

The Essence of British Feminist Criminology Theory and its Prospects

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Abstract: The article examines the formation and development of British feminist criminology as a revolutionary direction in criminological science that emerged in the context of second-wave feminism of the 1960s-1970s. It provides detailed analysis of fundamental theoretical concepts by Carol Smart on the patriarchal nature of law and processes of secondary victimization, Frances Heidensohn's theory of multilevel social control explaining gender disproportions in crime, and Pat Carlen's concept of "gender and class deals" revealing mechanisms of economic determination of female criminality. The methodological contribution of these researchers to developing qualitative methods of criminological analysis and their critique of traditional masculinized theories are examined. Based on analysis of the contemporary criminological situation in Uzbekistan, characterized by high levels of domestic violence and specific cultural features of women's victimization, the necessity of creative adaptation of feminist approaches to the national context is substantiated. Specific directions for integration are proposed: establishing specialized research structures at the Institute of Criminology, developing culturally-sensitive methodologies, introducing gender perspective into law school educational programs, and overcoming cultural barriers by demonstrating compatibility of women's protection with traditional values.

Keywords: feminist criminology, gender violence, women's victimization, Uzbekistan, Smart, Heidensohn, Carlen, social control, patriarchy, criminological integration

In recent decades, **feminist research** has played a significant role in British-American criminology, challenging traditional views on crime and punishment. In particular, feminist criminology in Great Britain developed in response to insufficient attention to gender aspects of crime. First and foremost, feminist criminology represents one of the most influential directions not only in Great Britain but also in contemporary criminological thought, emerging as a response to traditional masculinized criminology¹. In Great Britain, this direction received particular development thanks to the activities of outstanding researchers and unique socio-political conditions. The

¹ *Masculinized criminology*, or gendered criminology – is a direction of criminological research that examines crime considering gender aspects. It studies how biological and social factors related to sex influence criminal behavior, as well as the perception of crime and society's response to it.

relevance of studying British feminist criminology is determined by its pioneering role in developing gender studies of crime and its significant influence on international criminological thought.

The emergence of feminist criminology in Great Britain is inextricably linked to the rise of second-wave feminism in the 1960s-1970s and general social transformations of the postwar period. Student movements, the struggle for civil rights, and criticism of traditional institutions created favorable ground for rethinking criminological theory. In particular, the British movement for women's rights and protection from violence officially began in 1970 with the first national conference at Ruskin College, Oxford (February 27 - March 1, 1970). As a result of a series of national conferences (1970-1978), several key demands of the British women's liberation movement were formulated, which had primarily a social character, including: a) *equal pay for equal work* – directed against wage discrimination; b) *equal educational opportunities and equal employment opportunities* – demand for elimination of professional segregation; c) *free contraception and abortion on demand* – women's reproductive rights; d) *free 24-hour nurseries* – liberation of women from domestic duties; e) *legal and financial independence for all women* – abolition of laws on family dependency; f) *freedom from intimidation by threat or use of violence or sexual coercion regardless of marital status; cessation of all laws, assumptions and institutions that perpetuate male dominance and male aggression towards women*.

At the same time, British second-wave feminists made a significant contribution to the development of this theory. In particular, the theoretical contribution of British feminist criminologists consisted in developing several theoretical approaches, among which can be included the concept of "**the personal is political**," which meant understanding private life as an area of women's political struggle. Another feminist theory can be called "**the distinction between sex and gender**," which was based on differentiating between biological and social aspects of the sexes. The next theory is the theory of "**patriarchy analysis**," aimed at systematic study of male dominance in social relations; as well as the theory connected with "**consciousness-raising practice**," the basis of which was the method of collective analysis of women's social experience.

As Pamela Davies noted, "...important theoretical developments were rational choice theory in the 1980s and the theory of gender differences in the 1990s. In the 1980s, rational choice theory dominated criminology. The question of whether this theory can be extended to women has yet to be fully explored. Both the rational choice perspective and gender differences in behavior are important issues that need to be considered when studying female crime and crimes for gain"².

The political activity of feminist communities subsequently bore fruit. Thus, the scale and strength of the British women's liberation movement forced the government to adopt a series of landmark laws that radically changed the legal status of women in society. These are the following laws:

- **Equal Pay Act** (1970), prohibiting discrimination against women in wages;
- **Employment Protection Act** (1975), guaranteeing maternity leave and benefits for pregnant women;
- **Sex Discrimination Act** (1975), this law prohibited any form of discrimination in employment, education and provision of services; the law also laid the foundation for creating the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC);
- **Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act** (1976), which effectively provided legal protection for women from domestic violence;
- **Housing Act** of 1978 guaranteed provision of housing to victims of domestic violence, etc.

Undoubtedly, the feminist movement managed to achieve significant changes in public consciousness, including:

² Pamela Davies. Women, Crime and the Informal Economy: Female Crime and Crimes for Gain. British Criminology Conferences: Selected Proceedings. Volume 2. Papers from the British Criminology Conference, Queens University, Belfast, 15-19 July 1997. This volume published March 1999. Editor: Mike Brogden. ISSN 1464-4088.

- changing attitudes toward domestic violence and rape;
- growth in the number of women in higher education and professional activities;
- creation of women's support centers and shelters for victims of violence.

