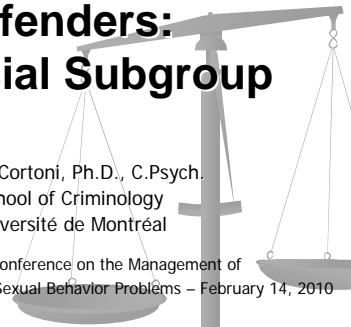


Female Sexual Offenders: A Special Subgroup

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18th Annual Conference on the Management of
Adults and Juveniles with Sexual Behavior Problems – February 14, 2010



Outline

- Prevalence
- Pathways to offending
- Risk of recidivism / risk factors
- Treatment Issues & Risk Management
- Conclusion



Prevalence



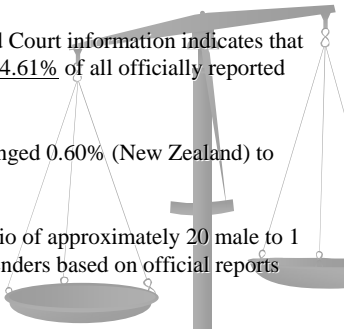
Proportion of s.o. who are women (Cortoni, Hanson, & Coache, 2009a)

- The proportion of sexual offenders who were women was estimated based:
 - Official police or Court reports of offender gender
 - Victimization surveys
- Information was available for the following countries: Canada, UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand



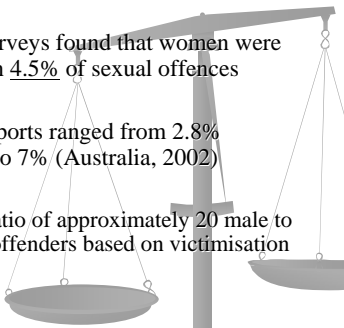
Proportion of sexual offenders who are women

- Official police and Court information indicates that women constitute 4.61% of all officially reported sexual offences
- Official reports ranged 0.60% (New Zealand) to 8.71% (U.S.)
- Results show a ratio of approximately 20 male to 1 female sexual offenders based on official reports



Proportion of sexual offenders who are female based on victimisation surveys

- Victimization surveys found that women were the perpetrator in 4.5% of sexual offences
- Victimization reports ranged from 2.8% (Canada, 1984) to 7% (Australia, 2002)
- Results show a ratio of approximately 20 male to 1 female sexual offenders based on victimisation surveys.



Prevalence: Conclusion

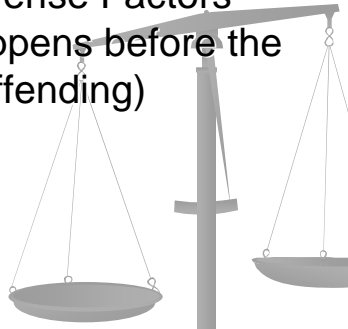
- Women appear to be responsible for approximately 4% to 5% of all sexual offences
- Clearly, sexual offending is much more common among males than females:
 - > ratio 20 to 1
- Female sexual offending not as frequent as that of male– but impact on victims of female offenders as important (Denov, 2004).

Pathways to Offending

Gannon, Rose, & Ward (2008)

- Grounded theory method
- Interviewed 22 women convicted of sexual offenses
- Developed a model of the offense process for female sexual offenders

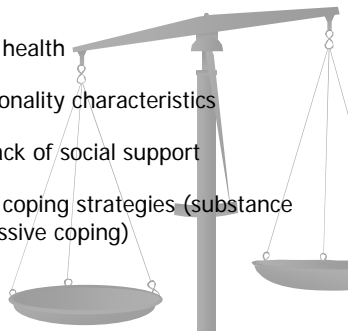
Pre-offense Factors (what happens before the offending)



Pre-Offense Period

■ Vulnerability Factors:

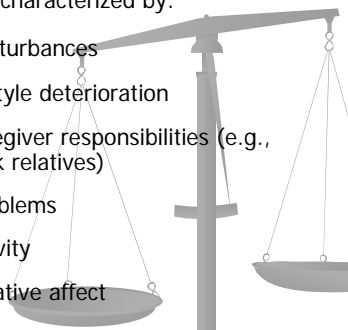
- poor mental health
- passive personality characteristics
- isolation & lack of social support
- maladaptive coping strategies (substance misuse & passive coping)



Pre-Offense Period (cont.)

