



The National Children's Advocacy Center

Recent Research Affecting Child Abuse Investigations and Prosecutions

The NCAC models, promotes, and delivers excellence in child abuse response and prevention through service, education, and leadership.

Learning Objectives

- Attendees will review recently published research affecting child abuse investigations and prosecutions.
- Attendees will relate this information to their current practices in the field.
- Attendees will identify multiple issues to raise with their local MDT to inform them of this emerging research and identify potential modifications to current practice.





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Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., Ormrod, R., & Hamby, S.L. (2010).

Trends in childhood violence and abuse exposure. *Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine*, 238-242.

What is happening to our kids?

- Substantiated sexual abuse has dropped at an average annual rate of 6% per year between 1992 and 2001
 - *Average decline has only been 2% between 2002 - 2006.*
 - *Great skepticism in the child abuse field about whether these declines are real and whether they are continuing.*
 - The purpose of this study is to describe the trend information when comparing:
 - *2003 Developmental Victimization Survey (DVS) data*
 - *2008 National Study of Children Exposed to Violence (NATSCEV)*
- to see if sexual abuse substantiation declines continued during this five-year time frame.

What is happening to our kids?

- DVS collected data from 2,030 children aged 2-17,
- NATSCEV collected data from 4,046 children aged 2-17
- Both surveys utilized:
 - *Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ) – a comprehensive screening instrument for a wide range of victimization experiences including sexual victimization.*
 - *National sampling of residential telephone numbers and used list-assisted random-digit dialing for sample selection.*
 - If multiple children lived in the home one child was randomly selected from the eligible children living in the home.
 - If the selected child was less than 10 years old data was collected from a caregiver.

What is happening to our kids?

- Participation rates:
 - *DVS – 79%*
 - *NATSCEV – 71%*

- Focus of study:
 - *Prior year victimizations*
 - *Victimization rates calculated for the DVS sample were compared to those calculated for the NATSCEV sample to determine whether significant changes occurred during the five year period between each survey.*

What is happening to our kids?

- Declining victimization between 2003-2008
 - *All physical assault dropped from 53.1% to 49.6%*
 - *Sexual assault **by adult** declined from 3.3% to 2.0%*
- No decline of victimization between 2003-2008
 - Kidnapping
 - Bias attacks
 - Physical abuse by caregivers
 - Neglect by caregivers
 - Dating violence
 - Witnessing of domestic violence
 - Exposure to a shooting



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Finkelhor, D., Ormrod, R., Turner, H. & Hamby, S.L. (2010).

School, police, and medical authority involvement with children who have experienced victimization. *Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine*, 9-15.

Are we getting all cases?

- The purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which authorities know about victimization in a contemporary cohort of children and adolescents.
- The National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NATSCEV) was designed to obtain one-year and lifetime prevalence estimates of a wide range of childhood/adolescent victimizations.
 - *Conducted during 2008 with a nationally representative sample of 4,549 children between the ages of 0-17*
 - *0-9 year of age - short interview with an adult caregiver*
 - *10-17 years of age - the child was interviewed*

Are we getting all cases?

- The survey used an enhanced version of the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ) – an inventory of childhood victimization covering five primary areas:
 - *Conventional crime*
 - *Maltreatment*
 - *Victimization by peers and siblings*
 - *Sexual Victimization*
 - *Witnessing and indirect exposure to violence*
- Follow-up questions for each victimization item gathered additional information about each event. This study only considers the victimizations which occurred during the past year.

Are we getting all cases?

- **58.3%** of the sample reported at least one victimization in the past year (included bullying but not exposure to domestic violence)
- Of these victims, **45.7%** had at least one victimization known to authorities (we know about less than half of cases!!)
- The victimizations most likely known to any authorities were typically of a serious nature:
 - *Sexual abuse by a known adult (69.0%)*
 - *Sexual abuse by a non-specified adult (76.1%)*
 - *Kidnapping (73.5%)*
 - *Gang or group assault (70.1%)*

Are we getting all cases?

- The victimizations least likely known to authorities were:
 - *Peer and sibling assault (16.9%)*
 - *Dating violence (15.2%)*
 - *Sexual exposure/being flashed (16.6%)*
 - *Completed and attempted rape (14.0%)*
 - *Statutory rape (3.4%)*

- Who is informed of these victimization events?
 - *School authorities - 42.3%*
 - *Police - 12.7%*
 - *Medical authorities - 1.8%*

Are we getting all cases?

- Police were more likely to know about several types of victimization:
 - *Kidnapping (71.0% vs. 46.0%)*
 - *Neglect (36.9% vs. 29.2%)*
 - *Sexual abuse by a know adult (64.9% vs. 30.2%)*
 - *Sexual abuse by a non-specific adult (76.1% vs. 28.5%)*
 - *Witnessing of domestic violence (42.3% vs. 22.9%)*
- Sexual offenses were more likely to be known to the police when the child expressed feeling afraid

Are we getting all cases?

