

WOMEN ARE CAPABLE

Lara Gunter

LMU Research Day 2023

AGENDA

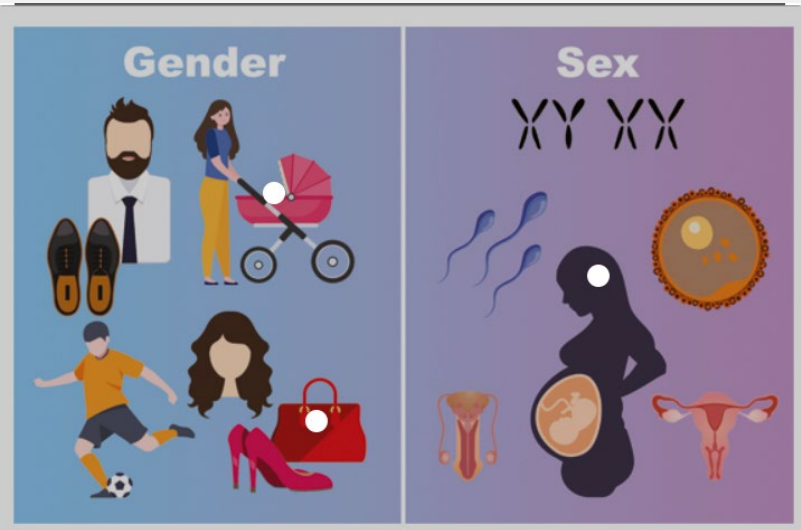
- Gender roles
- Gender roles have impacted the study of women in criminology
- Lombroso
- Incarceration stats
- Depictions of women in film (crime shows)
- There need to be more studies done of female criminality.
- **Goal: View women as equal to men because gender roles hinder our perception of women's actions and therefore obstruct the justice process.**

SOCIETY'S IMPACT ON WOMEN

- Men and women are equal.
- However, men and women are different. Mentally and physically, women cannot be studied like men.
- In society, women have suffered due to stereotypes and suppressive gender roles. The restrictions on what is socially acceptable for women has allowed for victimization and oppression.
- The way society views women has greatly impacted the study of women in the criminal justice system.



GENDER VS SEX



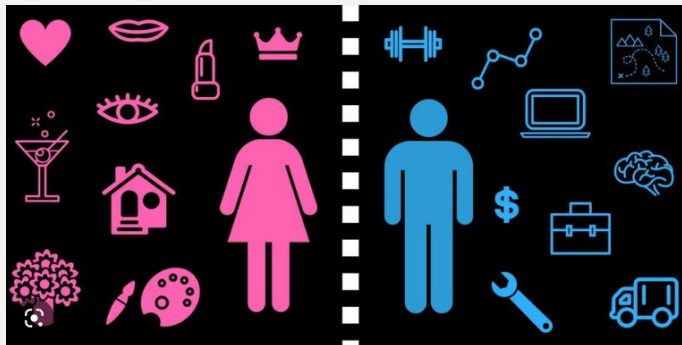
- In order to truly understand how women are perceived there must be a clear distinction between gender and sex.

Judith Roof's *What Gender is, What Gender does* 2016

- Gender is how a person views themselves (social aspect)
- Sex is biological

Gender Roles

- Roof says that different genders have different roles in society.
- Labels such as man and women indicate certain categories. **These categories are linked to specific roles, which is where “gender roles” come from.**
- Example: Women are responsible for taking care of house chores and childcare.



THE IMPACT

Carol Smart says in *Criminal theory; its ideology and implications concerning women*, **“Classical and contemporary criminology has largely overlooked female criminality. This neglect has produced a situation in which analyses of this phenomena have met no theoretically informed body of criticism and ideology informed studies have become “leading” works by default. The ideological underpinnings of female behavior and upon a belief that deviant behavior is caused by individual pathology.”** (p.89)

- Gender roles influence the way women are studied in criminology.
- Studies that were done in the past are still influencing the studies today.
- Research from the past cannot be used because it is not accurate.



