

PART IX

Feminist Theories: Gender, Power, and Crime

For much of its history, criminology as a discipline focused almost exclusively on crimes committed by men. Most empirical studies used data only on male offenders, and theories were constructed to explain why boys and men broke the law (Belknap, 1996; Leonard, 1982; Sharp, 2009; Simon, 1975; Smart, 1977; Steffensmeier and Broidy, 2001). Part of the neglect of females stemmed from the disproportionate involvement of males in crime, especially serious offenses, and from the overwhelming maleness of the prison population. Women's criminality thus was seen as tangential to the crime problem—as not really worth investigating and as having no implications for the understanding of male's illegality. A more salient reason for the failure to consider gender in criminological analyses, however, was that, as was the case in other academic disciplines, criminologists were nearly all men: males were studying and writing about males.

Equally disquieting, on those infrequent occasions when female criminals received scholarly attention, the resulting analyses were decidedly sexist. Although exceptions existed (Steffensmeier and Clark, 1980), prominent scholars often viewed female criminality as a departure from "natural" female behavior—that is, maternal, passive, and gentle. What would cause such "odd," "unfemale" behavior? Female lawbreakers, it was thought, could only have contravened their feminine nature because of a pathological defect in their

biological makeup or within their psyche (Klein, 1973; Smart, 1977). The traditional female role thus was seen as normal; any departure, such as crime, was seen as abnormal. In this perspective, social factors, especially gender-based inequality, were accorded little or no causal importance in the behavior of women—or, for that matter, in the behavior of men.

Starting in the 1970s and continuing to this day, such male-centered, asocial theorizing has been challenged as sexist and as theoretically impoverished. A revisionist approach, which elevated gender to the center of theoretical analysis, was fueled in important ways by the emergence of the Women's Movement and its fight for equality between the sexes. This movement had two noteworthy effects. First, as educational and occupational opportunities broadened, increasing numbers of women entered the field of criminology, bringing with them fresh insights rooted in personal histories unlike those of male criminologists. Second, the Women's Movement focused attention on the social situation of women vis-à-vis men, including such crucial issues as gender-based differences in socialization and inequalities in power. For many criminologists—especially female scholars—the idea that gender was not implicated in crime and criminal justice now seemed incongruous.

The rejection of male-centered traditional criminology has resulted in the emergence of the

competing paradigm of "feminist criminology." In this approach, sex is not simply another variable added to a multivariate empirical analysis (usually as a "control" variable). Rather, gender relations become central to understanding human behavior, including crime. There is a special focus on how crime is related to gender-based inequality between males and females. Finally, to a greater or lesser extent, feminist analyses—similar to critical criminology—are oriented to the production of knowledge so as to unmask and change the structural relationships in society that result in the discrimination against and the oppression of women (see Chesney-Lind, 2006; Daly, 2010; Daly and Chesney-Lind, 1988; see also Miller and Mullins, 2006; Ollenburger and Moore, 1998; Sharp, 2009).

Feminist criminologists directed attention to several major questions about the causes of crime. First, how can we explain female crime? Some criminologists argue that traditional crime theories are equally applicable to males and females (e.g., Jensen and Eve, 1976; Smith and Paternoster, 1987), but feminist criminologists argue that new theories need to be developed to explain female crime or that traditional theories need to be revised in ways that accord a central role to gender. Second, how can we explain the gender gap in crime and, related to this, changes in the gender gap over time? Gender is one of the strongest correlates of crime, with rates of serious crime being many times higher among males than females (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 2004; Steffensmeier and Allan, 2000). The size of the gender gap has decreased for certain crimes in recent decades (see Heimer, 2000), although there is some debate over the extent to which this is due to such things as changing police practices (see Chesney-Lind, 2006; Lauritsen et al., 2009; Rennison, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2009). Until the 1970s and 1980s, little effort was devoted to explaining these facts. Third, what role does gender play in the generation of male crime? While traditional theories were developed with males in mind, such theories devote little attention

to the role of gender in producing male crime. Finally, how does gender "intersect" with race/ethnicity and class to affect crime (see Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Simpson and Gibbs, 2005)? Feminist criminologists have increasingly come to argue that a full understanding of crime requires that we consider gender by race/ethnicity by class groups (e.g., examine poor, white females separately from middle-class, African American females).

It is important to emphasize, however, that there is a diversity of thinking within feminist criminology, as well as a dynamism that leads to continuing theoretical developments (for an analysis of recent contributions, see Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 2004; Daly, 1997, 2010; Davidson and Chesney-Lind, 2009; Miller and Mullins, 2006, 2009; Sharp 2009). Over the past three decades, the most poignant split has been between "liberal feminists," who focus on the salience of sex-role socialization and equality of opportunities, and feminists who take a more "critical" or "radical" approach, emphasizing structural inequality in power between men and women. These latter theorists see male and female crime as fundamentally linked to patriarchy—a deeply entrenched system in which males exert dominance through their power (financial and, if necessary, physical) and through a hegemonic culture that defines male ways of doing things as "normal" and male control of women as legitimate. In general, liberal feminist views had the most powerful influence in the earlier days of feminist criminological scholarship, while more radical approaches currently direct most theory and research within the feminist paradigm.

Liberation and Crime

As the Women's Movement grew in strength and swept across the nation, it was tempting to conclude that substantial equality between men and women was within reach. Although gender socialization and inequalities ultimately would prove

difficult to transform, significant social changes did occur. Almost on a daily basis, it seemed, women were breaking one social or occupational barrier after another. Witnessing these changes in progress, it became almost inevitable to ask, how will this refashioning of the experiences of women affect their criminality? For those with a sociological imagination who saw male crime as rooted in their social experiences, the answer seemed clear. If girls were raised like boys and if in their life course they had the same opportunities as boys, then it seemed logical that their behavior—including their criminal conduct—would become more like that of boys. In short, women's liberation ultimately would result in "equality on the wanted list."

These ideas informed Rita Simon's (1975) important contribution, *Women and Crime* (see also Simon, 2002). "If one assumes that the changes in women's roles, in their perceptions of self, and in their desire for expanded horizons that began in the latter part of the sixties will not be abated," observed Simon (1975: 1), "then we would expect that one of the major by-products of the women's movement will be a high proportion of women who pursue careers in crime." Simon contended that females' entry into the job market would prove particularly consequential because it would give them access to opportunities for "financial and white-collar crimes," such as "fraud, embezzlement, larceny, and forgery" (p. 2). She rejected the idea, however, that women's participation in violent crimes would increase. Arguing that women committed violent crimes largely because of the "frustration, the subservience, and the dependency that have characterized the traditional female role," Simon reasoned that occupational advancement would reduce these "feelings of being victimized and exploited" and thus would blunt "their motivation to kill" (p. 2).

This liberation thesis was stated even more boldly and eloquently by Freda Adler in her classic book, *Sisters in Crime*, which carried the revealing subtitle *The Rise of the New Female Criminal* (1975 [Chapter 26 in this part]). Adler proclaimed that

women were not only committing more crimes but also were engaging in traditionally male offenses. She noted that between 1960 and 1972, female arrests increased 168 percent for burglary, 277 percent for robbery, 280 percent for embezzlement, and over 300 percent for larceny (1975: 16). She linked these dramatic shifts in female criminality to the transformation of gender roles that was then occurring in American society. "Women are no longer indentured to the kitchens, baby carriages, or bedrooms of America," observed Adler. "Allowed their freedom for the first time, women—by the tens of thousands—have chosen to desert those kitchens and plunge exuberantly into the formerly all-male quarter of the working world" (p. 12). But there was also a "shady aspect of liberation": the rise of new female criminals. "In the same way that women are demanding equal opportunity in fields of legitimate endeavor," concluded Adler, "a similar number of determined women are forcing their way into the world of major crimes" (p. 13).

The work by Adler and Simon was critically important in bringing gender into criminological discourse and in prompting sustained research on women's criminality (Hartman and Sundt, 2010). Still, their versions of the liberation thesis have been subjected to much critical scrutiny. Many criminologists, including later feminist scholars, have rejected this thesis (see, e.g., Belknap, 1996; Daly and Chesney-Lind, 1988; Heimer, 2000; Steffensmeier and Allan, 1996). Although several concerns have been voiced, three criticisms of the liberation thesis seem most important to review.

First, the empirical predictions of the thesis have not proven correct (see Heimer, 2000; Steffensmeier and Allan, 1996; Steffensmeier et al., 2005). While the percentage of all arrests involving females has increased a good deal since the 1960s, the largest increases involve the crimes of larceny, fraud, and forgery—which include the traditionally "female" offenses of shoplifting, passing "bad" checks, and welfare fraud. The increased involvement of females in these offenses began well before the women's

movement became popular in the late 1960s. And certain data suggest that arrest statistics may exaggerate the increased involvement of females in crime. In particular, some of the increase in female arrests may be attributable to changes in police practices—with the police becoming more likely to arrest females.

Second, the liberation thesis implied (if not stated directly in places) that females' labor market participation and achievement of equality across a range of social opportunities would foster criminality. The data showed, however, that gender equality's "dark side" was not to create offenders. Instead, crime was more common among those who did *not* achieve equality—among women who were trapped in economically marginal positions (Davidson and Chesney-Lind, 2009; Giordano et al., 1981; Heimer, 2000; Wolfe et al., 1984). True equality, therefore, might well reduce, rather than increase, women's criminal involvement.

Third and relatedly, the focus of the liberation thesis on gender socialization and occupational opportunities did not consider the structural roots of the inequality between men and women. To be sure, as liberal feminists, scholars such as Adler and Simon were critical of the barriers that they and other women faced. More radical feminists, however, contended that the analyses of liberation theorists did not get to the core of the problem: that patriarchy—a system of men's dominance of women—underlay how women were socialized, why women experienced discrimination in the workplace, and why women were consigned—often alone and with children—to marginal economic positions. A feminist theory of crime, they claimed, thus must move beyond discussions of liberation to illuminate how power affects the crime and victimization of women.

Patriarchy and Crime

Radical feminism, which places patriarchy at the center of its analysis, has had a widespread influence on criminological scholarship (see Belknap,

1996; Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Davidson and Chesney-Lind, 2009; Groot, 2010; Sharp, 2009; Simpson, 1989). Within criminal justice, for example, it has spawned research on gender inequities in sentencing and on how the law is used to reaffirm traditional, subordinate female roles and to control women's sexuality (e.g., the "double-standard" in the juvenile justice system of institutionalizing "promiscuous" girls but not boys) (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 2004; Daly and Tonry, 1997). This perspective also illuminated the importance of investigating the victimization of women by men. Studies showed how male violence against women—such as nonstranger rape and the battering of intimates—was traditionally subject to virtually no sanctions by the state. Such violence was thus conceptualized as a means by which men dominate women and, in doing so, reproduce the existing patriarchal system (Daly and Chesney-Lind, 1988).

In rejecting male-centered criminology, radical feminism also argued that there would be a need to develop gender-specific theories. Because they neglected gender and ignored the role of patriarchy as the underlying social context for behavior, traditional theories were incapable of explicating the gendered experiences that were central to a full understanding of female (and male) criminality. Radical feminism helped spur a number of "qualitative" studies of female crime, wherein researchers observed and conducted intensive interviews with female offenders (e.g., Bottcher, 2001; Daly, 1992; Gilfus, 1992; Giordano et al., 2002; Miller and Mullins, 2006). Such studies shed much light on the social world of these offenders, and contributed to the development of gender-specific theories as well as to the revision of traditional theories.

Meda Chesney-Lind (1989 [Chapter 27 in this part]) provides an important example of a "feminist theory" in which considerations of patriarchy illuminate the special causes of female delinquency. She observes, for example, that "girls are frequently the recipients of violence and sexual abuse" (p. 23). Patriarchy is conducive to such

abuse because females in general are objectified as "sexual property." "In a society that idealizes inequality in male/female relationships and venerates youth in women, girls are easily defined as sexually attractive by older men" (p. 24). Escape from this abuse, however, is not easy. Girls who run away often are returned to their homes by the state—a practice that ignores the girls' genuine fears of continued victimization and serves to confirm parental, patriarchal authority. The only option thus for many abused girls is to seek refuge in the "streets," where they must commit crimes to survive. But patriarchy shapes their experience and victimization here as well. "It is no accident that [these] girls . . . get involved in criminal activities that exploit their sexual object status," comments Chesney-Lind (for similar accounts and research, see Daly, 1992; Gilfus, 1992). American society has defined as desirable youthful, physically perfect women. This means that girls on the streets, who have little else of value to trade, are encouraged to use this "resource" (p. 24). It is noteworthy that considerations of sexual abuse, its relation to patriarchy, and its etiological role in crime have been virtually absent in the major theories of crime authored by males.

The work of Chesney-Lind illustrates what is perhaps the most prominent theme in feminist theories of crime: the idea that the oppression of women, including their criminal victimization, is a major cause of female offending (Daly, 2010; Davidson and Chesney-Lind, 2009; Groot, 2010; Miller and Mullins, 2006; Sharp, 2009). In particular, some females engage in crime in an effort to cope with or overcome certain of the problems they face—with many of these problems stemming from the gender inequality that characterizes patriarchal society.

Gendering Traditional Theories

Along with the rise of gender-specific theories, there have also been numerous efforts to apply traditional theories to the explanation of female

crime and the gender gap in crime. These efforts typically find that many of the variables that explain male crime also explain female crime. Such variables include association with delinquent peers, beliefs favorable to crime, low social and self-control, strains, the perceived costs and benefits of crime, and opportunities for crime. In fact, reviews of the research have found that there is a great deal of overlap between the leading causes of female and male crime (Agnew, 2009; Andrews and Bonta, 1994; De Coster et al., 2013; Hubbard and Pratt, 2002; Lanctot and Le Blanc, 2002; Steffensmeier and Broidy, 2001). (Relatedly, the conditions that predict the success in reducing crime for males are similar to those for females [Dowden and Andrews, 1999]). Further, certain of these causes go a long way toward explaining the gender gap in crime. In particular, studies suggest that most of the gender gap in crime is due to the fact that males are more likely than females to associate with delinquent peers, be low in self-control, be low in social control, and so on (e.g., Agnew, 2009; De Coster et al., 2013; Jensen, 2003; Moffitt et al., 2001; Rowe et al., 1995; Zahn, 2009). Traditional theories, then, have much to say about the relationship between gender and crime.

At the same time, some criminologists argue that these theories are inadequate for several reasons (see Belknap and Holsinger, 2006; Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 2004; Davidson and Chesney-Lind, 2009; Lanctot and Le Blanc, 2002; Miller and Mullins, 2006, 2009; Sharp, 2009; Steffensmeier and Broidy, 2001). While many of the same factors cause male and female crime, there is some evidence that certain factors have a larger effect on crime among males or females. For example, several studies indicate that association with delinquent peers is more likely to lead to crime among males (see Giordano, 2009; McGloin and Dipietro, 2013; Mears et al., 1998; Piquero et al., 2005). Early puberty, however, is more likely to lead to crime among females (Fishbein et al., 2009). Traditional theories do not explain why this is the case. Also, there is evidence that certain gender-related factors neglected by

traditional theories may help explain female and/or male crime. Such factors include the nature of one's gender identity, experiences with gender discrimination, differences in physical size and strength, romantic disputes and partner abuse, the timing of menstruation, and—as indicated above—sexual abuse (e.g., Belknap and Holsinger, 2006; Bottcher, 2001; Eitle, 2002; Haynie, 2003; Steffensmeier and Allan, 1996; Zahn, 2009). Finally, while traditional theories may state that males are more likely than females to possess those factors that contribute to crime, they usually do not explain why this is the case. Why, for example, are males more likely to associate with delinquent peers or be low in self-control? Given these inadequacies, many criminologists have embarked upon the task of “gendering” traditional theories; that is, devoting explicit attention to the ways in which gender might impact the causal forces identified by these theories (see Daly and Chesney-Lind, 1988; De Coster et al., 2013; Lanctot and Le Blanc, 2002; Steffensmeier and Broidy, 2001; Zahn, 2009). In particular, how might gender affect the nature of, exposure to, and reaction to these forces? There have now been attempts to “gender” virtually all of the traditional theories described in earlier sections of this book.

