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GENDER AND CRIME: A GENERAL STRAIN THEORY PERSPECTIVE

LISA BROIDY
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This study applies Agnew's general strain theory (GST) to two fundamental questions about gender and crime: (1) How can we explain the higher rate of crime among males? (2) How can we explain why females engage in crime? With respect to the first question, the authors suggest that gender differences in types of strain and the reaction to strain help one understand the gender gap in criminal behavior. With respect to the second question, it is argued that several types of strain may lead to female crime under the proper circumstances. In this area, GST has much in common with numerous accounts that explain female crime in terms of oppression.

Two questions dominate the theoretical literature on gender and crime: (1) How can we explain the higher rate of crime among males? and (2) How can we explain why females engage in crime? In particular, can the dominant theories of crime, developed primarily to explain male behavior, explain female crime? (For overviews of these two questions and data on gender differences in crime, see Box 1983; Canter 1982; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1992; Daly and Chesney-Lind 1988; Klein 1973; Leonard 1982; Morris 1987; Naffine 1987; Steffensmeier and Allan 1995.) We argue that Agnew's (1992) general strain theory (GST) can offer insight into these two questions. With respect to the first question, we suggest that gender differences in types of strain and the reaction to strain help us understand the gender gap in crime. With respect to the second question, we argue that several types of female strain may lead to crime under the proper circumstances. In this area, GST has much in common with accounts that explain female crime in terms of oppression.

The classic strain theories of Merton (1938), Cohen (1955), and Cloward and Ohlin (1960) argue that crime stems from the inability to achieve the

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goals of monetary success, middle-class status, or both. These theories have been applied to the above two questions, although the results have not been satisfactory (for discussion see Agnew 1995; Agnew and Brezina 1997; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1992; Leonard 1982; Messerschmidt 1993; Morris 1987; Naffine 1987). Several theorists, however, have argued that a broader version of strain theory may help shed light on the relation between gender and crime (Berger 1989; Cloward and Piven 1979:660-62; Leonard 1982:136, 190; Ogle, Maier-Katkin, and Bernard 1995). This argument, for example, is made by Naffine (1987) when she critiques those classic strain theorists who claim that women are under less strain or pressure.

They ignore the evidence when they insist that women are insulated from the pressures of public life, that their role is less demanding than the male role and that they thus do not experience pressures causing them to deviate. . . . Research has since revealed that females are susceptible to frustrations of a more general nature and that these frustrations correlate positively with offending. . . . At the head of the feminist agenda for strain theory is the investigation of the concerns and goals and the frustrations of criminal and conforming women. (P. 23)

Agnew's (1992) general strain theory is much broader than classic strain theory: It recognizes that there are several sources of strain—not just the failure to achieve positively valued goals like monetary success. It also recognizes that there are a wide range of adaptations to strain—cognitive, behavioral, and emotional. Certain of these adaptations involve crime, whereas others do not. And it more fully describes the factors that influence the choice of criminal versus noncriminal adaptations. As such, GST is in a good position to exploit the observation that females suffer from a range of oppressive conditions and that this oppression is at the root of their crime. GST, in particular, allows us to significantly extend the work of classic strain theorists. It allows us to better explore the types of strain experienced by men and women, including but not limited to the economic strain identified by certain classic strain theorists. Furthermore, it allows us to more fully explore the factors that influence the reaction to this strain by men and women.

In the first section of this article, we examine how GST might explain the higher rate of male crime. In the second section, we examine how GST might explain the causes of female crime. We then discuss whether GST is equally applicable to males and females. These discussions draw heavily on the feminist literature on crime, the gender and stress literature in social psychology, and sociological research on gender. We then summarize the arguments that are presented by offering several hypotheses for further study.

WHY ARE MALES MORE CRIMINAL THAN FEMALES?

Much data indicate that males have higher crime rates than females, with the gender gap in crime being highest for serious violent and property crimes (except for family violence) and lowest for minor property crimes, drug use, and escapist behaviors like running away (e.g., Canter 1982; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1992; Steffensmeier and Allan 1995). GST might explain the higher rate of male crime in four ways:

1. Males are subject to *more* strains or stressors than females.
2. Males are subject to *different* strains than females, with male strains being more conducive to crime.
3. Males have a different emotional response to strain, with the male response being more conducive to crime.
4. Males are more likely to respond to anger/strain with crime.

This section draws on the empirical literature to evaluate each of these explanations.

Are Males Subject to More Strain?

General Strain Theory identifies three major sources of strain: the failure to achieve positively valued goals, the loss of positively valued stimuli, and the presentation of negative stimuli. The first type of strain includes three subtypes: the failure to achieve aspirations or ideal goals, the failure to achieve expectations, and the failure to be treated in a just/fair manner. Classic strain theories focus exclusively on the failure to achieve aspirations. Such theories, in particular, focus on the inability of individuals and groups to achieve the culturally defined goals of monetary success, middle-class status, or both. GST, then, significantly broadens the scope of strain theory. It examines a broad range of goals—goals that derive from the cultural system as well as those that are existentially based. And, it considers types of strain other than goal blockage, such as the loss of positive stimuli like friends and romantic partners, and the presentation of negative stimuli like excessive demands and verbal/sexual/physical abuse. As such, GST allows us to better explore gender differences in the amounts and types of strain.

Are males more likely to experience the types of strain identified by GST than are females? The stress literature allows us to provide the best answer to this question because it contains systematic comparisons of the amounts of strain experienced by men and women. The most recent inventories of stressful events and conditions focus on numerous types of strain, particularly

those dealing with the loss of positive stimuli and the presentation of negative stimuli: the two types of strain ignored by classic strain theory. The latest literature, based on the best samples and the broadest inventories of stressors, finds that females experience as much or more strain than do males (e.g., Barnett and Baruch 1987; Barnett, Biener, and Baruch 1987; Bush and Simmons 1987; Compas 1987; Compas, Davis, and Forsythe 1985; Gove and Herb 1974; Kessler and McLeod 1984; Kohn and Milrose 1993; LaCroix and Haynes 1987; Mirowsky and Ross 1995; Pearlin and Lieberman 1979; Petersen 1988; Thoits 1982; Turner, Wheaton, and Lloyd 1995; Wagner and Compas 1990). These findings apply to both adolescents and adults (some evidence suggests that male children experience more stressors than do female children). Further, certain data suggest that females subjectively rate these strainful events as more stressful or undesirable than do males (Compas 1987; Wagner and Compas 1990). Females, then, may be higher in both objective and subjective strain. These findings are especially convincing when one considers that the stress literature often overlooks stressors that may be of special relevance to females, like sexual abuse, abortion, gender-based discrimination, child care problems, and the burdens associated with nurturing others (see Aneshensel and Pearlin 1987; Makosky 1980).

