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| 13. Learning table on crime, deviance & gender | | | | | | |
| **Key assumptions**  1. Official crime statistics show that males are roughly four times more likely to commit crimes than females. However, women are involved in all types of crime and female crime is rising.  2. Self-report study data shows that females are less likely to offend than males.  3. Victim surveys show that women are more likely to be victims of sexual and violent assaults than males. They also show that women fear a range of crimes more than men.  4. Female crime has largely been neglected by most sociological theories of crime and deviance. **Radical feminists** such as **Heidensohn** (1986) suggest this is because of the domination of sociology by men. The result is that crime issues relating to males, social class and ethnicity have been at the centre of most sociological theories of deviance. | | | | | | |
| **Liberal & radical feminism** | **Evaluation - ☺ ☹ (eet)** | **Interactionist feminism** | **Evaluation - ☺ ☹ (eet)** | **Postmodern feminism** | **Evaluation - ☺ ☹ (et)** | **Synoptic links** |
| Response to OCS  These early feminist explanations **largely accept** the statistics and believe that females are less criminally inclined than males. They stress that women are more likely to be victims of domestic violence and sexual assaults than men. Why women are less criminally inclined - liberal feminists **Liberal feminists** such as **Steffensmeier and Allan** (1991) maintain that women are socialised into a different set of moral values than men. For example, they suggest that females are socialised to be caring, compassionate and are therefore less likely to commit crime, especially violent crime.  **Why women are less criminally inclined - radical feminists**  **Radical feminists** such as **Heidensohn** (1986) claim that women’s lower crime rates can be explained in terms of patriarchy. She claims that both in the private sphere (family) and public sphere (work and leisure) men exert power and social control over women. Heidensohn argues that the consequence of this is that women have fewer opportunities to commit crime and acts of deviance. Why women are more likely to be victims of domestic violence and sexual assaults - radical feminists **Radical feminists** such as **Kelly** (1988) claim that women’s greater risk of domestic violence and sexual assaults is the result of patriarchy. They claim that such violent crimes are the product of male power and control in families and society at large. Radical feminists also highlight that such experiences impact a great deal all women’s lives. This is because women fear crime more than men and as a consequence adopt various avoidance behaviours, for example not going out alone at night. | Strength 1. Radical feminist ideas have gained empirical support. **Dobash & Dobash** (1979) support the view that domestic violence is a product of patriarchal marriage relationships. They found that domestic violence was often triggered off by husband’s perception that his wife was not carrying out her ‘duties’. This suggests there is some validity in radical feminist ideas.   Weaknesses 1. Liberal and radical feminist theories have been questioned on empirical grounds. **Panorama’s** research into violent women would seem to suggest that violent crime is in fact a significant and growing problem amongst females (e.g. girl gangs and female domestic abusers). This suggests that the validity of liberal and radical feminist ideas have to be questioned.  2. Liberal and radical feminist theories have been criticised on atheoretical level. **Postmodern feminists** would suggest the ideas are dated and do not take into account the significant changes which have occurred in women’s lives. For example women’s greater (if unequal) access to paid employment. This suggests that liberal and radical feminist ideas only offer a partial view on crime and deviance. | **Response to OCS**  Interactionist feminists **reject** official crime statistics, seeing them as little more than a social construction. They point out that females are **under-represented** in the statistics and therefore the statistics do not present an accurate picture of the social distribution of criminality. The extent of crime and deviance by gender is socially constructed Interactionist feminists abandon attempts to offer causal explanations of female crime and deviance. Instead they examine the social processes that lead certain women to be under-represented in official crime statistics.  Interactionist feminists share **Becker’s** (1963) idea that the social distribution of crime and deviance is dependent on processes of social interaction between the deviant and powerful agencies of social control. Interactionist feminists suggest that females are less likely to be policed and labelled deviant than males. Perhaps this is because of sexism and chivalry within the police. | Strength 1. Interactionist feminist theories have gained empirical support. **Campbell** (1981) found that females were more likely to receive cautions from the police than males and **Hedderman and Hough** (1994) claim that female offenders are far less likely than male offenders to receive a custodial sentence for nearly all serious offences. This suggests there is some validity in the interactionist feminist ideas. Weaknesses 1. Interactionist feminist theories have been questioned on empirical grounds. **Steven’s and Willis** (1979) question the potential biasing effect of the police on crime statistics. This is because they point out that the police initiate only 8% of recorded crimes. This suggests that the validity of interactionist feminist ideas have to be questioned.  2. Interactionist feminist theories have been criticised on atheoretical level. **Marxist feminists** would argue that social class is ignored. They would point out that selective law enforcement is not only tied to gender but also social class. This suggests that interactionist feminist theory only offers a partial view on crime and deviance. | **Response to official crime statistics**  Postmodernist feminists **largely reject** the official statistics. They believe females are **under-represented** in the statistics and attempt to explain in causal terms recent rises in female criminality and deviancy. The causes of female crime and deviance1. Women’s liberation Postmodern feminists claim that the increase in female aggressive behaviour is linked to shifting gender roles. They also argue that the rise in female white-collar crime is linked to the increase in female participation in the workplace. 2. Poverty Postmodern feminists such as **Naffine** (1987) claim that changes in global economies have given rise to a ‘pink-collar ghetto’ of insecure, low wage, part time jobs. It is suggested then that women employed in the ‘pink-collar ghetto’ engage in petty crime because of economic necessity. | Strength 1. Postmodern feminist theories have gained empirical support. **Fagan** (1993) notes in America that black women are drawn into the drug industry due to poverty and lone parenthood. This suggests there is some validity in the postmodern feminist ideas. Weakness 1. Postmodernist theories have been criticised on atheoreticallevel. **Biological** theories stress the importance of PMS in the causation of some female violent crime. This suggests that postmodern feminists only offer a partial view on crime and deviance. | Research methods/methodology  Liberal & radical feminists largely accept ocs.  Interactionist feminists reject ocs.  Postmodern feminists argely reject ocs.  Theories/perspectives  Liberal & radical feminism, interactionist feminism, postmodern feminism.  Other topics  Other topics  **Power & politics**   * Powerful agents of social control (police) more likely to enforce the law against males * Low levels of female crime and deviance due to a lack of power. * Domestic and sexual violence due to the power of men over women. * As women become more powerful, opportunities increase for female crime. For example, powerful white-collar crime. * Postmodern feminists explain crime committed by powerless females.   **Families and households**   * The family as an agency of socialisation instils feminine behaviours amongst women. Behaviours which are less likely to draw females into crime and deviance, especially violent crime. * Men’s patriarchal control of women in the home limits opportunities for female crime and deviance. * Domestic and sexual violence taking place in households due to patriarchal family structures. |
| In conclusion postmodern feminists offer a strong theory. This is because they recognise that official statistics on gender and crime have problems. Postmodernist feminism can and has been used to account for recent growths in female street crime. Furthermore postmodern feminists appreciate the way in which female crime is intertwined with factors such as ethnicity and social class. However, all sociological debates will soon need to look more closely at female street crime and deviance. Recent research by Tara Young (2006) suggests that although girl gangs in the traditional sense are rare in London there are plenty of girl only groups which engage in arrange of deviant and anti-social behaviour. It can further be concluded that although radical feminist ideas on gender and offending seem dated, their observations and explanations of domestic violence and sexual violence remain significant today. | | | | | | |