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As you learned in the section, feminist criminology challenged not only the male-dominated views of criminality but also provided a new perspective for understanding the offending behaviors of women. Here, Drs. Chesney-Lind and Morash argue that while feminist criminology has made a number of valuable contributions to the discipline, the field needs to expand beyond its traditional boundaries in order to move toward a global understanding of gender and crime.

Transformative Feminist Criminology

A Critical Re-thinking of a Discipline

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Introduction

Early theories to explain delinquency, crime, and victimization were actually limited to theorizing male deviance, male criminality, and male victimization with a specific focus of showcasing the utility of the positivist paradigm to the study of the distributions and causes of these phenomena. Thus, the founders of criminology almost completely overlooked women's crime, and they ignored, minimized, and trivialized female victimization (Hughes, 2005). When they did consider women, they considered them in relation to men, and discussions of these relations rarely if ever included details of the horrific violence that many women suffered at the hands of those men (or blamed the woman for the assaults).

Based on the assumption that aspects of the social world could be precisely measured and clearly demonstrably linked as causes and effects, positivist methodology came to dominate criminology by the mid-twentieth century (see Deegan, 1990). This perspective emphasized

the researcher as objective and detached from both the data collection process and the use of the findings. No consideration was given to the effect of field research on study participants or the potential that social phenomena are given their meaning by individuals, and these meanings are as important as precisely measured "realities." Even those criminologists that used more qualitative data, such as Thrasher (1927) and Cohen (1955), failed to understand how their own gender colored their view of the world, which meant they completely ignored and/or sexualized girls and talked almost exclusively to boys and young men about gangs and delinquency.

Feminist criminology directed attention toward gender as a key force that shapes crime and social control, toward research methods that recognize power differentials between the researcher and the researched, and gave relatively powerless people voice to express their standpoints, and toward action-oriented research to reveal and promote justice.

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Feminist Theory's Unique Focus

To recognize the unique contributions of feminist criminological theory, we first consider what is "missing" in other paradigms, and we present key feminist work that has filled these gaps (Sprague, 2005). Specifically, inconsistent with the longstanding inattention to girls and women caught up in the justice system, research on the early history of US courts showed that concern for girls' immoral conduct fueled the so-called "child-saving movement" which established a separate system of justice for youth and that ended up incarcerating large numbers of girls for sexual offenses for many decades into the twentieth century (Chesney-Lind, 1977; Odem, 1995; Schlossman & Wallach, 1978). Another historical analysis (Rafter, 1990, p. 149-152) revealed that while reformatories housed white women deemed amenable to being "saved" through grooming for work as domestics, particularly in the South after the Civil War, the criminal justice system treated and punished imprisoned African American women as if they were men, requiring them to work alongside men in chain gangs, even subjected them to whipping, like men.

The recognition of women's and girls' variation in experiences based on race, gender, and other differences has become another cornerstone of feminist criminology. Feminist criminologists were also the first to recognize that many girls moved deep into the justice system after they ran away from a sexually abusive parent, were arrested for running or for "survival crime," and were then criminalized by the system (Chesney-Lind, 1989). This discovery stimulated much research on girls' and women's unique pathways into illegal activity and institutions of control (e.g., Belknap & Holsinger, 1998; Davis, 2007; Holsinger, 2000; Van Voorhis, Wright, Salisbury, & Bauman, 2010) and on the high prevalence of victimization among women offenders (e.g., Browne, Miller, & Maguin, 1999; Moe 2004; Richie, 1996).

The inclusion of women and girls in criminological research was catalyzed by the second wave of the feminist movement in the late 60s and early 70s.¹ As might be expected, feminist criminologists of this period brought the insights of feminist theories unrelated to crime and

social control into their groundbreaking work; indeed, inter-disciplinarity is another earmark of feminist work. Contemporary criminologists who work from a feminist perspective continue to borrow heavily from the disciplines of women's studies, gender studies, and feminist scholarship in other social sciences and fields of study. Often their keenest insights come when they transgress criminology; that is, they focus on concepts apart from crime, victimization, and justice system; these imported concepts shed light on the operation of gender as it pertains to the core interests of criminology (Cain, 1990).

