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## Vulnerability across a life course: an empirical study: women and criminality in Botswana prisons

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### ABSTRACT

*The number of women in prison in Botswana has grown over the past ten years. This is due, in large part, to rising numbers of women offenders admitted to prison for property and drug-related offences. The purpose of the study presented here was to assess the relationship between their life events and the subsequent offending of incarcerated women. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 80 women inmates at six prisons in Botswana in 1997. Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, respondents were asked about their backgrounds, criminal histories and relationships with significant others, together with the reasons for their current offending. Results show that women in prison are predominately poor, young and uneducated, who report high levels of victimization, substance abuse, familial disruption and high-risk behaviour and suffer from a host of physical and mental disorders. High rates of child and adult abuse, neglect and abandonment were also reported. These histories were strong predictors of poor physical and mental health. The findings of this study force us to examine the interplay of the cultural, ideological and structural factors affecting women's lives from a gender, class and relational analysis. This paper ends with a discussion on the findings of the study, under themes that emerged with specific reference to lifetime socialization for gender roles and the structural perspective of deprivation, stress, victimization and survivorship.*

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## **Introduction**

Over the past three decades Botswana has undergone a rapid process of socio-demographic growth, spatial transformation and socio-political change, resulting in a noticeable increase in overall crime rates. In Botswana news from the media, police records and law reports all show that women are becoming an increasing presence in the criminal justice system. Recent studies across the world show that men and women are most often arrested for quite similar offences. These are mainly property crimes. The most striking difference is the absolute level of men's and women's offending. Some studies, however, show that while factors in the development of "deviant behaviour" may not differ markedly for men and women, the latter's special circumstances, such as being victims of physical and sexual violence, poverty and single parenthood, low self-esteem and identity problems, make it necessary to see in women's crime a reaction to prolonged victimization and dispossession.

Much of the literature on women offending has focused primarily on such issues as the reasons for the marginalization of women in the criminal justice system and reasons for the rapid increase in the number of female prisoners in recent decades (Naffine 1987; Pollock-Byrne 1990, Price and Sokoloff 1982). A number of studies have also focused on the lack of women-centred intervention programmes in women's prisons compared to men's (Chesney-Lind and Rodriguez 1983, Chesney-Lind 1986, Leonard 1983, Moss 1986, Resnick 1982, Wellisch et al. 1994). While this information is needed, it is also necessary to understand the characteristics of the women themselves. This paper, therefore presents findings on a study conducted on women and girls in six prisons in Botswana. The focus will be mainly on the socio-demographic characteristics of imprisoned women—their age, marital status, education, work history, the reasons for their imprisonment, their experiences of violence and their physical and mental health and their history of substance abuse.

## **Women and criminality: an overview**

The involvement of women in crime is not new. The criminality of women has a long history but approaches to female criminality and imprisonment

have been guided by stereotypical views of women's role in society. This has negatively influenced how women are perceived at different points in their involvement in crime and the treatment that they will receive. Theorists explaining female involvement in crime were first oriented towards women's sexuality and mental stability as their primary point of analysis. Recently, attention has focused on the way in which socioeconomic deprivation, formal control and victimization shape women's criminality.

The overriding critique of conventional criminal studies has been that women have been relegated to the periphery and are almost invisible in all criminal literature. Girls have also been ignored as independent of the overall patterns of women's criminality (Giordano 1978, Giordano et al.1999). While the causes of crime have been examined in criminological theory, little attempt has been made to explain the specifically female patterns of crime. The myth that the female experience was biologically determined and was not influenced by the environment was dominant in nineteenth century literature (Lombroso 1911). Early theories of female criminality thus focused on supposed biological and physiological determinants of criminality and took for granted the inferior status of women (Lombroso and Fererro 1897, Freud 1933, Pollack 1950). Feminist research has set out to illuminate the female experience in ways that capture the role of patriarchy and the social exploitation of women and girls in relation to offending (Chesney-Lind 1997, Gilfus 1987).

### **Gender and crime in Botswana**

Female criminality is on the increase in Botswana, accounting for 15 per cent of all those arrested or accused and 10 per cent of all incarcerated prisoners (Moleboge 1998). Available data in Botswana show that women are increasingly involved in crime although the trend has remained small compared with men. The Police Annual Report (1992:2) observed:

The number of people involving themselves in criminality showed a marked increase during the year under review as the police dealt with 789,840 people during the year under review. A majority of

the culprits are males even though females are beginning to show a sign of decay [sic] in that in 1991, 6,145 females and 100 juvenile females were dealt with and in 1992, the figure rose to 7,295 and 141 juvenile females.

In 1994 women accounted for 14 per cent of property offences. The prison daily average for 1987 was 2382 males and 150 females. Statistics show that women commit crimes that are generally non-violent and non-aggressive. Offences involving violence against the person and theft have been among the major crime increases (Government of Botswana 1992). In 1998 women arrested for criminal activities had increased to 15 per cent (Moleboge, 1998:6). Of these, eighteen per cent of offences were drugs related, 24 per cent were for violating the Trade and Liquor Act and more than 10 per cent were property related. Drug-related crimes have also increased. The most common drugs are *dagga* (*Cannabis sativa*), heroin, mandrax and cocaine in varying amounts. In 1994 over 250,000 tablets of mandrax were seized, compared with 970 in 1995. In 1995 468,721 kg of *dagga* was seized. Two years later about 542,000 kg of *dagga* was intercepted by the immigration officials.

Crimes against women and children are generally on the increase as well. Offences of rape registered an increase, with women as the most likely victims. The Police Annual Reports (Government of Botswana 1995, 1996, 1997) reported that all crimes involving violence (murder, grievous harm, unlawful wounding and assault as well as rape) have increased. Between 1986 and 1996 convictions for rape, defilement and indecent assault increased by 14 per cent.

Official statistics show that the number of women involved in crime in Botswana has increased, although only 20 per cent or less end up in prison after conviction. Women account for 10–14 per cent of all convictions and, of these convictions, 80 per cent are diverted away from custody through fines, community service or warnings. While offences against property and persons rank as the first and second major offences for all, the third most frequent offence for women relates to public order, usually due to fights in public places such as bars and drinking spots (Moleboge 1998:6). For all convictions, about 60–70 per

cent of men are likely to be fined compared with 75–85 per cent of women.