There have been several recent efforts to apply biopsychological theories to the explanation of female (and male) crime and the gender gap in crime (see Fishbein et al., 2009, for an overview). The most prominent is that of Moffitt et al. (2001). They find that most of the gender difference in crime is due to the fact that females are less likely to possess the personality traits of low constraint and negative emotionality (see Chapter 6; see also De Coster et al., 2013; Nofziger, 2010). They argue that while these traits are in part socially produced, they are also heavily influenced by biological factors—such as genetic inheritance and exposure to biological harms such as head injuries. Other biological factors have also been used to help explain sex differences in crime—although such factors are typically said to work in combination with social factors. For example, females who experience

puberty at an early age are more likely to engage in delinquency, especially acts such as drinking under age, truancy, and disorderly conduct. This is partly because their early physical maturity increases the likelihood they will get involved in romantic relationships, associate with delinquent peers, and experience conflict with their parents (Fishbein et al., 2009; Haynie, 2003).

Broidy and Agnew (1997) have applied “general strain theory” to the explanation of female crime and gender differences in crime (see Agnew, Chapter 16; Agnew, 2009; De Coster et al., 2013; Kaufman, 2009). Based on a detailed review of the existing theoretical and empirical literature, they state that the gender gap in crime cannot be explained by arguing that males experience more strains than females. Males and females experience similar amounts of strains; in fact, some studies indicate that females experience more strains than males. Instead, Broidy and Agnew explain the gender gap in three ways. First, males are more likely to experience strains *conducive to crime*, such as criminal victimization. Second, males are more likely to react to strains with moral outrage, while females more often react with a combination of anger, depression, and guilt—which may be less conducive to other-directed crime. Finally, males are more likely to cope with strains and negative emotions through crime. This is because they are higher in negative emotionality, lower in constraint, lower in social control, lower in social support, more likely to hold beliefs favorable to crime, and more likely to associate with delinquent peers—among other things. Broidy and Agnew explain the above differences in terms of gender differences in such things as social position and power, socialization, and identity. Broidy and Agnew also attempt to explain why some females do engage in crime. Here they argue that many females do experience strains conducive to crime, with many of these strains being linked to gender inequality and oppression. Such strains include sexual abuse, gender discrimination, and partner/dating violence.

Several theorists have applied social learning and differential association theory to the examination of gender and crime (see Agnew, 2009; Giordano, 2009; Heimer, 1996; Jensen, 2003; McGloin and Dipietro, 2013; Mears et al., 1998; Simons et al., 2002). A key assertion of these theories is that association with delinquent peers increases the likelihood of crime, with peers being the major source for learning crime. Some theorists, however, argue that gender influences the relationship between delinquent peers and crime (for overviews, see Giordano, 2009; McGloin and Dipietro, 2013). Females are less often exposed to delinquent peers, partly due to their close supervision by parents and others. Females are also less likely to respond to such association by engaging in crime, partly because of their stronger moral commitment and the constraining effect of female "typescripts" (rules about how females should think and behave). However, association with male friends and romantic partners who are delinquent has a strong effect on female crime.

Another example of the gendered application of social learning and differential association theory is provided in the work of Heimer and De Coster (1999; see also De Coster et al., 2013). Heimer and De Coster (1999) embrace the central insight of social learning/differential association theory (Part IV) that "violent definitions" (i.e., beliefs approving of the use of violence) are related to violent behavior. Boys exhibit more violence because they are more likely to learn violent definitions. Their key insight is that the causal factors that produce violent definitions differ for males and females and are rooted in gender position and associated cultural meanings. For males, violent definitions are learned when parents do not directly control them and supervise the degree to which they associate with aggressive companions. For females, violence is tied more closely to the quality of interpersonal relationships and to patriarchal beliefs. Feminists often portray women as being "more concerned

than males with interpersonal relationships" (pp. 284–285). Consistent with this view, females are more likely to learn violent definitions when there is a breakdown of "indirect control" or emotional bonds with the family. Furthermore, girls who embrace traditional patriarchal values are less violent because such conduct is inconsistent with the "meaning of being female" (p. 303).

Costello and Mederer (2003) apply control theory to the explanation of gender differences in crime (see also Agnew, 2009; De Coster et al., 2013; Hagan et al., 1987, 2002; Heimer, 1996; Lanctot and Le Blanc, 2002; Payne, 2009). Being control theorists, they do not ask why men commit so much crime. Their crime requires no special explanation, since it is "natural" for people to pursue their self-interests in the most expedient manner available—including crime. Rather, they ask "Why don't women commit as much crime as men?" (Costello and Mederer, 2003: 88). They argue that the answer is that women are more controlled than men. Women are socialized to exercise more self-control and show more concern for others. Women are more closely supervised and are more likely to be sanctioned by others when they display aggressive behavior. And women are more involved in childcare and more closely tied to the household, which limits their opportunities for crime. Costello and Mederer argue that the greater control of women stems from their ability to bear and nurse children. Women's historic role as the primary caregivers of infants tied them to the home and led to the equation of femininity with self-control and concern for others. Costello and Mederer, however, argue that this arrangement has become increasingly dysfunctional for women, and that "men must become more like women and share the constraints of caretaking" (2003: 90). This will allow women to better pursue goals that are not tied to the family and will reduce the crime of men.

Criminologists have revised still other traditional crime theories in an effort to better understand the relationship between gender and

crime (Agnew, 2009). Such theories include labeling theory (see Bartusch and Matsueda, 1996; Braithwaite, 1989), deterrence and rational choice theories (Blackwell and Eschholz, 2002; Richards and Tittle, 1981; Tibbetts and Herz, 1996), life-course theories (Daly, 2010; Davidson and Chesney-Lind, 2009; Giordano, 2010), and the routine activities perspective (Schwartz and Pitts, 1995). In all such cases, these theories are combined with feminist insights to better understand why females engage in crime and why males have higher rates of crime.

Masculinities and Crime: Doing Gender

In *Masculinities and Crime*, James Messerschmidt (1993 [Chapter 28]) challenges both traditional and feminist criminological theories of criminal conduct. Traditional theories may be male-centered, but they do not examine how “being male” is related to crime. Men might be strained, lack control, and differentially associate with peers, but how their gender is implicated in their behavior is not analyzed. Feminists have brought gender to the center of criminological analysis, but their vision of men tends to be stereotypical and unidimensional. In particular, when the lens of patriarchy is employed, males are conceptualized as dominant. This approach, however, ignores the considerable variations among men, especially in how they seek to affirm their masculinity.

To Messerschmidt, criminality and masculinity are intertwined. He argues that in social situations, men are constantly confronted with the task of establishing their manliness. When legitimate means of demonstrating masculinity are denied, crime becomes a resource to accomplish this task. Criminal behavior thus is best seen as a way of “doing gender.”

Messerschmidt recognizes that males “do gender” largely within the confines of “hegemonic masculinity”—the prevailing idealized cultural conception which defines “masculinity”

as involving the dominance of women, heterosexuality, the pursuit of sexual gratification, independence, and so on (1993: 82). Still, this general masculinity is specified by the intersection of age, class, and race. Different “masculinities”—tied to structural locations—thus emerge and have varying impacts on the rate and content of criminal behavior. For example, middle-class white boys often engage in petty delinquency to show their masculinity, but they also have access to conventional ways to “do gender,” such as through success in school and, later, in the labor market. In contrast, lower-class minority boys, who face structural barriers and dismal futures, are more likely to seek to demonstrate their masculinity through repeated robberies and acts of violence. As Messerschmidt notes, the pursuit of these different masculinities both reflects and serves to reproduce the existing class, racial, and gender inequalities in society.

More recently, Messerschmidt (1999, 2004) has suggested that the role of the “body” be considered in the complex interplay between masculinity and crime. In fact, he argues for a “body friendly criminology” (1999: 200; see also Daly, 2010: 239–240). He notes that “our bodies constrain or facilitate social action and, therefore, mediate and influence social practices.” For adolescent males, for example, physical size and strength are sources of opportunity, and they structure the nature of both conformity and crime. Being large and strong allows youths to accomplish or show their masculinity by playing sports (such as football) and through heterosexual activities. It might also enable a youth, however, to gain a reputation for being an effective fighter and provide access to a gang. Alternatively, boys small in size and stature may be defined as “wimps” and be precluded from showing masculinity through sports, dating, or gang conflict. They may be pushed into a painful “subordinate masculinity,” and their deviance may take a different form, such as preying on even more vulnerable youths (e.g., victimizing

younger female relatives in private spaces). In any event, by introducing the concept of "the body," Messerschmidt continues his attempt to specify the conditions under which males "do gender" through crime.

Messerschmidt's focus on masculinities and on "crime as doing gender" is an important contribution that is prompting scholarly investigations (see, e.g., Gadd, 2000; Hood-Williams, 2001; Jefferson and Carlen, 1996; Miller and Mullins, 2006; Mullins, 2006, 2010). Field studies have provided some support for his argument that crime is sometimes used as a device for "accomplishing masculinity," and certain survey studies suggest that threats to one's masculine status increase the likelihood of crime (e.g., Jakupcak, 2003). His theory, however, risks *overpredicting* crime among men. By linking masculinity so closely to crime, the theory is confronted with explaining the thorny reality that most men do not commit crime most of the time (Hood-Williams, 2001). In addition, there is some controversy over how Messerschmidt's perspective might explain female crime (e.g., Heimer, 1994).

Messerschmidt (2002, 2004) argues that in certain social environments and situations, females may construct and embrace a "bad girl" femininity that involves crime. This is said to be true of many female gang members. To quote Messerschmidt (2002: 464, 470)

What is usually considered atypical behavior by girls outside the social situation of the gang is, in fact, normalized within the social context of inter-neighborhood conflict; gang-girl violence in this situation is encouraged, permitted, and privileged by both boys and girls. . . . Even though gang girls situationally engage in similar behavior as gang boys (physically violent practices), this does not . . . challenge their feminine identity. . . . In short, for many adolescent girls and young women, 'acting bad' and femininity are *not* incompatible. (our emphasis)

Miller (2002), however, argues that most gang girls embrace a masculine identity, as reflected in the title of her book about female gangs, *One of the Guys* (Miller, 2001). She explains this by stating that "it makes sense that young women would strive to adopt a gang identity as 'one of the guys,' particularly given the status and respect available within gangs to youths who exhibit characteristics typically associated with the highly valued cultural construction of gang masculinities" (Miller, 2002: 445; see also Daly, 2010). In any event, both Messerschmidt and Miller argue that both males and females sometimes use crime as a device for "accomplishing gender"—that is, for constructing and demonstrating their particular conceptions of masculinity (and perhaps femininity) in certain situations.

An Integrated Theory of Gender and Crime

In sum, a variety of theories have been used to explain female (and male) crime and the gender gap in crime. These include feminist theories, the traditional theories of crime described in previous sections of this book, and revised versions of these traditional theories. One might wonder whether it is possible to integrate certain of the theories to develop a more general theory of gender and crime. Steffensmeier and Allan (1996, 2000; see also Schwartz, 2010) have attempted such an integration, and their "gendered theory of female offending" is described in Chapter 29.

They begin by noting that traditional theories of crime help us understand female offending and the gender gap in crime, but these theories have their shortcomings. Among other things, they do not explain why the gender gap is largest for serious crimes and they shed little light on gender differences in the "context" of offending (e.g., the fact that female offending more often involves relational

concerns). Steffensmeier and Allan then develop an integrated theory that draws on both traditional theories and feminist perspectives. In particular, their theory considers many of the causal factors identified in traditional theories of crime—such as level of self-control, association with criminal others, the perceived costs and benefits of crime, and routine activities. At the same time, their theory describes the many ways in which gender influences the individual's standing on these factors and sometimes the effect of these factors on crime. Further, their focus on gender leads them to identify additional factors that impact crime, such as the opportunities women have to “exploit sex as an illegal money-making service” and “the consequences of motherhood and childcare” (Steffensmeier and Allan, 1996: 474).

Their theory is designed to explain female and male offending, the gender gap in

offending, and gender differences in the context of offending. While their theory may not explicitly incorporate all of the factors said to affect female offending and the gender gap, their theory is the most ambitious attempt to date to fully account for the relationship between gender and crime. Additional attempts at integration are under way, with certain of these taking on one of the great challenges of crime theories—describing the ways in which gender intersects with race/ethnicity and class to affect crime. There has not been much research in this area, but the few studies that have been done suggest that gender must be considered along with class and race/ethnicity if we are to fully explain crime (e.g., Bernard, 2013; Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 2004; Daly, 2010; Simpson and Elis, 1995; Simpson and Gibbs, 2006; Zahn, 2009).

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26. Sisters in Crime

Freda Adler

In 1938, Clifford Shaw of the Chicago school of criminology published *Brothers in Crime*, a work whose title revealed his central focus on male crime. Nearly four decades later, Freda Adler (1975) signified a break with this perspective by naming her book *Sisters in Crime*. Indeed, her scholarship helped to ensure that no future generation of criminologists would ignore gender in the study of criminal behavior.

Adler's most provocative claim was that the movement to achieve equality between the sexes would result in increasing female crime, especially in domains previously dominated by men. This liberation thesis underestimated the tenacity of existing gender roles and inequality. Gender differences in socialization and opportunities were not swept away and, in many ways, boys and girls continued to be raised in different social worlds. Accordingly, the "new female criminals" that Adler saw gathering on the horizon did not, at least in large numbers, materialize (see, however, Alarid et al., 1996).

Adler's work, however, played a major role in directing the attention of criminologists to the gender gap in crime and changes in this gap over time. Also, Adler challenged previous attempts to pathologize female offenders. Instead, she illuminated the way in which social experiences shape the life-choices, including the choice of crime, that women make. She developed the case that the major barriers to females' participation in crime are not biological but social. While later criminologists, especially radical feminists, may find the specifics

of Adler's liberation thesis problematic, she still deserves much credit for ushering in a feminist paradigm that shifted attention away from the supposed abnormalities of individual female offenders and toward an appreciation of the social circumstances in which women are enmeshed.

Further, it may be premature to dismiss the possibility that long-term changes in gender roles will influence the criminal participation of women. A strong liberation thesis may be untenable, but it is not farfetched to theorize that the incremental transformation of gender roles—a transformation that affects the social experiences of women across class and racial boundaries—might be implicated in the amount and content of women's criminality. Indeed, several recent accounts relate female crime to the adoption of nontraditional gender roles and identities—although none of these accounts portray female criminals as "liberated." Rather, they argue that some females assume roles and adopt identities that allow for crime in certain situations (e.g., Messerschmidt, 2002; Miller, 2001). In terms of social change, Adler's *Sisters in Crime* is still a "young" book. It will be interesting to revisit her ideas a half century from now to see if she has proven more prophetic than we now imagine.

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Women are no longer indentured to the kitchens, baby carriages, or bedrooms of America. The skein of myths about women is unraveling, the chains have been pried loose, and there will be no turning back to the days when women found it necessary to justify their existence by producing babies or cleaning houses. Allowed their freedom for the first time, women—by the tens of thousands—have chosen to desert those kitchens, and plunge exuberantly into the formerly all-male quarters of the working world. . . .

