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Sarah Belanger
Three Studies of Sexual Offenders:
Female Perpetrated Sexual Victimization,
Comparison of Male and Female Perpetrated
Sexual Victimization, and Escalation Histories

ABSTRACT

This thesis incorporates three studies which explore adult and adolescent male sexual offenders. The first two articles examine the occurrence and effects of female perpetrated sexual abuse within a population of adolescent sexual offenders. The final article explores the occurrence of escalation in the offending histories of adult male sexual offenders. The first article examined the occurrence and characteristics of female perpetrated sexual abuse within a population of adolescent sexual offenders, as well as the arousal and victim choices of the youth. The findings suggest that this population experiences female sexual abuse at increased rates. Also supporting the ‘victim to victimizer’ hypothesis, youth victimized by women were more likely to abuse the gender of their victimizer. The second article compared the characteristics of adolescent sexual offenders who had been victimized only by women with those who had been victimized only by men. Disagreeing with prior literature in places, there were few differences seen in the victim and offence characteristics between the two groups, suggesting that female perpetrated sexual aggression is equal if not more severe than that perpetrated by males. The third article offers previously unresearched detail on the existence of escalation within the offending history of adult male sexual offenders, in regards to victim characteristics (age, gender, relationship to perpetrator), the M.O. and the severity of the offences. There was contradictory evidence regarding escalation across offender’s careers,

suggesting that sexual offenders are just as likely to escalate as they are to not. Research and treatment implications were discussed.

Three Studies of Sexual Offenders: Female Perpetrated Sexual Victimization,
Comparison of Male and Female Perpetrated Sexual Victimization, and Escalation
Histories

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2008

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Characteristics and Reaction to Sexual Victimization of Adolescent Male Sexual Abusers by
Female Perpetrators

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Abstract

Characteristics of male child sexual abuse victims of female perpetrated sexual abuse were examined through data from 32 male juvenile sexual offenders, in regards to age the abuse started, duration of the abuse, relationship to the perpetrator, severity of the abuse and Modus Operandi (MO) used. Also, following the “victim to victimizer” hypothesis, the victim choice and arousal of the youths was determined. The victims were abused at a young age ($M= 6.5$ years), the duration of the abuse last 2.02 years, and the majority of the perpetrators were family relations (53.1%). The majority of the abuse experienced by the victims included penetration with a mean victimization score of 11.21 (reflecting a combination of exposure, voyeurism, fondling and penetration), and youth were victimize via a gentle Modus Operandi (54.1%). The youths reported being most aroused by females 13-18 ($M= 3.26$) and the majority reported victimizing female children (54%). These results are discussed in relationship to past research examining female sexual offenders.

Literature Review

In recent years, juvenile male sexual offenders have received increased clinical and research attention (Barbaree et al., 1993; Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). Crime reports and surveys suggest that juvenile sexual offenders are responsible for 20% of rapes and 30-50% of child sexual abuse cases in the U.S. (Davis & Leitenberg, 1987; Deisher et al., 1982, Snyder & Sickmund, 1999), resulting in an estimated 70,000 boys and 110,000 girls who have been sexually assaulted by adolescents each year (Ryan & Lane, 1997). In addition, researchers have reported that about 50% of adult sexual offenders' first offenses were committed while they were minors (Becker & Abel, 1985). Those findings have led to further research focused on the characteristics and treatment of male juvenile sexual offenders, and have supported the conclusion that male juvenile sexual offenders are a significant problem within our society.

As knowledge of male juvenile sexual offenders increased, this population became understood to constitute a heterogeneous group (Awad & Saunders, 1991), within which research has supported the prevalence of trauma. Such research has suggested that between 0% and 95% of juvenile male sexual offenders have been themselves sexually abused (Burton, 2003; Cooper et al., 1996; DiCenso, 1992; Fromuth & Burkhart, 1989; Smith, 1988; Worling, 1995a), with the majority of studies suggesting between 20-30%. Thus, even the most conservative estimates are that adolescent male sexual abusers have been sexually abused as children at a rate that is three to four times that of the general male adolescent population (Watkins & Bentovim, 1992).

The prevalence of past sexual trauma within the population of juvenile male sexual offenders has led researchers to examine the possible existence of causal relationships between past trauma and later acts of sexual aggression. One hypothesis (i.e. "victim to victimizer") asserts that the characteristics of an individual's past sexual trauma are likely to be reflected in that individual's

acts of sexual aggression; and that the greater the extent of sexual abuse as a victim, the greater the likelihood of increased sexual aggression (Burton, 2003; DiCenso, 1992; Faller, 1989; Freeman-Longo, 1986; Garland & Dougher, 1990; Ryan, 1986; Veneziano et al., 2000; Widom, 1989).

In a study to determine the existence of a correlation between past abuse and future aggression, Burton et al. (2002) found that a larger percentage of sexually offending young males reported a history of having been sexually assaulted than a group of non-sexually offending delinquents. However, with her findings from a longitudinal study of 908 cases, Widom (1989) concluded that having been a victim of sexual aggression is a risk factor for future delinquency. Although Widom (1989) found a correlation with delinquency, a few others have found that there is little to no relationship between an adolescent male sexual offender's having been himself a victim of past sexual abuse and the likelihood of his committing sexual assault. For example, Skuse et al. (1998) reported that there was no relationship between the frequency of the sexual abuse suffered by two groups of young sexually victimized adolescent males, 11 of which abused others and 14 who did not these results are limited due to a small sample size.

Not only has a relationship been found between past abuse and the likelihood of future offending, but also specifically in regards to the gender the youth's perpetrator and later victim (Kaufman et al., 1996; Worling, 1995a) and their acts experienced as a victim and victimizer (DiCenso, 1992). Veneziano, Veneziano, and LeGrand's (2000) research supports these hypotheses, finding that 74 sexually abusive adolescents were more likely than not to repeat the behaviors that they had experienced as victims in regards to age and gender of victims, the nature of the relationship of victim and offender (e.g., stranger, peer, care-giver), and sexual behaviors.

These findings were later furthered to include Modus Operandi and severity of abuse (Burton, 2003).

Within the literature, this sex offending cycle of abuse is understood as existing between male victims and perpetrators. Less examined is the occurrence of past victimization of male juvenile sexual abusers by female perpetrators and the possible relationships of such abuse to future behaviors. Historically, female offending has been assumed to be non-existent or so infrequent as to be insignificant. Some researchers, however, have determined that although female sexual offending accounts for a minority of all sexual offenses (Grayston & DeLuca, 1999) -about 5% (Finkelhor & Russell, 1984)- it is a problem that warrants attention. The recent handful of studies which have begun to explore female perpetrated sexual abuse have been uncontrolled case studies of women who have either been identified as perpetrators of child sexual abuse, been convicted or incarcerated for sex offenses or been recipients of treatment for sexual offending (Faller, 1995). Using those populations, the studies examined only those women whose acts were severe enough to receive a conviction, thus excluding all but what may be the most serious and unusual of all incidents (Faller, 1995; Greyston & De Luca, 1999; Nathan & Ward, 2002). Yet, data collected from victim, community and specialized samples (day care settings, sexual and non sexual offenders) suggests that female sexual abuse may account for an even greater proportion of sexual abuse, anywhere between 24 % to 71% (Burton, 2000; Faller, 1995; Finkelhor & Williams, 1988; Johnson & Shrier, 1987).

Researchers exploring female perpetrated sexual abuse suggest that the offenses committed by female perpetrators are consistent in nature, both as to the victims and as to the type of offense. It appears that females abuse young children, specifically preschool and school-aged (Faller, 1987; Finkelhor & Russell, 1984; Finkelhor & Williams, 1988; Rudin et al., 1995;

Solomon, 1992), with an average age of 6.4 years old (Rudin et al., 1995). Women also tend to have close victim-perpetrator relationships, often offending within the context of their role as a care-giver (Rudin et al., 1995). When committing offenses, women tend to use violence and threats less than coercion and persuasion (Grayston and DeLuca, 1999; Johnson and Shrier, 1987).

Female sexual offenders have also been found to have similar offense characteristics to their male counterparts. Initial findings suggest that women tend to engage boys and girls in some form of penetration to roughly the same extent as males (Kercher & McShane, 1984). The gender of the perpetrator not only seems to affect the victim choice and characteristics of their offense, but also the response of the victim. It has been found that victims of male perpetrated abuse are less likely than victims of female perpetrated abuse to disclose the abuse (Fritz, Stoll, & Wagner, 1981). These findings were supported by Johnson and Shrier (1987) who found that although boy victims of female sexual abuse experienced the abuse as strongly or devastatingly traumatic, none of the participants in their study reported the abuse to a mental health, social service, or criminal justice agency.

More to the point and albeit with a dated study, the existence of female perpetrated penetration was supported by Petrovich and Templar (1984) when examining the abuse histories of adult rapists. They found that 59% of 83 adult rapists had been molested by a female and that the majority of this abuse was intercourse.

This literature has begun to examine the relationship between past victimization and later acts of abusive behavior, but little has been researched regarding the extent to which the gender of a youth's perpetrator effect their later offending habits. Therefore, in conjunction with past research, I will examine disclosures gathered from male adolescent sexual offenders who

experienced childhood victimization by female perpetrators, to classify occurrences of their victimization based upon the age of onset, the relationship between the youth victim and female perpetrator, the Modus Operandi, the severity of the incidents, and the age the youth disclosed the abuse. Secondly, as a means to understand the cycle of abuse through the “victim to victimizer” hypothesis, I will examine both the identified arousal preferences of the youths as well as their victim’s age group and gender.

