

**Chivalry Isn't Dead: Gender Differences in the  
Media Treatment of Teacher Sex Offenders**

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## Abstract of Thesis

### Chivalry Isn't Dead: Gender Differences in the Media Treatment of Teacher Sex Offenders

Through a comparative examination using content analysis of 50 online news articles released from January 2005 to June 2009, this study evaluates gender differences in media portrayals of teachers that are accused of committing sex offenses with minor students. Findings show that gender does play an important role in the media treatment of offenders; females receive more news coverage than male sex offenders, female offenders are treated as mentally ill lovers as compared to a male "predator" portrayal, and females are treated more leniently than male teachers who commit sex offenses with minor students. These findings support the chivalry hypothesis of female deviance which purports that because women are viewed as weak and vulnerable, they are treated in a more patriarchal lenient manner. In addition to contributing to the current literature, this study addresses how societal perceptions of sex offenders are being shaped by media and the consequential implications on victim reporting practices and the criminal justice system.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Criminal justice research suggests gender bias as an explanation for differential treatment of offenders in the correctional system, evidenced by disproportionate arrest, conviction and incarceration rates for females. Gender bias is the foundation of the *chivalry hypothesis* which purports that because females are viewed as weak and irrational as a result of societal expectations of gender roles, law enforcement and the correctional system treat them in a more lenient manner as opposed to male offenders. This gender bias has also received attention by journalism research evidenced by the conclusion that women typically appear in the news as victims and males as perpetrators of crime. It is important to examine and be aware of the influence of the media in shaping how we perceive gender roles particularly in relation to criminality and deviance. Current social images and perceptions of deviant women are reflected, cultivated and reinforced by the mass media. In response to an observed surge of media coverage and a discovered gap in the empirical research, this study is an exploratory analysis of gender differences in the media reports on teachers who are accused of committing sex offenses with minor students.

Media research on crime and gender are predominately centered on examinations of male offenders and female victims. How do the media treat females when they are the perpetrators of the crime? How are they treated when the crime challenges the traditional expectations of gender roles such as violent sex crimes against children? More specifically, are teachers that commit sex offenses with their students treated differently by the media based on their gender? If so, does the differential gendered treatment support the chivalry hypothesis? By conducting a content analysis of online news articles

reporting on sex crimes committed or allegedly committed by teachers, the value of this study is to address a gap in the research and provide a better understanding of the media treatment of sex offenders. This endeavor departs from current research that examines how deviant females are represented in the media because these studies typically exclude sex crimes (Grabe, et al., 2006); utilize anecdotal evidence (Sikes, 2006; Cavanagh, 2005); examine prime time crime dramas (Cecil, 2007); or do not focus on female offenders (Dowler, 2006) in their analyses.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Disproportionate Crime Rates by Gender**

The relationship between gender and crime continues to be a well-researched issue in the literature. While males compose the largest number of inmates, females are the fastest growing segment of the correctional population (Dowden & Andrews, 1999; Gottschalk, 2006). The number of women in U.S. prisons has risen more than eight-fold since 1980. The annual rate of growth for female prisoners has averaged 5% since 1995, far exceeding the 3.3% increase for males (Gottschalk, 2006). Although women constituted about 51% of the population, they accounted for about 12% of the arrests for violent crimes in 2000 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2001; U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). While imprisonment is only weakly related with underlying crime rates (Gottschalk, 2006), increases in the number of females incarcerated in state and federal prisons have led some researchers to conclude that differential sentencing of female offenders is a thing of the past. Spohn and Beichner (2000) found no evidence to support this “gender neutrality” hypothesis. Despite the increase in incarceration rates, women face significantly lower odds of imprisonment than do men (Spohn & Beichner, 2000; Stolzenberg & D’Alessio, 2004). One common argument is that women commit less crime than men and, as a consequence, are less apt to appear in official arrest statistics (Stolzenberg & D’Alessio, 2004). Again, however, the research does not support this explanation. Using the data from the National Incident-Based Reporting System, Stolzenberg and D’Alessio (2004) analyzed the impact of offender’s gender on the likelihood of arrest for 555,752 incidents of various violent crimes. Using logistic regression, findings showed that the probability for arrest for females was 28% lower for

kidnapping, 48% lower for forcible fondling, 9% lower for simple assault, and 27% lower for intimidation than for males, for example. Overall, studies have shown that wherever discretionary decisions are made in the correctional process, women are less likely than men to be detected, arrested, charged, convicted, and sentenced (Herzog & Oreg, 2008).

Historically, research has examined this disproportionate relationship over the course of shifts in political and social environments ranging from the impact of the feminist movement in 1960-70s to more contemporary studies focusing on the impact of the war on drugs in the 1980s (Gottschalk, 2006). While the literature provides extensive research on these shifts in female criminality, much of the research is plagued with limitations. For example, some limitations include inadequate methodologies, representativeness of the samples, few control variables, and lack of generalizability (Visher, 1983; Stolzenberg & D'Alessio, 2004). However, despite these common limitations, several theories and hypotheses have emerged that warrant acknowledgement.

Authors argue that the disproportionately lower arrest rate for females is partly the result of police favoritism (Stolzenberg & D'Alessio, 2004), biased law enforcement practices and leniency shown to women by law enforcement personnel (Stolzenberg & D'Alessio, 2004). These claims fall under the realm of the "chivalry" or "paternalism" hypothesis. The chivalry hypothesis maintains that because women are viewed as weak and vulnerable, law enforcers and the criminal justice system treat them, across the board, in a more lenient, paternal manner (Grabe, et al., 2006) in order to shield them from the adverse consequences of criminal records and stiff criminal sanctions (Anderson, 1976; Goethals, Maes, & Klinckhamers, 1997; Stolzenberg & D'Alessio, 2004). Kruttschnitt

and Green (1984) argued that because women have historically been more likely to be financially dependent on others such as husbands, they were less apt than were men to face severe criminal punishments. Another related perspective, as explored by Daly (1987), suggested the relationship between gender and arrest was indirect. Daly (1987) posits that the state treated individuals with child-care responsibilities, usually women, more leniently to avoid the disintegration of the family unit and to protect the members who were dependent on the offender for financial and/or parental support. These hypotheses suggest that the punitive attitudes held by criminal justice officials, judges, and law enforcement personnel are influenced by their perceived roles, norms and expectations of women in society.

Journalism scholars show a similar level of interest as criminal justice scholars do in their attention to the relationship between gender and crime. While the criminal justice perspective suggests that gender bias is alive and well as reflected in the disproportionate arrest rates and leniency by law enforcement, journalism scholars have also found evidence that this differential treatment is sustained in the media.

### **Role of Media**

Media reporting on crime is typically the primary way the average person comes to know about deviance and justice (Barak, 1994). Media is a powerful force in shaping the way we perceive reality. It is important to examine and be aware of the influence of the media in shaping how we perceive gender roles particularly in relation to criminality and deviance. While the news represents one element of mass media, it has significant power to subtly shape and influence our perceptions of the world, of other people, and of ourselves. It has the ability to inform and mold our perspectives on social issues. The

news, according to Fowler (1991), is not 'a natural phenomenon' but 'a product' or reflection of social norms and values. The issues the public perceives as critical are very likely to be the same ones recently featured by the news media (Glassner, 1999; McCombs & Reynolds, 2002; Anastasio & Costa, 2004). Literature has focused on the importance and role of language employed by media to represent social issues.

The language and texts media use can provide evidence about social structures, processes and understandings of deviance (Goddard & Saunders, 2000). The type of language used can illicit vivid imagery and emotional responses to incidents of criminal acts. The language and imagery employed by the media can influence how various audiences make sense of crime potentially leading to public fear and a call for action (Markovitz, 2006). As a result, media has the ability to influence and guide public opinion which informs public policy. For example, it is Nelson's (1994) argument that the media not only responded to the problem of child abuse but also, in part, created the problem and the public's sense of the urgent need to respond to it. In an analysis of the relationship between child abuse and the media, the language used to describe the sexual abuse of children impacted the viewers' interpretation of the seriousness of the crime (Goddard & Saunders, 2000). The influence of media on the social understanding of crime and deviance has implications when it comes to the formation of public opinion, policy making, law enforcement, victim reporting, and the criminal justice system in general. Therefore, by examining the role of media in shaping the social understanding of crime, the issue of gendered differential treatment evident in the correctional and criminal justice research can be further explored beyond that of disproportionate crime rates and leniency of law enforcement.

