

## The Status of Feminist Theories in Criminology

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In her preface to a special issue of *The Annals* on feminist theory in the social sciences, sociologist Christine Williams (2000: 9) describes academic feminism as “a general approach to understanding the status of women in society.” Notwithstanding the range of feminist theoretical approaches brought to bear on the problem, she observes: “all feminist social scientists share the goals of understanding the sources of [gender] inequality and advocating changes to empower women” (Williams 2000: 9). As a consequence of these overarching goals, broader, often interdisciplinary frameworks guide feminist theories in criminology more so than most theoretical perspectives in the discipline. In the case of feminist criminology, these include theoretical frameworks on gender and gender inequality, and on intersectionality, i.e., the intersections of race, class, gender and age. Thus, what differentiates *feminist* criminology from mainstream criminological analyses that consider “women and crime” is the theoretical understanding of gender that guides our research: theories of *gender* are as much a starting point in feminist criminological analyses as are theories of *crime* (Daly 1998).

Kathleen Daly (1998: 86) observes that criminological field expansion in the study of gender—because it emanates both from traditional and feminist theoretical perspectives—has “created a somewhat incoherent theoretical field.” In “taking stock” of the status of feminist theories within the discipline, we will suggest that the best feminist work—and the most promising direction for the future of feminist criminology—is that which remains critically engaged with the gendered life situations of women and men while drawing from, and enriching, its analyses from the insights of broader criminological thought (see also Simpson 2000). Moreover, we suggest that this course of action offers the best hope for the important insights of feminist

scholarship to both challenge and enrich the broader enterprise of criminological theory-building.

### Distinctive Features of Feminist Criminology

*Feminist criminology*<sup>1</sup> refers to that body of criminological research and theory that situates the study of crime and criminal justice within a complex understanding that the social world is systematically shaped by relations of sex and gender. Though feminist scholarship draws from diverse theoretical traditions (see Tong 1998), there are a number of central beliefs that guide feminist inquiry in criminology. In their influential paper on feminism and criminology, Daly and Chesney-Lind (1988: 504) list five aspects of feminist thought that distinguish it from traditional criminological inquiry. These include recognition that:

- Gender is not a natural fact but a complex social, historical, and cultural product; it is related to, but not simply derived from, biological sex difference and reproductive capacities.
- Gender and gender relations order social life and social institutions in fundamental ways.
- Gender relations and constructs of masculinity and femininity are not symmetrical but are based on an organizing principle of men's superiority and social and political-economic dominance over women.
- Systems of knowledge reflect men's views of the natural and social world; the production of knowledge is gendered.
- Women should be at the center of intellectual inquiry, not peripheral, invisible, or appendages to men.

In addition, contemporary feminist scholars strive to be attentive to the interlocking nature of race, class and gender oppression, recognizing that women's experiences of gender vary according to their position in racial and class hierarchies (see Daly and Maher 1998; Maher 1997; Schwartz and Milovanovic 1996; Simpson 1991).

Given this broad framework, we would like to begin by highlighting several key features that distinguish feminist theories from most theoretical perspectives in the discipline. These illustrate both the strengths and vitality of the perspective and the challenges feminist scholars face within what Dana Britton (2000: 59) aptly terms the mainstream of "hegemonic criminology." First, as noted, feminist scholarship grounds its inquiry in the examination of the meaning and nature of gender relations. As such, gender is as important to understand and theorize as crime and criminality. Specifically, feminist scholars insist that it is only with the inclusion of an understanding of gender that crime can be fully understood and theorized. It is ironic that "criminology is in possession of one of the most consistently demonstrated findings in all of the social sciences: that men are considerably more likely than women to

engage in activities defined as criminal" (Britton 2000: 58), yet this emphasis on gender has resulted in the widespread misinterpretation of feminist criminology as reductionistic.<sup>2</sup> Such erroneous critiques persist because of the dominance of reigning paradigms and the limited range of accepted methodologies within criminology (see Williams 2000: 8). In fact, feminist scholarship challenges the simplistic notion that gender is nothing more than an individual-level independent variable to be controlled for, as our discussion here will elucidate.

Second, given the overarching goals of understanding gender inequality and advocating for change, feminist perspectives cut across a broad range of questions within criminology and criminal justice. With few exceptions, most criminological theorizing focuses attention *either* on explaining crime *or* on justice systems and processing. Feminist theories—with gender inequality as a guiding question—have been brought to bear on crime and criminal justice, as well as victimization (i.e., violence against women), work and occupations within the criminal justice system and the law.<sup>3</sup> Feminist activism linked to scholarly research has been particularly notable with regard to juvenile/criminal justice processing (including incarceration) and violence against women (see Britton 2000 for an overview).

There are often key substantive differences between feminist activism and mainstream criminological foci. These have led, at times, to erroneous charges of polemical bias in feminist research. In fact, the theory/praxis relationship among feminist scholars is not strikingly different in practice from the parallel reality that policy goals also drive much criminological theory and research. In general, criminological theory and research attempt to explain crime in order to offer policies to reduce it. Feminist criminology has as its goals the reduction of gender inequality, crime, and the inequitable treatment of offenders, victims, and workers emerging from the androcentric policies and practices within "gendered institutions"<sup>4</sup> (Acker 1990).

Third, feminist scholars must grapple with what Daly and Maher (1998: 1) refer to as an "intellectual double shift." Gender operates not just within the practices and organization of social life but also within "the discursive fields by which women (and men) are constructed or construct themselves" (1998: 4). Taken-for-granted ideologies about gender are profoundly embedded in social life and include common-sense notions of fundamental difference between women and men, coupled with the perception of maleness as the normative standard. These deeply engrained assumptions are found in: academic research and theory; the policies, practices and operation of organizations and institutions; the interpretive frameworks women and men bring to their daily lives; and even in some feminist analyses. Thus, feminist scholars face the dual challenge of examining the impact of gender and gender inequality in "real" life while simultaneously deconstructing the intertwined ideologies about gender that guide social practices (see Connell 2002; Fausto-Sterling 1992; Lorber 1994; Tavis 1992; Thorne 1993).

One arena in which the latter focus has received a great deal of attention in criminology is the interrogation of traditional theories to expose and critique the androcentric biases that have guided this work (see Campbell 1984; Smart 1976). Two overarching features of feminist critique are notable. First, much criminological theory has either ignored women—focusing exclusively or implicitly on explaining male participation in crime and defining females as unimportant or peripheral—or has ignored gender. The tendency to ignore *women* results, in part, from the fact that most serious criminal offenders are male. As a consequence, the field of criminology has been primarily concerned with understanding and explaining men's offending. Ignoring *gender* results both when theories of male crime don't seek to account for how gender structures and shapes *male* involvement in crime, and when theories assume to be generalizable—that is, theories derived from the study of men are assumed to be able to account for female crime or female offenders. Since theories derived from studies of women are not seen as generalizable, implicit in this assumption is the notion that women are a subcategory of men (see Daly 2000).

A second critique is aimed at theories that do the opposite: theories that are based on beliefs about fundamental differences between women and men—for instance, men are more rational, women more emotional; men are more aggressive, women more passive; men are instrumental, women relational. As taken-for-granted assumptions, these stereotypes about what distinguishes women from men often are reflected in criminological theory and research. It is precisely women's greater emotionality, passivity and weakness, according to these theories, which account for their involvement (or lack thereof) in crime and the nature of their criminal activities. Early theories about female crime, for example, focused on individual pathologies such as personality disorders and sexual or emotional maladjustment. This approach contrasts with theories of male crime, which have historically been much more likely to define males in relation to the broader social world around them. Because many of the gender-based assumptions that have guided criminological theories are hidden or taken-for-granted, it has taken a feminist lens to bring many of these biases to light. Moreover, while such assumptions about gender are rarely as overt in contemporary research, many recent explanations of "women and crime" continue to reproduce conventional understandings of gender difference in their search to explain gendered patterns of offending (see Miller 2000 for further discussion).

