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Abuse histories among female inmates

Magann Jordan
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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ABUSE HISTORIES AMONG FEMALE INMATES

by

Magann Jordan

Bachelor of Science
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2003

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree in Criminal Justice
Hank Greenspun Department of Criminal Justice
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 2005
UMI Number: 1428560

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Abuse Histories Among Female Inmates

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Criminal Justice

Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College

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ABSTRACT

Abuse Histories among Female Inmates

by

Magann Jordan

Dr. Terance Miethe, Examination Committee Chair
Professor of Criminal Justice
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The current study explores the extent and the consequences of one’s prior history of physical and sexual abuse on criminal behavior of female offenders. Using a sample of incarcerated women, it will first investigate the prevalence of prior abuse (sexual and physical) among female offenders. Survey responses will then be analyzed to assess psychological problems and possible criminal patterns that are related to abuse history. Specifically, the study examines whether prior abuses are risk factors for committing particular types of criminal offenses. The results of this study are then discussed in terms of their implication for criminological theory and public policy.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the expertise, sound advice, and constant encouragement from my committee chair, Dr. Terance Miethe. From undergraduate through graduate school, Dr. Miethe has helped me realize that my niche in life is the criminal justice field and I could never thank him enough for all of the patience, understanding, and compassion he has shown me throughout my educational career.

I would also like to thank the rest of my committee staff for their support and constructive criticisms throughout this project; Dr. Elaine Gunnison for allowing me to participate in collecting data for this thesis and constant encouragement, Dr. Ojmarrh Mitchell for teaching me to not be afraid of the word “statistics,” Dr. Larry Ashley for support, and Dr. Randall Shelden for making me realize there is room for passion in the criminal justice field.

This thesis is dedication to my brother, Michael Hargrave, for allowing me to focus on the open doors around me instead of dwelling on the closed ones. When graduate school became more difficult the fond memories of my brother gave me the courage and stamina to remember that I am strong enough to get through anything.

I am lucky enough to be a graduate student that did not have to leave home in order to receive this great experience of the Master’s program at UNLV. I was able to stay at home and work diligently on my studies thanks to my mother, Kandis Hargrave. From the home-cooked meals at night to Starbucks’s in the morning, my mother never
allowed me to question my intelligence and constantly encouraged me to strive for the stars.

To my surrogate family, my colleagues, my friends, Jodi Olson, Rachel Abrams, Alicia Boots, and Jeff Groebner for exposing me to lasting friendships and undying support through these past couple of years. I cannot thank them enough. I wish them the best in their future endeavors.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The rising population of incarcerated females during the past two decades has sparked the interest of criminological researchers. Traditional criminological theories have focused on explaining male offending and, thus, do not provide a complete understanding of female crime. Fortunately, recent research has established the importance of gender-specific theories (Belknap, 2001; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004; Chesney-Lind & Okamoto, 2001; Muraskin, 2000; Zaplin, 1998).

Additional research suggests that unique risk factors contribute to females’ onset into offending (Chesney-Lind 1992). For example, female offenders are more likely to have been victims of sexual abuse as children or adults (Belknap 2001; Chesney-Lind 1992; Chesney-Lind & Shelden 2004; Muraskin 2000; Zaplin 1998). Other risk factors include childhood experiences, peer relationships, and other aspects of their interpersonal environment (Hawkins, Catalano, Miller, 1992).

Risk factors are variables occurring before the behavioral problem starts and are correlated with an increased probability of the behavior continuing (Hawkins et al. 1992). For example, Daly (1992) found many lawbreaking women share a history of psychological problems, aggressive personalities, depression, and drug abuse histories. Many studies focus on juvenile behavior and their environment as risk factors for future criminal involvement. Socio-economic status, family conflict, low degree of commitment
to school, and peer rejection are some of these key factors (Hawkins et al. 1992). However, many of these studies do not distinguish between risk factors for males and females. The current study explores several risk factors that may be especially important among female offenders. These risk factors include vulnerability to sexual assault, traumatic histories, and measures of psychological well-being (e.g. depression and anxiety).

Research suggests that female offenders are more prone to prior abuse than their male counterparts, but few studies have directly addressed differences in the types of criminal offending committed by women who were not abused and those abused as juveniles or as adults. This lack of research on the relationship between prior sexual and physical abuse and offending patterns is surprising, given that it makes strong intuitive sense that specific criminal offending patterns should be a manifestation of prior abuse histories. For example, Widom & Maxfield (1995) found that a higher percent of people who were abused as children were more likely than non-victims to be arrested for prostitution as adults. This suggests particular types of abuse may predispose the survivor to specific types of criminal behavior in later years.

There is extensive literature on prior abuse as a precursor for criminal behavior among women offenders, but little attention has focused on whether abuse histories are more often linked to specific criminal offenses (e.g. property and violent). In the past, research on women offenders has focused on physical characteristics rather than other causal factors such as past experiences with violence and sexual assault (Chesney-Lind & Shelden 2004). For example, Lombroso described female offenders as having masculine attributes (i.e. facial hair, and high testosterone). Also, in comparison with male...
offenders, females have also been viewed historically as sexual deviants focusing on sex crimes like prostitution than other types of offenses (Chesney-Lind & Shelden 2004: 144; Lombroso & Ferero 1895). Although numerous theories focus on risk factors, they tend to combine female and male offending together. Combining genders together reduces the chance of discovering gender-specific differences in offending patterns.

The current study is designed to offer additional insight about the consequences of female abuse histories. It will first determine the prevalence of prior abuse (sexual and physical) among female offenders. The psychological problems and criminal patterns associated with prior abuse will then be examined. The results are then discussed in terms of their implication for criminological theory, public policy, and future research about women and crime.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Prevalence of Abuse

The rising population of females in prison beginning in the 1980s has lead to a greater amount of research on female offenders (Mullings, Marquart, & Hartley, 2003; Moon et al., 1994). Variables related to female criminality include economic factors, low educational attainment levels, and psychological factors (Moon et al., 1994). Researchers have concluded that “typical incarcerated females are poor, single parent, undereducated, and a survivor of physical and/or sexual abuse” (Moon et al., 1994).

As a risk factor for female criminals, the prevalence of prior physical and sexual abuse among incarcerated women is astonishing. Almost half of the women in the nation’s jails and prisons say they were physically and/or sexually abused before their imprisonment (Birch, 1999). Even compared to the general population, female offenders reveal a higher percentage of prior abuse histories. Harlow (1999) found that when compared to the general population, female inmates reveal a much larger percentage of abuse histories before the age of 18. Research also indicates that female prisoners who had spent their childhood in foster care or institutions reported even more severe abuse (Harlow, 1999). Appendix I summarizes various studies relating to the prevalence of abuse histories for women offenders.
Previous studies reveal a high abuse rate among female offenders prior to incarceration. These studies range from 34% to 81% of women with histories of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse. Among the most comprehensive studies are those conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Harlow, 1999), Wing (2004), McClellan, Farabee, and Crouch (1997), and Singer, Bussey, Song, and Lunghofer (1995).