In the same way that women are demanding equal opportunity in fields of legitimate endeavor, a similar number of determined women are forcing their way into the world of major crimes. . . .

It is this segment of women who are pushing into—and succeeding at—crimes which were formerly committed by males only. Females like Marge are now being found not only robbing banks single-handedly, but also committing assorted armed robberies, muggings, loan-sharking operations, extortion, murders, and a wide variety of other aggressive, violence-oriented crimes which previously involved only men. . . .

By every indicator available, female criminals appear to be surpassing males in the rate of

increase for almost every major crime. Although males continue to commit the greater absolute number of offenses, it is the women who are committing those same crimes at yearly rates of increase now running as high as six and seven times greater than those for males. . . .

In summary, what we have described is a gradual but accelerating social revolution in which women are closing many of the gaps, social and criminal, that have separated them from men. The closer they get, the more alike they look and act. This is not to suggest that there are no inherent differences. Differences do exist and will be elaborated later in this book, but it seems clear that those differences are not of prime importance in understanding female criminality. The simplest and most accurate way to grasp the essence of women's changing patterns is to discard dated notions of femininity. That is a role that fewer and fewer women are willing to play. In the final analysis, women criminals are human beings who have basic needs and abilities and opportunities. Over the years these needs have not changed, nor will they. But women's abilities and opportunities have multiplied, resulting in a kaleidoscope of changing patterns whose final configuration will be fateful for all of us. . . .

Social Differences

Whatever equality may have existed between Adam and Eve before the Fall, there was a clear distinction in their social roles afterward. Adam was thenceforth required to till the soil and earn his bread by the sweat of his brow; Eve was condemned to painful childbirth and total submission to her husband. In one august decree, her reproductive role and social role were established and fixed. To be a woman, then as now, meant not just to be a distinctive blend of physiological and psychological characteristics. It meant and means that one is perceived differently, treated differently, responded to differently, and the subject of different expectations. Given the varying social forces that weigh unequally on the sexes in

creatures as culture-dependent as humans, it seems clear that the resulting differences in behavior owe more to wide disparities in social-role than to the narrow differences in physical and psychological makeup.

The answer to the nursery-rhyme question, "what are little girls made of?" is revealing at several different levels. The list of ingredients—"sugar and spice and everything nice"—contains both a biological theory and a social demand. We are told, first of all, that little girls are good because of their inherent structure, and secondly, that they had better be good if they hope to enjoy the status of femininity and avoid the social disapproval which accompanies deviancy. Little boys, too, are under social pressure, but of a different kind. They are made of "snakes and snails and puppy-dog tails"—a combination designed to contrast mischievously and dynamically with the inert and saccharine constitution of their female counterparts. They, too, are saddled with social and presumed biological imperatives which compress the wide-ranging human potential for variation into the narrow confines of social-role expectation. There is hardly any important individual or social area—play, personal hygiene, manners, discipline, dependency, dress, activity, career, sexual activity, aggressiveness, etc.—which has not been polarized and institutionalized as a sex-role difference. While it is true that men have tended to stigmatize women as a group, deviation from social standards is even worse—e.g., the "effeminate" man and the "masculine" woman.

Traditionally, the little girl and later the woman are confined to a low-level of noise, dirt, disorder, and physical aggression. They must be obedient, dependent, modest about their bodies, and avoid sex play as well as rough and tumble competition. But life is not all no-no's: for her pains she is allowed to turn more readily to others for gratification, to cry when hurt, to be spontaneously affectionate, and to achieve less in school and work. Whatever the natural inclination of the sexes may be, society

does not depend on spontaneous acquisition of the profile it considers desirable: besides identification with the parent of the same sex, which is probably the single most important determinant of behavior, it selects out from the random range of childhood activities those certain ones which will be accentuated or discarded. The shaping process includes toys—mechanical and problem-solving for boys, and soft and nonchallenging for girls—social structuring, individual rewards and punishments, and the satisfactions apparently inherent in conforming to role expectations. The development of aggressive and dependent traits, both of which are considered to be sex-related, is a case in point. One research study found that while aggressive boys become aggressive men and dependent girls become dependent women, the reverse was true for dependent boys and aggressive girls: as they approach maturity, they reverse themselves and also become aggressive men and dependent women, respectively. Similarly, there is a greater overlap of sex-role personality traits when the sibling in a two-child family is of the opposite sex, and this effect is greater with the younger siblings than with the older ones. Clearly, learning and social pressure are influential in effecting sex-role expectations. Extending the argument that social roles are related to biological processes only indirectly, presumably a technology which permitted father to nurture the child could result in a complete social-role reversal. In a pithy and accurate observation, Simone de Beauvoir summed up the consensus of current thinking when she said, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."

In the interests of clarity, I have spoken separately of the major physical, psychological, and social characteristics which distinguish women from men, although obviously each molds the final form of the other, both clinically and theoretically. Investigations of animal behavior demonstrate, for example, that rat pups who are psychologically stimulated develop larger and presumably smarter brains than those

exposed to sensory isolations; a litter born to a low-status African wild dog is less likely to survive than one born to a high-status female because the pups are less well fed and less protected by the pack; the male offspring of low-status baboon females, regardless of their innate characteristics, are less likely to become dominant than those born to high-status females because the latter spend more time in physical proximity to the inner circle of dominant males and learn dominance behavior; and the ovulatory cycle of a dove is retarded when a glass partition is placed between her and the rest of the flock, and it is stopped altogether if she is isolated in a room, unless there is a mirror. The interdependency between biological drive and learning is described in Konrad Lorenz's formulation of the concept of "instinct-training interlocking behavior:" he describes this as a blend of instinctive and learned components, with instinct guaranteeing the readiness for certain kinds of learning and behavior to occur but experience shaping its final form.

In summary, females are smaller and meeker than men, they are less stable physiologically, they produce fewer androgenic hormones, and they have been socially shaped toward passivity, dependency, and conformity. Men are bigger, stronger, more aggressive, achievement-oriented, and more willing to break rules and take risks. This profile of the "normal" male and the "normal" female is consistent with the traditional differences which, until the last few decades, have prevailed for their criminal counterparts. However, the increasing "masculinization" of female social and criminal behavior forces us to reexamine the basis for her previous feminine limitations. A common-sense approach, and one followed by even such uncommon men as Freud and Adler, would suggest that what is natural to the female could be inferred from a factual description of the way the majority of females think and feel and act. Understandably, this is what has been done, and just as understandably it has been wrong. . . .

Female Passivity: Genetic Fact or Cultural Myth?

In the past, aggression was thought to be chiefly a biologically controlled trait. As a matter of their birth and ongoing internal chemistry, males were assumed to be "naturally aggressive"—hence the explanation of their historic roles as soliders, hard-boiled businessmen, and merciless criminals. Women, on the other hand, were thought to be innately timid, passive, and conforming. Their general failure to be anything but mothers and housewives was offered as proof of their inability to be aggressive.

Of all the differences between the sexes, only four—size, strength, aggression, and dominance—have been implicated in any way with the overrepresentation of males in the criminal system.

The first two are biological givens; the other two are largely, if not entirely, socially learned. Let us examine them separately. In non-technological societies, and in earlier periods in industrial societies, physical strength was often the final arbiter of social interaction, but even so, it was not the only one. In man as well as in the apes, psychological factors including social manipulation, ruses, and group alliances were often decisive for leadership and effective action. In animals as well as men, the battle did not always go to the strong nor the race to the swift. But even if it did, this edge has been diminished by the technology of modern weapons. The deadliness of a gun is not necessarily less dangerous in the hands of a woman—although some have claimed that her lack of aggressiveness makes her a very unlikely and ineffective gunslinger. This is an interesting assumption because it is a common stereotype and is grounded in studies of male hormonal influences on lower animals, which gives it a ring of biological authenticity. There is much truth in this, but it is only a partial truth which, when stretched beyond its limits, conveys a falsehood. The truth is that in lower animals males are characteristically more aggressive, and this aggression is so directly linked to male

hormones that if the male is castrated or injected with estrogen (the female hormone) he will stop fighting. Likewise, the prenatal administration of testosterone to pregnant monkeys results in pseudohermaphroditic female offspring who even three years after birth are more aggressive than normal females. However, it would be misleading to formulate the equation androgen = aggression or estrogen = nonaggression for all but the simplest and least socially developed species. Furthermore, it cannot be claimed that aggression is the exclusive prerogative of males. Mature female chimpanzees regularly drive off lower status males and any female mammal's defense of her cubs is as fierce as it is legendary.

But relevant as this is in establishing that aggression can co-exist with estrogen and can be unrelated to male hormones in mammals, the evidence for hormonal-behavioral detachment is even more compelling in subhuman primates and men. It is not possible to understand the behavior of social animals outside the context of a social situation. For example, an electric shock applied to an animal in a dominant position vis-à-vis another will result in an attack; the same stimulus applied to the same animal who is in a subordinate position vis-à-vis another will result in cringing, submissive behavior. Likewise, the response of anger vs. fear or fight vs. flight depends less on the release of specific chemicals than on whether we perceive the threatening stimulus, in relation to ourselves, to be smaller or larger. The human capacity for abstraction and symbol formulation extends the range of "size" to include factors only remotely related to actual mass, so that characteristics such as wealth, lineage, social connections, skill, and intelligence may be perceived as "big" and accorded dominance. In the evolutionary progression toward higher mammals, there is a decreasing dependency between hormones and behavior, and in humans we find an almost complete cultural "override" of innate drives and tendencies. Thus, while status and dominance appear to be constants throughout the order of social primates, culture

defines which characteristics will be labeled as dominant. Likewise, the distinctive sex-appropriate behaviors so rigidly controlled by hormones in lower animals have yielded to a rich variety of gender roles in human societies.

In *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, Margaret Mead described three revealing cultural variations. In one tribe, both sexes acted in the mild, parental, responsive manner we expect of women; in a second, both sexes acted in the fierce initiating fashion we expect of men; in a third, the men were chatty, wore curls, and went shopping in the manner of our stereotype of women, while the women were their unadorned, managerial, energetic partners. She concluded that sex roles were

mere variations of human temperament, to which the members of either or both sexes may, with more or less success in the case of different individuals, be educated to approximate.

She also concluded that regardless of what social role the male plays, it is always the lead.

Regardless of what his characteristic behavior may be and even when it is imitative of "feminine behavior," it is considered high status when he adopts it. While historically and universally it is indeed a man's world, it does not follow that modern industrial man is innately more dominant than modern woman. It could be argued that the equalizing effects of a technological civilization like ours is without historical parallel and that the universal dominance of men may have resulted more from the institutionalization of man's superior strength than from any innate feminine submissiveness.

Western history is replete with examples of women who have risen above their cultural stereotype to become leaders of vigor and acclaim. Nor has their reign or tenure in office been particularly noteworthy for its tranquillity, peacefulness, or lack of aggressive adventures, all characteristics of their countrywomen in the social role of housewife. These women have, in

fact, displayed a remarkable talent for ruthless and highly aggressive leadership. For instance, few world leaders have ever been so renowned for their tyrannical, belligerent rule as the English queens. One can still be stirred by the picture of Elizabeth I attired with her gold crown and shining breastplate, mounted on a white stallion, and moving like an avenging angel through her army of twenty thousand men at Tilbury...; Cleopatra of ancient Egypt, a biological woman's woman by any standards, was known for her shrewd political manipulations and insatiable appetite for military conquests; Maria Theresa was the founder of the modern Austrian state; the Russian Empress Catherine, who mothered a dozen children during her reign, still found time to annex ever-widening territories and seek new armies to defeat. In the present day, it is noteworthy that the two major countries with female rulers have both been at war within the last few years: Indira Gandhi of India and Golda Meir of Israel have shown no timidity—each, in wars across her border, has wielded political and military might as effectively as any man. Of course, such women as these who have risen to national leadership possess extraordinary characteristics which distinguish them from the mass of women—and the mass of men, for that matter. The very capacity and drive for ascension through a male world involved a selection process which would have discouraged weaker women. Notwithstanding their small numbers, the resoluteness, and fortitude of such women challenge the myth of innate female passivity. On a broader scope, and one which encompassed more ordinary women, was the female incursion into criminal areas, previously considered male, during World War II. In law-enforcing as well as law-breaking, it would appear that social position and social-role expectations are more important than sex in determining behavior.

During the early 1940s, the mobilization of males from the civil to the military sector resulted in the necessity for a large number of women to fill positions previously held by men. And fill

them they did, in a way not altogether anticipated. It had been known and expected that lesser men often rise to the stature of a role thrust on them by circumstance. It should not have been surprising, therefore, that "lesser men" who happen to be women would do the same thing. What was most portentous, however, about this vocational shift was not that women could assume men's jobs, but that in doing so they could also presume to men's social roles. One need not look to psychological theories to explain the enthusiasm with which women embraced men's esteemed positions. Their own, as housewife and playmate, had been eroding for years and a desperately labor-short male establishment had further devalued it in the interests of national defense, as something akin to indolence, if not disloyalty. "Rosie the Riveter," symbol of the women working for the war, was proclaimed a heroine in song and style by a grateful country. As the residence of female status shifted from the home to the office or factory, a trip that men had made long before, the American woman accommodated so congenially to the change that few people at the time challenged her credentials to perform. However, many were concerned that she was not just commuting to her new-found roles but might settle down to stay. In unprecedented numbers women crossed the sex-role line in their jobs and in their crimes during the war years, 1940 to 1945. In that period, the crimes committed by women almost doubled in number and even began to assume the same patterns as male crime. The trend peaked in 1945 and declined rapidly after the war with the return of men to their jobs, but it could never be the same. Women were now urged to act more like women by a male establishment which wanted to return to the position it had temporarily (it hoped) vacated. But in social evolution as in biological evolution, there is no easy road back, especially since in a very profound sense the women could not go home again. Labor-saving household appliances and the denigration of the domestic work ethic they conveyed

rendered her old position untenable. In addition, there was a shift in the male attitude. Men were seeing women as worthy rivals and feeling considerably less charitable and more competitive toward them. Furthermore, in a world grown too full of people, even the once sacrosanct status of motherhood was beginning to bear unhappy resemblances to overproductive pollution. With zero population as a national goal and household drudgery an accepted epithet, where was the woman to go? The road back was blocked, and while the road forward was not completely open it was now more accessible than ever before.

The pressure was all for discarding the separate-but-equal provisions of the old social contract and opting for a chance to compete in the same field and under the same conditions as men. Unfortunately, the men were not as ready for this change as the women. Psychoanalysts, long accustomed to the futile penis envy of women, were now talking about breast envy and womb envy, an example of male jealousy toward women almost unheard of in Freud's day.

While women proceeded to widen their social and criminal roles, many men, especially middle- and lower-class men, who had the least ground to yield in the status hierarchy, resisted in every way they could. . . .

Gender Equality and Crime

The old ways do indeed die hard, not only because we need our stereotypes and our subdominants, but also because cognitive systems tend to become security blankets to which we cling most tenaciously just when we are most threatened. It is perhaps for these reasons that the coming of age of the Western woman was not forecast by the behavioral scientists who should have known, but instead it caught us unawares and overtook our comfortable prejudices with a *fait accompli*. While most were predicting that it was impossible and many were arguing that it wasn't happening, it had already occurred. It is tempting to think no deeper

than an apparent fact, and it must be admitted that the "facts" of female inferiority were apparent to all who could read the figures that supported them. It did not seem productive to search out the reasons behind the figures. They were self-evident because they confirmed what we already knew about the natural superiority of men. If it were otherwise, we surely would have been told by this time. But, indeed, we were being told new "facts" in compelling ways by new figures which were challenging old theories.