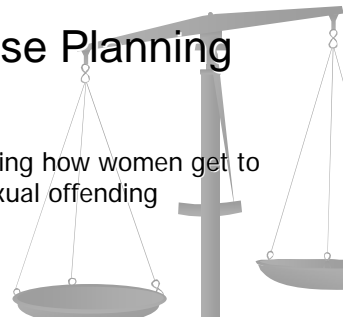
■ Unstable lifestyle characterized by:

- domestic disturbances
- general lifestyle deterioration
- multiple caregiver responsibilities (e.g., children, sick relatives)
- financial problems
- criminal activity
- general negative affect



Offense Planning

Understanding how women get to sexual offending



Goals toward offending

- Goals to offend:
 - sexual gratification
 - intimacy (with either a victim or a co-offender)
 - instrumental other (e.g., revenge / humiliation or financial)



Implicit Planning

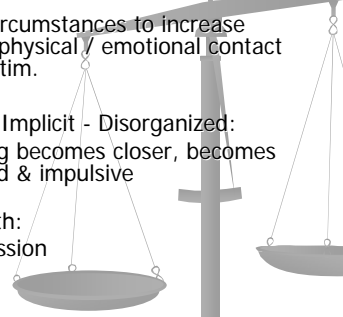
General Implicit planning:

- Adjusting circumstances to increase chances of physical / emotional contact with the victim.

Sub-type: Proximal Implicit - Disorganized:

- As offending becomes closer, becomes disorganized & impulsive

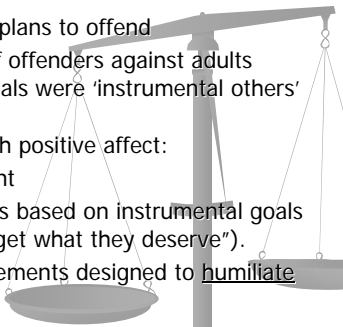
- Associated with:
 - Aggression
 - Anger



Explicit Planning

Explicit planning:

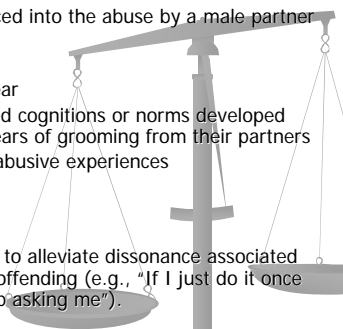
- Explicitly plans to offend
- Typical of offenders against adults whose goals were 'instrumental others'
- Associated with positive affect:
 - Excitement
 - Cognitions based on instrumental goals ("They'll get what they deserve").
 - Sexual elements designed to humiliate



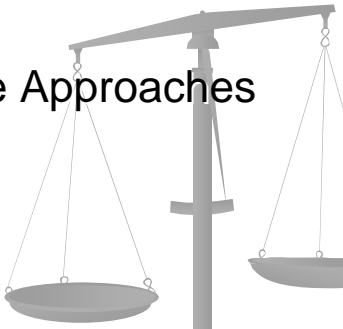
Directed Planning

Directed planning:

- Women coerced into the abuse by a male partner due to
 - passivity
 - extreme fear
 - or ingrained cognitions or norms developed through years of grooming from their partners and early abusive experiences
- Associated with:
 - Anxiety
 - Cognitions to alleviate dissonance associated with their offending (e.g., "If I just do it once he will stop asking me").

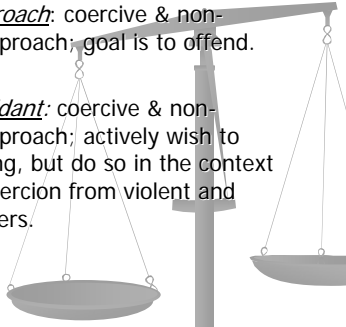


Offense Approaches



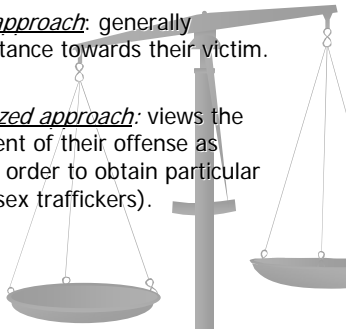
Offense Approaches

- 1) *Maternal approach*: coercive & non-aggressive approach; goal is to offend.
- 2) *Maternal avoidant*: coercive & non-aggressive approach; actively wish to avoid offending, but do so in the context of extreme coercion from violent and abusive partners.



