

OBSERVATIONS ON FEMALE CRIMINALITY IN FRANCE*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The term “female criminality” is very popular in French criminology at present, although it already appeared in the literature on the subject of the 19th century.¹ Particular categories of perpetrators were distinguished in the research into criminality then and women formed one of them.² It was emphasised that they had committed common crimes in the “private sphere” such as infanticide or a murder of a close relation: a child or a partner. That is why, the dominance of female perpetrators in the family-related crime against close relations was observed in France, especially in the last century. In fact, if women had appeared in the criminal population less frequently than men, it had resulted from the fact that crimes committed by them had been criminalised to a lesser extent or treated with greater leniency by courts. Moreover, female perpetrators also less often had a criminal record because of low detection rate of forbidden acts (infanticide, abortion) committed by them.³ It is highlighted in France at present that the difference between male and female perpetrators⁴ is visible mainly in the frequency of some categories of committed crime,⁵

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¹ See, <http://crimefeminin.free.fr/qui-sont-criminelles.html>.

² M. Agrapart-Delmas, *Les femmes criminelles*, [in:] S. Tzitzis, *Déviances et délinquances. Approches psycho-sociales et pénales*, Vol. 8, Dalloz, Paris 2009, p. 187.

³ A. Laingui, A. Lebigre, *Histoire du droit pénal*, Vol. I: *Le droit pénal*, Cujas, Paris 1979, p. 172 ff.

⁴ D. Deligny, *Délinquance et criminalité féminine: une exception difficile à appréhender*, *Observatoire de la Justice Pénale*, 29 March 2016, <http://www.justicepenale.net/single-post/2016/03/29/D%C3%A9linquance-et-criminalit%C3%A9-f%C3%A9minine-une-exception-difficile-%C3%A0-appr%C3%A9hender>.

⁵ C. Parent, *La contribution féministe à l'étude de la déviance en criminologie*, *Criminologie*, Vol. XXV, No. 2, 1992, pp. 73–91; C. Parent, *Au-delà du silence: les productions féministes sur la “criminalité” et la criminalisation des femmes*, *Déviance et Société*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1992, pp. 297–328.

and a lack of symmetry between men's and women's statistical criminal activity is more visible today than it was in the past.⁶

With the development of criminality in France at present, female perpetrators' increased violence and aggression accompanying their criminal activity have been observed. At the same time, French criminal law experts draw attention to the fact that the concept of an "act of violence" is to a great extent inconsistent and it is used in French criminal law to refer to a catalogue of crimes from detriment to health to premeditated homicide.⁷ Thus, it is difficult to unambiguously state why the range of violent acts committed by women is so changeable. Analyses indicate that in 2008 French female perpetrators committed 21.7% of crimes with the use of violence more than in 2003. Moreover, the number of under-age women committing acts of violence doubled in five years' time (from 3,521 in 2003 to 7,079 in 2008 – an increase by over 100%).⁸ Looking at the phenomenon of criminality from perpetrators' perspective, N. Bourgoïn⁹ distinguishes three main categories: crimes in which women dominate (e.g. infanticide, abortion),¹⁰ crimes in which women's participation is lower but higher than average (crimes against children, domestic theft, handling stolen goods) and crimes with a very high or even untypically high rate of commission by women in recent years (homicide, affrays and acts of violence), and finally typically male crimes which are rather seldom committed by women (e.g. rape, aggravated theft or political crimes). As he emphasises, French analyses show that particular increase in the number of female perpetrators has been recorded especially among the category of women who commit forbidden acts resulting in high level of social harm, which is an alarming phenomenon.

2. SELECTED CATEGORIES OF FEMALE CRIMES

It is commonly highlighted that women, unlike men, have a certain category or categories of motives for committing crimes, which determine their criminal activity. One can distinguish forbidden acts performed under the influence of emotions (e.g. because of love, envy or revenge), due to financial factors (a wish to become rich or obtain an advantageous disposal of property) or because of moral ones (aversion to motherhood).¹¹

⁶ P. Genuit, *La criminalité féminine: Une criminalité épicienne et insolite. Réflexions d'épistémologie et d'anthropobiologie clinique*, 2007, doctoral dissertation, Department of Psychology, Université Rennes 2, 2007, <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00198603/document>, p. 17.