- Sexual offenses were more likely to be known to school authorities when they:
 - *Occurred in school*
 - *Involved a non-identified perpetrator*
 - *Occurred to a child between 2-9 years of age*
 - *Involved a child living with a step-parent or unmarried partner of a parent*
- When these findings are compared to similar data collected in 1992, reporting has:
 - *almost doubled for reporting on all victimizations*
 - *tripled for kidnapping*
 - ***almost doubled for sexual abuse incidents!***



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**Mills, R., Alati, R., O'Callaghan, M.,
Najman, J.M., Williams, G.M., Bor,
W., & Strathearn, L. (2010).**

Child abuse and neglect and cognitive function at 14 years
of age: Findings from a birth cohort. *Pediatrics*, 4-10.

Child Abuse and School Performance

- The purpose of this study was to examine the association between child maltreatment (abuse and neglect) and long-term cognitive outcomes within a prospective birth cohort.
- Participants were 7,223 mothers who had enrolled in the study at their first antenatal visit (18 weeks gestation) between January 1981 and December 1983
- Data was collected:
 - *At enrollment*
 - *Within days of delivery*
 - *6 months*
 - *5 years*
 - *14 years*

Child Abuse and School Performance

- Approximately 70% of the youth completed the Achenbach Youth Self-Report at 14 years of age.
- 52% of the youth also completed the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) Reading Test and Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices (RSPM) at age 14.
- Reports of abuse and neglect between 1981 and 2000 were collected from Child Protective Services. This data included the type of abuse, relationship of the offender to the child, and the date of report/notification.
 - *CPS history was available for 7,214 of the dyads*

Child Abuse and School Performance

- 11.5% (830) had been the subject of a report of suspected child maltreatment.
- 789 of these reports were accepted for investigation (10.9% of the original sample).
- 506 subjects (7.0%) experienced at least one substantiated abuse.
- Of the 3,796 children who completed either the WRAT or RSPM, 298 (7.9%) had a documented history of abuse.
 - 258 – *suspected abuse*
 - 152 – *suspected neglect*
 - 113 – *both abuse and neglect*

Child Abuse and School Performance

- When compared with non-maltreated peers, both the **WRAT and RSPM scores were significantly lower for the children who had been reported to CPS because of both abuse and neglect independently.**
- **Children who had experienced child neglect scored, on average, slightly lower than their peers who had experienced abuse (physical, sexual, emotional).**





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**Bourke, M.L. & Hernandez, A.E.
(2009).**

The 'Butner Study' redux: A report of the incidence of hands-on child victimization by child pornography offenders.
Journal of Family Violence, 24(3), 183-193.

Child porn only? Seriously?

- There is limited information available regarding the actions of individuals who possess child pornography, especially their likelihood for engaging in the sexual abuse of children.
- The purpose of this study was to shed additional light on this emerging issue. This project involved two analyses:
 - *Compare criminal sexual histories known at the time of sentencing with the self-report of offenders following participation in treatment for the purpose of determining **how many of the so-called “just pictures” offenders self-reported contact sexual offenses.***
 - *Assess the **incidence of these offenders to “crossover”** – engage in the victimization of children across genders and age categories.*

Child porn only? Seriously?

- 155 sexual offenders in an intensive, residential, sex offender-specific treatment program at a medium security federal prison.
 - *All had been convicted of the possession, distribution, or receipt of child pornography; and voluntarily participated in this treatment program.*
- Treatment program consisted of group and individual therapy, and a 60-week psycho-educational series focusing on:
 - *criminal thinking errors, management of deviant sexuality, emotional self-regulation, victim impact and empathy, social and intimacy skills, communication skills, relapse prevention, and community re-entry skills.*

Child porn only? Seriously?

- Information was obtained from the following:
 - **Presentence Investigation Report** - history of a “hands-on” offense was defined as:
 - Previous conviction for a contact sexual offense
 - Acknowledgement of a prior contact sexual offense from the offender
 - Prior investigation and substantiation of a child sexual offense committed by the offender
 - **Psychosexual History Questionnaire** – includes a complete listing of their hands-on victims
 - **Polygraph Examination Report** – administered after 14 months of treatment

Child porn only? Seriously?

- At the time of sentencing:
 - *74% of the offenders had no documented “hands-on” offenses*
 - *Of the forty men who had a prior history of a “hands-on” offense, these individuals had an average of **1.88 victims***
- By the end of treatment:
 - *Only 24 subjects denied having committed a “hands-on” offense*
 - ***85% admitted having committed at least one “hands-on” offense** –vast majority indicated they committed these offenses **prior** to seeking child pornography on the internet*
 - *Of those who admitted a prior history of a “hands-on” offense, they had an average of **13.56 victims***

Child porn only? Seriously?