All the disciplines that contain feminist theory have different strands that vary in several ways: degrees of theoretical attention to intersectionality (i.e., combinations of gender with race, class, ethnicity, and other status markers that affect social life and individuals); preference for particular research methods; integration with constructionist, conflict, or other theoretical paradigms. The best known of the early theoretical influences on criminology were the notions of *radical feminist theory*, *liberal feminist theory*, and *socialist feminist theory*. *Radical feminism* stresses that patriarchal gender arrangements lead to men's efforts to control women's sexuality (and their reproductive capacity) often through violence and abuse (e.g., rape and wife battering). Men dominate over women throughout society, and meaningful change requires obliterating gender differences in power and opportunities (Brownmiller, 1975; Millet, 1970). *Liberal feminism* suggests that gender oppression would be reduced or eliminated by altering the way that girls and boys are socialized and by reforming laws and their implementation, for example, by eliminating bias in the sentencing of women and men and between racial groups (Bickel & Peterson, 1991). *Socialist feminism* made an important contribution to understanding that not just gender but also class results in oppression, so for example, countries where women receive little education and hold low occupational status experience high levels of sexual violence against women and produce women's tremendous fear of crime (Yodanis, 2004; also see Martin, Vieratits, & Britto, 2006; Whaley, 2001). According to socialist feminists, since gender oppression takes on alternative forms and intensity

"The women's movement has traditionally been divided into two historic 'waves,' despite the fact that work on the status of women can be dated well before the first of these events, and continued in a rather clear form after the first 'wave' passed. Generally, however, the first 'wave' is recognized as starting with the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, and the second 'wave' is dated to the publication of Betty Friedan's influential book, *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963.

depending on social class, reforms require change in the economic system (e.g., a shift toward socialism) not just in the sex/gender system.

New schools of thought continue to appear on the feminist theoretical landscape and they, too, are of clear relevance to criminology. Each school has challenged both mainstream criminology and other feminist theory to more fully account for the complexity of how gender is connected to crime and justice. Despite different strands of feminist theory, there are important key concepts and both theoretical and epistemological assumptions that cut across the variants of feminist theory. The centrality of patriarchy and “feminine” and “masculine” identities, intersectionality that recognizes the combined effects of gender and other status markers, agency even of the oppressed, and feminist epistemology and research methods are persistent characteristics of feminist social science, including feminist criminology.

Patriarchy Matters

While the dictionary defines feminism as simply “the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes” (Merriam-Webster, 2009), the terrain has been made much more complicated in the years that followed that 1895 definition. The *sex/gender system* (also referred to as the *gender organization and gender arrangements*) stands as a central concept in feminist theory. The *sex/gender system* exists globally and in countries, cultures, regions, communities, organizations, families, and other groups. It affects individuals by impacting their identities, imposing gendered expectations, and prohibiting and sanctioning “gender inappropriate” behavior. Patriarchal *sex/gender systems* are characterized by males’ exercise of power and control to oppress women (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). The degree and the form of patriarchy vary by place and time and even for subgroups (e.g., social class, racial, ethnic, and age groups) sharing the same geography and period (Lerner, 1986a, b; Lown, 1983; Pateman, 1988, 1989). According to the ideology of extreme patriarchy, women’s orientation should be totally restricted to the home with no participation in education or the workforce (Stankuniene & Maslauskaitė, 2008). Slightly less extreme forms of patriarchy allow women to participate in the workforce but husbands and, depending on the culture, other relatives control women’s earnings.

the perpetrators were male and the victims were predominantly female.

What about girls? Here the discussion focuses on how girls, particularly girls involved in crime, negotiate feminine norms that tend to reward obedience to authority, particularly male authority, passivity, and nurturance. Consider girls who are gang members. Despite the stereotype of gangs as hyper masculine, girls are present in gangs, and present in very significant numbers (one estimate is that that girls are roughly a third of gang members) (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Exactly how do these girls negotiate what some might imagine as a quintessentially male space? Are they simply embracing a “bad girl femininity” as an “aggressive, tough, crazy and violent gang member”? Laidler and Hunt (2001) do an outstanding job of documenting how African American, Latina, and Asian American girls negotiate not only dangerous neighborhoods and risky peer groups (since most girls are in mixed-sex gangs) but also engage in very complicated cultural notions of femininity. Contrary to the construction of gang girls as “a bad ass” (p. 675), they note that girls place a very high value on both “respect” and “respectability.” They alternately challenge and embrace notions of traditional femininity through interactions with others in a range of settings but always return to behaviors that involve “defending one’s reputation as respectable” (p. 676).

