

FEMALE SEXUAL PREDATORS

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FEMALE SEXUAL PREDATORS

Understanding Them to
Protect Our Children and Youths

Karen A. Duncan

Forensic Psychology
Duane L. Dobbert, series editor



PRAEGER

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To Tom
A husband who makes the world a safe and joyous place

To
All Children and Teens
May Your World Be Safe and Loving
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reports on female sexual offenders along with his engaging discussions on human sexuality within contemporary society. To Anthony Richey, who worked with Andrew Duncan to research and compile media reports on women convicted of child sexual abuse within schools. Anthony and Andrew along with some of the male college students in my human sexuality classes were invaluable in helping to gain the male perspective on women who sexually abuse adolescent boys and provided helpful insights on the male response to female sexual coercion.

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Introduction

Sexual crimes are among the most disturbing acts committed by one human being against another. They are disturbing not only because of the sexual nature of the crime but because of the psychological and emotional consequences that follow in their aftermath and because they are most often committed by someone the victim knows. Historically, there has been less acknowledgment and little attention given to females who commit sexual crimes even though females have been documented as committing sexual offenses as early as the 1930s (see Chideckel, 1935). This lack of attention has hindered the information that is needed about female sex offenders in order to prevent their criminal behavior. The same lack of attention has also afforded less recognition, understanding, and support to the people—adults, teens, and children—who are the victims of female sex offenders.

Even though there has been less research of female sexual offenders, what is known from the information that is available is that females commit the same types of sexual crimes as males do. Sexual stalking, sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, and child sexual abuse are among the types of sexual crimes that both males and females are known to commit. There are, however, also differences. One of the differences between male and female sex offenders is that due to the potential for gender bias, female sexual crimes are more likely to be obscured. Female sexual crimes are obscured due in part to the cultural norms that define female sexual behavior and by the gender stereotypes that define who society identifies as a sex offender. A consequence of this obscurity is that

victims are less protected. Victims are less protected because females are less likely to be identified, reported, prosecuted, and convicted when gender bias and cultural stereotypes prevail and camouflage their sexual offense. When and if females are convicted for their sexual crimes, they might not receive the same level of judicial accountability and social sanctioning as a male who has committed the same or similar crime. A consequence of less accountability is that females are given license to continue their sexual offending, thereby creating more victims and continuing the harm they cause to others. An additional outcome of gender bias and cultural stereotypes regarding females who commit sexual crimes are that they are not afforded the same opportunities for rehabilitation and treatment and a reliable level of law enforcement oversight when living in the community. This outcome of gender bias happens when a majority of the research, treatment, and criminal justice funding goes toward male sex offenders because female sex offenders are thought to commit fewer sexual crimes because fewer reports are made to law enforcement or because fewer cases are prosecuted (see Levine, 2006).

Female Sexual Predators is a response to the growing need for comprehensive information about females who commit sexual crimes that corresponds with the emerging research about female sex offenders. It is also in part a response to addressing the gender bias regarding female sex offenders that many of us who work in the field of child sexual abuse and family violence have come to recognize over the years. The idea, let alone the reality, that there are women who intentionally and with a sense of purpose act in a violent, aggressive, and coercive manner is not an acceptable idea in some social, political, and professional circles. As stated by Lori Girshick in writing about sexual violence within lesbian relationships, “The idea that women might be violent is not palatable; we don’t know quite how to place it, and as feminists, we are worried about possible consequences to our patriarchal analysis. The thought of a woman rapist is even more removed from our sensibility. A woman sexually harming another woman? Penetrating her with an object or her fingers? Tying her up and anally raping her? Holding her down? Verbally harassing her? Her against her? This is tough stuff. Just ask the women it happens to” (see Girshick, 2002, p. 3). Similar responses can be found when discussing women who commit acts of sexual aggression in their heterosexual relationships with men or against adolescents and children.

The fact that there are mothers who through their own volition harm their children and in some cases contribute to a significant number of child deaths is not a reality that some people want to admit unless there is a man around to blame for the mother’s violence. This denial is equally strong when it comes to accepting that there are mothers who sexually abuse their children and that the abuse can continue for a number of years, even into adulthood and in the ab-

sence of a male offender. The reality of being sexually abused by your mother is not a reality that sons and daughters want to necessarily acknowledge either; however, the denial of maternal sexual abuse does not erase its existence. What anyone who denies and minimizes maternal sexual abuse and other types of violence committed by mothers needs to realize is that a resistance to admit to female violence, and sexual violence in particular, prevents the possibility to provide a safe home to the children who remain in the care of this group of mothers and fails to address the needs of women who cause such incredible harm to a generation of our young.

