

Pathways Into and Out of Offending for Girls

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Speakers:

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- Beginning of Recording -

Joshua Nederhood: 0:06

Hello, everybody. Thank you for joining us this morning. This is our first non-introductory webinar in this International Symposium on Girls in Conflict with the Law. Once again, my name is Joshua Nederhood. I am the Development & Programs officer at The Dui Hua Foundation. Before I pass things over to our moderator, Patricia Lee, I'm just going to briefly explain the format of today's event. We're going to hear 20-minute presentations from Dr. Gena Castro Rodriguez and Dr. Elizabeth Cauffman, and then Patricia Lee will moderate around a 20-minute question-and-answer session. So, at any point, if you have questions, feel free to submit them using the Q&A feature. As I mentioned, we are recording these talks. So, if you prefer to not have your name mentioned with your question, you can submit your question anonymously.

Just to let you know, this Symposium has been put on with the support of dedicated grants from The Canada Fund for Local Initiatives and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, as well as private donors, Alice Lam Memorial Fund, and Mark Hedley & Christina Pehl. Dui Hua also has grants going to support its core programs from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, SIDA the Swedish

International Development Agency, and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Our moderator today is Patricia Lee. She is the managing attorney of the San Francisco Public Defender's Juvenile Unit, and she's overseeing the closure of San Francisco's Juvenile Hall. So, without further ado, I'll pass things over to Patty now.

Patricia Lee: 1:58

Thank you, Josh. I want to thank our generous benefactors and the support crew of Dui Hua Foundation, Josh and his team, and the executive director, John Kamm, who I believe is part of the audience today. We're very excited to have you here for our very first webinar. We have had two introductory meetings, very well attended by folks throughout the world. Without further ado, I want to move quickly into the wonderful presentations by our two presenters, and this is a topic that has been near and dear to my heart. I do want to report that as of today for two days straight, in part of our Close Juvenile Hall work, we have no girls in custody with a total of 12 youths in custody. So, I do believe this is a good trend, and I wanted to introduce to you the wonderful Dr. Gena Castro-Rodriguez. She is also part of our committee to close juvenile hall, and Dr. Gena Castro-Rodriguez is the chief of Victim Services Division of the San Francisco District Attorney's Office where she oversees victim advocacy, mass casualty, restitution, and the California State Victims Compensation Program. So, Gena, we're very excited to have you on board this morning. Thank you.

Gina Castro-Rodriguez:

Thank you, Patty, and good morning, everyone. I'm honored to be on this panel with Dr. Cauffman and Patty Lee this morning, and I'm really happy to be talking about the work that we have done with girls involved in the delinquency and criminal justice system. It's been an issue I have been working in for 20 years, very close to my heart, and I really care about how we care for girls and young women. So, I'm happy to have this presentation today. Here are some of the things I'm going to cover. I'm going to talk a little bit about gendered violence and what

happens to girls and young women. I'm going to talk about abuse and how that can be a predictor of risk-taking and delinquent behavior. I'm going to talk about reactions that girls and young women engage in that are part of the trauma, but often seen as delinquent or criminal behavior. I'm going to talk about how the system responds and where the risk and the danger lies in that, and then just some special considerations, things that we have to pay attention to when we're dealing with girls and people that identify as girls or women. Slide.

So, first, this is not news to the audience here, but we have factors in society that contribute to violence against women. Sexism, gender roles contribute to violence against women, but also the acceptance of violence against women. Really interesting. I've been watching old movies with my daughter, and one of the things that she has been bringing up - she's 14 years old - is how common it was to have scenes that allude to rape or sexual assault or harassment of women and how the acceptance of that is beginning to change, but it's part of comedy. It's part of storyline. It's part of gender in our society, and that's dangerous for girls and women because it makes things acceptable and normalized when it's not. Next slide.

Girls are twice as likely to report having significant histories of trauma. In the late 90s, 1997, we had the ACE Study that was done by Kaiser and the CDC which gave us some of the first information that we have about how trauma in childhood or negative experiences, things like abuse or exposure to violence or family dysfunction, actually lead to long-term health problems and behaviors that put people at risk. So, now we know that girls are two times as likely to report multiple experiences like that in childhood, and that the more of those experiences they have, the higher risk they are for lots of things in their future, including types of cancer, heart disease, diabetes, risk for suicide and self-harm, substance abuse, even teen pregnancy. So, those experiences that they have in childhood that happened because they're not kept safe actually can cause lifelong harm for them.

I'm going to talk about two factors of abuse that we know that are related, and then I'm going to focus on sexual abuse because that's the one that we know is most highly correlated. So,

emotional abuse of a child leads to anger and irritability, depression, dissociation, eating disorders, trouble in relationships, even social phobias, and these young people often have difficulty identifying their feelings and have a really hard time predicting risk and defending themselves. When I'm working with young people who've experienced emotional abuse in childhood, chronic or severe emotional abuse, we're really trying to help them negotiate their relationships and how to protect themselves from other people so that they don't continue victimization, and we'll talk about that in a little bit. In kids who are victims of physical abuse, we see aggression and anger, violence, intimate partner violence, sexual perpetration, and criminal behavior, and those often come out of the frustration and the anger associated with physical violence. Slide.