- A significant percentage of subjects crossed age bands and genders with their offending behavior
- **Offenders who reported having male victims were significantly more likely to engage in crossover behavior** when compared with those who reported abusing female victims.
- Among the offenders who were not known to have any “hands-on” victims at the time of sentencing:
 - *24% admitted during treatment they had abused both male and female children*
 - *48% admitted having abused both pre-pubescent and post-pubescent children*



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I am ready to get started with the interview.

What does using a oath do for us?

Lyon, T.D. & Dorado, J.S. (2008).

Truth induction in young maltreated children: the effects of oath-taking and reassurance on true and false disclosures. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 32, 738-748.



To Oath or not Oath?

- **Purpose** - examine the potential effects of a promise to tell and reassurance on young maltreated children's disclosure of a minor transgression.

Experiment 1

- **Subjects:**
 - *135 children (70 girls and 65 boys) between the ages of 6-8 who were awaiting a dependency court appearance after having been removed from their parents' care due to allegations of abuse or neglect*



To Oath or not Oath?

- **Design:**

- *Children interviewed by a female experimenter who sat with the child at a table with a toy house sitting on the floor.*
- *Interviewer told the child he/she could play with the toy house later, and then administered the Oath-taking Competency Task (Tom Lyon). This task involves:*
 - *Pictures and conversation to assess child's understanding of truth-lie and their moral understanding of these concepts.*
- *Only children who passed this Task were included in this study (N=109).*
- *Then, the interviewer pointed to the toy house and informed the child there were lots of doors on each side, and behind each door was a fun toy or a marshmallow.*

To Oath or not Oath?

- **Design:**

- *Interviewer looked through some papers and informed the child that she had to go get something from her office and that she would be gone for about five minutes.*
- *After she left, a confederate entered the room, spoke with the child, picked up the toy house and put it on the table, and then engaged the child in opening doors and looking at what was present.*
- *Shortly before the five minutes were up, she put the toy house back on the floor, and told the child, “we might get in trouble if anyone found out we played with the toy”, and then left the room.*

To Oath or not Oath?

- **Design:**

- *The interviewer then returned to the room, and children were assigned to one of three conditions:*

- **Oath** – got the child to promise to tell the truth
- **Reassurance** – mentioned the need to tell the truth and also reassured the child that he/she would not be in trouble for any response, and the interviewer would be happy if they told the truth
- **Control** – no mention of any instructions

- *Then the interviewer asked six questions regarding:*

- The toy house
- Whether the child played with it
- Whether anyone else came in the room.

To Oath or not Oath?

Results:

- 14% of the children denied the confederate entered the room
- Child admitted playing with the toy:
 - *Oath and Reassurance Conditions (collapsed)* – 85%
 - *Control Condition* – 52%
- Children were more likely to acknowledge the confederate's actions with the toys than themselves
- Children were more likely to acknowledge looking at the toy
 - *Fewer admitted touching the toy*
 - *Still fewer admitting playing with the toy*

To Oath or not Oath?

Experiment 2 - Subjects: 101 children (52 girls and 49 boys) between the ages of 5-7 who had been victims of child maltreatment.

- **Design:**

- *Very similar structure to Experiment 1, except that the confederate did not engage the child in play with the toy.*
- *Rather, she introduced herself and engaged the child in small talk. She then played the “raisin game” where child was encouraged to guess in which hand the confederate was holding a raisin.*
- *Again, children were assigned to either the **Oath, Reassurance, or Control** condition. The interviewer asked some yes-no questions and some “tag” questions (“Now there is a lady who likes to come in here and play with my toy while I am gone, and I think she came in and played with my toy”) regarding the activity.*

To Oath or not Oath?

- 67 of the children passed the competency pretest (34 failed!)
- No evidence that the oath had any negative effects even when combined with suggestive questions and asked of children who failed to pass the competency task.
- Taken together, these studies suggest this child-friendly version of the oath increases true disclosures (true positives) without increasing false disclosures (false positives)





Lippert, T, Cross, T.P., Jones, L. & Walsh, W. (2008).

Telling interviewers about sexual abuse: predictors of child disclosure at forensic interviews. *Child Maltreatment*, 14(1), 100-113.



What is he/she going to say?

- Purpose – to explore child, abuse, and suspect characteristics that predict disclosure at a forensic interview.
 - *How do previous disclosures relate to disclosure at a forensic interview?*
 - *How do age at onset and age at time of forensic interview relate to disclosure?*
- Subjects - 987 children who were interviewed regarding sexual abuse allegations where it was believed that sexual abuse had occurred. 81% of cases were CSA.

What is he/she going to say?

- This was part of the Multi-Site Evaluation of Children's Advocacy Centers involving the CACs
 - *Dallas CAC, Dallas, TX*
 - *Dee Norton Lowcountry Children's Center, Charleston, SC*
 - *National Children's Advocacy Center, Huntsville, AL*
 - *Pittsburg Child Advocacy Center, Pittsburgh, PA*
- A full disclosure was defined as “a disclosure during the forensic interview of all sexual acts which were later determined to have occurred over the course of the investigation”.