The specific stressors experienced by females are described in more detail below. They fall into the three categories identified by GST. Certain of these stressors involve the failure to achieve positively valued goals, including economic and relational goals, as well as the failure to be treated in a just or equitable manner by others. Other stressors involve the loss of positively valued stimuli, including romantic partners, friends, and the opportunity to freely engage in a range of valued behaviors. Still other stressors involve the presentation of negative stimuli. Females are frequently subject to a wide range of abusive behaviors—verbal, sexual, and physical; they are the object of excessive demands by family members and others; and they often experience other aversive conditions at home, work, and in their neighborhoods.

Taken as a whole, these data suggest that GST cannot explain the higher rate of male crime by simply arguing that males experience more strain. Females experience as much if not more strain than males.

Are Males and Females Subject to Different Types of Strain?

Although differences in the *amount* of strain cannot explain gender differences in crime, perhaps differences in the *type* of strain can. Males experience somewhat different types of strain than females, and perhaps these types of strain are more likely to lead to crime. The stress literature suggests that different types of strain have substantially different impacts on emotional

well-being and other outcome variables (e.g., Aneshensel, Rutter, and Lachenbruch 1991). GST is still in a primitive state, and we have little idea whether some types of strain are more likely to lead to crime than are other types. However, it is not unreasonable to suppose that this is the case.

It has been suggested that there are gender differences in the three types of strain identified in GST. First, males and females may have somewhat distinctive *goals and conceptions of fairness*. Several strain and feminist theorists have argued that males are more concerned with material success and extrinsic achievements, whereas females are more concerned with the establishment and maintenance of close relationships and with meaning/purpose in life (see Cernkovich and Giordano 1979; Cohen 1955; Gilligan 1982; Gilligan, Lyons, and Hanmer 1989; Jordan 1995; Leonard 1982; J. Miller 1986; A. Morris 1987; R. Morris 1964). Tentative data provide for these arguments (Beutel and Marini 1995; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1992; Gilligan 1982; Jones 1991; Mazur 1989; Rokeach 1973). Further, these arguments are compatible with the stress literature, which suggests that males more often report financial problems and are more upset when they experience financial and work problems. Females more often report network-related stressors (i.e., stressors involving family and friends) and are more upset when they experience network and interpersonal problems (Compas and Phares 1991; Conger et al. 1993; Kessler and McLeod 1984; Stark et al. 1989; Turner et al. 1995; Wethington, McLeod, and Kessler 1987). There also appear to be gender differences in evaluations of fairness (Gilligan 1982; Major and Deaux 1982). Males are said to be more concerned about the fairness of outcomes (distributive justice), whereas females seem to be more concerned about the fairness of the procedures by which outcomes are allocated (procedural justice). Males, then, focus more on the outcomes of interaction, whereas females focus more on how people involved in interactions are treated.

There are also gender differences in the experience of the second two types of strain: *the loss of positive stimuli and the presentation of negative stimuli*. In addition to experiencing more network-related stressors, females are more likely to report the following types of negative treatment: gender-based discrimination, low prestige in work and family roles, excessive demands from family members, and restrictions on their behavior—with females being more likely to be confined to the “private sphere” (e.g., Bush and Simmons 1987; Campbell 1984; Gove 1978; Gove and Herb 1974; Hagan, Simpson, and Gillis 1979; Messerschmidt 1986; Mirowsky and Ross 1989; Ogle et al. 1995; Thoits 1991). In addition to experiencing greater financial strain, males are said to experience more problems with peers. Males, in particular, are more likely to report that their relations with peers are characterized by

conflict, competition, jealousy, and imbalance. Female relations with peers, however, are warmer and less competitive (see Campbell 1993; Giordano, Cernkovich, and Pugh 1986; Lempers and Clark-Lempers 1992). Finally, data suggest that males are more likely to be the victims of most types of crime—as well as the targets of others' aggression and anger (Eagly and Steffen 1986; Frodi, Macaulay, and Thome 1977; Frost and Averill 1982).

These differences in types of strain may help us explain gender differences in crime. The greater emphasis of males on material considerations and the greater financial stress of males may explain their higher rates of property crime. Females, however, may sometimes steal to finance their social activities or to provide assistance to their families (see Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1992:43; Morris 1987). Further, as argued shortly, females have come to experience increased levels of financial strain in recent years. This strain may help explain the increase in minor property crime by females (see Steffensmeier and Allan 1995). The interpersonal conflicts and criminal victimization more often experienced by males may explain their higher rates of violent crime. Many data suggest that interpersonal conflicts/victimizations are especially upsetting and that they play a central role in violent crime (see Ambert 1994; Avison and Turner 1988; Felson 1994; Luckenbill 1977). It is true that females experience relatively high levels of conflict with, and victimization by, family members, but it is in the area of family violence where gender differences in violence are smallest (Bowker 1978; Campbell 1993:103; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1992:15; Mann 1984:21). The high levels of family violence experienced by females may also explain why gender differences in running away from home are so small (see Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1992).

The emphasis of females on ties to others and on procedural justice may help explain their lower rates of serious violent and property crime. Such a crime may be an effective way to obtain money or punish others, but it is a less effective vehicle for establishing ties to others or achieving procedural justice. The failure to achieve relational or justice goals, however, may be conducive to more self-destructive forms of illegitimate behavior, like drug use and eating disorders. Likewise, the other forms of strain more often experienced by females are *not* conducive to serious violent and property crime. With the exception of some types of gender discrimination, these strains involve excessive social control and a restriction of criminal opportunities. It is difficult to engage in serious violent and property crime when one spends little time in public, feels responsible for children and others, is burdened with the demands of others, and is under much pressure to avoid behaving in an aggressive manner. These types of strain, however, pose few barriers to self-destructive forms of behavior like drug use and criminal

behavior compatible with female gender roles—like shoplifting. In fact, the above types of strain may foster such forms of deviance. Drug use, for example, allows females to “manage” their negative emotions without directly harming others. Minor property crime may allow females to finance social activities or better meet the demands of others.

Gender differences in types of strain, then, may help explain gender differences in types of crime.

Are There Gender Differences in the Emotional Response to Strain?

Not only may males and females experience different types of strain, but they may also differ in their emotional response to strain. Males, in particular, may be more likely to respond to a given strain in ways that are conducive to serious crime.

