

**MALE VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE: AN ANALYSIS OF
CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES REPORTS**

by

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Statistics indicate that sexual abuse occurs at a rate of approximately 2.5 per 1,000 children (Peterson, 1993; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1994). Thus, it is a problem that affects a great many children in our country. This figure is rather astonishing, but even this high rate represents only a portion of actual cases because many incidents of sexual abuse go undetected due to lack of recognition and reporting (Kaplan & Pelcovitz, 1982). Many people are unaware that sexual abuse is such a prevalent phenomenon. Additional research is necessary, therefore, to inform professionals in this area, and the public as well, what a common occurrence this is and to better understand how Child Protective Services deals with such reports.

Sexual abuse has far reaching consequences for both male and female victims which often last into adulthood (Alter-Reid, Gibbs, Lachenmeyer, Sigal, & Massoth, 1986). These consequences can cause severe psychological and developmental damage (Mann, 1985; Peterson, 1993). Many adult survivors of sexual abuse experience post traumatic stress disorder as a result of their abuse (Koverola & Foy, 1993). Furthermore, sexual abuse has consequences at least as severe for males as for females, if not worse (Black & DeBlassie, 1993). Due to the severity of the consequences, it is important

to make sure that as many victims as possible are recognized and treated, but to do this we need to know what to look for, and make sure that the victims that do come to the attention of professionals get the help that they need.

While sexual abuse is a widespread problem that affects children of all ages, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds, not all children are equally at risk for sexual abuse. For instance, there is a plethora of research findings that indicate there are more female victims of sexual abuse than male victims (Alter-Reid et al., 1986; Cappelleri, Eckenrode, & Powers, 1993; De Jong, Hervada, & Emmett, 1983; Dube & Hebert, 1988; Kaplan & Pelcovitz, 1982; Mian, Wehrspann, Kaljner-Diamond, LeBaron, & Winder, 1986; Peterson, 1993). This does not mean, however, that sexual abuse does not affect a substantial number of male victims. In fact, there are more male victims of sexual abuse than was recognized in the past (Roane, 1992). Until fairly recently, boys were not recognized as victims of sexual abuse by child welfare professionals (Faller, 1989; Roane, 1992); but today, because of a number of factors including greater awareness of the problem, a possible increase in the actual incidence of cases, and better reporting procedures, the number of male victims being reported to child protective services is on the rise.

Despite the increase in the number of reports involving male victims, there are many factors that may play a part in keeping the number of reports

involving male victims relatively low. For example, males are less likely to disclose abuse than are female victims (Black & DeBlassie, 1993; Levesque, 1994; Nielsen, 1983). One reason for this unwillingness to disclose is the stigma of homosexuality associated with male-male sexual abuse (which is the most common form). This stigma also may inhibit a family from reporting abuse. A parent may fear that his/her son may be labeled a homosexual if they tell someone about the abuse in order to get help (Black & DeBlassie, 1993; Faller, 1989; Levesque, 1994; Nielsen, 1983; Roane, 1992; Thomlison, Stephens, Cunes, Grinnell, & Krysik, 1991). Another reason that boys may not disclose that they have been sexually abused is that the circumstances that surround the abusive incident, such as the use of coercion by the perpetrator, may make male victims feel guilty so that they blame themselves for the abusive incident. Many perpetrators use coercion rather than force to control their male victims; therefore, the victims may feel like they are responsible for their own abuse, so they do not tell anyone what has happened (Nielsen, 1983). A consequence of boys' reluctance to disclose abuse is that there are many boys who are victims who are not getting the attention and help that they need. Since they are less likely to tell anyone that the abuse has occurred, professionals must be aware of the symptoms that boys exhibit as a result of abuse, and the fact that these symptoms differ from those of girls who are abused (Black & DeBlassie, 1993; Roane, 1992; Young, Bergandi, & Titus, 1994).

There is ample evidence that male victims show different symptoms of sexual abuse than female victims. For example, boys show more signs of anxiety, worry, and aggressiveness than female victims (Black & DeBlassie, 1993; Roane, 1992; Young et al., 1994). They are also likely to recapitulate the abuse that they experienced by becoming abusers themselves (Black & DeBlassie, 1993). Finally, they have been shown to experience more problems with gender identity and greater sexual orientation confusion as a result of abuse than girls (Black & DeBlassie, 1993). The fact that boys present different symptoms of abuse necessitates greater efforts to educate professionals working with child maltreatment cases. They need to know what to look for in male victims, and also be aware that cases involving male victims are qualitatively different from cases involving female victims. When professionals are trying to decide whether or not sexual abuse has occurred, they need to be aware of these differences so they are not looking for signs of abuse that are typical of female victims, but not male victims.

