

Theories for female criminality



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Women commit crimes for the exact same reasons as men, while the crimes are often different as a result of upbringing and social status, the motives are the same and the only reason that women are treated so unfairly in the criminal justice system and are subjected to outrageous theories regarding their subconscious is because of the “ double crime” societal standard.

In the modern legal vernacular the word Crime has no set definition however it is widely regarded in common language as any unlawful act. Crime has long been an unfortunate facet of society, some of the earliest written text are law codes. Despite the fact that crime appears to be ingrained in the human mind, it has always been a primarily male thing. So the question is, what role do women play in a system that is designed almost exclusively for men. When women commit crimes they are generally regarded as double offenders, one for breaking the law and two for breaking the societal standard of women being the secondary or subservient gender. As a result women’s treatment in the area of crime has been less than acceptable throughout recorded history. There have been prisons for women as early as 1873. Before that, women were housed in the same facilities as men, which obviously leaves the door wide open for both physical and sexual abuse. In addition to mistreatment from fellow prisoners, women’s prisons are generally staffed by an overwhelming majority of men. These all these factors combine to spell out a very unfortunate situation for incarcerated women throughout the duration of history.

Women have been in every case the minority when it comes to committing crimes and it’s very plain to see that men and women have very little in common both mentally and physically so the question arises: why do women

commit crimes, what motives are commonly scene and what crimes do they most often commit. Many scientist throughout history have debated and tossed around several often seemingly outrageous theories about what it is in the female subconscious that drives them to commit crime, Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychoanalysis, once suggested that females commit crimes as a result of a phenomenon called “ penis envy”. “ Penis envy” in its simplest definition is a subconscious jealousy of the male reproductive system, because crime is almost always associated with males; committing crimes will bring the female individual into closer association with the male, the penis holder. While this theory has little to no scientific basis and seems to have no legitimacy the very core logic does make sense so this conclusion, considering the time of its publication in 1908 seems reasonable. Another theory also places its causation on the male identity, women who look like males are more likely to commit crimes because they are more biologically similar to males, who commit more crimes, this theory, much like the Freuds seems to be a logical statement however it is on no way realistic and there is very little scientific fact to back these theories up. In spite of all these theories the most agreed upon conclusion is that Women commit crimes for the same reasons as men: personal gain, emotions like love or anger, thrill, and to cover up other crimes. Nearly every motive, when boiled down, fits into those four categories. A common female crime that adds greatly to the number of incarcerated women but does not seem to be factored into studies regarding female crime is prostitution, this one has a very simple explanation, there is very few male prostitutes compared to the number of female prostitutes. The cause of female prostitution is often desperation or a need for money. Almost 40, 000 women were arrested for

<https://assignbuster.com/theories-for-female-criminality/>

prostitution related charges in 2016 according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, its evidently clear that prostitution greatly contributes to female crime statistics however it does not seem to be factored into any of the theories presented earlier regarding female crime.

The Sigmund Freud “ penis envy” theory stems from several of his other outlandish proposals that suggest an incredible unfamiliarity with the female mind and body, which is understandable given his name was Sigmund and having now seen a picture of him through the course of my research. The first base layer of the penis envy belief is one of Freud’s most well known developments, the Oedipus Complex, which states that all children are at some point attracted to their parent of the opposite sex and as a side effect resent their parent of the same sex because of jealousy. The key part of the penis envy theory is a young girl comparing herself to boys and realizing that she does not possess a penis, which then turns into the belief that she has lost it via castration. The anxiety that stems from this pivotal moment in a young girls life profoundly affects her well into her adult years according to Freud. There is several things that make very little sense about this theory however its legitimacy is still debated even today.

Another theory, which seems to be more of a logical guess than a scientific conclusion proposes that women who look more masculine are more likely to commit crime because on a genetic level they have more in common with men, who commit more crimes and as a whole are more likely to commit crimes. While the logic of the theory is valid, it is in no way realistic and has no basis in actual fact. If anything this theory seems to place a bias on the looks of women and then in turn associate that with criminal behavior. Bias <https://assignbuster.com/theories-for-female-criminality/>

against women is seen time and time again in the female criminal justice system, those who come from impoverished or are of minority status are much more likely to be incarcerated than wealthier white women. This is also the case with men within the criminal justice system, further supporting that women commit crimes for the same reasons as men.

The final outlandish theory proposes that there is a link to the natural differences in heart rate between men and women. The base fact here is that men with lower heart rates are more likely to commit crimes, which seems to be more coincidence than correlation. The claim here is that because men with lower heart rates are more likely to commit crimes, women with lower heart rates are more likely to commit crimes.