Irwin and Chesney-Lind (2008) build on the insight that girls’ and women’s crime, even violent crime, is not well understood or explained by simply assuming that girls are mimicking their male counterparts and taking up a form of dangerous masculinity (the “bad ass” perspective). Long dominant in criminology, these theories of “violence” assume that female violence can be explained by the same factors that have long been studied to explain male violence, since these “bad” women are seeking equality with men in the area of violence (and acting just like men). Irwin and Chesney-Lind also identify other approaches to female violence that stress its roots in female victimization in patriarchal society and the role of deteriorated neighborhoods in producing a female version of the “code of the streets,” tough femininity, particularly for urban girls of color. Building on these more recent constructions, they conclude that one must examine how the multiple systems of oppression (based on class, race, ethnicity, and gender) interact in complex but

victimization, the justice system, and workers in that system. Importantly, they document inequities and suffering introduced by patriarchal arrangements to protest and change them.

Masculinities and Femininities

In criminology, one important explanation that has traditionally been “missing” from conversations about crime is that boys and men have always committed the most crime, especially of a violent type or in the “crimes of the powerful” category (Daly, 1989; Schwartz, Steffensmeier, & Feldmeyer, 2009; Steffensmeier, Schwartz, Zhong, & Ackerman, 2005). For decades criminologists by and large ignored the gender gap (or dropped girls and women from the analysis as many early longitudinal studies did), which had the effect of normalizing high levels of male violence. Although certainly not the only explanation for men’s and boys’ high levels of illegal behavior, theories about gender identities are one approach that holds promise in explaining the gender difference. Although feminist theory, by definition, is grounded in women’s experience, some critical male scholars (DeKeseredy, 2011; Messerschmidt, 1993; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, this issue) have increasingly adopted feminist perspectives in their own research on men and male behavior as well as women, and they have explored the link of masculinities to crime. Also, feminist criminologists have made major advances by showing the connection of pressure to conform to particular aspects of manhood and male involvements in crime (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Bowker, 1997; Bui & Morash, 2008).

The feminist perspective calls attention to gender (and thus masculinity) as something that is enacted in the context of patriarchal privilege, class privilege, and racism. The power of this perspective is clearly evident in work by Danner and Carmody (2001) who document how the media accounts of school shootings completely miss the role of gender in these crimes that so horrified the nation. Surveying newspaper coverage of shootings at multiple districts, Danner and Carmody noted that while the media was obsessed with the stories, all the stories “rounded up all the usual suspects”—general culture of violence, violent media, gangs, the access to guns, youth culture, and so forth—with virtually no realization that all

The sex/gender system typically functions as a system of social stratification, where both men and women and the tasks they perform are valued differently—with men’s assumed qualities and the work they do valued more highly (Conway, Pizzamiglio, & Mount, 1996; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, Xu, 2002; Gerber, 2009). To illustrate, many citizens and some police associate effective policing with characteristics assumed to be traits for men, especially traits surrounding “aggression, violence, danger, risk taking, and courageousness” (Franklin, 2005, p. 6; also Heidensohn, 1992; Hunt, 1984; Probo & Padavic, 2002). In highly gendered (Acker, 1990) police organizations, women are stereotyped and channeled into restricted types of police work and support roles, are treated with hostility, and are rejected by other officers just on the basis of their gender (Martin & Jurk, 2007). Practices of exclusion from informal work cultures, gender segregation, differential assignment, sexual harassment, and marginalization of women within family responsibilities also characterize correctional organizations and the settings where legal professionals work (Martin & Jurk, 2007, p. 2).

The feminist conceptualization of the sex/gender system contrasts sharply with representation of a person’s biological sex category as an individual-level variable—an approach that is frequently found in traditional criminological discussions of gender. In feminist theory, gender is not a variable nor is it an unchanging personal trait. A person’s gender is constructed through actions and interactions to produce a form of “masculinity” or “femininity” that either reproduces or challenges common expectations for gender-appropriate behavior (West & Zimmerman, 1987; also see West & Fenstermaker, 1995). The sex/gender system at the macro (structural) level affects individuals by affording them access to influence and resources depending on their sex and gender. Thus, to begin to fully explain key phenomenon, such as the gender gap in crime, as well as the seemingly perplexing responses of the criminal justice system to girls and women as both victims and offenders, we must theorize gender in terms of individual level identity and interactions embedded in a broader macro-level system of gender arrangements.

