Female Sex Offenders:

An examination into university student attitudes regarding adult sexual behaviour towards children

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand

Julie Lynell Aitken

2009

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to examine university student attitudes regarding illegal sexual behaviour of women towards children. Attitudes toward sexual abuse are an undeveloped area of research, particularly when a woman perpetrates the abuse. Sexual offences committed by women are rare, although low estimates are speculated to be a result of the myths surrounding the sexual nature of women and the gender role prescribed for them by society. Victims are less likely to report abuse by a female, and authorities are less likely to believe victims of female perpetrated abuse. To examine whether these findings hold true within the New Zealand population, attitudes towards adult sexual behaviours were investigated, using vignettes and the attitudes regarding women's and men's sexualised behaviour towards children questionnaire. The Massey University students in the present study were found to hold different attitudes towards male and female sexual behaviour, following a similar pattern to a United Kingdom study of social workers and police officers. Female sexual behaviour was perceived as less serious and less harmful compared to male sexual behaviour. Effects on the victims of female-perpetrated abuse are discussed as well as future directions for the research of attitudes towards women who commit sexual abuse against children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Mei Williams, whose practical and astute knowledge enabled me to complete this work. I thank you for your time, perspective, and most notably, your patience in supporting and pushing me that bit further. I also would like to thank the crime lab attendees for making it to the meetings and sharing your difficulties and experience of postgraduate studies. We all shared thesis anxiety, and without you, my perspective on the why, how, and what of thesis completion would have been lost. I thank you for your support, thoughtful suggestions, and sense of humour. I would also like to thank Joy Oehlers, Jane Clarke, Fiona Alpass, Janet Mak, and Julie Bunnell for all of their support and administrative advice that has made my journey that bit easier.

I would like to thank my family, who never doubted my decision in embarking on this journey, and who have shown patience and immense support. Words of motivation and encouragement over dinners were a much required and appreciated part of this journey. I extend my heart to my friends and partner; I thank you for always asking how I was going and providing long distance support.

I would lastly like to thank the participants. The area of sexual offending is not an easy topic to discuss, and I thank you all for your time and the thought that went into your responses. I respect and admire that some of you may have brought personal experience into the study, whilst I also respect those who couldn't apologise enough for their lack of knowledge. It was the intent of this study to encompass such differences, and I hope that each of you took something useful away from this experience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Page

Page

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Women and Crime

The rate of women offending has increased over recent years as illustrated by higher apprehension and conviction rates across the majority of offence categories. For example, 91 percent more females compared to 29 percent more males were sentenced in 2003 (Statistics New Zealand [SNZ], 2005). This pattern appears to be similar in America with the conviction rate of female offenders doubling compared to conviction rates of male offenders. The numbers of women convicted had increased by an overall 48 percent, with an 88 percent growth within the inmate population alone since 1990 (Bureau of Justice Statistics [BJS], 1999).

King (2005) reported that New Zealand prison censuses from 1989 to 2001 have shown a 50 percent increase in women sentenced to prison (from 135 in 1989 sentenced to 202 in 2001). The most notable change within this rising female prison population is the increase in violent crimes. Convictions for violent offences committed by women doubled between 1992 and 1997 from 542 to 1,020 convictions, and steadily increased to 1,105 convictions in 2001 (SNZ, 2005). On prison census day in 2001, 202 women were imprisoned (4% of the total prison population) with the majority of convictions being crimes of violence (43%). Furthermore, three percent of the female inmate population were imprisoned for violent sexual offences (King, 2005). Although sexual offences comprise a minority of all reported crime (SNZ, 2005), research is emerging in relation to female sexual offenders and their victims. This study focuses on female sex offenders in the context of a rising female criminal population, and investigates whether societal attitudes towards female sex offenders are linked to the low conviction of child sexual abuse crimes perpetrated by women.

1.2 Prevalence of Female Sex Offenders

Sexual offences committed by adults of both genders, when recorded separately from violent crimes, comprised a total of 0.8 percent of all recorded crime for the year ending 31 December 2007 (SNZ, 2008). This figure appears to be consistent with similar recorded rates from 2005 and 2006 (0.8% of all recorded crime, respectively) and recorded rates of sexual offences as low as 0.7 percent in the years 2003 and 2004 (New Zealand Police, 2006; SNZ, 2005). Sexual offences appear in a minority of reported crime when compared to all other offence categories, such as violent offences (13% of recorded offences in 2007), and dishonesty offences (51% in 2007).

In examining the differences between genders, one percent of all reported crime committed by men in 2005 comprised of sexual offences. However, for women, a figure failed to be reported because; "although women commit sex-related crimes, they are few in number" (SNZ, 2005, p. 119). This statement suggests that women do sexually offend, but the true incidence of female perpetrated child sexual abuse remains unknown. Examination of New Zealand's latest population Census of 2006 (SNZ, 2008) reflects a similar picture, with men remaining consistent at an apprehension rate of one percent, or 2,206 of 172,754 total offences; a figure was also stated for women (0.1% of sexual offences or 49 out of 40,876 total offences).

Child sexual abuse literature suggests a variety of findings of the incidence of women committing sexual offences against children (Allen, 1990; Banning, 1989; Denov, 2001; Elliot, 1993; Faller, 1995; Finkelhor & Russell, 1984; Saradjian & Hanks, 1996). In a study conducted by DeFrancis (1969, as cited in Finkelhor & Russell 1984), three percent of all reported sexual offences were committed by females. A surprising 92 percent of sexual offences were perpetrated by women in an article review of sex offender literature by Grayston and De Luca (1999). Overall, research indicates that women do sexually offend, but that offending occurs in less

than five percent of all sexual offences against children (Bunting, 2005; Finkelhor & Russell, 1984; Grayston & De Luca, 1999).

In terms of New Zealand figures, Poels (2005) reported that 62 females were imprisoned for sexual offending (combined with other offences in some cases such as violent offences) between 1964 and 2005. Of the total prison population for the year 2005, one and a half percent of female inmates had been sentenced for a sex crime. In contrast, women have accounted for two to five percent of all sex offences in the United States. Such a percentage, based on population, calculates to be an estimated 10,000 separate sexual offences committed by women each year (Ferguson & Meehan, 2005). Given the significant potential numbers of females who may sexually offend, it is surprising how few cases are reported, and how limited the knowledge is regarding female sexual offenders.

1.3 Methodolgical Issues in the Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse Crimes

The variance in the prevalence rates of female perpetrated sexual abuse has been attributed to under-reporting and in some cases, over-reporting of abuse crimes. This variance may be a direct result of different reporting strategies. The New Zealand Police official statistics are recorded differently to that of Australia, England, and America (Segessenmann, 2002). In New Zealand, every offence committed by an offender is recorded. For example, if a woman sexually abused a child, and then took photos of her and distributed them, two offences would be recorded (one for the abuse and one for the distribution of photos). In comparison, Australia, England, and America record offences in relation to the number of victims. Using the above example, the same offences would be recorded as one offence as there was only one victim involved (Segessenmann, 2002). As a result, differences in crime rate per country would exhibit New Zealand's crime rate as highly inflated due to this difference in recording strategies.

Blackburn (1993) noted that victimisation surveys and crime self-report surveys may, instead of underestimating crime, escalate it. In a study conducted by Groth, Longo, and McFadin (1982), an anonymous survey was presented to a population of incarcerated male rapists and child sexual offenders. These populations admitted to two to three times more offences than they had been apprehended for. The researcher argues, however, that such self-report surveys may provide a more accurate account of the total number of offences. Shifting self-report surveys from anonymous to confidential status in incarcerated populations provides a more accurate view of offending, as researchers are able to effectively compare recorded offences to those reported by the survey (Mosher, Miethe, & Phillips, 2002).

In contrast to the inflated crime rate, another factor is the under-reporting of sexual offences. This may stem from the victim's ability to report the abuse, as typically, female offenders abuse young; preschool, and school-aged children (Saradjian, 1996). Many victims of both male and female sex crimes are too young to report these crimes or to perceive the behaviour as 'wrong' (Blackburn, 1993). Victims may also refuse to report sexual abuse due to the sexual nature of the crime and the humiliation this can cause, or through the intimidation and potential reprisal offenders use to reduce the chance that the victims will speak up (Andrews & Bonta, 2003; Blackburn, 1993; Safe Network, 2006).

Results from victim self-report surveys further differ from offender self-reported measures. Rudin, Zalewski, and Bodmer-Turner (1995), and Goldman (2000) reported that the latter are studied with an incarcerated population or with offenders recently released from prison. The definition of abuse used in offender studies is; therefore, likely to include more extreme aspects of sexual abuse as these extreme cases have the highest likelihood of coming to the attention of the criminal justice system.

Victimisation studies have consisted of case studies and self-report data using a variety of methodology. Several studies have focused on clinical populations (Faller,

1989; Kalders, Inkster & Britt, 1997; Reinhart, 1987) ranging from sexual abuse victims who have either self-referred, been referred by social agencies for treatment, or are incarcerated sexual offenders with a history of child sexual abuse. Self-report studies have yielded higher incidence rates of female perpetrated sexual abuse (Denov, 2003). Groth (1979) found that out of a sample of 348 convicted male sex offenders, 106 of these men reported histories of childhood sexual abuse. Of those self-reports, 51 percent reported abuse by a male perpetrator and 42 percent by a female perpetrator. Similarly, Allen (1991) found that 45 percent of his sample of 75 convicted male offenders disclosed that their perpetrator was female. In comparison, case-report studies of female perpetrators indicate a much lower prevalence rate of female perpetrated abuse (Denov, 2001). A study conducted by Pierce and Pierce (1985) of reported sexual abuse cases found that of 205 cases, only one percent of victims reported being abused by a female. Studies by Faller (1989) and Reinhart (1987) found similar results.

Notably, the above comparisons reflect the distinct populations in which the data was obtained. Data from incarcerated populations may reflect an inflated representation of the occurrence of female perpetrated sexual abuse. What is apparent from such research is the large discrepancy between the rates of female perpetrated abuse from victims who reported it to authorities compared to those who disclosed it through self-report studies. Researchers remain uncertain as to the true prevalence in which females do commit sexual abuse against children. The prevalence rates based on victim disclosure vary, and the different definitions of child sexual abuse used in the literature may be one key factor that has contributed to this occurrence (Kalders et al., 1997).

1.4 Definition of Child Sexual Abuse

In a study of female college students conducted by Fromuth and Conn (1997), 22 students out of the sample of 546 described situations that would have met the

criteria for committing sexual abuse. However, only three of the 22 (14%) women viewed the occurrence as sexually abusive. This study highlighted the difficulty in defining the term, *sexual abuse*, with the consequence that many sexual abuse crimes may go unreported.

The term "child sexual abuse" is difficult to define. Each word contained within this term has been conceptualised differently according to the profession examining it. Lawmakers, psychologists, and researchers all have differing backgrounds and interests in the terminology (Haugaard, 2000). For example, a psychologist's role may involve helping children and families cope with abuse. Their view of child sexual abuse will be broader, being inclusive of a variety of sexual acts that allows them to provide support to a broader spectrum of families. Lawmakers, in comparison, have a vested interest in prosecuting or in defending the accused. This requires a precise and narrow definition that dictates what interactions between offender and child are prohibited and which are allowed (Haugaard, 2000). The following section examines the terms *child*, and *sexual abuse*, and discusses the difficulties in both the definitional boundaries of the terms and the methodological issues these difficulties present.

At what age is a child classed as a *child* when referring to child sexual abuse? The legal definition of a child in New Zealand is any person aged below 14 years of age (New Zealand Law Society, 2007). However, the age of 16 years is the legal age deemed appropriate for consensual sexual intercourse. Studies on sexual abuse vary on this aspect. For example, researchers may consider children below the age of 18 years young enough to be included in the definition of "child sexual abuse" even when the consensual legal age of sex is below that (Haugaard, 2000). The cut off points appear to vary from an upper limit of 18 years of age to before puberty (Babiker & Herbert, 1998). Such discrepancy between age groups creates difficulty in the comparison of studies and in gaining an accurate account of the prevalence of child sexual abuse.

The more common criterion when defining sexual abuse is the age difference between the victim and the perpetrator. Allen (1991), in his study of female and male child sex offenders, gave the following criterion for the age difference: the victim was less than 16 years of age and at least five years younger than the perpetrator. This limited definition has been criticised by Johannson-Love and Fremouw (2006) who argued that, legally, sexual relations between a 16-year-old child and a 12-year-old child may be perceived as sexual abuse, but it is not within the stated 5-year age discrepancy. Furthermore, sexual interaction between a 40-year-old and a 17-year-old, could be classified as a sexual offence, despite the victim being older than the restricted 16 years. The fact that the victim is over the age criterion of 16 years appeared to exclude them from the study. Cases such as this may provide significant information into the research of child sex offenders and by Allen (1991) setting such limited criteria for example, Johannson-Love & Fremouw (2006) suggested the prevalence of sexual abuse against children may be skewed. In addition to the age concern, they also believed a definition of what constituted sexual abuse was absent in the study.

A similar critique could also be applied to Fromuth and Conn's (1997) study. The age difference criterion within this study extrapolated that the female offender had to be at least five years older than her victim if the victim was less than 13 years of age, and for victims aged between 13 and 16 years, the offender had to be at least 10 years older. Problems from this definition arose in which 18 years of age is perceived to be the age of consent in most states of America, and that legally an age difference of three to five years supported the term child sexual abuse. Johannson-Love and Fremouw (2006) suggested that the 10-year minimum age difference between offender and victim may alleviate the blame from offenders who are below the 10-year requirement (for example a 24-year-old adult and a 15-year-old child), unnecessarily restricting the boundaries of child sexual abuse research.

The term *sexual abuse* has received similar attention. Definitions of sexual abuse vary between studies. Studies that include contact behaviours such as sexual

molestation, genital fondling and kissing, and those that include non-contact behaviours such as exhibitionism, sexual coercion, and pornography, have been shown to report different prevalence rates (Goldman, 2000). Finkelhor and Russell (1984), in their Boston community sample, asked participants to include a number of sexual acts that they perceived as being abusive, being guided only by the specified age of child and adult. Acts such as inviting the child to participate in a sexual activity and the more extreme behaviours of exhibitionism and genital fondling were all included.

Research such as Finkelhor and Russell's (1984) study that uses a broad definition of sexual behaviours (including both contact and non-contact behaviours) will subsequently report higher prevalence rates of child sexual abuse. A study by Roosa, Reyes, Reinholtz, and Angelini (1998) demonstrated that only 39 percent of study participants were identified as victims of child sexual abuse compared to 59 percent of participants when a broader definition was used. The broader definition included non-contact molestation, coercion, attempted rape, rape, and included several acts to define contact molestation. However, the use of these broader definitions may be more detrimental than beneficial in attaining accurate prevalence rates. An inflated view of the occurrences of sexual abuse may distort the actual occurrence rate of abuse and raise public concern unnecessarily (Goldman, 2000; Hauggard, 2000). Secondly, victims who experienced more severe forms of abuse, such as sexual intercourse over a prolonged period of time, would appear less relevant and of less concern to the wider public. The higher number of less severe forms of abuse would distort the severity of abusive experiences, resulting again in a skewed distribution of child sexual abuse victims and the trauma suffered by them (Haugaard, 2000).

Goldman (2000) believed the following four factors should be considered before a sexual interaction could be classified as sexually abusive: the definition of the sexual contact, whether non-contact events such as exhibitionism or pornography with the child are included or excluded, the factor of whether the interaction was wanted or unwanted by the child, and lastly, the age difference between the victim and

offender. Researchers have further stipulated that each case of sexual abuse should be examined from within the context it occurred; e.g. intra-familial or extra-familial, and within the definition of sexual abuse as determined by that individual and that individual's culture (Banning, 1989; Haugaard, 2000).