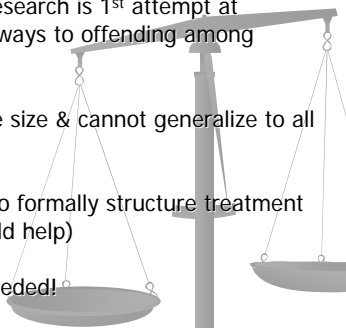
Offense Approaches (cont...)

- 3) *Aggressive approach*: generally aggressive stance towards their victim.
- 4) *Operationalized approach*: views the sexual element of their offense as necessary in order to obtain particular goals (e.g., sex traffickers).




Offense Pathways: Caveats

- Gannon et al.'s research is 1st attempt at establishing pathways to offending among women
- But, small sample size & cannot generalize to all women
- Cannot be used to formally structure treatment (although it should help)
- More research needed!

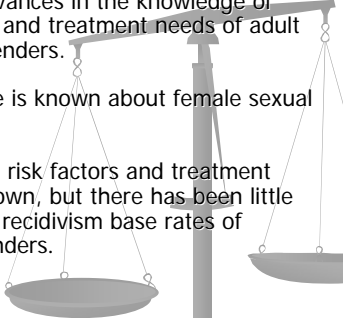


Recidivism Rates of Female Sexual Offenders



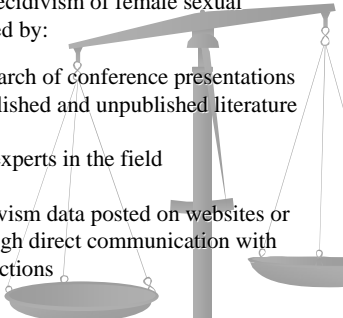
Female S.O. & Recidivism

- Tremendous advances in the knowledge of risk assessment and treatment needs of adult male sexual offenders.
- In contrast, little is known about female sexual offenders.
- Not only are the risk factors and treatment needs are unknown, but there has been little research on the recidivism base rates of female sex offenders.



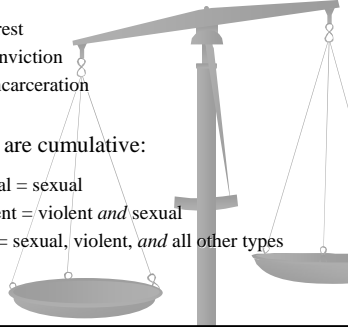
Cortoni, Hanson & Coache, 2010

- Review of rates of recidivism of female sexual offenders - conducted by:
 - A thorough search of conference presentations as well as published and unpublished literature
 - Contact with experts in the field
 - Official recidivism data posted on websites or obtained through direct communication with various jurisdictions



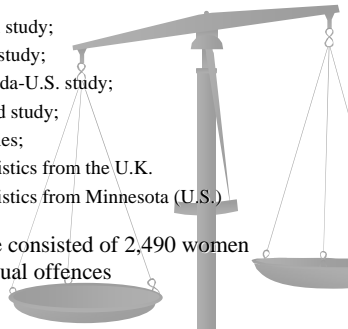
Recidivism: Definition

- Recidivism was defined as:
 - Rearrest
 - Reconviction
 - Re-incarceration
- Recidivism rates are cumulative:
 - Sexual = sexual
 - Violent = violent *and* sexual
 - Any = sexual, violent, *and* all other types



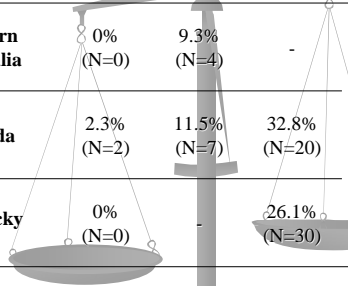
Sources of Information

- Information was obtained from:
 - 1 Australian study;
 - 1 Canadian study;
 - 1 joint Canada-U.S. study;
 - 1 Netherland study;
 - 4 U. S. studies;
 - Official statistics from the U.K.
 - Official statistics from Minnesota (U.S.)
- The total sample consisted of 2,490 women convicted of sexual offences



