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Abstract

Women commit less crime than men and their crimes are typically less serious, violent, and profitable. Most investigations of this “gender gap” in offending consider differences in social control or socialization. This helps explain overall crime participation disparities, but cannot account for the sex-segregated character of offending. Building on ethnographic research and feminist labor market analyses, our study explores how gender affects access to criminal opportunities. Using NIBRS data, we examine the effect a male co-offender has on women’s offending. We find that the presence of a male co-offender broadens women’s criminal involvement in distinctive ways.

Keywords

gender, co-offenders, crime, illicit labor markets, NIBRS

Women commit significantly less crime than men and the crime they commit is typically less serious, less violent, and less profitable. This has been true for as long as social scientists have been measuring crime. Relative to men, women’s crime participation rates have remained remarkably stable over time. In spite of the potential theoretical significance of this finding, the discipline of criminology has been slow to consider gender at all, much less conceptualize crime as a gendered activity. This has prompted numerous calls for researchers to pay greater attention to the relationship between gender and crime and critiques into criminology’s near-exclusive focus on men

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(Belknap, 2007; Britton, 2000; Daly, 1992; Heimer, 2000; Simon & Ahn-Redding, 2005; Smart, 1976). Feminist criminology emerged as an important corrective to this oversight and research documenting differences in men and women's crime participation patterns has proliferated in recent years. The present study aims to extend our understanding of crime as a uniquely *gendered* phenomena by examining sex segregation across crime categories and exploring how gender affects men's and women's access to a variety of crimes.

Feminist criminologists adapted the concept of the "gender gap" from sociological research on labor markets. In research on gender and paid work, the term refers to wage differences and occupational sex segregation that lead to women being disproportionately clustered in low pay, low status work (Acker, 1990; Bielby & Bielby, 1984; England, Farkas, Kilbourne, & Dou, 1988; Reskin, 1993; Reskin & Roos, 1991). In a similar sense, criminologists use the term "gender gap" to refer to differences in the rate, seriousness, and frequency of men's and women's crime participation (Heimer, 2000).¹ Indeed, whether crime is measured by arrest, self-report, or victimization data, one pattern is clear: men and boys participate at a rate 5 to 10 times higher than women and girls do (Heimer 2000; Lauritsen, Heimer, & Lynch, 2009; Rennison, 2009; Steffensmeier & Haynie, 2000). For example, in 2008 males accounted for more than three quarters of all persons arrested in the United States (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009). Furthermore, studies consistently find gender differences in the frequency and seriousness of criminal involvement, with men participating more often and in more serious crimes than women (Austin, 1982; Boritch & Hagan, 1990; Klein, 1973; Maher, 1997; Smith & Paternoster, 1987; Steffensmeier, 1993; Steffensmeier & Haynie, 2000; Steffensmeier, Schwartz, Zhong, & Ackerman, 2005).

Traditional criminological explanations of the gender gap in offending have primarily moved in one of two directions. Some of the earliest scholarship focused on internal constraints, particularly gender differences in moral sensibilities and patterns of socialization (Broidy, Cauffman, Espelage, Mazerolle, & Piquero, 2003; Cohen, 1955; Gilligan, 1982; Steffensmeier & Allan, 1991; Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985). In Gilligan's (1982) classic formulation, gender differences in moral development predispose women to an "ethic of care" that inhibits their participation in crime. In contrast, studies emerging from a control theory perspective consider external constraints by examining how differential levels of social control directed at girls and women reduce their overall participation in crime (Hagan, Simpson, & Gillis, 1979; McCarthy, Hagan, & Woodward, 1999). For example, parents may exert greater supervision over daughters and not only tolerate but also encourage greater levels of risk-taking behavior by boys. Subsequently, parental supervision contributes to different rates of delinquency (Hagan et al., 1989; Wellford, 1990).

Feminist criminological scholarship adds at least two additional layers of complexity to existing research on the gender gap in crime. First, a growing body of research supports the claim that women follow different, and often distinctly gendered, pathways into criminal behavior (Belknap & Holsinger, 2006; Daly, 1992; Reisig, Holtfreter, & Morash, 2006). In particular, "pathways" research demonstrates the significance of

physical and sexual abuse and economic disadvantage for girls' and women's entry into crime. Second, recent studies reveal that the gap in crime participation has narrowed across most crime categories with the exception of murder since the 1960s (Heimer, 2000). The most broadly supported explanation for this is the economic marginalization thesis. This model compares women's economic well-being to men's across a range of indicators (e.g., unemployment, poverty, earnings) and demonstrates that as women's economic condition worsens relative to men's, their crime participation rate increases (Box, 1987; Carlen, 1988; Heimer, 2000; Miller, 1986; Smart, 1979; Steffensmeier, 1993).

While research in each of these directions reveals much about why women and girls commit fewer crimes than men and boys and the factors that influence their rate of crime participation over time, we argue that none of these perspectives adequately accounts for crime as a socially embedded and gendered activity. Indeed, while there is considerable overlap in the kinds of crimes men and women commit (see Britton, 2000), women are disproportionately likely to be clustered in a small range of criminal offenses while men are represented across a broader array of crime categories (Belknap, 2007; Simon & Ahn-Redding, 2005). Our study aims to extend research on the gender gap in crime by exploring sex-segregated offending patterns and offering a preliminary analysis of how these patterns shape the kind of crimes women engage in. Drawing on feminist labor market scholarship, we argue that sex segregation patterns are a key component for understanding the gender gap in crime specialization (Acker, 1990; Bielby & Bielby, 1984; England et al., 1988; Reskin, 1993; Reskin & Roos, 1991). In many respects crime, particularly that which is economically motivated, can be considered an illicit labor market where gender conditions access to criminal networks and opportunities.²

Findings from several ethnographic studies offer support for this framework, particularly with respect to socially embedded crimes like drug trafficking, robbery, and burglary. Studies reveal that these offenses are coordinated and enacted through male-dominated social networks (Maher, 1997; Miller, 1998; Mullins & Wright, 2003). Furthermore, consistent with feminist research on work organizations and labor markets, they report that male-dominated networks operate to exclude and restrict women's access to criminal opportunities (Acker, 1990; Maher, 1997; Messerschmidt, 1997; Miller, 1998; Mullins & Wright, 2003; Mullins, Wright, & Jacobs, 2004; Reskin & Roos, 1991). Indeed, even when women are included in criminal networks, their participation is often temporary and peripheral (Daly, 1989; Decker, Wright, & Logie, 1993; Maher, 1997; Mullins & Wright, 2003; Steffensmeier & Terry, 1986). This suggests that the gender gap is attributable, at least in part, to differential access to criminal opportunities.

In *Gender and Power*, Connell (1987) argues gender scholars should investigate "the street" as a social institution—one that perpetuates gender inequality across a variety of domains, including crime. The ethnographic studies summarized above do that by offering a detailed, interior account of how discrete criminal networks operate with respect to specific crimes and social contexts. This raises the question of how gender conditions access across a broader range of crimes and invites further study of

how women's crime participation changes according to their access to social networks, particularly whether they offend in same sex groups or with men.

Are women represented across a broader range of crimes when they offend with men than when they offend alone or with other women? Are women more likely to move out of female-dominated crime categories when they commit crimes with men? Does working with men have a distinctive impact on women's criminal involvement? To explore these questions, we examine the offending patterns in crime incidents drawn from the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) for 2002-2008 (U.S. Dept. of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008).³ NIBRS offers a unique opportunity to understand how the presence or absence of male co-offenders shapes women's participation across a variety of violent, property, victimless, and "white-collar"⁴ index offenses.

Gender and Opportunity Structures

In Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) classic modification of Merton's (1968) strain theory, they argue that blocked opportunities in the labor market do not necessarily translate into criminal conduct. Individuals who experience strains associated with economic and social disadvantage can only engage in criminal activity when they have access to illegitimate opportunity structures. Although Cloward and Ohlin's work was devoted primarily to explaining gang participation among impoverished boys, it is also useful for thinking about how social characteristics, notably gender but also race, class, age, and residence, condition access to criminal networks and opportunities. For example, while social conditions like poverty may create incentive to engage in a crime such as burglary, actually committing the crime requires access to knowledge, tools, and skills—access that is facilitated through social networks. If these networks are male dominated, men may enjoy disproportionately greater access to burglary resources than women, which facilitates their higher rates of participation in the crime.