Methods

Procedure

The sample was comprised of subsets of data from 325 adjudicated juvenile sexual abusers, with 179 (55%) reporting sexual victimization as children and 146 (45%) denying sexual victimization. Of the 179 youths who reported past sexual victimization, 37 reported being abused by women only. Average age of the sample ($N= 32$) was 16.19 years ($SD = 1.90$ years), with an average grade level of 9th grade ($SD= 1.64$ grades). The majority of the sample identified as Caucasian ($n= 17, 45.9\%$), with ($n= 9, 24.3\%$) selecting African-American, 18.9% ($n= 7$) selecting Other, and 10.8% ($n= 4$) not responding to any option for race. Most of the sample 65% grew up in a home with their biological mother ($n= 25$) either in a family of origin consisting of two parents (28.9%, $n=11$), a single mother (21.1%, $n=8$), or their mom and her partner (15.8%, $n=6$). The remaining youths reported being raised by a single dad 2.6% ($n=1$), dad and partner 2.6% ($n=1$), other relatives 5.3% ($n=2$), grandparents 10.5% ($n=4$), or in a foster home 2.6% ($n=1$). A number of youth (10.5%, $n=4$) did not respond to questions of their family of origin.

Measures

Participants were asked a set of non-standardized simple yes/no questions regarding sexual victimization as a child, along with a set of sexual arousal questions, age group (i.e. children, adolescents or adults) and number of victims.

The survey had questions including the gender of their perpetrators in two different locations; the first a general question asking “How many people abused you?” and second a more specific victimization history survey. Youths who responded yes in either or both sections were included in this study. Youths who indicated on the more general identification question that they had been abused by women may not have indicated who their abuser was or any specifics in the more detailed victimization history as a way to protect their perpetrators.

The Self Report Sexual Aggression Scale (SERSAS) was used to assess the youth’s sexual abuse of others and victimization. The survey instructions clarify that only sexual acts in which the youth felt forced, coerced or manipulated or acts in which the person abusing them was 3 or more years older than they, were of interest. The SERSAS is a multi-item inventory used previously in past studies (Burton, Miller, & Shill, 2002; Burton, 2003). The scale is used to measure sexually aggressive behaviors over an individual’s lifespan. Previous reliability testing for this instrument yielded an alpha of .88 with an 8-week test-retest agreement for a small sample of 96% (Burton & Fleming, 1998; Burton, 2003).

The victimization score (Vscore) is a scale used to measure the severity of acts ranging from 1= exposure and voyeurism (EV) to a combination of 15= exposur, voyeurism, fondling, oral sex and penetration. Possible scores consist of; 1= exhibition and voyeurism (EV), 2= fondling, 3= EV and fondling, 4= oral sex, 5= EV and oral sex, 6= fondling and oral sex, 7= EV, fondling and oral sex, 8= penetration, 9= EV and penetration, 10= fondling and penetration, 11=

EV, fondling and penetration, 12= oral sex and penetration, 13= EV, oral sex and penetration, 14= fondling, oral sex and penetration, and 15= EV, fondling, oral sex and penetration.

Similarly, the Modus Operandi (MO) was assessed through a MO scale ranging from 1= favors to a combination of 7= favors, coercion and force. Possible scores consisted of 1= favors, 2= coercion (threats), 3= favors and coercion, 4= force, 5= favors and force, 6= coercion and force, and 7= favors, coercion and force.

The subjects were assessed for sexual arousal by using a simple 5 point scale (0= not at all to 4= a great deal) for a number of categories, consisting of; females under 12, females 13-18, males under 12, males 13-18, masturbating in public, obscene phone calls, peeping, rape, frottage, bestiality, masochism, sadism, and exhibitionism.

Procedure

Consent and confidential data were collected from youth adjudicated for sexual offenses in 6 residential facilities in a Midwestern state. Surveys were collected via group format. Several youth ($n = 8$) could not read the survey and the survey was read aloud 1:1 to each of these youth by a graduate student. Data were entered using SPSS 12 and analyzed with SPSS 16.

Results

The subjects reported an early onset of their own sexual abuse, with a range from less than 1 to 13 years old, with a mean age of 6.50 years ($SD = 2.80$ years). The last age they reported being sexually victimized ranged from 4 to 17 years with a mean age of 8.52 years ($SD = 3.51$ years), resulting in a duration of abuse which ranged from less than a year to 11 years, with a mean duration of 2.02 years ($SD = 2.84$ years).

In conjunction with past literature, the majority of perpetrators, 53.1%, were family relations to the youth ($n = 17$). The second largest perpetrator relationship category was female

teen friends or neighbors with 21.9% ($n = 7$) of the youth endorsing this choice. The remaining perpetrator relationships were comprised of adult female friends (12.5%, $n = 4$), adult female strangers (9.4%, $n = 3$), and for both girlfriends and female teen strangers (6.2%, $n = 2$). One youth reported being victimized by two different categories, while 13.5% ($n = 5$) of the youths did not offer a relationship to their perpetrator.

In regards to the disclosure of this abuse, when asked if other family members, other than the abuser, knew about the abuse, the majority of subjects, 73.0% responded no ($n = 27$).

The percentage of victims who experienced specific acts can be seen in Table 1. The majority of victims, 59.4% reported experiencing some form of penetration ($n = 22$). The mean Vscore was 11.21, reflecting that on average, subjects experienced a combination of exposure, voyeurism, fondling and penetration ($SD = 5.02$).

The majority of victims 54.1% ($n = 20$), were victimized via a gentle Modus Operandi (MO) of their perpetrator, using favors, games or babysitting, although 18.9% ($n = 7$) reported that their perpetrator used some form of force used, either on its own or with another MO (i.e. favors, games, babysat and or threats) as well. The MO mean was 2.19 ($SD = 2.04$), reflecting the use of threats of harming the victim or family.

Subjects were most aroused by females 13-18, with a mean of 3.26 ($SD = .852$), the second closest being females 12 and under with a mean of .51 ($SD = .562$). For all other categories including, males under 12, males 13-18, masturbating in public, obscene phone calls, peeping, rape, frottage, bestiality, masochism, sadism, and exhibitionism subjects reported a mean of less than .50.

When the youth's victim gender and age were examined, the majority of subjects (54%, $n = 20$) reported abusing female children followed by female teens (37.8%, $n = 14$). Lower

percentages of youth reported abusing male children and male teens, 16.2% ($n = 6$) and 2.7% ($n = 1$) respectfully. In regards to adult victims, the youths did not offend against any male adults but 10.8% abused an adult females ($n = 4$).

Discussion

Of the 159 participants who reported past sexual victimization, 20.1% reported being victimized only by female perpetrators. This number far exceeds past results in which researchers have suggested that about 5% of sexual offenses are committed by female perpetrators (Finkelhor & Russell, 1984, Grayston & DeLuca, 1999, Rudin, et al., 1995). However, this data suggests that male juvenile sexual offenders experience this type of abuse at increased rates, but this data cannot be applied to other groups.

The youths who participated in this study reported being abused at a young age. This is in agreement with past research from perpetrator's self reports and other victim populations which indicates that female perpetrators choose victims at school age, about 6.4 years old (Rudin et al., 1995). The choice of a young victim age, has previously been attributed to a need for an increased power differential between the perpetrator and the victim (Faller, 1987; Finkelhor & Russell, 1984), as well as an age group which is more susceptible to verbal coercion and less likely to disclose the abuse (Rudin, et al., 1995). Without disclosing their abuse, youth are less likely to receive treatment, and thus at greater risk to reenact their trauma through the victimization of others.

The duration of the abuse lasted about 2 years. Although past studies have suggested that durations of abuse vary considerably from case to case, with incidents ranging from a single episode to multiple years of victimization (Mathews et al., 1989; Mathews et al., 1991). There

seems to be a consensus in the literature that, on average, women tend to abuse their victims for an extended period of time (Saradjian & Hank, 1996).

Past research has indicated that female perpetrators have close relationships with their victims. This study supports those findings in that the majority of the perpetrators were family relations to the youth, followed by a female teen friend or neighbor. It has been suggested that female perpetrators offend within their role as care givers (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988; Rudin et al., 1995). Although this study did not specifically test that role, the two most common relationships (family relation and teen friend or neighbor) could easily have care taking responsibilities attached to them. For example, babysitters would most likely fall into the category of teen friend or neighbor. Other researchers have suggested that the role of a caretaker acts as an inhibitor towards sexual abuse (Rubin et al., 1995).

In accordance with past researchers (Johnson & Shrier, 1987), the majority of youths did not disclose their abuse to another family member. Also, some of the inconsistency within the survey answers could be understood as an attempt of the youth to protect their perpetrators by answering more general questions about the gender of their perpetrator, but not identifying specifics about their relationship and acts in their victimization histories. These findings are congruent with past research which suggests that social norms affect the way victims identify abusive sexual encounters (Mayer, 1992). Specifically, Fromuth and Burkhart (1987) found there were negative consequences associated with childhood sexual experiences in a sample of college males even though the participants did not consider the acts abusive.

There is a belief in the field that female perpetrated abuse is often less severe than male perpetrated abuse. These beliefs focus on the understanding that due to women's physical construction, they are incapable of abusive acts as serious as those perpetrated by males

(Hetherington, 1999). Although this is the case, there has been a minority of past research which suggests that the majority of victims of female perpetrator experience some form of penetration (Petrovich & Templar, 1984). This data supports this later body of research, finding that a majority of youth's in this study experienced some form of penetration. The average victim experienced a combination of exposure, voyeurism, fondling and penetration.

The majority of female perpetrators used a gentle MO of favors, games or babysitting to victimize the youth, although the mean MO score reflected a combination of favors, games, babysitting, and threats. The lack of physical force may be a result of the close relationship many of the perpetrators have with their victims and the victim's desire to please.

