

Gender & Crime

& Feminist perspectives

Invisible Crime

- Comparatively little research
 - Tendency to look at why males don/don't offend
- Lower levels of female offending - +/-20%
- Different types of offence

Malestream criminology

Heidensohn (1989)

- 4 reasons
 - Male dominance of offenders
 - Male domination of sociology
 - “Vicarious identification”
 - thrills
 - Sociological theorising
 - Gender blind
- Women as victims rather than perpetrators

Theorising crime

Problem:

- Acceptance of male dominance of offending

Challenges to traditional approach:

- Biological explanations
- Women do commit crime
- Sex-role theory
- transgression

Biological explanations

- Women different from men
- Lombroso & Ferrero (1895) – physical difference
- Dalton (1964) – hormones affect offending

Women do commit crime

Pollak (1950)

- Questioned male predominance
- Some crime previously male only
- Leniency of justice system
 - Caring, irrational, emotional rather than dangerous

Eaton

- Delinquency in girls seen as more problematic – need for protection

Sex-role theory

Female role limits offending

- Parsons (1937) – Socialisation
- Social control – supervision
- Lack of opportunities

Changes in female offending

- Denscombe (2001) – increase in risk-taking behaviour
 - Adoption of traditionally male attitudes
 - Theoretical support of rise in female crime levels & seriousness
- “ladettes”
- Westwood (1999) – limitations of conceptualising female ID as fixed

Transgression

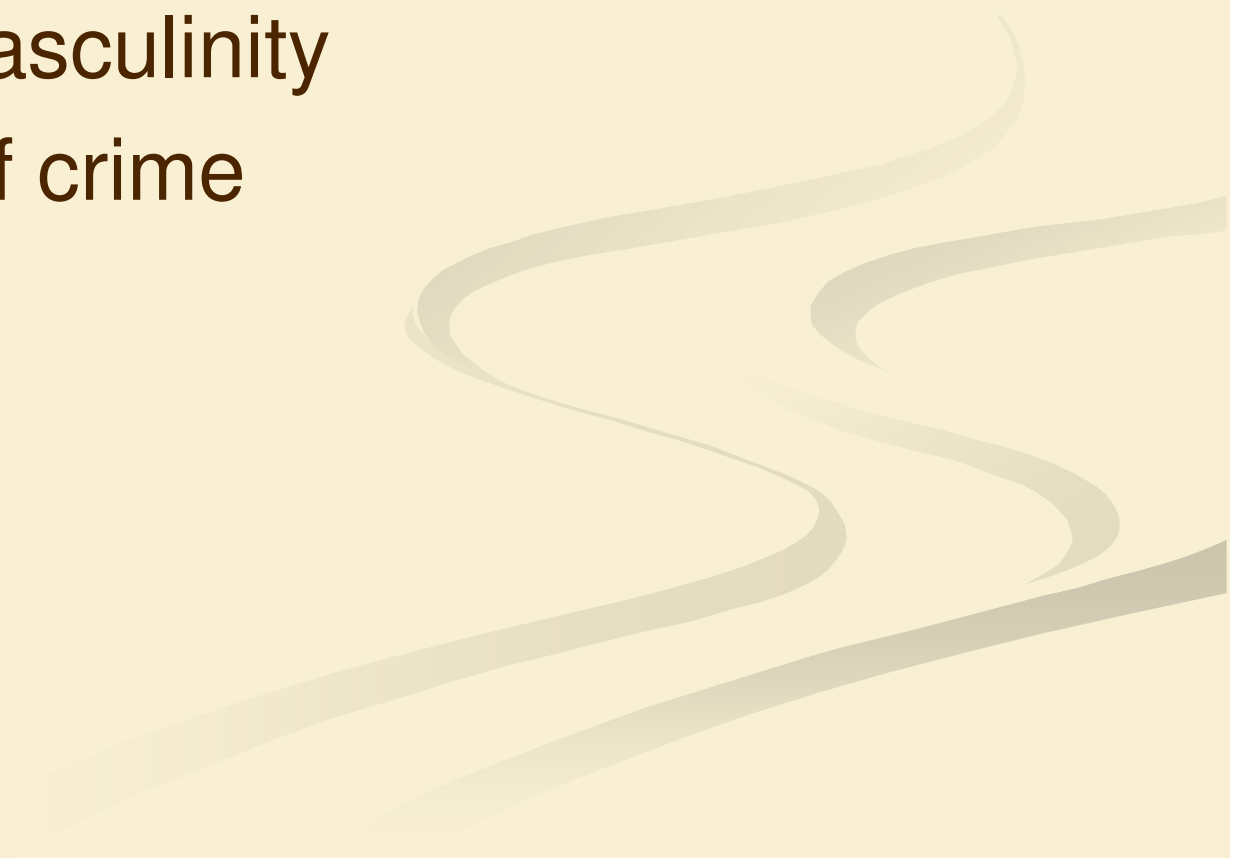
- Carlen (1992) – biological & sex-role explanations theoretically weak
- Smart (1990) – response to need for feminist criminology – transgressive criminology
- Using criminology to answer female questions & probs
 - Fear of crime
 - Treatment of women under law
- Postmodern influence

Feminist Perspectives on Crime

- Liberal Feminism
 - Overarching theories
- Socialist Feminist
- Radical feminism
 - Crime against women
 - Need for unique approach
- Postmodern feminism
 - Widening of approach

Masculinity & crime

Postmodern analysis of crime, fed back into criminology

- Normative masculinity
 - Seductions of crime
 - Edgework
- 
- The background of the slide features several thick, light-colored wavy lines that flow from the bottom left towards the right side, creating a sense of movement and depth.

Normative masculinity

- Messerschmidt (1993) – multiple constructed masculinities
- Idea of “real male” – accomplished rather than innate
 - Achieved by different means
 - Leads some to commit crime

Seductions of crime

Katz (1988)

- Role of pleasure in crime
 - Boredom
 - Range of thrills
 - Moral superiority
- Influenced by Matza's (1964) idea of "drift"
 - Need for identity

Edgework

Lyng

- Pleasure through risk-taking
 - Acting on the edge

Further Reading

- Sociology: Themes & Perspectives (5th ed), Haralambos & Holborn, pp.408-425