Also, sexual abuse reports involving male victims are less likely to be substantiated once a suspicion has been reported to Child Protective Services (Eckenrode, Munsch, Powers, & Doris, 1988). This is important because it is case substantiation that protects the child from further abuse and opens access to services. A possible explanation for this gender difference in substantiation is that CPS workers may share some of the same biases that lay people have, and these biases may inadvertently contribute to the lower

substantiation rates of reports involving male victims (Kalichman, Craig, & Follingstad, 1988; O'Toole, O'Toole, Webster, & Lucal, 1993, 1994; Zellman, 1990). Perhaps they are unaware of the substantial number of male victims of sexual abuse, or the fact that these cases may be different from cases involving female victims. Maybe it is something about the way the cases involving male victims differ from the cases involving female victims that affects the perceptions of CPS workers in such a way that they are less likely to substantiate the report. There is a great deal of evidence that the characteristics of child abuse cases influence the perceptions of professionals working with these cases (Benson, Swann, O'Toole, & Turbett, 1991; Kalichman & Craig, 1991; O'Toole et al., 1994; Zellman, 1990, 1992). Case characteristics include child characteristics, perpetrator characteristics, and characteristics of the incident. These characteristics can all affect whether or not the case will be recognized, reported, and consequently substantiated. Gender is one very significant child characteristic, and the effect of the gender of the child on how a case is handled should be further investigated.

Therefore, this research will attempt to identify how reports of sexual abuse involving male and female victims differ when they enter the system and will compare how the cases are handled differently by the system in the process of the investigation. It will also examine where similar or different factors are related to the decision to substantiate a case in cases involving male or female victims.

This research will add to the existing literature by using gender as the organizing variable. Previous research has treated gender as just one of the many independent variables of interest without exploring the impact that gender has on what else happens in the case. This research will look at how gender may affect all of the other independent variables that have been shown to affect case outcomes. The sample will be separated into males and females and the independent variables will be examined separately for each gender in order to determine if they differ or remain the same for each subsample. Further, it will examine which variables are significant discriminators between substantiated and unsubstantiated cases for males and for females.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

There was little concern about child abuse until the 1940s and 1950s when the medical community became aware of the “battered child syndrome.” Concern spread from the medical community to the general public and led to the rapid adoption of child protective legislation in the states. Since 1967, all 50 states have adopted legislation which provides legal definitions of child abuse and neglect (Kaplan & Pelcovitz, 1982). Due to a growing national concern over child maltreatment, there was a growth in the 1970s of Child Protective Services (CPS) which dealt with abuse, misuse, and exploitation. In 1974, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act was passed at the national level to provide federal funding for research, in-service training, and treatment of families. All states now have reporting laws that require professionals in the areas of health care, social service, law enforcement, and education to report cases of suspected child abuse or neglect (Kaplan & Pelcovitz, 1982; Schultz, 1982).

Child maltreatment includes physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. The focus of this research will be specifically on sexual abuse. Sexual abuse takes place at every level of society and is vastly underreported (De Jong et al., 1983). This is the most unclear form of abuse, probably because it often

remains hidden (Indest, 1989). Although, it was not in the public eye until the 1960s, it is now a topic of burgeoning interest in the United States (De Jong et al., 1983; Levesque, 1994).

The incidence of child sexual abuse

Studies of child sexual abuse often try to estimate the incidence rate, however it is difficult to get an accurate estimate of the incidence of this phenomenon due to extensive underreporting (Kaplan & Pelcovitz, 1982). Reported cases are only the tip of the iceberg. The cases represented by the statistics are the part of the problem that we see, while there are many more cases hidden from view. In fact, it has been suggested that sexual abuse cases which are known to professionals may represent as few as one quarter of the actual cases (Alter-Reid et al., 1986). Sexual abuse occurs at a rate of about 2.5 per 1,000 children (Peterson, 1993; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1994). In fact, the number of sexual abuse incidents being reported has increased at a faster rate than other categories of child abuse (Eckenrode, Munsch et al., 1988). However, it is not known if this increase is because more abuse is actually occurring, or because there is a greater awareness of the problem and the mechanism for reporting suspicions so that more cases are being detected. Reasons for underreporting of sexual abuse cases are discussed later in the paper. However, the statistics make it clear that hundreds of

thousands of children are being sexually assaulted each year by family members, acquaintances, and strangers, and the emotional consequences of this abuse often extend into the adult years (Alter-Reid et al., 1986). This is one reason why it is so important that research continue in this area (Alter-Reid et al., 1986).