The influence of this theoretical framework is evident in Simon's (1975) early articulation of the liberation thesis, where she argued that as women enter the workforce in greater numbers and move into male-dominated white-collar jobs, they also gain access to new criminal opportunities (e.g., embezzlement, fraud, extortion, insider trading). Simon's early predictions regarding the nature and direction of women's offending haven't come to pass. Increases in women's crime participation over the last 30 years are not attributable to upwardly mobile women engaged in white-collar crime, but to impoverished women engaging in nonviolent property and drug offenses (Belknap, 2000; Chesney-Lind, 2004; Heimer 2000; Hunnicutt & Brody, 2004; Snell & Morton, 1994). Indeed women offenders continue to be overrepresented in what Belknap (2007) refers to as "gender neutral" and "female-gender-related" crime categories. In Belknap's (2007) framework, crimes are "gender neutral" when they are equally likely to be committed by men or women. A notable example is larceny-theft, where women typically constitute around 40% of persons arrested. "Gender-related" crimes are those more likely to be committed by one sex than the other. In her analysis

of arrest data, she finds that the vast majority of crimes are “male-gender-related,” while just two—prostitution and running away—are “female-gender-related.”

Nonetheless, Simon’s argument that gender shapes access to criminal opportunities remains important conceptually. The framework is evident in contemporary feminist accounts of street life as a “gendered institution.” Connell (1987) argues that street life has its own division of (illicit) labor, one which mirrors licit labor markets in that men predominate in comparatively higher status, higher power, and higher paying forms of illicit activity. Connell’s conceptual argument has been developed into a more systematic theory of how race, class, and gender structure crime participation by Messerschmidt (1993; 1997) and examined empirically in ethnographic work on gangs (Miller, 2000), prostitution and street hustles (Miller, 1986), and illicit drug markets (Maher, 1997). Daly (1989) argues that a similar pattern is evident in white-collar crimes, where sex segregation in the workplace limits women’s opportunities to commit more serious white-collar crimes (Daly 1989; Zietz 1981). One recent study found that gender differences in white-collar crime become especially pronounced when the fraud type is associated with higher level employees like chief executives (Holtfreter, 2005).

Findings from ethnographic studies of street crime reveal that women involved in street hustles are typically confined to low status, high risk, and low reward criminal opportunities. In Maher’s (1997) ethnography of the crack cocaine market in Bushwick, NY, for example, women make up a “reserve army” of workers in the illicit labor market. Most do not work in the “core” of the drug business game. Instead they are clustered in peripheral, low status, dangerous hustles—most notably sex work. This is not a function of their preferences or their morality. It is, as Maher convincingly demonstrates, a function of male-dominated criminal networks that operate to exclude and/or marginalize women’s involvement in better paying, less risky, and higher status work. Maher’s research and other ethnographic studies of street life (Anderson, 1999; Katz, 1988; Miller, 2000; Shover, 1996), robbery (Miller, 1998), burglary (Decker et al., 1993; Mullins & Wright, 2003), and retaliation (Mullins et al., 2004) reveal that streets are controlled by men and illicit activities reflect men’s interests and concerns (Messerschmidt, 1993, 1997). These interests restrict women’s access to traditionally male-dominated criminal activities (Laidler & Hunt, 2001; Maher, 1997; Miller, 2000).

Research on delinquent peers and co-offending demonstrates similar patterns. Among juveniles, girls get into more trouble around boys (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Pugh, 1986; McCarthy, Felmlee, & Hagan, 2004; van Mastrigt & Farrington, 2009). Using National Survey of Youth data, Warr (1996) found that significantly more group offending among girls happens in cross-gender groups (see also Reiss, 1988). In addition, he noted that while boys and girls who become involved in delinquency usually follow the lead of a same-gender instigator, girls are much more likely to follow a male instigator than boys are to follow a female instigator. Gang researchers, too, find that crime is lowest in all-female gangs and increases proportionate to the number of males present (Miller & Brunson, 2000; Peterson, Miller, & Esbensen, 2001).

Some argue women offend less in the absence of men due to the nature of social control structures and because women tend to inhabit settings with higher levels of

surveillance (McCarthy et al., 2004). It is also plausible, however, that women's lower rates of offending and the gendered character of their offense specialties are linked to opportunity structures. In other words, differential access to "criminal capital" (the tools, skills, and information necessary to engage in a criminal act) can help explain men and women's offending patterns (McCarthy & Hagan, 1995; McCarthy, Hagan, & Cohen, 1998). Indeed, Steffensmeier (1983) found that women are more likely to be solo offenders or part of small, nonpermanent crime groups and concluded this was the result of the male-dominated character of deviant peer groups and the homosocial manner through which these groups reproduce themselves.

Studies on gender and co-offending contain parallel findings. They reveal that women are more likely to commit violent and serious offenses when working with men. For example, Alarid, Marquart, Burton, Cullen, and Cuvelier (1996) discover from interviews with felony offenders that women are more likely to participate in robbery, burglary, and drug sales when co-offending with men. They argue that for these crimes, men provide women "an opening in to deviant networks" (p. 431). In an analysis of criminal incidents reported to NIBRS agencies in 1998, Koons-Witt and Schram (2003) also find that women working with men are more likely to commit violent offenses like homicide or robbery and to use guns than women who work alone or together are.

In this study, we use NIBRS data to explore how co-offending with men influences women's crime participation patterns across a broad range of offenses. Specifically, we are concerned with whether the gender gap in crime specialization narrows when women co-offend with men. To do this, we extend Koons-Witt and Schram's (2003) earlier study in two ways. First, we analyze incident- as well as offense- and offender-level NIBRS data. Second, our analysis covers property, white-collar, and victimless offenses in addition to violent crime. We hypothesize that women who commit crimes with men are more likely to engage in gender-atypical⁵ offenses than women who commit crimes alone or with other women are and that the impact men co-offenders have on women's offending patterns is distinctive.

Data and Method

Our analysis uses incident, offense, and offender data reported to NIBRS-participating police agencies from 2002 to 2008. NIBRS provides a unique opportunity to grasp how co-offending shapes the character of women's crime participation. Previous research on this question comes primarily from self-report data and ethnographic studies of illicit labor markets. NIBRS data complements and extends previous research by presenting information reported to and known by police across a larger geographic area and for a much greater number of offenders and offenses. Through NIBRS, we can examine women's representation across a broader range of crime categories. Unlike Uniform Crime Report (UCR) data, NIBRS presents a more complete picture of crime by including information about the presence or absence of co-offenders as well as relevant demographic information about victims and offenders.

NIBRS data has two important limitations that temper our findings. First, it is not representative of the U.S. population as a whole or of crime in the United States. Not all states currently participate in the NIBRS program⁶ and in states that do submit data, participating agencies are located primarily in mid-sized cities. In 2008, 39% of all law enforcement agencies submitting UCR data did so using the NIBRS program (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009). Data drawn from these areas cover approximately 26% of crime statistics collected by the UCR and approximately 26% of the U.S. population. In spite of these differences, a remarkably similar proportion of NIBRS offenders and UCR arrestees are female.⁷

The second limitation is one the UCR and NIBRS share: both rely on information reported to and known by police. Research has shown evidence of gender bias in crime reporting and police arrest decisions (McCorkel, 1996; Mosher, Miethe, & Phillips, 2002; Steffensmeier et al., 2005). In other words, official data does not always accurately reflect gender differences in criminal behavior because it is influenced, in part, by police expectations. We are mindful of this as we analyze our findings, noting that women's participation in discrete crime categories may be more extensive than their representation in official police data suggests. In spite of this limitation, we argue that it remains important to understand how co-offending with men in comparison to same-sex groups alters women's representation across crime categories.

NIBRS provides highly detailed information about crimes reported to police. It classifies criminal incidents according to offense(s) involved, number of offenders, circumstances and location, victim-offender relationship, and victim and offender characteristics. These details add a layer of complexity to data analysis, particularly since one event in time can involve multiple offenses, offenders, and victims. The first part of our findings is an analysis of criminal incidents and offenses reported to NIBRS agencies from 2002 to 2008. By itself, this does not provide a complete picture of the gendered character of offending. It reveals how many crimes reported to police involve women offending alone, together, or with men, but tells us nothing about the average offender. We therefore supplement it with a comparative analysis of the impact co-offenders have on women's and men's offending patterns.

Incidents with unknown offenders (39.99% of incidents in 2002-2008) and those with known offenders whose gender is unknown (17.06% of incidents in 2002-2008) are excluded from the dataset. These proportions are higher for property and "white-collar" crimes, which have more unknown offenders, and lower for violent and victimless crimes. In sum, the dataset includes 16,222,628 incidents involving 20,240,115 known offenders.⁸

Findings

As Table 1 shows, most incidents reported to NIBRS agencies from 2002-2008 involved individual men or individual women (62.49% and 19.90%). All-male groups account for the next largest proportion of incidents (9.33%) and mixed-gender groups account for a greater proportion of incidents (5.85%) than all-female groups (2.33%) do.

