

**when the perpetrator is a woman**

the relevance of gender and sexuality in offending and detention

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**preview**

- sex, gender and sexuality
- the harmful behaviour of women
- women in custody
- conclusions

women are not funny shaped men

**SEX, GENDER AND SEXUALITY**

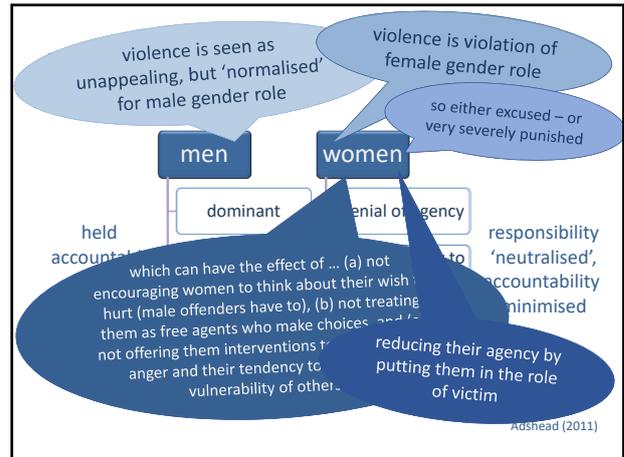
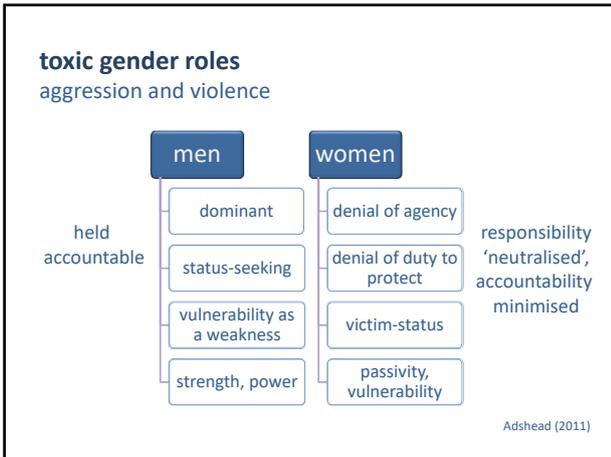
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>sex</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">biological traits that society associates with being male or female</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>e.g. XX and XY chromosomes, male and female sexual characteristics</small></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>gender</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">the cultural meanings attached to being masculine and feminine, which influence the development of personal and social identities</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>e.g., cisgender, transgender</small></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>sexuality</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">sexual attraction and practices</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>e.g., heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual</small></p>
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**traditional gender stereotypes**

general

	men		women	
greater identification with peers	competitive	nurturing	sensitive	greater identification with intimates
	assertive	expressive	identification with the other	
	dominant			
	independent			

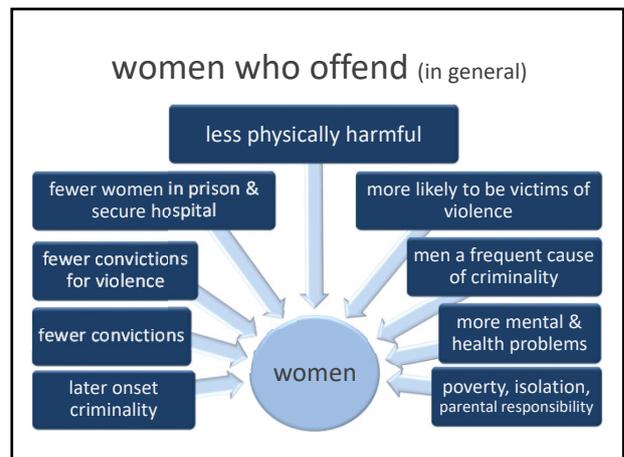
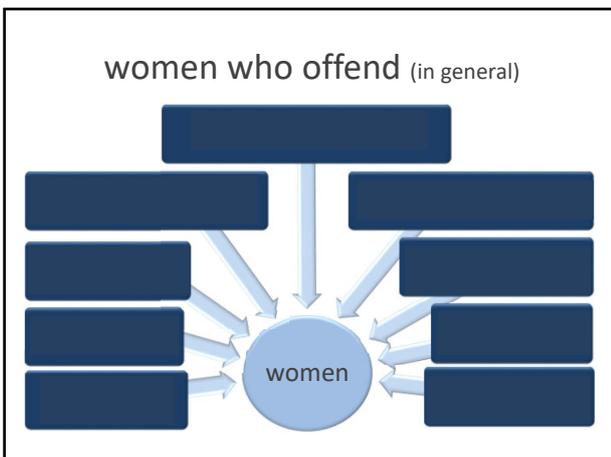
Adshead (2011)  
Paris (2007)  
Rosenfield (2000)



therefore ...

i. gender is an essential consideration in trying to understand behaviour, including offending behaviour

