

Gender and Crime

By Patrick Nelson PhD

When we look at how gender and crime mix, it gets pretty tricky. It's not just about what people do; it's tied to society, culture, and even biology. For a long time, crime studies focused on guys, so they missed a lot about women involved – both as criminals and as victims. This old bias still messes with how we see crime and how the courts handle things when gender is a factor. When you start digging into the types of crimes men and women commit, there are clear differences. That makes you wonder what's behind it all. Maybe it's biology, maybe society, or maybe their surroundings. The way we're raised really matters. From when we're kids, we get ideas about what's okay for boys and girls. These ideas can push people toward or away from doing illegal stuff. What we see in the news and on social media makes it even harder to understand. They often show guys as aggressive and girls as weak, which isn't always true and affects how we react to crime and what laws we make. Different crimes hit men and women harder. Women deal with domestic violence and sexual assault way more often. Feminist ideas have really questioned old crime theories, pointing out that who has power and how things are unfair play a big role. If we want to really stop crime and be fair, we need to think about gender when we make laws and programs. Getting all of this is super important if we want to find ways to lower crime for everyone, no matter their gender.

Over time, how we've looked at gender and crime has changed a lot. It mirrors what society thought was normal and who had the power. The first crime theories mostly talked about male criminals, sidelining women. Back in the 1800s and early 1900s, people thought women who broke the law were breaking the rules of womanhood. Women were supposed to be gentle, caring, and stay at home. People thought female criminals were just born bad or had something wrong with them, instead of looking at their lives or what was happening around them. Early crime researchers didn't really think about how women's experiences with crime were unique. They just thought women were naturally better and wouldn't be criminals. One researcher, Cesare Lombroso, had a theory about born criminals, but it was mostly about guys. He said women criminals were just weird or had something

wrong in their heads. Basically, folks saw women criminals as either crazy or just bad, not fitting into what society expected. But things slowly changed. Feminist thinkers started saying that the old ideas weren't working. These thinkers said that old crime studies didn't look at how unfair gender rules affected what chances people had to commit crimes and how the legal system treated them. They showed that society basically trapped women, which shaped the crimes they did, which were different from what men did. Some women stole or went into prostitution just to survive, while guys were more likely to do violent stuff. History shows that the laws about crime and how society reacted were often biased because of gender. Things like laws about sex, violence at home, and who owned what were based on who had the power, not on what was fair. The courts often ignored it when women were victims until feminist groups fought to get things like rape and domestic abuse taken seriously. So, looking back at gender and crime shows how social ideas about gender and crime theories have changed each other. Understanding this past is key to judging the crime ideas we use today when we try to get why men and women commit crimes.

Studies show men and women do different types of crimes, in different amounts, and for different reasons. Guys tend to do more crimes, especially violent ones like murder, assault, and robbery. This is pretty consistent across different places and times. Women usually do less violent stuff, like stealing, fraud, and things like prostitution or having drugs. Basically, gender affects how often people do crimes and what those crimes are. People try to explain this with biology, psychology, and society. Some say guys are just more aggressive because of their hormones. But that doesn't explain everything because it doesn't account for culture or where someone lives. Psychologists try to explain it with emotions and risk-taking, but that's not the whole story either without looking at what's around them. Sociologists give a better picture. They look at how we learn gender roles as we grow up. Guys are often told to be strong, compete, and take risks. This can lead to them doing more crimes. Girls are often told to follow the rules and be caring, which might keep them from breaking the law. These expectations really shape what crimes people do and how the courts treat them. Stuff like not having money also plays a role. Sometimes women do crimes to survive poverty or abuse. And the courts? They can be biased, too. They might arrest, sentence, and try to help men and women differently. Biology is part

of it, but a lot of why men and women commit different crimes comes down to how we're raised and what society expects from us.

How we're raised really shapes whether we end up doing crimes. From the time we're little, we learn what's okay for boys and girls. Guys are often pushed to be tough, take charge, and take risks – things that are linked to more crime. Girls are usually taught to be good, caring, and keep their feelings in check. These different rules for guys and girls play a big part in why they commit different amounts of crimes. The family is a big teacher. Parents often treat boys and girls differently, even in how they punish them. Boys might get away with more wild stuff, while girls are watched more closely and told to avoid trouble. Schools keep the gender train rolling. They might praise girls for being good but encourage boys to be loud and competitive. When guys hang out with their friends, they learn to be tough and take risks to look cool, which can make them more likely to get in trouble. Also, the shows we binge, the movies we watch, and what people say in the community all tell us what it means to be a man or a woman, and that affects crime. The idea of being a man is often linked to having power over others, which can lead to violence or stealing. Women are supposed to be good and quiet. These ideas are a big deal. They tell people how to act and shape how we see criminals. Looking at how we're raised shows us why guys commit more crimes and why we need to challenge gender roles to stop crime. Programs that fight tough-guy ideas and teach guys to be caring can lower crime. And recognizing how being a woman can trap them can help us understand why women do crimes. Socialization is key to understanding crime and figuring out how to deal with it.

The way crime stories are told in the media really affects what we think. It often sticks to old ideas about men and women. Male criminals are often shown as tough and aggressive, fitting into the idea of masculinity. Female criminals are often seen as either victims of their situations or as bad women who go against what's expected of them. This creates a simple view of crime, turning complex issues into simple male and female boxes. Male crimes are often public, like robbery, while female crimes are private, like theft or things involving kids. This reinforces stereotypes and can affect how juries see people and what sentences they give. Some studies say the media focuses on shocking female criminals, which gives an unbalanced view of what women actually do. The media often blows up female crimes, focusing

on how they're breaking the rules of being a woman. This creates images like the evil woman. It hides the real reasons why women do crimes, like poverty or abuse. But male criminals? They're rarely looked at for how they fit into masculine ideals. The media just sees their violence as normal. When it comes to victims, there's a similar bias. When women are hurt by men, especially in cases of sex violence or abuse, it gets a lot of attention. But when men are victims, it's often ignored or played down because of ideas about male strength. This affects what people think and what the government focuses on in terms of crime prevention. Media stories often reinforce gender ideas, showing men as naturally dangerous and women as either bad or helpless. Getting this is key to understanding how gender attitudes affect the legal system and what outcomes people get.