Based on a survey of over 65,000 women prisoners across the United States, BJS staff (Harlow, 1999) found that more than half of the respondents reported being physically, sexually, and/or emotionally abused prior to incarceration. This BJS study also revealed additional characteristics about abuse patterns among women offenders. For example, among those women reporting prior abuse histories, nearly ninety percent of them came from foster care or other agencies (Harlow, 1999). Approximately three-fourths of abused women had parents who abused alcohol or other drugs. Nearly two-thirds of the women in the BJS study had at least one family member incarcerated prior to their conviction.

Wing's (2004) study focused on women offenders who had been emotionally or physically abused within an intimate relationship prior to incarceration. Using a self-administered survey in an Idaho women's correctional facility, this project found three-fourths of female offenders were in an abusive relationship prior to incarceration. This study differs from most research in that it looks at abuse within intimate relationships rather than grouping all potential abusers together (e.g. family, friends, and intimate partners).

Wing (2004) also explored other risk factors including alcohol consumption and drug abuse. Results indicated that daily alcohol consumption was more than twice as
prevalent among abused females as those females who had no history of abuse (13% vs. 5%). Similarly, over half of the women in abusive relationships reported they abused drugs prior to incarceration compared to only about one-third that were not in an abusive relationship.

A study of women inmates in Texas revealed that more than half had been abused growing up and nearly three-fourths had been victimized as adults (McClellan et al., 1997). When compared to over a thousand male inmates, the study indicated that almost one-third of the women report sexual mistreatment, abuse, or rape. Only about one percent of male inmates reported these problems. McClellan et al. (1997) also found that over half of the women experienced this abuse from their male spouse/partner.

Sexual violence was an experience frequently reported by the women inmates in a study conducted by Singer et al. (1995). More than two-thirds of the women interviewed reported forced sexual activity as adults. Almost half of the women revealed they had been sexually victimized as children. When combining childhood and adult sexual abuse, 81 percent of the women had been sexually victimized prior to incarceration.

Singer et al. (1995) study focused on exposure to physical violence within the past year before incarceration. Three-fourths of the women reported having been threatened with physical violence. Actual violence was reported by over half of the women offenders. Although the women were not specifically asked to describe their abuser, most women made passing references to domestic violence.

These findings suggest that prior abuse histories are important for understanding the nature and extent of female offending.
Role of Abuse on Psychological Well-Being

Prior sexual and physical abuse research concentrates on long-term consequences of victimization. Many studies focus on abuse as a risk factor for future criminal deviance but many do not specify the type of crimes prior abused victims are more prone to commit. However, previous research also indicates that prior abuse is associated with post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety attacks, and sexual dysfunction (Fleming et al., 1999; Johnson, Pike, & Chard, 2001; Mullings, Marquart, & Hartley, 2003).

It is well established that females are more prone to prior Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA) than their male counterparts (Chesney-Lind, 1997). The effects of this abuse includes, “fear, anxiety, depression, anger and hostility, and inappropriate sexual behavior” (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986, p. 69). The psychological manifestation resulting from such abuse can lead to various consequences for adults. Appendix II summarizes various studies examining the relationship between past abuse (physical, sexual, and emotional) and its different psychological consequences. These and other studies of the psychological consequences of prior abuse among females reveal a high rate of personality disorders, depression, anxiety, and antisocial behavior (see, for example, the following; Briere and Elliot, 2003; Sutherland, Bybee and Sullivan, 2002; Silverman, Reinherz and Giaconia, 1996).

A random sample of over 900 adults from the United States was conducted by Briere and Elliot (2003). Results indicated that one-third of the women experienced sexual abuse and a quarter of the women experienced physical abuse. Abused subjects were tested using the Trauma Symptom Inventory (TSI) to evaluate posttraumatic stress and other psychological behavior. Specifically, TSI tests include ten measures of
psychological states including; anxious arousal, depression, anger-irritability, intrusive experiences, defensive avoidance, dissociation, sexual concerns, dysfunctional sexual behavior, impaired self-reference, and tension reduction behavior. Upon comparison to the male subjects, women tested higher on anxious arousal, depression, dissociation, and impaired self-reference. Results indicated that childhood sexual abuse was associated with an increase level of all ten TSI psychological behaviors (i.e. depression, anxious arousal, etc) even after controlling for other variables.

A study by Sutherland et al. (2002) focused on women who had been physically, psychologically, and/or sexually abused from an intimate partner within the past six months. Consequences of abuse in this study included depression and poor physical health status.

Depression was measured using a combination of Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D) and a modified version of Andrews and Withey’s Quality of Life measure. When compared to non-abused women, more than half of the abused women claimed a mild depression while a third of the abused women revealed suffering from severe depression. Less than half of all participants had ever thought about committing suicide.

Sutherland et al. (2002) also explored the participant’s physical health status. Results indicated most abused women complained about pain and fatigue. A little over ninety percent of the women felt low in energy and over three-fourths complained about sleep problems, headaches, muscle tension or soreness, back pain, and fatigue. Chronically abused women were found to have higher levels of stress, depression, and
physical health symptoms compared with women who had no or lower rates of abuse (Sutherland et al., 2002).

Over 350 young adults participated in a seventeen year longitudinal study started in a public school system in a working class community in the Northeastern United States (Silverman et al. 1996). Data were collected at five time periods (age 5, 9, 15, 18, and 21) and abuse was assessed during each time period. Over one-third of the respondents reported being physically or sexually abused. The author concluded that females were more likely to have been abused than males (Silverman et al. 1996).

The Children’s Depression Inventory (CDI) was used in this study by Silverman et al. (1996) to assess depression and suicidal tendencies while the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale was used to measure anxiety. Compared to their non-sexually abused peers, females abused before fifteen years old were more likely to develop anxious-depression, social problems, thought problems, and attention problems (Silverman et al., 1996). Furthermore, nearly all of the sexually abused women by this early age thought about committing suicide compared to one-quarter of their peers (Silverman et al., 1996: 718).

The Impact of Abuse on Social Behavior

The psychological consequences of prior abuse have been connected to numerous social and criminal outcomes. For example, Dubowitz, Black, Harrington, Verschoore (1993) found that sexually abused children were likely to develop various problems, including depression, aggression, hyperactivity, and sexual problems. Sexually abused
children also exhibited other behavioral problems including social withdrawal, delinquency, and cruel attitudes toward others.

Previous research has also found that depressed females exhibit more aggressive behavior than non-depressed females (Knox, Carey, and Kim, 2003). An opposite effect occurs with males, with depressed males having lower aggression levels. A higher aggression level is also associated with higher conduct disorder including “violating the rights of others, property destruction, deceitfulness, theft, and serious violations of rules” (Knox et al., 2003: 226-228).

Appendix III summarizes various social behaviors (i.e. aggression, delinquency, drug and alcohol use, fighting, and sexual problems) that stem from prior abuse among females. These studies illustrate the impact that prior sexual and physical abuse has on future behavior. In particular, each of these studies indicates that past abuse is a possible risk factor for different types of social and criminal behavior. The most comprehensive studies involve those conducted by Siegel (2000), Widom and Ames (1994), and Herrera and McClosky (2001).

