

# Juvenile Female Arrests: A Holistic Explanation of Organization Functioning

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**ABSTRACT.** This paper elaborates on feminist theory using Emerson's (1983) notion of holistic effects. We propose that the processing of juvenile female status offenders may vary systematically with the level of sex crimes in a community. This hypothesis is tested using a time series analysis of monthly status arrests in a Midwestern city. Our models indicate a significant increase in female status arrests at one "intervention" point, but no changes were found for male status arrest levels. We conclude that heterogeneity of processing of female offenders within single jurisdictions is an important avenue for future theoretical and empirical exploration. [Article copies available for a fee from *The Haworth Document Delivery Service*: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2003 by *The Haworth Press, Inc.* All rights reserved.]

**KEYWORDS.** Status offenders, feminist theory, policing and juveniles

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Consonant with conflict theory, criminal justice research has long focused on how citizen characteristics affect the likelihood of arrest (Smith, Visher, & Davidson, 1984). Feminist theory focuses on gender as a unique characteristic that may influence how criminal justice agencies process individuals (e.g., Visher, 1983, regarding arrest). This paper explores feminist theory as ripe for elaboration using Emerson's (1983) idea of "holistic" approaches to explaining processing. Below, we argue that searching for heterogeneity of processing within organizations, over time, is an important step for refining the predictions of feminist theory. Using this framework we concentrate on one possible external influence on criminal justice agencies, the level of sex crimes in a community, as conditioning how bureaucracies may change the processing of juvenile female status offenders.

## ***THEORY***

### ***Feminist Criminology***

In the study of crime and delinquency, various contributions have been made by the feminist tradition. Approaches to studying female crime are based upon the recognition that traditional theories capture the experience of males and do not readily apply to females (Chesney-Lind, 2001). In its development, feminist criminology has focused on the *etiology* of female offending and on the *treatment* of females in the criminal justice system (Haney, 2000). This paper is concerned with the latter; that is, we seek to utilize findings within feminist criminology to understand the treatment of females in the juvenile justice system. At the same time, we hope to expand that work through the inclusion of contextual organizational factors to provide a holistic perspective of the female experience in the criminal justice system.

In characterizing the treatment of women in the criminal justice system, Belknap and Holsinger (1998) describe hypotheses offered by feminist criminology. First, the equal treatment hypothesis has been posited which suggests that females are treated similarly to males by criminal justice agents. A second hypothesis characterizes the treatment of females as more lenient than males. The lenient treatment of women is cited by some scholars as evidence of chivalry or paternalism; in an effort to revere and protect women, agencies in a male-dominated system of social control treat women with greater leniency than males. A third hypothesis identifies the treatment of women as more severe than

that of their male counterparts. Also known as the “evil woman” hypothesis, this perspective suggests that criminal behavior is uncharacteristic of the traditional female role. In an effort to control the “evil woman” and curb inappropriate behavior, women are ultimately treated more harshly than males (Belknap & Holsinger, 1998).

Studies that empirically examine the treatment of women in the criminal justice system find evidence of lenient treatment in some cases, and in others, more harsh treatment of women (Haney, 2000). In examining the literature, it seems that no consensus exists for characterizing the experience of females. Instead, evidence has been provided which supports both lenient and harsh treatment of females relative to males.

At the same time, there is increasing recognition that the processing of females is conditioned by several factors, including offense type and stage of criminal justice processing. For example, studies have found that women who are accused of committing serious offenses are likely to be treated more harshly than those accused of less serious crime (Naffine, 1996). Variation has also been observed by stage of criminal processing. Studies suggest that women are *least* likely to be treated with leniency at earlier stages of processing (by police) than later stages (Belknap, 1996). In addition, the treatment of females is also thought to vary by race, class, and age. As Belknap (1996) describes, White women are the most likely recipients of chivalrous treatment compared to women of color. Similarly, those from higher income families and older female offenders are also likely to be treated with leniency. Taken together, findings suggest that multiple factors condition the treatment of females by criminal justice agencies. Support is provided by empirical research for both lenient and harsh treatment of females relative to males, and suggests that differing treatment is based on the stage of processing, offense type, and individual characteristics.

