

**„Смртоносни“ дами или „очајни“ домаќинки:
Генералната теорија на напнатост на Агњу и насилните кривични дела
извршени од страна на жените**

**“Lethal” Ladies or “Desperate” Housewives:
Agnew's General Strain Theory and Violent Crimes Committed by Women**

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Апстракт

Насилството отсекогаш било набљудувано преку призмата на човековиот свер. Истото било објаснето преку инстинктите, темната, доминантна страна на луѓето, но ретко било објаснувано како резултат на напнатост и фрустрација. И доколку ги додадеме жените на другата страна на равенката на насилното однесување, тогаш добиваме уште потемна, помалку истражувана област од криминалитетот. Жените како потчинетиот пол, во најголемиот број криминолошки истражувања, биле набљудувани како жртви, а не како сторители. Истражувањето опфаќа анализа на судски пресуди (**N=41**) во период од пет години, преку кои се елаборираат најважните карактеристики на насилното криминално однесување на жените во Република Македонија. Судските пресуди се од областа на Основните судови во Битола (N=11) и Прилеп (N=30). Користејќи ги информациите дадени од жените кои го сториле к.д., во текот на процесот, авторите ќе се обидат да откријат од каде потекнува напнатоста во нивниот живот.

Клучни зборови: Агњу, кривично дело, жени, напнатост, насилство

Abstract

Violence has always been perceived through the prism of human's bestiality. It has been explained by the survival instincts, the dark, dominant side of humans, but rarely had it been discussed as a result of strain and frustration. And if we add women at the side of the equation with violent behavior, then we get even a darker, less researched area of criminality. Women as the dominated gender, in most of the criminological researches have been perceived as the victims, not as the offenders.

The research subsumes analysis of court decisions (**N= 41**) in a period of five years, through which we elaborate the most important patterns of violent criminal behaviour among women in the Republic of Macedonia. The court decisions are from the area of the Basic Courts in Bitola (**N=11**) and Prilep (**N=30**). Using the information given by the women who committed the crimes, during their process, the authors will try to find out which are the origins of the strain in their lives.

Key words: Agnew, crime, females, strain, violence.

Introduction

Defined in its most essential meaning: "violence is the extreme form of aggression which is embodied as illegitimate and unlawful usage of force (physical and psychological)" (Arnaudovski, 2007: 331). It can be manifested as organized, spontaneous, ritual, symbolic, ideological or even as an instrument (Aslimoski, Stanojaska, 2015). It can be result of instrumental aggression or predatory aggression among animals; expressive aggression which is similar to the defensive animal aggression; and aggression in the framework of social contacts, mostly known to humans (Semple, Smith, 2013).

Violent crimes include every criminal activity committed using means of physical or psychological coercion, manifestation of force or threat to use force, injured or put in jeopardy the person's integrity. Every crime from this phenomenon connects offender's aggression towards the victim in different varieties and different intensity (Konstantinovic - Vilic, Nikolic - Ristanovic, Kostic, 2010: 112).

During past times, violent crimes differed in regard to instrumentum operandi and attacked object, thus women mostly attacked other women, and as instruments to commit the crime used their teeth, hands and legs. Weapons were rarely used (Durston, 2013). This period is also characterized by few crimes typical for women, such as infanticide. Unmarried women, very often, were offenders of such crimes, because of their position as priests' lovers or servants in rich families, unmarried women in their early twenties, newly married women and widows. The children were born outside of marriage, they couldn't take care of them, and so the only choice was to kill them. Mostly used modus operandi was drowning, strangulation, suffocation and deprivation. Females rarely used beating, neck breaking, knifing, burning or throwing the baby to the pigs as modus operandi (Spence, 2010).

Women as criminals in the Republic of Macedonia cover a very low level of total crime participation. The ratio between women and men between 1995 and 2015 oscillates between 5.27 in 2001 as the lowest and 10.66 in 2014 as the highest ratio. The average number of convicted women in the 21 year period is 554 women a year, which is around twelve times lower than the one of.