The one we're going to focus on today is sexual abuse, because there's such a strong connection between sexual abuse for girls and individuals who identify as female and later risk-taking and delinquent behavior. So, it is the primary predictor of delinquency. Seventy percent of victims of sexual abuse in childhood are girls. Girls are four times more likely to be abused than boys. This does not mean that boys are not abused. It certainly happens, but we have a disproportionate amount for girls. Girls experience sexual violence at an earlier age and usually sustain that violence for longer. In some of the reactions we see from young people who experienced sexual abuse or that aggression or that frustration from being harmed, later substance use is often used to deal with some of the symptoms that they're experiencing from the trauma, like re-experiencing or having flashbacks or nightmares. We see self-harm behavior. Sometimes the abuse can numb people's feelings, and self-harm is a coping mechanism for that. We see risky sexual behavior, depression, anxiety. Unfortunately, right now we're seeing trends of depression and anxiety, even pre-pandemic, diagnosed as early as 11 now. We see self-destructive behavior, low self-esteem, and unfortunately, suicidality. Slide.

So, why this is really important is that there's a cycle to violence. It's not just the trauma or the event that happens during that abuse, but it's the pathway that leads to the risk for potential violent behavior, increased potential for criminal behavior, and unfortunately, increased risk for

re-victimization. So, what we really want to focus on is how we address the abuse in children, how we try to intervene and get young people to safe places, and how we treat that trauma so that we don't end up with this cycle. Right now, I am the chief of Victim Services in San Francisco, and we're doing a study on the correlation between trauma and polyvictims or people who have multiple victimization cases, and there's a really strong correlation for that. So, we really want to pay attention to what happens to young people, and how we intervene and treat. If we don't intervene, that abuse leads to risk-taking, re-victimization, and then it can even lead to delinquency or criminal behavior in the future. Slide.

There's an added layer to trauma when the trauma comes from people that were supposed to love and protect you, whether those are caregivers or friends or people that were in a caregiving role, like a teacher or a coach or a religious figure. There's a layer of betrayal that makes this trauma more complex, and the reason that this is really important is that it has a different effect on young people. As they develop and as they engage in the world and in relationships, it has a propensity to give them the inability to form and maintain healthy relationships, even to sometimes identify healthy relationships. It can make their behavior look erratic, difficult. Their interpersonal styles are hard to deal with. We're going to talk about why in a moment. Low fidelity in relationships. Often, in relationships where there's more chaos, there's more violence. There's more dysfunction than someone who has not had that experience, and their capacity for violence and love in relationships has increased because they have been shown and modeled experiences where love and pain or trauma has been intertwined, and they are more familiar with those relationships as they move into their own peer and romantic relationships. Slide.

So, it's important. We're not going to focus on neurobiology today, but it just is important to note that the ages of somewhere around 11 to 24, the brain is continuing to develop, and the reason that's really important is to speak to access and capacity for young people. So, as the brain develops, the area that is continuing to develop into our early- to mid-20s is the prefrontal cortex, and that's the front of the brain that really controls our executive

functioning. The important pieces for us to remember here that these are things that help us to function as adults, but they're still in development for young people. So, the ability to control impulses, the ability to foresee a consequence and to weigh those consequences, the ability to temper your emotions or your reactions, the overvalue of the reward center of the brain which actually even causes young people to move towards things that feel good and move away from things that don't feel good for them, and then the undervaluing of risk evaluation in decision-making. So, I mean, I'm sure that you remember this as a young person that taking risks at that time that you might not take today as an adult is just part of that brain continuing to develop.

We also think about the center of the brain, the limbic system of the brain that responds and helps us process emotion, and the amygdala is still in development during adolescent. This is the area that with time will help us learn to control and manage our emotions, but right now, it is affecting our emotional regulation. Young people that are adolescents and young adults are often experiencing things, feeling emotions, and reacting because the process is not yet connected with the front of the brain where all of those decision-making processes are. So, they often feel and react before they think things through. It's all just part of regular development and that will improve over time, but that's where they are right now.

Then the last one we want to talk about is the hippocampus, which has a primary function of managing and helping us process memories and store memories, but it's also involved in us managing stress. So, when the hippocampus is affected by trauma, young people find that they are unable to manage stress as they will be later in life or as they would be if they hadn't experienced that trauma. It can inhibit their memory formulation, including having memories get stuck which is one of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress or other stress reactions, and the ability to cope with that stress. So, part of coping with stress is neurological, and part of coping with stress is sociological. So, it's how they see other people deal with stress. So, they're learning to cope with that, and it's still in development for them. That's the important thing that I want to say about brain development. It's in development. They're just not there yet.

Slide.

So, some of the protective reactions. This is really important for us to note that young women and girls express their trauma with reactions that sometimes look negative or defiant or dysfunctional, risky, delinquent, and really they're meant to protect them. So, anger, aggression, being confrontational, being defiant, that's all meant to help them stave off future victimization. It's really meant to push people away from them so that the potential for people to harm them decreases, but we see those behaviors and we react to them rather than understanding them. Slide.