What is he/she going to say?

- Time of forensic interview from onset of abuse:
 - *Within one year of onset – 65%*
 - *Between 1-7 years of onset – 29%*
 - *More than 7 years after onset – 4%*
- Disclosure rates:
 - *Full - 73%*
 - *Partial – 12%*
 - *No Disclosure – 10%*
 - *Denials – 5%*
 - Girls were significantly more likely to make a full disclosure than boys
 - Disclosure rates were much higher for older children

What is he/she going to say?

- Full disclosure rates by prior disclosure status:
 - *No prior disclosure – 60%*
 - *Prior disclosure by child – 81%*
- Caregiver actions which were related to children's full disclosure:
 - *Contacting law enforcement*
 - *Contacting another person about the allegations*
 - *Restricting suspect contact with the child*
 - *Removing the suspect from the home*



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Cederborg, A.C., Danielsson, H., La Rooy, D. & Lamb, M.E. (2009).

Repetition of contaminating question types when children and youths with intellectual disabilities are interviewed.
Journal of Intellectual Disabilities Research, (53)5, 440-449.

Can I ask it again?

- The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of repeating option-posing (OP) or suggestive questions in investigative interviews with children who may already have memory and communicative difficulties.
- 33 children from Sweden with intellectual disabilities who had been interviewed regarding allegations of childhood sexual or physical abuse
 - *Gender*
 - 25 females
 - 9 males
 - *Age - 5.4 – 23.7 at the time of the interview*

Can I ask it again?

- All interviews were recorded and transcribed, then reviewed with each interviewer utterance being classified based on the categories developed by Michael Lamb and colleagues:
 - *Facilitators*
 - *Invitations*
 - *Directive Utterances*
 - *Option-posing utterances*
 - *Suggestive utterances*
- In total, 49% (2,858 of the 5,764) of the questions asked in the substantial phase were focused prompts:
 - *Option-posing - 32%*
 - *Suggestive – 17%*

Can I ask it again?

- 85% of the interviews included at least one repeated question
- 60% of the responses to these 260 repeated focused questions remained the same, and 40% of the responses changed.
- When the repeated questions were identical, 42% of the responses remained the same, but when the questions were similar yet not identical, only 34% of the responses remained the same.
- Responses were more likely to change if a question was repeated a third time or more.



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La Rooy, D., Katz, C., Malloy, L.C. & Lamb, M.E. (2010).

Do we need to rethink guidance on repeated interviews?
Psychology, Public Policy, and Law, 16, (4), 373-392.



Should we interview again?

- This is an article which briefly summarizes existing cognitive psychological research especially focusing on memory and the reminiscence as a means of increasing recall.
- Recommendation: Consideration for conducting a follow up interview within a day or two of the initial interview, especially in cases where the alleged abuse occurred within 72 hours of the initial interview.
 - *There seems to be greater recall in a follow-up interview in these cases rather than those where abuse occurred a long time ago*



Should we interview again?

- Recommendation: A good Forensic Interview should not only query about the alleged abuse, but also build a strong foundation for a child to possibly return for a follow-up interview.
 - *Child recalls any additional information?*
 - *Provide child with an opportunity to disclose information he/she recalls at the first interview but is unwilling to share*





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Berger, L.M., Slack, K.S., Waldfogel, J. & Bruch, S.K. (2010).

Caseworker-perceived caregiver substance abuse and child protective services outcomes. *Child Maltreatment*, 15(3)
199-210.

Substance Abuse and CPS?

- Prior research suggests that anywhere between 40-80% of families involved with CPS may be affected by parental substance abuse.
 - *Lower rates of caregiver substance abuse have been found among CPS-involved families whose children remain in-home than among those whose children are removed from home.*
- The purpose of this study was to investigate whether a CPS caseworker's perception that a child's caregiver had a substance abuse problem is associated with a family's subsequent experiences with the child welfare system.

Substance Abuse and CPS?

- The data for this study was taken from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW), the first study in the US to collect data from a national probability sample of children and families coming into contact with CPS.
 - *4,156 children for whom a baseline caseworker interview was completed and complete data available*
- Caseworker-perceived caregiver substance abuse assessed **alcohol or drug abuse by either the primary or secondary caregiver** (if applicable) and **whether substance abuse services were provided to or arranged for the child's caregiver.**

Substance Abuse and CPS?

- Outcomes – two measures of caseworker perceptions of maltreatment severity and four measures of CPS case outcomes
- 23% of the children had a primary or secondary caregiver who the caseworker perceived as having an alcohol or drug problem
- Caseworkers were considerably more likely to report that children whose **caregivers were perceived as having substance abuse problems** were at **severe risk of harm and had been severely harmed** as a result of the alleged maltreatment.