The Safe Network, a child sexual abuse delivery programme established in New Zealand, encompasses both non-touching (such as showing pornography to the child or exposing one's genitals to the child) and touching behaviours (such as touching the child's genitals for sexual pleasure or inserting objects or body parts into the vagina, anus or mouth – also for sexual pleasure) in their definition of what constitutes sexual abuse. They used the following definition of sexual abuse: "Child sexual abuse is sexual activity with a child by an adult, adolescent, or an older child." ("Safe Network", 2006)

The definition of child sexual abuse used in the present study follows the above definition. The definition is broad; it encompasses all sexual behaviours, but specifically excludes the factor of consent, as in the writer's view, no child of any age has knowledge of what defines consensual sexual behaviour between themselves and an adult. The New Zealand Law Society (2007, p. 3, cl.15) stated the following in the legislative context of child offenders: " . . . children are not adults, and should not be treated as if they were." This emphasises a child's level of immaturity when the child is the victim of sexual abuse. The adult's presence, as someone who is older than the child and in a position of authority, compromises the consenting process, debilitating the child's ability to accurately perceive the situation as just or unjust.

In summary, the term sexual abuse can encompass a broad spectrum of sexual acts but the element of an adult-child sexual relationship is a key factor. The definition of child sexual abuse and the varied methodolgies used to research this area may account for the differences in prevalence rates. Although victim and offender studies

report varied incidence rates, it is obvious that child sexual abuse occurs, and is a prominent concern within societies worldwide.

The following sections will explore in detail the characteristics of female sex offenders in comparison to male sex offenders, and possible reasons behind the under-reporting of female-perpetrated sexual abuse. The current social climate in New Zealand will be explored, as will recent developments to the legalisation of sexual offences as outlined in the Crimes Amendment Act 2005. Finally, the theroretical premise of attitudes and the importance of understanding attitudes held towards female sex offenders will also be discussed.

CHAPTER 2

PROFILE OF FEMALE SEX OFFENDERS

2.1 Motivations and Typologies of Female Sex Offenders

The motivations behind females who sexually offend against children are still being explored. Research has focused on what predisposes men to sexually offend, with models of male's sexual behaviour and treatment being adapted into New Zealand's sex offender programmes, such as Te Piriti and Safe Network. The literature reflects attempts at developing a theoretical understanding of female sex offenders by comparing them to male offenders or by the development of typologies such as Mathews, Mathews and Speltz, (1991). Robson (1996) stated that what is clear from the emerging literature is that male models of sex offending are not directly applicable to female sex offenders. Female offenders, similarly to male offenders, have a history of sexual victimisation, but research indicates that the motivations and psychological functioning behind females committing sexual abuse against children are different. Kalders et al. (1997) stated they reflect a need for intimacy and dependence rather than the sexualisation of aggression as found in male sex offenders.

In the majority of studies conducted, female perpetrators appear to share certain characteristics. Research has commonly reported that victims of sexual abuse often develop into sex offenders themselves (Jennings, 1994). In the study by Kalders et al. (1997) in a sample of convicted female sex offenders, 75 percent had a history of sexual abuse. All women had been abused by men, and 83.3 percent reported this abuse had begun in childhood. Fromuth and Conn (1997) found that 77 percent of the offenders in their study reported at least one incident of sexual abuse during their childhood, and in a review of the literature, Grayston and De Luca (1999) confirmed that consistently high

levels of physical and sexual abuse were reported in the histories of female sexual offenders.

Mathews, et al., (1991) developed typologies classifying female sex offenders into different categories. Women who are victims of abuse themselves reflect the *predisposed* category. Mathews et al. (1991) reported that the sexual abuse was likely to be inter-generational, with the result that as the victims grew older, they were seen as promiscuous; sexual relationships were the only form of intimacy they knew. The authors regarded women in this predisposed category to likely act alone and abuse their own children and family members. Sexual abuse is often combined with physical abuse, motivated by their sense of anger and hatred from their own victimisation.

Higgs, Canavan, and Meyer (1992) presented a single case study that seems to support the Mathews et al. (1991) predisposed category in which a sex abuse victim develops into a 14-year-old sex offender. Three specific factors were suggested that could lead a victim into abusing others: a high frequency of sexual abuse, the close relationship between themselves and the offender and lastly, the severity of the abuse (such as intercourse). If all three are present with the addition of violence, it is highly likely that the victim will become an offender.

Of interest is that whilst many offenders may have been victimised in the past, not all were. Individuals with no history of prior abuse have been found to sexually abuse children (Finkelhor & Russell, 1984; Robinson, 1998). Similarly, despite the majority of victims of sexual abuse being females, females constitute a very low percentage of all reported sex offenders (Grayston & De Luca, 1999). In contrast to Higgs et al. (1992) and Kalders et al. (1997) beliefs, Grayston and De Luca (1999) emphasised that victimisation alone cannot explain the transition from victim to offender. Other socio-cultural and psychological factors need to be explored that may cause a female to sexually abuse.

Robson (1996) suggested that women have a tendency to sexualise the relationship between themselves and their victim/s by perceiving the relationship as having similar dynamics to that of an adult relationship. Offenders believe they are in a reciprocal loving relationship with the victim. An example of this scenario is shown in the *teacher-lover* typology (Beckett, 2005; Mathews, et al., 1991; Nelson, 2004). The classification of *teacher-lover* indicates a woman who may seduce an adolescent (generally male) into a "loving" relationship. The woman often denies the significance of her actions and minimises the effect on her victim, as in her view, the victim is her equal, and that her sexual encounters with the child are positive. Research has indicated that the perceived 'loving relationship' may be the result of the offender seeking to fulfil their own relationship void – their sexual and emotional needs and wants being unattainable through normal adult relationships (Beckett, 2005; Faller, 1995; Jennings, 1994).

The offenders' mental stability is a common causal factor reported in the literature. In Kalders et al. (1997) study, they found that all the female sex offenders in their sample were under some form of stress at the time of the offence. Relationship difficulties and high anxiety were common, with 35 percent reporting a current or previous psychiatric disorder. The *psychologically-disturbed* typology developed by Mathews et al. (1991) describes women who have a long-standing mental illness with deficits in emotional security and self-esteem preceding the offence. Mental retardation and substance abuse were significant factors as were psychological disorders (Faller, 1995). However, such factors may be prominent in clinical samples only, as less than half (47.5%) of the offenders studied suffered from a mental illness (Faller, 1995).

Psycho-social factors were also found to be prominent in women who sexually abuse children. Kaufman, Wallace, Johnson, and Reeder (1995) noted that particular acts of abuse may strongly correlate with offenders' motivations. For male offenders, a high rate of oral-genital contact with the genitalia suggests a focus on the offenders' immediate sexual gratification. In comparison, female offenders had a higher involvement in exploitative situations, taking the opportunity to engage in sexual activity. Mathews et al. (1991) defined this behaviour as the *exploration/exploitation*

category, whereby the female (particularly a teenager) fondles a child when an opportunity arises, such as during babysitting duties. Kaufman et al. (1995) suggested that rather than sexual gratification as a motivation for women, the abuse may serve a different purpose fulfilling emotional needs or unattained physical intimacy. Krug (1989) highlighted the same notion, reporting that women from divorced or troubled marriages had a higher rate of sleeping beside their sons on a regular basis as a provision of comfort to the women. In four out of the eight cases, the mothers initiated sexual contact with their sons.

Establishing whether offenders experience sexual fantasies involving children is a common element in male sex offender programmes. Once established, fantasies and arousal patterns can be modified focussing on the offender's cognitive distortions linking sexual intimacy with children (Lambie & Seymour, 2006; Poels, 2005). In terms of female offenders and their arousal patterns, only six percent of 31 women indicated having some sexual interest in children (Fromuth & Conn, 1997). The majority of fantasies involved young girls (3%) rather than boys (1%). In Mathews et al. (1991) sample of 16 offenders, 11 admitted some arousal or fantasies during the abuse. Yet arousal was perceived not to be the main motivating factor, as many did not fantasise about children in general. Rather, during the offence these women imagined the child as an adult male, or enjoyed having power over the child in the sexual encounter, an element sought in adult relationships.

Female sex offenders are reported to have significantly lower levels of self-esteem, increased *emotional loneliness*, and less assertive traits compared to non-offenders (Beckett, 2005). Female sex offenders were commonly found to be involved in abusive relationships and experienced a high level of social isolation at the time of offending. According to research by Mathews et al. (1991), Saradjian & Hanks (1996), and Wallis (1995), low self esteem and a feeling of loneliness could indicate an increased likelihood for a female to engage in co-offending. These *dependent* offenders are described as women who were forced into committing abuse by a dominant male. The women in this typology were usually motivated by fear and dependency on their partner, with their

own daughters often becoming victims (Mathews et al., 1991). These women were sexually abused as children and grew up as passive adults with a strong fear of being left alone and subsequently often married men who further abused them. The men would initiate the child abuse in these cases and then pressure the women to participate. There is some research on women as co-offenders that support this; for example, Rudin et al. (1995) reported that females co-offended with a male partner in 50 to 77 percent of sexual abuse cases. Kalders et al. (1997) reported that all eight offenders co-offended with a male, typically a husband or partner, but 25 percent of women carried on to offend independently.

Female co-offenders may have an indirect involvement in the sexual offence. Grayston and De Luca (1999) suggested that even though women are charged with committing sexual abuse, they may not have committed any overt acts of abuse against the child. Many women, particularly mothers, may have witnessed the abuse of their own children, but failed to intervene or report the abuse to authorities. Offenders can expose children to abusive opportunities or exploit the child for another adult who is usually a male accomplice (Grayston & De Luca, 1999).

Andrews and Bonta (2003) point out that psychosocial factors such as low self-esteem may not be specific to sexual offenders. Social isolation and introversion are also common in non-sex offender populations, and similarly, sex offenders have histories of committing non-sexual crimes. From a study of 5,000 sex offenders 24 percent had histories of nonsexual offences; after treatment, 24.6 percent re-offended by committing a sexual offence, but a higher percentage (26.8%) re-offended by committing a nonsexual crime (Andrews & Bonta, 2003). The authors did not distinguish between male and female sex offenders, but the finding indicates that child sex offenders may share similar criminal and psychological traits with groups of non-sexual offenders and that sexual abuse of a child may be secondary to other criminal activities.

The use and specificity of typologies however, are debatable. Kalders' et al. (1997, p. 24) study reported difficulties fitting female sex offenders into one of the above-

mentioned categories. They stated that, "Using Mathews' typology, all of the clinical sample fell into the coerced and co-offender categories. However, the level of denial expressed by the women makes accurate classification impossible." For example, only 25 percent of Kalders et al. (1997) sample accepted responsibility for their offending, and even after a period of treatment for their own personal abuse, many continued to blame others. Denial has been found in male sex offenders also (Abel, Becker & Cunningham-Rathner, 1984). For example, cognitive distortions are typically employed; e.g., resistance by the victim is regarded as implying consent for the sexual activity, or the sexual experience is for the benefit of the victim. This suggests that male offenders perceive the child as a willing participant in the sexual activity, or that the child is to be blamed for the abuse (Abel et al., 1984). More research is required to ascertain whether these belief systems or cognitive distortions are also precipitating factors or justifications for women to commit sexual abuse. Whether or not offenders deny committing the abuse, Mathews et al. (1991) typologies provide a framework in which to start to understand the motivations behind the sexual abuse of a child and a offer a possible starting point for treatment.

2.2 Characteristics of Offenders and their Victims

Characteristics of female sex offenders such as, demographic data and victim preference have not been consistently included in the typologies developed by Mathews at al. (1991). This may be a result of the heterogeneity of this offender population. An examination of such factors is presented in the following section.

The age that females commit their first sexual offence varies. Studies indicate that the majority of offenders are aged between 20 and 30 years at the time of their first sexual offence, although the age ranges from as young as 12 years and up to 80 years of age (Faller, 1995; Grayston & De Luca, 1999; Saradjian & Hanks, 1996). In terms of ethnicity and social status, the majority of women were of Caucasian descent and solo parents (Faller, 1995; Ferguson & Meehan, 2005; Kalders et al., 1997; Vandiver, 2000, 2006).

A higher number of female sex offenders appeared to be poorly educated and derived from low-income families compared to non-offenders (Faller, 1987). However, the study conducted by Faller (1987) obtained data from referral sources such as social services, and thus a larger proportion of women from low socio-economic backgrounds may be overly represented. Professionals such as early child care teachers and caregivers were also implicated in cases of sexual abuse (Faller, 1995; Finkelhor & Russell, 1984; Finkelhor & Williams, 1988). The proximity of an offender to potential victims appears to increase the likelihood abuse will occur. For example, victims of female sexual offenders are usually related to or under the care of their female abusers. In the Kalders et al. (1997) study, the women had all committed sexual abuse against children residing with them, and five of the eight women had abused their own children. Fromuth and Conn (1997) found 69 percent of victims were family members, 35 percent were cousins of the offender, 30 percent were siblings and 13 percent were friends. Similarly, in a study comparing male and female sex offenders, Kaufman et al., (1995) found that the majority of female offenders were the victim's parent/stepparent (52%) or babysitter (43%). Similarly, with male sex offenders, they were predominantly known to the victim, with most being their parent, or stepparent (62%) and only seven and a half percent of men being a stranger to the child.

Victims of sexual abuse are predominantly pre-school and school-aged children. Fromuth and Conn (1997) found in their study that the mean age of victimisation was six years, and Vandiver (2006) in her review of the literature, suggests that the average age of victims is 12 years or less. In comparison to men, female offenders target younger children and in many instances, these children are in the care of their offenders (Poels, 2005; Rudin et al., 1995). This may explain the prevalence of early childcare teachers that have been charged for committing sexual abuse against children. Women who abused children are reported to have had regular daily access to their victims. The daily activities such as bathing and dressing allow for ease of access and concealment of sexual abuse. The inherent bond of trust that is formed between a caregiver and child increases the likelihood that sexual acts such as fondling could take place while dressing

the child, and the victim would not be aware of anything adverse taking place (Robson, 1996; Saradjian & Hanks, 1996; Vandiver, 2006).

Further to the age of the victim, gender preference may also vary between male and female sex offenders. Some studies indicate that female perpetrators abused a higher proportion of boys than girls (Finkelhor & Russell, 1984; Fromuth & Conn, 1997). The heterosexual preference of the victim's gender is similar to male sex offenders who are more likely to target a higher number of young females as opposed to males (Rudin et al., 1995). However, other studies found that female offenders target same sex victims with a much higher victim rate of girls compared to boys. In a comparative study of male and female perpetrators, Rudin et al. (1995) found that women targeted more girls (62.1%) than boys (37.9%) compared to male perpetrators who were more likely to offend against females (76.3% and 23.7 % for female and male victims, respectively). Mathews et al. (1991) found similar results; of the 16 female offenders they assessed, of a total number of 44 victims, 28 (64%) were female and 16 (36%) were male.

The use of force in female-perpetrated abuse has also been reviewed. Schwartz and Cellini (1995), in their examination of female offending, emphasised that men were physically more aggressive than women. Not surprisingly, more than 48 studies reviewed by Oetzel (1996) and Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) confirmed this difference. Of interest however, is that in terms of verbal aggression, women were equal if not worse than their male counterparts. Ferguson and Meehan (2005) reported that whilst women do react to anger, jealousy, and hurt with violence, it is uncommon for them to sexualise the violence by committing rape. The use of force in sexual abuse by female offenders is a topic of debate. The female gender is perceived to be the more passive and genteel of the two genders, and this perception is reflected in the area of sexual offending (Robinson, 1998). The majority of studies have shown that women are less likely than men to use force; instead they utilise psychological methods of persuasion, threat, or manipulation towards their victims (Fromuth & Conn, 1997; Mathews et al, 1990). In their study, Kaufman et al (1995) compared 53 male and 53 female perpetrators and suggested women were more likely to be exploitative offenders,

seizing a convenient moment to exploit their victim or to coerce them into sexual contact by focussing on their weakness. In comparison, men tended to use physical force or bribery in their sexual offending.

Contradictory to the above findings, four male victims from a sample of 11 victims reported physical constraint, violent attacks, and fearing for their personal safety during sexual abuse by females. In addition, Sarrel and Masters (1982, as cited in Wakefield & Underwager, 1991) emphasised the falseness of the belief that women cannot physically, sexually abuse a male. All four males achieved and maintained an erection under these violent attacks, and throughout the sexual abuse. It was not stated however, whether the female offenders were influenced by external influences such as substance abuse or a psychiatric illness. Ferguson and Meehan (2005) analysed the offence records of 279 convicted female sex offenders and found results that supported some degree of physical abuse during the sexual offence. Only 7.4 percent of offenders did not use force or threats, while 6.5 percent threatened their victim and 86.1 percent used some degree of physical force. The degree of force varied from simple to aggravated assault with 17.3 percent of female offenders causing genital mutilation or permanent disfigurement as a result of the force used.