Siegel (2000) attempted to explain the correlation between abuse histories and adult behavior. As the abused women matured in age, the physical violence they report taking part in became more violent. Specifically, “of the fifty women who fought as adults, fifty-eight percent reported using weapons, in contrast, of the forty-seven women who fought as teens, only one reported using a weapon” (Siegel, 2000, pg. 244). The results indicated that prior abuse had a positive correlation with future involvement in violence.
Additional research reports that sexually abused children are more prone to be arrested as juveniles (Herrera & McCloskey 2001; Siegel & Williams 2003; Widom & Ames 1994). Widom and Ames (1994) also reported that sexually abused children (males and females) were more likely to have an adult arrest for prostitution. Several other researchers have reported similar findings (Gilfus 1992; Silbert and Pines 1982).

Herrera & McClosky (2001) conducted a longitudinal study focusing on abusive families among 299 children and a follow-up study five years later on the same children. Unlike most studies relating to female victimization and later offending, this study linked exposure to child abuse and marital violence to crime. They found that marital violence and physical child abuse are known to overlap (Herrera & McCloskey, 2001). They also found that children exposed to child abuse and marital violence was referred to juvenile court for delinquent acts more often than children that were not exposed to family violence. When compared to boys, girls were arrested for more violent offenses; more specifically, eighty-nine percent were arrested for domestic violence.

Other Risk Factors in Female Offending

Prior abuse and psychological problems are two general risk factors for female offending. However, previous research has also identified several additional risk factors for this behavior. The most widely recognized risk factors involve substance abuse, academic failure, and family conflict.

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is one of the most significant risk factors for adult criminal behavior (Elliot, Huizinga, & Ageton, 1985; Sommers & Baskin, 1994). Among females,
substance abuse coexists with mental illness and academic failure at a significantly higher rate than among males (Rotheram-Borus, 1993). Many abused females flee their home and run away at an alarming rate. Research has found that many of these teens have a higher risk of being exposed to drugs. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2004) finds that teenage runaways are far more prone to using alcohol and marijuana than non-runaways.

In a national study conducted by Greenfeld and Snell (BJS, 1999), about half of the women offenders in State prison reported using alcohol, drugs, or both at the time of offense for which they were convicted. When compared to their male counterparts, female offenders use drugs more often during criminal activity. Half of the women in State prison described themselves as using drugs daily prior to conviction.

Singer et al. (1995) found similar results when conducting interviews on 201 women at the Cleveland House of Corrections. Over half of the women that reported using drugs prior to conviction used cocaine or cocaine in combination with another drug. Over half of the sample reported a substance abuse problem and mental health problems.

Similar to the results found from prior abuse histories, McClellan et al. (1997) found high depression and anxiety among women with a previous history of substance abuse problems. In a sample of 500 female inmates, more than half of the women reported having a substance-dependency issue prior to incarceration while less than ten percent of the sample reported no history of illicit drug use. Three-fourths of the female sample was more likely to experiment with drugs prior to involvement with criminal activity. When compared to male inmates, female inmates had higher rates of use for “harder drugs” (i.e. heroin and crack cocaine).
Academic Failure

There is extensive literature on academic failure as a risk factor for delinquency among female offenders (Alderden, 2002; Bloom & Clovington, 2001). For example, truancy, suspensions, expulsions, placement in special classes, and dropouts and poor grades have been linked to female juvenile offending and repeat offending (Alderden, 2002; Sherman, 2002). Dembo & Schmeidler (2003) conducted a study of 315 arrested youth. Although they found that 87 percent were still in school, almost half of the youths (boys and girls) were in a special educational program and half of the sample repeated a grade in school.

Various studies have found a strong correlation between poor academic performance and delinquency (Howell & Hawkins, 1998; Maguin & Loeber, 1996; Moffit, 1993). Fagan & Pabon (1990) conducted a study within six inner city neighborhoods. They found dropouts (both male and female) took part in more criminal activity than the students still in school. While ten percent of the female dropouts committed serious offenses (e.g. murder, burglary, aggravated assault), three-fourths participated in delinquent acts. A higher rate of substance abuse problems (especially cocaine) was also found among female dropouts when compared to female students still in school.

Other studies have also identified academic failure as a predictor of subsequent violence among females (see Denno, 1990). Results from a meta-analysis indicated that academic failure and aggression are among the earliest predictors of violent behavior among 12-14 year olds (Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Derzon, 1996). Comparative studies
indicate that low academic achievement was a better predictor of delinquent behavior among girls than boys (see Crosnoe, Erickson, and Dornbusch, 2002).

**Family Conflict**

Although abuse (physically, sexually, and neglect) help define family conflict, previous studies have explored different types of family issue that often lead to juvenile offending and adult criminality. Arguing with family members, family alcohol and drug behavior (i.e. parents who abuse drugs/alcohol), and poor inconsistent family management practices are often viewed as risk factors in various studies (Sheikh & Flanagan, 2000; Hawkins et al., 1992). Many researchers argue that poor family relationships often lead to depression, anxiety, and withdrawal; similar symptoms are found among other risk factors (i.e. prior abuse and academic failure) (Sheikh & Flanagan, 2000).

Sheikh and Flanagan (2000) conducted a longitudinal study focusing on problem drinking and family interactions. Utilizing 51 families that met the criteria of problem drinking and a comparison group of 104 families, the authors found that a higher level of drinking among parents was related to the children’s internal and external problems (i.e. depression symptoms, anxiety, and social problems).

Dembo et al., (1992) found that most youths came from a home where one or more of the parents experienced substance abuse and/or had mental health problems. The majority of the parents had encountered the criminal justice system sometime in their lives. Almost three-fourths of the parents had been arrested, while over half had either been in jail, detention, or put on probation. In a later study, Dembo and Schmeidler (2003) found similar results when interviewing 315 arrested youth. A quarter of the
families reported problems associated with substance abuse or mental health. Over half of the youth had parents involved in law-breaking behavior.

Theoretical Orientation

Past research has focused on two main questions about female offending. First, why are rates of crime lower for females than males? Secondly, what are the predisposing and precipitating risk factors that trigger male and female involvement in criminal activity? The first question involves the epidemiology of gender differences (i.e. the different rates of involvement in crime by gender). The second question is concerned about the etiology of crime (i.e. what causes the onset or commencement of criminal offenses?).

Previous epidemiological research has extensively examined the differential crime rates among male and female offenders. Epidemiological theories describe the relatively lower rate of female criminality by focusing on several factors such as biological characteristics (e.g. testosterone, serotonin levels among men), cultural factors (e.g. masculinity), and structural opportunity (e.g., economic segregation). In contrast, etiological research focuses on risk factors leading to the commission of criminal behavior. These theories concentrate on particular sociological forces (e.g. learned behavior and social bonds), psychological characteristics (e.g. past abuse histories and mental illness), and environmental factors (e.g. neighborhood and family) that are associated with the onset and persistence of criminal behavior.
For the purpose of my study, the primary focus will be on theories of etiology. How particular theories would identify prior abuse history as a risk factor for the commission of specific types of offenses is described below.

