INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA

UMI®
800-521-0600
FEMALE SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

by

Kathryn Tracey Jennings

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

© Copyright by Kathryn Tracey Jennings 1998
The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author’s permission.

L’auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L’auteur conserve la propriété du droit d’auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-41556-2
Female Sexual Abuse of Children: An Exploratory Study
Kathryn Tracey Jennings
Doctor of Philosophy 1998
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore the phenomenon of female sexual abuse of children, and to examine the usefulness of Finkelhor's Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse in determining factors related to this abuse. This study investigated whether women commit sexual offences against children for different reasons than men and whether female sexual offenders possess cognitive distortions about sexual contact with children. Results collected from a sample of thirty female sexual offenders recruited for the study are presented in qualitative and quantitative format. Findings from the study suggested that female sexual offenders are not a homogeneous group and cannot be studied as such. Approximately half of this sample of sex offenders were forced to abuse their victims by their male partners or husbands, a powerful finding from the study, and a replicated finding from previous research. The research also revealed that almost three-quarters of the women in this study were the victims of sexual abuse themselves when they were younger. This is a higher percentage than found for male child sexual offenders. Findings also suggest that, unlike male sex offenders, female sexual offenders did not appear to endorse cognitive distortions that contribute to child sexual abuse.

Despite the comprehensiveness of the model in terms of its explanatory power for the behaviour of male sex offenders, it fails as an overall model when applied to a sample of female sex offenders. The model is only partially useful when applied to a particular sub-group of women who sexually abuse children; that is, the small number of women
who can be described as most closely fitting the profile of a pedophile. Given the heterogeneity of female sex offenders, the model is limited in terms of providing guidance for a conceptual analysis of women who sexually abuse children. To its credit, the model has been a useful organizing tool with respect to examining the numerous facets and complexities behind the behaviour of women who sexually abuse children.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Lana Stermac for all her support and supervision. Her academic and emotional commitment to this dissertation was invaluable. I am very grateful for her strength and integrity. She taught me to persevere and overcome any challenges that were presented to me throughout the process. I would also like to thank the thesis committee members: Dr. Sandra Acker, Dr. Peter Gamlin, Dr. Roy Gillis, Dr. Fleming and Dr. Cheryl Regehr for their support. Particular thanks goes to Dr. Acker for all her comments, critical feedback, and support. This topic is a particularly sensitive one that was difficult to study. It is important to acknowledge that it would not have been possible to write this dissertation without the cooperation of the thirty female sexual offenders who participated in this study, and for the United States in granting me access to interview the women in two of their penitentiaries. This thesis, however, was written for the children. It was written for those who are victims of this well hidden and under-reported crime. It is for them that I hope to increase our knowledge of female sexual offenders. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends whose support was strong and solid. Thanks to my mother who has always been there for me. Thank you Judith Schutz for your friendship and excellent editorial skills! Thank you Kyoshi Cezar Borkowski and Renshi Marion Manzo whose dedication and instruction in the martial arts have taught me more about myself than I ever knew. Thank you Mary for showing me the rainbow!
Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction and Review Of The Literature  
Introduction 1
Review of the Literature 3
What Do We Know About Female Sexual Offenders? 5
Earlier Typologies and Theoretical Explanations For Male Sexual Offenders 13
Theoretical Explanations For Female-Perpetrated Child Sexual Abuse 23
Typologies of Female Perpetrated Child Sexual Abuse 36
Similarities and Differences Between Male and Female Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse 38
Methodological Problems 46
Getting The Message Across 48
Conclusion 52

Chapter Two: Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse 54
Introduction 54
Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse As It Applies To Women 55
  Precondition One 58
  Precondition Two 68
  Precondition Three 72
  Precondition Four 73
Conclusion 77
Chapter Three: The Study

Introduction To The Study

Primary Research Questions

Method

Subjects

Subject Recruitment and Settings

Ontario, Canada

The United States

Subject Consent

Measures

Interview Schedule

Demographic and Background Information

Criminal History, Offence Characteristics and Victim Characteristics

Finkelhor's Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse

Other Factors

Cognition Scale

Procedure

Approval for Data Collection
Chapter Four: Results of Background and Offence Characteristics

Introduction

Participant/Subject Characteristics

Demographic and Background Information

Mental Health History

Criminal History, Offence Characteristics and Victim Characteristics

Chapter Five: Results From Primary Research Questions

Does Finkelhor's Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse Apply To Women?

Precondition One: Factors Related to the Motivation to Sexually Abuse

Emotional Congruence

Sexual Arousal

Blockage

Precondition Two: Factors Predisposing to Overcoming Internal Inhibitors
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1: Age, Education and Marital Status</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2: Number of Children, Race, and Occupation</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3: Mental Health History</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4: Criminal Offence and Length of Sentence</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5: Victim Characteristics</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6: Precondition 1: The Motivation To Abuse - Emotional Congruence</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 7: Precondition 1: The Motivation To Abuse - Sexual Arousal</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8: Precondition 1: The Motivation To Abuse - Blockage</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 9: Precondition 11: Factors Predisposing to Overcoming Internal Inhibitors</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 10: Precondition 11: Factors Predisposing to Overcoming External Inhibitors</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 11: Precondition 1V: Factors Predisposing to Overcoming a Child's Resistance</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 12: Additional Questions</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One: Introduction and Review of the Literature

Introduction

Women who sexually abuse children are a relatively unexplored group. Research on male sex offenders is theoretically and empirically more comprehensive than that on female sex offenders. From what we know, males comprise the overwhelming majority of sex offenders, and for that reason, research has focused on the men who sexually abuse children. This has left a gap in the literature. Attention has not focused on the female sex offender because the sexual abuse of children by a woman is thought to be quite rare. In fact, some may argue that women who abuse children sexually are so rare that the topic does not warrant investigation. The following study offers a contribution to the study of female sexual offenders in terms of advancing our existing knowledge base about this particular population.

The present study examined the applicability of a model for child sexual abuse to a sample of thirty women convicted of child sexual abuse. The model used was David Finkelhor's Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse (1984). Finkelhor suggests that four preconditions must all be met before child sexual abuse can take place: 1) the offender must be motivated to sexually abuse a child; 2) the offender must overcome internal inhibitions to sexually abuse a child; 3) the offender must overcome external inhibitors to sexually abusing a child; and 4) the offender must be able to overcome the resistance of the child. Although the Model was developed for the male sexual offender, it has never been applied to a sample of men. The Model's comprehensive explanatory power along with its organizational structure was the primary reason it was chosen for the
study. The researcher chose to investigate which, if any, of the causal explanations offered by the Model were useful in understanding female sexual offenders. The results suggest, however, that the Model is limited in its ability to advance our knowledge of women who sexually abuse children. Results from the study also point to areas worthy of consideration for future research on this population with respect to understanding their behaviour and to advance the development of theory on women who sexually abuse children.

Chapter one presents an overall review of the literature. Specifically, our current knowledge base on female sex offenders is outlined with respect to prevalence rates and previous research. Arguments are also outlined as to why the number of female sex offenders is so low in comparison to males. Typologies and theories on male sex offenders are presented to illustrate the comprehensive research base that currently exists with respect to males who sexually abuse children. Theoretical explanations for female sex offenders are then identified to demonstrate what is currently known and the extent to which research is limited for this unique population. The reader is then presented with an overview of the similarities and differences between male and female sexual offenders. Methodological problems are identified to illustrate some of the difficulties inherent in conducting research on child sexual abuse. Finally, the need to increase awareness of the existence of female sexual offenders in our society is discussed.

Chapter two presents the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse, developed by David Finkelhor and adopted by the researcher for the present study. In this chapter the Model is outlined and each of the preconditions to child sexual abuse described. The
Model is then applied to published case studies of female sexual offenders to gather preliminary support for its applicability to women. Chapter three describes the present study. The primary research questions are presented at the outset and the method by which the questions are examined is outlined. The measures used are described in detail and the procedure for collecting the data discussed.

Chapter four presents the reader with the results of the data in terms of the demographic and background information, mental health history, criminal history, offence and victim characteristics of the participants in the study. Chapter five outlines the results from the primary research questions posed for the study. Specifically, results from applying the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse to the participants, other factors deemed to be related to the sexual abuse of children by women, and any cognitive distortions held by study participants are discussed and presented in chapter five. Finally, chapter six provides the reader with an overall discussion of the study and identifies directions for future research.

Review Of The Literature

Child sexual abuse is a serious problem. It is a topic which has been examined in considerable depth in recent years (Badgley, 1984; Finkelhor, 1979, 1984; Finkelhor& Araji, 1986; Groth, 1978). According to the findings of the Badgley Committee on Sexual Offences Against Children, approximately one in two women and one in three men have experienced unwanted sexual acts at some point in their lives. Moreover, the survey showed that some four out of five of these incidents occurred when these persons were children or youths (Badgley, 1984).
Finkelhor (1986) reports that the victimization rates for child sexual abuse derived from various North American studies range from 6% to 62% for females and from 3% to 31% for males. Such large discrepancies in figures are a result of the varying definitions of child sexual abuse that are adopted, the differences among the samples studied, and the methodology used. Similarly, Bagley and King (1990) report the prevalence rates of child sexual victimization studies carried out since 1979 involving 9000 persons from Canada, Britain and the United States. Their findings suggest that between 11% and 45% of females and 3% and 9% of males reported at least one incident of sexual abuse before the ages of approximately 16 to 18 years old. Taken together, this information suggests that child sexual abuse is fairly common, and for some, a bitter reality. A review of the literature on sexual offences committed against children shows that relatively little research has been done on female sex offenders (Finkelhor, 1984; Groth, 1979; Mathews, Matthews, & Speltz, 1989; Elliott, 1993). Given that in the majority of reported child sexual abuse offences the perpetrator is male (studies indicate approximately 80 to 95%), the issue of the female sex offender has been virtually ignored, with the result that the literature on female sex offenders is sparse. The majority of publications and research on the topic have appeared within the last decade; prior to that, relatively little attention had been paid to the female offender in the main body of literature on child sexual abuse.

Moreover, there is a dearth of literature available on the unique experiences of victims of female-perpetrated sexual abuse. The overwhelming majority of books for survivors of child sexual abuse address those men and women who were abused by men. For example, one of the popular healing books, The Courage To Heal, by Bass and Davis (1988), devotes 3 out of 495 pages to the specific issue of female-perpetrated child sexual
abuse. Bass and Davis concede that “since much of the literature has focused on father-daughter incest, or solely on abuse with a male perpetrator, those survivors who were abused by women have felt even more isolated than those abused by men” (Bass & Davis, 1988, p.96). However, they do not provide any major contribution to the literature that survivors could use in their healing process that would specifically address the unique circumstances and consequences of being abused by a female. The issue has indeed been raised that victims of female sex offenders may not necessarily experience their abuse in the same way as those who were abused by men. Therefore, to treat all victims in the same way, and to examine both male and female sex offenders in a similar fashion, is to ignore possible and important differences that may exist between them.

**What Do We Know About Female Sexual Offenders?**

Information and discussion is slowly beginning to disseminate on women who sexually abuse children. At a conference given in 1991 in Toronto, Canada, Dr. Fred Mathews, a community psychologist, gave some statistics at his lecture on female sex offending that are worthy of attention. He stated,

[he assumes that approximately 10% of child molesters are female]...if one in seven Canadian men and one in four women were sexually abused as a child, as a study has indicated, that works out to about five million people. Ten percent of that figure would mean 500,000 Canadians have been abused by girls or women; 1 percent would mean about 50,000. I don’t know about you, but that doesn’t seem like a minor number, he said. (The Globe and Mail, Wednesday, October, 30, 1991, A1-A2)

One wonders then that if these numbers are a rough reflection of the extent to which adult women are involved with children sexually, where are all these women? Finkelhor suggests equally high prevalence rates. He writes,
Multiplying the estimated number of females in the United States (127,300,000) by the estimated proportion experiencing sexual abuse in their childhood (23%), and the result by the estimated proportion abused by women (5%), produces an estimate of roughly 1.5 million females who may have been sexually abused as children by women. Multiplying the number of males (121,500,000) by the estimated proportion who have experienced sexual abuse in their childhood (6.75%), and the result by the estimated proportion abused by women (20%), produces an estimate of roughly 1.6 million males sexually abused in their childhood by women. Combining these rough estimates for female and male victims produces a prevalence figure of 3.1 million victims of child sexual abuse by women. (Finkelhor, 1986 [in Allen, 1991, p.20])

The literature is problematic with respect to the incidence of female perpetrated child sexual abuse. The definitions for what is considered child sexual abuse by a female are inconsistent and the population samples from which the data are drawn vary and are often unrepresentative. Moreover, given the grossly under-reported incidence of child sexual abuse in general, caution needs to be exercised when examining the data. In Canada, the Badgley Commission found that 1.1% (8) of the 727 convicted male sexual offenders interviewed for the report revealed that they had experienced sexual abuse by a female when they were children (Badgley, 1984). Conversely, Groth maintains that 60% of a sample of male sex offenders he interviewed had been victimized sexually when they were young; and of these, 20% reported to have been victimized by a female (Groth, 1982).

Similarly, Burgess et al. state that 56% of a sample population of serial rapists disclosed having been abused sexually as children (Burgess, Groth, Holmstrom, & Sgroi, 1987). Statistics gathered from the National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (1981) reported that 13% of the female sexual abuse victims and 24% of the male sexual abuse victims polled stated that they had been abused by a female. However, the authors
assert that due to some methodological and definitional problems, the numbers may be somewhat high. According to the American Humane Association study, a large-scale collection of sexual abuse cases that included female perpetrators, 14% of the perpetrators who abused boy victims were female, and 6% who abused girl victims were also female (1981). Discrepancies over the incidence of female perpetrated child sexual abuse cause enormous difficulties in determining the extent to which women are involved in sexual offences against children. However, one thing is clear: the incidence of reported female perpetrated child sexual abuse is quite low in comparison to the reported abuse by their male counterparts.

This has led researchers to ask why it is that women commit fewer sexual offences than men do. Some argue that the incidence of female sex offending appears quite low due to serious under-reporting of female perpetrated child sexual abuse (Groth, 1979; Justice & Justice, 1979). Krug (1989), whose study examines only males, offers some possible explanations as to why males in particular who were abused as children may not report their abuse. He states,

1. Males do not get pregnant, and the evidence of sexual abuse has not been present;
2. A double standard in belief systems has existed in which fathers have the potential for evil and mothers are ‘all good’;
3. Adult males have been too embarrassed to reveal their sexual activity with and arousal by their mothers;
4. Male children have been presumed to be unaffected by sexual abuse, and reports by sons have been ignored;
5. Patients and therapists alike have been unaware of the connection between the sexual abuse of males by mothers and later interpersonal relationship problems (pp.117-118).
Information such as this is useful in increasing our understanding of why male survivors may be reluctant to come forward and report that their abuser was a woman. However, it ignores some possible explanations why a female survivor may not disclose the abuse she suffered at the hands of another female. Mathews, Matthews and Speltz maintain that,

Viewing females as perpetrators of sexual abuse, perhaps parallel to viewing males as victims, challenges traditional cultural stereotypes. Females are thought of as mothers, nurturers, those who provide care for others; not as people who harm or abuse them. Since, historically, females have been viewed as non-initiators, limit-setters, and anatomically the receivers of sexuality, it is difficult for some to imagine a female sexually abusing others (1987, p.1).

Perhaps female victims find it difficult to report sexual abuse by another female due to victim identification with the perpetrator because she too is female. Moreover, the level of trust that we give women in our society may have an effect on reporting rates due to the victim possibly feeling more violated by the abuse. Whatever the effects of female-perpetrated and female-victim sexual abuse, it remains clear that further research and empirical data in this area need to be conducted and collected if we are to know more about this form of sexual abuse. Stereotypical views of women such as those mentioned above are further substantiated in a study conducted by Sylvia Broussard and her colleagues (1991). They asked 180 female and 180 male undergraduate students about their perceptions of the effects of child sexual abuse on the victim. The results revealed that the participants tended to view the interaction of a young male with a female perpetrator as less representative of child sexual abuse. In addition, they also thought that male victims of this interactional situation would experience less harm than would victims
of other interactional situations (ex. female victim-male perpetrator) (Broussard, Wagner, & Kazelskis, 1991). Societal attitudes such as those highlighted in this particular study illustrate the difficulties male victims may have in reporting sexual abuse and why women perpetrators continue to remain unreported and undetected.

A study done by Fischer (1990) demonstrated similar results with subjects who were themselves victims. The author found that males who were sexually victimized by a female when they were children retrospectively reported having liked the experience and maintained that they did not have any residual stress or emotional problems because of it. It should be noted that the males who were abused by an adult rated their trauma from the abuse as less intense when it was heterosexual than homosexual.

Finally, it seems that not only do a certain percentage of the victims (mostly male) continue to subscribe to the traditional view that women are harmless and could not commit such a crime, so does a proportion of the population in general (Krug, 1989). Furthermore, Longdon (1993) argues that the general population hold some grossly distorted views and myths toward women who sexually abuse children. She lists some of the primary myths held surrounding females who sexually abuse children:

1. Females do not sexually abuse;
2. Females only abuse if coerced by a man;
3. If females sexually abuse it is gentle and loving;
4. Females only abuse boys;
5. If you are female and you were abused by a female as a child then you will be a lesbian as an adult;
6. If you were sexually abused as a child you will abuse as an adult;
7. People who say they were abused by a female are fantasizing or lying. If you are male you are having sexual fantasies, and if the perpetrator was your mother, you are having incestuous wishes. If you are female you are muddled and it was a man that abused you really;

8. Women only sexually abuse adolescents;

9. If a 30 year old woman were to seduce a 14 year old boy it would not be sexual abuse, but if a 30 year old man were to seduce a 14 year old girl then it would undoubtedly be so;

10. A mother having an incestuous relationship with her son in his late teens/early twenties is sex between two consenting adults and not sexual abuse.

While there are likely other stereotypical myths that people believe on the subject of women engaging in sexual activities with children, those mentioned by Longdon are fairly typical of those in existence. One might not necessarily agree with them; nevertheless, they still exist. From what we know, women do indeed seem to commit a much smaller number of criminal offences in general than do men, and an even smaller proportion of sexual offences against children. Nevertheless, it is still crucial to examine the research surrounding this topic, as it may serve to shed some light on the pervasive problem of child sexual abuse.

We need to recognize 1) that women do sexually abuse children, and 2) that given their traditional role as caretakers, they are considerably more able to hide their crimes. In our society women have been given the primary responsibility of raising children, and with that comes a great deal of control over their dependents. Generally speaking, women are charged with bathing and changing children, putting them to bed, breast-feeding, changing diapers, not to mention countless other intimate activities surrounding the care of a child. Many of these are done in private, thus providing the mother (or any other caretaker)
with a space that allows her to commit the sexual act under the guise of child care. Justice and Justice (1979) maintain that mothers more frequently engage in types of sexual activities that are less likely to get reported with their sons, such as fondling and sleeping with them, caressing them in a sexual way, and keeping them tied to themselves in an emotional way with implied promises of a sexual payoff or other favours.

Longdon argues that issues such as denial and stereotyping only exacerbate the problem and serve to keep a tight lid on a potentially explosive topic. She argues,

Whatever the reasons for this denial, let me be clear on one thing. The longer the denial continues, the longer we are potentially putting our children at risk [...]. There is no obvious type of woman who is more likely to sexually abuse. Survivors have experienced abuse from, amongst others, nuns, mothers, aunts, teachers, residential social workers, baby-sitters, and nursery school teachers. It appears that most abusers tend to be close relatives, a high proportion were mothers, however, this may be due to opportunity and accessibility (Longdon, 1993, p. 53).

Indeed, Longdon’s claims sound strikingly similar to findings on male sex offenders. That is to say, these individuals too come from all cultures and backgrounds. To classify or stereotype sex offenders, male or female, as being a certain type of person clearly recognizable by others, is not only unproductive but serves to perpetuate a false reality. Indeed, there are certain similarities among sex offenders; however, some of those same traits and likenesses can be found among those in the general population as well.

Given the discussion thus far, one has likely surmised the extreme difficulties involved in attempting to describe and define child sexual abuse. There are many different definitions used to describe adult/child sexual activity. What do we call it? What is considered abusive behaviour and what is not? What types of behaviour do we include in our definition? How broadly or narrowly should we define child sexual abuse? What age
does the child have to be before we decide that the behaviour is 'acceptable' and not 'abusive'? As Liddle notes,

Some of the variation reflected in child sexual abuse data [...] appears to be rooted in different characterizations of 'abuse' itself, and a multiplicity of terms in addition to the usual label have been invoked in the literature to refer to particular subsets of sexual activity involving children (1990, p.2).

Descriptions such as child sexual abuse, child molestation, child rape, sexual misuse of children, child sexual exploitation, child sexual victimization, and so on are used to describe this behaviour. To some extent, these definitions imply different meanings to adult/child sexual contact. The ways in which a researcher uses and defines his/her topic of interest has a great deal of influence over how the issue at hand is received. If we are to reach further gains in this research, there needs to be less multiplicity of terms and a move towards a more consensual label applied in an effort to maintain consistency over what is actually being discussed. Liddle comes up with a fairly short and comprehensive way in which to define this behaviour. He states,

....the term ‘child sexual abuse’ appears to be the one most often employed in the literature, and understood broadly, it refers to a class of sexual interactions involving children, where the child’s participation is either coerced or forced, or where a significant difference in age, capacity, power, or authority exists between the participants (Liddle, 1990, p.3).

Moreover, there appear to be similar problems in the ways in which we define 'adult' and 'child'. At what point does an individual become an adult? What age is to be used? At present, there are a variety of definitions used in the research in terms of the age of consent. Further, the issue of who is deemed to be a child is even more problematic. Some use an earlier cut-off age of, say, twelve or so, while others go to the upper limits of
sixteen and seventeen when examining a population of children who have been involved in sexual activity with a person who is significantly older than themselves.

At the outset of the research it is crucial to identify just what definitions for this activity will be applied and to indicate age boundaries for those included in the study. Clearly, definitional variations in the research on child sexual abuse make it very difficult to build up a consistent body of research whereby consensus exists in terms of how to identify and define this behaviour. In Canada, adults who have sexual contact with children (under fourteen) are considered to have committed a criminal offence outlined in the Criminal Code of Canada under sections 150.1, 151, 152, and 155 respectively (Martin’s Annual Criminal Code, 1990). Despite the Criminal Code’s clearly outlined definitions of this behaviour, the authors of studies on child sexual abuse do not always subscribe to these definitions. Consequently, one is exposed to a myriad of approaches to this phenomenon, all attempting to examine the same topic but from many different vantage points.

Earlier Typologies and Theoretical Explanations For Male Sexual Offenders

Currently, what we know about child sexual abuse is derived largely from research conducted on male sex offenders. Early theories on child sexual abuse examined the anomalous behaviour from very narrow perspectives and focused almost entirely on male sex offenders. Initially researchers looked at child sexual abuse mainly within the family. Bagley (1969) was one of the first to offer a categorization of incest offenders. The typologies of incest developed included:

functional (marriage of a close relative to prevent division of property); disorganized (total role chaos and normative confusion in a family); pathologic
(one parent psychotic); fixated (the father attracted to the child because of experiences in his own childhood); and psychopathic (a father without any apparent moral scruple, who exploits his child regardless of consequences). (in Bagley & King, 1990, p. 183).

Justice and Justice categorized incestuous offenders in a different way:

(1) The symbiotic offender wants closeness and intimacy, but cannot verbalize his needs, and knows no way of achieving them other than sexually. He may be a tyrant, rationalizer, introvert, or alcoholic in acting out his needs. (2) The psychopathic offender is driven by hostility and the need for pleasure. He may be promiscuous (heterosexual) or pansexual (attracted to both boys and girls). (3) The paedophile has an erotic craving for children because of arrested sexual development. Most paedophiles present no physical threat to children. (4) Other offenders include those who may be psychotic, or whose behaviour is culturally sanctioned. (Justice & Justice, 1979, p. 183).

More recently, Nicholas Groth divided sexual offences into two separate categories: molestation and rape. Molestation is characterized by seduction, persuasion, and passivity. In this situation, the offender displays positive emotional involvement with the child and is looking for an ongoing relationship. Molesters, according to Groth, can be subdivided into two types: fixated and regressed. He argues,

A fixated child offender is a person who has, from adolescence, been sexually attracted primarily or exclusively to significantly younger people, and this attraction has persisted throughout his life, regardless of what other sexual experiences he has had...Regression is defined as a temporary or permanent appearance of primitive behaviour after more mature forms of expression have been attained, regardless of whether or not the immature behaviour was actually manifested earlier in the individual's sexual development. A regressed child offender is a person who originally preferred peers or adult partners for sexual gratification (Groth, 1978, pp. 6-9).

Rape, on the other hand, although traditionally associated with adult victims, also fits the behaviour of some child sexual abusers. It is characterized by some sort of an attack, a threat, an assault, or intimidation with the child as the object of hostility or domination.
Rape is more typically a series of one-time occurrences with different victims. The child becomes an object and is depersonalized. The behaviour can take the form of penetration and/or overt sexual acts and rituals (Groth, 1987).

Typology and classification of sexual offenders emerged from assumptions inherent within the various theories postulated about sex offenders. Traditionally, theories on child sexual abuse have attempted to understand sex offenders from different perspectives. Explanations of sexual abuse have focused on four levels: the individual-psychological, the biological, the behavioural, and the socio-cultural. With respect to the individual-psychological, Freud’s psycho-dynamic theory of deviant sexual behaviour has had a great influence within the field of sexual deviance (Freud, 1953). Specifically, Freud located the causes of deviant sexual behaviour in early childhood development. Explanations centered around Oedipal conflicts, castration anxiety, repression of Oedipal wishes, and regression to less mature behaviour. The presence of an impaired moral conscience or a defective superego was also believed to be a precondition present in child sexual abusers. Freud argued that these early childhood experiences and developments resulted in infantile sexual desires and practices later on in life. Freud’s view on deviant sexuality made a strong contribution to our understanding of child sexual abuse; however, adherence to psycho-dynamic theory is less common now.

A more recent theory argues that child molesters have arrested psycho-sexual development and are emotionally immature. Child molesters choose to relate to children because they are at a child’s emotional level and are able to understand and respond to childlike preoccupations (Finkelhor & Araji, 1986). Many theories have focused on
elements of the sex offender’s childhood to explain his deviant sexual behaviour. Specifically, these theories state that relating to children allows child molesters to attempt to overcome the effects of their own childhood trauma, such as physical or sexual abuse. By sexually abusing his victim, the child molester attempts to ‘master’ the trauma by reversing the roles from the original victimization that he suffered in childhood. He now becomes the victimizer; through an identification with the aggressor, he attempts to overcome his own residual feelings of powerlessness (Finkelhor & Araji, 1986). Finally, others maintain that narcissism is the motivating factor for the child molester. Specifically, it is argued that as a result of the child molester’s own emotional deprivation or over-protection in childhood, he remains emotionally involved with himself as a child or his likenesses. The abuser attempts to give to his victim the love that he missed or wished he had when he was a child. Generally, the victim resembles the abuser in some way.

Biological theories of child sexual abuse focus on metabolic, genetic, hormonal or physiological abnormalities that contribute to child molesting behaviour (Langevin, 1983). Theories that are biological in approach can be convincing because they permit a thoroughly material explanation. Moreover, they give reason to believe that the deviant sexual behaviour is largely beyond the abuser’s control. In other words, biological theories generally view the child molester as ill rather than deviant. Some researchers argue that child sexual abusers are marked by high levels of sex hormones, plasma testosterone, and other endocrine abnormalities (Bradford, 1985). Organic conditions such as dysfunctions of the hypothalamus and temporal lobe as well as lesions of the limbic system have all been found to be associated with an altered sexual orientation. Genetic anomalies have also
been examined as possible contributing factors to child sexual abuse (Barnard, Fuller, Robbins, & Shaw, 1989).

Some of the earlier theories on child sexual abuse have focused on behavioural explanations to understand the behaviour of child molesters. Behavioural approaches are of two basic types. According to one formulation, the abuser comes to experience pleasurable sexual acts with children as a result of orgasm being paired contiguously with the sexual act or some aspect of it. The principles of Pavlovian, or Classical Conditioning, apply (Langevin, 1983). Responses become strengthened with repeated pairings of the child and the orgasm. The other behavioural approach, known as Operant Conditioning, postulates that the abuser’s sexual activity is strengthened when it is followed by rewarding or reinforcing states such as orgasm (Skinner, 1953). Not only the sexual act, but also the thoughts, feelings, and fantasies can be reinforced and strengthened by masturbation and orgasm. The principle of partial reinforcement, where responses become strengthened when they are reinforced intermittently rather than continuously, helps to explain in part why deviant sexual activity, once firmly established, is difficult to extinguish.

A related body of research suggests that child molesters are sexually responsive to children and have an unusually heightened level of sexual arousal to them. Freund (1967b) and Quinsey (1977) have conducted most of the research supporting this line of inquiry. Specifically, in a series of studies, Freund and colleagues (Freund 1967a, 1967b; Freund & Langevin, 1976; Freund, Langevin, Cibri & Zajac, 1973) examined and measured the penile responses of child molesters to slides of male and female children and adults. He
found that child molesters were significantly more likely to be sexually aroused by slides of children, both male and female, than either of the two control groups (homosexual and heterosexual males). Quinsey and colleagues found similar results. They compared the penile responses of a group of child molesters with those of non-molesters by showing both groups slides of adults and children, and found that although child molesters claimed adult females were their preferred sexual object, the test results showed that they exhibited the largest penile responses to slides of female children (Quinsey, Steinman, Bergensen, & Holmes, 1975). These studies appear to establish the fact that some pedophiles have a sexual-arousal preference for children. However, it is not clear whether all child molesters have such a preference.