### *Female Status Offenders*

Although studies cite both lenient and harsh treatment of female offenders generally, treatment appears to differ for females based on age. Specifically, the literature consistently cites the harsh treatment of *female status offenders* at all stages of criminal justice processing (Chesney-Lind, 2001; Chesney-Lind & Sheldon, 1998). Among police and in courts youthful female offenders are treated more severely than their male counterparts. In their interactions with young females, police are more likely to arrest females than males for minor property offenses and status offenses (Chesney-Lind & Sheldon, 1998). In juvenile court,

female status offenders are more likely than males to receive harsh treatment and ultimately harsh sanctions. In spite of the deinstitutionalization movement among status offenders, the number of institutionalized females has changed little. For example, the number of girls in detention centers has remained relatively stable for the last two decades, while the number of female status offenders in private facilities increased more than 25 percent (Chesney-Lind, 2001). Typically, females are more likely than males to be institutionalized for less serious offenses (Chesney-Lind & Sheldon, 1998). Overall, the treatment of young females (status offenders, in particular) is unlikely to reflect leniency on the part of criminal justice agencies.

There are several perspectives that serve to explain the less chivalrous treatment of youthful females who violate the law. First, there is the notion, similar to the “evil woman” hypothesis that delinquent behavior, regardless of seriousness, is uncharacteristic of females. As a consequence, young women who skip school, run away, or violate truancy laws are as likely as more serious offenders to be treated with severity by police and courts. Another explanation is that girls who engage in status offenses are likely to put themselves at risk for an “unauthorized sexual encounter” (Cain, 1989), for which they are more likely than boys to be treated more severely. The picture that is portrayed of the juvenile justice system is one in which the monitoring and control of girls’ sexuality is a central concern (Chesney-Lind, 2001). Scholars have described the preoccupation of criminal justice agents with the sexuality of girls, which is likely to impact the treatment of young females in the system. As Belknap and Holsinger suggest, the treatment of young females in the criminal justice system results in the “sexualization of girls and punishment of girls for their sexuality,” whether consensual or victim (1998:55). Similarly, Chesney-Lind describes the juvenile justice system as it has “historically served to reinforce the sexual piety of girls by holding them to a different standard of behavior than boys” (2001:29).

In their examination of type-scripts and decision making, Sealock and Simpson (1998) describe the intersection of gender, race, and socioeconomic status in the decision to arrest. They suggest that among status offenders, “type-scripting may be confounded by gender based stereotypes that revolve around morality and sexuality” (1998:447). They suggest that criminal justice agencies are more likely to treat nonserious delinquency among females more formally than males, in an effort to protect females whose behavior affects the White patriarchal family structure in society (1998:436). In their analysis, they find

support for the use of type-scripts among female offenders and paternalism among criminal justice agents (police in this case) toward female status offenders.

### ***Holistic Approach to Understanding the Treatment of Females***

Traditionally, perspectives of female treatment in the criminal justice system are relatively static; that is, they characterize the treatment of females in the system as a dichotomy (leniency versus severity). As the literature suggests, the process by which female offenders are identified and entered into the system appears to be dynamic. That is, in certain situations, they are likely to be treated with leniency and in others they may be treated more harshly than their male counterparts by criminal justice agents.

In describing the development of feminist criminology, Haney (2000) characterizes recent feminist criminological work as exploring diversity in criminal justice processes rather than focusing on a single orientation of the female experience. The current study follows that movement and considers an additional source of variation in the treatment of adolescent females by police. This inquiry is based on the work of Emerson (1983), who has identified an important dimension on which decision making is likely to be based, namely, organizational concerns which are formed in part by other cases which are processed by the agency. He suggests that individual case decisions are not made in a vacuum; instead, they are influenced by the stream of cases that flow through the agency and are considered part of a larger, institutional whole. As such, holistic concerns represent “an important organizationally-based factor that shapes decision outcomes” (1983:426).

Emerson (1983) describes the manner in which social control agents respond to individual cases within a larger organizational framework. He suggests that organizational concerns such as case sets and case-loads within an agency serve to impact decision making in individual cases. For example, Emerson describes the “stream of cases” that flow through a social control agency which serve as a “background against which the classification of particular cases in organizationally relevant ways will be made” (1983:426). The seriousness of cases, in particular, is assessed according to the stream of cases within an agency. Emerson suggests that case seriousness can be judged on the total case stream or a specific set of cases that come to the attention of the agency. Assessments of appropriate processing at the individual case level, then, are based on a larger collection of cases at the organizational level.