The majority of youth victimized females, with the two most common victim choices female children and female teens. These preferences correspond with past research which suggests that on average, about 70% of male juvenile sexual offender's victims are female (Worling, 1995b). This rate decreases when the victims are children with the proportion of male victims increasing to 63% (Davis & Leitenberg, 1987). This data found that in the cases where the victims were children under the age of 13, 76.9% of them were female, thus youth victimized by women were more likely to choose to abuse the gender of their victimizer.

Participants reported that they were aroused most by females between the ages of 13 and 18 years. Surprisingly, although youth were aroused by female teenagers, they choose to victimize children. This discrepancy could be a result of the offending opportunity of the youths, for example babysitting younger siblings. Their target population may be an older population but were not given the same opportunity to abuse them.

The limitations of this research include the use of self report data from the youth. Self reports can yield a more in-depth picture of an individual's experience, but youths could have

easily with held information to protect themselves or their perpetrators. Secondly, this study examines youths who were abused only by female perpetrators and does not include boys who were victimized by multiple perpetrators (with different genders) or, those who were victimized by co-offenders. Researchers have previously shown the majority of female perpetrators co-offend with a male perpetrator (Solomon, 1992) therefore, given that this is a limited sample and the lack of measurement of co-offending, these results can not be generalized to the larger population of female sexual offenders. These results also suggest that there was an even greater occurrence of female perpetrated sexual abuse than the numbers in this study show. Future research should further examine the occurrence of female perpetrated sexual abuse within the population of male juvenile sexual offenders, as a means to better understand the effects of such abuse and develop appropriate treatment for the victims.

Although the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim was examined, past research has suggested that women abuse within their role as a caregiver (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988). Others suggest that the role as a caregiver acts as an inhibitor function in female offenders (Rudin, et al., 1995). This specific aspect of the perpetrator to victim relationship was not examined in this study, therefore continued research is needed to determine the influence care giving has on female offenders.

The current study serves as a descriptive analysis of the occurrence of female perpetrated sexual abuse, and how that affects the later victim choice of those they abused. The findings associated with female perpetrator victim choose and acts are congruent with past research which has begun to examine the occurrence of female perpetrated sexual abuse. This study documents the occurrence of this abuse as well as begins to examine potential learned effects it has on their victims. Although there seems to be some common characteristics of victims and acts of female

sexual offenders, more specific studies are needed to help determine the extent and specifics of those commonalities. Further research should continue to examine different aspects of female perpetrated sexual abuse, specifically in comparison to male perpetrated sexual abuse and other victim groups (e.g. delinquency non sex offending youth and non criminally involved youth). Through a better understand of female perpetrated sexual abuse, as well as the reaction and long term effects it has on their victims, as a means to better support and treat both the women and their victims.

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Comparison of the Characteristics of Childhood Sexual Victimization of Adolescent Male
Sexual Abusers by Male and Female Perpetrators.

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Abstract

The characteristics of childhood sexual abuse victims were examined through a comparison of data from 179 juvenile sexual offenders, 37 of which were abused by lone female perpetrators and 89 by lone male perpetrators, in regards to the age the abuse started and stopped, duration of the abuse, relationship to the perpetrator, severity of the abuse and the Modus Operandi (MO) used. There were few differences seen between female and male perpetrator's victims in regards to age the abuse started and duration of abuse, with victims of male perpetrators slightly younger ($M= 6.60$ years) than those of female perpetrators ($M= 6.89$ years), and the duration of the abuse lasting slightly longer for victims of males ($M= 2.77$ years) than females ($M= 2.17$ years). The majority of both male (52.40%) and female (53.10%) perpetrator's victims were family members. Participants abused by females were slightly more likely to report more severe abuse ($M= 11.21$) than those abused by men ($M= 9.46$) but the opposite was true from the MO, with those abused by males reporting a more forceful MO ($M= 3.41$) than those abused by women ($M= 2.19$). As a result of a small sample size, none of the differences seen were statistically significant and implications for further research and treatment are explored.

Literature Review

It is a common belief and often reported within the literature on child sexual abuse, that the majority of offenders are males and their victims female (Finkelhor, 1993; Finkelhor and Russell, 1984). However a few researchers have written about female sexual abusers (Finkelhor & Russell, 1984; Forward & Buck, 1978; Rudin et al., 1995) raising interesting questions. There is a consensus across these studies which indicates that females comprise up to five percent of all sexual offenders against children and adolescents (Finkelhor & Russell, 1984; Grayston & De Luca, 1999; Saradjian & Hanks, 1996; Thomlison et al., 1991), although this is thought to be an underestimate of actual numbers (Finkelhor & Russell, 1984; Hetherington, 1999). This underreporting of female sexual offenders has been attributed to the difficulty of collecting accurate data (Finkelhor & Russell, 1984), smaller likelihood of disclosure from male victims (Fritz, Stoll, & Wagner, 1981), and social beliefs which minimize the understanding of female sexual abuse (Hetherington, 1999).

Research thus far is primarily comprised of case studies and descriptive summaries of identified female sexual offenders (Faller, 1995), and day care center abusers (Finkelhor & Russell, 1984), resulting in many inconsistent findings. The majority of these studies examine convicted female sex offenders, using a population of women whose acts were severe enough to receive a conviction, cases which may be among the most serious and unusual of all incidents (Faller, 1995; Grayston & DeLuca, 1999; Nathan & Ward, 2002), and focus on the more extreme prosecutable 'sexual offenses' rather than reportable 'sexual abuse' (Travin et al., 1990). Within the literature, some authors have examined data from victims as a means to explore the actions of a larger span of female sexual abusers, not only those who are convicted (Rudin et al., 1995).

Juvenile Sexual Offenders as Victims

Juvenile sexual offenders are a population which experiences sexual trauma at rates that are higher than the general population. Past research has suggested that between 0% and 95% of juvenile sexual offenders have reportedly been sexually abused (Burton, 2002; Cooper, et al., 1996; DiCenso, 1992; Fromuth & Burkhart, 1989; Smith, 1988; Worling, 1995). Even with this large discrepancy, the most conservative estimates suggest that adolescent sexual abusers have been sexually abused three to four times the rate of the general male adolescent population (Watkins & Bentovim, 1992). Recent studies have also examined the occurrence of female perpetrated sexual abuse within this population, and suggested rates higher than the general public, between 22-71% (Burton, 2003; Ryan et al., 1996).

Female Perpetrated Sexual Abuse

Through examining victim and perpetrator data, researchers have determined some characteristics of the victims and offenses of female sexual abuse. Faller (1987) found that female and male perpetrators did not significantly differ in the number of victims they abused. What did differ was the age of the victims, with females victimizing significantly younger children (6.4 years old) than males (8 years old). Although the majority of the female sexual offenders in Faller's study co-offended with a male, later researchers examining lone female offenders continued to support these age differences (Rudin et al., 1995). It has also been reported that women tend to abuse children over a longer period of time, especially in cases where the victims are biologically related to their perpetrator (Saradjian & Hanks, 1996), perhaps explaining a greater duration of victimization. As mentioned previously, female offenders often have close relationships with their victims and sometimes sexually abuse within their role as caregivers. For example, Rudin et al (1995) found that lone female perpetrators were less likely to be strangers, and that while frequently in relationships with their victims, lone male

perpetrators were less likely to be caregivers. These trends exist within and outside of the family unit, for example female perpetrators abusing within their roles as directors and owners of day-care centers (Finkelhor & Russell, 1984). Also, Kercher and McShane (1984) reported that a majority of the women in their sample of female sex offenders were related to their victims in some way, half of which was comprised of mothers and step-mothers.

There has been contradictory evidence regarding the Modus Operandi used by female sexual abusers, specifically in regards to amount of force used. For example, Ferguson and Meehan (2005) reported that the majority of offenses reported by convicted female sexual offenders in their study involved some degree of physical force above coercion or seduction. In contrast, other researchers reported that only a minority of female offenders used force while offending (Russell, 1988).

In addition, similarities have been reported between male and female offenders, in regard to Modus Operandi; both have been found to use grooming patterns to ensure compliance and to prevent disclosure by their victims (Saradjian & Hanks, 1996). Other similarities between male and female offenders have been found in the type of acts used to offend, with boys and girls being victimized by some form of intercourse to a comparable extent (Kercher & McShane, 1984). Rudin et al. (1995) found similar similarities between lone female perpetrators, lone male perpetrators and male/female co-perpetrators in regards to the severity of the abuse, suggesting that contrary to the assumption, abuse by female perpetrators was not less severe than that of male perpetrators.

The gender of the perpetrator also seems to have an effect on the reaction of the victims. Clinical reports have indicated that there is a tendency for adult survivors and victims to disclose female abuse only after a trusting therapeutic relationship has been established (Lawson, 1993)

and after disclosure of abuse by males (Sgroi & Sargent, 1993). Similarly, Johnson and Shrier (1987) found that although boy victims of female sexual abuse identified the abuse as being strongly or devastatingly traumatic, none of the participants reported the abuse to a mental health, social service, or criminal justice agency.

Although the population of juvenile sexual offenders has experienced a greater degree of sexual abuse from both males and females than the general population (DiCenso, 1992; Fromuth & Burkhart, 1989; Watkins & Bentovim, 1992; Worling, 1995) there is little known about the differences in acts of male and female perpetrators of these young men. The purpose of this study is to examine the similarities and difference between the victims of lone male or lone female perpetrator in a sample of adolescent male sexual offenders. The study specifically examines differences in reported sexual victimization of this sample by perpetrator gender in terms of the type of abuse, the force used, relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, age the abuse was initiated and terminated, and the age of disclosure of the sexual abuse.