Trauma in childhood really affects a person's worldview, and your worldview is developing when you're a child, when you're an adolescent, when you're a young adult, and that worldview is going to stay with you throughout your lifetime. So, it affects your sense of self, your beliefs about safety, trust, value, your own value. It affects your view of others, the potential for people to harm you, the capacity for love and pain to be entwined, the ability to assess risk and take care of yourself, and then it also makes the world seem like a less safe, less fair, and more dangerous place. When we're in a state of feeling unsafe and unfair, we react differently. We are in a more defensive stance, and that's how young people often are because they don't know what's going to happen next, and they can't control it.

When young people express their reactions to trauma, sometimes that looks like violence. One of the big things that we see is domestic violence, conflict within the home. Young women are often incarcerated for that. Even when there's mutual combat in a home, they are the ones that take the brunt of the responsibility for it. Offenses like running away or truancy or substance use, those are reactions to trauma. Those are young people using the tools they have to manage the symptoms that they're feeling from the trauma. There's also survival crimes, things that they do in order to take care of themselves when they are left without adequate or safe supervision, theft, selling drugs, using drugs, joining gangs. Then the last point I just want to make briefly is that human trafficking or sometimes referred to in other places as

prostitution - I refer to it as exploitation - is really highly correlated with child sex abuse, and there's an over-representation of girls of color. Slide.

Unfortunately, our delinquency system is one of the worst places for young people who've experienced trauma. We tend to have young people that have high need and low risk to public safety, yet we use the most restrictive mechanisms to support them. Young women engage in criminal or risk-taking behavior for, with, or because of other people. Very different than young men. So, we know that their motivation for criminal behavior is relational. They're often overcriminalized for their behaviors. They're overrepresented in low-status offenses. We look to them at a higher standard, often protecting them because of their gender. Incarceration itself is traumatizing and re-victimizing. We know that young people are victimized in detention facilities, and then engaging them in these systems widens the net and keeps them kind of cycling out of this system for a long time, and we'll see a lot of chronic involvement with low-level, non-public-safety offenses until they eventually age out of the system. Slide.

Just some special considerations that we're not going to have the time to touch on today, but we're really looking at the intersection of race, class, and gender. We're looking at the experience of LGBTQ identified youth and their high risk for both the violence and sexual abuse, and then running away, their reaction to abuse because of what's happening in their home or their parental rejection. Then we want to think about girls of color that in the United States are overrepresented for African American, Latina, and native American girls, and how we're overusing incarceration as a treatment strategy, instead of treating the trauma that these young people have been exposed to and experienced. Slide.

These are just some references, materials to look at that speak to some of the studies and the research that I've referenced today, and then my contact information at the end, and I'm open to questions at the end of our presentation. Thank you very much.

19:38

Patricia Lee:

Thank you, Gena. Now, I'm very excited and very delighted to introduce a colleague of mine, and that is Dr. Elizabeth Cauffman. She is Professor of Psychological Science, Education and Law, Director for the Center for Psychology and Law, and Director and master in Legal and Forensic Psychology, University of California, Irvine. Boy, this is a mouthful. Beth, you are so accomplished, and we're very, very excited to have you on board. As many folks know, Beth is an expert on girls and has produced probably the most far-reaching research in the field. So, Beth, it's all yours. Thank you.

Elizabeth Cauffman:

Well, thank you, and I'm very honored to be here. I mean, Patty and I go all the way back to the MacArthur Foundation Network together. So, it's nice to be doing something together again, Patty. Gena, your presentation was fabulous. It was perfect, and you set me up wonderfully. So, I get the easy part, which is really about, we know girls are important. We know that women and understanding their needs is important, and in fact, even TV shows are now being made about women in the system. I mean, for those of you who watched Orange Is the New Black, well, it's supposed to be a comedy, but it really does raise a lot of the important issues that many of the women in the system face and things that we should be thinking about, and this is why it's so important to start thinking more about women. Because when we look at the FBI Uniform Crime Report, if you look at the trajectories of offending, you'll see, for instance, this comes from the FBI Uniform Crime Report with people starting at the age of 10, up until their 60s, with higher scores meaning more arrests. You see the age crime curve with crime peaking around 18, 19, 20 for boys. I have boys in blue and then for the girls in pink. We see the same developmental curve, the same developmental trajectory, just a lower base rate.

With these developmental patterns, and I think as Gena rightly pointed out, based on the way in which the brain develops, the way in which adolescents grow out of crime, it really shows

how criminal behavior transitions over time and the path that it follows. So, this gets into the question, and what really, I think, a lot of people have been trying to tackle is, well, what is an adolescent-limited versus life-course-persistent offender among females. So, adolescent-limited means you peak during those adolescent years and then stop versus who's going to continue, who's going to continue offending and why. Now, there's mixed evidence that there's even a life-course-persistent female, that women even continue long-term, and we know very little about, even if they do continue, why. So, this is the kind of research and things that people have been focused on to better understand the mechanisms and drives of what's happening.