⁷ X. Rousseau, *Civilisation des mœurs et/ou déplacement de l'insécurité? La violence à l'épreuve du temps*, *Déviance et Société* Vol. 17, No. 3, 1993, p. 291.

⁸ *Les femmes de plus en plus sujettes à la délinquance*, L'OBS, 16 June 2009, <http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/societe/20090616.OBS0697/les-femmes-de-plus-en-plus-sujettes-a-la-delinquance.html>.

⁹ N. Bourgoïn, *Les chiffres du crime. Statistiques criminelles et contrôle social (France, 1825–2006)*, Logiques sociales, L'Harmattan, Paris 2008, pp. 75–80.

¹⁰ J.-M. Delassus, *Le sens de la maternité*, Dunod, Paris 2007, p. 285.

¹¹ S. Harratis, D. Vavassori, L. Villerbu, *Étude des caractéristiques psychopathologiques et psychocriminologiques d'un échantillon de 40 femmes criminelles*, *L'Information Psychiatrique*, Vol. 83, 6/2007, pp. 485–493.

Homicide is a dominant crime most often committed by women. If it is a murder of a female perpetrator's partner, it usually results from the use of various types of violence against her (physical or psychological one).¹² A former victim decides to eliminate her tyrant and murder is an opportunity of liberation.¹³ It has been stated that women demonstrate extremely strong emotional reactions after murder. It has been observed that female murderers' behaviour is driven by untypical aggression, even an instinct to inflict pain. They satisfy this need with the suffering of a person being killed. It is hard to find sorrow or compunction in their behaviour.¹⁴ What must also be mentioned is that "acts of violence in liminal states are connected with a violent and primitive instinct rather than pleasure which the intended attack will lack".¹⁵ E. Durkheim explains that women's lower inclination to kill is due to their input into social life. He claims: "A woman does not kill less often or does not kill at all because she is different from a man in a psychological sense; it is because she does not take part in everyday life in the same way. Every time homicide is within her reach, a woman commits it as often as a man and sometimes even more often than a man."¹⁶ Having noticed that homicide is a forbidden act the frequency of which is always higher for men, one should emphasise that women's share in the population of convicts for this crime in France remains at the level of 15% (one out of seven homicide perpetrators is a woman)¹⁷.

Infanticide is another, although undoubtedly the most symptomatic, female homicide. Until the amendment to the French criminal code of 1992 (*Code pénal*, hereinafter: C.P.), two types of this crime against children committed by a mother could be distinguished: newborn baby homicide (infanticide) and older child homicide. At present, based on the criminal code in force, child homicide constitutes one of the aggravating circumstances (in accordance with Article 221–4 C.P., manslaughter of a juvenile under 15 years of age),¹⁸ which results in more severe punishment due to crime committed against an always weak, immature victim who remains unable to defend oneself.¹⁹ The current wording of the provision

¹² P. Mercader, *Les déterminants sociaux et psychiques du crime dit "passionnel"*, Recherches et Prévisions, Vol. 89, No. 1, September 2007, pp. 43–53.

¹³ S. Frigon, *L'homicide conjugal au féminin. D'hier à aujourd'hui*, Remue-Ménage, Montreal 2003, p. 16.

¹⁴ M. Agrapart-Delmas, *Les femmes....*, [in:] S. Tzitzis, *Déviances et délinquances....*, p. 189.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ E. Durkheim, *Le suicide. Étude de sociologie*, PUF, Paris 1967, p. 389.

¹⁷ L. Mucchielli, *Les homicides dans la France contemporaine (1970–2007): évolution, géographie et protagonistes*, [in:] L. Mucchielli, P. Spierenburg (ed.), *Histoire de l'homicide en Europe*, La Découverte, Paris 2009, p. 147.