Other theories of child sexual abuse have attempted to understand the sex offender from a socio-cultural perspective. The power theory for example, suggests that child molesters are attracted to children because children give them a feeling of being powerful, omnipotent, and in control (Howells, 1979). The power model assumes that sexual abuse is an expression of a power motive and that the drive towards sexual power and dominance may originate both from a pathological motivation and from traditional male socialization (Bagley & King, 1990). Child molesters are generally immature, have a low sense of self esteem and little efficacy in their social relationships (Finkelhor & Araji, 1986). Children offer little competition for power and control and are therefore ideal targets for the abuser who has a need to feel powerful (Marshall & Barrett, 1990).

Feminist theories about child sexual abuse suggest that the sexual abuse of children grows out of certain themes in normal male socialization that tend to make children
appropriate’ and ‘desirable’ objects of sexual interest and attraction. Similar to the power theory, these theories focus on the value that male socialization puts on being dominant and on being the initiator in sexual relationships. Moreover, emphasis is placed on sexual partners who are youthful, smaller than the perpetrator, and subservient to him (Finkelhor, Araji, Baron, Browne, Doyle-Peters, & Wyatt, 1986; Howells, 1979). Child sexual abuse, it is argued, occurs as a natural extension of some of these values.

Howitt (1995) explores six major perspectives of pedophilia, each of which may involve several different theories. The first, sexual learning theory focuses on the ways in which pedophilia is a learned behaviour. He argues that children are known to engage in various forms of sexual activity quite often throughout childhood. Howitt states,

Granted these high rates of sexual experiences with peers in normal childhood, the association of sexual arousal with the immature body characteristics of other children might condition a long-term sexual response to immature bodies, the strength of the sexual drive during puberty possibly enhancing the likelihood of such a learning process (1995, p. 131).

It is important to note that although this perspective explains how sexual attraction towards children begins, it does not explain why it is that the majority of people successfully move through adolescence have had those sexual experiences, but do not become adult pedophiles.

The second major perspective examined by Howitt (1995) is the Four Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse developed by Finkelhor (1984). Finkelhor’s Model, which was adopted for the purposes of the present study, essentially examines the necessary preconditions that characterize sex offenders and the circumstances that lead to their offending behaviour. Howitt argues that the Model, despite its widely acknowledged
explanations of pedophilia, is problematic because the evidence and research supporting
the theories inherent in the Model is 'technically poor'. However, he maintains that,
ironically, the Model's strength stems from this weakness since it stresses multiple causes
of pedophilia -- different explanations for different sex offenders.

Cognitive distortion theory is the third perspective discussed by Howitt (1995). Cognitive
distortion theory argues that the sex offender will use whatever means he can to
validate his activities. Characteristic among the cognitive approach is the abusers' use of
rationalizations and minimizations to avoid acceptance of responsibility for their
behaviour. The offender will utilize whatever excuse he can to shift responsibility away
from himself. For example, he may attempt to redefine the abuse as something consensual
and desired by the child or he may lay the blame on his dysfunctional family. As Howitt
notes,

It is counterproductive to treat the man primarily as part of the family system since
this merely allows him more freedom to lay the blame on the dysfunctional family
or another family member (1995, p. 137).

Psycho-dynamic theory is the fourth approach discussed by Howitt (1995). Within
the psycho-dynamic approach, several theories are postulated. First, pedophilia is regarded
as a perversion. Perversion is defined as sexual interest in a less than fully regarded
partner, as manifested in pedophilia, necrophilia, and bestiality. It is believed that sex in
these contexts is the essence of a perversion since the very existence of another person is a
threat to one's sexuality. However, this theory is problematic: since there is no clear
concept of the meaning of the term 'perversion', there is a danger of attributing too much
to something that may simply be different or unusual. One group of Jungian analysts, as
exemplified by Gordon, argue that in order to understand pedophilia, it is important to appreciate its healthy basis. As Gordon suggests, interactions between adults and children arise out of feelings generated by responses to the characteristics of childhood. Children elicit fond and pleasurable feelings from adults evoking a desire to protect them -- which ultimately serves to preserve the 'inner child' in ourselves (1976). This particular Jungian perspective is markedly different from other explanations in so far as pedophilia is used for something that can be positive; it becomes pathological only when the process is diverted from its relatively healthy course.

The psychiatric view maintains that the degree of psychological disturbance in the sex offender may be inversely related to the age of his victim. That is to say that the younger the victim, the greater the psychological disturbance. Moreover, the pedophile also possesses negative feelings towards adult sexuality. There may be feelings of fear or condemnation or both. In terms of the larger question of how a pedophile can sexually abuse children when the rest of society condemns such activities, Glasser argues that societal standards (the superego) do not become integrated into the pedophile’s personality because of the strong rejection he felt toward his parents and other people in positions of authority who treated him badly in childhood. The activities of the pedophile are the protest of this mistreatment (Glasser, 1989).

The fifth perspective outlined by Howitt (1995) is the feminist perspective which regards pedophilia as gender politics. This explanation sees child sexual abuse as a major social problem only identified as such as a result of the women’s movement. The feminist understanding of child sexual abuse developed out of concerns of family violence and the
sexual violence committed against adult women. Consequently, the earlier themes of family violence have influenced feminist analysis of child sexual abuse. There are a number of critical concerns with respect to the feminist analysis of child sexual abuse. First, explanations of child sexual abuse that relate it to the activities of all men appear to be encouraged. Second, feminist writers seemingly focus much of their research on abuse in the family, which serves to sustain the family-violence tradition (Howitt, 1995). Feminist discourse then maintains the notion that male power and control are the most influential variables involved in the explanation of pedophilia.

Finally, Howitt (1995) examines the perspective that pedophilia may be the result of a biological abnormality. The notion that pedophilia may be accounted for by a genetic or hormonal characteristic is an attractive yet simplistic explanation. Research on biological abnormalities in pedophiles is not extensive. Researchers have examined various biological anomalies among pedophiles such as the possibility that their sex hormones are in some way peculiar, or that they have different neuro-psychological characteristics. Biological explanations of pedophilia increase our understanding of the etiology of this behaviour; however, to focus on biological explanations only limits our understanding to a relatively simple and narrow approach as to why pedophiles do what they do.

It is evident from the above discussion that there are several different approaches to understanding the etiology of child sexual abuse. However, none of the earlier theories could singularly explain the myriad of sexual behaviours and motivations underneath this deviant sexual behaviour with much general power. While some theories, or parts of them, may be applicable to some sex offenders, no one theory, in and of itself, is satisfactory.
Conventional theories relied too much on locating the sex offender’s motivations in the biological or the behavioural spheres with the belief that the behaviour can be attributed to some sort of readily-identified causal factor (Mohr, Turner, & Jerry, 1964). A serious problem exists in the field of research on sex offenders: evidence for single-factored theories is limited and narrow in terms of explanatory power. Moreover, with respect to advancing our knowledge base of the female sexual offender, existing research is extremely limited in its applicability as it primarily focuses on the male child molester. There is very little supporting evidence from earlier theories that can be applied to women who sexually abuse children.

**Theoretical Explanations For Female-Perpetrated Child Sexual Abuse**

According to Allen (1991), theoretical explanations put forward with respect to women who sexually abuse children tend to be somewhat problematic. Underneath all the various theoretical approaches to this problem lies an even deeper one: the possibility that female perpetrated abuse is non-existent. Specifically, Allen argues that the ‘core issue’ is empirical, not theoretical. We question whether this type of behaviour occurs at all, regardless of any theoretical perspective. The empirical belief that has to some extent come to be regarded as ‘fact’ is the belief that women simply do not abuse. Allen goes on to assert that,

These few reported case studies conveyed the impression that female sexual abuse of children was so rare that it was almost unique in its occurrence. Because of the widespread acceptance of this empirically based conclusion, the sexual abuse of children by women tended to be virtually ignored or totally discounted in the literature (1991, p.16).
The belief that only men engaged in sexual activities with children has led to the development of an entire set of theoretical explanations based on male subjects only. Given the relatively recent emergence of attention paid to females who sexually abuse children, attempts to ‘explain’ their behaviour have emerged out of the male based research, thus attempting to pigeon-hole women into existing theoretical explanations. It should be noted, however, that there is indeed some merit in applying male-based theory to the female sex offender, because in some cases, there are similarities between the two sexes with respect to the ways in which they offend sexually against children.

Moreover, attempts to look at women’s behaviour from any other perspective has generally led researchers in another unproductive direction: the conclusion that women who engage in sexual behaviour with children are likely mentally ill, sick, or disturbed in some way. Generally speaking, this has been the traditional way of explaining the anomalous deviant behaviour of women. Clearly, we need to examine this issue from a perspective that is comprehensive and takes gender and sex into consideration.

Various theoretical approaches have been advanced in an effort to understand the male who sexually abuses children; however, it is not clear whether such approaches could be applied to female sexual offenders. Whatever theories are advanced with respect to female sex offenders, they need to be wide ranging and explore in what way this behaviour may indeed be linked to such preconditions as the social structure of gender, human practice, and affect and desire (Liddle, 1990).

One thing is clear however: we cannot begin to explain why women engage in sexual activities with children by giving credence to single-factored accounts. One can
usually recognize these fairly clearly: the woman was lonely, drunk or high, she was herself abused as a child, or she did not have any sexual outlets. We need to gain a more comprehensive understanding about women who sexually abuse children by examining theories that attempt to look at all the relevant preconditions involved that may have some theoretical significance. We need to take into consideration that gender, as a variable, may interact with every other variable proposed by every other theory. If this is indeed the case, every theory of child molestation needs to explain not just why adults become sexually interested in children, but also why that explanation applies primarily to males and not to females (Finkelhor, 1984). By focusing one’s theoretical explanations on male-oriented factors, crucial information is missed as to why women may engage in abuse. For example, one of the more popular explanations put forward as to why males sexually abuse children is their need for control (Finkelhor, 1984; Elliott, 1993). It is argued that by dominating a child sexually, a male can feel powerful and in control of a situation in his life where he otherwise possesses no great degree of control over other aspects of his life. This may be true in some cases, but falls short in others.

Many perpetrators need not use any force (physical) in order to gain sexual gratification from their victims. It is not clear whether or not this applies to women as well. Indeed, force, power, and control over a victim are not to be ignored completely; rather, to regard control as the primary explanation for most forms of sexual abuse is all too-encompassing in nature. Even if such an explanation were widely accepted as the primary one, it is doubtful that all women who sexually abuse children could be so easily slotted into the same category.
More recently, there is a small body of research examining the etiology and motivations underlying the behaviour of female perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Specifically, Turner and Turner (1994) conducted a very small study of eight female adolescent perpetrators who had themselves all been abused sexually and/or emotionally in childhood. The authors found that the sexually abusive acts perpetrated by the adolescents correlated to the relationships they had with their mothers, who themselves had never disclosed to their daughters that they had unresolved histories of sexual abuse. The mother-daughter relationships were therefore of a dysfunctional nature. Turner and Turner discuss several aspects of these dysfunctional relationships as they impact on the abuse perpetrated by the adolescents. They suggest that there are six important aspects to consider: attachment and attunement, enmeshment, enmeshed shame, differentiation, malevolent attachment and abandonment. The first area the authors addressed was attachment and attunement. They suggested that when the attachment between the mother and the daughter is healthy, the mother is able to be fully available and present in the relationship, and the mother and daughter are able to respond to each other mutually. However, if the mother has herself been abused, she cannot have a healthy attachment with her own child, thus potentially affecting all the child's future relationships. Further, attunement with her child is also difficult for the mother who has been the victim of abuse. Because the mother never learned attunement as a child, she is unable to provide it for her own child. The authors assert,

When the mother hesitates in caretaking, tenses, pulls away, acts short-tempered, is busy, or blames the child for being too needy, the daughter is likely to feel unworthy of being cared for. The mother's shame, whether from unresolved abuse, from a sense of inadequacy as a mother, or from society's denigration of women, becomes the daughter's shame (Turner & Turner, 1994, p. 27).
Enmeshment is the second aspect of the dysfunctional mother-daughter relationship. Enmeshment occurs when boundaries are lacking between the mother and daughter and there is no differentiation between the two generations. In a relationship such as this, the mother turns to her daughter for guidance and understanding just as often as the daughter turns to her for the same thing. The mother regards her daughter as an extension of herself. When the daughter begins to differentiate from her mother as is healthy and appropriate, the mother feels threatened and abused. Due to the enmeshed nature of such a relationship, the daughter may come to absorb her mother’s victim dynamics. Consequently, she begins to view herself as bad, while the mother at the same time begins to see her daughter as an extension of her own bad, helpless, and disempowered self. The end result is that the daughter feels that she is not good enough to be a strong and empowered person in her own right, and she becomes very vulnerable to abuse (Turner & Turner, 1994).

The third area that the authors discuss is enmeshed shame. They describe shame as, “diminish[ing] one’s sense of self so thoroughly that the possibility of empathy becomes utterly distorted” (p. 28). In their study, the mothers of the adolescent perpetrators had very low self-esteem which served to reinforce feelings of shame. Most of the mothers of the perpetrators had their children at a very early age, perhaps in an attempt to escape the pain resulting from the abuse that they suffered from their own families. By becoming mothers at such a young age, they may have been attempting to re-enact their own childhood, attempting to care for their own children as they were uncared for. They were unable to do so, however, because not only did they lack appropriate role models for raising children, but also because most of them were left or abandoned by the
fathers of these children. Consequently, these women turned to their daughters to meet their needs. Their own childhood victimization prevented them from allowing their own children to experience childhood in a healthy way.

Differentiation is the fourth aspect of dysfunctional mother-daughter relationships. Differentiation in healthy families essentially involves the mother-daughter relationship moving from a dependent relationship to one in which the daughter begins to experience life more independently and develops relationships with others outside of the family. The authors found that when the adolescent perpetrators in their study attempted to differentiate from their mothers, they were unable to do so. The mothers experienced this normal part of development as losing part of themselves. The mothers themselves were never allowed to differentiate as children, so they were unable to tolerate this stage of development in their own daughters.

Malevolent attachment is the fifth area discussed by Turner and Turner (1994). Distrust and anger characterize the mother-daughter relationship. The mother may indeed love her daughter; however, distrust and anger overtake the love. In these situations, the mother believes that her daughter is intentionally attempting to hurt her. She regards her daughter as her own childhood self so when her daughter fails to meet her expectations, she regards her behaviour as deliberate, intentional, abusive, and a denigration of their relationship.

Finally, abandonment is the last aspect of the dysfunctional mother-daughter relationship. Some of the mothers in the study abandoned their daughters because they were incapable of dealing with their own family situation while at the same time trying to
cope with their daughters. Some abandoned their daughters when their daughters attempted to differentiate from them (Turner & Turner, 1994). The adolescent perpetrators in this study who had these types of dysfunctional relationships with their mothers were vulnerable to becoming abusers.

Mayer (1993) examines the motivational preconditions underlying the sexually abusive behaviour of female perpetrators. Identification with the aggressor is the first factor. The perpetrator herself was sexually abused in childhood, and as a way of dealing with her own abuse, identified and became the offender herself. Identification with the aggressor is supported by other studies on female perpetrators of child sexual abuse (Faller, 1987). The second motivator that Mayer discusses is displaced anger. The author argues that because the female perpetrator is unable to deal with her own feelings of anger at being sexually abused herself in childhood, she displaces her anger onto a younger, helpless, and powerless child. Therefore, her own children become the recipients of her unresolved anger, rage and unmet needs. If the perpetrator herself does not deal with her own victimization, the abuse may be recreated and the rage passed on to her own child.

Trauma mastery through reenactment is the third motivator examined by Mayer (1993). Unconsciously, the perpetrator attempts to master her own childhood sexual victimization by abusing her own child in a similar manner. Finally, unconscious patterning of family lifestyles is the fourth motivation examined by Mayer. In this situation, because the perpetrator herself grew up in a dysfunctional family where her role models were her abusive parents, she attempts to recreate an inter- and intra-generational family pattern characterized by chaos and dysfunctional abusive behaviour.
Clearly, the work done by Turner and Turner (1994) and Mayer (1993) examining the etiology and motivations underlying the behaviour of the female sex offender is useful to increasing our knowledge from a theoretical perspective. However, it is limited in terms of explanatory power. Their work tends to rely primarily on psychological explanations underneath the behaviour and ignores other possible preconditions, such as sociological ones, that may be influencing the behaviour of these women. Moreover, Turner and Turner's research is collected from a very small sample of only eight adolescent female sex offenders. The size of the study and the age of the sex offenders limits the extent to which the results can be generalized to all female sex offenders.

Finkelhor (1984) presents a very useful model on male sex offenders that is multifactored and comprehensive in approach. The Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse postulates that theories of child sexual abuse tend to fall into one of four preconditions: preconditions related to the motivation to sexually abuse a child, preconditions predisposing a person to overcome internal inhibitions to abuse a child, preconditions predisposing a person to overcoming external inhibitions to abuse a child, and preconditions predisposing a person to overcome the resistance of a child. Theories that focus on the motivation to sexually abuse fall into three areas: emotional congruence, sexual arousal, and blockage. Theories that can be classified under emotional congruence centre on concepts such as arrested psycho-sexual development, low self-esteem, and narcissism. There is an effort to understand the emotional motivations that underlie this behaviour. Theories examining sexual arousal tend to focus on early sexual experiences in the offender's childhood and whether or not the offender has an unusually heightened
degree of sexual arousal to children. The emphasis is on atypical indicators of sexual arousal in the individual.

Many of the popular theories about child sexual abuse focus on blockage (especially when attempting to understand the dynamics surrounding incest) as an explanatory factor. Such theories rely on the idea that individuals are blocked in their ability to get their sexual and emotional needs met in normal adult-oriented relationships and so turn to children for sexual gratification. Examples of blockages can range from a lack of social skills to a breakdown of the marital relationship. Theories that concentrate on disinhibition (internal and external) take into account preconditions that work to remove or weaken restraints so that a person can become sexually involved with a child. Psychosis, mental retardation, lack of impulse control, social isolation, substance abuse, and an absent or ill parent are examples of internal as well as external disinhibiting preconditions that weaken the adults' inhibitors to sexually abusing a child. Finally, precondition four, overcoming the resistance of the child focuses on the ability of the abuser to overcome any resistance from the victim in order to perpetrate the abuse. This Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse helps make it possible to understand why it is difficult to draw unambiguous conclusions about what preconditions lead to child sexual abuse. Through the utilization of Finkelhor's Model, it becomes possible to discern the various theoretical approaches that exist in the literature that have been used with respect to female-perpetrated child sexual abuse.

Matthews (1993) agrees for the most part with what Finkelhor views as crucial elements that are present in an individual who engages in sexual activities with a child. For
the sexual abuse to occur, Matthews argues that the following preconditions need to be present: shame, anger (and the two underlying components of anger, pain and fear), low self-esteem, impaired empathy, misinterpretation of what the victim is communicating. Moreover, Matthews goes on to say,

When you fuse shame and anger with sexuality and add in the other ingredients, you have abuse waiting to happen. Thus, the expression of anger, disappointment, sadness, low self-esteem or just about any other emotion becomes a sexual expression. If the person is hurt and wants to lash out, she is likely to act out sexually, because that is the way she knows how to hurt (Matthews, 1993, p. 11)

Finkelhor and Araji (1986) stress that no one particular factor can be applied when attempting to understand the reasons why a person would become sexually involved with a child. They argue that there needs to be a multitude of indicators derived from the medical, sociological, psychological, and criminological fields to explain child sexual abuse. Every individual is different; and therefore the preconditions that motivate one person to engage in such sexual activity may or may not be the same as those that motivate another person.

The Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse developed by Finkelhor appears to have taken this into account. It seems that such a model may be relevant and indeed in some ways applicable to the study of women who sexually abuse children. It should be noted though, that these explanations are primarily aimed towards males who sexually abuse children and that any attempt to incorporate this Model into a female-based theory must take this into consideration. Moreover, these theoretical views are not necessarily mutually exclusive; rather, females who sexually abuse children may have a host of motivations that underlie their behaviour. For example, O’Connor (1987) describes some
of the motives given by his sample of females who sexually abused children. He argues that their motives include,

boredom after a broken marriage complicated by sedative and alcohol abuse [...] sex with a 13-year-old boy as revenge against her husband for being unfaithful; punishment of a 13-year-old boy for breaking into her house by taking his trousers off and interfering with him (aided and abetted by her husband); fear of being beaten by her boyfriend if she did not aid and abet him in indecently assaulting a 9-year-old boy (O'Connor, 1987, p.617).

Some women focus on one factor that they feel was the major contributing element to their sexual behaviour. A common explanation for sex offending cited frequently throughout the literature is that the offenders themselves were once victims of child sexual abuse. This is noted in case studies,

I was sexually abused as a child from quite young on up, until I was a teenager. Some of the same things that I did to my children, some of the inappropriate boundaries, of growing up, of thinking, came from the family (Irene) (Mathews, Matthews, & Speltz, 1989, p. 27).

and in larger samples,

Six (21.4%) of the subjects (sexual offenders) reported a history of being physically abused; 14 (50%) were reported to have been sexually abused (Fehrenbach, 1988,p. 150).

Clearly, one must be cautious when interpreting this information. It is well documented in the literature that the majority of reported victims of sexual abuse are female; and, the majority of reported sex offenders in our society are male (Finkelhor, 1984; Bass, & Davis, 1988). In fact, if the popular theory that being abused as a child leads one to go on and abuse others were correct, then a very high percentage of adults who sexually abuse children would be female, given that a large percentage of the victims
are also female. Women tend to deal with past abuse in a different manner than do men, i.e. through repression, denial, substance abuse, depression or by working it through in a therapeutic environment. Therefore, when looking for possible explanations for why females sexually abuse, other factors need to be taken into consideration. It is therefore important to examine other areas and motivations that underlie the behaviour of these women.

Finally, one can see the usefulness in Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse with respect to child sexual abuse. It does not focus on a sole factor to explain why someone would sexually abuse a child. It stresses that a multitude of variables are present prior to, and during the commission of the offence. With regards to single factor theories, the author asserts,

They identify one or, at the most, a couple of mechanisms to explain sexual interest in children. Not surprisingly, they have been inadequate to explain the full range and diversity of pedophilic behaviour [...] researchers need to caution against all single-factor theories and quick explanations in general, because they can lead easily to uninformed public attitudes and short-sighted public policy (Araji & Finkelhor, 1986, p.92).

However, it should be noted that although the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse has been useful as a replacement to the various single-factored explanations that have been posited, Allen (1991) criticizes Finkelhor’s failure to explain why more men than women sexually abuse children. Allen argues that despite the value of this Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse, it has not significantly altered our knowledge of the phenomenon in any major way and is limited with respect to understanding female sex offenders. He states,
...the purpose was still the same: to validate a 'men-do-and-women-don't' gender-dichotomy theory of child sexual abuse. Finkelhor continued to insist that 'practically no evidence' supported the notion that the sexual abuse of children by women might be underreported (1986, p. 126). Thus, his position remained consistent with his earlier review of the research, concluding that the sexual abuse of children by women comprised only a very few instances of child sexual abuse, and that women rarely sexually abused children (Allen, 1991, pp. 15-16).

However, despite Allen's criticisms, Finkelhor can be said to contribute to the study of female child sexual abuse by offering nine possible reasons as to why the number of female sexual offenders may be so small. He states:

1. Women are socialized to prefer partners who are older, larger and more powerful than themselves;

2. Women do not generally act as initiators in sexual relationships;

3. Men appear to be more promiscuous than women;

4. Men seem to be able to be aroused more easily by sexual stimuli divorced from any relationship context i.e. pornography;

5. Men appear to sexualize the expression of emotions more than women;

6. Men and women appear to react in different ways to the unavailability of sexual opportunities;

7. Because of preparation for a role presumed to include maternal responsibilities, women may be more sensitive to the well-being of children;

8. Since women are more often victims of sexual exploitation of various kinds, they may be better able to empathize with the potential for harm that may result from such sexual contact;

9. Sexual contact with children may be more condoned by male subculture than female subculture (Finkelhor, 1984, pp. 182-183).

Clearly, these are generalizations as to why the male to female ratio is deemed to be so large. However, they do offer some insight into the phenomenon which may assist researchers in attempting to understand why women sexually abuse children. The value of
this research is not to be underestimated as it contributes a great deal of information to the study of child sexual abuse. Allen (1991), however, argues that what lies beneath the surface of theoretical explanations of child sexual abuse is an implicit belief that female perpetrated abuse is simply implausible. He asserts,

Perceptual processes that work to keep professional belief structures intact and belief structures that deny the possibility that women sexually abuse children make it more difficult for female sexual abuse to be recognized, regardless of its actual frequency of occurrence. Assuming without question that the frequency with which case reports of female sexual abuse of children appear in the literature is a good indication of the frequency of its actual occurrence is a questionable strategy at best (Allen, 1991, p.19).

In sum, explanations of child sexual abuse need to take into consideration a multitude of preconditions that may have an influence on whether an individual offends. Research on child sexual abuse needs also to look at the reality that women also sexually abuse children, and that this may be for the same or for different reasons than men do. Regardless, both males and females need to be included in the research process if we are to make any gains beyond those already in existence with respect to understanding child sexual abuse.

**Typologies of Female Perpetrated Child Sexual Abuse**

If one examines the characteristics of women who sexually abuse children, distinct categories begin to emerge. Researchers are beginning to create typological schemes that will allow them to characterize specific types of female sex offenders. Faller (1987) has created a classification scheme of females who sexually abuse children based on five case types:
1. Polyincestuous Abuse: where there are at least two perpetrators and generally two or more victims.

2. Single-Parent Abuse: where the mother abuses her own child.

3. Psychotic Abusers: are those whom she maintains are psychotic and who suffer from out-of-control libidinal impulses.

4. The Adolescent Perpetrator: generally has access to children in a baby-sitting situation and their sexual behaviour was meant to gratify themselves rather than pleasure the child.

5. The Non-custodial Abuser: who does not have custodial rights to her child and sexually abuses during visitation times (Faller, 1987, pp. 266-268).

Mathews, Matthews and Speltz (1989) created a classification scheme somewhat different from Faller’s. Their types emerged from the types of abuse perpetrated, the perceptions the women hold about their victims, the involvement of co-offenders, and the psychological similarities and differences among the women themselves. The types are:

1. Teacher/Lover offender: This woman does not believe that her behaviour is wrong; in fact, she frequently sees the child as her partner and the sexual behaviour as a positive experience for both individuals.

2. Predisposed (Intergenerational) offender: These women acted alone while offending and they generally abused their own family members. The majority of these women were themselves sexually abused at a very young age.

3. Male-Coerced offender: These women are fairly passive individuals and feel powerless in interpersonal relationships. They endorse a traditional lifestyle where the husband is the breadwinner and in control of the family. Generally, these women were coerced into the sexual abuse by their husbands or partners. They feared abandonment and violence if they did not participate in the abuse. It appears from what we know, that this group of women comprise a large percentage of the overall population of females who sexually abuse children (Mathews, Matthews, & Speltz, 1989, pp. 32-50).

It is important to critically examine the ways in which a particular typology is constructed. Specifically, are these categories mutually exclusive? On what basis have they been constructed? Would a continuum be more useful in understanding these women?
These questions are worthy of consideration. This information is also useful for the treatment of these women as it provides therapeutic professionals with specific information that will assist them in making effective therapeutic and case management decisions. If such tools as typologies are being utilized in the treatment of these women, it is crucial that an appropriate method is adopted in order to evaluate them in such a manner so as to determine how effective and useful they are in increasing our understanding of women who sexually abuse children.

Similarities and Differences Between Male and Female Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse

Therapists and researchers tend to agree that female sex offenders differ from their male counterparts in a number of areas (Allen, 1991). These differing characteristics can be useful not only theoretically but also on a more practical level such as in the creation of treatment programs and in the development of offender typologies. One of the most striking differences between male and female sex offenders is that many more females than males sexually abuse in consort with another person (usually male). In contrast, it is very rare for men to commit their offences with another person present (Mathews, Matthews, & Speltz, 1987). In a study of twelve female offenders, Wolfe remarks,

Perhaps one of the findings of this material which de-marks this female offender population most sharply from male offenders is the fact that half this sample offended in consort with another adult, in all cases the other adult was male (1985, p. 3).

Although the number of subjects involved in the study was quite small, the recognition of its findings is still of importance with regards to this particular issue. When women do participate in the abuse with another person, they often (not always) play an
adjunctive, rather than primary initiating role. However, it is important to recognize that a proportion of women who sexually abuse children do indeed act alone. For example, Fehrenbach (1988) collected descriptive data on a population of female adolescent sexual offenders and he points out that all of the subjects in his study acted independently of another person when committing their offences. Moreover, research conducted by Finkelhor and Meyer-Williams and Burns (1988) on the McMartin Preschool case in Manhattan Beach, California, U.S.A, showed that some women do act alone in sexually offending against children. The authors state,

In most of these cases, the original presumption was that the sons or husbands were the initiators who later pressured or cajoled mothers or wives into participation. However, after probing further into the cases, investigators have often come to the conclusion that the women played active if not initiatory roles (1988, p.39).

Clearly, in a society where women are given primary responsibility for child care duties involving intimate bodily contact, opportunities for the sexual abuse of a child are more available for a woman than they are for a man. Information like this may have implications for the construction of a typology for female sexual offenders.

Secondly, females tend to use violence less frequently than men do during the course of their offending behaviour (Krug, 1989; Harrison, 1993). This may simply be attributable to the differential socialization processes of males and females in our society. However, this is not an absolute. In the McMartin Preschool case, women were found to have committed sexual acts against the children as violent as those perpetrated by the men. Finkelhor, Meyer-Williams and Burns (1988) write,
The more serious nature of the cases involving women is also illustrated by the serious nature of the sexual acts the women committed. Women were significantly more likely than men to commit multiple sexually abusive acts and acts involving sexual penetration (sexual intercourse, fellatio, cunnilingus, anal intercourse, or anal or vaginal penetration with fingers or objects). Acts such as oral-genital penetration and the penetration of anus and vagina with fingers and objects occurred more frequently when women were the perpetrators, even in cases of lone female perpetrators when compared to lone men. Sexual penetration by women was more frequent. Women were also more likely to use force and threats of force (1988, p.43).

