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**Ženy jako pachatelky závažné trestné činnosti**

**Women as Serious Crime Offenders**

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### *Summary*

The survey on “Women as the Perpetrators of Serious Criminal Offences” was conducted at IKSP between 2005-2007. The aim of this study was to map existing theoretical concepts (criminological forensic-psychological approaches) concerning female delinquency and criminal behaviour, describe the development of female criminality in the Czech Republic, outline the personality of a female perpetrator of a serious criminal offence, and, with the aid of certain categorisations of female offenders, attempt to contribute to the development of resocialisation programmes for convicted women. For the purposes of the research, a serious criminal offence was defined as a criminal act for which the offender was sentenced to an unconditional term of imprisonment longer than 5 years. To fulfil the aims of the study, statistical data was compiled and analysed, a group of convicted women was selected for the research, these women’s criminal records were examined, as well as carrying out on them a psychological examination with the aid of a battery of standard psychodiagnostic techniques and methods focused on the cognitive processes and personality traits of the individuals in question.

The final report consists of a theoretical section (individual concepts relating to criminal or aggressive behaviour of women), chapters containing statistical data on women who have been prosecuted, sentenced and imprisoned and an empirical section containing the results of our own research and its results. The appendix contains statistical data on the prison population of Europe and Slovakia and an overview of research projects carried out hitherto on female delinquency.

Since the year 1994, the proportion of women in overall crime has (according to Czech Interior Ministry statistics) steadily risen from the original 7.9% to 13.6% in the year 2006. An average 9.4% proportion of women has been involved in violent crime over the last 4 years, with 10.7% being involved in property crime and 26.3% in economic crime. The trend for a slight growth in female crime rates is also reflected in statistics of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic – from 3.5% of prisoners being women serving a term of imprisonment in 1998 to 4.9% in 2006.

The research sample consisted of 86 convicted women, which constitutes almost 57% of all women sentenced to a term of imprisonment in the Czech Republic longer than 5 years. At the time the field survey was carried out, the average age of the convicted women in the research sample was 40.3 years; the youngest of the women being 24 years old, and the oldest 67. As to the personalities of the perpetrators of serious criminal offences, it was established that the overwhelming majority of women in the study had spent the important, formative years of their life in complete families, with most considering their upbringing by their parents as “normal”, or protective, when compared to their peers. The benchmark families of the majority of the women did not show any signs of major disharmony, with psychological problems or criminal activity only showing up sporadically amongst their parents. There was little remarkable about the social development of most of the women; most of them attained at least completed basic education, and 10% had received university education. Slightly less than a third (31.6%) were unmarried at the time of the study, with nearly half (47.8%) being divorced.

First-time offenders formed a slight majority, while slightly less than a third could be termed multi-recidivists. Only a small part of them (16%) started their criminal careers at a young age. Most of the convicted women were sentenced to terms of imprisonment for violent criminal acts (murder, injury to health, robbery), with “non-violent” cases most frequently involving the criminal offence of fraud.

The intellectual capabilities of the researched persons did not, in comparison with the normal population, show any signs of deficiency. Women from the sample group showed themselves to be, compared with the norm, more suspicious, untrusting and emotionally lacking. There were manifestations of feelings of inadequacy, low self-confidence and self-esteem. Interpersonal relationships tended to be superficial, generally with little emotional engagement. Perpetrators of violent criminal acts showed themselves to be more egocentric, with a manipulative tendency (manipulation or exploitation of others). They have less control of themselves (poor behavioral control; disconstraint), behaving impulsively with tendencies towards habitual behaviour (potential and manifest addiction, e.g. difficulties with alcohol or other substance use).

Women in the study group often present a critical motivational style, i.e., passive-aggressive or negativistic personality disorder. Their passive behaviour is linked to a critical attitude towards others, with their mood showing characteristics of resentment. Passive-aggressive individuals felt that they are generally misunderstood, constantly weighed down by excessive and unfair demands on them, with their resistance towards these demands (and their

surroundings) being demonstrated indirectly, e.g. through procrastination, deliberate forgetfulness, passive resistance or “wilful acts”.

The women show a tendency to increased resistance towards the penitentiary regime (treatment), being less accommodating towards therapy (negative treatment indicators); this is caused by a lack of motivation towards change. From this point of view, the prediction of their individual disposition to criminality would be rather adverse.

There is no doubt that the criminal prosecution process can contribute to the established steady decrease in trustfulness; women in the research sample had gone through this process at least once in the past, with its attendant situation of being under constant surveillance and the other typical hazards of incarceration.

Women who perpetrate serious, violent criminal offences are more egocentric and emotionally depleted, more submissive and have markedly less self-control (poor behavioral control; disconstraint) than women who perpetrate serious, non-violent criminal offences. Criminal offences tend to be committed at a younger age.

We would like to, in the future, verify the applicability of Megaggee’s penitentiary typology, whose basic characteristics we mention in the text of the report, for the purposes of treatment and differentiation under our conditions, as well as to add to it a more “general” paradigm for the classification/ typology of female offenders on the basis their personality traits, also for the purposes of effective treatment of offenders and their resocialisation (and resettlement).

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