In the countless indices which measure female output of degrees and income and factory production, and in the Uniform Crime Reports which tabulate her legal transgressions, these rising figures were intruding not only on our beliefs but on the mores which supported them. At first, the rising crime rates were greeted as an apparition, a mirage; at first, they were dismissed as an aberration which would correct itself by statistical adjustments; at last, they were recognized as ancient female strengths which had always been latent and were just now, at this sociotechnological juncture of history, realizing their potential. Everything we know about the history of woman and everything we see about her current behavior tells us that her past limitations as a worker and law-breaker have been largely, if not entirely, the result of her physical weakness and the cultural institutions which derived from that fact. Save only her inferiority in size and strength, her differences from men are just *that*, differences. Some confer an advantage, others a disadvantage, depending on the particular culture. In our own, given her education, aspirations (these, too, have been liberated), freedom from unwanted pregnancies, healthy assertiveness, and access to labor-saving devices, including guns, she shares the same fortunate or unfortunate criminogenic qualities as men.

I have not contended here that women are equal to men, simply that they are potentially the equal of men. There are many differences which we have described and no doubt more will be discovered, but all evidence points to two complementary conclusions: First, the small natural

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1. The first step in the process is to identify the problem or issue that needs to be addressed. This involves gathering information and understanding the context of the problem.

2. Once the problem is identified, the next step is to define the objectives and goals of the project. This helps to clarify what needs to be achieved and provides a clear direction for the team.

3. The third step is to develop a plan or strategy to address the problem. This involves breaking down the problem into smaller, manageable tasks and determining the resources needed to complete each task.

4. The fourth step is to implement the plan. This involves putting the strategy into action and monitoring progress to ensure that the project is on track.

5. The final step is to evaluate the results of the project. This involves assessing the outcomes against the objectives and goals and identifying any areas for improvement.

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The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various positions in the various departments of the Government of the State of New York, for the year 1900:

differences between the sexes have been polarized and institutionalized in special ways by different cultures to produce a gender disparity which reveals more about emotional needs of the society than about the innate possibilities of the individual. And second, when size and strength between the sexes are discounted by technology, as they have been within the ranks of men, social expectations and social roles, including the criminal roles, tend increasingly to merge.

There was a time early in the history of the physical sciences, before the concepts of mass and gravity were formulated, when the weight of an object was thought to reside within the physical boundaries of the object. Because weight is palpable and measurable, it was a conclusion which met the requirements of common sense and common experience. But the limitation of common sense is that it owes too much allegiance to the past to permit conceptual breakthroughs to the future. It is a better follower than leader. As physicists later discovered, the weight of an object

is not inherent within it but rather the measure of an outside gravitational pull acting upon it. In an analogous manner, scientific thinking about human behavior has evolved in the same centrifugal direction. From the predecessors of Lombroso to the followers of Freud and into modern times, the search for the causes of female criminality have focused on her biology with scant heed to her sociology. We have only recently recognized that the clothes of social-role expectations not only make the man, they also form the woman.

Even if it is established that humans have innate biological drives, and even if it were confirmed that females have a different biogrammar (i.e., a behavioral repertoire of signals) from males, the social forces which impinge on her from without would still be decisive for her conformist as well as her deviant behavior. In the profoundest evolutionary sense, the social factors which sustain and suspend us also create our destiny, and biology must follow where society leads.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you think that the Women's Movement and the corresponding changes that were occurring in American society affected Adler's ideas on female crime as she wrote *Sisters in Crime*?
2. What is the liberation thesis? How does this relate to Adler's views about the "rise of a new female criminal"?
3. Why did Adler argue that biology is not the main cause of female behavior, including female criminality?
4. Think back to your own childhood and teenage years. How might the socialization practices that you witnessed while you were growing up be related to why the criminal behaviors of males and females differ?

27. A Feminist Theory of Female Delinquency

Meda Chesney-Lind

"There is considerable question," notes Meda Chesney-Lind (1989: 10), "as to whether existing theories that were admittedly developed to explain male delinquency can adequately explain female delinquency." But why is this necessarily the case? After all, if strain, control, or social learning are general causes of crime, might we not expect that the sources of female criminality would be the same as male criminality? In Chesney-Lind's view, however, such thinking renders gender socially irrelevant and behaviorally inconsequential. Yet gender is a master status in virtually every social interaction—a salient factor that provides meaning to and structures for behavioral options. As a result, growing up in the United States (and elsewhere), girls and boys have different experiences, they react to their experiences differently, and they are reacted to differently by those seeking to control them. Gender thus provides the ongoing, day-to-day contact through which crime is caused and accomplished.

The most defining feature of gender roles is "patriarchy." But it is precisely here that traditional theories of crime are most wanting. Because they were largely constructed to explain male criminality, the values and power relations inherent in male domination simply are never given any causal consideration. In methodological terms, one might say that traditional theories are "misspecified": they leave out a key explanatory variable—not merely women or gender, but what it means to be a female.

When patriarchy is used to inform one's criminological analysis, however, the special pathways that girls take into crime are suddenly illuminated. An important feature of the "patriarchal context" from which female delinquency flows, observes Chesney-Lind, is that girls are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. Faced with constant abuse, females can do little to fight back against their dominant male abusers. One option is to run away. Here, however, they face a second manifestation of patriarchy: They are defined as "runaways" and as sexually "promiscuous." According to Chesney-Lind, criminal justice agencies have traditionally sought to criminalize the behavior of these girls. They have played a role in tracking down the runaways and returning them to the very home in which the victimization had transpired.

Facing extensive physical and sexual victimization at home and with little hope of protection from the state, girls find escape in the "streets." Their quest for survival, however, leads to crimes of petty theft and panhandling. But patriarchy is reproduced on the streets as well. Their sexuality is another means of survival, and thus they risk being lured into prostitution. As Chesney-Lind (1989: 24) notes, these girls have "little else of value to trade" and thus "get involved in criminal activities that exploit their sexual object status."

The potential weakness of feminist theories is not what they include but what they exclude. Feminist

Meda Chesney-Lind, "Girls' Crime and Woman's Place: Toward a Feminist Model of Female Delinquency," *Crime & Delinquency* (35) 1989, pp. 10–11, 19–27, copyright © 1989 by Sage Publications. Reprinted by Permission of Sage Publications.

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The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various positions in the various departments of the Government of the State of New York, for the year 1900.

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1. The first step in the process is to identify the problem. This involves gathering information about the situation and understanding the needs of the stakeholders involved.

scholars risk committing the same mistake as the criminologists they rightly criticize by simply dismissing—often on a priori, ideological grounds—theories they do not like. By calling perspectives “male-centered” and ignoring the related research studies, they are free to neglect the causal significance of conditions that have been shown empirically to affect not only boys’ but also girls’ delinquency. Traditional theories thus are useful in identifying factors that may, in varying degrees and in unique ways, play a role in the crime and delinquency of females (Agnew, 2009; De Coster et al., 2013; Heimer and De Coster, 1999).

Even so, Chesney-Lind has shown the value of taking a feminist perspective to the study of delinquency. She has demarcated a pathway into crime—rooted in gender-related power inequities and the physical/sexual abuse girls endure—that would not be apparent without the lens of gender and patriarchy. Feminist theories are essential, therefore, because they force criminologists to take seriously the position that, however overlapping their experiences might be, boys and girls reside in different worlds that are circumscribed by the broader patriarchal system. Gender affects so much in our lives; the notion that crime would be the exception is, on its face, difficult to sustain.

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There is considerable question as to whether existing theories that were admittedly developed to explain male delinquency can adequately explain female delinquency. Clearly, these theories were much influenced by the notion that class and protest masculinity were at the core of delinquency. Will the “add women and stir approach” be sufficient? Are these really theories of delinquent behavior as some (Simons, Miller, and Aigner, 1980) have argued?

This article will suggest that they are not. The extensive focus on male delinquency and the inattention to the role played by patriarchal arrangements in the generation of adolescent delinquency and conformity has rendered the major delinquency theories fundamentally inadequate to the task of explaining female behavior. There is, in short, an urgent need to rethink current models in light of girls’ situation in patriarchal society.

... This discussion will also establish that the proposed overhaul of delinquency theory is not, as some might think, solely an academic exercise. Specifically, it is incorrect to assume that because girls are charged with less serious offenses, they actually have few problems and are treated gently when they are drawn into the juvenile justice system. Indeed, the extensive focus on disadvantaged males in public settings has meant that girls’ victimization and the relationship between that experience and girls’ crime has been systematically ignored. Also missed has been the central role played by the juvenile justice system in the sexualization of girls’ delinquency and the criminalization of girls’ survival strategies. Finally, it will be suggested that the official actions of the juvenile justice system should be understood as major forces in girls’ oppression as they have historically served to reinforce the obedience of all young

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women to demands of patriarchal authority no matter how abusive and arbitrary....

Toward a Feminist Theory of Delinquency

To sketch out completely a feminist theory of delinquency is a task beyond the scope of this article. It may be sufficient, at this point, simply to identify a few of the most obvious problems with attempts to adapt male-oriented theory to explain female conformity and deviance. Most significant of these is the fact that all existing theories were developed with no concern about gender stratification.

Note that this is not simply an observation about the power of gender roles (though this power is undeniable). It is increasingly clear that gender stratification in patriarchal society is as powerful a system as is class. A feminist approach to delinquency means construction of explanations of female behavior that are sensitive to its patriarchal context. Feminist analysis of delinquency would also examine ways in which agencies of social control—the police, the courts, and the persons—act in ways to reinforce woman's place in male society (Harris, 1977; Chesney-Lind, 1986). Efforts to construct a feminist model of delinquency must first and foremost be sensitive to the situations of girls. Failure to consider the existing empirical evidence on girls' lives and behavior can quickly lead to stereotypical thinking and theoretical dead ends.

An example of this sort of flawed theory building was the early fascination with the notion that the women's movement was causing an increase in women's crime; a notion that is now more or less discredited (Steffensmeier, 1980; Gora, 1982). A more recent example of the same sort of thinking can be found in recent work on the "powercontrol" model of delinquency (Hagan, Simpson, and Gillis, 1987). Here, the authors speculate that girls commit less delinquency in part because their behavior is more closely controlled by the patriarchal family. The authors' promising

beginning quickly gets bogged down in a very limited definition of patriarchal control (focusing on parental supervision and variations in power within the family). Ultimately, the authors' narrow formulation of patriarchal control results in their arguing that mother's work force participation (particularly in high status occupations) leads to increases in daughters' delinquency since these girls find themselves in more "egalitarian families."

This is essentially a not-too-subtle variation on the earlier "liberation" hypothesis. Now, mother's liberation causes daughter's crime. Aside from the methodological problems with the study (e.g., the authors argue that female-headed households are equivalent to upper-class "egalitarian" families where both parents work, and they measure delinquency using a six-item scale that contains no status offense items), there is a more fundamental problem with the hypothesis. There is no evidence to suggest that as women's labor force participation has increased, girls' delinquency has increased. Indeed, during the last decade when both women's labor force participation accelerated and the number of female-headed households soared, aggregate female delinquency measured both by self-report and official statistics either declined or remained stable (Ageton, 1983; Chilton and Datesman, 1987; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1987).

By contrast, a feminist model of delinquency would focus more extensively on the few pieces of information about girls' actual lives and the role played by girls' problems, including those caused by racism and poverty, in their delinquency behavior. Fortunately, a considerable literature is now developing on girls' lives and much of it bears directly on girls' crime.

Criminalizing Girls' Survival

It has long been understood that a major reason for girls' presence in juvenile courts was the fact that their parents insisted on their arrest. In the early years, conflicts with parents were by far the most significant referral source; in

Honolulu 44 percent of the girls who appeared in court in 1929 through 1930 were referred by parents.

Recent national data, while slightly less explicitly, also show that girls are more likely to be referred to court by "sources other than law enforcement agencies" (which would include parents). In 1983, nearly a quarter (23 percent) of all girls but only 16 percent of boys charged with delinquent offenses were referred to court by non-law enforcement agencies. The pattern among youth referred for status offenses (for which girls are overrepresented) was even more pronounced. Well over half (56 percent) of the girls charged with these offenses and 45 percent of the boys were referred by sources other than law enforcement (Snyder and Finnegan, 1987, p. 21; see also Pope and Feyerherm, 1982).

The fact that parents are often committed to two standards of adolescent behavior is one explanation for such a disparity—and one that should not be discounted as a major source of tension even in modern families. Despite expectations to the contrary, gender-specific socialization patterns have not changed very much and this is especially true for parents' relationships with their daughters (Katz, 1979). It appears that even parents who oppose sexism in general feel "uncomfortable tampering with existing traditions" and "do not want to risk their children becoming misfits" (Katz, 1979, p. 24). Clearly, parental attempts to adhere to and enforce these traditional notions will continue to be a source of conflict between girls and their elders. Another important explanation for girls' problems with their parents, which has received attention only in more recent years, is the problem of physical and sexual abuse. Looking specifically at the problem of childhood sexual abuse, it is increasingly clear that this form of abuse is a particular problem for girls.

Girls are, for example, much more likely to be the victims of child sexual abuse than are boys. Finkelhor and Baron estimate from a review of community studies that roughly 70 percent of the victims of sexual abuse are female (Finkelhor and

Baron, 1986, p. 45); they are more likely than boys to be assaulted by a family member (often a stepfather) (DeJong, Hervada, and Emmett, 1983; Russell, 1986), and, as a consequence, their abuse tends to last longer than male sexual abuse (DeJong, Hervada, and Emmett, 1983). All of these factors are associated with more severe trauma—causing dramatic short- and long-term effects in victims (Adams-Tucker, 1982). The effects noted by researchers in this area move from the more well known "fear, anxiety, depression, anger and hostility, and inappropriate sexual behavior" (Browne and Finkelhor, 1986, p. 69) to behaviors of greater familiarity to criminologists, including running away from home, difficulties in school, truancy, and early marriage (Browne and Finkelhor, 1986).

Herman's study of incest survivors in therapy found that they were more likely to have run away from home than a matched sample of women whose fathers were "seductive" (33 percent compared to 5 percent). Another study of women patients found that 50 percent of the victims of child sexual abuse, but only 20 percent of the nonvictim group, had left home before the age of 18 (Meiselman, 1978).

Not surprisingly, then, studies of girls on the streets or in court populations are showing high rates of both physical and sexual abuse. Silbert and Pines (1981, p. 409) found, for example, that 60 percent of the street prostitutes they interviewed had been sexually abused as juveniles. Girls at an Arkansas diagnostic unit and school who had been adjudicated for either status or delinquent offenses reported similarly high levels of sexual abuse as well as high levels of physical abuse; 53 percent indicated they had been sexually abused, 25 percent recalled scars, 38 percent recalled bleeding from abuse, and 51 percent recalled bruises (Mouzakitis, 1981).

A sample survey of girls in the juvenile justice system in Wisconsin (Phelps et al., 1982) revealed that 79 percent had been subjected to physical abuse that resulted in some form of injury, and 32 percent had been sexually abused by parents or

other persons who were closely connected to their families. Moreover, 50 percent had been sexually assaulted ("raped" or forced to participate in sexual acts) (Phelps et al., 1982, p. 66). Even higher figures were reported by McCormack and her associates (McCormack, Janus, and Burgess, 1986) in their study of youth in a runaway shelter in Toronto. They found that 73 percent of the females and 38 percent of the males had been sexually abused. Finally, a study of youth charged with running away, truancy, or listed as missing persons in Arizona found that 55 percent were incest victims (Reich and Gutierrez, 1979).