Despite the relatively low number of violent female sex offenders compared to men, they still cannot be ignored. A third difference between male and female sexual offenders lies within the area of availability. Given the relative proximity that women have traditionally had with children, they are more likely than males to know their victims. Availability is a key factor in victim selection; and given that women are generally the nurturers in our society, it stands to reason that they would have greater access to children. Fourthly, the duration and frequency of the sexual activity appears to be less for females as a group than for males. Finally, the number of victims per female offender appears to be less than for their male counterparts (Wolfe, 1985).

There have only been a handful of studies documenting background and offence characteristics of female sex offenders. From studies that have attempted to provide data on these women, we know that female sex offenders appear to be a heterogeneous group, but one for which we can identify some pertinent preconditions. To speak of the ‘typical’ adult female who interferes with a child sexually would be next to impossible as she simply does not exist. What one can do, however, is to construct typologies comprised of the various similarities and differences among the women themselves.
First, typically, the age range of female sex offenders lies somewhere between approximately 16-36 with a mean age of 26 years (Johnson, 1987; Wolfe, 1985; O’Connor, 1987). To some extent, these women differ from their male counterparts in that the latter offend up to a later age in life than do women (Johnson, 1987). In addition, pre-adolescent females under sixteen also commit sexual offences against children for which they remain largely undetected. Their behaviour usually occurs while they are trusted to look after a child, as for example while baby-sitting (Knopp & Lackey, 1987). Comparatively speaking, female sex offenders as a group are more likely to know their victims, whereas more of their male counterparts will abuse not only children they know, but strangers as well. Briefly, Faller (1987) identifies the perpetrator-victim relationship in her sample,

Because the women in this sample frequently sexually maltreated more than one child, they could have different relationships with different victims. Thirty-four of the women (85%) were mothers to at least one of their victims. Twenty-two (55%) sexually abused only their own children, and the other 12 (30%) abused their own children and others. In three instances, the women also abused nieces and/or nephews. Two abused their children and step-children and two their boyfriend’s children as well as their own. Two who sexually abused their children also victimized their grandchildren. Three sexually abusive mothers maltreated neighbor children or those of friends as well (Faller, 1987, p. 265).

Generally speaking, female sexual offenders are usually acquaintances of their victims (if the victims are not their own children), most notably a neighbour, baby-sitter, or other trusted adult or adolescent (Johnson, 1987). With regards to the actual sexual acts that these women engage in with children, the activities involve a variety of sexual acts. They include fondling, mutual masturbation, oral, anal, and genital activities, pornography and sexual games (Johnson, 1987; Knopp & Lackey, 1987). The vast
majority of female sex offenders use persuasion on their victims rather than threats or physical force. As mentioned earlier, generally speaking, aggressive behaviour appears to be more prevalent with males who sexually abuse children (Wolfe, 1985). As Matthews asserts,

Women use force or violence in the committing of their crimes far less often than men. When they do use physical force it is of a lesser degree than males (Matthews, 1993, p. 63).

A question needs to be raised here with respect to what the terms 'violence' and 'force' mean. There does not appear to be any real consensus on the definitions used. A lack of consensual understanding of the specific meaning of these terms can, in effect, have implications within the various areas and aspects of this research.

With regards to the sex of the victim, the data is somewhat confusing. Given that child sexual abuse is grossly under-reported, it is impossible to generate accurate figures for this phenomenon. Is it the case that young males are less likely to report sexual activity with an older woman due to societal norms that endorse and even glorify 'older woman/younger boy' relationships and fantasies? (Hunter, 1990). Clearly, issues like this need to be taken into account when examining the sex of the young person (as well as other data on female sex offenders).

In a study conducted by Knopp and Lackey (1987), the authors found that out of 646 offences committed by female abusers, 329 were against male victims while 317 were against females. These figures show an almost even split between male and female victims. A sample of females who sexually abused children studied by Faller (1987) revealed that approximately two-thirds of the victims were female and one third male. Similarly,
Fehrenbach’s (1988) study on female sexual offenders found that 35.7% of his sample abused males while 57.1% had abused female children. It appears from the above findings that girls are disproportionately more likely than boys to be sexually abused by women; however, conclusions such as this should be drawn with caution due to the severe under-reporting of child sexual abuse in general and the possible additional under-reporting from male children for the reasons discussed above.

In attempting to understand the motivations of female sexual offenders, many researchers examine whether these women were ever themselves the victims of child sexual abuse. It is not clear if this belief in the association between past abuse and present offending behaviour has a lot of merit given that most child sexual abuse victims are female, yet most sex offenders are male. Nevertheless, such a possible factor needs to be taken into consideration. In Mathews, Matthews and Speltz’s (1989) sample of 16 female sex offenders, she found that all of the women except one were abused sexually when they were children. In a study by Fehrenbach, 50% of his subjects reported that they have been sexually abused in their past (1988). Similarly, Wolfe (1985) reported that 58% of her sample of female offenders stated that they had been sexually abused during childhood. Further, in Johnson’s study (1989), 100% of her sample of female sexual perpetrators had a prior history of sexual victimization. It appears then that a substantial number of female sex offenders were abused themselves as children; however, it is unclear whether or not this contributes to these women offending later on in life. It should also be noted that the number of individuals in the general population who were sexually victimized when they were children is very high as well (Badgley, 1984). More research in this area is seriously needed.
Another factor characteristic of female sex offenders appears to be their extreme dependency on or fear of rejection by males (Mathews, Matthews, & Speltz, 1989). Many of these women have a very low level of self-esteem and are dependent on men not only for their survival but for their sense of self as well. They are easily manipulated or coerced by their male partners to engage in inappropriate sexual acts against their own or other people’s children. It is important to note that not all females who sexually abuse children have these characteristics; but, it is likely that those who do, generally abuse because they were coerced by another person, usually a male.

Finally, other considerations relevant to sexually abusive women are substance abuse and mental health. The literature points out that many women who engage in sexual activities with children may abuse drugs and/or alcohol. This is a good example of what Finkelhor refers to in his Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse as a disinhibiting factor that the women may use in order to weaken internal inhibitions and cognitive and emotional restraints against committing child sexual abuse (Finkelhor & Araji, 1986). In terms of prevalence, Faller (1987) found in her study that 55% of her subjects reported substance abuse. Further, in Wolfe’s study of twelve female sexual offenders, she found that five of these subjects had a history of substantial substance abuse, primarily alcoholism (1985). Clearly, it is important to treat substance abuse in an effort to prevent these women from engaging in a disinhibiting activity that may contribute to their abusive patterns. This is not to say that substance abuse ‘causes’ a person to engage in sexual activity with a minor; rather, it simply serves to complicate the situation further by distorting reality to a certain degree (just as alcohol and drugs can be related to a large percentage of violence in general).
With respect to the mental health of female sexual offenders, the literature is somewhat confusing and contradictory. Society views women as being incapable of committing deviant acts. There seems to be an underlying belief that if a woman commits a crime, she must be unstable and in need of psychological treatment. As Wolfe remarks, “A societal myth maintains that any woman who would commit an act of pedophilia has to be crazy” (1985, p.7). It is unclear if in fact these women are unstable or just found to be so by the mental health and criminal justice systems who have them tested rigorously in order to confirm a biased belief that women who commit deviant acts are ‘mad’ and not ‘bad’.

The literature is in disagreement over this issue. For example, O’Connor (1987) states that 48% of the female sexual abusers in his sample had a psychiatric diagnosis and a history of previous treatment (once again, one must recognize that many women have received psychological treatment and counselling but have not become sexually abusive towards children). Conversely, Krug (1989) maintains that in his study of mothers who sexually abused their sons there was not a single case where the mother was psychologically ill. Similarly, Mathews, Matthews, and Speltz comment on their study:

None of the women was classified as severely emotionally disturbed or psychotic. Emotional problems abounded, but the reality contact of all of the women was satisfactory; none of them manifested a chronic history of psychiatric dysfunction (1989, p. 88).

With discrepancies in the literature over the mental health and stability of women who sexually abuse children, it becomes clear that there needs to be more research conducted in this area. By looking at some of the preconditions that underlie the behaviour of female sexual offenders, one can recognize that, as a group, they are not necessarily the same as men who sexually abuse children (Allen, 1991). Another area that
needs more attention is with respect to power and control in the abuse process. This is a well documented motivating factor for the male sex offender (Finkelhor, 1984; Groth, 1979), but the literature is less clear on women, for whom the need for power and control may not be a primary motivating factor in the offence process. However, despite the current information available, we need to recognize that some women may sexually abuse children for similar reasons as their male counterparts; we have simply not discovered this information yet. There could be a host of reasons for this, such as the cultural blinders that we wear against associating women with power and control. It is therefore important when examining this issue not to discount any preconditions that may be crucial to increasing our understanding of these women.

Methodological Problems

The methodological difficulties in studying child sexual abuse is a problematic area worthy of discussion. Perhaps one of the more glaring issues is with respect to data collection. Child sexual abuse is a very sensitive and clandestine behaviour; consequently, it is not always reported. Clearly, the occurrence rates of 'officially' reported child sexual abuse underestimate the actual occurrences of this behaviour in the general population (Elliott, 1993; Badgley, 1984; Finkelhor, 1984). We can never really know just how many people have been victimized for a number of reasons. For example, they may have been too young when it happened to them and therefore are unable to remember. They may have been threatened with harm if they reported the abuse. They may be embarrassed. They may feel guilty because they enjoyed the sexual contact. The list is endless. Suffice it to say however, that the numbers we hear and read about are likely not very accurate.
Moreover, the ways in which researchers collect the data on sex offenders (e.g. interviews, questionnaires) can have a great deal of influence over the type of information that is collected. An example of this would be how the framing of the questions posed to our respondents can have a serious impact on the results. Are these questions biased in one direction or another? This factor needs to be taken into consideration at the research design level.

With respect to the adults themselves who become sexually involved with a child, data collection is also an issue of concern. We hear only about those who have been caught, charged, and convicted for their offences. What about the number of individuals who have never been caught or reported? This is something that we can never really know. The likelihood of someone coming forward to the authorities and reporting their behaviour is slim given the potential consequences involved. Once again then, the numbers and statistics reported in the literature are likely an underestimation and need to be examined critically and with caution.

A related methodological problem involved in studying child sexual abuse is the biased nature of the data itself. Overwhelmingly, the data that is obtained has been gathered from biased samples (Finkelhor, 1984). For example, we attempt to study the sex offenders by obtaining access to them from prison authorities, probation and parole services, halfway houses, and a host of other agencies and institutions where we know these individuals can be located. Admittedly, it is very difficult to collect data on sex offenders. Ideally, it would be favourable to conduct a study in which data could be collected from an unbiased sample gathered from the general population. However, it is
highly unlikely that one would find many people willing to divulge that they have been sexually involved with a minor. Consequently, the information that we are largely restricted to utilizing for research purposes comes from a biased sample consisting of most likely the most serious sex offenders of all. Social desirability of responses is also a consideration when collecting data from sex offenders. Given the nature of their offences, it is in their best interest to attempt to ‘paint’ a picture of themselves in the best light possible to the researcher. Rationalizations, minimizations, and distortions of reality are not infrequent issues to contend with when interviewing sex offenders.

This is also true for those who have been victimized as children. If this happened to them and they are currently adults, the situation is easier; however, if they are still minors, access problems are more difficult. Once again, the researcher is restricted to certain agencies like child protection services and other institutions for information; it is not infrequent, however, that access to the young people is denied. Therefore, one is limited to some extent in terms of who will be included in the research study. This is not to say that this information is without value; rather, one must be cautious when making interpretations and generalizations.

**Getting The Message Across**

There are many questions that arise out of the literature on female sex offenders. This issue has slowly begun to become unearthed from a research perspective and is being given some attention by the media. For example, in Canada, the Toronto Star newspaper printed two articles March 14 and 15, 1991 titled, “When Mothers Sexually Abuse Their Sons” which describes the stories of two men who are adult survivors of incest by their
mothers. The articles trace the lives of these men and how they coped with the buried memories, conflicting emotions, and other consequences of being abused by a trusted female. Both men experienced the contact as negative in terms of its impact upon their lives (Steed, 1991, D1-D3).

Despite current evidence that females do abuse, researchers are still somewhat hesitant to accept this reality. For instance, an article on the front page of the Globe and Mail, dated Wednesday, October 30, 1991, written by Sean Fine under the headline “Sex abuse by women ignored, psychologist tells conference”, alluded to some of the problems that contribute to the disbelief that women abuse. Fine quotes Dr. Fred Mathews, a psychologist who spoke at a child abuse conference hosted by the Institute For The Prevention Of Child Abuse in Toronto, Canada:

Politically, [he said], there is resistance to identifying the problem for fear that this will divert attention from male sex offenders. Also, to some extent women have been in control of the discourse on child abuse in Canada and the United States. Culturally, he said, women are seen as passive receptacles of sex rather than as aggressors (Fine, 1991, A1-A2).

Do we really want to know that women are also involved in sexually abusing children? The implications of this knowledge challenge the very foundations of how we view women. Specifically, they are our caregivers and our nurturers. Men, on the other hand have been traditionally associated as the sole perpetrators of such a repugnant crime as child sexual abuse. To begin to question this entrenched belief may indeed challenge one of the strongest and most powerful arguments of the feminist movement, that abusive behaviour is primarily a male phenomenon.
There are some interesting questions left unanswered by the current literature but worthy of attention. First, does being sexually abused by a female have different effects and consequences for the victim than if the perpetrator were a male? Clearly, on a general level, the short and long term effects that child sexual abuse have on both males and females are fairly similar; however, it was alluded to earlier that society holds this view that men are the perpetrators of child sexual abuse, not women. Some regard women as,

incapable of sexually abusing children because, women have more empathy with their children’s sense of well-being than men do, as a result of the day-to-day interaction of women with their children in the capacity of caretakers (Liddle, 1990, p.12).

Although we would all like to feel that our mothers, aunts, grandmothers, and baby-sitters are trustworthy of our children, it needs to be acknowledged that a small proportion of the female population does in fact sexually abuse them. Given that we as a society generally regard women as nurturing individuals, will victims suffer any additional effects by being abused by the very group of people that they thought they could trust? This is not to say that children are less trustworthy of the primary male caretakers in their lives; rather, that women (especially mothers) have traditionally been regarded as more ‘virtuous’ in nature. If indeed there are differences between being abused by a female compared to a male, this information may have implications on the focus and direction of therapy and treatment programmes provided to the offenders as well as the survivors of child sexual abuse.

Another area of inquiry worthy of investigation is with respect to the changing role of women in our society. Specifically, has the changing role of women had any measurable impact on the extent to which women sexually abuse children? As more and more women
leave their traditional roles as primarily homemakers and caregivers in order to join the paid workforce, will there be a decline in the incidence of their offending behaviour? Further, will we witness an increase in the extent to which children are abused in daycare centres by baby-sitters or other caregivers?

Conversely, will the added pressures of working in the paid workforce along with still being expected to be primarily responsible for the home and child-care duties contribute to an increase in women sexually abusing their own as well as other people’s children? Moreover, as women strive to be given the same rights, privileges, and freedoms as men, will their sexual crimes against children become more similar to those committed by their male counterparts? Specifically, will women offend for some of the same reasons that men do, i.e. power and control, rather than for reasons that are particular and unique to women, i.e. being coerced by a male?

It is difficult to predict the nature and direction that female-perpetrated child sexual abuse will take in the future given the difficulties involved in forecasting behaviour. However, it is the researcher’s belief that it is unlikely that one will witness any real changes in the ways in which we view and conceptualize child sexual abuse, and moreover, in the behaviour of females who sexually abuse children due to the external preconditions such as the differences in the socialization process of males and females in our society. These questions need to be the focus of exploration in further research endeavours.
Conclusion

In conclusion, research on women who sexually abuse children remains a relatively unexplored phenomenon. Researchers have only begun to gather data on these women in the last ten years and only within the last few years has the media begun to pay some attention to this issue. Clearly, some women do sexually abuse children; however, from what we know, they comprise a small minority of the total population of sex offenders (approximately 1%-20%). Despite the apparent infrequency of the offending behaviour, it is still a bitter reality that cannot be ignored. Women are in a far greater position to sexually abuse children given their traditional roles as caregivers in our society. Moreover, their behaviour is less likely to be detected given the relative privacy that goes along with taking care of children. It is therefore quite difficult to determine the extent to which women are actually engaging in this behaviour. This literature review was conducted in an effort to highlight some of the current research being done on female sex offenders and to allow for a better understanding of some of the issues surrounding their behaviour. Theoretical formulations on male and female child sexual offenders were presented to increase our knowledge of the etiology and motivations underlying the behaviour of child molesters. Information has been provided on some of the characteristics of female sex offenders, and typological schemes were discussed with the intent to demonstrate some of the similarities and differences among the female sex offenders themselves. This review has served as a backdrop to the current study. It seems clear from the review that increased attention needs to be paid to female perpetrated child sexual abuse. As Finkelhor admits,
Certainly in the past some people have assumed that sexual abuse at the hands of females never occurred. If this is how people have interpreted past research, then it is wrong and does require correction in the direction that some of the current commentators indicate (Finkelhor, 1984, p. 184).

There are many holes within the existing research that are in need of exploration. The solution to the widespread problem of child sexual abuse cannot be arrived at by ignoring a certain percentage of the offenders themselves. It is only through an examination of all types of child sexual abuse that we may increase our awareness of the dynamics that occur between perpetrators and victims, whether they are male or female.
Chapter Two: Finkelhor's Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine an existing theoretical model on sex offending and how it may apply to women. Specifically, given that the overwhelming majority of research on sex offenders has been conducted on men, it would seem imperative not to ignore such a fully developed body of research. By applying well developed male-oriented theory to published case studies on women who sexually abuse children, we can begin to understand how adaptable such theories are to this group of women. For the purposes of this study, one well developed model for male sex offenders was selected to examine its usefulness to the study of women. It is understood that there are a host of theories and models postulated for male sex offenders; however, the particular model chosen for the current study was utilized for its comprehensive explanation of sex offending.

The present chapter will focus on David Finkelhor’s Model on child sexual abuse (1984). Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse is one of the most comprehensive and inclusive models on child sexual abuse in terms of examining current theoretical formulations relating to how an individual comes to be involved sexually with a child. The Model was originally developed to explain the behaviour of males who sexually abuse children; however, it provides an initially convincing overall understanding of why an individual, male or female, would sexually abuse a child. The Model itself is broken down into four preconditions: preconditions relating to the motivation to abuse, preconditions related to overcoming internal inhibitions, preconditions related to
overcoming external inhibitions, and preconditions related to overcoming the resistance of the child. Each of the preconditions will be discussed in depth as it applies to current case studies of women who sexually abuse children.

**Finkelhor's Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse As It Applies To Women**

In the previous chapter, an overall literature review was conducted. Theoretical explanations for child sexual abuse were also discussed; however, all theory appears to be based on the male sex offender. To date, there has been no fully developed theory to explain why a woman would abuse a child sexually. Certainly, as mentioned earlier, there have been attempts to understand why a woman would commit such an act; however, most of these are single factored in account and do not adequately integrate the various preconditions that may contribute to a female sexual offenders behaviour. Araji and Finkelhor stress a multi-factored approach to understanding child sexual abuse. They argue,

> Such diversity of behavior defies single-factored explanations. What is needed is a more complicated model that integrates a variety of single-factor explanations in a way that accounts for the many different kinds of child molesting outcomes (Araji & Finkelhor, 1986, p. 92).

Clearly, any theory or model advanced to explain female sex offending must be comprehensive in design and approach. Women may indeed sexually abuse children for reasons similar to those found in men; but there is preliminary evidence demonstrating that they may be offending for other reasons related to being female as well (Mathews, Matthews, & Speltz, 1989; Wolfe, 1985; Allen, 1991; Rowan, Rowan, & Langelier 1990; Elliott, 1993). A female-oriented integrated theory of why women sexually abuse children appears to be the most promising approach to understanding the specific behaviour of
women. With respect to male-based theory, it may become apparent that women do offend for some of the reasons advanced in these theories; however, it is argued that some specific preconditions likely play a far more influential role than others, and that some explanations may not even apply to women at all. Moreover, women themselves could very well be offending sexually against children for very different reasons than men altogether.

To date, there are a handful of published case studies examining female sex offenders, some providing more detail than others. It seems appropriate to utilize this material to ascertain how useful and adaptable male theories for sex offenders are when applied to the women in these studies, given the relative difficulty there seems to be in obtaining a sample of female child sexual abusers that is relatively unbiased and large in sample size. Many of these published case studies provide information that comes from the women themselves on what they feel influenced their behaviour. Indeed, descriptive information on this population is crucial and having access to such qualitative clinical data seems to be important at the outset of this investigative process.

Despite some of the criticisms lodged against Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse in terms of its failure to apply to women (Allen, 1991), the comprehensive approach to understanding the male abuser provides some valuable insights with regards to women as well. The Model suggests that all of the factors related to sexual abuse can be grouped as leading to one of four preconditions that all need to be met before sexual abuse of any kind can occur. The four preconditions are:

1) A potential offender needed to have some motivation to abuse a child sexually;
2) The potential offender had to overcome internal inhibitions against acting on that motivation;

3) The potential offender had to overcome external impediments to committing sexual abuse;

4) The potential offender or some other factor had to undermine or overcome a child's possible resistance to the sexual abuse (Finkelhor, 1984).

Emotional congruence, sexual arousal, and blockage are viewed by the author to be the three components that contribute to precondition one, the motivation to sexually abuse a child. Specifically, Finkelhor argues that in many cases these three elements are present in the offender; however, the author maintains that these three components need not be present in order for the abuse to occur and are not by themselves preconditions to the abuse.

Precondition two, overcoming internal inhibitions, is regarded as a necessary factor that needs to be present in order for the abuse to occur. An offender not only needs to be motivated to sexually abuse, but he or she must also overcome internal inhibitions against committing the abuse. Precondition three, overcoming external inhibitions examines the environment external to the offender and the child. Here, one of the most important outside forces is the supervision that the child receives from other people. These individuals serve to exert a restraining influence on the potential offender. In essence, these external forces serve as deterrents. With respect to the male offender, Finkelhor maintains that the mother is perhaps the most crucial person in protecting her child from abuse. Her absence or illness may serve as a disinhibitor to the abuser. Finally, precondition four concentrates on overcoming the resistance of the child. A child who has
the ability to resist the abusive behaviour of the offender will influence whether or not the sexual abuse occurs at all (Finkelhor, 1984).

In the following section, the motivation to abuse (precondition one) will be discussed. A brief description of each component will be provided prior to determining its applicability to the female abuser as identified in published case studies. Following that, the notion of disinhibition or overcoming internal inhibitors (precondition two) will be identified and applied to the published case studies of female sexual offenders.

**Precondition One**

With respect to emotional congruence, Araji and Finkelhor (1986) argue that sex offenders select children for sexual partners because children have some sort of emotional meaning for them. Specifically, they state, “we have called this ‘emotional congruence’ because it conveys the idea of a ‘fit’ between the adult’s emotional needs and the characteristics of children” (1986, pp. 94-95). The authors assert that various theories that attempt to account for sex offending from this perspective focus on the emotional meaning that the child has for the adult. They postulate that the offender has an arrested psychosexual development and is emotionally immature, thus relating to a child from the child’s emotional level, preoccupations, and interests. Second, they believe that these men are not only emotionally immature but have low self-esteem as well. Children provide them with a sense of power and control.

Third, it is believed that by relating to children sexually, child molesters can attempt to overcome the effects of some victimization that they may have suffered in childhood. By victimizing a child, the adult victim can, “master the trauma by reversing
roles in the victimization they suffered, and through ‘identification with the aggressor,’ they combat their own powerlessness by becoming the powerful victimizer” (Araji & Finkelhor, 1986, p.95).

Fourth, another theory postulated in the literature that falls under the heading of emotional congruence is that of ‘narcissism’. This theory asserts that the sex offender remains emotionally involved with himself as a child, or his likeness, as a result of previous emotional deprivation or overprotection, “because they are at a child’s emotional level and they can respond to childlike pre-occupations or are narcissistic and are trying to “give the love he [she] misses or wished he [she] had had to a child who resembles himself [herself]” (Araji and Finkelhor, 1986, p. 95). The final theory classified under this factor emerges from recent feminist thought. Specifically, it is argued that sexual abuse is a result of particular themes and notions in ‘normal’ male socialization in which children are regarded as appropriate objects of sexual interest. Males are socialized to be dominant and to initiate sexual encounters with females who are smaller and younger than themselves.

It is unclear just how applicable the theory of emotional congruence is to the female child molester. Do these women choose children to have sexual contact with because the children provide for them some sort of compelling emotional meaning? That is to say, is there a ‘fit’ between the adult’s emotional needs and the characteristics of children? A thorough examination of the published case studies on female abusers appears to, at least in part, support this notion. That is not to say that female child molesters do not possess these characteristics; indeed they may, it is just not revealed in the literature. Clearly though, there is to be some credibility given to the theory of emotional
congruence. Case studies appear to indicate that some of these women do have a low sense of self-esteem and that perhaps relating to children serves, in some perverse way, to mitigate these negative feelings by giving them a sense of power and control over their lives as well as the children they molest.

With respect to the idea in the emotional congruence component that child molesters abuse children in an effort to overcome some childhood victimization that they themselves may have suffered, case studies appear to support such a belief. For example, in Mathews, Matthews and Speltz (1989), a woman named Grace (pseudonym) states while disclosing her feelings surrounding the sexual abuse of her nine-year-old nephew,

The sexual abuse started when I was raped. I never told anyone what happened, and I exploded at times. I began to take it out on Nathan. It began with touching his penis, then it led to oral sex (p.17).

In this case, Grace appears to have taken out her own victimization on her nephew as a way of dealing with her own pain. In this way the roles become reversed; Grace is now the victimizer. Clearly, as noted in the literature review, many abusers were themselves once victims. However, we do not really know to what extent these female victims go on to become abusers in order to ‘master their own trauma’, or if there are additional dynamics present during the abuse process. It is well documented that the majority of victims of sexual abuse are females; yet, the overwhelming majority of sex offenders are male. In any event, there does appear to be some support for the emotional congruence component in Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse. Children, in some cases, serve to meet the emotional needs of these women who use them sexually for what the children can provide them.
With regards to Finkelhor's second component in precondition one, sexual arousal, published case studies on female sex offenders appear to indicate some support for theories that fall within this component. Specifically, the authors are interested in determining just what preconditions affect how a person comes to find children sexually arousing. One general theory postulates that some people have early sexual experiences with children that condition them when they become adults to find children sexually attractive. They argue that there are some special circumstances at work surrounding the childhood experience that serve to give that experience a compelling quality of some sort. It may be possible that the critical experiences are those in which some special kind of fulfillment or frustration was involved or perhaps an association was made between the experience and the traumatic victimization. Some theorists that support the sexual arousal theory believe that what is crucial in the development of a fixation is "that the early experience of arousal be incorporated into a fantasy that is repeated and becomes increasingly arousing in subsequent masturbatory repetitions" (Araji & Finkelhor, 1986, p. 100). Given that masturbation is highly reinforcing, components of the memory (in this case, the element of childhood) come to be associated with sexual arousal through a process similar to operant conditioning even in cases in which the original experience itself might not have been pleasurable (Araji & Finkelhor, 1986).

In another theory on sexual arousal, it is argued that 'attributional error' may play a part in creating arousal to children. Children tend to elicit strong emotional reactions in most people which are generally termed 'parental' or 'affectionate' in nature; however, some people may 'mistakenly' label such reactions as sexual and react to them accordingly. Another theory about sexual arousal maintains that some individuals may in
fact become sexually aroused to children through the media and pornography that often project children in an erotic light. Evidence for the theory of sexual arousal is apparent in some of the published case studies on female sex offenders. Many of the women disclose having felt sexual attraction for the children with whom they were involved and how this interaction served to motivate them to abuse. For example, Mathews, Matthews and Speltz (1989) conducted research on 16 female sexual abusers and found evidence of sexual arousal as a motivating factor for eleven of the women in their study. In the case of Carol, they write,

Carol reported herself to the authorities in the 1960’s for sexually abusing her daughter. For a period of several years, she had engaged in fondling the child’s vagina and breasts. This touching would last for three to four minutes each time. Carol also stated that she and her daughter would undress and shower together. These behaviors were sexually arousing to Carol and she would usually masturbate afterwards (p.15).

Another woman in the study called Grace was quite sexually attracted to her nine-year-old nephew. She states,

He would be playing with cards, Legos or listening to music...I would then reach over...would put my hands inside his pants, then I’d ask him to take his pants off. He would. I would ask him to lay down. He would. I would then suck on his penis. He would get scared and tense. He would get an erection, but no ejaculation or orgasm. [...] I couldn’t stop it (p.17).

The authors add,

This was very scary for Grace because she felt ‘out of control’. She admitted that she fantasized about and had erotic feelings for her nephew (p.17).
In the case of a third woman, Irene, the sexual abuse of her children appears to be partially motivated by her own childhood sexual experiences. Irene discloses,

I learned mine from my family, relatives, and friends of my family that touched me...Sexual touching was okay. It seemed like I didn’t have boundaries because it seemed like anybody could walk in on me, whether I was dressing, coming into the bathroom when we were taking a bath, taking a tinkle...it didn’t seem to matter. I figured that I didn’t have no right to no boundaries (p.19).