Female sex offenders of children are a heterogeneous population, yet certain characteristics appear common. The conglomeration of traits such as the age of the victim (majority are pre-school aged), sex of the child (predominantly female), and motivation behind the offending enabled typologies to be developed providing professionals with a clearer understanding of behaviour patterns. Many factors such as the use of force by female perpetrators and the relevance of psychosocial factors remain topics for further research. These areas may impede the recognition of females as capable of committing sexual abuse as mentioned previously, as women are perceived to be nurturing and genteel rather than possessing the capability to commit physical and sexual acts of aggression. A discussion exploring why female sexual abuse of children is under reported will be examined in the following section.

CHAPTER 3

THE UNDER-REPORTING PHENOMENON

3.1 Myths of Female Perpetrated Child Sex Abuse

Disclosing sexual abuse perpetrated by a female appears to present more difficulty for the victim than disclosing abuse perpetrated by a male (Rudin et al, 1995). Male and female victims of sexual abuse were reluctant to discuss abuse committed by a female:

> [After being sexually assaulted by a female] I felt I had no place to go. I felt I couldn't go to a sexual assault centre and say "I've been raped by a woman." I didn't think I would receive respect or attention or if I would be told that it just wasn't so. It's harder to have your story believed if the perpetrator is a woman. It made me feel very alone. (Denov, 2003, p.182)

This sentiment appears to be consistent across studies (Elliot, 1993; Grayston & De Luca, 1999; Sardjian & Hanks, 1996; Sgori & Sargent, 1993). Denov (2003, p. 310) concluded in her study that, "...all of the female participants reported that the sexual abuse by a mother or sister was the most shameful and damaging form of childhood victimization they had suffered." Male victims of female sexual abuse were also less likely to report it and if they did, it was not until many years later that they disclosed details of the abuse (Etherington, 1997). In Etherington's study of male survivors, the majority of men could not recall at what age the abuse began as many had denied or repressed their experiences, and only disclosed their stories when they were adults.

The above suggests that the sole variable, the *gender* of the perpetrator, in child sexual abuse crimes may act as *the* deterrent in reporting the abuse. The following section discusses factors hypothesised to explain the under-reporting of sexual abuse crimes committed by females, and why disclosing female perpetrated abuse is perceived as more shameful than disclosing abuse perpetrated by a male.

Myths are defined as notions held towards social (and natural) phenomena which are false (Burchfield, 1986). In the female sex offender research, the following myths are common; ... *"It is physically impossible for women to sexually abuse children."* (Hetherton & Beardsall, 1997, p.77), and *"Females only abuse if coerced or accompanied by a man"* or *"People who say they were abused by a female are fantasizing or lying."* (Longdon, 1993, p.47).

These myths appear to be based upon gender stereotyping and attributes placed on women by society. For example, the traditional roles prescribed to women are the homemaker, the nurturer, the lover, and the carer (Denov, 2003). In comparison, men are perceived to be unemotional, strong, brave, and sexually aggressive. The stereotyping process is transferred to the domain of sexual offending, where it is commonly perceived that men are the perpetrators of sexual abuse, and women are not. An example of this is present in myths surrounding the denial of women as sexual predators. Etherington (1997, p. 114) in her findings of seven men who had been sexually abused by their mothers, reported the following from one of her interviewees:

> "I couldn't see it as her abusing me because, as well as being an emerging man in my own right, I was the man of the house; and apart from being my mother, she was a woman. I'd been educated by my father that women were there for the cooking, cleaning and sex. They were put on earth for our benefit and every man should have several. They were not abusers they were there to be abused upon. So how could she abuse me when I was the man?"

Further to this, male victims in particular were most unlikely to disclose abuse perpetrated by a female (Robinson, 1998). Krug (1989) explained this gender specific occurrence in terms of cognitive dissonance, in which two belief systems are held that appear to contradict each other, for example, the idea of a mother versus a sexual perpetrator. As a result, males experience shame and embarrassment, and therefore are reluctant to disclose an occurrence such as sexual abuse by a woman. The following are examples of what Krug (1989) proposes to exist behind the reluctance to disclose:

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 or female perpetrators.
4. Male children have been presumed to be unaffected by sexual abuse, and reports by sons have been ignored.

As a result of these gender stereotypes, several authors have discussed a major area of concern labelled the *recognition barrier*. Allen (1990) developed the recognition barrier to explain how traditional gender stereotypes may impede the recognition and acknowledgement of females as sexual predators (Allan, 1990; Denov, 2003; Finkelhor & Russell, 1984; Robinson, 1998; Saradjian & Hanks, 1996). Saradjian and Hanks (1996) and Robinson (1998) believed the denial that women could sexually abuse children stems from society's construct of what being a woman entails. Life experience, parental modelling, and the media are three modes that guide ideas on how we should perceive our environment. The beliefs individuals hold towards a group of people (such as women) will influence their interaction with that group and their attitude towards them. Individuals that believe women are incapable of committing sexual abuse will demonstrate this attitude in a number of ways. For example, they may fail to report sexual abuse, deny its existence, or justify its occurrence by creating a reason for it such as, "...the abuse was mistaken love and a form of childcare" (Etherington, 1997, p. 108).

Confirmed by victims' reports, the consequences of believing these myths is indifference; victims are denied the support and justice they need, and they may remain alienated by those close to them (Grayston & De Luca, 1999; Rudin, et al., 1995). Subsequently, victims may develop their own maladaptive coping strategies in order to survive (Etherington, 1997).

3.2 Allen's Three Causal Factors for the Under-reporting of Female Sexual Abuse

The low estimates of female sexual offending are consistently speculated to be a result of the under-recognition of women being physically and emotionally able to engage in

sexual abuse. Allen (1990) suggested three possible causal factors for this: (a) overestimation of the strength of the incest taboo, (b) overextension of feminist explanations of child sexual abuse, and (c) overgeneralization that female child sexual abuse is rare. All three factors will be briefly outlined, focussing on the presence of the stereotypes instilled in society and most significantly, on the professionals who support and treat victims of sexual abuse.

Overestimation of the strength of the incest taboo was established from the core belief that "human order must be preserved" (Herman & Hirschman, 1977). Eighteen of Sigmund Freud's patients reported sexual abuse by an adult or older sibling, yet Freud (cited in Allen, 1990) continued to deny the occurrence of incest on the premise that it could not occur. Freud instead blamed his patients' disclosures on sexual fantasies of family members. Allen (1990) suggested that the sexual scripts of men and women were differentiated from this point onwards, emphasising that men competed for sexual interaction with females within the family, and females were the passive recipients of such sexual acts. Sexual interaction initiated by males within the family was accepted, but female perpetrated incest was viewed as taboo.

These beliefs of incest taboo became strongly instilled in professional attitudes towards sexual abuse victims. Claims of female-perpetrated abuse were simply dismissed, or reported so rarely that in those actual cases where abuse had occurred, it was justified by explaining that the woman was experiencing a psychotic episode and was unable to engage within the realms of normal sexual interaction (Allen, 1990). This prejudice towards female-perpetrated sexual interaction is prevalent even today. Nelson (1994) conducted a study investigating police officers who dealt with cases of female-perpetrated child sexual abuse. In examining the case of a five-year-old child sexually assaulted by his babysitter, the following was stated; "I wish that someone who looked like her [the babysitter] had sexually abused me when I was a kid...the kid's mother is overreacting because someone popped her kid's cherry. Hell, it's every guy's dream." (Nelson, 1994, p.74).

Secondly, overextension of feminist explanations of child sexual abuse refers to the feminist perspective on the subordination of women and children in sexual abuse. Men are perceived as sexually aggressive and controlling, and through socialisation have been ascertained as sexually exploitative of women and children. These same characteristics are difficult to attach to women. Therefore, if the feminist perspective is the only perspective accepted, female-perpetrated abuse would be deemed to be non-existent. Females are the victims of sexual abuse, not the perpetrators. Such a strongly-held belief adds to the under-reporting of female-perpetrated sexual abuse as it is more socially acceptable to explain sexual abuse in terms of male dominance, subsequently minimising the recognition of females as sexual perpetrators (Allen, 1990).

Lastly, overgeneralization of the empirical observation that female child sexual abuse is rare highlights the inaccuracy and misinterpretation of the frequency of female sexual abuse. Professionals may assume that rates provided in the literature reflect true incidence rates of abuse, and that these low numbers may be taken as absolute (Allen, 1990).

The consequence of all three explanations suggests that both the families of victims and the professionals who treat and support victims of abuse, fail to recognise the prevalence of female sex offenders and the harm experienced by their victims (Schwartz & Cellini, 1995). The implications of not recognising women as possible offenders are vast; offenders fail to be apprehended, victims fail to be believed, and both offender and victim are deprived of receiving the support and treatment required. Furthermore, the number of victims and offenders would increase as this "taboo" of a crime will remain a crime that continues to occur – given shelter by the sexual scripts and gender role stereotypes instilled into society.

3.3 The Sexist Double Standard

Another area suggested to aid the under-reporting of abuse is the double standard between the sexes. Women are less prevalent in national and international crime

statistics and arguably; their noted 'absence' is due in part to the double standard. Research has shown that women are less likely to be remanded in custody, convicted of an offence, or sentenced to imprisonment compared to men (Newbold, 2000; Jeffries, 2005). Subsequently, women also received shorter sentences and were likely to be released earlier on parole (Jeffries, 2005). Favouritism, sexual biases, and chivalry are terms used to describe the gender discrimination, giving women preferential treatment over their male counterparts.

Newbold (2000) provided examples of the sexist double standard. Prior to the Crimes Amendment Act 2005, there were no legal sanctions against women committing indecent acts or initiating sexual intercourse with boys of any age, although women were prohibited from engaging in sexual acts with girls under the age of 16 years. A man who committed similar offences with children of either sex under the age of 16 was liable for up to ten years' imprisonment.

External factors such as economic dependency and the role of the primary care-giver have been suggested to account for the disparity in sentencing. Women are more likely than men to depend on, and more significantly, to be depended upon by the family. Responsibility for others, such as their children, will influence sentencing decisions (Jeffries, 2005). A history of victimisation and perceived pathology of offenders are also factors that influence penal outcomes. Women are more often perceived "...as 'mad', as victims of personal misfortune, and thus not altogether responsible for their criminality" (Jeffries, 2005, p.3). By comparison, men are viewed as active participants in their offending and therefore responsible for their actions.

The sexist double standard appears to function to women's advantage. When matched on offence and mitigating factors, women still received less severe court outcomes than men. In Jeffries (2005) national study of sentencing and remand in Christchurch Courts, women's imprisonment terms were eight and a half months less than for men. Women were 14 percent less likely to be remanded in custody, and once remanded, women were there for a period of 42 days less than men.

These examples suggest that women receive lighter penalties compared to men in similar offence categories. For an individual to report sexual abuse perpetrated by a female, the apprehension and the conviction of that female appears somewhat uncertain. Reporting of child sex abuse committed by female perpetrators may increase if the punishment 'met the crime' no matter what the sex of the offender. The double standard appears to exist within sexual and other offence categories. An examination of New Zealand society and the perception of female-perpetrated sexual abuse is presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

ATTITUDES TOWARDS FEMALE SEX OFFENDERS

4.1 The Influence of the Media and the Current New Zealand Climate

The factors of public policy, public perception, and the media all influence the current social environment in New Zealand. The media has a large influence on what society perceives to be right and wrong. Thakker and Durrant (2006) conducted a nationwide study of three daily newspapers (*The New Zealand Herald*, *The Press*, and *The Dominion*) over one year, examining the coverage of sexual offending. The authors found 377 articles referring to sexual offending, with the majority of cases describing factual reports of court hearings, certain sexual offenders, or offences.

In comparison to what previous researchers have found in the media regarding the social construct of news, in which certain aspects are emphasised and omitted, Thakker and Durrant (2003) found the reverse. Sexual offending articles were not found to be construed in any direction; however, the authors cautioned that all the examined articles were sourced from legal authorities such as police, lawyers, and judges, with minimal mention of health professionals or scholars working in the field.

Although such "factual" accounts of sexual offending can be perceived as having little influence on swaying the public's opinion, the authors strongly note that little attention was given to the follow-up aspects of such cases. Treatment of sex offenders, rehabilitation, or support for both victim and offender escaped media coverage, thus providing little education to the wider public on such aspects (Thakker & Durrant, 2003). Also, the most extreme cases of sex offenders captured more than a fifth of the total news coverage in 2003, further distorting the public perception of sex crimes and sensationalising those cases with multiple victims whereas in reality, this is not the case (Thakker & Durrant, 2003). However, media overall appears to have a significant impact

on the formulation of attitudes. Singer and Cooper (2008) suggest that media is an important source of public information about the criminal justice system. In a public survey, people cited television news, documentaries, newspapers, or the experiences of family and friends as the most trusted sources of information about crime. The following section explores this idea further in what appears to be an increase in awareness of sexual offending in New Zealand society.

4.2 Public Interest and Government Legislation

An example of the combination of public policy and the effect of the media can be seen in the establishment of the Crime Amendments Act 2005. There was a case concerning Stacey Friel, a 21-year-old swimming coach from Wellington, who admitted to having a sexual relationship with a 16-year-old boy in 2003 (Martin, 2005). Public outcry followed, as Friel could not be charged under the current law; at the time only men could be charged with having sex with a minor of either gender. A woman aged over 21 years however, was prohibited only from having sexual relationships with a female under 16 years, but not with a male (Tyler, 2003). Friel's only punishment for her sexual offending was to be subsequently banned from competing in the New Zealand open, and suspended from coaching for a period of 12 months (*The Southland Times*, 2003). Penal action would have occurred in terms of a severe prison sentence had she been a male (Newbold, 2000).

As a result of the media attention, there was an emerging awareness of female sexual offenders (New Zealand Press Association, 2000; Tyler, 2003), and the inequality in the criminal justice system towards female sex crimes was heightened. This resulted in the enactment of the Crimes Amendment Act 2005 with changes to the Crimes Act (1961). The changes included the following: the gender differences between crimes was acknowledged with the prohibition of sexual relations between adult females and boys under the age of 16 years, and the term, *sexual intercourse*, was redefined to cover all aspects of sexual interaction (from non-touching to touching behaviours). The maximum penalty for sexual offending against children was also increased from seven to ten years

imprisonment (Martin, 2005). The sexual offending aspects enclosed in the Crimes Amendment Act 2005 are a reflection of the strong relationship that media, public perception, and subsequently, policy makers have. The changes demonstrated the inequality in the management of female sex offenders and that equal sentencing for offenders, regardless of gender, were warranted.

A considerable amount of resources have been invested into the male sex offender population with the development of services and community-based programmes for these offenders such as SAFE Network Incorporated, STOP in Wellington and Christchurch, and prison-based programmes such as Kia Marama, and more recently, the Te Piriti sex offender unit at Paremoremo Prison. New Zealand's world-renowned resources and programmes have proved to be effective in the treatment of males who sexually offend against young children (Lambie & Stewart, 2003; Nathan, Wilson & Hillman, 2003).

On the other hand, rehabilitation programmes are generally not available for female sex offenders. Female offenders have been treated following male models of treatment (Bunting, 2007). Theorists argue against the generalized application of male models to the female offending population, stating that classification schemes such as typologies and treatment programmes have been developed using samples of male offenders, which appear to inaccurately classify female offenders and dismiss risk and rehabilitative factors that are significant to female offending and recidivism (Bunting, 2007; Freeman & Sandler, 2008). Female offenders have gender specific needs and present with different developmental pathways leading to their offending compared to men (Beckett, 2005; Poels, 2005; Robson, 1996; Schwartz & Cellini, 1995). Their standing in society, reproductive and relationship concerns, access to criminal activity, context, and motivation of the offending are several factors cited by Steffensmeier and Allan (1998). Examining such factors would enable a better understanding of the nature of female offending and lead to a more appropriate treatment programme.

