

Feminine Criminality

Multilateral Analysis of the Profile

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ABSTRACT: Criminality as a social and legal phenomenon tends to be generalized. Anti-social behavior has no legal gender differences and they are condemned in the same way, depending on the gravity of the offence. The social and psychological impact of the criminal activity, on the other hand, gives the differences and the severity of the individual and general repercussions inside the affected environment. Although feminine criminality has lower rates, it tends to cover a larger area of severe and brutal felonies with higher impact. In this paper, we intend to analyze gender-dependent characteristics, environmental factors, psychological and physiological elements of female anti-social behavior and a woman’s road to becoming an offender, most often, from the status of familial and social dysfunctional ambience.

KEYWORDS: feminine, criminal, psychology, society, justice

Introduction

Criminality amongst women is no simple task to analyse. It is a complex phenomenon that combines psychological factors with environmental factors. There are major elements like instinct, psychological resilience, intellectual capacity and tolerance that are contouring an intense, contrasting and complicated picture of the feminine deviance. The contrast resides in the duality of a woman’s capacity for both love tenderness and cruel or brutal response to severe stress. Instinct tends to be more powerful in situations of acute stress, especially because social and familial factors inhibit a woman’s response to daily negative influences leading to explosive manifestations in major conflictual situations. On other perspectives, in matter of premeditated felonies, feminine criminality tends to be characterised by patience, well calculated and planned actions with specific design of the anti-social act and post-crime conduct. If we pay attention to the immense role of a woman in the socio-familial space and the evolution of her status in the socio-professional space, we need to take into consideration a diversity of factors that influence the woman’s “criminalization” (Bisi 2002, 24).

Maybe one of the most important stress factor is gender discrimination and male dominance that manifests in every level of society in different shapes and proportions. Evolution and breaking through the masculine dominance wall took a lot of efforts and some problems are still persistent if not as a physical aggression then as a psychological one. In disrupted familial environments, abuse on women and discrimination with culture of woman’s weakness is a major problem, especially when religion and tradition are cultivating these behaviours as normality. Women tend to accept their fate and rarely try to exit that space but the options are obvious in our society and the alternatives are very visible, so, the moment of breakdown and no turning back is inevitable whereas it will be a violent one or not (Maxwell 2017, 130).

Masculine versus feminine criminality

Although deviant and anti-social behavior is not gender differentiated and social, material and environmental factors influence both sexes in the same proportion, there are elements that contrast between men and women regarding violent crimes. First of all there are physiological

and anatomical differences but also, behavioral elements influenced deeply by organic factors such as hormonal flux that implies changes in the central nervous system. Psychological factors imply not only the genetic constitution of the woman's psychological profile but also the environmental influences such as society, education, religion, parental issues, love interest and relationship management, material status, professional status, abusive or discriminating environment, all of these bringing a heavy emotional burden on any woman's shoulders. This emotional burden is the most frequent source of violence amongst women who, at some point, become offenders (Hoffman-Bustamante 1973, 117).

Freud explained a woman's criminal tendency as a rebellion against men power generated by deep emotional disorders. In women with psychiatric disorders, emotions can trigger extreme violence and cruelty driven by a low instinct control. Maybe that is the most equitable explanation in the history of psychological analysis as other theories are concentrated on the inferiority of women, their low connection to society, and their concerns regarding superficial interests or explanations of female criminality that refers to sexual promiscuity. Those explanations are not only shallow and discriminating but also expired, given the modern characteristics of a woman's role in society, out of the anonymity of the male "protection" (Box and Hale 1983, 41).

Modern theories are being debating in the present, concerning criminal activity amongst women. The liberation theory associates criminality with masculinity and explains that women were forced to adopt masculine stereotypes like aggressive behavior and competition in order to obtain more power inside society. The opportunity theory says that the higher a woman is included into professional and economical hierarchy, the more she is prone to take advantage of some situations and act delinquently. The same theory can also be used to characterize men so, in order to characterize real feminine criminality we could discuss opportunity in familial space rather than economical spaces. An opportunity can be taken by a women to become violent and retaliate against an abusive member of the family (parent, husband), after a long period of fear, tolerance and emotional repression. Another theory is the one of power control, which resides in the different roles played by a woman and a man inside and outside their home, beginning with the education they, received in that sense (Banarjee, Islam and Khatun 2015, 7).