Hence, one can extend traditional feminist theories, which have tended toward statements of homogeneous case-processing tendencies to include predictions about how case types and caseloads condition those tendencies. Feminist theory largely focuses on the differences between males and females in terms of processing. Elaborating on that theoretical base with Emerson's (1983) ideas allows for predictions focused on the heterogeneity of processing of similar female offenders over time, or across agencies.

### *Goal of Current Study*

In the current study, we apply Emerson's work to the treatment of female status offenders. Specifically, we assess whether the stream of a specific class of cases processed by local law enforcement, namely sex crimes, affects the treatment of adolescent females in the juvenile justice system. We utilize Emerson's work to expand upon traditional feminist theories and examine the extent to which holistic concerns provide a sensitizing framework for decision making. We examine arrest trends for status offenders by gender to determine whether an increased flow of sex crime cases affects the treatment of adolescent females. We anticipate that increases in sex offenses are likely to produce a heightened awareness of victimization, particularly among young females who are most likely to be victims of sex-related crimes (Bryan, 1995). This organization-level or holistic concern may then condition the treatment of females by law enforcement agencies and result in higher arrests of female status offenders.

We examine arrest rates separately by gender to identify changes over time within each group, rather than compare rates across groups. This represents a unique approach to identifying factors which influence the treatment of females. Our concern is not to compare female status offenders with their male counterparts, but instead, examine how institutional caseload concerns might affect the treatment of females over time. We include males as a control group, to determine whether an increase in sex offenses impacts one or both groups.

### *Hypotheses*

In the current analysis, we anticipate that the influence of sex offenses within the organization is expected to be evident among female status offenders only. We argue that the perception of young females as victims operates at the individual-case level and is likely to result in po-

lice intervention and introduction of females into the system. Since young males are not likely to be seen as potential victims in the same way, their arrest rates for status offenses are not likely to change as a consequence of increased sex offenses within a jurisdiction. This argument is supported by literature which cites the focus on the sexuality of young females; involvement in sexual encounters appears to evoke a response by law enforcement agencies (Belknap & Holsinger, 1998; Chesney-Lind, 2001; Sealock & Simpson, 1998). Therefore, we expect a significant and positive impact of elevated sex offenses on female status arrests.

### ***DATA AND METHODS***

The data for the study were drawn from a research project examining juvenile delinquency in a Midwestern community. The study city is the largest community located in a metropolitan area of over 300,000 citizens. According to the 2000 census, Center City (a pseudonym) had a population of 120,000. Eighteen percent of the total population is represented by females under the age of eighteen. The primary economic base of Center City is the auto industry, government, and education. The police department employs 250 uniformed officers and approximately 100 full-time civilian employees.

#### ***Data***

In order to examine the relationship between the flow of sex offenses and official police response to status offenses committed by juvenile females, we plotted both monthly reports of sex crimes and status offense arrests for both juvenile males and females from January 1989 to August 1999. The analysis of the two events by month over the ten-year period yielded 128 observation points for analysis.

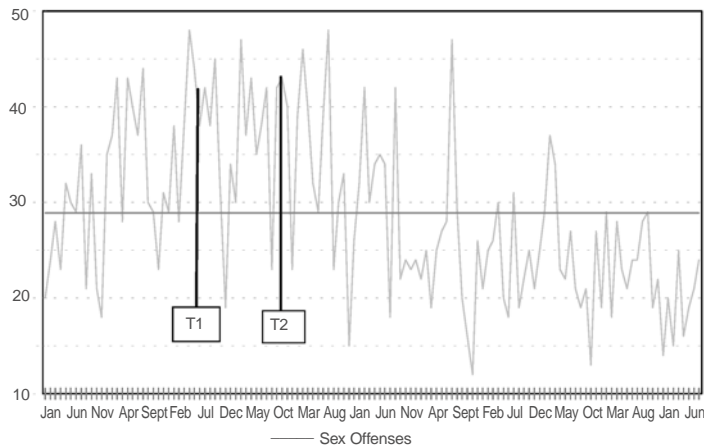
#### ***Independent Variable***

Across the observation points sex offenses, which include completed rapes, sexual contacts, and attempts to commit rape and other sexual contacts, range from a minimum of 12 per month to a maximum of 48 per month. The mean level of the series is 28.9, and the standard deviation of the series is 8.8. The series is used to identify periods where a system might see new stressors in a monthly aggregate. Single peaks are