Despite the changes occurring in society's social consciousness and the adoption of laws guaranteeing gender equality, by the end of the 1970s feminist movement activists realized that legislative changes had not led to fundamental transformations. By that time, the gender pay gap persisted, there was insufficient societal attention to differences among women (class, race, social position), and violence against women continued.

Against this background, the last national conference took place in Birmingham in 1978, gathering more than 3,000 participants. By this time, contradictions between socialist and radical feminists had intensified within the movement, leading to its decline.

However, the movement's legacy proved long-lasting. In particular, the feminist movement created a theoretical foundation for further feminist research. Also in British society there occurred institutionalization of gender issues in academia and politics, and development of international feminist connections.

It was precisely in the context of these social and institutional transformations that feminist critique of traditional criminology emerged. Women's liberation movement activists, many of whom had received academic education, began applying feminist analysis to the study of crime and justice, which led to the formation of feminist criminology as an independent direction.

Significant contributions to the formation and development of feminist criminology were made in their time by such scholars as Carol Smart and Frances Heidensohn. Both scholars became revolutionary figures in criminology, transforming the discipline through a feminist lens of analysis. Thus, Heidensohn, a British sociologist, began her academic career at the London School of Economics, where her innovative research on female crime in the 1980s challenged the masculine foundations of criminology. Smart, who worked at the universities of Leeds and Manchester, radicalized the discourse with her critique of law as a patriarchal institution. Both scholars did not simply add a female perspective to existing criminological theories, but fundamentally reconceptualized the understanding of crime, victimization and social control, creating an intellectual foundation for generations of feminist criminologists.

Moreover, Smart and Heidensohn, criticizing entrenched stereotypes, proposed new approaches to analyzing the causes of crime among women and combating gender violence. According to their assertion, traditional criminology often ignored or minimized the experiences of women victims of crime.

In particular, Heidensohn's works from the early 1980s became a revelation for the criminological community, accustomed to viewing crime as a predominantly male phenomenon. Her argumentation was built on a paradoxical observation: women constitute half the population, but their participation in criminal activity is disproportionately small compared to men. This fact, which had long been ignored or considered a natural state of affairs, Heidensohn turned into the central problem of criminological analysis. She argued that understanding the low level of female crime could give us more information about the nature of crime in general than studying male criminal activity. Indeed, according to British criminal statistics, women constituted only 15% of all convicts in the 1980s, with less than 10% for violent crimes. These figures remained remarkably stable over decades, indicating a structural rather than random nature of gender differences in crime³.

Additionally, Heidensohn began developing the concept of social control that acts on women significantly more intensively and on multiple levels than on men. This control begins in the family, where girls from an early age are taught to submit, be obedient and avoid risky behavior. Parental supervision of girls is traditionally stricter, their freedom of movement is limited, and any manifestations of aggression or disobedience are suppressed more

³ Heidensohn F. *Women and Crime*. London: Macmillan Press, 1985.

decisively than in boys. This early socialization creates deep psychological barriers to deviant behavior that persist throughout a woman's life.

Transitioning to adult life, Heidensohn shows how control mechanisms transform but do not weaken. Women find themselves under pressure from social expectations regarding their roles as wives and mothers. Motherhood becomes a particularly powerful factor of conformity – women avoid criminal activity not only due to fear of punishment, but also due to potential loss of children, family destruction, and social ostracism. Heidensohn emphasizes that for women the price of deviant behavior is disproportionately higher than for men, since breaking the law also means violating gender norms, which entails double punishment - legal and social⁴.

The economic marginalization of women that Heidensohn analyzes creates a paradoxical situation. On one hand, women are more often in poverty than men, which theoretically should push them toward economic crimes. On the other hand, their exclusion from many spheres of public life and economic activity deprives them of opportunities to commit many types of crimes. Women rarely occupy positions allowing them to commit corporate crimes, they are excluded from many criminal networks built on male solidarity. Thus, the very structure of patriarchal society simultaneously creates conditions for female victimization and limits female criminal activity.

In this context, data on types of female crime were particularly revealing. According to Heidensohn's research, about 80% of women who went to prison were convicted of non-violent crimes – shoplifting constituted 40% of all female offenses, social benefit fraud – another 25%. Moreover, the average amount of damage from female thefts was seven times less than from male ones, indicating the economic determinism of female crime⁵.

Carol Smart develops these ideas in an even more radical direction, asserting that law itself is a patriarchal institution. Her work "Women, Crime and Criminology" became a manifesto of feminist criminology, challenging the legal system's claims to objectivity and universality. Smart demonstrates how legal categories and procedures systematically work against women, regardless of whether they appear as criminals, victims, or witnesses⁶.

Analyzing judicial practice, Smart shows how stereotypical notions about female nature influence justice. Women who have committed violent crimes are often pathologized – their actions are explained by mental disorders, hormonal disruptions, emotional instability. This may lead to lighter sentences in some cases, but also means refusing to recognize women's rational agency, their capacity for conscious choice, even if criminal. Women who have broken the law are presented either as victims of circumstances or as monsters who have violated the natural order of things⁷.

Particularly insightful is Smart's analysis of women's victimization processes in the legal system. She reveals mechanisms of secondary victimization, when women who have suffered from crimes, especially of a sexual nature, are subjected to humiliating procedures in police and court. Rape victims are forced to prove their innocence, their sexual history becomes a subject of public discussion, their behavior is scrutinized[3] for "provocation." Smart shows how the legal system, while formally protecting women from violence, in practice reproduces patriarchal attitudes about female sexuality and women's responsibility for male aggression.