Recidivism Rates of Female Sexual Offenders

Source	Country	Type of Recidivism		
		Sexual % (n)	Violent % (n)	Any % (n)
Broadhurst & Loh (2003) (N=43)	Western Australia	0% (N=0)	9.3% (N=4)	-
Williams & Nicholaichuk (2001) (N=61)	Canada	2.3% (N=2)	11.5% (N=7)	32.8% (N=20)
Peterson et al. (2001) (N=115)	U.S. Kentucky	0% (N=0)	-	26.1% (N=30)



Continues...

Hanson et al., (2007) (N=6)	Canada & Iowa	0%	16.6% (N=1)	0%
Home Office Statistics (1998 –2003) (N=81)	U.K.	1.2% (N=1)	1.2% (N=1)	11.1% (N=9)
Sandler & Freeman (2009) (N=1,466)	U.S. New York State	1.8% (N = 19)	5.2% (N = 54)	26.6% (N = 277)

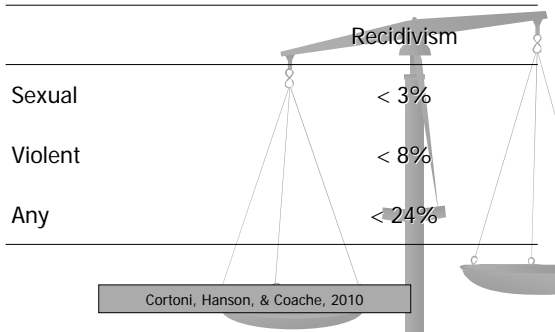
Continues...

Dept. of Corrections* (2007) (N=41)	U.S. Minnesota	4.87% (N=2)		
Vandiver (2007) (N=471)	U.S. Texas	10.8% (N=51)	14.8% (N=70)	45.0% (N=212)
Wijkman & Bijleveld (2009) (N=132)	Netherlands	1.5% (N=2)	6.8% (N=9)	24.2% (N=32)
Holley & Ensley (2003) (N=74)	U.S. Florida			12.2% (N=9)

Weighted Average: Recidivism Rates

<u>X</u> follow-up: 6.5 years	Type of Recidivism		
	Sexual % (n)	Violent % (n)	Any % (n)
Female S.O. N = 2,490	3.19%	6.46%	24.52%
W/out Vandiver (2007) N = 2,019 Follow-up: 5.9 y.	1.34%	4.25%	19.54%
Males (N > 20 000) (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004)	13.5%	25.00%	36.9%

Meta-analysis: Recidivism Rates

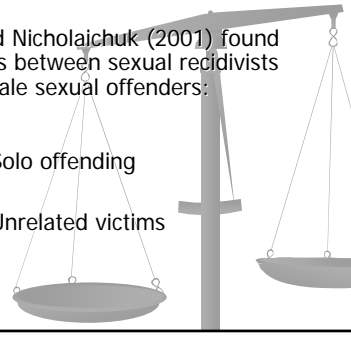


Characteristics of Female Recidivists



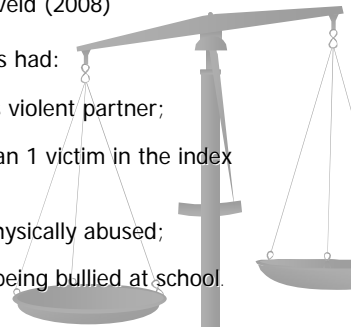
Characteristics of Female Sexual Offenders Recidivists

- Williams and Nicholajchuk (2001) found 2 differences between sexual recidivists & other female sexual offenders:
 - Solo offending
 - Unrelated victims



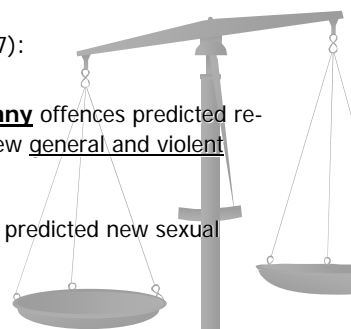
Characteristics of Recidivists (cont.)