Substance Abuse and CPS?

- These families were also significantly more likely to have:
 - *services arranged or provided for them*
 - *the initial maltreatment allegation substantiated*
 - *the child removed from the home*
 - *termination of parental rights pursued*

- These families were:
 - *less likely to have been reported for physical or sexual abuse*
 - *more likely to have been reported for lack of supervision and other forms of maltreatment*



Atoro, K. E., Cross, T. P., Jones, L. M., Magnuson, S., Shadoin, A. L. & Walsh, W. (2010).

Nonoffending caregiver and youth experiences with child sexual abuse investigations. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 25(2), 291-314.



Is this working for you?

- Purpose - Do non-offending caregivers and youth victims perceive the sexual abuse investigation process better or worse than expected?
- Subjects – participated in CAC-based investigation:
 - *203 caregiver interviews*
 - *75 interviews with victims (ages 8-18 years old)*
 - *Part of the Multi-Site Evaluation of Children's Advocacy Centers involving the CACs in four communities and comparison communities without CAC services (Dallas, TX; Charleston, SC; Huntsville, AL; and Pittsburgh, PA).*

Investigation process

- Better than expected:
 - *Caregivers:*
 - The level of emotional support provided by investigators
 - *Youth:*
 - Interviewers' patience and helpfulness in allowing them to take their time responding to and answering questions
- Worse than expected:
 - *Caregivers:*
 - The thoroughness of evidence collection
 - Perceived failures by investigators to pursue justice fully
 - Timeliness of interviews
 - *Youth:*
 - 55% viewed the investigators' child interviewing skills as a place for improvement

Satisfaction with investigators' abilities

- Better than expected:
 - *Caregivers:*
 - 27% of caregiver respondents viewed the investigators' ability of interviewing a child was a positive experience.
 - *Youth:*
 - 20% felt the investigator was skilled and committed to their case
 - The investigators' supportiveness of the victim and helpfulness
- Worse than expected:
 - *Caregivers:*
 - Lack of communication about the case
 - Dissatisfaction about not being updated about case (32%)
 - *Youth:*
 - 20% perceived a lack of commitment and skill from the investigators during their case

Level of support given by investigators

- Worse than expected:
 - *Caregivers:*
 - 18% experienced a slow investigation process
 - *Youth:*
 - 15% of youth respondents felt as though the investigator could have been more supportive throughout the investigation process
- Better than expected:
 - *Caregivers:*
 - 25% viewed the investigator as skilled and committed to the case
 - *Youth:*
 - 20% praised the investigators' emotional supportiveness during the interviewing process



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**Dubowitz, H. and Lane, W. G.
(2009).**

Primary care pediatricians' experience, comfort and competence in the evaluation and management of child maltreatment: Do we need child abuse experts? *Child Abuse & Neglect.* 33, 76-83.



Who is doing the exam?

- **Purpose** - explore whether or not primary care pediatricians had the experience, comfort, and competence to evaluate child maltreatment cases or if there is a need for child abuse experts.
- **Subjects** - 147 primary care pediatricians, randomly selected from the AAP membership roster
 - *Filled out a questionnaire in regards to their pediatricians' time since residency, number of hours spent at lectures or conferences, and overall experience*
 - *46% were male and 54% female*
 - *81% were Caucasian and 19% listed as other*

Who is doing the exam?

- **Reporting to CPS** - Only 75% of suspected sexual abuse and only 50% of suspected neglect case were reported to CPS by these pediatricians
- Percentage of suspected abuse reported to an expert:
 - *Approximately 80% of pediatricians that came across suspected abuse had an expert available to provide a consultation*
 - *Pediatricians referred an average of 64% of their suspected abuse patients to an expert*
 - *60% of pediatricians referred all suspected child abuse patients to an expert*
 - *20% of pediatricians did not have an expert available for referrals*

Who is doing the exam?

- An estimated **97%** of pediatricians agree that primary care providers should receive training for the medical evaluation of child maltreatment
- **81.5%** of pediatricians would prefer to refer suspected child maltreatment patients to specialists



Who is doing the exam?

- Levels of experience, knowledge, and competency:
 - **47.6%** of pediatricians reported **feeling competent enough to evaluate** children for suspected sexual abuse.
 - **30.6%** reported **feeling competent enough to give a definitive opinion** in regard to sexual abuse cases.
 - **24.8%** of pediatricians reported **feeling competent enough to testify** in court for a sexual abuse case.
 - **65.1%** of pediatricians would **like more training** in evaluating child maltreatment.
 - **40.9%** of pediatricians reported **not having enough time** to thoroughly evaluate suspected child maltreatment patients.



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Lippert, T., Cross, T.P., Jones, L., & Walsh, W. (2010).

Suspect confession of child sexual abuse to investigators.
Child Maltreatment, 15(2), 161-170.