The research is directed towards analysing the connection between patriarchal relations; female position in Macedonian society; frustration and strain as the result of not being able to fulfil the "dream" of "modern" woman.

A short overview of the Agnew's General Strain Theory

The general strain theory from Robert Agnew was developed in a time when previous strain theories began to lose its central position in criminological research and explanations of crime and delinquency. A revised version of strain theories (Merton (1938), A. Cohen (1955) and Cloward and Ohlin (1960)) was much needed. His theory is written on a social-psychological level where the focus is set on the individual and his or her immediate social environment. (Agnew, 1992)

In his first paper regarding the strain theories he tries to explain some of the most criticized points of the previously mentioned theories. According to the original strain theory, crime and delinquency rate should be at its highest level when aspirations are high and expectations are low (Agnew, 1985:152). Another stepping stone for the original strain theory is the link between delinquency and lower classes, and its explanation that members of the lower class are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior because they lack the means to achieve economic success and middle class status, or both (Agnew, 1985:152). The abandonment of crime in late adolescence and the quality of family relationships are two variables that are not included in the original strain theory (Agnew, 1985:152-153).

Agnew broadened the scope of strain theory, where he recognized that several sources of strain exist in someone's life, not just the failure of achieving positively valued goals such as monetary success, but also he includes a wide spectrum of adaptations to strain – cognitive, behavioral and emotional. Also, in his strain theory he takes into consideration the individual's social status, their expectations for the future and the connections with criminal others.

Before we can talk about the different types of strain that both sexes experience, and are more likely to lead to criminal behavior, we have to explain what can be included in the term strain. According to Agnew the term strain refers to "relationships in which others are not treating the individual as he or she would like to be treated" (Agnew 1992: 48). In one of his articles (Agnew, 2001) Agnew gives definitions about what is incorporated in the three types of strain that he identifies in one's life.

✦ Objective strains – these types of strain refer to events and conditions that are negatively valued by most members of a given community. So one can experience an objective strain when the event or condition that he or she is experiencing is disliked by the members of his or her group;

✦ Subjective strains – these types of strain are connected with the events and conditions that are usually disliked by the people that have experienced or are experiencing them. An individual is experiencing a subjective strain, when he or she dislikes the event or condition that they are experiencing;

✦ The emotional response to an event or condition – it is deeply connected to the subjective strain, so the subjective strain is one's perspective and estimation of an event or condition. The emotional reaction about an event or condition may differ or be the same for two individuals. So the same subjective strain can result in different emotional reaction from the perspective of two individuals. One can get really angry, but the other may experience a mild anger.

Agnew also put gender into consideration when he tried to connect the different types of strain and criminal behavior. According to Agnew and Broidy female suffer from a wide range of oppressive conditions that can lead to crime. The general strain theory exceeds the work in prior strain theories, because this theory allows us to better understand and perceive the different types of strain that man and women experience and gives us a better picture of the different factors that influence the emotional reaction to the strain experienced by man and women. The fact that prior to this theory theorists believed that women feel less pressure and consequently to that experience less strain, can be reflected in the next citation of Naffine:

They ignore the evidence when they insist that women are insulated from the pressures of public life, that their role is less demanding than the male role and they thus do not experience pressures causing them to deviate ... Research has since revealed that females are susceptible to frustrations of a more general nature and that these frustrations correlate positively with offending ... At the head of the feminist agenda for strain theory is the investigation of the concerns and goals and the frustrations of criminal and conforming women (Naffine 1987:23).