- Wijkman & Bijleveld (2008)
- Sexual recidivists had:
 - Previous violent partner;
 - More than 1 victim in the index offence;
 - Being physically abused;
 - Having being bullied at school.



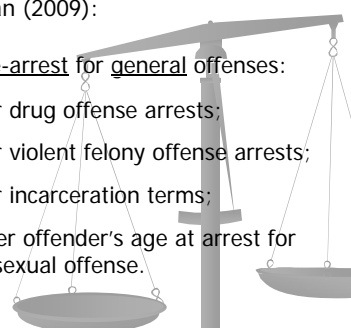
Characteristics of Recidivists (cont.)

- Vandiver (2007):
 - Prior # of **any** offences predicted re-arrest for new **general and violent** offenses.
 - **No factors** predicted new sexual offenses.



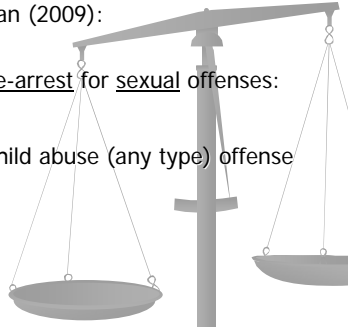
Characteristics of Recidivists (cont...)

- Sandler & Freeman (2009):
 - Predictors of **re-arrest** for **general** offenses:
 - # Prior drug offense arrests;
 - # Prior violent felony offense arrests;
 - # Prior incarceration terms;
 - Younger offender's age at arrest for index sexual offense.



Characteristics of Recidivists (cont...)

- Sandler & Freeman (2009):
 - Predictors of re-arrest for sexual offenses:
 - # Prior child abuse (any type) offense

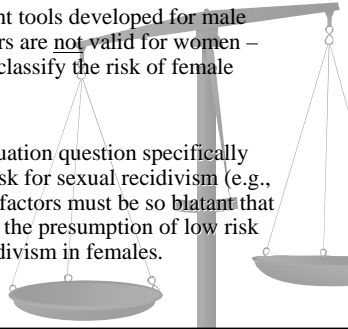


Implications for Assessment



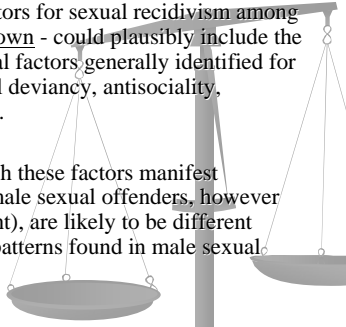
Risk Assessment Implications

- Risk assessment tools developed for male sexual offenders are not valid for women – they will over classify the risk of female offenders.
- When the evaluation question specifically concerns the risk for sexual recidivism (e.g., SVP): the risk factors must be so blatant that they overcome the presumption of low risk for sexual recidivism in females.



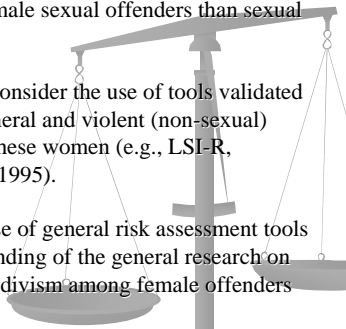
Risk Assessment Implications – cont...

- Dynamic risk factors for sexual recidivism among females are unknown - could plausibly include the same three general factors generally identified for males (i.e., sexual deviancy, antisociality, intimacy deficits).
- The ways in which these factors manifest themselves in female sexual offenders, however (if they are present), are likely to be different from the typical patterns found in male sexual offenders.