It is important to note that the present study was conducted in a social climate of emerging awareness. In January 2006, a newspaper article with the headline, "Why I had sex with a 13-year-old boy" (Chapple, 2006), reported the first woman to be sentenced under the new gender-neutral laws. The phenomenon of female sex offenders is therefore an extremely relevant topic to study in New Zealand at this time, and examining university student attitudes in relation to women's sexual behaviour towards children will reflect this changing social climate.

4.3 Attitudes towards Child Sexual Abusers

Hetherton and Beardsall (1997) believed that, "...whilst people may hold idealised beliefs about women, it is the evaluative emotional response, that is, the attitudes, evoked by the idea of women sexually abusing children that would promote behaviour either bringing about or minimising its recognition" (p. 75). Attitudes appear to be a fundamental concept in our understanding and response to the world, and are shaped by past behaviour and experience (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Hetheron & Beardsall, 1997). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) suggest that attitudes contain three core elements: that they are learned, that attitudes predispose actions, and thirdly, attitudes are fairly stable regarding given situations and objects (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). It is this attitude that then promotes our behaviour (Hetherton & Beardsall, 1997). In regard to the present study, a person's belief that only males can sexually abuse a child will transfer to an attitude denying the possibility that women *could* commit a sexual act of the same intensity (Hetherton & Beardsall, 1997). The above sentiment appears evident in a number of studies.

Broussard, Wagner, and Kazelskis (1991) examined undergraduate student attitudes towards child sexual abuse. Descriptions of sexual contact between an adult and a 15-year-old teenager were presented. Participants viewed the interaction of a male victim with a female perpetrator as less representative of child sexual abuse; in addition, male victims were perceived to be less likely to experience distress compared to female victims. It was also found that when the victim was male, the child was perceived to be

more responsible for the abuse, and to experience less harm when compared to a female victim (Broussard et al., 1991). Such perceptions are consistent with findings proposed by cognitive dissonance theory and by self-report studies of male victims themselves. However, the researcher argues, the distress of abuse experienced by victims may manifest itself in varying ways: low self-esteem, depression, and self-injurious behaviour which are examples of short-term effects (Broussard et al., 1991). The effect of sexual abuse may only show up in later years. For example, research has identified sexual dysfunction and an inability to form adult relationships in victims of child sex abuse (Wyatt, 1991).

Public attitudes concerning child sexual abuse are extremely important. These attitudes directly impact on the support victims receive, the identification and prosecution of offenders, and the reporting of cases in the media. An individual's capability of identifying when his/her child has been abused, for example, and their willingness to notify the appropriate authorities, is influenced by their attitude and beliefs regarding sexual abuse.

A study conducted by Hetherton and Beardsall (1998) emphasises this point further, in which the attitudes of 65 social workers and 65 police officers were examined to assess whether a case of alleged child sexual abuse would be deemed as serious enough to warrant further investigation. They hypothesised that if the perpetrator in the alleged case was female, both social workers and police officers would consider investigation into the case as less necessary than to cases in which the perpetrator was male. Hetherton and Beardsall (1998) used vignettes which described the case of alleged sexual abuse, a decisions questionnaire, the Bem Sex Role Inventory, and the Attitudes regarding women's sexualised behaviour towards children questionnaire to assess their hypothesis. They found that participants deemed the involvement of social services and police investigation as less appropriate in cases where the perpetrator was female, and that imprisonment was appropriate for male perpetrators rather than for female perpetrators. Female social workers, however, viewed the prosecution of the perpetrator as more appropriate if the perpetrator was female as opposed to male. This finding is

consistent with results found by Kalichman, Craig, and Folingstad (1990) who suggested that professionals may be harsher on their own gender, because in being male or female, they feel more capable of judging that behaviour respectively. Female-perpetrated sexual abuse was viewed as serious, but overall less serious than male-perpetrated abuse.

The present study aims to measure whether the above findings are reflected in a New Zealand student sample. With an emerging awareness of female-perpetrated sex crimes, attitudes regarding male and female sex offences appear to be changing, although gender biases may still strongly exist. It is envisaged that by examining student attitudes, the measures used will highlight this inert social climate. The hypotheses and measures used to explore these attitudes and the possible implications of them will be discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 5

THE PRESENT STUDY

Aside from the emerging awareness of female perpetrators of child sexual abuse, empirical evidence regarding attitudes towards offenders appears inconsistent. Low statistics indicate that victims remain hesitant in reporting sexual abuse because clinicians and other authorities remain steadfast in their beliefs that sexual abuse is a male-perpetrated crime. Yet the empirical literature strongly indicates that females are involved in child sexual abuse. The present research aims to clarify whether the male-female sexual offender dichotomy exists with the use of a vignette and attitude questionnaires. The researcher aims to investigate student attitudes towards sexual offending and gain an indication of present student attitudes towards female sexual offending in New Zealand.

5.1 Aims and Hypotheses

The aims of the present research are two-fold. Firstly using a vignette, the aim is to investigate the influence the gender of the offender has on the believability of an alleged case of child sexual abuse.

Using the vignettes, it is hypothesised that:

1. The *gender of the offender* in the vignette will be more influential in the student's belief of alleged child sexual abuse than the other factors such as the child being recently told of sexual abuse, the child telling a teacher, explicitness of the disclosure, and the child allegedly having a poor reputation.
2. Students will be influenced more in believing an allegation of child sexual abuse when the offender is male compared to when the offender is

female. Students will report a higher mean on the male (Andrew) vignette than the female (Anna) vignette.

Secondly, using the attitude questionnaires, the researcher aims to examine the following: whether students' attitudes differ towards male and female sexual offenders, whether students held similar attitudes to that of the professionals in Hetherton and Beardsall's (1998) study, and lastly, whether gender differences exist within the student group in terms of their denial or belief that females do commit child sexual abuse.

Using the attitude questionnaires, it is hypothesised that:

1. All students will view male sexual behaviour towards children as more serious and harmful than female offenders. This will be shown by a higher mean score on the male attitude questionnaires.
2. However, analysis between student groups will show that:
   (a) Female students will rate the female offender as more serious and harmful as shown by a higher mean than male participants will.
   (b) Male students will rate the male offender as more serious and harmful as shown by a higher mean than female students.
3. Further to the above, the gender of the participant will have an interaction effect with the vignette gender resulting in higher scores obtained on the attitude questionnaires.
   (a) Female participants who are exposed to and or respond to the female offender vignette will have a higher attitude score on the female attitude questionnaire, reflecting a belief that female perpetrated abuse is serious and harmful, compared to a lower score on the male attitude questionnaire.
   (b) Male participants who respond to the male vignette will have a higher score on the male attitude questionnaire indicating a belief of the seriousness of the abuse; however, they will have a lower score on the female attitude questionnaire, reflecting a trivialisation or denial of female-perpetrated sexual abuse.

CHAPTER 6

METHOD

6.1 Research Design

A quasi-experimental, between-group design was used. Participants were assigned into groups based on their gender, and on the gender of the character contained within the vignettes, resulting in a 2 x 2 factorial design. This allowed for direct comparison between male and female students, and their attitudes towards male and female sexual behaviour towards children.

6.2 Participants

Participants in this study consisted of students from Massey University, Albany Campus in Auckland. A total of 68 male and 70 female students agreed to participate in the study. The demographic characteristics of the sample are shown in Table 1. The majority of respondents were aged below 25 years (76.8%). Participants aged between 36 and 40 years were the least represented in the sample (3.6%).

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Gender	Male	68 (49.3%)
	Female	70 (50.7%)
Age	16-20 years	65 (47.1%)
	21-25 years	41 (29.7%)
	26-30 years	7 (5.1%)
	31-35 years	11 (8.0%)
	36-40 years	5 (3.6%)
	41 and above	9 (6.5%)

6.3 Measures

The measures were developed by Hetherton & Beardsall, (1997) to gain an idea of the attitudes towards female sex offenders by professionals such as psychologists, social workers and police officers who were working or previously had worked in the field of child sexual abuse. The vignettes measure will be examined first, and then followed by the attitudes questionnaires.

6.3.1 Vignette

The vignette plus decisions questionnaire developed by Hetherton & Beardsall (1997) contained four vignettes describing a scene of alleged child sexual abuse. Each vignette varied on the following factors: gender of the victim (boy/girl), gender of the perpetrator (male/female), the sexual activity that took place (between girl/woman, girl/man, boy/woman or boy/man), description of the activity as told by the victim, and the response to the allegation by the perpetrator (Hetherton & Beardsall, 1998).

Of interest in the present study was the degree to which the respondents viewed the gender of the perpetrator as causing them to doubt the child's allegation. The vignette

was developed and piloted in England by Hetherton and Beardsall (1997). They examined whether the vignettes were matched, ensuring that any differences in responses were attributable only to the gender of the child or to the gender of the perpetrator. The vignettes were piloted in a gender-neutral form (by eliminating names of the characters) to fifteen participants. The degree to which the participants made similar decisions across all of the questions indicated whether the vignettes were matched. Hetherton and Beardsall (1997) found that the agreement ratio across all responses was 80 percent indicating the vignettes matched and that any differences in the responses were attributable to the gender of the child and to the perpetrator.

Although gender of the victim was a significant factor in Hetherton and Beardsall's (1998) study, in the present study the gender of the victim was excluded for two reasons: firstly, to control for internal biases of same-gender sexual activity that could influence participants' responses, and secondly, that any differences in participants' responses would be able to be attributed to the gender of the perpetrator only. As a result, only two vignettes were used that focused on the gender of the alleged perpetrator; male or female. In all instances, the gender of the child was kept neutral. Similar to Hetherton and Beardsall's (1997) vignettes, the gender of the alleged perpetrators was represented by the names given to them in the vignettes (see Appendix A).

After reading the vignettes, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which each of the five variables listed influenced their perception of the credibility of the child's allegation. As with Hetherton and Beardsall's study (1998) four of the five items were filler items used to disguise the purpose of the study. The filler items included the following: the child was recently told about sexual abuse, the child was telling a teacher about the occurrence, the explicitness of the disclosure of the abuse, and the child allegedly had poor reputation. The key item that was the focus of the analyses was that the alleged perpetrator was male or female. The items were rated from 0 to 6, with 4 to 6 seen as influential, and 0 to 3 having none to little influence (see Appendix A).

For this study, the scale internal consistency was Cronbach's coefficient alpha of 0.52. Alpha values are sensitive to the number of items contained within each measure, and with scales such as the vignette decisions questionnaire containing less than ten items, Cronbach's alpha of 0.5 was expected (Pallant, 2005). Briggs and Cheek (1986) suggest that with scales containing fewer items, investigating mean inter-item correlations may be more appropriate. The strength and relationship between items provides a clearer view of the cohesiveness of scale items and avoids being influenced by the scale length. The inter-item correlation mean was (r = 0.24) indicating a moderate level of homogeneity and within the recommended range of .2 and .4 for a scale of this size (Briggs & Cheek, 1986).

6.3.2 Attitudes regarding women's sexualised behaviour towards children questionnaire.

This measure consisted of a 22 item questionnaire examining attitudes endorsing beliefs on the following three factors: (1) whether female sexual abuse of children exists, (2) whether female perpetrated sexual abuse of children is a serious, harmful problem, and (3) the denial and/or trivialisation of the existence of female perpetrated abuse (Hetherton & Beardsall, 1997).

Attitudes were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, and 5 = strongly agree). Twelve of the 22 items consisted of items that minimised women sexually abusing children with statements such as "If child sexual abuse by females went on, there would be more written about it," and "So called sexual abuse by women refers to loving expressions of intimacy and caring." The remaining 11 items indicated the presence of female-perpetrated abuse within society, and that it is a serious and harmful issue that should be further investigated (Hetherton & Beardsall, 1997; refer Appendix B). The maximum possible score on the attitude questionnaires was 110. High scores suggested an attitude that female sexual behaviour was considered harmful and serious, and low scores indicated an attitude that denied or trivialised the seriousness of female sexual abuse of children.

Statistical analysis of the attitudes questionnaire indicated similar reliability to figures reported by Hetherton and Beardsall (1997, 1998). In Hetherton and Beardsall's study, the attitudes regarding women's sexualised behaviour towards children questionnaire was shown to have sufficient internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha of 0.89. In the present study, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81 confirmed the measure to have sufficient internal consistency.

6.3.3 Attitudes regarding men's sexualised behaviour towards children questionnaire.

For the purposes of this study, the above scale was replicated to measure attitudes regarding men's sexualised behaviour towards children. The aim of this scale was to allow for a direct comparison between participants' views of female versus male sexual abuse of children. For example, it may be that one participant had strong views on male-perpetrated abuse, but rather weak views concerning female perpetration of abuse. Hence, in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of students' attitudes towards adult-perpetrated child sexual abuse, two attitude measures were utilised.

This second attitude measure was the same as the previous scale, adapted from Hetherton and Beardsall's (1997) original attitude questionnaire, with the only modification being the gender of the person, changing woman to man (or women to men) in all of the 22 items (see Appendix C). Similarly, Cronbach's co-efficient alpha of 0.79 confirmed that the scale had high internal consistency (Pallant, 2005).

6.4 Procedure

Ethics approval for this study was obtained from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee at Albany Campus. Prior to the main study, a pilot study with the measures was undertaken.

6.4.1 Pilot Study

There were two stages to the pilot study: first, a focus group was conducted to identify names for the characters to be used in each vignette suitable for the New Zealand population. The focus group comprised six members of the public (n = 3 female and n = 3 male) aged between 23 and 35 years of age. The participants were from varying occupations (such as retail, sales representative, legal firm, and student). As certain names can be associated with strong stereotypes, whether complementary or otherwise, it was deemed important that an effort be made to control for any attributional bias participants might experience with seeing particular names for perpetrators. The names *Anna* and *Andrew* were decided upon as these names did not appear to carry any negative connotations, and were applicable to persons of all ages.

The second stage of the pilot study was then conducted to trial all three measures: the Vignette and the two Attitudes regarding women's/men's sexualised behaviour towards children questionnaires. This stage consisted of 10 individuals (n = 4 female and n = 6 male) all of whom had little or no experience with child sexual abuse. Participants were aged from 18 to 57 years, three being students themselves, the remaining seven were working professionals.

Some minor changes were made as a result of the feedback received; for example, commas were inserted for ease of comprehension. An example was item 6: "If child sexual abuse by males [females] went on, there would be more written about it," and item 5 in which an extra comma was inserted after the term *perpetrators*. The term, *deviation,* proved to be a concern for participants in the pilot study, with most participants asking the researcher to define the term further. To clarify the statement, it was decided that rather than replacing deviation with another term, it would be expanded to further infer what deviation meant. The result was "child molestation is a deviation from male [female] sexual behaviour." Other adaptations to the measures included the format, size of font, and overall readability of the questionnaires. The completion time for the questionnaires averaged 10 to 15 minutes.

One observation made by the researcher was that participants referred back to their answers on the first attitude questionnaire when completing the second attitude questionnaire. To control for the transference of initial answers across to the second questionnaires, instructions were inserted stating, "Please do not refer back to your answers on the previous page/s." After the modifications, the questionnaires were administered to the student population.

6.4.2 Recruitment of Participants

Students attending Massey University, Albany campus, were invited to participate in the study. Recruitment of participants involved three methods: poster advertisement, researcher approach, and class presentation. A description of these three methods will be explained below, followed by the procedure of data collection.

To recruit prospective participants, three different advertising methods were utilised. Poster advertisements were positioned around the Albany campus in student common areas, outside the Students' Association office, and on bulletin boards surrounding the entranceway to lecture theatres. A total of fifteen posters were exhibited (see Appendix D). This resulted in a small pool of participants. The second but most successful method of recruitment was by personal approach. The researcher approached students in the concourse during their breaks, and invited them to participate in the study. An information sheet was provided to each prospective participant (see Appendix E). A description of what was expected of the participant in terms of questionnaire completion was provided, enabling students to decide whether or not to agree to participate in the study. Most participants were recruited in this manner.

The third method of recruitment was by class presentation. The researcher liaised with individual lecturers to obtain consent to talk to their students briefly during class time with an introduction to the research. Information sheets were handed out at the conclusion of the class to those interested.