Given this situation, women's participation in crime needs to be studied, in order to analyse and understand the factors that influence it. Daly and Chesney-Lind (1983) suggest that, in order to understand the factors leading women to crime, we need in-depth descriptive information on their life histories. The research was therefore intended to connect women's life stories to their participation in crime and explore how these experiences could have influenced their subsequent role in crime.

## **Method**

### **Study design**

The study was approached from a feminist research standpoint and employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis of 80 life history interviews with incarcerated women and girls in six prisons in Botswana. The exploratory phase was composed of an in-depth analysis of each woman's life experience. According to McQuaide and Ehrenreich (1998:236),

Traditional, positivistic, psychometric and psychometric approaches have less value in studying this population [referring to women offenders], than do qualitative methods. Broad surveys, psychometric data, ... even if they were more complete, cannot adequately capture the experience of women in prison. To understand these women and to design interventions to serve them, a more experience-near approach, which takes into account how a particular woman experiences her own unique life as well as how her shared experiences of gender, race and ethnicity and imprisonment affect her, is necessary

The population studied was composed of women and girls in Serowe, Lobatse, Tsabong, Maun, Gaborone and Francistown Women's Prison in Botswana. Respondents were recruited from the inmate population. A list of women who are currently in prison was obtained from the Department of the Prison and from staff at the Women's Prisons. A simple random sampling method was used to minimize bias in

demographic characteristics and to manage the interviews. Informed consent was obtained from every respondent and all were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Using the above sampling design, a sample of 80 women was selected for the first part of the study, which consisted mainly of demographic close-ended questions. The same sample of 80 women was recruited for the second phase of the study, which was qualitative and detailed in nature.

### **Data collection procedures**

This was mostly a retrospective study, hence the use of intensive interviewing. An interview guide with probes was used to ensure that key topics were explored with each of the respondents. The guide was structured to probe the information on the questionnaire given by the respondents and to add new areas that the researcher and the women wanted to explore further. Interviews were completed by the author and six research assistants. The use of a feminist approach to interviewing is important in addressing issues of concern to women participants. The women's experiences were explored, while all the time ensuring that the research was for women. A questionnaire consisting of primarily closed-choice questions and open-ended questions was administered and the researchers recorded all the answers. An interview guide was designed to solicit information about the life histories of the women and girls, how they came to be in prison and how they planned to live after release.

To facilitate the in-depth interviews, an interview guide was used to provide the structure for each interview. These guides were constructed to cover a broad spectrum of the women's lives in a development sequence to the present. The aspects of their well-being explored included their interpretation of the female sex role and the role in their lives of victimization, poverty, ethnicity, unemployment, illiteracy and the parent/daughter relationship. We asked participants to reflect on how these conditions could have encouraged or forced their behaviour in any given direction. Other aspects investigated included their satisfaction with their family composition, their history of alcohol and drug use, their relationships with friends and relatives, their own health

and the health of other family members, the time available to them for themselves and for their family, their financial well-being, their work and the community where their family lives. The guides were both unstructured and spontaneous.

## Presentation of findings

### Biographical data

Respondents ranged from the ages of 16 to 65 years with a mean age of 30 and a median of 28. Most of the respondents were 20–35 years old. The peak ages for criminal involvement were 30–45 years. The age graph shows a decline in criminality as age advances. Respondents under the age of 25 were mostly incarcerated for infanticide, abortion,

Table 1: Presentation of data by age, ethnicity, marital status, educational status and crime committed

Age		
Mean =30.53		
Median age=28		
Standard deviation =9.98		
Age range 48 = (17–65)		
Skewness = 1.32		
Crime committed	Frequency	Percentage
Assault/arson/ grievous harm	3	3.8%
Receiving stolen property	4	5.2%
Murder	6	7.8%
Immigration crimes (overstaying <sup>2</sup> )	6	7.8%
Possession of <i>dagga</i>	18	23.4%
Theft common/robbery	18	23.4%
Infanticide	22	28.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>2</sup> Overstaying is when the specific number of days on a visa to stay in Botswana is exceeded. This was common with Zimbabwean women



Marital status		
Divorced	5	6.3%
Widowed	5	6.3%
Married	7	8.8%
Cohabiting	7	8.8%
Single	56	70.0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>
Educational status		
Adult education	1	1.3%
Form 5	6	7.5%
None	7	8.8%
Primary school	32	40.0%
Junior Certificate	34	42.5%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>
Family financial situation		
Registered destitutes	9	11.3%
Middle class	14	17.5%
Parents worked hard (not so poor)	24	30.0%
Poor but not registered	33	41.3%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>
Employment history *		
Homemaker ( <i>mosadi wa lehwapa</i> )	7	
Never had formal employment	22	
Was formally employed	23	
"Piece jobs" (on and off)	35	
<b>Total:</b>	<b>87</b>	
Religion		
Roman Catholic	11	13.8%
None	12	15.1%
Protestant	14	17.5%
African Independent	43	53.8%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>
NOTE: * Respondents answered more than one category in this section		

stealing by servant (a majority of whom were domestic workers) and petty theft. The ages between 25 and 40 show crimes of all categories. All women above 50 years (except one who was incarcerated for use of insulting language) were in prison for possession of *dagga*. Table I summarizes the biographical data.

Sentences ranged between three months (for use of insulting language) to 12 years (for possession of *dagga*). Crimes like murder and infanticide were mostly committed by people with no formal education (63 per cent) and who had a close family member who had a problem with alcohol and drugs. Crimes related to interpersonal disputes were mostly associated with alcohol use and these prisoners had little education, erratic jobs and unstable intimate relationships characterized by deception and unfaithfulness.

These women also had family members and significant others with histories of criminality. Sixteen per cent had brothers, 5% had fathers, 3% mothers and sisters and 2% husbands who had had a criminal conviction. Boyfriends accounted for 6% of all previous criminal convictions. Some husbands, male partners and mothers-in-law were in prison with the respondents, especially if the crime was possession of *dagga*. One woman, whose father had an extensive criminal history, shared her experience of how this could have affected her own life as well,

My father literally lives in prison. He steals whenever he can find a chance. I think when they caught him for the first time he was in his 30s. He used to get lesser sentences, but the customary courts realized that he was a serious thief, so they started increasing the sentences. Nowadays he is tried at the magistrate court. Right now, he is in prison again—he was arrested while I was also in prison. When we ask him why he is doing it, he tells us angrily that it is his way of making a living. We have never really lived with him. My mother brought us up on her own.