## THE HARMFUL BEHAVIOUR OF WOMEN



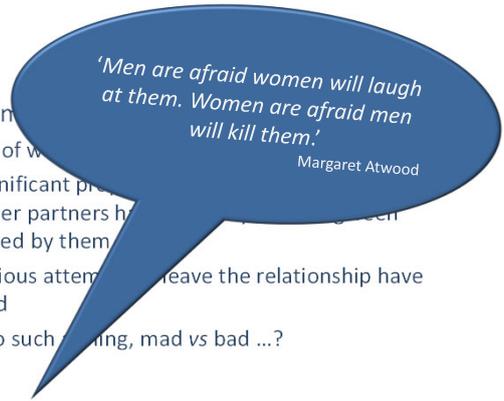
### what we know ...

8% of men are killed by their former partners

- 47% of women
- a significant proportion of women who kill their former partners have a history of having been abused by them
- previous attempts to leave the relationship have failed
- to do such a thing, mad vs bad ...?

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Margaret Atwood

targets

targets

motives

targets

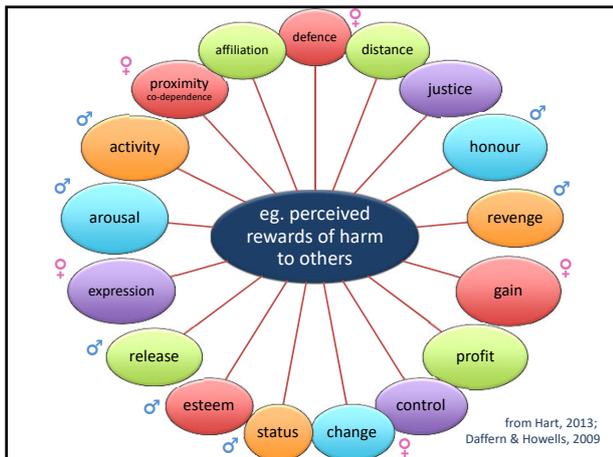
motives

nature of harm caused

### what we know ...

about the violence of women

- domestic focus
- private, secretive
- communicative, expressive act
- unbearable affect
- the relational nature of women's violence is paramount



### what we know ...

- partners (and children) as a narcissistic extension of the self
  - separateness – and separation – difficult to tolerate
- roots in disordered parenting and attachment
  - own early experiences of being loved were inadequate, impoverished
- intergenerational transmission of disordered love

### what we know ...

- unknowing of one's own needs
  - unable to meet one's own needs except in crude ways
  - unable to respond to the needs of others
- lack of control, especially emotionally
- projection of the 'bad self' onto others
- narcissistic rage & fear of abandonment

### what we know ...

- what happens when we deny or minimise the propensity of women to be violent?
  - those women are removed from the ordinary and become other
  - we demonise their violence when it occurs
  - against nature
  - we limit our own understanding of its occurrence
  - and its potential to recur