Similarly, in McCarty’s (1986) study on women who sexually abuse children, Mrs. ‘N’, a victim of childhood sexual abuse herself, discloses her sexual interest in her daughter. She states,

After her daughter was born, Mrs. N dressed her up like a doll. As the baby got older, Mrs. N had no tolerance for any autonomous behavior on the child’s part. At two and a half, the child told her baby-sitter about being given douches and enemas, and that her mother inserted soapy fingers in her vagina and anus. Initially it was difficult to determine if this mother’s behavior was sexual in intent or just an obsession with cleanliness. Later she described her daughter in sexual terms and admitted to sexual fantasies about her (p.450).

In Marvasti’s (1986) case reports of female sex offenders, he notes the sexual arousal and physical gratification that some of these women gain from sexually abusing children. In case history #2, a white female in her mid-twenties with a past history of sexual victimization by her father was divorced and had a two-year-old son. She admitted to touching her son’s penis, while masturbating herself (p.67). And, in case history #3,

A white female in her mid-twenties with congenital deafness was abused sexually by her stepfather for years. She married and had two children. Her four-year-old daughter developed a vaginal infection and subsequently it was found that the mother also had the same infection. She admitted that when washing her daughter she perceived a vaginal discharge and felt that her daughter had had an orgasm. The mother became sexually stimulated and touched her child’s vagina while masturbating herself. No indication of psychosis or mental retardation was evidenced in this mother (p.67).
In addition to reported case studies about the offenders themselves, victim disclosures of sexual abuse by a female also indicate sexual arousal on the part of the adult woman. For instance, Sarrel and Masters (1982) document a case of a man who was sexually abused by his mother when he was thirteen. They write,

His mother began playing with his genitals when he was 13, shortly after his first episode of nocturnal emission. In a few months, the genital play progressed from manipulation to fellatio to intercourse. Sexual activity continued at his mother's instigation (two or three times a week) until the boy left for college. He gave no history of sexual dysfunction or disorder during this period. Although the boy never approached his mother, he always responded to her evidenced sexual needs. He felt strongly devoted to her, stating that he enjoyed her obvious pleasure during their sexual encounters far more than his own (p.124).

In Elliott's (1993) book on female sex offenders, a survivor discloses the sexual abuse by her mother. The sexual gratification that this woman’s mother gained from the abuse is fairly apparent. She describes one incident among many others with her mother,

One fateful day she took me into the bathroom with her. I was to play on the floor with my toys whilst she had a bath. When she got out she put the lid of the toilet down and sat on it. Bracing one leg on the bath and the other on the side of the airing cupboard she drew me to her. She took my hands and guided them towards her genitals. Looking me full in the face once again she told me that inside that hole was a warm cozy nest where I had first been [...] She encouraged me to find that nest. [...] she persisted and slowly with my tiny child's hands I tried to do as she wanted. Her breathing grew heavy and faster and eventually she threw back her head and let out a large scream. A climax of course... (Elliott, 1993, pp.128-129).

Further, another survivor named Rachal who had been abused by her mother from the age of two until nine describes some of the more subtle forms of sexual behaviour that her mother made her endure in order to gain sexual satisfaction. She states,

Nothing I ever did was enough. I'd feel guilty about that. It was not enough that I was attentive and compliant, willing to massage her and smooth lotions onto her face, her breasts, her stomach and thighs. It was not enough that I remained quiet
when she sat me across her naked thighs and gripped my small leg against her genitals and bounced me up and down while clinging onto me so hotly and tightly that I thought I would choke. It was not enough that, in bed, I lay across her while she rocked me against her body. She wanted more - she wanted me to enjoy it... (p.155).

Elliott (1993) includes another story described by a survivor named Richard who regarded his sexually abusive aunt as someone who derived great sexual satisfaction from abusing him. He writes,

As a child, I wet the bed a lot, one night, after I had received my punishment, I was told I had to sleep in her bed because mine was still wet. During the night, I woke up because she was shaking and moaning, one of her hands was inside my pyjamas. I remember feeling very afraid as I tried to wake her. When I told her what had happened, she said she must have been having a nightmare. She said that if it happened again, I was not to wake her, what I had to do was hold her as tight as I could, and gently rub her tummy or back. I now know she was masturbating, although at the time I felt sorry for her and wanted to help her. Needless to say, it happened quite a lot. Most nights when I slept in her bed, in the morning we would end up with no clothes, although we had night clothes on when we went to bed (p.170).

The abuse of Richard by his aunt eventually led to more serious acts of abuse such as oral sex and intercourse. Finally, in Finkelhor, Meyer-Williams and Burns (1988) study of sexual abuse in day care facilities in the United States, they describe several cases of men as well as women who molested little children. An excerpt from their work illustrates the sexually motivated actions from one of the female day care owner/operators. They write,

A 32-year-old owner/operator was convicted of the sexual abuse of several girls, having sexually penetrated them with dildos and vibrators and engaged in cunnilingus. Children were threatened with knives and tied up. This woman had a history of prostitution and was described as infantile, 'sexually running amuck,' unable to control sexual impulses, and sadistic. She had sexually abused her own daughters from the time of their birth (p.46).
It does appear that the sexual arousal theory does have some support when applied to females who sexually abuse children. Evidence from published case studies illustrates that some female sexual offenders do indeed become aroused prior to, and while abusing underage persons. In a study conducted by Wolfe (1985), she maintains that 67% of her sample of female sex offenders utilized sexual fantasies, and in most cases, the fantasies resembled the subsequent deviant acts that they committed against their victims. Despite contrary doctrine that posits that it is only men who are sexually aroused by children, the literature and published case studies seemingly contradict such a belief. Sexually abusive women may abuse for a host of reasons; however, one cannot ignore the motive of sexual arousal that may indeed be involved in the decision making process to abuse for some of these women.

The third component under the motivation to sexually abuse a child in Finkelhor’s Model is with respect to the notion of blockage. Specifically, the author attempts to determine why it is that some individuals are somehow ‘blocked’ in their abilities to meet their emotional and sexual needs in adult relationships. Here, it is assumed that a child who has a normal development would later go on to fulfill his or her sexual needs in an adult relationship. They argue that the sex offender turns to children for sexual satisfaction as his or her acceptable ‘normal’ outlets are blocked in some way. Those in this theoretical realm who subscribe to psychological theories that rely on Oedipal dynamics fall into this category of explanation. They believe that sex offenders have intense conflicts about their mothers that make it extremely difficult for them to relate to women.
Other theorists believe that the source of blockage stems from traumatic experiences of sexual behaviour such as the man who may find himself impotent in his first sexual encounter with a woman or is abandoned by her altogether. Such frustrations may lead him to choose children as a safer substitute to meeting his sexual needs. Another derivative from this line of reasoning is with respect to theories that try to explain the behaviour of incest offenders. These theories tend to rely heavily on the blockage model. In this situation, the marital relationship has perhaps broken down and the husband and wife have become alienated from each other. Repressive sexual norms prevent the husband from engaging in extra-marital affairs or masturbation. For some reason, the sexual abuse of his own children appears to be the preferred alternative chosen, perhaps because of the sheer convenience of having his children around. In regards to the published case studies, some evidence exists that women who are blocked in their adult sexual relationships may indeed turn to children for sexual gratification. For instance, in the Mathews, Matthews and Speltz’s (1989) study of female sex offenders, the authors reveal the existence of such dynamics. In the case of ‘Lisa’, whose husband encouraged her to become sexually involved with their three daughters, they state,

She hated her husband and was not satisfied with their sexual relationship, so she turned to her children for contact. She rubbed their vaginas and had them touch her and insert objects into her vagina. She also had them use a vibrator on her as she fantasized about ‘the perfect man’ (p.21).

Similarly, from the same study, ‘Irene’ reported,

that prior to the abuse, she had been doing a lot of changing, attending parenting groups, feeling better about herself, and coming out of her shell. She stated that her husband didn’t like the changes. He withdrew from her and became flirtatious
with a woman (age 29) who was living in their home. Her response was to feel ‘lonely’ and ‘angry’ at her husband (p.19).

The husband and the other woman had been sexually abusing Irene’s children. Irene joined the other two in abusing the children with the explanation that, “At first, I felt that it was good. It felt nice, like I was getting a lot of my needs met that I couldn’t meet through my husband” (p.19). In Krug’s (1989) study of adult males who were abused by their mothers when they were children, he found similar evidence. He writes,

Between the patient’s seventh year and early teens, the mother slept with the patient every night. The patient was distressed and verbally objected to both his mother and father regarding this invasion. The father ignored the patient’s complaints, and his mother continued. He believed his mother initiated this behavior to escape intimacy issues with her husband and father-in-law. That is she used the patient as a refuge from other interpersonal demands (p.113).

As a final note with respect to the blockage component as it applies to sexual abuse, Araji and Finkelhor (1986) both concede that this line of reasoning has not been developed very extensively by theorists, especially at a socio-cultural level. Therefore, one needs to understand that such a theory, if applied, must be amalgamated with the other preconditions in the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse rather than applied on its own.

Precondition Two

Overcoming internal inhibitions is the second precondition discussed by Finkelhor in the Model. This precondition, it should be noted, is not in itself a source of motivation to sexually abuse; rather, it is the primary reason the motivation is unleashed. Theories that tend to fall within this precondition essentially concentrate on why it is that conventional inhibitions against having sex with children are overcome or are simply not
present in those individuals who sexually abuse children. For some reasons, inhibitory controls are circumvented or perhaps there is a higher level of acceptability for engaging in this behaviour (Araji & Finkelhor, 1986). Finkelhor distinguishes internal from external inhibitors as serving to disinhibit an individual. His Model separates the two, and in this section, the preconditions that predispose an individual to overcoming internal inhibitions to sexually abusing a child will be discussed. Precondition three highlights the external inhibitions.

With respect to internal inhibitors, from a psychological perspective, theorists argue that child molesters are individuals who have poor impulse control. In addition, other preconditions such as senility, mental illness, alcoholism, drug and alcohol abuse have also been regarded as disinhibiting preconditions. Clearly however, one cannot focus on a particular factor as being the primary reason why an individual would offend; rather, such preconditions are to be viewed as contributing elements to the offence. The key mechanism to focus on with respect to disinhibition is the “lowering or disappearance of inhibitions against acting on pedophilic impulses” (Araji & Finkelhor, 1986, p.112). In addition, other preconditions that act as particular stressors in a person’s life such as the loss of a job or the death of a loved one may be elements that contribute to the lowering of inhibitions. Feminist theories of sexual abuse are also essentially disinhibition theories. According to Araji and Finkelhor,

These theories highlight certain social and cultural elements that encourage or condone sexual behavior directed toward children and thus weaken inhibitions (Araji & Finkelhor, 1986, p.113).
Some of the case examples given below demonstrate some support for the disinhibition theory of child sexual abuse as it is applied to female sex offenders. For example, in Krug's (1989) case reports, he cites the case of a male patient who was abused by his alcoholic mother:

The parents did not have a good relationship and divorced after the patient left home. Apparently there had been no intimacy between the parents since early in their marriage. His mother was actively alcoholic during this man's childhood and adolescence. When the patient was 15 years old, during periods of intoxication the mother began to become sexually aggressive. She would lock the patient and herself in the patient's room and attempt to sexually seduce him (1989, p.114).

Similarly, another of Krug's (1989) patients reported,

he shared his mother's bed from an unspecified 'very young age,' and at her initiation had sexual intercourse with her on a regular basis since early puberty. The mother was severely alcoholic but not psychotic (p.115).

Grayson (1989) also concurs with the disinhibiting effects of alcohol and drugs. One of her patients, 'Fran' stated that all of the sexual contact that she had with her children occurred when she was 'high' on marijuana. The abuse continued over a seven-year period. In Margolis's (1984) case study of a male who had been sexually abused by his mother over a period of years, he reported that intercourse often occurred after his mother had been drinking. Rowan, Rowan and Langelier (1990) report that the presence of mental illness and/or a low level of intelligence may be possible disinhibiting factors that influence an individual to sexually abuse a child. In their study, they identify such cases. For example, one woman was diagnosed as having borderline personality disorder. She was charged with performing fellatio on her two-year-old son. One woman had multiple
hospitalizations for chronic schizophrenia, five showed low IQ scores, and one was suffering from depression.

Similarly, in McCarty's study on mother-daughter incest (1986), the data indicate that of the eleven women included in the study 55% suffered from some sort of emotional disturbance, as documented by psychological testing or psychiatric hospitalization. In the Mathews, Matthews and Speltz (1989), situational stressors also contributed to sexually abusive behaviour among the sample of women in their study. For example, in the case of 'Bonnie', she began abusing her daughter Arlene shortly after her father died. In another case documented by the same authors, 'Ellen', like most abusers, initially denied abusing her children. "I didn't commit any...at the time I was drinking...others said I did." She eventually disclosed the allegations to the therapist, "what people said," and finally acknowledged her involvement, "I know it happened." Ellen described that while changing the diapers of her two daughters, she sexually abused them (p.16).

It would appear, then, that evidence does exist in terms of applying the internal inhibition precondition from the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse to females who sexually abuse children. In particular, the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs seem to affect the thinking patterns of these women and serve to disinhibit them enough in order that they may become sexually abusive toward a child. Still related and somewhat important to the inhibition component is the presence of mental illness and particular life stressors that a person may be going through prior to abusing. In the literature, no evidence was found linking poor impulse control (with the exception of one case) and/or
senility to the sexual abuse of children by women. However, that is not to say that it does not exist.

**Precondition Three**

In precondition three, the potential offender must overcome external inhibitions prior to sexually abusing a child. An outside force such as a parent will serve as an obstacle to the offender. Finkelhor’s Model highlights such factors as a mother’s absence or illness, a mother who is not close to or protective of her child, a mother who is dominated or abused by her husband, social isolation of the family, unusual opportunities to be alone with a child, lack of supervision of the child, unusual sleeping arrangements, child pornography, male inability to identify with the needs of children, ideology of family sanctity, as well as other preconditions that may predispose an individual to overcoming external impediments to abuse. Indeed, in the published case studies of women who sexually abuse children, evidence appears to exist in support of this precondition.

For example, in Rowan, Rowan, and Langelier’s (1990) study of female abusers, they cite an example of a woman whose case appears to provide support for precondition three. In case seven he reports,

This 65-year-old woman was evaluated after her 10-year-old foster son reported to a neighbor that she masturbated him regularly. He had been found performing a similar activity with the neighbor’s child. The woman had been victimized as an adolescent, was a chronic alcoholic and socially isolated, and, because of her husband’s physical illness, had slept with the boy for years (Rowan, Rowan, & Langelier, 1990, p.82).

Krug (1989) reports similar evidence. In case one he writes,
The mother had continually slept with the son from the time of divorce until his mid-teens. The mother never remarried, and did not date; rather she invested her entire non-professional life in the relationship with her son (Krueg, 1989, p.112).

A perusal of the literature on female sexual offenders indicates that indeed women, like men, do overcome outside inhibitors to abuse. In many cases, female offenders are the sole parents responsible for their children, which would provide them with the necessary privacy needed for the abuse to occur. Often the woman is socially isolated and therefore not actively involved in social networks. For the incestuous mother, unusual sleeping arrangements with her children serve to lower external checks and balances to abuse. When one couples this with the fact that, as a rule, women are afforded much more unquestioned opportunity to be physically close to children in our society, one can see just how an abusive situation may develop.

Precondition Four

In precondition four, overcoming the resistance of the child, Finkelhor argues that a potentially abusive parent or adult must overcome a child’s resistance if the sexual abuse is to occur. If the adult is unable to do so, the abuse cannot happen. He maintains that a child who is emotionally insecure, deprived, lacks knowledge about sexual abuse, trusts the adult, is coerced and powerless, is likely to be at a high risk for sexual abuse. In the published case studies on female sex offenders, it appears that this factor is a necessary element in the offence process. In many of the cases, women served as the primary and sole caretaker (generally the mother) of the children that they sexually abused. Moreover, a number of the victims were quite young and consequently unaware of what was actually happening to them due to their lack of knowledge about sexual abuse. Further, a
particularly salient factor with respect to women who molest children is in regards to the number of women who actually slept with their children (a figure dissimilar to the male sex offender). Many women who were single parents would sleep with their sons as a means of comfort for themselves. In addition, of those women who were in a relationship with an adult male, some would sleep with their children as a way of avoiding intimacy issues with their adult partner. Paul’s story is a prime example of such a situation. He reveals,

[My mother’s] marriage to my adoptive father was unsuccessful sexually. I think I became her substitute penis, which she simultaneously hated because of her anger at her husband. [...] She saw me as a solution to her problem of ‘absent husband/lover/companion’. This attitude was reinforced by her behaviour in bed with me. Sometimes I would seek a comforting cuddle and then she would tell me it ‘was her turn’. This meant that I had to hold her from the back and let her sit on my lap! (Elliott, 1993, pp.209-211).

Clearly, in the situations where the woman was the primary caretaker of the child or children that she abused, there was likely a great deal of trust between herself and those in her care. Children are relatively powerless individuals in our society and must rely on the knowledge and direction of adults. It is therefore not difficult to see how an adult can manipulate a child to serve his or her own needs. Finally, in a small number of cases, the adult female utilized force on the child in order to gain compliance with respect to the sexual abuse. Some of the children were forced, either verbally or physically, to perform various sexual acts on these women. In situations like this, refusal is next to impossible given that at one time they likely attempted to say no and suffered the consequences. For example, Lynne’s story describes a forced situation in which her mother would sadistically sexually abuse her. She was not able to resist due to the force her mother exerted over her. Lynn revealed:
Abuse also took place when Mother would take a bath with me. At eight years old, I was still made to bathe with her. Mother would fondle me and coerce me into touching her breasts and genitals. I recall a time when I objected to this. Consequently Mother took a bath brush and put it inside of me. When I attempted to resist, Mother held me under the water to get me to co-operate. I choked on the water and couldn’t breathe (Elliott, 1993, p. 132).

Precondition four is therefore seen as a necessary and critical factor in the offence process. If a child can effectively resist the attempts of the adult to abuse him or her, then the sexual abuse will not likely occur. However, it must be stressed that often children’s attempts to thwart a potential abuser are overcome and the abuse occurs anyway. In any event, overcoming the resistance of the child is a factor evident in the case studies on female sexual offenders.

In sum, Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse (1984) is a useful and popular model for male sexual offenders. However, women who sexually abuse children do exist and for this reason it seems necessary that this model be examined for its applicability to the female sex offender. Clearly, it was found that indeed there are aspects of the Model that one may apply to women who sexually abuse children. With regards to emotional congruence, the first component in precondition one, the motivation to sexually abuse, published case studies did not appear to support the notion that women abuse children due to arrested psycho-sexual development or emotional immaturity. Moreover, it does not appear that they relate to children because they are at a child’s emotional level and can respond to childlike pre-occupations. However, it does seem that women who sexually abuse tend to have a low level of self-esteem and that relating to children gives them a sense of feeling powerful and in control. In addition, evidence appears to
exist for the belief that some women who sexually abuse do so in an effort to master some trauma that they themselves suffered as children.

Finkelhor's second component in precondition one, sexual arousal, appears to have some credibility when applied to the female child molester in the published case studies. In the literature several examples were found that illustrated the sexual aspect involved in the sexually abusive behaviour of these women. Some instances of the documentation were more subtle than others. Nevertheless, many of these women are sexually aroused by children -- a piece of information not widely accepted by the general population. However, this notion of sexual arousal may indeed prove fruitful in the development of a female-based theory on child sexual abuse.

Blockage is the third component in precondition one: the motivation to abuse. Some theories about child molesters argue that an offender who is blocked in 'normal' adult sexual relationships may turn to children for sexual gratification. Information from the published case studies on females who sexually abuse children suggested that these women may turn to children for various reasons such as a breakdown in the marital relationship, a need for a sexual encounter, alienation and/or abuse from their husbands, and a host of other reasons. Rather than going outside of the marriage for a sexual partner, these women choose their own children as surrogate sexual partners. It appears that blockage component is supported as a motivating factor in the dynamics of child sexual abuse perpetrated by women.

Preconditions two and three that Finkelhor (1984) discusses are with respect to disinhibition, or overcoming internal and external inhibitions to sexually abuse a child.
Precondition two and three in particular appear to be applicable to women in the published case studies. Specifically, the disinhibition factor postulates that sex offenders either do not possess conventional inhibitions against having sex with children, or are essentially able to overcome these inhibitions. The author identifies preconditions such as a lack of impulse control, substance abuse, senility and life stressors as being possible disinhibiting preconditions that contribute to the abuse process. A perusal of published case studies on women who sexually abuse children found that indeed disinhibiting preconditions played a role in their abusive behaviour. Impulse control, life stressors and senility did not play as significant a role in the offences committed by these women as alcohol and drugs did however. The majority of these abusive women committed their crimes while intoxicated or under the influence of some sort of mood altering substance, thus allowing them the false sense of courage that they needed to commit their crimes. One can then be fairly confident that when examining various reasons as to why women sexually abuse children, alcohol and/or drugs may likely be disinhibiting factors present during the commission of the offence. Finally, precondition four, overcoming the resistance of the child, is a critical factor in the abuse process, and was supported in the published case studies on female sexual offenders.

Conclusion

To summarize then, Finkelhor's Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse has primarily been designed to apply to the male sex offender. However, that does not mean to imply that certain preconditions from this Model may not be applicable to women as well. Not all of the elements of this Model apply to women. It is important therefore that a
study be conducted to determine the applicability of the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse to the female sex offender. This may serve to highlight the need for the development of a comprehensive and integrated model that not only includes pertinent preconditions from the male-based theories but also encompasses explanations specific to women who sexually abuse children.
Chapter Three: The Study

Introduction To The Study

In the previous chapter, Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse was described and its applicability to published case studies on women who sexually abuse children was explored. The Model suggests that four preconditions must all be met before child sexual abuse occurs. Specifically, Finkelhor discusses the first precondition, the motivation to sexually abuse a child in terms of the emotional congruence, sexual arousal and blockage components. The second precondition is overcoming internal inhibitions to sexually abuse a child. A potential offender not only needs to be motivated to abuse a child sexually, but the offender must overcome internal inhibitions against acting on those motives. The third precondition, overcoming external inhibitions to sexually abuse a child essentially involves the abuser being able to overcome any external influences that may interfere with the abuse occurring. Finally, precondition four, overcoming the resistance of the child, is considered to be an important element in the abuse process. If the adult can somehow manipulate the child in such a way so as to make it possible for him or her to abuse that child, then it becomes that much easier to execute the behaviour. Clearly, this model of child sexual abuse is a compelling one. It includes many facets of the abuse process and integrates them into a convincing and multi-faceted approach to understanding child sexual abuse.

With respect to the application of the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse to female sex offenders, the published case studies on female sex offenders appear to provide support for the Model in a general way; however, some of the elements within the
Model appear to be more applicable than others. For that reason, it seems necessary to examine the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse with respect to a sample of women convicted for child sexual abuse. It may be that it is insufficient in terms of explaining why women commit this crime, and therefore some sort of an adaptation of this Model may be necessary. This is what the present study has done. The purpose of the current study was to interview women who have been involved in sexually abusing children, and to determine the usefulness of Finkelhor's Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse when the Model was applied to the study sample. This study also investigated whether women commit sexual offences against children for different reasons than men do. Finally, the study examined the extent to which female sexual offenders possess cognitive distortions about sexual contact with children.

Existing research on women who sexually abuse children has primarily examined these offenders from a qualitative perspective, relying largely on information gathered from case studies. There are critical reasons for this approach, namely, the relative infancy of this area of research and the very small number of female sex offenders available for study in comparison to male sexual offenders. It seems necessary to take the current research further, and to begin to examine the female sex offender within an existing theoretical model in order to determine the usefulness of the Model when quantitative data from a larger sample is applied. As previously noted, research on female sex offenders is limited in scope and direction given the enormous difficulties in conducting research on this uniquely small and hard to detect population.
This is what the present exploratory study has done. Structured interviews based upon an interview schedule specifically designed for this study were conducted with a sample of thirty women convicted for child sexual abuse in Canada and the United States. The subject participants were serving prison sentences or were on probation at the time of the interview. Information was obtained from the subjects about their offences, the circumstances, victim characteristics, their backgrounds and other information related to factors within the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse in terms of its applicability to women. In addition, questions were asked to determine any similarities and/or differences that may exist among the study participants themselves with regard to the offending process. Finally, cognitive distortions were examined to determine the role they play in the offending process. Evidence suggests that sex offenders possess beliefs and cognitive distortions about their sexual involvement with children that serve to perpetuate and sustain their abusive behaviour (Abel, Becker, Cunningham-Rathner, Rouleau, Kaplan, & Reich, 1984; Stermac & Segal, 1989). The interview schedule consisted of a series of prepared, open-structured prompts and closed questions (see Appendix E) designed to determine the extent to which Finkelhor's Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse was applicable to the female sex offender, and/or whether there were additional preconditions present that were pertinent to women which have not been included in this primarily male-based model. In addition, qualitative information from the interviews was analyzed and presented in order to examine the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse and its suitability when applied to the individual case studies of the participants themselves.
Primary Research Questions

The main question addressed in this study was whether Finkelhor's Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse is applicable to women who sexually abuse children: specifically, is there support for the four preconditions in Finkelhor's Model that the author argues lead to child sexual abuse? The second question posed in the research was: what other factors, if any, apply to the female sexual abuser? Finally, the last question addressed in the study was: do female sex offenders endorse cognitive distortions that may contribute to the sexual abuse of children? A perusal of the published case studies on female sex abusers has provided a preliminary start in this investigative process. Conducting a study specifically aimed to answer these three broad questions should increase our understanding of why women would sexually abuse children.

Method

Subjects

Thirty female participants were recruited for this study. These women had, as adults, sexually abused a child under the age of sixteen. The study participants were all over the age of eighteen and spoke the English language. An interview schedule was administered to all subjects either in the institution in which they were serving their prison sentences or, for those women who were not incarcerated, at another location in the community.
Subject Recruitment and Settings

Ontario, Canada.

Participants for this study were selected from correctional and social services agencies within Ontario. Specifically, all provincial jails, detention centres, and probation and parole field offices from the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services were asked to participate in the study in terms of informing the researcher about suitable candidates who were under their supervision or care. Four subjects were recruited from Ontario probation and parole field offices for participation in the study. Interviews were conducted in interview rooms within each of the field offices. Only the subject and the interviewer were present. One subject was also recruited from a correctional institution in Ontario for inmates who are serving provincial prison sentences. The interview was conducted in an interview room in the institution. Only the subject and the interviewer were present.

With respect to the federal system, Kingston Prison For Women was the only institution for women in Canada at the time that the data was being collected. Despite requests to interview female sexual offenders at the Prison For Women, access was denied on the grounds that the study itself presented a 'security risk' to the inmates who may participate due to the nature of their offences. In addition, there were difficulties in identifying female sex offenders in the system due to the various tactics used such as plea bargaining in the courts which often results in the reduction of a sexual assault charge to an assault, therefore making it very difficult to identify the sex offender. Consequently, the researcher had enormous difficulties in obtaining a sufficient number of participants for the
study. It therefore became necessary to broaden the scope of the investigation to include participants from the United States.

The United States.

Consent was obtained from the State Department of Corrections (see Appendix A) to interview women serving prison sentences for the sexual abuse of children. (In order to ensure anonymity, all locations and names of institutions and departments have been changed for the purposes of the study.) In addition, a Transfer Agreement was completed for the State Department of Corrections (see Appendix B) to ensure that the research was carried out in accordance to the department’s ethical and institutional standards. There are approximately thirty women incarcerated in the State’s correctional system at any given time that fit the requirements for inclusion in the study. The State Sexual Offender Program identified females incarcerated for sexually abusing children in two of their institutions: State #1 Correctional Centre and State #2 Correctional Centre. The researcher traveled to the United States December 12-15, 1996 and interviewed each of the women who agreed to participate in the study. State #1 Correctional Centre is a prison for women in the mid-western United States. The majority of inmates are serving lengthy sentences. In cooperation with the State Sex Offender Treatment Program, State #1 Correctional Centre referred the researcher to twelve subjects who took part in the interview process. State #2 Correctional Centre is a prison for women approximately three hours travel time away from State #1 Correctional Centre. In cooperation with the State Sex Offender Treatment Program, State #2 Correctional Centre referred the researcher to fourteen subjects who took part in the interview process. All but one of the women
agreed to participate in the study. Each interview was conducted privately with only the interviewer and the subject present.

Subject Consent

Participation in this study was completely voluntary. Women were given a Participation Information Sheet (see Appendix C) outlining the nature of the study, issues surrounding the confidentiality of the information that they provided to the researcher, and a clear understanding that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. The participants signed a Consent Form authorizing their participation in the study (see Appendix D). The women were not remunerated for their participation in this project. Overall, the women were willing to participate in the study. The overwhelming majority were involved in a sex offender treatment program at the time of the interview, and so, for the most part, were able to discuss their offences and seemed comfortable talking about them. Participation in a sex offender treatment program gives participants the opportunity to discuss their offence as well as all the other issues related to treatment that are often associated with sex offenders, i.e. denial, minimization, rationalization, etc. Rapport with the women was therefore much less difficult to establish. However, it is important to note that the prison setting is not the most ideal location to conduct interviews. It is an oppressive environment in which inmates must always be watchful and careful about what they say and do, especially those convicted of sexual offences against children. In order to minimize concerns of potential study participants, prison officials who were involved in assisting the researcher in carrying out the interviews were extremely sensitive to this potentially volatile issue. Participants who were identified by prison
officials as potential subjects for the study were asked whether they wished to participate in the study on the day of the study in order to minimize the risks of their identification as sex offenders among the rest of the general prison population. Those who agreed to participate were removed from their daily routines within the institution and individually escorted to the interview room. The assumption from other inmates was that they were visiting the Prison Psychologist.