Table 1. Incidents/Offenders by Offender/Co-Offending Group (2002-2008)

	Incidents with known offenders ^a	Offenders ^b		
		Male	Female	Total
Individuals				
Males	62.49%	67.34%	—	50.08%
	10,137,066	10,137,066	—	10,137,066
Females	19.90%	—	62.24%	15.95%
	3,228,133	—	3,228,133	3,228,133
Co-offending				
All-male	9.43%	24.23%	—	18.02%
Pairs or groups	1,530,080	3,648,135	—	3,648,135
All-female	2.33%	—	16.26%	4.17%
Pairs or groups	377,601	—	843,202	843,202
Mixed gender	5.85%	8.42%	21.51%	11.78%
pairs or groups	949,748	1,268,039	1,115,540	2,383,579
Totals	16,222,628	15,053,240	5,186,875	20,240,115
	100%	100%	100%	100%

^aExcluding offenses involving known offenders whose gender is unknown.

^bExcluding known offenders involved in offenses with co-offenders whose gender is unknown.

Though more than 80% of criminal incidents involved individuals, a substantial proportion of offenders (32.66% of men and 37.76% of women) participated in co-offending incidents. These findings are consistent with previous research on co-offending (see Reiss, 1988; Reiss & Farrington, 1991). Similar to what Carrington found in his study of co-offending in Canada (2002), a slightly greater proportion of men (67.34%) were involved in solo offending than women (62.24%). Earlier studies, however, have suggested that women are somewhat more likely to offend alone than men are (Steffensmeier, 1983; Reiss, 1988).

When they co-offend, both men and women are more likely to work with men. About a quarter of men (24.23%) co-offended in all-male groups and nearly a quarter of women (21.51%) co-offended with one or more men. Women are more likely to co-offend with other women than men are. About 16% of women co-offended in all-female groups while only 8.42% of male offenders co-offended in mixed-gender groups. This finding is consistent with previous research on gender and co-offending (see Reiss, 1988).

Three patterns are apparent from this summary offender and incident data. First, all-female offending groups account for the smallest proportion of criminal incidents. Second, a greater proportion of both men and women who co-offend do so with men rather than women. Third, a greater proportion of women co-offend in all-female groups than do men in mixed-gender groups. Past research indicates that these proportions can vary by offense type (Reiss, 1988; Reiss & Farrington, 1991; Hochstetler, 2001).

Table 2. Offenses by Offender Group Type (2002-2008)

Offense category	Offender group					N
	Individual male	Individual female	All male group	All female group	Mixed gender group	
Violent offenses	68.28%	18.92%	7.72%	2.15%	5.20%	6,867,404
Homicide	63.38%	8.21%	20.50%	0.49%	7.42%	14,267
Assault offenses						
Aggravated assault	64.76%	17.50%	10.65%	1.73%	5.36%	937,480
Simple assault	66.02%	20.28%	5.42%	2.59%	5.70%	3,927,832
Intimidation	67.85%	23.49%	3.30%	1.81%	3.55%	1,186,825
Rape and forcible sex offenses	88.35%	3.31%	6.46%	0.15%	1.72%	361,563
Robbery	54.03%	3.03%	36.12%	0.97%	5.86%	365,321
Kidnapping	72.72%	9.20%	11.59%	0.75%	5.74%	74,116
Property Offenses	34.43%	14.60%	6.12%	2.42%	3.52%	6,492,073
Arson	59.06%	12.01%	21.94%	1.62%	5.37%	40,230
Burglary	62.42%	9.32%	19.80%	1.17%	7.29%	835,781
Vandalism	62.97%	17.09%	13.49%	1.63%	4.82%	1,636,342
Larceny						
Pickpocketing	55.07%	27.08%	9.27%	2.87%	5.71%	14,442
Purse snatching	64.65%	15.75%	11.86%	2.38%	5.37%	19,737
Shoplifting	48.54%	29.88%	7.75%	8.34%	5.50%	1,261,512
Theft from building	54.76%	26.47%	8.95%	2.81%	7.01%	500,547
Theft from coin-operated machine	58.87%	4.36%	25.89%	0.94%	9.94%	11,331
Theft from MV	64.60%	9.01%	20.16%	0.96%	5.27%	298,017
Theft of MV parts	66.85%	7.61%	20.88%	0.40%	4.26%	79,231
Other larceny	59.06%	24.29%	8.68%	2.10%	5.86%	1,417,736
MVT	65.32%	15.15%	13.16%	1.17%	5.20%	377,167
Victimless offenses	61.77%	13.75%	12.94%	1.29%	10.25%	3,410,151
Weapons laws	68.18%	6.84%	16.46%	0.62%	7.90%	366,514
Stolen property offenses	56.95%	11.65%	18.30%	2.08%	11.02%	150,198
Drug offenses						
Sales	60.60%	9.89%	14.59%	1.03%	13.89%	436,670
Possession	62.24%	14.39%	12.09%	1.34%	9.94%	2,364,257
Gambling offenses	52.82%	8.76%	24.24%	0.97%	13.22%	6,416
Porn/obscene material	83.04%	6.05%	5.19%	0.68%	5.03%	13,380
Prostitution						
Prostitution	26.02%	60.01%	2.13%	3.12%	8.72%	54,083
Aiding/abetting prostitution	32.96%	49.02%	2.47%	3.95%	11.60%	18,633

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Offense category	Offender group					N
	Individual male	Individual female	All male group	All female group	Mixed gender group	
"White-collar" offenses	49.35%	35.31%	4.81%	2.87%	7.67%	1,234,021
Bribery, extortion	62.32%	18.62%	8.35%	1.92%	8.79%	6,311
Counterfeiting/ forgery	46.87%	36.26%	4.89%	3.12%	8.87%	424,039
Embezzlement	42.03%	44.40%	3.80%	4.32%	5.46%	115,282
Fraud	51.99%	33.35%	4.90%	2.48%	7.28%	688,389
Totals	61.61%	20.17%	9.15%	2.46%	6.60%	100.00%
	9,535,880	3,122,397	1,416,118	380,812	1,021,647	15,476,854

To examine how co-offending is shaped by the nature of the crime, we turn to offense- and offender-based analyses of co-offending patterns.

Gendered Patterns in Offending: Offenses

As we see in Table 2, for most offenses, all-female groups account for the smallest proportion of incidents. Shoplifting (where mixed-gender groups are the smallest proportion) and prostitution offenses and embezzlement (where all-male groups are the smallest proportion) are exceptions. Across crime categories, individual men account for the largest percentage of incidents, except in the case of prostitution offenses and embezzlement where individual women account for a larger proportion. Individual women offenders make up the second largest proportion of incidents for most offense types. However, for a specific set, all-male groups account for a larger proportion of incidents than solo women do: homicide, rape and forcible sex offenses, robbery, kidnapping, arson, burglary, theft from a coin-operated machine or device, theft from a motor vehicle, theft of motor vehicle parts, weapons law violations, stolen property offenses, drug sales, and gambling offenses.

In addition, for the majority of crime categories, all-male groups account for a larger proportion of incidents than mixed-gender groups do. Exceptions include: simple assault, intimidation, prostitution offenses, and white-collar offenses. Overall, the majority of crimes are clearly male-dominated, albeit some more so than others. In contrast, with the exception of prostitution, there are no crimes that are female-dominated in a comparable sense. And ethnographic research suggests that while women are the majority of arrestees for prostitution-related offenses, they are often working with and for men (Maher, 1997; Miller, 1986).

