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WOMEN, CRIME AND AN INFORMAL ECONOMY: FEMALE OFFENDING AND CRIME FOR GAIN

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This paper is about women, crime and rationality, the context is the criminal economy. The discussion seeks to critique and build upon the literature on the informal and criminal economies. In particular the chapter will begin to explore women's contribution to these economies. Definitions of the criminal economy are loosely formulated, tend to be simplistic, mechanistic and limited to studies of male offenders, professional and white collar criminals. These definitions are scrutinized to discover whether they may be extended to include activities in which women engage or whether different definitions from a feminist perspective may be more helpful. Three important themes which the paper will address are: first, women and economic crimes, second, generalisability and 'doing gender- doing difference' and third, rational choice, in particular, rationality and the lure and attraction of unlawful opportunities for women.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to revisit the literature on the informal and criminal economies and provide a critique which builds upon this work by investigating women's contribution to a criminal economy.^[1] The discussion is organized around three broad headings: Women and Crime, the Informal and Criminal Economies and Women, Crime and an Informal Economy. There is a considerable literature in two of these areas. The literature addressing women and crime has proliferated since the publication of Carol Smart's book *Women, Crime and Criminology: A Feminist Critique* (1976), and since then several notable authors have become well established contributors to this area (Carlen, 1985, 1988; Eaton, 1986; Heidensohn, 1985, 1996; Carlen and Worrall, 1987; Worrall, 1990). With respect to the informal and criminal economies, there is also a history of literature with contributions from various disciplinary areas (Hart, 1973; Smith, 1986; Henry, 1978; Harding and Jenkins, 1989; Mars, 1994). The informal economy in particular is attracting a recent resurgence in interest (Shapland 1997). The third area, women, crime and an informal economy is less well served by the literature. If crime were excluded and women and the informal economy were the focus there is more evidence of published work particularly in the Third World countries (Bromley and Gerry, 1979; Nelson, 1979; Gilbert and Gugler, 1981; Beneria and Feldman, 1992).

Before the discussion directly addresses the three areas identified above, two points are made which are important to bear in mind. The first concerns the so-called 'generalisability problem' (Daly and Chesney-Lind, 1988) and the second related point concerns timing. The 'generalisability problem' is concerned with whether or not general theories take account of both women's and men's criminality. In essence, the question is whether or not the same theories can be used to explain female and male crime. According to Gelsthorpe and Morris (1994), this idea 'has profound significance for theory construction'. My argument is that there are rational choice theories to which this test needs to be addressed. The problem was identified after the first phase of feminist criminology particularly in the UK following Carol Smart's 1976 publication which spawned a feminist critique concerned almost exclusively with the legacy of sexism, with man-made constructions and social control issues. Amongst the

few authors who provided exceptions to this are Dorie Klein (1996) and previously with June Kress (1976), and Pat Carlen (1983, 1985, 1988), whose works will be addressed below. Since this first phase, usefully summarized by Daly and Chesney-Lind's posing of the 'generalisability problem', two of the most important theoretical developments are rational choice in the 1980's and doing gender - doing difference in the 1990's. The 1980's saw the domination of the rational choice perspective in mainstream criminology. Whether or not this perspective can be generalized to females has yet to be fully explored. The 1990's saw the influential body of work 'doing gender - doing difference' emerge (Messerschmidt, 1993, 1995). Whether or not rational crime for economic gain is part of 'doing femininity' has yet to be explored. Both the rational choice perspective and doing gender - doing difference are important issues that must be confronted when the focus of research is on female offending and crime for gain. These important theoretical developments of the 1980's and the 1990's must be thought about in relation to the generalisability problem.

Women and Crime

This section considers the literature on women and crime that has specific bearing on those women who commit 'economic crimes'. [2] Most female crime, according to any measure of female offending, is property crime, it is economic. Despite this, economic rationality, the dominant way of accounting for property crime generally, is the one explanation seldom offered when women enter the equation. This paper suggests that previous explanations for female offending are partial and incomplete. The following discussion begins to show how and is organized in five parts:

1. Explaining women and crime
2. Doing gender - doing difference
3. Rational Choice
4. Shoplifting
5. Rational or Willful women ?