A similar resistance holds true when discussing the need to recognize that there are young women on college campuses who commit acts of sexual coercion and sexual assault against their male dating partners and that they do so in a similar manner and by similar means, as do young men who commit these offenses. To advocate for this acknowledgement and for the prevention of sexual coercion and assault by females, goes against the gender stereotypes that can exist on college campuses and challenges the gender politics that can be found within the research about sexual violence, as it is reported to occur on college campuses. However, if we fear to make these challenges or fail to recognize that within contemporary society acts of sexual coercion and aggression may be more about how personal boundaries are violated by the individual rather than about the aggressor's gender, we risk not teaching an entire generation the basic human value that violating someone's personal boundaries is not acceptable whether you are a male or a female.

Promoting healthy, mutually respectful and life-affirming relationships is the overarching goal of all prevention education programs. It is important to remember that prevention efforts began with the recognition that the silence surrounding sexual violence was no longer acceptable. Within this basic premise of "no more silence" was the requirement that men and women across societies no longer deny that these traumatic crimes happen. Perhaps the time has come to thoughtfully consider that in order to achieve the overarching goal of preventing all sexual crimes that the day has come to acknowledge that in contemporary society the question of who commits sexual crimes is not determined by gender alone. In doing so, we begin the process of acknowledging that people who commit sexual crimes may have commonalities that include the abuse and exploitation of another human being; a belief in sexual entitlement rather than the belief in sexual consent; feelings of hostility and anger that often include an adherence to adversarial feelings against another gender; the acceptance of interpersonal violence that provides permission for violence; and an inherent denial of the harm sexual aggression in all its many forms cause to another human being. The outcome of such a paradigm shift is that we may actually provide the opportunity to move beyond the gender stereotypes that permeate the societal

denial of female sex offenders and move toward the fulfillment of identifying, understanding, and preventing sexual crimes that are committed by females as well as males.

Female Sexual Predators covers a wide range of predatory sexual behaviors and offending patterns by women. It examines women employed in caretaking positions who commit sexual offenses against children and teens; mothers who commit sexual offenses against their sons and daughters; and college-age women who commit acts of sexual aggression and coercion within their heterosexual dating relationships. Women who sexually exploit male and female high school students are included along with a discussion of how widespread sexual harassment is within high schools, and how this type of behavior between educators and students can set the stage for more intrusive sexual acts that are both illegal and unethical. The book is unique in that it provides a worldview of female sexual predators with studies from the United States, England, South Africa, Australia, Poland, Canada, Sweden, and other countries. Chapter 1 is an in-depth discussion about female sexual offending that reviews studies from the United States and other countries in order to place female sexual offending within a broader context. The chapter discusses the underreporting of sexual offenses committed by females because of gender bias and cultural stereotypes and how sexist beliefs about female sexuality contribute to the continuation of sexual crimes committed by females. The types of sexual crimes females commit, along with the frequency and type of violence that females use during their sexual offending, are presented so that the reader has a clear understanding of the severity of sexual crimes committed by females and the level of harm that female sex offenders cause to their victims. The debate about whether females commit their sexual crimes alone or because of coercion by males is addressed, and the reader may be surprised by the findings. In particular, the physiological response that a male or female victim can experience as a result of sexual victimization by a woman is discussed to dispel the myth of the sexually invulnerable male and to clarify the human sexual response that can occur during sexual victimization.

Chapter 2 discusses maternal sexual abuse and the consequences to children sexually abused by their mothers or other women who assume a maternal role with children. Maternal sexual abuse is devastating to the sons and daughters who have been the victims of their mothers' sexual deviance and who have been silenced by a society unwilling to accept or discuss the existence of maternal sexual offenders. Children sexually abused by mothers describe a deep sense of betrayal and a personal loss that at times seems impossible to reconcile. The impact of maternal sexual abuse is presented, as is the resilience of adult children who have endured sexual abuse and other types of childhood abuses at the hands of their mothers. Characteristics of maternal sexual offenders are presented

along with the types and context of sexual abuse that mothers commit so that the reader has an understanding of how maternal sexual abuse can differ from sexual offenses committed by fathers, and how they can also be similar. Further research on women who commit maternal sexual abuse is needed in order to provide greater protection to children and teens and to support the healing and recovery of children sexually abused by a female parent.