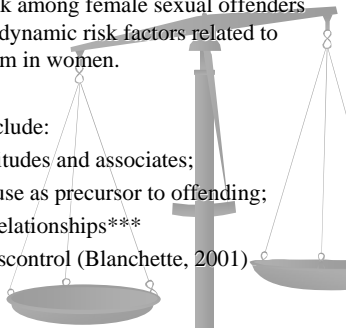
Recommendations

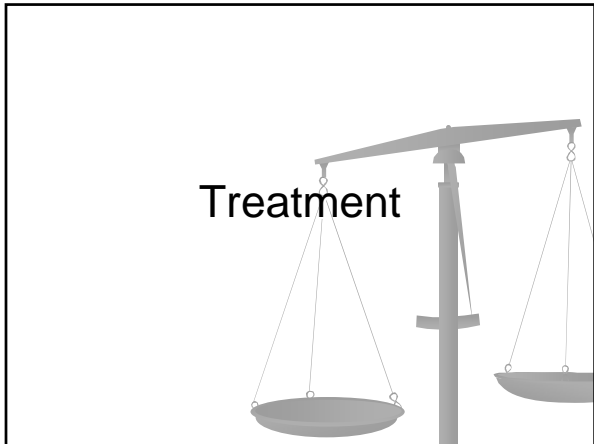
- General (i.e., non-sexual) recidivism is much more common among female sexual offenders than sexual recidivism.
- Evaluators should consider the use of tools validated to assess risk of general and violent (non-sexual) recidivism among these women (e.g., LSI-R, Andrews & Bonta, 1995).
- Caveat: Even the use of general risk assessment tools require an understanding of the general research on risk factors and recidivism among female offenders



Implications: Evaluation

- Evaluation of risk among female sexual offenders should focus on dynamic risk factors related to general recidivism in women.
- These factors include:
 - Antisocial attitudes and associates;
 - Substance abuse as precursor to offending;
 - Problematic relationships***
 - Emotional dyscontrol (Blanchette, 2001)





Female vs. Male Sexual Offenders

- Shared characteristics (but manifested in different ways than for males – i.e., gender-specific):
 - Attitudes & cognitions toward the offending behaviour;
 - Intimacy & relationship issues
 - The use of sex to regulate emotional states or to fulfill dependence or intimacy needs;
 - Emotional dysregulation

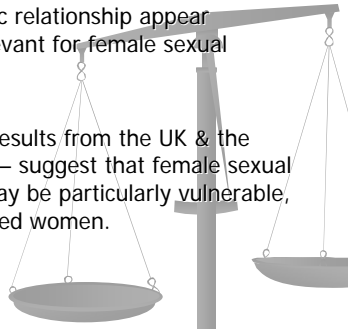
Eldridge & Saradjian, 2000; Gannon et al., 2008; Grayston & De Luca, 1999; Nathan & Ward, 2002

Unique to women: Co-offender (dependency & domestic violence issues)

- Between 1/3 & 2/3 of female sexual offenders are estimated to offend in the company of an accomplice (Vandiver, 2006).
- Co-offender:
 - Typically male
 - Although female co-offending does occur
- Types of relationships co-offender:
 - 1) Coerced via force or fear (but sometimes subsequently engage in solo offending)
 - 2) Co-offends willingly (sometimes even initiates)

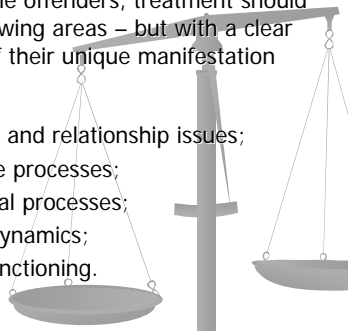
Relationship Issues

- *** Problematic relationship appear particularly relevant for female sexual offenders:
 - Preliminary results from the UK & the Netherlands – suggest that female sexual recidivists may be particularly vulnerable, socially abused women.



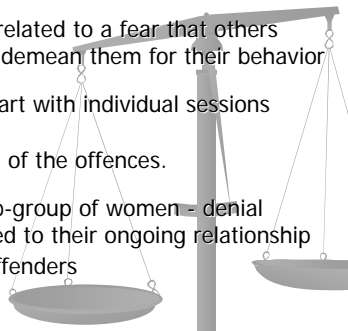
Treatment Areas

- Just like with male offenders, treatment should address the following areas – but with a clear understanding of their unique manifestation among women:
 - (1) intimacy and relationship issues;
 - (2) cognitive processes;
 - (3) emotional processes;
 - (4) sexual dynamics;
 - (5) social functioning.