arguably poor indicators of interventions since there is a high likelihood of a lagged response, but sustained periods are arguably times when organizational routines could become transformed to cope with a new problem in the organization's environment. One might expect when two consecutive months are high that there is an increased likelihood of an organizational response, particularly during the second month. Thus we crafted the criteria for a sustained period of sex crime activity as two months (or more) where the crime total is 1.5 standard deviations above the mean level of the series. In these instances, an increase in the flow of cases is more evident and is likely to alter organizational routines. In 128 observations this occurred only twice (see Figure 1). The second months of these points were June 1991 and November 1992, observations 30 and 47, respectively. We hypothesize that these two periods of high sex crimes (hereafter referred to as intervention periods) would change the climate of enforcement against female status offenders. These two points serve as catalysts for a change in street-level behavior within the Center City organization, consonant with the combined ideas of Emerson and feminist theory.

One concern is that the sex crime series is ignored by the police altogether as a feedback mechanism. Newspaper reporting of criminal incidents in the intervention year was used in this research as a proxy for

FIGURE 1. The Reported Sex Crime Series from Center City January 1989-August 1999, with Mean Level (28.9)





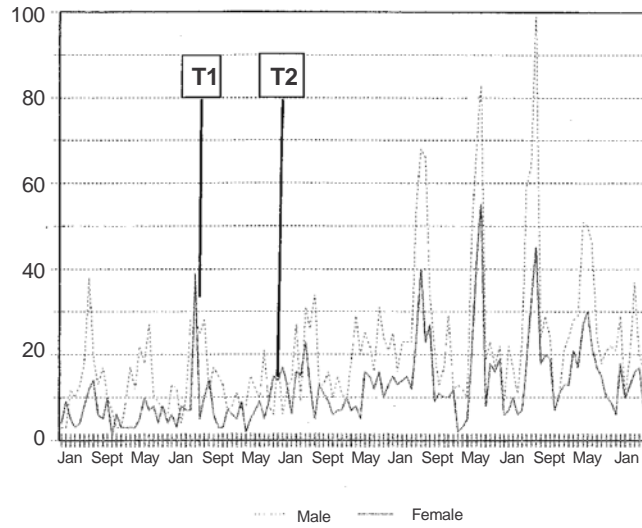
community knowledge of sex crime events. Although citizens are able to ascertain information on community events from a variety of media outlets, researchers have used newspapers to understand the relationship between media coverage and crime control.<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that we do not hypothesize that newspaper reporting of sex crimes has a direct effect on police processing of juveniles. Consistent with Emerson's theory, this research instead seeks to understand how the level of sex crimes (case flow) drives enforcement. The presentation of data from newspaper reports is merely used to illustrate if the sex-crime wave made it into the local media. If sex crimes were highlighted by the media we hypothesized that it was more likely that the bureaucracy (the police) responsible for processing these cases was sensitized to the unusually high case flow of sex crimes. In short, the newspaper reports serve to further validate the intervention points chosen for this analysis.

In order to quantify media coverage of sex crimes, we examined newspaper reports presented on the front page of the local Center City newspaper.<sup>2</sup> Content analysis was used to examine the characteristics of newspaper stories presented during the two intervention months specified by our criteria.<sup>3</sup> During each of the intervention months, two stories with an attention score of three were presented on the front page. In fact, both stories highlighted local crimes of sexual molestation of young girls; different aspects of both stories were highlighted in multiple parts of the newspaper. Content analysis was also conducted of two comparable months, June 1995 and November 1996, which failed to produce any reports of sex crime in either of these months.

### *Dependent Variable*

Female status arrests were defined as those involving runaway and curfew offenses during the January 1989 to August 1999 period under study. Truancy was excluded because a policy change for that offense occurred late in the series and would create an inconsistency in the measurement of female status arrests for the entire series. The number of female status arrests ranged from 1 to 55 per month in the observed series (see Figure 2). The average level of status arrests was 12 with a standard deviation of approximately 9. A control series of similar cases for male status arrests ranged from 3 to 99 per month during the same observation period. The average level of the male status arrest series was 21 with a standard deviation of 16.