Feminist criminologists (e.g., Hunnicutt, 2008; Ogle & Batton, 2009) struggle to keep attention focused on how different forms of patriarchy influence crime

co-equal ways to produce contexts where girls' violence makes sense (often as a survival mechanism) rather than understanding gender as something one "does" or doesn't do while negotiating more robust systems of race and class oppression (see Chesney-Lind & Jones, 2010).

Intersectionality

African American scholar and activist bell hooks's book, *Ain't I a Woman* (1981), highlighted and forever invalidated the sole focus on gender. Hooks argued against white feminists who felt that women were denied access to politics because they were stereotyped as frail and delicate. She pointed out that women like her had a history that fully contradicted this imagery, in part because of the hard labor and the severe living conditions imposed on slaves. The challenges of understanding the realities of the lives of women who differ in their combinations of age, color, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other characteristics pervade feminist criminology, and are addressed in attempts to take these intersections into account in understanding individual identity, group and local context, and social structure.

Black feminist criminology makes its contribution by emphasizing race-related structural oppression, the influence of Black community and culture, intimate and familial relations affected by race, and the nature of women's identities as Black, female, of a particular class, and so on (Potter, 2006). In this tradition, Jones (2010) explored and explained the lives of Black girls who confront violence on a daily basis in their communities. Providing an example of feminist theory that attends to identity, context, race, and gender, Jones rejects placing the justice system at the center of the girls' lives and assuming that justice system labeling is a meaningful descriptor for the girls. Instead, she builds theory to show how the girls manage expectations for being "good girls" in communities and schools that are marked by conflict and require an offensive posture and even the use of violence for self-protection.

Agency

Theorists and researchers sometimes ignore women's agency and focus only on their compliance with patriarchal constraints (Gallagher, 2007; Macleod, 1991). Feminist

criminologists instead emphasize agency—an assertion of identity and attempts to steer one's life—even under extreme conditions (Lerner, 1986a, b, p. 239). Although a context characterized by a constant threat of male violence, the girls that Jones (Jones, 2010) studied were active and agentic in navigating between "good" and "ghetto" messages about Black femininity. Similarly, Bosworth and Carrabine (2001) detailed how women in prison, who certainly suffered from a profound loss of freedom, found a variety of ways to resist, to cope with, and survive the carceral conditions. As a final example, Morrell and Haarr (2012) discovered that many women who resisted reproducing traditional female-male stereotypes and hierarchies that devalue traits commonly associated with women. Instead they fashioned complex, personal occupational identities that in many cases were not tied to their sex category, but when they were, that associated women's positive attributes with excellent job performance.

Feminist Methodology and Epistemology

Although all sorts of research methods have been used to develop and improve feminist theory (Reinharz, 1991; Sprague, 2005), feminist criminologists have contributed some unique insights on "how we know" about social life and have challenged positivist science norms that reduce the researcher invisible and study participants powerless. Feminist approaches to research are suited to revealing human agency and the constructed nature of gender identity and structure. The recognition of these features of social life extends to the research process.

Specifically, feminist researchers believe that the subjects of research can contribute crucial information to their experiences, that their understandings are important, and that these experiences must be considered in the context of patriarchy to be understood. They recognize the need to consider the power differentials between the researched and the researcher, and how these differentials affect the production of knowledge (Ramazanoglu, 1988; Burman, Batchelor, and Brown (2001) put these principles into practice in their study of Scottish teenage girls' views and experiences of violence. They faced moral dilemmas in their ethnographic work that over time involved 800 girls. For instance, sometimes discussions

violence led to girls being violent toward each other, raising ethical issues about the appropriateness of group discussion and how the researcher should intervene. Also, researchers were strongly affected by girls' accounts of being bullied, sexually assaulted, or in other ways victimized, in some cases because the researchers had similar experiences during their own childhoods. Researchers struggled, too, with girls' descriptions of hitting or slapping each other as "fun" and "not violence."