Table 3. Offenses by Offenders/Offending Pattern (2002-2008)

Offense category	Male offenders			Female offenders		
	Alone	Male only	Mixed gender	Alone	Female only	Mixed gender
Violent offenses	73.19%	19.99%	6.83%	63.61%	16.43%	19.95%
Homicide	48.86%	40.83%	10.31%	44.95%	6.07%	48.98%
Assault offenses						
Aggravated assault	65.50%	27.04%	7.46%	62.47%	14.73%	22.80%
Simple assault	77.48%	14.84%	7.68%	62.32%	17.98%	19.70%
Intimidation	85.25%	9.53%	5.22%	74.30%	12.93%	12.76%
Rape and forcible sex offenses	83.39%	14.47%	2.15%	59.92%	5.84%	34.24%
Robbery	35.03%	58.62%	6.35%	24.43%	18.82%	56.74%
Kidnapping	65.86%	26.41%	7.73%	51.76%	9.80%	38.44%
Property offenses	61.09%	30.64%	8.27%	60.00%	19.75%	20.25%
Arson	47.81%	44.92%	7.27%	53.74%	16.49%	29.77%
Burglary	50.86%	39.69%	9.45%	44.82%	12.71%	42.47%
Vandalism	60.27%	32.70%	7.03%	63.72%	14.15%	22.13%
Larceny						
Pickpocketing	65.80%	25.41%	8.79%	67.49%	15.62%	16.89%
Purse snatching	65.62%	27.65%	6.74%	57.77%	19.46%	22.77%
Shoplifting	67.19%	23.81%	9.00%	54.75%	33.49%	11.76%
Theft from building	64.20%	24.82%	10.99%	64.06%	15.25%	20.69%
Theft from coin-operated machine	43.73%	45.64%	10.63%	24.12%	11.33%	64.55%
Theft from MV	53.24%	40.33%	6.42%	52.77%	12.10%	35.13%
Theft of MV parts	54.26%	40.52%	5.22%	57.51%	6.48%	36.00%
Other larceny	68.00%	23.23%	8.77%	67.68%	13.01%	19.32%
MVT	63.03%	30.00%	6.97%	63.98%	10.75%	25.27%
Victimless offenses	57.61%	28.41%	13.98%	47.79%	9.81%	42.40%
Weapons laws	56.96%	34.41%	8.63%	39.80%	7.95%	52.25%
Stolen property offenses	48.36%	37.72%	13.92%	39.48%	15.97%	44.56%
Drug offenses						
Sales	52.26%	29.20%	18.54%	34.46%	7.78%	57.76%
Possession	59.41%	26.76%	13.83%	49.26%	9.91%	40.83%
Gambling offenses	32.25%	45.87%	21.88%	36.34%	9.47%	54.19%
Porn/obscene material	80.78%	11.81%	7.41%	43.55%	11.34%	45.11%
Prostitution						
Prostitution	61.17%	14.10%	24.73%	77.11%	9.23%	13.65%
Aiding/abetting prostitution	60.22%	12.54%	27.24%	66.60%	12.88%	20.52%

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Offense category	Male offenders			Female offenders		
	Alone	Male only	Mixed gender	Alone	Female only	Mixed gender
"White-collar" offenses	70.36%	15.70%	13.94%	69.35%	12.42%	18.23%
Bribery, extortion	66.09%	21.12%	12.79%	55.01%	12.92%	32.07%
Counterfeiting/forgery	67.60%	16.15%	16.25%	67.53%	12.64%	19.83%
Embezzlement	71.96%	14.97%	13.08%	71.14%	16.11%	12.75%
Fraud	71.81%	15.48%	12.71%	70.33%	11.45%	18.22%
Totals	65.26%	25.49%	9.25%	60.21%	16.14%	23.65%
	11,116,478	4,341,012	1,575,959	3,484,487	934,098	1,368,720

Gendered Patterns in Group Offending: Offenders

The *Gendered Patterns in Offending: Offenses* section reveals patterns in the gender composition of offending groups within discrete crime categories. We now shift the analysis from consideration of criminal offenses to criminal offenders. This allows us to explore gendered offending patterns for men and women. Table 3 reveals that for most crimes, men work alone. For three offenses, however, all-male groups account for the majority of incidents: robbery, theft from a coin-operated machine or device, and gambling. The same pattern applies to women. For most crimes, women usually work alone. Exceptions include offenses where the majority offend in mixed-gender groups: those listed above (robbery, theft from a coin-operated machine or device, and gambling offenses) and weapon law violations, stolen property violations, and drug sales.

In addition, for the overwhelming majority of crimes, more men co-offend in all-male groups rather than mixed-gender groups. Prostitution offenses and counterfeiting/forgery are the only exceptions. The same pattern of disproportionate involvement with male co-offenders applies to women. For most crimes, women more frequently co-offend in mixed-gender groups than in all-female groups. For intimidation, shoplifting, and embezzlement, however, a greater proportion of women work in all-female groups rather than mixed-gender groups.

Male Co-Offenders and Women's Criminal Involvement

Looking at patterns in the offense-based analysis (where groups of co-offending women make up the smallest proportion of offenses for the majority of crimes) and the offender-based analysis (where both men and women are more likely to work with men) illustrates the well-established fact that women exhibit lesser degrees of criminal involvement than men and that women are less likely to be criminal co-offenders (Carrington, 2002; Lauritsen et al., 2009; Rennison, 2009). NIBRS data also reveals

a gender gap in crime specialization in that men are involved in a broader range of crimes than women are. Indeed, in certain types of crime (notably burglary, robbery, homicide, rape, and other serious offenses), women's participation is quite limited. This raises the question of whether access to male co-offenders alters the character of women's crime participation. Does the presence or absence of a male co-offender/(s) increase the likelihood that women will commit gender atypical crimes?

To address this question, we turn to an analysis of women offenders. Table 4 offers a more detailed portrait of women's offending and co-offending patterns. We place women into three categories: those who offend alone, those who co-offend with other women, and those who co-offend with one or more men. A cross-tabulation indicates a statistically significant relationship between offending group (solo, all-female co-offending groups, and mixed-gender co-offending groups) and offense type (Cramer's $V = 0.2236, p \leq .001$).

To analyze the effect of male co-offender/s on women's offending, we compare the offense involvement of individual women to those of women who co-offend. Comparing individual women offenders to those who co-offend assumes women commit both types of offenses (solo and co-offending) during their criminal careers. Past research supports this assumption. A small number of offenders specialize in either solo or co-offending and proclivity to co-offend declines with age, but the majority of offenders commit both types of offenses at some point in their criminal careers (see Reiss, 1988; Reiss & Farrington, 1991; Hochstetler, 2001; McCord & Conway, 2002).

As Table 4 shows, we calculate difference ratios to assess the impact that co-offending with women or with one or more men has on women's offense involvement. For the majority of crimes in the dataset, the presence of a male co-offender/s increases a woman's likelihood of involvement in that offense category. Women's involvement in most serious violent offenses (homicide, rape and forcible sex offenses, robbery, and kidnapping), some property offenses (arson, burglary, theft from a coin-operated machine or device, theft from a motor vehicle, theft of motor vehicle parts, and motor vehicle theft), and nearly all victimless offenses (drug possession or sales, weapon law violations, stolen property offenses, gambling offenses, and possessing or distributing pornography/obscene material) increases when one or more male co-offenders is present. The same is true for one set of white-collar offenses (bribery and extortion).

In contrast, co-offending with other women increases a woman's likelihood of involvement in only a few crimes. In fact, co-offending with women has a negative impact on the chances that a woman will be involved in most crime categories. Co-offending with women increases women offenders' involvement in three crime categories that working with a man does not: simple assault, purse snatching, and shoplifting. Working with female co-offender/s also increases the chances that a woman will be involved in five crime categories for which working with a male co-offender has the same effect: robbery, arson, burglary, theft from a coin-operated machine or device, and stolen property offenses.

Table 4. Offense Involvement of Women Offenders by Offending Group, 2002-2008

Offense category	Offenders					Pattern	
	Alone	With other women	Diff ratio ^a	With one or more men	Diff ratio ^b		
Violent offenses							
Homicide	0.03%	0.02%	(-1.99)	0.09%	(+2.77)	-	+
Assault offenses							
Aggravated assault	4.71%	4.14%	(-1.14)	4.38%	(-1.08)	-	-
Simple assault	22.86%	24.60%	(+1.08)	18.40%	(-1.24)	+	-
Intimidation	8.00%	5.19%	(-1.54)	3.50%	(-2.29)	-	-
Rape and forcible sex offenses	0.34%	0.13%	(-2.75)	0.50%	(+1.45)	-	+
Robbery	0.32%	0.91%	(+2.87)	1.88%	(+5.91)	+	+
Kidnapping	0.20%	0.14%	(-1.42)	0.37%	(+1.89)	-	+
Property offenses							
Arson	0.14%	0.16%	(+1.14)	0.20%	(+1.41)	+	+
Burglary	2.24%	2.37%	(+1.06)	5.39%	(+2.41)	+	+
Vandalism	8.02%	6.65%	(-1.21)	7.09%	(-1.13)	-	-
Larceny							
Pickpocketing	0.11%	0.10%	(-1.16)	0.07%	(-1.57)	-	-
Purse snatching	0.0892%	0.11%	(+1.26)	0.0895%	(-1.00)	+	-
Shoplifting	10.82%	24.68%	(+2.28)	5.92%	(-1.83)	+	-
Theft from building	3.80%	3.38%	(-1.13)	3.13%	(-1.22)	-	-
Theft from coin-operated machine	0.0142%	0.0248%	(+1.75)	0.10%	(+6.81)	+	+
Theft from MV	0.77%	0.66%	(-1.17)	1.31%	(+1.69)	-	+
Theft of MV parts	0.17%	0.07%	(-2.38)	0.28%	(+1.59)	-	+
Other larceny	9.88%	7.09%	(-1.39)	7.18%	(-1.38)	-	-
MVT	1.64%	1.03%	(-1.60)	1.65%	(+1.01)	-	+
Victimless offenses							
Weapons laws	0.60%	0.45%	(-1.34)	2.01%	(+3.34)	-	+
Stolen property offenses	0.50%	0.76%	(+1.51)	1.44%	(+2.87)	+	+
Drug offenses							
Sales	1.24%	1.04%	(-1.19)	5.29%	(+4.26)	-	+
Possession	9.76%	7.32%	(-1.33)	20.60%	(+2.11)	-	+
Gambling offenses	0.02%	0.01%	(-1.17)	0.10%	(+5.99)	-	+
Porn/obscene material	0.0232%	0.0226%	(-1.03)	0.06%	(+2.64)	-	+
Prostitution							
Prostitution	0.93%	0.42%	(-2.24)	0.42%	(-2.22)	-	-
Aiding/abetting prostitution	0.26%	0.19%	(-1.39)	0.21%	(-1.27)	-	-