FIGURE 2. Center City Status Offense Arrests January 1989-August 1990, Sex Crime Peaks Noted at Observations 30 and 47



### ANALYSIS

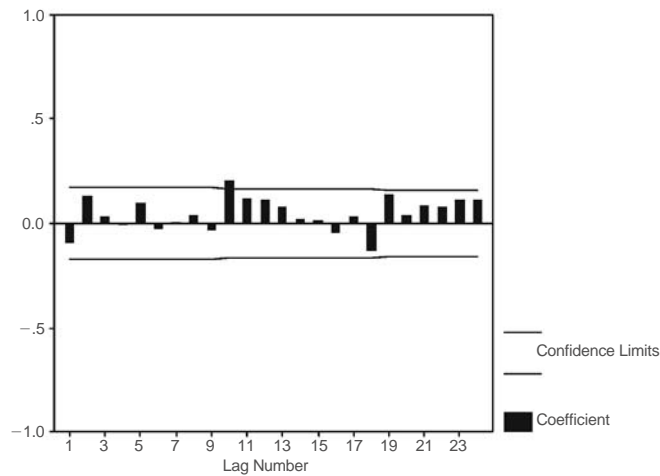
Since the analyses deal with data arrayed over time, specific techniques must be used to control for variation that is systematic in the series, to ensure that inferences are accurate. We followed the Identification, Estimation, and Diagnosis process outlined by McCleary and Hay (1980:91-103) to perform the analyses. Trend data require special analysis since it is common for data to be autocorrelated, or more simply, to have high correlations between adjacent observations in the series. Analysis techniques such as ordinary least squares regression have strong assumptions about the independence of observations, and time-series data often violate this assumption, making the statistical estimates suspect when those methods are used to analyze trend data. This requires the fitting of a statistical model to the data in order to control for the systematic variation inherent in much time series data.

Examination of the plotted data indicated that the variance of the series was not stationary, and, therefore, logging the data would be appropriate. The autocorrelation function (ACF) plot of the series was first examined to determine how to generate a "white noise" series (essen-

tially purging the data of autocorrelation) from which to conduct our ARIMA analyses. The ACF of the logged series indicated an ARIMA (1,0,0) model would be an appropriate fit, which is confirmed by the model ACF presented in Figure 3. The bars in Figure 3 represent correlations between observations and previous lags, such that the first bar represents the correlation between every observation and the one immediately preceding it (the first lag), these correlations are summarized by the Box-Leung Q-statistic to determine whether the series still has significant variation that must be modeled. It is also important to be aware that some trends are nonstationary, in the sense that they have a trend that is drifting up or down. These are typically diagnosed when one obtains large phi coefficients. The model generated a phi coefficient within the bounds of stationarity (McCleary & Hay, 1980) and the ACF indicated that the series had been reduced to white noise with a Box-Leung Q-statistic of 28.8 for 24 lags and a p-value of .23. In summary, the part of the data series that was due to systematic variation (autocorrelation) was removed through the process of Identification, Estimation, and Diagnosis, which results in a transformed series that is appropriate for intervention analysis.

This univariate ARIMA model was used to test the form of the intervention as suggested by McCleary and Hay (1980, see also Enders,

FIGURE 3. ACF of Errors for Univariate ARIMA (1,0,0) Model of Logged Monthly Female Status Arrests in Center City January 1989-August 1999



1995). Table 1 presents comparisons of zero-order and first-order models of the impact of the reported sex crime wave on female status arrests. The delta ( $\delta$ ) statistic is interpreted as the decay of the intervention, and in both instances it not distinguishable from zero. In that case we opted for a more parsimonious model featuring an abrupt and temporary impact using a single pulse variable to model the intervention.

Next we performed an intervention analysis including two simple pulse functions for observations 30 and 47 entered as dummy variables with results presented in Table 2 (McDowall, McCleary, Meidinger, & Hay, 1980). As noted above, these observations represent the second month of "sex crime waves" in Center City, when Emerson would predict that police responses to female crime would change. These pulse functions produced one significant intervention effect, for  $\omega_{30}$  (the intervention associated with the 30th month of the series), with a coefficient of 1.83. The second intervention effect for  $\omega_{47}$  (the 47th month), with a coefficient of .32, was not significant. Transforming our calculation from the logged metric (McCleary & Hay 1980:174) back to the metric of status arrests indicated that the series changed by producing five times as many arrests in the 30th observation and attaining an arrest increase of 37 percent in the 47th observation. In terms of the raw data, the 29 observations preceding  $\omega_{30}$  had a mean level of slightly more than 6, but then jumped to 39 during the second month of the sex crime wave. Similarly, at the point of the second intervention, the mean level of the prior series was just under 7, but jumped to 15 at the 47th observation. Both are in the expected direction of our theory, but only the for-