### therefore ...

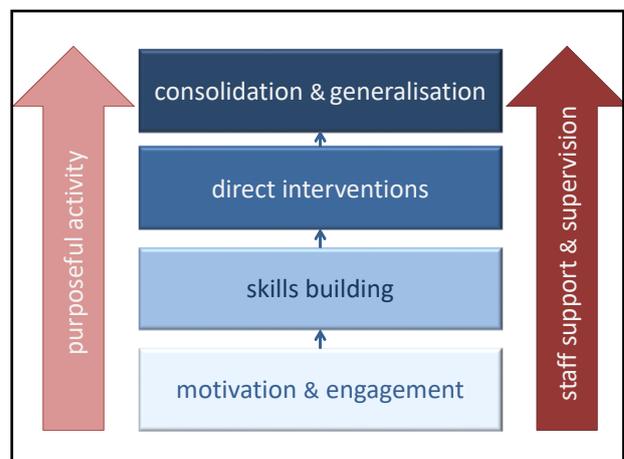
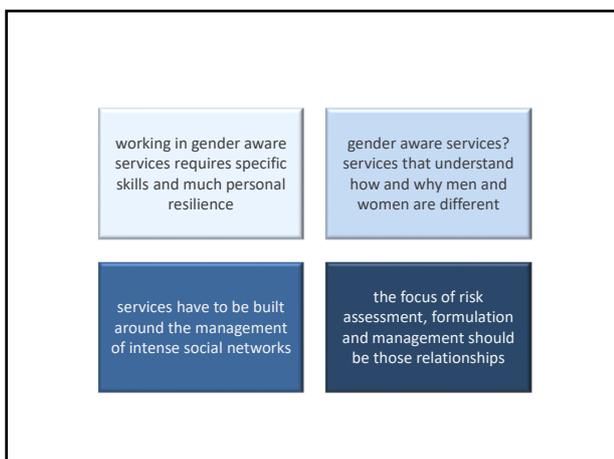
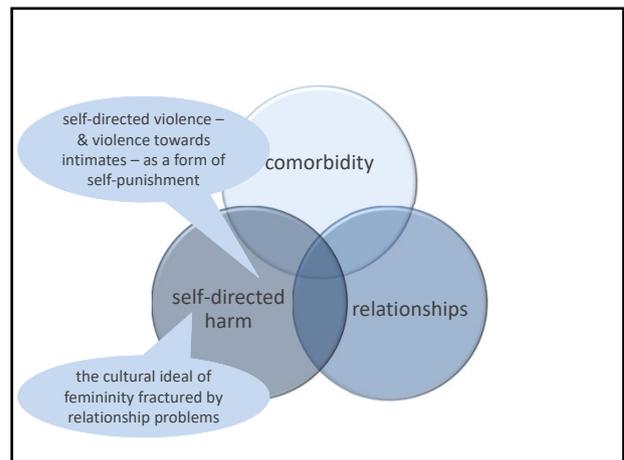
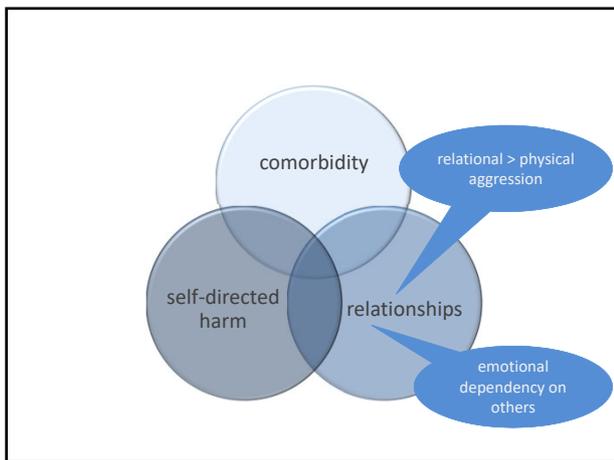
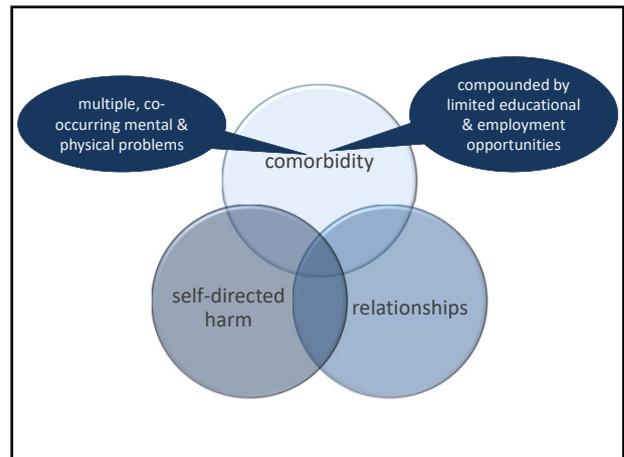
- ii. the harmful behaviour of men and women is different
  - it serves different functions; it's purpose cannot be removed from the gender of the perpetrator
  - the role of formulation in practice
- iii. gender should frame our understanding of these differences and their implications for future risk

the f

ii. harmful behaviour is enacted by people for whom that behaviour has meaning – therefore, key to risk assessment is accessing that meaning in order to understand the circumstances in which harmful behaviour could be chosen again as a means of self-expression or problem-solving

of  
implications for  
future

# WOMEN IN CUSTODY



### therefore ...

- iv. services for women in custody (prison, forensic mental health) should not be run in the same way as services for men
  - what works for men appears to work less well for women
  - although what works for women, tends to work well for men too
- v. build change over time, starting with their motivation to be different

### CONCLUSIONS

### recap

- i. gender is an essential consideration in trying to understand behaviour, including offending behaviour
- ii. the harmful behaviour of men and women is different
- iii. gender should frame our understanding of these differences and their implications for risk

- iv. services for women in custody (prison, forensic mental health) should not be run in the same way as services for men
- v. build change over time, starting with their motivation to be different

### observations

- *while male villainy was dismissed as an unfortunate regression; the same sort of behaviour in females, particularly when it was directed at males, was condemned as a hideous perversion* Margaret Atwood
  - ‘double deviance’
  - the ‘*scurvy behaviour of women*’ Attwood
  - the ‘*transgressive woman*’ Knelman

- the standards we set for women are very high
  - are they higher than those we set for men?
- the intensity of women and social awareness can puzzle and scare (terrify?) many men

- the viewing eye on the conduct – misconduct – of women is important
  - what we understand about violence is based largely on male perpetrators, who usually have male victims, based on research on men
  - research on women as perpetrators, and on the influence of gender and sexuality on violence, is limited

- the viewing eye on the conduct – misconduct – of women is important
  - gender expectations influence our behaviour, and the judgements and responses we have to one another
  - these expectations are highly relevant to our practice with women in detention

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