

The background of the journal cover features a top-down view of a desk. On the left, there is a pair of black leather brogue shoes. In the center, an open notebook with lined pages and a silver pen lies on a light-colored wooden surface. To the right, a black leather bag is partially visible, and a black leather watch with a silver dial is placed on the desk. A large, semi-transparent white rectangular box is centered over the image, containing the journal's title and ISSN information.

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“CRIMINALITY AMONGST WOMEN: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE”

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1.1. Introduction

The nature of criminality among women is a fairly new or recent issue in the industrialised and third world countries like India when seen from the perspective of development or social change. Women crime is a reflection of diverse socio-economic cultural- ecological factors stemming from the thunderstorm growth of industrialisation, westernisation and urban population. This increasing rate has now quieted the concern because of which it has pulled in psychologist, sociologist and criminologist both at International and National level scene. It has not only struck a strong blow against our social and cultural heritage but also affected the social structure of Indian society.¹

Previously, women were more or less like ghosts in the literature on crime. The issues surrounding female criminality were largely absent in most textbooks (or added as a footnote to the discussion on male criminality) until recently. Within these narratives, the experience of women has often been sidelined and their criminality has subsequently been pieced together to fit the masculine narrative being perpetuated. In these accounts criminality was assumed to be something male. The theories that have been created to explain the criminal behaviour since early times are based on the male model as well, due to the fact that all subjects studied have a tendency toward male which also happens to be mostly composed of male population conducting such studies. As a result, these theories were tried to fit on women.²

Almost all of the traditional criminal justice theories are essentially gender-neutral, but they were developed to explain male crime. This module will discuss some of the early explanations you might have heard, how to apply some core criminal justice theories to women, and end with and discussion on some modern theoretical work on criminality amongst women.

¹ J.K.Patnaik, *Social Changes and Female Criminality in India* (2001), p. 41.

² Katherine S. Williams, *Text Book on Criminology*, (2008), p. 502

1.2. Theoretical Perspective

Primitive researchers claimed the criminality of women was due to biological or sociological factors. Crime, a behavioural or social problem, is complex and cannot be easily understood. Abstract Criminality in the context of women is conceptually far more clear to perceive yet complex and certainly hard to manage.

Theories on crime have been proposed from time to time. Several authors have analyzed the deviant behaviour of a person. There have been biological school writers, psychological school writers and sociological school writers. The biological school of writing interprets deviant behaviour on the grounds of traits inherited, physical and mental. While psychoanalytical school consider deviance as unproblematic, because they start from the axioms about human nature, which postulates that tendency to deviance is “given” (according to them). However while the sociologist views it as problematic; and sees complexions as a learned tendency rather than an inherent, a priori one. Such behaviour is said to function of social environment and which learned by group association.³

Various social scientists theorize different explanations for the political opinion crime phenomenon. Researchers from diverse fields (social work, sociology, biology, psychology / criminology/law) made sense of crime through their corresponding lens. Major Theoretical Explanation of Criminal behaviour – In this chapter we will try to discuss. Low crime rates and male-dominated fields of criminology have led to the largely forgotten nature of female criminality. Theories Almost all of the classic criminal justice theories are male-created theories to explain male crime commission. In this module we will consider a number of the early explanations of female crime, attempt to apply some of the core criminal justice theories to women and finally conclude with a reflection on some contemporary theoretical work on she criminality.

A long history of questions and constraints has informed criminological thought about female offending, dating back at least to Lombroso (1894). One question is whether female crime can be interpreted with the same theories that account for male crime. This leads us to a very important question: Are female offenders the same or do they differ from male offenders? Writers have thrown around many different terms to describe this historic criminological focus.⁴ Daly and Chesney-Lind (1988,508) theorized that ‘theories of gender and crime can be built in several ways however their conceptual framing examined what we have called the