It is possible that some women are introduced to crime by their relatives and male partners, such as husbands and boyfriends. A number of Batswana women stated that they had been recruited by other women,

especially from Zimbabwe, who had introduced them to the selling of *dagga*. This link needs further exploration in future research.

### **Marital status of respondents**

About 26 per cent of the respondents came from a two-parent family where there was a father and mother. Six per cent had lived with step-parents. A majority were from single-parent families: their mothers had never married. Seven were from a family where there was more than one wife. Seventy per cent were single; 13 per cent were either divorced or widowed whilst nine per cent were cohabiting, mostly with the fathers of their children. Married women were in prison for possession of *dagga*, arson or grievous harm. The rest had committed various other offences.

### **Educational status of respondents**

Most respondents had some form of formal education. Eighty-two per cent had either primary education or had attempted junior certificate. Only six women in the sample had completed Form 5 with a third class, attained GCE or had failed. Some women could not go far in school either because they had failed or had dropped out due to a teenage pregnancy or for other reasons. Twenty per cent dropped out of school because they felt that they were poor performers and saw no reason for continuing. The reasons given for dropping out of school were pregnancy (18%) or lack of school fees, school uniform or fees for food. General poverty at home and a desire to leave school in order to help the family were mentioned by 30 per cent. They did not say that they needed special help in learning, but they did say that it was difficult to understand what was being taught at school. Only one woman had been through non-formal education. Seven women had never had formal education.

About twenty-five per cent (N=20) of the respondents returned to adult education after dropping out compared to 55 per cent (N=55) who did not. Those who did return were most likely to attend secretarial, vocational, dressmaking and business-related courses. They stated that these courses did not help them to advance their economic status. Two

of the women dropped out before completing vocational training due to yet another pregnancy.

Women who described themselves as having come from “low-income families” stated that they faced institutional, social and economic constraints which contributed to their leaving school. They complained that during their school years, they found the school environment unfriendly and so they could not find and sustain good role models and relationships. Personal efficacy and self esteem and autonomy were compromised by relationships with boys, older men in the community and “rich” children in school. They left school after failing and never returned. This was before they even reached standard seven. Promises of marriage distracted them from school work and offered some kind of opportunity for an already detached girl student. Unfortunately, such marriages only brought more hardships. Now, almost 40 years later and in prison for selling *dagga go itshetsa* (to earn a living), some of these women regretted the choices they made in leaving school for the sake of marriage.

The women thought that they would have been less vulnerable if social workers or school guidance counsellors had been available to them at school, to make it safe to discuss issues of domestic violence, incest and sexual harassment, class stratification and the lack of living space (especially to study at home). One woman who left school after being punished for doing homework at home (despite the fact that her stepmother denied her access to the lamp), decided to drop out of school to avoid double punishment. Another woman also told of her experience of trying to explain to the teacher that boys had been touching her breasts, only to be beaten together with the boys “for enticing them”. Often the recognition they got from teachers, male or female, was limited to being asked to go to the teacher’s house to clean or cook.

### **Employment and financial security**

Twenty eight per cent of the respondents had never been employed, whilst 44 per cent had worked erratically, mostly as domestic workers, retail workers or doing piece work jobs such as washing clothes for other people and, as they put it, for “unmarried men”. Only 20 per cent

were in full-time employment at the time of their arrest. The salaries of these women ranged from P40 per month to P560 per month. Only one woman earned P1500 per month. Most earned between P80 and P120 per month. About eight of the respondents described themselves as *Mosadi wa lelwapa* (a housewife or homemaker) and did not need to "work" because their husbands or male partners were "working". These were mostly women who were in prison for selling *dagga*. Further, women felt that well-paying jobs for women in the community were not available and care work in the home limited their capacity to train or to get full-time employment without support. For older women, the number of their dependent children, commonly referred to as "*bana ba bana*" (my children's children) limited their capacity to seek employment or to be self-employed, especially if the children were less than ten years of age.

Eleven per cent of the women were from a family where either their mother or grandmother was registered under the destitute programme. Fourteen per cent stated that they were poor, but were not receiving any welfare benefit. Thirteen per cent said that their parents (especially their mother) "worked very hard for us" and so they were able to survive.

### **Childcare**

Only 15 per cent of the women had no children. Seventy per cent had between one and four children whilst 15 per cent had five or more children and 10 of them had their children with them in prison, either because they were born in prison or because there was nobody to take care of them outside. Sixteen per cent had had their first child when they were less than 17 years old. The peak age of childbearing was between the ages of 18–22, comprising 64 per cent of the total number of respondents. The rest had had their first child between the ages of 24 and 30. After release, most women planned to take over the custody of their children who were, at the time, being cared for by their grandmother (39%), fathers (12.5%) and other relatives (9%). Among inmates with children, women had had contact with their children since admission to prison, regardless of the children's ages. Thirteen per cent had left their children with people who were not related to them when they were coming to prison. One child was left with neighbours. Women described

their children as the most important people in their lives, followed by their mothers, husbands and boyfriends. Only two of the women mentioned brothers as important.

### **Family background**

An estimated 60 per cent had grown up in a single-parent household with their mothers. An additional 13 per cent had lived in a household with neither parent present. Families were continuously subjected to the stress caused by minimal survival mechanisms and a failure to satisfy basic family requirements. Other family stressors were migration patterns (especially rural-urban migration when there was no source of income in the urban areas), which negatively affected cohesion in the family. Most families had between six and seven siblings (excluding the mother and other relatives), who lived in the home. The number of siblings in the family of origin ranged from one to 11. Seven respondents came from polygamous families and the mother was the second wife in all cases.

### **Step-parent experiences**

All the respondents who had step-parents reported bad memories. Women who were in prison for infanticide directly blamed their step-parent relationships. These women talked of how they lacked the protection of their biological parents when they were physically abused by their step-parents and alcohol-abusing brothers. The term "his/her person" (*Motho wa gagwe*) was frequently used to describe the "third person" in these relationships. In most cases, the daughter felt that if this "person" had not appeared on the scene, they would have lived more happily with their biological parents. Mothers were blamed constantly for preferring the relationship with their partner to that with their children. One woman related such an experience with her mother,

My mother had a bad temper, which on many occasions she could not control. We did not understand why she was so angry with us. She would be angry if she felt that they we did not respect our stepfather—whom I, personally, did not like. Even now, I still hate

him. I had to maintain peace by all means and at all cost, especially to protect my siblings.