Selection criteria of participants included the following: that they must be current students from Massey University, have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the English language, and literacy ability to complete the questionnaires. For students for whom English was not their first language, the researcher took time to outline the aims of the research and what participation involved. Only when the researcher was satisfied that the applicant appeared capable of completing the measures, would they be included in the participant pool.

6.4.3 Data Collection

After students had read the information sheet and agreed to participate in the study, they then completed the questionnaires. The researcher remained in close proximity to answer questions, and to ensure all participants completed their responses in privacy. Participants understood that by completing the questionnaires, they were implying consent. Signs of distress and discomfort were monitored throughout the data collection process. All students were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and the nature of the research was also explained to each participant prior to commencement of participation. Participants were advised that *attitudes* of the university's student population were the focus of the study, and thus the *attitude* towards sexual offending against children was sought.

Equal numbers of male and female perpetrator vignette plus decision questionnaires were distributed to study participants. The researcher distributed the questionnaires according to the gender of the participant, for example, out of 68 male students, 34 responded to vignettes with Andrew as the character, and 34 responded to vignettes with Anna as the character. Female participants were similar with 35 out of the 70 in total responding to vignettes of Anna, and 35 responding to vignettes of Andrew. This distribution resulted in the ability of the researcher to compare students' attitudes towards both male and female offenders.

Those interested were given the option to receive a summary of the results when the study was completed. A tear-off slip was attached at the end of the second attitude questionnaire; these slips were placed into a separate envelope by students at the conclusion of their participation. Completion of the questionnaires took approximately 10 to 30 minutes, and the recruitment and data collection stage was completed within five weeks during the months of May and June 2006.

CHAPTER 7

RESULTS

Results of the analyses are presented in the order of hypotheses as listed in Chapter 5 of this paper. The influence of the offender's gender on the believability of an alleged case of child sexual abuse will be followed by an examination of the participant's attitudes regarding the sexual behaviour of both male and female offenders towards children.

7.1 Data Screening

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS*) for Windows, Release 15.0 (SPSS Inc., 2006) was the software package used in screening and analysing all data collected from the vignette decisions questionnaire and the two attitude measures.

Vignette

Normality of the data was assessed before any data analysis took place. Five univariate outliers were identified on the Vignette scores. Transformation of the outliers did not occur as analyses, including the outliers, were similar to the original mean (Total Vignette scores, M = 16.23 and Trimmed M = 16.25), and the outliers were within the range of possible scores (Pallant, 2005). The assumptions of linearity, and homoscedasticity were met; however, the total belief items were negatively skewed (-.05). The kurtosis value was 1.49 indicating a peaked distribution.

Attitude Questionnaires

Fifteen questionnaires (10.7%) out of the total 140 questionnaires collected had missing data, but these were less than 10 percent. The statistical method of regression imputation was used to substitute the missing data with values that were estimated on the basis of

the variable or item in question, and its relationship to other variables within each data set (Hair et al., 2006). Two participant responses were deleted from analyses, as more than 10 percent of the items were missing (12.2% and 22.4%). The missing data was viewed as random error (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham 2006; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), thus reducing the sample size from 140 responses to 138 (male n =68 [49.3%] and female n =70 [50.7%]).

Reverse coding of the data followed missing value imputation. Statements contained within each attitude questionnaire were either positively or negatively worded. Twelve of the 22 items were negatively worded reducing response bias and any possible social desirability effects (Hetherton & Beardsall, 1998; Pallant, 2005). These 12 items were reverse coded before total scores were calculated so that high scores on the attitude measures indicated attitudes ***endorsing*** male/female sexual behaviour towards children as a serious and harmful problem.

Total scores obtained on the attitudes towards male sexual behaviour questionnaires were negatively skewed (-.24). This was similar to scores obtained on the female questionnaire (-.08). Total scores obtained from the male attitude questionnaire were the only scores to be significant at the 0.5 p level using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic indicating the distribution violates the assumption of normality (Pallant, 2005). In comparison, total scores from the female questionnaire were non-significant at the 0.5 p level ($p = .20$), indicating the distribution was normal (Pallant, 2005).

7.2 Vignette

All five items on the vignettes' measure were found to be significantly correlated with at least one other item on the scale. The results of the correlation analyses are presented in Table 2. The item of interest, *gender of perpetrator,* was found to only correlate moderately with the item, *child has poor reputation* ($r = .34$). *Explicitness of disclosure* and *Child recently being told of sex abuse* had the highest; there was also moderate

correlation of all five items (r = .35) indicating that the two items are measuring similar constructs.

Table 2

Correlation between Vignette Items

Belief Items	1	2	3	4
(1) Child recently told of sex abuse				
(2) Telling a teacher	.252**		.	
(3) Explicitness of disclosure	.288**	.350**		
(4) Gender of perpetrator	.145	.095	.093	
(5) Child has poor reputation	.202*	.046	.081	.344**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Hypothesis 1

Taken from the five items contained within the vignette item four, *gender of offender,* was the key dependent variable for investigation into student attitudes. Scores for each of the five items were calculated. To reiterate, high scores suggested the gender of the offender was relevant or influential in an alleged child sex abuse case. Low scores suggested the irrelevance of the perpetrator gender, whether it be female or male. Students rated the *explicitness of disclosure* as most influential in their credence of the child's story (M = 4.07), and the item of *child having poor reputation* as the least influential (M = 2.30). The *gender of the offender* item resulted in a mean of 2.70 suggesting that this item was not highly influential in whether or not to believe the

allegations put forward by the child (see Table 3). The results failed to support the hypothesis.

Table 3

Comparison of Mean Scores of Items on the Vignette Questionnaires (n = 138)

	Anna		Andrew		Total		
Belief Items	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	Range
Child recently told of sex abuse	3.32	1.38	3.32	1.70	3.32	1.54	0-6
Telling a teacher	3.92	1.44	3.80	1.61	3.86	1.52	0-6
Explicitness of disclosure	4.16	1.15	3.97	1.24	4.07	1.19	0-6
Gender of perpetrator	2.43	1.89	2.97	1.69	2.70	1.79	0-6
Child has poor reputation	2.33	1.66	2.26	1.71	2.30	1.68	0-6

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare male and female responses on the degree of influence the ***gender*** of the offender (Anna or Andrew) had, on the alleged case. A significant difference was found between the two groups: for males (M = 2.38, SD = 1.67), and females [M = 3.00, SD = 1.86; $t(136)$ =-2.07, p = .04]. The effect size however, was small (eta squared = -.03). Female students had a higher mean score on this factor compared to males.

Due to the use of modified measures in the present study, data from Hetherton and Beardsall's (1998) study differ from the present results. A comparison of results from both studies is discussed below. Out of 130 professionals (65 police officers and 65 social workers), less than half of the sample considered the gender of the perpetrator as an influential factor in believing the proposed allegation when the offender was female (46% of social workers and 49% of police officers) A similar response was found in the

male vignettes with 53 percent (N = 35) of social workers and 44 percent (N = 29) of police officers considering the gender to also be an influential factor.

Hypothesis 2:

Table 4 compares the mean total scores of the *gender of the perpetrator* item between vignettes that depicted a male perpetrator (Andrew), and vignettes depicting a female perpetrator (Anna). The Mean score was higher for the Andrew vignettes (M = 2.97, SD = 1.69) than the Anna vignettes (M = 2.43, SD = 1.89). An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the degree of influence of item four as rated by participants on both vignettes. There was no significant difference in scores between Anna vignettes (M = 2.43, SD = 1.89) and Andrew vignettes [M = 2.97, SD = 1.69; t(136) = -1.79, p = .07]. The magnitude of the differences in the means was small (eta squared = -0.02).

Mean total scores of all five items were calculated and are presented in Table 4. A higher Mean score was obtained on Andrew vignettes (M = 16.31) indicating participants more readily believed that allegation of child sexual abuse than in the vignettes with Anna (M = 16.15) as the alleged offender. An independent samples t test was conducted to compare the Mean Total scores between the vignettes. There was no significant difference in scores obtained on Anna (M = 16.15, SD = 4.09) and Andrew vignettes [M = 16.32, SD = 5.07; t(136) = -.21, p = .83]. The difference in the means was very small (eta squared = -.0002).

Table 4

Comparison of Mean total scores of five items between Vignettes

Offender Gender	N	M	SD	Std. Error Mean
Anna	69	16.15	4.09	.49
Andrew	69	16.31	5.07	.61

A further analysis between student groups was conducted to assess whether students differed in their belief of the allegation of child sexual abuse if the vignette involved a male or female offender. The Means are presented below in Table 5. An independent-samples t test was conducted to compare the total item scores on vignettes (both Anna and Andrew) for male and female students. There was no significant difference in scores for male students on either the Anna (M = 15.23, SD = 4.21) or Andrew questionnaires; [M = 15.11, SD = 5.19; t(68) = .10, p =.92]. There was also no significant difference in scores on either the Anna (M = 17.04, SD = 3.82) or Andrew vignettes [M = 17.48, SD = 4.74; t(70) = .42, p = .67] for female students. From the above, responses between participants did not vary as a result of the perpetrator variable. Whether the vignette listed an Anna or Andrew, participants' responses were similar. These results failed to support the hypothesis that students would score higher on a male offender vignette compared to a female offender vignette.

Table 5

Comparison of Mean Total Scores on Anna and Andrew Vignettes for all five items by Participant Gender (N = 138)

Participant Gender	Anna				Andrew		
	N	M	SD	Std. Error Mean	M	SD	Std. Error Mean
Female	70	17.04	3.82	.64	17.48	4.74	.80
Male	68	15.23	4.21	.72	15.11	5.19	.89

Lastly, analysis of the difference in student responses on the Vignettes was examined. The Mean scores of male and female students are presented in Table 6. Females overall scored higher on the vignettes, regardless of the gender of the offender. An independent t-test was conducted examining this difference between male and female participants. A significant difference was found in responses for males (M = 15.18, SD = 4.70) and females [M = 17.27, SD = 4.28; $t(136) = -2.73$, $p = .007$]. The extent of the difference in the means was moderate (eta squared =-.05) indicating that five percent of the variance in the influence of those five factors was explained by participant gender.

Table 6

Total Mean Scores obtained by Participants

Participant Gender	N	M	SD
Female	70	17.27	4.28
Male	68	15.18	4.70

Analysis of the gender of the participants in Hetherton and Beardsall's (1998) study inferred similar results to the present study, with a higher percentage of female professionals (100% of both female social workers and police officers) and an average of 94 percent of male professionals (97% male social workers, 91% of police officers) believing the child's' allegation when the offender was female. When the alleged offender was male, 100 percent of female participants rated it as influential, compared to 100 percent of male social workers and only 90 percent of policemen.

Overall, the above results appear similar to the results found in the present study, with item 4, *gender of the perpetrator,* being perceived as less influential compared to other items. In both studies, female participants appear to have a stronger view on the influence of the gender of the perpetrator when compared to their male counterparts.

7.3 Attitudes questionnaire.

After the data screening analysis of all 22 items on both attitude questionnaires, a correlation analysis was performed. The results of the correlation analyses can be seen in Appendix F. The moderate correlation between items 1, *Sexualised behaviour by a woman towards children may be seductive but would not be harmful*, and 8, *Those who suggest that women sexually abuse children are women haters*, on the female attitude questionnaire (r = .49) indicates these two items are measuring similar constructs: the denial or trivialisation of women committing sexual abuse. Most items denying the existence of female-perpetrated abuse are quite high, as would be expected. Similarly item 4, *A sexual experience with a woman would be harmful to most children,* on the male attitude questionnaire and item 9, *Sexual abuse of children by women is more common than people think,* has a small correlation (r = .28), indicating that both items are measuring the construct that sexual abuse by women is a real and serious problem. The correlations of some items are quite low and non-significant. This could indicate that some items are redundant or have no relationship at all.

A Factor analysis then followed. In the development of the "Attitudes regarding women's sexualised behaviour towards children" questionnaire, Hetherton and Beardsall (1997) suggested that the scale consisted of the following two underlying dimensions; (1) denial or trivialisation of sexual abuse perpetrated by women, and (2) the seriousness and perceived harm of sexual abuse perpetrated by women. A Factor Analysis was conducted and indicated that seven factors accounted for 16 items and 68.2 percent of the variance. Analysis of the factors showed that ten items clustered to three main themes: sexual behaviour by women was not abusive, denial that female abuse existed, and males were also responsible in the sexual abuse perpetrated by women. A Factor analysis was conducted in the present research to examine whether the themes were consistent with the previous research when using a student sample.

Assessment of the data for its suitability for the procedure of factor analysis was conducted using SPSS© Windows. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy had a value of 0.78 and 0.79 for the women's and men's questionnaires respectively (above the required 0.6 as recommended by Kaiser, 1974) and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant at the p=.05 value. Similarly to Hetherton and Beardsall's (1997), study analysis of the factorability of the items showed that the first seven components recorded eigenvalues above 1.0 (attitude towards women's questionnaire: 5.49, 1.70, 1.45, 1.39, 1.20, 1.07, 1.06; attitude towards men's questionnaire: 5.27, 1.89, 1.57, 1.39, 1.23, 1.10, 1.03). These seven components explained a similar percentage of variance from both questionnaires, 60.90 percent of the variance in the women's' questionnaire and 61.39 percent variance within the men's questionnaire. These supported the factorability of the items.

From the scree plots, only one component appeared to capture much of the variance compared to the remaining six components. It was decided that Component one and two be retained for further exploration into the clusters of the items. This was further confirmed by the Component Matrix, in which the majority of the items loaded strongly on the first and second components (above .3).

After the process of Varimax rotation, the two components from both attitude questionnaires were interpreted. The analysis appeared consistent with the previous factor analysis conducted in the development of the questionnaire, with both components showing a number of strong loadings. The two-factor solution explained a total of 32.74 percent of the variance within the questionnaire regarding women's sexual behaviour, with Component 1 contributing the most with 19.74 percent and Component 2 contributing 13.00 percent. From analysis of the attitude regarding men's sexualised behaviour scores, similarly the two-factor solution explained a total of 32.57 percent of the variance; Component 1 explained 18.94 percent and Component 2 contributed 13.64 percent. Interpretation of the two components from both questionnaires was partially consistent with previous research of the development of the scale, in which items listed were compared to the items that were reverse scored during the initial data screening.

Once examined, all items listed under Component 1 in the men's questionnaire indicated denial of sexual abuse as a serious and harmful problem. In comparison, 10 out of the 13 items under Component 1 were of similar interpretation from the women's questionnaire. The acceptance of harm and seriousness of abuse perpetrated by either gender was only strongly loaded on a few of the items under Component 2, and as can be seen in Tables 7 and 8, several of the items crossed over with Component 1. The results of this analysis, therefore partially support the use of the denial and acceptance of sexual behaviour towards children as separate scales. Further research into the underlying themes of the scale would be recommended.

Table 7

Varimax Rotation of Two-Factor Solution for Attitudes regarding women's sexualised behaviour towards children questionnaire

Item	Component 1 Denial/trivialisation of the sexual behaviour	Component 2 Acceptance of the seriousness and harm of sexual behaviour
Fatt10	.706	
Fatt22	.695	
Fatt2	.691	
Fatt8	.685	
Fatt20	.605	
Fatt6	.557	
Fatt15	.543	.398
Fatt13	.534	.368
Fatt4	.476	
Fatt16	.328	
Fatt11	.309	-.307
Fatt3		
Fatt14		.693
Fatt12		.619
Fatt19	.457	.557
Fatt1	.488	.499
Fatt18		.477
Fatt7		.454
Fatt17		-.436
Fatt5		
Fatt21		
Fatt9		

Table 8
Varimax Rotation of Two-Factor Solution for Attitudes regarding Men's sexualised behaviour towards children questionnaire

Item	Component 1 Denial/trivialisation of the sexual behaviour	Component 2 Acceptance of the seriousness and harm of sexual behaviour
Matt1	.680	
Matt14	.651	
Matt2	.612	.339
Matt12	.608	-.404
Matt19	.602	.366
Matt15	.566	.382
Matt9	.518	
Matt5	.498	
Matt4	.481	
Matt8	.471	.434
Matt21	.446	
Matt7	.413	
Matt20	.305	
Matt17		
Matt22		.728
Matt10		.692
Matt3		.516
Matt6		.513
Matt13	.443	.481
Matt16		.436
Matt18		
Matt11		

The relationship between students' attitudes regarding women's and men's sexualised behaviour towards children measures was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. A scatter plot was initially conducted to assess linearity of the two scales. It was found that there was a strong positive relationship between what students perceived female sexual behaviour towards children to be in terms of seriousness and harm of offending, and how they perceived male behaviour [$r = .78$, n = 138, $p < .000$]. The large coefficient suggests a strong relationship between the two variables, and the strength of the relationship is emphasised by further examining the coefficient of determination (60.52%). Attitudes regarding female sexual behaviour

towards children can explain over 60 percent of the variance of students' scores on the male attitude scale (Pallant, 2005).

