

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: THE FEMALE OFFENDER
(OVERVIEW, COMPARISON TO THE MALE OFFENDER AND POSSIBLE GENDER BIAS IN THE
COURTS)

By

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis reviews the growing problem of females as offenders in child sexual abuse. Typically, this form of crime has been viewed by society, in general, as being committed by males. However, recent studies have shown a significant increase in female offenders. This thesis reports the definition(s) of what constitutes this form of abuse, and identifies characteristics, frequency and other factors which contribute to the rise in the numbers of female offenders being reported. This author decided to explore the theory of gender bias in the court system in regards to punishment rendered for this type of offense. Being that the number of females currently in the correctional system for this type of offense is small, I chose to utilize inferential statistical analysis of secondary data to reject the null-hypothesis. The literature review portion of this thesis explores a great deal in reference to the growing numbers of female offenders, types of abuse, and factors contributing to that abuse, and how the female differs from male offender. The research findings reveal some significant differences in the methodology of past studies conducted in this field.

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I INTRODUCTION.

A mere 10 years ago, it was a common to believe that females did not or could not sexually abuse children. There were some professionals, who worked in the field, which also believed women represented only about 1% to 3% of sexual abusers at most. Mounting evidence in research about sexual abuse perpetration at the hands females has begun to challenge these assumptions. (1)

The amount of awareness in reference to female sexual abuse perpetrators has definitively increased in recent times. A tremendous range exists from different studies as well as different definitions of the terms, sexual abuse, the sample selected and the methodology of the research, all of which should be considered. Reviewed in whole, the literature reveals that most sexual abuse is perpetrated by males; however, females also commit this type of offense and more often than once believed. The circumstances under which women sexually abuse children not only differ among the individuals' reasons for committing this offense, but also widely differ from those circumstances under which males offend. A majority of the studies I have reviewed indicate and portray female offenders as being alienated from mainstream society and being victims themselves of abuse. However, most are not clinically labeled as psychotic.

The great majority of sexual offenses are committed by males, such as rape and exhibitionism. Again, the majority (males vice females) are more prone to have paraphilias; corophilia, frotteurism, fetishism, necrophilia, and sadism. The DSM-III-R (2) reports that except for sexual masochism, in which the sex ratio is estimated to be 20:1 (males vs. females), the remaining paraphilias are rarely found/diagnosed in females.

Until recently, females have not been viewed as sexual perpetrators except in extreme or unusual circumstances. In particular, maternal incest has been believed to be extremely rare (4-7).

Currently there appears to an increased interest in females as perpetrators of child sexual abuse and researchers suggest it is more and more common than believed in the past. However, there is still considerable disagreement about how often women sexually abuse children, what type of woman is a sexual abuser, and under what circumstances the abuse occurs.

I believe it prudent to define key concepts for the reader. During my studies of the literature, I found numerous definitions of the term “**Child Sexual Abuse**”. However, the following provides the most comprehensive and effective points:

“Any act that involves sexual molestation or exploitation of a child by a parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody of or responsibility for supervision of a child, or by any household or family members regardless of whether physical injuries are sustained. Child sexual abuse is a physical violation of a child's body through any sort of sexual contact or a psychological violation of a child's personal space through verbal or visual sexual behavior. It is a violation of a child's basic rights to be protected, nurtured, and guided through childhood and it disrupts child development, causing low self-esteem, distorted beliefs about body image and sexuality, and a lack of trust in care givers and the world in general (3).”

Co-perpetration/co-abuser/co-offender, for the purpose of this paper, although referred to, has been left out of the statistical analysis for acceptance/rejection of the null-hypothesis. Co-perpetration occurs when either the female assists the male in the commission of the abuse or when the female does nothing to prevent/stop the abuse. Therefore, the only cases reviewed are those that were committed by only a male or a female.

The differences in rates of abuse by females and the characteristics of such women reported in the literature are likely to be due to the different definitional and methodological framing of the research questions along with the nature of the sample used. Therefore, it is not surprising that the studies report such different results.

II. NEED FOR THE STUDY.

Purpose

The purpose for writing this thesis is to focus on the differences between female and male offenders of child sexual abuse. Additionally, and to a lesser extent, the perception of gender bias in regards to societal views and court actions concerning the female offender. This author is only interested in those offenders which have been found guilty and received official sentencing through a court of law.

Based on current studies, this form of offense appears to be on the rise. Many factors exist to impact the rise in the numbers of female offenders. This presumption may be attributed to different forms of reporting procedures, or, numerous environmental factors to include the rise in population in general. What might have been viewed as harmless play between family members or a teenaged babysitter and her charge, is now being seen as molestation or abuse.

Research Hypothesis

There is a significant statistical difference in the rates of incarceration for male and female offenders of child sexual abuse.

This hypothesis is based on the following factors:

- * Personally observed media portrayal of female offenders
- * Gender bias in our court system in respect to other offenses
- * Societal views on females in our culture as caretakers of our children
- * The small percentage of female offenders currently confined for this offense
- * The existence of only a few studies conducted in the area of female offenders of child sexual abuse

Assumptions and Delimitations

In order to test the hypothesis, assumptions had to be made. The first assumption regarding the thesis revolves around the dependent variable, female offenders of child sexual abuse. This author makes the assumption that since there are females serving sentences at present for a criminal court conviction of child sexual abuse, then a comparison may be made in regards to males currently serving sentences for the same offense.

Another assumption is that court actions remained constant in regards to the administrative process through which each offender, regardless of gender, completed prior to judgment being rendered.

These assumptions are not expected to affect the reliability and validity of the hypothesis test. Reliability and validity is assumed because these assumptions will not significantly impact the incarceration rates that have been imposed upon the offenders within my study.

There are three limitations in reference to the validity of the hypothesis testing:

- * The small population sample of incarcerated female offenders
- * The unknown specifics of each case prior to receiving judgment
- * The method in which crimes are labeled

It is not the purpose of my thesis to define or examine personalities, emotions, or individual Judge's views. It is the purpose of my thesis to expose court practices that exhibit a certain bias in regards to punishments rendered to child sexual abuse offenders, which is not distributed equally in reference to the offender's gender.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Prior Studies.

Finkelhor and Russell (8) note that some studies contain definitional problems which inflate the statistics concerning female perpetrators. For example, the National Incidence Study figures suggest that almost half of the sexual experiences of children included a female perpetrator. However, according to the study definitions, a caretaker could be a perpetrator if she "permitted acts of sexual contact to occur." Therefore, if a mother neglected a child while a father sexually abused the child, the mother would be listed as a sexual abuse perpetrator. Also, a mother could be listed as an active perpetrator if she did not adequately supervise the child's voluntary sexual activities. The study by the American Humane Association had similar problems. When the data were reanalyzed to exclude these types of cases, the figures suggested that 14 percent of perpetrators against boys and six percent of perpetrators against girls were females acting alone.

Travin, Cullin and Protter (9) observe that the concepts sexual abuse and sexual offense are often confused. Although these terms are often used interchangeably, sexual abuse involves a sexual act perpetrated against an individual without consent, whereas sexual offense describes the same behavior but denotes it as a criminal act.

