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Child Care Providers Who Commit Sexual Offences

A Description of Offender, Offence, and Victim Characteristics

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The aim of this investigation was to undertake an exploratory analysis of child care providers who sexually offend against children and adolescents and the circumstances related to these offences. Archival Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System (ViCLAS) reports were obtained from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and demographic and criminal characteristics for the offender, as well as information about the victim and offence, were selected for analyses. A descriptive approach was used to analyze the qualitative reports for a group of 305 Canadian sexual offenders between 1995 and 2002. Adult male ($N = 163$) and female ($N = 14$), along with juvenile male ($N = 100$) and female ($N = 28$) child care providers who were involved in a sexual offence against a child or adolescent are described. This article provides unique information about the crimes committed by child care providers in that it is focused on crime characteristics, rather than on personality or treatment variables. Furthermore, it represents a comprehensive examination of this type of offender by including understudied groups, namely juvenile and female offenders.

Keywords: *sexual offenders; child care providers; day care; adolescent sex offenders; female sex offenders*

It has been hypothesized that some sexual offenders seek out positions of authority for the purpose of increasing access to children and opportunities to offend

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(Waterhouse, 2000, as cited in Sullivan & Beech, 2002). Many studies have demonstrated that a meaningful proportion of sexual offences occur while the perpetrator is providing child care to the victim (Colton & Vanstone, 1998; deYoung, 1982; Fehrenbach, Smith, Monastersky, & Deisher, 1986; Finkelhor & Williams, 1988; Margolin, 1991; Sullivan, & Beech, 2002; Wasserman, Kappel, Coffin, Aronson, & Walton, 1986). Given the increasing reliance on public and/or nonparental child care services it is important to better understand the characteristics and risks associated with crimes committed in this context.

The Nature of Sexual Abuse in Child Care Settings

In response to high-profile cases in the United States, a large-scale study of sexual abuse in formal and informal day care facilities between 1983 and 1985 was undertaken and reported by Finkelhor and Williams (1988). Based on their data, the authors suggest that 1,300 children were sexually abused in 267 day care centers and family-home care facilities over a 3-year period. Although directors (16%), teachers (30%), and nonprofessional staff (15%; e.g., volunteers, teaching aides) represented a large proportion of the abusers, individuals employed as noncare providers (8%) or family and friends (25%) of the primary care providers were also likely to perpetrate abuse. The authors note a gender difference in that those providing primary care were most likely to be females (90% were employees at the care facility), whereas noncare providers or proxy care providers were more likely to be male.

In their extensive analysis of this problem Finkelhor and Williams (1988) provided descriptions of the offenders, offences, and victims in a format similar to our study. They found that women were overrepresented in this domain of sexual abuse and often acted in conjunction with another perpetrator (47% of cases). Compared with male offenders, female sexual abusers were more socially integrated, better educated, and less likely to have a history of deviant behaviour. Victims were found to be equally distributed based on gender, which suggests a slight overrepresentation of boy victims in this setting. Victims abused at day care were also quite young (3 to 4 years old), likely reflecting the modal age of children in child care services.

With respect to offence characteristics, Finkelhor and Williams (1988) reported that most offences took place in private areas of the facility, such as bathrooms and offices, and were most likely to occur during nap times or during other times of the days when staff presence was low or few other children were around. Finally, the most typical sexual acts perpetrated were fondling and touching, although a number of children experienced oral-genital contact, penetration, and/or were forced to sexually abuse other children.

Three previous studies by Margolin (Margolin, 1991; Margolin & Craft, 1989, 1990) have investigated sexual abuse in child care settings. In a comparison of adolescent and adult caregivers, Margolin and Craft (1990) reported that although

adolescent babysitters accounted for 25% of the physical abuse reported to a child protection service, their offences were not more violent than those physical assaults committed by adults. Furthermore, relationship to the victim and victim gender were not related to the severity of physical abuse. However, focusing on cases of sexual abuse specifically, the age of the offender was related to the severity of the offence, with adolescents being responsible for the greatest number (44%), the most intrusive, and the most violent sexual offences. Overall, the authors reported that females were more likely to be both physically and sexually victimized by both male and female perpetrators, a fact that has been consistently found in victimization reports (Badgely et al., 1984; Finkelhor & Russell, 1984). A final note was that male caregivers were more likely to sexually abuse their charges compared to female caregivers. This is despite the fact that in 2004, females represented 76% of the labour force in the education and health/social service industries in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2004) and we speculate that they represent even greater numbers when referring to child care specifically.

In another study on sexual abuse by caregivers, Margolin (1991) examined the specific types of child care situations. Using ethnographic content analysis, interviews, and files of 325 case records from the Iowa Child Abuse Registry were examined. Seven different scenarios were identified in which a child was sexually abused while in the care of someone other than the parent. The most common situation involved the child being cared for by his or her regular babysitter. In these cases, the caregiver was selected by the parent, paid for his or her time, and provided routine care for the child. According to this study, one third of the offences were committed by female sexual offenders. These women offended against both boys (55%) and girls, as compared with the male offenders, who offended against girls predominantly (69%). Another feature of this group was that offenders and victims were younger compared with those in other caregiving categories. The perpetrators were approximately 17 years old, and the victims were approximately 5.5 years old (Margolin, 1991). Margolin did not examine adolescents as a distinct group, but they are clearly included in this sample.

The second most common situation, also in the context of regular care, occurred when a friend, family member, or partner of the regular caregiver offended against the victim. Although they were not formally responsible for the care of the child, according to the study these individuals were often around the children and offered surrogate supervision when the regular caregiver was ill or away from the child. Sexual abuse was also perpetrated by live-in caregivers and by adult friends of the child or family friends responsible for supervising or babysitting the child (but often not for pay). The final two scenarios described victims who were sexually abused while at a sleepover, at which the assumption was that the residing parent was providing care, and in child care situations in which the parent was in crisis and left the child with an irregular caregiver. Sadly, these scenarios included a number of reports of the parent leaving the child with a caregiver who was known to have a history of

child molestation or whom the child had previously accused of molestation. In all but the regular caregiver category, males were responsible for at least 83% of the offences.