The results of the hypotheses as listed in Chapter 5 pertaining to total scores obtained from both the attitudes regarding women's and men's' sexualised behaviour towards children will now be presented. The results will then be followed by a comparison to the findings in Hetherton and Beardsall's (1998) study.

Hypothesis 1

Participant scores were examined from both the female and male attitude questionnaires. Mean scores were higher on the Attitudes regarding men's' sexualised behaviour towards children questionnaire (M=83.12, SD=9.96) compared to responses on the Attitudes regarding women's' sexualised behaviour towards children questionnaire (M=80.13, SD=10.29). These results support the hypothesis that compared to female sexual behaviour, all students perceived male sexual behaviour as more serious and harmful.

Hypothesis 2

Participant gender differences in the mean scores were then examined. A significant difference was found in scores for male students (M=77.99, SD=10.03) and female students [M=82.21, SD=10.19; t(136)=-2.45, p=.01] in attitudes towards women's sexual behaviour (refer to Table 8 and figure 1). The effect size was very small (eta squared=-.04).

A significant difference was also found in the male attitude questionnaire, with males (M=80.59, SD=10.59) and females [M=85.57, SD=8.70; t(129.55)=-3.01, p=.003]. The effect size was also small (eta squared=-.07). Refer to Figure 1.

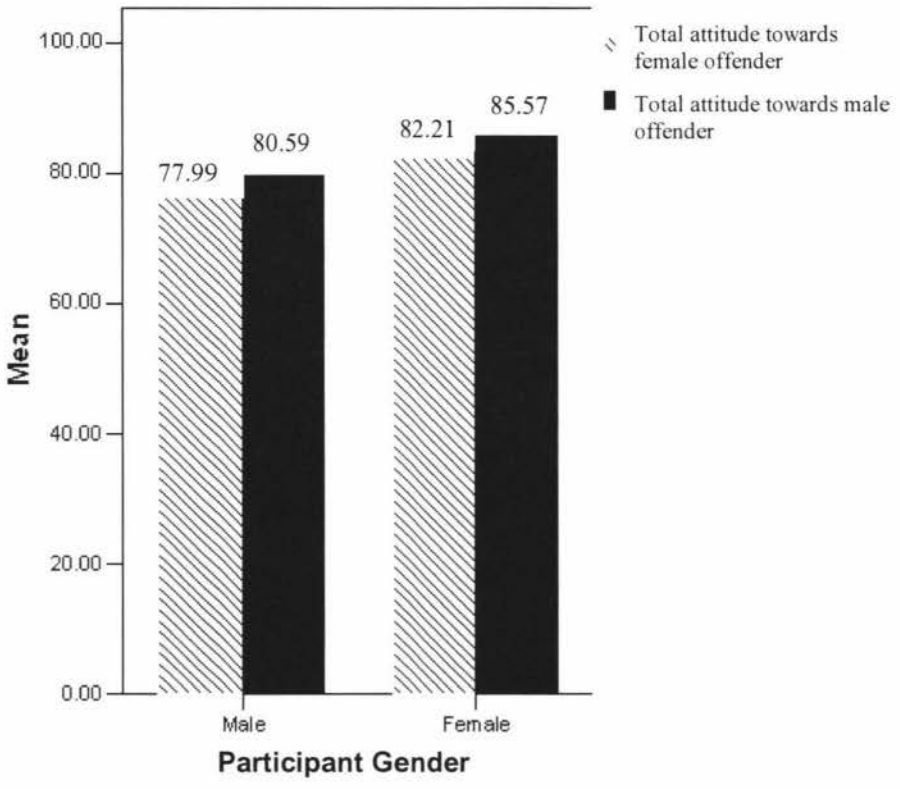

Figure 1. Mean scores obtained on the two Attitude Questionnaires; Attitudes regarding women's sexualised behaviour towards children and Attitudes regarding men's sexualised behaviour towards children by participant gender.

The above stated hypothesis estimated that students' overall attitudes would differ depending on the gender of the perpetrator in question. As can be seen in Figure 1, females in particular, appeared to have stronger attitudes than males endorsing the view that ***both*** male and female sexual behaviour towards children is harmful. The male mean was lower in both measures; however as predicted, they too had stronger views towards male behaviour as opposed to sexual behaviour exhibited by a female.

Furthermore, the means of the overall scores comparing responses from the male attitude measure to responses from the female attitude measure were minimal (M= 83.12; M=80.13). Although statistically, the difference is significant, practically the researcher would argue, the difference isn't large enough to adequately confirm the hypothesis.

Participants viewed male sexual behaviour towards children as serious and harmful, but participants viewed female sexual behaviour towards children in a similar manner.

The above results appear similar to the findings in Hetherton and Beardsall's (1998) study. Table 9 shows the descriptive statistics for the attitudes questionnaires as rated by professionals. Overall, all participants despite gender, scored high on the attitude questionnaire indicating an attitude that women's sexual behaviour towards children exists, and is a serious and harmful problem.

Table 9.

Mean scores obtained from the Attitudes regarding women's sexualised behaviour towards children questionnaire in Hetherton and Beardsall's (1998) study

	Male Social Workers (N = 33)	Male Police Officers (N = 33)	Female Social Workers (N = 32)	Female Police Officers (N = 32)
M	88.18	81.88	89.26	87.41
SD	8.08	8.16	7.29	7.69
Range	72-107	63-98	74-104	75-105

7.3 The Interaction Effect

Hypothesis 3

To explore the interaction effect between participant gender and vignette gender on the total attitude score, a one-way between groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed. Pallant (2005) suggests a higher order design can be used, involving two or more categorical independent variables. This design was utilised in examining the above hypothesis. The two dependent variables used were: total score on attitudes regarding men's and women's behaviour towards children questionnaire; the two independent variables were participant gender and vignette character gender.

Preliminary assumption testing was performed to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity. The dependent variable, total scores from the men's questionnaire was found to violate the assumption of equality of variance. Tabachnick and Fidell (1996) suggest a stricter alpha level of .025 or .01 is to be used when examining that particular variable's level of significance.

There was a statistically significant difference between male and female students on the combined dependent variables: $F(2, 108) = 5.46$, $p = .006$; Wilks' Lambda = .91; partial eta squared = .19 and also on the total belief item 4 (gender of perpetrator): $F(14, 216) = .2.55$, $p = .002$; Wilks' Lambda = .74; partial eta squared = .14. This suggests that participant gender and student ratings of the perpetrator gender from the vignettes had an effect on their overall attitude score in the denial or acceptance of harm of male/female-perpetrated sexual abuse. When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, the differences to reach statistical significance using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of 0.17 were the total score from the male attitude questionnaire and the interaction with both participant gender: $F(1,109) = 9.99$, $p = .002$, partial eta squared = .08, and total belief item 4 $F(7,109) = 3.42$, $p = .002$, partial eta squared = .18.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate university student attitudes regarding adult sexual behaviour towards children, and whether they viewed male sexual behaviour as more serious and harmful than female sexual behaviour in such instances. Participant gender and perpetrator gender in the vignettes were explored to assess the relationship between gender and attitude towards sex offenders. Each of the hypotheses will be addressed, and the findings of the study discussed in comparison to the results of Hetherton and Beardsall's (1998) study. The implications of holding onto these attitudes are explored, and then followed by a discussion of the limitations and direction for future research.

8.1 Vignette – Influence of Gender of the offender

The item of the gender of the offender was one of the least influential factors to contribute to the overall belief in the child's story of alleged sex abuse. This finding differed from previous research. Hetherton and Beardsall (1998) found that of 65 police officers and 65 social workers, 48 percent (13/33) of male social workers, 67 percent (22/33) of policemen, 55 percent (17/31) of female social workers, and 25 percent of female police officers viewed offender gender as relevant on the female vignettes. These findings were similar to the male vignette (55% male social workers, 65% policemen, 55% female social workers, and 26% policewomen).

Students in the present study found *explicitness of disclosure* as the most influential in their credence of the child's story (M = 4.07) and the item of *child having poor reputation* as the least influential (M = 2.30). The present study differs in comparison to Hetherton and Beardsall's (1998) findings in which the offender gender appeared not to contribute to students' perceptions of the alleged case of

sexual abuse. There may be an explanation for this. Hetherton and Beardsall (1998) were examining attitudes of those individuals who have had experience in dealing with child sexual abuse cases. For example, social workers had dealt with between 40 and 50 cases within the 12 months prior to the commencement of the study. It is hypothesised that students at Massey University may only have had limited (if any) personal experience in dealing with child sexual abuse, and that this experience may have stemmed from personal victimisation or from what was seen and heard in the media. As a result, their perception of what is most influential in an alleged child sex case could differ.

There was no significant difference found between responses on either the Anna or Andrew vignettes. This suggests that the gender of the perpetrator had no or minimal effect on the participants responses. A between groups analysis further indicated a similar finding, in which females overall rated both male and female sexual behaviour as more serious compared to male students. They appeared not to score higher solely on the vignettes that contained Anna, an offender of the same gender as them which is a result contrary to the predicted hypothesis (Kalichman, et al, 1990). This suggests that the notion of both male and female perpetrated sexual abuse is more credible to this female population, compared to male students. The underpinning stereotypes or cognitive processes that creates this difference would add value for further research.

8.2 Student Attitudes regarding Male and Female Sexual Behaviour towards children

The main hypothesis was supported in that all 138 students viewed male sexual behaviour towards children as more serious and harmful than female sexual behaviour. The higher scores may indicate that the stereotype of men as being "sexually aggressive" and/or "exploitative" still exists, further endorsing the myth that women do not sexually offend (Denov, 2003; Hetherton & Beardsall, 1998). Alternatively, men commit the majority of reported sex abuse crimes, and the student attitudes appear to reflect this.

There were significant differences found between female and male students' attitudes. Female students were found to have higher means compared to males in their overall view of adult sexual behaviour, suggesting they viewed both male and female sexual behaviour towards children as serious and harmful, compared to male or female alone. It is important to note however, that although the difference between student attitudes was significant, the difference in means was minimal. Both male and female students still viewed female sexual behaviour towards children as serious and harmful, emphasising that they did not deny its existence, or trivialise it. This is similar to Maynard & Wiederman's study (1997) with results that indicated no matter what the gender of the child or alleged offender depicted in vignettes was, respondents still viewed adult sexual behaviour towards the child as serious and harmful. These results may be further indicative of the emerging awareness of child sexual abuse. As stated by Singer and Cooper (2008), all forms of media such as newspapers, documentaries and also the experiences of friends and family are the main modes of information regarding criminal offences. University students in particular may have a greater level of access to such information increasing their own knowledge on the area of sex offending.

8.3 The effect of participant gender and vignette gender on attitude towards adult sexual behaviour

Participant gender and gender of the alleged offender was found to be significantly related to the attitude of sexual behaviour by adults. Kalichman et al. (1990), reported that professionals who were of the same gender as the offender may perceive the offender's behaviour as more serious than that of an offender counter to the professional's gender. The reasoning being that such professionals feel more capable of judging behaviour of the same gender. This is contrary to the results found from the MANOVA analysis, as both participant gender and vignette gender had an effect on the overall attitude score. When the results for the dependent variables (participant gender and offender gender) were considered separately, the

participants' gender and rating of item 4 (gender of the perpetrator) were the main factors that had an interaction effect on participant's scores on the male questionnaire. This result was surprising, as it indicates that student gender had an effect on their overall attitude score, *irrelevant* of their own gender and that their rating of either Anna or Andrew vignette also impacted on their attitude score towards males.

From the above, the researcher concludes that no matter what the gender of the participant was, an underlying process such as stereotypical biases had an effect on their attitude score towards male sex offenders. This finding may support Farber, Showers, Johnson, Joseph, and Oshin's study (1984), whereby female sexual interactions with children were viewed as less representative of child sexual abuse, hence no interaction effect on the female attitude questionnaire. It is worth noting that in the Farber et al. (1984) study, female-perpetrated child sexual abuse of a female victim was perceived as serious; however, not abuse of a male victim. Gender disparity therefore remains within the realm of child sexual abuse. Students from the present study appeared to perceive male sexual abuse as more serious and harmful, and their own gender and that of the vignette gender, impacted on their overall perception of male sexual abuse against children. This finding was not indicative with the female attitude scores.

8.4 Limitations and Future Directions of the Current Study

The present study was conducted using a relatively small sample of Massey University students, and as such, the ability to generalise the results is limited. The majority of the sample consisted of younger-aged students with the majority identifying with the youngest age cohort (16 to 20 years of age). Personal approach to prospective participants during the recruitment and data collection stages did not allow for random selection of participants; therefore, the results may show some selection biases. This limits the comparisons that can be made between student and non-student groups. Ethnicity data and subject area of participants may have resulted

in differing attitudes, and allowed for greater analysis between sub-groups. It is important to note also, that the sample was taken from Massey University in Auckland, and attitudes towards adult sexual behaviour may differ in other parts of the country.

Many students had not considered the issue of female sexual offending prior to participation. Asking students to formulate an opinion on an issue with little previous knowledge could be disadvantageous. Stahlberg and Frey (1990) stated that the risk of obtaining unstable scores on a scale is much higher if the object in question is unfamiliar to the participant. However the intent of this study was exploratory, in that its aim was to increase the awareness of female involvement in sexual abuse, and to measure what attitudes students held of the same. These two aims appear to have been achieved.

In terms of the measures used, some limitations are noteworthy. The Likert scale, utilised in all three measures, has been questioned as a reliable measure in self-reporting (Goddard & Villanova, 1996). The option of *neither agree nor disagree* has its limitations. This option allows respondents to remain neutral to statements they are uncertain of, or want to be perceived as socially desirable. The items were reverse-coded to control for this, however, some statements remained neutral as part of this process. Pauline, Searle, and Knaggs (2003) identified that due to the topic of research being studied; a 'neutral' option may have provided students with a sense of ease or comfort when answering the statements. Goddard and Villanova (1996) suggest that for research enquiring as to a respondent's belief, the neutral options be omitted completely for the purpose of clearly ascertaining the intensity of the belief in question.

In conducting the research, the students' lack of comprehension in answering the questionnaires was noted. The pilot study conducted at the beginning resulted in a number of alterations to the original measures constructed by Hetherton and Beardsall (1997). However, even after the modifications, item content still appeared

confusing to some students. The use of the double negatives contained in several of the attitude questionnaire items were highlighted by many respondents. For example, item 16: "For a woman to sexually abuse children she would *not* have to be forced into it by another woman/man," and item 5: "Females represent the victims, not the perpetrators, of child sexual abuse." The latter item contained two parts to the statement, and therefore required more thought in responding compared to the remaining items.

Many variables mediate an individual's attitude; such as previously mentioned early life experiences and exposure to media stories of sex offenders (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Singer & Cooper, 2008). Whilst the present study did not examine the focal factors that could explain a person's attitude toward sexual offenders, a theoretical backdrop of social cognitive dissonance may aid in gaining a greater understanding of where these attitudes come from. Saradjian and Hanks (1996) and Robinson (1998) believed the denial that women could sexually abuse children stems from society's construction of what being a woman entails. Schemas are a rough guide that provides models in how we should perceive and react to people and events unfolding around us. They further provide the ideals of a mother such as being nurturing, genteel, and asexual (Festinger, 1957). Such a schema can originate from the gender role society has prescribed for a woman and mother (Robinson, 1998).