Chapter 3 delves into the research and the reality of sexual aggression and coercion committed by college women in the context of their dating relationships and social interaction with college men. This chapter challenges the stereotype that only college males commit acts of sexual aggression. Contemporary studies regarding sexual aggression and coercion on college campuses indicate that there is a greater amount of mutual sexual aggression between young adult men and women that takes place during dating than perhaps previous research suspected or reported. The relationship between alcohol consumption and sexual aggression is discussed with studies from Harvard and Columbia substantiating the fact that the amount of alcohol consumed by college students contributes to sexual aggression, although alcohol consumption in of itself is not the cause of coercive sexual behavior. Sexual aggression, intoxication, and the culture that is found within some sororities and fraternities is discussed, since this group of college students is at particular risk for alcohol-related sexual violence. The role of adversarial beliefs and a history of childhood sexual abuse are discussed since both are found to have a relationship for college-age females who commit sexual aggression against their male dating partner. Recent research on the role of love styles is also presented as another avenue of understanding how the types of attitudes a person holds toward their dating relationships can contribute to sexual coercion. Prevention of sexual violence on college campuses is discussed within the context of helping young women and men to develop mutually respectful relationships at this stage of their adult development and so that both young men and young women can learn to avoid becoming victims or offenders of sexual coercion and assault.

Chapter 4 turns to the topic of how a students' age and stage of cognitive and sexual development, as well as a students' social inexperience in responding to an adult intent on committing this type of child sexual abuse, is exploited by adult sex offenders who work in the school environment. Sexual harassment in the high school environment is a particular focus since sexual harassment that goes unchecked can become the social norm in schools. When sexual harassment becomes the cultural norm, it can then set the stage for more intrusive and illegal sexual behavior. Studies indicate that sexual harassment in the high school environment occurs across age groups and gender. Students report that they engage in the sexual harassment of each other, experience sexual harassment from the adults employed at their schools, commit sexual harassment against

adults at their schools, and witness sexual harassment between the adults in their school. Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion of female sexual deviance, the emerging typologies for female sexual offenders, assessment and treatment of female sexual offenders, and the possibility of preventing child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation by women.

While *Female Sexual Predators* covers a spectrum of female sexual offending, it is primarily about raising awareness in order to help prevent the sexual abuse of children and teens by adult women. It is my sincere hope that all adults who care about children and teens will challenge the stereotypes they may hold about females who commit sexual crimes and thereby make a conscious choice to speak and act on the behalf of children and teens to ensure that their world is free of abuse and exploitation. I hope you will share this book with other adults you know. I especially ask that you share this information with women whom you suspect may not be that safe and nurturing adult that children and teens deserve—women who may not have that inner voice or a moral compass to guide them in knowing the difference between what is right and what is wrong when it comes to how adults are to speak and behave with children and teens. Perhaps through your sharing, one woman will stop, think, and consider the harm she may have already caused or could cause, and then choose a different path to follow. Thank you.

1

Female Sexual Offenders: A Changing Perspective

Few behaviors deviate as far from cultural norms and deep-seated beliefs as those committed by women who sexually abuse children.

—Craig Allen, *Women and Men Who Sexually Abuse Children*¹

Societies are becoming increasingly aware that women do in fact commit sexual crimes.² Studies from the United States,³ Australia,⁴ Canada,⁵ England,⁶ South Africa,⁷ and Sweden⁸ have begun to place the sexual offenses that women commit into a broader social and public context by confirming that females perpetrate sexual crimes across societies and cultures. The information from this diverse group of cross-cultural studies documents that women commit a broad range of sexual offenses, that their sexual offenses are both similar to and different from those committed by men,⁹ and that the harm women cause from their sexual crimes can exact a toll on a victim's physical health, emotional well-being, and ability to function effectively in relationships.¹⁰

A recent study by Dube et al. (2005) from the United States on the results of a large-scale longitudinal study that was sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control indicated that 40 percent of the men and 6 percent of the women who reported experiencing childhood sexual abuse disclosed that the sexual offender was a female.¹¹ The experience of child sexual abuse significantly increased the risk of negative health outcomes and social/relational problems across the life span of this group of adults. Individuals in this study who had

experienced childhood sexual abuse had an increase risk for a suicide attempt, depression, and alcohol and drug problems. As studies continue to substantiate that sexual abuse by females is a significant social and public health problem, it becomes evident that education on the identification and detection of female sexual crime is important in the training of law enforcement personnel, child protection workers, educators, and health professionals (Bunting, 2005; Denov, 2003b; Gannon, Rose, & Ward, 2008; Turton, 2007).