(continued)

Table 4. (continued)

Offense category	Offenders					Pattern
	Alone	With other women	Diff ratio ^a	With one or more men	Diff ratio ^b	
"White-collar" offenses						
Bribery, extortion	0.0337%	0.0295%	(-1.14)	0.05%	(+1.48)	- +
Counterfeiting/forgery	4.41%	3.08%	(-1.43)	3.30%	(-1.34)	- -
Embezzlement	1.47%	1.24%	(-1.18)	0.67%	(-2.19)	- -
Fraud	6.59%	4.00%	(-1.65)	4.35%	(-1.52)	- -
Total offenders	3,484,487	934,098		1,368,720		

^aWomen offending alone versus women co-offending with women ($P \leq 0.001$)

^bWomen offending alone versus women co-offending with at least one man ($P \leq 0.001$)

In each of the sections below, we document the effect of co-offenders on women’s criminal involvement in greater detail. Looking at the direction of difference ratios for each offense, we categorize effects into four possible outcomes. First are crimes where female co-offenders have a negative effect (-) but male co-offenders have a positive effect (+) on women’s likelihood of involvement. We designate these crimes as having “positive male co-offender effects” and denote them with a (- +) symbol. Second, we look at crimes where female co-offenders increase but male co-offenders decrease a women’s likelihood of involvement (+ -). Finally, we examine crimes where co-offenders of either gender increase a woman’s likelihood of involvement in that offense (+ +) and crimes where co-offenders of either gender decrease their likelihood (- -).

Positive male co-offender(s) effects (- +). As Table 4 shows, most offenses fit a (- +) pattern. For these crimes, having all female co-offenders decreases a woman’s chances of being involved in a given crime while having one or more male co-offenders increases those chances. Women with one or more male co-offenders are 2.77 times more likely to be involved in a homicide than individual women, for example. Those co-offending with women are 1.99 times less likely to be involved in that crime than individual women are. Similar (though weaker) effects exist for two other violent crimes: rape/forcible sex offenses and kidnapping.

When looking at property offenses, women co-offending with one or more men are 1.69 times more likely to be involved in theft from a motor vehicle and 1.59 times more likely to be involved in theft of motor vehicle parts than women working alone are. Women co-offending with other women, however, are 1.17 and 2.38 times less likely to be involved in those crimes. A similar pattern exists for motor vehicle theft. For victimless crimes, women co-offending with one or more men are 5.99 times as likely to be involved in a gambling offense, 3.34 times as likely to be involved in a weapons law violation, and 4.26 times more likely to be involved in a drug sales

offense than women offending alone are. Women who co-offend with other women are 1.17, 1.34, and 1.19 times less likely to be involved in the same offenses. Similar patterns exist for drug possession offenses and pornography/obscene material offenses. Only one set of white-collar offenses (bribery/extortion) falls into this category.

Positive female co-offender(s) effects (+ -). Far fewer crimes fit the inverse pattern, where female co-offenders increase a woman's chances of involvement while male co-offender/s decrease those chances. In the case of simple assault, purse snatching, and shoplifting, women's representation increases when they co-offend with other women but not when they co-offend with one or more men. Women are 1.08 times more likely to be involved in a simple assault when they co-offend with other women compared to when they offend alone. They are 1.24 times less likely to be involved in that crime when they co-offend with men. For shoplifting, women co-offending in all-female groups are 2.28 times more likely to be involved while women who co-offend with one or more men are 1.83 times less likely. For purse snatching, women co-offending with other women are 1.26 times more likely to be involved while women co-offending with one or more men are 1.00 times less likely to be involved.

Positive co-offender effects (+ +). There are five offenses where co-offenders (men or women) increase a woman's chances of criminal involvement. In each case, however, working with one or more male co-offenders increases those chances more than working with female co-offenders does. Women who co-offend with other women are 2.87 times more likely to be involved in robbery than women who offend alone are, but women who offend with one or more men are 5.91 times more likely to be involved in that offense. Women who co-offend with other women are 1.75 times more likely to be involved in a theft from a coin-operated machine or device as women offending alone are. Women who co-offend with at least one man, however, are nearly seven times as likely. Similar patterns apply to burglary, arson, and stolen property offenses.

Negative co-offender effects (- -). For 11 of the 31 crime categories, working with a co-offender (male or female) decreases the likelihood that a woman offender will be involved in that type of crime. The offenses that fit this pattern include: intimidation, aggravated assault, vandalism, pickpocketing, theft from a building, other larceny, prostitution, aiding and abetting prostitution, counterfeiting/forgery, embezzlement, and fraud.

Comparing Effects: Female Co-Offenders and Men's Criminal Involvement

Our analysis of women offenders indicates that working with men broadens women's criminal involvement in a way that working with other women does not. Whether that effect is unique deserves further exploration. Are we seeing the effect of a male co-offender or the effect of having a co-offender of the other gender? To examine this question, we apply the same analysis we did for female offenders to male offenders, looking at whether men's offending patterns shift significantly in the presence of

Table 5. Difference Ratio Comparisons, Men and Women Offenders, 2002-2008

Offense category	Difference ratios				Pattern
	Women w/women co-off's	Women w/one/ more men co-off's	Men w/ men co-off's	Men w/ one/more women co-off's	
Violent offenses					
Homicide	(-1.99)	(+2.77)	(+1.85)	(+1.19)	- + + +
Assault offenses					
Aggravated assault	(-1.14)	(-1.08)	(+1.00)	(-1.23)	- - + -
Simple assault	(+1.08)	(-1.24)	(-2.21)	(-1.38)	+ - - -
Intimidation	(-1.54)	(-2.29)	(-3.55)	(-2.52)	- - - -
Rape and forcible sex offenses	(-2.75)	(+1.45)	(-2.13)	(-5.31)	- + - -
Robbery	(+2.87)	(+5.91)	(+3.60)	(+1.14)	+ + + +
Kidnapping	(-1.42)	(+1.89)	(+1.11)	(-1.13)	- + + -
Property offenses					
Arson	(+1.14)	(+1.41)	(+2.43)	(+1.15)	+ + + +
Burglary	(+1.06)	(+2.41)	(+1.93)	(+1.25)	+ + + +
Vandalism	(-1.21)	(-1.13)	(+1.45)	(-1.20)	- - + -
Larceny					
Pickpocketing	(-1.16)	(-1.57)	(+1.12)	(+1.06)	- - + +
Purse snatching	(+1.26)	(-1.00)	(+1.03)	(-1.11)	+ - + -
Shoplifting	(+2.28)	(-1.83)	(-1.03)	(-1.14)	+ - - -
Theft from building	(-1.13)	(-1.22)	(+1.03)	(+1.25)	- - + +
Theft from coin-operated machine	(+1.75)	(+6.81)	(+3.55)	(+1.91)	+ + + +
Theft from MV	(-1.17)	(+1.69)	(+2.17)	(-1.05)	- + + -
Theft of MV parts	(-2.38)	(+1.59)	(+2.02)	(-1.40)	- + + -
Other Larceny	(-1.39)	(-1.38)	(-1.10)	(-1.13)	- - - -
MVT	(-1.60)	(+1.01)	(+1.31)	(-1.35)	- + + -
Victimless offenses					
Weapons laws	(-1.34)	(+3.34)	(+1.51)	(+1.01)	- + + +
Stolen property offenses	(+1.51)	(+2.87)	(+1.79)	(+2.07)	+ + + +
Drug offenses					
Sales	(-1.19)	(+4.26)	(-1.09)	(+2.81)	- + - +
Possession	(-1.33)	(+2.11)	(-1.32)	(+1.75)	- + - +
Gambling offenses	(-1.17)	(+5.99)	(+1.01)	(+2.76)	- + + +
Porn/obscene material	(-1.03)	(+2.64)	(-2.17)	(-1.73)	- + - -
Prostitution					
Prostitution	(-2.24)	(-2.22)	(-2.13)	(+2.47)	- - - +
Aiding/abetting prostitution	(-1.39)	(-1.27)	(-1.79)	(+2.60)	- - - +
"White-collar" offenses					
Bribery, extortion	(-1.14)	(+1.48)	(-3.24)	(+1.13)	- + - +
Counterfeiting/forgery	(-1.43)	(-1.34)	(-1.32)	(+1.76)	- - - +
Embezzlement	(-1.18)	(-2.19)	(+1.08)	(+1.46)	- - + +
Fraud	(-1.65)	(-1.52)	(-1.66)	(+1.21)	- - - +