To tell the truth....

- The purpose of this study was to examine suspect confession rates within the context of an investigation of child sexual abuse.
 - *Four communities – two with CACs and two without CACs*
 - *This is secondary data analysis from the Multisite Evaluation of CACs – funded by OJJDP.*
- There were a total of 282 cases included:
 - *170 from the CAC communities*
 - *112 from the non-CAC communities*
- Children were on average 9.6 years old at the time of abuse onset, and 10.3 years old at the time of the initial forensic interview.

To tell the truth....

- A confession was defined as “a suspect’s communication to an investigator (LE or CPS) of any sexual acts with the alleged victim”
 - *Full and partial confessions were combined vs. those denying or neither admitting nor denying sexual abuse*
- 30% of the suspects confessed to having sexually abused a child
- No significant difference found between CAC and non-CAC communities as it relates to the confession rate of suspects

To tell the truth....

- Suspect confession was uniquely associated with:
 - *suspect's age (18-30 most likely to confess)*
 - *children's full disclosure of abuse during the forensic interview*
 - *corroborating witness available*
- Suspect confession was more likely when:
 - *child victims were older*
 - *multiple victims*
 - *it was an extra-familial case*
- **Corroborative witness evidence was available for about one-third of the cases and more than doubled the confession rate!**



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**Block, S.D., Oran, H., Oran, D.,
Baumrind, N. & Goodman, G.S.
(2010).**

Abused and neglected children in court: knowledge and attitudes. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, (34) 659-670.

Knowledge of Court

- The purpose of this study was to examine maltreated children's knowledge of, attitudes about, and perceived participation in dependency court and to identify predictors of their legal knowledge and attitudes.
- Subjects were between the ages of 7-10:
 - *children were interviewed as they emerged from the dependency courtroom*
 - *approximately one-third of the children had experienced either neglect, sexual abuse, or physical abuse*
 - *all of these children had been removed from their homes and were wards of the court*
 - *in 82% of the cases the biological parents were in the courtroom for the proceedings*

Knowledge of Court

- The children completed:
 - *Children's Court Questionnaire (CCQ) – a structured interview created to assess children's knowledge, attitudes, and perceived legal participation.*
 - *State Anxiety Inventory for Children – widely used standardized questionnaire consisting of 20 questions focused on state anxiety.*
 - *Demographic information form – self-explanatory*
- All interviews were conducted by one of two specially trained interviewers in a quiet hallway of the court's shelter-care area.
 - *interviewers were blind to abuse status, demographic factors, and family history.*
 - *Only one child did not agree to participate*

Knowledge of Court

- **Findings:**

- *Being older was significantly associated with having more dependency court knowledge*
- *Minority children held more positive attitudes than Caucasian children toward dependency court*
- *Higher scores on state anxiety were significantly associated with more negative dependency court attitudes*
- *37% of the children did not feel they were believed or listened to in the court proceedings*
- *A total of 71% of the children wanted to return home either immediately or eventually*





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Walsh, W., Jones, L., Cross, T.P. & Lippert, T. (2008).

Prosecuting child sexual abuse: The importance of evidence type. *Crime & Delinquency*, 56, 436-454.



How much is enough?

- The purposes of this study was to:
 - *examine the presence of evidence in all investigated cases of child sexual abuse, not just those referred for prosecution;*
 - *explore whether some types of evidence are more prevalent for certain types of cases;*
 - *examine the extent to which case characteristics and types, as well as amount and level of evidence, help to predict whether charges are filed;*
 - *examine reasons why charges were not filed;*
 - *and examine the relationship between evidence and conviction.*

How much is enough?

- This is secondary data analysis from the Multisite Evaluation of CACs – funded by OJJDP.
- 329 child sexual abuse cases with adult offenders:
 - *female victims - 87%*
 - *male victims – 13%*
- The offenders were 94% male and 6% female.
 - *More than 70% were family members or those intimate with the family.*
 - *Age of offenders:*
 - 18-29 36%
 - 30-39 34%
 - 40+ 30%

How much is enough?

- Categories of Evidence
 - *Disclosure from the child*
 - *Corroborating evidence*
 - *Offender confession*
 - *Eyewitness*
 - *Physical evidence*
 - *Additional child abuse report against the offender*
 - *Behavioral evidence*
 - *Medical evidence*
 - *Psychological/Psychiatric evidence*



How much is enough?

- Types of evidence found:
 - *Children disclosure - 87%*
 - *Corroborating witness – 46%*
 - *Offender confession – 22%*
 - *Eyewitness – 18%*
 - *Physical evidence – 14%*
 - *Additional child abuse report against offender – 11%*
 - *Behavioral evidence – 20%*
 - *Medical evidence – 9%*
- Only 31% of the victims received a medical exam
- 49% of the cases involved penetration

How much is enough?