The truth is these are just a few examples of theories that debate and characterize a woman's criminal tendency. But the relative limit of those theories is that each of them can be adjusted to characterize a man, if you adjust the external and internal factors. The unicity of the feminine criminality stands in the emotional instinctual and personality aspects of the motive of crime. And the one big and complex difference between men and women in deviance stands in the one crime that can only have a woman as its author: murder of the new-born with aggravating or mitigating circumstances (Bernard 2013, 15). This offence, in all the diversity of factors that lead to the killing of a new born baby is one of the most cruel and severe crimes in the forensic field. The feminine characteristic of the crime resides in the modifications of the central nervous system during and immediately after the birth of the child, interconnected with the social and material status of the mother. From the beautiful significance of what motherhood stands for to the murder of a baby are fewer steps then you would think because of the severe hormonal and mental imbalance, lack of control over emotions and most of all, the fear of social standards, especially inside small traditional societies. In Romania, majority of these crimes are committed by young women, from rural environment, with low income, low intellectual stimulation, frequently outside official marital relationships, inside communities with religious and traditional standards that prone people to strong judgments and women to fear of being excluded and labelled for the rest of their lives. The lack of sexual education is obvious in these cases as unprotected intimate relations are often and pregnant women face also material problems that prevent them to address to medical resolutions or adoption resources. All these elements combined with the fact that they have to deal alone with their problems, with the fact that a pregnancy changes a woman in all physical and psychological aspects, added by the

hormonal storm and the psycho-emotional lability during childbirth pushes them to extreme actions in order to escape what they consider an obstacle and not a blessing. From premeditated murders, planned during pregnancy, to post-partum depression the diversity of this offence is as complex as it is cruel and violent and if we analyze all aspects, we will find that the woman alone does not carry all the guilt, but the major impact and the specifics of the crime are unique characteristics for a profile of feminine criminality (Cloninger and Guze 1970, 305).

Psychology of crime in women and social impact of feminine criminality

Trying to develop the public profile of criminal women is difficult. Most times, women are never suspected, due to their normal appearance but also because of the social generic expectations about them. Also, society tends to have dramatic and impressive reactions to cases of feminine offence but it tends to forget them fast and that could be explained by the fact that general public has a hard time reorganizing and associating feminism with criminal activity and so, the general memory sanctions them harder and excludes them, as distressing elements, from the natural social order (Mann 1984). Actually, a woman capable of crime is not only unpleasant but even scary to accept, even with the modern society where women are equally recognized and if we stop and think about it, it is still a form of discrimination. There are few feminine criminals throughout history that survived the public's memory and they are rarely mentioned in articles or studies like Elizabeth Bathory or "The Smiling Granny" – Nannie Doss that killed all her husbands. Their cruelty drive dramatic reactions and moral sanctions from the public but the subject tends to pass quickly from any discussion and that is because, the truth is, nobody wants to see a woman as a violent being (Kalunta-Crumptom 2019, 3). Psychologically, we want to preserve the diaphanous image of the feminine gender, we morally sanction those who "violate the standard and expectations" and we eliminate the defect from our lives and memory. General social balance tends to imagine a man more prone to violence and antisocial activity rather than a woman capable of cruelty. Moreover, a woman's capacity for violence is always a manifestation of genetics, personality and imbalanced education and life environment, all combined into a tragic story and a dramatic action that changed the course of normality (Flowers 1995).

The general public view over feminine criminality is very different and superficial compared with the reality of the situation. The psychological profile of a criminal woman is complex and unique with every case but there are some common tendencies that appear during investigations. One of these elements is the fact that rarely women are aggressive or kill strangers. Most of the times, the victim is someone close, a lover, husband or even a family member. This characteristic is important because this explains the deep emotional involvement of the criminal motivations in women (Vasilyev 2018, 16). Another aspect is the tendency for extremism. Women don't take aggressive behavior step by step and are rarely involved in physical abuse. Because of the power they have to restrain and hide their frustration, sometimes with an immense self-control, the manifestations in the snapping moment tend to go to lethal force, with immense brutality, as a combination of a psychological and emotional tension being released explosively and adrenaline impact on physical strength. If the manifestation is not a result of an impulsive response to accumulated stress factors then it is often a well-planned and designed plan that is developed proportional to the level of stress she is submitted to. That is another way of explaining the capacity of response and retaliation that a woman is capable when she is submitted to a form of abuse and it is well that a woman's revenge can be as cruel as very detailed and designed. So emotion is a powerful motivation for women and almost all aspects of their crimes are personal. (Montgomery and Zeng 2016, 1).