The women described their stepmothers as possessive, insecure and unwilling to give up their fathers, especially during the early stages of their relationship. Because of the new relationship between their father and stepmother there was ongoing verbal and non-verbal conflict within the family about who was the final decision-maker. Respondents stated that they were unhappy with the way decisions were made in their families during their adolescent years. One such woman who was constantly rebelling against the orders of her stepfather stated,

*Setswana: Nna papa ga ke mo ke tshabe. Le ene motho wa gagwe ga ke mo tshabe. Re tlhola re omanyane. Mme ke mmolelela gantsi gore ga a ka ke a ntaola. Ha ke rata ga ke mmuise. O a itse le ene.*

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English: I do not fear my father at all. I don't fear his *person* either. We have quarrelled on several occasions and in all instances, I told him that he cannot control me. At times, I can go on for a long time without talking to him. He knows this, too.

The father's desire to control his daughter was resisted as the daughter actively sought to be independent of him and to make autonomous decisions. She hated the father's girlfriend. Respondents stated that their fathers had lost authority over them when they brought another woman home and wanted the children to respect her. When these fathers openly flaunted their sexual relationships in front of the children, at a time when the children had not got over the loss of their mothers, the respondents experienced the same helplessness they had seen their mothers go through when alive. Some of these women appeared happy on the surface (as they described themselves), but one could also note that beneath the smile, lay deep-seated anger. On many occasions, they had contemplated harming the step-parent even though they had never had the will to complete the act. As a result, none of them was able to connect with the source and intensity of their anger and its possible future implications. In cases where the mother had died, the daughters

felt that their father had never loved their mother, especially when the widower gave himself a perfunctory period of mourning after the mother's death. These daughters rebelled, not because the fathers' orders did not carry weight, but possibly because the father was seen to be breaking societal rules himself. They saw the father as colluding with his *person* to erase the memory of their mother:

I grew up living with my father and my stepmother. My stepmother used to beat me very often. I had to do all the housework while my step-siblings were just sitting and not doing anything. Though my father was aware of what was going on, he never did anything to protect me. My father had told me that my mother had died. It was only after I had my first child that my grandmother told me that my mother was alive. My stepmother used to beat me and I ended up moving out to stay with my grandmother. When my grandmother died, I had to go back to my father and stepmother. Later I traced my mother and went back to stay with the family. Here I also faced problems since my mother was abusing alcohol.

Another woman detailed the trauma of living with a stepmother who made life so difficult for her that she ran away from home,

We were expected to wake up early in the morning and go and fetch water before school. We were not allowed to eat breakfast. This happened before I was 10 years old. There was no food provided at school so we would go hungry. In winter, we would have no warm clothing and we always had chapped feet and shivered all the time in winter. After school, we were expected to go to the fields and weed before we could eat. Unfortunately after weeding, we would find that the rest of the family had cooked but had eaten and then poured water in the pots so that we could cook for ourselves. We were also not allowed to bring homework home. Time after time, we were told that paraffin was expensive and if we needed it, we should follow our mother to get it.

At one point, my stepmother burnt all my schoolbooks, but when I was asked about it at school, I lied and said that they had fallen into a fire. I was afraid if they asked her, she would ill-treat



me even more. I was beaten at school for negligence. Our school system allowed corporal punishment. Ultimately, I left school. My father and stepmother did not force me back into school. I thought they would—if they cared.

### **Children from polygamous families**

As previously mentioned, seven women were from polygamous families and their mothers were second wives. Women felt that while polygamy may have been good for their fathers, it exposed “the mothers”<sup>3</sup> to rivalry with each other, especially when the second wife had little power. The first wife was seen as structurally placed to command most of the economic and social power in the household and she could use this to alienate and completely sideline the second wife. The situation was more tense where the first wife was not properly consulted about the coming of a second wife. Ultimately, the children of the second wife suffer most as the husband is sandwiched between the two women. The women blamed their fathers for colluding with the first wife to their disadvantage. Another woman, whose father had married two wives, described her experience as a child to a second wife who wielded little power in the family:

There was rivalry between the two mothers. Consequently, the first wife hated the children of the second wife and discriminated against us in a big way. For example, only children of the second mother would be sent on the many errands. We were encouraged to miss school and provided with reasons to tell the teachers.

We would miss school during the ploughing season and when the goats and cattle had gone missing. Food was also distributed unevenly. They always got clothes and we would go to school with chapped feet (*re phatlogile manga*) during winter. We were always entrusted with harder jobs at home and scolded if we failed to perform them correctly. It looked as if my father loved the

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<sup>3</sup> Children in a polygamous family may refer to all the women who are married to their father as “mother” irrespective of whether or not the relationship is biological

first wife more than my mother because he tolerated the treatment to which we were subjected.

Polygamous customary marriages often inflict economic hardships on women and their children and sometimes the wife has little or no say in her husband's decisions to take another wife. This creates conflict in the family, violence and mental health problems.

### **Parental divorce**

Parental divorce was a significant experience for these women. For women whose parents were divorced, the conflictual nature of the relationship between the two parents led to a divided self and a sense of powerlessness when they failed to unite two loved parents who could not get along. In most cases, the parent who had custody of the children saw no value in allowing continued contact between the other parent (especially if it was the father) and their children. The respondents shared stories of parents actively sabotaging visits and meetings and giving reasons why the child could not come, without consulting them first.

They were often intimidated into silence by an angry scene in the family that prevented them from enquiring about visits. They saw themselves as a symbol of the unity of their parents. As such, they found it difficult to divide themselves and ignore or prefer one parent over the other. In some families, rivalries between the two parents resulted in emotional trauma for the children who believed they were being used to fight the internal battles between one parent and the other. One woman told how her divided family led to her not knowing where to run to after she became pregnant, as both parties blamed each other "for spoiling the children" or for keeping the children "to yourself, as if they were yours alone".