Other research aimed at describing personal or psychological factors has indicated that child care providers who commit sexual offences are characteristically either authoritarian or controlling in their presentation (Sloan, 1988) and have a tendency to use entrapment or emotional manipulation to gain victim compliance rather than the grooming behaviours often associated with childhood sexual abuse. This is likely reflective of the inherent authority and trust vested in the position of caregiving. Therefore, instructions to comply with sexual abuse may be presented in the same manner as other demands for compliance. An additional characteristic, which appears to be unique to this group, is the higher frequency of cases that involve multiple offenders working together in the preparation and commission of the offence (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988; Gallagher, 1999; White & Hart, 1995). This is particularly true of female sexual offenders, where between 25% and 73% of female offenders committed abuse in conjunction with another defendant, often male (Faller, 1995; Finkelhor & Russell, 1984; Finkelhor & Williams, 1988; Kaufman, Wallace, Johnson, & Reeder, 1995). A review of the relevant literature suggests that there are some unique characteristics of this population, the sexual offences they commit, and their potential victims, that are worthy of specific investigation. This is particularly important given the proportion of children in nonparental child care and the number of children sexually abused in this context.

Female Sexual Abusers and Child Care

Despite a social reluctance to acknowledge female sexual abusers, reports suggest that they account for between 3% and 15% of all sexual offences (Faller, 1995; Finkelhor & Russell, 1984; Finkelhor & Williams, 1988; Grayston & DeLuca, 1999; Thomlison, Stephens, Cunes, Grinnell, & Krysik, 1991). A number of studies have identified child care provision as a common context within which females sexually offend against children (Faller, 1995; Kaufman et al., 1995). According to Faller (1995) child care provision is the second most common context (30%), after incest, in which females commit sexual offences (see also Finkelhor & Williams, 1988).

In their review of female sexual offenders Grayston and DeLuca (1999) provided a summary of characteristics typical of this group based on descriptive and clinical reports. The authors described the typical female sexual offender as in her 20s or 30s, raised in a dysfunctional family, and in many cases the offender had experienced physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse. In their review they concluded that female sexual offenders likely experienced many problems in their lives, including psychological disturbance and substance abuse. These offenders described deviant arousal and appear to have distorted perceptions surrounding sex with children.

Lastly, these women typically offended against preschool-aged boys and girls. It is interesting to note that many of these characteristics are similar to those associated with male sexual offenders, including deviant sexual arousal, cognitive distortions associated with child abuse, and psychological and substance abuse problems (Kaufman et al., 1995; Marshall, Anderson, & Fernandez, 1999; Marshall, Laws, & Barbaree, 1990).

In their description of female sexual abusers in day care settings Finkelhor and Williams (1988) noted that compared with male offenders, females abused more children, younger children, were more intrusive in their sexual abuse, and were more likely to use force and engage in ritualistic abuse. The authors acknowledge that this may represent a potential bias to report the most disturbing offences. Indeed, they note that sexual offences committed by females were least likely to result in criminal charges.

Juvenile Sexual Abusers and Child Care

Care and supervision of young children is a scenario in which juveniles, both male and female, may also sexually offend. In 2003, adolescent offenders accounted for 558 sexual crimes in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2003). Some studies have estimated that adolescents are responsible for approximately 20% of sexual assaults and 30% of child sexual abuse (Davis & Leitenberg, 1987). These data do not distinguish between male and female offenders, but some accounts have estimated that females represent 22% of juvenile sexual offences (Johnson, 1989). In our study the term juvenile is used to describe all nonadult individuals, both children and adolescents.

Examination of juvenile offenders reveals that both males and females are characterized by problematic childhood experiences. Becker (1998) reported that these offenders were raised in negative family environments that are characterized by substance abuse, psychological disturbance, sexualized behaviour in caregivers, and emotionally distant or intrusive relationships with parents. She also found that many of these offenders had experienced some form of physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse. In fact, according to retrospective studies, between 93% and 100% of female offenders have been sexually abused, and so have between 25% and 57% of male offenders (Becker, 1998; Johnson, 1989). Male adolescent sexual offenders may share more characteristics with generally delinquent youth as compared with female sexual offenders and typically report a more dysfunctional history compared to adult male sexual offenders (Becker, 1998). For a comprehensive examination of the factors involved in juvenile sexual offending, the reader is directed to Barbaree and Marshall (2005).

In an analysis of sexual abuse in day care settings Finkelhor and Williams (1988) determined that adolescents were responsible for 14% of the sexual abuse cases, and most perpetrators were male. One third of the adolescent sexual abusers were employed at the child care facility; the remaining subjects were family members of the primary caregiver and thus provided proxy care and/or supervision in the setting.

Similar to Becker's (1998) results, evidence of psychological and substance abuse problems were characteristic of many of the adolescent offenders.

According to a typology of adolescent sexual offenders, one type of female sexual offender was defined by abuse committed while providing child care (Matthews, Hunter, & Vuz, 1997). This type of offender was described as sexually motivated and lacking psychopathology and prior victimization, which represents a different dynamic compared with some of the other descriptions of adolescent sexual abusers and female sexual abusers. One explanation for juvenile sexual abuse in the context of child care comes from O'Brien and Bera (1986). They have suggested that sexual offences by adolescents in general may be a function of poor peer relationships and a tendency to gravitate toward younger children. These potential offenders may seek out opportunities to provide child care, which legitimizes the time spent with younger peers.

