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Research at a glance

Women who Sexually Offend: An Assessment of the Descriptive Model of Female Sexual Offending

KEY WORDS: *women offenders, sexual offending*

What it means

The Descriptive Model of Female Sexual Offending¹ was able to effectively characterize most women sex offenders who participated in interviews. The pathways approach underlying this model, which accounts for the contributory roles of cognitive, behavioural, affective, and contextual factors in women’s sexual offending (see Table), could potentially inform treatment targets for this group.

Our recommended augmentations to the model could also facilitate its utilization as an assessment tool. Further quantitative research should be conducted to validate the new proposed pathway and the proposed changes to the checklist.

What we found

The pathways model of women’s sexual offending was able to classify most, but not all, women sex offenders who participated in the study. Fifty percent of these women were classified as *Directed-Avoidant*, or as coerced into offending by a co-offender. Another 29% were classified as *Explicit-Approach*, or as actively planning their offences. Finally, *Implicit-Disorganized* offenders, or those who offend impulsively, represented 7% of the sample, with the remaining 14% not classifiable.

Exploratory follow-up analyses led the researchers to recommend a fourth pathway, *Adopted-Approach*, which characterizes women sex offenders who actively approach co-offending to please their intimate partner.

Why we did this study

Very little research has been conducted on women who sexually offend. In collaboration with Theresa Gannon (University of Kent, UK), who developed the Descriptive Model of Female Sexual Offending, we applied the model to a Canadian sample of women sex offenders to examine its validity.

What we did

Fourteen women sex offenders completed qualitative semi-structured interviews. These offence narratives were then coded using established guidelines, and allowed the women sex offenders to be characterized into pathways.

For more information

Lutfy, M. & Derkzen, D. (2014) *Women who sexually offend: An assessment of the descriptive model of female sexual offending* (Research Report R-334). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

To obtain a PDF version of the full report, or for other inquiries, please e-mail the [Research Branch](#) or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975.

You can also visit the website for a full list of research publications.

¹ Gannon, T., Rose, M., & Ward, T. (2012). A descriptive offence process model for female sexual offenders. In B. K. Schwartz (Ed.), *The Sex Offender: Current trends in policy and treatment practice VII* (pp. 1-16). Kingston, NJ: Civil Research Institute.

Descriptive Model of Female Sexual Offending, Including Proposed New Pathway

| Pathway | Features | | |
|--|--------------------------|---|---|
| | Planning | Motivation | Affect |
| Explicit-Approach | distal, explicit | sexual gratification, intimacy, revenge, financial gain | strong, positive |
| Directed-Avoidant | directed by co-offender | threats or coercion from co-offender | negative |
| Implicit-Disorganized | impulsive, implicit | varied, self-regulation failure | strong or fleeting, positive and negative |
| Newly-Proposed: Adopted-Approach | adopted from co-offender | sexual gratification, intimacy | positive |