Many young women, then, are running away from profound sexual victimization at home, and once on the streets they are forced further into crime in order to survive. Interviews with girls who have run away from home show, very clearly, that they do not have a lot of attachment to their delinquent activities. In fact, they are angry about being labeled as delinquent, yet all engaged in illegal acts (Koroki and Chesney-Lind, 1985). The Wisconsin study found that 54 percent of the girls who ran away found it necessary to steal money, food, and clothing in order to survive. A few exchanged sexual contact for money, food, and/or shelter (Phelps et al., 1982, p. 67). In their study of runaway youth, McCormack, Janus, and Burgess (1986, pp. 392-393) found that sexually abused female runaways were significantly more likely than their nonabused counterparts to engage in delinquent or criminal activities such as substance abuse, petty theft, and prostitution. No such pattern was found among male runaways.

Research (Chesney-Lind and Rodriguez, 1983) on the backgrounds of adult women in prison underscores the important links between women's childhood victimizations and their later criminal careers. The interviews revealed that virtually all of this sample were the victims of physical and/or sexual abuse as youngsters; over 60 percent had been sexually abused and about half had been raped as young women. This situation promoted these women to run

away from home (three-quarters had been arrested for status offenses) where once on the streets they began engaging in prostitution and other forms of petty property crime. They also begin what becomes a lifetime problem with drugs. As adults, the women continue in these activities since they possess truncated educational backgrounds and virtually no marketable occupational skills (see also Miller, 1986).

Confirmation of the consequences of childhood sexual and physical abuse on adult female criminal behavior has also recently come from a large quantitative study of 908 individuals with substantiated and validated histories of these victimizations. Widom (1988) found that abused or neglected females were twice as likely as a matched group of controls to have an adult record (16 percent compared to 7.5 percent). The difference was also found among men, but it was not as dramatic (42 percent compared to 33 percent). Men with abuse backgrounds were also more likely to contribute to the "cycle of violence" with more arrests for violent offenses as adult offenders than the control group. In contrast, when women with abuse backgrounds did become involved with the criminal justice system, their arrests tended to involve property and order offenses (such as disorderly conduct, curfew, and loitering violations) (Widom, 1988, p. 17).

Given this information, a brief example of how a feminist perspective on the causes of female delinquency might look seems appropriate. First, like young men, girls are frequently the recipients of violence and sexual abuse. But unlike boys, girls' victimization and their response to that victimization is specifically shaped by their status as young women. Perhaps because of the gender and sexual scripts found in patriarchal families, girls are much more likely than boys to be victims of family-related sexual abuse. Men, particularly men with traditional attitudes toward women, are likely to define their daughters or stepdaughters as their sexual property (Finkelhor, 1982). In a society that idealizes inequality in male/female relationships and

venerates youth in women, girls are easily defined as sexually attractive by older men (Bell, 1984). In addition, girls' vulnerability to both physical and sexual abuse is heightened by norms that require that they stay at home where their victimizers have access to them.

Moreover, their victimizers (usually males) have the ability to invoke official agencies of social control in their efforts to keep young women at home and vulnerable. That is to say, abusers have traditionally been able to utilize the uncritical commitment of the juvenile justice system toward parental authority to force girls to obey them. Girls' complaints about abuse were, until recently, routinely ignored. For this reason, statutes that were originally placed in law to "protect" young people have, in the case of girls' delinquency, criminalized their survival strategies. As they run away from abusive homes, parents have been able to employ agencies to enforce their return. If they persisted in their refusal to stay in that home, however intolerable, they were incarcerated.

Young women, a large number of whom are on the run from homes characterized by sexual abuse and parental neglect, are forced by the very statutes designed to protect them into the lives of escaped convicts. Unable to enroll in school or take a job to support themselves because they fear detection, young female runaways are forced into the streets. Here they engage in panhandling, petty theft, and occasional prostitution in order to survive. Young women in conflict with their parents (often for very legitimate reasons) may actually be forced by present laws into petty criminal activity, prostitution, and drug use.

In addition, the fact that young girls (but not necessarily young boys) are defined as sexually desirable and, in fact, more desirable than their older sisters due to the double standard of aging means that their lives on the streets (and their survival strategies) take on unique shape—once again shaped by patriarchal values. It is no accident that girls on the run from abusive homes, or on the streets because of profound poverty, get

involved in criminal activities that exploit their sexual object status. American society has defined as desirable youthful, physically perfect women. This means that girls on the streets, who have little else of value to trade, are encouraged to utilize this "resource" (Campagna and Poffenberger, 1988). It also means that the criminal subculture views them from this perspective (Miller, 1986).

Female Delinquency, Patriarchal Authority, and Family Courts

The early insights into male delinquency were largely gleaned by intensive field observation of delinquent boys. Very little of this sort of work has been done in the case of girls' delinquency, though it is vital to an understanding of girls' definitions of their own situations, choices, and behavior (for exceptions to this see Campbell, 1984; Peacock, 1981; Miller, 1986; Rosenberg and Zimmerman, 1977). Time must be spent listening to girls. Fuller research on the settings, such as families and schools, that girls find themselves in and the impact of variations in those settings should also be undertaken (see Figueira-McDonough, 1986). A more complete understanding of how poverty and racism shape girls' lives is also vital (see Messerschmidt, 1986; Campbell, 1984). Finally, current qualitative research on the reaction of official agencies to girls' delinquency must be conducted. This latter task, admittedly more difficult, is particularly critical to the development of delinquency theory that is as sensitive to gender as it is to race and class.

It is clear that throughout most of the court's history, virtually all female delinquency has been placed within the larger context of girls' sexual behavior. One explanation for this pattern is that familial control over girls' sexual capital has historically been central to the maintenance of patriarchy (Lerner, 1986). The fact that young women have relatively more of this capital has been one reason for the excessive concern that both

families and official agencies of social control have expressed about youthful female defiance (otherwise much of the behavior of criminal justice personnel makes virtually no sense). Only if one considers the role of women's control over their sexuality at the point in their lives that their value to patriarchal society is so pronounced, does the historic pattern of jailing of huge numbers of girls guilty of minor misconduct make sense.

This framework also explains the enormous resistance that the movement to curb the juvenile justice system's authority over status offenders encountered. Supporters of this change were not really prepared for the political significance of giving youth the freedom to run. Horror stories told by the opponents of

deinstitutionalization about victimized youth, youthful prostitution, and youthful involvement in pornography (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1985) all neglected the unpleasant reality that most of these behaviors were often in direct response to earlier victimization, frequently by parents, that officials had, for years, routinely ignored. What may be at stake in efforts to roll back deinstitutionalization efforts is not so much "protection" of youth as it is curbing the right of young women to defy patriarchy.

In sum, research in both the dynamics of girls' delinquency and official reactions to that behavior is essential to the development of theories of delinquency that are sensitive to its patriarchal as well as class and racial context.

Discussion Questions

1. What makes Chesney-Lind's explanation of crime a "feminist" theory? How does it differ from a nonfeminist or "traditional" theory of crime? In particular, how is patriarchy central to Chesney-Lind's theory?
2. Why would Chesney-Lind criticize the work of "liberation theorists" such as Freda Adler (Chapter 26)?
3. Does Chesney-Lind believe that the causes of female crime are the same as the causes of male

crime? What would she say to theorists such as Edwin Sutherland and Donald Cressey (Chapter 10) and Travis Hirschi and Michael Gottfredson (Chapters 18 and 19) who claim to have set forth "general" theories of crime that explain everyone's criminality—whether they are male or female?

4. In Chesney-Lind's theory, how does gender affect why girls turn to specific types of crime? Could nonfeminist theories explain the types of crime engaged in by girls on the street?

28. Masculinities and Crime

James W. Messerschmidt

Although sympathetic to radical feminism, James Messerschmidt observes that feminist analyses do not take seriously the study of masculinity. The tendency to attribute male behavior to patriarchy is reductionistic: it places all men in a single category—one in which “women are good, men are bad, plain and simple. And it is this essential badness that leads to patriarchy and violence against women” (1993: 43). But men are not all the same. In particular, gender intersects with race and class to create different “masculinities” or conceptions of what it means to be male. Understanding male behavior thus entails understanding the historical and structural conditions that construct the masculinities that structure male social action, including crime.

Messerschmidt makes the important insight that “crime by men is not simply an extension of the ‘male sex role’” or, for that matter, of some male trait (1993: 85). In any social situation that males enter, they are faced with the ongoing task of showing that they are manly, of “accomplishing” their masculinity. Precisely what this entails differs by age-class-racial position in society. The meaning of masculinity varies by structural location, and in turn these meanings are “reproduced” or reconfirmed as men in these locations act to reaffirm their manly identities in the ways available to them.

In this framework, crime is seen as a resource for “doing gender”—that is, it is a way of showing that one is masculine. Messerschmidt argues that crime is most likely to occur when legitimate means of demonstrating masculinity are stifled. It is noteworthy that class and racial inequality restrict the conventional avenues for doing gender, such as success in school and in the labor market. In response to their emasculation and humiliation in these settings, juveniles and later adults develop “opposition masculinities,” which involve the rejection of conventional ways of doing gender. Instead, criminal acts—from vandalism to violence—become vivid ways of showing their manliness. The end result, however, is that these criminal displays of masculinity only serve to restrict life chances and thus to reproduce existing structural inequalities.

Messerschmidt does not offer a class-biased theory. He recognizes that middle-class youths and adults also break the law, whether it is through juvenile mischief, displays of drunkenness, sexual harassment in the work-place, or white-collar crime. Still, in most ways, he sees more affluent white males as having access to and using “accommodating masculinities” that allow them to do gender in ways that accrue advantage and reinforce their gender, class, and racial dominance.

Finally, Messerschmidt recognizes that, in one way or another, all males act to do gender within the confines of the dominant conception of masculinity

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which teaches that heterosexual men are superior to women. Messerschmidt calls this "hegemonic masculinity," which is "defined through work in the paid-labor market, the subordination of women, heterosexism, and the driven uncontrollable sexuality of men" (1993: 82). "Refined further," he observes, "hegemonic masculinity emphasizes practices toward authority, control, competitive individualism, independence, aggressiveness, and the capacity for violence" (p. 82). As men do masculinity within these cultural scripts, they also reinforce their dominance over females in society.

Messerschmidt's theory can be questioned on a number of grounds: Females are omitted from the analysis; his menu listing the ways in which men can demonstrate masculinity seems narrow, ignoring, for example, being a good father, participating in voluntary organizations, talking about sports, and so on; conformity among disadvantaged groups is not easily explained; and his motivational theory—the need to do masculinity—may over-explain many criminal acts that are committed simply because they are fun or gratifying (cf. Gottfredson and Hirschi, Chapter 19). Still, for any male who has given a "high five" after scoring a basket, who has grunted with one's fellows, who has exchanged sexist jokes with "the guys," or who has performed risky acts to show he is not "chicken," the idea that masculinity is intimately involved in male behavior—including crime—has enormous intuitive appeal.

Reference

- Messerschmidt, James W. 1993. *Masculinities and Crime: Critique and Reconceptualization of Theory*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Criminological theory—although traditionally written by men and primarily about boys and men—has been alarmingly gender-blind. That is, gendered men and boys have never been the object of the criminological enterprise. Feminism has challenged the overall

"malestream" nature of criminology by highlighting the repeated omission and/or misrepresentation of women in criminological enquiry. The result of this critique is twofold: (1) it has increased attention to women in criminological theory and research but (2) when criminology addresses gender it speaks exclusively of women, with little or no attention directed to the impact of gender on men. Although some consideration has focused on masculinity and crime, this relationship has been examined through an essentialist, antiquated, and fallacious sex-role theory.

[I previously] demonstrated that radical feminism is not a viable alternative theory. A feminism that insists upon alleged natural differences between women and men, and goes on to explain crime committed by men in terms of that essentialism, not only homogenizes men (as does sex-role theory) but also proves itself inadequate to explaining crime committed by men. Although radical feminism is applauded for moving sexuality and gender power to the forefront of feminist thought, we are compelled to reject all forms of essentialism and reductionism. . . .

To structure a comprehensive feminist theory of gendered crime, we must bring men into the framework. However, we should do this not by treating men as the normal subjects, but by articulating the gendered content of men's behavior and of crime. This approach requires a different theoretical lens—one that focuses on a sociology of masculinity—to comprehend why men are involved disproportionately in crime and why they commit different types of crime. In what follows, I build on the critique . . . by employing the insights of Giddens (1976, 1981), Connell (1987), West and Zimmerman (1987), Festermaker, West, and Zimmerman (1991), Goffman (1979), and others to present new theoretical tools for comprehending crime committed by men.

At least two significant theoretical undertakings are suggested from the criticisms outlined [previously]. First, it is essential to make the relevant

theoretical links among class, gender, and race without surrendering to some type of separate systems approach (e.g., capitalism plus patriarchy). Second, it is critical to construct a theory of crime that recognizes that illegal behavior, like legal behavior, personifies synchronously both social practice and social structure. Indeed, social structures do not exist autonomously from humans; rather, they arise and endure through social practice. Social structures originate, are reproduced, and change through social practice. In short, we can only speak of *structured action*: social structures can be understood only as constituting practice; social structures, in turn, permit and preclude social action. . . .

To understand why men engage in more and different types of crimes than women and in differing amounts and forms among themselves, we need an adequate account of social action. We can begin by recognizing that in society all individuals engage in purposive behavior and monitor their own action reflexively. That is, we comprehend our actions and we modify them according to (among other things) our interpretation of other people's responses. Social action is creative, inventive, and novel, but it never occurs separately from, or external to, social structures. Social structures are constituted by social action and, in turn, provide resources and power from which individuals construct "strategies of action" (Swidler, 1986: 227). Social structures organize the way individuals think about their circumstances and generate methods for dealing with them.

Gendered Social Action and Crime

. . . Masculinity is accomplished, it is not something done to men or something settled beforehand. And masculinity is never static, never a finished product. Rather, men construct masculinities in specific social situations (although not in circumstances of their own choosing); in so doing, men reproduce (and sometimes change) social structures. As Giddens (1976: 138) forcefully argues,

every act which contributes to the reproduction of a structure is also an act of production, a novel enterprise, and as such may initiate change by altering that structure at the same time as it reproduces it.

. . . Hegemonic masculinity is the idealized form of masculinity in a given historical setting. It is culturally honored, glorified, and extolled, and this "exaltation stabilizes a structure of dominance and oppression in the gender order as a whole" (Connell, 1990: 94). In contemporary Western industrialized societies, hegemonic masculinity is defined through work in the paid-labor market, the subordination of women, heterosexism, and the driven and uncontrollable sexuality of men. Refined still further, hegemonic masculinity emphasizes practices toward authority, control, competitive individualism, independence, aggressiveness, and the capacity for violence (Connell, 1990, 1992; Segal, 1990). Because "most men benefit from the subordination of women, and hegemonic masculinity is the cultural expression of this ascendancy," most men engage in practices that attempt to sustain hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987: 185). Indeed, most men help maintain hegemonic masculinity (and consequently the subordination of women) by means of the practices that reflect their particular positions in society. . . .

When men enter a setting, they undertake social practices that demonstrate they are "manly." The only way others can judge their "essential nature" as men is through their behavior and appearance. Thus, men use the resources at their disposal to communicate gender to others. For many men, crime may serve as a suitable resource for "doing gender"—for separating them from all that is feminine. Because types of criminality are possible only when particular social conditions present themselves, when other masculine resources are unavailable, particular types of crime can provide an alternative resource for accomplishing gender and, therefore, affirming a particular type of masculinity. For, although men are always doing masculinity, the

significance of gender accomplishment is socially situated and, thus, an intermittent matter. That is, certain occasions present themselves as more intimidating for showing and affirming masculinity. As Coleman (1990: 196) states, "Such an occasion is where a man's 'masculinity' risks being called into question." The taken-for-granted "essential nature" of a man or boy can be questioned, undermined, and threatened in certain contexts, those situations where he lacks resources for masculine accomplishment.

