Why Does Incest Occur? A Distinction Between Genetic and Sociolegal Incest

Anusha Lalani, B.Sc., *MacEwan University, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada*
Sandy Jung, Ph.D., R.Psych., *MacEwan University, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada*

INTRODUCTION

- Misperceptions about child sexual abuse (CSA) [1]
  - Rarely occurs
  - Most victims are females
  - Most offenders are male strangers
- Facts about CSA [1]
  - Very common occurrence
  - Perpetrated against boys and girls alike
  - Offenders include men and women
  - Ratio of CSA by family members is significantly higher than CSA by relatives or strangers [2]

CURRENT STUDY

For all occurrences of sexual abuse against children ages 12 and younger reported to Edmonton Police Service from 2010-2014, perpetrators who were biological parents, step parents, and unrelated (extrafamilial) to the victims were compared a series of variables.

METHODS

Data Reduction

Identifiable perpetrator who is 19 years or older

Victims who are 12 years or younger

Sexual assaults reported to EPS from 2010 and 2014

Perpetrator and victim are known to each other and nature of relationship is recorded

N = 479

Extrafamilial offender *n* = 200

Intrafamilial biological parent *n* = 160

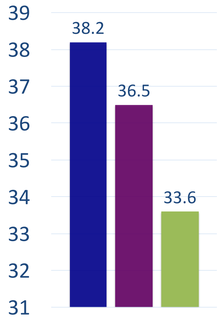
Intrafamilial step parent *n* = 119

Variables

Offence Characteristics	Victim Characteristics	Perpetrator Characteristics
• Duration of abuse • Delay in reporting	• Age • Gender	• Age • Gender • Ethnicity • Recidivism

