Women as Victim-Offenders: Negotiating the Paradox

Organised by the Women, Crime and Criminal Justice Network (British Society of Criminology) supported by Department of Sociology, City, University of London & the University of Essex

This conference aims to provide a space for academics and practitioners working with women offenders to discuss and negotiate the paradox of victimisation and offending. A range of issues will be explored, such as the problems with dichotomising experiences of offending and victimisation; ensuring experiences of choice and agency are understood when exploring women’s experiences; the role of feminism and the impact this has on the development and analysis of such work and research; and the potential impact that academic research may have on policy and practice within this context. The conference will provide the opportunity to hear from established academics in this field, emerging research and work in this area and contribute to group discussions regarding future directions.

Programme

9.30-9.45  Registration – tea and coffee

9.45-10.00  Introduction and welcome – Dr Marisa Silvestri

10.00-11.00  Keynote – Professor Jo Phoenix – Women Offenders? Women Victims? Where criminological categories meet penal politics

11.00-12.15  Academic Constructions and Problems of Doing Research
This panel will explore emerging academic research related to women as both victims and offenders, particularly focusing on the problems and issues faced when conducting such research. The papers also reflect and consider the dilemmas experiences through the positioning as a ‘feminist researcher’ within this field.

- Dr Gemma Birkett – Researching Sentencers, Practitioners and Women Offenders: Negotiating the Victim-Offender Paradox
- Dr Susan Batchelor – Doing justice to young women? The risks of research on girls, ‘gangs’ and violence
- Dr Jo Roberts – Offending against the patriarchy: researching women’s pathways into crime from a feminist perspective

12.15-13.15  Lunch

13.15-14.30  Law and Policy Constructions
This panel will offer a critical insight into existing law and policy in relation to women offenders and assesses the extent to which they capture experiences of both victimization and offending. Future directions and recommendations for potential changes in both law and policy are also be considered.

- Dr Emma Mline and Dr Karen Brennan – Challenging the paradox of infanticide and murder – understanding cases in context
- Liz Hogarth (OBE) – "The trouble with women is...": An often encountered refrain and example of the impediments faced in developing women's policy in the CJS
- Professor Loraine Gelsthorpe – Explaining the inexplicable: women as offenders …and victims of human trafficking
14.30-15.45 Practice-based Constructions
This panel will explore practice-based constructions and interventions of women victim-offenders. Practitioner perspectives and implications for practice when working with and supporting such women will also be discussed.
- Dr Charlotte Barlow – "I felt like a prisoner in my own relationship": Women co-offenders experiences of offending and victimisation
- Dr Karen Evans – The persistence of punishment: Working with women in an era of punitive sentencing
- Dr Margaret Malloch – The Paradox of Praxis

15.45-16.00 Tea and coffee

17.15-17.30 RoundTable Discussion
The roundtable discussion allows an opportunity to reflect on the past, present and the future in relation to theorisations and interventions with women as victim-offenders. Future directions and recommendations for academia, policy, law and practice when working with women victim-offenders will be considered and delegates will also be provided with the opportunity of sharing ideas and ask questions of panel members.
- Dr Jennifer Fleetwood
- Professor Frances Heidensohn
- Professor Jackie Turton
- Dr Serena Wright

About the speakers

Charlotte Barlow is a Lecturer in Criminology at Lancaster University. Her research falls within the remit of feminist criminology and she is particularly interested in violence against women and girls, female offending/co-offending, pathways into crime and police responses to domestic abuse.

Susan Batchelor is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Glasgow, based in the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research. Her research interests centre around the intersections of gender, generation, culture and crime and most of her publications relate to the views and experiences of girls and young women. Most recently Susan was Principal Investigator on an ESRC-funded study of youth leisure and social change in Glasgow ([http://reimaginingyouth.wordpress.com](http://reimaginingyouth.wordpress.com)).

Gemma Birkett is a lecturer in Criminology at City, University of London. Gemma has researched and published in the areas of penal reform, penal policy-making, the courts and courtroom interactions, and gender and crime. Gemma sits on the steering group of the Women, Crime and Criminal Justice Network of the British Society of Criminology and is also a member of the European Society of Criminology and the Political Studies Association.