GST contends that what links strain to crime are the negative emotions individuals experience in response to strain. GST argues that strain increases one's level of negative affect, leading to emotions such as depression, anger, and frustration. These emotions, being unpleasant, create pressure for corrective action. Crime is one possible response. According to GST, the emotional reactions of anger and frustration are especially important because they increase the likelihood of a criminal response. As Agnew (1992:59-60) stated, anger energizes the individual for action, lowers inhibitions, and creates a desire for retaliation/revenge.

GST might explain the lower rate of female crime by arguing that females are more likely to respond to strain with depression rather than anger. As Mirowsky and Ross (1995) pointed out, it has been argued that women “respond to stressors with somewhat different emotions than men . . . men get angry and hostile—women get sad and depressed” (pp. 449, 451; also see Dornfeld and Kruttschnitt 1992; Frost and Averill 1982; Kopper and Epperson 1991; Ogle et al. 1995:175-76). The research on gender, stress, and emotion provides some support for this argument. Virtually all studies find that females are more depressed and anxious than are males. The higher depression of females is only partly explained by their greater exposure to stressors. With certain exceptions noted above, females are more likely to respond to a given stressor with depression than are males (e.g., Aneshensel 1992; Barnett et al. 1987; Bolger et al. 1989; Conger et al. 1993; Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend 1976; Gove 1978; Gove and Herb 1974; Kessler and McLeod 1984; Menaghan 1982; Newman 1986; Pearlin and Schooler 1978; Petersen 1988; Rosenfeld 1980; Ross and Huber 1985; Thoits 1982, 1987, 1991; Turner et al. 1995; Wheaton 1990).

Research on gender, stress, and anger, however, challenges the view that males are more angry than are females. In fact, data indicate that females are just as likely, or more likely, to respond to stress with anger than are males (Campbell 1993; Conger et al. 1993:78; Frost and Averill 1982; Gove 1978:189; Kopper and Epperson 1991).¹ In one of the best studies in this area, Mirowsky and Ross (1995) found that women reported feeling angry 28.7 percent more frequently than men. Anger was measured by asking respondents how often they felt angry, felt annoyed with things or people, and yelled at someone during the last seven days. Further, they found that depression and anger typically accompanied one another (also see White and Agnew 1992).

There is, however, some suggestion in the literature that the anger women experience is different from that experienced by men. In an extensive discussion of gender differences in anger, Campbell (1993) argued that the anger of women is typically accompanied by emotions such as fear, anxiety, guilt, and shame; the anger of men, on the other hand, is characterized by moral outrage. Other theorists have made similar arguments regarding the anger of women (see Kopper and Epperson 1991; Ogle et al. 1995:180). Data from the psychological literature support these arguments (Eagly and Steffen 1986; Frodi et al. 1977; Frost and Averill 1982). Such data, in particular, suggest that the anger of women is more likely to be accompanied by anxiety, hurt, and crying. These arguments are also compatible with Mirowsky and Ross (1995), who found that women are more likely to be *both* depressed and angry.

Several reasons are offered for this difference in the experience of anger. Women tend to blame themselves when adversely treated by others; they worry that their anger might lead them to harm others and jeopardize valued relationships—relationships central to their self-concept; and they view their anger as inappropriate and a failure of self-control (these arguments are said to be more true of White than African American women). Men, however, are quicker to blame others for their adverse treatment and to interpret such treatment as a challenge or deliberate insult. They are less concerned about hurting others or disrupting relationships, and they often view anger as an affirmation of their masculinity (see Adler 1975; Berger 1989; Box 1983; Campbell 1993; Chesney-Lind and Sheldon 1992; Cloward and Piven 1979; Heidensohn 1985:193; Kopper and Epperson 1991; Messerschmidt 1986; Morris 1987:55, 64; Ogle et al. 1995; Rosenfeld 1980; Siddique and D'Arcy 1984 for fuller discussions). Research by Stapley and Haviland (1989) supports these explanations. They find that there are gender differences in the strains that most often provoke anger, as discussed above. Adolescent girls most often experience anger in affiliative interactions, whereas boys most

often experience anger in situations in which performance is evaluated, such as in sports or at school. Further, there are gender differences in the experience of anger. The anger of boys is accompanied by contempt (suggesting externalization of anger), whereas the anger of girls is accompanied by surprise, shyness, shame, guilt, sadness, and self-hostility (suggesting internalization of anger).

These gender differences in the experience of anger may also help us explain gender differences in crime. The moral righteousness of the angry male may propel him into serious violent and property crime, whereas the depression and serious misgivings of the angry female may lead her into more self-destructive forms of deviance. White and Agnew (1992) found limited support for these arguments. They examined the effect of emotional state on crime and found that anger and depression interacted in their effect on delinquency, but not drug use. Anger was most likely to lead to delinquency when depression was low. Further research should more fully explore the experience of anger and other emotions in males and females and should examine the impact of the different constellations of emotions on different types of crime and other forms of deviance—such as eating disorders.

Are Males More Likely to Respond to Strain/Anger with Crime?

As suggested above, one may argue that the types of strain and anger experienced by males are more conducive to many forms of crime. In addition, there is a fourth and final way that GST can explain higher rates of male crime. One might argue that males are more likely to respond to strain/anger with crime than are females. So, even if males and females experience the same emotional reactions to the same types of strain, males are still more likely to respond with crime—especially serious crime.

GST argues that the relationship between strain/anger and crime is conditioned by a number of factors, including coping resources, coping skills, social support, constraints to delinquent coping, and one's disposition toward delinquency—with this disposition being a function of certain temperamental variables, criminal beliefs, reinforcement for crime, and exposure to criminal models. Strained males may be more likely to engage in crime because of gender-related differences in these variables (also see Cloward and Piven 1979 for an excellent discussion in this area).

The stress literature has begun to explore gender differences in coping and social support. Although results do not indicate that females are significantly advantaged over males in these areas, they do offer some insight into why males may be more likely to respond to strain with serious crime than females.

Certain data suggest that females are less likely to possess certain effective coping resources; especially a sense of mastery and positive self-esteem (Bush and Simmons 1987; Kobasa 1987; Miller and Kirsch 1987; Mirowsky and Ross 1989; Pearlin and Schooler 1978; Siddique and D'Arcy 1984; Thoits 1987; Wethington et al. 1987). Low mastery and self-esteem reduce women's ability to effectively cope with strain. However, these traits may also reduce the likelihood that women would respond to strain with serious crime, because they may not feel secure or confident enough to challenge behavioral proscriptions against such behaviors for women. Hence women low in mastery and self-esteem may be more likely to cope with strains using noncriminal and/or self-destructive, illegitimate coping strategies such as alcohol/drug abuse or disordered eating patterns (bingeing or starving oneself). Along with these differences in coping resources, there appear to be gender differences in coping skills. Data on gender differences in coping skills are mixed, with some studies showing that females are more likely to employ certain ineffective coping strategies, such as selective ignoring or defining away the problem (Brown et al., 1986; Compas, Malcarne, and Fondacaro 1988; Menaghan 1982; Pearlin and Schooler 1978). Such strategies seem to exacerbate rather than reduce stress. However, they are also less likely to trigger aggressive forms of criminal behavior. Rather, such strategies seem more conducive to escape-avoidance tactics such as drug use and eating disorders.