Information on female sexual offending is also essential in programs that focus on the prevention of sexual victimization, such as those funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Injury Prevention,¹² the National Sexual Violence Prevention Resource Center,¹³ and the National Coalition to Prevent Child Sexual Exploitation.¹⁴ National, state, and community organizations that provide information in response to sexual victimization can enhance their effectiveness by including information regarding female sex offenders. In doing so, they help to raise awareness of the risk for victimization by females and aid in the detection and reporting of female sexual offenders in the

KEY POINTS

International studies indicate that sexual offenses committed by females occur across societies and cultures.

A majority of female sex offenders commit sexual offenses against their own children or other youth in their care.

Stereotypes about sexual offending and gender bias against viewing women as potential sex offenders can prevent the recognition and reporting of sexual crimes committed by females.

Children and teens benefit when law enforcement and child protection services are trained in the recognition and investigation of sexual offenses committed by females.

There are females who commit acts of physical violence in the commission of their sexual crimes that is equal to and at times exceeds that of some males.

The negative health outcomes and overall adverse consequences to victims of female sexual abuse are similar to those experienced by victims sexually abused by males.

Current education programs to prevent sexual victimization need to include accurate and up-to-date information about female sex offenders.

home, schools, day care centers, religious organizations, and the community at large. Education programs, media campaigns, and prevention strategies are recommended to go beyond the gender stereotypes and sensationalism that can sometimes surround the media reports of females who commit sexual crimes. Kevin Fagan, an award-winning reporter with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, offers his colleagues a reminder that “sex crimes are always potentially explosive and this can be especially true when the offender is a female. So we, in the legitimate media, have a greater responsibility to keep that in mind and try to be informative, responsible, and educational in our coverage of such stories [female sex crimes].”¹⁵ When individuals, organizations, and the media work together to improve public education, public safety can also improve.

A recent study in South Africa by Andersson and Ho-Foster (2008) reported on the sexual abuse of boys. This study was in response to laws in South Africa that have been revised and updated to extend equal protection to boys against rape,¹⁶ giving support to the changing view that sexual victimization is not only a crime committed against females and that offenders are not always male. The South African study is significant in that it surveyed a total of 126,696 boys across 1,191 schools in nine provinces. The survey identified 13,915 boys as experiencing forced sex in the year the survey took place. Boys identified that the sexual assaults they experienced occurred most often in their schools and that *women* were the predominant perpetrators. Boys indicated that 42 percent of the sexual offenders were female and that 32 percent were male, while 27 percent of the boys identified that both male and female perpetrators had sexually offended against them. Furthermore, the authors found that by the age of 18, two in every five schoolboys reported being forced to have sex and that most of the people who forced them to have sex were female offenders. The South African study brings attention to the frequency and severity of female sexual abuse along with the number of victims touched by sexual crimes committed by women and confirms that the range of offenses that females commit are substantial and have been occurring for a number of years.

A 2007¹⁷ study sponsored by the McCarty Centre Society¹⁸ in Vancouver, British Columbia, on marginalized and street youth surprised researchers when they learned that a substantial number of females engaged in the sexual exploitation of this vulnerable population of youth. One of the principal researchers noted that females accounted for 79 percent of the sexual exploitation of boys who participated in the study and a smaller percentage of the girls. The study defined sexual exploitation as “the exchange of sexual activity for money, goods or resources such as shelter and food” (p. 40). This means that women were approaching this group of young people to solicit

sex, knowing that these youths were on the street, homeless, and without adult protection. This finding is even more staggering when you consider the fact that this group of youth, a majority of whom are Aboriginal, are among the most vulnerable of youth in this region of Canada, often coming from homes where they have already experienced multiple traumas that include sexual abuse and physical violence. Considering that women are stereotypically viewed as the gender that is protective of youth, not exploitive of them, the surprise of the researchers is understandable. The study also demonstrates that adult women are willing to sexually exploit children at a tremendous cost to the child they exploit. What do women who treat our young people in such a manner teach children about their place and value in the world?