However, it is not just within criminological theory that the impact of ideologies about gender must be examined and scrutinized by feminist scholars. These interpretive frameworks—particularly cultural emphases on a psychologically-based "character dichotomy" between women and men (see Connell 2002: 40)—also guide the meanings and understandings of the individuals, groups and organizations we investigate (see Allen 1987; Britton

2003; Daly and Maher 1998; Miller and White 2003; Pierce 1999). It is through the enactment of these gendered meanings that the most persistent, yet often invisible, facets of gender inequality are reproduced. The elucidation of the relationship between ideological features of gender and gendered practice is, thus, a key facet of feminist criminology<sup>5</sup> but poses a significant challenge—or intellectual double shift—not faced by scholars of crime who take the categories under investigation as social facts.

A final distinguishing feature of feminist criminology is that it is best suited to the development of what Daly (1998) refers to as theories of the "middle range": those theories that seek primarily to explore how broader structural forces are realized within both particular organizational contexts and the micro-level interactions of social actors within a specific domain or area. As opposed to "grand theory," which often over-generalizes situational effects in the attempt to explain everything at once (see Mills 1959), middle range theories attempt to provide narrower, more focused explanations of situations and contexts. If a prominent goal in much of the criminological enterprise is the creation of general theories (see Agnew 1992; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Hirschi 1969; Tittle 1995), feminist criminology has not been particularly successful. However, it is precisely feminist understandings of gender that require us to move beyond what broad, global explanations can provide. While our starting point is the recognition society and social life are patterned on the basis of gender, we also recognize—and empirical evidence demonstrates—that this *gender order* (Connell 2002) is complex and shifting.

Thus within feminist criminology, middle range theories most profitably start from the understanding that gender is complex, contingent and highly varied across historical context and social position. Given this recognition, advances in the field have highlighted three important problems: 1) how gendered organizations—through their structures, policies, ideologies and practices—are built on and reproduce gender hierarchies (see Britton 2003; Collier 1998; Martin 1999; McCorkel 2002; Pierce 1999); 2) how actors navigate gendered environments in an attempt to realize their personal goals and enhance their social positions (even when simultaneously reproducing inequality) (see Maher 1997; Miller 2001; Mulhins and Wright 2003); and 3) how the intersections of gender with other facets of social identity and structural position—race, class, age, sexuality—create variations in the nature and effects of gender inequality (see Britton 2003; Farr 2000; Ferguson 2000; Maher 1997; Martin 1994; Simpson 1991; Steffensmeier et al. 1998; Visher 1983).

With regard to understanding offending, for instance, careful examination of the shifting nature of gendered behavioral demands, at both the structural and interactional level, provides a means to better understand the precise ways in which gender frames criminality and criminal events. Multi-level approaches: allow for the simultaneous examination of gendered ideologies and

social practices; recognize and can account for variations across and within gender that result from structural positions such as race, class and age; and, thus, avoid the tendency to fall back upon easy notions of individual-level gender difference. In fact, we see recent work that addresses gender in such complex ways as among the most promising and stimulating of current trends in the field.

### Theories of Gender

As with much of criminology, feminist scholarship is greatly influenced by theoretical developments within a range of social science disciplines. Sociological scholarship is most prominent among these influences. The groundbreaking works of such feminist theorists as Barrie Thorne (1993), R.W. Connell (1987, 2002), Sarah Fenstermaker and Candace West (2002), and Joan Acker (1990) have had a profound impact on recent developments within feminist criminology. In this section, we draw from these broader analyses to provide an expanded discussion of the aspects of feminist thought noted above. We use Connell's (2002) recent work as the primary framework for this discussion because he provides a comprehensive overview of gender theory and synthesizes the insights of other important feminist scholars.

Connell differentiates and draws connections between the operation of gender at the macro level (what he terms *gender order*), meso level (*gender regime*) and micro level (*gender relations*). By gender order, Connell refers to the overarching patterns of social life within society that are arranged on the basis of gender. Cutting across institutions, gender frames social organization itself. Not only does it structure life chances and opportunities, it generates and legitimates cultural norms of difference and inequality. Within criminology, macro-level structural analyses of gender and crime are perhaps the least well developed. However, several recent attempts to examine structural features of gender inequality have proven fruitful (see Bailey and Peterson 1995; Dugan et al. 1999; Peterson and Bailey 1992; Steffensmeier and Haynie 2000; Whaley 2001).

While Connell provides a broad analysis of the structures and social relations of gender, he includes a strong emphasis on the contingent and historically shifting nature of gender, gender inequality and the agency/structure nexus. As he summarizes (2002: 10):

Gender patterns may differ strikingly from one cultural context to another, but are still "gender." Gender arrangements are reproduced socially [not biologically] by the power of structures to constrain individual action so often they appear unchanging. Yet gender arrangements are, in fact, always changing, as human practice creates new situations and as structures develop crisis tendencies.

From this account, it is clear why feminist theoretical developments are best suited for middle range analyses, even within an overarching theoretical

framework that emphasizes the structural sources of gender and gender inequality. Within the gender order of any given society, gender operates at a number of levels, each of which requires examination.

*Gender regimes* are the patterns of gender arrangements within given institutions or organizations which usually (but don't always or entirely) correspond with the gender order (see also Acker 1990). Among feminist criminologists studying offending, gender regimes that have received particular attention include the family (see Heimer and DeCoster 1999; Hagan et al. 1985) and the streets (Miller 1986; Phoenix 2000)—including drug economies (Maher 1997; Maher and Curtis 1992), street gangs (Campbell 1984; Joe-Laidler and Hunt 1997; Miller 2001; Peterson et al. 2001; Portillos 1999) and offender networks (Mullins and Wright 2003; Steffensmeier 1983; Steffensmeier and Terry 1986). Though ample evidence exists of the gendered nature of schools (Orenstein 1994), and while criminology in general has examined the role of schooling in explaining risks for offending (Gottfredson 2001), this is an institutional arena that has received limited attention with regard to how the gendered (and raced) regimes of the school shape risks for, and patterns of, offending (but see Ferguson 2000).

Within the gender order and given gender regimes, sets of relationships emerge both across and within gender. These *gender relations* include both direct interactions between individuals as well as indirect or mediated interactions. Connell (2002: 58) identifies "four main structures in the modern system of gender relations": power relations, productive relations, emotional relations, and symbolic relations. Recognizing multiple dimensions of gender relations is key to understanding the complexity, and sometimes contradictory nature of gender relations. Power relations, for example, operate at the institutional level and, more intimately, at the discursive level, shaping our "identities and sense of...place in the world" (2002: 59). Productive relations are those that shape the gender division of labor and include production, reproduction, and consumption. Emotional relations include such aspects as romantic and sexual attachment, gender-marked emotional displays (anger and aggressiveness, compassion and nurturance, for example) and emotional labor, and are an important facet of oppression and brutality. Symbolic relations are the powerful meaning systems that exist about gender, including, as noted above, "the dichotomous gender structuring of culture" (Connell 2002: 65). These dimensions of gender relations are interwoven with one another in a complex tapestry.

To understand gender relations at the level of interaction, it is necessary to examine both the structures of relationships—that is, the enduring and expected patterns of behavior that constrain practices—as well as the agency of individuals in learning, navigating, accommodating and resisting these structures. Agency itself includes social practices and behaviors as well as the configurations of gender identity that individuals bring to these activities. In

some cases the two correspond, as when individuals draw from a repertoire of behaviors in order to enact or demonstrate their gender identity (see West and Zimmerman 1987); however, the relationship between gendered social practices and gender identities is often much more complex (see Miller 2002).