**Psychoanalytic Theory**

Freud’s psychoanalytic theory focuses on the “abnormalities or disturbances in the individual’s emotional development from early childhood” (Akers, 2000: 59). The basic premise of this theory involves the clash between the primitive instincts (id), sense of self (ego) and conscience (superego). Various behavioral problems often result from early childhood experiences (i.e. poor early relationship with mother and/or father). Psychoanalytic theory considers criminal activity as an act of revolt resulting from unconscious feelings of guilt and shame initiated by unloving and/or cruel parents (Akers, 2000).

Extensive literature reveals a significant higher rate of past abuse among female offenders when compared to their male counterparts. According to psychoanalytical theory, past abuse (physical, sexual, and/or emotional) during early development can cause a disruption in the development of the superego causing psychological dysfunction in adulthood like feelings of guilt or shame (Akers, 2000). Crime is viewed as a symptom or condition from these feelings of guilt that the individual cannot control. From this perspective, female offenders with a history of abuse develop a psychological defect.

By focusing on early childhood maltreatment, psychoanalytic theory offers an explanation for subsequent criminal offending. In fact, this perspective suggests that early abuse (i.e. physical, sexual, and/or neglect) results in psychological trauma (i.e.
depression and frustration) which ultimately leads to an outburst of negative emotions (i.e. aggression and violent behavior). Accordingly, psychoanalytic theory would predict that physically abused females act out their childhood trauma and will later commit violent acts. Similarly, sexually abused children may transfer emotions of sexual inappropriateness to adult sex crimes (i.e. prostitution).

**Differential Association Theory**

Sutherland’s differential association theory describes crime as a learned behavior through intimate groups and pro-criminal individuals (Akers, 2000). Specifically, as exposure to procriminal values and patterns increase in frequency and duration, the likelihood of criminal involvement also increases (Alarid et al., 2000). From this perspective, earlier exposures to procriminal behavior and values have an adverse affect on later criminality. Many female inmates describe numerous family members as being involved in criminal activity prior to their conviction (Dembo et al., 1992). The association with delinquent peers and law-violating family members increases the chance of formulating law-violating definitions.

The basic ideas of differential association theory have been widely supported in previous research. For example, Alarid et al. (2000) found the differential association theory significantly predicted both male and female involvement in crime. A later study conducted by Hartjen and Priyadarsini (2003) obtained similar finding among 2,000 teenagers. These authors found that involvement with delinquent peers and other pro-criminal individuals over a longer period of time increased the likelihood of criminal involvement.
Differential association theory offers an explanation of subsequent criminal behavior by focusing on the early onset of frequent procriminal values and patterns (i.e. violent and sexual abuse) from intimate groups (i.e. family members) over a long period of time. Under this theory, criminal behavioral patterns are transferred into specific adult types of offending. For example, sexually abused children through the life course develop into sexual predators or other sex-related offenses in adulthood. The link between early physical abuse and subsequent violent offending in adulthood is also consistent with this theory.

Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura's (1977) behavioral model theory contends that behavior is learned through a series of stimulus response relations (i.e. patterns reinforced by family members, neighbors, and/or mass media). It is through these relationships that individuals find reinforcement for various types of behavior.

According to Grusec (1992), the premise of modeling rests on four components. First, the observer must pay attention to events (e.g. domestic violence and abuse). Second, the process of memory will help retain the events being shown to the individual. Third, the observer will replicate or model the behavior viewed. Fourth, there must be a reason to motivate the performance of the modeled actions (e.g. a child views the euphoric stage of a drug induced parent and later experiments with the same drug).

Previous studies reveal that many female offenders come from troubled family backgrounds (i.e. parents with dependency problems, abuse, and neglect). These early experiences are important because our own behavior is often modeled from the prior treatment by family, peers, and loved ones. Through this process of behavioral modeling,
childhood victim of abuse and neglect may become adult offenders of the same behavior. A cycle of violence may occur in the following way: a parent physically abuses their crying child and the behavior stops. As the child matures, he/she realizes that physical abuse is a successful method to have control over others. The child then uses violence in the future.

Bandura's behavioral modeling theory offers an explanation of specific criminal acts among female offenders. The causal sequence under this theory is as follows: (1) The person observes a particular behavior, (2) internalizes the benefits of that behavior, (3) learns the physical skills to commit that behavior, and (4) commits that behavior in anticipation of a successful reinforcement. According to this theory, physically abused females will commit violent crimes and sexually abused females will commit sex crimes through this process of behavior modeling.

Research Questions

The major purpose of this research is to examine the consequences of prior abuse (physical and sexual) on the psychological well-being and specific types of criminal offending on female inmates. Three specific research questions are investigated.

First, what is the prevalence of childhood physical and sexual abuse among a sample of women inmates? Prior research indicates that almost half of the women in the nation's prisons and jails were abused prior to incarceration (BJS, 2004; Harlow, 1999; Snell & Morton, 1991).

Second, what is the relationship between prior abuse and psychological well-being among the female inmates? Previous literature identifies prior abuse as a risk factor
for various psychological problems (Gover, 2004; Spataro, Mullen et al., 2004). Accordingly, I expect to find a similar relationship between abuse experiences and measures of psychological well-being (i.e. depression, self-inflicted harm).

Third, does specific types of abuse influence the specific offenses committed by female offenders? Does this victim-offender cycle exist after controlling for other variables that affect offender behavior? Based on various theories (differential association and social learning), I expect to find a victim-offender cycle in which specific types of prior abuse are associated with similar offending patterns in adult criminal behavior.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

A survey method was used in the current study of abuse and female offending. Surveys are the preferred method of inquiry when the primary research question involves the description of a characteristic of a group or population (Babbie, 2004). Compared to other methods of inquiry, a self-reported survey of female inmates had several obvious advantages for studying the relationship between abuse history and subsequent criminal behavior. Specifically, a self-report survey allows the subject anonymity and provides researchers with facts containing a glimpse into the "dark figures of crime" or crime otherwise not known to police because of underreporting. Self-report surveys disclose valuable personal statements containing realities that would have gone unnoticed (Mosher, Miethe, and Philips, 2002). Self-administered surveys are also cost effective in terms of collecting a large amount of information on a large number of respondents in a relatively short period of time (Babbie, 2004).

The nature of the questions asked in this particular survey contained extremely personal information. The most obvious types of sensitive information include reports of prior sexual and physical abuse and their criminal activity. Self-report surveys were chosen to collect this sensitive information from female offenders because it was the best way to keep the individual’s anonymity and still collect valuable data.
Sample

The data for this study was derived from a sample of female inmates at a Southwestern prison. Participation in the survey was voluntary and all participants were anonymous.

Of the 400 women that were incarcerated at the prison at the time of the research investigation, 131 surveys were administered leaving 121 usable surveys for this study. The survey gleaned information on the offenders' life history prior to incarceration, prior criminal record, their convicted offenses, and various demographical characteristics.

Before data collection began, approval for this study was sought and granted by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) and from the Institutional Review Board at the Department of Corrections in the Southwestern state. To solicit volunteers for this research, fliers were placed, with the Warden's approval, in all of the inmates' pods. The sign-up sheet explained that research was being conducted by the Department of Criminal Justice at UNLV and participants were appreciated (see Appendix IV for a copy of this consent form).

The fliers only contained information such as the time and place of the survey and did not indicate the specific nature of the study. Since the flier did not specify the exact purpose of the study, the women who participated in this study should be a reasonable cross-section of the women in this particular correctional institution.