1.Explaining women and crime

The purpose at this stage is to re-consider the work of Dorie Klein and June Kress (1976) and Pat Carlen (1983, 1985, 1988), during that early wave of feminist criminology. As Klein and Kress observe women offenders have rarely been seen as either rational or willful:

Women criminals have rarely been accorded even the grudging respect shown male criminals, who are at least seen as a threatening force with which to be reckoned. Instead, women have been the target of voyeuristic studies concerned only with their sexuality. (Klein and Kress 1976: 155)

In a later review entitled the 'Etiology of Female Crime', Klein (1996) again makes reference, in her critique of authors who contribute to the 'legacy of sexism', to the way in which boys are 'instrumental' whilst girls are 'expressive' and that even; '*Economic* offences such as shoplifting are explained as outlets for *sexual* frustration' (1996). Men and boys have always been credited with committing crimes for a whole variety of reasons. In addition to being lead astray, being sick or evil, males have also been viewed as rational (Merton, 1938; Cohen, 1955). Male offenders have been credited with the faculty of reasoning, women offenders have not. As with the popular stereotypes of women in society generally women offenders are portrayed as hysterical, irrational and incapable of being fully responsible for her actions and crimes due to her biology and sex (Allen, 1987).

In similar fashion to that of Klein and Kress in the mid 1970's Carlen's work also makes occasional reference to women offenders acting rationally. Carlen has identified four major characteristics belonging to female offenders (Carlen and Worrall, 1987). The first characteristic identified is economic rationality. Carlen however, does little more than state the

possibility that women are acting rationally and where her argument is more fully developed she concentrates on rationality as a form of escape from economic dependency and economic hardship.

More importantly, Carlen's own analysis of rationality is one that is restricted to rationality born of a need to escape from poverty not one borne out of a vision of prosperity or the attraction and pull of material possessions. Yet one of her most renowned co-authors of *Criminal Women*, Jenny Hicks suggests she established her own criminal firm, defrauded a post office out of a quarter of a million pounds and used the profits from this to finance a lifestyle which included drugs (Hicks, in Carlen et al. 1985: Ch3). Similarly Chris Tchaikovsky '....my criminality was the result of a rational choice - nobody had coerced or cajoled me into it' (Tchaikovsky, in Carlen et al. 1985: 56).

Daly (1993) has identified several pathways into criminality. There are street women and those who enter through a relationship with a violent man and those whose friends/partners are involved in selling drugs. As suggested by Hicks and Tchaikovsky, it can be argued however, economic gain, the attraction of money and economic reward as a pull factor, is another. Shoplifting for example, may hold out the attraction of money and economic reward and is just one type of outlawed economic activity that may be an attractive earner to women. Carlen does occasionally suggest that escaping from poverty and abuse is not a generic and comprehensive explanation for women's involvement in crime. Similarly Klein and Kress (1976) acknowledge that rationality may not be an entirely male preserve. Although none of the above develop this theme, they reiterate and acknowledge the possibility, that for some women who commit property crimes a different explanation may be appropriate. Clearly I suggest this could be an explanation that sees some forms of offending as a more purposely rational activity.

2. Doing Gender - Doing Difference

In line with a recent observation and recommendation offered by Steffensmeier and Allan (1996), I would argue that it is productive to proceed following a gendered paradigm that 'acknowledges both the utility of traditional theory and the need to describe how the organization of gender (and biological/physical differences) specifies the impact of social forces suggested by traditional theory' (Steffensmeier and Allan 1996: 482). Some recently emerging literature is beginning to focus on the gendered nature of crime. This work is illuminating both gender difference, for example in the area of youth street gangs (Campbell, 1991) and gender similarity in crime. Gender can now be viewed as a situated accomplishment; girls and boys 'do' masculinity and femininity. Crime is used as a resource for 'doing' gender, male youth crime is a resource used for accomplishing masculinity (Messerschmidt, 1993, 1995). Precisely what this means for women and girls is not yet clearly theorized but implies that women who 'do crimes for economic gain' would 'do' prostitution, shoplifting, cheque frauds and so on. To develop the idea of 'doing femininity', if we assume the 'doing gender - doing difference' approach, one consequence of this is that we never need to consider the 'generalisability problem' because of the separateness of the gendered explanations, women would simply be emphasizing their femininity. On the other hand we may choose to take on board the generalisability problem first which could reformulate the theorizing as follows:

Generalisability and 'doing gender - doing difference'

- take the rational choice perspective from mainstream criminology,
- consider this perspective adopting a gendered position, with specific reference to women,
- subject the outcome to the 'doing gender - doing difference' test

These are some of the complex and searching questions that can now begin to be addressed following developments within mainstream and feminist criminology's in the late 1980's.