Similar to most research on sexual offenders, the data collected to date have reflected some psychological and treatment descriptions but few offence characteristics. Although Finkelhor and Williams' (1988) study provided information on offender, offence, and victim characteristics, this study is more than 20 years old and is based on American data. Our investigation is part of an ongoing research project evaluating sexual offenders in positions of trust/authority. Data gathered from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Archival Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System (ViCLAS) files provided information on offender (e.g., marital status, substance abuse), offence (e.g., location of offence, sexual acts committed during offence, motivation for offence), and victim (e.g., age, gender, activity at time of offence) characteristics. The purpose of this research was to compile descriptive profiles for child care providers who sexually offend.

Method

Procedure for Data Collection and Coding

Information for the study was obtained from ViCLAS crime reports for child care providers who were considered high-probability offenders, under investigation, charged, and/or prosecuted for a sexual offence. These reports were obtained following a request submitted to the RCMP to view data gathered from ViCLAS summaries of investigations, charges, and/or convictions involving perpetrators whose relationship with the victim was one of trust (e.g., clergy, teachers). It is important to note that for the purpose of the RCMP crime database, the identity of an offender does not have to be established by charge or conviction. If, as a result of the investigation, the investigator(s) is satisfied that the identity of the offender is known, then the person can and should be listed as the offender.

When a sexual or violent crime occurs, investigating officers from municipal and provincial police forces in Canada complete a ViCLAS booklet of standardized

questions, with one booklet completed for each of the incidents involving the offender. If an offender has more than one victim, a separate booklet is completed for each victim. Similarly, a separate booklet is completed for each unique incident, even if it involves the same perpetrator and victim. Each question in the booklet provides a series of response options (e.g., the question of marital status includes the following response options: single, married/common law, separated, divorced, widowed, homosexual relationship, and other). Investigating officers make judgements based on information gathered during the course of the investigation, such as interviews with offenders, victims, and collateral sources, as well as physical evidence. These officers undergo extensive training in the descriptions and coding of information gathered during the course of the investigation. Unfortunately, no examination of the reliability of such reports has been completed to date. However, such a study is currently underway (M. Martineau, personal communication, October 20, 2005). The completed booklet is then forwarded to one of 10 provincial RCMP centers, where a trained investigator enters the data into a specialized database for serious and violent crime. Provincial databases are linked to a centralized RCMP file, which is regularly updated with new crime reports. Each crime report contains more than 200 variables regarding offender and victim characteristics as well as crime scene information. As such, they provide a valuable source of information.

Each nominal variable (e.g., victim residence) contained many items (e.g., living with both parents, living with single parents, living with siblings, living in group home/residential school, etc.). With the exception of the apparent age and gender of the offender and victim, variables were coded into dichotomous items indicating the presence or absence of the characteristic, thus creating various categories for each variable. This was necessary because many variables had between 20 and 30 descriptors. Variables were selected based on completeness of the data and the relevance to the intended goal of the study (i.e., to examine descriptive characteristics of crimes committed by child care providers).

Participants

The inclusion criteria requested information for those incidents that resulted in investigation, charges, or prosecution of perpetrators whose relationship to the victim was identified as a nonfamilial care provider. From this complete database, offenders were organized into four categories based on gender (male or female) and age (< 18 or ≥ 18). This resulted in a sample of 163 adult males, 14 adult females, 100 juvenile males, and 28 juvenile females who had come to the attention of the RCMP for a sexual offence against a child or adolescent who had been in their care between 1995 and 2002. Given low base rates and problems with reporting of sexual offences, it is acknowledged that the data reported here represent only those sexual offences detected and are not representative of all sexual offences committed by child care providers.

In this article, child care providers are nonparental, nonfamilial individuals who provide formal (e.g., registered day care) or informal (e.g., babysitting) child care or supervision to children. Offenders in these scenarios included not only the defined child care provider but also those individuals who provided proxy care by virtue of being in the setting (e.g., partner or child of the primary care provider). Although the nature of the care context could not be determined based on the ViCLAS definition of care provider (i.e., day care/babysitter), other data in the database suggested these parameters to us.

Data Treatment

The data are organized according to identification numbers associated with offenders, victims, and offence incidents. There is no identifying information attached to the codes. Multiple victims were defined as two or more victims. Because one offender may have multiple victims, thus entering into a frequency analysis multiple times, the results would be biased toward those offenders with multiple victims. In our study 18 adult males, 8 adolescent males, 1 adult female, and 2 adolescent females had multiple victims. On a related note, five victims were offended by more than one offender. Typically a nesting procedure would be used to address the confounding of variance, however given the nature of the data (i.e., one sample, dichotomous variables) and analysis (i.e., descriptive statistics), this procedure was not appropriate. Therefore, the most typical case for each offender was selected to enter into the analyses.

Typicality for each offender was determined based on the following factors: completeness of data, victim age and gender, sexual acts perpetrated, and location of offence. When equally typical cases were found within the same offender, greater severity of the sex acts was the discriminating factor. When cases could not be discriminated for typicality for a given offender, the case most typical of the sample was used. This resulted in the exclusion of 52 victims. Because complete information was not available for every offender/victim profile, and because categories were not exclusive, the sums do not always add up to 100 percent, and the sample size will vary depending on how many cases were entered into the analysis.

Data were analyzed using SPSS/Windows version 12.0. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Prior to analysis, study variables were inspected for accuracy of data entry and missing data. Two of the authors were responsible for entering and interpreting coded data. Entry reliability was examined using 10% of the data, and a correlation of $r = .89$ was determined. Cases with more than 10% of data missing were removed from the sample, resulting in the loss of 17 cases. Cases with missing data were not included in individual frequency analyses. Therefore, frequency analyses reflected total counts (i.e., total count = total – missing). The findings in the Results have been organized into two sections. The first section reviews descriptive results for adult offenders, and the second summarizes the findings for juvenile offenders.

