

Goodkind, S., Wallace, J. M., Jr., Shook, J. J., Bachman, J. G., & O'Malley, P. M. (2009). Are girls really becoming more delinquent? Testing the gender convergence hypothesis by race and ethnicity, 1976–2005. *Children and Youth Services Review, 31*, 885–895.

Abstract

Historically, girls have been less delinquent than boys. However, increased justice system involvement among girls and current portrayals of girls in the popular media and press suggest that girls' delinquency, particularly their violence and drug use, is becoming more similar to that of boys. Are girls really becoming more delinquent? To date, this question remains unresolved. Girls' increased system involvement might reflect actual changes in their behavior or changes in justice system policies and practices. Given that girls of color are overrepresented in the justice system, efforts to rigorously examine the gender convergence hypothesis must consider the role of race/ethnicity in girls' delinquency. This study uses self-report data from a large, nationally representative sample of youth to investigate the extent to which the magnitude of gender differences in violence and substance use varies across racial/ethnic groups and explore whether these differences have decreased over time. We find little support for the gender convergence hypothesis, because, with a few exceptions, the data do not show increases in girls' violence or drug use. Furthermore, even when girls' violent behavior or drug use has increased, the magnitude of the increase is not substantial enough to account for the dramatic increases in girls' arrests for violence and drug abuse violations.