### **Loss and grief**

Loss of a parent or significant other often preceded criminal involvement, especially in cases of infanticide and the possession of *dagga*, when the breadwinner was no longer available. Twenty five per cent of the women had experienced the death of a close family member within less

than two years of their criminal involvement. These were mostly parents, boyfriends, children or siblings. The absence of positive role models in the home to assist these young women to identify and actualize their goals in life was another factor. A 17-year-old girl in prison for infanticide told how her father's death brought misery upon their lives, especially since the mother's new partner "worked hard" to divert their mother's attention from them:

After my father died my mother got into another relationship. This man moved into our compound. My mother did not take alcohol when my father was alive. She started doing so when she was having this relationship with this other man who was physically abusing everybody in the family with impunity. My mother could not stand up to him to defend us. This man hates me and often told me that I thought I was the boss in the home. I became pregnant but my mother did not care in the least. During my eighth month, I begged my mother for support but got none. My grandmother stepped in and offered to support the baby and me. My mother-in-law<sup>4</sup> had committed herself to caring for me. She came to see me two days after my discharge from the hospital but could not take me home, due to customary rules. I was starving and verbally taunted. My mother would not serve food for me. She said that I should go back to my boyfriend who had made me pregnant. The way out of all this was to kill the baby. My stepfather then reported me.

Another woman who lost her mother at a young age, shared her plight:

It was painful not to have a mother when I was growing up. If I had one, she would have taken care of my child so that I could continue with school. When my aunt's daughter had a baby she went back to school because my aunt stayed at home with the baby. I felt bad. I had been forced to leave school because there was nobody to take care of my child. My sister and I went to

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<sup>4</sup> Although she was not married to the father of her forthcoming child, because of the disconnection she was feeling at home, she sought an affiliation with her boyfriend's mother

school barefooted but my aunt could have bought us anything we needed if she wanted. She said that there was no point investing in us, because when we grew up we would desert her.

### **Adolescence and the search for connection**

Adolescence was characterized by a series of agonizing separations and losses, which resulted in having no roots in any family, school or recreational structure. Some of the respondents reported crying and contemplating suicide, but not having the strength to carry it through; feeling alone and unloved and not as good as others, especially at school. This feeling was more likely to be shared by those respondents who were in prison for infanticide, abortion, concealing birth and the murder of a partner. Running away from home and seeking to identify with other girls in the community often precipitated the establishment of treasured new friendships with girls in similar positions.

These new relationships came at a time when they were socially disconnected from the family, having been chased from home due to pregnancy, fleeing an abusive father and his first wife or homeless, seeking accommodation in urban areas. This was also a first step to their introduction to alcohol and sexual relationships. Unfortunately the presence of a boyfriend divided the friends' attention. When the boyfriend exerted power and control over them, the girls' friendships broke up. Betrayal was cited as a major reason for this break-up. It should be understood that these female friendships came at a time when the women in this study had a strong desire to give and receive warmth. Unfortunately, some of the friendships backfired or were tainted by chronic betrayals. The lack of trust for other woman is a common experience in a society where the opposite sex has not been kind to women.

### **Girls and the authentic voice**

Interpersonal relationships defined their ability to create and sustain interpersonal relationships with other people. They stated that humour, sarcasm and scornful remarks about them in certain contexts led them to doubt their own voice and the authenticity of their decisions. A 17-

year-old girl in prison for infanticide, who had all the relevant information to make a decision about using contraceptives in a fragile relationship, found her voice completely eclipsed by an elder from the church she attended regularly. This man claimed that certain religious rituals were better contraceptives than the use of condoms or any "modern" method. She said:

I was involved in a relationship with a man who belonged to our church (Zion Christian Church). He was okay most of the time except when he would beat me when he found me talking to another man. When we started the relationship, he told me that his church prohibited the use of contraception and if we used any, we would be sinning. He said that for us to have sex before marriage is not even a sin because in God's eyes we are "almost" married. He also told me that he had performed a ritual "*taela*"<sup>5</sup> so he did not make a women pregnant within a certain period. I believed him.

When she finally listened to her own voice and realized that she had been deceived, she decided to get rid of the child. At this time, this girl had several younger siblings who she felt were more vulnerable than she was. She questioned her own preparedness to have children when she could not take care of her siblings, earning an erratic P120 per month as a domestic worker. Her mother (who had been an unhappily-married second wife in a polygamous marriage) had died due to alcohol-related liver cirrhosis.

It is possible that during her relationship with the man, this young woman found her own viewpoint and judgement of events trivialized and this trivialization was based on the sense of power that emanates from the status of a church leader. Thus, she was temporarily alienated from her own sense of direction.

### **Running away from home**

Fifteen per cent of the women had run away from home at some point in their lifetime due to family disruptions and fear of step-parents (both mother and father), but an overwhelming (81%, N=65) did not run away,

<sup>5</sup> *Taela* is a spiritual purification ceremony that is common in the Zion Christian Church

because they felt that the welfare of their younger siblings would be adversely affected if they left. They could not entrust their siblings with anyone else. Running away usually started at the age of 13 and escalated at 18. These run-aways ended up with an equally abusive boyfriend who used their run-away history against them.

### **Commercial sex work**

Most women denied having a history of commercial sex work. Only 5 per cent admitted to having been sex workers and then only for a short period. Some, however, had multiple boyfriends who they met interchangeably and, according to them, mostly for financial gain. They relationships were described as "not emotionally involved". The women who were involved in commercial sex work were between 14 and 33 years old.

### **The transition to adulthood**

For some women the transition to adulthood was marked by an event such as the death of a parent, having to support herself and starting work outside the home, pregnancy or desertion by her husband. One woman stated that she first started perceiving herself as an adult at the age of 42. Seven of the respondents said that they had never supported themselves in their life. Interestingly, some women walked directly into a life of crime after being told by their parents to leave the home (because they were old enough, or had "too many children" or were rebellious).

### **Marriage**

Generally, the women entered marriage with a desire to settle down and have some security and stability in their lives. Some of these women were likely to have come from a disrupted family background. Some had also been chased away from the family home just prior to the marriage. Some state that they entered these marriages expecting to be rescued from past trauma. Nevertheless they found themselves doing most of the work in the new relationship and felt that their partners participating in the relationship in name only, often giving them the silent treatment.

Those who did not run away from home were faced with verbal threats and intimidation on a daily basis.

The women said it was difficult for them to blend into their families of marriage. Mothers-in-law were described as especially difficult to live with. None of the married women had a positive relationship with her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law. They found themselves under the authority and control of their mother-in-law, especially when the husband had gone to the urban areas to work. There were times when money would be withheld from the wife, based on whether she was a "good wife" or not. This would bring further dependency to the woman and made it hard for her gain independence in the use of her money. Family disputes over non-support often discredited the woman's version of the story. Another development was the belief that the wife had come to divert money from the family to herself. When women sought independence from such tense situations they landed in other situations that were criminal.