Methods

Procedure

The sample was comprised of subsets of data from 325 adjudicated juvenile sexual abusers, with 179 (55%) reporting sexual victimization as children and 146 (45%) denying sexual victimization. Of the 179 youths who reported past sexual victimization, 37 reported being abused by women only and 89 reporting being abused by men. There are no significant differences between the groups in regards to their age ($t(124) = -1.80, p = .318$), with the average age of the sample ($N = 126$) 16.61 years of age ($SD = 1.71$ years). Similarly, there was no difference between groups in regards to grade ($t(120) = -.185, p = .220$), with the mean in the 9th grade ($SD = 1.58$ grades). The majority of the sample, 51.6% identified as Caucasian ($n = 66$),

with (29%) selecting African-American ($n= 29$), 11.7% selecting Other, and 14.1% not responding to any option for race ($n= 18$). Most of the sample, 75.0% grew up in a home with their biological mother ($n= 56$) either in a family of origin consisting of two parents (32.8%, $n=42$), a single mother (22.7%, $n=29$), or their mom and her partner (19.5%, $n= 25$). The remaining youths reported being raised by a single dad 2.3% ($n= 3$), dad and partner 3.1% ($n= 4$), other relatives 1.6% ($n= 2$), grandparents 10.9% ($n= 14$), or in a foster home 3.9% ($n= 5$).

Measures

Participants were asked a set of non-standardized simple yes/no questions regarding sexual victimization as a child, along with a set of sexual arousal questions, age group (i.e. children, adolescents or adults) and number of victims.

The survey had questions including the gender of their perpetrators in two different locations; the first a general question asking “How many people abused you?” and second a more specific victimization history survey. Youths who responded yes in either or both sections were included in this study. Youths who indicated on the more general identification question that they had been abused by women may not have indicated who their abuser was or any specifics in the more detailed victimization history as a way to protect their perpetrators.

The victimization score (Vscore) is a scale used to measure the severity of acts ranging from 1= exposure and voyeurism (EV) to a combination of 15= exposure, voyeurism, fondling, oral sex and penetration. Possible scores consist of; 1= exhibition and voyeurism (EV), 2= fondling, 3= EV and fondling, 4= oral sex, 5= EV and oral sex, 6= fondling and oral sex, 7= EV, fondling and oral sex, 8= penetration, 9= EV and penetration, 10= fondling and penetration, 11= EV, fondling and penetration, 12= oral sex and penetration, 13= EV, oral sex and penetration, 14= fondling, oral sex and penetration, and 15= EV, fondling, oral sex and penetration.

Similarly, the Modus Operandi (MO) was assessed through a MO scale ranging from 1= favors to a combination of 7= favors, coercion and force. Possible scores consisted of 1= favors, 2= coercion (threats), 3= favors and coercion, 4= force, 5= favors and force, 6= coercion and force, and 7= favors, coercion and force.

The Self Report Sexual Aggression Scale (SERSAS) was used to assess the youth's sexual abuse of others. The SERSAS is a multi-item inventory used previously in other studies (Burton, Miller, & Shill, 2002; Burton, 2003). The scale is used to measure sexually aggressive behaviors over an individual's lifespan. The original survey was several pages but reduced to two pages based on collapsed variables used in previous projects. Past reliability testing for this instrument yielded an alpha of .88 with an 8-week test-retest agreement for a small sample of 96% (Burton & Fleming, 1998; Burton, 2003).

The Trauma Symptom Checklist-40, (Elliot & Briere, 1992) is a 40-item scale that provides a brief and relatively noninvasive screening of traumatic experiences in childhood. The total TSC-40 total score is highly reliable with a Cronbach's alpha of .90 (Elliot & Briere, 1992).

Procedure

Consent and confidential data were collected from youth adjudicated for sexual offenses in 6 residential facilities in a Midwestern state. Surveys were collected via group format. Several youth ($n= 8$) could not read the survey and the survey was read aloud 1:1 to each of these youth by a graduate student. Data were entered using SPSS 12 and analyzed with SPSS 16.

Results

Although subjects abused by males were abused at a slightly younger age ($M= 6.60$ years, $SD= 3.15$ years) in comparison to those abused by females ($M= 6.89$ years, $SD= 3.53$ years) there was no significant difference between the two groups ($t(117)= .439, p= .315$).

Similarly, there was no significant difference ($t(120) = -.521, p = .757$) between the groups in regards to the age the abuse stopped, although those abused by males were a slightly older ($M = 9.48$ years, $SD = 4.01$ years), than those abused by females ($M = 9.06$ years, $SD = 4.24$ years). This resulted in a slightly longer abuse for victims of male perpetrated abuse ($M = 2.77$ years, $SD = 3.46$ years) than those victimized by women ($M = 2.17$ years, $SD = 2.97$ years) but again there was not a large enough difference to obtain statistical significance ($t(117) = -.911, p = .122$).

There was also no difference between the groups in severity of sexual victimization score ($t(106) = 1.53, p = .101$) although subjects abused by females had a slightly higher Vscore mean of 11.21 ($SD = 5.02$) (representing exhibitionism, voyeurism, fondling and penetration) than those abused by men, 9.46 ($SD = 5.35$) which represents exhibition, voyeurism, and penetration.

Similarly, although there was not a significant difference between groups in regards to the MO ($t(102) = -2.45, p = .173$), those abused by males reported a higher mean MO of 3.41 ($SD = 2.25$) (representing a combination of favors and threats), than the subjects abused by a female perpetrator with a mean MO of 2.19 ($SD = 2.04$) (representing threats of harming the child or family if the victim told). Therefore, although there was not a significant difference, subjects abused by females were slightly more likely to report more severe abuse while subjects abused by men experienced more force by their perpetrator.

In regards to the relationship between the youth's and their perpetrator, youths in both groups reported the majority of abused occurring from a family member, 53.1% ($n = 17$) for those abused by females and 52.4% ($n = 45$) for those abused by male. As seen in Table 1, the largest difference occurred in regards to teen strangers as perpetrators, with male teen strangers acting as perpetrators for 16.3% ($n = 14$) and female teen strangers acting for 6.2% ($n = 2$) of the

youth. Due to the limited sample size of the youths victimized by females, Chi Squared tests could not be completed.

Discussion

There were no significant differences in victimization characteristics and sexual acts. As I will discuss later, the lack of significant findings may be related to the limited sample sizes of the groups. However, there were interesting differences which arose in the results which I will discuss.

Past research has suggested that female perpetrators choose younger victims, on average 6.4 years old, than their male counterparts, average 8-9 years old (Faller, 1987; Rudin et al., 1995). Unlike this past research, the participants in this study who were abused only by male perpetrators were abused at a slightly younger age than those abused only by female perpetrators. There is not enough evidence as to why the ages of those abused by males differ but there were some difference between these studies which could have impacted these results. Unlike past research, this study examined only male victims of sexual abuse. Previous research has examined male perpetrated sexual abuse in regards to both genders. These differences in results could result from perpetrators choosing older female victims and thus increasing the mean victim age.

Similarly to the age of the victim, the duration of the sexual abuse the youth experienced contradicted past research findings, which suggested that women tend to abuse children over extended periods of time (Saradjian & Hank, 1996). The youth in this study abused solely by women were victimized for a slightly shorter duration than those victimized by male perpetrators. There could be many reasons why this data contradicts past research. Some researchers have suggested that the extended duration of abuse seen with female perpetrators may be a result of the close relationship between victim and perpetrator (Saradjian & Hank,

1996). As I will discuss later, there was no significant difference between the familiar relationships in regards to gender of the perpetrator. This lack of relational differences may have effected the duration of the youth's abuse.

In regards to the severity of the abuse and the MO used by the perpetrator, there were again no significant differences although there were some interesting trends in the results. Subjects abused by females reported experiencing slightly more severe abuse than those who were abused solely by male perpetrators. These results are in agreement with past research which suggests that abuse by females is not necessarily less severe than abuse by males (Rudin et al., 1995). Jointly these studies help to contradict societal beliefs which understand women's sexualized behavior towards children as seductive and subtle and therefore not serious (Krista, 1994). In fact, this data suggests that women perpetrators participate in an equal if not more severe level sexual aggression than men.

Surprisingly, although youths abused by women experienced slightly more severe abuse, the youths with male perpetrators were victimized via a more severe Modus Operandi (MO). These results support prior findings which suggest that female perpetrators infrequently abuse via the use of force, violence, or threats during acts of sexual abuse instead tending to solicit the cooperation and involvement of their victims through persuasion (Johnson & Shrier, 1987). This discrepancy has previously been attributed as a result of the close relationship between perpetrator and victim as a result of the role of the perpetrator as a caregiver to the victim (Rudin, et al., 1995).

As discussed previously, the relationship between perpetrator and victim is often used to understand discrepancies in characteristics of offenses. The most common relationship type for both groups of perpetrators was family relations. It has been suggested that female perpetrators

offend within their role as care givers (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988; Rudin et al., 1995). This study did not specifically test that role, and further research is needed to determine the differences between the gender of the perpetrator in regards to a care taking relationship. There were differences seen in the results in relation to both teen and adult strangers, with youth's abused by males being victimizing a higher percentage by teen strangers than those abused by females and the opposite case for adult strangers. These results contradict previous findings which found that female perpetrators were less likely to be strangers and than lone male perpetrators (Rudin et al., 1995).

There are a number of limitations of this study. There was a limited sample size of youth abused by female perpetrators (n= 32). A second limitation was the use of self report data from the youth. Self reports can yield a more in-depth picture of an individual's experience, but youths could have easily withheld information to protect themselves or their perpetrators. Also, the participants were comprised of those youths who were solely abused by either gender, but youth who were victimized by perpetrators of both genders or co-offenders were not included. Although past research has shown that the majority of male offenders, tend to act alone when abusing children (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988; Solomon, 1992), the majority of females on the other hand perpetrators co-offend with a male perpetrator (Solomon, 1992). Given that this is a limited sample and the lack of measurement of co-offending, these results incorporate the majority of male perpetrators but can not be generalized to the larger population of female sexual offenders.