³Smriti Bhosle, *Female Criminals in India*, (2009). p54

⁴ Lombroso, Cesare, *The Female Offender*, (1894) p.61

generalizability problem alongside exploring what they have referred to as the 'gender ratio problem'. Generalizability is the search for theories that explain both male and female offending equally well. The gap problem — that is, scholarship fixated on the 'gap' or difference between male and female offenders. The 'gender ratio' and 'generalizability' problem, according to Miller, fits one end of a spectrum labelled by herself as the former 'gender differences' and latter gender similarities framework and quotes: '...the former tends to essentialize differences between women and men while ignoring commonalities from both the sexes failing to acknowledge that "in most respects, women talk and think about sex just like men"'.⁵

In criminology literature, there are various notions of gender similarities and differences orientation. Universal crime theories (e.g., neighbourhood, family, school or peer context) These align with particular strands of the gender similarities perspective whereby causation is worked out across gender lines for crime. Interestingly, many of the major criminological theories have been constructed using data focusing specifically on boys and men, and then making a generalization to girls and women while fighting for universal applicability.⁶

1.3. Early theories of crime

The earliest explanations of the nature of criminality among women were those that did not escape prevailing views about crime and human behaviour more broadly. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, theories of human behaviour were mostly deterministic.

This view shows up in criminology with theories that say crime can be explained by biological or social determinants (factors outside the control of individuals). Psychological theories became a prominent explanation of crime and thus psychological explanations of crime came into being. Simultaneously, many of the major sociological explanations of crime (differential association, anomie, social disorganisation) were stressing social and cultural factors that might explain female as well as male criminality.

The social scientists have prepared various theoretical explanations for causes of criminality among women. First we will talk about some early theories that help us to explain male or female criminal behaviour.

⁵ Miller, Jody, *One of the Guys: Girls, Gangs, and Gender* (2001), p.199

⁶ Hirschi, Travis, *Causes of Delinquency*.(1969), p.72

1.4. Biological theory

Biological accounts of criminal behaviour were a major focus of attention in the nineteenth century and earlier writings had also connected facial features and corporeal make-up with sudden acting out (Cuello, 1979; Frankenburg, 1977). Classical biological theories relied on the assumption that offenders had specific anatomical or physiological defects which made them different from law-abiding citizens. This was established by the view that penology could be traced to inherited traits, bodily constitution and mental disposition affecting successfully criminal behaviour.⁷

Many early twentieth-century explanations of female crime were elaborated as applications of theories of male crime. Consequently, the female criminal was frequently overlooked in criminological discussions. One of the foremost theorists, Cesare Lombroso had a significant impact on biological theory with respect to women criminality. He claimed that some women offenders were biologically predisposed to criminality and had atavistic or primitive traits. When it comes to women specifically based on work by Lombroso, criminal women were one-off characters breaking the mould of the passive and maternal character embodying women.⁸ In 1893, in *The Female Offender*, Lombroso and Ferrero applied the theory of biological predisposition to female criminality suggesting that physical abnormalities or masculine traits might make certain women offenders a little more identifiable. They divided women offenders into occasional criminals and born criminal. While these views are understood to be relatively distasteful now, they remain historically significant as early markers of criminological attitudes towards women accused persons.⁹

Otto Pollak was another prominent writer of this period; he associated women's offending behaviour with hormonal and biological cycles – menstruation, pregnancy and menopause. He even suggested that emotional imbalance, shifts in mood and psychological pressure during these periods affects criminal behaviour. Pollak also contended women were more criminal than they were typically given credit for, but their crimes left more room to be undetected or hidden.¹⁰

Subsequent bio-chemical theorists similarly attempted to correlate hormonal imbalance with propensity for criminality. Yet the contemporary consensus is that biology, in itself, does not provide an adequate explanation of crime. Under the right social, economic and psychological

⁷ Prof. N.V. Pranjappa, *Criminology and Penology*, (2008), p.54.

⁸ Lombroso, *Crime: Its Causes and Remedies*, (1911), p.74.

⁹ Lombroso and Ferrero, *The Female Offenders* (1958) 112.