One theoretical perspective developed to elucidate these facets of gender relations is the analysis of gender as situated accomplishment. From this approach, gender is "much more than a role or individual characteristic: it is a mechanism whereby situated social action contributes to the reproduction of social structure" (West and Fenstermaker 1995: 21). Specifically, these theorists argue that women and men "do gender"—or behave in gendered ways—in response to normative beliefs about femininity and masculinity. The performance of gender is a response to gendered social hierarchies and expectations but it also reproduces and reinforces them. Such actions are the "interactional scaffolding of social structure" (West and Zimmerman 1987: 147), such that the performance of gender is both an indication of, and a reproduction of, gendered (and raced, classed, generational, sexed) social hierarchies. This approach has been incorporated into feminist accounts of crime in order to explain differences in women's and men's offending. Some investigations have focused on crime as "a 'resource' for accomplishing gender" (Simpson and Elis 1995: 50; see also Messerschmidt 1993); others have examined gender as a resource for accomplishing crime (Jacobs and Miller 1998; Miller 1998); and still others have used this conceptualization to tease out the simultaneous and complex relationship between gendered structures, social practices and identities (Miller 2001; Mullins and Wright 2003; Phoenix 2000; see Miller 2002 for an overview).

Two final features of Connell's theoretical framework are noteworthy. First, he examines the important relationship of bodies to the construction of gender, focusing attention on the *social embodiment* of gender. Connell details the ways in which bodies are "both objects of social practice and agents in social practice" (2002: 47). Feminist research on the sexualization of female offenders, including the heightened emphasis on the "sexualized" bodies of female status offenders, illustrates the significance of this feature of gender<sup>6</sup> (see Chesney-Lind 1973; MacDonald and Chesney-Lind 2001). Feminist scholars both in, and outside of, criminology have been most attentive to the treatment of the female body, as cultural constructions of gender difference are often mapped on a male/female mind/body dichotomy (de Beauvoir 1960; Eisenstein 1988). More recently in criminology, Messerschmidt (2000, 2004) has brought more explicit theoretical attention to the role of the body in the enactment of male (as well as female) violence (see also Collier 1998).

Finally, drawing from the work of Thorne (1993) and others, Connell (2002: 82) provides a theoretical account of the *trajectories of gender formation*, including the development of *gender competence* (learning how to negotiate the gender order) and the creation of *gender projects* (characteristic strategies

for handling gender relations crystallized as patterns of masculinity or femininity). This approach for understanding the development of gender identities, and the inculcation into gendered social practices, provides a more multidimensional understanding of the process of becoming gendered than traditional socialization models. Such models fail to adequately account for agency and are premised on a seamless notion of unitary sex or gender "roles" (see Thorne 1993). Moreover, recognition that gender identities and gender projects are situational, contingent, and constructed in interactions moves beyond the limitations of sex/gender role theory which often remains a conceptual underpinning in mainstream analyses of "women and crime."

These new approaches advance theoretical accounts of gender in a number of significant ways. For instance, while the concept of "sex roles" or "gender roles" assumes that "gender is logically *prior to* behavior, already settled, and can be understood as [the cause of] behavior" (Connell 1993: x), the conceptualization of gender projects emphasizes that gender is "constructed in social action...done, accomplished in the everyday actions of social life" (Connell 1993: xi). Moreover, in contrast with the notion of unitary sex or gender "roles," this more contingent approach emphasizes variations in gender identities, projects, and expectations across both situational contexts and social structural positions such as race and class. This also results in a less static and less deterministic view of social structure (see Emirbayer and Mische 1998; McNay 2000; Sewell 1992). Specifically, conceptualizing individuals' constructions of gender as actively emerging within various gender regimes or relations (at the meso and micro levels) allows for recognition of agency, but remains thoroughly grounded in the contexts of structural inequalities such as those built around relations of gender, sexuality, race, class and age. As Connell (1993: ix) notes, this approach insists that "social structure does not exist 'outside' everyday life."

### Contemporary Directions in Feminist Criminology

Two questions have guided mainstream criminological examinations of gender for the last several decades: the question of generalizability and the gender ratio problem. In this section, we will briefly review and critique these approaches for theorizing "gender and crime" and will then describe more profitable developments within feminist criminology drawing from Daly's (1998) conceptual schema of *gendered pathways to lawbreaking, gendered crime, and gendered lives*.<sup>7</sup> We also highlight promising developments in the study of masculinities and crime. In keeping with our position that the best feminist research in criminology is explicitly attentive both to gender and to useful insights from broader criminological thought, we link advances within feminist criminology to trends in mainstream criminology. Though feminist theorists have been critical of traditional criminological approaches, there is, nonetheless, recognition that "many seminal ideas emerging in criminologi-

cal thought can be integrated and/or elaborated in ways that can inform gendered criminological theory" (Simpson 2000). We orient our discussion to emphasize the ways in which feminist analyses challenge and enrich the criminological enterprise.

#### *The Problem of Generalizability*

For more than a century, theories developed to explain why people commit crime have actually been theories of why *men* commit crime.<sup>8</sup> Ironically, the gender gap in offending has long been a primary rationale for this focus (Britton 2000). In many cases, this orientation is not outwardly stated; instead theories are presumed to be "gender-neutral" and it has been taken for granted that a given theoretical approach can be applied to males or females. Given the recognition of gender as a structuring feature of society, feminists have explicitly posed the questions: "Do theories of men's crime apply to women? Can the logic of such theories be modified to include women?" (Daly and Chesney-Lind 1988: 514). If not, what alternative explanations can account for women's offending? Scholars who have attempted to test whether mainstream theories can be generalized to women have focused on such constructs as the family, social learning, delinquent peer relationships, strain and deterrence. For the most part, these studies have found mixed results (see Broidy 2001; Smith and Paternoster 1987). As Kruttschnitt (1996: 141) summarizes, "it appears the factors influencing delinquent development differ for males and females in some contexts but not others."

This lack of consistent findings is unsurprising from a feminist perspective. While mainstream theorists who include gender in their analyses often search for generalizable explanations of crime, and, thus, examine whether the same processes are at work in explaining women's and men's crime, there are several key limitations to this approach. First, they cannot account for the gender ratio of offending—that is, men's disproportionate involvement in crime.<sup>9</sup> Dramatic gender differences in rates of offending suggest that a general etiological process is not occurring. This is not to suggest that many of the basic factors included in such analyses are unimportant for understanding crime across gender, but to highlight that it is necessary to examine whether and how such elements influence offending across gender in the same way or with equal force.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, feminist scholars recognize gender as an important feature of the social organization of society and, thus, of women's and men's experiences. Theories that attempt to generalize across gender are unable to address these pivotal social forces (see Daly 1998).

For instance, much of this research takes for granted that variables or constructs have the same meaning for males and females. While such elements as learning, peer influences, social control, family attachment and supervision, individual strain and opportunity are essential in the understanding of crime

for both males and females, recent work shows that, indeed, these factors have variant influence within and across gender (see Alarid et al. 2000; Broidy 2001; Burton et al. 1998; Heimer and DeCoster 1999; Katz 2000; Mears et al. 1998). Because of the gendered nature of women's and men's lives, important explanatory factors take on different meanings and have different consequences for females and males. Thus, feminists insist that while some of the theoretical concepts found in presumably "gender-neutral" theories of crime may be relevant or useful for understanding women's offending, gendered theories—i.e., those that take gender and gender stratification into account—are preferable to approaches that assume measures or constructs are gender neutral (Daly 2000; Simpson 2000). However, this does not mean that "gender difference" is the sole focus of feminist research. Instead, feminists ask the questions: when, how, and why does gender matter? Recent endeavors that examine similarities and differences within and across gender, and especially those that conceptualize gender beyond the individual level, have proven especially fruitful in understanding the causes of crime.