Although recently the occurrence of female perpetrated sexual abuse is beginning to receive some literary attention, there is still very little which is known about the different victim and offence characteristics between female and male perpetrators, as well as the effects that

perpetrator gender has on the victims. Further research is needed within the field to understand not only the characteristics of victim choice and acts of females who both co-offend or solely offend but also the emotional implications those acts have on their victims. Specifically in regards to male juvenile sexual offenders, further research, with the understanding of the “victim to victimizer” theory, should examine how gender impacts the later offending characteristics of the victims.

As suggested by these results, male juvenile sexual offenders seem to have increased rates of female victimization. Past researchers have explained the lack of examination of these perpetrators as a result of the low percentages of occurrence in the population. Using a population where female victimization rates are increased, can help to further the field and increase our knowledge through the disclosure of women’s victims.

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Table 1

Percent of Perpetrator Relationship Categories of Both Groups of Juvenile Sexual Offenders

<u>Relationship Categories</u>	<u>Perpetrator of Abuse</u>			
	<u>Female</u>	<i>n</i>	<u>Male</u>	<i>N</i>
	%		%	
Family Relations	53.10%	17	52.40%	45
Partners	6.20%	2	2.30%	2
Teen Friend Neighbor	21.90%	7	29.10%	25
Teen Stranger	6.20%	2	16.30%	14
Adult Friend	12.50%	4	15.10%	13
Adult Stranger	9.40%	3	4.70%	4

*= p< .05, **= p< .01

An Exploration of Escalation in the Offending Histories of Adult Male Sexual Offenders

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Abstract

Extensive sexual offending histories of 129 adult male sexual offenders were anonymously collected and examined for escalation related to age and gender of victim, relationship to victim, Modus Operandi (MO), and severity of acts. Six subjects are presented as both illustrations of trends found in the data as well as unique offending trajectories. Similarly to past research, there was little escalation found in relationship to the gender of the victim and the MO used. Escalation was seen in regards to the relationship between the perpetrator and victim, as well as the progression of acts for each victim. There was contradicting evidence of escalation of victim's ages, with the larger subject population reporting escalation but the specific participants examined not. Finally, I found that for this sample, that there is just as likely chance of offenders escalating throughout their offending careers as not. These results are discussed in terms of limitations, future research, and clinical implications.

Literature Review

During the past few decades, there has been a significant increase in the extent of research addressing the sexual assault and exploitation of women and children. For example, in 1983 it was reported that there was a one in five chance that a woman would be a victim of completed rape at some point throughout her life; when attempted rape was considered, these odds increase to one in three (Russell, 1983). More recently, the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS) found that 17.6% of women experienced a completed or attempted rape in the course of their lifetime (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). In examining child sexual abuse, victim data from random samples of adults, indicates that 2.5-5% of boys have been sexually victimized (Finkelhor, 1984). Current research, using anonymous surveys and interviews with parents and children between the ages of 2 and 17, has indicated that 1 child in 12 has reported some form of sexual victimization experiences within the year 2004 (Finkelhor et al., 2005).

Not only has there been an increase in attention given to sexual assault, but also an increased appreciation of the precipitants and trajectories of violence against women and children in general. For example, in cases of domestic violence, verbal arguments are now understood as a precipitant of later physical aggression (Cascardi & Vivian, 1995, Dobash & Dobash, 1984, O'Leary & Smith Slep, 2006). Not only does there seem to be an escalation of the level of violence occurring within a specific incidence of domestic violence, but research also suggests an escalation of coercive interactions through the course of the relationship (O'Leary, 1988, Patterson, 1982), with physical aggression stemming as an outcome of this coercive system (Murphy & O'Leary, 1989, Straus, 1973). Research examining criminology and delinquency in adolescents also suggests an 'escalation model' of violent behavior over time, with behavior increasing from minor aggression to severe violence across time (Cornell et al.,

1987, Loeber et al, 2005). These different models of aggression are consistent in suggesting that, general violence escalates across time. Still unknown is whether those models of aggression fix the trajectory of sexual aggression in all circumstances.

As the interactions that result in aggression and sexual assault have become better understood, there has been an accompanying increased focus on prevention, particularly tertiary prevention as in the cases of adjudicated sexual offenders returning to the population. In the past ten years, actuarial risk assessment tools have been developed to assist in evaluating the risk of recidivism for such offenders. Such tools have been developed based on practical experience under guided by large meta analyses (e.g. Hanson & Bussiere, 1998) and longitudinal research (e.g. Marques et al., 2005). The tool most frequently used Hanson's Static 99 (Hanson & Thornton, 2000) and tools that also assess dynamic factors (e.g. change in treatment) are also under development (e.g. SONAR) (Hanson & Harris, 2001).

Researchers studying the recidivism of offenders have begun to examine the impact of age on the propensity for re-offending. Barbaree et al. (2003) found that in a population of sexual offenders ($N= 477$), sexual recidivism decreased in a linear fashion as a function of age. In support of the impact of age on offending, erectile response of sexual offenders has been found to decrease with age, suggesting that aging will lessen the likelihood that a male sexual offenders will be driven to repeat his offenses (Hall, 1992). Other studies have focused less on age, and identified it as only a moderate predictor ($r = -.13$) of recidivism when compared to anti social behavior and deviant sexual interest (Hanson & Bussiere, 1998). There is still contradicting evidence regarding the impact age has on the risk of re-offending. Some believe that the drive of sexual deviance persists into old age (e.g. Hanson & Bussiere, 1998), and others believe that there is a reduction of sexual deviance during the aging process (e.g. Barbaree &

Blanchard, 2008). Although researchers have examined the impact of age on recidivism, however, very little has been reported on the escalation or stability of sexual offending patterns over time.

Recent studies reexamining sexual polymorphism or crossover patterns suggest that adult sexual offenders are not as specialized as past research has indicated, having found that they are responsible for a wider variety of victims and a larger number of offenses than previously appreciated. Crossover or sexual polymorphism “refers to crime-switching patterns along several dimensions such as victim’s age, gender, relationship to the offender, and nature of acts committed by the offender” (Lussier et al., 2008, p. 1). Evidence supporting crossover sexual offending theories has been found by researchers in studies examining sexual offense behavior and multiple victim types, specifically in the metrics of age, gender and relationship between the victim and perpetrator (Cann et al, 2007; Guay et al, 2001; Heil et al, 2003; Lussier, 2008). Although there is evidence supporting crossover, there has been little research examining the specifics around those behaviors and whether escalation of acts or victim choice is connected to it.

Historically, the typologies used to assess risk and assign treatment rely on the premise that offenders remain consistent across time when considering the age of their victims, i.e. that rapists sexually assault adults, and that child molesters sexually assault children. Although that premise at times is correct, research examining crossover behaviors suggests that it is not always the case; and that some sexual offenders assault victims of a variety of ages (Abel & Osborn, 1992). Perhaps the most extensive evidence of crossover was Heil et al’s (2003) study of incarcerated sexual offenders. These researchers reported that 70% of the participant inmates admitted to assaulting both child and adult victims. Specifically, 78% of inmates incarcerated

for molesting children also admitted to sexually victimizing adults; and 52% of the inmates incarcerated for assaulting adults admitted to molesting children. What remains unstudied is whether there are patterns of age crossovers and whether an individual's behavior pattern changes to include targeting younger victims across time.

The sexual intrusiveness of the offenses has similarly been suggested to involve a degree of crossover (Lussier, et al., 2008). Researchers found that less than half (48%) of the offenders who were convicted of committing less severe acts (fondled, rubbed and/or masturbated their victims) for their offense committed the same less severe acts for their second, thus showing a low rate of specialization.

Unlike victim's age and sexual intrusiveness, research suggests that the level of physical force adopted during the offense remains relatively stable across time. Lussier et al. (2008) found that a given offender adopted a single style (no physical force, the force necessary to commit the offense, or excessive force) and that such style remained stable over their sequence of crimes. Similar patterns were found when considering the victim's gender, with the majority of subjects reporting consistency across time (Heil et al, 2001; Lussier, 2008).

Crossover studies have examined the specialization and generalization of individual offending, but have yet to consider escalation of offenses across time. Researchers examining adult sexual offenders reported that 50% of the population examined admitted beginning offending while they were minors (Becker & Abel, 1985), thus suggesting that there is a continuance of offending across time. Other research studying the behavior of sexual offenders has focused specifically on the escalation of offenses. Stermac and Hall (1989) studied the histories of 50 convicted sexual offenders in terms of their escalation of severity, finding that, 32% were classified as escalators, 32% were non-escalators and 36% were first time offenders.

The researchers concluded that there was an equal probability of offenders escalating their behaviors as not. When all forms of criminal behavior are examined, however, escalation is more frequent, with 80% of convicted sexual offenders receiving their first conviction for a nonsexual offense (Smallbone & Wortley, 2004).

Past research has examined escalation in terms of severity of acts and force **used (CITE)**, but not in relationship to victim choice. That may have been partially due to the belief that sexual offenders were did not switch victim types. As discussed, however, crossover exists at high levels in the sexual offender population, and for that reason victim choice can and should be examined in regards to escalation.

Although researchers who have studied crossover have not addressed escalation, practical risk assessments such as the Static-99 (Harris et al., 2003) understand victim characteristic as impacting the severity of offense and the likelihood of re-offending. For example, in the Static-99, Harris et al (2003) identify aspects of age and gender of the victims, and relationship with the offender as increasing an individual's score and thus their risk of re-offending. Researchers identified that abusing children under the age of 14 or abusing males increases the offenders risk of re-offending. Similarly to victim age and gender, the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim affects the recidivism rate, with those who choose victims who were unrelated to the perpetrator (an acquaintance or stranger), having increased risk of re-offending (Harris, et al., 2003).

