I22   Females Who Sexually Offend: Characteristics and Behaviors

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The goal of this presentation is to add to the empirical literature on sexual offending by females, given the paucity of such resources available to those involved in assessment, treatment, and prevention.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by increasing empirically based understanding of females who sexually offend, which, in turn, will improve clinicians' abilities to effectively evaluate clients for diagnosis, treatment, and risk reduction.

Female sex offenders are an understudied population and are often regarded as being rare; however, as a recent meta-analysis reported, sex offenses committed by women are more prevalent than it previously appeared.[1] Specifically, Cortoni and colleagues reported that although only approximately 2% of sex offenses reported to law enforcement are perpetrated by women, victimization surveys report a much higher (approximately 12%) instance of sexual offending by women.[1]

This presentation will include data on 13 women who were convicted of sexual offenses and were assessed for civil commitment under the South Carolina Sexually Violent Predator (SVP) Act. The mean age was 32.85 (*Standard Deviation (SD)*=6.50, range 23-44) at time of assessment. The sample had one to two victims (*M*=1.23, *SD*=0.44) each and 30.8% had female-only victims, 61.5% had only male victims, and 7.7% had both female and male victims. The victims' ages ranged from 3 to 17, with the mean age of the offenders' youngest victim being 12.54 (*SD*=4.41). The convictions included Criminal Sexual Conduct with a Minor, Lewd Act on a Child, Criminal Solicitation of a Minor, Promoting Minor Prostitution, and Sexual Exploitation of a Minor. Two of the women had prior convictions for sexual offenses and four had prior convictions for felony offenses. Nine (69.2%) had victims who were unrelated, three (23.1%) had related victims, and one (7.7%) had both related and unrelated victims. None of the women had been diagnosed with a paraphilic disorder. Nearly 70% (*n*=9) had been diagnosed with a mental illness to include schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, substance use disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and an unspecified depressive disorder. More than 75% (*n*=10) reported experiencing childhood sexual abuse. Only one of the women was referred for further review for potential civil commitment under the SVP Act. A comparison with a matched set of male sex offenders will be included, noting similarities and differences, with discussion of likely etiologies of each.

Practical application of findings for diagnostic and risk assessments and treatment planning is presented. Next steps in developing this area of limited evidence base are outlined for consideration.

Reference(s):

1. Cortoni F., Babchishin K.M., and Rat C. (2017). The proportion of sexual offenders who are female is higher than thought. *Criminal Justice and Behavior. 44*(2), 145-162.

Female Sexual Offenders, Sexually Violent Predators, Women

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