¹⁸ Article 221–4 C.P.: "Le meurtre est puni de la réclusion criminelle à perpétuité lorsqu'il est commis: 1° Sur un mineur de quinze ans, (...)"; <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCodeArticle.do?idArticle=LEGIARTI000006417572&cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006070719&dat eTexte=20100102>.

¹⁹ Ch. Bellard, *Les crimes au féminin*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2010, p. 89 ff; O. Verschoot, *Ils ont tué leurs enfants. Approche psychologique de l'infanticide*, Imago, Paris 2007, p. 111; S. Marinopoulos, *La vie ordinaire d'une mère meurtrière*, Fayard, Paris 2008, p. 88; M. Agrapart-Delmas, *Les femmes....*, [in:] S. Tzitzis, *Déviances et délinquances....*, p. 187; M.-L. Rassat, G. Roujou de Boubée (ed.), *Droit pénal spécial*, Ellipses, Paris 2008, p. 31; J. Francillon, B. Bouloc, I. Mayaud, G. Roujou de Boubée, *Code pénal commenté*, Dalloz-Sirey, Paris 1997, p. 150.

of Article 224–1 C.P. expresses the French legislator's care of an infant victim.²⁰ It should be emphasised that even if a female perpetrator is not aware of the child's age (under 15), the circumstance is still aggravating in nature,²¹ and the above-mentioned provision stipulates life imprisonment punishment.

At the same time, apart from symptomatic newborn baby homicide, women also commit manslaughter of older children, which is most often called extended suicide.²² Older mothers (26–35 or 36–45 years of age) commit this crime usually against a few years old children, regardless of their gender. It is emphasised in psychology that there is a specific emotional context of an extended suicide. It usually takes place after the partners' separation when a mother is alone and realises that her existence is not possible, does not want to make a child unhappy when left without her as a caregiver, and eventually decides to finish not only her own but also her child's life. Sometimes, extended suicide takes place because of poor mental health of a single mother who takes care of a handicapped or disabled child. She decides that it is necessary to shorten her offspring's suffering and share the same destiny. Another interesting regularity is also worth emphasising: in case of infanticide, a mother does not usually want to have a child much earlier, at the stage of pregnancy. She tries to hide the condition, she does not use healthcare services or see the need to devote herself to the good of her future offspring, because for some reasons she does not accept her child's existence. On the other hand, in case of extended suicide, mothers commit crime against their long-awaited and beloved children, they decide to eliminate them because they love them and do not want to expose them to the risk of any suffering.²³ As far as punishment for infanticide in France is concerned, there is no uniform court decision-making policy. The younger the child, the more lenient the punishment is (usually at the same level as it used to be for a newborn baby homicide). However, the older the child, the more severe the punishment because it is believed that a mother killing her offspring meets the features of aggravated crime under Article 224–1 C.P. Thus, she acts against a maternal instinct and her behaviour not only challenges the legal order but also breaches the moral one to a big extent.

Acts of violence against persons under 15 years of age are the most serious crimes committed by French female perpetrators. Various forms of bullying juveniles and physical violence lead to victims' death or serious disabilities. Female perpetrators of this category of crimes are usually between 26 and 31 years old. The victims of violence are most often their biological children (79%) who are very young (from six to up to 20 months old). Unfortunately, the statistics are alarming because in 73% of cases, violence leads to a child's death.²⁴ It is worth emphasising that the

²⁰ M.-L. Rassat, G. Roujou de Boubée, *Droit pénal...*, p. 31; J. Francillon et al., *Code pénal...*, p. 150.

²¹ M. Daury-Fauveau, *Droit pénal spécial. Livres 2 et 3 du code pénal: infractions contre les personnes et les biens*, PUF, Paris 2010, p. 198.

²² Ch. Bellard, *Les crimes...*, pp. 99–99.

²³ P. Mercader, A. Houel, H. Sobota, *L'asymétrie des comportements amoureux: violences et passions dans le crime dit passionnel*, Sociétés Contemporaines, No. 55, 3/2004, p. 107; O. Verschoot, *Ils ont tué...*, pp. 35–36.