3. Rational Choice

In the scenarios and questions highlighted above, the rational choice perspective was used as an example of a development within mainstream criminology that emerged in the 1980's. Cornish and Clarke (1986) provide the most developed explanation for the viability of the rational choice perspective in the introduction to *The Reasoning Criminal. Rational, Choice Perspectives on Offending* (1986). John Carroll and Frances Weaver contribute chapter two: 'Shoplifter's Perceptions of Crime Opportunities: A Process-Tracing Study', to this edited volume. This empirical study of shoplifting, uses verbal protocol procedure to find out what criminals 'really' think about when they are considering actual crime opportunities. The study, whilst it has limitations, is useful in two respects. First, it emphasizes the value of empirical and crime-specific analyses i.e. shoplifting. Second, the findings suggest a fairly high degree of rationality in the decisions of both expert and novice shoplifters (Cornish and Clarke, 1986: 35). Retrospective accounts through interviews were not carried out. In addition and significantly for the purposes of this chapter, gender differences/similarities were not discussed in any depth although it is apparent that the data could have been further exploited on this subject.

In the early 1980's Steffensmeier also broached the question of rationality, but through a gendered lens. He looked at an organization's criminal enterprise in the context of 'sex-segregation in the underworld' (Steffensmeier, 1983). He suggested, 'rationality refers to the link of means to ends or the extent to which expeditious means are used to achieve goals' and with specific regards to women:

..if women are less into crime and are relatively less successful at it, this is less a result of single-mindedness in the rational pursuit of crime than because they lack access to organizations and social contacts that would enable them to pursue criminal enterprise more safely and profitably. (Steffensmeier 1983: 1025)

It seems that the rational choice perspective may be called upon and further developed in respect of specific offences such as shoplifting, that the methods used to investigate this should be more pluralistic, and that the whole inquiry might usefully be conducted on women offenders. The concept of rationality needs to be subjected to the generalisability test. In this context 'rational choice' requires deconstructing in order to evaluate the extent to which rationality may be a concept peculiar to masculinity, an entrenched male attribute. A different understanding of rationality may need to be constructed suitable for analyzing women who 'do' their own types of crime for gain.

4. Shoplifting

It is often claimed that women's crimes tend to reflect their place in society. It is nothing new to suggest that traditional women's crimes are linked to domestic life such as shoplifting and social security fraud. This apparent link is difficult to deny although a simplistic link between expressions of women's role and their offence choice is inappropriate. Take for example the crime of shoplifting. [3] As Allison Morris points out all women shop but only some shoplift (Morris, 1989: 65) In this example the generalisability problem comes into effect when theories used to explain female crime are grafted on to explain male crime although this is not an exercise that is ever carried out, and would result, if the doing gender doing difference perspective were also taken on board, in male shoplifters being labelled homosexual.

Several authors have focused upon the offence of shoplifting and these works can be divided into various categories. Some for example have focused upon who shoplifts, others have been more interested in shoplifting as a vehicle for examining differential sentencing patterns between men and women (Eaton, 1986). Others have focused upon the prevention aspects of shoplifting (Butler, 1994). Some have made use of observational data (Buckle and Farrington, 1984), others have used the survey method to elicit information (Gibbens and Price, 1962; Munday, 1986). In other areas of crime authors have developed the so-called offenders perspective by listening to known offenders about their habits, targets and so on (see for example Maguire, 1982 and Walsh, 1986).

In 1964 Cameron wrote that 'every town, has its little old kleptomaniac lady who steals at will...'. Over 30 years later such impressions are still typical. Gibbens and Price's survey in 1960 found two and a half times as many women as men were accused of shoplifting. Twenty

five years later Munday found the balance had swung so that more than one and a half times as many men as women were accused of shoplifting. The stereotypical images of the shoplifter that persist continue to be overwhelmingly female and also now include; the menopausal housewife, the confused foreign tourist, the mother striving to feed and clothe her young children, women and girls tempted by glitzy bright jewelry and clothes.

When it comes to further analysis and theories concerned about explaining crime, criminology has generally been gender blind, assuming that crime is a masculine preserve. In addition, explanations in respect of why men and boys might be engaged in property crime have changed several times during the course of the twentieth century. Men and boys actions have moved from being explained by innate biological impulses through to psychiatric explanations, though to explanations that show shoplifting to be an essentially social activity where peer group pressure and sub-cultures are important influences through to socio-environmental explanations including poverty and need, greed and excitement. The classic explanations throughout criminology; anomie, sub-culture, differential association, rational choice all draw upon examples using men and/or boys either explicitly or implicitly as illustrations.