Media research has mainly focused on the journalistic portrayal of female victimization. It has been concluded that women typically appear in the news as the victims, not the perpetrators of crime (Grabe, et al., 2006). Numerous studies have shown that television news and newspapers overrepresent the victimization of females. This victimization of women tends to reaffirm the gendered stereotype that males are aggressive and females are weak and vulnerable (Faith, 1993). But this leaves an important question unanswered: How are females portrayed in the media when they are the offenders, rather than the victims, of crime?

There is little published on the media's construction of female criminality (Grabe, et al., 2006). Existing studies show that the majority of crimes reported in the news and portrayed in fiction are explained in terms of individual motivations of women such as substance abuse, greed, jealousy, rage, laziness, psychological instability, or revenge (Grabe, et al., 2006). In analysis of reports of violence in four national British newspapers, authors found that journalists employed different explanatory narratives based on gender. They found that women's violence was more likely to be reported as irrational or emotional with real wickedness whereas men's violence was more likely to be presented as normal or rational (Naylor, 2001). Work by feminist criminologists has shown that it is the type of crime rather than the severity of the crime that determines how women are treated (Grabe, et al., 2006). Female criminals who commit unfeminine acts (e.g. behave violently) are treated much more harshly than women whose criminal activity conforms to the expected gender roles of females (e.g. shoplifting food for their families) (Chesney-Lind, 1999). These findings are examples from the research which support differential treatment of female offenders as compared to male offenders in the

media. As a result, the chivalry hypothesis originally discussed in correctional research has gained attention from journal scholars as a potential explanation of the differential gendered treatment of offenders in the media in addition to the criminal justice system.

### **Media and the Chivalry Hypothesis**

There have been a handful of studies that directly apply the chivalry hypothesis to media coverage of crime. The first study evaluated responses to hypothetical crime scenarios from a national sample of 840 Israeli residents. The scenarios mimicked stories as reported in the news and alternated the use of independent variables including type of crime, female versus male offenders, and traditional versus nontraditional types of offenders. For example, “traditional women” were operationalized as being married with children and as not working in a full-time job. “Nontraditional women” were operationalized as those who were single and held full-time jobs (Herzog & Oreg, 2008). Respondents were asked to evaluate their perceived seriousness of the crime and the sentence they thought was appropriate for the offender. In partial support of the chivalry hypothesis, Herzog and Oreg (2008) found that female offenders tended to receive more lenient judgments of the seriousness of the crime than men and that judgments were contingent on the extent to which female offenders assumed traditional gender roles. In other words, when female offenders were more aligned with traditional roles, they were given more leniency than when the scenario described a nontraditional female offender. As a result of this contingency, authors argued for an adapted version of the hypothesis referred to as “selective chivalry.” In support of the feminist criminology argument, these authors found that women who meet a certain set of social criteria will benefit from preferential treatment or selective chivalry. The chivalry effect can be thought of as a

form of exchange in which society grants female offenders more lenient treatment in return for maintaining traditional gender role behaviors (Steury & Frank, 1990).

A study using methodology most similar to that employed in the present study is that of Grabe, Trager, Lear & Rauch (2006), who explored the chivalry hypothesis by conducting a content analysis of crime stories in a local newspaper. Grabe and colleagues (2006) operationalized media treatment with four primary constructs: the placement of the article in the newspaper, level of graphicness in describing the crime, evidence of photographic portrayals of the criminal, and the reported explanations for the criminal motivations behind the crime. "Harsh" media treatment was defined as more sensational and prominent coverage in the newspaper measured by location, font size, word count, etc. Authors developed a scale to measure the graphicness of the descriptions of the crime; harshness was attributed to descriptions that were violent and detailed. Photographs were also examined for the degree to which the physical appearance of the criminal presented a striking and flattering image. The less flattering the photograph, the higher degree of harshness was assigned. Finally, media treatment was also examined by looking at explanations for the motivation of the crime in terms of individual verses societal level causes. Grabe, et al. (2006) attributed a high degree of harshness by the use of individual factors, such as revenge and substance abuse, as opposed to societal level causes, such as poverty or racism. The rationale is that motivation caused by individual factors provokes viewers to assign blame to the offender because the crime was committed out of their own will or fault as opposed to some external societal force that is beyond their control. To summarize, harsh treatment was attributed to articles that were prominent in the newspaper, were very graphic in the

crime description, contained unflattering photographs of the offender, and described motivations as a result of individual factors.

Grabe et al. (2006) found that women who violated gender expectations (i.e., committed violent crimes or victimized children) received harsher media treatment than women who did not violate stereotypes about female behavior. Further, they found that when women committed violent crime, thus defying stereotypical expectations of gender roles, they were more likely to be framed as self-interested criminals than when they committed nonviolent crimes. These findings are supported by the concept of *selective chivalry*, as proposed by previous studies. Finally, Grabe et al. (2006) expanded on the chivalry hypothesis by examining the differences in treatment of male as compared to female offenders. They found that women who committed violent crimes and crimes against children received harsher media treatment than male criminals who committed the same crimes. However, when women committed nonviolent crimes in which children were not the victims, thereby aligning with stereotypical expectations of gender roles, they received more lenient treatment in the news than male offenders who committed similar types of crimes (Grabe, et al., 2006).

When crimes are violent and challenge gender roles, female offenders are more harshly treated than when the crimes are nonviolent and aligned with traditional expectations of behavior. Female criminality, particularly when it is violent and nontraditional, challenge the claims of the chivalry hypothesis. Previous studies, as seen in Grabe et al. (2006), incorporated crimes against children as being characteristic of a violent crime that defies traditional expectations of female behavior as nurturing caregivers. Grabe et al. (2006) did not expand on the type or frequency of crimes against

children that were incorporated into the analysis. The present study expands on their findings by focusing on a specific type of crime, sex offending against children, and a specific type of offender, teachers.

By focusing on teachers that commit sex offenses against children, this study explores a type of offender and crime that challenges what we know and adds a new layer to the current discussion of the differential gendered treatment of crime in the media. Being a teacher is aligned with societal expectations of gender roles for women but committing crime against children, particularly crimes that are sexual in nature, is considered violent and defies expectations of behavior by females. Female sex offenders are a category of criminality that is a challenge for research on media and gender. Most studies of crime in the media exclude sex offenses (Grabe et al., 2006) presumably because it is an outlier when compared to the more common types of crimes reported in the news that are researched at an aggregate level. In addition, journalists typically uphold anonymity when reporting on the victims of sex crimes. As a consequence, studies examining sex crimes in terms of victimization exclude them in order to allow the manner in which the victim was identified, such as name or personal information, to be examined (Anastasio & Costa, 2004).

### **Female Sex Offenders**

Because much of the prior literature on sex offenders has focused solely on males, there is little empirical research on female sex offenders. However, there is consensus among the sociological, medical, and psychological fields of research that this area of study is only in its infancy.

Several reasons for the lack of research on female sex offenders are presented in the literature. Sexual offenses committed by females often go unnoticed, unreported, or diverted from the criminal justice system (Vandiver & Walker, 2002). Typically, these offenses go unnoticed because females can disguise sexual offenses while engaging in routine child-rearing activities such as bathing and dressing (Vandiver & Walker, 2002; Vandiver, 2006). In addition to going unnoticed, incidents of sexual abuse by females are often underreported especially when the victim is male. Male victims, in particular, must cross a major threshold before reporting sexual abuse by a female to the police, as this often conflicts with the common view that men dominate in a sexual sense. Perhaps the most notable explanation for why there is little known about female sex offenders is that it is often perceived that females simply cannot sexually assault another person. Society has been geared towards assuming sex offenders are only males and females are incapable of committing such offenses (Vandiver, 2006). The words “sexual assault” and “sexual aggression” tend to conjure up an image of a male perpetrator and a female victim. This has tended to obscure the reality that not only can males be victims of sexual assault, but also that females can perpetrate acts of sexual violence (Denov, 2003).