There are significant variations in definitions of sexual abuse in the literature. The definitions vary in terms of their criteria and in their specificity. They differ in the inclusion of non-contact along with contact. Some specify an upper age limit along with a minimum age discrepancy while others do not. Some rely on the respondent's perception of whether the event was wanted or unwanted.

Is it sexual abuse when a child catches a glimpse of an exhibitionist? There is disagreement over this. Most people would not consider it abuse if a child is shown a Playboy magazine by an older playmate. But what if a young child is shown hard core pornography? Does a mother sleeping with her child constitute sexual abuse in the absence of sexual touching? What if the child is a teenager who becomes aroused by this? Most people would agree that it is sexual abuse if a 19-year-old woman has sexual contact with a 6-year-old boy, but not if the boy is 16. However, what if the boy is 14? What if the 14-year-old boy initiates the experience with the woman and later views the experience as positive? Some of the retrospective surveys of childhood sexual experiences include reports of sexual contacts with older women which were perceived as positive by the respondents and were initiated by the respondents. How such issues are handled will effect the information obtained.

Retrospective studies are a common source of information about the prevalence of sexual contact between women and children. Self-report studies provide a very different view of sexual abuse perpetration and substantially increase the number of female perpetrators. In a retrospective study of male victims, 60% reported being abused by females (10). In other studies of male university and college students, rates of female perpetration were found at levels as high as 72% to 82% (11). Yet another found that 27% of males were abused by females. In some of these types of studies, females represent as much as 50% of sexual abusers (12). It is evident that case report and self-report studies yield very different types of data about prevalence. These extraordinary differences tell us we need to start questioning all of our assumptions about perpetrators and victims of child maltreatment.

Such studies therefore suffer from the difficulties of all such retrospective data. Finkelhor (13) notes that "it is well-established in survey research that the validity of reports declines with the distance from the event." Memory is basically a reconstructive process, and what is recalled depends upon our current beliefs and feelings (13-15). We literally "make up stories" about our lives and reality (13) and may even come to believe in memories of events that never happened (15). Surveys using retrospective reports do not have external verification of the information provided by the respondents.

Raphael, Cloitre and Dohrenwend (16) report a study comparing ten months of concurrent monthly recall with a final retrospective recall using event checklists. The level of concordance was so low they conclude "... the results are devastating for the accuracy of reporting event categories." Gerlsma, Emmelkamp and Arrindell (17), in their meta-analysis of parental rearing styles, comment on the dangers in retrospective data and discuss false accounts and fabricated accounts. Green and Hall (18) in discussing quantitative methods and dependent variables describe retrospective self-reports as especially tenuous.

It is generally assumed that this difficulty will result in underestimates of the actual rate of sexual abuse because people will have repressed their memories or will be hesitant to talk about them. But retrospective data can also result in overestimation if some individuals, as a result of the media attention to sexual abuse or misguided psychotherapy, become convinced they have been sexually abused. Ross (19) suggests that a person may come to attribute to the parents those behaviors now believed to be the cause of the individual's current state and generate a revisionist history to justify the present.

The accuracy of what is reported in a questionnaire to an interviewer will depend upon the way the questions are worded, the manner by which the interview is administered, and the skills of the interviewer. The data will be influenced by the population sampled, the sampling techniques, and the response rates of those in the sample (19).

For example, Okami (21) observes that Russell (23), in her survey of incest history in women, carefully selected and trained her interviewers to be sympathetic to victims, to know how to ask questions to encourage disclosure, and to disbelieve "myths" such as a belief that sexual contact between an adult and child could ever be seen as benign. Okami states that this ideological approach distorted the results and this is why Russell reported prevalence rates for incest that have greatly exceeded those in other studies.

Okami (21) also describes Finkelhor's (22) instructions in his 1979 survey of childhood sexual experiences in college students: "Some of these (childhood sexual experiences) are very upsetting and painful and some are not" and notes that this sets the stage for negative reports. He wonders what Finkelhor's reaction would be if some other investigator had used the instructions: "Some of these experiences are very delightful and pleasurable and some are not." Also, when the subject marked an experience as neutral, the designation was graded by coders as negative if there was an age discrepancy of more than five years. Okami gives several other examples to illustrate his assertion that much of the current victimology-based research employs polemical devices and research methods that blur the line between social science and social criticism. Because of this, he maintains, empirical truths are ignored or distorted in the interests of furthering the cause.

B. Prior Research Problems.

The major difficulty with studies based upon specialized samples is that they are not representative of cases which did not come to the attention of authorities or where the adult did not seek help from a mental health professional. Many of the retrospective surveys use college students. However, college students are unlike non-college students in many ways and information from this population may not be representative of other groups (24).

Several studies use prison populations, both for studies of adults who were perpetrators of sexual abuse and for adults who were childhood victims. Finkelhor and Russell (8) note that most sexual offenders are never reported and the number of those who are caught and convicted and end up in treatment is even smaller. This group, therefore, is unlikely to be representative of sex offenders in general. Also, prisoners who report childhood sexual molestation are atypical in several respects, including socioeconomic status, education and sociopathy. In addition, there is evidence that convicted sexual offenders in treatment are likely to report childhood sexual abuse when it may have never happened (26).

Clinical samples also present problems. Any generalization of dynamics and characteristics based on a clinician's experience is limited to victims or perpetrators who have sought therapy. In addition, clinical experience and clinical impressions form a notoriously unreliable base for drawing conclusions (27, 28). Therefore, although clinical and case studies provide a beginning point for developing hypotheses and therefore contribute to the knowledge in the field, their limitations must be kept in mind.

The Finkelhor “Sexual Abuse In Day Care Study”

David Finkelhor and his colleagues (29, 30), in a national study of 270 day care cases, report that 40 percent of the perpetrators were women. These women tended to be intelligent, educated, highly regarded in their communities, and not likely to have a history of known deviant behavior.

Many of these apparently normal women were alleged to have engaged in extremely deviant, low frequency behavior, including oral-genital penetration, urolagia and coprophagia, and ritualistic, mass abuse.

This study has received both popular and professional attention and it is likely that it will be cited in the future as evidence that apparently ordinary women are sexually abusing children. Finkelhor and his colleagues recommend that parents and licensing and law enforcement officials be educated to view females as potential sexual abusers.

Coleman (30) gives an example of how, shortly after its publication, the study was cited in a California Grand Jury as support for vigorous prosecution of such cases. There are significant difficulties with the methodology of this study. Although the authors required the abuse to be "substantiated," their definition of substantiation was whether any one of the individuals assigned to investigate the report believed that abuse was real, despite whoever else may have thought it was false. They say "our way of defining substantiation is only a way of approximating the truth ... Whenever we refer to cases, the reader should not automatically assume that we, or anybody else, know with absolute certainty that these are cases of abuse rather than mistaken allegations" (29). Therefore, their sample includes an indeterminate number of cases which ended in dismissals or acquittals, or convictions that were later reversed. For example, the McMartin case, which later ended in dropped charges and acquittals, is included.

Descriptions of ritualistic abuse are presented as fact in spite of the complete lack of any corroborating evidence for such allegations (32). Finkelhor et al. remark that the abusers, 40 percent of whom were women, did not fit any stereotypes about sexual abusers. They note the "disturbing" fact that some parents "failed to believe their own children's allegations" and claim because very few staff members were the source of disclosures, there was sometimes an actual cover-up of the abuse (29).