Research on gender differences in social support suggests that females are higher in emotional social support (Rosenthal and Gesten 1986; Stark et al. 1989). Data indicate that such support is often effective in reducing stress. The impact of this support on stress, however, is sometimes small. Further, involvement in intimate networks has costs as well as benefits—with the costs seeming to outweigh the benefits for females low in coping resources (Belle 1987). Involvement in interpersonal networks increases the likelihood of certain network-related strains, such as having a close friend or relative become seriously ill. Nevertheless, females who are more strongly invested in their intimate networks may try to avoid serious criminal behaviors that would threaten these ties. They may opt, instead, for various self-focused, nonconfrontational illegitimate coping strategies—like drug use.

The literature on gender, opportunities for crime, social control, and social learning also helps explain gender differences in the reaction to strain/anger (e.g., Berger 1989; Bottcher 1995; Box 1983; Burton et al. 1995; Campbell 1984, 1993; Cernkovich and Giordano 1987; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1992; Figueria-McDonough 1981; Gilfus 1992; Giordano 1978; Giordano et al. 1986; Gora 1982; Hagan et al. 1979; Heidensohn 1985; Jensen and Eve

1976; Leonard 1982; Mann 1984; E. Miller 1986; Morash 1986; Morris 1987; Naffine 1987; Simons, Miller, and Aigner 1980; Smith 1979; Smith and Paternoster 1987; Sommers and Baskin 1993; Steffensmeier and Allan 1995; Torstensson 1990). Studies suggest that males have more opportunities for at least certain types of crime, that they are lower in at least certain types of social control, that they are more likely to possess certain temperamental traits conducive to crime, and that they are more likely to associate with deviant others. This is not to claim, however, that opportunity, social control, and social learning variables have a bigger impact on males than females. In most empirical research, such variables have a similar effect on males and females. Males, however, score higher on many of the variables that are conducive to a criminal response to strain.

The literature on gender differences in socialization reinforces the assertion that males may be more disposed to respond to strain/anger with crime. Males and females likely view certain behavioral responses as unavailable because they are inconsistent with gender stereotypes or their own gender identities. Several researchers suggest that the expression of anger is inconsistent with stereotypical beliefs about women and that women's anger is regarded as less appropriate than men's. Associated with this, women perceive greater costs for acting on their anger (e.g., Campbell 1993; Egerton 1988; Frost and Averill 1982; Kopper and Epperson 1991; Shields 1987). Evidence also suggests that these stereotypical beliefs about the appropriateness of anger and various responses to it are conditioned by gender role identification. Kogut, Langley, and O'Neal (1992) reported evidence that, for women, aggressive responses to provocation are more common among those high in gender role masculinity than low-masculinity subjects. This is despite similar levels of reported anger among both high- and low-masculinity subjects. Steenbarger and Greenberg (1990) also looked at the impact of women's gender identities on their coping responses. Their findings indicate that

masculinity, facilitating coping through an externalization of threat, tends to protect against intrapersonal distress (depression), at the possible cost of interpersonal distress (hostility). Femininity, promoting an internalization of threat, mitigates against interpersonal stress at the possible cost of individual turmoil. (P. 66)

Males, then, may be more likely to respond to anger by aggressing against others, whereas females may be more likely to engage in self-directed illegitimate behaviors such as alcohol and drug abuse, and disordered eating practices.

Gender differences in peer associations also suggest that males are more inclined to respond to strain/anger with crime. Thorne and Lupia (1986) pointed out that boys tend to congregate in large groups organized hierarchically and characterized by physical and competitive interaction. Girls, on the other hand, tend to interact in smaller groups or friendship pairs organized around cooperation. Conflict among boys tends to be overt and physical (i.e., fighting), whereas among girls conflict is typically indirect (i.e., talking behind people's backs). Further, groups of boys tend to be more likely to take risks and challenge authority.

Girls are more likely to affirm the reasonableness of rules, and, when it occurs, rule breaking by girls is smaller scale. . . . Boys experience a shared, arousing context for transgression, with sustained gender group support for rule breaking. Girls' groups may engage in rule-breaking, but the gender group's support for repeated transgressions is far less certain. (Thorne and Lupia 1986:181)

If behavioral preferences are a function of the networks in which a person is embedded (see Smith-Lovin and McPherson 1993), then it is not surprising that women are less inclined to engage in deviant behaviors because their networks do not offer models or support for such behavior. However, this is not to say that female networks are entirely incompatible with all forms of illegitimate coping strategies. Noncompetitive, small friendship networks would facilitate nonaggressive, cognitive, and emotional coping strategies over the aggressive, behavioral ones that large, competitive male networks likely facilitate. So, whereas male networks would seemingly favor illegitimate behavioral coping strategies when legitimate strategies fail, female networks would favor cognitive or emotional ones. Males, then, would be more likely to have access to behaviorally deviant strategies such as violent/aggressive delinquency. Females, on the other hand, would be more likely to have access to nondelinquent cognitive or emotional illegitimate strategies. Their networks stress rules, morals, and compassion, making overt delinquency less available. Deviance is more likely to take nondelinquent and/or nonconfrontational forms in such networks. Thus eating disorders, depression, and alcohol or drug use would be more probable responses to ineffective or blocked legitimate coping strategies among females.

The above arguments are reflected in certain theories of female aggression, which claim that females—facing greater barriers to aggression—must experience higher levels of provocation and anger before turning to aggression (e.g., Campbell 1993; Ogle et al. 1995; also see Klein 1973; Thoits 1991). These theories, then, argue that there is a curvilinear relationship between female anger and aggression, with anger only leading to aggression at very

high levels (Campbell 1993; Ogle et al. 1995). The relationship between strain/anger and crime, then, should differ for males and females. Strain/anger should bear a stronger relationship to serious crime among males, because males have more opportunities for crime and are more disposed to deal with their problems through crime. Further, the relationship between anger and serious crime should be about linear for males, but curvilinear for females (see Campbell 1993:114).