Participants were given the opportunity to have the results of the study sent to them upon its completion if they requested it. Given the degree of sensitivity of the subject matter involved in the study, the researcher informed each of the women of its sensitive nature at the outset and provided participants with a debriefing session upon completion of the interview. The intention was to provide the subjects with a forum to express their feelings about the information they shared with the researcher, and to discuss what effect, positive or negative, it may have had on them.

Measures

The primary thrust of the study was exploratory in approach and the measures adopted reflected this. Interviews were structured and based upon an interview schedule specifically designed for this study. Two measures were used in the study:

a) An interview schedule (see Appendix E) which was pre-designed and consisted of eighty-one questions, some requiring short answers, others requiring more extensive information. Questions were designed to examine the applicability of Finkelhor's Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse to female sexual offenders. There was no available questionnaire as the Model has never been applied to data gathered from a sample of male
or female sexual offenders. In addition to asking study participants questions examining the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse, the interview schedule consisted of additional questions designed to obtain information from the participants about other factors and conditions that may have had an influence on their offending behaviour. Finally, participants elaborated on some of the questions in the interview schedule, providing qualitative information that augmented the quantitative data with richer and more candid detail on the abuse process.

b) The Cognition Scale (Abel, Becker, Cunningham-Rathner, Rouleau, Kaplan, & Reich, 1984) which consisted of twenty-nine additional questions to examine whether or not the women possessed any significant cognitive distortions that may have contributed to the sexual abuse of children. Subjects filled out the Cognition Scale themselves (see Appendix F).

**Interview Schedule**

All participants were informed that the information (raw data) collected from them would be coded by the researcher so that their individual responses would remain anonymous. The interview schedule was comprised of four sections consisting of standardized open-ended and closed questions. First, in order to establish rapport with the subjects and help them to feel comfortable, part of the interview schedule concentrated on obtaining demographic information from the women. It should be noted that the actual questions used with the subjects were ordered in such a manner so as to begin the interview with the least intrusive questions followed by more personal and sensitive
questions as the interview progressed. The sections of the interview schedule are discussed below.

**Demographic and Background Information.**

In this section, demographic information was gathered from eight questions. Information on age, education, race, marital status, number of children, and occupation was obtained. In addition, seven questions focused on the mental health history of the subjects.

**Criminal History, Offence Characteristics and Victim Characteristics.**

Five questions were asked to gather information from the subjects with respect to the nature and characteristics of their offences. Women were involved in numerous behaviours involving the sexual abuse of children. It is important to note that sexual offences against children are categorized differently in Canada than in the United States. Information on prior criminal history and length of sentence was also obtained from the subjects. Three questions were posed on the characteristics of the victims, i.e. sex, age, and relationship to offender. Finally, information was collected from the study participants with respect to their use of substances (drugs or alcohol) during the commission of their offences.

**Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse.**

The main section of the structured interview focused on Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse (1984). As the Model itself had not been tested previously on a sample of male or female sex offenders, there was no available questionnaire for such a purpose. For that reason, the questionnaire that was used for the
present study was devised by the researcher so as to examine the applicability of the Model to women who sexually abuse children. Specifically, the measures consisted of a series of open-ended (structured prompts) and closed questions designed to obtain quantitative and qualitative information from the women. Questions were based on examining the preconditions in Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse to determine the extent to which it was applicable to a sample of women who sexually abused children. It should be noted that, despite focusing the questionnaire largely around the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse, the order in which the questions were asked was not grouped according to the preconditions within the Model; rather, they have been grouped in such a manner so as to facilitate as effective an interview as possible.

From precondition one, the motivation to abuse, eleven questions examining the emotional congruence component focused on the extent to which women felt some sort of emotional connection to children. Examples of questions focusing on emotional congruence are:

1. Do intimate or close relationships with adults intimidate or scare you?
2. At the time of the offence, did you feel more comfortable around children or adults?

From precondition one, fourteen questions were posed to the subjects that focused on the sexual arousal component. Examples of questions designed to examine participant’s sexual arousal to children are:

1. If you masturbate, do you sexually fantasize about children?
2. Do the bodies of children “turn you on”?
Ten questions focusing on the blockage component from precondition one were devised.

An example of one of the questions examining whether these women were blocked in ‘normal’ adult sexual relationships is:

1. If you were involved with a partner in a sexual relationship at the time of the offence, would you consider the relationship good (bad)? Did he or she meet your physical, emotional and mental needs?

For precondition two, disinhibition (internal inhibitors), thirteen questions were designed to determine what factors served to disinhibit participants so they could overcome internal inhibitions to abuse. Two examples of questions are:

1. When you had sexual contact with the child or children had you been using drugs or alcohol?

2. Have you ever seen a psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker or counsellor for therapy?

For precondition three, disinhibition (external inhibitors), ten questions were asked of the participants that focused on this component of the Model. Examples of these questions are:

1. Did you go out a lot socially or did you spend most of your time alone at the time of the offence?

2. Did you spend a lot of time alone with children around the time the offence occurred?

Finally, in precondition four, the researcher asked six questions of the participants that focused on how they overcame the possible resistance of the child in order to be able to commit the sexual abuse. Two examples of questions are:
1. Did the child attempt to stop you in any way from engaging in sexual contact with him or her? For example, did they physically try to get away or did they say anything to you that indicated that they did not want to have sexual contact with you?

2. How much would you say the child trusted you?

Other Factors.

Other factors were included in the questionnaire. Six questions were asked of the study participants that the researcher believes are gender-specific to child sexual abuse with respect to women, but have yet to be explored fully in the literature due to the overwhelming emphasis placed on male explanations as to why an individual would sexually violate a child. For example, are women who sexually abuse a child likely to be coerced into doing so by their male partners? Do women regard children as extensions of themselves, and therefore do not see their sexual contact as abusive or illegal in any way? Finally, do female abusers, like many male abusers, view the child, particularly if he is a male, as their lover and/or partner rather than the minor that he actually is?

To explore these factors, seventeen further questions were posed to the participants. Two examples of these questions are:

1. Did anyone urge or force you to have sexual contact with the child/ren?

2. Do you feel that it is okay for a woman over the age of 18 to engage in sexual relations with a person under 14 in order to ‘teach’ and ‘educate’ him or her about sex?

   Cognition Scale (Abel, Becker, Cunningham-Rathner, Rouleau, Kaplan, & Reich, 1984).

A cognition questionnaire was administered to the subjects in order to examine whether or not they possessed any significant cognitive distortions that may have contributed to the sexual abuse of children. This instrument consists of twenty-nine items
and was originally developed to measure cognition in adult male child molesters. It consists of statements reflecting values about adult sexual contact with children, and asks subjects to endorse one of five response alternatives ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Lower scores on this measure indicate a greater degree of permissiveness toward adult sexual contact with children (Stenac & Segal, 1989). Child sexual abusers tend to have non-conventional attitudes and belief systems about adult/child sexual contact that serve to disinhibit them so that they can abuse children. A treatment programme for female sex offenders maintains from their findings that this may also be the case for women who sexually abuse children (Barnett, Corder, & Jehu, 1995). This particular section of the interview was given to the subjects to fill out on their own. Gore (1988) reports test-retest reliability for this scale as .76 over a three week interval and coefficient alphas which range from .59 to .71 for the six subscales he identified. Moreover, discriminant validity was also demonstrated by the fact that child molesters scored significantly higher on all six sub-scales than did normal controls (Gore, 1988).

Two examples of items from this questionnaire are:

1. When a young child has sex with an adult, it helps the child learn how to relate to adults in the future.

2. An adult fondling a young child or having the child fondle the adult will not cause the child any harm.

Procedure

Approval For Data Collection

Prior to beginning the study, approval for the research was secured from the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services in Ontario and from the State
Department of Corrections in the United States. In addition to submitting a formal proposal, the following documentation was submitted to government and agency officials in Canada and the United States in support of the research:

- a literature review on women who sexually abuse children
- a section outlining Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse
- references
- copy of the approved ethical review from the University of Toronto (OISE)
- the interview schedule
- cognition scale
- participant information sheet
- consent form

**Ethics**

The procedures to be undertaken in order to carry out this research project strictly adhered to all institutional protocol for the State Department of Corrections, and the University of Toronto/OISE ethics and guidelines regarding research on human subjects. It should be noted that due to the highly sensitive nature of the subject matter being discussed in the interviews, it was critical to establish a solid rapport with all participants. Given the researcher’s extensive background working with inmates and offenders, it was possible to provide an atmosphere in which the participants felt relatively comfortable with the researcher. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of participants were in treatment for their sexual offences at the time of the interviews; therefore, they were somewhat familiar with the sensitivities involved in participating in such an interview and responding to questions that were difficult and private in nature.
Structured Interviews

The researcher visited the institutions in which the subjects were incarcerated, and the probation and parole field offices to which they reported, and carried out the structured interviews on the premises. Each of the interviews took approximately 1-2 hours in length to complete. The procedures minimized as much as possible the extent to which institutional personnel were needed or involved in the interview process and made every attempt not to disrupt the regular routine of the institutions and the probation and parole field offices. Participants’ responses to the questionnaire were recorded by the researcher and presented in the results section in frequency and percentage format. Qualitative information was also collected and examined to determine whether it provided additional support for Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse and to see whether any new themes emerged.

In general, the women were cooperative during the interview. The researcher developed a good working rapport with the majority of the participants in order to facilitate obtaining as much information as possible from the interviews. It was hoped that good rapport would lead to a high level of cooperativeness and compliance. That is not to say, however, that social desirability was not a factor during the interviews. As Babbie (1986) notes, “whenever you ask people for information, they answer through a filter of what will make them look good. That is especially true if they are being interviewed in a face-to-face situation” (p.132). Collecting data on such a sensitive subject as child sexual abuse increased the likelihood that study participants may have provided responses that were less likely to portray them in a negative manner. However, given that the majority of
participants were in treatment or had completed treatment for their sexual offending at the time of the interviews, issues of denial, rationalization, and minimization had been addressed in treatment. Consequently, the participants were fairly open and willing to discuss the details of their sexual offence. That is not to say that honesty and truth were not of concern; however, participants, for the most part, had discussed their abuse in treatment and had addressed these issues previously. Despite this, limitations to the study need to be recognized with respect to relying on the accounts of the women themselves in the telling of their stories.

Subject Confidentiality

Identification of all study participants was protected through the adoption of pseudonyms. In addition, all names of correctional institutions and facilities from which the data was obtained have been removed and re-named for the purposes of the study. All of the raw data provided by the women was only viewed by the researcher and thesis supervisor and will be destroyed upon completion of the research project.

Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from interviews conducted from the study sample. Frequencies and percentages were calculated and tabled according to the measures used for the study. Qualitative data were also presented to provide a deeper understanding of the lives and circumstances of the women as these related to the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse, and any additional factors that may have contributed to the abuse of their victims. As previously mentioned, the data collected for the study focused on extremely sensitive subject matter. For that reason, the issues of truth
and social desirability were factors to take into consideration when obtaining information from the participants on their life histories and the details surrounding their offences (Jupp, 1989).
Chapter 4: Results of Background and Offence Characteristics

Introduction

Participants in the study appeared willing to participate in the interviews. The data collected from the participants in the study will be presented in qualitative and quantitative format. Specifically, quotes from the participants themselves, along with excerpts from their stories will be presented throughout the results. This will provide the reader with a more personal view of the lives of the women. The quantitative data will be presented in table and text format with frequencies and percentages throughout the chapter. The results have been grouped, tabled and presented in the following manner: demographic and background information, criminal history, offence characteristics, victim characteristics, application of Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse, other factors, and the Cognition Scale.

Participant/Subject Characteristics

Demographic and Background Information

The participants in the study ranged in age from twenty to sixty years old (see Table 1). The majority of the participants (60%) were between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five with a mean age of thirty-one. The educational background of the participants ranged from less than grade eight to university level. Twenty-three (77%) of the women possessed some level of high school education. At the time of the interview, subject participants were in many different stages of their lives in terms of relationships and marital status. The largest group of participants were those who were separated or divorced. Sixteen (53%) of the women fell into this category.
The majority of the participants in this study had children (63%). With respect to race, the overwhelming majority of participants were of Caucasian background (see Table 2). Twenty-two (73%) of the women fell into this category. Given that the majority of the data was collected from two correctional centres in the United States where the inmate population composition was overwhelmingly African-American, this is an interesting finding. Four (14%) of the participants were from an African-Canadian or African-American background. With respect to occupation, almost half (N=13, 43%) of the thirty participants worked in the service industry, i.e. cashiers, waitresses, clerks. Eleven of the subjects held a variety of positions of employment at the time of the offence, while the remaining six (20%) of the participants were unemployed.

Mental Health History

Table 3 summarizes the results from questions posed to the participants about their mental health. Fourteen (47%) of the participants responded that they had been given a psychiatric diagnosis at some point in their lives. Eighteen (60%) of the participants responded that they felt they were suffering from a psychological problem or negative mental state at the time the sexual contact with the child occurred. Ten (33%) of the participants stated that they had been hospitalized for psychological or psychiatric reasons. Fourteen (47%) of the participants stated that they had been prescribed medication related to some sort of mental disturbance at some point in their lives. Only seven (23%) of the participants revealed that they were involved in therapy or counselling at the time of the offence. Overwhelmingly, twenty-four (80%) of the women stated that
they were experiencing a lot of stress at the time of the offence. Finally, seventeen (57%) of the participants stated that they had tried to commit suicide at some point in their lives.

A seven-point scale was used to determine the severity of problems indicated by the mental health history of the subjects. Specifically, individual scores on each of the questions were tallied to determine the number of ‘yes’ responses each participant gave for this section, indicating a more serious mental health history as the number of positive responses increased. Responses were then grouped together in two groups to present an overall picture of the mental health of the subjects, with the assumption that as the number of ‘yes’ responses increased for each subject, the greater the likelihood that the subject suffered from mental health problems. Subjects who positively responded to up to three questions were regarded as having a low score with respect to a problematic mental health history. Subjects who answered ‘yes’ to four or more of the questions were regarded as having a high level of difficulty with mental health problems in their lives. The results indicate that 9 (30%) of the subjects appear to have a highly problematic mental health history. Overall, however, participants reported that they did not suffer from severe psychological or psychiatric mental health problems at the time of their offences.

Criminal History, Offence Characteristics and Victim Characteristics

The overwhelming majority of participants did not possess any prior criminal convictions. Twenty-eight (93%) out of the thirty subjects had never been charged with an offence prior to their present offence/s. Table 4 illustrates the current criminal offences and length of sentence given to the women in the study. There were a total of fifty-nine
Table 1.

### Age, Education and Marital Status of Female Sex Offenders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>N = 30</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>(60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-49</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>N = 30</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>less than grade 8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grade 8-13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>(77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Marital Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>N = 30</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married/Common law</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated/Divorced</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>(53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>N = 30</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One - Three</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>(63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four or More</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(23%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasion</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>(73%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby-sitter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(14%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Health History</th>
<th>Total N=30</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Psychiatric Diagnosis</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Psychological Problem</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hospitalization at anytime</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Prescribed Medication</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Therapy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Stress during the time of the offence</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Attempted Suicide</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
offences committed by the thirty participants in the study. Twenty-six (44%) of the offences fell under the category of Sodomy. Rape was the next largest category, with eighteen (31%) of the participants convicted for this crime. The remaining offences for which subjects were charged are identified in Table 4. It is important to note that the offences for which these women in the study were charged vary considerably; the differences are not only in the actual behaviours of the women, but, more importantly, in the way in which the offences are categorized differently in Canada as compared to the United States. Perhaps the two most distinct offence categories that emerge from the study is Sodomy and Rape. Three-quarters of all the offences committed by the participants fell under these two offence categories. These sexual offences, as defined by American Statutory and Common law, cover a broader set of behaviours than the terms actually imply. Sodomy, for example, not only includes the carnal copulation by human beings with each other, or with an animal (the term ‘carnal’ meaning bestiality, buggery, and cunnilingus), it also makes it illegal for any person to voluntarily allow a minor to become sexually involved with them. Rape, includes the punishment of any person who has carnal knowledge of any woman against her will, and it also includes any person who carnally knows or abuses any female child.

Length of sentence received by the participants is also shown in Table 4. Participants in this study received a variety of dispositions for their offences which ranged anywhere from a term of probation to over several years incarceration. The most frequent disposition given was over eight years incarceration with thirteen (43%) of the participants falling into this category. Generally speaking, sentencing patterns in the United States tend to be more severe and lengthy than in Canada. Consequently, study participants from the
Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sodomy</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>(44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Assault</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>(31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Interference</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Endangerment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using child in a sexual performance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrupting Child</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Immorality</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Indecency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Pornography</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-3 Years Incarceration</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-7 Years Incarceration</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Years And Up Incarceration</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(14%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
United States tended to be serving longer dispositions for their offences than study participants from Canada. Study participants also revealed that when a male partner was involved in the offence, he was likely serving a similarly long term of incarceration for his involvement in the abuse.

In Table 5, victim characteristics are displayed. There were in total forty-six victims among the thirty participants in this study. More than two-thirds of the victims were boys, a finding not consistent with previous research on victim sex with respect to child sexual abuse committed by women (Faller 1987; Fehrenbach 1988). Participants sexually abused thirty-one (67%) boys and fifteen (33%) girls. Table 5 displays the age of the victims. Of the forty-six victims, almost half of the children were between the ages of 8 and 12. Participants abused a total of twenty-one (46%) children in this age group. The next most frequent age group was children between 13 and 16. Participants sexually abused 15 (33%) children in this age group. Less common was the abuse of the younger children. In this study, participants abused seven (15%) children who were between 4 and 7. The least common age group were victims who were three years of age and younger. In this age group, participants abused three (7%) children.

Table 5 also shows the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim. Participants in this study had various relationships with their victims. Eighteen (39%) of the victims were the perpetrators’ own children and seventeen (38%) were children that the participants knew as acquaintances. These were the two largest groups. In addition, six (13%) of the victims were related to the perpetrator, i.e. nieces or nephews. The results of this study show that the female perpetrators who participated in this study had some sort of
Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victim Characteristics</th>
<th>N = 46</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex of Victim</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>(67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>(33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age of Victim</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-3 year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-7 year</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-12 year</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>(46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-16 year</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>(33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship to Victim</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own Child</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>(39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend’s Child</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbour</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby-sitter</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquaintance</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>(38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Victims by Gender for each Participant</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single male victim</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single female victim</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>(24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two male victims</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight male victims</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One male and one female victim</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two male and two female victims</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
relationship with their victims and were not strangers to the children they abused. In Table 5, the number of victim/s according to their gender for each participant is displayed. Of the forty-six victims abused in this sample, twenty-four (52%) of the children were the sole victims of the perpetrator. In terms of the number and gender of the victims abused by the participants, the majority abused single victims. Of the participants who abused one victim, thirteen (28%) were boys and eleven (24%) were girls. Three of the participants each abused two boys (13%), and one participant abused eight boys (17%). Two of the participants each abused one male and one female child (9%), and one woman abused two male and two female victims (9%).

Finally, in terms of the use of substances, just over a third of the women reported that they were using alcohol and/or drugs while they were sexually abusing their victims. Eleven (37%) of the participants stated that they were using substances around the time the sexual contact with the child occurred. The data also revealed that 10 (33%) out of the thirty subjects were intoxicated while they were actually sexually abusing their victim/s.

For example, Destiny, who sexually abused two boys, eleven and thirteen years of age, reported that she was quite intoxicated while she was abusing them. At the time of the offences, she stated that she had been drinking Tequila along with consuming large quantities of ‘moonshine’. She revealed that she was quite ‘aggressive’ while abusing her victims because of the amount of alcohol she had ingested. When asked to describe her mood at the time of the offence, Destiny stated, “when I was drunk, I was violent and horny!” Similarly, Marie, who sexually abused her eight year old nephew, revealed that she was very drunk and stoned at the time of the offence. She reported that while she was
abusing her nephew, “I was more high than drunk - I was on a gram of coke and drank a straight mickey”. She goes on to state, “I was always on something when I was ‘with’ the kid - it put me in a party mood and made me loud”. Cathy, who was forced by her boyfriend to sexually abuse her fourteen year old daughter, stated that at the time of the offence she was suffering from alcoholism. She related that during the actual abuse, she would drink anywhere from twelve to eighteen beers in order to feel ‘uninhibited’. Although she conceded that she was scared, the alcohol reduced her inhibitions and made it easier to comply with her boyfriend’s demands to abuse her daughter.
Chapter Five: Results From Primary Research Questions

Does Finkelhor's Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse Apply To Women?

The first research question in this study examined, “Do women molest children for the reasons outlined in Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse?” Finkelhor’s Model, in brief, suggests that all preconditions relating to the sexual abuse of a child could be grouped as contributing factors to one of four preconditions that need to be met before sexual abuse could occur. The operation of the Model suggests that the various preconditions come into play in a logical sequence (Finkelhor, 1984). Specifically, the Model posits that only some individuals have strong motivations to become sexually involved with children. Of those that do, only some overcome their internal inhibitions to act on these motives. Of those who do overcome their internal inhibitions, only some overcome external inhibitions, and act on those motives. If there is no resistance from the victim, the abuse will occur. Finkelhor argues that all four preconditions have to be fulfilled for the sexual abuse to take place. The presence of only one precondition is not enough in itself to explain sexual abuse. To understand the abuse process requires the presence of all four preconditions.

Precondition One: Factors Related to the Motivation to Sexually Abuse

Emotional Congruence.

Finkelhor suggests that relating sexually to a child satisfies some important emotional need for the child molester (Finkelhor, 1984). Table 6 summarizes the
### Table 6.

**Precondition One: The Motivation To Abuse: Emotional Congruence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional Congruence</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Den't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unwanted sex in childhood</td>
<td>22 (73%)</td>
<td>8 (27%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control over abuse as a child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22 (73%)</td>
<td>8 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt loved as a child</td>
<td>8 (27%)</td>
<td>22 (73%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taught anything from first sex encounter</td>
<td>29 (97%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As child ever witness any sexual abuse</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>27 (90%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resemblance of sex acts to own abuse as a child</td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
<td>11 (37%)</td>
<td>9 (30%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt in control of life at time of offence</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>27 (90%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were you comfortable around children at time of offence?</td>
<td>12 (40%)</td>
<td>18 (60%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim resemble perpetrator as a child?</td>
<td>16 (53%)</td>
<td>13 (43%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse out of need for closeness and intimacy</td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
<td>19 (63%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See child as part of you?</td>
<td>11 (37%)</td>
<td>19 (63%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
responses from the subjects on the eleven questions related to the emotional congruence component. Twenty-seven (90%) of the women in this study stated that they did not feel that they had any power or control over their lives at the time the offence occurred. Moreover, eighteen (60%) of these participants revealed that they were not comfortable emotionally and physically around children. Interestingly though, sixteen (53%) of the women in this study stated that the children they abused reminded them of themselves when they were children. Nineteen (63%) of the study participants also revealed that their sexual involvement with the children did not arise out of a need for closeness and intimacy. Finally, results also showed that nineteen (63%) of the participants did not see the child as part of themselves.

Twenty-two (73%) of the women stated that they had experienced unwanted sexual acts committed against them when they were children. Of the women who had experienced this unwanted behaviour, all twenty-two (100%) stated that the unwanted sexual acts had a negative effect on them. Moreover, all twenty-two (100%) revealed that they felt they had no control over what happened to them. Ten (33%) of the participants stated that the acts that they committed against their victims were similar to those that were committed against them as children. Out of the thirty respondents, twenty-two (73%) maintained that they did not receive enough love and nurturance as a child. Twenty-nine (97%) out of the thirty respondents stated that the first time they had a sexual encounter with someone, it had taught them something about sex. Twenty-three (77%) out of the twenty-nine participants stated that their first sexual experience left them feeling quite negative about sex and sexual relations. Three (10%) of the women revealed
that, when they were growing up, they witnessed another person engaging in sexual acts with a child.

In a general way, the data supports the view that relating sexually to a child satisfies an important emotional need for the female abuser. Support for the emotional congruence component was determined by a combination of positive and negative responses to the questions designed for that component. A powerful finding was that almost three-quarters (73%) of the sample had been abused themselves as children. The majority of women felt that they did not receive enough love and nurturance as children. In addition, a third (33%) of the women committed sexual offences against their victims that were similar to those committed against them when they were children. Moreover, over half of the women revealed that their victims reminded them of themselves when they were children. Clearly, however, some factors within the emotional congruence component of motivation were not supported. First, it was found that ninety percent of the participants in the study did not feel any sense of power and control over their lives at the time they sexually abused their victims; a risk factor for child sexual abuse. This is not to say that they did not feel a sense of control over their victims while the abuse was actually occurring. Moreover, almost two-thirds (63%) of the participants did not abuse their victims out of a need for closeness and intimacy, an integral factor to the emotional congruence component for the motivation to abuse.

Betsy is an example of a woman whose profile fits the emotional congruence component. She was sexually abused by her step-father from the age of three until the age of nine. She felt completely powerless over the abuse that she suffered. She related that
she did not feel that she received enough love and nurturance as a child. Betsy was convicted for numerous sexual offences against her two year old daughter, her twelve year old niece, and her two nephews, aged nine and eleven. She received an eight year prison sentence for her crimes. Betsy acknowledged that she felt a strong sense of power and control while sexually abusing her victims. While abusing her victims, she knew it was illegal, "I liked the control but I knew it was wrong", but she could not stop, "part of me wanted it to stop, but part of me loved it." Betsy’s victims reminded her of when she was a child, and she saw them as part of herself. She was lonely at the time that the abuse occurred and felt a sense of closeness and intimacy while abusing her victims. In essence, by abusing her victims, Betsy had complete control over the degree of closeness and intimacy with the children, something she herself never had when she was sexually abused in childhood.

Similarly, Candy is serving a ten year prison sentence for sexually abusing her twelve year old son. Candy’s story reveals a strong fit between her emotional needs and the characteristics of her son. As a child herself, she was sexually abused by her father and felt that she did not have any control over the abuse. When describing her own childhood sexual abuse, she stated, "I hated it." Candy related that the abuse that she perpetrated against her son was similar to the abuse that she suffered at the hands of her father as a child. Her son reminded her of herself when she was younger. She described her relationship with her son as close and stated that the sexual abuse occurred out of a need for closeness and intimacy, something that was missing from her relationship with her husband. She said, "I just wanted to be close to somebody."
Frankie is an example where emotional congruence with a child did not appear to be a motivating factor in the sexual abuse of her victims. Frankie abused eight boys who were all between thirteen and fourteen years of age and were friends of her son. She received a fifteen year sentence for her crimes. As a child herself, Frankie never experienced sexual abuse and related that she felt loved as a child. She stated that her husband forced her to become involved in the abuse of the boys. She did not experience any feelings of power and control during the abuse, and related that she, in fact, felt “degraded, useless, and frustrated” by being forced to abuse the children. The need for closeness and intimacy were not motivating preconditions in this case as Frankie was forced to abuse the young boys; in fact, at the time of the offences, she stated that she did not feel comfortable emotionally or physically around children. All she could think of during the sexual abuse was, “hurry up and get it over with.” She complied with her husband’s requests to abuse the boys out of fear that her husband would leave her and take their son with him. Frankie stated that her husband was emotionally abusive to her and that he did not meet her needs in the marriage. She is remorseful over her participation in the abuse but felt, at the time, that she was unable to stop the abuse out of fear of her husband.

Ann is serving a twenty year prison sentence for sexually abusing her nine year old son. Emotional congruence with her victim was not a motivating factor in the abuse as Ann maintained that her husband forced her to sexually abuse her son. As a child, Ann never experienced child sexual abuse, and she describes her formative years as positive ones where she received love and nurturance from her parents. She never witnessed anyone engaging in sexual acts as a child while she was growing up. Her first sexual
experience as a young adult was a positive one which she described as, "it was loving." She participated in the abuse of her son out of fear of her husband, "so he wouldn’t beat me again." She felt completely powerless over the situation. Her involvement in the abuse did not arise out of a need for intimacy or genital satisfaction; rather, she related that, "it was very uncomfortable, I didn’t like it." Ann expressed a lot of anger towards her husband for "forcing me to do that."

**Sexual Arousal.**

Table 7 summarizes the responses from the subjects on fourteen questions related to the sexual arousal component in precondition one: the motivation to abuse. Finkelhor states that with respect to the sexual arousal component, the child comes to be the potential source of sexual gratification for the person (Finkelhor, 1984). Overall, the data did not support this component. Interestingly, all of the participants from the study stated that when they were engaging in sexual relations with an adult, they never fantasized that it was a child. Similarly, twenty-seven (90%) of the participants revealed that they never thought about children in a sexual way prior to their sexual involvement with them. When asked whether they prefer to look at the naked bodies of adults or children, twenty-six (87%) of the women stated that they prefer to look at the bodies of adults and not children. Moreover, twenty-five (83%) of the participants stated that at the time of the offence, the naked bodies of children did not arouse them sexually.

When asked about sexual fantasies towards children, twenty-eight (93%) of the respondents stated that they did not fantasize about their victims, or children in general, prior to abusing them. All of the participants in this study reported that sex
### Table 7.

**Precondition One: The Motivation To Abuse: Sexual Arousal**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Arousal</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you learn anything from first sex encounter?</td>
<td>29 (97%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As child ever witness any sexual abuse?</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>27 (90%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resemblance of sex acts to your own abuse?</td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
<td>11 (37%)</td>
<td>9 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you fantasize about children during adult sex?</td>
<td></td>
<td>30 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think about children sexually?</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>27 (90%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual preference for looking at adult bodies?</td>
<td>26 (87%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aroused sexually by naked children?</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>25 (83%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual fantasies about children before abuse?</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>28 (93%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is sexual contact with child okay?</td>
<td></td>
<td>30 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to abuse, ever curious about it?</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>29 (97%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you learn abuse from someone?</td>
<td>12 (40%)</td>
<td>17 (57%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for genital satisfaction?</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>23 (77%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pornography as an influence</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>25 (83%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of children in pornography</td>
<td></td>
<td>30 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
between an adult and a child is not okay. Only one woman (3%) acknowledged that prior to having sexual contact with her victim, she was curious what it would be like to do so. When asked if, as children, they had ever learned their abusive behaviour from someone, twelve (40%) of the women stated that they had. Seven (23%) of the participants in this study described their sexual contact with their victims as arising out of a need for genital satisfaction. When asked whether the use of pornography had any influence over their behaviour, twenty-five (83%) of the respondents stated that it did not. Further, all of the women in this study were against the use of children in pornography or the use of explicit advertising.