The Finkelhor et al. study is the most obvious example of the problem of cases of false accusations included in the sample. In defending their choice the authors claim there is no reason to believe investigators err on one side or the other (29). Given the extensive theoretical discussion and empirical research on the cognitive activity of the clinician, the research on the reliability of diagnosis, the wide and broad research on decision theory, the more than forty years of research on clinical versus statistical decisions with not a single study supporting confidence in clinical observations and judgment, and the failure of research to demonstrate any efficacy to clinical experience, this is a surprising claim (9, 27, 28, 33-36). It can only be the result of ignorance or a deliberate choice to obscure and obfuscate the issues.

In other instances researchers may have inadvertently included falsely accused persons in their sample. Therefore, the possibility of women wrongfully convicted or falsely accused must always be considered when reviewing the recent literature on female perpetrators.

Faller (36) reports on a clinical sample of 87 boy victims and 226 girl victims of validated sexual abuse. The female victims were more likely than male victims to be sexually abused by a man. Neither boys nor girls were very likely to be victimized by a woman alone, but this happened with boys ten times more often than with girls.

Of the 87 boys, 55 (63.1 %) were victimized by a man alone, seven (8 %) were victimized by a woman alone, and 25 (28.7 %) were victimized by both females and males together. Faller reports that the largest category of offenders was professionals, including day care workers.

In this study, the validation criteria was primarily the child's statements and a clinical interview, although other evidence such as perpetrator confession, witnesses and medical findings were also relied upon when present. Therefore, this sample may include an unknown number of false accusations. The fact that Faller reports the largest category of offenders was professionals, including day care workers, suggest this may have similar difficulties to the Finkelhor day care study.

C. Frequency of Child Sexual Abuse (Female Offender)

The percentage of women and teenage girl perpetrators recorded in case report studies is small and ranges from 3% to 10% (37-39). When the victim is male, female perpetrators account for 1 % to 24% of abusers. When the victim is female, female perpetrators account for 6% to 17% of abusers (40). In the Ontario Incidence Study, 10% of sexual abuse investigations involved female perpetrators (41).

However, in six studies reviewed by Russell and Finkelhor, female perpetrators accounted for 25% or more of abusers (8).

Three retrospective survey studies of college students found large proportions of female perpetrators reported by males who acknowledged a history of childhood sexual abuse. Fritz, Stoll and Wagner (42) administered a questionnaire to 952 male and female college students regarding sexual abuse when they were children and found that 4.8 percent of the males reported they had been molested. Of these, 60 percent were molested by females, primarily older female adolescents.

Risin and Koss (43) surveyed 2972 male college students and found that 216 (7.3 %) met one of their three criteria for sexual abuse (age discrepancy between child and perpetrator, use of coercion, or perpetrator who was a care giver or authority figure). Their definition was very broad, and included some consensual activities with adolescent females. The abusive behaviors ranged from exhibition to penetration. They report that there were almost as many female perpetrators (42.7 %) as male (53.3 %), with a small proportion involving both a male and a female together (4.2 %). Almost half of the female perpetrators were adolescent babysitters.

Almost half of the boys involved with female perpetrators reported that they participated in the incidents voluntarily and did not feel victimized. The authors note that this suggests qualitatively different experiences were tapped in this study compared to other surveys.

Fromuth and Burkhart (44) surveyed 582 men from two colleges and found that, depending upon the definition of childhood sexual abuse, prevalence rates varied from 4 percent to 24 percent being defined as abused. The majority (78 percent and 72 percent in the two samples) of the perpetrators of sexual abuse were females. They also found that, compared to women in college survey studies, men are less likely to perceive childhood sexual experiences as abusive, which is consistent with the Risen and Koss (43) survey. It may be that women perceive such experiences as sexual violation, while men perceive them as sexual initiation. Male socialization encourages men to define sexual experiences as desirable as long as there is no homosexual involvement. The authors emphasize the need to consider how sexual abuse is defined, particularly in studies of male victims.

Finkelhor, on the other hand, found much smaller proportions of female perpetrators in his student samples. Only 6 percent of college women and 16 percent of college males who reported childhood abuse indicated that the perpetrator was a woman. His survey using a community sample of residents from Boston yielded similar figures: none of the women and 15 percent of men reporting childhood abuse indicated that a woman was the perpetrator (8).

A small percentage of female perpetrators were also found by Russell (23) who states that her sample of 930 women only reported ten cases of incestuous abuse by females. The perpetrators included a biological mother, three sisters, three first cousins and three more distant relatives. These ten relatives constituted only five percent of all incest perpetrators and affected only one percent of the 930 women interviewed. The percentage of female perpetrators of extra-familial child sexual abuse was four percent. Russell's survey provides no information on the frequency with which females abuse males.

The necessity of considering differences in the type of sample and research method is demonstrated by contrasting the above studies to those reported by Reinhart (45), who found that only four percent of 189 boy victims were alleged to be abused by females and Farber et al. (46), who reported that only two percent of 162 children (half boys and half girls) were sexually abused by a female acting alone (six percent were abused by both a male and a female).

Both Reinhart and Farber et al. used clinical as opposed to college samples and their studies were of current cases in a hospital as opposed to a retrospective survey. Neither study is clear as to how the abuse was substantiated.

A still smaller percentage of female perpetrators was found by Rowan, Rowan and Langelier (47), who report that only nine (1.5 %) of 600 sex offenders referred for evaluations were females. This study, however, was on sex offenders rather than on victims. The previous studies focused on victims.

The necessity of specifying the sample and methodology is also shown by contrasting the Fromuth and Burkhart (44) and the Risen and Koss (43) retrospective surveys of college males to a report by Johnson and Shrier (48) on eleven cases of molestation in a community based sample of adolescent male outpatients. Eight of these boys experienced the molestation as intensely traumatic. The female molesters were usually acquaintances of the victims — most often a neighbor, babysitter, or other trusted older adolescent or young adult. All but one of the female molesters used persuasion rather than physical force or threats and three-quarters of the female molesters attempted to get their victims to ejaculate, and nearly half succeeded. Johnson and Shrier therefore conclude that childhood sexual victimization of boys by women as well as men is a high risk and traumatic experience. In contrast, the two college surveys indicate that many men did not feel victimized by the experience.

Studies using prison samples show high percentages of men reporting childhood sexual experiences with older women. Petrovich and Templer (49) found that 59 percent of 83 convicted rapists reported heterosexual experiences before the age of 16 with a female at least five years older. The authors stated that they did not know whether this high rate was a function of low socioeconomic status, being rapists, being sex criminals more generally, or being criminals in general.

Condy, Templer, Brown and Veaco (50) surveyed 359 male college students and 212 male prison inmates concerning childhood heterosexual contact. Of the male prisoners, 46 percent reported early sexual contact. This differed by offense with 57 percent of the rapists, 37 percent of the child molesters and 47 percent of the nonsexual offenders reporting such contact. In contrast, only 16 percent of the college students reported childhood sexual contact with a woman. Both the prisoners and college men reported more good feelings than bad at the time of the incident and, with the exception of the child molesters, the experience was regarded as having more of a good than a bad effect on their adult sex lives.