There are three major types of strain according to general strain theory. They are the failure to achieve positively valued goals, the loss of positive stimuli, and the presentation of negative stimuli. The first type of strain incorporates three subcategories and those are: the failure to achieve aspirations or ideal goals, the failure to achieve expectations and the failure to be treated in a just/fair manner. These types of strain can be connected with the emotional reaction to the strain which may differ from male to female. The strain that an individual is experiencing leads to emotions such as depression, anger and frustration, and one possible response to these emotions is crime. Especially the emotional reactions of anger and frustration are seen as an important factor that can increase the likelihood of a criminal response. For example, the lower rate of female crime can be connected with the fact that females are more likely to respond to strain with depression rather than anger. According to Mirowasky and Ross (1995) "women respond to stressors with somewhat different emotions than man ... man get hostile – women get sad and depressed".

In the next few paragraphs we will explain the types of strain that are experienced by female offenders and are incorporated and explained in the general strain theory from Agnew (Agnew, Broidy, 1997).

The failure to achieve positively valued goals – each and every person during his or her life sets its own aspirations and ideal goals. The failure to achieve these goals may lead to the appearance of different types of strain. So the tests of previous strain theory are focused on the measurement of strain in terms of the disjunction between aspirations and expectations. But this conclusion is seen as unfit to really explain the strain that a person is experiencing. People do not feel serious distress when they fail to achieve their ideal goals or aspirations, but the distress comes to the surface when they experience disjunction between their expectations and their actual achievements. Another source of serious distress is the disjunction between just/fair outcomes and actual outcomes, so people expect to be treated in a just and fair manner and when that is not the case they experience some type of strain. The main goals in a female life are put in two

groups, first female strive to achieve and maintain close interpersonal relationships and have a certain expectation from such relations and in the second group is the achievement of monetary success and security, which is a result of today's cultural changes and new standards regarding female achievement. The achievement of these goals is quite problematic, especially in times where the rates of divorce are really high; the presence of abuse in intimate relationships is more common nowadays, and the failure to achieve these goals is a major source of strain in the lives of female offenders. Also females have difficulties regarding the achievement of financial success and security, in a society where they are de jure equal to male members of society, but de facto they are employed in the same type of jobs as before and the differences between their income is still unequal. Combined together the failure to maintain intimate relationship and the failure to achieve financial independence and security has led to a situation known as "feminization of poverty", and the increase of the number of female that are head of the households and live in poverty. The financial stress inevitably is a source and leads to female crime (Agnew, Broidy, 1997).

The loss of positively valued stimuli – this group is formed from several types of strain that females experience, such as the loss of a close one, family member or a friend, because of their death or relocation. Especially the separation or divorce from a loved one can cause strain that is connected with the loss of positively valued stimuli. Females are often faced with barriers and difficulties about engaging in behaviors that they value the most. These barriers are put in front of them during the adolescent years where they have to switch from "masculine behaviors" that has been approved in preadolescent years, to a more feminine role. During their adulthood female encounter more barriers regarding their way of behaving in work surroundings, among family members and close friends. These barriers affect every aspect of their lives, including appearance, conversation, physical and emotional expression, even their sexual behavior. Females are discouraged from a number of behaviors that they value the most. This kind of restrictions may result in the appearance of strain, which in the end can lead to criminal behavior (Agnew, Broidy, 1997).

The presentation of negative stimuli – the strain that is related to the presentation of negative stimuli its regarding to the various types of abuse by family members and others. Usually the presentation of negative stimuli is referring to the role of housewives, which female find it to be very restrictive, monotonous and demanding, and undervalued from other family members. Females also are confronted with a wide range of strain in their work environment. The work assignments women perform are eventless, also the tasks that they are given are repetitive in which they cannot show their set of skills and talents, where the authority they have is really low and the chances for climbing the leader of success are slim. The strain related to these conditions is not equally present in every woman's life, but when it is present there are higher chances of criminal behavior (Agnew, Broidy, 1997).