A lot of work that first started was really looking at the onset, who gets into criminal behavior, and there was some suggestion that this occurs later for girls, that girls actually start their criminal careers later, but there's mixed evidence on that. So, the evidence on girls and understanding their pathways, the trajectories they follow, what criminal patterns look like for girls has been really sort of an exploration that we've been doing in the field. So, this is really where my work started, and what we started out doing was just looking at the risk factors of who got into crime, and I'm going to throw up a big slide really fast, but what I want you to take away is they're really the same. If you look at boys and girls together for risk factors, whether it's biological risk factors like cortisol or resting heart rate, whether it's emotional factors like mental health or empathy, or whether it's interpersonal relationships like parental monitoring, they're true for both boys and girls. I have the ones in bold in the middle of those that tend to be slightly higher risk factors for girls, but that doesn't mean that they're not for boys.

When you start to tease apart, the only studies we were able to find was, for instance, for boys, in particular the amygdala, the fight or flight response tended to be stronger for boys. They tend to have that more evolutionary pull of fight or flight and the genotype of the MAOA genotype. That seemed to be more unique for boys. For girls, those adversarial interpersonal relationships, and I'm going to show you data on that in a little bit, as well as some EEG brain asymmetries versus the right frontal activation is greater than the left frontal activation, but other than that, boys and girls really share the same risk factors.

So, how do we better understand what's going on for girls? How can we better design our treatments, our programs, our responses to them? Well, that's where this study came in. The goal of the study was really to look at whether these pathways were similar among males and females. Looking at their criminal behavior, do girls and boys follow those same criminal trajectories? Do we see the same patterns of offending? And if we do, what are the risk factors for those who continue? What are the risk factors for those who stay engaged in criminal behavior so that we can identify those risk factors and then put better treatments in place, and are those the same risk factors for boys?

So, that's really where a lot of our work came from and where we started when we started to really ask these questions, and to do that, we used a study called Pathways to Desistance. Desistance means to stop. We wanted to see. Do any kids stop offending? It was a study of over 1,300 youths who had committed very serious felony-level offenses, and about 14% of that sample were females. So, this is the largest sample of really serious female offenders where we were able to compare them to males, and as you'll notice, it's disproportionately youth of color, which is a reflection of the overrepresentation of youth of color in our system and some of the racial bias that we see within our system.

We did recruitment in two locations. This was done in both Philadelphia and in Phoenix, and you had to be 14 to 17 years of age at the time of your arrest and adjudicated of a felony offense to get into our study. So, we started with these youths when they were 14 to 17, and we followed them for seven years. So, we followed them up until 21, and some of our kids even turned 25 by the time we finished their interviews. They were interviewed for the first six months, for the first three years, and then the remaining four years thereafter. So, we followed these youths to really better understand who's continuing to offend, and who's stopping and why.

To give you an idea of who got into this study, let me just show you their offending behavior. For instance, almost half, 40% of the girls were in there for a person offense. That means some sort of a violent offense, a person type of crime where a bodily action was taken against somebody else, and that was roughly the same for the boys. We had roughly fewer girls committing property crimes compared to the boys. Weapons was about the same. Sex charges, we had slightly more for males. Drug charges were slightly higher for the females, and then procedurally, some of the charges like terroristic threats or things of that felony level were similar for males and females. So, this just gives you an idea of the types of crimes we're talking about, aggravated assault, robbery, property crimes, drug crimes, weapons charges. These were kids who were committing very serious offenses, and the goal was to see. Do any of these kids ever stop offending? And if they do, why? Who persists and what predicts that, and are these patterns the same for males and females?

So, that's where we started and we had to match our samples because we only had 184 girls, and we needed to make sure that those 184 girls had a good match. By the end of the day, when we matched on a variety of characteristics like age, race, committed offense, etcetera, we had 172 females and 171 males who were perfectly matched on a variety of characteristics so that it gave us the confidence that we were actually matching youths on the same criteria to better identify similar and differences between these pathways.

Just to give you a quick idea of their descriptives, their age when they first self-reported their own delinquency, like when did you first get in trouble with the law, girls said on average they got in trouble when they were about 10 years old and boys said about nine years old. There was no statistical difference here. So, they're getting in trouble at roughly the same time, and they're getting in trouble before the age of 13, which we know is a big risk factor for continued behavior in criminal behavior. So, they are starting very young. Their age at first petition to the court, that is when did they get their first petition filed against them, was roughly 14 and a half years of age. Again, no difference between the boys and the girls and when their first petition was filed. When we looked at their priors, the girls had about one and a half, and the boys had

two and a half priors. Again, no statistical significance here, but slightly higher with the males, but not statistically so. The only difference we found in terms of how males and females differed in our study was really how they were sentenced, and in fact, 16% of our young men were transferred to the criminal court system. Whereas, only 7% of our young women were transferred. So, we saw a little bit more punitive response to the males than we did to the females.