The concept of the "deserving victim" that Smart develops reveals class and racial dimensions of victimization. Not all women are equal before the law in their victim status. Women from marginalized groups – prostitutes, drug addicts, migrants, women with criminal pasts – face distrust and accusations when they try to obtain protection from violence. Their victimization is considered less significant, partially deserved, an inevitable

⁴ Heidensohn F. Women and Crime (2nd edition). Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996.

⁵ Heidensohn F. Sexual Politics and Social Control. Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000.

⁶ Smart C. Women, Crime and Criminology: A Feminist Critique. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976.

⁷ Smart C. Feminism and the Power of Law. London: Routledge, 1989.

consequence of their lifestyle. Thus, according to the author, the legal system not only reflects social inequality but actively reproduces and legitimizes it⁸.

The word "scrutinized" in the context of my text about feminist criminology means detailed, meticulous, almost microscopic study and analysis of something with the aim of finding flaws or inconsistencies. This English word comes from the Latin "scrutari," which literally meant "to rummage through garbage looking for something valuable," and this etymology perfectly conveys the nature of such study – digging into details, turning over every stone, searching for any clues. In the context of trials of sexual violence victims, "scrutinized" means that the woman's behavior is subjected to extremely close and often hostile examination. The court and defense literally dissect every aspect of her life: what she wore that evening, how much she drank, whom she met with before, how she behaved. It's as if a person were put under a magnifying glass and any details, even the smallest ones, that could be interpreted against them were sought.

Following Smart, Heidensohn also sought to deepen understanding of gender aspects of crime through analysis of women's prisons and the experience of incarceration. Her research shows that the penitentiary system, created for men and oriented toward a male model of crime, proves especially destructive for women. Women's prisons are often located far from the places where prisoners' families live, which breaks family ties. Rehabilitation programs in women's prisons are traditionally oriented toward teaching "feminine" skills – sewing, cooking, hairdressing, which only reinforces gender segregation and does not give women real opportunities for economic independence after release. Thus, Heidensohn's study of women's prisons revealed that 65% of female prisoners were mothers of minor children, with only 5% of children remaining with fathers during the mother's imprisonment, while 90% of children of male prisoners remained with mothers. This demonstrated the disproportionate social consequences of female incarceration for families⁹[1].

Meanwhile, the medicalization of female crime, which both researchers criticize, has a long history and profound consequences. Since the 19th century, female deviance was explained by such biological factors as menstruation, pregnancy, menopause, etc. However, this tradition continues today in more sophisticated forms. Women in prisons are more often prescribed psychotropic drugs, they are more often referred for psychiatric treatment. In this regard, Smart and Heidensohn show how this medicalization serves as a control mechanism, depriving women of political voice and the ability to articulate the social causes of their actions.

In addition, examining domestic violence, both researchers made a revolutionary contribution to understanding this phenomenon. Before their work, domestic violence was considered a private matter not subject to criminological analysis. It was Heidensohn and Smart who showed how the artificial division into public and private spheres serves to conceal systematic violence against women. They demonstrated that domestic violence is not isolated incidents but a structural phenomenon supported by legal, economic and cultural institutions of society.

Analysis of police practice regarding domestic violence, conducted by these researchers, revealed systematic reluctance of law enforcement agencies to intervene in "family matters." Police often refused to register complaints about domestic violence, suggested that women "reconcile" with aggressors, and did not take measures to protect victims. Even when cases reached court, punishments for domestic violence were disproportionately lenient compared to similar crimes against strangers. This "privatization" of violence against women, as Smart and Heidensohn show, is a key mechanism for maintaining patriarchal order.

Police practice also showed systemic distortions: women received official warnings instead of arrests twice as often as men for similar offenses, but were punished more severely for repeat violations. Smart documented that

⁸ Smart C. *Feminism and the Power of Law*. London: Routledge, 1989.

⁹ Heidensohn F. *Sexual Politics and Social Control*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000.

women spent 40% more time in pre-trial detention than men when charged with comparable crimes, which she explained by women's lack of economic resources to post bail¹⁰.

Additionally, in her research Smart presented shocking victimization statistics based on victimological surveys that revealed an enormous gap between the real level of violence against women and official statistics. Her data showed that only 12% of rape victims went to police, and only 2% of cases ended in conviction. When analyzing 500 court cases of rape, Smart found that in 73% of cases the defense focused on the victim's sexual history, despite formal prohibitions of such practice¹¹.

The intersectional approach¹² that both researchers develop shows how gender intersects with class, race, sexuality and other social categories in the production of crime and victimization. Working-class women more often become objects of criminalization for behavior that in middle-class women is considered eccentricity or temporary crisis. Black women and women from ethnic minorities face intensified control and suspicion from law enforcement agencies.

It was Smart who was able to convincingly confirm how racial stereotypes influence the perception of female crime and victimization. White women are more often perceived as victims of circumstances, deserving sympathy and rehabilitation. Black women and women from other racial minorities are more often perceived as inherently dangerous, aggressive, and incorrigible. These stereotypes affect all stages of the criminal process – from the decision to detain to sentencing.