Table 1. Sex differences in types of strain (Agnew and Broidy, 1997:278-281)

Females	Males
Concerned with creating and maintaining close bonds and relationships with others – thus lower rates of property and violent crime	Concerned with material success – thus higher rates of property and violent crime
Face negative treatment, such as discrimination, high demands from family, and restricted behavior	Face more conflict with peers and are likely to be the victims of crime
Failure to achieve goals may lead to self-destructive behavior	Failure to achieve goals may lead to property and violent crime

Table 2. Sex differences in emotional response to strain (Agnew and Broidy, 1997:281-283)

Females	Males
More likely to respond with depression and anger	More likely to respond with anger
Anger is accompanied by fear, guilt, and shame	Anger is followed by moral outrage
More likely to blame themselves and worry about the effects of their anger	Quick to blame others and are less concerned about hurting others
Depression and guilt may lead to self-destructive behaviors (i.e. eating disorders)	Moral outrage may lead to property and violent crime

Methodology

The research is quantitative in nature and is based on data gathered by court decision's analysis. The analysis was undertaken by using already prepared questionnaires' with every important aspect and variable of women's criminality. During the analysis we marked different characteristics of different crimes. We analysed N=41 court cases with effective judgments in a period of five years (2011 - 2015), from the area of Basic Courts Bitola (11) and Prilep (30). The court cases were regarding violent crimes committed by females. The total number of women who were sentenced as offenders by the two courts was 46.

The main objective of this study is to analyse and describe the patterns of violent crimes and behaviour of females in our country.

Discussion and Results

As we already mentioned, the number of analysed court cases is 41, with 46 women convicted as perpetrators of violent crimes, from which 11 cases (11 women) are from the area of the Basic Court in Bitola and 30 cases (35 women) from the area of the Basic Court in Prilep, in the period between 2011 and 2015.

As we can see from Table n.3, the number of violent crimes in the area of the Basic Court Prilep is higher than the one in the area of the Basic Court in Bitola. Even the total number of crimes committed by women is higher in Prilep, than the one in Bitola.

Table 3. Total number of convicted women for violent crimes in the area of Basic Courts Bitola and Prilep (2011 - 2015)

Year	Total (number of convicted women)	Basic Court Bitola	Basic Court Prilep
2011	11	4	7
2012	13	3	10
2013	11	1	10
2014	7	2	5
2015	4	1	3
Total	46	11	35

Source: Basic Courts Bitola and Prilep

Table 4. Types of violent crimes committed by women in the area of Basic Courts Bitola and Prilep (2011 - 2015)

Crime	Bodily Harm	Grievous bodily harm	Participation in a brawl	Threatening with a dangerous instrument during a brawl or a quarrel
Year				
2011	10	1	/	/
2012	9	/	4	/
2013	10	1	/	/
2014	5	/	/	2
2015	4	/	/	/
Total	38	2	4	2

Source: Basic Courts Bitola and Prilep

Table n.4 shows the different crimes of female violent behavior in our country. It is obvious that in most cases (38), women commit bodily harm, which is the less harmful type of injury. In 2 cases the injury is grievous and the level of danger is higher. There were also 4 cases of Participation in a brawl and 2 cases of Threatening with a dangerous instrument during a brawl or a quarrel. This structure of violent behavior has the expected patterns when females are in the center of research. The crimes are mostly committed in the area of their homes, their victims are family members and the starting point is either family conflict or domestic violence. The crimes committed are in the comfort of their family homes or near them, crimes which have happened after a long history of family conflicts, in some cases even domestic violence. Also, regarding the rural/urban locus operandi, the majority of crimes were committed in rural areas, especially the ones from the area of the Basic Court in Prilep. This is another characteristic connected with female's gender position in rural areas, especially inside Macedonian society.