So, to break this down and to see if we can answer our question, could we actually identify any young women who continue or persist in criminal offending? So, following our youths starting at age 15, up until 25, higher scores here mean more criminal behavior. The first thing you should notice is that developmentally, over time, all criminal behavior among girls goes down. The same is true among the males. They're just committing crimes at a higher base rate than females. Again, it goes back to that age crime curve. Boys commit more, but they follow the same pathways. So, this is the first, I think, biggest important piece to know, that girls and boys, as they get older, both desist. Criminal behavior developmentally goes down over time. I always say that we basically grow up and grow out of crime. Most criminal behavior, even among kids who committed very serious offenses, the majority of them stopped.

So, let's break this down further. Can we identify different pathways within these groups? So, to start this, again starting at age 14, up until age 25, higher scores mean more offending behavior, and just looking at the girls, only the girls, the first thing we notice is about 40%. We call them the low group. About 40% of the group started committing crime at a young age and then never did another crime again. They completely desisted. Realize that's almost half of the kids, and these are kids - I showed you their offenses, robbery, aggravated assault, some sort of person offense, drug charges, weapon charges. These were felony-level offenses, and yet almost half of them, by the time they reached young adulthood, had stopped. We did have another group. We call them the early desister group. They started at a much higher rate, but by the time they got to their 20s, they also desisted. 31:32 Our next group is what we call our moderate group. They persisted for a while at a low level, but by the time they reached their

20s, again desisted. 31:42 The late persister group, this is another group starting very high. These were girls engaged in a lot of criminal behavior. By the time they reached their late 20s, they have desisted. We did, however, have a group of girls who persisted, only about 7%. So, a very low base rate of these young women continue persisting into adulthood.

So, there are two big takeaways from this finding. The first big takeaway is that the majority of youths, even girls who commit very serious offenses desist by the time they reach their late 20s. This follows with the brain development Gena was talking about earlier. It falls in line with growing up and growing that sense of identity and maturity, growing that impulse control, all of those pieces. The second big takeaway from this is that there's not just one pathway. This notion that "if you see the crime, you can determine the behavior" is not true. Different girls follow different paths, and it's important to know why, so that we can better understand what treatments we can put into place.

Now, of course, the thing that everybody always asked me is, well, how does this compare to the boys? Because when we ever talk about girls, well, what do boys look like? Well, let me show you really quickly because we did the same thing with the boys so that we would have that comparison. As expected and as we found, we found that the low desistance group had stopped right away. We had a very early desister group who started very high, but again desisted into their 20s. That moderate group that continued for a low base rate, but again desisted. A late desister group that did desist, but very late into their 20s, and then about 14% of our boys persisted into adulthood.

So, just to kind of put this side-by-side for you so that you can see them together, here's what the female trajectory patterns look like, and here's what the male trajectory patterns look like. Males, again, just tend to be at a higher base rate with slightly more males persisting into adulthood than females. So, the same big findings that are the takeaways, majority of youths will desist into adulthood, but there's a lot of heterogeneity and variability in criminal offending and patterns. So, what predicts those desisters from those persisters? What predicts that

persistence? What predicts those people who don't stop, and can we design better treatments to address their needs?

First off, it wasn't age. So, the age when they started, age of their offending had no differential predictive effects. It wasn't their priors either or their neurological functioning. We did do psychopathy assessments and did find that the desisters were less likely to exhibit psychopathic-type traits, those antisocial, callous, and emotional characteristics. So, those who were able to express more empathy and care for others were more likely to desist compared to those who were more antisocial, more psychopathic, more callous, those were more likely to persist. Perceptions of the law, how cynical you feel about the law, did not have an effect. Neighborhood disorder did not have an effect, and victimization did have an effect. That is girls who were more than likely to be victimized. I think this is really important with what Gena was talking about in her presentation, that victimization, and in particular, that betrayal they may feel from the person who has done [it], seems to be a very prominent predictor for females for staying in the system and for staying in criminal behavior.

Mental health diagnosis, again, was a big predictor, and again, this follows very nicely with what Gena presented on the risk factors of what girls are at risk for and then why they may persist. Impulse control didn't reach significance, but perspective did, their ability to think long-term. They had less ability to think long-term if they persisted into adulthood. Parental factors did not have an effect, like having a hostile mother, but we did find that peers, these interpersonal relationships, if your peers were antisocial or if your peers were negative, you were more likely to persist.

Many people have shown that women tend to date older men, and in fact, in our sample, girls on average were dating people about two years their senior, but that the age difference is not what was driving the behavior for these young women in persisting in their criminal behavior. In fact, one of the best predictors of that persistence was that their romantic partner was engaged in antisocial behavior or was influencing them to be antisocial. Again, going back to

these interpersonal relationships. In fact, in another study that we did - which we of course had to use a Lady Gaga song for, caught in a bad romance, because you have to make some science at least interesting and fun here - we actually studied deviant partner relationships. What we wanted to see was if you're dating somebody who's doing bad things, what influence does that have on you?