In every category for the subjects who reported sexual contact with a female, intercourse was involved in at least half of the sexual encounters. In only a minority of the cases did the female force the boy. In fact, in a large proportion of the cases, the male reported initiating the activity.

The distribution for the ages at which the boys first became involved was skewed toward the higher ages; the median age was 13 and the mode was 15. Condy et al. speculate that the nature of these contacts could be more characterized by an extension of the lower end of the age distribution for adult male-female sexual relationships, in contrast to what ordinarily occurs when the molester is a male. Also, although prepubescent vaginal size would make penile penetration of a girl by an adult male difficult, the prepubescent penile size would actually be less difficult with a young boy and a woman.

These higher percentages reported in prison populations could be due to many factors, such as lower socioeconomic status and higher sociopathy. However, it could also be due to a possible tendency, as discussed earlier, for a prisoner to report being sexually abused when this has actually not happened. At any rate, data from prison populations cannot be generalized to the population at large.

Bolton, Morris and MacEachron (51) conclude that male perpetrators far exceed female perpetrators of child sexual abuse. They observe, however, that the interest in studying female offenders has increased markedly in the past few years and note that no matter how the differing rates found in the various studies are explained, the fact remains that females are sometimes perpetrators.

C. Difficulties in Recognizing the Offense.

Finkelhor and Russell (8) note that despite ample opportunities for sexual abuse, remarkably few mothers seem to take advantage of them. They conclude that the literature "leads fairly persuasively to the conclusion that the traditional view about child molestation as a primarily male deviation is essentially correct. Women do not use children for their own direct sexual gratification very frequently." However, other researchers have challenged this and asserted that barriers have prevented the recognition of female child molestation.

Allen (52) claims that women may be perpetrators more often than is realized and believes that there are several barriers preventing the recognition of female child sexual abuse. The first barrier suggested is an overestimation of the strength of the incest taboo, in which the taboo was thought to be so strong that sexual abuse by women was an extremely rare aberration. When it occurred, it was seen as evidence that the woman was seriously impaired.

A possible second barrier to recognition has been an overextension of feminist explanations of child sexual abuse. Here, child sexual abuse is considered to be a direct result of culturally-based socialization which leads to male dominance and subsequent exploitation of women and children.

The third proposed barrier is the overgeneralization of the empirical observation that female perpetrated child sexual abuse is rare. That is, the frequency of reports in the literature may not accurately reflect the frequency of actual occurrence. Allen notes that even if there are far fewer female than male perpetrators, there may still be a significant number of females who abuse children. Allen concludes by recommending the strategy suggested by Bolton and Bolton (53): "Awareness of female sexual abuse perpetration is increasing ... It seems wise to withhold judgment about such cases until more is known."

Groth (54) suggests three possible reasons for the less frequent identification of female sexual abuse perpetrators: 1) women may mask sexually inappropriate contact through activities such as bathing or dressing the child; 2) the sexual offenses of women are more incestuous in nature and therefore children are more reluctant to disclose the abuse when the offender is a parent and someone they depend on; and, 3) boys may be more frequent targets of abuse by females than are girls, but it may be difficult to confirm this since boys are less likely to disclose abuse.

Although mother-son sexual abuse is rare, examples of such activities are sleeping with a son, fondling and caressing him in a sexual way, exposing her body to him, and keeping him tied to her emotionally with promises of a sexual payoff.

Banning (55) also maintains the incidence of child sexual abuse by women is underestimated. She notes that feminists view child sexual abuse as a crime committed against girls by men and until recently mother-child incest was considered to be virtually nonexistent. She claims female sexual abuse is not recognized because of the disbelief that this can occur. In addition, women are permitted a freer range of sexual contact with their children through care-giving activities and sexually abusive behavior may be more difficult to recognize. Although more recent studies have shown a higher incidence of female perpetrators, there has been little research on them and their psychopathology may be different from that of male perpetrators. Banning believes, however, that the incidence of female sexual offenders will probably remain much lower than that of males.

Sarrel and Masters (56) note that sexual abuse of men by women has been an integral part of many cultures, in which most of the sexual abuse has been committed by older females on young males.

This abuse has ranged from casual masturbation to quiet an irritable child to long term incestuous relationships. They report on eleven case studies of males who have sought treatment for sexual dysfunction that was a consequence of their childhood sexual abuse by women. In four of the cases, the assaulted males were physically constrained, violently attacked and feared for their safety, but still functioned sexually.

The authors observe that this contradicts the belief that male cannot achieve or maintain an erection when threatened or attacked by a woman. There is no information on the characteristics of the perpetrators of the sexual assaults, but these cases suggest that, although rare, women can commit rape and violent sexual assault.

Finkelhor and Russell (8) discount the hypothesized barriers to identification and conclude the research indicates sexual contact between children and older women is a distinct minority of child-adult sexual contacts. They believe the best estimates put female perpetrators of sexual abuse at about 20 percent for male children and five percent for female children. (Since this time, however, Finkelhor has recently reported greater frequencies of females as sexual abusers, as was discussed above.)

Although these proposed barriers are interesting, they are speculative and not supported by empirical data. In summary, the different studies report widely varied frequencies of sexual abuse by women. The definition of sexual abuse used, the type of sample selected and the methodology employed affects the results obtained.

Although child sexual abuse by females may not be as rare as was once believed, it does occur. However, some of the recent studies may be inadvertently including cases of false allegations.

D. Characteristics of the Female offenders of Child Sexual Abuse.

What are the circumstances under which females sexually abuse children? What are the characteristics of such females? Are the factors similar to those in male perpetrated sexual abuse?

There are now studies which address these questions. Many of these are based on small samples and case studies. Although any generalizations from such reports must be made cautiously, this information provides a necessary starting point in understanding female sexual abuse perpetrators.

Dynamics of Female-Perpetrated Abuse

Some research has reported that female perpetrators commit fewer and less intrusive acts of sexual abuse compared to males. However, studies also indicate that rarely does a female offender "just" sexually abuse a child. Generally there is a combination of psychological humiliation, degradation, physical and verbal abuse in combination with the sexual.

It is not uncommon for the female offender to urinate on a child, force the child to urinate on her or other children that may be involved; beat them while masturbating; force them to act out sexually with each other while she beats them and/or masturbates; makes them eat their own vomit; etc. Another common practice has been for the female to utilize such things as used kotex pads or tampons.

The readings suggest that male perpetrators are more likely to engage in anal intercourse and to have the victim engage in oral-genital contact, females tend to use more foreign objects as part of the abusive act. Many studies also reported that differences were not found in the- frequency of vaginal intercourse, fondling by the victim or abuser, genital body contact without penetration or oral contact by the abuser.

Females may be more likely to use verbal coercion than physical force. The most commonly reported types of abuse by female perpetrators include vaginal intercourse, oral sex, fondling and group sex (56, 57). However, women also engage in mutual masturbation, oral, anal and genital sex acts, show children pornography and play sex games (58, 59). The research suggests that, overall, female and male perpetrators commit many of the same acts and follow many of the same patterns of abuse against their victims. They also do not tend to differ significantly in terms of their relationship to the victim (most are relatives) or the location of the abuse (60, 61).