TABLE 1. Comparisons of Zero-Order Pulse and First-Order Pulse Models of the Logged Number of Monthly Female Status Arrests in Center City with an ARIMA (1,0,0) Model

| Parameter                 | Intervention 1:<br>First-Order Pulse |      | Intervention 1:<br>Zero-Order Pulse |      | Intervention 2:<br>First-Order Pulse |      | Intervention 2:<br>Zero-Order Pulse |      |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|------|--------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|------|
|                           | Value                                | S.E. | Value                               | S.E. | Value                                | S.E. | Value                               | S.E. |
| $\alpha$ Intercept        | 1.99*                                | .19  | 2.21*                               | .12  | 1.95*                                | .20  | 2.22*                               | .11  |
| $\phi$ ARIMA<br>Component | .53*                                 | .08  | .57*                                | .07  | .46*                                 | .09  | .53*                                | .07  |
| $\omega$ Intervention     | 1.82*                                | .51  | 1.82*                               | .50  | .41                                  | .55  | .32                                 | .54  |
| $\delta$                  | .02                                  | .02  |                                     |      | .03                                  | .02  |                                     |      |

\*p < .05, two-tailed test

TABLE 2. ARIMA Models for Female and Male Status Arrests

| Female Status Arrest Model (1,0,0) |           |      | Male Status Arrest Model (1,0,0) (0,0,1) |           |      |
|------------------------------------|-----------|------|------------------------------------------|-----------|------|
| Parameter                          | Estimates |      | Parameter                                | Estimates |      |
|                                    | Value     | S.E. |                                          | Value     | S.E. |
| $\alpha$ Intercept                 | 2.21*     | .12  | $\alpha$ Intercept                       | 20.95*    | 3.06 |
| $\phi$ ARIMA Component             | .57*      | .07  | $\phi$ ARIMA Component                   | .53*      | .09  |
| $\omega_{30}$ Intervention         | 1.83*     | .50  | $\theta_{12}$ ARIMA Component            | -.47*     | .09  |
| $\omega_{47}$ Intervention         | .32       | .50  | $\omega_{30}$ Intervention               | .95       | 8.98 |
|                                    |           |      | $\omega_{47}$ Intervention               | -9.91     | 8.95 |

\*p < .05, two-tailed test

mer is statistically distinguished from zero or the null hypothesis that sex crime levels affect arrests of female status offenders. The fit of this model was also assessed by examining the ACF plot of the residuals and the adequacy of the model was confirmed with the Box-Leung Q-statistic of 27.3 at 24 lags and a p-value of .29.

More succinctly, the first intervention identified indicated that, consonant with Emerson’s predictions, the Center City police significantly changed the numbers of female status offenders that were handled through formal arrests. During both periods the levels of status arrests increased, but only in the first intervention period could the change be clearly distinguished from chance variation.

***Estimation of a Control Series***

One concern with estimating these two pulse interventions is that we have a historical artifact of juvenile behavior. More precisely, the police output of arrests merely vary with the input of juvenile female status offenders and by chance that varied with our intervention dates. The analyses indicate that only one period is significant, though both are in the predicted direction. Therefore, we estimate a control series that is composed of the same status offense series for males with similar intervention components. If an underlying offending pattern explains the findings then we might reasonably suspect that male juveniles would be similarly affected by contemporaneous spikes in arrest. Conversely, if no significant interventions are found in the male series, then we would

be more confident that the pulse captures a temporary change in enforcement patterns for Center City, limited to juvenile female status offenders. The series covers the same 128 observations and has a mean level of 21 arrests per month, with a standard deviation of 16.

The model for male juvenile status arrests, presented in Table 2, is ARIMA (1,0,0) (0,0,1) indicating an autoregressive component and a moving average seasonal component were necessary to generate a series of "white noise." Analysis of the residuals of the white noise series generated by this model indicated that it fit the data well. The intervention analyses revealed no evidence of a change in enforcement against male status offenders during the two periods of high sex crime activity at observations 30 and 47. In fact, a statistically nonsignificant decline of nearly 10 status arrests for male juveniles occurred in the second period as contrasted by the increase (though nonsignificant) for juvenile females during the same period. We argue that this is further support for a change in the processing of juvenile female status offenders during periods of persistent high levels of sex crime as posited by Emerson's theory.