So, these were the girls. Again, these higher scores mean more offending behavior. If girls were dating a romantic partner who was deviant, they kept right on doing their own delinquent behavior. So, they did not change their delinquent behavior, and if they had a deviant partner, they continued, but if they didn't have a deviant partner, if their partner was prosocial and positive, it actually reduced their offending. So, we actually see a decline in their negative and delinquent behavior. So, of course, how does this compare to males? Interestingly, if males are dating a girl who is very antisocial, they're very influenced when they're younger. You'll notice. I always say to my husband, "Nag, nag, nag." [Laughter] Women just don't necessarily have that same influence when they get older, and it was really interesting to see this developmental phenomenon. Men, while still at a higher base rate, were less influenced by those partners. Compared to a partner who is non-deviant, we see very little change in the behavior that the female didn't have as much of an impact, but just at a lower base rate. It did keep them reduced, but just not to a point of zero.

So, we pushed this just a little bit further. Well, what if you're in a long-term relationship versus a short-term relationship, or what if it's just influencing you? Not even the partner being deviant, just them influencing you to be deviant. So, what we found here, again with our 15 to 20 five-year-olds, higher scores mean more offending behavior. If a girl is in a long-term relationship and her partner is highly antisocially influencing her, over time, that partner influences her and increases her behavior in delinquency. So, remember, when I first showed you, everybody was declining in offending, but if I'm dating somebody long-term who is influencing me to be antisocial, it will actually increase my offending. Whereas, if I'm dating somebody who isn't influencing me to be antisocial, it will decrease. The same thing is true

whether it's a short-term or a long-term relationship, the same phenomenon. Whether it's short-term or long-term, if I'm dating somebody who is influencing me to be antisocial, it will keep me engaged in crime. Girls are very susceptible to that interpersonal connection. Males, we see, even if the partner is high in antisocial influence, over time, they will decline. The same is true if they're in a low partner antisocial behavior, they've reduced their crime. It's a lower base rate, but again, still lower behavior, and it's short- or long-term where the most influences for males interpersonally is when they're young adolescents, but over time, women actually are good for males. They decrease crime, but antisocial men are bad for girls, and in fact, these interpersonal relationships are key.

So, a quick summary. Female offending, in general, begins at the same time as male offending. We're seeing these same patterns. There's a lot of variability. One size does not fit all. Girls follow different pathways. While they exhibit similar pathways to males, that level of severity is different between males and females. There are several risk factors that predict this persistent offending pattern. There are psychological components of mental health, callous and emotional traits, that ability to think long-term. Their rates of trauma and victimization are key in keeping them engaged. So, this is something that definitely needs to be addressed, and ultimately, the susceptibility and influence of these interpersonal relationships. Girls are relational, and these relationships have a big effect on their behavior. So, if we want to really change things, these romantic partners with negative influence are most likely keeping these young women engaged. So, helping women transition out of negative or destructive relationships may be a big key in turning treatment around.

So, what does this mean? We do need to have our treatments tailored for girls, as well as for boys, making sure we know where their needs are and what things are being met at the different developmental time points. Ultimately, one of the biggest focuses I've taken away from the work I've done with young women is that relationships really matter and how can we create, promote, and engage with more positive relationship treatment so that we can get girls

back on track and back onto the right course. So, with that, I thank you. I'm delighted to be here and I look forward to your questions, and I'll leave it over to Patty now.

Patricia Lee:

Thank you, Beth. That was wonderful. For our audience, if you're interested in the sides, the slides, informational materials, and abstracts that have been submitted to Dui Hua will be on their website. So, I invite you to review those. We do have a question, and it's either to Beth or to Gena, from Rebecca. She'd love to hear from you. If we look at the global community, are there any systems or responses to girls in conflict with the law in other countries that get it right or more right? And if so, what are the most fundamental differences in approach and responses compared to what we see in the United States?

Elizabeth Cauffman:

Well, that's a great question that I don't have necessarily the best answer to, but there is an amazing program in Denmark that, right now, what they have done is there's no institutionalization of anyone. Even people who have committed murder, they are actually housed in houses with their own living arrangements. So, they live there, but then they have to go to work during the day, but they have to go back home to this place that they live, and they're responsible for cooking their own food, for cleaning up after themselves, for taking care of themselves. They're living as they would if they were in their own home, but they are in an incarcerated setting in the sense that they've been removed from their families, in the sense that they have to live in this place and do all the programming, but they have to go to work every day and still contribute to society. In fact, the rate of length of incarceration, I think its maximum was like two to five years in that, and this was true for both the men and the women, which has really shown that by giving agency, by giving engagement, by giving them opportunity to be more prosocial in their own action and being responsible to be a contributing member to society, and giving them that scaffolding, you're actually seeing a better outcome.

So, right now, Denmark is sort of my hotspot of where I've been looking at things that are creative, of thinking outside the box.