Gender bias has been suggested to be an influential factor in why there is such variation across types of research and statistics in terms of the prevalence of female sex offenses and offenders. To be “feminine” means to be nurturing, protecting, caring, nonaggressive, and nonsexual. Thinking of a woman as sexually aggressive or as a sexual offender is contrary to the traditional sexual scripts which are predominately heterosexual and gendered. Traditional sex scripts have influenced broader society that females are sexually passive, harmless, and innocent influencing perceptions of the

plausibility of female sexual abuse, but have also influenced criminal law, victim reporting practices, and professional responses to female sex offending. This leads to an implicit denial of women's potential for sexual aggression within these domains which may ultimately contribute to the under-recognition of the problem (Denov, 2003).

Since the infamous case of Mary Kay Letourneau in the late 1990's, there has been a surge of media attention on female teachers that commit sex offenses with their students. How do these offenders fit into the discussion of differential gendered treatment in the media? Can the chivalry hypothesis be applied to this type of offender and crime? Is a more nuanced form of the chivalry hypothesis, i.e. selective chivalry, more appropriate? While the previous studies explored the media treatment of crime and gender, this study will contribute to the research by addressing a gap in the literature by focusing on sex offenders, specifically on teachers.

### **3. METHODS**

To best address these research questions, a content analysis of a non-random sample of 50 online news articles was conducted to explore gender differences in the media treatment of teachers accused of committing sex offenses with minor students. Because this research study was exploratory, I created a purposive sample of 24 articles reporting on female teacher sex offenders and 26 articles reporting on male teacher sex offenders (See Appendix A – Sample of Articles). The use of the term “offender” here includes both persons convicted as well as those accused of offenses, as some of the articles reported on accused persons whose cases had not yet been adjudicated.

To obtain these 50 articles, keyword searches were conducted on both national and local news websites including CNN.com, WashingtonPost.com, NewYorkTimes.com, MSNBC.com, and LexisNexis. Information regarding the article including the source of the article, the keywords used to find the article, and the date the article was recorded and tracked over the life of the data collection. A brief discussion follows of the selection of data sources, the keywords, criteria for accepting an article into the sample and the coding protocol.

For this study, online news sources were utilized. The reason for this is because pulling archives of television and radio segments are costly and internet news often reflects the news reported in newspaper print and television newscasts. For example, WashingtonPost.com is the online version of the Washington Post newspaper and CNN.com is the online version of the CNN television news cast. Internet is easy to access and online sites can generate search results instantaneously which span over a

specified time period. For this study, articles in the sample covered the time period from January 2005 to June 2009.

The online newspaper sources utilized included NYTimes.com and WashingtonPost.com. These websites were selected because they are nationally known news sources, have a large circulation, offer national coverage of the news, and together contribute fairly broad geographic representation. These newspapers have also been used by other studies that are similar in nature to this content analysis (Anastasio & Costa, 2004; Beamish et al., 1995; Welch et al, 1997). In addition to these online newspapers, I sampled from online news sites such as CNN.com and MSNBC.com. These two sites, in addition to online newspaper sites, are nationally seen news sources. It is inevitable that some articles that are featured in local news will be excluded from the sample because the stories were not picked up by national news. To address this limitation and to build a more robust sample, LexisNexis was used to identify local newspaper articles. Similar to the national news sources, keyword searches were used to identify articles reporting on teachers that commit sex offenses with students that are minors. By using both national and local news sources, this study examined articles that carry high exposure to the public, thus lending to the importance and relevance of its findings of how teachers that commit sex offenses are treated in the media and the proposed social implications of gender and crime resulting from that treatment.

In order to examine the treatment of teachers that commit sex offenses with students, keywords were selected for the online sources. The searches were executed on the specific websites rather than a general search engine such as Google.com as to ensure that the articles retrieved came from the archives of the news source. Articles were found

by doing keyword searches on combinations of “man, woman”; “teacher”; “sex” and “student.” For example, keyword searches included: “man teacher sex student,” “woman teacher sex student,” and “teacher sex student.”

Criteria for accepting an article into the sample included:

- a) The article must be reporting on an accusation or charge against an individual who is a teacher.
- b) The article must be reporting on a student victim attending the school of the teacher. The student may or may not be a student in the teacher’s class but has to be a student at the same school as the teacher.
- c) The student must be younger than 18 years old.
- d) The article must be reporting on a crime between the teacher and minor student that is sexual in nature.
- e) State briefings and commentaries on sex education or curriculum in schools were excluded from the sample.
- f) Transcripts from news shows were excluded from the sample.

The online searches yielded multiple articles within and across sources that reported on the same offender. It is important to note that the article is the unit of analysis, not the offender. The purpose of this study is not to see how a certain offender is treated, but rather to see if the media treats teacher sex offenders differently based on gender. As such, it is necessary to ensure there is no duplication in the featured offender within sources. Finally, this is a purposive search of articles meaning that the data collection is targeted. The purpose is not to find generalizable findings to all media accounts of all teacher sex offenders, but instead to provide a comparative analysis of media coverage

during a particular time period, focused on potential differences by gender in media reporting on teacher sex offenders.

The initial coding protocol was developed using an inductive method of coding 15 preliminary articles. After many iterations, a more refined protocol was established and utilized for the remaining 35 articles in the sample. The articles were coded for various themes including information relating to details of the article, the offender, the victim and the crime.

Articles were coded for word count, location on the website (US verses local), the presence of a picture or video, and the headline. Details of the offender were coded for name, age, gender, race, job status, subject they teach, and any personal information. Details of the victim were coded for age, gender, race, and any details about the victim. Details of the crime were coded for how it was referenced in the first line, the number of victims, the charge, the plea, the sentence, and any quotes (See Appendix B-Coding Protocol).

As discussed previously, this study builds on the methodology employed by Grabe and colleagues (2006). Their study operationalized media treatment with four primary constructs: the placement of the article in the newspaper, level of graphicness in describing the crime, evidence of photographic portrayals of the criminal, and the reported explanations for the criminal motivations behind the crime. The present study incorporates these constructs to a certain extent. Data collected at the article level will be employed to address the first construct of prominence. To address the second construct, the degree of graphicness used in describing the crime in the first sentence of the article will be employed to determine the type of media treatment. Photographs were examined

to some extent for the third construct; however, limitations resulting from the research design prevented this finding from being utilized in the current analysis. These limitations will be addressed later. For the fourth construct, the present study explored the use of quotes to address the motivations and causal factors associated with the crime to determine the degree of harsh media treatment.

Prior research found that women who committed violent crimes and crimes against children received harsher media treatment than male criminals who committed the same crimes (Grabe et al., 2006). However, when female offenders assumed traditional gender roles, they received more lenient treatment than male offenders and nontraditional female offenders (Herzog & Oreg, 2008). The current study hypothesizes that while female offenders are committing sex crimes against children, they will receive more lenient treatment compared to their male counterparts because of their occupation as a teacher which is aligned with traditional gender roles for females.

#### **4. FINDINGS**

Before exploring the primary constructs of this analysis, an examination of the demographics of accused offenders and victims is provided to further describe the sample of articles.

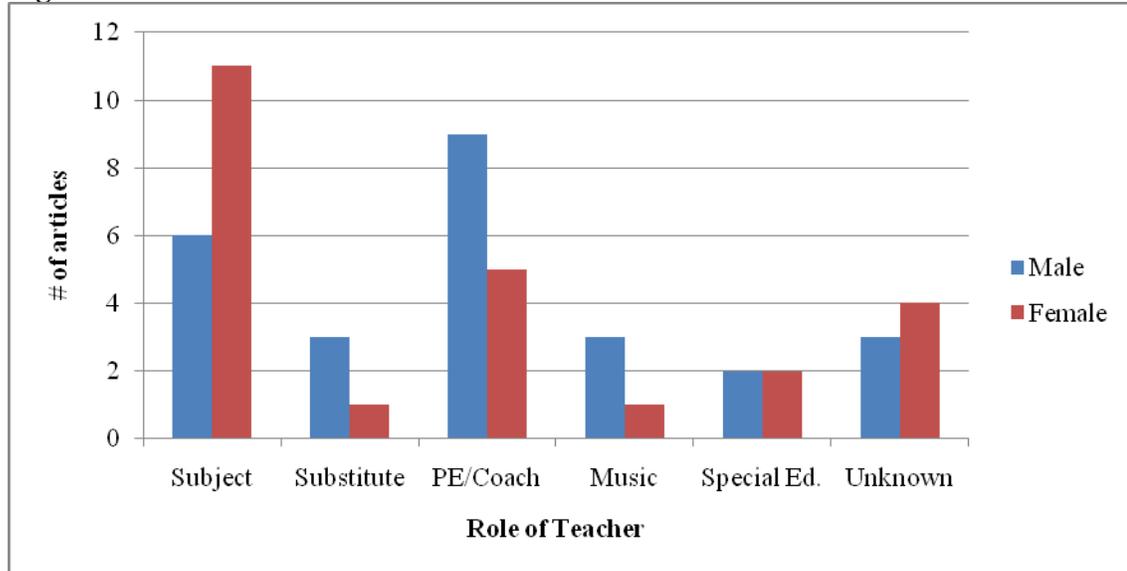
##### **Demographics - Offender**

Of the 50 articles, 24 reported on female offenders and 26 reported on male offenders. The average age of the female offender was 31 years old. The youngest female offender in the sample was 23 years old and the oldest was 46 years old. For male offenders, the average age was 37 years old ranging from 19 to 52 years old. Race was coded from what was stated in the article or inferred from images of the offender. All of the female offenders were White, whereas the male offenders were 67% White, 22% Black, and 11% Other.