Table 5. Strain among women offenders and the "dream" of "modern" women

Crime	Age/ Education	Financial status/ Employment	Locus operandi	Victim/s	Motive	Strain	Basic Court
Bodily harm	25/no information	No information	At home (urban area)	Mother in Law	Conflicts	The presentation of negative stimuli	Prilep
Bodily harm	39/Secondary school	Unemployed	Outside (rural area)	Sister in Law	Conflicts	The failure to achieve positively valued goals	Prilep
Bodily harm	41/Secondary school	Employed	At home (rural area)	Mother in Law	Conflicts	The presentation of negative stimuli	Prilep
Bodily harm	34/Secondary school	No information	At home (rural area)	Mother in Law	Domestic violence	The presentation of negative stimuli	Prilep
Bodily harm	47/Primary school	Unemployed	At home (rural area)	Daughter in Law	Conflicts	The failure to achieve positively valued goals	Prilep
Bodily harm	21/Primary school	Unemployed	At home (rural area)	Mother in Law	Conflicts	The presentation of negative stimuli	Prilep
Bodily harm	29/Secondary school	No information	At home (urban area)	Mother in Law	Conflicts	The presentation of negative stimuli	Prilep

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Bodily harm	47/7 th grade	Unemployed	At home (rural area)	Daughter in Law	Conflicts	The failure to achieve positively valued goals	Prilep
Bodily harm	22/Primary school	Unemployed	At home (rural area)	Mother in Law	Conflicts	The presentation of negative stimuli	Prilep
Bodily harm	47/Secondary school	Unemployed	At home (rural area)	Sister in Law	Conflicts	The failure to achieve positively valued goals	Prilep
Bodily harm	63/Medical school	Retired person	At home (urban area)	Husband	Domestic violence	The presentation of negative stimuli	Prilep
Bodily harm	42/Secondary school	Employed	Outside (urban area)	Ex-husband	Conflicts	The presentation of negative stimuli	Prilep
Bodily harm	57/Secondary school	No information	At home (urban area)	Mother in Law	Domestic violence	The presentation of negative stimuli	Prilep
Bodily harm	31/Secondary school	Unemployed	At home (rural area)	Mother in Law	Domestic violence	The presentation of negative stimuli	Prilep
Bodily harm	27/Primary school	Unemployed	At home (urban area)	Mother in Law	Domestic violence	The presentation of negative stimuli	Prilep
Bodily harm	54/No information	Unemployed	At home (urban area)	Daughter in Law	Domestic violence	The failure to achieve positively valued goals	Prilep
Bodily harm	50/Self-taught	Unemployed	At home (urban area)	No information	Conflicts	/	Prilep
Bodily harm	28/Secondary school	Employed	At home (urban area)	No information	Conflicts	/	Prilep
Bodily harm	54/Secondary school	Unemployed	At home (urban area)	Mother of the daughter in law	Conflicts	The presentation of negative stimuli	Prilep

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Bodily harm	35/Faculty diploma	Employed	At home (urban area)	Ex father in Law	Conflicts	The presentation of negative stimuli	Prilep
Grievous bodily harm	47/Secondary school	Unemployed	At home (urban area)	Daughter in Law	Domestic violence	The failure to achieve positively valued goals	Prilep
Bodily harm	55/no information	Employed	At home (urban area)	Daughter in Law	Domestic violence	The failure to achieve positively valued goals	Prilep
Bodily harm	35/4 th grade	Unemployed	At home (urban area)	Mother in Law	Domestic violence	The presentation of negative stimuli	Prilep
Bodily harm	38/6 th grade	Unemployed	At home (urban area)	Partner of her father in law	Domestic violence	The presentation of negative stimuli	Prilep
Threatening with a dangerous instrument during a brawl or a quarrel	26/Secondary school	Unemployed	Outside (rural area)	Sister of the other accused person	Conflicts	/	Prilep
Bodily harm	29/no information	No information	Outside (urban area)	Son	Domestic violence	The failure to achieve positively valued goals	Prilep
Threatening with a dangerous instrument during a brawl or a quarrel	69/Secondary school	Retired person	Outside (urban area)	Neighbor	Property relations	/	Prilep