Overall, the methodological contribution of Smart and Heidensohn to criminology is difficult to overestimate. They showed the limitations of quantitative methods that dominated criminology for understanding women's experience of crime and victimization. According to their justified conviction, official statistics, on which traditional criminologists relied, reflect only the tip of the iceberg of female victimization and distort the picture of female crime. Many crimes against women are not registered, many forms of female deviance are not criminalized or are processed through medical and social services, bypassing criminal justice¹³.

The qualitative methods that these scholars promoted – in-depth interviews, ethnographic observations, analysis of personal histories – allow hearing women's voices, understanding their own interpretation of their experience. This is especially important for understanding female victimization, where official definitions often do not coincide with their experiences. Many women do not identify themselves as victims even in situations of obvious violence, internalizing guilt and responsibility for the aggressors' actions.

The concept of the continuum of violence, developed within feminist criminology, shows the connection between various forms of male aggression against women – from obscene jokes and street harassment to rape and murder. Smart and Heidensohn demonstrate that these phenomena are not isolated from each other but constitute a unified system of control and subordination of women.

"Minor" forms of violence normalize and legitimize more serious crimes, create an atmosphere of fear and limit women's autonomy.

At the same time, the analysis of prostitution conducted by these scholars reveals contradictions in the legal system and public morality. Prostitution is simultaneously criminalized and tolerated (i.e., showing tolerance), prostitute

¹⁰ Smart C. Law, Crime and Sexuality: Essays in Feminism. London: Sage Publications, 1995.

¹¹ Smart C. Law, Crime and Sexuality: Essays in Feminism. London: Sage Publications, 1995.

¹² *Intersectional approach* is a theoretical concept and methodological approach that examines the intersection of various systems of oppression, discrimination and domination. It asserts that various aspects of identity (such as race, sex, class, sexual orientation, disability, etc.) do not exist in isolation, but interact with each other, forming unique and often mutually reinforcing forms of oppression.

¹³ Smart C. Law, Crime and Sexuality: Essays in Feminism. London: Sage Publications. 1995; Heidensohn F. Sexual Politics and Social Control. Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000.

women are simultaneously victimized and demonized. Thus, Smart shows how prostitution laws are aimed at controlling female sexuality rather than protecting women from sexual exploitation. Clients of prostitutes are rarely punished, pimps often avoid responsibility, while women bear the main burden of criminalization.

In this approach, Heidensohn also develops an understanding of economic factors that push women into prostitution and other forms of criminalized activity. She notes that for many women, especially single mothers, women without education and professional skills, *prostitution or petty theft may be rational economic survival strategies*. Criminalization of these strategies only deepens women's marginalization, depriving them of opportunities for legal employment and social support¹⁴.

Thus, the critique of traditional criminological theories developed by Smart and Heidensohn shows their androcentrism¹⁵ and inability to explain gender differences in crime. For example, Merton's anomie theory assumes that crime arises from the gap between cultural goals and legal means of achieving them. But Smart and Heidensohn's research showed that women, having even less access to legal means of achieving success, nevertheless commit fewer crimes. In their view, differential association theory also does not explain why girls growing up in criminal neighborhoods are less likely to engage in criminal activity than boys.

Smart is particularly critical of biological and psychological theories of female crime that ignore social context and reproduce only gender stereotypes. She shows how these theories serve to depoliticize female crime, presenting it as individual pathology rather than a reaction to structural inequality and oppression. Even feminist theories that focus on women as victims can paradoxically deprive women of agency, presenting them exclusively as passive recipients of male violence¹⁶.

Smart and Heidensohn's contribution to understanding sexual violence revolutionized not only criminology but also public consciousness. They showed that rape is not the result of uncontrolled sexual desire, but an act of power and domination. The rape myths that Smart and Heidensohn deconstruct – that victims provoke attacks with their behavior or clothing, that "real" rape is committed by a stranger in a dark alley, that women often make false accusations – serve to justify rapists and shift responsibility to victims¹⁷.

At the same time, Smart's analysis of court proceedings in rape cases shows how the legal system reproduces these myths. The requirement of physical resistance as proof of absence of consent ignores the reality that many women freeze from fear or fear greater violence if they resist. In her opinion, the focus on the victim's sexual history reflects patriarchal notions of female sexuality as property that can be "spoiled" or "devalued" by previous sexual contacts¹⁸.

Heidensohn expands the understanding of sexual violence by including in the analysis workplace harassment, which for a long time was not recognized as a form of violence. She shows how sexual harassment serves as a mechanism for excluding women from the public sphere, especially from traditionally male professions. Tolerance for sexual harassment by employers and colleagues creates a hostile environment that forces women either to endure humiliation or leave their workplaces.

Understanding fear of crime as a gendered phenomenon is another important contribution of these scholars. As they noted, women experience greater fear of crime than men, despite having a lower statistical probability of

¹⁴ Heidensohn F., & Silvestri M. Gender and Crime. In M. Maguire, R. Morgan, & R. Reiner (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology* (5th ed., pp. 336-369). Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2012.

¹⁵ *Androcentrism* is a worldview from a male perspective, presenting male normative ideas and life models as universal social norms and life models.

¹⁶ Smart C. *Law, Crime and Sexuality: Essays in Feminism*. London: Sage Publications. 1995.

¹⁷ Referenced works

¹⁸ Smart C. *Women, Crime and Criminology: A Feminist Critique*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976.

becoming victims of most types of crimes¹⁹. Smart and Heidensohn show that this "paradox" is explained by the real threat of sexual violence that women face, as well as socialization that teaches women to perceive themselves as vulnerable and defenseless.