Karen Brennan is a lecturer in the School of Law at the University of Essex. Her research and teaching interests are in the area of criminal justice, with a particular focus on socio-historical and gendered issues. She recently co-edited a book on women and the criminal justice system (Women and Criminal Justice System: Failing Victims and Offenders? Palgrave-Macmillan, forthcoming 2018). She has published extensively on the subject of infanticide in national and international journals, taking a socio-legal, historical, and feminist approach to this subject. She has also published on abortion and family homicide. Her work engages with a range of themes, including social norms, compassion, medicalisation, and
reproductive rights. She is currently developing her research across three areas: maternal obligation to the foetus/newborn child, with a particular focus on the criminalisation of women who harm the foetus/baby; obstetric violence; and assisted dying.

**Karen Evans** is a senior lecturer in the Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology at the University of Liverpool. Karen has published, researched and taught in the area of Gender and Crime for more than ten years.

**Jennifer Fleetwood** is a Lecturer in Criminology in the Department of Sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her PhD, completed at the University of Edinburgh, was based on ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in prisons in Ecuador. *Drug Mules: Women in the International Cocaine Trade*, won the British Society of Criminology book prize in 2015. Her research is broadly underpinned by an interest in gender and issues of structure and agency. To this end, she draws on ethnographic research methods, and narrative criminology. Her current research explores women’s narratives of self-defence in response to street harassment.

**Lorraine Gelsthorpe** is Professor of Criminology & Criminal Justice, and Director of the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge. She has written extensively about women, crime and criminal justice and has been involved with a number of organisations seeking to address women’s needs (e.g. the Commonweal Trust & the Re-Unite Project and Women’s Breakout – before it was amalgamated with Clinks). Former President of the BSC. In her spare time: a psychotherapist, and a trustee of Pembroke House, in Walworth, South London.

**Frances Heidensohn** is Visiting Professor Dept of Sociology & is at the Mannheim Centre for Criminology. She has researched, & written extensively on women & crime, gender & policing & international comparative criminology. Among her books are ‘Women & Crime, Women in Control, & Gender & Justice’. She was a member of the Sentencing Advisory Panel & a Commissioner for Judicial Appointments.

**Liz Hogarth (OBE)**
After a career in the voluntary sector and probation service, including working in HMP Holloway during the 1990s, Liz Hogarth became the Ministry of Justice policy lead on women in the criminal justice system from 2002. She worked closely with Baroness Corston during her review and on the implementation of the Corston Report recommendations. She now works in a voluntary capacity as an Independent Adviser, campaigning for the gendered approach and systems change called for by Corston.

**Margaret Malloch** is Associate Professor in Criminology at the University of Stirling and Associate Director with the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research.

**Emma Milne** is Lecturer in Criminology at Middlesex University. She gained her PhD in Sociology from the University of Essex. Her research interests are in feminist criminology and women offenders. The wider context of Emma’s work is consideration of social controls and criminal justice regulations on all women, notably in relation to pregnancy, sex and reproduction. She is co-editor of the forthcoming volume: Women and the Criminal Justice System, due to be published later this year.

**Jo Phoenix** is a Professor of Criminology at the Open University. She has numerous publications on subjects ranging from prostitution policy reform, child sexual exploitation, women’s involvement in sex work, youth justice and youth justice practice. Her research

Jo Roberts is a Senior Researcher for Public Health Wales and her research interests include domestic abuse, female offending and feminist criminology. Jo has previously worked as a consultant researcher for Integrated Offender Management Cymru and as a Research Associate for Cardiff University. Jo completed her PhD at the University of Leicester and her study established that women’s involvement in crime can occur as a by-product of attempts to cope with/ survive domestic abuse.

Jackie Turton is a professor in the Sociology Department at the University of Essex and is currently Deputy Dean (education) of the Faculty of Social Science. Her research interests have focussed on domestic crime with a particular interest in women as victims and offenders, and child protection issues. She is co-editor of the forthcoming volume: Women and the Criminal Justice System, due to be published later this year.

Serena Wright is Lecturer in Criminology at the School of Law, Royal Holloway, University of London. Prior to this, she was a Research Associate at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge. Her research and publications have considered issues ranging from women as ‘prolific offenders’ or ‘frustrated desisters’, the gendered experience of long-term imprisonment, and the concept of ‘trauma-informed’ practice in women’s prisons. She recently led a Learning Together prison-university educational initiative at HMP/YOI Bronzefield women’s prison, where students from the prison and Royal Holloway came together to learn about ‘pioneering women’.