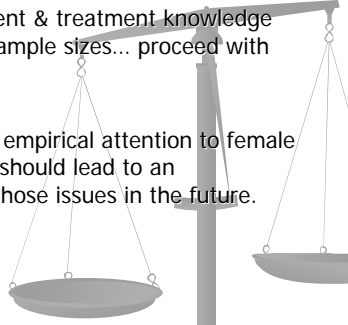
Special considerations

- Resistance to group therapy:
 - Appears to be related to a fear that others would judge & demean them for their behavior
 - May need to start with individual sessions
- Categorical denial of the offences.
 - Among this sub-group of women - denial frequently linked to their ongoing relationship with their co-offenders



Conclusion

- Current assessment & treatment knowledge based on small sample sizes... proceed with caution!
- Increased recent empirical attention to female sexual offenders should lead to an improvement of those issues in the future.



Risk Management



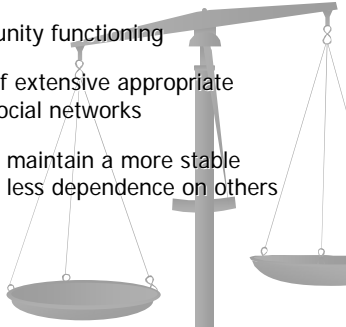
Special considerations

- Cognitive limitations
- Substance abuse problems
- Mental health issues
- Antisocial orientation



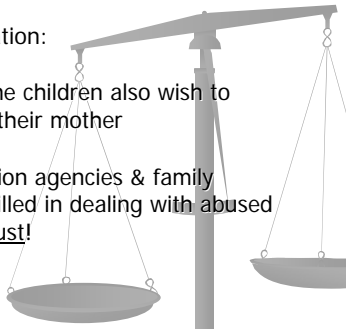
Special considerations (cont.)

- General community functioning
 - More need of extensive appropriate supportive social networks
 - Develop and maintain a more stable lifestyle with less dependence on others



Special considerations (cont.)

- Family reunification:
 - Only when the children also wish to reunite with their mother
 - Child protection agencies & family therapists skilled in dealing with abused children a must!

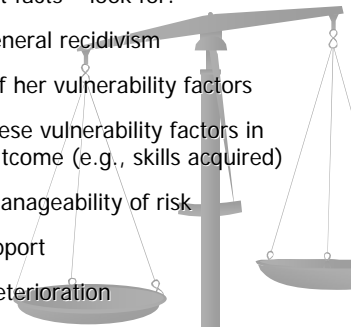


Conclusion:
Putting it all Together!



Start with the Right Information:

- Gather all relevant facts – look for:
 - Potential for general recidivism
 - Identification of her vulnerability factors
 - Targeting of these vulnerability factors in treatment & outcome (e.g., skills acquired)
 - Indicators of manageability of risk
 - Community support
 - Indicators of deterioration



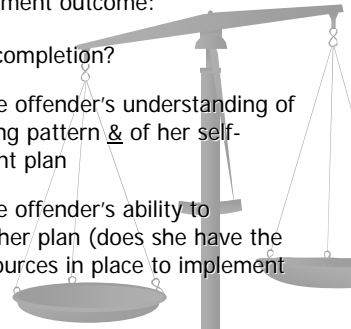
Reviewing Risk Information:

- Consider long-term risk of general recidivism
- Consider dynamics of offense & factors related to offending behavior in individual cases
- Consider the extent to which these factors have been addressed & resolved



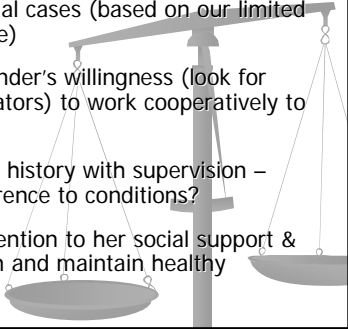
Reviewing Treatment Results:

- Consider treatment outcome:
 - successful completion?
 - consider the offender's understanding of her offending pattern & of her self-management plan
 - consider the offender's ability to implement her plan (does she have the skills & resources in place to implement her plan?)



Recommendations - Management

- Consider presence & extent of potential risk factors in individual cases (based on our limited empirical evidence)
- Consider the offender's willingness (look for behavioural indicators) to work cooperatively to manage her risk
- Consider her past history with supervision – evidence of adherence to conditions?
- Pay particular attention to her social support & ability to establish and maintain healthy relationships.



Thank you!

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