- Supporting Evidence
 - *None* - 26%
 - *One type* – 35%
 - *Two types* – 23%
 - *Three or more types* – 17%
- Girls were less likely to have behavioral evidence
- Cases with younger victims were more likely to include behavioral evidence
- Cases involving penetration were more likely to include
 - *corroborating witness*
 - *physical evidence*
 - *medical evidence*

How much is enough?

- Charges Filed:
 - **64% of cases had charges filed – significantly more likely when multiple types of evidence were present**
 - *Significantly more likely to have charges were cases with:*
 - older victims
 - male offenders
 - alleged penetration
 - *Strong predictors of whether charges were filed:*
 - child disclosure
 - corroborating witness
 - offender confession
 - *Most common reasons for charges not being filed:*
 - Insufficient evidence – 81%
 - Vague or incomplete child disclosure – 48%

How much is enough?

- Conviction:
 - *Of those charged, 80% were convicted*
 - *82% of these were convicted via a guilty plea versus going to trial*
 - *Cases with more types of supporting evidence were significantly more likely*
 - to be convicted
 - to be convicted via a guilty plea



Miller, A. & Rubin, D. (2009).

The contribution of children's advocacy centers to felony prosecutions of child sexual abuse. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 33, 12-18.



Contribution of CAC to Prosecution rates

- The purpose of this study was to describe trends in felony CSA prosecutions across two neighboring districts in a large urban city when one district experienced significant increase in CAC participation in CSA cases compared to the neighboring district whose use of the CAC did not change substantially.
- Data was obtained from the CACs, DA's offices, and CPS in two adjoining districts of a large urban city (1992-2002)
 - *One district dramatically increased its use of the CAC for CSA cases while the other minimally increased its use.*

Contribution of CAC to Prosecution rates

- Child Protective Services Findings:
 - *Children with substantiated sexual abuse cases between 1994-2002:*
 - District 1 – 2,617
 - District 2 – 2,320
 - *Decrease in the number of CPS substantiated cases of sexual abuse during this time:*
 - District 1 – 59%
 - District 2 – 49%



Contribution of CAC to Prosecution rates

- Child Advocacy Center Findings:
 - *Number of children evaluated by CACs for possible sexual abuse (1992 vs. 2002):*
 - District 1 – 295% increase
 - District 2 – 125% increase



Contribution of CAC to Prosecution rates

- District Attorney's Offices Findings:
 - *Total number of felony prosecutions of child sexual abuse (1992 vs. 2002):*
 - District 1 – 194 to 382 (196% increase)
 - District 2 – 112 to 111 (1% decrease)
 - *When controlled for rates per 100,000 children:*
 - District 1 – 56.6 to 93.0 (164% increase)
 - District 2 – 58.0 to 54.9 (5% decrease)



Contribution of CAC to Prosecution rates

- District Attorney's Offices Findings:
 - *The prosecution rate was similar in both districts in 1992, but 69% higher in District 1 by 2002.*
 - *Despite increased prosecutions, the conviction rate did not change significantly between the districts over this time period.*





The National Children's Advocacy Center

Edelson, M.G. & Joa, D. (2010).

Differences in legal outcomes for male and female children who have been sexually abused. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 22(4) 427-442.

Gender impacts in court

- The purpose of this study was to determine:
 - *whether cases involving male and female victims of sexual abuse differed with regards to legal outcomes*
 - *to determine if there were any interactive effects between the sex of the child and whether or not the child was evaluated at a Child Abuse Assessment Center (CAAC)*
- 172 children ranging from 1 to 17 years who were referred to the DA's Office regarding sexual abuse crimes
 - *CAAC group – 86 children average age was 9.55 years*
 - *Non-CAAC group – 86 children (case referred directly to DA office), average age was 9.45 years*
 - Children in each group were matched based on the age of the child and the relationship of the child to the alleged perpetrator

Gender impacts in court

- There were differences in filing rates depending on the sex of the child
 - *Female victims - 67.44%*
 - *Male victims - 51.25%*
- The highest filing rates occurred with females seen at the CAAC (78.57%)
- Criminal counts charged by site:
 - *children in the CAAC group - 2.942 charges*
 - *children in the non-CAAC group - 1.965 charges*



Gender impacts in court

- Total Counts Charged
 - *CAAC Group*
 - Female – 3.149
 - Male – 1.667
 - *Non-CAAC Group*
 - Female – 2.113
 - Male – 1.591
- Females had significantly more Rape I and Sexual Abuse I charges filed than males
- There were no significant sex differences for whether or not defendants were found guilty or pled guilty

Gender impacts in court

- Overall, 94% of alleged perpetrators either pled guilty or were found guilty
- For cases involving female victims:
 - *56.5% of the guilty defendants pled guilty*
 - *43.5% were found guilty at trial*
- For cases involving male victims:
 - *only 36% of the guilty defendants pled guilty*
 - *64% were found guilty at trial.*
- Average length of sentence for those found or pleading guilty:
 - *Female victim – 112.50 months*
 - *Male victim – 87.69 months*



The National Children's Advocacy Center

Back, C., Gustafsson, P.A., Larsson, I., & Bertero, C. (2011).