Results

Adult Child Care Providers Who Commit Sexual Offences

Adult male sexual offenders. The analysis included demographic information about the offender and victim as well as a summary of the characteristics of the sexual crimes committed by adult male child care providers. Results for the adult female offenders are summarized below. One hundred and sixty-three adult men were included in the study. The mean number of victims was 1.2 and ranged from 1 to 15 victims per offender. Two offenders abused the same victim, which suggests that they were co-perpetrators. An intriguing aspect of the information collected by the RCMP officers was that they noted the apparent age of the offender and the victim(s), as opposed to the chronological age. As part of a descriptive profile, this knowledge may serve as an investigative tool and aid the investigating officer in targeting particular suspects because the apparent age provides a more accurate description of how the offender and victim look and act. The mean apparent age of the sample was 37.2 years ($SD = 13.4$), and the modal age was 32 years, with ages ranging from 18 to 71 years. Of the adult males sampled, 56% were single, 31% were married or common law, 10% were divorced, and 3% were defined as other, which included being widowed, separated, or in a homosexual relationship.

By definition the offender was known to the victim as a care provider. However, in some cases the offender had additional relationships with the victim. In 26% of the cases, the offender was an acquaintance of the victim, 10% were neighbors, 10% were defined as other, and 4% were friends of the victim. In most cases the provision of child care was not the offender's primary occupation. Table 1 shows the occupational categories of the adult sample. Most offences committed by adult males were described as sexually motivated (99%), as compared with excitement/thrill seeking (12%), and mental illness (4%).

According to the file information, 12% of the adult male offenders reported or had been treated for problems with alcohol, 11% acknowledged sexual problems, and 9% described mental health problems. Fourteen percent of adult male offenders were under the influence of alcohol at the time of the offence.

Table 2 provides data about adult and juvenile offenders' methods of establishing contact with the victim. It is evident that the vast majority of adult male offenders abused their position as care provider and the authority vested in this position to initiate sexual contact with the victims.

Adult male offenders were most likely to offend against female victims (76%). Victims had a mean apparent age of 7.1 years ($SD = 3.3$), and the modal age was 6 years, with a range of <1 year to 16 years old. In these cases, 85% of the victims were under the age of 10 years, and 33% of the victims were under the age of 5 years. Victims were most likely to be residing with both parents (61%) at the time of the

Table 1
Adult Offenders' Occupations

Occupation	Percentage of Cases (Frequency)	
	Adult Males (<i>n</i> = 98)	Adult Females (<i>n</i> = 11)
Unemployed	29 (28)	27 (3)
Other	26 (25)	
Child care provider	10 (10)	45 (5)
Unskilled laborer	10 (10)	
Mobile (i.e., truck driver)	9 (8)	
Farmer	4 (4)	
Food services	3 (3)	
Factory worker	3 (3)	
Teacher	2 (2)	9 (1)
Clergy	2 (2)	
Criminal enterprise	2 (2)	
Student		9 (1)
Office worker		9 (1)

Note: Percentages will not sum to 100. More than one option may be applied to each offender.

Table 2
Manner of Victim Contact in Adult and Juvenile Offenders

Contact Type	Percentage of Cases (Frequency)			
	Juvenile Male (<i>n</i> = 100)	Juvenile Female (<i>n</i> = 27)	Adult Male (<i>n</i> = 163)	Adult Female (<i>n</i> = 11)
Used authority	74 (74)	63 (17)	62 (101)	63 (7)
Befriended the victim	52 (52)	44 (12)	46 (75)	36 (4)
Offered job, money, gift	8 (8)	4 (1)	17 (28)	9 (1)
Other			15 (24)	
Victim was sleeping	6 (6)		11 (18)	
Posed as an authority figure	1 (1)	30 (8)	5 (8)	18 (2)
Sneaked up on victim			3 (5)	
Wanted to show something	8 (8)	4 (1)	3 (5)	9 (1)
Solicited victim for sex	4 (4)			
Threatened with weapon	1 (1)			
Posed as repair person	1 (1)			
Immediately overpowered victim	1 (1)			
Lay in wait by building		4 (1)		

Note: Percentages will not sum to 100. More than one option may be applied to each offender.

Table 3
Sexual Acts Attempted and/or Committed by Adult and Juvenile Offenders

Sexual Acts	Percentage of Cases (Frequency)			
	Juvenile Males (<i>n</i> = 100)	Juvenile Females (<i>n</i> = 27)	Adult Males (<i>n</i> = 163)	Adult Females (<i>n</i> = 14)
Fondling	56 (56)	59 (16)	69 (112)	86 (12)
Rub penis against victim	19 (19)		21 (34)	
Digital penetration	23 (23)	15 (4)	19 (31)	14 (2)
Masturbation	23 (23)	4 (1)	19 (31)	14 (2)
Other			18 (29)	
Fellatio	28 (28)	4 (1)	16 (26)	14 (2)
Kissing	11 (11)		15 (24)	14 (2)
Vaginal intercourse	8 (8)	4 (1)	14 (23)	
Anal intercourse	9 (9)		13 (21)	
Simulated intercourse	9 (9)	11 (3)	8 (13)	
Cunnilingus	11 (11)	30 (8)	8 (13)	7 (1)
Licking	7 (7)	11 (3)	7 (11)	
Tickling	3 (3)		4 (7)	
Ejaculation on victim	2 (2)			
Sucking body parts	1 (1)	15 (4)		
Inanimate object insertion	1 (1)	15 (5)		
Perform acts with animals	1 (1)	4 (1)		
Slapping/spanking	1 (1)	7 (2)		

Note: Percentages will not sum to 100. More than one option may be applied to each offender.

offence, although a large proportion (33%) were living with a single parent, and 4% were living with relatives (e.g., grandparents).