In terms of youth programs and in terms of juvenile justice in particular, we do know that institutional settings, and in fact, research that we've done using the Pathways to Desistance Study, the more you incarcerate somebody, the actual lower their emotional development is. So, realize, as kids get older, they're supposed to develop impulse control, the ability to think long-term, all these things. Incarceration actually has the exact opposite effect, and if you think about it, it's because we tell kids when to wake up, what to do every day. If they make a mistake, they get in trouble. Developmentally, we have taken away everything developmentally they're supposed to do. So, our research has shown that incarceration settings, particularly secured confinement, actually arrests development, and it doesn't promote it. So, is that unique to boys and girls? No. We find the same phenomenon for both. The more you can give agency, the more you can give more positive structure, the more you can scaffold a positive outcome, the better outcome long-term for everybody and a better outcome in terms of community safety. You see less reoffending.

Patricia Lee:

Thank you, Beth. This one is for Gena. Is bullying in school a factor in the pathway to offending? Is there any evidence of that, Dr. Castro-Rodriguez?

Gena Castro-Rodriguez:

Of all the research I've done, including the research for my dissertation, bullying doesn't have a direct link to delinquent or risk-taking behavior, but what we do see is that connection between early victimization in a child's home, the physical abuse, sexual abuse, or emotional abuse, are putting them at risk for future victimization and other relationships like peer relationships or romantic relationships. So, in my dissertation study, I asked about bullying, and very interesting.

The young women that I interviewed said that they were first bullied and re-victimized because they had all experienced sexual and physical abuse in their childhood, and then their reactions to that sometimes became aggressive or violent, but that they experienced being bullied first, and then they reacted to that. So, we don't see a direct correlation between bullying and delinquent behavior.

Patricia Lee:

Thank you, Gena. Is there data on transgender youth and their entry into the juvenile justice system? I direct that to either of our experts here.

Gena Castro-Rodriguez:

So, the research that I've read and studied shows that they have a similar trajectory. They have similar risks and similar trajectory. Just higher rates of abuse and risk of being abused, and therefore, higher levels of reaction and interaction with the delinquency system.

Elizabeth Cauffman:

Yes. Gena is 100% right. The Prison Rape Elimination Act, PREA, has really worked toward dealing with transgender youth, and I think the fact that they exhibit the same thing, just at higher base rates than what's going on.

Patricia Lee:

This is from Judge Len Edwards who is also an expert on juvenile justice. Why do you think that we in the United States are so addicted to jailing people for antisocial conduct? I would direct that in reference to girls and boys. He notes, as we all know, we jail more people than any country in the world, and then I do believe that is true.

Elizabeth Cauffman:

Len, you're 100% correct. We are a retributive society. I mean, if you follow and go back, the juvenile court wasn't formed until what, 1899, right? One of my favorite laws comes from 1620, the stubborn child law. This was in Massachusetts, and this law said that if your child was stubborn or obstinate, parents could actually ask the court to have their child executed. No child was actually executed under the 1620 stubborn child law, but if you look at the history of where, how our country was formed, our approach, we are a punishment, retributive-focused group. Getting people to think about change, restoration to rehabilitation is a big shift, and I think the pendulum swings so many times. We go back and forth. It's really hard, I think, sometimes when we see heinous crimes. We feel the need to be punished rather than to try to forgive. For people who work with victims, there are victims out there, and their needs also need to be met. So, finding that balance, we're just not as good at doing that yet, and I think that's based on the foundation of how our laws originally were founded.

Gena Castro-Rodriguez: 49:20

I think we have to have a cultural shift to show that it matters why people engage in certain behaviors, and if we don't understand the why, then we don't improve public safety, we don't change that experience for people, and we don't make that better. When I have worked in the delinquency system, and I worked there for 10 years, people don't ask why kids are angry, why they are not at home, why they are engaging in risky behavior. If we don't do that, how will we help them get to a safer place so that they don't have to engage in those behaviors? The why is really important. If we just think punishing stops it, we're just going down the wrong track because there's a reason that young people take those kinds of risks. There's a reason that they put themselves in really difficult situations. It's because what has happened to them is even more difficult and challenging.

Patricia Lee:

I think this is a good segue into our next question, which is when judges consider dispositional options for girls at risk of sexual violence or trafficking and who are considered runners from placement or from home, they often favor secure confinement for her own good. What advice do you have for attorneys practicing in the delinquency system to be able to push back against this narrative?

Gena Castro-Rodriguez:

I think we need to improve treatment options for young people so that they build safety and learn how to read warning signs and red flags, be able to take care of themselves, and have other options other than running. So, if the treatment and the options were better, then young people wouldn't have to run away from them, and instead, we focus on how young people failed treatment rather than how the treatment is failing young people. So, we just have to do a much better job. We've talked today about how relational girls and young women are, and those relationships are really important in treatment. So, having consistency, having accountability, having things that are responsive to what young people need is very important.

Elizabeth Cauffman:

Yes. Gena is 100% correct. I mean, one of the things that we know is understanding the why. Most of the time, people just look at she has run, but not why she has run. It's always about her fault or the kid's fault, or they have failed when, as a result, we as the adults, we just haven't done a good job at figuring out how to solve the problem. So, it's not whether you hold a kid accountable, it's how, and we need to change the how. So, as an attorney, if you're dealing with this, pushing back on the court to say, "Look. Why is she running, and what is the reason she's running? She could be running for a very good reason. She could be being abused in that home. She could be having a hard time. I mean, something might not be right in that home." So,

understanding the mechanism of the why gives you some power to go back and go, “Okay. We need to change the course. We need to change our behavior. Not her. We need to figure out what works for her.”