### *CONCLUSION*

In keeping with the movement toward a dynamic view of the female experience in the criminal justice system (see Haney, 2000), this inquiry incorporates Emerson's (1983) notion of case flow as an organizational concern that is likely to influence decision-making processes. Specifically, we examine the number of sex crime cases within a single law enforcement agency and explore their influence on status offenses for females and males over time. Emerson suggests that assessments of appropriate processing of the individual case are based on a larger collection of cases at the organizational level; therefore, we anticipated that an increased sex crime rate could potentially influence the treatment of youthful female offenders. This approach builds upon traditional feminist theories which largely depict homogeneous case-processing tendencies and suggests that case types and caseloads condition the treatment of female offenders.

In the analysis, we examined the potential conditioning effect of high sex crime rates on the processing of male and female adolescents. Over time, we find that one of two periods of elevated sex crimes in Center City is followed by a significant increase in the status offense arrest rate for females only. The arrest rate for males does not significantly change

with the level of sex crimes in the same city. This finding supports our hypothesis that an organizational concern over increased victimization is likely to influence how young females are handled by police and suggests that Emerson's depiction of the case flow impact on the treatment of other cases within an organization is also supported. In this current study, the finding on female status arrests is also consistent with research that suggests that a preoccupation with the sexuality of young females is likely to result in increased formal processing in the juvenile justice system. Given our findings, we suggest that is particularly the case during times of heightened awareness of female victimization.

This finding supports a paternalistic view of police, whereby formal processing may serve to protect potential victims from sexual predators. On the other hand, this might also support the "evil woman hypothesis" which suggests that female status offenders are treated more severely than males for violating traditional gender roles. During times of increased sex crimes, police may be particularly harsh in their treatment of females whose behavior puts them at risk for victimization. Regardless of the underlying motivation, it appears that during specific time periods, the processing of female status offenders changes. This increase in female arrests is not met with a significant increase among males, which suggests that the organization systematically responds to females in a unique way.

This finding also suggests that the treatment of females in the criminal justice system is dynamic; that in certain contexts, females may be treated more harshly than they are at other times. Females are not likely to be treated with consistency (either leniently or harshly) across all situations; instead, the organizational response to youthful females appears to be influenced, at least in part, by organizational concerns such as case flow.

While the findings in the current analysis are compelling, the examination of multiple jurisdictions would have been preferred. Since a single agency is included in the study, it is not clear how existing organizational culture and climate might impact results without having a proper point of comparison. Future research might more closely examine the context of law enforcement organizations to see how case-load responses vary across jurisdictions and organization types (e.g., Wilson, 1968). In addition, studies might also seek to identify the specific mechanism that leads to organizational decision making. For example, it is unclear in the current analysis whether police in Center City are responding to internal concerns over sex offenses or public pressure to address potential victims in the community. The periods of increased

sex crimes defined in the current analysis (as officially reported by Center City law enforcement) were also supported by newspaper reports of sexual victimization, which are likely to reflect public concern. Therefore, it is unclear whether the significant change in female arrest rates stems from intra-organizational pressure or public demand for action. Uncovering the specific mechanism of change is likely to extend this work and that of Emerson (1983). Similarly, future research should also attempt to explore Emerson's ideas as they relate to other criminal justice agencies, such as the courts, which have their own organizational concerns.

Finally, future inquiry should attempt to understand how juvenile processing varies by race and class during periods of heightened awareness of sex crimes. The literature finds that women of color are less likely to be treated with leniency generally (Belknap, 1996; Visher, 1983). Perhaps they are also less likely to be "protected" by police during time of increased victimization. Future studies should explore the potential interaction between race, class, and gender within an organization over time.

## NOTES

1. For example, Fishman (1978) found that criminal justice officials often react to a publicized crime by changing the manner in which they address the specific situation. Chermak (1997) also found that media accounts of the war on drugs transformed the way in which criminal justice agencies respond to narcotic offenses.

2. The Center City newspaper is the only local newspaper for the city; the daily circulation for the paper is approximately 70,961 households.

3. Information was collected on stories that presented information on sex-related crimes that were perpetrated on young women. Using the attention score developed by Budd (1964) we determined the weight of a given story based on the following criteria: the story began in the top half of the page, the story had a headline of two column inches or more in width, and the story headline spanned more than half of the columns on the page. A point was given for each of the three criteria. This research methodology is consistent with other studies on crime presentations in the media (see Chermak, 1998).

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