While 64% of the articles did not state if the victim was a student of the accused teacher at the time of the crime, 32% reported the victim was a student of the teacher while 4% reported they were not. Of the 32% of articles, 31% were of female teachers and 69% were of male teachers where the victim was a student of the offender. As displayed in Figure 1, the majority of female offenders were teachers of “subjects” including math, history and English. For male offenders, the majority were teachers of physical education or coaches of basketball and soccer, for example. This finding comments to the alignment of gender roles in terms of occupation. Being a teacher is presumably thought of as a profession more aligned with gender expectations for females. It is interesting because while males are teachers which challenge the presumed

gender roles of the occupation, they are aligned with more masculine roles such as coaches of sports and teachers of exercise and athletics.

**Figure 1. Offenders' role as a teacher**



**Demographics - Victim**

All of the victims reported in the articles were considered minors, or under the age of 18, at the time of the accused sex crime. For female offenders, all of the victims were male victims. For male offenders, 85% of the victims were female, 8% male, 4% both male and female victims, and 4% unknown gender. For female offenders, 75% of the articles reported on a single victim and 25% included multiple victims ranging from 2 to 5 victims. For male offenders, 92% reported on a single victim and 8% were accused of crimes with one victim but investigations report possible additional victims. The average age of victims of female offenders was 14 years old (ranging from 11-17); for male offenders, the average age of victims was 15 years old (ranging from 9-17).

**Construct 1: Placement of the article**

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the type of news source of the article by the offender's gender. The majority or 62% (N=31) of the articles in the sample were gathered from

national news web sources. These web sources include MSNBC, Washingtonpost.com, NY Times, and CNN.com. The remaining 38% (N=19) were gathered from local newspapers accessed through Lexis Nexis. While articles reporting on male offenders were equally split between local news sources and national news sources, articles reporting on female offenders were more heavily sampled from national news sources, 75%, as compared to local news sources, 25%.

**Table 1. Article news source by offender gender**

News	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Local	13	50%	6	25%	19	38%
National	13	50%	18	75%	31	62%
<b>Total</b>	26	100%	24	100%	50	100%

As displayed in Table 2, of the articles featured at the national level, 58% (N=18) of the articles were on female offenders while 42% (N=13) were reports on male offenders. It is important to note that all of the articles retrieved from national news sources that featured male offenders were typically located in the “Local News” or “Metro” subsections. This sharply contrasts with articles on female offenders in national sources where most were featured prominently in the “US News” sections, 12 of the 18 articles or 67%.

**Table 2. Offender gender by article news source**

Gender	Local		National		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	13	68%	13	42%	26	52%
Female	6	32%	18	58%	24	48%
<b>Total</b>	19	100%	31	100%	50	100%

In summary, articles reporting on female offenders were more commonly found in US news whereas male articles were mainly found in local news on the websites. Because

articles reporting on male offenders were so rare on the national news sources, local news sources were utilized in order to build a more robust sample of articles reporting on male offenders.

There was not a stark contrast by offender gender in the word count for these articles. All articles averaged 362 words; articles on females averaged 363 words; articles on males averaged 360 words. There wasn't a big difference in word count in comparing offender gender by national as compared to local news sources either. For national news, articles reporting on female offenders averaged 348 words and male offenders averaged 353 words. For local news, articles reporting on female offenders averaged 407 words and male offenders averaged 368 words. While the location of the article was quite different depending on the offender gender, the word count was not significantly disproportionate.

## **Construct 2: Graphicness in Describing the Crime**

In order to assess the level of graphicness of the crime, a scale was developed to rate how the crime was referenced in the first sentence of the article. Rather than code the narratives used throughout the entire text, the first sentence was utilized because it sets the tone of the article by immediately forming the first impression the viewer. Text was coded on a four-point scale ranging from extremely non-violent (relationship) to extremely violent (graphic and severe). Crime references that were coded as extremely non-violent were the least harsh by using the terms "relationship" and "encounters" suggesting an emotional connection and a consensual exchange of sex. Non-violent crime references were more objective and factual including "had sex" which carries no degree of graphicness or emotion. Violent crime references included "abuse" and

“assault” which is still objective and factual but implies a general violent act. Extremely violent crime references were the harshest by employing terms such as “molested” and “lured” which conveys a high degree of graphicness and violence. This scale mimics the one employed by Grabe et al. (2006) to measure the degree of graphicness in the complete description of the crime. Table 3 provides a breakdown of the coded responses by the gender of the offender reported in the article.

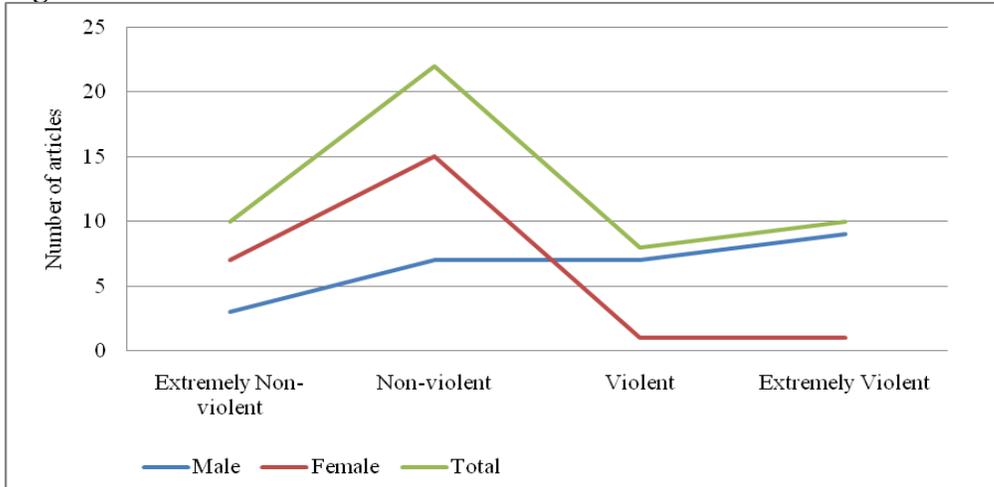
**Table 3. How the crime was referenced in the first line of the article**

SCALE	CRIME REFERENCE	MALE	FEMALE
<b>Extremely Non-violent</b>	<b>TOTAL (N=10)</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>70%</b>
	Having/Had a sexual relationship	1	3
	On-going/Carried on a sexual relationship/ Having sexual encounters	2	1
	Accused of having a sexual relationship	0	3
<b>Non-violent</b>	<b>TOTAL (N=22)</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>68%</b>
	Having/Had sex with	5	12
	Accused of/Allegedly having sex with	1	2
	Admitted having sex with a student	1	1
<b>Violent</b>	<b>TOTAL (N=8)</b>	<b>87.5%</b>	<b>12.5%</b>
	Sexually abusing a minor/ Sexually abusing two students	4	0
	Sexually assaulted/Trying to sexually assault	3	1
<b>Extremely Violent</b>	<b>TOTAL (N=10)</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>10%</b>
	Raping a minor		1
	Having a 16-year-old female student perform oral sex on him	1	
	Luring girls into pornography and sex	1	
	Molesting/molesting a female student	2	
	Child abuse	1	
	Sexual crimes with a student/ Sex crimes involving teenaged girls	2	
	Showed him pornography and sexually molested him	1	
	Using his computer to solicit sex with a minor	1	

