A New Look at the Female Offender

Anna C. Salter, Ph.D.

Saradjian Study of Female Offenders
N = 50 perpetrators
36 controls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Substantiated case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>49 of 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Saradjian, 1996)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Characteristics

Social Class: All
Homeless to aristocracy

Education & IQ: 6 university degrees
4 borderline IQ

Race: All Caucasian

Employment: Most short term, unskilled

(Saradjian, 1996)

Types

- Independent – Victims < 6
- Independent – Adolescent Victims
- Initially Coerced
Mean Age Gap Between Women & Victims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victims</th>
<th>Age Gap in Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A &lt;6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Ages 11 - 17</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Coerced by Male</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Saradjian, 1996)

What Difference Did Type Make?

Sexual Motivations

All offender groups: Sex with adults negative but met some need

Controls Sex rated positively

(Saradjian, 1996)
Victims Young Children

Motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive physical experience</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power and control</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanted to hurt them</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merger</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel loved</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Saradjian, 1996)

“Having sex with my sons was more enjoyable than having sex with a man and that was because I had some control over what was going to happen.”

(Matthews et al., 1990, p. 206)

“I was sexually aroused . . . Felt very powerful.”

(Matthews et al., 1990, p. 206)

Merger

“She wanted me to love her like her own mother did when she was little and sick. It makes me nauseated to think about it. She used me to maintain her own sick pleasure. I was mother, father, husband, sister, lover and friend to her when I needed a mother.”

(Rosencrans, 1997, p. 29)
Fusion

“I was not a separate person to her. In her mind we were fused.”

(Rosencrans, 1997, p. 31)

Who was the Mother?

- Child is the mother 83%
- No 9%
- ? 7%

(Rosencrans, 1997)

Fear of Mother Dying

“I used to worry about this all the time and her death was extremely traumatic for me. I never made the connection – it’s fusion!”

(Rosencrans, 1997, p. 32)

Violence

“My mother threatened to burn my hair/me if I did not comply. I was given beer to drink. I was beaten and there were threats I would be burned if I wasn’t quiet. Sometimes I was slightly burned on the butt with lit cigarettes. I learned not to cry and to stop screaming.”

(Rosencrans, 1997, p. 111)
**Disclosure**

- Attempts to tell in childhood: 5%
- Did tell: 3%
- Threatened to tell: 2%

(Rosencrans, 1997, p. 39)

**Victims Young Children**

**Motivations**

- All had sexual thoughts of children
- All experienced arousal
- Few called it arousal
- Unable to identify emotional states
- Feelings in terms of sensations

(Saradjian, 1996)

**Motivations**

**Group B: Victims Adolescents**

- Romanticized relationship
- Frequent sexual thoughts
- 80% masturbated to thoughts
- Equal in every way
- Victims instigators

(Saradjian, 1996)
“We had an affair, a love affair. Isn’t that ridiculous? I’m 40 years old! And I had an affair with a 14-year-old kid, which is totally ridiculous. And I was in love – not I loved him – but in love!”

(Matthews et al., 1990, p.209)

Motivations

Group C Initially coerced by male perps

Negative feelings during sex w/ child

Give pleasure, bonding with male

(Saradjian, 1996)

“I wasn’t a whole person unless there was somebody else with me. That’s pretty much what it’s been like for a long time. There had to be a male in my life, otherwise I would think I was nobody.”

(Matthews et al., 1990, p. 212)
### Motivations

**Group C** Initially coerced by male perps  
\[ N = 12 \]

- Thoughts of sex with children  
  \[ 12 \]
- Arousal or neutral  
  \[ 9 \]
- Repulsive  
  \[ 3 \]

(Saradjian, 1996)

**Subgroup of C:** Initially coerced, later alone  
\[ N = 7 \]

- Power and control
- Hurt someone

(Saradjian, 1996)

### Types of Female Sex Offenders

\[ N = 16 \]

- Minnesota Outpatients
  - Teacher / Lover
  - Predisposed
  - Male Coerced

(Mathews et al., 1989)
Types of Female Sex Offenders
Teacher/Lover
- No “malice” toward children
- “Fell in love”
  (Matthews, 1989)

Types of Female Sex Offenders
Predisposed
- Acted alone
- Difficulty with male relationships
- Seeking intimacy (or fusion)
  (Matthews et al., 1989)

Types of Female Sex Offenders
Male-Coerced
- Felt powerless in relationships
- Sexually abused as children
- Abusive male relationships
  (Matthews et al., 1989)
### Acting Alone vs. With Other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acting Alone</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting with Other</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Bespalec, unpublished)