Generally speaking, the women in this study did not have a positive experience the first time they themselves had sexual relations, which for many occurred in childhood. Of the twenty-nine women who stated that they had learned something from their first sexual experience, 79% stated that the sexual experience left them with negative thoughts and feelings about sex. Twenty-seven (90%) of the participants never witnessed anyone engage in sexual relations with a child while they were growing up. Ten (33%) percent of the women stated that the acts that they committed against their victims were similar to those that were committed against them as children.

The results indicate that sexual arousal does not appear to be an important component related to a woman’s motivation to abuse. The participants in this study did not appear to be motivated to abuse based on their sexual arousal toward their victims. The overwhelming majority of women in this study revealed that they never thought about children in a sexual way, nor did most of the participants fantasize about children in a
sexual context. Moreover, when engaging in sexual relations with adults, all of the participants stated they never fantasized that their partner was a child. The majority of participants (87%) acknowledged their preference for looking at the naked bodies of adults over those of children. Less than a quarter (23%) of the women described their sexual contact with their victims as arising out of a need for genital satisfaction.

Further, ninety percent of the participants never witnessed anyone ever sexually abusing a child when they were children themselves. All of the women in this study stated that sexual relations between an adult and a child are wrong. With respect to the erotic portrayal of children in advertising and child pornography, the majority of participants do not support the use of children for such purposes. Contrary to the findings in the published case studies that sexual arousal seems to be a motivating factor in the offending process for female sexual offenders, this was not found among the overwhelming majority of participants sampled for this research study.

Wendy, for example, is a thirty-five year old first offender who received a three year probation term for sexually abusing her twelve year old son on three different occasions. Wendy’s husband forced her to have intercourse and perform oral sex on their son while he watched. Her husband had her dress up in promiscuous clothing prior to having sex with their son. In addition, Wendy admitted that she and her husband would perform various sexual acts in front of their three male children, often while she was tied up and blindfolded. Wendy felt powerless to stop the abuse as she was in fear that her husband would stab her or her son if she did not comply. Wendy revealed that she was heterosexual and had never had any sexual interest in children. Moreover, she did not
endorse adult/child sexual relations in any way. When asked how she felt about her participation in the abuse, Wendy stated, “I wish I was strong enough to take the knife out of my husband’s hand.”

Tabatha is a 30 year old first offender who is serving a seven year prison sentence for sexually abusing her nine year old daughter and ten year old son. She is another example where sexual arousal was not a motivating factor during the commission of the offence. Tabatha related that her husband forced her to participate in the abuse of her children and “he threatened to kill me and my children if I didn’t cooperate.” She stated that she complied out of fear for the lives of her children. Despite being sexually abused herself in childhood, there were no similarities between her own victimization and that of her children. Tabatha revealed that throughout her marriage, her husband was sexually abusive to her, often bringing other men into the marital bed, or forcing her to engage in sexual activities without her consent, “he made me ‘do’ two men at once.” Tabatha acknowledged that pornography had an influence in terms of the sexual acts that she was forced to perform on her children. She stated that she had never had any sexual interest in children in her life and that her sexual preference was for adult men. She expressed remorse over her involvement in the sexual abuse stating, “I hated myself for not having control over anything.”

One of the sexual arousal areas that the data appears to support is modeling. Almost half (40%) of the participants stated that they had learned their abusive behaviour from someone. Finally, as mentioned earlier, the data showed that seventy-three percent of the women in this study were abused themselves when they were younger. It is unclear
whether the abuse contributed to their abusive behaviour as adults. Further research into this is needed.

Jill is an example of one of the few participants in the study whose experience with her victim supported the sexual arousal component. A forty-four year old woman with no prior convictions, Jill acknowledged that the sexual abuse that she perpetrated against a four year old little girl who was the child of a friend was similar to the sexual abuse committed against her when she herself was a child. When she recalled the memories of her own abuse, Jill stated, "it hurt -- sex hurt." Prior to sexually abusing her young victim, Jill related that she would often think about children in a sexual way. In fact, she admitted that she was sexually fantasizing about children prior to abusing her victim. Jill stated that her sexual fantasies usually had the same theme. "I seduce the child and then kill him or her." Moreover, she revealed that her sexual involvement with her victim arose partly out of a need for genital satisfaction, but "mostly control and love." When asked about her sexual preference, Jill stated that she was a lesbian, but that she preferred to look at the naked bodies of female children, in particular their genitals, rather than looking at the naked bodies of adult females.

**Blockage.**

Table 8 summarizes the responses from the subjects on ten questions related to the blockage component. Blockage is the third component in Finkelhor's precondition one: the motivation to abuse. Blockage refers to whether alternative sources of sexual gratification are available or not or are less satisfying (Finkelhor, 1984). Interesting results were found in this section that support the blockage component. First, it was found that
over half (57%) of the women in this study felt that sexually intimate or close relationships with adults intimidated and scared them. Moreover, at the time that their offences occurred, the majority of women (67%) stated that they were not in an affectionate and loving relationship with anyone. Of the women who were involved in a relationship with another adult, half (50%) of the participants suspected that their partner was being unfaithful to them. Sixty-seven percent of study participants acknowledged that they did not have any sexual outlets available to them at the time of the offence. When discussing sexual outlets, participants were asked how they felt about masturbation. Fifty percent of the women regarded masturbation as a negative or “bad thing” to do. Over half (60%) of the participants stated that they did not masturbate at all. Women were asked how they felt about sexual affairs, and not surprisingly, eighty-seven percent of the participants were not in favour of them. Interestingly, when asked whether their husband/partner (if they had one) met their needs (physically, emotionally, and sexually) at the time of the offence, only twenty-percent of the women stated that he or she did. Moreover, seventy percent of the study participants disclosed that during the time of the offence, they were involved in an abusive relationship. When asked about the availability of their partner at the time of the offence, of the twenty-five women who were involved in a relationship at that time, eleven (37%) stated that their partner was absent or away a lot. When asked whether they agree with the sentence, “Do you believe that it is okay for a man to physically ‘keep a woman in line’ if she does not do what he says?”, all thirty (100%) women disagreed with this statement.
Table 8.

Precondition One: The Motivation To Abuse: Blockage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blockage</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intimidated by close relationships</td>
<td>17 (57%)</td>
<td>12 (40%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In good relationship at time of offence</td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
<td>20 (67%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfaithful partner at time of offence</td>
<td>15 (50%)</td>
<td>11 (37%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual outlets at time of offence</td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
<td>20 (67%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condones masturbation</td>
<td>12 (40%)</td>
<td>15 (50%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports sexual affairs</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>26 (87%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant other meet needs</td>
<td>6 (20%)</td>
<td>20 (67%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In abusive relationship</td>
<td>21 (70%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult partner absent a lot</td>
<td>11 (37%)</td>
<td>14 (47%)</td>
<td>5 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it okay for a man to control a woman?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the three components related to the motivation to sexually abuse a child, it appears that the blockage component is supported the most by the data collected from the participants in the study. Generally speaking, the women in the study were involved in relationships with partners who were abusive or simply not present in any consistent manner. Further, many women felt intimidated by adult sexual relationships and/or were afraid of adult males. In addition, subject participants were, generally speaking, not in favour of other sexual outlets such as masturbation as a way of meeting their sexual needs. The results from this study with respect to the blockage component support those in the published case studies. Specifically, when Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse was applied to published case studies, blockage, as a source of motivation, appears to be present in many of the cases that were examined.

Jessie is a good example in terms of support for the blockage component. She was serving a ten year prison sentence for sexually abusing two male acquaintances who were twelve and thirteen years of age. Jessie felt pressure by her boyfriend to have sex with him and the young boys at the same time. She stated that intimate sexual relationships with adult men were very intimidating for her, “they scared me because I thought I would lose them if I didn’t do what they wanted.” Jessie’s relationship with her boyfriend at the time of the offence was not a good one. He was not affectionate and loving, and she believed that he was involved in a sexual relationship with another woman. Jessie related that her boyfriend was very abusive to her sexually, physically, and emotionally while they were involved. She did not have any sexual outlets apart from the sexually abusive relationship she had with her boyfriend and admitted that she did not feel in control of her life at the time of the offence.
Similar to Jessie’s story, Ann’s experience also provides support for the blockage component. Ann was serving a twenty year prison sentence for sexually abusing her nine year old son on four different occasions. Ann maintained that her husband was very abusive to her and forced her to have sexual intercourse with her son. She related that she did not abuse her son out of fear that she may lose her husband; rather, she was fearful of his abusive behaviour towards her. She stated that she had sex with her son, “so he (husband) wouldn’t beat me again.” Her relationship with her husband was extremely abusive, not only physically, but sexually and emotionally too. Ann suspected that her husband was having an extra-marital affair because he was absent a lot from the marital home. Ann did not have any sexual outlets available to her at the time of the offence apart from the abusive sexual relations she had with her husband. When asked about self pleasure, i.e. masturbation, Ann replied, “I think it’s disgusting.” She felt very isolated and lonely at the time and did not feel in control of what was happening to her or to her son.

Despite overall general support for the blockage component within precondition one, some participants did not appear to be ‘blocked’ in terms of availability of conventional sources of sexual gratification. Renee’s story is a good example. Renee was serving a five year prison sentence for sexually assaulting a fourteen year old male neighbour. She was married at the time and stated that her relationship with her husband was affectionate and loving. Despite her husband’s frequent absences from the family home, Renee stated that he met her needs on an emotional, physical and sexual level and that he was not abusive towards her in any way, nor did she have reason to suspect that he was having an extra-marital affair. She stated that she felt in control of her life at the time the offence occurred. Renee admitted that when she was having sexual relations with the
boy, “I was showing him how it feels to be with a woman.” A survivor of sexual abuse at the hands of her father, Renee acknowledged that her own abuse was similar to the abuse that she perpetrated against her neighbour. She stated that when she was involved with the boy, she felt a strong sense of power and control, something she learned as a child while she was being sexually abused: “men can have it anytime they want and you don’t have a choice in the matter.”

Similarly, Lorette’s story did not appear to provide support for the blockage component. Lorette was serving a thirty year prison sentence for sexually abusing a ten year old boy she was baby-sitting. At the time the abuse occurred, she was married to a man that she loved. She was not intimidated by adult sexual relations and admitted that her husband satisfied her needs emotionally, sexually, and physically. She felt satisfied with the sexual relations with her husband and maintained that she did not feel in need of additional sexual outlets in her life at that time. Lorette’s husband was not abusive in any way towards her and she did not suspect that he was involved in any extra-marital affairs. Similar to Renee however, Lorette admitted that her husband was not home often, a factor in her case which provides an element of support for the blockage component. As a child, Lorette was ‘gang raped’ while residing in a children’s home. She was also sexually abused by her step-father and learned to “be careful who you trust.” Interestingly, the abuse she perpetrated involved her being in a position of trust with the child she was baby-sitting.
Precondition Two: Factors Predisposing to Overcoming Internal Inhibitors

Finkelhor’s second precondition states that in order for sexual abuse to occur, a potential offender not only needs to be motivated to sexually abuse a child, but must also overcome internal inhibitions against acting on those motives (Finkelhor, 1984). To examine the applicability of precondition two, study participants were asked thirteen questions that pertain to this factor (see Table 9). With respect to the mental health status of the women at the time of the offence, almost half (47%) revealed that they had been given a psychiatric diagnosis by a mental health professional. Further, at the time of the offence, sixty percent of the participants stated that they were suffering from a psychological problem or negative mental state. However, when asked whether they had ever been hospitalized for psychiatric reasons, sixty-seven percent of the participants stated that they had not. In addition, fifty-three percent of the women revealed that they had never been prescribed medication relating to a mental disturbance. Surprisingly, fifty-seven percent of the study participants had attempted suicide previously. In terms of substance abuse, a factor related to overcoming internal inhibitions to abuse, the results were mixed. Eleven (37%) of the women stated that around the time of the offence, they were using various mood-altering substances. When actually involved sexually with their victim, thirty-three percent of the participants acknowledged that they were intoxicated or high from drugs at that time.

With respect to whether the participants endorse the belief that it is okay to have sexual contact with a child, all thirty women (100%) in the study disagreed with this
Table 9.

**Precondition Two: Factors Predisposing to Overcoming Internal Inhibitors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overcoming Internal Inhibitors</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ever received a psychiatric diagnosis</td>
<td>14 (47%)</td>
<td>16 (53%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffering from a psychological problem/negative mental state</td>
<td>18 (60%)</td>
<td>12 (40%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatric hospitalization at anytime</td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
<td>20 (67%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescribed medication</td>
<td>14 (47%)</td>
<td>16 (53%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted suicide</td>
<td>17 (57%)</td>
<td>13 (43%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance use around time of offence</td>
<td>11 (37%)</td>
<td>19 (63%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intoxicated during offence</td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
<td>20 (67%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it okay to have sexual contact with children?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do children have the right to decide whether to have sexual contact with adults?</td>
<td>12 (40%)</td>
<td>17 (57%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult/child sexual contact “okay” in order to teach or educate?</td>
<td></td>
<td>30 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe that ‘what an adult says goes’?</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>25 (83%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should our culture allow sex with children?</td>
<td></td>
<td>30 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are penalties for abuse too tough?</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>11 (37%)</td>
<td>15 (50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
question indicating a lack of permissiveness and social tolerance for this behaviour. Interestingly though, forty percent of the participants feel that children should have the right to decide whether or not they want to engage in sexual relations with an adult. Moreover, none of the thirty women endorsed the notion that it is okay for a woman over the age of eighteen to engage in sexual relations with a person under fourteen in order to ‘teach’ and ‘educate’ him or her about sex.

To ascertain their views on autocratic parenting, participants were asked whether they agreed with the statement, “whatever an adult says goes”. Eighty-three percent of the women disagreed with this statement. Further, when asked whether they felt our culture should endorse adult/child sexual contact as some other cultures do, all thirty of the women (100%) in this study disagreed with this question. Finally, when asked about the criminal penalties handed out to sexual offenders, the responses were mixed. Thirteen percent of the women felt they were too tough; thirty-seven percent saw them as too lenient; twenty-three percent stated that the penalties should depend on the situation; and, finally, twenty-seven percent felt that the criminal penalties were fair.

Generally speaking, Finkelhor’s precondition two, overcoming internal inhibitions against acting on the motivation to abuse may apply to the male sex offender; however, with respect to the female who sexually abuses a child, it is supported only in a minimal way. First, the data do reveal some support for the use of substances in overcoming internal inhibitions. A third (33%) of the participants were intoxicated or on drugs while they were sexually involved with their victims. Interestingly, evidence exists in the data that supports the notion that a belief in the existence of weak criminal sanctions for sex
offenders can serve to give offenders the ‘green light’ to justify their actions with respect to abusing a child sexually. In this study, more than a third (37%) of the participants regarded the current criminal sanctions handed down to sex offenders as being too lenient, perhaps making it easier on the abuser to rationalize her actions. Failure of the incest mechanism in the family dynamics to prevent an adult from abusing his or her own child is one of Finkelhor’s elements and partially supported in this study. Thirty women in the study abused forty-six victims in total; eighteen (39%) of all of the victims were the subjects’ own children.

Finkelhor also argues that a male’s inability to identify with the needs of children may serve to allow him to overcome his internal inhibitions to abuse. When this factor was examined for its applicability to the female sexual offender, there was partial support. Results from the study showed that more than half (60%) of the participants stated that they did not feel emotionally and physically comfortable around children at the time of the offence. This lack of connection to children may indeed contribute to reducing an individual’s internal inhibitions against the sexual abuse of a child.

Finkelhor argues that a serious mental disorder such as psychosis can serve to weaken internal inhibitions against abusing a child sexually. In this study, none of the women were suffering from psychosis. However, it should be noted that more than half (60%) of the women in the study stated that they were suffering from some sort of psychological problem or negative mental state at the time of the offence. Further, forty-seven percent of the participants admitted that they had been given a psychiatric diagnosis by a mental health professional. The women in this study may not have had a psychosis per
se, but a large percentage of them were suffering from mental health problems at the time of the offence which may have indeed served to weaken and/or remove their internal inhibitions against sexually abusing a child.

The remaining components in Finkelhor's precondition two, overcoming internal inhibitions against abusing a child, do not appear to be supported by the data. The participants in the study were not suffering from an impulse disorder or senility. Further, they did not support child pornography in any way. In fact, only one woman in the study was charged with the offence of Child Pornography. Finally, the social toleration of sexual interest in children was not endorsed by the participants in this study. It should be noted that the responses given by the participants at the time of the interviews may have been different than if the questions had been asked of the participants prior to, or directly after, they abused their victims. Generally speaking, however, precondition two of Finkelhor's Model is partially supported by the data; yet, of the factors that do support this precondition, the evidence from the data varied in terms of the strength of the support. When precondition two is applied to the published case studies on female sexual offenders this finding is also supported. Specifically, published case studies provide evidence that the use of substances appears to be a method for many female sex offenders to use in an effort to overcome their own internal inhibitions to abuse children (Faller, 1987; Mathews, Matthews, & Speltz, 1989).

Ann is a good example of a female sex offender who was able to overcome internal inhibitions against abusing a child. Serving a twelve year prison sentence for sexually abusing her seven year old son, Ann related that her husband forced her to sexually abuse
their son. Ann admitted to being high on drugs while sexually involved with her son. She stated, “I was shooting speed ball” (heroin) before the abuse occurred and she was feeling very “mellow” at that time. Ann’s story included an extensive psychiatric history. She stated that she had been diagnosed with Bi-Polar Disorder and Depression and was taking Lithium at the time of the offence. Ann acknowledged that she had been hospitalized for psychiatric reasons five times and had attempted to commit suicide on two different occasions by overdosing on medication. She stated that she was in counselling at the time of the offence. At the time of the offence, Ann felt that her life situation was a very stressful one, largely due to problems with her husband. Ann did not endorse the notion that adult/child sexual relations are acceptable; however, she felt that children should have the right to decide whether they want to engage in sexual acts with an adult; an unconventional belief not condoned by the general population. Moreover, Ann regarded the criminal sanctions handed down for sexual offenders as too lenient, a belief that Finkelhor argues can serve to reduce an individual’s internal inhibitions to abuse a child (1984).

Similarly, ‘Stargazer’ was serving a ten year prison sentence for sexually abusing her eight year old son after being forced by her husband to perform fellatio. Stargazer admitted that around the time of the offence, she abused both drugs and alcohol and, in fact, would “smoke four to five joints a day, and drink five to six beers.” While abusing her son, she was intoxicated and stoned. She revealed that she did not have any feelings at all during the abuse. Stargazer’s background included a history of mental health problems, including a diagnosis of manic depression for which she had been on medication for four years. At the time of the offence she was under a lot of stress and had no self esteem as a
result of the abuse she suffered at the hands of her husband. She had been hospitalized for manic depression on two occasions prior to the offence and had tried to commit suicide three times throughout her life by “starving myself and overdosing.” She was not involved in therapy or counselling at the time she sexually abused her son.

Frankie’s story, on the other hand, did not appear to provide support for precondition two. Frankie was serving a fifteen year prison sentence for sexually abusing eight boys, who were friends of her son. She stated that her husband was an emotionally abusive man who forced her to abuse the boys and she complied out of fear that he would take her son away. Frankie was not intoxicated or using drugs at the time the offences occurred. Moreover, apart from the stress that she described herself to be suffering from due to her husband’s abusive behaviour, she claimed never to have experienced any mental health problems in her life. She did not support unconventional beliefs in regards to adult/child sexual contact and did not feel that children should have the right to decide whether they want to engage in sexual relations with an adult. Frankie believed that the criminal penalties handed down to sex offenders were fair given the nature of the offence. Overall, it appeared that Frankie’s sexual involvement with her victims was forced by her husband. Her participation in the abuse was coerced by him and it did not appear that there were any precipitating preconditions contributing to the overcoming of internal inhibitions in her situation.

Precondition Three: Factors Predisposing to Overcoming External Inhibitors

In preconditions one and two, there is an attempt to account for the behaviour of the perpetrators; however, it is clear that, in and of themselves, preconditions one and two
do not fully explain to whom the abuse occurs or why it occurs at all. Precondition three focuses on inhibitors in the environment external to the offender and his or her victim that contribute to the sexual abuse offending process (Finkelhor, 1984). Ten questions were asked of the participants to examine whether the women had any predisposing factors contributing to overcoming external inhibitions to abuse. In general, the results support precondition three and are discussed below and presented in Table 10.

The results show a significant level of social isolation. Seventy-three percent of the women described themselves as alienated and lonely at the time of the offence. Seventy-three percent of the women revealed that they did not feel close enough to talk to anyone about their feelings around the time of the offence. Furthermore, more than three-quarters (77%) of the women stated that they were not receiving any therapy or counselling at the time of the offence even though eighty percent said that they were suffering from stress.

In terms of their sexual relationships with other adults at the time of the offence, seventy percent of the participants characterized their relationship as an abusive one. Of the twenty-five women who were involved in a relationship at the time of the offence, thirty-seven percent revealed that their partners were frequently absent or away from the relationship quite often. One of the questions that the participants were asked was whether they spent a lot of time alone with children. Sixty-three percent of the women said that they did. Moreover, thirty percent of the participants stated that they slept in the same bed as their children or other people's children. Thirty-three percent of the women in the study revealed that their victim/s served as a replacement for an absent or sick adult partner. Participants were also asked about their feelings with respect to giving children
privacy at certain times, for example, when going to the bathroom. Ninety-three percent of the women agreed that children should have the right to privacy.

It appears then, that the data supports precondition three from Finkelhor's Model. In this study, many of the women were involved in relationships where their partner was absent or frequently ill. In addition, the majority of participants were involved in abusive relationships at the time they committed the offences. Almost three quarters of the participants described themselves as socially alienated and unable to talk to anyone about their problems. More than half of the women in the study revealed that they spent a lot of time alone with children. Almost one third of the participants slept in the same bed with their own or other peoples' children. Given this information about the lifestyles and the nature of the relationships of the participants in the study, it appears that these women were in a position to overcome external inhibitions against abusing a child sexually according to Finkelhor's Model. The results from this study support the findings in the literature on published case studies which showed that women were able to overcome external inhibitions against sexual abuse in very similar ways to the responses provided by the participants in this study.

Jane's story is a good example of support for precondition three. She was serving a twenty year prison sentence for sexually abusing her ten year old daughter. She stated that she was an alcoholic at the time of the offence and was experiencing a great deal of stress in her life, for which she was not receiving any professional help. She felt very lonely and isolated and did not have anyone that she could talk to about her problems. At
### Table 10.

**Precondition Three: Factors Predisposing to Overcoming External Inhibitors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overcoming External Inhibitors</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In therapy at time of offence?</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>23 (77%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under stress during time of offence?</td>
<td>24 (80%)</td>
<td>6 (20%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active socially at time of offence?</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>22 (73%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to discuss feelings at time of offence?</td>
<td>8 (27%)</td>
<td>22 (73%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In abusive relationship at time of offence?</td>
<td>21 (70%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If in relationship, was partner absent a lot?</td>
<td>11 (37%)</td>
<td>14 (47%)</td>
<td>5 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend a lot of time alone with children at time of offence?</td>
<td>19 (63%)</td>
<td>11 (37%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep in the same bed as child?</td>
<td>9 (30%)</td>
<td>21 (70%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did child serve as replacement for absent/sick adult?</td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
<td>19 (63%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe in giving children privacy?</td>
<td>28 (93%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the time she abused her daughter, she was involved in a relationship with a man who, despite his frequent absences from the home, was physically abusive to her when he was present. Jane admitted that she spent a lot of time alone with her daughter, and, in fact, slept in the same bed with her every night. Jane related that her sexual involvement with her daughter filled an emptiness that she felt in her relationship with her male partner. Her daughter served as a sexual replacement to an adult male.

Similarly, Filicia’s story reflects support for precondition three. Filicia was serving a seven year prison sentence for sexually abusing two boys whom she was baby-sitting, one five years old and the other thirteen. The sexual abuse went on for approximately one year. Filicia stated that she was under a lot of stress at the time of the abuse as she had become aware that her husband was having an extra-marital affair. He was also abusive to her emotionally, verbally, physically, and sexually. She felt very alone and did not feel that she had anyone to talk with about her problems on a personal or a professional level. She stated that she spent a lot of her time alone with children, and, on occasion, would sleep in the same bed with her own children. She revealed that her sexual abuse of the boys arose out of feeling alone and in need of sexual satisfaction. Filicia revealed that when she finally decided to talk to a friend about her problems, her friend reported the abuse to the authorities.

**Precondition Four: Factors Predisposing to Overcoming a Child’s Resistance**

According to Finkelhor (1984), children themselves play an important role in whether or not they are abused. Children have a capacity to avoid or resist abuse. The notion of capacity must not be seen in a narrow way, however; it is related to much more
subtle ways in which a child is often able (depending on the situation, the age of the child, the personality of the child, and other critical variables) to escape a potentially abusive situation. To examine this factor, participants were asked six questions. The results are discussed below and presented in Table 11. Seventy-three percent of the women stated that they were very close to the victims they sexually abused. Further, eighty-seven percent stated that they felt that their victims trusted them considerably. Sixty percent of the participants maintained that their victims did not try to stop the abuse being perpetrated against them. More than half (53%) of the women related that they felt their victims did not know anything about sex at all. Sixty-seven percent of the participants stated that they did not use any type of force during the abuse in order to gain compliance from their victim/s. Finally, fifty-three percent of the respondents stated that the child understood that something inappropriate was happening to them while he/she was being abused.

Overall, the results from the study appear to support Finkelhor’s precondition four. Given the nature of the relationship that existed between many of these women and their victims, overcoming the resistance of the children would seemingly not be too difficult. Almost three quarters of the women described their relationships to their victims as quite close. Generally speaking, the social powerlessness of children combined with the above preconditions from Finkelhor’s Model made it possible for the participants in this study to overcome any resistance they might have encountered from their victims. Indeed, the results from this study concur with those found when precondition four is applied to the published case studies. This is particularly salient with respect to the issue of trust that women have with their victims.
Table 11.

Precondition Four: Factors Predisposing to Overcoming a Child's Resistance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overcoming a Child's Resistance</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Were you close to the victim?</td>
<td>22 (73%)</td>
<td>8 (27%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did child trust you?</td>
<td>26 (87%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>Don't Know: 1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did child attempt to stop abuse?</td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
<td>18 (60%)</td>
<td>Do not remember: 2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did child know much about sex?</td>
<td>13 (43%)</td>
<td>16 (53%)</td>
<td>Don't Know: 1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you use force or threats on</td>
<td>9 (30%)</td>
<td>20 (67%)</td>
<td>Don't Know: 1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>victim?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did child understand what was</td>
<td>16 (53%)</td>
<td>12 (40%)</td>
<td>Don't Know: 2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happening during abuse?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jill's story, the details of which have been discussed previously (p.120) provides a good example for precondition four. Jill sexually abused a four year old girl who was the child of a friend. In this case, she was able to overcome the resistance of the child with very little difficulty. Jill stated that she was, "very close" with the little girl who trusted her "completely." Given the child's very young age, she did not know anything about what was happening to her, and therefore, did not attempt to stop the abuse. Jill's close relationship with her victim, along with the very young age of the child, made it relatively easy for her to overcome the resistance of the child in order to sexually abuse her.

Destiny is a good example of a woman who was able to overcome the resistance of her victims in order to abuse them. Destiny was serving a five year prison sentence for having sexual intercourse with two young male acquaintances who were eleven and thirteen years of age. She felt that the relationship she had with her victims was a close one, stating, "they trusted me enough." The boys did not try to stop the abuse from happening to them, and consequently, Destiny revealed that she did not have to use any force in order to gain compliance from her victims. She stated that she did not think that the boys understood what was going on while the abuse was happening to them. Overall, the relationship that she had with her victims made it very easy for Destiny to sexually abuse them. Destiny revealed that she "just wanted to be accepted by them" and that was her way of becoming accepted. The abuse that Destiny perpetrated resembled the abuse that she suffered as a child, "I was sodomized, raped, and molested by my dad's brother's best friend." The sexual abuse that she suffered in childhood left her with HIV.
Unlike Jill and Destiny, Lorette had difficulty overcoming the resistance of her victim. Lorette perpetrated against her victim when she was in a position of trust as the boy’s baby-sitter. She stated that she was close to the young boy and that she, “loved him like my own son”, although she felt that he did not quite trust her because she “didn’t baby-sit him long enough.” Lorette revealed that the boy tried to stop her verbally and that she responded by threatening him verbally in order to gain compliance from him. She was not sure whether he was fully aware of what was happening to him, but acknowledged that he likely knew a lot about sex because his parents “had ‘porno’ tapes.”

What Other Factors Apply To The Female Sexual Abuser?

The results of the study revealed other factors pertinent to females who sexually abuse children that may not necessarily be present for the male sexual abuser and identified as such in the Finkelhor Model. These factors may not cause a woman to abuse; however, they may indeed serve to contribute to a female’s abusive behaviour. Almost three-quarters (N=21, 70%) of the women in this study were involved in an abusive relationship at the time they committed their offence/s. In fact, unlike the dynamics of sexual abuse surrounding male perpetrators, almost half of the participants in this study (N=14, 47%) revealed that they had been urged or forced to sexually abuse their victims by an adult male. This result appears to be distinct and characteristic to female sexual offenders and is perhaps the most powerful finding from this study. This result replicates findings presented from previous studies conducted on female sex offenders (Faller, 1987; Barnett, Corder, & Jehu, 1995; Wolfe, 1985).
The results show that there may be differences between women who were forced to abuse and women who were not, which may have implications on future theoretical formulations and research studies, including the application of the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse. By comparing the two different groups of offenders in the sample, preliminary evidence was found that illustrates that the Finkelhor Model may indeed be more applicable to the female sex offender who sexually abuses her victims alone than to the woman who abuses children because she has been forced to do so. The two groups of women appear to be different in many aspects, including relationship issues, power and control, mental health history, and beliefs about adult/child sexual contact.