As seen in Figure 2, gender of the offender produced quite extreme results on the scale of graphicness as measured by the crime reference in the first sentence. Crime references in

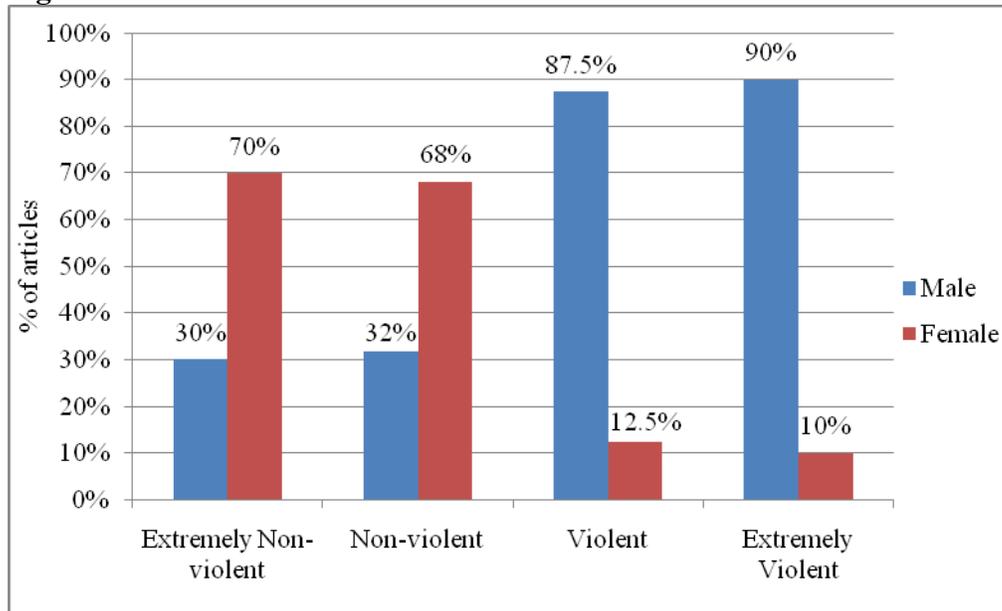
articles on male offenders were more often violent and extremely violent as compared to articles reporting on female offenders.

**Figure 2. How the crime was referenced in the first line of the article**



As depicted in Figure 3, female offenders received the least degree of graphicness being the majority of both extremely non-violent and non-violent references, 70% and 68% respectively. In contrast, male offenders received the highest degree of graphicness with the majority of both violent and extremely violent references, 87.5% and 90% respectively. While male offenders did receive extremely non-violent (30%) and non-violent references (32%), female offenders received a higher degree of graphicness at a much lower rate (12.5% and 10%) in comparison.

**Figure 3. Reference to crime in first line of the article**



This finding suggests that articles reporting on female offenders are much less graphic in how they refer to the crime in the first sentence as compared to when the offender is male. This level of graphicness is exemplified by using references that imply a consensual, emotional relationship as well as a factual, non-descriptive acts or “having sex”. On the other hand, articles reporting on male offenders received a much higher degree of graphicness in the crime reference as compared to females. This is characterized as using more striking and culpable words conveying violent acts of rape, molestation, luring, and abuse. How the first sentence of the article presents the crime creates two very distinct images of the crime and the resulting impressions of the offender depending on their gender: a lover and a predator.

### **Construct 3: Photographic Portrayals**

While the inclusion of a photograph was captured in the coding protocol, this variable carries some limitations given the study design. Because online news sources were used, some pictures were included but not available or the links were not working properly. Some sources, specifically Lexis Nexis, noted that a picture was included but did not

provide the actual picture in the plain text archives. Further, it is unclear how Grabe et al. (2006) coded the degree to which the photograph “flattered” the offender. Therefore, while this variable has been previously used in analyses of crime and media, it will not be incorporated into measuring media treatment given these limitations. However, the findings are still important to note and will be addressed in the discussion regarding future directions.

Of the 50 articles, 16 included pictures that were functional and able to be coded. Of these 16, 44% were of the female offender and 56% were of the male offender. While most of the pictures can be described as booking head shots and yearbook photos for both genders, some of the pictures included the offenders while they were in court. Again, while most photos were booking shots, the small number of pictures that were included conveyed two very different impressions of the offender. For example, in Figure 4a, the male offender is shown standing in court with the American flag in the backdrop. The offender is not showing any emotion and appears quite stoic while standing in front of the flag as if a symbol representing the American criminal justice system. On the other hand, in Figure 4b, the female offender is shown as being quite emotional by crying with her head down and dabbing her eyes with a tissue while she is testifying. Again, while the small sample size and limitations prevents this finding to be incorporated into the analysis, this example provides an interesting juxtaposition in images of the offender based on their gender which warrants future examination.



**Figure 4a. Gerald Johnson (010)**



**Figure 4b. Brandy Gonzales (002)**

In addition, 9 articles included links to videos related to the offender and the case. Of these, 7 were articles that reported on female offenders while only 2 were articles on male offenders. While the characteristics including content, quality, length, imagery were not included in the analysis because of limitations in the research design in addition to a small sample size, the use of video links provides a new and interesting data source that could be incorporated into future research.

#### **Construct 4: Explanations for the criminal motivations behind the crime**

Reporters often rely on the use of quotes from individuals to provide more detailed descriptions or factual commentary on various aspects of a news story. In order to assess the explanations for the criminal motivations behind the crime, quotes were examined to see who was quoted and what they said. While Grabe et al. (2006) did not specifically examine quotes, the authors' use of the conceptual framework of individual verses societal factors as a measure of media treatment will be employed when analyzing quotes. Further, this is the area where the current study is not aligned with the methods employed in the Grabe et al. (2006) study. Grabe et al. (2006) included mental health as an individual factor relating to crime motivation which they purport is evidence of harsh treatment. The basic idea is that a mental health problem is on the individual level and within the control of the offender, therefore, crimes are committed out of their own will as opposed to some societal pressure. The current study disagrees with this assumption.

While it is agreed that mental health is an individual-level factor, it is argued that employing themes of mental health in media reporting is suggestive of more lenient treatment as opposed to harsh treatment of offenders. The current study employs the rationale that attributing crime motivation to mental health problems is indicative of lenient treatment because it is beyond the offender's control and the result of a disease rather than a choice. While individual factors such as greed and revenge do support the argument of harsh treatment, presenting mental health issues in news reduces the perceived culpability of the offender, thus resulting in lenient treatment.

Of the 50 articles in the sample, 39 quoted someone at least once. Of these 39 articles, 20 reported on female offenders and 19 were on male offenders. Table 4 provides a breakdown of the types of people that were quoted and how many quotes were coded in the articles by offender gender. Articles contained a total of 113 quotes; 53% of the quotes were used in articles reporting on female offenders and 47% of the quotes for male offenders. While the prosecutor was the most quoted source for all of the articles including those reporting on female offenders, law enforcement was the most quoted source for articles reporting on male offenders. The defense was the second most quoted source in articles across both genders. Other sources that were quoted include the offender, various school representatives, the judge, local government officials and the families of the victim and the offender.

**Table 4. Quote source by offender gender**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>Female (%)</b>	<b>Male (%)</b>
Prosecutor	19	74%	26%
Defense	16	56%	44%
Offender	13	54%	46%
School - Other	13	69%	31%
Law Enforcement	11	27%	73%
School Spokesperson	9	33%	67%
School Principal/Superintendent	7	29%	71%
Victim Family	6	67%	33%
Judge	5	60%	40%
Offender Family	4	0%	100%
Local Government Official	3	67%	33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>47%</b>

After reviewing the content and coding the quotes used in the articles, a selection of sources was included in the analysis based on frequency and level of detail in the quotes. Sources that were not frequently coded or did not provide any detailed information were not included in the analysis. Therefore, the sources include quotes from the prosecution, the defense, the offender, school representatives (collapsed school sources), law enforcement, and the judge.

### **Prosecution Quotes**

Two major themes emerged when examining the quotes of the prosecution that were included in the articles. These themes included the culpability of the offenders and the prosecution's reaction to the resolution of the trial, typically a plea deal.