The importance of feminist criminology's contribution to research methodology is striking in the literature on violence against women. Depending on whether they use positivist measurement and sampling approaches, researchers have drawn conflicting conclusions: either that men and women are equivalently violent in intimate partner relationships, or that men are markedly more violent and destructive than women. Feminist criminologists emphasize that adequate measurement requires adequate theoretical conceptualization of violence and its context and it must include aspects of male violence (such as stalking and sexual assault that women rarely commit) (DeKeseredy, 2011; Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992; Meltzer & Belknap, 2003; Miller, 2005).

A valid measure of abuse must differentiate the types of intimate partner violence identified by Johnson and Ferraro (2000): *intimate terrorism*, which is violence used as one of many tactics in a general pattern of extreme effort to control an intimate partner through the combination of physical and emotional abuse; *violent resistance* in self-defense, often just once; *mutual violence* in which domestic partners use controlling and manipulative violence against each other; and *situational couple violence*, which "results from situations or arguments between partners that escalate on occasion into physical violence" (Kelly & Johnson, 2008, p. 485). Shelter and domestic violence advocacy program samples consist primarily of victims of intimate terrorism, but random samples drawn for surveys have high representation of situational violence victims. To bring this point home, we point out that intimate terrorism victims are often prohibited from leaving home, answering the phone, or reading the mail—so they are highly unlikely to take part in any sort of research, unless they are in shelters. By accurately measuring the type of violence and by recognizing the biases introduced by different sampling approaches, research demonstrates that in heterosexual couples, males most

often perpetrate the extremely damaging form of abuse, intimate terrorism, and that misogynist attitudes and gender traditionalism contribute to this form of abusive behavior (Johnson, 2006, 2011).

A central tenet of feminist methodologies is that research methods must be up to the task of producing knowledge that informs and promotes positive social change. As a case in point, guided by feminist theory and methodological approaches, Dobash and Dobash (2004) collected qualitative and quantitative data from a sample of couples. Their findings justified public policies that emphasize men's violence against women as well as caution against the practice of dual arrests, in which police take couples into custody together. If they had studied a random sample of couples with methods to "count" incidents, Dobash and Dobash might have made recommendations for family therapy to address situational couple violence, thereby ignoring the imbalance of power and danger to the victim when intimate terrorism or violent resistance occurs. To challenge damaging policies and advance those that protect the less powerful, feminist criminologists often collaborate with and carefully listen to the people they study. Additionally, they collaborate with advocates to ensure that theoretical discoveries are translated into program and policy action (Haviland, Frye, & Rajah, 2008).

Challenges for Future Theorizing and Research

As feminist criminology enters the new century, it must embrace two important and exciting challenges: First, in an era of unparalleled inequality, we must find new and powerful ways to continue paying attention to the powerful and the oppressors. We must forcefully present the globalization of the world's issues and the increasing need to see violations of girls and women as human rights issues.

Consistent with the overarching critical criminology paradigm, feminist criminologists have directed attention to a serious limitation of much social science theory, which is its failure to explain the privilege and behavior of powerful people and its complementary concentration on understanding people who lack power (Sprague, 2005, p. 11–12). Given the connection of limited power with female status,

feminist criminologists in particular need to be quite careful about “studying down”—that is, focusing exclusively on the powerless—which can result in pathologizing crime victims, or girls and women in conflict with the law, rather than showing how oppressive gender arrangements lead to victimization and harsh punishment. Understanding structures of power and context are crucial.

Globalization brings new challenges to feminist criminologists. Take the attempted assassination of Malala Yousufzai, the 14-year-old Pakistani girl shot in the head by the Taliban for speaking out about girls’ rights to an education in October, 2012. Shortly after—in December, 2012—in India there was the terrible gang rape and resulting murder of a 23-year-old medical student, which provoked worldwide outrage, and ultimately a global women’s protest that went viral because of the internet (see onebillionrising.org for images). So, if we were asked to chart out the pressing issues for feminist criminology, we would point to the following possibilities.

Malala Yousufzai’s courage causes us to see the importance of girls’ studies, not just women’s studies, because today’s girls will be tomorrow’s women. The tragic and brutal death in India tells us about tolerance of girls’ and women’s victimization. As a horrific example, after she was repeatedly raped over a 90-minute period on a public bus she rode with a male friend, who also was severely beaten and left suffering, the couple was dumped on the road. The police who finally showed up argued for two hours about which of them would have to take the seriously beaten couple to the hospital (Pokharel & Rana, 2013). Both incidents blur the boundaries between victimization, crime, and profound human rights violations. They also put in stark focus the explicit failure of certain “courts” and “police” to protect women. Indeed, in some parts of Pakistan, the establishment of Sharia courts actually jail girls and women seeking help for abuse (such as the arrest of women for adultery if they report a rape) and often forcibly return them to their abusers from whom they are trying to escape (Asian Human Rights Commission, 2010; Hadi & Chesney-Lind, 2013).