According to the scholars, fear of crime typically limits women's mobility and autonomy. Women avoid certain places and times of day, limit their social activity, and depend on male "protection." This fear, as the scholars show, is a form of social control more effective than direct violence, since women themselves limit their freedom, reducing the level of threat.

Meanwhile, analysis of moral panics around female crime reveals mechanisms of constructing gender norms. Heidensohn shows how periodic panics around "girl hooligans" or "murderous mothers" serve to reinforce traditional notions of femininity. In the scholar's opinion, these panics arise not in response to a real increase in female crime, but during periods of social change that threaten patriarchal order. The demonization of female criminals serves as a warning to all women about the consequences of violating gender norms²⁰.

Smart sought to deepen understanding of the media's role in constructing female crime and victimization. She noted how the media sensationalizes rare cases of serious crimes committed by women, presenting them as monstrous anomalies. At the same time, systematic violence against women is normalized, presented as isolated incidents or inevitable tragedy. This media representation shapes public opinion and influences criminal justice policy.

Moreover, the question of female criminals as mothers occupies an important place in the works of both researchers. They show how motherhood is used simultaneously to mitigate and intensify punishment. In particular, women-mothers could receive lighter sentences out of compassion for their children, but could be punished more severely for failing to fulfill maternal duties. Therefore, deprivation of parental rights in court proceedings was often used as additional punishment for female criminals, even when their crimes were not directly related to children.

The transformation of feminist criminology under the influence of Smart and Heidensohn's works led to the development of new research directions and practices. Their main ideas formed the basis for domestic violence victim support programs, reforms of rape liability legislation, and alternative forms of justice that take gender specificity into account. Despite these efforts, as the scholars themselves noted, institutional changes often proved superficial, not affecting the deep structures of patriarchal domination.

In contemporary times, the critique of carceral feminism²¹, present in Smart and Heidensohn's works, is becoming increasingly relevant. These works show that strengthening criminal prosecution for violence against women can paradoxically intensify women's victimization, especially those from marginalized groups. Since women may be reluctant to seek help, fearing consequences for their partners, especially if they are migrants or belong to criminalized communities. In this regard, the scholars' opinions about expanding police powers and the prison system ultimately harm precisely those women whom feminists seek to protect.

Alternative models of justice discussed by Smart and Heidensohn include restorative justice, community accountability, and transformative justice. As the scholars noted, these approaches seek to address the harm caused by crime without reproducing violence through punishment. For female criminals, these models can offer the opportunity to address the root causes of their actions – poverty, trauma, addiction – instead of simple isolation.

¹⁹ Barberet R. *Women, Crime and Criminal Justice: A Global Enquiry*. London: Routledge, 2014.

²⁰ Heidensohn F. *Sexual Politics and Social Control*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000.

²¹ *Carceral feminism* is the dominant practice of contemporary feminist struggle, in which the main tools for solving problems of domestic violence and gender inequality are strengthening forms of police control and toughening criminal punishment for crimes committed.

For victims, they can offer greater control over the process and outcome than the traditional criminal justice system²².

Currently, the transnational dimension of female crime and victimization, which Smart and Heidensohn began to investigate, is becoming increasingly important in the global world. In particular, trafficking of women for sexual exploitation, exploitation of migrant women in domestic labor, and cross-border violence against women require new analytical frameworks that go beyond the nation-state. It was Smart and Heidensohn in their research who showed how global inequality intersects with gender oppression, creating specific forms of victimization for women from the global South.

Meanwhile, in their later works Smart and Heidensohn began developing the theme: the impact of neoliberalism on female crime and victimization. As they noted, the reduction of the welfare state, privatization of public services, and deregulation of labor relations particularly severely affect women, increasing their economic vulnerability. At the same time, the neoliberal ideology of individual responsibility, in the scholars' opinion, diminishes the structural causes of female crime and victimization, presenting them as the result of personal choice or failure.

Today, digital technologies also create new forms of violence against women and new opportunities for female crime, which requires updating Smart and Heidensohn's theoretical approaches. From the perspective of the scholars' ideas, cyberbullying, revenge porn, and online stalking expand the space of male control over women beyond the physical world. At the same time, the internet provides women with new opportunities for organizing resistance, creating support networks, and documenting violence.

Thus, the significance of Smart and Heidensohn's works extends far beyond academic criminology. They changed public understanding of crime and justice, influenced legislation and policy, and inspired activist movements. Their insistence that gender is a fundamental organizing principle of society, rather than simply a variable in criminological equations, transformed the discipline.

Undoubtedly, the methodological innovations of these researchers, such as emphasis on qualitative methods, attention to subjective experience, critical analysis of official discourses – have enriched the criminological toolkit. They showed that understanding crime requires not only statistical analysis but also deep immersion into people's life experiences, attention to language and symbols, analysis of power relations, and others.

It should be noted that Smart and Heidensohn's legacy continues to develop in the works of a new generation of feminist criminologists who expand and complicate their ideas. The inclusion of queer theory[1] perspectives, critical race theory, and postcolonial studies enriches understanding of the intersection between gender and other systems of oppression. Attention to trans experience challenges the binary notions of gender on which early feminist criminology was based.