Female Crime and the stigmas surrounding it seem to be much worse than those surrounding crimes committed by males which is not at all surprising given that that is generally the case for most issues regarding gender.

Women and Men are both human and as a result are all subject to the same desires and emotions, why can't that be an acceptable answer or reason as to why women commit crimes.

One notable difference between Male and Female crime is the type of crimes that are committed, Men are much more likely to commit violent crimes such as murder, assault, arson, and armed robbery. On the other hand Women are more likely to be convicted for more peaceful crimes such as shoplifting, money laundering, embezzlement, and fraud. The only theory regarding crime that seems to make any sense states that women commit crimes like those listed due to the generally subservient nature that they play in society,

this is backed up by the fact that female crime has increased consistently following the second wave feminist movement. As women became more prominent in society, so did their crime statistics.

Some of the most famous female criminals in history were on par with or in charge of the men that they operated with. While some of their history may have been exaggerated or overstated like much of history, it would be very difficult for one to deny the cultural and historical impact of women like Bonnie Parker and Ma Barker. Bonnie Parker achieved more than celebrity status during her crime spree during the Great Depression. Bonnie was so much more than a criminal, women dressed like her, acted like her, wanted to be her, for the first time a female criminal was seen in a positive light, while seeing a criminal in a good light is definitely a bad thing it most definitely was a big step towards gender equality, especially in the media. Ma Barker's story is a very interesting one as some claim that she was the leader of the Barker gang which was responsible for several robberies and murders throughout the early 1930s, others claim that it was her son that ran things and she took the blame in an effort to protect her sons to an extent.

Women commit crimes for the exact same reasons as men, while the crimes are often different as a result of upbringing and social status, the motives are the same and the only reason that women are treated so unfairly in the criminal justice system and are subjected to outrageous theories regarding their subconscious is because of the "double crime" societal standard.

Citations

<https://assignbuster.com/theories-for-female-criminality/>

- OWEN, BARBARA. “ Prisons: Prisons for Women.” *Encyclopedia of Crime and Justice* , edited by Joshua Dressler, 2nd ed., vol. 3, Macmillan Reference USA, 2002, pp. 1191-1200. *Gale Virtual Reference Library* , <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/CX3403000203/GVRL?u=powhatanhs&sid=GVRL&d=480a040e>. Accessed 7 May 2019.
- RAFTER, NICOLE. “ Feminism: Criminological Aspects.” *Encyclopedia of Crime and Justice* , edited by Joshua Dressler, 2nd ed., vol. 2, Macmillan Reference USA, 2002, pp. 703-707. *Gale Virtual Reference Library* , <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/CX3403000124/GVRL?u=powhatanhs&sid=GVRL&d=55e2482a>. Accessed 7 May 2019.
- STEFFENSMEIER, DARRELL, and EMILIE ALLAN. “ Gender and Crime.” *Encyclopedia of Crime and Justice* , edited by Joshua Dressler, 2nd ed., vol. 2, Macmillan Reference USA, 2002, pp. 728-737. *Gale Virtual Reference Library* , <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/CX3403000129/GVRL?u=powhatanhs&sid=GVRL&d=dd086c72>. Accessed 7 May 2019.
- Guin, Jeff. “ The Irresistible Bonnie Parker.” *Smithsonian.com* , Smithsonian Institution, 1 Apr. 2009, www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-irresistible-bonnie-parker-59411903/.
- “ Has Gender Equality Made Women Commit More Crimes?” *Apolitical* , apolitical.co/solution_article/has-gender-equality-made-women-commit-more-crimes/.
- “ In the Spotlight: Women and Girls in the Justice System | NCJRS.” *National Criminal Justice Reference Service, NCJRS* , www.ncjrs.gov/spotlight/wgcjs/Summary.html.

- “ Ma Barker.” *Crime Investigation* , 30 June 2017, www.crimeandinvestigation.co.uk/crime-files/ma-barker.
- Ordway, Denise-Marie. “ Crime and Gender: A Partial Explanation for Why Men Commit More Crime.” *Journalist’s Resource* , 14 Apr. 2017, journalistsresource.org/studies/government/criminal-justice/crime-gender-women-prison-heart-rate/.
- “ Sex Differences in Crime.” *Wikipedia* , Wikimedia Foundation, 14 Feb. 2019, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex_differences_in_crime.