Several studies have examined the relationship between gender, strain, and crime; with most such studies simply examining the linear effect of strain on crime. Experimental studies tend to suggest that males are more likely to respond to a given provocation with aggression, especially more serious forms of aggression (see the meta-analysis in Eagly and Steffen 1986; also see Frodi et al. 1977 and Frost and Averill 1982 for contradictory data). With certain exceptions, survey studies tend to find that the relationship between strain and crime is at least as strong for females as it is for males (Agnew and Brezina 1997; Cernkovich and Giordano 1987; Dornfeld and Kruttschnitt 1992; Grossman et al. 1992; Hoffman and Su forthcoming; MacEwen and Barling 1988; Rankin 1980; Simons et al. 1980; Vaux and Ruggiero 1983). Studies in this area, however, tend to suffer from certain problems. They only examine certain of the types of strain in GST, measures of negative emotions and coping strategies are limited or absent, and they tend to focus on less serious forms of aggression and/or crime.

Summary

GST *cannot* explain the higher rate of male crime by arguing that males experience more strain than do females. GST, however, might explain gender differences in crime in three ways.

1. Males and females tend to experience different *types* of strain, with male strains being more conducive to serious violent and property crimes. Females' strains are conducive to family violence, to escape attempts like running away, and to more self-directed forms of crime, like drug use.
2. Males and females differ in their emotional response to strain. Although both males and females may experience anger in response to strain, the anger of females is more likely to be accompanied by depression, guilt, anxiety, and related states. Such accompanying states reduce the likelihood of aggressive or confrontational crimes and increase the likelihood of self-destructive and escapist offenses.
3. Males may be more likely to respond to a given level of strain or anger with serious property and violent crime because of differences in coping, social support, opportunities, social control, and the disposition to engage in crime.

Although many data provide indirect support for these arguments, there is a need for tests of GST that employ more comprehensive measures of strain and negative emotions, better measures of those factors that condition the reaction to anger/strain, and more comprehensive measures of crime and other deviant behaviors.

HOW CAN WE EXPLAIN FEMALE CRIME?

Not only can GST potentially account for the higher rate of male crime, it seems well suited for explaining female crime. In particular, it is very compatible with one of the central arguments in the feminist literature on crime: Female crime is rooted in the oppression of women (e.g., Carlen 1985, 1988; Daly and Chesney-Lind 1988; Gilfus 1992; Messerschmidt 1986; Naffine 1987). GST categorizes the types of oppression or strain that individuals experience and, like the feminist literature, argues that oppressed individuals may turn to crime in an effort to reduce their strain or manage the negative emotions associated with their strain.

The Strain Experienced by Females

In applying GST to the explanation of crime by females, it is first necessary to describe the major types of strain that are experienced by females. GST, as noted above, focuses on three types of strain, with the first type having three subcategories. The stress literature and the feminist literature on crime allow us to describe the particular types of strain experienced by females in these areas; with feminist studies of female offenders pointing to several types of strain that may bear a strong relation to crime.

The failure to achieve positively valued goals. Most tests of strain theory measure strain in terms of the disjunction between *aspirations* and expectations. According to GST, the failure to achieve aspirations or ideal goals is *not* a major source of strain. Aspirations have an element of the utopian in them, and we do not suffer serious distress when we fail to achieve them. Rather, serious distress is more likely when we experience a disjunction between our *expectations* or expected goals and actual achievements. Expectations are more firmly rooted in reality, and the failure to achieve them is likely to be quite upsetting. Serious distress is also likely when there is a disjunction between *just/fair outcomes* and actual outcomes. Many data indicate that individuals expect to be treated in a just or fair manner and they become upset when this is not the case.

GST, then, suggests that the failure to achieve positively valued goals be measured in at least two ways: (1) the disjunction between expectations and actual achievements, focusing on those goals that have high absolute and relative importance for the individual; and (2) the perception that one is being treated in a just or fair manner by others, including family, friends, co-workers, and employers (see Agnew 1992 for a fuller discussion of measurement strategies). There is reason to believe that many females would score high on these two measures of strain.

Although a particular woman may pursue a variety of goals, two goals have received much attention in the literature. First, numerous researchers contend that females are especially concerned with the achievement and maintenance of close interpersonal ties with others. Because of their socialization and structural position, females are said to have a strong desire for close relations with others and have certain expectations regarding the nature of those relations (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1992; Conger et al. 1993; Gilfus 1992; Gilligan 1982; Klein 1973; Leonard 1982; J. Miller 1986; Morris 1964; Thoits 1991). Second, females are said to be becoming increasingly concerned with financial success/security. The increased concern with money may be in part culturally based, reflecting our increasingly consumerist culture and changing standards regarding female achievement (Berger 1989:387-88; Chapman 1980:63; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1992:43). Adler (1975:94, 105), for example, argued that women are now more likely to be encouraged to strive for the same educational, occupational, and other goals as are males. And it may be in part structurally based, reflecting increased opportunities for achievement and the fact that increasing numbers of females live alone, head families, and/or have responsibility for supplying a substantial share of family income (Adler 1975; Figueira-McDonough and Selo 1980).

At the same time, many data indicate that the achievement of these goals is problematic for many females. The high rates of divorce and abuse in many intimate relationships mean that it is often difficult to satisfy the desire for interpersonal closeness. And qualitative studies suggest that abusive and failed relationships are a major source of strain in the lives of many female offenders. This strain, in turn, has been linked to their criminal behavior. Chesney-Lind (1986, 1989; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1992), in fact, has constructed a theory of female delinquency that focuses on the abuse of adolescent females by family members. Chesney-Lind states that adolescent females are more subject to certain types of family abuse than are males, particularly sexual abuse. Adolescent females are unable to end this abuse through legal channels, so they often escape from it by running away. Their

delinquent status forces them to turn to life on the street, where they confront a new set of strains. They have trouble obtaining legitimate employment and ultimately adapt to their economic problems through crime. In the process, they come to be exploited by a new set of actors (also see Daly 1992; Gilfus 1992; Mann 1984; E. Miller 1986). Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) offer a similar explanation for gang involvement by females. Family and other problems are said to create a need for support and protection, and females adapt by joining a gang—which functions as a surrogate family (also see Campbell 1984, 1990). Case studies of adult female offenders report similar scenarios (e.g., Carlen 1988; E. Miller 1986; Sommers and Baskin 1993), although interpersonal problems are not the only problems implicated in crime.