In contrast women and girls who shoplift can be much more easily explained. It is their sexuality rooted in their biological make up and psychiatric characteristics that are the root cause of their criminal tendencies (Carlen, 1985; Allen, 1987; Heidensohn, 1994). As in any other area of crime or social life women have never been deemed to act rationally, not even when in dire material need. Explanations when it comes to women and girls have ignored the fact that like men and boys they may also be badly or even worse off, have little or no money or earning capacity or legitimate opportunity to earn a decent living now or in the future. Traditional explanations never recognized the economic motivation or the fact that money might be equally a motivating factor for women as for men. The possibility of rationality being a female criminals attribute has never been systematically explored.

Such a history of female offending and its explanation is typical and shoplifting in particular serves to illustrate forcefully that studies have not challenged these images and explanations. Even criminological examinations of the offence-specific variety have served only to reinforce the stereotypes that have been typically illustrated in other areas. An article published in a psychiatry journal has as recently as 1995 shown continuing emphasis on psychopathological explanations for shoplifting in adult female offenders (Fugere *et al.* 1995). Although a variety of research methodologies and techniques have been employed in the various studies mentioned, none adopt a plurality of research techniques or a qualitative approach that investigates the day-to-day business of the female shoplifter by in depth interviewing from the female offenders perspective.

To conclude on the explanations of women as shoplifters, the overwhelming feeling of being stuck in time - due to a form of ahistoricism and a lack of incorporation of the developments that have taken place in criminology - persists. Although some recent work has begun to emphasize how rational and purposive are women offenders, women engaged in property crime, shoplifting and cheque frauds, drug use and prostitution according to these views, have all *chosen* these options albeit in the face of constrained choices due to poverty. It seems that there has been little examination of the links between types of crimes committed, particularly the attractions offered by some crimes for economic gain, and female offending.

5. Rational or Willful Women ?

Rather than focusing upon theories which seek to explain all forms of criminality amongst women this paper requires a particular concentration and focus upon those crimes which are more likely to contribute to the informal and illegal marketplace and have been referred to as crime for gain (Field, 1990). The crimes of interest here are those committed directly or indirectly for economic benefit such as property crimes where the property can be sold on for cash or bartered, theft of money and cheque frauds, shoplifting, dealing in illegal drugs, welfare and social security frauds. These crimes are also those that are amongst the highest arrest categories for women namely shoplifting, prostitution, fraud and forgery and drugs related offending.

Field (1990) usefully differentiated between crime for gain (primarily property crime) and crime not for gain (assault and sexual offences). The commission of directly economically beneficial crimes, such as those previously referred to in Carlen's work and those listed directly above,

together with prostitution - a clear example of deviance as work - might be subjected to both a gender and rationality test.

Two authors writing about women sex workers have recently advocated a '*presumption of willful rationality*' (Scrambler and Scrambler 1997: xv) to capture the idea that the background of prostitutes cannot be denied as unimportant when considering recruitment into the sex industry but the idea of free and informed choice might be important too. Such an approach recognizes 'doing crime' is one's own free will and choice (willful), however, at the same time it can be regarded as exercising one's reason (rationality). The notion of 'willful rationality' might be appropriate for considering other forms of crime for gain that women 'do'. It might also be considered alongside Carlen's 'optional', 'incidental' and 'professional law breaking' categories (Carlen, 1988).

The Informal and Criminal Economies

This whole area would appear to be dominated by an assumption of rationality. Twenty seven years ago Mary McIntosh, analyzed how crime can be seen 'as a rational economic activity, geared towards making money and minimizing risks,' (McIntosh, 1976: 265), and as having parallels with legal forms of work in the context of organized and professional crime (McIntosh, 1975). At the time McIntosh did not draw out the gendered nature of that activity. The work of Henry (1977, 1978) begins to touch upon a criminal economy. He suggests it includes both recorded and unrecorded or undetected crime. Chambliss (1978), Klockars (1974) and Block and Chambliss (1981), have illustrated how the criminal economy is comparable to the regular economy analyzing organized crime, fencing, and the Mafia respectively. Chambliss notes that the profits of organized crime and their business is an important part of the gross national product. His is a portrayal of illegal networks and corruption, illegal business on a typically American and grandiose scale. More recently Auld, Dorn and South (1986) on heroin use and Hobbs (1988, 1995) on professional forms of crime, provide useful insights into the motivations and lifestyles of criminal men and youth and deviant entrepreneurial activities.