In terms of a general profile of the participants who were forced to abuse, findings from the study appear to show that participants who were forced to abuse their victims by their male partners were less likely to be married than those who abused on their own. Moreover, women who were forced to abuse were much more likely to abuse their own children or relatives more frequently than women who acted alone. They were also far more likely to abuse male victims (double) than women who abused alone. Further, comparing the mental health history of these two groups by scoring their responses on the mental health questions, it was found that the participants who were forced to abuse scored higher than those participants who acted alone, suggesting that women who were forced to abuse had more serious mental health problems than those who abused on their own.

Differences in the relationship status of the two groups of offenders were also revealed. It was found that the women who were forced by their male partners to abuse
were much more dependent on men in general. They felt much more alienated and lonely in their relationships with their male partners, and felt very intimidated by close relationships in general. In addition, women who were forced to abuse were much more likely to be involved with a male who was unfaithful to them. In fact, the majority of these women acknowledged that their participation in the abuse was out of fear of losing their adult male partner as a result of their extreme dependency on them. In spite of this, only a quarter of the women who were forced to abuse felt that they needed a partner in their lives at all times. Interestingly, participants who were forced to abuse revealed overwhelmingly that their male partners did not meet their needs in all aspects of the relationship. Moreover, none of these women felt in control of their lives at the time of the offence.

Findings from the study suggest that women who were forced to abuse their victims are not abusing them for reasons outlined in Finkelhor’s Model, as for example sexual arousal; rather, they are an extremely dependent group of women who are involved with men who control and dominate them in order to achieve their own sexual gratification. In fact, over a quarter of the women in this group stated that pornography was utilized in some form during the offence process. These women have low self esteem, do not feel loved, possess mental health problems to a higher degree than those abusers who acted independently, and are involved in abusive relationships with their partners. They are very fearful of losing their partners and therefore participate in abusing children in an effort to sustain the relationship. Clearly, Finkelhor’s Model does not address these issues. Theoretical models and future research needs to focus on the dynamics involved in the offence process when female sex offenders are forced to abuse their victims. More
research is needed to explore women's dependency on men, male dominance, and power and control as major factors involved in this specific form of child sexual abuse.

Wendy is a good example of being forced to sexually abuse her own child. Wendy’s husband forced her to have intercourse with her twelve year old son and to perform fellatio on him while her husband watched. He threatened her with a knife and she feared that if she did not comply with his requests, he would stab her or her son. Wendy’s husband forced her to dress up in mini-skirts and garter belts prior to abusing her son and occasionally would blindfold her, tie her up, and insert a vibrator in her vagina while her two sons watched. Wendy knew what she was doing was wrong; however, she felt powerless to do anything. She stated, “I wish I was strong enough to take the knife out of my husband’s hand” in order to stop the abuse from happening. She revealed that the sexual abuse of her one son happened on three different occasions before she reported it to the police. A survivor of child sexual abuse at the hands of her mother’s boyfriend, Wendy revealed that the abuse of her own son brought back many memories as it was similar to her own abuse. Wendy had a history of being involved with abusive men and had a serious drinking problem at the time of the offences. In addition, she had a history of mental health issues in her background and functioned at a low intellectual level. She received a suspended sentence and three years probation for her part in the offences against her children.

Unlike the female sex offender who is forced to abuse her victims, the participants in this study who acted alone, abused their victims for different reasons. Interestingly, the women in this group were far more likely to be married at the time of the offence.
Moreover, this group revealed a much higher need to have a partner in their lives at all times compared to the first group. They appear to be far more comfortable around children, and were more likely to sleep in the same bed as their children than the first group. Women who abused their victims alone were more likely to think about children sexually, become aroused by the bodies of naked children, and to fantasize about their child victims in a sexual way. Strangely, this group of women acknowledged having more sexual outlets available to them than the other group.

Further, women who abused their victims alone stated that the abuse was related to their need for genital satisfaction almost three times as often as women who were forced to abuse. Almost half of the participants who acted alone revealed feelings of power and control while they were abusing their victims, feelings not shared by participants who were forced to abuse their victims. The profile of the women in this study who abused their victims alone appears to support Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse more closely than the profile of the women who were forced to abuse their victims by their male partner, and is more closely aligned with the research on pedophilia. Considerations for future research and theory needs to take into consideration the differences among these two groups of offenders, and the motivations underlying their behaviour.

Sixteen (53%) of the women abused their victims alone. For example, Susan acted alone when she sexually abused her victim. Susan was serving a five year prison sentence for sexually abusing a thirteen year old girl who was her niece’s best friend. Susan had a “close bond” with her victim who she felt “totally trusted me.” She stated that her need
for closeness and intimacy was more important to her than sexual satisfaction; although, this was also important. As a lesbian, Susan’s sexual preference was for females. During the actual abuse of her victim, Susan stated that she felt out of control while the young girl had all the control. While abusing her victim, she revealed, “I felt great -- there ‘ain’t’ nothing better.” At the time that she was involved with her victim, thoughts about the naked bodies of children would excite her sexually. Despite being active socially, Susan felt a sense of emptiness and loneliness inside. She was not involved in a relationship at the time and felt that there was no one she could talk to about her feelings or problems. She turned to the girl as an emotional source initially prior to sexually abusing her.

Other factors related to female sexual offenders were also found. The results revealed that the majority of the women in this study (N=22, 73%) were the victims of sexual abuse themselves when they were younger. Further, unlike many male sexual abusers, the issue of power and control was not a primary one with the majority of participants in this study. In fact, during the time that the abuse occurred, ninety percent of the women stated that they felt that they had no control over their lives. Third, it appears from the data that many of the women in this study were suffering from some sort of psychological problem (N=18, 60%) or were under a significant amount of stress (N=24, 80%) at the time of the offence. Moreover, over half (N=17, 57%) of the participants had attempted suicide (often on more than one occasion) at some point in their lives. Not surprisingly, almost three-quarters of the women in the study (N=22, 73%) stated that they did not feel that they received enough love and nurturance as children. As adults, two-thirds (N=20, 67%) of the study participants revealed that they were not involved in an affectionate and loving relationship with another adult at the time of the
offence. In fact, half of the women (N=15, 50%) stated that they suspected that the partner they were involved with at the time of the offence was being unfaithful to them. With respect to the characteristics of the abuse itself, all of the victims were known to their perpetrator. In fact, eighteen (39%) of the victims were the children of the participants themselves.

When participants were asked how they felt about themselves during the actual sexual contact with the child, they responded with a variety of answers, some of which are indicated here in the quotes below:

“That I was showing him how it feels to be with a woman”
“I didn’t like it, it felt very uncomfortable”
“I hated myself for not having control over anything”
“I was feeling nothing”
“I felt fear, scared and hurt”
“I felt dirty and ashamed”
“I was scared”
“That the child better not tell”
“Part of me wanted it to stop, but part of me loved it”
“I felt sick”
“I felt great -- I was partying, living off the government and having a good time”
“I knew it was wrong, but I was lonely-the kid cared more about me than my husband did”
“I felt degraded, useless and frustrated”
“To try and stop what was going on”
“I felt embarrassed and sick -- I knew it was wrong”
“It felt euphoric!”
“That it shouldn’t be going on, but I was too scared to stop it”
“I hated myself because I liked it”
“I couldn’t believe I was in a situation like that”
Cognitive Distortions

The results of the 29-item Cognition Scale (Abel, Becker, Cunningham-Rathner, Rouleau, Kaplan, & Reich, 1984) did not reveal any major cognitive distortions among the group of participants in the study (see Appendix F and G). However, responses to some of the questions revealed that a small number of participants do have unconventional beliefs around adult/child sexual contact. Interestingly, in question thirteen, 11 (37%) of the participants strongly agreed and 4 (13%) agreed with the statement, “An adult can tell if having sex with a young child will emotionally damage the child in the future.” Given that half of the women agreed with this statement, it begs the question, why did they sexually abuse children in the first place if they could tell that their behaviour would have traumatic emotional consequences for their victims?

In question nineteen, 14 (47%) strongly agreed and 3 (10%) agreed with the statement, “My daughter (son) or other young child knows that I will still love her (him) even if she (he) refuses to be sexual with me”. Once again, there is an assumption made by the participants that they are able to accurately determine how a child feels. Overall, the responses from the participants on the other questions from the Cognition Scale did not appear to be that different from the beliefs held be those who are not involved in the sexual abuse of children.

Additional Questions

Table 12 represents the responses gathered from five additional questions regarding the dynamics of the intimate adult sexual relationships of the participants themselves. When participants were asked that if a man urges a woman to join in and
have sexual contact with a minor, who is responsible for what happens, two (6%) of the participants stated that only the man is responsible. Five (17%) stated that only the woman is responsible, and the majority of participants, twenty-three (77%) stated that both the man and the woman were responsible. Fourteen (47%) of the participants stated that they had been urged or forced to have sexual contact with their victim/s. Nine (64%) out of the fourteen participants who abused in consort with an adult male stated that they were in fear of losing him if they did not go along with the abuse. Sixteen (53%) stated that they were not forced to have contact with their victim/s in any way. Eleven (37%) of the participants stated that they felt they needed a partner in their lives at all times. Finally, twelve (40%) of the participants said that they pleasured themselves sexually during the time leading up to their sexual contact with their victims.
Table 12.

Additional Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Questions</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If man and woman abuse, are they both responsible?</td>
<td>23 (77%)</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was woman forced to abuse?</td>
<td>14 (47%)</td>
<td>16 (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If abused with male, out of fear?</td>
<td>9 (64%)</td>
<td>5 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always need a partner in life</td>
<td>11 (37%)</td>
<td>19 (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever sexually pleasure yourself?</td>
<td>12 (40%)</td>
<td>18 (60%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Six: Discussion

Summary

This study has examined women who sexually abuse children. A review of the literature provided an overview of the existing research on this topic. To date, there is a dearth of literature on women who are sexually abusive to children. The overwhelming focus has been on male sexual offenders. As a result, existing research on female sex offenders is preliminary and lacking in many different areas. The literature review presented an overall picture of the current research on female sex offenders. The prevalence rate of female perpetrated child sexual abuse was discussed and an analysis as to why the numbers of women who sexually abuse children is so small in comparison to male sex offenders was presented. This led to a critical discussion on the difficulties in conducting research on this population with respect to varying definitions and descriptions of female sex offenders, methodological problems and the problematic nature of existing research samples. Current theoretical explanations for female sex offenders were reviewed. In addition, the similarities and differences between male and female perpetrators of child sexual abuse were explored in order to provide a greater understanding of the etiology of child sexual abuse. Classification schemes and typologies for female sex offenders were also reviewed to increase awareness of the differences among the existing population samples of women who sexually abuse children.

Given the lack of comprehensive theoretical formulations in the literature on the female sexual abuser, this study has examined a strong theoretical model for male sex offenders and its applicability to women. David Finkelhor's Four-Preconditions Model of
Sexual Abuse (1984) was outlined in chapter two. Specifically, the Model suggests that existing theoretical explanations for sex offenders have tended to fall into four separate preconditions which all must be present in order for sexual abuse to occur: the motivation to abuse, overcoming internal inhibitors, overcoming external inhibitors, and overcoming the resistance of the child. Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse takes all these preconditions into consideration. In order to obtain a greater understanding of the usefulness of the Model, the present study initially applied the Model to published case studies on women who sexually abuse children in order to determine its applicability to women. Published case studies revealed general support for the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse as a viable framework for examining the sexual abuse of children by women. This preliminary evidence provided the backdrop to initiate the collection of data on a sample of female sex offenders for the study.

Data was collected from a sample of thirty women in Canada and the United States who were convicted for offences involving the sexual abuse of children. Information collected from the subjects was designed to explore the applicability of Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse on women. In addition, data was gathered to examine whether other factors, such as previous sexual victimization, or being pressured or forced to abuse, contributed to the abuse process. Finally, the study investigated whether female sex offenders endorse cognitive distortions which are associated with the sexual abuse of children. Results from the study have answered the three major research questions identified at the outset of the study.
Summary of Findings

Findings from the study illustrated limited support for Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse as it applies to women. In terms of precondition one, the motivation to abuse, emotional congruence as a motivating factor was supported by the data in a general way. It appears that the data supports the view that relating sexually to a child satisfies an important emotional need for the female abuser. Of importance in this precondition was that the results showed that almost three-quarters of the subjects had themselves been sexually abused when they were children; and of those subjects, the abuse they suffered is recalled by most of the women as teaching them only negative things about sex. Moreover, over half of the study sample revealed that their victims resembled themselves when they were children. However, not all aspects of this component were supported. The issue of power and control as well as the need for closeness and intimacy did not receive support as motivating preconditions relating to emotional congruence. More research in these areas is needed.

In terms of the second component in precondition one: sexual arousal as a motivating factor in the abuse process was not generally supported in the findings. The majority of the subjects in the study did not appear to be motivated to sexually abuse their victims based on sexual arousal towards them. Clearly, results suggested that the majority of participants in the study did not endorse sexual beliefs and fantasies about children like those supported and acted upon by male paedophiles. However, it is important to bear in mind that, despite the lack of apparent support for the sexual arousal component, one needs to be cautious when interpreting such findings. Given that the population studied is
composed of prison inmates and other offenders, responses may not be accurate due to the possibility of unreliable responses as a result of social desirability issues.

The third component, blockage, was supported by the data. It was found that the majority of subjects in the study experienced blockage in adult sexual relationships and/or other sexual outlets, or were blocked emotionally in their relationships. These blockages were contributing factors to the motivation to abuse their victims. Over half the sample reported that they felt intimidated by close relationships. The majority of women were not in healthy relationships at the time of the offence and half reported that they suspected their partners of being unfaithful. Almost three-quarters of the participants revealed that their relationships with their partners were abusive and that their partners did not meet their psychological, sexual, and emotional needs.

Finkelhor's second precondition, overcoming internal inhibitions, was only partially supported in the results. Generally speaking, overcoming internal inhibitions against acting on the motivation to abuse may apply to the male sex offender; however, with respect to the female who sexually abuses a child, it is supported only in a partial way. Support for this factor was found in the area of substance use in overcoming internal inhibitions. A third of the participants were intoxicated or on drugs while they were sexually involved with their victims. Interestingly, evidence exists in the data that supports the notion that a belief in the existence of weak criminal sanctions for sex offenders can serve to give them the 'green light’ to justify their actions with respect to abusing a child sexually. In this study, more than a third of the participants regarded the current criminal sanctions handed down to sex offenders as being too lenient. Failure of the incest mechanism in the family dynamics to prevent an adult from abusing his or her own child is
one of Finkelhor's preconditions that is partially supported in this study. Thirty women in the study abused forty-six victims in total. Over one third of the victims were the participants' own children.

Finkelhor also argues that a male’s inability to identify with the needs of children may serve to allow him to overcome his internal inhibitions to abuse. When this factor was examined for its applicability to the female sexual offender, there is partial support. Results from the study showed that more than half of the participants revealed that they did not feel emotionally and physically comfortable around children at the time of the offence. This lack of connection to children may indeed contribute to reducing an individual’s internal inhibitions against sexually abusing their victim. In addition, it should be noted that more than half of the women in the study stated that they were suffering from some sort of psychological problem or negative mental state at the time of the offence. Further, almost half of the participants revealed that they had been given a psychiatric diagnosis by a mental health professional at some point in their lives. In addition, over half the women in this study revealed that they had attempted suicide at least once. The women in this study may not have had a psychosis per se, but a large percentage of them were suffering from mental health problems at the time of the offence which may have served to weaken and/or remove their internal inhibitions against sexually abusing a child. The remaining factors in Finkelhor’s second precondition, overcoming internal inhibitions against abusing a child, were not supported by the data. Generally speaking, precondition two of Finkelhor’s Model is partially supported by the preconditions of substance abuse, a belief in the existence of weak criminal sanctions, failure of the incest mechanism, an inability to identify with the needs of children, and a history of mental illness. Yet, of the factors that
do support precondition two, the evidence from the data varied in terms of the strength of the support.

For Finkelhor's third precondition, preconditions predisposing an individual to overcoming external inhibitors to abusing a child, the data from this study illustrated some support for this factor. In this study, many of the women were involved in relationships where their partner was absent or frequently ill. In addition, the majority of participants were involved in an abusive relationship at the time they committed the offence. The overwhelming majority of the sample revealed that they were under a lot of stress at the time of the offence. Almost three quarters of the participants described themselves as socially alienated and unable to talk to anyone about their problems. More than half of the participants in the study revealed that they spent a lot of time alone with children. Almost one third of the participants slept in the same bed with their own or other peoples' children. Given this information about the lifestyles and the nature of the relationships of the participants in the study, it appears that these women were in a position to overcome external inhibitions against abusing a child sexually according to Finkelhor's Model. The results from this study support the findings in the literature on published case studies. In the latter case, women were able to overcome external inhibitions against sexual abuse in very similar ways to the responses provided by the participants in this study.

Finkelhor's fourth precondition, overcoming the resistance of the child, was supported by the data from this study. Given the nature of the relationships that existed between many of the participants and their victims, overcoming the resistance of the child would seemingly not be too difficult. Almost three quarters of the women described their relationships to their victims as quite close. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of
participants stated that their victims trusted them. Further, more than half of the participants revealed that their victims did not know anything about sex, therefore making it easier for their abuser to abuse them. One third of the women used some sort of force on their victims in order to gain compliance from them. Generally speaking, the social powerlessness of children, combined with the above preconditions from Finkelhor’s Model, made it possible for the participants in this study to overcome the resistance from their victims. Indeed, the results from this study concur with those found when precondition four is applied to the published case studies. This is particularly salient with respect to the issue of trust that women receive from their victims.

Overall, the results from the study supported Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse in a limited way. Specifically, findings from the study demonstrate support for precondition one in terms of the emotional congruence and blockage components; precondition two was supported in a partial way; and both precondition three and four were supported by the results. However, the Model was originally applied to the male sex offender, and for that reason, it falls short in terms of fully explaining the offending behaviour of all types of female sex offenders. In addition, unlike the dynamics of sexual abuse surrounding male perpetrators, almost half of the participants in this study stated that they had been forced to sexually abuse their victims by an adult male. This result appears to be distinct and characteristic to female sexual offenders and is a powerful finding from this study. This result replicates findings presented from previous studies conducted on female sex offenders (Faller, 1987; Barnett, Corder, & Jehu, 1995; Wolfe, 1985). In addition, the results show that there may be differences between women who were forced to abuse and women who were not, which may have implications on future
theoretical formulations and research studies, including the application of the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse. By comparing the two different groups of offenders in the sample, preliminary evidence was found that illustrates that Finkelhor’s Model may indeed be more applicable to the female sex offender who sexually abuses her victims alone than to the woman who abuses children because she has been forced to do so.

In addition to the applicability of Finkelhor’s Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse, findings from the study suggest that other factors need to be considered when examining the female child sexual abuser. The results of the study revealed other factors pertinent to females who sexually abuse children that may not necessarily be present for the male sexual abuser. These factors may not cause a woman to abuse; however, they may indeed serve to contribute to a female’s abusive behaviour. Almost three-quarters of the women in this study were the victims of sexual abuse themselves when they were younger. This is a higher percentage than found for male child sexual offenders. The author found in a previous analysis of the demographic characteristics of male child molesters in a sex offender treatment group that only forty-three percent of the men reported that they had been sexually abused themselves in childhood (Jennings, 1990). A history of child sexual abuse does not necessarily lead to the perpetration of sexual abuse later on in life. However, child sexual abuse is a trauma that can have devastating effects on its victims sexually, emotionally, physically, and psychologically (Bass & Davis, 1988). The loss of trust and innocence that is experienced may contribute to the dynamics of future offending behaviour as the adult female who was once a victim now becomes the victimizer. She is taking from her victim what was taken from her: innocence and trust.
Everything the child represents becomes, at the same time, everything that the abuser loves and hates within herself. The child is seen as a loving, innocent and trusting being who is vulnerable; she is what the abuser once was prior to her own victimization in childhood. At the same time, she hates those very qualities in the child as they are those which made her vulnerable to sexual abuse herself when she was a child.

Moreover, for an adult survivor of child sexual abuse, emotional intimacy in a mature sexual relationship can be extremely difficult. A child is a safer outlet for the female perpetrator’s emotions. She has learned from her own victimization that her feelings do not matter and they are vulnerable to being manipulated and violated. However, if she has not completely ‘shut down’ her capacity to feel as a result of her own victimization, she needs a safe place to put her feelings and emotions. The child represents that safe place. In addition, in our society, there appears to be permission given to take more liberties with children than with adults with respect to boundary violations. For example, in a social situation, we are generally speaking more comfortable approaching children and talking to them. In fact, simple things like making eye contact seems less difficult with children than with adults. Because of their size and powerlessness children are regarded as non-threatening. Female perpetrators of sexual abuse who were themselves abused as children had their own boundaries violated and crossed. To them, boundaries were blurred and compromised; they repeat with their own victims what they know and experienced themselves in childhood. Overall, female sex offenders who were sexually abused when they were children are faced with the effects of that abuse on themselves. This becomes an additional complicating factor that may influence the dynamics of the abuse they perpetrate against their victims.
Further, unlike many male sexual abusers, the issue of power and control was not a primary one with the participants in this study. In fact, during the time that the abuse occurred, the overwhelming majority of the women stated that they felt that they had no control over their lives. It appears from the data that many of the women in this study were suffering from some sort of psychological problem or were under a significant amount of stress at the time of the offence. Moreover, over half of the participants had attempted suicide at some point in their lives.

Not surprisingly, almost three-quarters of the women in the study stated that they did not feel that they received enough love and nurturance as children. As adults, two-thirds of the study participants revealed that they were not involved in an affectionate and loving relationship with another adult. In fact, almost three-quarters of the women in this study were involved in an abusive relationship at the time they committed their offence/s. Moreover, half of the women stated that they suspected that the partner they were involved with at the time of the offence was being unfaithful to them. All of the victims were known to their perpetrator. In fact, over a third of the victims were the children of the participants themselves. Finally, with respect to the endorsement of cognitive distortions that contribute to child sexual abuse, it was found that, overall, study participants did not appear to have beliefs that were significantly different from the beliefs held by those who are not involved in the sexual abuse of children.

An interesting finding from the study revealed that almost three-quarters of the study participants were of the Caucasian race. Given that the majority of the data was collected from two correctional centres in the United States where the inmate population
composition was overwhelmingly African-American, this is an interesting finding. There may be many reasons for this. First, given the racial discrimination and conflicts that exist particularly in the United States between African-Americans and Caucasians, it may be that treatment in the State Sex Offender Treatment program may have been made more available to Caucasian inmates than their African-American counterparts. Therefore, the sample from which the participants were drawn may have been biased. Second, there is a mistrust of the police by African-Americans in the United States. Suspicions of the police may indeed serve to limit the extent to which African-Americans report crimes to the police, including crimes of child abuse. They may be more likely to handle the situation within their own families and culture. This, of course, does not imply that there are fewer African-American abusers; it simply means that they are perhaps less likely to report crimes to the authorities. It is acknowledged that racial discrimination in the United States may lead to a greater likelihood of minorities being identified and targeted more readily for crimes than their Caucasian counterparts. Finally, many African-American households are headed by women who hold their children in high regard and are very protective of them (Hill Collins, 1991). This may partially explain the lower rate of child sexual abuse among African-Americans found in this study.

It is important to note that the profiles of women in this sample may not be that disimilar to federally sentenced female inmates for all crimes in Canada. Statistics show that more than half of all federally sentenced women are between twenty and thirty-four years of age. Most federally sentenced female offenders have only finished part of their high school education and possess few marketable skills. Typically, they come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds where there is a history of physical and sexual abuse.
A large majority of the women have been the victims or witnesses of violence, many at the hands of abusive partners or husbands. There is a high incidence of substance abuse, and it often plays a part in the offence and criminal history of these women. Among Aboriginal women, the figure is even higher for substance abuse. A history of suicide attempts and other mental health issues is not uncommon among women serving federal prison sentences (Correctional Service Canada, 1990). Findings from this study suggest that female sex offenders in general do not differ greatly from other women serving prison sentences in terms of their characteristics and backgrounds. In addition, given the involvement of men in almost half of the cases in the study, along with the under-reporting of female sex offenders in general, it is difficult to determine what, if any, characteristics these women possess that differentiate them in any significant way from other women in the general population. Sadly, it is the children that pay the price of this seemingly faceless and hidden crime. Clearly, more research is needed to improve our knowledge of profiling women who sexually abuse children.

Limitations of the Study

The sexual abuse of children by women is a relatively new and under-explored phenomenon. In contrast to the comprehensiveness with which male child molesters have been studied, research on their female counterparts is seriously lacking in many areas. With respect to the present study, there were several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the research sample consisted of thirty women convicted of child sexual abuse. Ideally, a larger sample would have permitted more sophisticated statistical analysis of the data. With a relatively small sample, analysis of the data was limited. A
larger sample may have yielded additional information not uncovered in this study as a result of the limitations placed on data analysis.

Another limitation of the present study, and other research on sex offenders, is the source of the data. Specifically, the majority of research on sex offenders is derived from subjects who have been legally identified as such. That is to say, the populations on which the research is based are usually drawn from men and women who are serving prison sentences, on probation, under community supervision, listed in Child Abuse Registries, or otherwise known to the authorities for their crimes. Consequently, the samples upon which the majority of research is based are largely biased in composition. The very nature of the behaviour that is being studied makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to gather data on child sexual abusers from the general population. For the most part, research is based upon those men and women who were actually caught for their crimes (which represents a proportion of sex offenders only). Likely, those offenders who were caught represent the more serious offenders whose behaviour was detected. Moreover, the women who abused in consort with a male were likely increasing their chances of getting caught by virtue of the number of perpetrators involved in the abuse process. Therefore, the studied populations of child molesters are largely biased and unrepresentative of all child molesters yet to be detected in the general population. Further, it should be noted that the setting in which the interviews took place may have had an impact on the responses provided by subject participants. That is to say, interviews were conducted in probation field offices and prisons which are not the most suitable environments for interviewing subjects on such a sensitive issue.
In addition, the very nature of the subject matter being discussed places limitations on the data that is collected. Specifically, child sexual abuse is one of the greatest taboos in our society. To be convicted of such a crime is to be labeled perhaps with one of the worst labels of all. Consequently, child molesters, generally speaking, carry a tremendous amount of guilt and shame within themselves over their actions. This may indeed serve as a barrier to accurate research collection. Child sexual abusers may distort, omit, rationalize, exaggerate, and/or otherwise provide inaccurate information about their behaviour. Social desirability is always a consideration with research on sex offenders. Moreover, without verifiable information from external sources (victim statements, police reports), it is difficult to determine the extent to which the information provided is accurate. This limitation presents itself in the majority of research conducted on sex offenders. The present study made every effort to minimize the collection of inaccurate data; however, it is acknowledged that there is always a possibility that study participants could have distorted the information provided for the study.

In addition, the interview schedule and the way in which it was devised may have had an impact upon participant’s responses. Clearly, the way a question is formulated and presented may indeed have an effect on how an individual will respond to it. Every effort was made to devise the interview schedule in such a manner so as to elicit information from participants in a sensitive, clear, and concise manner. However, the sensitivity of the subject matter, the way a question is interpreted by the subject, and the willingness to respond to all of the questions as honestly as possible, are all important factors to consider when identifying possible limitations to the study. Given that the majority of participants in the study were themselves involved in a treatment program for sex offenders at the time
of the interview, they were familiar with discussing the nature of their offences, and had, for the most part, overcome issues such as denial and minimization of their behaviour.

Finally, the methodology used for the study was somewhat limited. Specifically, Finkelhor’s Model was a useful method for inquiry in terms of conceptualizing and organizing the data based on the four preconditions that contribute to child sexual abuse. However, as an explanatory model, it was more appropriate and applicable to the behaviours and actions of the participants who acted independently in abusing their victims. Perhaps it may have been useful to expand the line of inquiry from the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse to drawing from the literature on spousal assault and the psychology of women who are victims of domestic violence. Utilizing a method of inquiry adopted from previous research on these particular issues would likely prove fruitful in terms of increasing our understanding as to the motivations underlying female the actions of female sex offenders who were forced to abuse their victims.

Future Directions

The research on female sexual offenders is not as comprehensive as that for male sex offenders. Therefore there are many areas still in need of exploration. With respect to the present study, it seems that any attempts to replicate the study would likely benefit by expanding the research scope to include a sample of male child molesters matched on demographics. This would serve to increase our knowledge of any similarities and differences that may exist between men and women based on the questionnaire used for this study. To date, there is minimal published research in this area. Understanding the differences between men and women based on the application of Finkelhor’s Four-
Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse will provide support for the development of theoretical formulations of the female sex offender, an extremely under-developed area in the literature.