one or more female co-offenders. Table 5 shows the results of this analysis next to those from the original model.

For women, the presence of one or more male co-offenders increases their chances of involvement in most crime categories. A similar pattern exists for men who work with female co-offenders. Working with one or more female co-offenders increases men's chances of involvement in two violent offenses (homicide and robbery), five property offenses (arson, burglary, pickpocketing, theft from a building, and theft from a coin-operated machine or device), nearly all victimless offenses (weapons law violations, stolen property offenses, both drug offenses, gambling, and both types of prostitution offenses), and all four white-collar offenses.

At first glance, this seems to indicate that the presence of a co-offender of the other gender—and not the presence of a male co-offender specifically—significantly affects individual offending patterns. The comparative strength and character of these effects, however, suggests that gender still matters. First, in nearly all cases, difference ratios measuring male co-offender/s' impact on women's offending are larger than those that measure female co-offender/s' impact on men. Working with one or more male co-offenders increases women's likelihood of involvement in 17 crime categories. Ten of those have difference ratios of 2.0 or greater. Five are greater than 3.0. Working with one or more female co-offenders increases men's likelihood of involvement in 18 crime categories, but only five have difference ratios of 2.0 or greater and none are above 3.0. This indicates that male co-offenders have a stronger effect on women's offense involvement than female co-offenders do on men's.

Difference ratios measuring the impact of same-gender co-offending groups (columns two and four) also suggest male co-offenders have a stronger impact, especially for women. As Table 5 shows, female co-offenders increase women's chances of involvement in eight crimes, but five of those are crimes where working with one or more male co-offenders has a similar (but stronger) effect. In comparison, working in all-male offending groups increases men's chances of involvement in 18 crime categories. For seven of them, working with one or more female co-offenders has a similar (but weaker) effect.

In each of the sections below, we document patterns in the effects co-offenders have on men and women's criminal involvement. Looking at the direction of difference ratios for each crime, we put offenses into one of seven possible categories. First, we look at crimes where co-offenders of either gender have a positive effect (+) on both men and women's likelihood of involvement in that offense. We categorize these crimes as those with "positive co-offender effects" and mark them with a corresponding (+ + +) symbol. Second, we look at crimes where co-offenders decrease both men's and women's likelihood of involvement (− − −). The remaining categories capture crimes for which co-offender effects are more nuanced.

Some, for example, have what we label "offender-specific" effects. For these crimes, the gender of the offender seems to influence whether or not co-offenders increase or decrease their chances of involvement in that offense category. There are crimes where women are less likely to be involved when co-offenders are present, but men are more

likely to be involved when they co-offend (- - + +). There are also crimes that fit the inverse pattern, where women are more likely to be involved when co-offenders are present, but men are less likely to be involved when co-offending (+ + - -). Other offenses carry "co-offender-specific" effects, where the gender of a co-offender appears to influence the direction of the effect. Male co-offenders increase women and men's likelihood of being involved in some offenses (- + + -). For others, only female co-offenders increase women and men's likelihood of involvement (+ - - +).

Positive co-offender effects (+ + + +). The most common difference ratio pattern (+ + + +) applies to five crime categories: robbery, arson, burglary, theft from a coin-operated machine or device, and stolen property offenses. Here, co-offenders, regardless of their gender, increase both men and women's likelihood of involvement. Difference ratios for these offenses reveal, however, that male co-offenders have a stronger effect, especially on women. Women who work with one or more men are 5.91 times more likely to be involved in a robbery while men who co-offend with other men are 3.60 times more likely to be involved. Men who work with one or more women are 1.14 times as likely to commit a robbery. Women who work with other women are 2.87 times as likely to be involved in this offense. A similar pattern applies to arson, burglary, theft from a coin-operated machine or device, and stolen property offenses.

Negative co-offender effects (- - - -). Two crimes fit the inverse pattern and are disproportionately solitary offenses for both men and women. For intimidation and "other larceny," the presence of co-offenders reduces men and women's likelihood of involvement. Women who co-offend with other women are 1.54 times less likely to be involved in intimidation. Those who offend with one or more men are 2.29 times less likely to be involved. Men who co-offend with men are 3.55 times less likely to be involved in this offense while those who co-offend with one or more women are 2.52 times less likely. Similar patterns apply to other larceny.

Offender-specific effects (- - + +) (+ + - -). For a small number of crimes, co-offenders affect men and women differently. In three cases (- - + +), co-offenders decrease women's chances of involvement but increase men's: pickpocketing, theft from a building, and embezzlement. Men who co-offend with other men are 1.12 times more likely to be involved in pickpocketing, 1.03 times more likely to be involved in theft from a building, and 1.08 times more likely to be involved in embezzlement. Men who co-offend with one or more women are 1.06, 1.25, and 1.46 times more likely to be involved in these offenses. Women who co-offend, on the other hand, are anywhere from 1.13 to 2.19 times less likely to be involved in these offenses. Interestingly, no crimes fit the second pattern, where the presence of co-offenders increases women's likelihood of involvement but decreases men's (+ + - -).

Co-offender-specific effects (- + + -) (+ - - +). For other crimes, either male or female co-offenders (but not both) positively affect an individual's likelihood of involvement. Four offenses fit a (- + + -) pattern, where co-offending with men increases offenders' chances involvement but co-offending with women decreases them. Women who offend with other women are 1.42 times less likely to be involved

in kidnapping, 1.17 times less likely to be involved in theft from a motor vehicle, 2.38 times less likely to be involved in theft of motor vehicle parts, and 1.60 times less likely to be involved in motor vehicle theft. Men who work with one or more women are also less likely to be involved in these offenses. Working with one or more men increases women's involvement in these crime categories and co-offending with other men increases men's involvement as well. No crimes fit the inverse pattern (+ - - +), where female co-offenders positively affect men and women's likelihood of involvement, but male co-offenders do not.

Same- or mixed-gender co-offending effects (+ - + -) (- + - +). For a few crimes, working either in a same- or mixed-gender group affects offenders' likelihood of involvement. With purse snatching, for example, co-offending with same-gender others increases both men and women's likelihood of involvement (+ - + -). Women who co-offend with women are 1.26 times more likely to be involved in this offense and men who co-offend with men 1.03 times as likely. Women who co-offend with one or more men, on the other hand, are 1.00 times less likely to be involved and men who co-offend with one or more women 1.11 times less likely. Three crimes—drug sales, drug possession, and bribery/extortion—fit the inverse pattern (- + - +). Men who offend with other men are 1.09 times less likely to be involved in drug sales, 1.32 times less likely to be involved in drug possession, and 3.24 times less likely to be involved in bribery/extortion. Women who offend with other women are less likely to be involved in these offenses as well. Men and women co-offending in mixed gender groups, on the other hand, are more likely to be involved in each of these crime categories.

Mixed (negative) effects (- + - -) (+ - - -) (- + - -) (- - - +). Most crimes in the database are cases where both the gender of offender *and* the gender of his or her co-offender(s) influence the direction of the difference ratios. Some, for example, can be classified as having mixed negative effects, where most (but not all) offenders are more likely to be involved when working alone. Rape and forcible sex offenses and pornography/obscene materials violations are good illustrations. These crimes fit a (- + - -) pattern, where individuals are generally more likely to be involved when offending alone, but the presence of one or more male co-offenders increases a woman's chances of involvement. Simple assault and shoplifting fit a similar pattern (+ - - -). For these crimes, men are again less likely to be involved when co-offenders are present, but female co-offenders increase women's likelihood of involvement.