### **Passive-aggressive husbands**

Apart from one, all seven marriages were characterized by distress. Women complained that while they remained at home, supporting those who worked outside the home, the money that was earned never reached home. In addition, even where their husbands did not take other wives, they were generally unfaithful. This infidelity was tolerated by society and the wives simply had to put up with it.

Some women did not leave their husbands and were in prison for grievous harm, with their victim usually being the "other woman". Six out of the seven married women complained that they had limited meaningful and affectionate relationships with their husbands. Most of their marital conversations were brief and focused primarily on the family's needs. This passive-aggressive behaviour resulted in these women pacifying their partners by responding with less resistance and making no demands, but covertly committing a crime (especially the possession of *dagga*) of which the husband was unaware. One woman from Zimbabwe in prison for possession of *dagga* told her story:

My husband did not support the family. He was supporting another woman. He rarely initiated any discussion with me, If I initiated one, he would be monosyllabic. Each time I asked him for money, he would beat me up and tell me to go back to Zimbabwe. When I met some sisters from home and they introduced me to *dagga* selling, I found it profitable. He did not know where I was getting the money. He also withdrew even further from supporting the family when he saw that I was able to make it without him. He is very angry with me for coming to prison. He refused to hire a lawyer for me, saying that it was all up to me. I should go and get a lawyer from Zimbabwe or ask those people who introduced me to *dagga* to hire a lawyer for me. He says that he is not part of it.

It is unlikely that intimacy can exist in an atmosphere like this where inequality, powerlessness, dependency and lack of affection also abound. Unresponsiveness and a distanced interactive style in a relationship often stimulates a partner's anxiety about the security of an attachment. The central dilemma in these women's minds was why, in an intimate relationship, when one pursues connection and intimacy; the other pursues distance, emotional inhibition, silence and autonomy.

### **Substance abuse history**

#### **Personal use/abuse experience**

A significant number of women in the study had histories of substance abuse, especially alcohol, in their families of origin. Their drug-abuse histories started during adolescence and increased during their 30s. Mothers, brothers, fathers and boyfriends or husbands were more likely to use alcohol. About 43 per cent of the women said that their mothers either abused alcohol or were alcoholic. Twenty six per cent had brothers who were either abused alcohol or were alcoholic. Fathers accounted for 36 per cent of alcohol-abusing family members. Twenty-six of the respondents came from a home where there was a *shabeen*, often owned by the mother. A correlation of mother as alcohol abuser and mother as physical abuser was established ( $F= 4.177$ ;  $R^2= .051$ ;  $p<.04$ ). Alcohol abuse, however, explains only 5 per cent of the variance in physically abusive mothers.



None of the women admitted to using marijuana, cocaine or heroin. Thirty six per cent admitted to using alcohol regularly before incarceration. Three of the women described themselves as alcoholics, given the criteria presented. Alcohol use started at the age of 17 and continued over a lifetime. The peak age was between 23 and 40 and reasons were given for continuing alcohol use. The mostly cited reason was to "forget my problems", which can be interpreted as self-medication or numbing the effects of deprivation and victimization experienced. None had been referred for treatment for alcohol use or abuse.

While these women complained of lack of food for the family, they claimed that they managed to get sponsorship for alcohol from friends with whom they network to sustain their habit. The source of money was retail work (14%, N=11), erratic jobs, including domestic work (35%) or a boyfriend (16%). Fourteen per cent had no other source of money except that obtained criminally (such as stealing, the possession and sale of *dagga* and receiving stolen property).

Among women who had committed an offence under the influence of alcohol, the rate of abuse was highest for violent crimes (murder, infanticide and robbery) followed by arson and malicious damage to property and the use of insulting language. The influence of alcohol was lowest for fraud, the unlawful possession of *dagga*, theft of a motor vehicle and other property offences. Since drinking among women is considered a deviation from traditional Tswana female roles, a significant number of the women minimized their drinking habits and patterns. One woman, however, said that "she lives on alcohol," and her confession was as follows:

I cannot live without drinking. *Ke tanka!* (I am a tank!). Actually, when I came here I used to shiver all the time. This happens when I have not taken alcohol. My mother, brother and sisters all have serious problems with alcohol. We all drink a lot at home. After drinking, there is usually fighting in the home. We just beat up each other randomly. It has been like this since I was born. My father and mother used to fight a lot. I grew up drinking alcohol and I was introduced to it at an early age. It is like food to us. It is allowed.

Women who had lived in families where there was alcohol abuse could shed light about its possible effects on child welfare. One woman said how difficult it was to live with her alcohol-abusing mother:

My mother used to frequent bars and come home later in the night. I was forced to take care of my younger siblings by providing for them. When she arrived home at night, she would ask for food even when she had not left any money behind. This put a lot of pressure on me. I started stealing money from the security box at work.

Factors associated with living in a family where there was alcohol abuse were unpredictability, inconsistent parenting, an inability to protect or supervise children consistently because of drug use, unclear child-adult boundaries and the strain of keeping the family secret about the alcohol-abusing parent.

### **Relationships with drug-abusing men**

One significant concern that the women raised in relation to their substance abuse was their relationships with substance-abusing men (both of alcohol and marijuana). These relationships were characterized by physical and sexual violence, family and emotional withdrawal and economic insecurity. Some women talked about how their partners were never there for them, especially in times of crisis. These women were also at great risk for sexually-transmitted diseases, given the pattern of their lifestyle and that of their partners. Women in such relationships could not complain about sexual unfaithfulness and if they did, they would be beaten or threatened with a termination of the relationship. Women told how difficult it was for them to negotiate for safe sex, especially when they knew that their partners were having sexual relations with other women.

Another issue of great concern raised by the women was that they had to take over the overseer role in the family, while being constantly reminded that they were not head of the family. Carrying the weight of their families on their shoulders, both physically and emotionally and not being appreciated, was a big issue for most women in this study. They found themselves torn between taking care of the family and the

family power relations. They assumed the leadership role with guilt, having been socialized to expect their partners to take this role. In such a situation a woman lives like a single parent. Some women were also likely to conceal their partner's drug abuse history, especially to their relatives and other interested parties. The secrecy necessary to live with an alcohol-abusing and physically-abusing partner limited their options. Had these women sought help earlier, they would have been saved from ongoing physical and emotional abuse, which would have prevented them from committing certain crimes in the first place. This was particularly so with women who had killed their partners in self-defence after many years of abuse.