In such predicaments, sex category is particularly salient; it is, as David Morgan (1992: 47) puts it, "more or less explicitly put on the line," and doing masculinity necessitates extra effort, generating a distinct type of masculinity. Under such conditions, performance as a member of one's sex category is subjected to extra evaluation and crime is more likely to result. Crime, therefore, may be invoked as a practice through which masculinities (and men and women) are differentiated from one another. Moreover, crime is a resource that may be summoned when men lack other resources to accomplish gender. . . .

Crime by men is not simply an extension of the "male sex role." Rather, crime by men is a form of social practice invoked as a resource, when other resources are unavailable, for accomplishing masculinity. By analyzing masculinities, then, we can begin to understand the socially constructed differences among men and thus explain why men engage in different forms of crime. . . .

Social Structures, Masculinities, and Crime in Youth Groups

I explore the way social action is linked to structured possibilities/constraints, identifying in particular how the class, race, and gendered relations in society constrain and enable the social activity of young men in the school and the youth group, and how this structured action relates to youth crime.

"Boys will be boys" differently, depending upon their position in social structures and, therefore,

upon their access to power and resources. Social structures situate young men in a common relation to other young men and in such a way that they share structural space. Collectively, young men experience their daily world from a particular position in society and differentially construct the cultural ideals of hegemonic masculinity. Thus, within the school and youth group there are patterned ways in which masculinity is represented and which depend upon structures of labor and power in class and race relations. Young men situationally accomplish public forms of masculinity in response to their socially structured circumstances; indeed, varieties of youth crime serve as a suitable resource for doing masculinity when other resources are unavailable. These forms of youth crime, as with other resources, are determined by social structures. . . .

In what follows, I attempt to identify certain of the chief class and race junctures in the social construction of youthful public masculinities and crimes—in particular, the important relationship between youth crime and school. The focus is on how some young men come to define their masculinity against the school and, in the process, choose forms of youth crime as resources for accomplishing gender and for constructing what I call *opposition masculinities*. I begin with white, middle-class boys.

White, Middle-Class Boys

Given the success of the middle-class Saints and Socs in school [two youth groups studied by other researchers], it is this very success that provides a particular resource for constructing a specific form of masculinity. In this type of masculinity, the penchant for a career is fundamental: a "calculative attitude is taken towards one's own life" and the crucial themes are "rationality and responsibility rather than pride and aggressiveness" (Connell, 1989: 296–297). Throughout their childhood development, white, middle-class boys are geared toward the ambiance and

civility of the school. Within the school environment, for these boys, masculinity is normally accomplished through participation in sports and academic success. This participation in (or at least avid support for) sport creates an environment for the construction of a masculinity that celebrates toughness and endurance, incessantly advocates competitiveness and shame of losing, and "connects a sense of maleness with a taste for violence and confrontation" (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell, Dowsett, 1985: 39). Yet, in addition to creating this specific type of masculinity, sport is so revered and glorified within the school that it subordinates other types of masculinity, such as the sort constructed by the "brains" who participate in nonviolent games like debate (p. 39).

Over and above sport, white, middle-class masculinity in the school is typically achieved through a reasonable level of academic success. As Tolson (1977: 34–36) argues, the middle-class family supports this trajectory: "books in the home and parental help with homework provide a continuous emotional context for academic achievement"; moreover, middle-class families also tend to emphasize the importance of obtaining the appropriate qualifications for "respectable careers" that guarantee the "security" of a "profession." As Heward (1988: 8) experienced in an English boarding school, white, middle-class parents

planned their sons' futures carefully and then pursued their plans very actively, with the aim of placing them in suitable occupations and careers.

For the white middle class, then, manliness is about having a secure income from a "respectable" professional occupation. Thus, there is an important link between school and family in middle-class life, and both transmit class-specific notions of hegemonic masculinity to white, middle-class boys—a particular type of work in the paid-labor market, competitiveness, personal ambition and achievement, and responsibility.

Accommodating and Opposition Masculinities

Nonetheless, hegemonic masculinity also involves practices characterizing dominance, control, and independence. . . . Such masculine ideals are, however, the very qualities that schooling discourages. Although white, middle-class youth generally exercise greater authority and control in school than do youth from other class and race backgrounds, research on secondary schooling reveals that adaptation to the social order of the school requires that all students, regardless of their class and race, submit to rock-hard authority relations in which students are actually penalized for creativity, autonomy, and independence (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Greenberg, 1977; Messerschmidt, 1979). In other words, white, middle-class boys, like other boys, experience a school life that is circumscribed by institutionalized authoritarian routine.

In spite of this constraint, within the school most white, middle-class boys conform, since proper credentials are necessary to attaining careers. As Greenberg (1977: 201) notes, students

who believe that their future chances depend on school success are likely to conform if they resent the school's attempt to regulate their lives.

Within the social setting of the school, then, white, middle-class boys accomplish gender by conforming to school rules and regulations and by dominating student organizations, reflecting a wholehearted obligation to the school and its overall enterprise. White, middle-class boys "accept" school values and therefore the school exercises a prominent and influential restraint on these youth, at least within its own boundaries (Tolson, 1977: 39).

Because masculinity is a behavioral response to the particular conditions and situations in which we participate, white, middle-class boys thus do masculinity within the school in a specific way that reflects their position in the class and

race divisions of labor and power. Their white, middle-class position both constrains and enables certain forms of gendered social action, and these boys monitor their action in accord with those constraints and opportunities, thus reproducing simultaneously class, race, and gender relations. Moreover, this particular masculinity is sustained as a type of collective product in a particular social setting—white middle-class schools.

However, because the school is “emasculating” in the fashion discussed earlier, white, middle-class boys who join a youth group act outside the school in ways that help restore those hegemonic masculine ideals discouraged in school. In this process of “doing gender,” these boys simultaneously construct age-specific forms of criminality. Youth crime, within the social context of the youth group outside the school, serves as a resource for masculine realization and facilitates (as do such other practices as school athletics) “dominance bonding” among privileged young men (Messner, 1989: 79).

Successful “pranks,” “mischief,” vandalism, minor thefts, and drinking outside the school validate a boy’s “essential nature.” Such behaviors reflect an age-specific attempt to reestablish a public masculine identity somewhat diminished in the school, behaviors that are purposely chosen and manipulated for their ability to impress other boys. Moreover, outside the confines of the school, white, middle-class boys’ masculinity is still held accountable, not to school officials, but to other white, middle-class boys. These behavioral forms help a white, middle-class boy to carve out a valued masculine identity by exhibiting those hegemonic masculine ideals the school denies—independence, dominance, daring, and control—to resolve the problem of accountability outside the school, and to establish for himself and others his “essential nature” as a “male.” Indeed, most accounts of these forms of youth crime miss the significance of gender: it is young men who are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of these acts (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1992: 7–18). Accomplishing gender by

engaging in vandalism, “pranks,” and “mischief” (as an age-specific resource) incontrovertibly provides a public masculine resolution to the spectacle of self-discipline and emotional restraint in the school.

Thus we see that white, middle-class, youth masculinity is accomplished differently in separate and dissimilar social situations. For white, middle-class boys, the problem is to produce configurations of masculine behavior that can be seen by others as normative. Yet, as the social setting changes, from inside the school to outside in the youth group, so does the conceptualization of what is normative masculine behavior.

Through class appeal for educational credentials, white, middle-class boys are drawn into different masculine construction within the school: they develop an *accommodating masculinity*—a controlled, cooperative, rational gender strategy of action for institutional success. The white, middle-class boy’s agenda within the school, then, is simply to become the accomplice to the institutional order, thereby reaping the privileges it offers—access to higher education and a professional career (Connell, 1989: 295–297). In other words, as white, middle-class boys accomplish gender in the school setting, they simultaneously reproduce class and race relations through the same ongoing practices.

Being a man is about developing the essential credentials to obtain a suitable middle-class occupation. However, because the school both creates and undermines hegemonic masculinity, within the company of peers outside the school some white, middle-class boys draw primarily on non-violent forms of youth crime, thus constructing an *opposition masculinity*—a masculinity based on the very hegemonic masculine ideals the school discourages. In short, white, middle-class boys are forming different types of masculinity that can be assessed and approved in both social settings (inside and outside school) as normal and natural. Through this specific type of youth crime in the peer group, middle-class masculinities are differentiated from one another.

The case of white, middle-class youth demonstrates how we maintain different gendered identities that may be emphasized or avoided, depending upon the social setting. White, middle-class boys construct their gendered actions in relation to how such actions might be interpreted by others (that is, their accountability) in the particular social context in which they occur. White, middle-class boys are doing masculinity differently because the setting and the available resources change.

School Success, Masculinity, and Youth Crime

Social control theorists argue that youth who develop close bonds to the school are the least likely to engage in youth crime (Hirschi, 1969; Wiatrowski, Griswold, and Roberts, 1981). Yet the considerable amount of youth crime committed by the Saints and the Socs (who were the school "wheels" and high academic achievers) outside the school justifies reasonable concern regarding this argument. Nevertheless, middle-class schools, like schools in other social settings, develop a status system based on academic success. Research has consistently shown that students who fail academically (for whatever reason) and/or who occupy the lowest status positions in school, exhibit the highest rates of youth crime. (See Messerschmidt, 1979 for a review of this research.) Consequently, for white, middle-class boys who are not successful at schoolwork and who do not participate in school sports or extra-curricular activities, the school is a frustrating masculine experience as a result of which they are likely to search out other masculine-validating resources.

This view was demonstrated in one study of an upper-middle-class, white neighborhood, described by the authors as an "environmental paradise" that "harbors mansions and millionaires as well as deer and raccoons" (Muehlbauer and Dodder, 1983: 35). The particular neighborhood youth group which called itself "the losers," was composed primarily of boys who did not do well in school and

who demonstrated little athletic interest or ability. "The losers" spent considerable time "hanging out" together at the town square, but were not at all fond of interpersonal violence and controlling turf. Rather, they engaged chiefly in acts of vandalism—such as breaking streetlamps, making graffiti, destroying traffic signs, and doing donuts on the lawns of the more affluent members of the community—as well as organizing drinking parties at public beaches and parks. Indeed, the only serious violence committed by "the losers" was the firebombing of the personal automobiles of two representatives of "emasculating" authority: the chief of police and the vice-principal of the school. Thus, the specific types of youth crime engaged in by "the losers" served as a resource for masculine construction when other types of class-specific resources were unappealing and/or unattractive (e.g., academic success).

Although this opposition masculinity outside the school is clearly not the only version of white, middle-class youth masculinity, nor perhaps the most common version, it differs considerably from that of white, working-class youth, especially because of its reduced emphasis on the public display of interpersonal aggression/violence. It follows that we must consider more closely how this type of youthful, white, middle-class, masculine construction and its attendant youth crime differs from that of youthful, white, working-class men.

White, Working-Class Boys

As exemplified by the Roughnecks and the Eses [youth groups studied by other researchers], white, working-class boys engage in such acts as vandalism, truancy, and drinking because, as demonstrated more precisely below, they also experience school authority as an "emasculating" power. Not surprisingly, many of these boys also turn to this age-specific resource for "doing gender" outside the school. And yet, they define their masculinity against the school in a different way than do white middle-class boys, a way that

nevertheless leads to an in-school opposition masculinity as well.

'The Lads' and the 'Ear'oles'

Paul Willis's (1977) classic study *Learning to Labour* demonstrates how a group of white, working-class British boys ("the lads") reject both schoolwork and the "ear'oles" (earholes, or other young men who conform to the school rules) because "the lads" perceive office jobs and "bookwork" as "sissy stuff." The lads come to school armed with traditional notions of white, working-class masculinity: the idea that "real men" choose manual, not mental labor. Because of this particular gendered strategy, schooling is deemed irrelevant to their working-class future and "emasculating" to their conception of masculinity. In other words, schooling is unmanly in a different and broader way for these boys than for the white, middle-class boys discussed above. Accordingly, the lads evolve into an unstructured, counterschool group that carves out a specific masculine space within the school, its overwhelming rules, and unnerving authority.

In resisting the school, the lads construct behavior patterns that set them apart from both the ear'oles and also the school. Because the ear'oles are enthusiastic about schooling and support its rules, they are a major conformist target for the lads. One such practice for opposing the school and the ear'oles is "having a laff," that is, devising techniques to circumvent the controlled environment of the school. . . .

Another activity that distinguished the lads from the ear'oles is fighting. The lads exhibited "a positive joy in fighting, in causing fights through intimidation, in talking about fighting and about the tactics of the whole fight situation" (p. 34). Constructing masculinity around physical aggression, the lads—eschewing academic achievement—draw on an available resource that allows them to distance and differentiate themselves from the nonviolent ear'oles. As Willis (p. 34) points out,

Violence and the judgement of violence is the most basic axis of the 'lads' ascendance over the conformists, almost in the way that knowledge is for teachers.

The lads reject and feel superior to the ear'oles; moreover, they construct such practices as having a laff and fighting to demonstrate their perceived masculine eminence.

In this way, then, the lads accomplish gender in a specific relational way by opposing both the school and its conformists. Whereas white, middle-class boys are more likely to oppose school outside its boundaries but conform within school, the social setting for the lads is different. *They are the opposition both inside and outside the school.* Understandably, there is no accommodating masculinity here. Because schooling is conceived as unnecessary to their future while simultaneously encompassing effeminate endeavors, the lads earn symbolic space from the school by engaging in different forms of "pranks" and "mischief" within the school itself. Such behaviors help transcend the "sissyish" quality of the school day while simultaneously distancing the lads from the conformists.

But the lads also draw on forms of physical intimidation and violence to differentiate themselves from the ear'oles and the girls. For the lads, the fight "is the moment when you are fully tested"; it is "disastrous for your informal standing and masculine reputation if you refuse to fight or perform very amateurishly" (p. 35). In fact, physical aggressiveness seems to be an institutionalized feature of the lads' group. As Willis (p. 36) notes,

the physicality of all interactions, the mock pushing and fighting, the showing off in front of girls, the demonstrations of superiority and put-downs of the conformists, all borrow from the grammar of the real fight situation.

These activities provide the fodder with which to accomplish their gender and to establish (for the lads) their "essential male nature." They are designed with an eye to gender accountability

and resultingly construct inequality among boys by attempting to place the ear'oles masculinity beneath their own within the public context of the school. The lads are constructing an opposition masculinity as a collective practice; notwithstanding, this specific type is significantly different from the white, middle-class in school accommodating masculinity and gains meaning in relation to the masculinity of the ear'oles.

Outside the School

It is not only conformists to the school whom white, working-class youth, like the lads, attempt to subordinate in the process of doing gender. In Western industrialized societies, what have become known as hate crimes—racist and anti-gay violence—are disproportionately committed by groups of white, working-class boys, crimes that can also be understood in the way discussed above (Beirne and Messerschmidt, 1991: 562–563; Comstock, 1991: 72–92).

For some white, working-class boys, their public masculinity is constructed through hostility to, and rejection of, all aspects of groups that may be considered inferior in a racist and heterosexual society. For example, the ear'oles are considered inferior and subordinate to the lads because of their conformity to, and seeming enjoyment of, effeminate schooling projects. But other groups outside the school are also viewed as inferior by many white, working-class boys. Willis (1977: 48) found that different skin color was enough for the lads to justify an attack on, or intimidation of, racial minorities. Indeed, the meaning of being a “white man” has always hinged on the existence of for example, a subordinated “black man.” Thus, a specific *racial gender* is constructed through the identical practice of racist violence; a social practice that bolsters, within the specific setting of white, working-class youth groups, one's masculine “whiteness” and, therefore, constitutes race and gender simultaneously. White, working-class, youthful masculinity acquires meaning in this particular context through racist violence.