Therefore, for the purpose of this study, escalation will be examined in relationship to age of victim, the gender of victim, the relationship between victim and perpetrator, the severity of acts and the offender's M.O. used. Consistent with the Static-99, when considering age, escalation will be determined based upon the offender's crossover from adolescents or adults (15

and older) to children (under 14 years of age). A positive escalation of gender will be identified as crossing over from female to male victims. Escalation of the relationship between the victim and perpetrator will be identified by crossing over in a progression from relatives to acquaintances to strangers, with relatives least severe and strangers most.

Throughout the literature, researchers have relied on data collected from the criminal records of convicted sexual offenders, thus studying the characteristics of the most serious offenders and no doubt underestimating the actual rates of offending (Vandiver, 2006). Anonymous, self-reports from non incarcerated paraphiliacs have suggested that individuals offended at much higher rates than the data from criminal records suggest (Abel et al., 1987). Others suggest that, in interpreting these data, decreased criminal rates across time could be the result of a learning effect, in which men may learn new and better ways to avoid detection rather than an indication of an actual decrease in offending (Hanson, 2002). Very little is known, however, about the actual trajectories of individual offenders, and past research has reported contradictory findings. This study therefore examines the self reported offenses of incarcerated sexual offenders as a means of better understanding patterns of offending. Specifically, this study examines patterns of change and escalation in force, intrusiveness, gender, and age difference across a group of anonymously surveyed sexual offenders.

Methods

Participants

The study is comprised of 129 adult males who have self disclosed the sexual victimization of at least one child. The subjects ages range from 25 to 71 years old with a mean age of 44.39 years ($SD = 9.6$ years). The majority of the sample is Caucasian 88.6% ($n = 93$), with 3.8% ($n = 4$) identifying as Black, and 5.8% ($n = 93$) identifying as 'other,' including

American Indian and Hispanic. Two subjects (1.9%) did not respond to the question of race. The majority of the sample grew up in a two-parent household (67.6%, $n = 71$), with 17.1% ($n = 18$) having been raised by a single mother. The rest of the sample reported being raised by their mother and her partner 3.8% ($n = 4$), grandparent 2.9% ($n = 3$), foster home 2.9% ($n = 3$), single father 1.9% ($n = 2$), or other relatives 1.9% ($n = 2$). The participants were well educated, with 67.6% ($n = 71$) having completed high school, 33.3% ($n = 35$) having a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED), 26.7% ($n = 28$) having an associate's degree, 26.7% ($n = 28$) having a bachelor's degree, and 12.4% ($n = 13$) having a masters degree or doctorate.

At the time of the data collection, the majority (79%) of the participants were incarcerated and 87% identified previous prison placement (defining most of the sample as repeat offenders). The anonymity of the survey enabled participants to report a diverse number of sexual crimes in comparison to similar projects, which often report a single offense or charge. The respondents were offered a variety of victim characteristics, including victim gender and age group. Using that variety of classification, the participants had a total of 1,720 victims. The offenders had a range of 1-122 victims, with the average being 16.38 victims ($SD = 25.08$).

Procedure

Potential participants were identified through their involvement in the Sexual Abuse Treatment Alliance (SATA)/ Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants- Sex Offenders Restored Through Treatment (CURE-SORT) support network. SATA/CURE-SORT is a national non-profit organization serving a population of sexual abusers. Of the 230 surveys that were mailed out, 147 were returned in different stages of completion (64% response rate). There were no incentives provided for the completion of the survey. Data were only used from the 129 subjects who identified that they had abused at least one child.

Other than indicating consent with a check mark, the completion of the survey was anonymous. With a large potential subject population in prison, many participants were unable to send the surveys back without identifying information on the envelopes due to prison security policies. Participants returned their completed surveys to the SATA/CURE-SORT office. The SATA/CURE-SORT staff were responsible for maintaining anonymity, and were instructed to separate the survey from envelopes with potential identifying information and to destroying any other identifying information from the survey data. After any identifying information was redacted from the survey, the questionnaires were forwarded to the researchers for data entry and storage.

Instruments

The participants were asked a number of demographic questions, including family type and education history, and specific questions regarding criminal behavior. Participants were also asked to identify every victim they could remember and to describe their relationship to the victim, the acts they committed, their Modus Operandi (MO) used, the frequency of the acts, the ages of their victims at the start and stop of the abuse, and the ages of the participants at which they started and stopped their sexual activities with each victim.

The Self Report Sexual Aggression Scale (SERSAS) was used to assess the participant's sexual abuse of others. The SERSAS is a multi-item inventory used previously in other studies (Burton, Miller, & Shill, 2002; Burton, 2003). The scale is used to measure sexually aggressive behaviors over an individual's lifespan. Past reliability testing for the instrument yielded an alpha of .88 with an 8-week test-retest agreement for a small sample of 96% (Burton & Fleming, 1998; Burton, 2003).

Results

The data show a great degree of crossover of victim types with only 26.67% ($n= 28$) reporting abusing a consistent gender or age group; and provide several additional findings across the participants. To illustrate the findings a number of cases are presented and graphed below. They are presented with regard to victim choice and offense characteristics, specifically in terms of victim's age, victim's gender, relationship between the perpetrator and victim, MO, progression and escalation. Participants were selected for analysis via graphing based on their criminal trajectories. The majority of subjects selected for analysis ($n= 4$) were selected as examples of larger patterns seen throughout the data. The remaining two subjects were chosen as exceptions to larger trends and because of their unique of their patterns and traits, both in the number of victims and escalation across relationship and severity of acts.

Age

Escalation of age was measured based upon the crossover from children (0-14 years of age) to adolescents (15-18 years of age) or adults (19 years and older). Although there was significant crossover with regard to age and gender (as seen in Table 1), there was not significant escalation in relation to the age of the victim within the selected participants. This lack of escalation is seen in the majority (66.7%, $n= 4$) of selected participants. Both Fred¹ (Figure 3) and Nate (Figure 4) displayed no escalation, with 100% of their combined 11 victims being children. This is also true for Bob (Figure 1) and Charles (Figure 2), with the majority (90.0%) of their combined victims ($n= 20$) being children. Shaun (Figure 5) offered an example of a slight escalation. Shaun chose children 100.0% for his first 7 victims, after which he chose victims from a range of 7-15 years old, with the majority of his victims 57.1% ($n=20$) older victims being between the ages of 12 to 14 years old. The most significant escalation can be seen in Tom's (Figure 6) history. Tom's first victim was a child, but the next 5 victim's ages ranged

¹ Identifying information has been altered to protect participant's identification, names are created.

from 11-27 years, with 80% ($n= 4$) either adolescents or adults. Tom also displayed de-escalation, with 100% of his final four victims ranging in age from 6 to 8 years.

Gender

As discussed earlier, escalation of gender is defined as a crossover from a female to a male victim. In reviewing the participants' histories examples of gender escalation are found but there are also cases in which escalation did not occur. In the cases of Bob (Figure 1) and Shaun (Figure 5), 66.7% ($n=2$) of their first three victims were female, after which the combined remaining victims ($n= 48$) were only male. In contrast, Charles (Figure 2), Nate (Figure 4), and Tom (Figure 6) showed no escalation, with their combined victims ($n= 26$) being all female. Similarly, Fred (Figure 3) did not escalate, but reported only male victims ($n= 3$).

Relationship

The men disclosed that there were differentiating degrees of escalation with regard to the perpetrator's relationship to their victims. For example, Bob (Figure 1), Charles (Figure 2) and Shaun (Figure 5) escalated from having familiar relationships with their victims to choosing acquaintances as victims. Bob choose family relations as victims 100.0% for his first 6 victims. Similarly, Charles' first 2 out of 3 victims (66.7%) and Shaun first 4 out of 5 victims (80.0%) were family members. After those initial incidents, the majority of all participant's victims were acquaintances (83.3%, $n=5$; 100%, $n=5$; 91.9%, $n= 34$ respectfully). Similarly to Bob, Charles, and Shaun, Tom (Figure 6) also showed some escalation. His first victim was a family member, his second and third victims were acquaintances and his 5-7 victims were strangers. In contrast, Fred (Figure 3) and Nate (Figure 6) had little or no escalation. Fred consistently offended members of his family ($n= 3$). Nate offended acquaintances the majority of his career (87.5%, $n=7$).

Modus Operandi

The majority of offenders (65.9%, $n = 85$) responded that they only abused using favors with no crossover or escalation to another severity of MO. Examples of this can be seen in both Charles (Figure 2) and Nate (Figure 4), are examples of that tendency in that they reported offending via favors in every offense (of their combined 51 offenses). Other subjects (Shaun (Figure 5) and Bob (Figure 1)) reported offending via favors for the majority of their careers, but did use other methods sporadically throughout. Although Shaun and Bob. Although Shaun and Bob reported abusing via favors 89.8% ($n=106$) and 90.3% ($n = 28$), they did abuse via force for the remaining offenses.

Although the majority of offenders did not escalate in their M.O., there were some instances of escalation such. Fred (Figure 3) consistently abused via favors for the majority of offenses (80.0%, $n = 12$), but then escalated to use a combination of favors and threats for his most severe acts (“putting your digits, objects, or penis into the victim”). Tom (Figure 6) not only escalated his MO within each victim but also between them, increasing across time. Tom offended via favors 75% ($n=3$) with his first victim, but after which offended via force or a combination of force and threats 89.5% ($n = 17$) of the time.