### **Physical and mental health problems**

Women complained of various health problems. Seventy five per cent stated that they had some form of physical or mental health problem. Twenty five per cent complained of other physical or mental health problems with some receiving treatment at local mental health facilities. None of the respondents who were receiving mental health services knew exactly what their conditions were and what factors contributed to them. Women also reported long-standing, untreated pelvic inflammatory disease, human papillomavirus (HPV) and chronic dysmenorrhoea. Some feared HIV/AIDS infection.

Physical abuse was correlated with poor mental health ( $r = .32$ ;  $p < .004$ ). Multiple regression analysis also showed that the financial consequence of the family abuse and the mother's abuse of alcohol accounted for 16 per cent of the variance in health problems ( $r^2 = .163$ ;  $F = 7.514$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Physical violence alone accounted for 10 per cent of the variance in health problems ( $r^2 = .103$ ;  $F = 8.958$ ;  $p < .004$ ). The woman's financial situation was also the greatest predictor of health and mental health problems ( $\beta = .328$ ;  $p < .002$ ). The poorer the woman, the poorer her physical and mental health. Economic stress could, therefore, be a major psychosocial stressor for these women, contributing both to their poor health and their involvement in crime. Single parenthood also contributed to the stress in their lives.

### **The experience of violence**

The prevalence of past physical, sexual and emotional victimization by family members and intimates and the high proportion of drug and alcohol use by the women themselves, their parents or their male partners, are some of the factors signifying the distress present in women when they enter custody. Sixty-two per cent of the respondents stated that they had been subjected to ongoing physical abuse as they were growing up, especially by their step-parents, mothers, father's wives (in polygamous families), fathers and elder brothers. Most abuse occurred at home, more than once and the abuser was usually a family member. Girls who had been physically or sexually abused stated that the abuse typically occurred at home or in their neighbour's homes. Where there was a parental history of alcoholic drinking, this alone presented a high risk factor for current child physical abuse.

From having been subjected to verbal, emotional and often physical abuse from their families of origin, the transition to adulthood also brought with it more victimization from lovers and husbands. Lovers were responsible for 61 per cent of all physical abuse, whilst husbands were the perpetrators in 14 per cent of physical abuse cases. In all, more than 75 women reported physical violence from intimate partners. Women who were in relationships with violent men said that rape, both in and out of these relationships, had been a major life experience for them. About 40 per cent reported that they had been raped by strangers (45%), lovers (9%, N=7), acquaintances (15%, N=12), male cousins and uncles (13%, N=10) and husbands (6%, N=5). Twenty-three women were raped either once or twice and eight women were raped between three and five times.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study force us to examine the interplay of the cultural, ideological and structural factors affecting women's lives from a gender, class and relational analysis. Issues of power and gender relations in the household, the process of socioeconomic development and the women's attempts to humanize their lives by networking with each other to cope with the increasing demands on them emerge vividly.

The characteristics of women in prison in Botswana match those provided in studies elsewhere in the world. Imprisoned women tend to be dispossessed and marginalized with little or no education or work experience and histories of personal and substance abuse and alcohol abuse. Women go into crime as a result of an insecure financial base and gender inequality at distributive and relational levels, unemployment and low literacy levels. Reliance on destitute rations or erratic domestic work for little pay limits positive aspirations for women and could be implicated in their lower expectations during adulthood.

Desertions by male partners after children are born (after what appeared to be an enduring relationship), parental loss through death, migrant labour and parental divorce are also critical to women's vulnerability. Growing up in an environment where there is spousal abuse, financial strain, alcohol abuse and few opportunities for survival create early vulnerabilities and deprivations in women. Women who find their way into the criminal justice system are more likely to be disconnected from support and sustaining procedures at the time of their arrest: when they are connected to networks in the community, they may be the sole support in the family or intimate relationship. This results in feelings of debilitation and fatigue, both physically and emotionally.

At the theoretical level, Marxist or socialist feminists assert that women in prison are products of the class- and gender-based oppression they experience (Dalla Costa 1999, Dominelli 1989). Women are entangled in a capitalist mode of production, which is cultivated by the patriarchy. Women do not have access to the means of production and are exploited at every turn. Economic Marxist theory should therefore incorporate an understanding of the patriarchy as a system that is responsible for the reduced well-being of women throughout the world.

Gendered power relations at both distributive and relational levels designed to benefit men and perpetuate the fulfilment of their needs at the expense of women and their children, are push factors in women's criminality. Their economic impoverishment results in inadequate nutrition, health care problems, lack of and inadequate housing, the persistence and maintenance of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and

lack of, or poor, housing in the household. All these conditions create an unfortunate status for women, leading them further into a life of crime. The resources available to them determine whether a woman can maintain relationships materially and emotionally while staying out of crime.

### **Female development and women's criminality**

According to developmental psychologists such as Freud (1938), Erikson (1963), Levinson (1978), Kohlberg (1984) and Mahler et al. (1975), individuals follow a particular, distinct life pattern and have to satisfy certain normative phases in life before proceeding to the next stage. Based on this study, I would argue that a woman's developmental life course does not necessarily take a hierarchical, unidirectional and linear progression as suggested by such developmental psychologists. This perspective is influenced by the self in relation theory.

The self in relation theory was propounded by Miller (1976, 1982), Gilligan (1982) and Surrey (1991). This theory suggests that women organize themselves around relationships and the ethic of responsibility, care and nurturing others. Most psychologists shared the premise that separation, autonomy and differentiation are marks of a healthy adult. Connection, affiliation and mutuality were classified as childish traits. The self in relation theory was a departure from this standpoint and acknowledged the different path that women take in their construction and experience of the self. Women's development was seen as relational and connective, affirming the needs of the other, adapting their own needs to those of others and using their relational strength to enhance other people's well-being.