Patricia Lee: 52:26

Thank you. This is for Dr. Rodriguez. Are there any environmental factors that contribute to young girls’ influence into deviant behaviors? If so, what can the parents or caregivers do to prevent this?

Gena Castro-Rodriguez:

The highest correlation, as I spoke to, is sexual abuse, not feeling safe at home, not being protected at home, and sometimes that’s willful, and sometimes it’s not. Sometimes parents are not able to keep young people safe, but it’s how they deal with a traumatic experience for a child that makes a big difference, right? I talked about that layer of betrayal. So, that’s a caregiver who didn’t keep their young person safe or caused the harm to their young person. So, the first thing is to do as much as we can to help young people be safe and protected, as they should be. The second thing is how we deal with it when young people have not been kept safe, how do we help them understand that things were not their fault, that something happened to them, and then how to recover from that, how to heal and recover from that, and to get the support that they need. The last thing is I spent a lot of time with adults in treatment, clinically, helping women learn how to read danger signs, how to see red flags, and how to protect themselves in relationships, and we need to do a much better job helping young people, helping young women feel empowered to have their own voice, to have their own boundaries, to protect themselves from other people so that that’s a lifelong experience for them when they’re at risk.

Patricia Lee:

Thank you, Gena. How does parental criminal activity impact the lives of their children and their respective future involvement in criminal activity? Could we further explore that link? Has there been research on that, and how likely is it that a child with one or both parents involved in a criminal activity will also be involved?

Elizabeth Cauffman: 54:39

Oh, this is the one question I never like because it's always like the sins of the father, right? You would hate to - we do know that there is a relation between familial criminal activity and kids going on into criminal behavior. That said, it's not a causal factor, and I really want to make sure we disentangle correlation from causation because it's not a causal factor. It's a risk factor, just like any other type of risk factor you may have, and we want to be careful not to judge somebody because of something their parents have done. It just puts them more at risk. So, if you think of it more as a risk factor, yes, it puts a young person at risk. Is it a determinant factor? No. So, I think that's something we have to just be very careful thinking about because it is something that we know, interpersonally, relationships matter. We know how those things play out. So, giving people supports and resources when that's an issue will be really even more important.

Patricia Lee: 55:40

Thank you, Beth. I have a question for Beth. Is race a factor in predicting persistent offending in females or males, based on your research?

Elizabeth Cauffman:

Great question. Based on our research and based on what we found with the Pathways to Desistance Study, we did not find any race effects. So, there was no one race that was more

likely to persist or desist or follow different criminal pathways, which I think is important because I think, given the overrepresentation of youth of color in our system and the biases that have come into our system, it is really important for people to know that these racial biases are happening because of systemic problems in the system and not because of kids and their backgrounds.

Patricia Lee:

Based on your longitudinal research and Pathways to Desistance, Beth, did you find that many of the youth that were girls or boys were engaged in criminal behaviors had child welfare involvement?

Elizabeth Cauffman:

That's a great question. So, yes and no. We actually did a little poll on that to see. We didn't have great child welfare records for Pathways, so that was hard to determine. We did have some, and what's important to note - so, retrospectively a lot of our kids may have had involvement in the child welfare system at some way, whether it was just a call to full involvement, to removal from the home. I want to be very careful with that statement because being involved in the child welfare system does not mean you're going to become delinquent, but if you are delinquent, there is a connection of likely having had some contact with child welfare. So, I want to make sure that we're not saying kids in the child welfare system are doomed to become delinquent because that's not true, but understanding that kids who do come into the system, particularly the deep end of the system, they likely have touched the child welfare system at some point, but that goes to maybe their history and it's more correlated with their history of victimization, their history of trauma, their history. So, it's not that. It's who comes before. That's really what's going, and it's really the trauma that's happening there.

Patricia Lee: 58:05

Thank you. So we're at the end of our presentations. It has been very, very informative. I've learned so much. I want to thank our presenters. Beth and Gena, thank you so much for spending your morning with us, and I want to thank the audience for attending as well and being as engaged as you have been. Big thanks to Josh, of course, and the team in Dui Hua for sponsoring all of this wonderful work. We will have future webinars. It will be on our Dui Hua website. I don't know if we could pull that up in terms of our future presentations. Josh, do you have any closing comments? I thank you all for being present today. It was very, very informative.

Joshua Nederhood:

Yes. Thank you so much for your excellent job moderating, Patty. So, thank you all again so much for today's event. I've just posted in the chat that our next webinar will be on December 14 at 8:00 AM Pacific Time. It'll be Voices from Africa and the Middle East featuring Taghreed Jaber from Penal Reform International based in Jordan and Ann Skelton in South Africa. So, a very international event in our international symposium. With that, I think we're ready to conclude today's meeting. Thank you all so much again.

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