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2019 ATSA Conference | Friday November 8 | 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

F-07

Problematic Sexual Arousal in Women

Psychosocial Characteristics and Offense Patterns in Females with Online Child Pornography Offenses

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Much of the information that is known about women who commit sexual crimes is based on data from those who have committed contact offenses. These studies report these women experience high rates of sexual abuse in childhood and adulthood (Cortoni, 2018; Levenson, Willis, & Prescott, 2015). In addition, they report high rates of mental illness, low self-esteem, poor social skills, identity issues, and antisocial features (Fazel, Sjostedt, Grann, & Langstrom, 2010; Ford & Cortoni, 2008; Rousseau & Cortoni, 2010; Turner, Miller, & Henderson, 2008) are very common. However, there is little that is known about the women who are involved in the production, possession, and distribution of child pornography (CP), defined as any sexual depiction of minor children (under the age of 18; 18 U.S. Code § 2251). In the U.S. federal prison population, regardless of their gender identity, individuals who commit online sexual crimes are among the fastest growing segments of the total population (Magaletta, Faust, Bickart, & McLearn, 2012). Yet, although women are involved in CP crimes, little information is known about them. This study's aim was to explore the histories, crime characteristics, and other psychosocial factors of women charge with CP offenses.

Data was collected from a computerized database of all females sentenced for a sexual crime in the custody of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons as of November 2012. The final sample consisted of 98 subjects serving a sentence for a wide range of sexual offenses. The following variables were coded: history of mental health treatment (inpatient/outpatient), history of suicide attempts/gestures, history of treatment with psychotropic medication, history of cognitive impairment, history of autism spectrum disorder, history of substance abuse, history of sexual victimization, history of physical victimization, age at first arrest, prior offenses, prior sexual offenses, prior violent offenses, current offense, presence of co-offending, relationship of subject to CP production victim, and contact offending.

The majority of the sample (n=86, 87%) were convicted of violations of federal child pornography statutes and a minority (n=12, 12%) were convicted of contact sexual

SHAPING THE FUTURE

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offenses committed during the production of CP. Many of the women (n=70, 71%) were first-time offenders. Fifteen subjects (15%) had a history of inpatient mental health treatment and 46 subjects (47%) had a history of prior outpatient mental health treatment. Most subjects (n=60, 61%) reported a history of sexual abuse and almost half (n=44, 45%) reported experiencing physical abuse. Two-thirds (n=65, 66%) of the subjects committed an offense with a male co-offender, whereas one-third (n=33, 34%) were solo offenders. Of the 70 cases of CP production offenses, 77% (n = 54) involved a male co-offender and the majority (n=50, 71%) of victims in the CP production offenses were the woman's own child or children.

Although these women comprise a small percentage of all sexual offenses, it appears that they play a significant and essential role in the production of CP, primarily through partnerships with males. In these partnerships, these women appear to identify and 'supply' the children used in CP, including their own children. The relationships that they have with the children may also influence the types of images that are created during the production phase, including initiating sexual contact. As such, these women participate in the production of child pornography on both sides of the camera – as a person who provides access to the victim, and as a secondary subject of the images. These findings suggest that there may be a new type of contact offending that is a byproduct of the influence of digital technologies on patterns of sexually abusive behavior. We will review the implications these results have for health and behavioral health providers in regard to trauma-based treatment for the prevention of child abuse and highlight the importance of treating mental health, substance use, previous victimization, and other co-morbid issues often seen in women who have committed a sexual offense.

Learning Goals

- Identify the psychosocial characteristics of women with online offenses.
- Describe the unique role that women play in the production of child pornography.
- Increase knowledge regarding how psychosocial characteristics identified in this study translate into clinical practice.

Kristin M. Willert, PsyD is a licensed psychologist. She presently serves as the Sex Offender Treatment Programs Coordinator for the Federal Bureau of Prisons in Washington, DC where she has oversight of the Sex Offender Management and Treatment Programs throughout the Bureau of Prisons. She has clinical experience with justice-involved adolescents and adults, and was the Coordinator for the only female sexual offender treatment program within the Federal prison system. Additionally, she has experience providing drug treatment, crisis intervention, and trauma treatment for incarcerated women.

Melissa D. Grady, PhD is Associate Professor of Social Work at the National Catholic School of Social Service at Catholic University in Washington DC where she teaches clinical practice and theory, research, and human development. She has clinical experience working with adolescents who have been convicted of sexual crimes and their families. In addition, she conducts research on sexual violence prevention, specifically on sexual offenders and on evidence-based practice. She has numerous peer review publications and

SHAPING THE FUTURE

2019 ATSA Conference | Friday November 8 | 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

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SHAPING THE FUTURE

2019 ATSA Conference | Friday November 8 | 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Sexual Interest Testing for Women who Sexually Offend

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There is a known gender bias in the rates of sexual offending, with women committing between 2% and 12% of sexual offences, depending on the reporting source (Cortoni, Babchishin, & Rat, 2017). Although men commit most sexual offences, sexual abuse perpetrated by women is no less harmful to victims, and results in equally serious sanctions by the criminal justice system. Unfortunately, empirically validated risk tools for assessing sexual recidivism in women are lacking (e.g., Static-99R; Marshall, Miller, & Cortoni, 2018).

For men who sexually offend, the objective assessment of sexual interests has been an integral part of evaluating risk, particularly because self-reporting may be impacted by response biases. The penile plethysmograph is a valid measure of sexual interest and meta-analytic findings show that phallometric responses are predictive of sexual recidivism, particularly with respect to men with sexual interests in children (McPhail et al., 2017). Given the sensitivity and specificity with which phallometric responses reflect sexual interests and risk for recidivism in men, some have considered whether genital responses could also be used as an index of sexual interest in women who sexually offend (Knack, Murphy, Ranger, Meston, & Fedoroff, 2015; Suschinsky & Lalumière, 2009).

There has been a proliferation of studies assessing the genital response patterns of women with typical sexual interests in the past 30 years, with a number of new genital response measures being validated in the past decade (Kukkonen, 2014). Despite this surge of studies, the assessment of genital response in women with paraphilic interests is virtually nonexistent. This relative dearth of research may be explained in part by findings that women's genital responses are less specific than men's and do not necessarily correspond with their stated sexual interests (Chivers, 2017; Lalumière, 2017). However, emerging research suggests that some indices of genital response (e.g., genital lubrication; Sawatsky, Dawson, & Lalumière, 2018) as well as measures of visual attention (e.g., Dawson & Chivers, 2016, 2018; Vásquez-Amézquita et al., 2019) accurately detect women's sexual interests. As such, further research is needed to elucidate which genital and cognitive measures (if any) are suitable for assessing women with typical sexual interests as well as those that might be used in clinical and forensic settings to assess women who sexually offend.

SHAPING THE FUTURE

2019 ATSA Conference | Friday November 8 | 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Learning Goals:

- Provide an overview of objective measures of women's sexual arousal and sexual interest, including genital and cognitive measures.
- Review current research on gendered sexual response as it relates to the capability of objective measures to assess women's sexual interests.
- Discuss future directions for research on the objective assessment of sexual interests in women who sexually offend.

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