The largest proportion of offences took place in either the care provider's or the victim's residence (96%). Table 3 summarizes the sexual acts performed by the adult and juvenile offenders during the offence. These sexual acts were performed by the offender or he/she forced the victim to perform the act. The most common acts perpetrated by an adult male included fondling, the offender rubbing his penis against the victim, and digital penetration. Most victims (87%) did not sustain any physical injuries: 8% experienced minor physical injuries (requiring no medical treatment), and the remaining 5% sustained moderate-to-severe injuries (requiring medical attention). The victim-offender contact ended with the victim being released in 86% of the cases. In 10% of the cases, the offence was interrupted or the victim was rescued (i.e., a third party intervened), and in 4% of cases the victim escaped.

Adult female sexual offenders. The same variables were examined for the group of 14 adult female sexual offenders. Although this sample is small, the offences

committed by these women represented a meaningful proportion of the offences committed in a child care context, and we felt they should be described here. Like the analyses above, offender, victim, and offence characteristics were considered. Female perpetrators offended against between one and four victims. In one case, the female offender had a male co-perpetrator. The mean apparent age of the adult female offenders was 32 years ($SD = 22$), and the modal age was 20 years, with ages ranging from 18 to 58 years. Of the adult female offenders, 58% were single, 25% were married or common law, and 16% were divorced. Although most (45%) adult female offenders were employed as a child care provider, some individuals had other types of work. Table 1 shows the occupational categories of the adult female offenders.

In this sample, offenders did not have other relationships with the victims and were known to the victims as the care provider only. The offenders had a variety of ways of establishing contact with the victim, but in most cases, as with the adult male offenders, adult female offenders typically abused their position of trust as care provider to initiate sexual contact with the victims. All of the offences were described as sexually motivated (100%), and a small proportion were described as motivated by thrill or excitement seeking (15%) or mental illness (6%) as well. According to the file information, two female offenders reported being treated for problems with drugs, two acknowledged sexual problems, and one offender described mental health problems. Two offenders were under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of the offence.

Female perpetrators offended against eight males and six female victims. Victims had a mean apparent age of 5.1 years ($SD = 4.1$), and the modal age was 3 years, with a range from 1 to 14 years. In these cases, 12 of the 14 victims were less than 10 years old, and 64% of the victims were less than 5 years old. Victims were most likely to be residing with both parents (86%) at the time of the offence. Other living arrangements included living with a single parent (7%), living with a foster parent (7%), and living with other children (14%).

The offences took place at either the offender's residence (57%) or the victim's residence (47%). Table 3 summarizes the sexual acts attempted or committed during the offence. The most common act performed by adult female offenders was fondling and grabbing the victim. Most victims did not sustain any physical injuries (80%), although one victim experienced minor physical injuries (requiring no medical treatment), and one victim sustained moderate-to-severe injuries (requiring medical attention). The victim-offender contact ended with the victim being released in 83% of the cases. In one case the victim escaped, and one case ended in the victim's death.

Juvenile Child Care Providers Who Commit Sexual Offences

Juvenile male sexual offenders. The same offender, offence, and victim characteristics were reviewed for the juvenile offenders. One hundred juvenile males were

examined because of their involvement in a sexual offence against a child in their care. The number of victims per offender ranged from one to six. These offenders had a mean apparent age of 13.9 years ($SD = 1.7$), and the modal age was 14 years, with ages ranging from 10 to 17 years.

Given their age, it is not surprising that 98% of the juvenile male offenders were single, although one individual was married, and one was in a homosexual relationship. Seventy-five percent of the offenders were defined as students, 24% were employed as regular babysitters/day care workers, and another 8% worked in areas such as food services and unskilled labour.

Based on the inclusion criteria, the offender's relationship to the victim at the time of the offence was as the child care provider. The offender and victim were known to one another as neighbors (20%), acquaintances (18%), and long-term friends (9%) as well. In 2% of the cases the victim and offender had never met prior to the offence occasion. Most offences committed were described as sexually motivated (97%), but motivations of thrill seeking (16%) and mental illness (4%) were identified as well.

Regarding psychological concerns, one youth reported treatment for alcohol problems, one for drug problems, one for fire setting, five sought help for psychological concerns, and five had previously been treated for sexual problems. One offender reported that he was intoxicated at the time of the offence, and two were under the influence of drugs. In most cases, juvenile male offenders abused their authority as the care provider to initiate sexual contact with the victim. Table 2 summarizes the ways in which the offenders made contact with the victims.

Sixty-four percent of the victims were female. Victims had a mean apparent age of 5.4 years ($SD = 2.2$), and the modal age was 5 years, with an age range from 1 to 12 years. In these cases, 90% of the victims were under the age of 9 years. Victims were most likely to be residing with both parents (75%) at the time of the offence, although a large proportion (22%) lived with a single parent, relatives (8%), and other children, including siblings (8%).

The offence most likely took place at the victim's residence (70%), followed by the offender's residence (19%), and fields (6%). A number of single offences were committed at the following locations: tent or camper, offender's workplace, a business/store, offender's vehicle, a religious facility, recreation centre, alley, yard or schoolyard, playground, or public park. Although these examples do not speak to where most juvenile males offend, the list represents the diversity of offence locations for this group. Table 3 summarizes the sexual acts performed and/or attempted during the offence. The most common acts included fondling/grabbing and fellatio. Most victims did not sustain any physical injuries (88%), although 10% experienced minor physical injuries (requiring no medical treatment), and 2% required medical attention. The offence ended with the victim being released in 92% of the cases. In two cases the victim escaped, and six victims were rescued or the offence was interrupted (i.e., a third party intervened).