It is interesting to note in the study by Kaufman (61), that 8% of the female perpetrators were teachers and 23% were babysitters, compared to male perpetrators who were 0% and 8% respectively. Finkelhor also report significantly higher rates of sexual abuse of children by females in day-care settings. Of course, Finkelhor's findings should not surprise us given that women represent the majority of day-care employees.

Research on teen and adult female sexual abuse perpetrators has found that many suffer from low self-esteem, antisocial behavior, poor social and anger management skills, fear of rejection, passivity, promiscuity, mental health problems, post-traumatic stress disorder and mood disorders (57, 65). However, as in the case of male perpetrators, research does not substantiate that highly emotionally disturbed or psychotic individuals predominate among the larger population of female sexual abusers (56).

There is some evidence that females are more likely to be involved with co-abusers, typically a male, though studies report a range from 25% to 77% (38, 56, 61). However, Mayer (62), in a review of data on 17 adolescent female sex offenders, found that only 2 were involved with male co-perpetrators. She also found that the young women in this study knew their victims and that none experienced legal consequences for their actions.

Finally, there is an alarmingly high rate of sexual abuse by females in the backgrounds of rapists, sex offenders and sexually aggressive men - 59% (49, 54).

Mathews, Matthews, and Speltz (64, 65) and Patton (66), report on a study of 16 female sexual offenders who were in the Genesis II treatment project in Minnesota. All but one of the women studied were themselves victims of childhood sexual abuse and many were also victims of physical abuse. There were strong and consistent patterns of childhood social isolation, alienation, and lack of development of interpersonal skills and competence among perpetrators.

Three categories of female sex offenders were described: Teacher/Lover, Predisposed (intergenerational), and Male-Coerced (again, if co-perpetrated, this category has been left out of the study, but requires attention).

* Teacher/Lover: Typically involves prepubescent and adolescent males with whom the female offender relates as a peer. Her motive is to teach her young victims about sexuality.

* Predisposed offender: Usually is a victim of severe sexual abuse that was initiated at a very young age and persisted over a long period of time. She initiated the sexual abuse herself and the victims are her own children. The offender's motives are non-threatening emotional intimacy.

* Male-Coerced offender: Acts initially in conjunction with a male who has previously abused children. She exhibits a pattern of extreme dependency and nonassertive behavior and she may eventually initiate sexual abuse herself. The victims are children both within and outside of the family.

Faller (56) reports on a clinical sample of 40 women who were judged by staff to have sexually abused at least 63 children. These women represented 14 percent of the total of 289 perpetrators of sexual abuse. Many of the women had significant difficulties in psychological and social functioning. About half had mental problems, both retardation and psychotic illness.

More than half had chemical dependency problems and close to three-fourths had maltreated their victims in other ways in addition to the sexual abuse. The women fell into five case types (four were sexually abusive in more than one context).

- a) Polyincestuous abuse: Twenty-nine (72.5 %) of the women fit into this category. In such cases, there are at least two perpetrators and generally two or more victims. Usually, a male rather than the female offender instigated the abuse. The woman went along with the male and played a secondary role.
- b) Single-parent abuse: Six (15 %) of the women who sexually abused were single parents. These mothers did not have ongoing relationships with men and the oldest child seemed to serve as a surrogate partner for the mother, often having adult role responsibilities.
- c) Psychotic abusers: Only three (7.5 %) of the women were classified as psychotic at the time of the sexual abuse. Therefore, this study does not support the clinical assumption that most female perpetrators are highly disturbed and often psychotic at the time of the sexual abuse.
- d) Adolescent perpetrators: Three (7.5 %) were adolescent girls who had difficulty with peer relationships and lacked alternative sexual outlets.
- e) Non-custodial abusers: There was only one woman who was the non-custodial mother of her victims and sexually abused them during visitation. Faller believes that in such cases the non-custodial parent is apt to be devastated at the loss of her spouse and the children become the source of emotional gratification.

Faller concludes that the circumstances that lead women to sexually abuse children can be differentiated from those causing men to do so.

McCarty (38) describes the characteristics of 26 mother-child incest offenders. These women were identified by the Dallas Incest Treatment Program over a three-year period and constituted four percent of the offender population. The cases had been validated by a protective service investigation. Nine of the mothers were co-offenders with a male partner; while 12 were independent offenders (a male offender was also involved in half of these).

All but two of the women described their childhood as difficult and abusive. When the mother was a co-perpetrator, her dependency on her spouse was the major contributing factor.

The independent offenders in particular were characterized as experiencing themselves psychologically as loners and lacking any sense of attachment or belonging. They were likely to have married as teenagers.

Half were characterized as seriously emotionally disturbed and almost half had a serious chemical abuse problem. In three of the cases of mother-son incest, the father was out of the home and the mothers seemed to treat the boys as age mates. However, the women who abused daughters seemed to treat the daughters as extensions of themselves.

Vander Mey (67) reviews the research on sexually abused boys and reports that there is so little information on sexual abuse of males that findings must be considered tenuous. She tentatively posits that male incest victims are abused more often by males than by females and that both mother and father incest perpetrators tend to have emotional, social and psychological problems compounded by poor impulse control, low self-esteem and alcohol abuse.

Finkelhor (8) suggests that there are four components that contribute, in different degrees and forms, to the making of a child molester.

These four components represent complementary processes which help explain the diversity of the behavior of sexual abusers. These four factors are sexual arousal, emotional congruence, blockage and disinhibition and Finkelhor believes that examination of these factors can help explain why sexual abusers are predominantly male.

a) Sexual arousal: In order for an adult to be aroused by a child, there has to have been cultural or familial conditioning to sexual activity with children or early fantasy reinforced by masturbation.

b) Emotional congruence: For emotional congruence, there is comfort in relating to a child and satisfaction of emotional need through the abuse. This is apt to be due to arrested development through limited intelligence, immaturity, or low self-esteem.

c) Blockage: Age appropriate sexual opportunities may be blocked by bad experiences with age appropriate adults, sexual dysfunction, limited social skills, or marital disturbance.

d) Disinhibition: The abuser may lose control through impulse control deficits, psychosis, alcohol, drugs, stress, or nonexistent family rules.

Rowan et al. (47) describe characteristics of the nine female (out of 600) sex offenders in terms of Finkelhor's (8) four-factor model.

In five of the cases, the abuse occurred in conjunction with a dominant male partner; in four the woman acted independently. The case histories of several of the women showed a history of childhood abuse and all had serious psychological problems or limited intelligence. The four women who acted independently abused boys. Of the five who acted in conjunction with a male, three had female victims, one a male victim, and one victimized both a son and a daughter. The authors conclude that none of these cases were true paraphilics according to the DSM-III-R but that the female molesters did fit the model proposed by Finkelhor.

James and Nasjleti (69), in discussing their clinical experience with sexually abusive families, report that a minority of their cases involved female perpetrators.

Although the psychological profiles of these mothers is sketchy, in general they have infantile and extreme dependency needs, a marriage relationship that is absent or emotionally empty, possessive and overprotective attitudes toward child victims, and alcohol used as a crutch. These women expect their children to meet their emotional needs and because of the mothers' traditional role as a caretaker, they are able to hide the sexually explosive nature of these contacts.