Moreover, for some white, working-class youth, homosexuality is simply unnatural and effeminate sex, and many turn this ideology into physical violence. As one white, working-class youth put it, “My friends and I go ‘fag-hunting’ around the neighborhood. They should all be killed” (Weissman, 1992: 173). Gay bashing serves as a resource for constructing masculinity in a specific way: physical violence against gay men in front of other young, white, working-class men reaffirms one's commitment to what is for them natural and masculine sex—heterosexuality. In other words, the victim of gay bashing serves, “both physically and symbolically, as a vehicle for the sexual status needs of the offenders in the course of recreational violence” (Harry, 1992: 15). Accordingly, gender is accomplished and normative heterosexuality is reproduced.

White, working-class boys such as the lads construct public masculinities outside the school in other ways as well. As with the Roughnecks and the Eses, the lads also occasionally participate in various forms of theft. Because they want to take part in the youth culture (go to pubs, wear the “right” clothes, date, and so on) shortage of cash becomes “the single biggest pressure, perhaps at any rate after school, in their lives” (Willis, 1977: 39). Through contacts with family and friends, many of the lads acquired part-time, after-school, and summer jobs; in fact, Willis found that it is not uncommon for these youths to work over ten hours a week during the school year. Consequently, “this ability to ‘make out’ in the ‘real world’ . . . and to deal with adults nearly on their own terms” is seen by the lads as evidence of their “essential nature” as “males”—a practice that reproduces this specific type of white, working-class masculinity (p. 39). In addition, because of their access to paid employment, the lads' involvement in theft is irregular rather than systematic, providing a little extra pocket money when needed. . . .

In this specific context, then, intermittent theft is a resource that helps construct an “out-of-school,” autonomous, independent, and daring

opposition masculinity. And with part-time work available as a masculine resource, outside the school these white, working-class youths only sporadically turn to theft as a resource to accomplish gender. Thus, theft not only provides these youth with a resource for doing masculinity in the specific social setting of the group, it also helps construct a gendered line of action in which future gender accountability may be at risk. That is, it contributes to the wherewithal for adequate masculine participation in the youth culture.

Yet while the part-time workplace and youth group are initially seen as superior to the school—a milieu where masculinity as they know it is accepted—these working-class boys eventually find themselves locked into dead-end jobs, making less money than those who did not participate in the group and who conformed to the school. In this way, Willis's books show how white "working-class kids get working-class jobs." The initial context, and ultimate result, of the lads' opposition masculinity in the school was an orientation toward manual labor. Through their specific construction of masculinity, the lads themselves (and, similarly, the Hamilton Park boys) thus reproduced class, race, and gender relations as the structures constituted in those relations constrain and enable their collective social action.

Lower-Working-Class, Racial-Minority Boys

Consider now how this white, working-class opposition masculinity (and the white, middle-class masculinity discussed earlier) differs from youth masculinity of lower-working-class racial minorities who engage in youth crime. Because these youth have no access to paid labor (as have the lads and Hamilton Park boys) and their parents are unable to subsidize their youth culture needs (as are the parents of white, middle-class boys), the youth gang in lower-working-class, racial-minority communities takes on a new and significant meaning inasmuch as it is here where

resources are available with which to sustain a masculine identity. For many of these youths (although far from all), life is neither the workplace nor the school; it is the street. . . .

For many lower-working-class, racial-minority boys, the street group has become both a collective solution to their prohibitions and a life-style that sometimes takes the form of street crime. For these youths, then, street crime becomes a "field of possibilities" for transcending class and race domination and an important resource for accomplishing gender.

Opposition in School

Most white, middle-class boys envision a future in mental labor and members of the white, working-class (such as Willis's lads and Sullivan's Hamilton Park youths) realistically anticipate manual-labor positions. Consequently, these youths have resources (and a future) for masculine construction that are unavailable to lower-working-class, racial-minority boys. For marginalized, racial-minority boys, no such occupational future can be realistically anticipated and, accordingly, hegemonic masculinity is severely threatened. Under such conditions, life inside school takes on a significantly different meaning. . . .

Because the school is seen simply as another institutional impediment to a future in hegemonic masculine ways and because they lack the resources of white, middle-class and working-class boys, these young men are more likely to turn to those hegemonic masculine ideals that remain available, such as physical violence.

Physical violence within the school is a resource employed for masculine construction. In situations where class and race structural disadvantage are severe, one's taken-for-granted "essential nature" is more likely to be undermined and threatened; therefore, gender is held more accountable. In short, at the level of personal practice, this translates into a display of physical violence as a specific type of in-school, opposition masculinity. . . .

Thus, for lower-working-class, racial-minority boys in the process of opposing the school, doing masculinity necessitates extra effort; consequently, they are more likely than other boys to accomplish gender within the school by constructing a physically violent opposition masculinity. And in doing so, they turn to available hegemonic masculine ideals with which to construct such masculinity. This physical violence in the school is one practice that differentiates lower-working-class opposition masculinity from the other types discussed earlier.

Opposition Outside School

In addition to opposition within the school, because the school has less significance to these youths than to young men in other social classes, the street group also takes on a distinct and significant meaning in which opposition masculinity outside the school is likewise quite different from that of other youths. Marginalized, racial-minority boys are disproportionately involved in such serious property crimes as robbery and in such publicly displayed forms of group violence as "turf wars" (Steffensmeier and Allen, 1981; Elliott and Huizinga, 1983; Tracy, Wolfgang, and Figlio, 1991). The roots of this violent street crime are found in the disconcerting nature of the school and in the social conditions of poverty, racism, negated future, and power accorded men. Because of these social conditions and their attendant possibilities/constraints, young ghetto men are the most likely to commit certain types of street crime and thus to construct a different type of opposition masculinity outside the school. . . .

Sullivan and others (Zimring and Zuehl, 1986; Conklin, 1972) have reported that most robberies are committed by a group of young street men. Within this collective setting, robbery is a means of getting money when other resources are unavailable, and is particularly attractive for young boys on the street. Robbery provides a public ceremony of domination and humiliation of others. Because young street boys are denied access to the labor market and are relegated to a social situation (the

street group) where gender accountability is augmented, they are more often involved in crimes that entail actual or possible confrontation with others. As such, robbery provides an available resource with which to accomplish gender and, therefore, to construct a specific type of public masculinity—what Katz (1988: 225–236) terms "hardmen," or men who court danger and who, through force of will, subject others to it.

"Doing stickup" is doing masculinity by manufacturing "*an angle of moral superiority* over the intended victim" and, thereby, succeeding "in making a fool of his victim" (pp. 169, 174). . . .

The robbery setting provides the ideal opportunity to construct an "essential" toughness and "maleness"; it provides a means with which to construct that certain type of masculinity—hardman. Within the social context that ghetto and barrio boys find themselves, then, robbery is a rational practice for "doing gender" and for getting money. . . .

Marginalized, racial minority boys—as with white, middle- and working-class boys—produce specific configurations of behavior that can be seen by others within the same immediate social situation as "essentially male." As we have seen, these different masculinities emerge from practices that encompass different resources and that are simultaneously based on different collective trajectories. In this way, then, class and race relations structure the age-specific form of resources used to construct specific opposition masculinities. Young, middle-class, working-class, and lower-working-class men produce unique types of masculinity (situationally accomplished by drawing on different forms of youth crime) by acknowledging an already determined future and inhabiting distinct locations within the social structural divisions of labor and power. Collectively, young men experience their everyday world from a specific position in society and so they construct differently the cultural ideals of hegemonic masculinity.

Opposition masculinities, then, are based on a specific relation to school generated by the interaction of school authority with class, race, and gender dynamics. For white, middle-class boys, a

nonviolent opposition masculinity occurs primarily outside school; for white, working-class and lower-working-class, racial-minority boys, specific types of opposition masculinities prevail

both inside and outside school. Yet for each group of boys, a sense of masculinity is shaped by their specific relation to the school and by their specific position in the divisions of labor and power. . . .

Discussion Questions

1. How does the concept of "masculinities" help to revise views of men held by both feminists and traditional criminologists?
2. Why do youths in different class-race locations in society engage in different amounts and types of crime?
3. Why is crime a matter of "doing gender"? Are there other ways to "do gender"?
4. Think back to your days in high school. Can you give any examples of how masculinity was involved in some delinquent act that you witnessed?

29. Toward a Gendered Theory of Female Offending

Darrell J. Steffensmeier and Emilie Allan

Steffensmeier and Allan present a general or integrated theory of gender and crime, with this theory explaining female (and male) crime, the gender gap in crime, and the context of female (and male) crime. Steffensmeier and Allan draw on several traditional crime theories in constructing their theory, including social learning, control, rational choice, and routine activities theories. They also draw on feminist theories and research, and spend much time discussing the ways in which gender influences the level of the causal forces identified by traditional theories—as well as pointing to certain causal factors neglected by these theories. The key elements of their theory are illustrated in Figure 29.1. The theory begins by pointing to the importance of the “organization of gender” and sex differences in biological factors.

The organization of gender refers to gender differences in norms, moral development, and social control. With respect to norms, females are supposed to care for others, especially family members; be subservient to the key males in their lives; act in a weak, submissive manner; and attend to their physical appearance, while protecting their “sexual virtue.” With respect to moral development, females are socialized to care for others and be concerned about the maintenance of relationships, while men are socialized to be more independent and

competitive. And with respect to social control, female behavior is more closely monitored and female misbehavior is more likely to be sanctioned. As indicated below, these differences strongly influence gender differences in the motivation for and constraints against crime.

There are two major sets of sex differences in biological factors. The first involves differences in physical strength, which help account for the much lower rates of violence and certain other types of serious crime by females. The second involves reproductive-sexual differences, along with norms regarding appropriate sexual behavior for males and females. Such differences provide females with greater opportunities for prostitution and reduce their need to commit serious property crimes. These sexual and strength differences also increase the likelihood that females will align themselves with males for protection.

The above two sets of factors restrict female opportunities for crime. Females are more often confined to the home and involved in the care of others. Related to this, females are less often involved with delinquent others or engaged in unstructured, unsupervised activities with peers. The above factors also reduce the motivation for crime among females by “contributing to gender differences in tastes for risk, likelihood of shame and embarrassment, self-control, and assessment of

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costs versus rewards of crime" (Steffensmeier and Allan, 1996: 478). Also, as indicated in Figure 29.1, opportunities and motivation influence one another: "being able tends to make one more willing, just as being willing increases the prospects for being able" (Steffensmeier and Allan, 1996: 478).

Finally, gender organization, sex differences in biological factors, and motivations influence the "context of offending," including the circumstances and the nature of the criminal act (e.g., the setting, victim, extent of injury, purpose of the offense). So, for example, females who commit violent crimes are more likely than males to target people they know, are less likely to use weapons, and are less likely to seriously injure their victims.

Steffensmeier and Allan's theory has not received a formal test, but it is compatible with much of the research on gender and crime and it represents perhaps the most ambitious effort to integrate both traditional and feminist theories on gender and crime (see Schwartz, 2010).

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Shortcomings of Traditional Theories

Traditional theories are helpful in explaining overall patterns of female and male offending, and they shed some light on why female levels of offending are lower than for males. These approaches are less enlightening when seeking

answers for a variety of both subtle and profound differences in female and male offending patterns.

For example: Why are serious crimes against property and against persons so much less a feature of female offending? Male criminal participation in serious crime greatly exceeds female involvement, regardless of data source, crime type, level of involvement, or measure of participation (Kruttschnitt 1994; Steffensmeier 1983; Steffensmeier and Allan 1995). Women are far less likely to be involved in serious offenses, and the monetary value of female thefts, property damage, drugs, injuries, is typically smaller than that for similar offenses committed by men.

Why are female offenders less likely to participate in or lead criminal groups? Females are also more likely than males to be solo perpetrators, or to be part of small, relatively nonpermanent crime groups. When female offenders are involved with others, particularly in more lucrative thefts or other criminal enterprises, they typically act as accomplices to males who both organize and lead the execution of the crime (see Steffensmeier 1983, for a review). Perhaps the most significant gender difference is the overwhelming dominance of males in more organized and highly lucrative crimes, whether based in the underworld or the "upperworld" (Steffensmeier 1983; Daly 1989; Commonwealth of Pennsylvania 1991).

Why does female offending often involve relational concerns? Situational pressures such as threatened loss of valued relationships may play a greater role in female offending. Although the saying, "She did it all for love" is sometimes overplayed in reference to female criminality, the role of men in initiating women into crime—especially serious crime—is a consistent finding across research (Gilfus 1992; Miller 1986; Pettitway 1987; Steffensmeier 1983; Steffensmeier and Terry 1986). Such findings also suggest that women are not uniformly less amenable to risk, but rather that their risk-taking is less violative of the law and more protective of relationships and emotional commitments.

Toward a Gendered Theory

No satisfactorily unified theoretical framework has yet been developed for explaining female criminality and gender differences in crime. Criminologists disagree as to whether gender-neutral (i.e., traditional theories derived from male samples) or gender-specific theories (i.e., recent approaches derived from female samples and positing unique causal paths for female as compared to male criminality) are better suited to these tasks. We take the position that the traditional gender-neutral theories provide reasonable explanations of less serious forms of female and male criminality, and for gender differences in such crime categories. Their principal shortcoming is that they are not very informative about the specific ways in which differences in the lives of men and women contribute to gender differences in type, frequency, and context of criminal behavior. Gender-specific theories are likely to be even less adequate if they require separate explanations for female crime and male crime.

Here we build on a framework for a "gendered" approach begun elsewhere (Steffensmeier and Allan 1995). This approach is compatible with the traditional, gender-neutral theories. The broad social forces suggested by traditional theories exert general causal influences on both male and female crime. But it is gender that mediates the manner in which those forces play out into sex differences in types, frequency, and contexts of crime involvements.

Key Elements of a Gendered Approach

A gendered approach should include at least four key elements. First, the perspective should help explain not only female criminality but male criminality as well, by revealing how the organization of gender deters or shapes delinquency by females but encourages it by males. We use the term "organization of gender" to refer broadly to things gendered—norms, identities, arrangements, institutions, and relations by which

human sexual dichotomy is transformed into something physically and socially different.

