THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN MALE VIOLENCE AND WOMEN'S SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

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introduction

- Existing feminist theory re victimization focuses on male violence, there is a reluctance to study female offending
- Purpose of the study, exploratory and interpretive attempt to understand how female sex offending develops.
- The vast majority of abused women (and men) do not abuse, so how and why do some women come to offend?.
- Tentative assumptions of the study-women are victims as well as offenders, and are most often coerced, but what about lone women offenders?
- Background information-1-10% of sex offenders in Cda are women, means 50,000 victims to 500,000 according to Mathews (1991), so significant
- Key concepts identified in study: intra family abuse, C-PTSD, coercion, power and institutional heterosexuality
- The cases in this study involve EXTREME abuse in childhood, adulthood or both. My study needs to be viewed in this context.

Literature review

- Male violence and the victimisation of women and children
 -Herman best for explaining how male violence can break
 down willpower, lead to lack of protection of children and
 perpetration of abuse
- Male sex offending lit: psychological, individualistic, focus on one or a few characteristics of perpetrator
- Female sex offendending: similar psych focus. Key studies Saradjian (96), Mathews et al (89). These studies more holistic, detailed.
- Conclusions –literature on sex offending has psych focus, lack of feminist analysis, need more holistic approach, need research to understand progress from victim to offender.

methodology

- Study is exploratory, interpretive and has small sample.
- Uses case study approach, so multiple sources of info and methods to allow triangulation, method allows for interviews and holistic view
- 5 cases, gaining access very challenging, criteria: abused child(dren) under 14, additional sources of info on case avail.
- Interviews –semi-structured, in-depth
- Transcription: accuracy and interp checked with respondents
- Analyis: themes emerged during interviews and from literature
- Research trauma-researchers & supervisors need to be aware of effects of researching violence. Vicarious trauma is possible neg effect, increased understanding of psych effects and long –term nature of them can be positive result of the negative effects of researching violence.

Sarah

- Intra family child sexual abuse is key concept for analysis and was primary influence on her offending in my opinion, but trigger was male violence.
- Sarah's story-mult perp abuse, cognitive disability
- Analyis
 - family dynamics key factor-Finkelhor 4 factor model of sex offending employed: opportunity, disinhibitor, motivation to abuse (arousal, emotional congruence with children, blockage) abil to overcome child's willpower-.
 - -sibling incest-harmful as father/daughter abuse
 - -sexually intrusive children, sexualized family environment-abuse normalized, multiple offenders, types of abuse, participation in abusing others, sadism make offending more likely
 - -learning difficulties complicate situation-diff understanding and communicating what happened re own abuse, lack of alternative perspectives, external locus of control.

Emily

- Key concept: C-PTSD and PTSD-specifically flashbacks
- Emily's story
 - -prolonged, severe abuse
 - -changes in affect
 - -changes in cognitions
 - -changes in behaviour
 - -changes in relationships
 - -changed view of the world
 - tent conclusion: abuse began during a flashback

Frances

- Key concept Institutional heterosexuality
- Frances' story
- Violence in heterosexual relationships –establishes dominance, reinforces male needs/desires as primary, family secondary.
- Mothering, fathering, masculinity- mothering offers respectability, normality, status (F. Now around 80, stay at home mothering was norm.
- Love, duty and forgiveness –religious aspects and social norms my own recent experience of child protection in rural sk.
- Economic dependence and lack of resources no training, job skills
- Tentative conclusion: F. Adherence to norms of instit het led in long –term to her offence.

Chris

- Key concept: Coercion
- Vulnerability to victimization as result of childhood abuse
- coercive tactics (DIAP, 1984), psychological, physical, emotional.
- Multiple and intersecting forms of woman abuse
- Dependence on male partner and lack of social support
- Tent concl: offending was result of coercion

Jenny

- Key concept: Power was primary factor in Jenny's involuntary offending.
- Jenny's story
- gender power, status, economic, physical-violence maintains and perpetuates patriarchy—in workplace as well as home, capitalism: commercialized pornography part of this case
- Sexual violence and power sexual harassment, military women, women in war, military women, women in war,
- power of terror

Conclusions

- All the women have common experiences, but each case also unique aspects
- All have experienced abuse in an organized setting (family, workplace, sex ring)
- All experienced childhood victimization: sexual, physical, emotional
- All exp abuse in adult relationships with males
- All exp Intra-family sexual abuse in childhood or in adult relationships
- Abuse that is severe, ongoing, multiple perpetrators, multiple victims (either in childhood abuse or in adult offending) factor in female offending (other studies suggest).
- Lack of options/resources to get out, dependency on males (emotional, financial), acceptance of patriarchal view of family roles/relations (Institutional heterosexuality) are factors in the women's offending
- All women showed some effects of C-PTSD
- All experienced powerlessness in relation to males and more generally

Recommendations

Policy/practice

- Early treatment for csa
- Special attention paid to children who have experienced multiple types of abuse, multi-perp, sadism, participated in abusing others, longterm, severe (most likely factors in perpetration)
- Necessary for abuse victims to have help re self esteem, education and skill devel, ability to recognize abusive behaviour in potential partners early, as well as developing support systems

Future research

 more on the effects of C-Ptsd on brain chemistry, organized abuse, hormones? women offenders in general, women coerced who don't offend

My study: conclusions tentative – more research needed to establish the significance of the factors I believe were contributing to the offending of the 5 women, to see if more generally applicable.

Question

• if our lives had been like these women's lives, would some of us have also become offenders? At the end of this I'm not sure of the answer.