Social cognitive dissonance theory stipulates that when an event occurs that is outside of our schemas, for example an event that we could not predict, our sense of security is threatened, and as a result we may feel anxious or angry (Saradjian & Hanks, 1996). Festinger (1957) states the following in cases of dissonance:

> The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance. The strength of the pressure to reduce the dissonance is a function of the magnitude of the dissonance (pp. 3, 18 as cited in Fishbein & Ajzen, p.40, 1975).

Hetherton & Beardsall's study examines their findings against the theoretical background of attributions and gender perceptions. In examining attitudes, further exploration of the origin of such phenomena, such as stereotypes and schema, would assist in a greater understanding of why students perceive adult men as more serious and harmful when compared to adult women and their sexual behaviour towards children. Social cognitive dissonance theory connotes that in cases of child sexual abuse, for example, the aggressive sexual nature of men contained in our schemas remains unmodified; for a man to sexually abuse a child is consistent with the stereotypical male traits of power and sexual aggression (Saradjian & Hanks, 1996). However, for a woman to commit child sexual abuse, our schema faults as it cannot facilitate the idea of male traits transferring to a woman's actions. To cope with this internal conflict justifications of the event are used to keep schema consistent with stereotypes learned, such as explaining that females were coerced into offending by a male, or perhaps it was a 'misguided love thing'. As a result, perception of male and female gender roles remain intact (Saradjian & Hanks, 1996).

An awareness of sex offending was strongly displayed by the many comments made to the researcher by participants after response completion. The main area of concern raised was the importance placed on studying this population as limited information is known or presented to the public about women committing sex crimes as opposed to men. Media tend to highlight the more extreme crimes, involving men as perpetrators, multiple victims, and women who are mentally ill who have also committed such crimes (Thakker & Durrant, 2006). The daily abuse of children under the care of parents, relatives, and authority figures does not gain media attention, while it appears that it is in these instances that female sexual abuse of children is most prominent. Integrating qualitative analysis into this research area would aid in gaining a greater understanding of the occurrence of female-perpetrated child sexual abuse, and perhaps capture the reasons why people are reluctant to disclose and to support the survivors of the abuse.

Attitudes regarding sexual behaviour of adults towards children are noteworthy. From the present study, the researcher concludes that all students viewed sexualised behaviour as serious and harmful, with the majority of students not denying or trivialising the behaviour. The next recommended step is to probe attitudes further, to gain an insight into why students still perceive male sexual behaviour as more serious than females. As previously mentioned, the researcher found that participants were willing to discuss their opinions regarding sexual abuse and the topic of female offenders. A wealth of information could be obtained through pursuing qualitative research in this area. One suggestion would be to conduct focus groups with representative samples of the New Zealand population to further examine the basis of attitudes towards male and female sex offenders. Further to this, a meta-analysis of emerging studies on attitudes towards the female sex offender population would be interesting. This would allow for a more accurate comparison between studies so that reports of female sex offending and attitudes towards it could provide a clearer picture on the occurrence and perception of female sex offenders.

8.5 Summary and Conclusion

The present research does not deny or disparage the fact that the majority of sexual offenders are men. It highlights the ***other*** fact, that women can be sexual predators too. Students from Massey University, Auckland were found to hold a stronger attitude towards male sexual behaviour towards children and view this as more serious and harmful than female sexual behaviour. The research into these attitudes needs to be extended. Attitudes toward female sex offending appear to remain hindered, and the implications of this are vast. Offenders will fail to be apprehended; victims will fail to receive the support they need, and many will continue to be at risk of future sexual abuse.

REFERENCES

Abel, G. G., Becker, J. V., & Cunningham-Rathner, J. (1984). Complications, consent, and cognitions in sex between children and adults. *International Journal of Law Psychiatry, 7(1),* 89-103.

Allen, C. (1990). Women as perpetrators of child sexual abuse: Recognition barriers. In A. L. Horton, B. L. Johnson, L. M. Roundy, & D. Williams (Eds.), *The incest perpetrator: A family member no one wants to treat* (pp. 108-125). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Allen, C. M. (1991). *Women and men who sexually abuse children: A comparative analysis*. Brandon, VT: Safer Society Press.

Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (2003). *The psychology of criminal conduct* (3rd ed.). Cincinnati: Anderson Publishing Co.

Babiker, G., & Herbert, M. (1998). Critical issues in the assessment of child sexual abuse. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology, 1*(4), 231-252.

Banning, A. (1989). Mother-son incest: confronting a prejudice. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 13*(4), 563-570.

Beckett, R. (2005). *What are the characteristics of female sex offenders?* Hull: The National Organisation for the Treatment of Abusers.

Blackburn, R. (1993). *The psychology of criminal conduct: Theory, research and practice.* West Sussex: Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Briggs, S. R., & Cheek, J. M. (1986). The role of factor analysis in the development and evaluation of personality scales. *Journal of Personality, 54*, 106-148.

Broussard, S., Wagner, W. G., & Kazelskis, R. (1991). Undergraduate students' perceptions of child sexual abuse: the impact of victim sex, perpetrator sex, respondent sex, and victim response. *Journal of Family Violence, 6*(3), 267-278.

Bunting, L. (2005). *Females who sexually offend against children: responses of the child protection and criminal justice systems.* London: NSPCC.

Bunting, L. (2007). Dealing with a problem that doesn't exist? Professional responses to female perpetrated child sexual abuse. *Child Abuse Review, 16*, 252-267.

Burchfield, R. (1986). *The New Zealand Pocket Oxford Dictionary*. Auckland: Oxford University Press.

Bureau of Justice Statistics. (1999). *Women offenders*: U.S. Department of Justice.

Caird, B. (1999). *Speaking sentences - Inside women's experiences of gender, punishment, and rehabilitation.* Unpublished Master's Thesis, Massey University, Palmerston North.

Chapple, I. (2006, January 22). Why I had sex with a 13-year-old boy. *Sunday Star Times,* p. A1 & A4.

Denov, M. S. (2001). A culture of denial: Exploring professional perspectives on female sex offending. *Canadian Journal of Criminology, 43*(3), 303-330.

Denov, M. S. (2003). The myth of innocence: Sexual scripts and the recognition of child sexual abuse by female perpetrators. *Journal of Sex Research, 40*(3), 303-315.

Elliott, M. (1993). *Female sexual abuse of children: The ultimate taboo.* Harlow, Essex: Longman.

Etherington, K. (1995). *Adult male survivors of childhood sexual abuse.* London: Pitman.

Faller, K. C. (1987). Women who sexually abuse children. *Violence and Victims, 2(4),* 263-76.

Faller, K. C. (1989). Characteristics of a sample of sexually abused children: How boys and girl victims differ. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 13,* 281-91.

Faller, K. C. (1995). A clinical sample of women who have sexually abused children. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 4*(3), 13-30.

Farber, E., Showers, J., Johnson, C. F., Joseph, J., & Oshins, L. (1984). The sexual abuse of children: a comparison of male and female victims. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 13*, 294-297.

Ferguson, C. J., & Meehan, D. C. (2005). An analysis of females convicted of sex crimes in the state of Florida. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 14*(1), 75-89.

Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. London: Tavistock.

Finkelhor, D. (1984). *Child sexual abuse: New theory and research*. New York: The Free Press.

Finkelhor, D., & Russell, D. (1984). Women as perpetrators. In D. Finkelhor (Ed.), *Child sexual abuse: New theory and research* (pp. 171-185). New York: The Free Press.

Finkelhor, D., Williams, L. M., & Burns, N. (1988). *Nursery crimes: Sexual abuse in day care*. California: Sage Publications.

Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I.(1975). *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.

Freeman, N. J., & Sandler, J. C. (2008). Female and male sex offenders: A comparison of recidivism patterns and risk factors. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 23(*10), 1394-1413.

Fromuth, M. E., & Conn, V. E. (1997). Hidden perpetrators: Sexual molestation in a nonclinical sample of college women. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 12*(3), 456-466.

Goddard, R. D., & Villanova, P. (1996). Designing surveys and questionnaires for research. In F. Leong & J. Austin (Eds.), *The psychology research handbook: A guide for graduate students and research assistants*. California: Sage.

Goldman, J. D. G. (2000). Some methodological problems in estimating incidence and prevalence in child sexual abuse research. *Journal of Sex Research, 37*(4), 305-314.

Grayston, A. D., & De Luca, R. V. (1999). Female perpetrators of child sexual abuse: A review of the clinical and empirical literature. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 4*(1), 93-106.

Groth, N. (1979). Sexual trauma in the life histories of rapists and child molesters. *Victimology, 4*, 10-16.

Groth, A. N., Longo, R. E., & McFadin, J. B. (1982). Undetected recidivism among rapists and child molesters. *Crime and Delinquency, 28*, 450-458.

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., Anderson, R. E., & Tatham, R. L. (2006). *Multivariate data analysis* (6th ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Haugaard, J. J. (2000). The challenge of defining child sexual abuse. *American Psychologist, 55*(9), 1036-1039.

Herman, J., & Hirschman, L. (1977). Father-daughter incest. *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society, 2*(4), 735-756.

Hetherton, J. (1999). The idealization of women: Its role in the minimization of child sexual abuse by females. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 23*(2), 161-174.

Hetherton, J., & Beardsall, L. (1998). Decisions and attitudes concerning child sexual abuse: Does the gender of the perpetrator make a difference to child protection professionals? *Child Abuse & Neglect, 22*(12), 1265-1283.

Hetherton, J. P., & Beardsall, L. (1997). The development of a scale to assess attitudes concerning women's sexualised behaviour towards children. *Unpublished doctoral thesis*, 75-85.

Higgs, D. C., Canavan, M. M., & Meyer, W. J. (1992). Moving from defense to offense: The development of an adolescent female sex offender. *Journal of Sex Research, 29*(1), 131-139.

Jeffries, S. *Gender differentiation in criminal court outcomes*. Retrieved 20 May, 2005, from www.crime.co.nz

Jeffries, S. *Is differential treatment by gender warranted?* Retrieved 20 May, 2005, from www.crime.co.nz

Jennings, K. T. (1994). Female child molesters: A review of the literature. In M. Elliott (Ed.), *Female sexual abuse of children.* (pp. 219-234): Guilford Press.

Johansson-Love, J., & Fremouw, W. (2006). A critique of the female sexual perpetrator research. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 11*(1), 12-26.

Kaiser, H. (1974). An index of factorial simplicity. *Psychometrika, 39*, 31-36.

Kalders, A., Inkster, H., & Britt, E. (1997). Females who offend sexually against children in New Zealand. *The Journal of Sexual Aggression, 3*(1), 15-29.

Kalichman, S. C., Craig, M. E., & Follingstad, D. (1990). Professional's adherence to mandatory child abuse reporting laws: Effects of responsibility attribution, confidence ratings and situational factors. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 14*, 69-77.

Kaufman, K. L., Wallace, A. M., Johnson, C. F., & Reeder, M. L. (1995). Comparing female and male perpetrators' modus operandi: Victims' reports of sexual abuse. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 10*(3), 322-333.

King, L. (2005). *What Works for Female Offenders? Literature Review*: Department of Corrections.

Krug, R. S. (1989). Adult male report of childhood sexual abuse by mothers: case descriptions, motivations and long-term consequences. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 13*, 111-119.

Lambie, I., & Seymour, F. (2006). One size does not fit all: Future directions for the treatment of sexually abusive youth in New Zealand. *Journal of Sexual Aggression, 12*(2), 175-187.

Lambie, I. D., & Stewart, M. W. (2003). *Community solutions for the community's problem: An outcome evaluation of three New Zealand community child sex offender treatment programmes*. Auckland: Department of Corrections.

Longdon, C. (1993). A survivor and therapist's viewpoint. In M. Elliot (Ed.), *Female sexual abuse of children*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Maccoby, E. E., & Jacklin, C. N. (1974). *The psychology of sex differences.* Stanford: University Press.

Martin, K. (2005, April 15). Changes to law on sex crimes. *The Press,* p. 5.

Matthews, J. K., Mathews, R., & Speltz, K. (1991). Female sexual offenders: A typology. In M. Q. Patton (Ed.), *Family sexual abuse: Frontline research and evaluation.* (pp. 199-219): Sage Publications, Inc.

Maynard, C. W., & Weiderman, M. (1997). Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Child Sexual Abuse: Effects of age, sex, and gender-role attitudes. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 21*(9), 833-844.

Mosher, C. J., Miethe, T. D., & Phillips, D. M. (2002). *The mismeasure of crime.* California: Sage Publications.

Nathan, L., Wilson, N. J., & Hillman, D. (2003). *Te Whakakotahitanga - An evaluation of the Te Piriti special treatment programme for child sex offenders in New Zealand*: Psychological Service, Department of Corrections.

Nelson, E. (1994). Females who sexually abuse children: A discussion of gender stereotypes and symbolic assailants. *Qualitative Sociology, 17(1)*: 63-87.

Nelson, A. (2004). Incarcerated female sex offenders' perception of consent (Doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin at Madison, United States, 2004). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 64*, AAI3101375.

New Zealand Law Society (2007). *Submissions On The Young Offenders (Serious Crimes) Bill.* Retrieved May 30th, 2008, from http://www.nz-lawsoc.org.nz/PDFs/Submissions/YoungOffendersSeriousCrimes.pdf.

New Zealand Police. (2006). *New Zealand Crime Statistics 2005.* Wellington: Office of the Police Commissioner.

New Zealand Press Association. (2000, January 31). Women commit sex crimes, too _ Goff. *Waikato Times*, p. 8.

Newbold, G. (2000). *Crime in New Zealand.* Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.

Pallant, J. (2005). *SPSS survival manual: A step by step guide to data analysis using SPSS for Windows (Version 12)* (2nd ed.). New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.

Paulin, J., Searle, W., & Knaggs, T. (2003). *Attitudes to crime and punishment: A New Zealand study.* Wellington: Ministry of Justice.

Poels, V. (2005). *Risk assessment of recidivism of violent sexual female offenders*: Department of Corrections, Psychological Service Rotorua.

Reinhart, M. (1987). Sexually abused boys. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 11*, 229-235.

Robinson, S. E. (1998). From victim to offender: Female offenders of child sexual abuse. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research, 6*, 59-73.

Robson, M. (1996). An overview of the literature about female sexual offending. *Social Work Review*.

Roosa, M. W., Reyes, L., Reinholtz, C., Angelini, P.J. (1998). Measurement of women's child sexual abuse experiences: An empirical demonstration of the impact of choice on estimates of incidence rates and of relationships with pathology. *The Journal of Sex Research, 35*(3), 225-240.

Rudin, M. M., Zalewski, C., & Bodmer-Turner, J. (1995). Characteristics of child sexual abuse victims according to perpetrator gender. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 19*(8), 963-973.

Safe Network. (2006). *What is child sexual abuse?* Retrieved January 18, 2006, from www.safenetwork.co.nz

Saradjian, J., & Hanks, H. (1996). *Women who sexually abuse children: From research to clinical practice*. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons.

Schwartz, B. K., & Cellini, H. R. (Eds.). (1995). *The sex offender: Corrections, treatment and legal practice*. Kingston, New Jersey: Civic Research Institute, Inc.

Segessenmann, T. (2002). *International comparisons of recorded violent crime rates for 2002*. Wellington: Ministry of Justice.

Sgroi, S., & Sargent, N. (1993). Impact and treatment issues for victims of childhood sexual abuse by female perpetrators. In M. Elliot (Ed.), *The female sexual abuse of children*. London: Guilford Press.

Singer, L., & Cooper, S. (2008). Inform, persuade and remind: An evaluation of a project to improve public confidence in the Criminal Justice System. *Ministry of Justice Research Series, 15/08.*

SPSS Inc. (2006). *SPSS® for Windows Rel. 15.0*. Chicago IL: Authors.

Stahlberg, D., & Frey, D. (1998). Attitudes I: Structure, Measurement and Functions. In, M. Hewstone, W. Stroebe, J-P Codol, & G. Stephenson (Eds), *Introduction to Social Psychology*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Statistics New Zealand. (2005). *Focusing on women 2005*. Wellington: Author.

Statistics New Zealand (2008). Retrieved January 16, 2009, from http://www.stats.govt.nz/products-and-services/table-builder/crime-tables/default.htm

Steffensmeier, D., & Allan, E. (1998). The nature of female offending: patterns and explanation. In R. T. Zaplin (Ed.), *Female offenders: Critical perspectives and effective interventions* (pp. 5-29). Gaithersburg: Aspen.