²⁴ P. Mercader, A. Houel, H. Sobota, *L'asymétrie...*, pp. 110–111.

national survey conducted in France in 2008 by Dr Tursz revealed that the number of deaths resulting from maltreatment might be underreported.²⁵ In addition, H. Romano emphasises that the increased under-quoted number of murders results from very low interest in the phenomenon of children maltreatment in France. Law enforcement services are rarely interested in children's deaths, except for cases of death undoubtedly caused by third parties' involvement.²⁶

It is important that, apart from the different types of murders, an explicit increase in female criminality with elements of violence, especially in acts of violence (11% are committed by women) as well as burglaries and armed robberies are reported in France. The criminogenic activity of women is varied and it is sometimes targeted not only at people but also at specific property.²⁷ At the same time, it is interesting that female perpetrators of the above-mentioned crimes are severely punished as they commit aggravated types of those crimes. Average punishment for female perpetrators varies from seven years and six months' imprisonment (lack of care of a child)²⁸ to even 16 years and six months' imprisonment (special cruelty to a victim).

Thus, looking at the types of crimes committed by French female perpetrators at present, one should emphasise that violence of different level dominates. Undoubtedly, the strongest aggression is that used by female perpetrators who commit various types of manslaughter (usually with atrocity), but it is also present when performing acts of violence of different aetiology. It seems that the increase in brutality in female criminal activity results from a general French society's brutalization trend, which sociologists currently emphasise.²⁹

3. STATISTICAL ASPECTS OF FEMALE CRIMINALITY

An evident increase in women's share in the entire convict population has been reported in France over the last decades³⁰ and it was common for them to commit crimes with extraordinarily high level of aggression and use of violence.³¹ According to the findings of the French National Institute for Advanced Studies in Security and Justice (INHESJ) and the National Observatory on Crime and Criminal Justice

²⁵ H. Romano, *Infanticide: réflexions au sujet des homicides sur mineurs de un an*, Enfance Majuscule No. 98, , January-February 2008, pp. 16–28.

²⁶ Ch. Bellard, *Les crimes...*, p. 111; C. Dauphin, A. Farge (ed.), *De la violence et des femmes*, Albin Michel, Paris 1999, p. 37.

²⁷ S. Marinopoulos, *Solitude des futures mères*, l'Humanité, 1 September 2007.

²⁸ Ch. Bellard, *Les crimes...*, pp. 137–142.

²⁹ Report "La violence à la télévision" developed under the supervision of Blandine Kriegel commissioned by the Ministry of Culture, PUF, Paris 2003.

³⁰ L. Dancoing, *Le boom de la délinquance féminine*, Paris Match, 5 October 2010, <http://www.parismatch.com/Actu/Societe/Le-boom-de-la-delinquance-feminine-155045#>.

³¹ H. Van Gijseghem, *Le crime féminin et masculin: deux expressions d'une même délinquance*, Revue Québécoise de Psychologie, Vol. 1, No. 1, February 1980, p. 109–122; M.A. Bertrand, *La femme et le crime*, Les Éditions de l'Aurore, Montreal 1979.

(ONDRP), criminal activity of women is intensifying³² (depending on the type of crime) from three to ten times faster than in case of men. Unfortunately, more and more often it is also observed among young women and even girls.³³ M.A. Bertrand's observations indicate that the explanation of the phenomenon of female criminality evolution requires that different conditions (biological, sociological and psychological ones) determining such an increase be defined.³⁴

Undoubtedly, it must be emphasised that the growth in frequency of crime committed by women can be explained by the change in their social status.³⁵ At the same time, it must be noted that this modification of women's status does not mean a permanent change of their customary position. The fact that they are becoming financially independent does not change their position in family relations because they remain dependent upon men (husbands, fathers or sons). Thus, a woman "bound by her weaker position loses importance within her social status".³⁶

As far as the French statistics are concerned, it must be emphasised that the number of women convicted by correctional tribunals in 1990 was 58,406 (in comparison to 413,675 men). On the other hand, in 2008 there were 60,216 female perpetrators (577,449 men), i.e. 9.4% of the convict population. According to police statistics, in 1992 women violating legal order accounted for 14.97% of the convict population; in 2006 the rate was 17% and in 2009 – 15%. On the other hand, in 2010 the number of female perpetrators reached 182,884 in comparison to 1,174,837 male perpetrators.³⁷

Table 1 below presents statistical data indicating French women's criminogenic activity in 14 selected crime categories in three research periods: 1919–1932, 1953–1978 and 1984–2006.