LOMBROSO

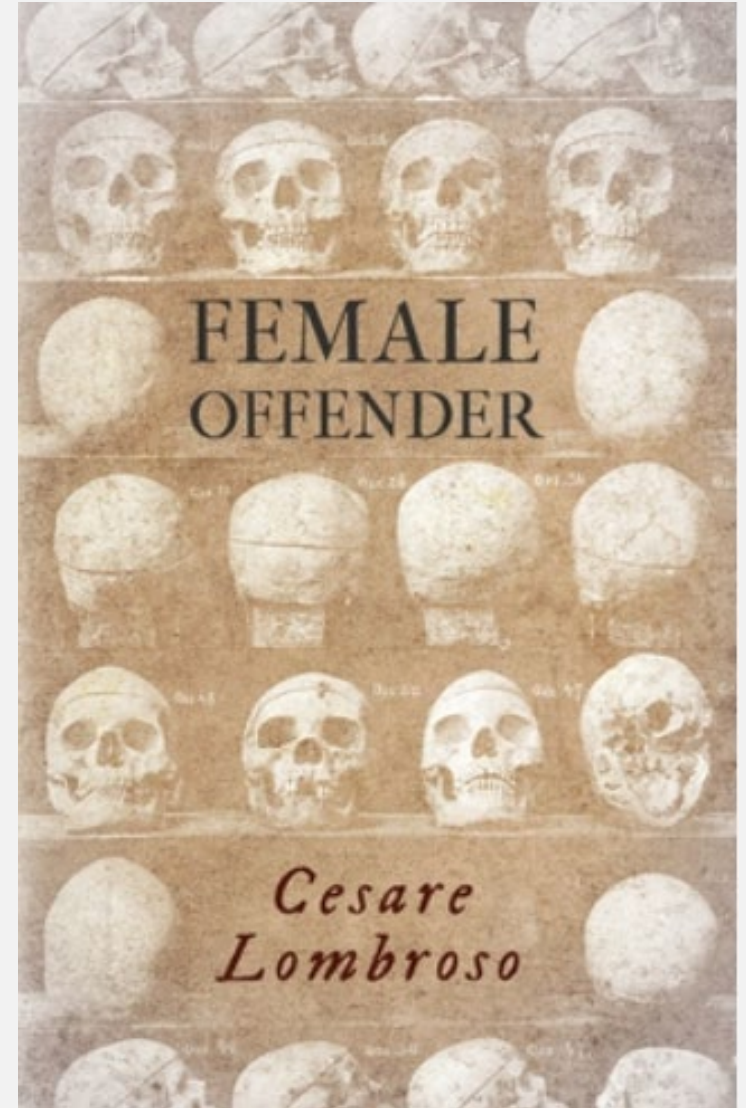
Criminologist

Published several works for
criminological theories

The Female Offender (1903)

FEMALE OFFENDER 1903

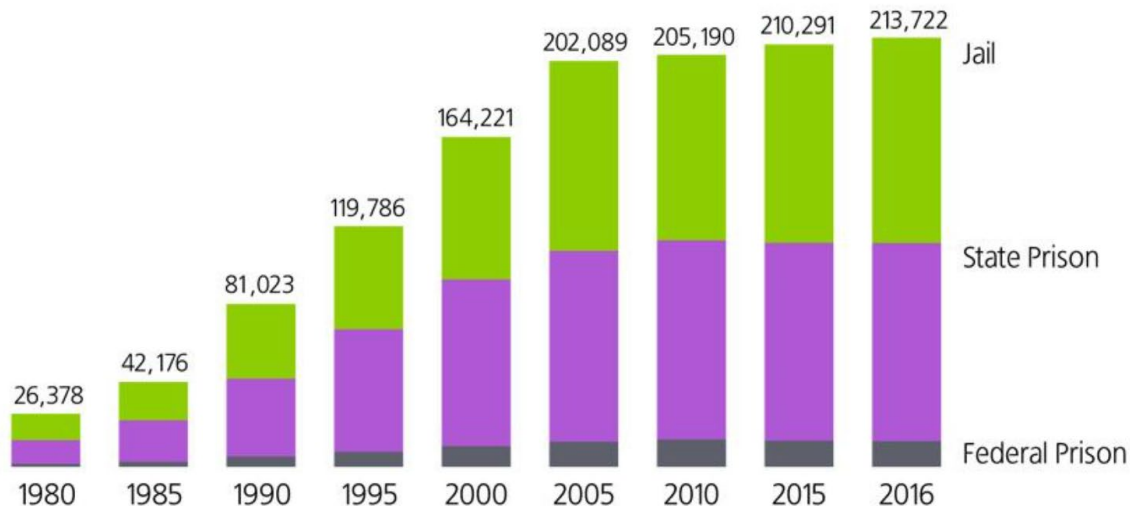
- Female criminals look masculine. They have dark hair and masculine facial features.
- When Lombroso recognized the crimes committed by women, he referred to them as "Ladylike crimes".
- "Hormonal or emotional" became an excuse. In an emotional state women become more inclined to commit crime.



LOMBROSO'S THEORIES EXPLAINED

- **Female criminals look masculine-** Suggests that when women step out of their gender roles, they become masculine. "A true woman would not commit crimes."
- **Ladylike crimes-** Lombroso referred to certain crimes as being gender specific and downplayed women's ability to commit crimes. This theory suggested by Lombroso stem from several stereotypes presented in society. One being the idea that women are not capable of crime. This incapability is established through the victimization of women who commit crime.
- *Example of victimization: women being sentenced less for the same crimes committed by a man.*
- **Hormonal/ emotional-** Lombroso suggested that women who are menstruating or going through menopause are more likely to participate in crime. He explains that in these physical states, women are too hormonal and emotional, which raises their interest in crime.
- *This excused was used to argue against women having the right to vote.*