Definitional issues

There has been a continuing struggle to define child sexual abuse. While the definition of physical abuse is based upon observable consequences, sexual abuse cannot necessarily be confirmed by physical observations (Dube & Hebert, 1988). One of the greatest problems in the study and treatment of child sexual abuse is the lack of a universally accepted definition (Dube & Hebert, 1988; Kaplan & Pelcovitz, 1982; Peterson, 1993; Schultz, 1982; Seng, 1986). Definitions are quite vague, which makes intervention difficult except in the most severe cases (Peterson, 1993; Schultz, 1982). This also makes determining an actual incidence rate rather difficult (Peterson, 1993; Seng, 1986). The term “child sexual abuse” can encompass a range of behaviors, and the states define it differently for reporting purposes. Because this study uses data collected in New York State, that state’s definition is relevant. In New York State, child sexual abuse is defined as:

A “sexually abuse child” is a child less than 18 years of age whose parent, or other person legally

responsible for his care, commits or allows to be committed a sex offense in the penal law. Sex offenses in the penal law include rape, sodomy, and any other non-consensual sexual contact. For all sex offenses, a person is deemed legally incapable of consent if less than 17 years, or mentally defective, or mentally incapacitated, or physically helpless.

Sexual abuse and maltreatment include situations in which the parent or other person legally responsible for the child's care commits or allows to be committed:

- Touching a child's mouth, genitals, buttocks, breast or other intimate parts for the purpose of gratifying sexual desire; or forcing or encouraging the child to touch the parent or other person legally responsible in this way for the purpose of gratifying sexual desire.
- Engaging or attempting to engage the child in sexual intercourse or deviate sexual intercourse.
- Forcing or encouraging a child to engage in sexual activity with other children or adults.
- Exposing a child to sexual activity or exhibitionism for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification of another.
- Permitting a child to engage in sexual activity which is not developmentally appropriate when such activity results in the child suffering emotional impairment.
- Using a child in a sexual performance such as a photograph, play, motion picture or dance regardless of whether the material itself is obscene. (New York State Department of Social Services, 1983, p. VIII-49)

Characteristics of sexual abuse perpetrators

The overwhelming majority of perpetrators appear to be known to their victims; in fact, they are often family members (Alter-Reid et al., 1986; De Jong et al., 1983; Dube & Hebert, 1988; Farber, Showers, Johnson,

Joseph, & Oshins, 1984; Mian et al., 1986). Most studies find only a small percentage of perpetrators are strangers to their victims (Dube & Hebert, 1988; Mann, 1985; Mian et al., 1986). Perpetrators are overwhelmingly male, in both intra-familial and extra-familial abuse, young, and of the same race as their victim (Alter-Reid et al., 1986; De Jong et al., 1983; Dube & Hebert, 1988). No one knows for sure why molesters become molesters, but there are many suggestions that have been posited to explain this phenomenon (e.g., emotional congruence, predisposed sexual arousal to children, or disinhibition) (Finkelhor, 1984; Peterson, 1993).

Some studies have found that approximately 60% of victims of sexual abuse experience intra-familial abuse while 30%-40% experience extra-familial abuse (Alter-Reid et al., 1986; Dube & Hebert, 1988; Mian et al., 1986). Because almost all of the cases that come to the attention of child protection services involve abuse within the family, a discussion of incest is in order. Incest is the most common type of sexual abuse. Mian et al. (1986) found that 14% of the perpetrators were members of the extended family and 46% were members of the nuclear family. Although women are over-represented as perpetrators of non-sexual abuse, men comprise the overwhelming majority of perpetrators of sexual abuse (Kaplan & Pelcovitz, 1982; Pierce & Pierce, 1985). Most perpetrators of incest are from lower socioeconomic groups (Kaplan & Pelcovitz, 1982); however, it should be noted that incest occurs at all socioeconomic levels (De Jong et al., 1983).

Characteristics of incest include the fact that the perpetrators are usually biological fathers (Kaplan & Pelcovitz, 1982; Mian et al., 1986; Seng, 1986), it usually only involves one or two children in the family (Seng, 1986), it is of longer duration than extra-familial sexual abuse (Mian et al., 1986; Pierce & Pierce, 1985), it is more likely to involve intercourse than extra-familial sexual abuse (Seng, 1986), and it generally is not characterized by the use of aggression (Kaplan & Pelcovitz, 1982).