¹⁰ Otto Pollak, *Criminality of Women* (1959) 31.

conditions, they are at worst contributory or catalytic; at best (for which I believe this piece is not venturing) as one of myriad ingredients that contributes to a more complex genetic makeup composition.¹¹

Biological arguments, at times even seeped into litigation too. Sometimes in sentencing or as partial explanations of behaviour, PMT or menopause/emotional disturbance were raised as mitigating circumstances. In some cases where the defence was proved the courts accepted diminished responsibility or gave them a degree of leniency.¹²

The biological theory led to the social and economic criticalfeministapproaches that claim the principal weakness of it, its sdocsolution: their view too, physically or hormones determined/pre-ordained reality but keep away from poverty, family conflict and abuse (domestic violence), social pressure—compulsory femininity—or wealth that leads to economic deprivation. Thus, both contemporary criminology views biological explanations as narrow with probable lifelong ramifications. In the present research, biological variables may only be relevant as one of a bevy of interceding contexts weighing in on how to deal with women when they are accused.

1.5. The psychological theories

Psychological theories of crime begin by believing that some individuals may be more inclined to crime due to differences in behaviour. Most psychological theories are developmental in nature, trying to account for how offending develops from childhood into adulthood.

As opposed to the social environment, psychological theories explain that the personality traits of the individual Is primarily disposed towards crime.¹³ Psychology is study of mind and behaviour attitude etc. Twas a study of individual traits like personality, rational thinking perceptions intelligence and imagination memory creativity etc.¹⁴

For psychologists, crime is a behaviour developed by the criminal throughout his or her exposure to otherpeople. So, as with sociologists they try to account for crime in relationfdealhatn people do within their environment. Psychological theories apply a number of assumptions, which essentially attribute female crime to individual traits. Which remain untouched or at least negatively impacted by economic, social and political forces. These theories also tend to end by arguing that criminality is constitutional, and 'abnormals' are

¹¹ Smriti A Bhosle, *Female Crime in India and Theoretical Perspective of Crime* (2009)

¹² Katherine S Williams, *Textbook on Criminology* (2008) 506.

¹³ Tappan Paul, *Crime, Justice and Corrections* (1960), p.36

¹⁴ Smriti Bhosle, *Female Criminals in India*, (2009). p54

chronic criminals who start their life with a predisposition for being criminal; or in more common man vernacular, they are born criminals. Because these theories are focused on the person. This screening process can also be seen along the lines of gene-correction and its treatment, sometimes referred to as a cure, varying from psychoanalysis to a sterilizing operation in order to prevent possible future crime. The role, status or socio- economic position of the women in the society hardly matters. The fact that social factors should be neglected at once has a direct appeal to anyone who is trying to keep the old order in force in society likely explains the success of these theories among the land-owning and employed classes. This also lent credence to the view that the penal system ought to reform prisoners during their confinement. Criminals were considered to be sufferers from an affliction which could be healed. These theories, in turn, also impacted upon the duration of prison sentences.¹⁵

Criminals have savage lineage, and criminality runs in the blood. Goring suggested that criminalistic traits (or defects) in criminals are inherited and acquired through innate behavior, thus environmental conditions do not play an important role. Research by psychologists and sociologists, however brought home beyond any doubt that it is not hereditary but the psychological influence apparent in delinquent families that makes one a criminal. The child absorbs casually criminalistic traits from the family background of the criminal nurturing and such individual turns into habitual criminal. Similarly, young children removed away from their parents tend towards criminality in the absence of proper parenting care and lack of compassion leading to a sense of inferiority complex leading frustration and humiliation on them.¹⁶

Pollak has disputed of so-called disproportion between male and female criminality in his book "the criminality of women". He argued that since women acquire greater deceit and cunning behaviour through socialization, they commit crimes like abortions, murders by poisoning, offences against children etc. only behind a veil. Apart from the superstitious and bewitching character of women as gained from differential socialization process, Pollak further stated that biological factors like lesser physical strength, psychological concomitants of menstruations, pregnancy etc also play a vital role in the etiologic approach of crime.¹⁷

