (1958); Miller, *Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency*, 14 *J. SOC. ISSUES* 5 (1958).

<sup>14</sup> T. HIRSCHI, *supra* note 9. See also R. AKERS, *DEVIAN'T BEHAVIOR: A SOCIAL LEARNING APPROACH* (1973); Conger, *Social Control & Social Learning Models of Delinquent Behavior*, 14 *CRIMINOLOGY* 17 (1976).

<sup>15</sup> In fact, the more general literature on adolescence supports this view. See J. COLEMAN, *THE ADOLESCENT SOCIETY* (1961); Curtis, *Adolescent Orientations Toward Peers: Variations By Sex, Age and Socioeconomic Status*, 40 *ADOLESCENCE* 483 (1975).

total population at a state institution for juvenile offenders (N=108), and to a comparable sample of eighty-three girls randomly selected from an urban high school in a predominantly lower status area. The high school sample was added to provide a wider range of delinquent involvement—primarily to increase the number who are more “law-abiding.” The age range for the institutionalized sample was twelve to nineteen, with a mean age of seventeen; the range for the school sample was fourteen to nineteen, with a mean age of 17.3. Non-whites constituted 50.9% for the institutionalized sample. The school sample included 48.2% non-whites. One of the important limitations of the sample is that the girls came from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds (as indicated by the occupations they list for their parents/guardians) and hence, the findings to be reported cannot be generalized beyond this lower class sample.

A revised version of the Nye-Short self-admitted delinquency test<sup>16</sup> was used to measure the extent of the girls' involvement in delinquent activity. A split-half test for reliability yielded a coefficient of 0.95 for this scale.

Several items derived from the literature on male friendship networks and gangs were used in this study to measure the extent of peer group involvement. Two items were identical to the friendship questions used by Lerman<sup>17</sup> (*Question*: “When you are at home, who do you usually go around with?” *Answer*: Myself, one or two others, or a regular group. *Question*: “How much of your leisure time do you spend with friends?” *Answer*: All, most, or some). Several other single item indicators, which were more descriptive, were also included.

To determine whether changing definitions of what is “acceptable” behavior for females may be accounting for some increase in criminal activity, a series of questions were constructed concerning three reference groups that might be important to the girls. The girls were asked to indicate how various reference groups would react if they were to engage in certain kinds of activity. Three reference groups were selected: “Guys I run around with,” “My boyfriend” and “Girls I run around with,” realizing that there might be other important reference groups, such as parents. Behavioral items were chosen to represent independent kinds of actions, some of which might encourage delin-

quent activity (e.g., “Staying out all night”), and others which were actually illegal (e.g., “Using grass once in a while”). The items chosen dealt with behavior that was traditionally proscribed for females but that it is hypothesized, may be considered more acceptable or even “cool” by today's adolescent subculture. The questions were worded so that there would not be universal disapproval; for example, it is possible to envision approval for one of the items, “Beating up somebody nobody likes,” as opposed to something like, “Murdering someone in cold blood.” The specific items included were:

- Beating up on somebody nobody likes.
- Shoplifting.
- Running away.
- Staying out all night.
- Stealing a car for a joy ride.
- Making an obscene phone call.
- Using a fake I.D. to get in a bar.
- Tearing up school property.
- Driving around with a bunch of kids.
- Using grass once in a while.
- Picking up guys.

Total “approval” scores for each reference group were obtained by summing the responses for all eleven items. The split-half reliability coefficient for these items using, “Guys I hang around with,” as the reference group was 0.93, for girlfriends, 0.93, and for boyfriends, 0.94.

### Results

It should perhaps first be noted that the sample of 108 incarcerated girls did produce a wide range of delinquent activities. One of the initial reasons for administering the questionnaire was to see if girls were indeed primarily involved with status offenses, incorrigibility, and the like, as depicted in the literature, or whether there were girls who had gotten involved in crimes typically considered “masculine.” While most of the girls in the institution had, in fact, committed many of the “traditional” female offenses (84.2% had run away from home one or more times, 65% had had sexual relations with someone they didn't know too well, and 99.1% had had sexual relations with someone they loved), there was evidence of significant involvement in more serious crimes as well. Table 1 lists the percentage of the sample of 108 girls who had been involved in crimes which had traditionally been considered “masculine” in character, as well as the involvement by girls in the school sample in these crimes.

<sup>16</sup> Nye & Short, *Scaling Delinquent Behavior*, 22 AMER. SOC. REV. 326 (1957).

<sup>17</sup> Lerman, *Gangs, Networks and Subculture Delinquency*, 73 AMER. J. SOC. 63 (1967).