Managing the legal proceedings: an interpretive phenomenological analysis of sexually abused children's experience with the legal process. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, (35) 50-57.

Legal Process Experience for Children

- The purpose of this study was to explore how children who have been sexually abused experience the legal process:
 - *what they experience when they are questioned by the police and in the courtroom*
 - *what they experience when they come in contact with professionals from various agencies involved in the response to child abuse allegations*
- The aim of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) is to explore the informants' views of the world and to adopt as far as possible an “insider perspective” of their experience.

Legal Process Experience for Children

- The interviewees for this study were identified from three public prosecution offices in Sweden.
 - *Fifty children who were invited to participate in the study (had disclosed they were sexually abused and their cases were prosecuted)*
 - *Ten children (9 girls and 1 boy) agreed to participate*
 - It is an indication of their experience that only 20% of those invited were willing to participate.
 - In all of these cases the alleged perpetrator was someone living outside the family



Legal Process Experience for Children

- The ten children were interviewed in a semi-structured method regarding the following topics:
 - *Tell me about the disclosure of sexual abuse.*
 - *Tell me about your experiences in participating in the legal process.*
 - *Have you received support/treatment? Tell me about it.*
 - *Have you had the opportunity to express your thoughts and opinions?*
 - *What are your thoughts about the perpetrator?*



Legal Process Experience for Children

- Five super ordinate themes emerged:
 1. *Not being believed*
 - A good relationship with the police was important for them if they were to dare to tell their story
 - The children questioned the behavior of defense counsel when describing their experiences in court
 2. *Making the CSA visible*
 - Many of the children kept their experience to themselves for some time before telling
 - As soon as they came to the police and began to talk about the CSA they began to feel a sense of relief
 - They described a good contact with the police as a healing process

Legal Process Experience for Children

- Five super ordinate themes emerged:

3. *Need for support*

- The children's statements reflect they feel worse over time, at least until the trial is completed
- These feelings are related to both the criminal act and also their anticipation and lack of information provided to them and their caregivers about the process
- The children experienced a kind of support when the perpetrator had to leave the courtroom during the child's testimony



Legal Process Experience for Children

- Five super ordinate themes emerged:
 4. *Nature of the offenders and the sanctions if found guilty*
 - It was of great importance for the children that the perpetrator was found guilty and there were specific consequences
 - The opportunity for financial remuneration was much less of interest than the individual receiving a treatment or a prison sentence
 5. *Lack of respect for the child's integrity*
 - One child mentioned feeling less willing to disclose her abuse after being shown all areas of the police department, including pistols and batons
 - Some children felt they were treated with disrespect by the defense counsel who suggested they provoked the abuse



NCAC Child Abuse Online Library (CALiO)

- What?
 - *1,300+ online journals*
 - *Searchable databases*
 - *Child abuse and demographic statistics*
 - *Professional bibliographies*
 - *Grant writing resources*
- Who?
 - **ANYONE!**
 - *All accredited and associate CACs of the National Children's Alliance (NCA) have restricted access*
- How much?
 - **FREE!**



JOURNALS : CORE COLLECTION

- [Aggressive Behavior](#) (1974- with 6 mo delay*)
- [Annual Review of Sex Research](#) (1996-)
- [Child Abuse & Neglect](#) (1995-)
- [Child Abuse Review](#) (1992- with 6 mo delay*)
- [Child Development](#) (1930- with 12 mo delay*)
- [Child Maltreatment](#) (1996-)
- [Child Welfare](#) (1990-)
- [Clinical Child & Family Psychology Review](#) (1998-)
- [The Future of Children](#) (1989-)
- [Issues in Child Abuse Accusations](#) (1989-)
- [Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma](#) (2003-)
- [Journal of Child Sexual Abuse](#) (2003-)
- [Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology](#) (1975-)
- [Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology](#) (1993-)



JOURNALS : CORE COLLECTION (cont.)

- [Journal of Family Violence](#) (1997- with 12 mo delay*)
- [Journal of Interpersonal Violence](#) (2000-)
- [Journal of Investigative Psychology & Offender Profiling](#)
(2004-)
- [Journal of Sexual Aggression](#) (2003- with 12 mo delay*)
- [Journal of Social Work Practice](#) (1999- with 12 mo delay*)
- [Journal of Traumatic Stress](#) (1997- with 12 mo delay*)
- [Legal & Criminological Psychology](#) (2001-)
- [Sexual Abuse: Journal of Research & Treatment](#) (1998-)
- [Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity](#) (1998- with 12 mo delay*)
- [Social Work](#) (2000-)
- [Trauma, Violence, & Abuse](#) (2000-)

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