#### *The Gender-Ratio of Crime*

One problem with attempts to generalize theories across gender is that all of this work begs the question of why it is that women and men have vastly divergent rates of criminal offending. This is the gender-ratio problem. Scholars who address this raise the following questions: "Why are women less likely than men to be involved in crime? Conversely, why are men more crime-prone than women? What explains [these] gender differences?" (Daly and Chesney-Lind 1988: 515). These questions have led scholars to pay attention to gender differences and inequalities and to develop theories that can account for variations in women's and men's offending (see Bottcher 2001; Hagan et al. 1985; Heimer and De Coster 1999).

With men as the starting point, explanations for the gender ratio of crime are typically pursued by asking what are the factors that limit or block women's involvement in crime? But to only ask this question, again, reflects an androcentric perspective that makes men the norm upon which women deviate through their limited offending. Inverting this question, and attempting to account for why men have considerably higher rates of offending than women, raises an important set of additional queries. For instance, a key question is what is it about being male—and about masculinity specifically—that accounts for men's disproportionate levels of offending? This is a topic we return to below.

Moreover, traditional and mainstream approaches typically explain the gender gap by drawing from stereotypical notions of dichotomous gender difference and treat gender as an individual trait. More promising are approaches that treat gender as a key element of social organization (see Bottcher

2001; Heimer and DeCoster 1999). Not only does such an approach avoid the assumption of essential gender difference, but it also allows for a more complex examination of the gender gap. For instance, data on crime trends reveal that the gender gap remains more persistent for some crimes than others, fluctuates over time (Steffensmeier and Schwartz 2004) and varies by race/ethnicity, class, and age (Sommers and Baskin 1993). Thus, there is no uniform or static gender ratio of offending, leaving the differential gap across offenses an important site for inquiry.

Given that women and men live in diverse structural conditions—conditions that are especially shaped by race and class inequality—approaches that seek simply to address a uniform gender gap miss the opportunity to examine how causal factors differentially shape women's and men's offending across cross-cutting social positions. For instance, there is evidence of a link between "underclass" conditions and urban African American women's offending that does not hold explanatory power for women's offending in other contexts (see Hill and Crawford 1990). Likewise, Steffensmeier and Haynie's (2000) recent structural analysis of homicide reveals variations across gender by age.

The most promising avenues for exploring the complexities of the gender ratio of offending are those that go beyond only the reliance on "descriptive and predictive numerical analyses" (Daly 1998: 95) for theoretical development. To demonstrate, we draw from Daly's (1998) conceptual schema and examine three areas of inquiry within feminist scholarship that have resulted in a more complex examination of gender and offending:

- *Gendered Pathways to Lawbreaking*: What trajectories bring males and females to offending? What factors and social contexts facilitate entrée to (and desistance from) offending and in what ways are these gendered?
- *Gendered Crime*: What are the specific contexts and qualities of female and male offending? How are various facets of offending socially organized?
- *Gendered Lives*: How does gender organize the daily lives of females and males and how does gender structure available courses of action and identities? How do these experiences intersect with crime and criminality?

As noted earlier, the typology we draw from here provides a useful means of organizing the primary thematic aspects of feminist research, though much of the research we draw from addresses problems and questions across this categorization and also speaks to the gender ratio of offending. We also include a separate discussion of new developments in the study of masculinities and crime. While this work has been developed primarily with regard to gendered crime, it represents somewhat distinctive theoretical problems and, thus, receives separate elaboration.

### *Gendered Pathways to Lawbreaking*

From the early 1990s, feminist scholars began carefully examining what is now commonly referred to as "gendered pathways." Emphasizing "biographical elements, life course trajectories and developmental sequences" (Daly 1998: 97), the pathways approach seeks to map the life experiences that lead women and girls to offending as well as desistance (see Daly 1992; Giordano 2002). One of the important conceptual underpinnings of this research is the recognition of the "blurred boundaries" of victimization and offending. For example, young women who run away from home to escape abuse often inadvertently enter into more dangerous and abusive situations on the streets, while their escape from abusive homes is also criminalized. As Chesney-Lind and Pasko (2004: 5) observe, girls' earlier victimization "set[s] the stage for their entry into youth homelessness, unemployment, drug use, survival sex (and sometimes prostitution), and, ultimately, other serious criminal acts."

Gilfus (1992), for example, analyzed life history interviews with incarcerated female offenders. She found that the women's childhoods and adolescence were plagued with abuse and neglect and many had run away from home in response to this. Once on the streets, an "onset of drug use, truancy and stealing" (1992: 72) followed, with a large minority entering into juvenile prostitution as a survival strategy. Illegal work was done simply to survive, but further enmeshed the young women in criminal networks. As they transitioned into adulthood, the vast majority experienced continued victimization and many developed drug habits.

While mainstream criminology has not focused on pathways approaches, developmental and life course approaches have become increasingly popular (see articles 10-12, this volume). There is also a small but growing literature within this area that expressly compares males and females (see Keenan et al. 2004; Moffitt et al. 2001; Silverthorn and Frick 1999; Tibbetts and Piquero 1999). However, similar to the problems noted earlier concerning traditional studies of female offending, these works are rarely done with specific attention to important sociological constructs related to gender. Instead, the research typically identifies and tests similar causal mechanisms across gender in the search for individual-level gender differences or similarities, rather than examining potentially gender-specific risks related to structural or situational features of gender (but see Haynie 2003).

Despite the important insights of the "blurred boundaries" approach, including its disruption of the victim/offender dichotomy, some feminist scholars have highlighted that this "leading scenario" of women's lawbreaking" (Daly 1992: 136) needs to be broadened to recognize the diversity of women's pathways to offending. Moreover, an exclusive emphasis on victimization as the key pathway to women's offending can overlook other important facets of women's and girls' lives that put them at risk for offending, including other

manifestations of gender inequality. For instance, Gaarder and Belknap's (2002) recent analysis identifies the importance of violence and victimization, but also racial and economic marginality, school experiences, structural dislocation, and drug and alcohol use in explaining girls' delinquency.

It is also the case that studies relying only on female samples cannot sufficiently specify whether and how such risks influence pathways to offending across gender. One area in which feminist pathways analyses have been applied broadly is in the study of youth gangs (Joe and Chesney-Lind 1995; Miller 2001; Moore 1991; Portillos 1999). This research is strengthened by the direct comparison of males and females, or gang and non-gang girls. Such a comparative approach provides a more definitive understanding of how gender impacts on girls' risks for offending. As with other areas of criminological inquiry, research on girls' pathways/risks for gang involvement has generally included two approaches: analyses of etiological risk factors from survey research, and qualitative analyses that focus on girls' accounts of why they joined gangs and their life contexts both prior to, and at the time of joining, gangs. Though differing in their approach, most studies include a focus on structural and neighborhood conditions, the family, and peers. In addition, feminist scholarship has focused specific attention to victimization and this is routinely found to be an important risk for gang involvement among young women (Joe and Chesney-Lind 1995; Miller 2001).

Moore's (1991) work is particularly important because of her comparative sample. She documents a myriad of family problems that contribute to the likelihood of gang involvement for young women: childhood abuse and neglect, domestic violence among adults (particularly the abuse of female caregivers), alcohol and drug addiction in the family, witnessing the arrest of family members, having a family member who is chronically ill, and experiencing a death in the family during childhood. Her conclusion, based on comparisons of male and female gang members, is young women are considerably more likely to come from families that have numerous of these problems. Likewise, Miller's (2001) comparison of gang and non-gang (but delinquent) girls highlighted the importance of cumulative risks for girls' gang involvement. Portillos' (1999) study of Chicana gang members suggests that girls are also drawn to gang involvement as a means of escaping oppressive patriarchal conditions in the home.