In terms of culpability, quotes by prosecutors commented on the danger the offender posed to the community, the labeling of the offender as a sex offender, and

references that imply the offenders are pedophiles. For female offenders, some prosecutors' quotes included:

(002) "I feel she's a very serious sex offender and one that does not need to be out in our community again, around children, especially school-age children."

(001) "He was a 12-year-old boy and the defendant knew it."

(042) said Farley displayed "classic grooming behavior" by giving the student attention and gifts before the relationship became sexual.

(042) "I want to emphasize for the record, ma'am, you are a sexual offender," Hansen told Farley. "You will be a sex offender under Idaho law."

While articles on males also included prosecutor quotes regarding the culpability of the offender, the degree of culpability was much less harsh as compared to the articles reporting on female offenders.

(020) She listed those items in arguing for a substantial bond, saying Ballmann's release would pose a "very disturbing community safety concern."

While females are labeled as "serious sex offenders", male offenders were referenced as a safety concern to the community. Another aspect of culpability was addressed in terms of the offender's position as a teacher. For example, for female offenders:

(050) "The facts really speak for themselves," Montgomery County District Attorney Risa Ferman said at a news conference yesterday announcing the charges. "We're dealing with a teacher, and a teacher is in a very unique position of trust and authority in both the school and the community," Ferman said.

As compared to articles on male offenders, prosecutors' quotes were harsher in their reaction to the female offenders' actions:

(014) "What the defendant did was an outrage. When a child goes to school she should be able to feel safe," Deputy Prosecutor Thalia Murphy said.

(035) "This defendant's actions are especially disturbing because, as parents, we entrust our children to teachers," Heck said. "This defendant, a popular teacher and coach, violated that trust and victimized a student."

While prosecution quotes are harsher on females in terms of labeling them as a sex offender as opposed to a public safety concern, there were more emotionally charged quotes in regards to the male offenders' violations of trust as a teacher and victimization of students as compared to female offenders.

Another theme that emerged from examining prosecution quotes was reactions to the resolution of the case or trial which was typically a plea agreement. For articles on female offenders, the quotes reflected the prosecutor's feelings of relief for the victim and the family in putting the crime behind them.

(045) "The victim and his family are very much in favor of resolving [the case] this way," Larsen told the judge.

(019) "The court may be willing to risk the well-being of the victims in this case in order to force it to trial. I am not."

(018) "We're happy that the victim's family can put this case behind them," he said. "The whole process has been very difficult, and we hope they can now resume their lives."

This relief for the family is indicative of nurturing maternal qualities which are typically associated with females as opposed to males. In contrast to favoring the well-being of the victim, prosecution quotes were more centered on the male offender. This is seen by quotes that were more directed towards the benefits of plea deals which would result in a quicker resolution of the trial. On the other hand, some of the quotes commented on the plea deals in terms of avoiding the consequences of the offender being found not guilty of the accused crime.

(049) "The risk of the defendant walking away without any repercussions was too great," McCarthy said Tuesday. "Based on the strengths of the case, the plea agreement was appropriate."

In summary, while certain elements of the prosecution quotes suggest harsher treatment of female offenders, the majority of the themes that emerged appear to be more lenient

towards them. These themes include a focus on the well-being of the victims of the female teachers and the outrage to the criminal acts and plea deals of the male teachers. However, this treatment is counterbalanced by the labeling of females as sex offenders possessing pedophilic characteristics as opposed to male offenders labeled as a public safety concern.

### **Defense Quotes**

Logically, the majority of quotes from offenders' attorneys defended their client. How this defense was justified was very different depending on the gender of the offender.

In cases of female offenders, the quotes used by defense attorneys were statements suggesting that the victims were willing participants and just as culpable as the offenders. For example,

(042) Farley's Attorney, Chuck Peterson, said the teenager, who turned 18 in October, was a willing participant. "She was attracted to a younger man," Peterson said. "It is not a case of sexual abuse of an adolescent." Peterson also said the student bragged about the relationship, and that he told a friend he did it to "become a legend." "Only he didn't become a legend. He became a pariah," Peterson said. "He brought the whole thing down on his head."

However, this relationship was tainted by claims of severe mental health issues.

(036) Fitzgibbons had originally planned an insanity defense, saying earlier this year that Lafave had "some profound emotional issues" and that "once anyone reads what the doctors have to say, they will understand a lot more."

While defense attorneys for female offenders that were quoted suggested that the victim was to blame and the offender suffers from mental health issues, defense attorneys for male offenders referenced their client's good standing and that the false accusations are the result of hysteria.

(013) French's attorney says his client is innocent and has lived a "pristine" life. He said there are questions about whether the accusations are real or the result of hysteria.

(023)"It's terrible, because as soon as there's an accusation, this teacher is destroyed, while the kid . . . is protected," McDonald said. "Mr. King is a hugely popular teacher. I've had all these parents calling me saying, 'Please let me testify for Mr. King; he did wonderful things for my kid,' and those are the teachers that get accused."

The treatment of females as mentally ill partners of a relationship is very different than the treatment of males as innocent victims of hysteria and false accusations. Quotes that were used that referenced female offenders were not as dismissive of the accusations. On the other hand, quotes characterizing females suggested that they wanted to spare any more damage to the victim:

(002) "She just wanted to get it over with, her punishment, and allow the children to begin their healing process."

(036) Very importantly, it allows the young man involved here to go on with his life, just as Debbie can go on with her life," he said. "He does not have to participate in a trial or deposition."

For male offenders, quotes were used to spare any more damage to the offender:

(010) Johnson's attorney, Terry Sherman, said there is no excuse for his client's actions. Sherman said Johnson lost a job he loved and that his wife has left him. "You can punish the body, but the soul's already pretty well been battered," Sherman said. "And rightfully so."

Again, the manner in which the defense attorney was quoted creates two very contrasting impressions of the offender. Perhaps most notable in regards to media treatment is the way in which defense is quoted when trying to protect their client. In some cases, attorneys attempted to defend the offender's character and protect their safety from potential harms they would inevitably be subjected to if incarcerated. This example exemplifies the concept of patriarchal chivalry proposed in the criminal justice literature.

(008) "It's an awful case with awful consequences, but Allenna Ward is not an awful woman." Ward's lawyer Donald Hocker said Ward will be vulnerable to physical and emotional abuse at the hands of other prisoners.

On the other hand, attorneys for male offenders asked the courts for leniency in punishment given the offender's career.

(040) Wilcox's lawyer, Robert Grimes, asked the judge to go easy on Wilcox because he lost his career as a teacher. "He is trying to reinvent his life," Grimes said.

In regards to quotes from defense, the degree of harshness in media treatment is mixed for both female and male offenders. Females received more lenient treatment in terms of victim blame, wanting to spare the victim, issues of mental health, and protection from prison abuse. On the other hand, males also received lenient treatment by the defense in terms of attributing the accusations of a crime to hysteria, defending their good standing and character, and protection from any additional damage already inflicted to the offender's career and family. Defense quotes for female offenders were more centered around the victim, whereas, quotes for male offenders were more around the offender.

### **Offender Quotes**

The majority of quotes from offenders of both genders are described as apologies to the victims and the victims' families as well as accepting responsibility for their actions. While this was the case for most of their statements, some of the offender quotes in the articles redirected blame back to the victim or were justifications for their actions. For articles reporting on male offenders, the offenders were quoted:

(034) "No matter what happens to me today, I don't want you to blame yourself in any way, shape or form," he told his victim, who was in the courtroom. "I want you to walk away from today knowing that I do not hate you, nor will I ever think badly of you."

(048) He said he thought they needed a positive male role model in their lives and it was a way of giving extra attention to students who often

didn't get a good night's sleep because their moms were "out partying all night."

On the other hand, quotes from female offenders often commented on their mental health.

For example:

(019) "I want the world to see that bipolar is real," Lafave said. "Not one time has the media brought up the subject of my bipolar. I challenge you to read a book or an article on bipolar illness." "I believe that my family know who I am and right now, my family and my friends are all that matter," she said.

While male offenders justified their actions in caring about the well-being of the child, female offenders justified their actions as a result of a mental illness that is beyond their control or the understanding of the public. By attributing their actions to mental illness, the responsibility of the actions is no longer associated with the offender but is a result of an illness. Whereas for male offenders, attributing their actions to the well-being of the child suggests that the motivation of the crime is associated with doing good deeds.

