

## Outline and assess sociological explanations of genders differences in patterns of crime

Official statistics show that when it comes to crime statistics, males clearly overshadow any crime committed by females. According to the Home Office in 1997, of people aged 20 years old in the population, fewer than 2% of females were found guilty of an offence compared with 9% of males. This would suggest that somehow statistics often ignore female offenders to a certain degree. However to add to this problem even self-report studies and victimisation studies, which are designed to mask the problems with official statistics, show a discernible division in the genders. This can suggest that perhaps it is not just a lack of acceptance of female crime but a difference in the gender constructs. All this has led to sociologists somewhat ignoring females in crime analysis, assuming it is a male phenomenon

Social, biological, economic, and psychological explanations have been used to develop theories to explain why women commit crime, as well as why they commit less crime than men.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, theories of human behaviour tended to be deterministic. Major sociological explanations of crime (differential association, anomie, social disorganization) were emphasizing social and cultural factors that could account for female as well as male criminality.

Some sociologists feel that economic marginalisation, through unemployment, inadequate welfare benefits and in some cases lone parent responsibility has added to increases in property offences e.g. shoplifting

Self report studies imply that women are more likely to escape conviction, receiving cautions and fines rather than prison sentences.

Box, however has reviews self report sentences and states the majority, do not indicate leniency towards females.

Crime against women is often referred to as 'gendered crime', where women are victims of men (Heidensohn 1989) e.g. domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment which often filter through the Crime Figures invisibly due to females being too scared to report it or becoming reluctant to admit such things ever happened.

However surveys such as the Islington Crime Survey, are seen with a more positive evaluation of women being the victim in crime, mainly in the inner city areas though.

Alder suggest that female liberation has resulted in increasing levels of female criminality and has spawned new and more serious types of female criminals.

The chivalry thesis puts forward the view that women are treated more leniently in front of judges than males, which may contribute to a difference in criminal statistics, causing a sway toward males.

However researchers have found now supporting evidence for this and dismiss the idea.

Steven Box, concludes that the weight of evidence on women committing serious offences and being sentenced for them, does not give clear enough support to suggest that women get off 'lightly' compared to males offenders. Box argues that the female criminal statistics are in fact accurate reflections.

Pollak has argued that official crime stats are misleading, underestimating the extent of female criminality.

However Pollaks analysis of crime statistic has been heavily criticized. Heidensohn's has commented Pollaks beliefs, labelling them as being stereotypical of the image of women. Although Pollaks work takes little credibility today, his work was one of the first to raise awareness of the underestimation of female criminal activity, which is believed to be seriously under-represented in official statistics.

Females are often seen as victims of crime, however many sociologists endeavour to move away from this view as its adopting and reinforcing the 'male-stream' analysis of crime.

Recent 'female crime waves' have been seen by some sociologists as the result of the media creating moral panics about particular female groups, so labelled as being abnormal and a threat to social order.

Most sociologists assume more males commit crime and for this reason choose males as the seeds in their explanations of crime.

Some reasons why women are seen less likely to commit crime are, They're inability to commit crime in the first place. Many women are seen to be on the domestic stage, with little access to positions of power, for

example, in a co-corporation or businesses, where 'white collar crime' / fraud may be apparent.

Other reasons may be, the fact that females go through a different socialisation period, ascertaining different values, norms etc (explained by sub-cultural theorists e.g. Miller)

Stereotypes scattered throughout society by the media, tend to influence law enforces attention.

Croall suggest that similarly to male crime, females may be motivated to commit crime to obtain clothing etc in hope of expressing their identity.

Some theorists simply commit to the idea that just like males, female deviants are in search of excitement, 'Cellinson 1996, 'risk taking desires'

In conclusion, we are left with the question; Do women really commit less crime than men?

In my opinion, without concrete evidence which suggests otherwise, I believe that men do commit more crime than women. However, through my understanding and exploration of theoretical explanations of gender patterns in crime, I do agree female criminal statistics are underrepresented.