While much of the feminist scholarship described thus far is qualitative, and we have suggested that much quantitative research has not adequately conceptualized gender, we end this section by highlighting a study that significantly raises the bar for quantitative research on gender. Heimer and DeCoster's (1999) analysis illustrates the tremendous benefit that results from a complex conceptualization of gender. In their "The Gendering of Violent Delinquency," these scholars address two key theoretical problems of interest to feminist criminologists: *within-gender* variability in the use of violence,

and variability in violence *across gender* (i.e., the gender-ratio of offending). In doing so, Heimer and DeCoster provide a theoretical model of the causes of delinquency that can address differences across and within gender as well as between-gender similarities. They accomplish this by blending insights from a traditional criminological theory—differential association theory—with feminist theory about the definitions, meanings and impact of gender.

Heimer and De Coster outline a complex theoretical model of violent delinquency based on the differentiated experiences of young women and young men that result from gender inequality. They focus specifically on the interplay between social structure and culture, and argue that different social structural positions—based on gender, race, social class—result in variations in two significant cultural processes: family controls and peer associations. With regard to family controls, Heimer and De Coster differentiate between two types of family controls which they suggest operate differently for males and females. First, *direct parental controls* include such things as supervision and coercive discipline. On the other hand, *emotional bonding* is a more *indirect* form of control that results from emotional attachment to families. Particularly as young women are taught to value interpersonal relationships to a greater extent than young men, Heimer and De Coster argue that indirect controls resulting from emotional bonds to the family are the primary controls over girls' behavior, whereas direct controls have a stronger impact on reducing boys' delinquency.

With regard to peer associations, they suggest that boys are more likely to have exposure to friends who engage in aggressive activities. This means boys are also more likely than girls to be exposed to norms favorable to violence. These two cultural processes—family control and peer associations—along with prior histories of violent behavior, influence two cultural outcomes: the extent that youths learn violent definitions (e.g., definitions of violence as an appropriate behavior) and gender definitions (traditional beliefs about the proper behavior of males and females, or of masculinity and femininity). Youths who internalize cultural values accepting of violence are more likely to engage in delinquency. However, cultural definitions of violence also run counter to traditional definitions femininity, which stress "nurturance, passivity, nonaggressiveness, and physical and emotional weakness" (Heimer and De Coster 1999: 283). Thus the attitudes and beliefs young women learn about appropriate femininity will have a direct affect on their likelihood of engaging in violence.

Through a sophisticated analysis of the National Youth Survey, Heimer and De Coster tested their theoretical model and found strong support for its ability to explain variations in girls' and boys' use of violence, as well as variations in the use of violence within gender, based on the causal pathway of social structural factors (positions tied to race, class, gender) shaping cultural processes (family controls, peer associations), shaping cultural outcomes (vio-



lent definitions, gender definitions), shaping the likelihood youths participate in violence. They (1999: 305) explain:

In short, the conclusion of our research is violent delinquency is "gendered" in significant ways. Adolescent violence can be seen as a product of gendered experiences, gender socialization and the patriarchal system in which they emerge. Thus, consistent with feminist arguments, gender differences in violence are ultimately rooted in power differences.

Significantly, individual-level character differences across gender do not account for the gender gap in violence; instead, the intersection of gendered meanings with the contexts of family and peer interactions expose males and females to different risks for learning violent definitions and, thus, engaging in violence (see also Bottcher 2001).

#### *Gendered Crime*

Research on the gendered social organization and situational contexts of crime represents a clear growth area in feminist criminology in recent years. In fact, the analysis of situational contexts of offending has gained momentum in the discipline, both by feminist scholars and those not using feminist approaches. Among mainstream scholars, the situational turn was partially in response to the development of a conceptual distinction between the criminal event and criminality as a set of individual characteristics (see Cohen and Felson 1979; Cornish and Clarke 1986; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). Thus criminologists brought renewed attention to the aspects of social situations that produce criminal events, as well as the individual decision-making and opportunity structures necessary for offending. While such questions date back to Sutherland (1939), they began receiving systematic attention in the 1990s. Most mainstream work in this vein has been grounded theoretically in various opportunity theories (see Felson 1998) or within symbolic interactionist approaches (Tedeschi and Felson 1994). Some of this work has relied on qualitative data in order to produce thick descriptions of circumstances and events (see Wright and Decker 1994, 1997).

Gendered attention to organizational and situational aspects of crime emerged with Steffensmeier's (1983; Steffensmeier and Terry 1986) pioneering analyses in the 1980s of institutional sexism and gender segregation in criminal networks. As a logical evolution of feminist criminology—which sees gender as potentially omnirelevant to social behavior and recognizes the situational nature of gender accomplishment—some feminist scholars have turned attention to how situational gender expectations and gendered opportunity structures shape criminal events. This work has taken several notable directions.

First, as noted in the previous section, an important contribution of feminist criminology has been to highlight the "blurred boundaries" of victimization and offending. While this approach most typically emphasizes the experience of victimization as a background risk for subsequent involvement in crime, feminists have also analyzed victimization as a key situational factor in the foreground of offending. This is most evident in feminist analyses of women who kill their abusive spouses. These events not only involve long-term patterns of serious abuse but are often triggered by a culminating victimization incident that directly results in the woman's violence (see Richie 1996). Likewise, Lisa Maher's (1997) ethnography of a drug economy analyses one form of female offending—"viccing"—that emerges from the widespread victimization and devaluation of women. Maher's work documents the proliferation of viccing—in which women in the sex trade rob their clients—as a form of resistance against their greater vulnerability to victimization and cheapened sex markets within the drug economy. Comparing viccing with traditional forms of robbery, Maher and Curtis conclude: "The fact the act [of viccing] itself is little different to any other instrumental robbery belies the reality that the motivations undergirding it are more complex and, indeed, are intimately linked with women's collective sense of the devaluation of their bodies and their work" (1992: 246).

In addition to the emphasis on blurred boundaries, recent feminist research also suggests that there are contexts in which situational norms favorable to women's crime exist, and these are not just about avoiding or responding to victimization, but also result in economic gain, status, recognition, or emotional rewards such as the alleviation of boredom, excitement or revenge (see Miller 1998; Simpson 1991; Simpson and Elis 1995). Though key motivational factors in these instances may not be explicitly "gendered," this work, nonetheless, maintains a gendered inquiry by moving beyond individual motivation to examine how women navigate gender-stratified environments and how they accommodate and adapt to gender inequality in their commission of crime. If a goal of situational crime analysis is to examine "the decision-making process of offenders confronted with specific contexts" (Einstadter and Henry 1995: 70), this cannot be accomplished without paying attention to the gendered contexts of the decision-making process, and the ways in which "gendered status structures this participation" (Maher 1997: 13).

Still another feminist approach to the study of situational context is reflected in those studies that have utilized sociological theory on gender as situated accomplishment (West and Zimmerman 1987; West and Fenstermaker 1995). As described above, this perspective emphasizes how women and men "do gender" in response to normative beliefs about femininity and masculinity, and has been incorporated into feminist accounts of crime as a means of explaining differences in women's and men's offending (Newburn and Stanko 1994; Messerschmidt 1993; Simpson and Elis 1995). Here, for instance,

violence is described as "a 'resource' for...demonstrating masculinity within a given context or situation" (Simpson and Elis 1995: 50). Though this normative emphasis has primarily been brought to bear on male offending and constructions of masculinity, feminist theorists recently have attempted to account for female crime based on the same framework but with more limited success (see Miller 2002).