Many females also have great difficulty achieving financial security/success, even though limited data from the stress literature suggest that financial problems are more often experienced by men and have a greater psychological impact on men. Nevertheless, financial strain is quite common among women and is especially problematic for certain categories of women. Gender role socialization and discrimination direct most women into “pink-collar” jobs with low pay. It is true that the economic situation has improved for some women, but conditions have not changed as radically as many believe. There has been little change in the types of jobs most women hold or in the compensation they receive relative to men. Further, the situation has deteriorated for many women because of the “feminization of poverty.” Increases in divorce and illegitimacy, coupled with changes in the job market, have dramatically increased the number of females who head households and live in poverty (Adler 1975; Box and Hale 1983, 1984; Carlen 1988; Leonard 1982:23; Mann 1984:96-98; Messerschmidt 1986; Morris 1987; Smart 1977; Steffensmeier and Allan 1995). Such financial stress is said to be a major source of female crime (Box 1983; Box and Hale 1983, 1984; Campbell 1984; Carlen 1988; Chapman 1980; Chesney-Lind and Sheldon 1992; Gilfus 1992; Lewis 1981; Mann 1984:96; Messerschmidt 1986; E. Miller 1986; Naffine 1987; Simpson 1991).

Qualitative data confirm this argument, suggesting that financial problems are a major source of strain in the lives of female offenders and that they play a central role in their crime. Such offenders, in particular, have great trouble finding jobs that they like and that provide a satisfactory income. As a result, they often turn to illegal sources of income. Much female crime involves minor property offenses and, according to qualitative accounts, is committed for the income and the independence it provides (Campbell 1984, 1990;

Carlen 1985, 1988; Chapman 1980; Daly 1989, 1992; Gilfus 1992; Mann 1984:34; E. Miller 1986; Sommers and Baskin 1993).

Once again, more research is needed in this area. We must measure the financial goals of men and women, the absolute and relative importance attached to such goals, one's financial situation, and the level of dissatisfaction with one's financial situation. We would expect dissatisfaction to be highest among those who have high monetary expectations, attach high relative and absolute importance to such expectations, and are in a poor financial situation. Such dissatisfaction, in turn, should be related to crime.

In addition to the pursuit of specific financial and interpersonal goals,² females (and males) have a more general desire to be treated in a just or fair manner. Many data, however, suggest that females are often treated in an inequitable manner by others. In the family, females (1) often perform low-skill, monotonous tasks that are not in keeping with their skills and qualifications; (2) routinely attend to the needs of their spouses and children but receive little attention to their own needs; and (3) do a disproportionate share of all housework, even if they are working full-time outside the home. At work, females are often employed in "pink-collar" jobs that are not commensurate with their skills and educational backgrounds. Further, they receive lower pay than do men in similar positions. And in interpersonal relations with males, females often give more than they receive. All of this is likely to create a sense of injustice, particularly given the increased emphasis on justice norms that stress *equal* treatment for males and females.

Unfortunately, these arguments have never received an adequate test. Cernkovich and Giordano (1979) did look at the relationship between gender discrimination and crime, but their study asked about perceptions of gender discrimination in general rather than whether the respondents had personally experienced such discrimination. As discussed in Agnew (1992), it is relatively easy to measure whether respondents believe they are being treated in an unjust or unfair manner. We would expect perceptions of injustice to be related to crime, particularly if the injustice involves relationships/roles that are central to the respondent.

The loss of positively valued stimuli. A second major category of strain involves the loss of positively valued stimuli, such as the loss of family members and friends through death and relocation and the loss of intimate others through divorce and separation.

This type of strain seems to be of special relevance to females. Data indicate that females are more likely to report and be affected by network events than are males (e.g., Kessler and McLeod 1984; Wethington et al. 1987)—with such events including the loss of family members and friends.

Further, females often find it difficult to engage in many behaviors they may value. Females face certain barriers when it comes to participation in certain social settings and entering certain areas of the city—particularly when unaccompanied and at certain hours of the day (see Bottcher 1995; Hagan et al. 1979 regarding the restriction of women to the private sphere). Females also face certain barriers when it comes to behavior at work and behavior among family members, friends, and others. These barriers affect virtually every aspect of one's life; including appearance, conversation, physical and emotional expression, and sexual behavior. Females, in short, often are prevented or discouraged from engaging in a wide range of behaviors they may value. Theorists suggest that females first begin to experience this type of strain in a powerful way during adolescence (Bush and Simmons 1987; Gove and Herb 1974). After being allowed to participate in a range of "masculine behaviors," females suddenly face pressure to adopt the feminine role. Many previous forms of behavior, then, are abandoned or de-emphasized.

This type of strain has been ignored in quantitative studies in criminology and, with the exception of the network events listed above, it has been largely overlooked in the stress literature. This type of strain, however, does emerge in qualitative studies of women offenders. As Carlen (1988) stated, "[A] recurrent theme in the relatively few autobiographies and biographies of women criminals is the women's disdain and active dislike for the constricting social roles that have been systematically ascribed to women through the ages" (p. 18).

This strain may be measured by asking females about the extent to which others make it (or have made it) difficult for them to engage in various activities. We would expect females high in such strain to be more likely to engage in crime, particularly if they are prevented from engaging in highly valued behaviors. The relationship between this type of strain and crime, however, is complex. Females restricted to the private sphere may experience strain, but this strain may be offset by the limited opportunities for serious crime and the increased social control these females experience. Individuals *currently* high in this type of strain, then, may report higher levels of self-destructive behaviors and "gender-appropriate" crimes, such as shoplifting. They may not be higher in serious violent and property crimes, however. This type of strain might also be profitably explored with longitudinal data. Qualitative accounts of female offenders suggest that their crime is often accompanied by a more "open" or freer lifestyle. Nonetheless, their crime and lifestyle may be a function of the frustration they experienced with barriers imposed in the *past*.

The presentation of negatively valued stimuli. The third major type of strain involves the presentation of negatively valued stimuli. In this area, data suggest that females are often subject to varying types of abuse by family members and others, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. In addition to such blatant forms of victimization, females are subject to many other types of negative treatment.

Numerous commentators have focused on the negative stimuli associated with the role of housewife (see Aneshensel and Pearlin 1987; Mirowsky and Ross 1989 for overviews). Many females find this role monotonous, demeaning, highly demanding, and restrictive. It is little surprise that family life is more stressful for females than males (Barnett et al. 1987; Barnett and Baruch 1987; Campbell 1993:110-11; Gove 1978; Menaghan 1982). A large percentage of women, of course, have entered the labor force in recent years. Here too, however, women confront a variety of strains. They face discrimination in the job market, and their jobs often involve tedious and repetitive tasks, low authority and autonomy, limited upward mobility, and the underutilization of their skills and talents. And as is the case at home, they are often subject to sexual and other forms of harassment. Data indicate that pink-collar jobs, characterized by high demands and low control, are among the most stressful of all jobs (Barnett et al. 1987; Chapman 1980; Heidensohn 1985; LaCroix and Haynes 1987). Women, as indicated above, are more often affected by the adverse events that happen to others in their network. Such network events and the demands associated with them can also function as a major source of stress (Belle 1987; Turner et al. 1995). Finally, there is the background strain associated with the knowledge that the status of female is devalued in our society. As Leonard (1982) stated, females "are subject to the suffering caused by being viewed as inferior to one half of the population" (p. 136). (See Messerschmidt 1986; Ogle et al. 1995; Campbell 1984, 1993 for fuller discussions of the negative stimuli experienced by females.)

