

## RESEARCH REPORT

### The Relationship of Sociometric Inclusion to Delinquent Behavior in Adolescent Females

Maurine Eckloff and James Hullinger (1986) reported the results of some research that ties the social acceptance of females—their sociometric inclusion or lack of inclusion—to later criminal behavior. The two researchers completing this study spent a combined 6 years employed in the state correctional institutions dealing primarily with young females. At a time when correctional institutions are overcrowded, taxpayers are reluctant to increase funding for such institutions, and society is desperate to find ways of dealing with criminal behavior, this study provides a way of understanding and predicting such behavior and potentially a way to modify it. It is curious that one of the first extensive sociometric studies done by J. L. Moreno and Helen Hall Jennings was at a New York state penal institution for young women.

An extensive literature indicates that society tends to treat boys and girls differently, especially in the way they develop their self-esteem. Kagan (1985) suggests that a boy's esteem appears related to accomplishment, whereas a girl's is associated with her social interactions. Girls who are not popular, not included, and not accepted have little chance of achieving much social status or self-esteem. In fact, many girls suffer a significant decrease in self-esteem during adolescence. Some research findings report that female delinquents generally reported having been isolated or rejected in school situations (Glueck and Glueck, 1950). Disruptive or delinquent behavior is a way to cope with low self-esteem; it is a declaration of revolt against the criteria by which the young woman has come to regard herself as a failure, at the time and in the place where the failure is felt (Gold and Mann, 1976). Previous research (Diemont, 1985, pp. 3–5) seems to show that inclusion in early life may tend to determine whether or not an individual will later turn to deviant behavior.

This study was designed to determine if there were relationships between the young women's feelings of inclusion in their early school years and their later deviant behavior. The researchers advanced four hypotheses to test these possible relationships. The subjects were three groups of girls, aged 17 to 19,

identified as delinquent high school girls, high-achieving nondelinquent high school girls, and nondelinquent high school girls. Measures used were the FIRO-F, a measure of wanted inclusion, and the Perceived Inclusion Measure, a modified version of the LIPHE. The FIRO (Schultz, 1978) is six Guttman scales of nine items, each representing expressed and wanted aspects of inclusion, control, and affection (reliability of .94). The LIPHE is designed to measure the relations between parents and children from the point of view of the child after the child is grown. The instrument was pretested on 117 subjects; it had a reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of .94 for the first set of scales and .93 for the second set of scales. Perceptions of self, peers, and teachers were tapped. The authors used a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and a repeated measures design for each of the three groups. The alpha level was set at .05, and a Tukey test was employed for comparisons between means. The results showed that the delinquent girls reported significantly less satisfaction with perceived inclusion by peers than did the nondelinquent girls and the high-achieving girls. The delinquent girls reported significantly less satisfaction with perceived inclusion from teachers than the other two groups did. The purpose of the study was to see if the inclusion needs of girls with criminal histories differed from other girls of the same age. The delinquent girls reported significantly less satisfaction with perceived inclusion by peers and teachers than the nondelinquent girls did, supporting the idea that delinquent girls feel rejected.

The researchers concluded that schools must be thought of as arenas for behavioral change. They suggest that sociometric testing be done to identify isolated and rejected students and that steps be taken to assure more inclusion for them, reducing the need for them to turn to deviant behavior and criminal acts. Readers may contact the researchers, Maurine Eckloff and James Hullinger, at Kearney State College, Kearney, Nebraska 68849, (308) 234-8411.

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