Juvenile female sexual offenders. Twenty-eight female youth committed sexual offences against between one and four victims per offender. In one case, three juvenile female offenders were co-perpetrators. The mean apparent age of the sample was 12.9 years ($SD = 1.8$), and the modal age was 12 years, with ages ranging from 9 to 17 years. Not surprisingly, all of the juvenile female offenders were single, and 77% of them were defined as students. However, 18% were employed as regular babysitters/day care workers, and one individual was employed as a prostitute.

Based on the inclusion criteria, the offender's relationship to the victim was as the child care provider. However, there were additional labels used to define how the offender and victim knew one another, including acquaintances (14%), neighbors (7%), and friends (3.5%). Most offences committed were described as sexually motivated (97%) or due to mental illness (3%). One juvenile female offender reported treatment for psychological concerns, and one offender reported that she was under the influence of alcohol at the time. No other problems were identified for this group.

In most cases the juvenile female offender abused her authority as the care provider to initiate sexual contact with the victim. Sixty-one percent of the victims were female. Victims had a mean apparent age of 4.6 years ($SD = 1.5$), and the modal age was 4 years, with an age range from 2 to 8 years. In these cases, 75% of the victims were less than 6 years old. Victims were most likely to be residing with both parents (66%) at the time of the offence, although a large proportion (30%) were living with a single parent, relatives (11%), other children including siblings (7%), and in foster care (1%).

The offence was most likely to take place at or around (e.g., in the yard) the victim's residence (80%). Seven percent of the offences occurred at the care provider's residence, and 7% were committed at a park. Table 3 summarizes the sexual acts performed and/or attempted during the offence. The most common acts included fondling and cunnilingus, followed by the offender requesting sexual contact from the victim. Most victims did not sustain any physical injuries (91%), although 9% experienced minor physical injuries (requiring no medical treatment). The victim-offender contact ended with the victim being released in 86% of the cases. In 14% of the cases, the offence was interrupted or the victim was rescued (i.e., a third party intervened).

Discussion

Compilation and analysis of detailed ViCLAS crime reports yielded informative and useful descriptions of child care providers who commit sexual offences, their potential victims, and the offences themselves. This is an important step in understanding this specific population and the characteristics of the sexual crimes they commit.

Those who sexually offend while in a position of trust present unique considerations for two reasons. The first is that this group is difficult to detect, given their often unsupervised access to victims and the trust that is bestowed upon them. These

two factors likely discourage victims from reporting the offence. Second, because victims trust these offenders, they may experience even more and longer lasting effects of the sexual abuse, given the betrayal inherent in the offence.

Profile Summaries for Sexual Offenders Providing Child Care

Adult offenders. Analysis of the offender characteristics revealed that in both the male and female groups, offenders were likely to be single. Having never been married is a known risk factor for male sexual offenders (Hanson & Bussière, 1998). It is interesting to note that a slightly different issue appears to be at play with female offenders. Grayston and DeLuca (1999) reviewed research on the relationships of female sexual offenders and found that they typically had married quite young, but were likely to be separated or divorced at the time of the offence. As with men, relationships may represent a protective factor for female child care sexual abusers. Another risk factor for male sexual offenders is relative youthfulness, typically defined as being less than 25 years old. The average age for incarcerated male and female offenders in Canada is 32 years (Dell & Boe, 1998; Dell, Sinclair, & Boe, 1998). This was the same average age for the male and female sexual offenders in this study. However, upon closer inspection, the modal age for the female offenders was 20 years and more consistent with previous research on female sexual abusers (Grayston & DeLuca, 1999; Kaufman et al., 1995).

This database revealed that although male offenders are responsible for a large proportion of sexual offences, female offenders also played a significant role. Research on adult female sexual offenders is rare, but it appears that the child care context may represent a likely modus operandi for such offenders. There appears to be a greater proportion of female offenders represented in this sample compared with national statistics on offender sex, which suggest that in 1996 women offended at a rate of 66 per 10,000 in Canada, as compared with men, who offended at a rate of 331 per 10,000 (Dell & Boe, 1998; Dell et al., 1998).

Many of the findings reported in previous studies (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988; Margolin, 1991; Margolin & Craft, 1990) were supported in this analysis of adults who sexually offended against children in their care. Adult male perpetrators offended against female victims predominantly, as compared with adult females for whom victim gender was approximately evenly distributed. Other research has suggested that although female victims remain more at risk, victims abused in child care contexts are roughly evenly distributed (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988; Margolin, 1991). According to Finkelhor and Williams, boys may be at an increased risk in child care as evidenced by their finding that 38% of victims in cases of child care abuse were boys, as compared with national rates of 29% in the United States. Female sexual offenders are often cited as engaging in abuse with multiple perpetrators (Grayston & DeLuca, 1999; Kaufman et al., 1995). This finding was not supported in our study in which only two instances of multiple perpetrators involved

females. This finding may be a product of the manner in which data is collected and coded in ViCLAS. Each victim–offender pair is coded individually, and so victims abused by multiple offenders were captured. However, abuse situations with multiple offenders may involve parallel abuse of multiple victims, especially when considering abuse in child care settings in which many potential victims are accessible. Therefore, multiple offenders may not have been represented in coded reports aimed at describing the features of an individual offender-victim contact.

Consistent with previous studies suggesting that females may be more serious sexual offenders (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988; Grayston & DeLuca, 1999), in our study females offended against younger victims and were more violent as compared with male abusers. These results should be interpreted with some caution because estimates of violence were based on a small number of cases for female offenders. Another caveat is that cases in which a female was the perpetrator are less likely to be reported (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988) and there is a general reluctance to pursue female suspects and to incarcerate them (Marvasti, 1986). Therefore, detected cases may represent the most serious offences.

Adult females were known to the victims as care providers only and were most likely employed in this area, as compared with a variety of relationships between adult male offenders and victims and with males being less likely to be employed as a child care provider. This may reflect the scenario described by Margolin (1991) in which the victim is abused by a friend, partner, or family member of the regular care provider. This is further corroborated by the fact that most offences took place in either the offenders' or victims' homes, where these proxy caregivers likely had greater access to the victims. Formal day care was rarely identified as the location of a sexual offence across offender type.