Characteristics of child victims

Not all children are equally at risk of being victims of sexual abuse. While sexual abuse can occur at any age from birth through age 18, younger children seem to be at a greater risk than older children and adolescents (Alter-Reid et al., 1986; De Jong et al., 1983; Mian et al., 1986; Seng, 1986). Also, females are vastly overrepresented in the incidence of sexual abuse (Alter-Reid et al., 1986; Cappelleri et al., 1993; De Jong et al., 1983; Dube & Hebert, 1988; Kaplan & Pelcovitz, 1982; Mian et al., 1986; Peterson, 1993). Most estimates say there are between three and five female victims for each male victim (Alter-Reid et al., 1986; Mian et al., 1986; Peterson, 1993).

The damage to victims of sexual abuse has been found to be quite extensive and even lasts into adulthood. Victims become confused, and as the abuse continues, their beliefs about sex between adults and children shifts

from wrong to right (Burgess & Hartman, 1987). Obviously, this is not a problem that just goes away as one grows older. Sexual abuse leads to serious developmental, psychological, and medical problems (Mann, 1985; Peterson, 1993). Victims may experience problems in the area of personal characteristics (e.g., guilt, emotional upsets, anger, aggression, low self-esteem, depression) and in interpersonal relationships (e.g., inadequate relationships with their mother, difficulty trusting others, over-dependence or clinginess, poor social skills) (Alter-Reid et al., 1986; Green, 1986; Kaplan & Pelcovitz, 1982; Mian et al., 1986; Peterson, 1993; Young et al., 1994). They may also experience some physical symptoms (e.g., enuresis, vaginal discharge, bleeding, sexually transmitted diseases, bruises in the genital area, abdominal pain, and pregnancy) (Kaplan & Pelcovitz, 1982; Mian et al., 1986). Thus it is clear that sexual abuse can cause damage that has profound and long-lasting consequences.

Gender Differences

Because males represent only one-third to one-fifth of the victims of sexual abuse, they have received little attention in the literature and research. Until recently, sexual abuse of boys was practically unrecognized by professionals in child welfare (Faller, 1989; Roane, 1992). In fact, the literature prior to 1980 consistently used the pronoun “she” when referring to victims of sexual abuse (Nielsen, 1983).

However, a number of researchers have incorporated gender differences in their study of the sexual abuse of children. One area where researchers have looked for gender differences is in demographic variables, such as race, socioeconomic status, age, and marital status of parents. Researchers have also looked at the severity of the violence involved in the abusive incident(s), where the abuse occurred, the chronicity of the abuse, the number of concurrent victims, the relationship of the victim to the perpetrator, and actions taken by social services. Numerous differences have been found between male and female victims, as well as some similarities.

Race and socioeconomic status

Research has looked at gender differences in the race and socioeconomic status of the victims. It appears that there are not racial differences between male and female victims (Faller, 1989; Farber et al., 1984). With respect to socioeconomic status, one study found that male victims were evenly split between middle class and lower class, while female victims were more likely to be from lower class than middle class families (Faller, 1989). This study further qualified its findings by saying that male victims of intra-familial abuse were more likely to be from lower class families than were victims of extra-familial abuse. This finding is consistent with the fact that females tend to be victims of intra-familial abuse more often than males. Perhaps there is not a gender difference with respect to

socioeconomic status, but rather the difference is a reflection of whether the abuse was intra- or extra-familial.

Age of the victim

There is also a gender difference in the age of the victims. The findings in this area have been fairly consistent. Most researchers find that male victims, in general, tend to be older than female victims (Black & DeBlasie, 1993; Faller, 1989), although some researchers have found the opposite (De Jong et al., 1983; Pierce & Pierce, 1985). Finkelhor (1984) suggests this discrepancy may be attributable to the fact that some studies use self-reports, while others use statistics from reported cases. Self-reports measure age as the victim's disclosure of the age of onset, while statistics report the child's age at the time of discovery by professionals. For instance, Faller (1989) found male victims to average 6.3 years, but the average age of male victims in a study by Roane (1992) was 8 years. This apparent discrepancy may be resolved by Finkelhor's (1984) explanation. The former study measured age by using age at onset of abuse, while the latter study used age at discovery. This may account for the apparent age difference.

Faller (1989) also found differences in the age of the male victims according to the type of abuse they suffered. Victims of intra-familial abuse where the victim is the sole victim were the youngest, victims of intra-familial abuse where there were multiple victims were next in age, and

victims of extra-familial abuse with multiple victims were the oldest. In general, males tend to show a peak in the incidence of abuse at approximately seven years of age, while females tend to have a bi-modal curve with peaks at approximately six and fifteen years of age (De Jong et al., 1983; Dube & Hebert, 1988; Kaplan & Pelcovitz, 1982). Age becomes an important variable when deciding whether or not abuse occurred because often, when there is little difference between the age of the victim and the age of the perpetrator, the incident is labeled as inappropriate sex play rather than sexual abuse (Roane, 1992).