The criticism to which Smart and Heidensohn's works are subjected by contemporary researchers is also productive for the development of the criminological discipline. Accusations of essentialism, of ignoring the agency of female criminals, of Western-centrism stimulate more nuanced and complex approaches. Recognition of the diversity of women's experience, attention to strategies of resistance and survival, inclusion of non-Western perspectives undoubtedly enrich feminist criminology.

Another famous representative of feminist criminology in Great Britain is Pat Carlen. She was born in 1947 into a working-class family in Northern England, which largely determined her future research interest in class inequality and social injustice. Having received a doctoral degree in sociology from the University of London, she began her academic career in the 1970s, when feminist criminology was just emerging as an independent field.

²² *Burgess-Proctor A. Intersections of Race, Class, Gender, and Crime: Future Directions for Feminist Criminology. Feminist Criminology, 2006. No. 1(1), 27-47.*

Carlen worked as a professor of criminology at several British universities, including the University of Keele, University of Bath, and University of Birmingham. Her first significant work "Magistrates' Justice" (1976) examined class prejudices in magistrates' courts, but real recognition came with the publication of "Women's Imprisonment: A Study in Social Control" (1983), based on interviews with female prisoners in Cornton Vale, Scotland's only women's prison.

[1] *Queer theory* is a critical sociological theory about the nature of gender that became widespread at the end of the 20th century. Its proponents believe that an individual's gender and sexual orientation are not only and not so much predetermined by their biological sex as by their sociocultural environment and conditions of personal upbringing.

Carlen regularly consulted government commissions on women's imprisonment, served as an expert at parliamentary hearings, and worked with organizations supporting female prisoners. Her recommendations influenced reforms of the penitentiary system in Great Britain, including the development of alternatives to imprisonment for women.

Carlen represents a unique figure in feminist criminology, whose theoretical contribution radically reconceptualized the relationship between economic marginalization and female crime. Her central theory of "gender deals and class deals" offers a completely different understanding of why most women, despite systematic discrimination and poverty, do not commit crimes, and what happens to those few who cross that line.

According to Carlen, women make implicit "**deals**" with patriarchal capitalist society. In her conviction, the **class deal** promises material reward for participation in the legal economy through labor, while the **gender deal** promises emotional and material reward through accepting traditional female roles – wife and mother. When both of these deals become unavailable or broken, women may turn to crime as a rational alternative. Through this approach, Carlen elegantly explains why precisely the most marginalized women – those excluded from both the labor market and traditional family structure – constitute the overwhelming majority of female prisoners²³.

At the same time, Carlen's methodological innovation lies in her insistent demand to listen to the voices of female criminals themselves. In this regard, she conducted research titled "Women's Imprisonment," which was based on in-depth studies of female prisoners. In the research process, Carlen conducted interviews with 39 female prisoners in Scotland, where she allowed them to articulate their own path to crime. This approach sharply contrasted with dominant positivist criminology, which viewed criminals as objects of study rather than subjects with their own rationality. Carlen also noted that women committed crimes not due to pathology or moral degradation, but as a rational response to impossible circumstances²⁴.

Particularly convincing is Carlen's analysis of how social policy can produce female crime. According to her research findings, any reduction in social benefits, tightening of criteria for receiving allowances, lack of affordable housing and childcare create favorable conditions in which crime becomes a survival strategy for women. Based on research results, she discovers such a paradoxical phenomenon: ***the more the state tries to save on social support for the population, the more it subsequently spends on maintaining women in prisons***. In particular, the annual cost of maintaining one female prisoner exceeded the cost of all social programs that could have prevented her crime.

Meanwhile, the concept of "**antisocial**" and "**asocial**" crime belongs precisely to Carlen's pen. In this concept, she offers a nuanced, that is, deep, subtle understanding of female deviance. In her opinion, **antisocial crime** represents a conscious challenge to social order, a political act of resistance. **Asocial crime**, in Carlen's understanding, conversely, is committed by women who are so excluded from society that social norms cease to

²³ Carlen P. Women, Crime and Poverty. Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1988.

²⁴ Carlen P. Women's Imprisonment: A Study in Social Control. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983.

have meaning for them. The majority of female crime, according to Carlen, belongs to the second category – this is not protest, but survival under conditions of extreme marginalization²⁵.

Additionally, Carlen's analysis of women's prisons reveals their disciplinary function, extending far beyond punishment for specific crimes. Women's prisons, according to her observations, function as institutions of refeminization, attempting to return women to traditional gender roles through programs of "housekeeping" and "motherhood." According to Carlen's conviction, the irony is that these programs are offered to women whose crimes were often caused precisely by the impossibility or unwillingness to conform to these traditional roles.

Furthermore, in her research Carlen criticizes the concept of "rehabilitation" in women's prisons as ideological mystification. According to her firm conviction, "one cannot 'rehabilitate' women who were never 'habilitated' in public consciousness, since most female prisoners never had access to quality education, stable work, or safe housing. She further noted that "prison cannot provide what society refused to give them while free." Vocational training programs in prisons, as Carlen shows, prepare women for low-paid, unstable work, reproducing their marginal status²⁶.

Particularly insightful is Carlen's analysis of how criminalization of poverty disproportionately affects women. In particular, according to the scholar, non-payment of television license, evasion of local taxes, petty shoplifting, robbery and fraud – these "crimes of poverty" constitute the majority of female offenses. She also shows the absurdity of the situation with the severity of punishments applied to women. Thus, when a woman is imprisoned for stealing food worth a few pounds, while her maintenance in prison costs the state hundreds of pounds per day.