In Australia, Child Wise¹⁹ (2006) authorized a study to determine the extent of child sexual abuse in organizations that employ primarily females to care for children and in organizations that engage in other types of youth services where females are employees. The study found that adolescent and adult females employed in youth organizations or as individual caretakers to children sexually abused both male and female children. This is one aspect of female sexual abuse that is both similar to and different from male sexual abuse. Females, unlike males, do not seem to target one gender over the other (or what is referred to as a gender preference in victims); rather, females are likely to victimize males and females equally (Vandiver & Kercher, 2004). This means that children of both genders are at risk for sexual abuse by a female offender.²⁰ Child Wise emphasizes that organizations need to recruit and screen employees conscientiously in spite of the “traditional view that women are non-predatory” (p. 40) and realize that stereotypes about females will not protect children from a female intent on committing child sexual abuse. A lack of knowledge about female sex offenders can result in fewer restrictions placed on females in their physical contact with children and give females easy access to children without proper supervision and oversight (Hunt, 2006). The conviction of Vanessa George²¹ on child pornography, a female who worked at Little Ted’s nursery in England, is a prime example of how children can be exploited by female sexual offenders when female workers are not properly supervised and their behavior with children is not readily questioned.

The report from Child Wise suggests that it is highly beneficial for professionals responsible for the care and education of children to receive training on female sex offenders as part of their formal education. This recommendation for employee and staff training is echoed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia. In their guidelines for preventing child sexual abuse in youth-serving organizations, the report states that

“youth-serving organizations strive to create a safe environment for youth, employees, and volunteers so that youth can grow, learn, and have fun. Part of creating a safe environment is making sure that youth are not harmed in any way while participating in organization-sponsored activities. One risk in any organization working directly with youth is child sexual abuse. It is vital that organizations create a culture where child sexual abuse is discussed, addressed, and prevented.”²² It is equally important that organizations, in their efforts to protect children, expand beyond the traditional stereotypes of males as the offender and females as victims and be willing to recognize that it is not practical in the protection of children and teens to assume that females cannot or will not commit sexual offenses. As stated by Olive Wolfers (1993), “Agencies that provide care, generally speaking, are not geared toward detecting women’s involvement in child sexual abuse and, consequently, frequently leave children unprotected” (p. 93).

A special report published by the U.S. Department of Justice (Beck, Adams, & Guerino, 2008)²³ on sexual crimes committed against youth in state and local juvenile correctional facilities that included private facilities where youth are in residential programs and the state may be paying for the housing and rehabilitation services for juveniles, indicated that females accounted for 46 percent of substantiated sexual offenses against this population of vulnerable youth and that female offenders included adult female staff employed at the facilities and adolescents residing in these facilities. The authors of the report indicated that 51 percent of the female offenders were white, 40 percent were African American, and 9 percent were Hispanic, indicating that female sex offenders cross racial and ethnic groups. A majority of the adult female offenders were employed in staff positions where they were responsible for the supervision and care of youth they sexually victimized. It was also of interest to note that while 45 percent of the male offenders were arrested and/or were referred for prosecution, only 34 percent of the female offenders were arrested and/or referred for prosecution.²⁴ No data on prosecution outcomes for males or females were available in the report, but this aspect of the report does suggest that the females were less likely to experience legal sanctions to prevent their reoffending. Nonlegal sanctions that were imposed against female offenders employed in a staff position were that 91 percent of the female staff experienced the loss of their job, and 12 percent were reprimanded or disciplined. The report did not indicate whether any of the females who remained employed were required to participate in specific interventions, such as mandated training or sex offense specific treatment to *decrease their risk* of reoffending, and whether written documentation of the females who victimized youth followed the reprimands, disciplinary actions, and loss of employment.