Over a six month period, two research assistants from UNLV administered the survey to the women inside the prison. Before survey administration, inmates were assured that answers would remain anonymous. They were also informed that they could quit taking the survey at any time. Inmates signed an informed consent prior to being
allowed to take the survey. Guards were asked to leave the room and the women sat at
different desks which prevented other inmates from reading their survey responses.

The survey was administered to small groups of women ranging from 5 to 10. It
took the women approximately thirty minutes to fill out the survey. On several
occasions, the researchers would make special visits to the facility to give assistance to
Spanish speaking inmates and also to inmates that had a difficult time reading. In such
cases, the questions were spoken to the inmates without anyone else being in the room at
the same time. This procedure was utilized to ensure confidentiality of survey responses.

Measurement of Major Variables

The primary variables in this study are classified as independent variables and
dependent variables. The specific variables under this classification, their coding, and
their frequency distribution in the same are summarized in Table 3.1.

Dependent Variables

The primary dependent variables involve measures of psychological problems and
the convicted charges that lead to being sent to prison. These charges were placed into
three categories including: (1) sexual offense (e.g. prostitution) (2) violent offense (e.g.
murder and assault) and (3) all other categories (e.g. kidnapping and drugs).

Based on current and past convictions, when multiple charges were present, the
variables were recoded into three offense categories using a hierarchal method. For
example, an inmate was placed as a sex offender if they had any past convictions of a sex
offense (i.e. prostitution) regardless of other offenses. An inmate was placed in the
Table 3.1: Coding of Variables, Univariate Statistics, and Bivariate Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Coding</th>
<th>% (N)</th>
<th>Type of Conviction Offense</th>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sex Off</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Violent Off</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Conviction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offense</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = Sex Off</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = Violent Off</td>
<td></td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>66.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = No</td>
<td></td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>67.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Sexual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = No</td>
<td></td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Physical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = No</td>
<td></td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>58.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = Nonwhite</td>
<td></td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = White</td>
<td></td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = No high school</td>
<td></td>
<td>65.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>degree</td>
<td></td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = high school</td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = $20,000 and</td>
<td></td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>below/missing</td>
<td></td>
<td>55.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = $20,001 and</td>
<td></td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>above</td>
<td></td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = Not married</td>
<td></td>
<td>75%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = Married</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = No</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>80.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.1: Coding of Variables, Univariate Statistics, and Bivariate Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Coding</th>
<th>% (N)</th>
<th>Convicted Offenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sex Offense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Use</td>
<td>0 = No</td>
<td>29.6% (37)</td>
<td>16.7% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Yes</td>
<td>70.4% (88)</td>
<td>83.3% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Use</td>
<td>0 = No</td>
<td>24.4% (30)</td>
<td>100% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Yes</td>
<td>75.6% (93)</td>
<td>67.6% (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents arrested prior to 18</td>
<td>0 = No</td>
<td>75.4% (95)</td>
<td>83.3% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Yes</td>
<td>24.6% (31)</td>
<td>16.7% (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: # Chi-square value of p < .10 when all three types of convicted offenses are compared.
* Chi-square value of p < .10 when convicted violent offense are compared with other offenses.

violent category if they had any violent offense in their past and no sex offenses. The other category held property offenders, drug offenders, and any other inmates that did not have either a sex offense or a violent offense in their past.

The second dependent variable focuses on psychological problems among the female offenders. Two survey items were used to develop a composite measure of psychological problems. These items involved (1) whether the respondents had ever experienced depression for one month or longer and (2) whether they ever purposely cut, burn, or harm themselves in some way. A chi-square test revealed a statistically significant relationship between these variables, providing a justification for combining them into a single scale. Under this composite measure of psychological problems, respondents are coded as “no” (i.e. never been depressed nor self-harmed themselves) and “yes” (i.e. reported one or both problems).
Independent Variables

The primary independent variable is the history of abuse among the female offenders. Women were asked whether they experienced any unwanted sexual contact under the age of 18. For purposes of the analyses, this question was nominally coded as "no" (0) and "yes" (1). Previous childhood history of physical abuse was coded in a similar manner. Physical abuse was measured by various behaviors (e.g. hitting, slapping, pushing, shoving, kicking, and/or choking).

The other independent variables included various measures of the women’s demographic characteristics and life experiences. These included their race, marital status, income, employment, children, and alcohol/drug use. High levels of missing data were found for some variables including education, employment, income, and marital status. Missing data was included in the category labeled “0” for these particular variables. For example, for the variable labeled education, “1” included all high school graduates and “0” included women that were not high school graduates or had missing data on this question. This coding decision was done to preserve a sufficiently large sample size to conduct multivariate analysis. Given this coding decision, however, the interpretations of these variables should be viewed with some caution.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The analysis was conducted in three sections. In the first stage, descriptive statistics (i.e. means and frequencies) were calculated on all major variables. Second, chi-square test comparisons were used to determine significant bivariate relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Third, logistic regression analysis was used to assess the net association between prior abuse and other risk factors on the risk of experiencing psychological problems and incarcerated for a violent offense. The results of these analyses are described below.

Univariate Statistics

As shown in Table 3.1, the majority of female inmates were incarcerated for non-violent and non-sexual offenses (e.g. drugs and property theft). Slightly more than one-fourth of them were convicted of a violent offense (n=35) and only about 5% were convicted of a sex-related crime (n=6).

Other aspects of the socio-demographic profile of female inmates are revealed by looking at the univariate frequency distributions. For example, the majority of the offenders had psychological problems and prior sexual and physical abuse. The majority of women inmates in this study were Caucasian, not married, had children, and had a
family income of less than $20,000 before going to prison. Most of these women also reported having high alcohol and drug usage prior to incarceration. Many of the same demographic characteristics are found in other studies of female inmates (see Wing, 2004 and Zlotnick, 1997).

Bivariate Relationships

The major purpose of this research is to examine the consequences of prior abuse (physical and sexual) on the psychological well-being and specific types of criminal offending on female inmates. Bivariate analyses were conducted to assess the relationships between the independent and dependent variables and the magnitude of their association.

Regardless of the type of convicted offense, the majority of female inmates in this study were characterized as having psychological problems (see Table 3.1). These problems included self-report of depression and self-inflicted harm. Although the relationship was not statistically significant, psychological problems were more commonly reported by violent inmates than women incarcerated for other types of offense.

Consistent with the idea of a cycle of violence, women convicted of violent offense were more likely than any other type of offender to have experienced childhood physical abuse. Nearly three-fourths of violent inmates reported a history of physical abuse compared to about one-half of women incarcerated for other types of offenses. This contrast between violent inmates and other offenders is statistically significant. This tendency to reproduce victimization experienced in adult offender behavior was also
observed among sex offenders. In particular, sex offenders (e.g. prostitutes) had a slightly higher rate of prior sexual abuse than other offenders. However, this bivariate relationship between type of convicted offender and sexual abuse history was not statistically significant.