At the same time, Carlen's theory is attractive also for its explanatory power and political relevance. Unlike psychological or biological theories of female crime, particularly unlike the ideas of Smart and Heidensohn, she offers a structural analysis of this type of crime, where she focuses attention on concrete political solutions to issues related to female crime. Above all, Carlen's analysis focuses on socio-economic conditions that generate female crime, rather than on individual pathologies. While biological theories explain female crime through hormones or genetics, and psychological ones through personality disorders. In her opinion, if female crime is produced by social policy, it can be reduced by changing that same policy. Moreover, her political solutions are concrete: *increasing minimum wage, expanding vocational training programs for women, affordable childcare, social housing for single mothers.*

Meanwhile, Carlen neither romanticizes female criminals nor demonizes them, presenting them as rational actors in an irrational system. On this basis, Carlen proposes, instead of treating or punishing "deviant" women, to change the structural conditions that push them toward crime²⁷.

Of particular interest is Carlen's methodological approach to solving scientific problems. In her combination of micro- and macro-analysis, she links individual biographies with structural processes. Undoubtedly, her works demonstrate how global economic trends – **deindustrialization, labor flexibilization**²⁸, **reduction of the welfare state** – are refracted in specific women's fates. A woman who lost her job at a closed factory, lost benefits due to

²⁵ Carlen P. Jigsaw: A Political Criminology of Youth Homelessness. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996.

²⁶ Carlen P. Sledgehammer: Women's Imprisonment at the Millennium. London: Macmillan, 1998.

²⁷ Carlen P. Women and Punishment: The Struggle for Justice. Cullompton: Willan Publishing, 2002.

²⁸ *Labor flexibilization* is the process of creating flexible forms of employment and organizing work processes, allowing quick adaptation to changing market conditions and increasing efficiency for both employer and employee. It includes implementing flexible work schedules, the ability to work from home, and changing business processes for quick response to market changes.

tightening criteria, evicted from social housing due to privatization, committing theft to feed her children – this is not an isolated tragedy, but a systemic result of neoliberal policy²⁹.

Additionally, Carlen also develops a critique of the "carceral turn" in social policy, when prison becomes the primary institution for managing poverty. Instead of social support, the state offers punishment, instead of investments in education and healthcare – investments in prisons. This turn is especially destructive for women, who are already in a more vulnerable economic position.

An important contribution to criminology by Carlen is her analysis of intersectionality in female crime. In it she shows how *race, class, immigration status, disability* intersect with gender, creating multiple forms of exclusion from social goods.

The practical significance of Carlen's works lies also in their direct influence on penitentiary policy. Her recommendations about the need for alternatives to imprisonment for women who have committed non-violent crimes have been partially implemented in some jurisdictions. Her arguments about the "counterproductivity of female incarceration – that it creates more problems than it solves" – resonate with politicians concerned with both humanitarian and economic aspects of mass incarceration³⁰.

Thus, Carlen's theory remains relevant to this day and even acquires new urgency in conditions of deepening inequality and social polarization. Her warnings about the criminogenic effects of neoliberal policy are confirmed by the growth of female crime in countries pursuing austerity policies. And her call for social, rather than criminal justice for female offenders resonates with contemporary movements for prison abolitionism and transformative justice³¹.

Summarizing what has been examined, it can be noted that the works of **Carol Smart, Frances Heidensohn, Pat Carlen and Pamela Davies** represent a fundamental contribution to understanding the gendered dimensions of crime and justice. Their analysis of mechanisms of social control over women, processes of victimization, and the patriarchal nature of the legal system revolutionized criminology and continues to inspire researchers and activists worldwide. Their persistent ideas that crime cannot be understood outside the context of gendered power relations remain relevant and necessary for any serious analysis of crime and justice in contemporary society.

The conducted research of British feminist criminology theory allows formulating a number of substantial conclusions characterizing both its scientific-methodological specificity and prospects for integration into contemporary criminological science.

First, feminist criminology represents a paradigmatic shift in understanding the nature of crime and social control, based on critical reconsideration of gender aspects of criminological knowledge. Its methodological specificity lies in applying an intersectional approach that allows analyzing crime through the lens of the intersection of gender, class, race and other social categories. This approach has allowed for radical transformation of traditional criminological concepts, revealing their androcentrism (i.e., the identification of the concepts of human and man) and offering alternative explanatory models.

Second, the epistemological significance of feminist criminology manifests in the deconstruction of established notions about the neutrality and objectivity of criminological knowledge. This theory was able to demonstrate that

²⁹ Carlen P. *Women and Punishment: The Struggle for Justice*. Cullompton: Willan Publishing, 2002.

³⁰ Carlen P. and Worrall A. *Analysing Women's Imprisonment*. Cullompton: Willan Publishing, 2004.

³¹ *Transformative justice* is a concept that goes beyond traditional punishment and focuses on transforming the conditions that led to offenses, with the aim of preventing their recurrence and promoting deeper changes in society. Unlike retributive justice, it seeks to change the social environment that generates conflicts, rather than simply punishing the offender.

ignoring the gender dimension of crime leads not merely to incompleteness of scientific analysis, but to systematic distortion of understanding criminal phenomena and mechanisms of social control.