Psychological theories of crime start from the assumption that differences between people in how they behave (personality) may make some people be at greater risk than others for committing crimes. Psychological theories are often developmental, looking to explain the

¹⁵ Katherine, S. Williams, *Text book on Criminology*, (2008), p.488

¹⁶ Sutherland and Cressey, *The Principle of Criminology*, (1978), p.100

¹⁷ Otta Pollak, *Criminality of Women* (1959) 31.

development of offending from childhood to adulthood and therefore based on longitudinal studies following individuals over time. Such theories have an emphasis on continuity as opposed to discontinuity from childhood through adolescence into adulthood. It is often assumed that the relative position of people on any given underlying construct, e.g. likelihood to commit crime, remains stable over time.¹⁸

Freud (1930): civil society is "continuously threatened with breakdown... by the basic aggressiveness of man towards another. Shared interests in the workplace never kept them together; the passions of instinct are more powerful than rationales. It is this that Culture must summon to its aid every potential ally, "to build up barricades against the aggressiveness of man on a large scale and to repress it with reaction-formations in our minds. The physiological Freudian explanation claims that female law breaking is a perversion of, rebellion against, the biologically natural female role or an evidence of masculinity complex. He insisted that in various degrees all females feel envious of males but 'normal' women find a way to internalise societal definitions of femininity, focused on exclusive investment in motherhood.¹⁹

Sanyal (1975) further found that women convicts were emotionally unstable, insecure with rejection or frustration in childhood. They went through difficult circumstances, love failures and a host of other unfortunate events that usually made life more painful for them to cope with. They had scarcely fulfilled their dreams in a test. Also, well understood Thomas thesis of four wishes (response, recognition, security and new experience) which would help in learning the character of crime.²⁰

1.6. Economic Theory of Criminality

Poverty As A Cause Of Crime One of the oldest theories of causes of crime propounded by economic determinists, the Marxists, seems to be poverty as a cause of crime. For some of them for sure, crime is simply a reaction to economic injustice. Impoverishing a part of the population, it condemns it to poverty and so no longer gives it education resources, turns it into ignorance; The oldest in point of time is the attempt to explain crime in terms of poverty. What has changed over time is the balance struck between them, away from one or another with shifts in social beliefs and state of the economy.²¹

The Economic theories of crime claimed that crime is the end product of economic wants and

¹⁸ Smriti A. Bhosle, *Female Crime in India and Theoretical Perspective of Crime*, (2009), p.29

¹⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, (1930), p.60-61

²⁰ Shubra Sanayal, "An Empirical study of certain personality characteristics and Attitudes of 25 Female Convicts of Nari Badi Niketan", *Social Defense*, (1975), p.41-43

²¹ Garofale, *Criminology*, (1881), p.143

of economic destitution like poverty, unemployment, low income, high cost of living, high expenditure etc. Benthem, Rouseeu, Walsh and Paranjappe are few the Expected Scientist for these theory.²²

However, poverty alone may not be the primary cause of a given crime. More important still, it doesnot create the crime-fostering situation most advantageous for both individuals and society at large. With economic insecurity, slums, inadequate food and clothing, lack of necessary medical care, lackof proper education facilities makes arrogant dangerously close to criminal behaviour. Including leading children and people families in differential association with delinquent scales because the attend miseries of their own. Richness or poverty indirectly can develop jealousy and bitterness that leads to crime very easily.²³

Women in employment is worse role model for children too Right from struggling with the outdoor occupational activities of mothers, the wellbeing of kids remains hampered. The absence of moral values from parents can mislead children and impact them in negative way. As children do not get proper parental attention, they will likely misled through adversity to commit some other crimes as well because maximum time children will find themselves alone without care and control at home causing a large number of issues and an avenue for juvenile delinquency. Besides that, the desire for money makes women to say yes to immoral deeds. The plight of working women in specific can be the most atrocious situation as she has not adequate guards to her from societal evils during her work hours.