### Severity of Abuse

### Insertion into Orifices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vagina</th>
<th>Rectum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fingers</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objects</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Rosencrans, 1997)

### Sadism

“When she wanted to do it do me, she’d say he told her to and I could never really be sure whether he had or not. She used to threaten me that... If I told anyone what was going on... I’d be in for ‘it’ and ‘it’ was really, really bad. I’d had ‘it’ before and I never wanted to ever feel that bad again. The more I hurt the faster she’d come... she knew just how to hurt me and I knew that she’d really ‘get off on’ getting him to hurt me... I never would have told because I was just too scared.”

(Saradjian, 1996, p. 36)
Objects Inserted

Enema equipment, sticks, candles, vibrators, pencils, keys, hairbrushes, hairbrush handles, light bulbs, soapy wash cloths, wooden spoons, various fruits and vegetables, knives, scissors, lit cigarettes, sock darning tools, surgical knives, hair rollers, religious metals, vacuum cleaner parts, goldfish

(Rosencrans, 1997)

Manipulation Vs. Coercion

Persuading Victims

Co-Offenders

Threatened death 23%
Threatened harm 36%

Independent

Expression of Love 13%
Games 27%

(David, Hislop & Dunbar, 1999)

Who Do They Victimize?

Victim Characteristics          Equally male and female
### Relationship to Perpetrator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biological</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Saradjian, 1996)

### Who Did They Victimize?

- **N = 93**
- Biological children 93%

(Rosencrans, 1997)

### Age It Began

- **Average Age It Began**
  - 3.2 yrs old

(Rosencrans, 1997)
Age It Ended

Average Age It Ended

17.3 yrs old

(Rosencrans, 1997)

Preventing Disclosure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threats</th>
<th>Co-offenders</th>
<th>Independent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harm</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abandonment</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(David, Hislop & Dunbar, 1999)

Why They Participated

Co-Offender Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threats</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abandonment</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(David, Hislop & Dunbar, 1999)
“I didn’t want my husband to leave me. I didn’t want to be alone. He always threatened to leave; ‘Do what I say.’”

(Matthews et al., 1990, p. 205)

Trauma Histories

Female Sex Offenders

N = 11 incarcerated female sex offenders

11 incarcerated non sex offenders

- More childhood sexual abuse
- Victimized exclusively within the family
- High incidence physical abuse

(Kaplan & Green, 1995)

If victim < 16;

48% - previous hx of psychiatric disorder
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Females vs. Male Sex Offenders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More denial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceive sexual abuse as more deviant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More resistant to investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer think behavior can be changed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Allen, 1991)
Female Adolescent
Sex Offenders

N = 67

Community/residential

- Mood Disorder > ½
- PTSD nearly ½

(Matthews et al., 1997)

Female Adolescent
Sex Offenders

- More severe abuse
- Abuse started earlier
- More experienced force

(Matthews et al., 1997)

Comparison of Female & Male Adolescent Sex Offenders Offending behaviors

Similar

Frequency & Magnitude

(Matthews et al., 1997)
Female Adolescent Sex Offenders

- Repetitive patterns of offending
- Multiple victims
- Used force as frequently as males

(Matthews et al., 1997)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of molesters</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. w/ more than 1 molester</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender of molester</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male only</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female only</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Matthews et al., 1997)

How Many?

Prevalence
Child Protection Agencies

3 to 5%

(Hislop, 2001)
### Incarcerated Sex Offenders

Canadian sex offenders serving 2 years or more

< 1% female

(Motiuk & Belcourt, 1996)

### Juvenile Sex Offenders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percent Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEW (1985)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierce &amp; Pierce (1987)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith &amp; Israel (1987)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray &amp; English (1995)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan et al. (1996)</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Hislop, 2001)

### Child Care Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faller (1988)</td>
<td>2% female alone 50% m. &amp; f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams &amp; Farrell (1990)</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finkelhor (1988)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margolin (1991)</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Hislop, 2001)
How Many Victims Overall?

Female Victims

23% females abused as children
5% of those have female offenders
Equals 1.5 million female victims &

Male Victims

6.75% of males abused as children
20% of those have female offenders
Equals 1.6 million male victims

(Allen, 1991)

Talking With Others

Currently in therapy 81%
Talking with therapist 3%
Talking with therapeutic group 0

(Rosencrans, 1997, p. 40)