These incidents are not isolated or unusual in the countries where they occurred or in many countries throughout the world. They are just two examples of a multitude of organized group efforts, in some cases sponsored or tolerated by the State, to enforce extreme patriarchy. The attack on girls’ education is not atypical.

Around the world, students, teachers and schools are attacked at an alarming rate. This war against education, in which educating girls is often a motivating factor, gets very little attention or media coverage. But in at least 31 countries education has been the target of intentional attacks for political, ideological, sectarian, religious, military or other reasons. (Winthrop, 2012, p. 2)

In one year, largely motivated by beliefs that girls should not go to school, Pakistan experienced 152 bombings that destroyed schools, and Afghanistan had 35 schools burned; similar patterns occur in parts of Latin America, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East (Winthrop, 2012). Lack of education and resulting dependence on others place girls and women at risk for continued exposure to violence. If they leave or are expelled from their natal or marital families—and expulsion is another form of violence—they may turn to prostitution or illegal acts to survive and keep their children alive, and they often must live in dangerous places that expose them to victimization and the need to defend themselves, sometimes violently. The connection of girls and women being victims and being caught up as offenders in the courts and correctional programs and institutions is strong, and it is many times a causal connection.

Just as globalization alerts us to violence against women throughout the world, it directs attention to U.S. policies that bring women into prisons outside of the United States. Not only did the U.S. “war on drugs” develop into a “war against women” who in increasing proportions came to make up non-violent prison populations charged with drug-related offenses (Chesney-Lind, 1977; Johnson, 2006). Also, businesses that run and supply prisons, U.S. government entities, and U.S. politicians have promoted arrest, prosecution, and incarceration of women worldwide (Richie, 2012; Sudbury, 2002). U.S. pressure to criminalize people involved in the international drug trade and in prostitution had the unintended effect of promoting incarceration of women whose only means of survival, economically or in face of pressures from criminal men, is to carry drugs or prostitute themselves (Kempadoo, 2005).

One aspect of globalization is the movement of people across borders. There are an estimated 214 million international migrants worldwide, and 49 percent of

article has posited, does not necessarily mean that one is restricted to what was once the standard trilogy of our field: women as offenders, victims, and workers in the criminal justice system. Instead, the whole of the field of criminology can fruitfully be rethought from a feminist perspective. Finally, there is a growing body of international research, particularly in the area of the victimization of women, that allows us to hope that feminist criminology will become globally relevant in the decades to come. As it does so, the field will do more than simply “document and count” women’s victimizations; instead, it will begin to act across “national” boundaries to name the problem and to reframe it in ways that make clear the centrality of the human rights of girls and women and also to find ways to take action on behalf of victimized and criminalized women.

Future Directions for Theory and Research

Feminist criminologists, along with other critical theorists, must increasingly embrace the insights of critical studies, particularly the role of the media in the construction and framing of the narratives that shape and define the “crime problem” (and the implicit solutions to same). The corporate media, whether print or television, turn to crime stories, along with celebrity gossip and scandals, as reliable front-page staples for a variety of reasons. This mix provides a sensationalistic and profitable filler for newspapers and television stations with shrinking newsrooms and diminished appetites to engage in serious investigative journalism (Hamilton, 1998; McManus, 1994).

Postmodern feminism directs attention to the “construction of truth” in such cultural outlets as the media, which can play a very critical role in the public’s perception of the crime “problem.” It is this emphasis on culture and the production of knowledge rather than on structure that is an earmark of postmodernism (Milovanovic, this issue). Websdale (1996), for example, documented how the media portrayal of sexual assault and abuse as perpetrated by strangers supported the passage of a Washington state law permitting “indefinite civil commitment” of sexual predators but excluded husbands and fathers assaulting wives and children as potential perpetrators. The law, supported by newspaper reports, creates a

them are women (<http://www.ionm.int/jahia/about-migration/facts-and-figures/lang/en>). Migrant women are at high risk for sexual exploitation and violence by intimate partners (Piper, 2003). Hoping to improve their lives, women who join men as “picture brides” may barely know the men they marry, if they know them at all. They often find themselves vulnerable to abuse because they are isolated in a new country, unable to speak the local language, and unfamiliar with the justice system and sources of help. Alternatively, women may be lured to foreign countries to take jobs where they are exploited or forced to work in the sex trades. These and other circumstances create new patterns of girls’ and women’s victimization and new challenges for justice system response.

