

# Crimes Against Men, Crimes Against Women

Peter G. Sinden, Ph.D., *State University of New York*

B. Joyce Stephens, Ph.D., *State University of New York*

## Abstract

This paper considers and explicates the general question: “whose risk (men’s or women’s) of criminal victimization evokes a stronger sense of public concern for, and subsequent response to, that victimization; and why is that the case?” The relative level of perceived risk and fear associated with stranger crime and acquaintance crime is examined. Victimization rates, which provide an indicator of actual risk, suggest men experience higher incidence of the former and women higher incidence of the latter type of crime. Following the lead of others, it is argued that both the fear of crime and the experience of crime differ for men and women. However, it is argued that because people (including the police) are thought to fear the stranger, this motivates a stronger and more complete law enforcement response to the “stranger” criminal. What results are official responses that are more oriented to respond to the victimization of males and thus, potentially, to protect males. We suggest this response focus is largely irrelevant to the type of crime victimization females typically experience. Adding information about these differences to police training curriculum and subsequent crime response tactics are among the recommendations presented.

Keywords: crime fear, acquaintance crime, stranger crime, police response.

## Stranger Crimes and Police Response

This paper considers police and public response to two categories of crimes against persons: those done by strangers and those done by acquaintances, including intimates of the victims. As a way of illustrating important themes, we begin with a description of three crime events that occurred in the recent past. Each was an ordinary, almost mundane, example of a crime involving a victim. In addition, none of these events produced a significant amount of social harm. However, of the three events, only the first two elicited an extraordinary response from the police agencies that were called. In the first incident, a lone perpetrator, who threatened with but did not display a gun, robbed a gas station of an undetermined amount of cigarettes; no cash was taken. The suspect then left on foot. This crime was investigated and the suspect was searched for by all the local officers on duty at the time, with assistance by police from the neighboring village and the K-9 unit. At the conclusion of this intensive search, the person remained at large (“Gas Station,” 2000).

The second incident occurred six months later in a rural village in the same county.

Again it involved a robbery, but of a drug store and in the daytime. The suspect demanded and was given 88 doses of a prescription pain-killing drug. According to a witness, he was reported to have a gun in his waistband. The robbery occurred in the same village as the headquarters of the county sheriff's department. Upon being notified of the crime, the police initiated an intensive search. "We had investigators at the store and deputies followed residents' tips...we also utilized road blocks, K-9 unit dogs and the helicopter. This is a very extensive manhunt and it is continuing," the sheriff was quoted as saying ("Police Searching," 2001). Again, this search failed to locate the suspect and, as with the first, a reward was offered for information leading to his capture. Four days later, the suspect in the second incident surrendered to authorities, while the first was never apprehended.

The third event is an account given by a victim of her encounter with police (from research reported in Stephens & Sinden, 2000). She described being driven to a state police barracks at 3:00 a.m. to seek assistance against her husband for having battered her on several occasions during the evening and night (leaving "horrible bruises all on my arm"). In response to a question "what do you want to do?" from the command post officer, she indicated....

## **Annotated Classified Guide to Family Violence and Sexual Assault Literature**

The references listed here are from many of the journals across disciplines that deal with family violence, child maltreatment, and sexual assault issues. These journals are available from your local university library. Please note that this listing is to serve only as a guide to obtain further information. These are references not included in prior issues of the FVSAB.

### **GENERAL CHILD MALTREATMENT**

**Allanson, J., Bass, C. & Wade, D.T.** (2002). Characteristics of patients with persistent severe disability and medically unexplained neurological symptoms: A pilot study. *Journal of Neurology and Neurosurgery Psychiatry*, Vol. 73, 307-309. This study audited patients who had been referred to the liaison psychiatry or the neurological disability service and had no pathology to explain their neurological disability. Of the 25 patients, 11 had experienced physical or sexual abuse. This small but significant group of disabled patients had a variety of psychiatric and neurological diagnoses and used considerable health care resources.

**Baumann, B. & Kolko, D.J.** (2002). A comparison of abusive and nonabusive mothers of abused children. *Child Maltreatment*, Vol. 7 (4), 369-376. This study compared service use and functioning at intake for families of physically abused children as a function of the mother's offender status. Analyses found few differences in the initial

functioning and subsequent services received by abusive and nonabusive mothers and their children.

**Benbenishty, R., Segev, D., Surkis, T. & Elias, T.** (2002). Information-search and decision-making by professionals and nonprofessionals in cases of alleged child-abuse and maltreatment. *Journal of Social Service Research, Vol. 28 (3)*, 1-18. The aim of this study is to identify the ways in which decision-makers search for information and use it to reach their risk-assessment and their recommendations of whether to remove children from home. It was found that information of signs of physical abuse had significant impact on high-risk judgments, removal recommendations, and information search patterns.

**Benbenishty, R., Zeira, A. & Astor, R.A.** (2002). Children's reports of emotional, physical and sexual maltreatment by educational staff in Israel. *Child Abuse & Neglect, Vol. 26 (8)*, 763-782. This study examines the differences in staff-induced victimization by the children's gender, age group, cultural groups, and by SES. Overall, children reported high rates of victimization by staff members. The most vulnerable groups were males, children in junior high school, and children coming from low-income and low-education families.

**Blinn-Pike, L., Berger, T., Dixon, D., Kuschel, D. & Kaplan, M.** (2002). Is there a causal link between maltreatment and adolescent pregnancy? A literature review. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, Vol. 34 (2)*, 68-75. The authors believe that it has not been shown whether there is sufficient evidence of a causal link between childhood maltreatment and subsequent adolescent pregnancy. Because recent studies have reached conflicting findings, had methodological weaknesses and lacked theoretical grounding, whether a causal link exists between maltreatment and adolescent pregnancy remains an unanswered question.

**Cash, S.J.** (2001). Family preservation services: The Casey family- A chronology. *Journal of Family Social Work, Vol. 6 (2)*, 43-54. The focus of this case study is on a family preservation services model applied to a family with a presenting problem of reported child abuse. The values and tenants of the model are presented throughout the case chronology and are specifically discussed in the conclusion of the article.

**Chaffin, J. & Richter, P.** (2002). Making prevention of abuse and neglect through dental awareness green. *Military Medicine, Vol. 167 (11)*, 920-922. Family violence encompasses child, spouse, and elder abuse and neglect and is viewed as a serious public health threat in our society. Reports that up to 94% of family violence injuries have head and neck components, which is the very site that dental providers focus their attention, justifies the need for dental involvement.

**Corliss, H.L., Cochran, S.D. & Mays, V.M.** (2002). Reports of parental maltreatment during childhood in a United States population-based survey of homosexual, bisexual, and heterosexual adults. *Child Abuse & Neglect, Vol. 26 (11)*,

1165-1178. Homosexual/bisexual men reported higher rates than heterosexual men of childhood emotional and physical maltreatment