Results from the study illustrated that women who sexually abuse children are not a homogeneous group. Approximately half of the sample were forced to abuse their victims while the other half acted alone. This finding had an impact on the overall applicability of the Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse to all participants in the study. Specifically, Finkelhor’s Model makes the assumption that the sex offender acts alone when he abuses his victims; this is not an unreasonable assumption given that, overwhelmingly, males do act alone when they sexually abuse children (except for the small percentage of males who force women to sexually abuse with them). However, this assumption had an impact on the applicability of the Model to female sex offenders. Results from the present study show that women who are forced to abuse differ from women who abuse alone in many ways. Consequently, in retrospect, the Model appeared more suitable in its use when examining women who sexually abuse their victims alone as they appear to be more closely matched to the male sex offender. Indeed, women who abuse their victims on their own would likely have underlying reasons and motivations for doing so that more closely resemble the male sex offender. Generally speaking, Finkelhor’s Model appears to satisfactorily take into account the motivations and necessary preconditions for the commission of an act of child sexual abuse by abusers who act independently.
However, it fails to account adequately for abusers who do not abuse their victims on their own, but rather abuse as a result of being forced to do so. It does not take into account the dynamics involved in the relationship between the two abusers leading up to the sexual abuse. How is it that one person can exert such an influence over another to get them to participate in society’s greatest taboo, child sexual abuse? How much power and control does that person, in this case, a male, have over the female that he forces her to abuse along with him? How does he effect that power? What is it about the female sex offender that prevents her from exerting her own power against abusing a child? Clearly, Finkelhor’s Model is not designed to answer these types of questions. Consequently, it is limited in terms of assisting us to further our knowledge about the female sex offender who is forced to abuse her victims, and ultimately, about female sex offenders as a whole.

It should be acknowledged, however, that Finkelhor’s Model has been a useful one in terms of increasing our understanding of the necessary preconditions to child sexual abuse as it applies to a sample of sex offenders. This is a major contribution by the present study. Finkelhor’s Model was originally intended to apply to the male sex offender; however, it is unclear as to why it has never been applied to a sample of male or female sex offenders. It serves simply as a model to assist us to organize our understanding of the causal and theoretical explanations of child sexual abuse offending behaviour. It synthesized theoretical perspectives of sexual abuse into one comprehensive model without applying it to a data set. This is what the present study has done. It adopted Finkelhor’s Model to the female sex offender, and explored its usefulness on a sample of thirty women who sexually abused children.
The results from the study suggest that women who were forced to abuse their victims were a very dependent group involved in relationships with abusive men who completely dominated and controlled them. It would therefore seem appropriate that future research on female sex offenders examine the literature on domestic violence as a method of inquiry in terms of broadening our knowledge as to the motivation and dynamics between men and women who are in such a relationship. Moreover, an examination into the background and psychological make-up of women who are involved in abusive relationships would increase our understanding with respect to the powerlessness that they feel towards the men in their lives. It may be that such research will illustrate that variables such as fear, powerlessness, and helplessness contribute to the female sex offender’s inability to object to her abusive partner’s demands to sexually abuse a child. However, it still does not completely answer the deeper question: how can a woman transcend and break society’s greatest taboo? Indeed, this area of inquiry will assist us in knowing more about the possible dynamics that occur in a case where a woman feels that complying with the male is more important than protecting the safety of a child, often her own child, from the trauma of sexual abuse. Moreover, we still do not know enough about the women who acted alone to understand how they could break such a taboo.

In terms of understanding the processes involved for the woman who abuses her victims independently, research on the sociology of deviance may be a helpful line of inquiry. Understanding deviance from a sociological perspective generally involves examining criminal activity from two broad perspectives: consensus and conflict theories. Briefly, consensus theories attempt to answer the question, “why would anyone break the
rules of life that nearly all of us accept -- particularly when observing these rules may be a means of obtaining the things most of us value?" (Hagan, 1984, p. 80). Conversely, conflict theories focus on answering the question, "Why do the behaviours that seem acceptable to some, seem disreputable to others?" (Hagan, 1984, p. 121). Child sexual abuse is a crime recognized as such by the overwhelming majority of the population. It would therefore be considered a consensus crime in which society supports the criminalization of this behaviour. A particularly salient explanation within the consensus theories falls under neutralization theory. The emphasis within neutralization theory is on the subjective manner in which crime-producing situations are interpreted. As Hagan notes,

At base, neutralization theory assumes that people's actions are guided by their thoughts. Thus, the question asked by this theory is, 'What is it about the thoughts of otherwise good people that sometimes turn them bad?' (1984, p. 89).

With respect to the female sex offender who acts alone, many of the women in the present study used rationalizations and minimizations to explain their behaviour. For example, some regarded their young male victims like boyfriends rather than as the children that they were. Others thought that the loneliness and lack of intimacy that they felt in their lives would be less painful if they had someone to turn to for support. In these cases, they rationalized that children were able to fill the void that they felt in their lives. Clearly, the thoughts of the participants in this study became distorted and rationalized in such a way so as to allow them to become sexually involved with their victims. Future inquiry may want to consider an examination of the consensus theories and the sociology
of deviance as an area of exploration with respect to female sexual offenders who abuse alone.

Future inquiry into female sexual offenders needs to account for the lack of homogeneity within this group of sex offenders. There are marked differences among women who abuse alone and women who are forced to abuse which need to be taken into consideration with respect to theory, research design, and methodology. Clearly, Finkelhor's Model was helpful, although limited. To Finkelhor's credit, the Model was useful in terms of organizing the data in such a way so as to determine what preconditions were more important than others in influencing the behaviour of the participants in the study. It may be that an adaptation of the Model would be a more useful direction to take with respect to future research.

Specifically, incorporating the Model into a more gender-based framework may prove a more fruitful method of inquiry and would be a major contribution to the research. Results from the study illustrate that women do not necessarily sexually abuse children for the same reasons that men do, but existing explanations of child sexual abuse focus only on males. To ignore gender-based research and its contribution to understanding the dynamics behind the behaviour of a percentage of female sexual offenders would result in a very narrow understanding of this population. This needs to be taken into consideration when determining the most appropriate methodology to use for future research. As male dominance and control played a large part in influencing the offending behaviour of almost half the sample, future inquiry should include an emphasis on gathering information about the relationships that participants are involved in and how they may or may not impact on
the sexual abuse of the victim. Further, researchers should inquire into the sociological and psychological processes involved in complicating the woman’s ability to say no to the partner who forced her to abuse.

Adapting Finkelhor’s Model to incorporate the study of female sexual offenders would necessitate not only revisions to the model as it stands in its current state, but, also it would need to include causal explanations specific to women. For example, to attempt to understand the sexual arousal of the female sex offender, we cannot rely on explanations and measurements based on male sexuality and physiology. Understanding the processes involved in how a female becomes sexually aroused to children will increase our knowledge as to how critical this particular variable is in the motivation to abuse a child.

In addition, it appears that adapting the Model to women would require expanding the blockage component in precondition one to include a deeper exploration into the nature of the adult relationships of female sexual offenders and what effect they have on the abuse. It seems that these women, on the whole, are involved in dysfunctional and abusive relationships with adult males. We need to address the extent to which such relationships ‘block’ a woman’s ability to engage in adult sexual relations, and or, how they contribute to a situation in which the woman is forced to abuse her victim. Moreover, given that many female sexual offenders are forced to abuse children by their male partners, it would appear that a revision to Finkelhor’s Model would need to address the concept of force. Clearly, the literature on female sex offenders appears to take the concept of force at face value without questioning its validity. Perhaps it would be useful
to understand how women's participation in sexual abuse comes about by considering the usefulness of a continuum to understanding their role in the offence process rather than viewing their behaviour from two completely separate categories (force and non forced).

Adapting Finkelhor's Model to females would also need to address the differences between men and women and their relationships to children. In contrast to men, women overwhelmingly know their victims and are in a far greater position to abuse and hide their crimes. This would therefore require a deeper understanding of the emotional meaning that children have for female sex offenders (precondition one) and how these meanings contribute to overcoming the resistance of the child (precondition four). Revising Finkelhor's Model would need to include a deeper understanding of the individual case histories of the women themselves, particularly women who have unresolved issues in their background such as sexual abuse. Understanding to what extent displaced anger, enmeshment, shame, pain, and other psychological processes are related to the motivation to abuse and a woman's ability to overcome the resistance of her victim would advance our understanding of causal explanations specific to female sexual offenders.

It should be noted that future research may also want to consider the issue of race. Results from the present study found that almost three-quarters of the subjects in the study were of the Caucasian race. However, the prison population from which the sample was drawn was comprised overwhelmingly of African-American inmates. There may be several reasons for this; however, future studies on female sexual offenders should take race and class into consideration in an effort to expand our knowledge base about the background and demographics of female sex offenders.
Another area worthy of future inquiry is with respect to the issue of power and control. Participants in this study described themselves as not feeling in control of their lives at the time of the offence. However, the issue of power and control as a motivating factor in the actual offence process itself was not discussed to any great length. The literature on male sex offenders supports the notion that power and control are motivating factors for a percentage of men who sexually abuse children. Do women, in fact, sexually abuse their victims for similar reasons? This is not a well researched area and is in need of further exploration. In addition, future research on female sex offenders should explore the extent to which there may be a possible connection between being victimized sexually as a child and sexually abusing a child as an adult. Almost three-quarters of the women in this study disclosed being sexually abused themselves as children. This figure is approximately three times higher than for women in the general population (approximately twenty-five percent). Clearly, one should not deduce that survivors of child sexual abuse will go on to abuse as adults; rather, it indicates that there may be a link between the effects of childhood sexual abuse and abusing later on in life.

Further research needs to focus on the relationships of female sex offenders. What are the dynamics involved and how do they lead to the sexual abuse of a child? Preliminary findings from this research point to a dependency on males as a possible factor leading to the abuse. The examination of the role that men play in the sexual abuse of children by females is critical to the development of theoretically-based formulations of this behaviour. Future research needs to take this into account. Finally, future research on the dynamics of men and women and/or families who willingly abuse together is also an area worthy of consideration.
Conclusion

In conclusion, what we know about female sex offenders is not as well understood as our knowledge base on male sex offenders. Our understanding of the latter is derived from well documented empirical research and theory from the psychological, biological, criminological, and sociological disciplines. It appears from the literature that to understand the behaviour of sex offenders, plausible explanations need to focus less on singular approaches, and more on multi-factor explanations that take into account a variety of factors that contribute to the sexual abuse of children. Indeed, this also applies to research on women who sexually abuse children. Female sex offenders are not a homogeneous group and cannot be studied as such. It is unclear as to why Finkelhor's Four-Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse has never been applied to a sample of sexual offenders given the implied assertion that it is a comprehensive model that provides a convincing approach to understanding the motives and behaviour of sex offenders.

The Model appeared initially to be useful for the study of women who sexually abuse children; however, in retrospect, it may not be the best approach to understanding this particular population of sexual offenders as a whole. Findings from this research point out that women sexually abuse children for a multitude of reasons not necessarily in keeping with male-based explanations as outlined in the Finkelhor Model. It is therefore limited in its scope in terms of its usefulness for future research on female sex offenders. Conceptual analysis of female sexual offenders requires a deeper exploration into variables relating not only to sexual abuse as a behaviour, but also to causal explanations specific to women.
References


APPENDIX
October 28, 1996

Kathryn Jennings
603 Clinton St.
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M6G 3Z8

Dear Ms. Jennings:

Your recent proposal to conduct interviews and assessments of selected inmates in the Department of Corrections has been reviewed and approved. The approval is contingent upon the completion of a transfer agreement which outlines confidentiality and inmate access issues and responsibilities for this research project. I have drafted and enclosed a standard transfer agreement for this project. Please review the agreement and return a signed copy for our files. If you have questions or concerns regarding the transfer agreement let me know. We can discuss any changes you would like to see in the agreement.

It is my understanding that staff members of the Sexual Offender Program will be identifying a target group of women at the Correctional Center and Correctional Center for possible participation in your study. I do not know how many inmates will be identified but I would expect the number to be fairly small. You will need to have the inmate sign a departmental release form to be filed in the case file before you proceed with the interview. I am enclosing a copy of the release form. Supplies will be available at the two facilities.

When you are preparing to make your site visits you should first contact the two facilities for scheduling purposes. I have contacted the two superintendents and they are aware of your project. At you will need to contact the Superintendent, , to schedule the visit and at you will need to contact at .

**AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER**

Services provided on a Non-discriminatory basis
AD EXCELLEUM CONAMUR • WE STRIVE TOWARDS EXCELLENCE
The tentative dates you discussed during our telephone conversation (December 12-15 or December 19-22) will need to be approved by the facilities. Since the dates include week-ends, the facilities will need to determine if they will be able to meet your needs at that time.

I hope this information satisfies your needs. If I can be of any further assistance, let me know.

Sincerely,

Director
Planning, Research and Evaluation

cc: Supt.
Asst. Supt.

Enc.
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
PLANNING, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION UNIT

TRANSFER AGREEMENT FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES

The Department of Corrections views correctional research activity as an important and worthwhile endeavor and a vital means of improving correctional management practices. Cooperative research projects which involve outside researchers are encouraged so long as the projects conform to recognized professional standards, including those relating to privacy, confidentiality and the protection of human rights.

The purpose of this transfer agreement is to ensure that research and evaluation projects conducted by non-agency researchers is carried out with the highest regard for individual and organizational concerns related to privacy, confidentiality, human rights, security and professionalism. The undersigned have been provided with a copy of the current departmental procedure relating to research projects and agree to abide by all current and relevant department procedures governing research and evaluation activity in the Department of Corrections and any other related state or federal statutes, requirements or regulations.

I. PROJECT NAME AND PURPOSE: Women Who Sexually Abuse Children
   The researcher will conduct detailed interviews and structured assessments using formal testing instruments with a voluntary group of female prison inmates convicted of sexual child abuse or molestation offenses as an exploratory study of the reasons for this type of behavior and the offenders' perceptions related to child sexual abuse. Interview and assessment information will be used to explore the usefulness of a four factor model proposed by Finkelhor in 1984 which itemizes certain elements that are likely to be preconditions for child sexual abuse. This study will contribute to the body of research regarding female sexual child abusers as a group and will aid in the development of effective treatment and counseling strategies for women involved in sexual child abuse.

II. IS DATA REQUIRED IN IDENTIFIABLE FORM? Yes IF SO, PLEASE EXPLAIN WHY IDENTIFIABLE DATA IS REQUIRED. The department's unit staff will identify female inmates convicted of sexual child abuse and contact them initially to determine whether they wish to participate in the study. Offender names will be required in this study primarily as a means of identifying participants for the interview and assessment process.

III. HOW WILL PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE DATA BE SAFEGUARDED? After initial interviewing and assessment has taken place, participant anonymity will be provided in all written or oral reports or resulting research material as a condition of this research. Sources linking interview case number with inmate name/identification number must be destroyed upon completion of the interviewing process. Research reports will primarily present grouped data and individual inmates and facilities will not be identified. Should qualitative case studies or...
individual scenarios be presented, background and legal variables will be altered in order to protect the identity of inmates.

Inmates will be interviewed in the most private setting made available to research staff within the correctional institutions. All inmates will be read an informed consent statement prior to beginning any interview. Inmates wishing to participate in the interviews must sign a departmental release form to be filed in their case record. Inmate participation is strictly voluntary and approval to participate may be withdrawn at any time. In cases of participant withdrawal from the study, no information from or regarding that participant is to be used in the study.

IV. HOW WILL THE IDENTIFIABLE DATA BE DISPOSED OF UPON COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT?
Upon completion of the research study, identifiable information included on written notes, computer files, tapes, diskettes or printouts will be destroyed. Case control numbers or other identifiers in the research will not be traced back to identifiable source information. Work tapes or other computer files containing identifiable corrections case material will be destroyed or otherwise expunged at the end of the study. No hard copies or disk copies of identifiable information will be maintained by the researcher after the conclusion of the study.

FINAL REPORT REVIEW AND DISSEMINATION
One (1) copy of the resulting research report will be provided to the Director of Planning, Research and Evaluation. No part of this research project will be released for publication. No departmental review or monitoring, beyond what is identified in the attached procedure, is anticipated, however periodic status reports may be requested as a means of measuring progress on the project.

The undersigned agree that data transferred under this agreement are to be used strictly for research and statistical purposes and that they are aware that violation of federal or state laws or regulations governing privacy and confidentiality are punishable as such. The Department of Corrections reserves the right to withdraw from any cooperative research or evaluation project agreed to under this arrangement if departmental policy and procedures are not strictly followed.

\[Signature\]  
KATHRYN JENNINGS  
PH.D. (CANDIDATE)  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Name  
Title  
Organization

PROJECT REVIEWED AND TRANSFER APPROVED

BY:______________________________

TITLE:______________________________  DATE:________________________
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Kathryn Jennings and I am a Ph.D candidate at the Ontario Institute For Studies in Education (Sociology), The University of Toronto (OISE). This thesis is part of the requirements for my Doctor of Philosophy degree and will be supervised by Professor Lana Stermac, Ph.D from the department of Applied Psychology, OISE. The aim of this study is to examine sexual contact between adult females and children (under 14). Most information and research that we know about focuses solely on males; consequently, there is very little literature at the present time that examines women. It is anticipated that through this research, we will increase our knowledge about this behaviour. In this project, I have constructed a series of questions that I would like to ask you that should take no more than 1-2 hours of your time. This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. It is a questionnaire that is being used to find out more about your views on adult/child sexual contact. The interview is completely private and confidential. I will be asking you some personal questions about yourself that are sensitive in nature. I would also like to look at your institutional file for basic information about you. The information that you give me will not be seen by anyone but myself and Dr. Stermac. All of the information collected from you will be labelled in such a manner that you will remain anonymous and the information itself securely stored in a locked cabinet at my office. It will be destroyed after five years. If any of your information is used in the thesis for the purposes of direct quotes or any other reason, you will not be identified but instead assigned a pseudonym (a different name). Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at anytime. If you wish any information or feedback about the results of the
study, I will be more than happy to send them to you upon completion. Thank-you for taking part in this study.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Jennings
CONSENT FORM

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and have been informed about the study and my involvement in it. I understand that I will be asked a series of questions relating to my sexual involvement with children. I understand that my institutional file may be examined. I have been informed that all of the information that I provide the researcher is confidential and will not be shared with anyone except the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Lana Stermac. I have been told that my real name will not be used in the study. I understand that the subject we will be discussing is a sensitive one and may cause me some distress.

I have been informed that the information collected from me will be labelled in such a way that I cannot be identified and that the initial information that I provide the researcher during the interview process will be destroyed five years after the study is completed. I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw at anytime if I wish. If I want to have feedback about the study when it is done, it will be sent to me.

Print Name:__________________________________________
Signature of Participant:________________________________
Researcher:____________________________________________
Date:_________________________________________________
QUESTIONNAIRE

CODE# _______________________

SECTION ONE

Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
* Do you have a family? Children? Where are they now?
* Have you been in jail before?
* How long have you been here? How much more 'time' do you have to serve?
* Are you involved in any special activities, counselling, or groups in the institution?
* How do you get along with the other women?
* Do they know what you are 'serving time' for?
* Do you have plans for when you are released?

SECTION TWO

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Date of Birth: / / 
2. Country of Birth: ________________________________
3. Race: ________________________________
4. What cultural group do you consider yourself to be a member of? ________________________________
5. Occupation: ________________________________
6. Highest level of education completed: ________________________________
7. Marital Status: ________________________________
8. Number of Children: ________________________________

9. Index Offences: ________________________________

10. Prior Convictions: 1. ________________________________

2. ________________________________

3. ________________________________

4. ________________________________

11. Age of Victim: ________________________________

12. Relationship to Victim: ________________________________

SECTION THREE

MENTAL HEALTH

1. To your knowledge, has anyone ever given you a psychiatric diagnosis of any kind? (MH:1)

2. At the time that you had sexual contact with a child, do you feel that you were suffering from some sort of psychological problem or negative mental state? (MH:2)

3. Have you ever been hospitalized for any psychological or psychiatric reasons? (MH3)

4. Have you ever been prescribed medication related to a mental disturbance of some sort? If so, were you taking any medication at the time of the offence? (MH:4)

5. Were you involved in any kind of therapy or counselling at the time of the offence? (MH:5)

6. At the time of the offence, were you under any particular stresses in your life? (MH:6)

7. Have you ever tried to commit suicide? If so, when? (MH:7)
SUBSTANCE USE

1. Around the time of the offence, were you using alcohol or drugs? If so, how much (SA:1)

2. While you were having sexual contact with the child, were you drunk or high? (SA:2)

3. When you are drunk or high, how would you describe your mood? (quiet, aggressive, loud, etc.) (SA:3)

4. What would you consider your mood to have been like at the time of the offence if you had been using substances (or not)? (SA:4)

CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN

1. If (or if not) you ever experienced any unwanted sexual acts committed against you while you were growing up or as an adult, did you feel that these acts had positive or negative effects on you? (CE:1)

2. If you had sexual contact with an adult when you were a child, do you feel that you had any control over what happened? (CE:2)

3. Do you feel that you received enough love and nurturance as a child? (CE:2)

4. The first time that you had a sexual encounter with someone, did it teach you anything about sex? If so, what? (CE:3)

5. While you were growing up, did you ever witness anyone else engaging in sexual acts with a child? (CE:4)

6. Do the sexual acts that you have committed against a child resemble those that were committed against you when you were a child? (CE:6)

ADULT RELATIONSHIPS OF WOMEN

1. Would you describe yourself as active socially or alienated and lonely from others at the time of the offence? (R:1)
2. During the time of the offence, were you close to anyone that you could talk to about your feelings? (R:2)

3. Did sexually intimate or close relationships with adults intimidate or scare you back during the time you had sexual contact with the child? (R:3)

4. At the time of the offence, were you involved in an adult relationship with anyone affectionate and loving? (R:4)

5. When you were engaging in sexual contact with an adult, did you fantasize that it was actually a child that you were with? (R:5)

6. If (or not) you were involved in an adult relationship at the time of the sexual contact with the child, did you suspect your adult partner of being unfaithful to you? (R:6)

7. Did you have any sexual outlets in your life at the time of the offence (a person, object, self pleasure, etc.)? (R:7)

8. How do you feel about masturbation? (R:8)

9. What do you think about sexual affairs? (R:9)

10. Did your significant other (if you have one) meet your needs (physically, emotionally and mentally) at the time that you were sexually involved with the child/ren? (R:10)

11. If you were involved with an adult significant other at the time the sexual contact with the child occurred, was he (she) abusing you in any way? (R:11)

12. Did you have an adult partner at the time the sexual contact with the child was going on? If so, was your partner absent a lot (i.e. through work, sickness, other responsibilities, etc.) (R:12)

13. At the time the sexual encounter with the child occurred, did you feel in control of your life? (R:13)

**SEXUAL CONTACT OF CHILDREN BY WOMEN**

1. Prior to your sexual involvement with the child/ren, did you ever think about children in a sexual way? (SCOC:1)

2. Do you prefer to look at the bodies of an adult of your sexual preference or a child of your sexual preference? (SCOC:2)

3. At the time of the offence, did the naked bodies of children ‘turn you on’? If so, what parts? (SCOC:3)
4. Were you sexually fantasizing about children prior to your contact with the child/ren that you were involved with? If so, how did these fantasies usually go? (SCOC:4)

5. Do you feel that sexual contact with a child is okay? (SCOC:5)

6. At the time of the offence, did you spend a lot of time alone with children? (SCOC:6)

7. Did you sleep in the same bed with your own or other peoples' children at the time of the offence? If so, how often? (SCOC:7)

8. Do you think it is okay to have sexual contact with a child? (SCOC:8)

9. How close were you to the child/ren that you were sexually involved with? (SCOC:9)

10. Did the child attempt to stop you from engaging in sexual contact with him/her i.e. verbally or physically? (SCOC:10)

11. How much would you say that the child trusted you? (SCOC:11)

12. Do you feel that the child knew much about sex? (SCOC:12)

13. In order to have sexual contact with the child, did you use any kind of verbal or physical force or threats to get him or her to do what you wanted? (SCOC:13)

14. Do you think that the child understood what was going on while the sexual contact was occurring? (SCOC:14)

15. At the time of the offence, did you feel comfortable emotionally and physically around children? (SCOC:15)

16. While sexually involved with a child, did you feel a sense of power and control? (SCOC:16)

17. Did any of the children that you were sexually involved with remind you of yourself when you were a child? (SCOC:17).

18. How did you feel about yourself during the actual sexual contact with the child? In other words, what was going through your mind? (SCOC:18)

19. Do you feel that children should have the right to decide whether or not they want to engage in sexual relations with an adult? (SCOC:19)

20. Prior to ever having sexual contact with a child, were you ever curious as to what it would be like to do so? (SCOC:20)

21. Would you describe your sexual involvement with a child as arising out of a need for closeness and intimacy? (AQ:21)
22. While you were actually having sexual contact with the child/ren, how were you feeling at the time? What was going through your mind? (AQ:22)

SECTION FOUR (8)

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. Did you see the child as part of you? (AQ:1)
2. When you were younger, did you learn this sexual behaviour from someone? (AQ:2)
3. Do you feel that it is okay for a woman over the age of 18 to engage in sexual relations with a person under 14 in order to 'teach' and 'educate' him or her about sex? (AQ:3)
4. Do you believe that it is okay for a man to physically 'keep a woman in line' if she does not do what he says? (AQ:4)
5. If a man urges you to join in and have sexual contact with a minor, who do you think is responsible for what happens? (AQ:5)
6. Do you think the child you were sexually involved with served as a replacement for an absent or sick adult partner? (AQ:6)
7. If you have children, how do you feel about giving them privacy, ex. when they are in the bathroom? (AQ:7)
8. Did anyone urge or force you to have sexual contact with the child/ren? (AQ:8)
9. If you abused along with an adult male, did you do so out of fear that you may lose him (AQ:9)
10. Do you agree with the following statement: "Whatever an adult says goes"? (AQ:10)
11. Other cultures introduce children to sex at an early age. Do you think we should do the same thing in this culture? (AQ:11)
12. Do you feel that you need a partner in your life at all times? (AQ:12)
13. Would you describe your sexual involvement with a child as arising out of a need for genital satisfaction? (AQ:13)
14. During the time leading up to your sexual contact with the child, did you ever sexually pleasure yourself? (AQ:14)

15. How do you feel about the criminal penalties handed out to those who sexually abuse children, i.e. are they too tough or lenient? (AQ:15)

16. Do you think pornography influenced your sexual behaviour towards children in any way? (AQ:16)

17. How do you feel about using young people (say under 14) in pornographic movies or explicit advertising? (AQ:17)
Cognition Scale

Read each of the statements below carefully, and then circle the number that indicates your agreement with it. For this questionnaire, you will work on your own.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

1. If a young child stares at my genitals it means the child likes what he (she) sees and is enjoying watching my genitals.
   1  2  3  4  5

2. A woman is justified in having sex with her children or step-children (or other children) if her husband doesn't like sex.
   1  2  3  4  5

3. A child 13 or younger can make her (his own) decision as to whether she (he) wants to have sex with an adult or not.
   1  2  3  4  5

4. A child who doesn't physically resist an adult's sexual advances, really wants to have sex with the adult.
   1  2  3  4  5

5. If a 13 year old (or younger) child flirts with an adult, it means he (she) wants to have sex with the adult.
   1  2  3  4  5

6. Sex between a 13 year old (or younger) child and an adult, causes the child no emotional problems.
   1  2  3  4  5

7. Having sex with a child is a good way for an adult to teach the child about sex.
   1  2  3  4  5

8. If I tell my young child (step-child or close relative) what to do sexually and they do it, that means they will always do it because they really want to.
   1  2  3  4  5
9. When a young child has sex with an adult, it helps the child learn how to relate to adults in the future.

10. Most children 13 (or younger) would enjoy having sex with an adult and it wouldn't harm the child in the future.

11. Children don't tell others about having sex with a parent (or other adult) because they really like it and want to continue.

12. Sometime in the future, our society will realize that sex between a child and an adult is all right.

13. An adult can tell if having sex with a young child will emotionally damage the child in the future.

14. An adult, just feeling a child's body all over without touching her (his) genitals, is not really being sexual with the child.

15. I show my love and affection to a child by having sex with her (him).

16. It's better to have sex with your child (or someone else's child) than to have an affair.

17. An adult fondling a young child or having the child fondle the adult will not cause the child any harm.

18. A child will never have sex with an adult unless the child really wants to.

19. My daughter (son) or other young child knows that I will still love her (him) even if she (he) refuses to be sexual with me.

20. When a young child asks an adult about sex, it means that she (he) wants to see the adult's sex organs or have sex with the adult.

21. If an adult has sex with a young child, it prevents the child from having sexual hang-ups in the future.
22. When a young child walks in front of me with no or only a few clothes on, she (he) is trying to arouse me.

23. My relationship with my daughter (son) or other child is strengthened by the fact that we have sex together.

24. If a child has sex with an adult, the child will look back at the experience as an adult and see it as a positive experience.

25. The only way I could do harm to a child when having sex with her (him) would be to use physical force to get her (him) to have sex with me.

26. When children watch an adult masturbate, it helps the child learn about sex.

27. An adult can know just how much sex between her and a child will hurt the child later on.

28. If a person is attracted to sex with children, she should solve that problem herself and not talk to professionals.

29. There's no effective treatment for child molestation.
## Cognition Scale Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question #</th>
<th>Strongly Agree-1</th>
<th>Agree-2</th>
<th>Neutral-3</th>
<th>Disagree-4</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree-5</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q#1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>21 (70%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>28 (93%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#3</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (20%)</td>
<td>20 (67%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#4</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>22 (73%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#5</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>11 (37%)</td>
<td>15 (50%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#6</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>22 (73%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>28 (93%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>22 (73%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#9</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>21 (70%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>22 (73%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#11</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>24 (80%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>23 (77%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#13</td>
<td>11 (37%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#14</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>20 (66%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#15</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>28 (93%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>28 (93%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>25 (83%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#18</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (20%)</td>
<td>22 (73%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#19</td>
<td>14 (47%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#20</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#21</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>22 (73%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#22</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22 (73%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#23</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26 (87%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#24</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (20%)</td>
<td>23 (77%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#25</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>22 (73%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#26</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>23 (77%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#28</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>25 (83%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q#29</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>