Both male and female adult offenders were sexually motivated. This finding is consistent with previous reports on motivation for offending (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988; Grayston & DeLuca, 1999), which found that sexual arousal and fantasy were indicated as motives for sexual abuse. To initiate contact, both males and females abused their position of authority to sexually offend against the victim. In this way the offenders were more directive compared with other modes of contact, which resemble more conventional examples of grooming behaviour. This is consistent with the findings of Gallagher (1999), who described child care providers who sexually offend as authoritarian and controlling. Although previous research has found no differences between male and female sexual offenders in their use of coercion, threats, or force, males are described as more likely to engage in grooming behaviours than are women (Kaufman et al., 1995).

Both groups described problems with alcohol, sexual behaviour concerns, and psychological problems. However, relatively low levels were reported compared with other research, which finds that sexual offenders tend to experience difficulties in these areas (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988; Grayston & DeLuca, 1999; see also Firestone et al., 2000; Wexler, Firestone, & Bradford, 2004). Previous research has

identified psychological and substance abuse problems as characteristic of female sexual offenders (Grayston & DeLuca, 1999; Johnson, 1989); however female offenders, both adults and juveniles reported relatively few concerns in our study. Research on female child care providers who sexually offend has been mixed with respect to this issue. However, some evidence suggests that female child care providers who sexually offend are better socially integrated and are less likely to have a history of crime, psychological/sexual disturbance, and substance use problems (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988). Similarly, in a typology of female juvenile sexual offenders, one type of offender is defined by the commission of abuse in a child care context and the lack of evidence of psychological problems (Matthews et al., 1997). Conversely, in their typology of female child care providers who sexually offend, Finkelhor and Williams describe all three types of women as characterized by psychological disturbance of some kind. These types of findings and interpretations highlight the ongoing need to study female sexual offenders, and in this context particularly.

Male and female offenders were equally unlikely to be under the influence of alcohol at the time of the offence. Previous research has found that intoxication is commonly linked to criminal behaviours in both groups (Martin, Bryant, & Fitzgerald, 2001). However, our results may be a function of factors associated with the location, timing, and nature of the context, such that offender may be less likely to be intoxicated at work.

The distribution of sexual acts perpetrated or attempted was similar for both male and female offenders, with fondling the most common act. In their comparison of male and female sexual offenders in general Kaufman et al. (1995), found no significant differences between the sexual acts committed. In their comparison of male and female child care providers who had sexually offended, Finkelhor and Williams (1988) found no gender differences, and noted that fondling and touching were the most common mode of abuse.

Juvenile offenders. Male and female juveniles who sexually offended against children in their care shared many characteristics. They were likely to be single and students. This group showed more diversity in the offence location, particularly for males. The location of offending likely reflects either babysitting positions or the proxy care involved in supervising children who would otherwise be cared for by the primary caregiver, often the offender's parent, or other family member. It is interesting to note that juvenile males demonstrated greater diversity in the types of offence locations. Perhaps juvenile males were charged with supervising younger children on excursions or during activities outside of the home.

Male youth offenders were slightly older compared with female offenders, who were somewhat younger in our study as compared with previous research (Grayston & DeLuca, 1999). The victims of both groups were approximately the same age (5 and 4 years old, respectively), and this is consistent with other studies suggesting

that preschool age is correlated with abuse in child care (Finkelhor & Russell, 1984; Finkelhor & Williams, 1988; Johnson, 1989). It is important not to overstate this relationship, as this age group represents the age at which most children are in child care. Younger children may still be at home, and older children have likely begun school.

Both groups had similar relationships to victims as a care provider, although two of the male offenders had never met the victims before. Although the data did not allow us to investigate relationships in more depth, based on previous research, Finkelhor and Williams (1988) found that in two thirds of cases, adolescent offenders were family members of the primary care provider.

Juvenile sexual abusers were more likely to offend against female victims. Male and female youth offenders were equally likely to fondle the victim and perform oral sex on the victim. Female offenders were less injurious as compared with the male offenders, as evidenced by their having more victims with no physical injuries and likelihood of the victim-offender contact ending with the release of victims. Male juvenile offenders reported more psychological disturbance, substance abuse, and sexual problems as compared with female offenders. Psychological problems and substance abuse have been consistently identified in the research as characteristics of juvenile male and female sexual abusers (Becker, 1998; Johnson, 1989; Veneziano & Veneziano, 2002).

Common Factors of Sexual Abuse in Child Care Settings

Consistent with all other research, males, adult or juvenile, are responsible for a larger proportion of sexual offences in a child care context than females. However, whereas females generally represent a small proportion of detected sexual offences in general, they appear to be overrepresented in the care-provision domain. Given the high rates of females in care occupations, the relative lack of supervision in home-based day care or babysitting, and the access to many potential victims, these crimes may be opportunistic in nature. However, another interpretation may be that female sexual abusers are psychologically disturbed and/or sexually motivated, as suggested by high rates of abuse in their own pasts and reports of deviant sexual interest, and thus engage with children in inappropriate ways (Grayston & DeLuca, 1999). Yet another explanation may be that female sexual abusers seek out such occupations in order to meet needs for control over weaker individuals (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988).

Female sexual abusers do appear to have some unique features, such that in all cases adult female abusers were the primary caregivers and used higher rates of force. It is interesting to note that these characteristics were not shared with the juvenile female offenders, who were less threatening and forceful as compared with their male counterparts.