Another characteristic of female criminality is that they rarely organize criminal activity in groups. It is a fact that when it comes to organized crime, women are now as equally respected and feared as men but in matter of crime and violence, the tendency is for them to act

alone. Given the circumstances stated above, this aspect is understandable (Uma 2020, 145). Most severe criminal offences tend to take course during adolescence and young adulthood, and during or immediate after pregnancy. This characteristic raises the problem of hormonal influences in these stages of life, with abrupt nervous and organic imbalances in some types of personalities.

Finally, statistics conclude that men are arrested more rapidly during investigations than women, because of their well-planned actions and capacity for dissimulation. This aspect can only positively discriminate women, given all the aspects stated above (Stanojoska and Jurtoska 2018, 147).

Although many studies have tried to classify criminal behaviors in women into behavioral categories depending on the type of offence, we tend to exclude this approach as the complexity of the subject and the diversity of elements that lead to the criminal behavior are far too vast to be described in limited pictures (Gainford 2017).

From victim to criminal

It is a fact that abuse is one of the reasons why women retaliate in violence. Psychological abuse or physical abuse, sometimes combined, represents chronic stress factors that induces frustration, anger, hate, suffer and pushes the victim to the point of desperate need to free herself. Even in the religious and traditional communities, where women's inferiority and abuse over her are normal, there are tensions that accumulate (Tudoran 2019, 140). Every being, need and tends to be free by instinct, and even if normality and freedom are not known, the natural reflex is to be search freedom. Moreover, we are beings that need love, respect, comfort and trust. Lack of those needs and receiving the opposite feed the negative instincts inside, and drive desperate actions in order to escape the abusive environment (Barlow 2020, 5).

Unfortunately, violence and abuse will only bring back the same, and not only in the instinctual need for freedom but also in fear of the immediate threat. Self-defense can be a lethal instrument when fear is combined with desperation and hate, especially when the women in that position have low self-control and high psychological instability (Ska 2017, 86). The truth is, in the right moment, after a long period of oppression and frustration, from victim to criminal is just one small step.

The characteristics of these crimes, in these specific situations are brutality and chaos. Being an unplanned act, driven by instinct and high emotional instability, the violence is chaotic, conducted with every usual object that the woman has in her surroundings and with extreme force, the blows causing often severe trauma to the head and thorax (Arnekrans 2016, 4). It is interesting to observe how many times, the heart is a target in these situations, as well as in passionate crimes. The target is often the mirror of the woman's suffering and the force of the blows are proportional to the negative emotions that woman accumulated during her abuse and post-mortem lesions can be found as she usually doesn't stop until all her anger and physical force is gone (Faisal 2017).

There are also the cases of families where the father abuses as well the children as his wife and in that case, the violence over the children is sanctioned by the woman in an attempt to save them from the power of the father. In these cases, the lethal force is as brutal as the precedent case but the psychological risk remains for the children that witness the scene (Schmidt A, 2020, 240).

Conclusions

All aspects stated above are just one small part of what feminine criminality means. Its complexity and diversity of factors are too vast for classifications and limitations. Today's

society still expects a limited role for the woman and discrimination persists even in the studies on the anti-social behavior in women.

General public and society tends to morally sanction and exclude women who turn to criminal activity because of their violation of their expected role, even when circumstances conclude that the woman was a victim of an abuse. The limited thinking and judgement are negative discriminating factors for those who are in difficult situations and education regarding this aspect could be further necessary.

Religious and traditional communities are still present in some countries and still influencing the defected normality for some women which remains an important triggering factor for some violent behaviors.

The specific of feminine criminality consists in personal, emotional motivation for the violent act, often as retaliation against abusive or other negative behaviors towards them.

The patience of a woman, her capacity to endure and repress negative feelings is proportional with the capacity of planning well designed crimes in order to obtain their objective, being capable of unique combinations of tender gestures with extreme violence.

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