Family structure

Another demographic variable which has been investigated is the marital status of the victim's parents. Male victims are much more likely to come from single parent homes than female victims (Nielsen, 1983; Thomlison et al., 1991). This is probably because female victims are slightly more likely to be abused by a father and in the home than are male victims. Thus the female sexual abuse victims that are discovered are likely to be from a home where the father is present, whereas male sexual abuse victims are less likely to be abused by a father, so more victims from single parent homes are likely to be discovered.

Characteristics of the abuse

Researchers also have discovered gender differences in the severity of violence and the types of acts involved in the abusive incident. There is not consensus in the literature with regard to whether males or females sustain more serious abuse. Some studies have found that males are more likely to sustain abuse categorized as serious sexual abuse (Black & DeBlassie, 1993; Dube & Hebert, 1988; Levesque, 1994; Roane, 1992), and they are also more often threatened with physical force as a means of gaining compliance (Black & DeBlassie, 1993; Roane, 1992). However, one study found no difference between male and female victims with respect to severity of the violence (Farber et al., 1984), and another found that sexual abuse involving female victims was more likely to involve force, a higher risk of physical injury, and more use of threats (Levesque, 1994). Levesque (1994) offers as an explanation for the finding that girls show more signs of physical injury than boys. Levesque suggests that because boys have less obvious evidence of their abuse, they may be less likely to report the incident. However if they do report it, they may exaggerate their description of the violence it entailed to appear more believable, to preserve their masculinity, or to avoid being labeled a homosexual. Still other studies claim that the severity of violence varies as a function of age rather than gender (Farber et al., 1984; Roane, 1992). Roane (1992) claims that the level of threats appears to escalate with the age of the victim. Farber et al. (1984) found that threats to males were

more common in victims older than 12 years of age, but threats to females were more common in the 6-12 age range.

Similarly, there are gender differences in the types of abuse that occur. Most studies find that males are more likely to be involved in abuse that involves actual physical contact, while female victims are more likely to experience sexual abuse that involves no physical contact (e.g., exhibitionism and voyeurism) (Farber et al., 1984; Levesque, 1994; Roane, 1992). This is consistent with the finding that males are more likely to be victims of severe abuse.

Another interesting finding involving gender differences is that boys are more likely to be abused outside the home than females (Faller, 1989; Farber et al., 1984). This is consistent with the findings that boys are more likely to be abused outside the family, while girls are more likely to experience incest (Peterson, 1993). Since males are more likely to be victimized by someone other than a family member, the abusive incident is more likely to occur somewhere other than in their home. It has been suggested that this may be because boys are allowed more independence and are likely to be out of the home more often than are girls (Nielsen, 1983).

A further distinction which has been made among male and female victims is the chronicity and duration of the abuse. The abusive incidents appear to be more frequent, and the duration appears to be longer for female victims than for male victims (Farber et al., 1984; Thomlison et al., 1991).

Farber et al. (1984) found that chronic sexual abuse was more frequent in intra-familial abuse than in extra-familial abuse. Again, the finding that females experience chronic abusive incidents is consistent with the finding that they are more likely to be victims of intra-familial abuse.

Other gender differences have been found with respect to whether the victim was abused alone, or concurrently with other victims. Most research indicates boys are much more likely to be victimized in conjunction with other victims, and girls are more likely to be solo victims (Faller, 1989; Levesque, 1994; Nielsen, 1983). However, some studies have found that there is little variation between the sexes in this respect (Farber et al., 1984; Thomlison et al., 1991). In these studies, males are still more likely to be victims of multiple abuse, however the difference is not great.

Relationship of the perpetrator

Much of the research on gender differences in sexual abuse focuses on the perpetrator and his relationship to the victim. As noted previously in the description of who are the perpetrators of sexual abuse, most of the time the perpetrator is a family member (Alter-Reid et al., 1986; De Jong et al., 1983; Dube & Hebert, 1988; Farber et al., 1984; Mian et al., 1986). Male victims are more likely to be victimized by a family member than a non-family member, however males are more likely to be victimized outside the family than are females (Black & DeBlassie, 1993; Faller, 1989; Farber et al., 1984;

Levesque, 1994; Roane, 1992; Thomlison et al., 1991). While males are more likely to be victimized by someone outside of the family than females (Faller, 1989; Thomlison et al., 1991), this does not mean they are necessarily victimized by strangers. Actually, a very small percentage of sexual abuse is enacted by a stranger; more often, the perpetrator is someone who is acquainted with the family, has developed a close relationship with the child, and is someone the child trusts and cares for (Nielsen, 1983).