The informal economy has been variously defined with a variety of disciplines doing the defining. Many attempts to illustrate the informal economy have been made by economists in the UK, US and elsewhere including analysis of the 'unofficial economy' (Heertje *et al.* 1982), the 'Underground Economy' (Mattera, 1985), where crime is seen as distinct from the underground economy, the 'Shadow Economy' (Smith, 1986) which includes the 'black economy' [4] but is much wider than simply illegal activity, the 'Subterranean Economy' (Bawly, 1982) which encompasses the whole unmeasured economy of open society. Although many examples of illegal activities are provided, there is little in the way of analysis and the work belongs to the 1980's and earlier. Even more recent work (for example by Burrows, 1991) has concentrated exclusively on the fiscal economy. Others have distinguished between the informal and formal sectors in the tradition of Hart (1973) whose work was associated with the development process and urban economies (Gugler, 1981). None of this collection offers a developed definition of a *criminal economy*.

Others have approached the informal economy from a criminological framework. Such work includes Mars' (1994) typology of work and its rewards and much earlier work belonging to Henry (1978), Ditton (1979). More detailed studies of those who take part in crime within the informal economy in the UK is now dated (Klockars, 1974; McIntosh, 1976; Chambliss, 1978; Maguire, 1982; McLeod, 1982; Bennett and Wright, 1984; Walsh, 1986). The literature review of forms of economic activity by Harding and Jenkins (1989), in some respects bridges the gap between these two frameworks; the economic and the criminological. These authors usefully illustrate economic activities and their location on a map of formality/informality and work/employment. They suggest that the connections between these elements is best achieved by subscribing to the idea of continuums. Criminal activities range on a continuum from crime to fiddles and outright corruption. In a similar vein MacDonald (1994) has recently focussed attention on the elusive distinctions between work and employment, raising questions about different allegiances to work including the options of alternative ways of working in the face of restricted avenues for legitimate employment, notably 'fiddly work'.

Debates are ongoing in respect of the contested definitions of organized and professional crimes, lines between formality and informality, between work and employment, legality and illegality, all adding to the complexity and problems of boundaries. Current work on the

informal economy in a European context argues in favor of making these 'fuzzy lines' between the formal and informal, and boundaries between the informal and criminal economy, problematic. Further, Shapland argues that this complexity is 'liberating' (Shapland, 1997). From the bottom up perspective of those women who are committing crimes for economic gain, as advocated in this paper, this complex view of the informal and criminal economies can indeed be regarded as a useful and liberating starting point.

Summary

There has been an over concentration by economists on the attempt to define the hidden, unofficial/informal/irregular economy solely for the purpose of approximating the size of its contribution to the economy as a whole. There has also been much vocabulary relating to the colour coding of the various types of economy, this is typified by the work of Handy (1984) who has referred to the 'white', 'black', 'mauve' and 'grey' economies. Of greater interest to sociologists, as Madaleine Leonard points out in her background to informal economic activity in Belfast (1994), is not the size of that economy (nor the colour coding) but rather the people who contribute to it.

To summarize the informal and criminal economy and its relationship to gender: Although women's relationship to the informal economy has been examined in relation to work patterns and the gendered experience of work and men's relationship to the informal criminal economy has been partially examined, women who contribute to the informal criminal economy have not attracted much attention. A gendered analysis is clearly absent from the literature to date on the informal and formal criminal economy. Applying the 'generalisability' and 'gender test' might be a useful direction in which to point the future direction of this body of work.

A further body of works can loosely be called the crime and work literature. Sutherland raised questions about criminal work (1937, 1949), Cloward and Ohlin (1960), about access to legal and illegal opportunities. More recently some have addressed the notion of criminal careers (West and Farrington, 1977; Farrington, 1994) or crime as a form of work and the business of crime (Hobbs, 1988, 1995; Punch, 1996). Others have focussed their inquiries upon crime at work (Gill, 1994, 1996) where the workplace is the scene of criminal activity and victimization. There are two main criticisms of this body of work. The earlier work tends to be well explored theoretically with the exception that it is not gendered and we know little about 'the initiation, escalation and termination of criminal careers by female offenders' (Sommers *et al*, 1994). The later work typified by Hobbs and Gill also remains a largely ungendered analysis and the latter also remains a criminology that has a rather narrow administrative focus. There are few examples from this body of work that provide a theorized and gendered analysis. One crime and work connection that has been extensively researched is the crime and non-work connection, in particular unemployment (poverty) and crime. However, this area has also suffered from the generalisability problem as far as women are concerned where women have been subsumed within the general research inquiries (Naffine and Gale, 1989).

