

# Crime and deviance (sclly 4)

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



CRIME AND DEVIANCE (SCLY 4) The social distribution of crime and deviance by age, ethnicity, gender, locality and social class, including recent patterns and trends in crime Assess sociological explanations of gender differences in crime (21 marks) Statistical evidence clearly suggests that women are less likely to commit crime than their male counterparts. For example in 2010, 85% of men were sentenced for indictable offences in comparison to only 5% of females. Men are also more likely to be repeat serious offenders and found guilty or cautioned for offending than women. Sociologists refer to structural explanations; which may encourage men to commit more crime and to factors of the criminal justice system that treat both gender differently. Pollack believes differences in crime can be attributed to the ‘chivalry factor’. He believes society generally feel the need to protect women and so are mentally discouraged from criminalising them. Thus they are less likely to be convicted for the same offences as men and this is reflected in statistics. However although it is evident that women are less likely to commit as serious offences as men, Carlen (1997) states that violent women are treated less favourably than men in the criminal justice system which undermines the chivalry factor thesis. This is because as well as committing an offence, females are reprimanded for having rejected traditional female behaviour. The fact that men are generally regarded as being more violent means they are given comparatively lighter sentences for offences of the same severity. Biological explanations for gender differences in crime can be said to reinforce the chivalry factor thesis. This is because the idea that women are naturally more innocent than men (which underpins the chivalry factor thesis) is supported by biological evidence. For example,

Dalton (1994) argued that women are more likely to commit crimes 4 days prior to and after their period. This justifies female criminality and suggests that they are less likely to commit crime and only do so on rare occasions due to hormonal imbalances. In addition, Parson's sex role theory supports biological explanations for the gender differences in crime. He believes that females are less criminogenic as they are socialised to conform to the expressive role which discourages criminal tendencies. They are socialised to be nurturing and caring, whilst the instrumental role for males associates them to familiarise with delinquent traits such as aggressiveness and toughness. However this can be said to be irrelevant in post modern society where gender role ideology is less powerful and prevalent due to individualism. The emergence of ladette behaviour among young females also indicates that such social variables are now irrelevant. According Denscombe (2001), ladette behaviour is a term to describe women adopting previously masculine traits (binge drinking, gang control) in order to assert a new identity which has led to an increase in female crime. Nonetheless it can be argued that social variables are still relevant in today's society and may not determine an individual's criminality as Heidensohn cites evidence from several studies to show that convicted female offenders score highly on psychological tests of 'femininity'. Despite the emergence of ladette behaviour, statistics also show that female crime (particularly amongst young women) is growing. The ratio of male crimes to female was previously 11: 1 in 1957 but more recently in 2008, have reduced to 4: 1. Also, crimes committed by girls aged 10-17 in England and Wales increased by 25% between 2004 and 2007. Adler (1975) attributes changing rates of female

criminality to the liberation thesis which argues that as females are becoming less restricted by gender role ideology and emerging into masculine roles, they are more likely to commit crime. However it must be noted that female crime began rising in the 1950s before the liberation movement which undermines the strength of the thesis. It can be argued that the fact that females are now in more powerful positions (seen through the higher recruitment of female officers) than before has led to authorities becoming more desensitised and thus more likely to prosecute them than in the past. Therefore the increase in female crime recorded in statistics may not actually reflect a real increase in female crime. Nevertheless, it is clear that males are more criminogenic than women. As aforementioned, Parson's linked male criminality to gender role socialisation. It can also be said that their socialisation and traditional roles in employment gives them more independence than women and so more opportunities to commit more crimes, especially white collar and corporate crimes. Connell (1987/1995), argues that males may turn to crime to assert their hegemonic masculinity (ideals such as toughness or success that define what it is to be a real man). This was said to be a focal concern of w/c boys by Miller and may occasion when males are unable to do so through legitimate means. Messerschmidt (1993) references to this, maintaining that m/c boys assert their masculinity through ruthlessness and thrill seeking in business, which leads to white collar/corporate crimes. The nature of hegemonic masculinity might also explain why men from all social classes commit domestic violence and rape. However the thesis lacks complete explanatory power as not all male crimes are an expression of masculinity (vandalism) and not all men who do not

have access to legitimate means of asserting masculinity turn to crime. Post modernists also link masculinity to crime. They state that de-industrialisation has meant that the availability of traditional w/c jobs which allowed men from such backgrounds to assert their masculinity has declined. Males may then turn to jobs in security which allows them to assert a masculine image but also provides access to various criminal ways of making money such as through drug dealing. Conversely, Winlow (2004) argues that the decline of males being able to assert their masculinity through work has meant that many resort to violent behaviour to achieve this. This had lead to an increase in crimes against women. According to Brownmiller (1975) this may occur through rape which is related to the association of masculinity with power, dominance and toughness. However this argument fails to account for crimes done by the m/c, other types of crimes and is not credible seeing as not all w/c men commit crime. In conclusion sociological explanations of gender differences in crime generally link masculinity with criminality. However, post modern and feminist theories suggest that the economy also determines ones criminal tendencies.