For females, the perpetrator is most likely to be a father or step-father (Faller, 1989; Levesque, 1994; Thomlison et al., 1991). Faller (1989) found that males were most likely to be abused by a professional, a biological father, a step-father, or a biological mother, in that order; while females were most likely to be abused by their biological father, step-father, other relative, or a non-relative, in that order. As noted previously, Faller (1989) found that younger males tend to be victims of intra-familial abuse, while older males tend to be victims of extra-familial abuse. He suggests that this makes intuitive sense because older males are more accessible to perpetrators outside the home because they go to school and are involved in more extra-familial activities. This view concurs with the suggestion made earlier by Nielsen (1983) that males often have more independence than females and therefore venture outside the home and are at greater risk of inadequate supervision. This has implications with regard to the reporting

of the incidents of abuse. Nielsen (1983) suggests that the lower prevalence of male victims in reporting statistics may be due to the fact that males do not want to lose any of their independence and fear that reporting the abuse would lead to a severe limitation on their activities outside the home and a loss of some of their freedom.

A final gender difference regarding perpetrators is how many perpetrators were involved in the abusive incident(s). In general, boys are more likely to be abused by multiple perpetrators, while females are more likely to be abused by a single perpetrator (Faller, 1989; Thomlison et al., 1991). However, once again the gender differences are not large (Thomlison et al., 1991) and have not been found in every study (Faller, 1989).

The relationship of the perpetrator to the victim has implications for the estimate of the relative proportion of male to female victims of sexual abuse. CPS is only responsible for cases in which a caretaker is the abuser or is negligent and allows the child to be abused (Faller, 1989). Consequently, when a male is the victim of extra-familial abuse, the situation is handled outside the CPS system and does not become a part of CPS reporting statistics. Because many studies use reporting statistics as their source of information, the number of male victims is underestimated by this type of research.

Gender differences have also been found in the actions taken by protective services with respect to victims of sexual abuse. For instance,

females are removed from the home more often than males (Black & DeBlassie, 1993; Thomlison et al., 1991). It is unclear whether this is because abuse involving females is perceived as more serious, or because female victims are more believable, or for some other reason.

Male Victims

As noted earlier, the number of reports of sexual abuse involving male victims has increased substantially in recent years. Treatment programs also have seen dramatic increases in the rate of referral of male victims in recent years (Roane, 1992). Due to the dramatic increase in uncovered cases, the need to understand the psychological impact of sexual abuse on male victims has become crucial (Young et al., 1994). As the number of cases increases, so does our concern for male victims both because there are more of them to be worried about and because the consequences of being a victim of sexual abuse are as bad (or maybe even worse) for a male victim as a female victim (Black & DeBlassie, 1993).

Authors have pointed out that it is not known whether cases involving male victims are less likely to be reported or if males just present different risk factors than females (Dube & Hebert, 1988). Thus, while the incidence rates for male victims tend to be low, studies of perpetrator behavior suggest that there are more male victims than are reported. For example, studies

have found that a larger proportion of perpetrators prefer male victims than there are male victims to account for this phenomenon (Farber et al., 1984).

Males also are not likely to self-disclose sexual abuse (Black & DeBlassie, 1993; Levesque, 1994; Nielsen, 1983). This unwillingness to self-disclose is most likely due to the fact that males in our society are socialized to be strong, independent, and in control. Victims, on the other hand, are seen as passive, helpless, and dependent upon others, characteristics that are counter to the masculine ideal of our society. Therefore, male victims and their families may be reluctant to report abuse (Black & DeBlassie, 1993; Faller, 1989; Farber et al., 1984; Levesque, 1994; Nielsen, 1983; Roane, 1992; Thomlison et al., 1991; Young et al., 1994). Another inhibition to self-disclosure is a fear of the stigma of homosexuality. Male victims may not report out of fear of being labeled a homosexual; similarly, even if the victim discloses his abuse to his family, the family may not wish to report the abuse in order to avoid the social stigma attached to homosexuality (Black & DeBlassie, 1993; Faller, 1989; Levesque, 1994; Nielsen, 1983; Roane, 1992; Thomlison et al., 1991). Other reasons include the fact that the victim may feel guilty about having received gifts from the perpetrator for engaging in the sexual behavior, he may have been sworn to secrecy, or he may have been threatened by the perpetrator so that he fears something bad will happen if he tells (Nielsen, 1983). Another reason for a male victim's failure to disclose abuse is denial. Males may use denial as a defense mechanism for protecting

themselves not only from the specific trauma, but also out of fear of social sanctions and isolation which he imagines will result after he discloses abuse (Black & DeBlassie, 1993). Black and DeBlassie suggest that verbal reports of sexual abuse by boys should be taken all the more seriously because of this reticence to disclose.