Tabachnick, B.G., & Fidell, L. S. (2007). Using multivariate statistics (5th edition). Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Thakker, J., & Durrant, R. (2006). News coverage of sexual offending in New Zealand, 2003. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology, 35*(1), 28-35.

The Southland Times. (2003, June 20). *Loophole had to be closed*, from Retrieved August 22, 2006, from http://io.knowledge-basket.co.nz/iodnews/cma

Tyler, F. (2003, 17 April). Woman's sex with boy, 13, legal--angry MP. *The Dominion Post*.

Vandiver, D. M. (2006). Female sex offenders: A comparison of solo offenders and co-offenders. *Violence and Victims, 21*(3), 339-354.

Vandiver, D. M., & Walker, J. T. (2002). Female sex offenders: An overview and analysis of 40 cases. *Criminal Justice Review, 27*(2), 284-300.

Wakefield, H., & Underwager, R. (1991). Female child sexual abusers: A critical review of the literature. *American Journal of Forensic Psychology, 9*(4), 43-69.

Wyatt, G. E. (1991). Child sexual abuse and its effects on sexual functioning. *Annual Review of Sex Research, 2*, 249-266.

APPENDIX A

COPY OF VIGNETTE

Please read the scenario below and then answer the question on the following page.

Following a school assembly on child sexual abuse, a favourite school teacher is approached by a 9 year old pupil. The pupil discloses that some weeks previously, whilst staying at a neighbour's home, the following happened;

During one afternoon the pupil was sitting on the couch discussing the day at school with Anna [Andrew] the neighbour. Anna [Andrew] then starts to touch the pupil "down below". When revealing this to the teacher, the pupil gestures to their genital area. Anna [Andrew] is an adult and has lived in the same neighbourhood as the pupil for some time.

Social services are subsequently contacted and the allegations are put to Anna [Andrew].

Anna [Andrew] is astounded and insists that the pupil is telling lies. She describes the allegation as yet just another example of the pupil attempting to create trouble by 'stirring things up.'

When considering a case of this kind, a number of factors are taken into account in trying to determine ***who*** is telling the truth. For the above case which of the factors listed below influenced you to believe the ***child's*** story over Anna's [Andrew's]?

Please rate these factors from **0 = factor not having any influence on my belief**, through to **6 = most influential factor causing me to believe the child's story.**

Use the below scale in answering this question:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
No influence on my belief at all			**Moderate influence**			**Most influence on my belief**

Question

Which of the following factors influenced you to believe the ***child's*** story over Anna's [Andrew's] ? Circle one number per factor according to its degree of influence on your belief.

1	Child was recently told about sexual abuse	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	Telling a teacher	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	Explicitness of disclosure	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	Alleged perpetrator is female [male]	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	Child allegedly has poor reputation	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX B

ATTITUDES REGARDING WOMEN'S SEXUALISED BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS CHILDREN QUESTIONNAIRE

Please rate your agreement on the following statements from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*.

Place only one tick per statement. No answer is right or wrong, read each statement carefully and place a tick in the box that most closely suits your opinion.

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Sexualised behaviour by a woman towards children may be seductive but would not be harmful.					
2	Those who go on about women sexually abusing children are trying to create a problem where there isn't one.					
3	Low numbers of reported cases of child sexual abuse by females do not reflect the true extent of the problem.					
4	A sexual experience with a woman would be harmful to most children.					
5	Females represent the victims, not the perpetrators, of child sexual abuse.					
6	If child sexual abuse by females went on, there would be more written about it.					
7	If a boy maintained an erection during sex with an older woman, she would still be sexually abusing him.					
8	Those who suggest that women sexually abuse children are women haters.					
9	Sexual abuse of children by women is more common than people think.					
10	Sexualised behaviour by a woman towards children would be more nurturing than sexually abusive.					
11	Child molestation is a deviation from normal female sexual behaviour.					
12	Children are sexually safe with women.					
13	Many of those who would claim to have been sexually abused by a woman have fantasized it.					

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
14	Women sexually abusing children, is a real problem that must be highlighted.					
15	Sexualised behaviour between a woman and a child is simply part of the normal closeness that exists between women and children.					
16	For a woman to sexually abuse children she would *not* have to be forced into it by another woman/ man.					
17	The idea of females sexually abusing children is no more threatening than the idea of men sexually abusing children.					
18	Sexual abuse by a woman would be just as harmful to a child as sexual abuse by a man.					
19	So called sexual 'abuse' by women refers to loving expressions of intimacy and caring.					
20	Raising the possibility of women abusing detracts attention from the problem of male abuse of children.					
21	Sexual abuse involves women victimizing children.					
22	Women sexually abusing children would be an issue of little significance for the training of professionals working with child abuse.					

APPENDIX C

ATTITUDES REGARDING MEN'S SEXUALISED BEHAVIOR TOWARDS CHILDREN QUESTIONNAIRE

Now I want you to do the same questionnaire again but this time take note that the statements are regarding *men* and not women.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Sexualised behaviour by a man towards children may be seductive but would not be harmful.					
2	Those who go on about men sexually abusing children are trying to create a problem where there isn't one.					
3	Low numbers of reported cases of child sexual abuse by males do not reflect the true extent of the problem.					
4	A sexual experience with a man would be harmful to most children.					
5	Males represent the victims, not the perpetrators, of child sexual abuse.					
6	If child sexual abuse by males went on, there would be more written about it.					
7	If a boy maintained an erection during sex with an older man, he would still be sexually abusing him.					
8	Those who suggest that men sexually abuse children are man haters.					
9	Sexual abuse of children by men is more common than people think.					
10	Sexualised behaviour by a man towards children would be more nurturing than sexually abusive.					
11	Child molestation is a deviation from normal male sexual behaviour.					
12	Children are sexually safe with men.					
13	Many of those who would claim to have been sexually abused by a man have fantasized it.					
14	Men sexually abusing children is a real problem that must be highlighted.					
15	Sexualised behaviour between a man and a child is simply part of the normal closeness that exists between men and children.					
16	For a man to sexually abuse children he would *not* have to be forced into it by another man/woman.					

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17	The idea of males sexually abusing children is no more threatening than the idea of women sexually abusing children.					
18	Sexual abuse by a man would be just as harmful to a child as sexual abuse by a woman.					
19	So called sexual 'abuse' by men refers to loving expressions of intimacy and caring.					
20	Raising the possibility of men abusing detracts attention from the problem of female abuse of children.					
21	Sexual abuse involves men victimizing children.					
22	Men sexually abusing children would be an issue of little significance for the training of professionals working with child abuse.					

.....

If you are interested in knowing the outcome of the study you have just participated in please tick the box below and provide your email address.

☐ **Yes** I would like a summary of findings once the study is complete to be sent to the following email address:-

Email address.....

For the purpose of confidentiality **Please tear along the perforated line and place this form in the box provided.** Your answers will not be linked to this form. All answers remain anonymous.

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX D

RECRUITMENT POSTER

Massey University
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore MSC
Auckland
New Zealand
T 64 9 414 0800 extn 9180
F 64 9 441 8157
www.massey.ac.nz

Research in the area of criminal psychology

STUDENTS WANTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FOLLOWING ...

A study of student attitudes towards sex offending against children

A fellow Massey student is looking to gain an insight into the attitudes of students towards sex offenders. This is a relatively new area of research focusing on offenders and how we, as students, perceive them.

Participants will be asked to fill out 3 short questionnaires rating their agreement or disagreement to a series of statements. All that is required of you is YOUR OPINION and 15-30 minutes of your time.

Why study an offender group such as this?

- To gain an awareness of these types of offenders
- To investigate attitudes and perceptions male and female students hold towards them
- Aide in improving support services to families and victims affected
- To gain knowledge that will enable effective treatment and rehabilitative services to offenders

FOR MORE INFORMATION TEAR OFF A SLIP BELOW

Txt or call 021 522 106 Student research	Txt or call 021 522 106 Student research	Txt or call 021 522 106 Student research	Txt or call 021 522 106 Student research	Txt or call 021 522 106 Student research	Txt or call 021 522 106 Student research	Txt or call 021 522 106 Student research

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Massey University
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore MSC
Auckland
New Zealand
T 64 9 414 0800 extn 9180
F 64 9 441 8157
www.massey.ac.nz

A study of student attitudes towards sex offending against children

INFORMATION SHEET

I invite you and your opinions!! I invite you to participate in a study in which your opinions count.

This information sheet is for you to keep. Please read it carefully before deciding to participate.

This research project is being conducted by fellow Massey Student, **Julie Aitken** as part of her MA degree in psychology, under the supervision of Massey University Psychology Department lecturer **Mei Wah Williams**. The focus of the study is to gain an insight into student's attitudes toward sex offenders. This offender group has gained much media attention of late and many stereotypes abound the topic of sex offending. It is hoped that in conducting such research an awareness of sex offenders is increased, some stereotypes put to rest and a gaining of new knowledge for future treatment of this offender group and their victims will be obtained. No questions are purposefully aimed at victims of sex abuse; the focus of study is purely on the attributes of adult sex offenders.

This information sheet provides an overview of the project, so you can make an informed decision on whether or not you would like to participate. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to complete a set of questionnaires which will take between 15 and 30 minutes to complete, at a time that is convenient to you.

Information collected from Questionnaires

The information collected from this study will be used to examine students overall attitudes towards adult offenders.

All responses are completely confidential and anonymous. Your name is not required or asked for on the questionnaires. Only demographic items will be asked for such as gender, age and it will not be possible to identify you from your responses alone. Questionnaires will not be shown to anyone outside of this research project and will only be used for research purposes.

Once the study has concluded, you are able to receive a summary of findings and any other information you would find interesting by contacting the researcher on the details listed below. As an alternative a tear off slip for your use with room to write your email address is provided at the end of the questionnaire. Your email address cannot be traced to the answers you have previously provided.

Once the data has been gathered, it will be stored in a safe secure location at the University for 5 years after which it will be destroyed.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated however;
You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- *withdraw from the study at any time during participation on the day;*
- *ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;*
- *provide information on the understanding that your name or any other personal details will not be used;*
- *be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.*

- *Completion and return of the questionnaire implies consent. You have the right to decline to answer any particular question*

Your refusal or acceptance to participate will in no way, shape or form affect academic grades or relationships with the School of Psychology within Massey University.

Support Availability

Participation in this study should cause you no harm or distress. However if you do feel uncomfortable at any stage of the study (during or after), contact details for Massey University Health & Counselling Centre are listed below. At time of participation, pamphlets on the centre's services will also be available.

Health & Counselling Centre
Massey University
Gate 5, Oteha Valley Campus
Oaklands Road
Ph: 443-9783
Fax: 443-9784
Email: StudentHealth@massey.ac.nz or www.massey.ac.nz

Contact Information

If you have any further questions about the nature of this study please do not hesitate to contact Julie Aitken (researcher) or her supervisor Mei Wah Williams on the following:

Julie Aitken
Email: aitkenjules@hotmail.com

Mei Wah Williams
Email: M.W.Williams@massey.ac.nz
Ph: 414-0800 extn 9886

Or contact by mail: School of Psychology
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore MSC
Auckland
Attn: J Aitken/M Williams

Committee Approval Statement

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, ALB Application 05/094. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor Kerry Chamberlain, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: Albany, telephone 09 414 0800 x9078, email humanethicsalb@massey.ac.nz

APPENDIX F

CORRELATION TABLES OF ATTITUDE ITEMS

Correlations between the 22 items on the Attitudes regarding women's sexualised behaviour towards children questionnaire (138)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1												
2	.48**											
3	.056	.043										
4	.183*	.355**	.017									
5	.150	.170*	.068	.082								
6	.207*	.359**	.169*	.185*	.109							
7	.156	.056	.096	.115	.111	.017						
8	.498**	.526**	.253**	.186*	.209*	.293**	.114					
9	.227**	.135	.229**	-.039	.086	.142	-.072	.205*				
10	.479**	.501**	.008	.394**	.238**	.319**	.128	.355**	.158			
11	.045	.074	.125	.022	.024	.079	-.089	.043	.100	.164		
12	.266**	.192*	.034	.080	.282**	.147	.096	.145	.107	.209*	-.157	
13	.399**	.349**	.051	.358**	.053	.314**	.278**	.354**	.177*	.434**	.043	.137
14	.305**	.221**	.074	.200*	.051	-.032	.267**	.196*	.193*	.194*	-.092	.386**
15	.424**	.328**	.108	.392**	.118	.232**	.295**	.374**	.078	.471**	.079	.198*
16	-.015	.079	-.020	.198*	-.074	.018	-.003	.242**	-.062	.115	.078	-.079
17	-.124	.098	-.005	-.029	.096	.128	-.105	.015	-.077	.038	.065	-.130
18	.250**	.180*	.088	.169*	.269**	.006	.200*	.244**	.097	.260**	-.008	.253**
19	.584**	.380**	.090	.262**	.325**	.123	.165	.406*	.216*	.504**	.021	.249**
20	.261**	.332**	.016	.238**	.207*	.196*	.146	.431**	.059	.418**	.079	.176*
21	.109	.212*	.225**	.145	.139	.157	.065	.245**	.022	.118	.039	.061
22	.322**	.432**	.133	.282**	.180*	.274**	.237**	.539**	.089	.481**	.044	.140

	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
13									
14	.336**								
15	.409**	.172*							
16	.152	.094	.180*						
17	-.069	-.100	-.101	-.001					
18	.301**	.345**	.251**	.086	.086				
19	.322**	.309**	.561**	.204*	-.157	.279**			
20	.315**	.199*	.332**	.170*	.104	.218*	.262**		
21	.187*	.147	.235**	.124	-.221**	.136	.166	.058	
22	.394**	.121	.316**	.223**	.041	.318**	.254**	.498**	.076

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) of probability * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) of probability

Correlations between the 22 items on the Attitudes regarding men's sexualised behaviour towards children questionnaire (138)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	1											.
2	.559**											
3	.145	.081										
4	.186*	.212*	-.102									
5	.396**	.376**	.050	.052								
6	.137	.166	.153	.012	.100							
7	.290**	.164	.127	.112	.141	-.069						
8	.359**	.529**	.207*	.256**	.335**	.178*	.220**					
9	.311**	.242**	.240**	.288**	.225**	.036	.123	.165				
10	.364**	.417**	.304**	.144	.200*	.305**	.113	.350**	.249**			
11	.036	.004	.191*	-.030	-.049	.000	.041	.050	.173*	-.012		
12	.308**	.200*	-.121	.187*	.288**	-.003	.084	.081	.190*	-.052	-.166	
13	.271**	.402**	.245**	.141	.303**	.201*	.317**	.438**	.165	.350**	.037	.128
14	.303**	.257**	.080	.232**	.164	-.019	.293**	.269**	.388**	.115	.036	.306**
15	.477**	.420**	.170*	.182*	.222**	.178*	.278**	.253**	.277**	.344**	.140	.138
16	.052	.027	.125	.119	.100	.172*	.013	.059	.170*	.260**	.090	-.065
17	-.072	-.054	-.058	-.017	-.050	.045	.019	.103	-.145	-.110	.009	-.213*
18	.244**	.094	.131	.170*	-.006	.180*	.294**	.232**	.126	.113	.165	-.033
19	.409**	.384**	.097	.326**	.276**	.201*	.165	.347**	.203*	.370**	.087	.244**
20	.121	.257**	.042	.183*	.143	.108	.239**	.281**	.062	.148	-.080	.020
21	.293**	.251**	-.008	.242**	.090	-.026	.164	.183*	.271**	.111	.104	.135
22	.319**	.397**	.226**	.153	.196*	.232**	.154	.345**	.106	.606**	-.022	-.101

	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
13										
14	.239**									
15	.394**	.413**								
16	.085	.099	.179*							
17	.023	-.067	-.043	-.021						
18	.262**	.296**	.214*	.096	.220**					
19	.429**	.365**	.530**	.265**	-.104	.166				
20	.229**	.149	.276**	.117	-.105	-.009	.271**			
21	.144	.175*	.157	.136	-.067	.095	.252**	.088		
22	.397**	.066	.354**	.355**	-.011	.091	.414**	.277**	.188*	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).