The above-presented statistics show that over a period of nearly 100 years one could observe specific changes in tendencies of frequency of prohibited acts committed by French perpetrators. Firstly, the basic evolution is connected with infanticide, the level of which was extremely high in the first research period (1919–1932), then it decreased radically (by almost 90%) and in the period 1984–2006 only 114 cases were reported (five cases per year on average), which used to be the most negative "symbol" of mother perpetrators' activity. On the other hand, women's share in the commission of other crimes is alarming in France. It must be emphasised that the number of homicide, affray and acts of violence as well as

³² C. Chauvel, *Délinquance féminine: Plus de doutes que de confirmations pour les sociologues*, 5 October 2010, <http://www.20minutes.fr/societe/605145-20101005-societe-delinquance-feminine-plus-doutes-confirmations-sociologues>.

³³ M. Agrapart-Delmas, *Les femmes...*, [in:] S. Tzitzis, *Déviances et délinquances...*, p. 187.

³⁴ M.A. Bertrand, *La femme...*, p. 36; E. Dieu, *Analyses psychocriminologiques et motivationnelles des crimes féminins*, *Revue Européenne de Psychologie et de Droit*, 14 December 2011, p. 2; <http://www.psyetdroit.eu/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/ED-Analyses-psychocriminologiques.pdf>.

³⁵ L. Dancoing, *Le boom de la délinquance...*

³⁶ S. Karstedt, *Liberté, égalité, sororité. Quelques réflexions sur la politique criminelle féministe*, *Déviance et Société*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1992, pp. 287–296; R. Lucchini, *Femme et déviance ou le débat sur la spécificité de la délinquance féminine*, 1996, pp. 22–24, <https://www.unifr.ch/socsem/Fichiers%20PDF/Femme%20&%20deviance.pdf>.

³⁷ R. Gassin, S. Cimamonti, P. Bonfils, *Criminologie*, Dalloz, Paris 2011, p. 438.

aggravated types of theft clearly increased in all the research periods.³⁸ The level of female criminality is growing fast. Homicide increased 2.5 times, on the other hand the frequency of affray and acts of violence rose almost eightfold. As far as aggravated theft is concerned, the growth was by 30%. Moreover, the level of fraud committed by women grew sevenfold. The presented data prove that the diversity of female crime categories in France over the last century clearly indicates that the stereotype of women committing prohibited acts in the privacy of their home has been challenged and that female perpetrators transgress standards of due behaviour in the sphere of compliance with relevant legal-criminal norms.

Table 1. Number of women convicted in France in the period 1919–2006 for selected crimes³⁹

	1919–1932	1953–1978	1984–2006
Patricide	16	18	–
Infanticide	951	360	114
Other homicide	556	450	1,220
Affray and acts of violence	123	472	839
Crime against children	61	19	–
Domestic theft	43	–	–
Aggravated types of theft	448	389	587
Aggravated handling stolen goods	25	331	246
Fraud	124	32	886
Political crime	11	4	–
Forgery	178	98	19
Organised crime	14	14	–
Abortion	970	–	–
Bigamy	17	–	–

Source: N. Bourgoïn, *Les chiffres du crime. Statistiques criminelles et contrôle social (France, 1825–2006)*, Logiques sociales, L'Harmattan, Paris 2008, pp. 152–156.

³⁸ <http://www.etudier.com/dissertations/La-D%C3%A9linquance-F%C3%A9minine/556412.html>; <http://www.etudier.com/dissertations/D%C3%A9linquance-F%C3%A9minine/298769.html>.