The nature and magnitude of the bivariate relationship between type of convicted offense and socio-demographic characteristics of the women inmates are also indicated in Table 3.1. Compared to other types of offenders, women incarcerated for violent crimes were more likely to be non-white, married, have less formal education, and less likely to report a drug use history. In contrast, women incarcerated for sex-related offenses had lower levels of legal employment, income, and had higher levels of substance use (both alcohol and drugs) than other convicted offenders. However, chi-square analyses indicated that the bivariate relationship between type of convicted offense and the offender’s race, education, and marital status were the only statistically significant differences.

Multivariate Analysis

Logistic regression analysis was conducted to assess the net association between prior abuse and other independent variables with psychological problems and the type of offense that lead to incarceration. The multivariate analysis of one’s convicted offense focuses on comparing violent inmates with other types of offenders. The small sample size for sex-related offenders (n = 6) prevents the multivariate analysis of the association between abuse history and other variables for this type of convicted offense. The results of the logistic regression analyses are presented in Table 4.1.
Table 4.1: Conditional Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression Models Predicting the Likelihood of Psychological Problems and Type of Convicted Offense.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Problems</td>
<td>Psychological Problems</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Sexual Abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Physical Abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.5**</td>
<td>6.56**</td>
<td>5.99**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td></td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.18**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a High School Grad</td>
<td></td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.18**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td></td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>2.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td></td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>2.98*</td>
<td>3.11*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had Children</td>
<td></td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Alcohol Use</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>6.37**</td>
<td>5.635**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Drug Use</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Incarcerated</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.95*</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.28*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before 18 yrs. Old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio Chi-</td>
<td></td>
<td>123.66*</td>
<td>100.58*</td>
<td>98.10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Square</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke R Square</td>
<td></td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td></td>
<td>115</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *= p < .10, **= p < .05
Model 1 in Table 4.1 indicate that the risk of reporting a psychological problem was significantly higher for females with a history of physical abuse and who had parents that were incarcerated prior to the age of 18. These were the only two variables that had a significant net effect on the presence of psychological problems. As noted in many studies, having a parent in prison is one of the strongest predictors of offending (Dryfoos, 1990).

As predicted according to the cycle of violence, the risks of a conviction for a violent offense were significantly higher for women that had been physically abused in childhood than none abused women. In addition, the odds of a conviction for a violent offense were significantly higher for women who were non-white, not a high school graduate, and married. The odds of committing a violent offense were over six times greater among women who used alcohol prior to incarceration.

According to Model 3 in Table 4.1, even after controlling for psychological problems prior physical abuse was still a significant risk factor for committing a violent offense. Characteristics including non-white, not a high school graduate and married were also significant risk factors for committing a violent offense in this study. Prior alcohol use and parents incarcerated prior to the age of 18 also had significant net effects on the likelihood of incarcerated for a violent offense.

Based on this information, two general conclusions can be reached from this analysis. First, the odds of having psychological problems were three and a half times greater among abused than non-abused women. Second, women who were physically abused as children had a substantially greater likelihood than non-abused women to be incarcerated for violent offenses. This cycle of violent victimization and offending
remains statistically significant even after controlling for psychological problems and demographic characteristics of the offender.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The major purpose of this research is to examine the consequences of prior abuse (physical and sexual) on the psychological well-being and specific types of criminal offending on female inmates. Specifically, does a victim-offender cycle over the life course exist after controlling for other variables that affect offender behavior?

The primary results of this study include the following. First, prior physical and sexual abuse among female inmates was prevalent among all categories of offenses. Regardless of the convicted offense, over half of the sample reported being either physically abused, sexually abused, or both prior to incarceration. Second, women convicted of violence were more likely to have childhood histories of physical abuse than other convicted offenders. This strong relationship between being physically abused under the age of 18 and later convicted for a violent crime remained significant in multivariate analysis that controlled for other variables that influenced prior abused convicted offenders.

Theoretical Orientation

Psychoanalytical theory argues that childhood abuse leads to feelings of guilt or shame often times resulting in criminal activity. In support of Freud's theory, psychological problems were more likely among female inmates with prior physical
abuse. Inmates that had psychological problems were almost three times more likely to be convicted of a violent offense and those with a history of physical abuse were almost six times more likely to commit a violent offense.

In addition to self-report claims of psychological problems (i.e. inflicting self-harm and depression), the study also asked female inmates to briefly summarize in their own words what they felt led them to their current involvement in criminal activity. Some of the responses from various abused inmates were as followed:

- “I had no self-worth, I felt useless.”
- “I am not happy with myself.”
- “Sexual abuse, low self esteem, co-dependency, and loss of identity.”
- “Low self-esteem and no one loved me.”
- “My own guilt for being molested.”
- “I’m the black sheep.”
- “It is all my fault.”

These types of claims illustrate the low self-esteem and feelings of guilt and shame that results from a disruption of personality development described in the psychoanalytical theory. Qualitative evidence of low self-esteem and guilt in addition to the vast number of inmates reporting psychological problems, offers support in the psychoanalytical theory in describing female offending.

Sutherland’s differential association theory and Bandura’s modeling theory both describe behavior as being learned through intimate groups (i.e. family, friends, teachers) early in life. Both theories describe the importance of family dynamics as causal agents for possible behavior problems in adulthood. Within the current study, many of the female inmates had parents incarcerated prior to the age of 18 indicating family conflicts. Also, over half of the inmates incarcerated for violent offenses claimed to have witnessed some type of physical abuse in their household growing up (66%). As found in the
current study, it is this early childhood physical abuse experiences that are likely to shape and influence future criminal behavior.

The survey asked the female offenders whether they can identify any life experiences, problems, or difficulties that caused them to get into trouble and commit the particular crime they were being incarcerated for or other criminal activity. Some of the responses for violent offenders were:

“Abusive family.”
“Alcoholic parents and child abuser for a father.”
“All the violence in my childhood.”
“Drugs and violence.”
“Getting beat up.”
“I got involved with a very violent man.”
“My mother and father were violent and my mother did drugs.”
“Parents drank.”

Consistent with the ideas of differential association and behavioral modeling, their qualitative data illustrate the adverse effects of prior experiences on subsequent criminal behavior.

Previous theories and research indicate that prior abuse plays a part in female offending and the results of the current study is correlated with this research. In fact, the qualitative data from the survey further illustrates the severity of prior physical and sexual abuse of these women. Some of their comments relating to abuse are described below in their own words:

“I have been raped.”
“I have had a life of incest, sexual abuse, running away before I was 13.”
“Growing up unloved and abused.”
“Abusive marriage.”
“Dysfunctional childhood being abuse sexually, verbally, and mentally.”
“Child abused and sexually molested.”
“My boyfriend beat me up daily.”
Study Limitations

Like many studies focusing on prior abuse, using a self-administered survey has multiple limitations. For example, the researcher is limited on the participant’s possible memory distortion, false accusations, and an over representation of past abuse. These measuring problems ultimately affect the validity and reliability of these measures. In addition, the mere definitions of physical abuse and sexual abuse can be confusing to the respondent.

The correctional facility used in this study housed nearly 400 female inmates during the course of the survey. It is possible that those who did not participate in the study would have responded in ways that could have changed the findings in this study. For example, the small sample size of sex offenders precluded the research from examining a subsequent relationship between prior sexual abuse and sex offending. It is possible that if more respondents participated, a larger group of this particular type of offenders would have been included in the research.