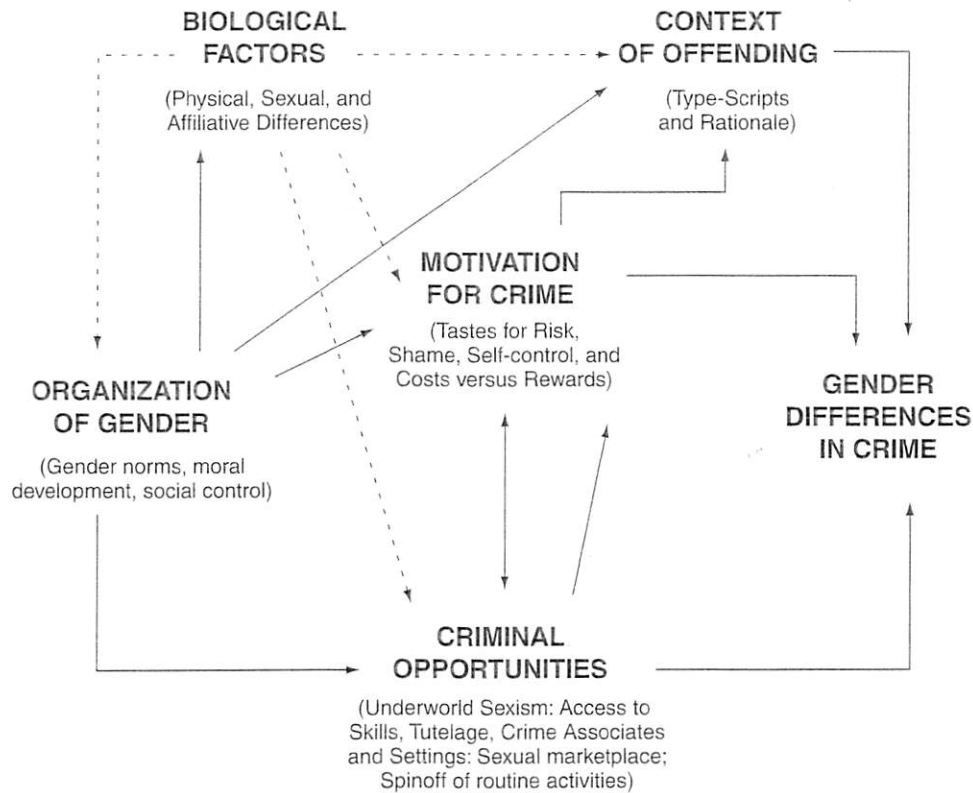
Second, a gendered perspective should account not only for gender differences in type and frequency of crime, but also for differences in the context of offending. Even when men and women commit the same statutory offense, the "gestalt" of their offending is frequently quite different. Because the gender differences in context are small for trivial or mild forms of lawbreaking, but large for violent and other serious forms of crime, contextual analysis can shed light on the gender differences for serious offenses—hitherto the most difficult to explain.

Third, compared to theories based on male crime, we need to consider several key ways in which women's routes to crime (especially serious crime) may differ from those of men. Building on the work of Daly (1994) and Steffensmeier (1983, 1993), such differences include: (a) the more blurred boundaries between victim and victimization in women's than men's case histories; (b) women's exclusion from most lucrative crime opportunities; (c) women's ability to exploit sex as an illegal money-making service; (d) consequences (real or anticipated) of motherhood and child care; (e) the centrality of greater relational concerns among women, and the manner in which these both shape and allow women to be pulled into criminal involvements by men in their lives; (f) the greater need of street women for protection from predatory or exploitative males.

Fourth, the perspective should explore the extent to which gender differences in crime derive not only from complex social, historical, and cultural factors, but from biological and reproductive differences as well (Kruttschnitt 1995, Udry 1995).

Figure 29.1 summarizes a gendered paradigm of offending that takes into account the four criteria enunciated above. We sketch here key features of this paradigm that affect men and women differently in terms of willingness and ability to commit crime.

Figure 29.1
Gendered Model of Female Offending and Gender Differences in Crime
 (broken line indicates weak effect; solid line signifies strong effect)



The Organization of Gender

The organization of gender together with sex differences in physical-sexual characteristics contributes to male and female differences in several types of relatively enduring characteristics that increase the probability of prosocial and altruistic response on the part of females but antisocial and predatory response on the part of males.

In the discussion that follows we elaborate briefly on five areas of life that inhibit female crime but encourage male crime: gender norms, moral development and affiliative concerns, social control, physical strength and aggression, and sexuality. Gender differences in these areas condition gender differences in patterns of

motivation and access to criminal opportunities, as well as gender differences in the type, frequency, and context of offending. These areas are not discrete, but rather they overlap and mutually reinforce one another.

Gender norms. The greater taboos against female crime stem largely from two powerful focal concerns ascribed to women: (i) nurturant role obligations and (ii) female beauty and sexual virtue. In varied settings or situations, these concerns shape the constraints and opportunities of girls' and women's illicit activities.

Women are rewarded for their ability to establish and maintain relationships and to accept family obligations, and their identity tends to be

derived from key males in their lives (e.g., father, husband). Derivative identity constrains deviance on the part of women involved with conventional males but encourages the criminal involvements of those who become accomplices of husbands or boyfriends. Greater child-rearing responsibilities further constrain female criminality.

Femininity stereotypes (e.g., weakness, submission, domestication, nurturance, and "ladylike" behavior) are basically incompatible with qualities valued in the criminal underworld (Steffensmeier 1986). The cleavage between what is considered feminine and what is criminal is sharp, while the dividing line between what is considered masculine and what is criminal is often thin. Crime is almost always stigmatizing for females, and its potential cost to life chances is much greater than for males.

Expectations regarding sexuality and physical appearance reinforce greater female dependency as well as greater surveillance by parents and husbands. These expectations also shape the deviant roles available to women (e.g., sexual media or service roles). Moreover, fear of sexual victimization diverts women from crime-likely locations (bars, nighttime streets) and reduces their opportunities to commit crimes (McCarthy and Hagan 1992; Steffensmeier 1983).

Moral development and amenability to affiliation. Gender differences in moral development (Gilligan 1982) and an apparent greater inherent readiness of women to learn parenting and nurturing (Beutel and Marini 1995; Brody 1985; Rossi 1984) predispose women toward an "ethic of care" that restrains women from violence and other criminal behavior injurious to others. Women are socialized not only to be more responsive to the needs of others but also to fear the threat of separation from loved ones. Such complex concerns inhibit women from undertaking criminal activities that might cause hurt to others and shape the "gestalt" of their criminality when they do offend.

In contrast, men who are conditioned toward status-seeking, yet marginalized from the world of work, may develop an amoral world view in which the "takers" gain superior status at the expense of the "givers." Such a moral stance obviously increases the likelihood of aggressive criminal behavior on the part of those who become "convinced that people are at each other's throats increasingly in a game of life that has no moral rules" (Messerschmidt 1986: 66).

Social control. Social control powerfully shapes women's relative willingness and ability to commit crime. Female misbehavior is more stringently monitored and corrected through negative stereotypes and sanctions (Simmons and Blyth 1987). The greater supervision and control reduces female risk-taking and increases attachment to parents, teachers, and conventional friends, which in turn reduces influence by delinquent peers (Giordano et al. 1986). Encapsulation within the family and the production of "moral culture" restricts the freedom even of adult women to explore the temptations of the world (Collins 1992).

Physical strength and aggression. The demands of the crime environment for physical power and violence help account for the less serious nature and less frequent incidence of crimes by women compared to those by men. Women may lack the power, or may be perceived by themselves or by others as lacking the violent potential, for successful completion of certain types of crime or for protection of a major "score." Hustling small amounts of money or property protects female criminals against predators who might be attracted by larger amounts. Real or perceived vulnerability can also help account for female restriction to solo roles, or to roles as subordinate partners or accomplices in crime groups. This can be seen in a variety of female offense patterns, including the exigencies of the dependent prostitute-pimp relationship (James 1977). Together, physical prowess and muscle are useful for committing crimes, for protection, for enforcing contracts, and for recruiting and managing reliable associates.

Sexuality. Reproductive-sexual differences (especially when combined with sexual taboos and titillations of the society as a whole) contribute to the far greater sexual deviance and infidelity among males. Women, on the other hand, have expanded opportunities for financial gain through prostitution and related illicit sexual roles. The possibilities in this arena reduce the need to commit the serious property crimes that so disproportionately involve males.

Although female offenders may use their sexuality to gain entry into male criminal organizations, such exploitation of male stereotypes is likely to limit their criminal opportunities within the group to roles organized around female attributes. The sexual dimension may also heighten the potential for sexual tension which can be resolved only if the female aligns herself with one man sexually, becoming "his woman."

Even prostitution—often considered a female crime—is essentially a male-dominated or -controlled criminal enterprise. Police, pimps, businessmen who employ prostitutes, and clients—virtually all of whom are male—control, in various ways, the conditions under which the prostitute works.

Access to Criminal Opportunity

The factors above—gender norms, social control, and the like—restrict female access to criminal opportunity, which in turn both limits and shapes female participation in crime. Women are also less likely than men to have access to crime opportunities as a spin-off of legitimate roles and routine activities. Women are less likely to hold jobs as truck driver, dockworker, or carpenter that would provide opportunities for theft, drug dealing, fencing, and other illegitimate activities. In contrast, women have considerable opportunity for commission, and thus for surveillance and arrest for petty forms of fraud and embezzlement.

Females are most restricted in terms of access to underworld crimes that are organized and lucrative. Institutional sexism in the underworld severely limits female involvement in crime groups, ranging from syndicates to

loosely structured groups (Steffensmeier 1983; Commonwealth of Pennsylvania 1991). As in the upperworld, females in the underworld are disadvantaged in terms of selection and recruitment, in the range of career paths and access to them, and in opportunities for tutelage, skill development, and rewards.

Motivation

Gender norms, social control, lack of physical strength, and moral and relational concerns also limit female willingness to participate in crime at the subjective level—by contributing to gender differences in tastes for risk, likelihood of shame or embarrassment, self-control, and assessment of costs versus rewards of crime. Motivation is distinct from opportunity, but the two often intertwine, as when opportunity enhances temptation. As in legitimate enterprise, being able tends to make one more willing, just as being willing increases the prospects for being able. Like male offenders, female offenders gravitate to those activities that are easily available, are within their skills, provide a satisfactory return, and carry the fewest risks.

Criminal motivations and involvements are also shaped by gender differences in risk preferences and in styles of risk-taking (Hagan 1989; Steffensmeier 1980; Steffensmeier and Allan 1995). For example, women take greater risks to sustain valued relationships, whereas males take greater risks for reasons of status or competitive advantage. Criminal motivation is suppressed by the female ability to foresee threats to life chances and by the relative unavailability of type scripts that could channel females in unapproved behaviors.

Context of Offending

Many of the most profound differences between the offenses committed by men and women involve the context of offending, a point neglected by quantitative studies based on aggregate and survey data. "Context" refers to the characteristics of a particular offense, including both the

circumstances and the nature of the act (Triplett and Myers 1995). Contextual characteristics include, for example, the setting, whether the offense was committed with others, the offender's role in initiating and committing the offense, the type of victim, the victim-offender relationship, whether a weapon was used, the extent of injury, the value or type of property destroyed or stolen, and the purpose of the offense. Even when males and females participate in the same types of crimes, the "gestalt" of their actions may differ markedly (Daly 1994; Steffensmeier 1983, 1993). Moreover, the more serious the offense, the greater the contextual differences by gender.

A powerful example of the importance of contextual considerations is found in the case of spousal murders, for which the female share of offending is quite high—at least one third, and perhaps as much as one half. Starting with Wolfgang's classic study of homicide, a number of writers propose that husbands and wives have equal potential for violence (Steinmetz and Lucca 1988; Straus and Gelles 1990). However, Dobash et al. (1992) point out that the context of spousal violence is dramatically different for men and women. Compared to men, women are far more likely to kill only after a prolonged period of abuse, when they are in fear for their lives and have exhausted all alternatives. A number of patterns of wife-killing by husbands are rarely if ever found when wives kill husbands: murder-suicides, family massacres, stalking, and murder in response to spouse infidelity.

In common delinquency, female prevalence approaches that of males in simple forms of delinquency like hitting others or stealing from stores or schools, but girls are far less likely to use a weapon or to intend serious injury to their victims (Kruttschnitt 1994), to steal things they cannot use (Cohen 1966), and to steal from building sites or break into buildings (Mawby 1980).

Similarly, when females commit traditional male crimes like burglary, they are less likely to be solitary (Decker et al. 1993), more likely to serve

as an accomplice (e.g., drop-off driver), and less likely to receive an equal share of proceeds (Steffensmeier and Terry 1986). Also, female burglaries involve less planning and are more spontaneous, and they are more likely to occur in daytime in residences where no one is at home and with which they have prior familiarity as an acquaintance, maid, or the like (Steffensmeier 1986, 1993).

Application of Gendered Perspective to Patterns of Female Crime

The utility of a gendered perspective can be seen in its ability to explain both female and male patterns of criminal involvement as well as gender differences in crime. The perspective predicts, and finds, that female participation is highest for those crimes most consistent with traditional norms and for which females have the most opportunity, and lowest for those crimes that diverge the most from traditional gender norms and for which females have little opportunity. Let us briefly review some examples of property, violent, and public order offending patterns that can be better understood from a gendered perspective.

In the area of property crimes we have already noted that the percentage of female arrests is highest for the minor offenses like small thefts, shoplifting and passing bad checks—offenses compatible with traditional female roles in making family purchases. The high share of arrests for embezzlement reflects female employment segregation: women constitute about 90 percent of lower level bookkeepers and bank tellers (those most likely to be arrested for embezzlement), but slightly less than half of all accountants or auditors. Further, women tend to embezzle to protect their families or valued relationships, while men tend to embezzle to protect their status (Zeitiz 1981).

Despite Simon's (1975) claim that female involvement in white collar crime was on the

increase, in fact it is almost nonexistent in more serious occupational and/or business crimes, like insider trading, price-fixing, restraint of trade, toxic waste dumping, fraudulent product commerce, bribery, and official corruption, as well as large-scale governmental crimes (for example, the Iran-Contra affair and the Greyhound scandal). Even when similar on-the-job opportunities for theft exist, women are still less likely to commit crime (Steffensmeier 1980).

The lowest percentage of female involvement is found for serious property crimes whether committed on the "street" such as burglary and robbery or in the "suite" such as insider trading or price-fixing (Steffensmeier and Allan 1995). These sorts of offenses are very much at odds with traditional feminine stereotypes, and ones to which women have very limited access. When women act as solo perpetrators, the typical robbery is a "wallet-sized" theft by a prostitute or addict (James 1977; see also Covington 1985; Pettiway 1987). However, females frequently become involved in such crimes as accomplices to males, particularly in roles that at once exploit women's sexuality and reinforce their traditional subordination to men (American Correctional Association 1983; Miller 1986; Steffensmeier and Terry 1986).

Female violence, although apparently at odds with female gender norms of gentleness and passivity, is also closely tied to the organization of gender. Unlike males, females rarely kill or assault strangers or acquaintances; instead, the female's victim tends to be a male intimate or a child, the offense generally takes place within the home, the victim is frequently drunk, and self-defense or extreme depression is often a motive (Dobash et al. 1992). For women to kill, they generally must see their situation as life-threatening, as affecting the physical or emotional well-being of themselves or their children.

The linkage between female crime and the gendered paradigm of Figure 29.1 is perhaps

most evident in the case of certain public order offenses with a high percentage of female involvement, particularly the sex-related categories of prostitution and juvenile runaways—the only offense categories where female arrest rates exceed those of males. The high percentage of female arrests in these two categories reflects both gender differences in marketability of sexual services and the continuing patriarchal sexual double standard. Although customers must obviously outnumber prostitutes, they are less likely to be sanctioned. Similarly, although self-report studies show male rates of runaways to be as high as female rates, suspicion of sexual involvement makes female runaways more likely to be arrested (Chesney-Lind and Sheldon 1992).

Female substance abuse (as with other patterns of female crime) often stems from relational concerns or involvements, beginning in the context of teenage dating or following introduction to drugs by husbands or boyfriends (Inciardi et al. 1993; Pettiway 1987). Women tend to be less involved in heavy drinking or hard drug use—those drugs most intimately tied to drug subcultures and the underworld more generally (Department of Health and Human Services 1984). Female addicts are less likely to have other criminal involvements prior to addiction, so the amplification of income-oriented crime is greater for female drug users. Female addict crimes are mainly prostitution, reselling narcotics or assisting male drug dealers, and property crimes such as shoplifting, forgery, and burglary (Anglin and Hser 1987).

Advantages of Paradigm

A gendered approach helps to clarify the gendered nature of both female and male offending patterns. For women, "doing gender" preempts criminal involvement or directs it into scripted paths. For example, prostitution draws on and affirms femininity, while violence draws on and affirms masculinity....