³⁹ In comparison, according to statistics, female criminality by selected types of crime in Canada in 1999 was as follows: homicide: 35, crime with elements of aggression: 15,045, theft: 17,712, handling stolen goods: 2,233, fraud: 7,132, prostitution: 2,607, drug-related crime: 6,076; M. Beare, *Les femmes et le crime organisé*, Sécurité publique Canada 2010, p. 31, http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2012/sp-ps/PS4-106-2010-fra.pdf.

In order to obtain the most current picture of female criminality in France, another table of selected categories of prohibited acts committed by French female perpetrators in the period 2006–2014 is presented below (Table 2). It must be emphasised that the initial analysis of the presented crime categories allows observing a certain general evolution of trends in the criminality under analysis. What is interesting, there are some categories of crime that did not occur in the former analysis (Table 1). These are drug-related crimes as well as traffic in and transport of firearms. Their appearance in the research demonstrates that women not only take an active part in law violation but also modify their illegal activity in the same way as men do. A clear increase in the frequency of these types of crime as well as the maintenance of high (3,500 drug-related crimes were committed in 2014) and even very high level (women committed as many as 19,199 traffic crimes in 2014!) was reported.

Table. 2 Number of women convicted in France in the period 2006–2014 for selected crimes⁴⁰

	2006	2010	2014
Homicide	49	34	37
Unintentional manslaughter	221	167	136
Infanticide	11	15	8
Theft	5,350	4,338	4,948
Aggravated theft	5,064	5,389	5,620
Handling stolen goods	1,901	1,439	1,231
Fraud	1,921	4,084	3,330
Damage to property	1,149	1,032	886
Crimes in traffic	18,203	17,958	19,199
Forgery	178	108	92
Affray and acts of violence	4,215	5,104	5,063
Domestic assaults	1,046	922	843
Assaults on a person	1,239	1,102	1,106
Drug-related crime	2,136	2,968	3,521
Traffic in and transport of firearms	95	115	141
Signature forgery	1,004	994	1,269
Crime against public administration	2,994	3,011	3,201

Source: <http://www.justice.gouv.fr/budget-et-statistiques-10054/donnees-statistiques-10302/les-condamnations-27130.html>.

⁴⁰ In comparison, according to statistics, female criminality by selected types of crime in Canada in 2009 was as follows: homicide: 55, threats: 3,650, aggravated theft: 1,742, fraud: 10,699, prostitution: 1,351, drug-related crime: 15,419. T. Hotton Mahony, *Les femmes et le système de justice pénale*, Statistics Canada, April 2011, p. 21, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11416-fra.pdf>; for more, see M.A. Bertrand, *La femme...*

It must be emphasised that specific criminogenic modification of women's activity keeps taking place in the only "female" crime, i.e. infanticide, because its share in other prohibited acts committed by women is decreasing (only eight such cases were reported in 2014). However, unfortunately, in comparison with the former statistical data (Table 1), there is still a rising trend in the commission of crime with elements of violence by women. It must be emphasised that "female" affrays, acts of violence and aggravated thefts are getting more and more intense. In the period 2006–2014, there was a 20% increase in the first of the above-indicated crime and a 12% growth in the second category. Moreover, an intense rise in the commission of theft was reported, as in the last eight-year period (2006–2014) its level initially increased by over 100% to slightly fall then, however, still maintaining extraordinarily high frequency (over 3,300 cases). There is also another alarming phenomenon observed: a high level of aggression used by women towards family members (over 800 cases in 2014) and towards third parties (over 1,100 crimes in 2014).

4. CONCLUSIONS

Observing the phenomenon of female criminality in France, it is necessary to emphasise a few basic findings. Firstly, the range of forbidden acts committed by female perpetrators grows in a specific way. The statistics presented above show a clear increase in the volume of crimes in which women use all kinds of violence.

Likewise in other European countries (e.g. Poland or Italy), it seems that the growth in aggression among French perpetrators results from political, economic and also cultural changes that took place in France in the last decades. Women's participation in social life, which is commonplace because of their scientific and professional development, made them start competing with men in all the fields of social life. Unfortunately, criminality is one of these areas. It was observed that the level of every type of crime indicated had increased in all the three periods: 1919–1932, 1953–1978 and 1984–2006. The only female crime that did not show that tendency was infanticide, which decreased considerably (almost ninefold) throughout the last century. The reason for that should be looked for in the evolution of women's position in social life. A stereotypical woman's role of a mother and a wife is not justified any more. Women uncompromisingly went beyond the limits of traditional social behaviour and entered the areas that used to be reserved for men. Unfortunately, this observation refers to the area of criminality, where they are "more visible" now.