These strains do not affect all women equally, and we would expect that those women who are highest in such strains will be highest in crime. Limited data support this assertion. Several researchers have commented on the close connection between female victimization and female crime (e.g., Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1992; Daly 1992; Gilfus 1992). Also, data suggest that low-income, minority women are most likely to suffer from the above types of strain (Allen 1979; Campbell 1984, 1990; Carlen 1988; Chapman 1980; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1992; Gilfus 1992; Hagan 1985; Joe and Chesney-Lind 1995; Lewis 1981; Morris 1987; Simpson 1991; Simpson and Ellis 1995). And it is these women who are most likely to be serious offenders.

Factors Conditioning the Reaction to Strain

As numerous commentators have pointed out, not all strained individuals turn to crime. This is especially true of females. Females experience as much or more strain than do males but are less likely to engage in crime—especially serious crime. How, then, can we explain the fact that only a small portion of all strained females turn to crime? Part of the explanation may have to do with differences in the types of strain experienced. Although there are gender differences in the types of strain, it is still the case that many females experience those types of strain most conducive to serious crime—such as financial strain and victimization. Also, even though there are gender differences in the emotional response to strain, many females may respond to strain with the contemptuous anger that often characterizes males. As suggested, this may be more likely of females who are high in “masculinity.” Finally, females differ from one another in those factors that condition the reaction to strain/anger; including coping, social support, opportunities for crime, and the disposition to engage in crime. Differences in the above areas, then, may help explain why some females are more likely than are other females to react to strain with crime—including serious crime.

The literature on female offenders provides some support for these arguments. Compared to females in general, female offenders have more opportunities for crime, are lower in social control, and/or are higher on those variables that predispose one to crime—such as criminal beliefs and association with deviant others than noncriminal females (Carlen 1985; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1992; Daly 1992; Gilfus 1992; Giordano 1978; Jensen and Eve 1976; E. Miller 1986; Morash 1986; Simons et al. 1980; Sommers and Baskin 1993). Differences in these areas, as well as differences in the level and types of strain, have been used to explain the higher offending rates of minority and low-income females (Adler 1975:142-52; Lewis 1981; Mann 1984; Morris 1987:64; Simpson 1991). These differences may also explain why middle-class, White women are more likely than are low-income minority women to adopt self-destructive and typically noncriminal forms of illegitimate behavior.

Given the above arguments and data, we would expect the above factors to condition the impact of strain on crime. Data from the family violence literature suggest that this is the case. In particular, victimized females appear most likely to turn to crime when there are no or few legal options for dealing with their abuse (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1992). Also, a recent study by Hoffman and Su (forthcoming) found that the impact of strain on crime was conditioned by certain of the above factors.

*IS GENERAL STRAIN THEORY
APPLICABLE TO BOTH MALES AND FEMALES?*

As indicated, a central question in the feminist literature is whether the same theories can explain both male and female crime. At a general level, it would appear that GST is applicable to the explanation of male and female crime. Both males and females experience the types of strain identified by GST, they often react to this strain with anger and related emotions, and research suggests that such strain leads some males and females to engage in crime. At a more specific level, data suggest that males and females (1) may be subject to somewhat different types of "objective" strain, (2) may differ in their subjective interpretation of particular types of strain (i.e., the extent to which these "objective" strains are interpreted as negative or stressful), (3) may differ in their emotional reaction to strain, and (4) may differ in their propensity to react to strain/anger with crime.

As indicated above, females appear more likely to experience network strains, gender-based discrimination, excessive demands from others, and low prestige in their work and family roles. Males appear more likely to experience financial strain, interpersonal conflicts with peers, and most types of criminal victimization. It is likely that additional research, employing better samples and broader inventories of strain, will reveal still other differences. Tentative data also suggest that females rate most types of strain as more stressful or negative than do males. Further, females are emotionally more vulnerable to network and interpersonal stressors, whereas males are emotionally more vulnerable to work and financial stressors. Again, additional research will likely reveal further gender differences in the emotional impact of specific stressors.

Males and females seem to react to strain with different constellations of emotions. Although both males and females may experience anger in response to certain types of strain, the anger of males is more often accompanied by moral outrage, whereas that of females is more often accompanied by self-deprecating emotions. Finally, experimental data suggest that males may be more likely than females to respond to provocations with serious aggression—although the survey data in this area are less supportive.

The above findings suggest that the underlying process identified by GST—that strain triggers negative emotions leading to coping behaviors, which can take legitimate or illegitimate (i.e., criminal/deviant) forms—is likely applicable to males and females. In other words, the theory can explain both male and female crime. However, different models of strain may be necessary for males and females to highlight gender differences in this

underlying process. Hence empirical research on GST should examine males and females separately. Because of the gender differences described above, we may find that a particular type of strain leads to crime among one gender but has little or no effect on crime in the other gender (see, e.g., Aneshensel et al. 1991; Hoffman and Su forthcoming). Whether gender differences do, in fact, shape individuals' experiences with strain and their subsequent responses (both deviant and nondeviant) must be assessed through future empirical analyses. Such analyses will be able to assess whether separate models of male and female deviance are necessary.

At the same time, it is important to note that the above gender differences, to the extent that they exist, involve differences in *degree* rather than *kind*. It is not the case, for example, that females are exclusively concerned with interpersonal relations and males are exclusively concerned with the achievement sphere. As Morris (1987:62) argued, we are simply talking about different degrees of emphasis. Further, as Thoits (1991) and others point out, we may ultimately be able to develop more sophisticated models of stress/strain that allow us to treat males and females together. Such models would take account of those factors that explain gender differences in the reaction to strain. We are already aware of many of these factors, such as differences in criminal opportunities, level of social control, and the predisposition to crime. And research continues to point to other factors. Thoits (1991), for example, argued that the individual's salient role identities strongly condition the reaction to strain.

In sum, if asked whether GST can explain both male and female crime, the answer is yes, but we must pay attention to the way in which gender conditions the processes described by GST.