CLARIFYING CRIME REPORTS AND PREVALENCE STUDIES

Crime reports are limited in the information that they provide to the public regarding sexual crimes, whether the crimes are committed by males or females.²⁵ This is because for a crime to be included in crime statistics, the crime must first be reported to law enforcement, and then the law enforcement group at the state or county level must actually report the crime into national databases that track crime rates.²⁶ Additionally, sexual crimes are the least likely group of crimes to be reported to law enforcement because the offender often is someone in the victim's family or someone close to the victim; this is especially true of crimes against children.²⁷ Female sexual crimes are even less likely to be reported because of the stigma that victims experience, cultural stereotypes that have helped to obscure sexual crimes by females, and feminist frameworks that have dominated the public's view that females are victims while ignoring sexual crimes committing by females, especially those committed by mothers.²⁸

Information from national crime reports in the United States indicates that both adult and adolescent females are entering the criminal justice system at higher rates than ever before for violent and nonviolent crimes, including sexual crimes.²⁹ As of 2005, women offenders represented 23 percent of adult probationers and 12 percent of parolees in communities (Glaze & Bonczar, 2006). National crime statistics on violent crimes in the United States (Rand, 2009) indicate that females represent 7 percent of all reported arrests for sexual offenses against people *12 years and older*, placing the number of victims of female sexual offending at approximately 14,265 victims during 2008. Given that sexual crimes are not readily reported and that female sexual crimes are even less likely to be detected or reported, the number of victims of female sex offenders is considered much higher than what is reported in official crime statistics.³⁰ Craig Allen (1991) estimated that, on the basis of population figures and prevalence rates of sexual abuse at the time of his analysis, an accumulative total of 1.5 million females and 1.6 million males would have been sexually abused by females in their childhood. Within the *juvenile court system*, *adolescent females* are responsible for 3 percent of forcible rape cases and 5 percent of other violent sex offenses.³¹ More specifically according to the Center for Sex Offender Management (2007a), between 1997 and 2002, "juvenile cases involving female-perpetrated forcible rape and other violent sex offenses, and non-violent sex offenses rose by 6%, 62% and 42% respectively" (p. 2).³² Similar to adult females, a majority of adolescent females victimize children entrusted in their care (siblings, other child family members, and children in the community), committing acts of sexual abuse that include penetration, forcible oral sex, and genital fondling.³³

A U.S. Department of Justice Report (Snyder, 2000) on the sexual assault of children *11 years of age and younger* indicates that female offenders are most common in sexual assault against victims *under age 6*. For these youngest victims, females were 12 percent of their offenders.³⁴ Females also accounted for 6 percent of sexual assaults for child victims in the age range of 6 to 12 years old.³⁵ The majority of these young victims are children (defined as 11 years of age and younger) and older youth (defined as 12 to 17 years of age) in the direct care of females who are their mother or other family member or females employed in the role of day care/home care provider, educator, or youth worker.³⁶ Among the types of sexual crimes committed by women against children are forcible rape (oral, anal, and vaginal penetration) that includes sexual assault with an object, sexual fondling, and sexual exploitation that includes pornography and prostitution (Snyder, 2000).

In Great Britain, Vanessa George and Angela Allen were convicted in December 2009³⁷ of possessing, making, and distributing indecent images (i.e., child pornography) and committing sexual assaults on children, some under the age of one year; this is an example of the type of sexual offenses and level of exploitation that females can commit against children. Vanessa George worked in a day care center where she had access to children to make the pornographic images and commit the sexual assaults depicted in the images. She then distributed the pornographic images to a man she met on Facebook who in turn introduced George to Angela Allen. Together the three of them exchanged pornographic images of children. Police suspect that up to 30 children in the day care center where Vanessa George was employed were abused and exploited in this manner; however, at the time of her conviction, George refused to identify the children she had victimized. Police investigators emphasize that neither of the two women was groomed, coerced, or forced by Colin Blanchard, the male involved in the criminal acts. Rather, all three adults were equal participants, and George in particular violated the trust of the children in her care and that of their parents.³⁸

Females fulfill various roles as caretakers to children as parents, teachers, nurses, and youth workers. The caretaking roles that are often held by women allow a female intent on committing sexual abuse to manipulate a victim in a similar manner that a male offender would in a similar position of authority and trust. Mothers have no need to groom their child victims given that they have control over the children in their homes. However, because of a lack of information regarding human sexuality and stereotypes surrounding female sexuality, along with the prominent view that sexual abuse is more likely to come from a man than a woman, and the greater physical contact and freedom that females are given with children, maternal sex offenders have a greater capacity to camouflage their sexual crimes in their caretaking relationships and to exonerate or excuse themselves simply on the fact that they are female.³⁹ Mothers

cause considerable harm when they commit sexual abuse against their sons and daughters. Mothers often commit sexual abuse against their children alongside other abuses, such as emotional, verbal, and physical abuse.⁴⁰ Mothers also place their children at additional risk when they establish relationships with other adults who share their sexual offending beliefs and deviant sexual behavior.⁴¹ When mothers are single, children who are sexually abused by them may have no other parent available to tell about their mother's abuse.⁴² A study in Sweden found that among female sex offenders, 69 percent were single, 69 percent were mothers, and 32 percent had committed violent crimes other than sexual crimes.⁴³