It is worth mentioning that not only the frequency of female perpetrators' participation in the total convict population changes but this evolution also applies to their criminality characteristics. One can take the risk of stating that infanticide is losing its dominant status in female criminal activity. However, despite this finding, it is necessary to indicate the criminogenic behaviour that still remains typical of women such as acts of violence towards children, emotionally motivated manslaughter and petty theft, which dominate. This general pattern is changing because of the commission of other, formerly non-existent female crimes, including especially drug smuggling or trafficking in and transporting firearms. Thus, the

above-mentioned categories of crime give evidence of even stronger belief that women started competing with men in all fields of social life and are not inferior to men, also in the area of legal and criminal activity that was formerly typical of men exclusively. What is also important, their share in the commission of the “new” illegal acts is noticeable but not dominant.

Characterising French female perpetrators’ criminogenic activity, one may get an impression that the evolution in this respect is typical and critical. However, it seems that criminologists who soften this radical attitude are right. It is true that female perpetrators’ participation in atypical or deviant illegal activities occurs but, at the same time, the total population and the male perpetrator population in France are growing, too. On the other hand, women are more and more often influenced by “negative” education. They observe all signs of male criminality and easily adopt them. It seems, however, that the general level of French female criminality is not so advanced as some researchers suggest. In conclusion, it must be stated that in order to conduct a complex analysis of this issue, apart from a detailed examination of statistical data, it is also necessary to take into consideration other factors (customary, social, economic and cultural ones), which will make the final picture of the examined phenomenon more plausible rather than minimise it.

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OBSERVATIONS ON FEMALE CRIMINALITY IN FRANCE

Summary

The aim of this paper is to indicate characteristics of women's crime in France. The study shows categories of criminal acts in which women demonstrate the highest criminal activity, i.e. murder of a partner, infanticide and many acts of violence (e.g. affray or damage to health). It is noticed that the number of female crimes with the use of violence is currently increasing drastically and aggression dominates in behaviours of the youngest female perpetrators. It has been determined that general tendencies for female crime are changing. The female perpetrators more and more frequently commit the most severe crimes, which in previous years were reserved solely for men, such as arms trafficking, drug smuggling or participation in organized criminal groups. It can be deduced that such prompt modification in female perpetrators' behaviour results from social and economic changes that intensified in France in the several past decades.

Keywords: women's crime, female-perpetrators, trends in female criminality

UWAGI O PRZESTĘPCZOŚCI KOBIET WE FRANCJI

Streszczenie

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest charakterystyka przestępczości kobiet we Francji. W opracowaniu wskazano te kategorie przestępstw, w których kobiety wykazują najwyższą aktywność kryminalną, a wśród nich zabójstwo partnera, zabójstwo dziecka oraz liczne akty przemocy (np. bójka lub uszczerbek na zdrowiu). Zauważono, że obecnie radykalnie wzrasta poziom przestępstw popełnianych przez kobiety z użyciem przemocy, a agresja dominuje już w zachowaniu najmłodszych sprawczyń. Ustalono także, że zmianie ulegają ogólne tendencje w przestępczości kobiecej. Sprawczynie coraz częściej realizują najpoważniejsze, zarezerwowane niegdyś wyłącznie dla mężczyzn, czyny zabronione, takie jak: handel bronią, przemyt narkotyków czy udział w zorganizowanych grupach przestępczych. Wydaje się, że tak zdecydowana modyfikacja postaw kobiet-sprawczyń stanowi rezultat przemian społeczno-gospodarczych, które od kilku dekad nasilają się we Francji.

Słowa kluczowe: przestępczość kobiet, kobiety-sprawczynie, tendencje kobiecej przestępczości