1.7. Major Theories of Women Criminality

In the past, it was thought by many criminologists that women were less likely to commit crimes than men. Similarly, when women committed crime it was presumed they strayed from acceptable notions of.. areas inhabited by men with masculinity and femininity. But in subsequent decades, the percentage of female arrests went up, and this was taken as a sign of growing woman deviance.²⁴

Theories on female criminality, Otto Pollak observed, tended to embrace the myths and stereotypes associated with women. Writers — classical and modern alike — often accounted for women's crime from physiological or psychological perspectives, with far less attention to social and cultural forces. There was an assumption that women are a homogenous category, and biological differences were considered deviations from what normative womanhood

²² A.Thomas Williams, *Women Criminals in India*, (2004).p.20

²³ J.P. Sirohi, *Criminology and Penology*,(2004), p.83

²⁴ Otto Pollak, *The Criminality of Women* (1950) 109–112.

should be. These kind of assumptions were deemed as naive.²⁵

Women have been more active in academic, scientific, cultural and economic life nowadays. This increased public presence is one factor some scholars cite as influencing the nature of crime women commit.²⁶

Therefore, while the earliest theories of women criminality favoured biological explanations, later approaches began to acknowledge social and economic factors. Although classical theories have been criticized, they are still valued for being the basis upon which later criminological thought built. Below is a summary of major theories explaining women criminality:

1.8. Theory of Anomie

Influenced by the theories of American sociologist Robert Merton, and French Sociologist Emile Durkheim. According to Durkheim, crime consists of acts that "offend strong and definite states of the collective conscious". Crime for him is social fact. It must permit normals and universally in its forms reforming from all cultures and societies at stages of their developments. Crime is pretty much inevitable as a normal and healthy part of society. Crime is inevitable (because not all of society can be as autocratic, ambilateral, or zusätzlich disinterested in their communal sentiments—the ethics and ethos of a society) It is impossible for all human beings to be the same because humans are affected by different influences in society. Durkheim goes on to claim that crime not only is something that is bound to happen, but it can serve a purpose. Some form of deviance lies at the root cause of social change and as for society, it generates deviance to nurture itself. It is not a good thing, either, to repress criminal entirely — that creates an environment antithetical to innovation and social transformation.²⁷

Robert Merton copied from Emile Durkheim. As Merton, (1938) describes it in his theory, the idea that refers to criminality is when people feel pressure or tension. This tension is induced by desires to pursue goals countered by some barriers that must be overcome in order to attain them. Disgruntled people commit crime either to blow off steam, or to reach some objective through illegal means. Merton used the word 'Anomie'. To Merton, anomie was not a purposeless state that precipitated antisocial behaviour but the condition of individuals who are

²⁵ Smriti A Bhosle, *Female Crime in India and Theoretical Perspective of Crime* (2009) 56.

²⁶ Pardeep Kumar, *Philosophy of Crime* (2004) 44.

²⁷ A. William Thomas, *Women Criminals in India: Sociological and Social Work Perspective*, (2004), p.217

taught to want the goals of their culture but then denied access to them.²⁸

Merton classified social and cultural structures. Cultural structures refer to the goals and interests that men pursue, and social structures are the means or sanctioned avenues which order, regulate and control basic goal pursuit (Hagan et al., 2005; Karstedt, 2002). The cultural system of society urges all men to attain goals through the means of normatively sanctioned modes of actions. Nonetheless, the methods by which these goals are achieved through socially acceptable channels are wildly unequal. Deviant Behaviour Deviant behaviour arises when social structures limit or eliminate access to approved methods of achieving these goals. Certain social patterns do not have a class uniform, they push a copy more than conformist conduct.²⁹ The form that mal-integration takes at a societal level is anomie; delegitimate valued culture ends but dissociate the means to those ends. As such, a more organized or anomie group, community or society has less crime and deviance. Merton hypothesized that anomie defines American society at large, but that it is high in the lower classes specifically because they are more barred from legitimate opportunities. It is essential to note that high levels of anomie and social disorganization in lower class and disadvantaged ethnic groups, therefore, are hypothesized to lead these groups into having various crime and delinquency rates. Merton has isolated five adaptations that individuals may engage in which reflect their reaction to the goals and means of society-conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion. Though Merton views the last four modes of mitigation as deviance, he provides his classification of "innovation" to buttress the association between anomie and crime. He uses innovation to rationalize high crime rates among the lower class or even poor elements of population.³⁰