Chasnoff et al. (70) report on three cases of sexual abuse by a mother of her infant. The mothers who were separated from their sexual partners had demonstrated some confusion regarding sexual identity and had sought assistance with chemical dependency during pregnancy.

Two of the three were diagnosed as borderline personality disorder and two had been raped. All three women were isolated in their living arrangements and the authors believe that the sexual abuse was motivated by loneliness. The social alienation and isolation of the mothers were significant facts in the molestation of their infants.

Goodwin and DiVasto (71) review six reported cases of mother-daughter incest and two cases of grandmother-granddaughter incest. These cases deviate from the usual descriptions of incest and the authors note that physical closeness between mothers and daughters is less subject to taboo than are father and daughter contacts.

The greater toleration of physical intimacy between mothers and daughters makes it more difficult for the child, the parent, and eventually the therapist to recognize when these contacts become incestuous.

Although Goodwin and DiVasto acknowledge that since the reports of mother-daughter incest are few and brief, any conclusions must be tentative, they find the mothers seem to be similar to those mothers who initiate mother-son incest. They describe the mothers as aggressive women who have abandoned their maternal role for an exploitive relationship with their children. Their need for nurturance precipitates a sexual relationship with the child. In all five cases of mother-daughter incest, the mothers were involved in deteriorating marriages. Goodwin and DiVasto believe that mother-daughter incest is more common than the rare case reports suggest.

Kempe and Kempe (72) suggest that with the high divorce rate, an increasing number of boys are living alone with their mothers and become a source of comfort and closeness which may sometimes substitute for the companionship previously experienced in marriage. Although this in itself is normal, it can lead to problem behaviors, such as taking the boy to bed for comfort. Kempe and Kempe note that society is more ready to believe that there is a sexual aspect to fathers who sleep with daughters compared to mothers who sleep with sons. They describe two case studies in which sleeping arrangements also included overt sexual behavior and state that in their experience, the psychological effects to the boy can be devastating.

Krug (73) reports on eight case histories of men who were sexually abused by their mothers as children in which seven of the mothers slept with their sons regularly until the boys were teenagers.

The mothers, who were either divorced or had troubled marriages, appeared to be trying to satisfy emotional and relational needs through their sons.

Some were clearly socially insecure and isolated. In four of the cases, the mothers initiated actual sexual contact, in the others there was no overt sexual behavior. None of these mothers were described as psychotic.

Although these case studies are interesting, the question is the classification of all as sexual abuse.

The behaviors of the mothers sleeping with their sons into adolescence may be inappropriate and may infantilize the boys, but to label all such cases as sexual abuse is to use a very inclusive definition of sexual abuse. However, since this was a clinical sample we would expect the men to report emotional and adjustment problems in that this is the reason they sought therapy.

In an early article describing different types of incest, Lukianowicz (74) discusses five cases of female perpetrators — three mother-son and two aunt-nephew. In one case of mother-son incest, the mother was a widow, and in a second, the mother's married life was very unhappy.

Both of these women became very dependent on their eldest sons, in whom they saw the idealized young lovers of their own youth. The third mother was a chronic schizophrenic of low intelligence. One of the aunts was hypo manic and seduced her nephew during a manic phase; the other was generally promiscuous. Lukianowicz reports that in many of the cases studied, social isolation was a very important etiological factor.

Wakefield, Rogers and Underwager (75) describe four case histories of women who had sexual contact with children. Each of these women had a history of significant losses in her background along with a lack of healthy, secure childhood relationships.

The sexually abusive behavior was triggered by a particular loss and in three of the cases the relationship between the woman and the victim was emotional as well as sexual and appeared to be engaged in primarily to satisfy the woman's emotional needs.

O'Connor (76) reports on a group of 62 convicted and imprisoned female sex offenders in Great Britain. In 39 (63 %) of the sex offenses with individual victims, the victims were children and in nine cases the offender was the mother or stepmother. In most (25) of the cases the women were convicted of aiding and abetting a male offender. Almost half of the women convicted of child sexual abuse had a previous history of psychiatric disorder. Sexual gratification was never noted as a motivation for the women involved in sex offenses with a victim.

In another survey using a prison sample, Condy et al. (50), asked 625 female college students and 172 female prison inmates about their early sexual contacts with younger males. They report that three (0.5 %) of the college women and thirteen (7.6 %) of the prison women reported that they had had sexual contact with a boy. These women were more likely to have had early sexual experiences themselves (81 % compared to 21 %) and were significantly higher on the schizophrenia and hypo mania scales and lower on the Lie scale on the Kincannon Mini-Mult.

The authors state that although they were atypical, the women were not psychotic. Although this finding is consistent with other research concerning the characteristics of females who sexually abuse children, the different response set suggested by the lower Lie scale and the serious limitations of the Kincannon (James Butcher, personal communication, 1988) must be considered. The authors also note the possible importance of the lower socioeconomic status of the prisoners since it is well established that acting out and illegal behaviors are more common among less privileged segments of society.

Travin et al. (9) observe that only the *most overt acts of sexual abuse perpetrated by females are likely to come to the attention of the criminal justice system*. Also, female offenders often exhibit a history of physical and sexual victimization, chronic substance abuse and longstanding psychiatric disorder. Therefore, those female abusers identified by the justice system as offenders generally represent women who are both severe victims and victimizers.

They report on nine case histories of women referred for evaluation and treatment at a forensic psychiatry clinic. These cases constituted 1 percent of the sex offenders seen at their clinic. All nine women had backgrounds of severe psychological, physical, and/or sexual abuse. Each had low self-esteem, reported few or no positive social contacts, and was functioning at a marginal level. Four had histories of severe psychopathology, including psychosis and substance abuse.

The other five had obvious characterological deficiencies, although no history of psychosis. Travin et al. conclude that female sexual offenders do exist and may warrant the diagnosis of paraphilic disorder.

E. Societal views on female offenders and gender bias in courts.

“When we think of sexual crimes, society generally perceives victims as female and males as perpetrators. This crime conjures up an image of women and children as being vulnerable and at high risk around males. Women are seen as being caring, loving and fiercely protective of children. *The media, courts and general public* have the misconception that those cases involving females as perpetrators are "rare incidences" or the female being bullied, abused or coerced into such deviant acts under the domination of an abusive male.

In society, it used to be that with a 13-or 14-year-old male, if his first sexual experience involved a 25-year-old girl who may well have taken advantage of him, his male counterparts may say, 'Hey, you lucked out,' " Richard Gartner, author of "Betrayed as Boys: Psychodynamic Treatment of Sexually Abused Men," told ABC News. "It was almost seen as a rite of passage. That's the only group that later recalls such experiences as 'lucking out.' You don't find that in females. Today that kind of behavior is regarded as sexual assault.

Whereas abuse of a young girl by a man is always seen as horrifying, this "rite of passage" perception can make cases involving the abuse of a boy by a woman seem titillating and thus irresistible to the media.

It is unlikely, for instance, that Mary Kay Letourneau, the former schoolteacher serving time for having an affair with one of her students (and ultimately bearing him two children), would have generated countless headlines and a made-for-TV movie if she had been male and her victim female.

The scenario in which an older woman "teaches" a young man about sex is also ubiquitous in literature and movies. "The Graduate's" Mrs. Robinson and "The Summer of '42" are classic examples of a theme that has been explored endlessly.