Severity of Acts

The escalation of the severity of acts was examined both in terms of progression (within a victim) and escalation (between multiple victims). Examples of progression and escalation, as well as a combination of both can be seen in the data. Charles (Figure 2) and Fred (Figure 3) showed no escalation, performing the same acts to the majority (90.9%, $n=10$) of their (combined 11) victims. They did progress, however, performing exhibitionism, fondling, oral sex, and penetration. Fred waited a mean= 1.83 years after he first started abusing his victims

before he victimized with penetration. Unlike Fred and Charles, Bob (Figure 1) did not show progression, performing on average 2.58 degrees of severity on each victim. Bob did escalate. He performed only exhibitionism and fondling only on his first 6 victims, but 71% ($n=5$) of his last 7 victims experienced some form of penetration.

In comparison to the previous examples, Shaun (Figure 5) showed both progression and escalation. The majority of Shaun's early offenses (92.3%, $n=12$) did not include penetration thereafter he offended using penetration 37.9% ($n=11$). Shaun's severity of offenses range from exhibitionism to penetration with half of his victims (50.0%, $n=21$), and he illustrated 3 or more severity types. Although the majority of those participants showed some form of progression or escalation, Nate (Figure 4) did not. The majority of his victims (87.5%, $n=7$) experienced a combination of exhibitionism, voyeurism, and fondling, and experienced a $mean=2.75$ of different acts.

Discussion

The study data offered no clear pattern with regard to the participant's escalation of victim's age. Data examining the larger population of subjects indicated that there was a large degree of crossover in a combination of age and gender of the victims, but the specific participants graphed were not consistent with that finding (they showed little escalation). The results from the larger sample supported past research, which had found that there is extensive crossover within the population of sexual offenders (Heil et al., 2003). Although extensive crossover would seem to be the principal behavior, Lussier et al. (2008) found that, within the population of sexual offenders, child molesters have a lower degree of crossover than those who abuse teenagers or adults. The majority of examples presented in this study were participants

who were child molesters and the failure of the study data to more closely conform to the results of the earlier study may reflect the preferences of a more specialized population of offenders.

There was also little escalation found in the gender of the victim. The majority of participants offended either males or females consistently across their careers. The study data thus support earlier crossover research, which found that the majority of offending subjects remained consistent in regards to victim gender across time (Heil et al., 2001; Lussier, 2008). Even in the cases where escalation did occur (e.g. Bob and Shaun), both participants offended women earlier in their criminal careers, at a time when they were teenagers, had a low frequency of accounts, and chose family members for their female victims in a majority of instances. This suggests that the gender choices of the study participants could be a result of opportunity to offend rather than personal choice.

Unlike victim gender, there was a variety of escalation patterns in the relationship between the perpetrator and their victims. Although some participants (e.g., Fred and Nate) showed no escalation across their victim relationships, the remaining offenders examined had varying degrees of escalation. Bob, Charles and Shaun all showed moderate escalation, with family members as their initial victims and escalating to acquaintances. Tom had the most escalation, crossing over victim choices from family members, to acquaintances and then to strangers.

Historically, the relationship between perpetrator and victim has not been examined in terms of crossover or escalation. Within measurements of recidivism, the Static-99 views an increase in recidivism as resulting from a decrease familiarity of relationship between perpetrator and victim (Harris et al., 2003). The results of this study suggest that there is a high degree of both crossover and escalation when analyzed on the basis of the relationship between perpetrator

and victim, and thus such an analysis could play an important role in understanding recidivism and developing effective treatment for such men.

In comparison to the differences found in the relationship between perpetrators and victims, the majority of participants offended via favors without escalating. The data thus support past research, which found that sexual offenders adopt a similar MO style of offending across their careers (Lussier, et al., 2008). Although the data were consistent for a majority of subjects, there were examples of both sporadic escalations, as well as, progressing and escalating MOs, throughout the data. Past studies have researched MO through questions that did not connect specific acts with the perpetrator's MO. Therefore, participants could have easily generalized their answers to their most common style without discussing their more in-depth histories.

The escalation of severity of offenses was examined in terms of both progressions as well as escalations. The majority of subjects exhibited progression within individual victims. This is congruent with past research examining domestic violence, which suggests that there is escalation within specific incidents (Cascard & Vivian, 1995, Dobash & Dobash, 1984, O'Leary & Smith Slep, 2006). The data from the current study were split as to the existence of escalation, with two subjects experienced escalation and three not. These findings are similar to past research, which suggested that offenders are just as likely to escalate as not (Stermac & Hall, 1989). The majority of study subjects who did escalate often had a larger number of victims. This suggests that escalation of acts is related to number of victims, but should be examined further to understand to what extent.

This study has a number of methodological limitations. First, the data were collected through the self-reports of participants, although the data collection was anonymous and clearly

revealed a great depth of information on each participant. Therefore, the results could have easily been affected by biases of the participants, especially of those participants currently incarcerated or undergoing treatment. Secondly, the majority of the participants of the instant study were comprised of child molesters who were currently or who had at one time been incarcerated for a sexual offence. Thus, the sample drew from a population of offenders who had committed the most severe acts. Also, there is a likelihood that a number of the participants are currently continuing to offend or will re-offend in the future. Therefore, this study does not look at the complete life histories of offender's but rather a snapshot of their offending career.

Although this study has begun to examine escalation with the sexual offending histories of the participants, past research has shown that nonsexual offenders often receive their first conviction for a nonsexual offence (Smallbone & Wortley, 2008). This study did not measure nonsexual criminology therefore, further research should examine the escalation patterns of both sexual and nonsexual offenses of sexual offenders.

Through researching the career histories of sexual offenders, this study has taken the first step to define escalation in relationship to both crossover and recidivism. Theoretically, crossover in victim characteristics is necessary for escalation, but does not exclusively define it. Also, in subjects who have had the benefit of past treatment measures, higher recidivism is understood as an expression of escalation. Although there are clear relationships between crossover, escalation and recidivism, the field has yet to determine the extent to which there may exist a cause and effect relationships. Further research is needed to better define escalation of offending and how it differs from both crossover and recidivism, specifically with regard to victim characteristics.

The current study has begun to both define and examine escalation within the offending histories of adult sexual offenders. Within the literature and treatment of sexual offenders, there is an assumption of escalation of violent acts. Although in some cases that seems to be true, it does not apply to all offenders. This study suggests that there is an extensive range of actions and trajectories within the population of child molesters and that it is important to learn the complete offending histories of sexual offenders as a means to provide them with better treatment.

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Table 1

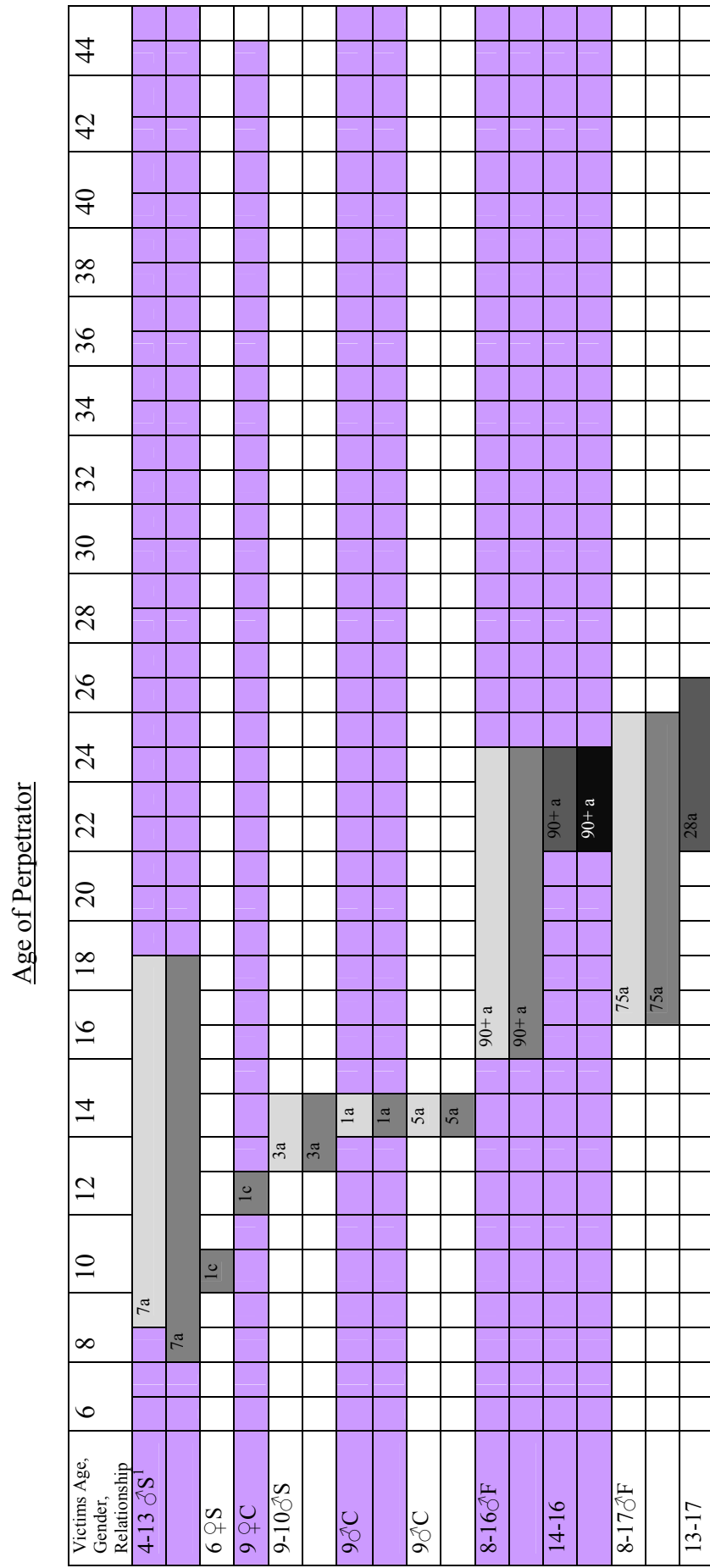
Victim Characteristics by Percentage

Victim(s) Gender(s) and Age Group(s)*	n	Percentage
Female children	24	18.60%
Female children and female teens	14	10.85%
Male children and male teens	11	8.53%
Male and female children	9	6.98%
Male children, female children, male teens, female teens	7	5.43%
Male and female children and female teens	6	4.65%
Female children, female teens and female adults	6	4.65%
Male children, female children, and male teens	5	3.88%
Male children only	4	3.11%
Male children, male teens and female teens	4	3.11%
Male children, female children, male teens, females teens and female adults	4	3.11%
Female children and male teens	2	1.55%
Male children, male teens and female teens	2	1.55%
Female children and female adults	2	1.55%
Male children and female teens	1	0.77%
Male children and male adults	1	0.77%
Male children, female children and male adults	1	0.77%
Male children, male teens, male adults and female adults	1	0.77%
Male children, female children, male teens, male adults and female adults	1	0.77%
Missing	24	18.60%
TOTAL	129	100.00%