When we look at who gets hurt by crime, there are big differences between men and women, which shows that society isn't equal. Women are more likely to be victims of certain crimes, especially violence in relationships, like domestic abuse or sexual assault. Surveys show that women are sexually assaulted more often than men. These assaults usually happen in private, where the power dynamic allows abuse. On the flip side, men are more likely to be victims of violence in public, like robberies or attacks by strangers. This could be because they're more likely to be doing risky things or be in high-crime areas. But male victimization is often underreported. Societal ideas about masculinity make it hard for them to speak out. The mix of gender with things like race, class, and age makes things even more complex. Women from groups that are already pushed to the side, like minorities or those with less money, are more likely to face violence and get less help from the courts. Young men from poor neighborhoods are also more likely to be victims because of where they live. Men and women also report crimes differently. Women are more likely to report domestic violence and sexual assault, which can make it seem like men aren't victims as often. Understanding these details is key to creating programs and support that meet the needs of all victims. Looking at how gender affects crime and how the courts respond helps us create a better strategy for helping victims.

Feminist ideas about crime and justice look closely at how gender affects both criminal behavior and the way the legal system responds. They challenge old crime theories because those theories often ignore women's experiences, both as people who commit crimes and as victims. Feminist

criminology believes that society, which is run by men, and gender inequality play a big role in crime. They look at how social roles, power, and unfairness create different paths to crime for women, instead of just assuming that men's experiences apply to everyone. One big idea in feminist theory is intersectionality. This means that things like race, class, sexuality, and gender all come together to shape how people experience crime and justice. It shows that women from groups that are already marginalized face even more disadvantages, which can lead to them committing crimes because of poverty or abuse. But the courts often punish them instead of dealing with the reasons why they did what they did. Feminist scholars also look at the justice system and say it's biased towards men. This makes them see women criminals as either bad or victims, instead of recognizing that they have their own agency. Ignoring women's needs in rehab and sentencing leads to unfair outcomes. They also say that legal systems support gender inequality by not protecting women enough from sexual violence and not recognizing control in cases of abuse in relationships. Feminist criminology doesn't just focus on female offenders and victims. It also looks at men and how ideas about masculinity can lead to violence. These theories want to change how we look at crime and promote policies that deal with unfairness in society.

If lawmakers want to stop gendered crime, they need to really get how gender affects both criminal behavior and the people who are victimized. The usual crime prevention methods relied on the same solutions for everyone, without thinking that these methods may not work because of issues related to gender. It's super important that we find out and understand the things about gender, so we can create a plan that will get rid of the main reasons each gender commits crimes. Male offenders often commit violent crimes and public disturbance at higher rates, which means policies that focus on managing anger, substance use, and community involvement would be very helpful. On the other hand, female offenders commit property crimes and may engage in activities due to their will to survive, so implementing policies that focus on social support services along with providing mental health care, and economic empowerment show to be really effective for preventing female crime. Along with old strategies, crime prevention strategies need to fix the way that we are socialized into particular gender stereotypes, because this produces clear criminal roads for the particular genders. The action taken on certain situations as early as

possible, need to have components that point out certain negative male stereotypes that cause harm, like trying to act over masculine, and repressing emotional traits in male boys, while also fighting against any gender stereotypes, which prevents girls from having a number of opportunities. Educational programs, which have a goal to promote gender equality, along with emotional intelligence act as preventative methods, which tend to lower the possible risks, linked with bad behavior. The creation of policies counts a lot on crime exposure experiences, which tends to give information, regarding the fact that women are more likely to happen to experience any type of relationship violence, along with various sexual misconducts, while men go through a lot of various street violence crimes. The process of creating and the process of implementing prevention plans means that victim-based approaches, which are incorporated for these disparities, tend to add many resources for housing domestic violence victims, and implementing more outreach plans for people vulnerable to possible risks. Various bodies of feminist criminological work want widespread systemic reforms, so the current deeply embedded levels of inequalities will be addressed since they tend to cause stereotypes for each gender. In order to come with a comprehensive way of policy making, it requires the attention to the person's behavior, but it also requires the attention to take a step and remove the institutional obstacles, that add the constant stereotype of being pushed out with no support, this tend to include being pushed out from various job and educational opportunities, this will lead them to a bad decision in the long run.

Looking closely at gender and crime shows how social rules, biology, and the courts all mix together to shape crime and what happens in the justice system. In the past, crime was seen through strong gender roles, which often pushed women to the side and didn't recognize their experiences. Today, we see that men and women often commit different crimes. Men are more likely to commit violent crimes, while women are more likely to commit property crimes. The reason for this isn't just biology; it's also about how we're raised and the gender roles we learn. The media also plays a big role by reinforcing stereotypes about crime. Women are more likely to be victims of certain crimes, like domestic violence, which means we need special protections for them. Feminist theories challenge old ideas by looking at how power and inequality affect crime. All of this means that we need to think about gender when we make laws and policies. We need to promote fair

ways of raising kids, change how the media talks about crime, support victims, and make sure that the justice system is fair to everyone.