And experts say these messages can confuse male victims and subtly encourage them not to report abuse. Because boys tend to be easily sexually aroused, Gartner said, adults can manipulate their victims into thinking they were equal and willing participants in sexual acts. And because society sometimes perceives that the incidents aren't abuse but a case of the boy "getting lucky," male victims might not admit or even realize they've been abused until they reach adulthood.

A boy might see sex with an older woman as "a sort of a prize," said Tarlow-Sale.

"Depending on the maturity level, that could be something they would want. . . . It would be really hard to judge whether he felt raped. If he's gone through puberty and is having sexual feelings, it could be working out for both of them. It's absolutely inappropriate, but the victim might not be aware of that."

I have noted that when a female is charged with a sex offence, even the media tends to be more sympathetic, often reporting the case as being "seduction" or the offender as "having an affair".

In a book written by Matthew Parynik Mendel, "The Male Survivor", he quotes the following reasons why society continues to see males as abusers and females as victims. He stresses our beliefs about gender roles blinds us to disconfirming and discomfoting examples. His study listed the following findings:

- Denial of female sexuality and aggression
- Belief that sexual interaction with an older female is benign or positive
- Greater leeway given to females than males in their physical interaction
- Greater tendency for female perpetration to be interfamilial
- Greater tendency for female perpetration to be covert and subtle
- Assumption that female perpetrators act under the initiation or coercion of males
- Overextension of feminist explanation of child sexual abuse stemming from male violence and power differentials between the sexes
- Politically based avoidance of acknowledgment of female perpetration “(73).

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.

A. Design and Sample

The research design selected is a non-experimental, unobtrusive measure utilizing secondary existing data from the Shelby County Corrections Center, Memphis, TN, and the Criminal Court 30th Judicial District, also in Memphis, TN. The reason behind my choosing this method and region for secondary data gathering is based on the literature review, which exposed the minute portion of society encompassing the female offender. Secondary analysis is the reanalysis of data that was originally compiled by another researcher for purposes other than the original intent. The act of submitting and gathering surveys would yield little to no results as pointed out in the literature review section. The sample population that is consistent with this topic could only be identified through those offenders who have been found guilty, through a court of law. The Uniformed Crime Report and the Bureau of Prisons do not list Child Sexual Abuse in their statistical breakdowns. These points, along with time restraints, lead me to utilize local secondary data to gather the required information for the hypothesis.

I chose inferential statistics to prove that a small sample (16 cases of child sexual abuse, split equally between male and female offenders, which have been found guilty by a court of law and received punishment), shows that females do receive less actual incarceration time for similar crimes in regards to child sexual abuse, than do their male counterparts.

Inferential statistics are used to draw inferences about a population from a sample. In the most common use hypothesis testing, a "straw man" null hypothesis is put forward and it is determined whether the data is strong enough to reject it.

The null hypothesis is a hypothesis about a population parameter. The purpose of hypothesis testing is to test the viability of the null hypothesis in the light of data. Depending on the data, the null hypothesis either will or will not be rejected as a viable possibility.

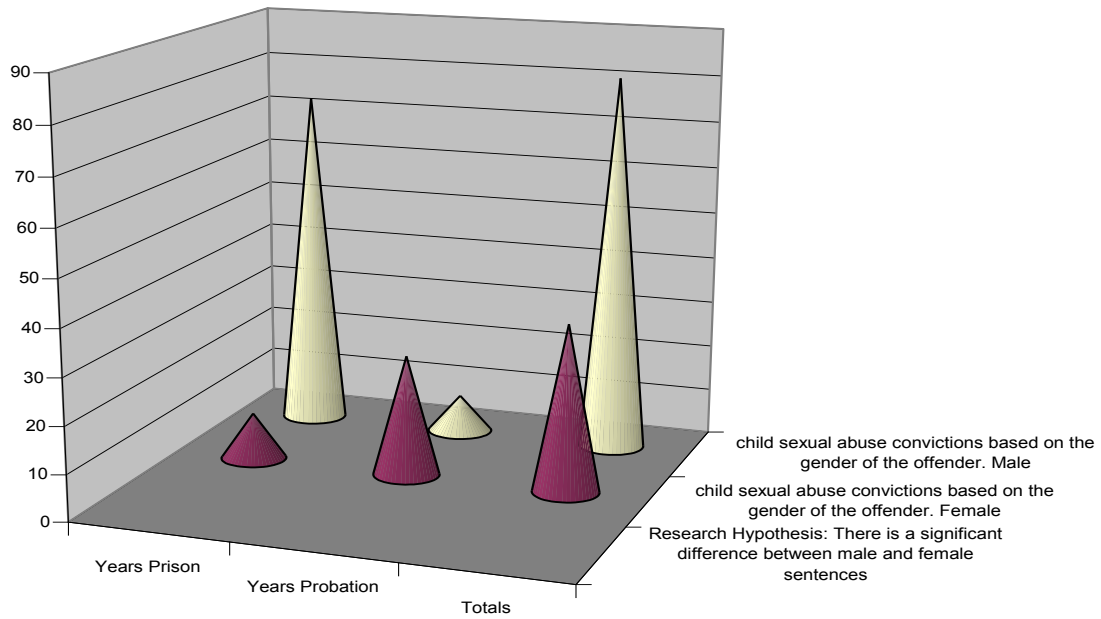
This research determines medians and means as measures of central tendency, standard deviation as a measure of dispersion, and utilizes the Chi square test as an inferential test to establish a statistically significant difference exists between the two sets of data.

B. Statistical Analysis

The Microsoft Excel program was used for the statistical analysis. The median and mean were analyzed as descriptive measures of central tendency, in regards to the two sample populations. The median is a useful measure when there is the possibility that data contains outliers that may cause skewing (disproportionate distribution which occurs in response to presence of very high or very low scores) of the data presented. However, the Chi Square test is not as efficient for properly analyzing small samples. I also utilized the paired t test, which compares two paired groups so I could make inferences about the average difference between the paired measurements.

It calculates the difference between each set of pairs, and analyzes that list of differences based on the assumption that the differences in the entire population. The following chart depicts the difference.

Gender Comparison (Prison/Probation)



	Years Prison	Years Probation	Totals
■ Research Hypothesis: There is a significant difference between male and female sentences			
■ child sexual abuse convictions based on the gender of the offender. Female	10	26	36
■ child sexual abuse convictions based on the gender of the offender. Male	73	8	81

Data table (1) combined (78):

	Years Prison	Years Probation	Total
Female Offender	10	26	36
Male Offender	73	8	81
Total	83	30	117

Data table (2) Female/individual:

	Years Prison	Years Probation
Female		
Subject 1	8	0
Subject 2	2	2
Subject 3	0	8
Subject 4	0	4
Subject 5	0	7
Subject 6	0	1
Subject 7	0	2
Subject 8	0	2

Data table (3) Male/individual:

	Years Prison	Years Probation
Male		
Subject 1	25	0
Subject 2	13	6
Subject 3	13	6
Subject 4	8	4
Subject 5	5	5
Subject 6	5	5
Subject 7	2	2
Subject 8	2	2

Null hypothesis: “There is not a significant statistical difference in the incarceration rate between male and female offenders of child sexual abuse”.

