

Women, aggression, prisons - criminological and victimological aspects

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The thesis that women - if we abstract a very few individuals who are rather exceptions that proves the rule - are nonaggressive is quite problematic, although it would be even more questionable to pretend that women have a sort of natural (a priori) repulsion to aggression which can take qualitatively and quantitatively different forms. Although it is incontestable that observable differences between aggressive behaviour of men and women have biological "foundations", the article pays more attention to cultural and social determinants of nonaggressive behaviour of females. It is basically focussed on gender differences in emotional socialisation, i.e. on the social control of experiencing and expressing emotions, for example, anger, because it seems that it is more appropriate to explain in this way women's relatively rare violent crimes, for example homicides of their intimates (a partner, a relative or a child). Even more, it would be more necessary to highlight the key factors of their proverbial conformity than to explain criminalised and other deviant acts of women. For most women in patriarchal society with traditional sexual morality it has been typical that they have been "sentenced" to live in one sort of "prison" or another: deviant women have been hosted by prisons, reformatories, juvenile institutions and mental health institutions; in contrast, conformist women - prisoners of their conventional female role - have enjoyed the hospitality of their family home to which they were entitled through matrimony and by their own will and have also participated in its creation. Today we are witnessing a sort of progressive "decarceration" of women, i.e. their liberation from ties of traditional female gender role and sexual morality, a process which has not yet been finished. It seems that in the period of incurable crisis/disruption of patriarchal relations, the most incorruptible "jailer" of women, i.e. the person who binds a woman to a binding tradition, is her child or more precisely, a culturally persistent myth of mothering.

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