This study controlled for multiple variables (i.e. race, economic status, marriage, and prior sexual/physical abuse) but it did not examine childhood neglect of which could have had an affect on adult criminal behavior. Even without this variable included however, results of this research agree with the data found in most other studies on female offending (Wing 2004; Bloom and Owen, 1999; Harlow, 1999; Zlotnick, 1997).

A direct causal relationship between prior abuse and specific criminal offenses cannot be made from this study. Studies containing a group of prior abused females outside of the prison system would have to be examined as well in order to make a more efficient causal relationship between these two variables. Nonetheless, other variables
that may be associated with prior abuse (e.g. family conflict) would also have to be included to make a more definitive relationship. The high prevalence rate of prior abuse among female inmates suggests that future studies of its causal importance of subsequent criminal behavior should be investigated more fully.

Future Research Implications

Numerous researchers have reported that female offenders are more likely to have been victims of sexual abuse either as children or as adults. Focusing on this trend, therapy groups within the correctional facilities should keep promoting physical and sexual abuse therapy. This type of therapy would promote increased self-value and independency that many women in the study revealed in the qualitative responses as being implications to their criminal behavior.

By combining a qualitative and quantitative approach, research should continue exploring the victim/offender cycle in both sexual and physical nature. Also, research should continue studies on physical abuse as a specific risk factor for specific types of violent offenses and general criminal behavior. This study suggests that one serious consequence of childhood physical victimization is subsequently involved in violent criminal behavior in adulthood.
APPENDIX I

STUDIES OF PREVALENCE OF ABUSE ON FEMALE INMATES
## I: Studies of Prevalence of Abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Sources of Information</th>
<th>Prevalence of Abuse (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bureau of Justice Statistics (2004)</td>
<td>Personal Interviews of approx 6,000 inmates (jails)</td>
<td>50% of women with prior abuse (physical and sexual)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wing (2004)</td>
<td>N = 426 female inmates (surveyed in an Idaho women’s correctional facility)</td>
<td>77% reported to have experienced emotional abuse within an intimate relationship prior to incarceration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>68% reported previous physical abuse within an intimate relationship prior to incarceration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dembo &amp; Schmeidler (2003)</td>
<td>N = 315 arrested youths in Florida (173 males and 142 females ages 11 to 18)</td>
<td>34% of females had been sexually victimized at least once in their lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloom &amp; Owen (1999)</td>
<td>N = 162 women surveyed from the California Youth Authority</td>
<td>70% of females experienced physical abuse prior to incarceration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46% of females experienced sexual abuse prior to incarceration</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>68% of females experienced emotional abuse prior to incarceration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35% of females experienced sexual assault prior to incarceration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Sample Size and Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harlow (1999) Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
<td>N = 65,425 females (surveyed in state prisons), N = 6,347 females (surveyed in federal prisons), N = 50,298 females (surveyed in jails), N = 428,644 females (surveyed on probation)</td>
<td>57% of females experienced abuse before sentencing, 40% of females experienced abuse before sentencing, 48% of females experienced abuse before sentencing, 40% of females experienced abuse before sentencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morash, Bynum, &amp; Koons (1998)</td>
<td>1 prison for each State were surveyed (mail, telephone, site visits, and focus groups)</td>
<td>43% of women inmates said they had been physically or sexually abused before their admission to prison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McClellan, Farabee, &amp; Crouch (1997)</td>
<td>N = 500 adult female prisoners in Texas</td>
<td>26% reported sexually mistreated/abuse in childhood, 31% reported sexually mistreated/abuse in adulthood, 57% report experiencing deprivation and/or abuse growing up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zlotnick, Caron (1997)</td>
<td>N = 85 females inmates from Rhode Island (face-to-face interviews)</td>
<td>40% of females reported childhood sexual abuse, 55% of females reported childhood physical abuse, 53% reported being raped in adulthood, 63% reported some type of physical assault in adulthood prior to incarceration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>N = 1,593 annually</td>
<td>68% of women reported physical or sexual abuse as children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Council on Crime and Delinquency (1995)</td>
<td></td>
<td>72% reported such abuse as adults</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher et al. (1995)</th>
<th>N = 201 female inmates incarcerated at a municipal jail</th>
<th>81% of women disclosed having been sexually victimized at some time in their lives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48% of women disclosed they had been sexually victimized as children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher et al. (1992)</th>
<th>N = 549 women inmates surveyed in Oklahoma</th>
<th>74% experienced physical abuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher et al. (1991)</th>
<th>N = 549 female offenders (Oklahoma Correctional Facilities)</th>
<th>52% of females experienced physical abuse prior to the age of 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50% of females experienced emotional abuse prior to the age of 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>38% of females experienced sexual abuse/rape prior to the age of 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher et al. (1991)</th>
<th>N = 13,986 surveys administered in 277 prisons in the United States</th>
<th>43% of females experienced physically and/or sexually abuse prior to incarceration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher et al. (1990)</th>
<th>N = 276 women inmates surveyed in small groups</th>
<th>69% experienced physical abuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>70% experienced emotional or mental abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39% experienced a rape</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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APPENDIX II

STUDIES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL BEHAVIOR FROM ABUSE HISTORIES
II: Studies of Psychological Behavior from Abuse Histories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Behavior</th>
<th>Source of Information</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression, Anxiety, Self-esteem, Dependence, Fear, and Sexual Problems</td>
<td>Gover (2004) N = 588 juvenile inmates (208 females)</td>
<td>- 77 females reported sexual abuse prior to incarceration. - Using the Likert-type scale from Jessness Inventory, 37 of the females reporting child sexual abuse (CSA) illustrated a high level of depression when compared to the other juveniles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethier, Lemelin, &amp; Lacharité (2004) N = 49 maltreated preschoolers and school-aged children (29 boys and 20 girls) completed three behavioral and emotional outcomes using the child behavior checklist (CBCL). - Results illustrated an increased of anxiety/depression among the maltreated children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spataro, Mullen, Burgess, Wells, &amp; Moss (2004) N = 1,612 children (1,327 females)</td>
<td>- A higher rate of anxiety/acute stress disorder among females with past abuse histories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briere &amp; Elliott (2003)</td>
<td>N = 935 questionnaires mailed to random adults in US; 152 women reported CSA</td>
<td>After controlling for numerous variables and utilizing the Traumatic Symptom Inventory (TSI), CSA was associated with a significant level of depression among women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levitan, Rector, Sheldon, &amp; Goering (2003)</td>
<td>N = 6,597 Ontario residents from 1990-1991 ages 15-64</td>
<td>Using the Organization-Composite International Diagnostic Interview (CIDI), research found that prior sexual abuse, physical abuse, and/or parental strain increased levels of depression, anxiety and co-morbid (depression and anxiety).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson, Heath, Madden, Cooper, Dinwiddie, Bucholz, Glowinski, McLaughlin, Dunne, Statham, &amp; Martin (2002)</td>
<td>N = 1,991 sets of twins (1,159 female pairs and 832 male pairs) participated in phone interviews.</td>
<td>The CSA female twin reported a history of major depression, suicide attempts, conduct disorder, social anxiety when compared to co-twin.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Depression, Anxiety, Self-esteem, Dependence, Fear, and Sexual Problems | Sutherland, Bybee, & Sullivan (2002) | N = 397 women recruited primarily through the newspaper (half of whom had been assaulted by an intimate partner within the prior six months | - 205 women fit the criteria of being abused (physically and/or sexually prior interview)
- Using the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D), 63% of the women were at least mildly depressed and 30% were severely depressed. |
| Molnar, Buka, & Kessler (2001) | N = 8,098 participants ranging from ages 15-54 between the years of 1990-1992 by the NCS | - Among those sexually abused, the prevalence of lifetime psychiatric disorders was higher than those not reporting CSA.
- Disorders included depression, anxiety, and substance disorders. |
| Depression, Anxiety, Self-esteem, Dependence, Fear, and Sexual Problems | Silvern, Waelde, Baughan, Karyl, & Kaersvang (2000) | N = 542 undergraduates participated in a survey (291 women and 251 men) | - 127 women reported abuse (physical and/or sexual) histories
- Using the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), the CSA women revealed an increase of depressive symptoms and posttraumatic symptoms when compared to men. |