The null hypothesis simply states that there is no difference between the two groups (male and female offenders). Using this term, I defined the P value to be the probability of observing a difference as large or larger than I would observe if the null hypothesis were true.

Paired *t* test:

The most important results are the P value and the confidence interval.

If the pairing was effective, “*r*” will be positive and the “P” value will be small. This means that the two groups are significantly correlated, so it made sense to choose a paired test.

If the P value is large (greater than 0.05), then it would be useless to utilize a paired test. Your choice of whether to use a paired test or not should not be based on this one P value, but also on the experimental design and the results you have seen in other similar experiments, which the Chi square test confirmed.

The P value answers this question: What is the chance that random sampling would result in an average effect as far from zero (or more so) as observed in the secondary data?

Before interpreting the P value or confidence interval, I thought about the size of the relative risk, odds ratio or P1-P2 for which I was searching. This was a major factor in determining how the results were to be interpreted.

If the P value was small, then it would be unlikely that the effect I observed was due to a coincidence of random sampling. Therefore, the null-hypothesis was rejected.

By simply observing different sample means, especially with a very small sample of secondary data, was not enough to persuade this writer to conclude that the populations have different means. It is possible that the populations have the same mean and that the difference I observed was a mere coincidence.

If the populations really have the same mean, what is the probability of observing such a large difference between sample means in a broader arena? This is where the “P” value comes into use.

The P value is a probability, with a value ranging from zero to one. If the P value is small, I concluded that the difference between sample means is unlikely to be a coincidence.

Calculations:

I used “QuickCalcs” online calculator from <http://graphpad.com/quickcales/ttest2.cfm> to conduct the calculations with the following results:

In comparing incarceration rates between the two groups (prison, not probation), the difference is considered to be very statistically significant.

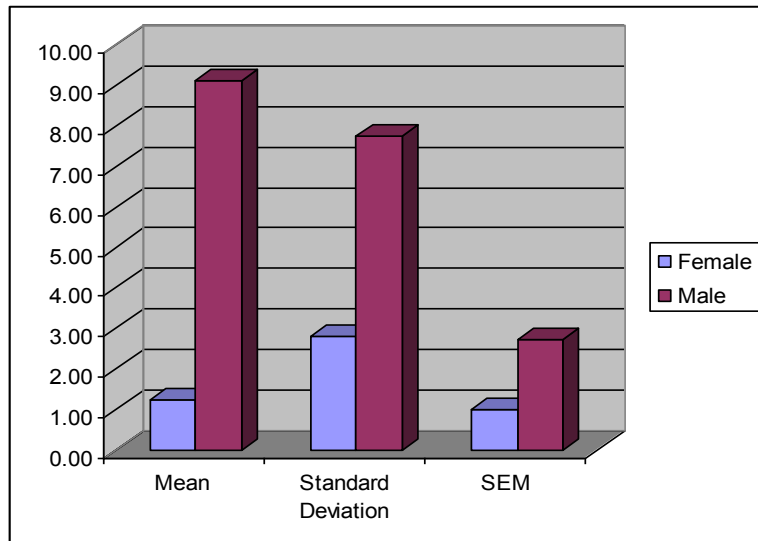
P Value: 0.0045 (two tail)

Confidence interval: The mean of group one (female) minus group two (male) = 7.88

95% CI of this difference (from -12.40 to - 3.35)

Intermediate values used in calculations: $t = 4.1172$; $df = 7$; standard error of difference = 1.913

Group	One (Female)	Two (Male)
Mean	1.25	9.13
SD	2.82	7.74
SEM	1.00	2.73
N =	8	8



Note: When performing the same test in reference to probation, the results did not show a statistical difference.

V. DISCUSSION.

By using the "Category to Category" comparison, which required the declarative hypothesis statement: "There is a statistically significant difference between gender and mean incarceration rates imposed by the court for the crime of child sexual abuse", I was able to delineate the differences in sentencing between males and females within the local geographic area.

Generalizing from Samples to Populations

Case study occurs when all you have is information about one unique offender, and you want to generalize about all offenders of that type. This statement accurately reflects the reason I have chose this approach. Albeit a small group of offenders (female) vice one, the statement holds true. Initially, I envisioned utilizing both qualitative and quantitative research. However, as my research progressed, it became clear that using quantitative data only was more appropriate; numbers (prison terms). Being that my population sample consisted of only 16 total cases; the qualitative value of punishment rendered through the courts was not the main factor driving the hypothesis.

This topic would have proved too difficult and time consuming, to produce from scratch, any form of valid data. Several datasets in criminal justice and criminology exist just for this purpose. Often, secondary analysis will involve adding an additional variable to an

existing dataset. This variable will be something that the researcher collects on their own, from another dataset, or from a common source of information.

When I chose to utilize inferential statistics, I did so based upon my small sample population, and also to assist in proving my theory. I measured the sample in order to infer about the larger populations from which the samples were drawn. On the basis of raw observed frequencies (or percentages) of a sample's behavior or characteristics, I could then make claims about the sample itself, but I could not generalize to make claims about the population from which the sample was drawn. A test of statistical significance assists in determining how confidently a researcher can generalize to a larger (unmeasured) population from a (measured) sample of that population.

Initially, I used the chi square to accomplish the test of statistical significance and to reject the null-hypothesis. However, the chi square test is not as efficient with small sample populations. Therefore, I chose the paired t-test. Variables – The variety (independent measure of a variable) included the offense. The variable is gender (male/female).

Problem Statement

The problem statement usually begins with a statement of need, which may be based on a public policy to be fulfilled or examined and/or on data indicating some shortcoming in educational or psychological services. Therefore, I believe the need is for society and our criminal justice system to render punishment which is equally applied to both sexes in the offender realm.

VI. CONCLUSIONS.

It is difficult to prove whether or not the number of cases concerning female perpetrated child sexual abuse has risen in the past two decades. This could be attributed to additional and different forms of reporting methods.

Our courts should be a reflection of society's views and interpretation of the laws "we" enact through "our" legislative branch of government. If society does not view an "offense" differently based on the gender of the perpetrator, then equally, the punishment for that offense will not be altered.

Although there are different means of committing this offense, to include characteristics of the offender, relationship to the victim, covert, overt, some emotional, some physical, the end result is the harm to the child. Studies have shown that victims often become offenders as they age, therefore, an endless circle is created.

On a small scale, I have shown a significant statistical difference between the incarceration rates for male and female offenders of this offense. This writer believes that this aspect is copied in other geographical areas of the U.S., based on probability and inference.

VII. RECOMENDATIONS.

Further research into the arena of the distribution of punishment for this offense in relation to offender gender needs to be conducted. This may be accomplished by organizing a board of review at the state level. The board would ideally consist of an equal amount of male and female members, representing a variety of disciplines and not limited merely to the legal field. Knowing the judgments would be reviewed, perhaps the courts might refrain from the normal stereotyping of gender roles and render decisions which reflect the offense committed.

Additionally, there are small numbers of psychologists/psychiatrists who have access to the female offender. Prison systems are not as adequately equipped in the realm of counseling services required for treatment of the female offender, being that there are much greater numbers of male offenders of child sexual abuse. The establishment of these services within our prison system is essential to curve repeat offenders once released from incarceration.

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