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CLINICAL RESEARCH

Adult Perpetrator Gender Asymmetries in Child Sexual Assault Victim Selection: Results from the 2000 National Incident-Based Reporting System

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ABSTRACT. Data from the 2000 National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) show that while males make up about nine out of every 10 adult sexual assault perpetrators, totaling about 26,878 incidents within the reporting period, females account for about one out of 10 perpetrators, totaling about 1,162 incidents. Male sexual assault perpetrators offend against child victims about 25% of the time and predominate

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antly choose female child victims, whereas female perpetrators offend against child victims about 40% of the time and choose child victims of both genders equally. Male perpetrators offend against adolescent victims about 40% of the time, and once again tend to choose female adolescent victims. Female perpetrators offend against adolescent victims a comparable amount of time (about 45%), and for forcible offenses (rape, sodomy, sexual assault with an object, and forcible fondling) choose adolescent victims of both genders equally, while for non-forcible offenses (non-forcible incest and statutory rape) they tend to choose predominantly male victims. Finally, adult male sexual assault perpetrators choose adult victims about 36% of the time while female perpetrators choose adult victims only 16% of the time. Implications for professionals are discussed, including recommendations to aid in correct identification of adult perpetrators and child/adolescent victims of sexual assault. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2005 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

KEYWORDS. Child and adolescent sexual assault, adult male and female perpetrators, victim gender and age, gender asymmetry in victim selection, implications for professionals

WHY IS VICTIM SELECTION BY PERPETRATOR GENDER IMPORTANT?

Sexual assault of children in the U.S. seems to be on the rise; the most recent continuous reports available indicate that between 1986 and 1993, there was an increase of 125% in officially reported cases of childhood sexual abuse (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999; U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). Current reports also show that children under age 12 constitute one-third of all sexual offense victims reported to authorities (Langan & Harlow, 1994; Snyder & Sickmund, 1999; U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). Even so, the actual number of child sexual assault victims in the U.S. remains unknown; it is estimated that at least half of all serious childhood victimizations, sexual assault included, are not reported to any authority (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999; U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). Although not all child sexual assaults are reported to the authorities, those in positions of social power due to professional status