* the question did not offer cut offs for the age groups

Figure 1

Offending History of Bob



¹ Example: Bob offended his first victim from the ages of 8 to 18. The victim was 4 years old at the start of the abuse, was 13 when it stopped, and was a male sibling (brother). Bob offended via the MO of favors (a). He first abused the victim through fondling but after a year, included exhibitionism. Throughout the 10 years of abuse, Bob offended the victim in both severities 7 times.

Bob Cont...	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44
12-14♂F									28a	11a										
12-18♂F										11a						75a				
12-15										11a						75a				
13-18♂F																7a				
17																75a				
14-16♂F																				
15																				
12♂C																				1c

Severity:

Exhibitionism	Voyeurism	Fondling	Oral sex either V to O or O to V	Gender:	Digital or objects V to O	Digital or object O to V	V perform sexual acts with Animals
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Frequency:

of occurrences of abuse

MO:
a= favors
b= threats
c= force

Gender:
♂= male
♀= female

Relationships:
Family:

- S= Siblings (including half/ step/ foster siblings)
- C= Cousin
- O= Offspring (Son/Daughter, including step/foster)
- G= Grandchild
- N= Niece/Nephew
- L= Long-term Romantic Partner

Acquaintances:

F= Friend/ Neighbor

P= Partner (boyfriend/girlfriend)

Stranger:

St= Stranger

Figure 2

Offending History of Charles

Victims Age, Gender, Relationship	Age of Perpetrator													
	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32
3-7♀N						11a								
						11a								
						11a								
						11								
8♀F						1a								
						1a								
13♀C							1a							
							1a							
							7a							
							7a							
8♀F							7a							
							7a							
							7a							
							7a							
8♀F							3a							
							3a							
							3a							
							3a							
7♀F								7a						
								11a						
								3a						
								11a						
9♀F								7a						

Charles cont...	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32
								11a						
								3a						
								11a						
11♀F								7a						
								11a						
								3a						
								11a						

Severity:

Exhibitionism	Voyeurism	Fondling	Oral sex either V to O or O to V	Gender	Digital or objects V to O	Digital or object O to V	V perform sexual acts with Animals
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Frequency:

of occurrences of abuse

MO:
a= favors
b= threats
c= force

Gender
♂= male
♀= female

Relationships:

Family:

- S= Siblings (including half/ step/ foster)
- C= Cousin
- O= Offspring (Son/Daughter, including step/foster)
- G= Grandchild
- N= Niece/Nephew
- L= Long-term romantic Partner

Acquaintances:

- F= Friend/ Neighbor
- P= Partner (boyfriend/girlfriend)

Stranger:

- St= Stranger

Figure 3

Offending History of Fred

Victim Age, Gender, Relationship	Age of Perpetrator																		
	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42
9-14 ♂ O											90+ a								
11-14											90+ a								
											90+ a								
											90+ a								
10-16 ♂ O													90+ a						
													90+ a						
													90+ a						
12-16													90+ a						
14-16														11 a/b					
9-11 ♂ G																	72 a		
																	72 a		
10-11																		72 a	
																		45 a	
11																		7	a/b

Severity:

Exhibitionism	Voyeurism	Fondling	Oral sex either V to O or O to V	Digital or objects V to O	Digital or object O to V	V perform sexual acts with Animals

Frequency:

MO: Gender: Relationships:

of occurrences of abuse

a= favors
b= threats
c= force

♂= male
♀= female

Family:

S= Siblings (including half/ step/ foster)
C= Cousin
O= Offspring (Son/Daughter, including step/foster)
G= Grandchild
N= Niece/Nephew
L= Long-term Romantic Partner

Acquaintances:

F= Friend/ Neighbor
P= Partner (boyfriend/girlfriend)

Stranger:

St= Stranger

Figure 4

Offending History of Nate

Victims Age, Gender, Relationship	Age of Perpetrator																	
	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40
6 ♀F					1 a													
4-5 ♀F														29a				
														29a				
														1a				
5-6 ♀F														1a				
														1a				
														1a				
5 ♀F														3				
														a				
														3				
														a				
														3				
														a				
														3				
														a				
7 ♀F														3				
														a				
														3				
														a				
														3				
														a				
														3				
														a				
														3				
														a				
5-11 ♀N														45a				
														45a				
														45a				
8-9 ♀F																	5a	
																	5a	
10-11 ♀F																		11a

"Nate" cont...	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40
																		11a
																		5a

Severity:

Exhibitionism	Voyeurism	Fondling	Oral sex either V to O or O to V	Digital or objects V to O	Digital or object O to V	V perform sexual acts with Animals

Frequency:

of occurrences of abuse

MO:
a= favors
b= threats
c= force

Gender:
♂= male
♀= female

Relationships:

Family:

- S= Siblings (including half/ step/ foster siblings)
- C= Cousin
- O= Offspring (Son/Daughter, including step/foster)
- G= Grandchild
- N= Niece/Nephew
- L= Long-term Romantic Partner

Acquaintances:

- F= Friend/ Neighbor
- P= Partner (boyfriend/girlfriend)

Stranger:

- St= Stranger

Figure 5

Offending History of Shaun

Victims Age, Gender, Relationship	Age of Perpetrator															
	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36
<1 ♀F	1a															
<1 ♂C				3a												
3-4, ♀N							3a									
							3a									
							3a									
3-4 ♂N							3a									
							3a									
							3a									
9-10 ♂N							90+a									
9-10 ♂F							90+a									
							90+a									
							90+a									
							17a									
							17a									
12-13 ♂F							11a									
							11a									
							11a									
12							1a									
							1a									
13 ♂F							1a									
							1a									

	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36
9 ♂ F									17 a							
									11 c							
									11 c							
"Shaun" Cont...	6								11 c							
11 ♂ F									7c							
									7c							
10 ♂ F									11 c							
									11 c							
12 ♂ F									5c							
									5c							
									5c							
13 ♂ C									1 a							
13 ♂ F									1 7 a							
									1 7 a							
									1 7 a							
									1 7 a							
									1 7 a							
									1 7 a							
									1 7 a							
									1 7 a							
12 ♂ F									1 7 a							
									1 7 a							
									1 7 a							
13 ♂ F									3 a							
									1 7 a							
									1 7 a							
									1 7 a							
									1 7 a							
13 ♂ F									1 7 a							
									1 7 a							
									1 7 a							
									1 7 a							
									1 7 a							

	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36
14 ♂ F																
13 ♂ F																
“Shaun” Cont...	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36
13-15 ♂ F														45a		
														45a		
														45a		
														45a		
10-11 ♂ F														3a		
13-14 ♂ F														11a		
														11a		
														11a		
														11a		
11 ♂ N														1		
13 ♂ F														a		
10 ♂ F														5		
15 ♂ F														a		
														1		
														a		

Severity:

Exhibitionism	Voyeurism	Fondling	Oral sex either V to O or O to V	Digital or objects V to O	Digital or object O to V	V perform sexual acts with Animals
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Frequency:

MO: Gender: Relationships:

of occurrences of abuse

a= favors
b= threats
c= force

♂= male
♀= female

Family:

S= Siblings (including half/ step/ foster)
C= Cousin
O= Offspring (Son/Daughter, including step/foster)
G= Grandchild
N= Niece/Nephew
L= Long-term Romantic Partner

Acquaintances:

F= Friend/ Neighbor
P= Partner (boyfriend/girlfriend)

Stranger:

St= Stranger

Figure 6

Offending History of Tom

Victims Age, Gender, Relationship	Age of Perpetrator															
	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36
8-9♀S				11a												
				1a												
				7a												
				1c												
27♀P								5c								
								5c								
18♀P										3c						
11♀St												1c				
												1c				
18♀St												2c				
21♀St												2c				
8-10♀O													28ab			
													11bc			
													7c			
													11bc			
													5c			
6-7♀O													3bc			
													1bc			
													1a			
8♀O																
7♀F													1bc			
													1bc			
													1bc			

"Tom" Cont...	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36
													lc			

Severity:

Exhibitionism	Voyeurism	Fondling	Oral sex either V to O or O to V	Digital or objects V to O	Digital or object O to V	V perform sexual acts with Animals
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Frequency:

of occurrences of abuse

MO:
a= favors
b= threats
c= force

Gender:
♂= male
♀= female

Relationships:

Family:

S= Siblings (including half/ step/ foster)

C= Cousin

O= Offspring (Son/Daughter, including step/foster)

G= Grandchild

N= Niece/Nephew

L= Long-term Romantic Partner

Acquaintances:

F= Friend/ Neighbor

P= Partner (boyfriend/girlfriend)

Stranger:

St= Stranger