CONCLUSION

Agnew (1992) did not present a fully developed theory of crime when he first introduced GST. Rather, as suggested in the title of his article, he presented a foundation on which such a theory could be constructed. Agnew described several potential sources of strain, several modes of coping with such strain, and several factors that influence whether criminal versus non-criminal coping strategies are employed. Further research is necessary to develop the specifics of this general theory. That is, further research must specify (1) how much and what types of strain are experienced by different groups; (2) how different groups cope with the strain they experience, including the extent to which they cope in criminal versus noncriminal ways; and (3) why groups cope with strain in the manner in which they do (see

Agnew 1997 for an effort to address these issues regarding age groups). This article attempted to address these issues regarding gender groups. In doing so, GST was applied to the two central questions about gender and crime: Why do males engage in more crime than females, and how can we explain female crime? The research highlighted in this article suggests that GST can potentially answer both questions. On the basis of the preceding discussions, we can advance several tentative hypotheses.

First, regarding differences in rates of male and female crime, we hypothesize that males and females experience different *types* of strain, which leads to distinct behavioral outcomes. The research discussed above suggests that males are more often subject to types of strain that are conducive to serious crime. Among other things, research indicates that males are more often subject to financial strain, which is conducive to property crime, and to severe interpersonal conflict, which is conducive to violence. With certain exceptions, the types of strain most common among women involve high levels of social control and a restriction of criminal opportunities (e.g., the burdens of nurturing others like family members, the restriction to the private sphere). These types of strain may be conducive to self-destructive forms of behavior, such as drug use. However, it should be noted that females are often subject to family violence—which may explain why gender differences in the commission of family violence are relatively small. Also, financial strain is becoming a more serious problem for women, which may explain why gender differences in minor property crime are relatively small.

Second, we hypothesize that differences in rates of crime among males and females are, in part, a function of their distinct emotional responses to strain. Although both males and females are likely to respond to strain with anger, the anger of females is more likely to be accompanied by emotions such as depression, guilt, anxiety, and shame. Such emotions reduce the likelihood of other-directed crime. Rather, they often lead to self-destructive forms of deviance, such as drug use and eating disorders. This may help explain why gender differences in many types of drug use are small and why eating disorders are significantly more common among females than males. A third hypothesis is that females are less likely to respond to strain/anger with crime than are males. This is due to gender differences in social support and coping styles as well as differences in opportunities for crime, social control, and the disposition for crime.

In offering these hypotheses, it should be emphasized that GST does *not* argue that gender differences in crime are a function of differences in the *amount* of strain males and females experience. Certain researchers, drawing on classic strain theories, did make this argument (see Agnew 1995 for an overview). GST, however, recognizes a much broader range of strainful

events and conditions than does classic strain theory. And, the data strongly suggest that compared with males, females are as likely or more likely to experience these types of strain.

With respect to the causes of female crime, GST also suggests several tentative hypotheses. First, women's oppression in various social arenas may play an important role in the generation of strain, and ultimately criminal behavior. In the preceding discussion, we argued that the following types of strain may be especially conducive to crime among females: the failure to achieve financial and interpersonal expectations; the failure to be treated in a just and fair manner by others, including family members, intimate others, and employers; the loss of positive ties to others; a broad range of restrictions on behavior—including restrictions on appearance, conversation, physical and emotional expression, sexual behavior, travel, and social life; the experience of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse; and the role-related strains often associated with "pink-collar" jobs and the housewife role. Women, of course, differ in the extent to which they experience these strains, with most being more common among low-income, minority women.

Second, women are more likely to respond to strain with crime (or other deviant adaptations) when nondeviant coping mechanisms are ineffective or unavailable, when they have criminal/deviant opportunities, when they are low in social control, and when they are predisposed to crime/deviance (i.e., have deviant beliefs and associates, are reinforced for deviance).

The above hypotheses advance the literature in several ways. They pull together and synthesize the theory and research from several areas, providing a more precise statement of those variables that may be important in explaining gender differences in crime and the causes of female crime. Further, they point to a range of new variables for empirical researchers to consider. Empirical researchers, particularly quantitative researchers, have largely neglected the several types of strain outlined in this article in their attempts to explain female crime. Finally, this article and the larger literature on GST provide some guidance as to how empirical researchers should go about testing these hypotheses (also see Agnew and White 1992; Hoffman and Su forthcoming; Paternoster and Mazerolle 1994).

Unfortunately, no currently available data set that we are aware of allows anything close to a full test of the above hypotheses. In particular, most data sets contain only a small portion of the types of strainful events and conditions described above. It is even more difficult to find a crime/delinquency data set with good measures of emotions such as anger and depression. Several data sets, however, allow for partial tests of certain of the hypotheses listed above. It is our hope that this article will stimulate researchers to collect better data

on the above issues and to once again give serious consideration to strain theory when focusing on issues of gender and crime.³

NOTES

1. The issue of causal order may be relevant here. Men may initially experience more anger than women, but their higher level of crime/aggressiveness may subsequently reduce their anger. Women, being less likely to act on their anger, may experience further negative treatment and grow even more angry (see Brezina 1996; Campbell 1993; Ogle, Maier-Katkin, and Bernard 1995). Limited data from the psychological literature, however, suggest that females are just as likely as males to respond to provocations with anger (see Averill 1983; Frost and Averill 1982).

2. Females obviously pursue other goals beyond the interpersonal and financial ones just described, and research should focus on such goals. It has been suggested, however, that the lives of females are often more restricted than those of males. Females, in particular, have fewer arenas for achievement than men have. If true, this might also contribute to female strain. Individuals who pursue a smaller number of goals are probably more likely to experience strain because they "place all their eggs in one basket"—leaving themselves fewer alternatives should they fail to achieve their goals in a particular area. Related research in the stress literature suggests that multiple role performance tends to reduce rather than increase stress (Barnett and Baruch 1987; Barnett, Biener, and Baruch 1987). It is theorized that this is because multiple roles provide alternative avenues for the development of self-esteem and alternative sources of gratification.

3. GST is a social-psychological theory and so does not address the macro-level sources of strain and coping. Some effort was made to discuss these sources in the article, such as differences in socialization and in the structural position of men and women. Future research should also devote more attention to the ways in which gender structures one's exposure to strain and reaction to strain. GST is compatible with several macro-level theories of crime, including most of the macro theories regarding gender and crime (see Messerschmidt 1993 for a summary), the anomie theories of Bernard (1990) and Messner and Rosenfeld (1994), Messerschmidt's theory of masculinities and crime, left realism (Young and Matthews 1992), and the recent work of Hagan (1994). All of these theories provide excellent starting points for this type of analysis.

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