Although we advocate theoretical and research attention to conditions for women internationally, it is important to recognize that in the United States, which Hausmann, Tyson, and Zahida (2012) scores as providing equivalent education to females and males, inequality in economic participation and opportunity place women at risk for being unable to leave abusive relationships, move out of dangerous neighborhoods, or resist earning money through illegal means. Dramatic cuts in welfare support that began in 1996 leave increasing numbers of women (and their children) either without income or in low-paying jobs that do not provide medical or other benefits (Peterson, Zong, & Jones-DeWeever, 2002). The so-called feminization of poverty (formation of female headed households, fathers’ failure to support children and segregation of women in low-paying traditionally female occupations) leads to women’s increased involvement in consumer-based crimes, such as shoplifting and welfare fraud (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2011; Steffensmeier & Streifel, 1992).

Theory as a tool to fuel the disassembly and replacement of destructive processes in the name of crime control and prevention is long over-due both in the United States and in all the countries that are tempted to emulate the tolerance of violence against women and the penal regimes that the United States has become so reliant on. Does the new century offer any hopeful signs for such a conversion in theory? The very fact that progressive and critical criminology, and particularly feminist criminology, has survived three decades of furious backlash politics gives us reason for hope. Beyond that, there is the vitality of our field. To do feminist criminology, this

discourse that sex crimes rather than routine are “dreadful but rare” events that require tough sanctions rather than a confrontation with patriarchal families (Websdale & Alvarez, 1998, p. 65). In an earlier piece, Websdale and Alvarez documented how the corporate media traditionally discusses the murder of women by intimate partners by using an approach they call “forensic journalism.” Here, the reader is given vivid and dramatic details of the event and is ultimately told “more and more about less and less.” In essence, the readers are left with salacious details but little actual information that might prevent future such occurrences (Websdale & Alvarez, 1998).

Regarding offenders, we know that media exposure to crime stories does, in fact, have an impact. Heavier viewers of local television news are more likely to fear crime and criminal victimization (Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003, p. 101). This is attributed to “pervasive coverage of violent crime stories,” which also tends to increase fear of African Americans and other minorities who are disproportionately featured in crime stories (Romer, Jamieson, & DeCoteau, 1998). Research has shown that ideas about crime and criminals are based, in large part, on the stories that individuals learn about from the media (Antunes & Hurley, 1977; Chernak, 1994; Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002). A broader question, though, is the degree to which crime journalism influences punitive crime policies such as “the war on drugs” and “mass incarceration” (see Brennan, Chesney-Lind, Vandenberg, & Wulf-Ludden, in press).

We also know that the race of women offenders dramatically affects the way the media treat them. In a study of drug stories appearing on the front pages of 17 national newspapers, it was found that the stories about minority women who committed street-drug offenses were considerably more negative than the stories about white women who committed such offenses. The chief difference was the emphasis that journalists tended to place on an offender’s degree of guilt, harm to another person, and reform potential. As an example, stories about white women drug offenders often included pictures of their families on a couch and discussions of a new drug program, while women of color were often portrayed as hopelessly drug addicted, and getting re-arrested and re-committed as a result (Brennan, Chesney-Lind, Vandenberg, & Wulf-Ludden, in press).

In an era of around-the-clock news coverage as well as the use of crime as entertainment, the media often

misrepresents the majority of women who break the law and hides the circumstances of women who act with violence. Women who act violently are portrayed in the news as “irrational” and even “demonic,” especially if they act against children (Grabe, Trager, Lear, & Rauch, 2006). By paying much more attention to violence by women than by men, the media suggests (incorrectly) that women are well represented among violent offenders (Naylor, 2001; Schlesinger, Tumber, & Mordock, 1991). Documentaries, televised news, and talk shows portray imprisoned women as violent and sex-crazed (Cecil, 2007), and “crack moms” are blamed for damage to unborn children (Humphries, 1999). Especially racial and ethnic minority women are described as abnormal and individually flawed (Mama & Zatz, 1996). Evidence that women are not and never have been as violent or criminal as men contradicts both media images and official punitive responses. The potential for such portrayals to influence responses to women offenders deserves more attention, because arrest statistics and not victim surveys show a narrowing in the gender gap for assaults (Schwartz, Steffensmeier, & Feldmeyer, 2009), and arrests of women for drunk driving are out of proportion to behavioral indicators (Schwartz & Rooley, 2008).