Studies of situational context have also included the framing of events within meso-level (e.g., neighborhood) and macro-level (e.g., structural) contexts. Again, an eye to gender enhances our understandings. As noted, extant research highlights that social networks, especially those on the streets, are highly gender segregated (see Anderson 1999; Bourgois 1995; Maher 1997; Miller 1998, 2001; Mullins and Wright 2003; Steffensmeier 1984; Steffensmeier and Terry 1986). Moreover, concentrated disadvantage strongly shapes the nature of street social networks, which then shapes the interactions within these networks. For example, James, et al. (2004) found that residence in a low-income, disorganized community increased girls' and women's exposure to both drugs and violence, and this connection was best understood through an examination of how living in this environment shaped their social networks (see also Simpson 1991; Sommers and Baskin 1993). They note that such neighborhoods "severely restricted [women's] social networks, both because there were few choices of friends available and because the threat of violence made social activity outside the house unappealing" (2004: 1006-1007; see also McCarthy et al. 2004). In a similar vein, Rountree and Warner (1999) examine how gendered neighborhood social ties affect community crime rates. This work highlights the importance of examining gender beyond the individual level.

Drawing from these various approaches, one of the strongest contributions of situational analysis lies in its ability to examine both convergences and divergences between women's and men's offending. Much traditional work in criminology—drawing from the character dichotomy noted earlier—suggests that while male violence is instrumental, direct, and highly physical, female violence is expressive, indirect, and relational (see Hagan and Foster 2003; Steffensmeier and Allen 1996). Such interpretations embrace, rather than challenge, taken-for-granted assumptions concerning gendered behaviors. While many scholars have found notable differences between male and female offending, especially in the realm of violence, this binary analytical framework ignores variation within male and female violence. Men *do* engage in relationally-focused violence (e.g., fighting in defense of a friend or loved one; see Anderson 1999; Mullins et al. 2004) and women engage in instrumental violence (see Baskin and Sommers 1997; Miller 1998). In fact, the routine framing of women's violence as expressive often functions to discredit and undermine their more instrumental goals (see Miller and White 2003). Thus, it is through the contextual examination of violent episodes and other

offending, with strong attention to situational dynamics, that similarities and differences within and across gender can be uncovered and explained.

Few studies of gendered crime have integrated the various facets outlined above (but see Maher 1997). We conclude this section with a brief overview of one such analysis in order to highlight the important potential of such a multifaceted approach. Mullins and Wright (2003) examined the ways in which gender structures participation in residential burglary, a quintessentially group-based offense. In a quasi-replication of Miller's (1998) comparison of motivations and enactment strategies among armed robbers, they explored how gender influenced initiation into, enactment of, and potential desistance from burglary. Building on work that highlights the intense segregation and male dominance of street life social networks (Maher 1997; Steffensmeier 1983; Steffensmeier and Terry 1986) the article highlights male control of both *entrée* into burglary crews and access to networks for goods disposal.

Because men were "the gatekeepers to the social world of residential burglary" (Mullins and Wright 2003: 821), males were initiated into burglary crews from a broad array of associates, including male peers and relatives. In contrast, females were most often initiated into crews by a romantic connection. Moreover, while men typically held marginal roles early in their careers (e.g., lookout and get-away driver), they began undertaking more central—and more profitable—roles as they gained experience. In contrast, women's roles rarely went beyond these peripheral acts. Mullins and Wright emphasize how stereotypes about gender were "expressed, reinforced and exploited within [these] street life social networks" (2003: 813), in some cases despite contradictory evidence. It was through both gender ideologies and male access to primary resources (control of crews and access to information about suitable targets) that women were marginalized.

Mullins and Wright also uncovered a striking gender difference in hypothetical desistance from crime. When men were asked to explain why they had ceased burglaries for a period of time in their lives, or what might cause them to quit entirely, they cited the influence (real or hypothetical) of a stable relationship with a woman as the primary factor (see also Laub, Nagin and Sampson 1998). Thus, the establishment of normative ties drove their desistance. For women, the situation was the opposite. Just as relationships with criminally involved men often framed their initiation into offending, the end of that relationship also tended to signal the end of their offending. However, women's offending behaviors were not simply a product of the relationship; instead, the relationship facilitated offending by providing opportunities and access to crews. Once the tie to the network was broken, the misogyny that dominates the streets kicked in and women found it difficult to gain *entrée* into another crew. Moreover, Mullins and Wright found that women—but not men—expressed strong concerns about how their families would react to their offending, suggesting that "female burglars are more sensitive than males to

conventional informal social control" (2003: 832; see also Heimer and DeCoster 1999).

This study demonstrates the utility of situational analyses of gender and crime. Through close attention to the nature and dynamics of criminal situations, feminist approaches such as Mullins and Wright's can uncover and elucidate in a more precise fashion how gender operates in both the foreground and background of offending events. Through the discovery of contingencies, variations in crime within and across gender, and the careful examination of the evolution of criminal events, this form of inquiry can more precisely specify dynamic relationships between gender and crime.

### *Masculinities and Crime*

Much early feminist work in criminology correctly critiqued existing theory and research for focusing on men's and boy's crime at the expense of women and girls. Yet, as gender-focused modes of inquiry evolved within the field, the key questions scholars asked concerning female offending and offenders also pointed to the need to "gender" the criminal behavior of men. While the danger in this focus lies in a return to the pre-feminist era of placing men back at the center of inquiry (Daly 1998: 87), it is nonetheless the case that criminology has ignored the significance of gender in the study of male offending. Given men's overrepresentation as offenders, the study of masculinities and crime is an important area for feminist inquiry. Historically, the gendered nature of male offending was assumed (and normalized), but was neither explored nor theorized. Parallel with the growth in the sociological study of masculinity, recent work in feminist criminology has attempted to look at the criminal behavior of men in the context of gendered theories. This approach has enhanced our understanding of male offending.

While not framed as such, much early research in criminology reflected the salience of masculinity for understanding criminal behavior. Work such as Miller's (1958), Cohen's (1955), and Wolfgang and Ferricutti's (1968), which emphasized subcultural approaches to the study of crime, clearly linked offending, especially violence, to the notions of self-comportment we would today distinctly identify as masculine. Offenders' expressions of focal concerns such as independence, toughness, and strength clearly reflect the core of Western hegemonic masculinity. Even more recent research, such as that of Anderson (1999), Shover (1996), and Wright and Decker (1994, 1997) has highlighted the powerful conceptualizations of male identity among persistent offenders. Yet this work has been done without drawing from theories of gender, to the detriment of both subcultural and feminist criminology.

Similar to the focus on intersectionality in studying women's offending, some of this research has directly examined gender identity in the context of

exploring racial/ethnic identity. For example, Davidson (1974) provided one of the earliest, nuanced linkages of masculinity and violence in the ethnographic literature. Studying Chicano prisoners housed in San Quentin, he centralizes the concept of *machismo*, Latino hegemonic masculinity, as the organizing principle behind violence specifically, and the totality of the inmate experience generally. Oliver's (1994) analysis of black male street violence strongly linked violent enactment and victimization to a distinct form of urban black masculinity. Other works suggest that violence is central to the generation and maintenance of a distinctly black masculinity that arises from the unique history of racial oppression and persistent denial of access to legitimate avenues of mainstream masculinity. In contexts of concentrated disadvantage, street reputation and associated violence become central to some black men's identities (see Anderson 1999).