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Bodily harm	35/Faculty diploma	Employed	A bus	Fellow travellers	Conflicts	/	Prilep
Bodily harm	29/Secondary school	Employed	Outside (urban area)	Neighbor	Conflicts	/	Prilep
Bodily harm	54/Secondary school	Employed	At home (urban area)	Mother in Law	Domestic violence	The presentation of negative stimuli	Prilep
Bodily harm	36/Secondary school	Unemployed	At home (urban area)	Son	Domestic violence	The failure to achieve positively valued goals	Prilep
Bodily harm	38/secondary school	Unemployed	At home (urban area)	Mother	Domestic violence	The presentation of negative stimuli	Bitola
Bodily harm	No information	No information	At home (urban area)	No relation	Situational	/	Bitola
Bodily harm	46/No information	Employed	At home (urban area)	Husband	Domestic violence	The presentation of negative stimuli	Bitola
Grievous bodily harm	62/Agricultural school	Retired person	At home (urban area)	Friend	Conflicts	/	Bitola
Bodily harm	59/2 years after secondary school	Housewife	At home (urban area)	Father in Law	Domestic violence	The presentation of negative stimuli	Bitola
Participation in a brawl	35/Self-taught	Unemployed	At home (urban area)	Neighbors	Conflicts	/	Bitola
Bodily harm	32/No information	No information	At home (urban area)	Mother	Domestic violence	The presentation of negative stimuli	Bitola
Bodily harm	24/Primary school	Unemployed	At home (rural area)	Friend	Conflicts	/	Bitola

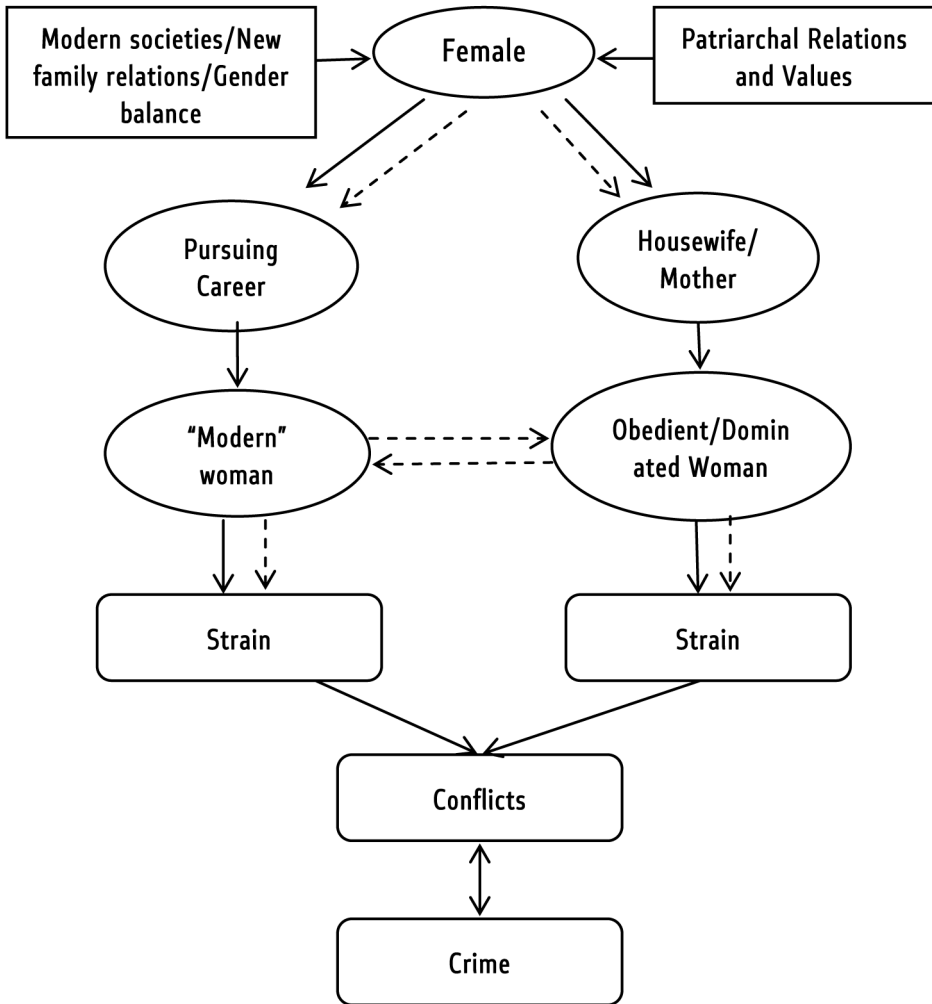
Bodily harm	35/Primary school	Unemployed	At home (rural area)	Sister in Law	Conflicts	The presentation of negative stimuli	Bitola
Bodily harm	73/No information	Retired person	At home (rural area)	Son	Domestic violence	The failure to achieve positively valued goals	Bitola
Bodily harm	58/Faculty diploma	Employed	At work (urban area)	Colleague	Conflicts	The failure to achieve positively valued goals	Bitola