### **School Quotes**

Quotes related to persons associated with the school were collapsed into one analysis category. These persons included students, parents of other students, other teachers, school board members, spokespersons, principals and superintendents. Two key themes emerged from reviewing these quotes. For articles reporting on male offenders, the content of the quotes was centered on school policy.

(012) "He's gone through our certification. He's gone through our training. He's passed background checks. Unfortunately, this is something you can't foresee."

(026) "It's our policy to provide additional support staff for students in a situation like this," said school system spokeswoman Patti Caplan. "These are not the kind of announcements you make over the PA."

(032) "There are people who do these kind of things in every walk of life," Edwards said. "That's not an excuse and we should not tolerate it. He won't be in the classroom and he won't be hired by the district."

For articles reporting on female offenders, the quotes used from various school sources conveyed perceptions of an epidemic, a moral panic, fear that this was becoming a common trend in schools. For example,

(050) "It's a little unsettling," Jaggi said. "The safety of the children is number one. But unfortunately, the problem is that you are hearing about stuff like this more and more in the schools these days."

(031) "I'm just sick to my stomach about what's going on in our schools at the moment," Griffin said. "Is this Hillsborough County, or is this something that's going on across the nation?"

In this sense, school quotes used in articles on male offenders suggest that this type of crime is already incorporated into their school policy in terms of their response, their hiring process, and their intolerance of sustained employment. On the other hand, school quotes used in articles on female offenders suggest that this type of crime is relatively new and happening more frequently resulting in fear and moral panic. In comparing a theme of school policy verses school panic, more lenient treatment can be attributed to male offenders as opposed to female offenders. However, how the school representatives were quoted suggests a very interesting comparison. When a female commits the sex crime, schools respond with shock and fear but when a male commits it, the school system responds with administrative protocol.

### **Law Enforcement Quotes**

While the majority of quotes from law enforcement were included in articles that reported on male offenders, the differences in context are quite clear. For articles on female offenders, law enforcement was quoted in a manner as if to justify or validate the arrest through the evidence and offender's confession.

(005) "I wouldn't have charged her if I didn't have enough evidence to show it is true."

(006) "She confessed to having full sexual intercourse with this child in her vehicle in the school parking lot. "She admitted to us quite graphically what happened."

On the other hand, articles reporting on male offenders used quotes from law enforcement that were more public service announcements or warnings for parents to be better equipped to protect their children from the real dangers of these offenders. This conflicts with the themes observed in school quotes that attribute to an epidemic in reaction to females as opposed to males.

(022) "Unfortunately, you lock up one person, and there are many more who are out there," Lisle said. "But I think we are making strides in trying to catch them and trying to protect children."

(012) "Take that phone from them every once in a while. Check out and see who they've been talking to, what type of images are downloaded onto their phones."

(029) "We're not going into details, but the contact was so subtle that some of the victims may not realize they were victims," Ms. Galindo said. "So we're asking parents and school districts to talk to parents and ask them to talk to their kids about a no-touching policy."

In this regard, the quotes used from law enforcement are associated with harsher treatment of male offenders in that this type of crime requires collective action and is a critical social issue. Whereas for female offenders, the quotes from law enforcement are associated with more lenient treatment in that they had to justify the arrest, suggesting that the crime was viewed as implausible.

### **Judge Quotes**

The quotes included from judges suggest a range in the judgment of the seriousness of the crime as well as the punitive opinions of the punishment of the offender, often plea deals. For quotes referencing female offenders, judges were often quoted in terms of the offender's violation of trust and expectation of the role of a teacher. For example,

(002) "Rather than educate our children, you chose to violate their trust in a horrific way."

(019) "Quite frankly, if the allegations against the defendant are true, the agreed-upon sentence shocks the conscience of this court."

In contrast, for quotes referencing male offenders, judges were often quoted in terms of the offender's violation of an oath and the criminality of the offense.

(040) "You violated your oath as a teacher."

(034) "Really, this is more of a crime of theft and destruction," he told Black. "You've stolen things that can't be replaced. You've destroyed things that can't be remade."

By using quotes that suggest females violated trust in their role as a teacher as opposed to males violating an oath, harsher treatment is attributed to the females given the emotional violation compared to a professional violation.

### **Expert Opinion Quotes**

In addition to various individuals related to the case, reporters utilized expert quotes as a way to provide factual commentary or narratives of the crime in general. By using experts, the viewer is provided with a more scientific opinion of the crime which influences their perceptions of the offender and the offense. Of the 50 articles, 6 contained quotes from experts who were not involved in the case investigation. Of these, 4 were for female offenders and 2 were for male offenders. While this sample size is small, analysis of these quotes and the types of experts employed were very different by offender gender. For articles that reported on female offenders, all the experts that were quoted were from the mental health field including psychologists, psychoanalysts, and psychiatrists.

(031) Richard Gartner is a New York psychologist and psychoanalyst and author of several books about sexual abuse. He said the most likely answer is that society until now has been more permissive of women who have sex with underage boys.

(038) Psychiatrists and psychologists tell CNN that attraction to danger is a common theme in these cases -- along with immaturity on the part of the teacher. One psychologist says they become almost emotionally on-par with the student. In a taped phone conversation between Lafave and her alleged victim, released by Florida prosecutors, Lafave asks the student to make a "pinky promise." Experts say, some female teachers see themselves as nurturers, blocking out the idea an affair is wrong or illegal. And they often play into cultural stereotypes that women are incapable of victimizing children, like a male teacher who preys on a female student.

(008) Forensic psychiatrist Donna Schwartz-Watts said Ward is not a pedophile, but rather a childlike victim suffering from personality disorders and a repressed childhood. Schwartz-Watts said the minister's daughter lived a sheltered life but really was a 'free spirit' who never got a chance to break away from her family.

In terms of articles that reported on male offenders, there was no use of quotes by mental health experts. While there was a very small sample of quoted experts for male offenders, the ones that did get quoted were a child advocacy representative and a teacher's union representative.

(032) Mary Jo McGrath, a member of Stop Educator Sexual Abuse, Misconduct and Exploitation, said Menes' alleged behavior follows the protocol of a child molester. "It's a perversion," she said. "And they will attack as many victims as they have the opportunity to." Mary Jo McGrath, a member of Stop Educator Sexual Abuse, Misconduct and Exploitation. McGrath said teachers who prey on students often do so by earning their trust. She said such teachers break both student and parent trust because teachers are expected to act as professionals in and out of a school setting. Parents do not send their children to school to have them exploited, she said. McGrath said she's not surprised that police suspect Menes victimized other students at Durango because child molesters often can't control their demons. "It's a perversion," she said. "And they will attack as many victims as they have the opportunity to."

(023) Representatives of the county's teachers union, which is providing King's legal representation, said that the vast majority of sexual abuse allegations against teachers are untrue. Teachers who go out of their way to help at-risk students -- which colleagues said King was known for doing -- are especially vulnerable to false accusations, union staff member Meg McDonald said. McDonald said that each year she receives reports of five or six teachers accused of sexual assault. In her 16 years with the school district, she said, one person has been found guilty of sexual misconduct with a student: a high school teacher convicted of statutory rape for having sex with a 17-year-old girl.

The use of expert opinions differed quite dramatically by the gender of the offender. As seen in other sections of quotes, mental health is a very common theme among the media treatment of female offenders. The use of quotes by mental health experts not only solidifies this theme among articles reporting on females, but it adds legitimacy to the article which influences the viewer's impression of the female offender as suffering from a mental illness that is beyond their control. This impression is quite distinctive from the expert quotes used in articles reporting on male offenders. In this regard, males are either vilified by child rights' groups or, in contrast, defended by teacher advocacy groups. Despite this range in treatment, reporters made no mention of mental health in any capacity in any of the articles reporting on male offenders.

### **Sex Registry**

While not a quote of an actual person, some articles quoted the punishments associated with the sentencing or plea deals that illustrated a very unique theme for females as opposed to males. Of the 50 articles, 9 included references to the offender having to register as a sex offender or receive psychosexual treatment/counseling. Of these 9, 7 were for female offenders, 2 were for male offenders. While this is a small sample, there was an interesting theme among the female offenders. In addition to reporting that the teacher must register as a sex offender, there are references to sex offender treatment, psychosexual evaluation of pedophilia, and psychosexual counseling. While there are not enough articles to report this theme with significance, it does provide an interesting commentary to the issue of rehabilitation and treatment for female sex offenders as opposed to males who typically receive only the mandate to register.