Rise in Women's Incarceration, 1980-2016

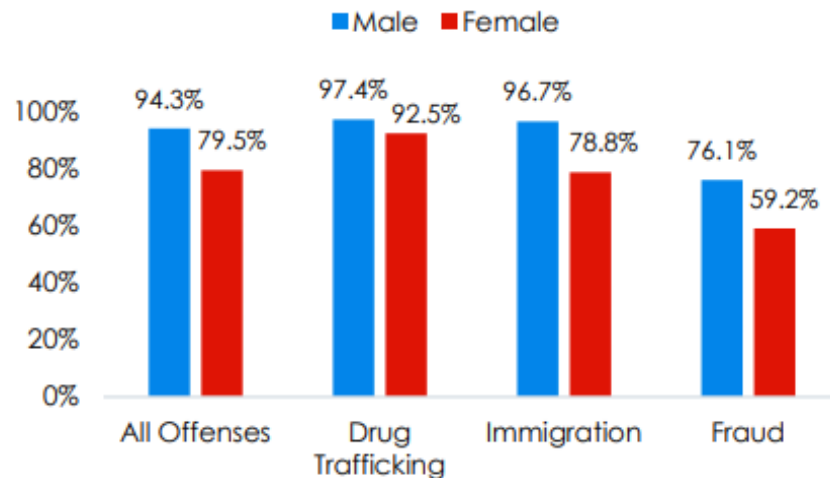


Sources: *Historical Corrections Statistics in the United States, 1850-1984*. (1986); *Prison and Jail Inmates Series*. (1997-2014.) Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics; *Prisoners in 2016*. (2018). Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Incarceration rates

- Data indicates that women are becoming more involved in the system.
- We need more research to understand female criminality so they get the help they need.
- Researchers can make accurate predictions.

Male and Female Offenders Sentenced to Prison by Guideline



This document was produced and published at U.S. taxpayer expense. For more Quick Facts, visit <https://www.ussc.gov/research/quick-facts>.

Punishment

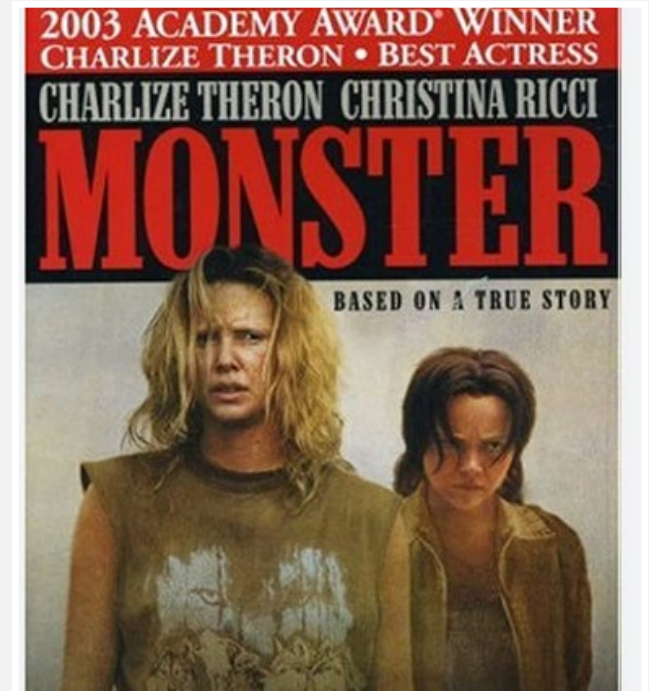
- The average sentence for female offenders was 32 months, compared to 52 months for male offenders.
- 79.5% were sentenced to prison, compared to 94.3% of male offenders.
- 33.5% were convicted of an offense carrying a mandatory minimum penalty, compared to 28.8% of male offenders.

CRIME SHOWS

- One way to examine stereotypes in society is by reviewing films and literature. Women in movies and literature are often portrayed to perfectly match gendered emotions and stereotypes.
- **Cavender Gray (*The Construction of Gender in Reality Crime TV*)**
- Television's dramatic depictions of crime and victimization mirror and reinforce these popular beliefs (Stereotypes)
- On television, women and children are vulnerable to criminals who are usually men. Women victims are typically white and physically beautiful.
- Television scenarios such as these recapitulate a certain message- women are weak. It is situations like these that reinstate that women are the victims of crimes and are not capable of crime.
- The way that men perform the deviant acts and save women allow women to be further victimized.

AILEEN WUORNOS

- In the 1990's Wuornos murdered several people.
- Wuornos was a lesbian, and the media deemed her as unattractive.
- Her appearance and sexual orientation seemed to be the most important details in this serial killer case and film.
- **Women had just recently been deemed capable of murder by the FBI in the 1990s.**
- After a few years on trial, Aileen Wuornos was executed on October 9, 2002.



SUMMARY

- Gender roles and stereotypes have impacted the way women are studied and viewed in society.
- Female incarceration rates are increasing. There is not a lot of research on female criminality to explain why women commit crime.
- Differencing in sentencing leads to more victimization.
- Women are capable of crime.

SOURCES