| Fleming, Mullen, Sibthorpe, & Bammer (1998) | N = 710 randomly selected Australian women through a cross-sectional data focusing on the long-term effects of CSA. | - 144 women experienced childhood sexual abuse
- Women reporting CSA had significantly more sexual problems than non-CSA women.
- Using the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ), abused women had an increase of depression, fear of men, sexual problems, and low self-esteem. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Depression, Anxiety, Self-esteem, Dependence, Fear, and Sexual Problems</th>
<th>Johnson, Cohen, Brown, Smailes, &amp; Bernstein (1999)</th>
<th>N = 639 youths participated in longitudinal interviews</th>
<th>Of the children reporting CSA, physical abuse, and/or neglect, results (using the DSM-IV) illustrated an increased rate of personality disorders (PD) during early adulthood; including depression and antisocial behavior.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Styron &amp; Janoff-Bulman (1997)</td>
<td>N = 879 college students completed a multi-scale questionnaire (528 female and 351 male)</td>
<td>145 students reported verbal, physical, or sexual abuse. Using the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), prior abused students revealed an increase of depression level.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silverman, Reinherz &amp; Giaconia (1996)</td>
<td>N = 375 subjects participated in a seventeen year longitudinal study</td>
<td>Using the Children’s Depression Inventory (CDI), results indicate a higher level of depression and a higher level of suicide attempts among those with abuse histories. Results indicate a higher rate of anxiety.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX III

STUDIES OF PAST ABUSE IMPACT ON SOCIAL AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR
### III: Studies of Past Abuse Impact on Social and Criminal Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Sources of Information</th>
<th>Social Behavior</th>
<th>Criminal Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
- Sexual abuse is a risk factor for the development of antisocial behavior in young adolescents. |                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
<p>| Siegel &amp; Williams (2003)         | N = 411 women (206 victims of past abuse and 205 matched non-abused women)             | - Victims of past abuse were more likely to runaway as juveniles.                                                                                                                                               | - Victims were almost twice as likely to be arrested as adults. (20% vs. 11%)                                                                                                                                  |
| Herrera &amp; McCloskey (2001)       | N = 299 children and mothers interviewed regarding abuse in the family. A follow-up study conducted five years later on the same children.   |                                                                                                                                                                                                               | - Girls with a history of physical child abuse were arrested for violent offenses more than boys with similar histories.                                                                                           |
| Widom and Maxfield (2001)        | N = 1,575 longitudinal case (6 year follow-up)                                         | - Mental health problems (suicide attempts and post-traumatic stress disorder)                                                                                                                                   | - Females abused or neglected were 73% more likely to be arrested when compared to the control group.                                                                                                          |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Sample Description</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Siegel (2000)</td>
<td>N = 136 women sexually abused as children</td>
<td>Fighting was common and adult aggression with being a victim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widom (1995)</td>
<td>N = 908 individuals who had been physically, sexually, and/or neglected during childhood and a matched control group (667)</td>
<td>Acting-out behaviors, running away, and depression (past research) Abused victims were more likely to be arrested later in life. 26% of those abused were arrested as juveniles. Victims of abuse were more likely to commit a property offence and/or a drug charge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubowitz, Black, Harrington, &amp; Verschoore (1993)</td>
<td>CBCL completed by parents of 93 sexually abused children and 80 non-abused children.</td>
<td>Depression, aggression, and sexual problems Social withdrawal, hyperactivity, and delinquency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moon, Rolison, Akande, &amp; Fletcher (1992)</td>
<td>N = 547 female inmates</td>
<td>High rates of physical and emotional abuse increase the chances to use multiple drugs prior coming to prison.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Department of Criminal Justice

Before agreeing to participate in this study, it is important that the following explanation of the proposed procedures be read and understood. It describes the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study. It also describes the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

General Information:

I am _________________ from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Criminal Justice. I am a researcher on this project, and you are invited to participate in this research study. The purpose of this study is to understand the factors that contribute to offending. The following paragraphs offer important information that you need to know before participating in this study.

Procedure:

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire about your background (e.g., your family, education, employment, and past behaviors) as a juvenile and as an adult.

Benefits of Participation:

By participating in this study, you will be helping researchers understand the nature of offending. In addition, the information that you provide can help improve existing correctional programming and help to develop new programs from offenders. Finally, as a “thank you” for your time, a small bath item will be provided to you.

Risks of Participation:

You may be uncomfortable answering some of the questions (e.g., the question triggers bad memories). If you feel that you need counseling during or after the completion of the survey, please notify one of the researchers so that it can be made available to you.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in the study completely, or you may quit participating at any time, even if you have already started a survey. If you feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions, you may skip any
question or decide not to continue. If you should decide to quit participation in this study, your survey will be destroyed. At any time during this study, if you have any comments or concerns about the research, you may contact Dr. Elaine Gunnison at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (702-895-0238).

**Confidentiality:**

All of your answers to the surveys will be kept CONFIDENTIAL. There will be no personal identifiers such as a social security number or ID number that will be taken meaning that there is no way in which to link you to your survey answers. That is, no one at this institution or anywhere else in the criminal justice system will know how you answered these surveys. At no time will your answers to these surveys affect your case in any way. When you complete your surveys, you will place them in an envelope and seal it. Then, a researcher from UNLV, who does not work at this facility, will immediately send all of the surveys from the entire group to UNLV, where they will be kept in a locked cabinet. The results of this study will be presented as a group, meaning that, no one will talk about your specific answers or any other participant’s specific answers. The information that is collected from this study will be published in research articles and reports, so that people can have a better understanding of offenders. All records will be stored in a locked cabinet at UNLV for at least 3 years after completion of the study. When the study is completed, the questionnaires will be shredded.

**Contact Information:**

If you have any questions about this study or if you experience harmful effects as a result of participation in this study, you may contact Dr. Elaine Gunnison at the UNLV, Department of Criminal Justice at 895-0238.

**Participant Consent:**

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Signature of Participant ___________________________ Date ____________

Participant Name (Please Print) ___________________________
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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