To summarize, the fourth construct used to examine media treatment by the explanations of the criminal motivations behind the crime produced quite mixed results. In some aspects, females received more lenient treatment while in other instances, males received more lenient treatment. However, several key themes have been discussed which create two very different impressions of the offender based on their gender supporting the argument that differential treatment exists in the media.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Limitations should be noted regarding this study. Sampling of articles was purposive and included only online news sources, therefore a lack of generalizability exists. Future research should incorporate more news sources and sampled articles in order to examine more media coverage of sex offense crimes by teachers. Media research almost consistently includes the content of headlines in their analysis. Because keywords were used to search for articles in the archives of news sources, this data element was not incorporated into this study. Further, future research should examine media treatment by cross tabulating various data elements. For example, do articles that report on more attractive or younger offenders receive different treatment as opposed to less attractive or older offenders? Because this study is small-scale, this type of relationship across data elements was not pursued. However, several key themes emerged when examining the four primary constructs, and these findings provide evidence for the chivalry hypothesis.

The first construct focused on the placement of the article in the news source. Articles reporting on female offenders were featured more in national news sources as opposed to male offenders which were more prominent in the local news. While Grabe et al. (2006) attributes this prominence to harsh treatment of female offenders, it is suggested that when females commit crimes they are considered newsworthy and will attract more viewers. In contrast to the notion of harshness, perhaps this treatment can be attributed to the idea that it is considered perverse, thus attractive for news sources, when a female is deviant in a manner that challenges traditional gender roles or expectations (e.g., sex offenses). In other words, perhaps female deviance, and especially this kind of

deviance, is more newsworthy than male deviance because it challenges are perceived expectations of a perpetrator. While the placement of the article can be a reflection on the newsworthiness of the story, this construct cannot stand on its own when exploring the media treatment of sex offenders. Rather, the prominent coverage of female offenders counterbalanced with the residual coverage of male offenders is more of a commentary on the need for this type of study in order to address the implications of such a finding in the differential placement of news based on offender gender.

The second construct – which examined the graphicness of the crime – produced the most concrete evidence of gendered treatment in media reports of sex offenses. In comparing articles that reported on males and female offenders, the degree of graphicness was polarized depending on offender gender. For female offenders, the majority of articles employed non-violent descriptions which conveyed to the viewer that the crime was either relationship-based or a straight, non-graphic reference to having sex with the victim. For male offenders, the majority of articles employed violent descriptions which conveyed to the viewer that the crime was an assault or that the offender lured, molested, or abused the victim. This finding very clearly supports the chivalry hypothesis, in showing that the news media treat females in a more lenient manner than male sex offenders.

The third construct examined photographic portrayals in order to determine the degree to which the media flattered the offender. As noted previously, limitations in the research design did not allow for this construct to be fully integrated into the analysis. However, there is an observed difference in the manner in which offenders are photographed which supports the utility of this construct. Further, the research design

does provide for an opportunity to build upon the conceptual framework developed by Grabe et al. (2006) in their study of printed newspapers. In response to more current technological trends of news dissemination, using online news sources provides researchers with the opportunity to explore the use of video in reporting on crime. By exploring the content of videos, the manner in which offenders are portrayed and framed by the journalists and presented to the viewer could contribute valuable insights into the media treatment of sex offenders. In addition, online news sources provide the opportunity for a public forum where viewers can leave comments on the article. This capability provides a unique opportunity to have immediate access to some viewers' impressions of the crime story. Future research could profit by incorporating videos and viewer comments as data sources when exploring the media treatment of offenders.

The fourth construct focused on the use of quotes in terms of the explanations for the criminal motivations behind the crime. Across all quote sources, the findings were mixed in terms of the way the media treated the offenders. However, some patterns emerged within quote sources that offer potential areas for future research. The main theme observed in the use of quotes was the poor mental health of female offenders. While no articles on male offenders included any reference to mental health, the theme dominated the quotes used in articles reporting on female offenders. Most notably, reporters used quotes from mental health professionals to comment on cases of female teachers. It is argued that by employing mental health discourse, media is treating females in a more lenient manner by suggesting that these offenders are suffering from a disease which makes them not in control of their deviant sexual behavior, at fault for their actions, and in need of counseling and treatment. The implication of this is that viewers

may perceive female offenders as victims of mental illness as opposed to perpetrators of a sex crime, thus reducing the culpability attributed to the offender and strengthening the gender bias argument. This finding is consistent with societal trends in the direction of “medicalizing” some types of deviance.

While the findings of this study did not provide overwhelming evidence of a certain type of treatment of female offenders across all four constructs, there is overall support for the chivalry hypothesis in the news media’s treatment of female teachers who commit sex offenses with their minor students. This leniency is exemplified in the non-violent graphicness in descriptions of the crime and the inclusion of mental health discourse as a means of justifying or explaining the motivations for committing the crime. The observed leniency towards female offenders strengthens the argument of gender bias in the stereotype that females are incapable of committing sex crimes, are involved in less serious offenses, or lack culpability for the offense – thus supporting the chivalry hypothesis.

This gender bias seen in the media reporting of sex crimes by teachers carries significant consequences. Not only does the bias sustain the argument of differential gendered treatment of female offenders, it shapes public perceptions and reactions to sex crimes by teachers. By normalizing sex offenses between female teachers and students as consensual, non-violent relationships between a willing victim and mentally ill offender, this impacts victim reporting practices as well as punitive attitudes of the culpability of the offenders, which carries significant policy implications for the criminal justice system.

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## Appendix A. Sample of Articles

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## Appendix B. Coding Protocol

VARIABLE	LABEL AND RESPONSE ITEMS
ID	xxx
Website	Web Source
Keywords	Keywords Used
Location	Source Location
Sublocate	Sublocation
DateArt	Date of Article
DateRet	Date Retrieved
WordCount	Word Count
PICTURE	Picture included? (Y/N)
PICTYPE	Picture Type or Description
VIDEO	Video included? (Y/N)
TYPE	1=Female Offender 2=Male Offender
ONAME	Offender Name; 99 if not stated
OAGE	Offender Age; 99 if not stated
ORACE	Offender Race 1=White 2=African American 3=Other
ORCEHOW	How is race known? 1=Stated 2=Picture or video inference
VJUVIE	Juvenile Victim (Y/N)
NUMVIC	How many students as victims?
VGENDER	Victim Gender 1=Female Victim 2=Male Victim
VAGE	Victim Age; 99 if not stated
VRACE	Victim Race 1=White 2=African American 3=Other
VRCEHOW	How is race known? 1=Stated 2=Picture or video inference
CITY	City
STATE	State
HEAD	Headline
SUBHEAD	Sub Headline
OSTATUS1	How is offender referenced in the first line?

<b>VARIABLE</b>	<b>LABEL AND RESPONSE ITEMS</b>
OSTATUS2	Job Status of Offender 1=Active Teacher at time of crime; 2=Former Teacher at time of crime; 3=Not stated
RELATE	Was the teacher the victims' at the time of the crime? 1=Yes 2=No 3=Don't Know
OTEACH	Subject of Teacher; 99 if not stated
SEXREF	How was sex referenced in first line?
STAGE	Stage of the article? 1=Charged 2=Sentenced
OPEA	How did the offender plea?
OCHARGE	What was the offender charged with?
OPUNISH	What is the punishment?
CHARGEDES	Description of crime
SEXLOCATE	Where the sexual activity take place?
NUMQUOTE	Number of quotes in article
QUOTES1-5	Who was quoted
NUMQUOTE1-5	Number of quotes
QUOTES1-5	Quote Text
OTHQUOTE	Other indirect quotes
VBLAME	Any blame on victim?
VOTHER	Other details of victim?
MHTALK	Any mention of mental health of offender?
EXPERT	Any expert quotes used?
OFAMILY	Mention of teacher's Family?
HISTORY	Description of teacher's career
PERSHIST	Description of teacher's personal life
TOWN	Description of school or town
OHOME	Was the offender's home searched?
OTHERDES	Any other description of teacher?
TIPLINE	Was a tip line provided?
SEXREG	Any mention of sex offender registry?
SEXTRMT	Any mention of treatment?
PROFIT	Any mention of restrictions on profiting from public appearances?
Coder Summary	Coder brief notes
Attractive Bias?	Is the offender attractive?