Overall, females were most likely to be victimized sexually by a care provider in all cases, except when the offender was an adult female, confirming again that females are most at risk for sexual abuse. Theorists have suggested that this is a function of their

tendency to be more compliant and easily coerced. However, it is important to reiterate that day care may be a particularly risky place for boys as well (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988). Finkelhor and Williams also point out that younger boys may be more likely to report abuse because they are less socially inhibited by homophobic attitudes. Consistent with previous research, in this study most offenders abused one victim, and approximately 17% of cases involved multiple victims (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988).

Victims in every group were typically quite young (between 3 and 6 years old) and likely to be living with both parents at the time of the offence. As mentioned above, this finding is likely reflective of the fact that preschoolers represent the majority of children in care. In Canadian society, regardless of whether children come from two-parent or single-parent homes, there is reliance on outside child care. Therefore, although most victims came from two-parent homes, this finding should not be interpreted as a risk factor for child care sexual abuse, but rather it is consistent with the breakdown of families in Canada in which 48% of families comprise two parents and 16% are lone-parent families (Statistics Canada, 2001a). More than three out of four couples with children in Canada rely on the income of both parents, thus requiring nonparental child care (Statistics Canada, 2001b).

The offences committed by all groups of offenders often took place at the victim's or offender's home, which is not surprising given the care-provision context of contact. This finding was consistent with the results described by Margolin (1991), which may suggest a risk factor for home-based child care. Finkelhor and Williams (1988) argued that family care facilities potentially provided more opportunities for privacy and less supervision.

Limitations

There are a number of important caveats that must be reviewed for this article. It is acknowledged that the reporting of sexual offences, along with difficulty establishing base rates, limited this analysis to detected sexual offences and is not representative of all child care providers who commit a sexual offence. This is particularly relevant given the low prevalence of female, as compared with male, sexual offenders. However, given that these data represent all those offenders who have been primary suspects, or high-probability offenders, and not strictly those convicted for a sexual offence, these findings are more likely to capture those perpetrators who may be diverted, as is often the case with juvenile offenders in Canada, or possibly dismissed because of a lack of evidence or a reluctance to prosecute.

The information on the female offenders is based on a small sample of offenders, and thus may restrict the generalizability to other child care providers who offend as well as to the broader population of female sexual offenders. Given the low incidence and/or reporting of sexual offences committed by female offenders, the authors felt that these data were important to report despite the small sample. Information about female sexual offenders is limited and so any group patterns may contribute to this

literature. Second, female offenders seemed to be responsible for a larger proportion of child care offences as compared with other offence types or contexts (Margolin, 1991; Moulden, Firestone, Kingston, & Wexler, 2006). This position may represent a likely *modus operandi* for female sexual offenders, and is a domain that should be explored further.

The nature of the data, designed for qualitative and profiling use, precluded comparative analyses because of too many comparisons and inflated family-wise error rates. However, given that so little is known about sexual offences committed in this context, it is the intention of the researchers to provide a comprehensive, Canadian, and up-to-date description of the problem and thus a foundation and platform for further study. There were also limitations surrounding access to specific articles of data. For the purpose of maintaining confidentiality some aspects of offenders, victims, and offence characteristics were restricted in the database provided to us so as to protect the identification of parties, particularly in sensational cases, and, we presume, to avoid generalizations based on racial membership.

Implications and Conclusions for Child Care

Many Canadian families rely on two incomes, which often necessitates care for their children in formal or informal child care settings. The results of this study are not presented to suggest that nonparental child care is a risk factor for sexual abuse, which is not the case (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988). However, this analysis does suggest that this context may reveal descriptions of previously underrepresented sexual offenders (i.e., females and juveniles) and victim groups (i.e., males).

There is evidence that the consequences of sexual abuse by a trusted adult are more negative than is the case when offences are perpetrated by strangers (Bennett, Hughes, & Luke, 2000; Freidrich, Urquiza, & Beilke, 1986; Risman, 2000). In fact, sexual abuse of child female victims by a trusted adult was associated with subsequent sexual abuse of other children and more psychological disturbance (Johnson, 1989). Certainly, in these situations the consequences of sexual abuse appear to be compounded by the betrayal of trust and possibly ambivalent feelings about reporting abuse. This may be particularly relevant for those victims of female sexual abusers and abuse in child care. It seems as a society we are reluctant to acknowledge that females can commit sexual offences, particularly against children. Unfortunately, this may be the most likely place to find these abusers. Employers and parents should be equally thorough in investigating the background of a potential female caregiver as a male caregiver. Unfortunately, the research suggests that police checks are often not sufficient, because many female abusers in child care contexts have no criminal or deviant history (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988; see also Sullivan & Beech, 2002).

Another factor that may compromise the safety of children in child care, is the access of nonstaff and family/friends of the primary caregiver to potential victims.

The findings suggest that in many cases involving male perpetrators, they were not official caregivers but had been left to supervise when the primary care provider ran errands or was away. Based on this information, owner/operators of day care facilities and parents should make themselves aware of who else is in the care center/home and able to access children.

This type of secondary or informal care is also provided by juveniles, likely in informal settings, particularly. In addition, juveniles are often used for babysitting purposes on evenings and weekends. Older children may be overlooked as potential perpetrators of sexual abuse, despite the fact that in this study they accounted for 42% of the offences committed in a child care context. Parents should make sure they know the juvenile supervising or providing care and refrain from leaving children in the care of strangers, as was the case with two offences in this analysis.

This article is part of a larger research project aimed at better understanding sexual offences committed by individuals in a position of authority. It is an attempt to provide a comprehensive description of child care providers who commit sexual offences by including both male and female, as well as adult and juvenile, offenders. The information presented may assist parents and employers in characterizing high-risk individuals and high-risk situations. Furthermore, the specific characteristics may be helpful for those involved with the development of preventative strategies to avoid the sexual exploitation of children and vulnerable populations. Specific recommendations include improved background and reference checks, increased supervision, more stringent limitations regarding access to children by nonstaff members, and use of licensed/formal child care facilities.

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