As part of a broader attempt to situate criminal behavior within gendered social structures, Messerschmidt's (1993, 2000) structured action theory highlights intersectionality in examining the criminal behavior of both men and women. This approach sees gender norms and definitions as a product of social structures, but it is through micro-level processes of social action/interaction that gender is (re)produced. In *Masculinities and Crime*, Messerschmidt establishes an analytical framework for understanding the intersection of masculinity and crime by indicating that "men do masculinity according to the social situation in which they find themselves" (1993: 84). Masculinity and criminality will be more intertwined in certain environments than others. In the absence of more normative and mainstream avenues to masculinity construction (e.g., work and family life), Collison (1996: 440) notes, "a masculine self identify [is] fashioned around money, consumption, toughness and respect." According to Messerschmidt, men in these social locations may view crime as a "masculine-validating resource" (1993: 83). Such processes have been used primarily to explain men's participation in violence (but see Hochstetler and Copes 2003).

Scholars have drawn on the concept of "masculinity challenges"—interactions in which one's gendered identity is questioned and a specifically gender-scripted response is provoked—to frame men's interpersonal violence. In his study of homicide, for example, Polk (1994) analyzed how masculinity guided social actors: public challenges between men produced violent events that often turned lethal. Yet the source of the challenge need not come from another man. Alder and Polk (1996) uncovered similar processes within child homicide cases, where motivation often emerged from some form of challenge to the man's authority or power. Messerschmidt (2000) also shows how responses to such challenges can be directed toward other targets. For example, boys who are pushed into subordinate masculinities by their male peers can reassert their internal claims on hegemonic masculinity through the sexual assault of girls.

Recent work has also explored the contradictions and nuances of a specifically situated street masculinity in framing criminal action. Mullins et al. (2004) found that most of men's interpersonal disputes with other men were grounded in their need to build and maintain gendered reputations (see also Graham and Wells 2003). They found that gendered perceptions of appropriate and inappropriate behavior served as triggers for—and barriers against—retaliation. Men viewed violent retaliation as a key street survival tactic, deeply rooted in their identities *as men*. However, due to more traditional attitudes held by men concerning appropriate inter-gender interactions, if they were "wronged" by a woman, the path to action was sometimes more complex. Direct use of violence against women in a street context could lead to one appearing as a "punk" (a subordinated masculinity), as it was commonly believed that men should only involve themselves in "fair fights"—something not possible since women were seen as physically and emotionally weaker. At the same time, men strongly believed that they could not ignore a slight—this too is a mark of "punkness." A number of solutions to this conundrum were revealed in the interviews, from enlisting women to carry out the retaliation, to assigning the women retaliated against temporary symbolic status as "men" and, thus, legitimate targets because they were engaged in male-dominated activities<sup>11</sup> (see also Miller and White 2003). These findings highlight the contingent nature of masculinity on the streets. The connection between masculinity and crime is not so straightforward as to produce a consistent set of action frames. Instead, multiple contingencies seem to be the rule despite the deeply embedded nature of street masculinities.

While most research on masculinities and crime focuses on violence, Hochstetler and Copes (2003) provide an analysis of how the situational construction of masculinity frames property crime events. Based on interviews with convicted property offenders, they explore how masculine posturing immediately prior to the criminal event often "boxes" offenders into a position where backing out of the crime would result in a loss of masculine capital. They also suggest that such reputational maintenance is much more salient for younger than for older men. Other work has shown that gains from property crime are often spent to enhance one's status on the streets which is significantly gendered (Mullins and Wright 2003).

Future work on masculinities will be strengthened by attention to several key theoretical problems. First, contradictions and contingencies. While research calls our attention to how masculinity frames, encourages, and legitimates violence and other crimes, even the most criminally embedded men are not always violent. Thus, an important area for further study is how men negotiate potentially violent encounters, including the mechanisms by which they are sometimes pushed toward, and other times pulled away from, violent resolution. Second, future work should explore the overlap of pragmatic motivations with motives driven by masculinity construction. This will result in

careful detailing (rather than overuse of) gender ascriptions. While masculinity is deeply integrated with street identity, the potential to over-ascribe gendered meanings to violence can obscure, rather than enhance, our understandings (see Miller 2002). Embedded offenders operate on the basis of other motivations, even in the realm of reputation. For instance, Katz (1988) notes while armed robbery can serve as a profoundly violent way to "do masculinity," it also serves other purposes in the minds and lives of robbers (for instance, "kicks," resource acquisition, and revenge). A man can use such violence to build and maintain a street reputation as a "bad ass" but this is just one facet of such events.

Finally, as with feminist scholarship more broadly, the importance of the intersections of age, class, and race/ethnicity have been noted in research on masculinities and crime and warrant further research. Thus far, limited work has used comparative samples to verify the observations made in the study of specific populations. Finally, the primary aspect of feminist research that has been explicitly attentive to masculinity falls within the purview of the situational analysis of "gendered crime." To more fully understand the impact of masculinities on crime, future research should also focus attention to broader aspects of feminist analysis, namely gendered pathways to lawbreaking and gendered lives. Such analyses will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between gender and crime for men.

#### *Gendered Lives*

Daly (1998: 98) describes the concept of *gendered lives* as the examination of the "significant differences in the ways women experience society compared with men." Compared with the other aspects of feminist criminology we have described, this is perhaps the most challenging because it requires systematic attention to gender well beyond the analysis of crime. As Daly (1998: 99) notes, "rather than analyze gender as a correlate of crime, one would analyze crime as a correlate of gender." Feminist research has made important inroads in the study of pathways to offending and the gendered nature of offending, but less work has had the scope required to address gendered lives. In this section, we highlight two studies that have accomplished this goal.

Jean Bottcher's (2001) analysis of gender and delinquency focuses not on gender as individual action, but instead on the gendering of social practices. This provides a conceptualization of gender as active and dynamic, and "[m]ost critically, this approach decenters the individual, enabling us to isolate components of social practices which...include rules governing human behavior and the resources making human activity possible" (2001: 897). Based on comparative interviews with male and female siblings, Bottcher's analysis draws from Giddens' structuration theory, and "plac[es] types of activities—activities by which gender was defined—at the center of the analytic frame" (2001: 903).

Botcher identified three broad types of social practices: making friends and having fun; relating sexually and becoming parents; and surviving hardship and finding purpose. Within these she also identified more specific gendered dimensions that were related to exposure to, and risks for, delinquency. For example, gender segregated friendship groups, boundary maintenance among male peer groups and male access to privacy and nighttime "continuously placed the high-risk males, compared with the high-risk females, at greater risk of delinquent involvement" (2001: 910). Likewise, the meanings and rules guiding sexual relationships and childcare responsibilities had similar consequences.

Notable in Botcher's approach is that her emphasis on practices, rather than individuals, challenges the gender dichotomy often found in studies of gender and crime. She demonstrates that these gendered patterns are not universally applicable to all males or all females:

Some male-typed social practices appear to encourage or enable delinquent activity for either sex. Conversely, some female-typed social practices appear to discourage delinquent activity for both sexes. Thus, the social practices of gender disclose social conditions and activities influencing delinquent involvement, regardless of sex (Botcher 2001: 904).

This approach offers a promising avenue for the study of gendered lives, particularly when coupled with analyses of gendered crime and grounded in how gendered practices may be shaped by other social positions such as race, class and generation. Moreover, her study demonstrates that the broader examination of gendered lives contributes to our understanding of the gender gap in offending, as well as gendered pathways.

Lisa Maher's (1997) *Sexed Work* also provides a systematic examination of gendered lives, based on several years of ethnography and in-depth interviews with women in a street level drug economy. While focused primarily on the foreground of offending, her groundbreaking study goes beyond "gendered crime" through her complex, layered account of women's everyday lives, including their participation in the local drug market. Maher's study is particularly exemplary because of her consistent examination of the intersections of race, class and gender in shaping women's experiences and lives, and illustrates the strengths of feminist scholarship that moves beyond an exclusive emphasis on gender. Like other feminist scholars whose works we've highlighted, Maher blends feminist analysis with a traditional theoretical approach—cultural reproduction theory.