Source: Basic Courts Bitola and Prilep

Regarding the strain and their source, in cases when younger women have committed the violent crime and the victim is an older person (mostly mother in law); the strain is a result of the presentation of negative stimuli. This is caused by the permanent conflicts between the offender (mostly daughter in law) and the victim, regarding the place and role a women should have inside a dominantly patriarchal family. The conflicts are connected with the so called wish to fulfill the “dream” of a “modern” woman. Younger women under influence of modern values are starting to pursue life away from the patriarchal values and their role as a mother, good wife and a great housewife. In our cases, the conflicts were daily and the anger inside female offenders is a result of a longer process. The victims had their opinion of how a good wife should live her life and which activities are acceptable inside their communities. And if they get the possibility to work and be employed, the specter of working positions as a result of restricted societies towards women, is a bit narrow and includes monotonous and undervalued activities. Having different opinions, the everyday clash between the “modern” woman and the obedient wife and dominated housewife, result with criminal (violent) activities.

On the other side, in cases where perpetrators are older women and the victims are younger (mostly daughters in law) or sons, the strain is a result of the failure to achieve positively valued goals. In everyday life each and every person sets its own aspirations and ideal goals. The failure to achieve these goals may lead to the appearance of different types of strain. People do not feel serious distress when they fail to achieve their ideal goals or aspirations, but the distress comes to the surface when they experience disjunction between their expectations and their actual achievements. If families are built on strict patriarchal values and everyday obligations in term of the role every person has inside a home, than in these cases, the offenders failed to achieve their goals by not being able to make the victim to accept their set of aspirations and behavioral norms. In the analyzed cases, victims did not accept the ideal goals given by their family members, and did not act in accordance to acceptable female activities in their communities. Such non - obedience elevates frustration which results with strain and criminal (violent) behavior.

Scheme 1. The nexus between different ideals goals and life expectations among women



Conclusion

Agnew's general strain theory, as one of the social theories explaining criminality by using the development of strain among potential offenders, explains female criminality through the strain development connected with women's position inside a society. Either woman failures to achieve the positive valued goals and develops a strain after she loses or haven't succeed to maintain an intimate relationship or did not succeeded to gain economic independence as a result of the dominated position they have in their family or community.

In the Republic of Macedonia the strain that females feel as a result of the patriarchal relations and their submissive social position, results with different kinds of criminal behavior. The criminal behavior is in most cases connected to family relations, where taking care of the house, the older family members, the children, the financial dependence create tension and strain. Also, every kind of violence inside a family only increases the level of strain among women. That is why mostly the victims of violent crimes are the closest family members.

The new strain theory is concrete and can be used in constellation with today's modern way life of females, and their criminal (violent) behavior.

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