Third, the theoretical novelty of British feminist criminology lies in the fundamental reconceptualization of basic criminological categories through the lens of gender analysis. This approach is not limited to simply adding the "women's question" to existing theories, but offers a radical reconceptualization of the concepts of "crime," "deviance," "social control," and "justice."

Also innovative is the identification of the gendered nature of criminological knowledge itself and the demonstration of how supposedly universal theories actually reflect masculine experience and perspective. It was feminist criminology that was able to reveal the mechanisms through which criminology as an independent discipline participates in reproducing gender inequality, naturalizing and legitimizing a differentiated approach to male and female deviance.

Fourth, of particular theoretical significance is the conceptualization of the continuum of violence, linking private and public, legal and criminal forms of gender violence. This has allowed overcoming the artificial division between various forms of female victimization and demonstrating the systemic nature of patriarchal control.

Fifth, an important role is played by the impact of theoretical developments of feminist criminology on practical activities in combating crime in general, and female crime in particular. The practical significance of feminist criminology primarily manifests in the transformation of approaches to crime prevention and reform of the criminal justice system. In particular, gender-sensitive rehabilitation programs that take into account the specific experience of female offenders demonstrate significant effectiveness compared to traditional approaches.

Sixth, feminist criminology has also substantiated the necessity of a comprehensive approach to the problem of female crime, taking into account the relationship between victimization, economic marginalization and criminalization. Such a scientific approach has led to the development of alternative punishment measures oriented toward social reintegration rather than isolation and stigmatization of women who have committed crimes.

Meanwhile, a substantial practical contribution of feminist criminology is the development of methodology for gender expertise of criminal legislation and law enforcement practice, allowing for the identification and elimination of discriminatory elements in the justice system. Feminist criminology has also contributed to the recognition of specific forms of gender violence and the development of adequate legal mechanisms for protecting female victims of crimes.

From the perspective of criminological science, the question of prospects for the development of feminist theory is of particular interest. In our view, the future development of feminist criminology is connected with deepening intersectional analysis and expanding the geography of research beyond the Western context. Globalization of criminological knowledge undoubtedly requires consideration of cultural specificity, religious and colonial heritage in understanding gender aspects of crime and social control.

A promising direction in this matter is the study of new forms of criminalization and social control in the digital era, including cyber-violence, digital surveillance and algorithmic (i.e., computer) discrimination. Feminist criminology possesses unique potential for analyzing how digital technologies reproduce and amplify existing gender inequalities in the sphere of justice.

Thus, the integration of feminist criminology into mainstream criminological science appears not merely desirable but necessary for adequate understanding of contemporary criminal phenomena. The gender blindness of traditional criminology is becoming an increasingly obvious obstacle to effective criminological theory and practice.

It is necessary to express special respect for each scholar whose works were examined and researched in writing this article. The contribution of each of them to the revival and development of feminist criminology is enormous.

Despite this, it would be fair if we pay tribute to each scholar by noting their contributions to the development of criminological science as a whole.

Thus, **Carol Smart** laid the fundamental foundations of feminist critique of criminology, demonstrating the systematic marginalization of women in criminological discourse. Her work "Women, Crime and Criminology: A Feminist Critique" (1976) became a turning point, marking the transition from simply including women in existing theoretical frameworks to radically reconceptualizing the very foundations of criminological knowledge. Smart convincingly showed that criminology not only ignored women but actively constructed them as the "other," pathologizing female deviance through the lens of biological determinism and gender stereotypes.

Frances Heidensohn also made an invaluable contribution to understanding the mechanisms of social control over women, developing the concept of "double deviance" and "double jeopardy." Her research revealed the paradoxical position of women in the criminal justice system: they are simultaneously subjected to lighter formal punishment and stricter informal control. Additionally, it was Heidensohn who demonstrated that the low level of female crime is explained not by biological factors, but by the intensity of social control in the private sphere, which prevents female deviance at early stages.

Pat Carlen's contribution to the development of feminist criminology is connected with the fact that she was able to expand the theoretical horizons of this criminology, integrating class analysis into a gender perspective. Her concept of the "gender deal" and "class deal" revealed the complex dynamics of social exclusivity, showing how women from marginalized groups find themselves excluded from legitimate social arrangements, which pushes them toward criminal behavior. Carlen also convincingly demonstrated that female crime is often a rational response to structural constraints and lack of legitimate opportunities.

Finally, **Pamela Davies** was able to enrich the methodological construction of feminist criminology by developing innovative qualitative approaches to studying female criminal experience. Her work on victimology and the study of female crime victims revealed the complex relationship between victimization and criminalization, showing how the experience of violence often precedes women's involvement in criminal activity. Davies also made a substantial contribution to understanding the gender aspects of economic crime, demonstrating the specificity of female survival strategies under conditions of economic deprivation.

In conclusion, it can be noted that the theory of British feminist criminology represents a mature and influential research tradition that has fundamentally transformed the understanding of crime and social control. The works of Carol Smart, Frances Heidensohn, Pat Carlen and Pamela Davies have not only enriched criminological knowledge with new concepts and methodologies, but have also contributed to the humanization of the criminal justice system.

At the same time, feminist criminology has proven its theoretical validity and practical relevance by offering convincing explanations of gendered patterns of crime and effective strategies for countering the criminalization of marginalized women. Its integration into mainstream criminology is not a tribute to political correctness, but a scientific necessity driven by the pursuit of a more complete and accurate understanding of criminal phenomena.

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