Revealing the interdependence of formal and informal economies, including the illicit drug economy, the study focuses on the impact of stratification within formal and informal market economies and the consequent truncation of women's economic opportunities. Though some (primarily non-feminist) scholars have suggested the drug trade has opened new opportunities for

women, Maher's study provides compelling evidence to the contrary. Gender inequality, as she demonstrates, is institutionalized on the streets: gender segregation and stereotypes of women as unreliable and weak limit women's participation in informal economic street networks. Specifically, the study documents a rigid gender division of labor in the drug economy, shaped as well along racial lines, in which women are "clearly disadvantaged compared to their male counterparts" (1997: 54).

Describing the three spheres of income generation on the streets—drug business hustles, non-drug hustles, and sex work—Maher details the ways in which women are excluded from more lucrative opportunities and find sex work one of their few viable options for making money. Moreover, the introduction of crack cocaine into urban drug markets has further disadvantaged women by increasing competition, as well as the degradation and mistreatment women often experience on the streets. In addition, she shows how racial stratification further differentiates the opportunities and experiences of white, African American, and Latina women within street-level sex work.

*Sexed Work* challenges several dimensions of previous work on women's participation in drug markets—including both previous feminist studies and traditional criminological approaches. For example, it contradicts "the highly sexualized images of women crack users dominating the social science literature" (1997: 195). This sexualized imagery—of desperate women willing to do "anything" for their next hit—is part and parcel of the dominant view of drug users (and especially women) as pathological, dependent, and lacking any control over their lives. In contrast, Maher shows that women are involved in a wide array of income-generating activities within the drug economy, with occupational norms governing their activities, despite the rigid division of labor on the streets. Likewise, Maher's analysis provides a critique of feminist research that over-emphasizes women's victimization. When "women's lawbreaking is presented as symptomatic of their victimization," (1997: 200), it likewise denies women agency and continues to frame them only in terms of passivity and dependence. Instead, Maher's research displays a complex understanding of the relationship between structure and agency. As she summarizes (1997: 201):

I have tried to strike a balance between the twin discourses of victimization and volition that inform current understandings of women's drug-related lawbreaking. While this space must be large enough to include the constraints of sexism, racism and poverty that structuring women's lives, it cannot be so big as to overwhelm the active, creative and often contradictory choices, adaptations and resistances that constitute women's criminal agencies."

Maher's work exemplifies the aspects of feminist thought highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, and its scope and depth demonstrates the benefits of a *gendered lives* approach for understanding how gender intersects

with cross-cutting structural positions, and how ideologies and social practices reproduce structural inequalities.

### Conclusion

Contemporary feminist criminology is rich with theoretical development and stimulating research. The fusion of gendered theories with criminological theories has advanced our understanding of the complex ways that gender intersects with crime and criminality. In this essay, we have broadly explored the major theoretical and empirical directions within feminist criminology. Along the way, we have highlighted exemplary studies and pointed toward profitable future directions. Drawing from Daly's (1998) typology, we have examined the central themes that remain current in feminist criminology, including the gender ratio question, gendered pathways, gendered crime, and gendered lives. Some of these have been particularly fruitful in recent years.

With recent qualitative work, including feminist attention to masculinities and crime, we have seen the development of an increasing number of studies highlighting situational contexts and the overall complexity of gender's relation to crime. These works have pushed the field well past dichotomous conceptualizations of gender, as is evident as well in recent quantitative analyses of gender (see Heimer and DeCoster 1999). As these works emphasize the contingent nature of gender, they compel us to envision crime similarly. Likewise, feminist pathways research has drawn scholarly attention to those experiences that lead women and girls into criminal behaviors and networks, and have also pointed toward critically needed changes in prevention and intervention programs (see Acoca 1998; Henriques and Manata-Rupert 2001). This body of research will be strengthened further with more explicit comparisons across gender. And while the last theme, gendered lives, has received the least systematic attention, it perhaps offers the most promising potential for illuminating the intertwined nature of gendered social structures, behavioral expectations, and identities with crime and criminality. All of this work will be strengthened with continued systematic attention to the intersections of gender with race, class, generation and other structuring features of society.

As we see it, feminist criminology has advanced well beyond the questions of generalizability and the gender-ratio question that guided early works. Contemporary guiding questions have opened up a scholarly space that benefits from the rich theoretical tradition and contemporary developments in criminology, without remaining bound by its often narrow and androcentric conceptualizations of gender. Remaining cognizant of advances in interdisciplinary theories of gender as we "take stock" of the current status of feminist criminology, we find a healthy field of inquiry that continues to advance our understanding of the complex relation between gender and crime. The past three decades of feminist scholarship have firmly established both the legit-

macy and utility of this area of inquiry. Continuing developments, both qualitative and quantitative, promise to continue the refinement of our understanding not just of crime, but of gender as well.

### Notes

- \* The authors would like to thank Kathleen Daly, Candace Kruttschnitt, and Francis Cullen for their feedback on an earlier draft.
- 1. Mindful of Smart's (1995) critique of the phrase, we use "feminist criminology" here as a shorthand method of referring to the enterprise of theorizing crime, law and justice from feminist perspectives.
- 2. To wit, a student recently queried, "Why would you build your career around the study of one independent variable?" and a colleague complained of scholars who "list independent variables as research interests."
- 3. Given the breadth of these contributions, space constraints and the specific task requested of us here, our primary focus in this chapter will be feminist approaches to theorizing crime with specific emphasis on research in the social sciences.
- 4. Ironically, androcentrism is evident both in patterns of paternalistic treatment of female offenders and also in recent philosophical shifts toward equality in the treatment of male and female offenders. For instance, "get tough" policies of recent decades have resulted in what Chesney-Lind and Pollock (1995) call "equality with a vengeance" given the masculine conceptualization of "justice" in contemporary penal philosophy (see Kruttschnitt, Gartner and Miller 2000).
- 5. This tension will be further illustrated below in our examination of scholarship on gender and crime. For excellent examples in other facets of feminist scholarship in the field, see Britton (2003) and McCorkel (2002).
- 6. See Daly (1997), Naffine (1996) and Smart (1992 1995) for feminist socio-legal analyses of how legal discourses write sexed subjectivities onto women's bodies. These studies highlight important aspects of feminist epistemology that are beyond the scope of our discussion here.
- 7. Daly's conceptual schema provides a useful means of organizing the primary thematic aspects of feminist research in criminology. We should note that as with any typology, any single study can address questions within several of these categories. In fact, we see the best work as that which simultaneously addresses multiple aspects and will make note of these overlaps where relevant.
- 8. This certainly remains the case today. As illustration, a number of the articles in this volume—which synthesize the current state of leading criminological theories—make little to no reference to gender or do so in the ways problematized here.
- 9. Gender is one of the strongest and most persistent known correlates with offending. Historically, this led researchers to use all-male samples. More recently, quantitative research with samples that include both genders also includes a dichotomous measure of gender in order to avoid misspecification. Unfortunately, much work does not go beyond this methodological step and thus fails to theorize gender's effects.
- 10. The fallacy of gender neutrality is demonstrated by the fact that criminologists never draw from all-female samples and assume their findings are generalizable to males. Thus, the notion of gender neutrality is based on the implicit perspective of the male subject (see Daly 2000).
- 11. Given extensive evidence of the widespread and visible nature of violence against women in street contexts, it is also likely that men's reluctance to discuss their use of violence against women during their interviews was related to concerns over presentation of self. Miller and White (2003) examine this phenomenon with regard to dating violence.

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