1.9. Strain Theory

The strain theory provides that crime is born out of frustration, pressure, or tension which results with the failure to achieve socially legitimate means when attempting to fulfill certain goals. Society indoctrinates you with aspirations such as money and rank, but either way. Some individuals resort to criminality because legitimate routes are closed.³¹

This theory relates to women criminality since most of them have poverty, unemployment, family burden and less avenues for making money. Such circumstances can place a level of stress that manifests in terms of offending for survival, economy or emotive response. Ram

²⁸ Robert Merton, *Social Theory and Social Culture*, (1957), p.230-235

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Dr Madhurima, *Women, Crime And Prison Life*, (2009), p.41-42

³¹ 'Theories of Female Criminality' <http://www.castonlineilstu.co.edu> visited on 24 February 2012.

Ahuja explains the offence of women in terms of economic and social factors.³² According to Cloward and Ohlin, their argument in a nutshell is that crime does not only arise because of blocked opportunities but also due to means of illegal way open for people. It sheds light on some of the offenses that women commit when they are driven by economic needs, family obligations, or the atmosphere around them.³³

Albert Cohen, building on Merton's work, added that the frustration of failing to attain status may impel people to deviance. While principally applying to juvenile delinquency, this theory is still applicable in highlighting how exclusion and disparity of opportunities might also impact women.³⁴ Strain theory has become more applicable to women due to contemporary circumstances. Although many women are primary or co-breadwinners, we still see not only low pay but also precarious work and even poverty. Such pressures may add to the burdens they already face.³⁵

Later, Agnew and Broidy noted that women and men tend to experience different types of strain (the kinds of events or forces in the environment triggering negative affect) and vary in how they respond. Women may either feel lonely, guilty or turn towards withdrawal and men instead respond with anger.³⁶ A criticism of traditional strain theory is that it was originally framed around male experiences and did not fully consider women's social realities such as dependency, abuse and family stress.³⁷ Thus, strain theory supports the present hypothesis that socio-economic hardship and surrounding pressures are significant factors contributing to offences involving women.

1.10. Masculinity Theory

Masculinity theory consists of two components: first, crime itself is symbolically linked to masculinity, and second, masculine traits like adventure, toughness and aggression are direct motivators for criminal behavior. Consequently, as the theory suggests crime has been considered inconsistent with expected female roles it explains lower female offending. Talcott Parsons wrote, when analysing the nuclear family (1955), that males are more wanting of

³² Ram Ahuja, *Female Offenders in India* (1961) 57.

³³ *ibid* 58.

³⁴ Albert Cohen, *Delinquent Boys* (1955) 75.

³⁵ Katherine S Williams, *Textbook on Criminology* (2008) 517.

³⁶ Robert Agnew and Lisa Broidy, 'Gender and Crime: A General Strain Theory Perspective' (1997) 34(3) *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 275–306.

³⁷ Chesney-Lind, "Women and Crime", A Review of the Recent Literature on the Female Offender. A Report Submitted to Youth Development and Research Centre: Honolulu: University of Hawaii.(1984), P.7

autonomy than females.³⁸

Several writers retained Parsons's view of sex roles in contemporary criminology. It was hypothesised that crime by women is a reaction to gender roles imposed on them by society, whilst it was also found, generally speaking, that women were less deviant than men (as more controlled and conformist).³⁹

Hoffman Bustamante went on to describe how women are often incentivized for conformity and men, at times, rewarded when they disregard the rules. This process may socialising risk-taking in men and women to conform. Even the media depictions have male heroes as rule breakers and women as homemakers — mothers, wives or companions, she noted. She said gender-role training may also affect the types of offences women commit.⁴⁰