It has been reported that male victims show more signs of anxiety, worry, and aggressiveness in response to sexual abuse than female victims (Black & DeBlassie, 1993; Roane, 1992; Young et al., 1994). Black and DeBlassie (1993) suggest that a male's sense of powerlessness in the abuse situation gets channeled into aggressive sexual behavior, causing the victim to become, in turn, an offender. Similarly, Roane (1992) notes that sexual acting-out behavior was a factor, if not a primary reason, contributing to referral in his male sample. Specific recapitulation of victimization occurred in a large percentage of his sample. Several characteristics are present in adult male victims of childhood sexual abuse, including sexual preoccupation or compulsiveness; gender identity confusion; sexual orientation confusion; symptoms of chronic post-traumatic stress disorder; and repression, denial, and normalization of the trauma (Black & DeBlassie, 1993). Thus it is clear that sexual abuse has far reaching consequences in the lives of male victims and these consequences are different from those experienced by females.

Finally, the implications of all of these variables for the professionals working with these victims must be considered. As has been mentioned, male victims are often neglected by people in helping positions (Black & DeBlassie, 1993). Helpers are no more exempt from the effects of socialization than the victims and their families, therefore professionals must become aware of their own biases and how these biases may affect their professional interactions with male victims (Black & DeBlassie, 1993). Professionals may unwittingly contribute to the underreporting of cases involving male victims by not asking the right questions at the right time (Black & DeBlassie, 1993). Also the child protection system may not be handling the cases involving male victims in the same way it handles cases that involve female victims, thus leading to lower substantiation rates. This has important implications for these victims because it is only through the child protection system that they are protected and they and their families get the interventions they need.

Factors Affecting Perceptions of Sexual Abuse

There is a considerable body of research indicating that the case characteristics of sexual abuse cases, such as age of the child victim, the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim, or the gender of the victim, affect the perceptions of professionals working with such cases.

Characteristics of the child, characteristics of the perpetrator, and

characteristics of the incident are referred to as case characteristics. For instance, sexual abuse is consistently perceived as more serious than other types of abuse (Zellman, 1990). These characteristics affect not only how people perceive the nature of the incident, but also what they do about it.

There are several types of decisions that are made with regard to suspected incidents of abuse. First someone has to decide whether or not to report the incident to CPS for investigation. The caseworker who investigates the case has several decisions to make, including whether to seek court intervention in the case, whether to remove the child from the home, and whether there is sufficient evidence to support the allegations made in the case. Different states use different terminology for this final decision such as indication, determination, founded, or substantiation, but all these terms describe the outcome of the case investigation.

Professionals must be aware of any potential biases when working with sexual abuse cases (Kalichman et al., 1988). Many authors believe that professionals involved in cases of sexual abuse use the case characteristics to construct a representation of what happened during the abusive incident. These representations, in turn, have important implications for whether or not the abuse will get reported and the subsequent processing of the case (Mandel, Lehman, & Yuille, 1995; O'Toole et al., 1994; Zellman, 1992), as well as the perceptions of professionals who work with the child and his/her

family following a case determination (Kalichman et al., 1988; O'Toole et al., 1993, 1994; Zellman, 1990).

The majority of the findings on the effect of perceptions on decision making come from vignette studies in which the subject is presented hypothetical vignettes of abuse situations. Case characteristics are systematically varied across vignettes in order to determine which case characteristics affect the subjects' perceptions. Subjects report what decision they would make (such as whether to report the case to CPS or whether to substantiate the case) under the circumstances described in the vignette. Since these are not actual cases, one cannot be sure whether or not this is how the subject would react in a real situation; however, it has been found that behavioral intentions are significant predictors of actual behavior in many studies, across a range of behaviors (Zellman, 1990). Another methodology for trying to understand the effect of case characteristics on case decisions has been to use actual abuse cases to look at the various factors that affected whether or not the case was substantiated. The vignette studies will be described first.