For other crimes, co-offenders reduce women's chances of involvement, but specific co-offenders increase men's. Aggravated assault and vandalism, for example, fit a (- - + -) pattern, where women who co-offend (with anyone) and men who co-offend with women are less likely to be involved. Men who offend with other men, however, are 1.00 times more likely to be involved in aggravated assault and 1.45 times as likely to be involved in vandalism. Counterfeiting/forgery, fraud, prostitution, and aiding/abetting prostitution fit the inverse pattern (- - - +). For these crimes, women who co-offend (with anyone) and men who co-offend with men are less likely to be involved. Men with one or more female co-offenders, however, are 1.76 times as likely to be

involved in counterfeiting/forgery, 1.21 times as likely to be involved in fraud, and 2.47/2.60 times as likely to be involved in prostitution or aiding/abetting prostitution.

Mixed (positive) effects (− +++), (+ − ++), (+++ −), (++ − +). For other crimes, co-offenders typically (but not uniformly) increase an individual's likelihood of involvement. Homicide, gambling, and weapons violations, for example, fit a (− +++) pattern. Men who offend with other men are 1.85 times more likely to be involved in homicide, 1.01 times more likely to be involved in gambling, and 1.51 times as likely to be involved in weapons violations. Men who offend with one or more women and women who offend with men are also more likely to be involved in these offenses. Women who offend with women, however, are less likely to be involved in these crimes. No crimes fit the other patterns in this category. There are no cases where co-offenders generally increase an individual's chances involvement, but co-offending with men decreases women's chances (+ − + +). There are also no crimes where women who co-offend are more likely to be involved, but men's likelihood of involvement varies according to the gender composition of their co-offending group (+++ −) (+ − ++).

Discussion

One of the most intriguing and enduring issues in criminology is the gender gap in offending. Most research to date has explained one aspect of this gap—women's lower rates of criminal involvement. However, there is another dimension to the gender gap in offending: differences in the kinds of crimes men and women specialize in. As previous research has shown, women offenders cluster in a relatively narrow range of "gender typical" offenses including petty theft, fraud, shoplifting, bad checks, and embezzlement (Steffensmeier, 1993; Chesney-Lind, 2004). Our analysis of NIBRS data reveals a similar pattern. Men make up the greatest proportion of offenders involved in every crime category but prostitution. The proportion of female offenders is greatest in "gender typical" offenses like prostitution, larceny, embezzlement, counterfeiting/forgery, and fraud (Belknap, 2007).

We use NIBRS incident, offense, and offender data to look at men and women's offending and co-offending patterns across a broad range of crimes and to examine the potential influence of gender on criminal opportunity. We hypothesized that the presence of a male co-offender will broaden the range of crimes women are involved in—especially those that call for coordination among several individuals or access to scarce resources. Our analysis yields findings that support this hypothesis. First, although the greatest proportion of both men and women commit crime as individuals, both men and women co-offend primarily with men. Indeed, all-female offender groups remain a statistical rarity. Second, and most crucial to our argument, the presence of at least one male co-offender extends the range of women's crime participation. Specifically, women are several times more likely to be involved in gender atypical offenses like robbery, drug trafficking, burglary, homicide, gambling, kidnapping,

and weapons offenses when they have at least one male co-offender compared to when they work alone or in a same-sex group.

With the possible exception of homicide and rape, these crimes involve resources offenders working alone might find difficult to access—tools and raw materials, information, specialized skill sets, and distribution channels, for example. In the case of burglary, theft from a coin-operated machine or device, and theft from/of a motor vehicle, would-be offenders need information about targets, tools to facilitate entry, a unique skill set for picking locks and evading detection, and the ability to fence stolen goods. In the case of robbery, extortion, and some forms of kidnapping (like that done for a ransom), an offender needs sociopsychological resources like confidence, aggressiveness, an outward appearance of toughness, and the ability to threaten and be taken seriously. Finally, for crimes like drug sales, weapons offenses, stolen property offenses, gambling, some types of arson (for-profit), and possession or distribution of pornography or obscene materials, offenders need access to illegal goods and/or the right (criminal) network connections to commit the crime.

Some of these resources (like lock-picking skills or illegal drugs to sell) are more tangible than others (like the ability to intimidate a target). These crimes are socially embedded to the extent that coordination among a number of individuals facilitates the illegal act. Furthermore, each of these offenses is gendered in the sense that they are male-dominated activities that men are most likely to do alone or with other men. Without access to male co-offenders, women's ability to participate in these crimes appears limited.

To better contextualize these findings, we did a comparative analysis of the impact co-offenders have on men's criminal involvement. Our findings lend support to the general claim that the presence of male co-offenders broadens criminal opportunities. Working with other men has a strong impact on men's offending patterns, increasing their likelihood of participation in a variety of crimes. While female co-offenders also increase men's likelihood of participation in a variety of offenses, their impact is not as strong.

The disproportionate impact of male co-offenders is also evident in crime categories with a seemingly straightforward pattern of co-offender effects. For example, an individual's likelihood of involvement in offenses like robbery, theft from a coin-operated machine or device, arson, burglary, and stolen property offenses is increased by the presence of a co-offender. This makes conceptual sense, given that successful completion of these offenses with the least risk of detection, apprehension, or victim resistance requires coordination among several people. Male co-offenders, however, appear to be especially important in this regard since the effect of male co-offenders on an individual's participation is particularly pronounced.

Male co-offenders' disproportionate impact is apparent elsewhere, too. Men are more likely to be involved in homicide, weapons offenses, and gambling when co-offenders of either gender are present. Among women, only the presence of male co-offenders increases their chances of involvement in these crimes. With kidnapping and three types of theft involving motor vehicles, male co-offenders increase both men and

women's likelihood of involvement, but female co-offenders do not. Interestingly, no crimes fit the inverse pattern, where female co-offenders (but not male co-offenders) increase men and women's likelihood of involvement.

Many of the offenses where male co-offenders have a disproportionate impact are similar to those that emerged from our analysis of women offenders. Burglary, theft from a coin-operated machine or device, and thefts involving motor vehicles all require specialized skill sets and/or tools to complete successfully. The ability to secure victim compliance is instrumental in robbery and kidnapping offenses (Miller, 1998; Wright & Decker, 1997). Access to criminal networks is necessary for profit-motivated arson and for stolen property offenses, gambling offenses, and weapons offenses. It's unsurprising, then, that working with male co-offenders—who are more likely to have access to these skills sets, tools, and other resources—increases men's and (especially) women's likelihood of involvement in these crimes (Maher, 1997; Messerschmidt, 1997; McCarthy & Hagan, 1995; Mullins & Wright, 2003).

Comparative analysis of co-offenders' effect(s) on men and women also yields interesting findings for a smaller subset of crimes where male co-offenders appear to be less important. Drug offenses and bribery/extortion, for example, are cases where women who co-offend with other women and men who co-offend with other men are less likely to be involved than those who offend alone. Women with one or more male co-offenders and men with one or more female co-offenders (i.e. those in mixed-gender groups), however, are more likely to be involved. This stands out from the other crimes analyzed thus far and deserves exploration beyond what our data allows us to address here. Does working in a mixed-gender group carry an advantage for these offenses? Do these crimes involve specific tasks that call for cooperative work between men and women offenders?

Our comparative analysis also indicates that for a very small number of offenses, female co-offenders impact men's offending as significantly as male co-offenders impact women's offending. With prostitution offenses, counterfeiting/forgery, and fraud, most offenders are less likely to be involved when co-offenders are present. Men who co-offend with one or more women, however, have higher chances of being involved in these offense categories. The dynamics that produce this trend deserve further exploration as well.

Conclusion

In this study, we explore the gender gap in offending with a particular focus on the kind of crimes women commit and women's representation across a variety of crime categories. Previous research has considered the extent to which women's lower rate of offending is the result of differences in socialization and moral development as well as the differential application of social control. This research is useful for accounting for gender differences in the overall rate of crime participation, but does not tell us much about the sex-segregated character of criminal offending. Specifically,

men are represented across a broader array of crime categories than women are. Indeed, the *type* of crimes women participate in has remained remarkably stable over time, even as their rate of participation has increased. Feminist pathways research suggests men and women follow different trajectories into crime and that this, in turn, may influence gender differences in the rate of participation and in the kind of participation.