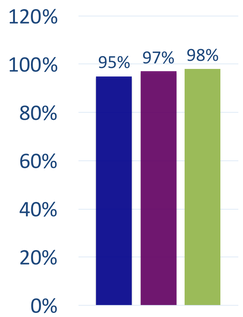
RESULTS

Age of Offender



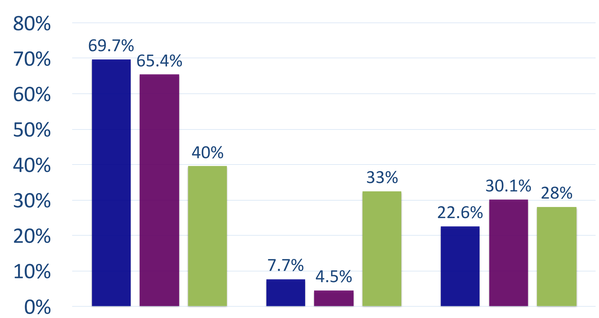
p < .001

Gender of Offender



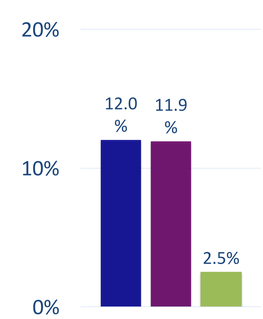
ns

Ethnicity of Offender



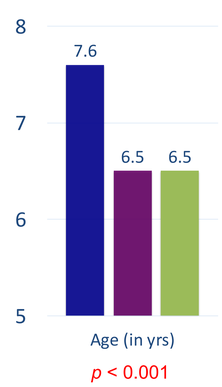
p = .000

Sexual Recidivism Rate



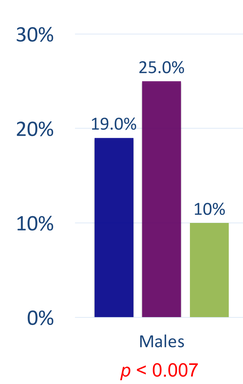
p < .010

Age of Victim



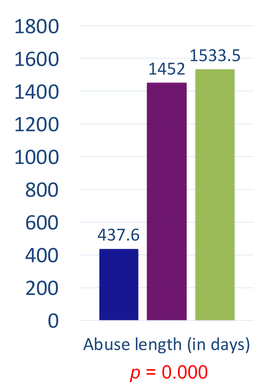
p < 0.001

Gender of Victim



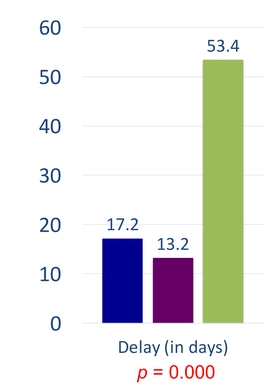
p < 0.007

Duration of Abuse



p = 0.000

Time to Report Abuse



p = 0.000

DISCUSSION

Key findings

- **Extrafamilial offenders:**
  - Were older than step parent offenders
  - Had older victims than intrafamilial offenders
  - Step parent offenders were younger
  - Were shorter in length of time that they abused
- **Intrafamilial step parent offenders:**
  - Had more female victims than biological parents
  - Were more likely Aboriginal (1/3) than other groups who comprised of < 10%
  - Were less likely to sexually reoffend
  - Had longer delay in reporting to police
- **No differences emerged regarding:**
  - Offenders' gender (nearly all were males)

- **Limitations:** Unsure of accuracy of variable coding, selection bias, short recidivism follow-up
- **Future research should**
  - Study biological and step parents separately when examining incestual sexual abuse, as findings in this study show that they are not homogeneous
  - Examine more comprehensive series of variables that go beyond the demographic variables included in this study

AUTHOR NOTE

The authors express deep appreciation to the following bodies, for without them, this research would not have been possible.

OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Canada

The points of view expressed in this study do not necessarily represent the views of the Edmonton Police Service.

Poster presentation at the Student Research Day at MacEwan University | April 23, 2019

Why Does Incest Occur?
A Distinction Between Genetic and Sociolegal Incest

Anusha Lalani, B.Sc., MacEwan University, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Sandy Jung, Ph.D., R.Psych., MacEwan University, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Abstract

The present study compares and contrasts intrafamilial biological parent, intrafamilial step parent, and extrafamilial sex offenders who are ages 19 and older and have sexually offended against victims ages 12 and under, on several variables of interest. Sexual assaults reported to the Edmonton Police Service from 2010 to 2014 were included in the sample. The aim of this study was to explore whether there were distinct differences among the three groups. Based on past literature, we hypothesized the following: (a) Intrafamilial offenders will likely be older than their extrafamilial counterparts; (b) There is likely to be no difference in perpetrators' sex; (c) Any difference in perpetrator's ethnicity is uncertain; (d) The likelihood to reoffend will likely be greater for extrafamilial offenders; (e) Intrafamilial victims will likely be younger than extrafamilial victims; (f) There is likely to be no difference in victims' sex; (g) Intrafamilial sexual abuse will likely last longer than extrafamilial sexual abuse; and (h) There will be greater delay in time to report abuse by intrafamilial offenders than extrafamilial offenders. We further expected to find that intrafamilial step parent sex offenders would reoffend more than biological parent sex offenders. The findings will be presented in this poster presentation.

Acknowledgements

The authors express tremendous gratitude to the Edmonton Police Service, particularly the support from the Sexual Assault Section, Business Performance Unit, and Megan Wells. The points of view expressed in this article do not necessarily represent the views of the Edmonton Police Service.

We also thank the MacEwan Research Office and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for their support.

Corresponding Authors

Anusha Lalani | lalania7@mymacewan.ca
Department of Psychology, MacEwan University

Sandy Jung, Ph.D., R.Psych. | sandy.jung@macewan.ca
Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, MacEwan University

References

[1] Cromer L.D., & Goldsmith, R.E. (2010). Child sexual abuse myths: Attitudes, beliefs, and individual differences. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 19,* 618-647.

[2] Wohab, A.M., & Akhter, S. (2010). The effects of childhood sexual abuse on children's psychology and employment. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences, 5,* 144-149.