

Police contact during adolescence can delay female psychosocial maturation

Over the past 30 years, the rate of female juvenile arrests in the USA has almost doubled. Despite this rapid increase, most research into juvenile delinquency has primarily focused on males. To determine some of the driving factors of female juvenile delinquency, Alison Hipwell and colleagues assessed the number of police contacts and arrests, and levels of self-control, personal responsibility and delinquency annually from age 12 to 17 years in a population sample of 2,450 girls enrolled in the Pittsburgh Girls Study. At age 12, 5.3% girls had been involved in illegal activity; this rate peaked at 12.3% at age 15 years. Interestingly, the levels of self control and personal responsibility at age 12 were lower in those who had had police contact than those without police contact. Regression analysis found that year-to-year increases in self-control or personal responsibility predicted a reduced likelihood of police contact. In the reverse association, an instance of police contact or arrest predicted decreases in self-control and personal responsibility in the following year. These data suggest for the first time, that police contact and/or police arrests

may be associated with delayed adolescent psychosocial maturation in girls. The researchers propose that programs that support growth in self-control and responsibility in girls will help prevent future justice system involvement.

Referring to:

Hipwell, A.E., Beene, J., Ye, F., Gebreselassie, S.H., Stalter, M.R., Ganesh, D., Keenan, K. & Stepp, S.D. (2018), Police contacts, arrests and decreasing self-control and personal responsibility among female adolescents. *J Child Psychol Psychiatr.* doi:10.1111/jcpp.12914

Glossary:

Regression analysis: a statistical method to model the relationship between a dependent (response) variable and one or more independent (predictor) variables.