Conclusion

Beyond the idea of the increasing role of globalism and of the media—including video footage that we can now carry with us in our pockets—we would contend there is a continuing need to better theorize feminist notions of patriarchy and systematically explore how patriarchal privilege is enforced through routine criminal justice practices. Borrowing from work of feminist political scientists such as Walby (1990), which early on identified that liberal notions of “public” and “private” greatly disadvantaged women, we must expand our thinking about the links between the observed patterns of women’s victimization, women’s offending, and women’s experience with the criminal justice system within the context of patriarchy. The question of how masculinities or *gender* other forces create the gender gap in criminality also begs for an answer.

We must also think about how feminist theorizing assists us in building a less violent and more just world including systems of crime control that take us out of the

penal regimes of the past century. Feminist criminologists have challenged the masculinist bias in their field, and they continue to do so today. As an example, both of us firmly believe that the assumption that fields grow and develop out of male styles of interaction and argument, or what might be called “mental combat,” is a flawed way to think about intellectual work. We instead think that what builds knowledge is open conversation, real respect, and real listening. Given the growing significance of crime policy and the criminal justice system in an era of “governing through crime” (Simon, 2007) and mass incarceration of women in many parts of the world (Carlen, 2002; Carlen & Toombs, 2006; Lee, 2007; Mauer, 1999), the feminist perspective on crime in modern society remains all the more vital. Feminist criminologists have proposed alternatives to the expensive and damaging status quo. For example, drawing on Gilligan’s (1982) understanding of the importance of care in girls’ and women’s moral thinking, Daly and Stubbs (2006) suggest that restorative justice may track with the feminist values of care and valuation of relationships as an alternative to the current emphasis on justice. Such notions of reconciliation, truth telling, and social responses to law violating that heal rather than punish and incapacitate will not only better reduce crime but also humanize the current dehumanizing systems of punitive courts and institutions, jails, and prisons that can oppress and destroy not only those held within them but those who are employed to serve as guards and wardens.

Theory as a tool to fuel the disassembly and replacement of destructive processes in the name of crime control and prevention is long over-due both in the United States and in all the countries that are tempted to emulate the penal regimes the United States has become so reliant on.

Does the new century offer any hopeful signs for such a conversion in theory? One can only hope that the right-wing control over the political process, which

established crime as a code word for race in national politics, is finally winding down (and losing power in the United States). One would wish that this were a product of moral outrage, but it is also explained by demographics. Simply put, the desire to ever expand the racist, sexist, and homophobic rhetoric has run into a numbers problem. Once you seek to criminalize huge swaths of *all* minority groups in the United States while also seeking to dramatically contract on women’s access to safe and legal birth control, you have alienated enough large constituencies to no longer hold national public office (Hadi & Chesney-Lind, 2013; Livingston, 2013).

In considering the future, we are cautiously optimistic that a feminist approach to the crime problem might be heard. Regardless of the odds, though, our work is informed by the expectation that we act as feminists to improve the social world in which we have found ourselves. This means, of course, that we again face the query: What constitutes feminism and being a feminist? Here, we’d like to conclude with first wave author and activist Rebecca West’s wry, and as it turns out, timeless observation:

I myself have never been able to find out what feminism is; I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute (West & Marcus, 1982)

In this article, we hope we have established that being called a feminist is not an insult or a signal that one cannot do good, scholarly or scientifically valid work (Faludi, 1989; Sprague, 2005). Instead, engaging in feminism and feminist theory offers all criminology incredible intellectual vitality and a recommitment to go beyond the collecting and disseminating of knowledge to seeking a just, equitable, and healthy world for all.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is intersectionality and what contributions does it make to feminist criminology?
2. How can feminist criminology help scholars understand the nature of male offending?
3. What challenges does feminist criminology face in the 21st century?