TABLE 1

Percent of Institutionalized and School Sample Reporting Involvement (One or More Times) in "Serious Delinquent Acts"

	Institutionalized Sample (N=108)		School Sample (N=83)	
	N	%	N	%
Stealing items over \$50	85	78.3	3	3.6
Taken part in gang fights	60	55.6	15	18.1
Carried a weapon, such as a gun or knife	86	79.6	22	26.4
Fought someone using a weapon	64	59.6	6	7.2
Breaking and entering	68	63.5	3	3.6
Used pills to get high	95	83.3	27	32.5
Tried heroin	47	43.5	1	1.2

In addition, 53.7% of the institutionalized group indicated that they had been part of a group of girls that could be called a "gang." Of these, 51.9% indicated that the gang had a name. The names of these gangs (*e.g.*, The Outlaws, the Cobras, Mojos, Loveless, Red Blood, White Knights, East Side Birds, Power) convey neither a particularly "feminine" image, nor suggest a subordinate position to a male gang.

#### Friendships and Delinquency

The first item which dealt with friendship patterns, "Who do you usually go around with?" had three possible responses—myself, one or two others, or a regular group. An analysis of variance was computed which indicated a statistically significant difference between groups. Those who were part of a regular group were more likely to be delinquent. For the white subsample,  $F = 11.65$  ( $p < .001$ ); for the black subsample,  $F = 4.62$  ( $p < .01$ ). The second item concerned the amount of leisure time spent with the group. A significant positive correlation was found between this variable and the extent of involvement in delinquency ( $r = .43$ ,  $p < .001$  for whites;  $r = .22$ ,  $p < .01$  for blacks). That is, the more leisure time spent in the group, the more likely a girl was to be delinquent. Similarly, those who indicated that they had been part of a group of girls that could be called a "gang" were more delinquent than those who said they had not been part of such a group ( $t = 5.17$ ,  $p < .001$  for whites,  $t = 3.32$ ,  $p < .001$  for blacks).<sup>18</sup>

#### The Context in Which Delinquent Acts Occur

In addition to the general association between group involvement and delinquency, which parallels the findings from most male based research studies, it was important to try to specify more clearly the actual social context in which females are likely to commit delinquent acts. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were more likely to go out with a group of "guys and girls" or with just girls. For the whites, those who indicated they were more likely to go out in a group of guys and girls were significantly more delinquent than those who said they went out more often with girls only ( $t = 2.40$ ,  $p < .05$ ). For blacks, however, this question did not appear to differentiate delinquents from non-delinquents.

In addition, subjects were asked, "When you are out in a group, who would be more likely to start the trouble—a guy or a girl?" While, as expected, most indicated that it would be a male, (only 17.6% of the white girls thought a girl might start the trouble), 31.6% of the black girls thought it might be a girl who would be the one to start trouble.

Similarly, Table 2 presents the distribution of responses to an item which asked subjects, "Who are you more likely to be with when you get into trouble?" An examination of this table suggests that for whites, "a group of guys" or "guys and girls" provides the social context in which "trouble" will most often occur. While this pattern exists in the black subsample as well, there is a higher percentage of black females that indicated that trouble would be more likely to occur with a group of girls. It should also be noted that an analysis of a different sample group showed that in terms of whom girls actually reported being with when committing particular offenses, the modal category was clearly a group of "guys and girls."<sup>19</sup> While this differed somewhat by the nature of the offense, (*i.e.*, it was more likely in the case of robbery (52.7%) or vandalism (54.1%), than for minor theft (28.5%)), and as shown here, by race, it is evident that association with males is somehow tied with many females becoming involved in delinquent acts. It is interesting, however, that this does not appear to represent a simple case of the girl adopting a passive role in going along with her boyfriend, as earlier depictions of the female criminal might lead to us predict.<sup>20</sup> This picture of the girl nega-

<sup>18</sup> Similar results for these and subsequent tests were also obtained when the social and institutional samples were computed separately.

<sup>19</sup> P. Giordano & S. Cernkovich, *supra* note 8.

<sup>20</sup> See, *e.g.*, NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH, THE CONTEMPORARY WOMAN AND CRIME

TABLE 2

*The Social Context in Which "Trouble" is Likely to Occur*

	White (N=91)*		Blacks (N=95)*	
	N	%	N	%
Group of girls	17	18.7	33	34.7
A group of guys and girls	25	27.5	21	22.1
A group of guys	28	30.8	15	15.8
One guy	5	5.5	10	10.5
One girlfriend	5	5.5		2.1
By self	8	8.8		12.6
	91		95	
	* 3.3% missing data		* 2.1% missing data	

tively influenced by the boy with whom she is romantically involved is challenged somewhat by the low percentage of both black and white respondents who felt that trouble would most likely occur with "one guy." Findings regarding the girls' perceptions of how significant others would react if they were involved in various delinquent acts further complicate this image.