Our study aims to further explore gender differences in the kinds of crime men and women participate in by considering how the presence of male co-offenders alters women's crime participation. We find that women are represented across a broader array of crimes when they co-offend with men, compared to when they co-offend with women or work alone. The presence of a male co-offender also increases the likelihood that men will participate in most crimes. To account for these findings, we build on Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) concept of differential opportunity structures and on theoretical arguments regarding the gendered character of street life and criminal opportunity advanced by feminist criminologists and labor market scholars (Connell 1987; Daly 1989; Maher, 1997; Messerschmidt, 1993, 1997; Miller, 1986, 1998).

Specifically, Cloward and Ohlin (1960) argue that there is not equality of opportunity when it comes to crime. In the same way that there are socially structured limitations in access to conventional opportunities like higher education, white-collar jobs, and adequate health care, there are also structural limitations in access to illicit opportunities. Cloward and Ohlin focused primarily on two structural barriers—social location and social relationships—and the ways they facilitated or blocked access to street gangs. It is not enough to merely want to join a gang, they argued, one must also live in or near an area where gangs are present and have network ties to gang members. Similarly, to commit white-collar crime, individuals must have access to a specific kind of social location (employment with fiduciary responsibility) and to social relationships that facilitate the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out financial crimes.

We carry this framework one step further by arguing that gender is a crucial intervening variable shaping both social location and social relationships. Indeed, feminist criminology and feminist labor market research reveals that even within shared social locations, gender moderates access to social networks and this, in turn, influences access to licit and illicit opportunities. Our results, when considered along with previous ethnographic research, suggest that women's underrepresentation in male-dominated crime categories such as robbery, drug trafficking, and gambling is at least partially a function of limited access. Men predominate in criminal networks and these networks often operate to exclude or minimize women's participation in crime (Maher, 1997; Miller, 1986; Messerschmidt, 1997; Miller, 1998; Mullins & Wright, 2003; Steffensmeier & Terry, 1986). In some instances, this appears to be based on men's overt preference to work with men rather than women. In her analysis of drug trafficking in New York City's "Bushwick" neighborhood, for example, Lisa Maher (1997) found men preferred not to hire women as street-level dealers or managers and engaged in a series of practices to keep them out of those jobs unless conditions rendered their participation absolutely necessary. This forced women to work in low-level drug market

jobs or low-profit, high-risk sex work instead. Jody Miller's research on gang-related crime (2000) and robbery (1998), Mullins and Wright's (2003) work on burglary, and other scholars' studies of serious crime (see Alarid et al., 1996; Baskin & Sommers 1998) yield similar findings about how gender operates simultaneously as a resource for crime and co-offending (for men) and obstructs criminal opportunities (for women).

Further research is needed to determine the extent to which limitations in women's access to male-dominated crimes are a function of other factors like offender preferences and the possibility of victimization. For example, studies of co-offending find co-offenders prefer partners with prior experience and "criminal capital" (Hochstetler, 2001; McCarthy et al., 1998). Given women's legacy of lower representation in crime categories like robbery, both men and women offenders may exhibit a preference for a male co-offender. Mullins and Wright's (2003) research on active burglars reveals most men prefer not to offend with women, which restricts women's access to co-offending opportunities. Some women in their sample, however, reported being coerced into taking part in or unknowingly brought along for a burglary (p. 820). The prevalence of women's victimization within the criminal underworld (see Kurtz, Surratt, Inciardi, & Kiley, 2004; Miller, 1986, 1998; Romensko & Miller, 1989) and the role of victimization in women's pathways into crime (see Belknap, 2000, 2007; Chesney-Lind, 2004; Daly, 1992) underscore the importance of exploring this as another potential operating factor.

Not all crime is the same, of course, and our theoretical account makes the most sense for economically motivated crimes and crimes requiring the coordination of members of a social network. For other crimes, particularly interpersonal violence, this model may not adequately account for men's and women's offending patterns. In this analysis, for example, male co-offender/s increase a woman's likelihood of involvement in homicide or rape/forcible sex offenses. Though there is evidence that men in criminal networks engage in practices that keep women peers from being involved in more serious violence (see Miller, 1998; Mullins et al., 2004), for crimes like these, it's plausible that something else is at work as well. Interaction with male criminal peers may erode the informal social controls that keep women from more serious offending, for example, or women may face pressure to prove themselves to criminal peers by engaging in or supporting acts of violence.

Our analysis lends support to the argument that differential opportunity structures explain in part the sex-segregated character of criminal offending, especially for crimes that involve access to network connections, learned skill sets, tools, and other concrete resources. Though NIBRS data allows us to look across a broad set of crime categories to get a picture of how male co-offenders affect women's crime participation, the limitations of the data underscore the importance of additional studies on this topic. First, we are mindful that women's representation across various crime categories may reflect gender bias in police reporting. Although we have demonstrated how women's representation in those categories changes with the presence of a male co-offender, we need additional research, particularly self-report data, to more accurately determine women's actual levels of participation, especially in crimes that are

thought to be gender atypical or where multiple stages of offending are involved. Though NIBRS captures all offenses related to one criminal “incident,” there are some crimes where those who are arrested are not a perfect representation of that network of offenders. Two individuals might be arrested for theft, for example, while their peers who distribute stolen goods evade detection. Second, our data cannot tell us what roles women play within a crime category. For example, we do not know if a woman arrested for robbery is a lookout, a getaway driver, or the person wielding a gun. We argue that the presence of men broadens women’s participation in male-dominated offenses. We are not suggesting women and men necessarily assume equal roles within these offense types. Indeed, ethnographic research would suggest that they do not.

Despite the limitations of our data, our analysis of co-offending underscores the significance of social networks and social location for understanding men’s and women’s patterns of criminal offending. Co-offending with men changes the character of women’s criminal involvement—allowing women to move into gender atypical offenses. This finding supports the arguments of feminist criminologists and others regarding the gendered character of street life and the claim that women are underrepresented in certain crime categories because of restricted access to opportunity structures. We are hopeful that this finding will stimulate additional research on criminal networks and opportunity structures, particularly regarding the ways that gender conditions access to both.

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Notes

1. See England’s (1992) summary of the gender gap in employment and labor market outcomes.
2. Gender is not the only factor that shapes access to illicit opportunities. As Caputo (2008) and Maher (1997) demonstrate, social location and individual resourcefulness are also important.
3. NIBRS is a national-level incident-based data collection system intended to eventually replace the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR). As of 2008, however, 39% of agencies (representing approximately 26% of the U.S. population and 26% of crime statistics collected by the UCR program) participated in the NIBRS program and submitted crime data to the FBI in NIBRS format. Compared to the UCR, NIBRS provides much more detailed information for offenses known to the police, arrests made, victims, and victim–offender relationships for serious offenses and information on a larger set of offenses. For a more detailed description see Chilton, Major, and Prophet (1998) and U.S. Department of Justice (2005).
4. Whether or not these offenses should be called “white-collar” offenses is a subject of debate. Reports from FBI statisticians sometimes refer to fraud offenses, extortion, embezzlement,

- bribery, and counterfeiting/forgery offenses in NIBRS as white-collar offenses (see Barnett, 2005 for an example). However, more in-depth analyses of the nature of these offenses and occupational positioning of offenders suggest that they are better classified in more complex ways—either as occupational crimes or crimes against property (see Daly 1989).
5. We use the terms “gender typical” and “gender atypical” to capture differences in the types of crime that women and men typically/frequently commit. This concept builds on, but is slightly different from, what Joanne Belknap calls “gender-related” and “gender-neutral” crimes. For Belknap, a gender-related crime is one that is more likely to be committed by a man/woman, while a gender-neutral one is equally likely to be committed by a man/woman (2007, p. 96). In this analysis we use the term “gender typical” to refer to crimes that are female-gender-related and those that are gender-neutral but account for large portions of women’s offenses/arrests. We use the term “gender atypical” to refer to crimes that are male-gender-related and/or account for a small portion of women’s offenses.
 6. In 2002, agencies from 23 states submitted data in NIBRS format. In 2003, agencies from 26 states submitted. In 2004, agencies in 30 states submitted. In 2005, agencies in 32 states submitted. In 2006, 2007, and 2008, agencies in 35 states submitted NIBRS data.
 7. 24.5% versus 27.7% in 2002, 24.7% versus 23.5% in 2003, 23.8% versus 25.3% in 2004, 25.2% versus 23.8% in 2005, 24.9% versus 23.7% in 2006, 26.0% versus 24.2% in 2007, and 26.4% versus 24.5% in 2008.
 8. “Known” offenders refer to all (alleged) adult and juvenile offenders reported to the police whether they were officially charged or not.

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