To conclude this part of the paper on the informal and criminal economy: Rather than one all encompassing real and very large economy existing which encompasses the hidden and illegal economy as suggested by the economists, I suggest it is more useful to proceed with the idea of several economies. I would also wish to retain their perception of continuums between both formality and informality. There are overlaps between activities in which people engage. Blurred distinctions and unclear boundaries exist in reality and these should be preserved rather than conveniently overlooked in order to neatly compartmentalize activities. The crime and work literature has looked at those who take part in the criminal activities that might be placed within these informal and criminal economies. This literature is largely ungendered and a theoretical. The area of the informal and criminal economies and that of crime and work have often been the subject of research, but how they fit alongside each other, particularly from a female perspective is under researched.

Women Crime and an Informal Economy

I have argued for greater investigation of women's relationship with the informal and criminal economy. The criminal career literature that currently exists remains overwhelmingly male oriented. In the UK Carlen alone has focused upon the criminal careers of women. Offence

specific studies have been few and far between, limited and are now dated. The literature appears to offer only partially helpful and fitting definitions of the illegal and informal economies suitable for the insertion of women offenders. Definitions, typologies and frameworks that currently exist tend to be reserved exclusively for male offending patterns and for activities that are dominated by male offenders professional and white collar crimes. One of the questions raised as a result of this paper is whether existing definitions and categorizations of the criminal economy are adequate or whether they may be extended to include women or whether again different definitions and conceptualizations altogether are required.

Explanations and motivations for female offending have remained sexist and inadequate. The theme of escape, from either an abusive family or household or from economic hardship is a recurring one in the current literature: although important, these notions are nonetheless partial and incomplete interpretations and explanations for women's involvement in crime. Another interpretation and logical explanation for women's involvement in crime, might view them very differently. Women may have very strong reasons for committing economic crimes and explanations might be also found in less backward looking reasons but in more forward looking explanations. This view asks that logic and reason be attached to some of the crimes that women commit for economic gain. Such explanations for women's criminality have largely been ignored yet are explanations that have long been offered for men's criminality.

The argument pursued here suggests that rational choice be specifically examined in relation to female offending, it suggests a need to examine the attraction of crime for women. There is a clear suggestion that some types of criminal activity that women and girls take part in may be strictly financially motivated. Prostitution is pursued purely for money, shoplifting, theft, fraud and forgery and drugs related offences are the principle crime categories that women contribute to. All of these crimes may be seen as crimes which are committed as a rational response to a lack of money or ability to obtain sufficient money from traditional and legitimate sources. The attraction held out by criminal and illegal opportunities and rewards is a potentially strong lure for women. This is a forward looking rationality, a rationality that sees into the future and envisages a more compelling lifestyle being offered by resorting to unlawful ways of making money and achieving financial success. As Gilfus (1992) points out the criminal careerwomen has little been studied and we need:

...a clear understanding of the specific behaviors involved in particular crimes committed by women and men, the nature of their criminal roles, the circumstances leading to criminal involvement, the motivations for committing crimes, and the vocabularies used to justify their crimes. (Steffensmeier and Allen, 1996: 484)

The motivation and vocabularies used by women in particular might offer us new insights and understandings of the nature, trends and female offending patterns of the 1990's. The pull towards criminal activity felt by women who are engaged in economic crimes and who are acting rationally, is an area which deserves further empirical and theoretical attention.

Notes

1. This chapter stands as a contribution to the theoretical debate about the future research prospects concerning women and criminality. The argument presented in this paper is currently being developed through empirical work in the North East of England. The aim of the research is to investigate the way in which women and girls contribute to an informal and criminal economy. The study focuses upon the nature of female offending and women's and girls' extra legal activities in particular crime for gain. [\[Back to text\]](#)
2. 'Economic crimes', 'crime for gain' and outlawed economic activity are used interchangeably in this paper and relate in the main to property crime. [\[Back to text\]](#)
3. Here I use the offence category of shoplifting to illustrate several issues: women and economic crimes; women as portrayed in the traditional criminological literature; 'doing gender - doing difference' and rational choice. [\[Back to text\]](#)
4. The hidden/illegal economy is no longer referred to as the 'black economy' because of the obvious racist overtones. In this paper the phrase is only used when referring to earlier work which specifically used this description. [\[Back to text\]](#)

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