#### *Changing Definitions of What is Acceptable Behavior for Adolescent Girls*

Table 3 presents the composite approval scores. This score represents the degree of approval or disapproval the girl thought she would receive from various reference groups if she were to engage in certain behavior. A comparison of the mean scores shows that, in both the white and black subsamples, the highest approval for engaging in these illegal activities came from other girlfriends. Looking at the other reference groups, girls making up the white subsample perceived the least amount of approval from their boyfriends. This lends additional evidence that these girls are not simply following the dictates of a lover when committing delinquent acts. The picture is, however, more complicated in the black subsample. The highest approval score again comes from other girls. However, while the mean approval is lower for the boyfriend ( $t = .33 \alpha < N.S.$ ), the gap between the reference groups is narrower. A computation of  $E^2$ <sup>21</sup> produced a value of 0.86 for the white subsample, 0.23 for the black subsample. This

statistic indicates that a much higher percentage of the variance in scores is accounted for by the degree of approval or disapproval from various reference groups in the white subsample as compared to the black subsample. This suggests, then, that the black girls in this sample did not differentiate as sharply between how male and female friends would view their behavior. Also, the meaning of the relatively higher approval score from the boyfriend should be interpreted with some caution, due to the very high variance in that category among black respondents ( $s^2 = 463.77$ ). This is contrasted with a variance on the girlfriend scales of 174.50, and 201.49 for the male friends scale. Thus, while there may be strong approval by *some* boyfriends, the high variance points to the existence of some girls within this group who perceived much less approval. It is hypothesized that at least some of the girls who thought the boyfriend would be approving may have been thinking of "pimps" when answering those items.

The correlation between the perception of approval from other reference groups and actual delinquency involvement is also presented in Table 3. There are significant correlations, for both black and white subsamples, between extent of approval from *other girlfriends* and actual participation in delinquency. There is also a significant correlation between perception of approval of male friends ( $r = .24 \alpha < .01$ ) and a weak but significant correlation between a boyfriend's approval and delinquency in the black subsample ( $r = .18, \alpha < .05$ ).

The findings regarding the relative importance of *female* approval are interesting, particularly when compared with the earlier findings (see Table 2) that females are quite likely to commit offenses within the context of mixed sex groups. At first this appears to be a contradiction; specifically, that where the whites were more likely to be with males, there does not appear in the white sample to be an important association between approval from males and actual participation in delinquent activity.

However, one possible interpretation of these results is that interaction with males, particularly in a non-romantic way, simply affords the most propitious environment in which girls will *learn* about as well as actually engage in delinquent acts. This does not have to mean that boys are coaxing them into this activity, or that approval from them is a necessary prerequisite. Just as the same sex peer group has offered a source of status and approval in the case of male delinquents, it appears that approval from other girlfriends will also ac-

(Public Health Service Pub. No. 161 1975), which suggests: "They have worked under the direction and guidance of men who have been their lovers, husbands, or pimps." *Id.* at 3-4.

<sup>21</sup> See H. BLALOCK, SOCIAL STATISTICS (2d ed. 1972).

TABLE 3

*Reference Group Support for Delinquency and Its Relationship to Actual Self-Reported Involvement (N = 191)*

	Mean Approval	Association With Delinquent Activity		Mean Approval	Association With Delinquent Activity	
	White	r	p	Blacks	r	p
Girls I hang around with	29.38	.33	.001	27.00	.29	.01
Guys I hang around with	26.97	.01	.42	24.74	.24	.01
Boyfriend	22.74	.02	.43	26.15	.18	.05

company a girl's decision to become involved in delinquent activity.

It could be argued that this approval would be an even greater necessity for girls since their behavior is not as much a part of an established tradition. Therefore, the girls who *do* become involved in delinquency would be likely to first feel that girls in general and themselves in particular are capable of committing certain behavior, that others *like them* (girls) also probably engage in it, and that these girls are not likely to regard them with disdain if they were to engage in that behavior themselves.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The findings from the present research, which point to an important link between friendship patterns and delinquent involvement, cast further doubt on the assumption that female delinquency represents some kind of personal maladaptation. Rather, for both the white and black subsamples, there was a significant association between group affiliation and self-reported delinquency. Especially in the case of white females, a closer examination of the actual makeup of such friendship networks suggests that groups which include both males and females were particularly conducive to delinquency. Due to the more established tradition of male participation in illegal acts it is likely that girls would, at least to some extent, be learning delinquent modes of behavior from males. This would be particularly important in instances in which there is some technical knowledge involved in committing the act. More research is needed on the particular ways in which association with males exerts this delinquent influence. The pattern

*appears* to be more complex than the notion that the boyfriend simply uses the female in an "accomplice" or other passive role while he commits the crime. One index of this is that "trouble" is likely to occur in *groups* which include both males and females. Also, further research should address the important racial differences suggested by this exploratory study; for example, in the black subsample there was a somewhat greater likelihood that "trouble" could involve a group of girls alone. This could represent a difference in the kinds of constraints which may have traditionally been placed on white as compared to black adolescent females. To the extent that the black female has had a longer tradition of independence and freedom of action than has her white counterpart, the less likely it seems that the black female would need to learn techniques, values and motives from "the guys."

Finally, while there were some differences in the social context of black and white participation in delinquency, it was found that for both subsamples the perception of approval from other girlfriends was significantly correlated with actual delinquency involvement. This suggests what may be a crucial element of change. While it is unlikely that girls are or will become immune to what the boys think of their behavior, it is likely that *other girls* are the most important reference group, or at least the group to which they compare themselves. This would be consistent with male subculture theories which have documented the important status-conferring, delinquency inducing influence of the same sex peer group. Girls appear to be no different in this respect.