Female sexual offenders outside the family violate the trust they are given to protect and care for children. They exploit a younger child's physical dependency and need for affection, and can take advantage of a teen's curiosity and excitement about their developing sexuality. Females who sexually abuse children and teens are acting on their sexual deviance (i.e., sexual behavior with children) and predatory needs in a similar manner as male offenders—but with a greater ability to fool the public.⁴⁴ Females are able to manipulate and deceive not only the children they sexually abuse but also the adults around them. They, like male sex offenders, commit their sexual crimes rather than choosing to seek help to prevent their sexual offending and the harm they cause to those they abuse (Duncan, 2004).

Official *crime reports* for sexual offenses provide only partial insight into the characteristics of the crimes committed by female sexual offenders. Because of the low number of reported sexual crimes into law enforcement, researchers conduct prevalence studies among the general population⁴⁵ or in specific targeted groups, such as school-age youth,⁴⁶ to gain a better understanding of the frequency of sexual victimization and offending. *Prevalence studies* indicate higher victimization rates for sexual offenses when compared to crime reports since they are designed to focus on information gained primarily through surveys of the general population.⁴⁷ Prevalence studies ask questions regarding the experience of sexual victimization regardless of whether the victimization experience was reported to law enforcement.⁴⁸ Prevalence studies are limited because of researchers not specifically asking about female sexual offenders when surveys are conducted or not designing specific questions that cover the types of sexual offenses that are committed by females.⁴⁹ Even with their limitations, prevalence studies confirm that females are involved in a greater number of child sexual abuse cases than what is reported to law enforcement and reflected in crime statistics, and they commit a greater amount of sexual aggression in adult populations than what is indicated in crime reports.⁵⁰ For example, an early population study by Russell (1984) that was conducted in San Francisco was one of the first

to identify female relatives (primarily mothers) as sexual offenders against children.

Bumby and Bumby (1997) reviewed retrospective studies of specialized population samples that included college students and incarcerated males and found that specialized samples yielded a wider range (between 2% and 78%) of adults having been sexually abused in childhood by a female. Johnson et al. (2006) identified that among 100 incarcerated males reporting child sexual abuse, 70 percent of the reported perpetrators were female. Within this incarcerated population of males, 59 percent of the men reported experiencing some form of sexual abuse before puberty with the first episode of sexual abuse beginning at an average age of 9.6 years. The females who committed sexual abuse against the men when they were boys were identified by the inmates as either friends or family members. Kaplan and Green (1995) found that self-report studies on adult survivors of child sexual abuse indicated that between 4 and 60 percent of sexual perpetrators had been female. Condy, Templer, Brown, and Veaco (1987) found a higher prevalence for adult female sexual contact with younger boys when they surveyed male college students and incarcerated men offenders.⁵¹ The study also found that incarcerated women in their survey sample reported sexual intercourse with children that they had sexually abused and that these women's penetration of youth was more frequent than what is usually reported by male sex offenders. The women in the Condy et al. study were not necessarily incarcerated for sexual offenses, indicating that there is a group of female offenders convicted for crimes other than sexual offenses and whose sexual crimes against children are not being detected or reported. Penetration of victims or having victims penetrate them has been found in other studies reporting on the types of offenses committed by females (Andersson & Ho-Foster, 2008). Kaufman, Wallace, Johnson, and Reeder (1995), in their study of 53 victims of female sexual offenders, found that 23 of the children victimized by female offenders had been penetrated with foreign objects. Penetration with objects appears to be a sexual offense particular to female sex offenders and is something that investigators should ask about when interviewing victims and that researchers should include in their population surveys.

There is also a growing body of research that indicates that college-age females use a range of sexually aggressive behavior to coerce their dating partners into sexual behavior. Female sexual aggression is decidedly different than female sexual assertiveness, but this distinction may not be evident in the studies by researchers who report on college-based sexual violence and aggression. In addition, researchers need to be aware of a personal bias to perhaps consider female aggression as "assertiveness" rather than as coercive, non-consensual sexual behavior. Female sexual aggression includes sexual stalking