Bustamante also said that women don't use weapons as much, but can be violent with home objects. Women violence is often against relatives or colleagues. Similar conduct connected with traditional domestic and financial roles like forgery, shop-lifting or property offences were associated with women.⁴¹ More recent feminist authors have denounced strict Gender-role explanations. In fact, Smart noted that even some earlier theories appeared to describe women's offending in terms of long-established stereotypes of passivity, domesticity and dependence.⁴²

Masculinity theory is too heavily focused on gender roles and neglects poverty, abuse, family stress and socio-economic hardship. However, the theory still serves a function in understanding the ways in which social expectations affect patterns of women's offending and judicial understandings.

1.11. Theory of Differential Opportunity/Learning Theory

Learning theory is based on the principle that criminal behaviour is learned rather than inherited. A criminal person's values and ideas may gradually develop into a kind of association. Underlying differential association theory is that a person forms close ties with others and, thus, is more likely to be exposed to criminal rather than anti-criminal influences.⁴³ Cloward and Ohlin (1960) described how everyone resides in two opportunity structures, legitimate and illegitimate. When legitimate means of goal attainment are restricted, some

³⁸ Talcott Parsons, 'Family Structure and the Socialization of Child' in *Family, Socialization and Interaction Process* (1954) 306.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Hoffman Bustamante, 'The Nature of Female Criminality' (1973) 8 *Issues in Criminology* 117.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² Carol, Smart, "The New Female Criminal: Real or Myth", *British Journal of Criminology*, Vol.19, (1979), p.50

⁴³ A Thomas Williams, *Women Criminals in India* (2004) 24.

individuals may resort to illegal means. That type of offending often relies upon access to a learning space where that behaviour is permitted or taught.⁴⁴

Differential association was developed by Edwin Sutherland and he sees all criminal behaviour as learned through communication in close personal groups. This learning includes both the methods of crime and the motivations relating to criminal behaviour.⁴⁵ Delinquent is a label implying that the definitions favourable to crime outweigh those unfavourable. Ruth Morris then later used this concept to account for female obedience and offending behaviour.⁴⁶

It is this theory that pertains to women criminality, because of the probability of being influenced by family members or an intimate relationships, hence other social circles. Women commit a crime for social reasons rather than something biological they inherited. Pollak also indicated to learned behaviour and low detection rates as contributors to concealed female offending.⁴⁷

Therefore, theory of learning lends credence to the present hypothesis that context family background and social dynamics play an enormous role in women offences.

1.12. Control Theory

According to the control theory, all individuals are capable of both good and evil tendencies, but social control through values and accepted norms enforces common conformity. The theory states that deviance occurs where those controls are no longer effective, or absent.⁴⁸

In contrast to anomie and differential association theories — which ask what causes deviance — control theorists ask what causes conformity. They suggest that provided you reduce the sources of conformity, deviant behaviour may surface.⁴⁹ Regarding women, control theory also is not entirely applicable. Some writers noted that the presence or absence of social bonds was less correlated with female delinquency than it was with male delinquency. Another study suggested that be girls with weaker social links may be more prone to offending than those with stronger family and social⁵⁰

For the current study, control theory is helpful in indicating that female supportive role, moral surveillance and healthy social dynamics could inhibit their delinquency incidences.

⁴⁴ Dr Smriti A Bhosle, *Female Crime in India and Theoretical Perspective of Crime* (2009) 62.

⁴⁵ Edwin Sutherland, *Principles of Criminology* (1970) 61.

⁴⁶ R Morris, *Female Delinquency and Rational Problems* (1964) 231.

⁴⁷ Female Criminality in India, <http://www.articlebase.com> visited on 9th Feb 2012.

⁴⁸ Walter Reckless, *The Crime Problem*, (1973), p.522

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p.65

⁵⁰ N. Nassine, *Female Crime*, (1987),p.72