

Etiological Factors and Offense Patterns of Female Sexual Offenders

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Societal perceptions of women as nurturers and caregivers have perpetuated the misconception of abuse by a female as aberrant and harmless. Recent studies have shown that abuse by a female perpetrator is not only harmful, but also may be associated with the survivor's development of sexual offending behaviors (Glasser et al., 2001; Salter et al., 2003). Despite the increased recognition that females do perpetrate acts of sexual violence, little is known about the extent of their offense histories and etiology. Through multiple methodologies and populations, this symposium presents information regarding the offense patterns and the development of sexually abusive behaviors by female sexual offenders. Specifically, these studies illustrate that female sexual offenders have engaged in diverse sexually problematic behaviors and have themselves frequently experienced childhood sexual victimization. This symposium concludes with an examination of the sequential behaviors that predict child sexual abuse by females.

Contributing Factors to Female Perpetrated Sexual Abuse of Minors

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The present study analyzed data from women who completed the Abel Assessment *for sexual interest*TM. The sample included 81 women who admitted sexually abusing children, 94 women who admitted sexually abusing adolescents, and 202 women evaluated for non-child related sexual misconduct. The study examined three factors theorized to contribute to female perpetrated sexual abuse of minors. These factors included the women's own history of sexual victimization, self-reported sexual attraction to children, and engaging in additional paraphilic behaviors.

The results found that the women reported first sexually touching a child in their early twenties, sexually abusing an average of 3.3 children, and committing an average of 40 lifetime sexually abusive acts. The women who admitted

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sexually abusing adolescents reported sexually abusing an average of 2.5 minors and committing an average of 29 sexually abusive acts. Half of the women who admitted sexually abusing children self-reported sexual attraction to children, as compared to 11.7% of the women who admitted sexually abusing adolescents. Two-thirds of the women who admitted sexually abusing minors reported a history of childhood sexual abuse themselves. Endorsing a greater number of problematic sexual behaviors and self-reported sexual attraction to children predicted the frequency of perpetrated sexual abuse.

Developmental and Offense Histories of Female Sexual Offenders

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The present study examines the offense patterns and developmental histories of incarcerated and community female sex offenders. Developmental experiences (e.g., sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, domestic violence, masturbation, parental attachment, psychiatric disorders, and bestiality) were recorded from a behavioral checklist, a parental-bonding survey, and a sexual history questionnaire. Sexual offense characteristics, including age of onset, crossover offenses, number of victims, and number of offenses were obtained from criminal history records and admissions during treatment combined with polygraph testing.

The developmental risk factors and psychiatric features of differential offending behaviors (i.e., child sexual abuse, rape, incest, multiple paraphilias, and male-accompanied abuse) for female and male sexual offenders are presented with applications to clinical practice and suggestions for secondary prevention.

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Sexual Behavior Predictors of Sexual Abuse of Children by Women

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Not much is known about which sexually problematic behaviors predict the sexual abuse of children. In a recent study with 44,202 males, the results of a survival analysis indicated that several behaviors, including bestiality, excessive use of pornography, frotteurism, sexual affairs, rape, fetishism, voyeurism, and exhibitionism predicted sexual abuse of children.

This study used the same methodology on a sample of 1,636 female sexual abusers. Use of survival analysis is critical because sexual behaviors can correlate with sexual abuse of a child without predicting whether a person will begin sexually abusing a child in the following years. In order to test whether a sexual behavior predicts the onset of child sexual abuse behavior, data regarding the order of behaviors is required. The present study included the age of onset for a variety of sexually problematic behaviors in a survival analysis to determine which behaviors predicted the start of child sexual abuse. Results in female sexual abusers are compared and contrasted to the results found among males.