In this study, women who were in relationships that were not connective and mutually satisfying found themselves de-selfing to retain these relationships and sacrificing and compromising their own values so that other people could benefit from encountering them. It is possible that socio-historical antecedents shape women's development and determine the direction, pace and tempo of their development. The ebb and flow of development is seasoned by the relationships in women's lives, but may also be halted, distorted and skewed by them. Experiences

of poverty, alcohol abuse, violence and abuse by the people these women love and trust, created disconnections in the flow of development and shaped their relational development in the direction of over-functioning in order to win approval, assurance, love and peace.

In cultures where women are not allowed to express themselves and experience adult status, their potential is limited, their voices are silenced and they become severely deprived. In order to understand women's criminality, we need to acknowledge the role of sociocultural factors in shaping expectations and we need to understand why women, if confronted by certain challenges, may have few options other than crime because of the psychological and material resources available to them at a given time. This lifetime of self-sacrifice and compromise is often a way of staying connected to people who matter to woman. This is exemplified in the illicit drug trade. The importance of relationships in women's lives and the fact that their criminal involvement came through their relationships with boyfriends, family members, employers and other colleagues confirm this theoretical base.

The use of alcohol in itself signifies a reaction to the loss of a relationship. It becomes a way of maintaining stability during a period in which one's sense of self is threatened. Alcohol may also be used to deny the pain of a distant, disconnected relationship when the woman is grappling to connect. In addition, women who are involved in crime have a history of over-involvement in either their parent's, boyfriend's or husband's life. This over-involvement is a way in which women seek external sources of fulfillment and identity. The success of the self is measured through making others succeed in whatever they are doing, even if this may result in a total loss of self. When relational skills (such as negotiation, compromise, persuasion or even intimidation) are seen as inadequate, the desire to reconnect with others may be exaggerated to the point of over-functioning.

This is seen in women who sell drugs on behalf of their boyfriends and in-laws, only to be arrested and get higher sentences than the original wrongdoer. A mother's dreams for employment for her child may motivate her to receive stolen property. The socialization script available to women prepares them for a life in which they are more likely to be asked

to serve others than expected to serve themselves. Their subordinate status—in which they are attuned to other people's behaviour—makes them able to “read” problems and respond appropriately without being asked. In this way, women may know more about the needs of men and children than their own.

Lack of affordable childcare services in the community also limits the full participation of women in the labour force. Older women take on the burden of care, in most cases without the support of either biological parent, who may leave the children with a grandmother, promising to find work in the urban areas, only to return expecting another baby. When promises are not fulfilled, women have to search for alternatives. The lack of money or opportunity to gain a sufficient income through legitimate means was cited by the women as a motivation for their offending. *Dagga* selling is one of those self-recruiting income opportunities that these women have found, but it is illegal.

Future studies may help explore the following unanswered questions: For a woman who is connective and caring, to what extent does this ethic of care impact on her well-being? How costly to her physical, emotional and spiritual welfare is the ethic of care? How does a woman's need for intimacy clash with battling for physical and emotional survival? For women who were in prison for trying to save their marriages and other intimate relationships, what amount of anger is permitted to a person who is betrayed, given that she is socialized not to express anger? How should this anger be expressed? Who judges what is an appropriate feeling of anger? What is a “normal” women's reaction to betrayal, deprivation and humiliation?

### **Victimization and survivorship**

Victimization and survivorship theories have just entered the debate of women's criminality via the women's movement. A significant number of the women in the study have experienced physical and sexual abuse during childhood, adolescent and adulthood. The range of this experience is considerable: some women have suffered single and/or minor episodes of abuse; others have suffered severe, prolonged and very damaging abuse across a lifetime. In adulthood, intimate



relationships were abusive and often exploitative. Several women reported experiencing tormenting flashbacks of specific incidents of violence. The women also said that they had developed a tendency towards “uncontrollable” anger, guarded and defensive posturing and self-isolation—a possible response to living in a tense environment where one’s life is continuously at risk.

In developing a theoretical framework for understanding how women victims of violence later become offenders, Gilfus (1987) argued that the victimization of women sets the pace for crime in women because of the survival strategies they use to numb the pain of their experiences. Women may participate in illegal drug work in order to support their partners, children and their own addictions. Gilfus (1992) also concluded that crime is the final product in a long process in which women are caught and cannot extract themselves. Women in crime are as much the perpetrators as they are the survivors of victimization. Battered women who are fearful of their spouse’s reaction to a child’s behaviour may also over-discipline them in an attempt to protect them from a greater danger from the batterer. This could explain why a majority of the physical abusers were mothers (35%; N= 28).

Low-income survivors of violence were often placed at the risk of continuous victimization. This victimization further led to their entrapment within the walls of the criminal justice system. Women got involved in criminal activities as a resistance or response to victimization. Girls ended up in the criminal justice system as they ran away from violence either in the home (especially due to negative parental reaction to unplanned pregnancy), in boyfriends (who denied responsibility and threatened them if they disclosed their names) or at school (where they are expelled on pregnancy).

## **Conclusion**

This study extends the risk factors model of background or social history analysis to the lives of incarcerated women. Their vulnerability to life situations is critical in understanding women’s criminality. Unfortunately for these women, they had not developed protective factors such as

resilience or a sense of control and mastery, which would have helped them overcome the consequences of the risks they encountered.

Women in the study described themselves as "the support system" for other people but failed to see how this role entangled them to a point of bringing debilitating stress in their own lives. In most cases, they lacked a support system themselves. As a result, they had limited opportunities to benefit from positive feedback when a crisis sets in. Influences such as poverty, substance abuse, physical and sexual violence and witnessing violence, especially directed at their mothers were identified. Abuse disrupts a person's ability to make attachments, display self-control and make moral and social judgments.

For women, crime is in many ways an act of resistance to express their frustration and rebellion against inequality and subordination. Crime may also be a coping mechanism—a way of evading the violence and the unrealistic expectations and multiple roles that women are engaged in within their homes. The challenge is to chart a new and brave road towards understanding and dealing with women's criminality, using information about the various contributory factors that give rise to it, such as socioeconomic inequality, gender-based violence and the socialization of women and girls.

As professionals interested in issues of women's criminality, we should be plugged to the realities of women's lives and engage in pragmatic political activism by directly developing feminist-informed theories and programmes that seek to empower women and open spaces for their voices to be heard and taken seriously. In order for women to achieve their own self-potential, development, peace and equity, social development-oriented programmes that are comprehensive, integrated and responsive are needed to change the direction and course of women's lives. It is intended that this study will serve as a springboard in the long debate towards addressing women's multiple needs.

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