Vignette studies have found that the age of the victim affects the perceptions of professionals working with child abuse victims and cases (Mandel et al., 1995; O'Toole et al., 1993). The effect, however, is not always consistent (O'Toole et al., 1993). For example, a study by Kalichman and Craig (1991) found that, in general, their sample of licensed psychologists

said they would be more likely to report cases involving younger victims. However, when they looked at the interaction of the victim's age with the type of abuse, there was an effect of age only when the abuse was physical. Vignettes depicting sexual abuse involving both younger and older victims were equally likely to be reported. Another study by Mandel et al. (1995) determined that when a child victim of physical abuse and neglect is younger, rather than older, both police officers and social workers report being more likely to remove the child from the home. Still another study, which sampled psychologists, found that when given a vignette which depicted sexual abuse, subjects attributed more responsibility for the sexual situation to the victim when he/she was older rather than younger (Wagner, Aucoin, & Johnson, 1993). A study by Zellman (1992) found that mandated reporters rated vignettes depicting both physical and sexual abuse as more deserving of a report when the victim was younger rather than older. However, contrary to these studies, Kalichman et al. (1988) found that in their sample of clinicians, age of the victim had no significant effect on whether or not the subjects thought abuse was occurring, or whether or not they would report the suspected abuse.

Several studies have found that the race of the victim tends to affect the perceptions of professionals (Benson et al., 1991; Pillitteri, Seidl, Smith, & Stanton, 1992). One study with a sample of social workers and police officers found that when vignettes depicted neglect or physical abuse

involving African American victims, the subjects reported being more likely to have the child removed from the home (Mandel et al., 1995). Another study using a sample of mandated reporters found that when vignettes depicted neglect involving a white victim, subjects said they were more likely to report the incident, but when vignettes depicted physical and sexual abuse involving an African American victim, the subjects said they were more likely to report the incident (Zellman, 1992).

Socioeconomic status also appears to affect perceptions, though the direction of the effect is not consistent from study to study. One study by Benson et al. (1991) found that when a vignette depicts physical abuse involving a low SES family, their sample of medical practitioners was more likely to label the situation abuse than in a vignette involving a high SES family. Another study by Zellman (1992) sampled mandated reporters and found different effects of SES, depending on the type of maltreatment. In vignettes depicting neglect, SES affected whether or not subjects would use the abuse “label” or would report the incident. In vignettes depicting physical abuse, SES affected whether or not subjects used the abuse label, would report the incident, and whether they believed making a report would benefit the family. In vignettes depicting sexual abuse, in the “milder” abuse situation, the lower SES family was more likely to be reported, but in the more severe abuse situation, the higher SES family was more likely to be reported. Also in the sexual abuse vignette, SES affected the perceived

seriousness of the abuse, use of the abuse label, and the perceived benefit of a report to the family. Unfortunately, the figures in this study do not indicate the direction of the effects. Interestingly, a study by Pillitteri et al. (1992) found that when vignettes depict either high or low SES families, subjects said they were more likely to make a report, but when vignettes depicted middle SES families, subjects said they would be less likely to make a report. Perhaps a study by Zellman (1992) clarifies this with the finding that higher status families were judged more harshly in vignettes depicting neglect, while lower status families were judged more harshly in vignettes depicting physical and sexual abuse. Further research is needed to clarify the effect of SES on the decision-making processes of professionals who report abuse.

It has also been found that the behavior of the child has a great effect on perceptions, especially when clinicians are the subjects of the research (Kalichman & Craig, 1991; Kalichman et al., 1988; Mann, 1985; Wagner et al., 1993; Zellman, 1992). Clinicians are hesitant to report abuse unless they are fairly certain that abuse is actually occurring. Hence, an important determinant of whether or not the subjects said they would report the suspected abuse is whether or not the vignette included a verbal account of the abuse given by the victim (Kalichman & Craig, 1991; Kalichman et al., 1988). Similarly, one study found that when an account of an abusive incident was recanted by the victim in the vignette, the sample of mandated

reporters said they would be less likely to report the suspected abuse (Zellman, 1992).

A previous history of abuse tends to affect whether or not abuse will be reported (Kalichman & Craig, 1991; Zellman, 1992). Zellman (1992) claims that a history of abuse permits professionals to question and possibly reject the idea that the incident in question was an accident. If the vignette describes a situation which could be construed as abuse and the characters of the vignette have a previous history of abuse, it seems more plausible that the current situation in the vignette is also abuse (Zellman, 1992). Also the severity of the abuse has an effect on the decision making process, such that the more severe the abuse depicted in the vignette, the more likely subjects are to recognize and label it abuse, and to say they would report it. Most studies have found that this is the variable that has the strongest effect on perceptions (Benson et al., 1991; O'Toole et al., 1994; Zellman, 1990, 1992). Similarly, the intent of the perpetrator has a substantial effect on the perceptions of professionals. It appears that when the vignette depicts an intent to abuse the child, the incident is perceived as more serious by subjects, who say they are more likely to report it (Zellman, 1992).

Gender of the victim also appears to have an effect on perceptions. However, the nature of this effect is not always clear (O'Toole et al., 1993). One study found that when vignettes depicted child maltreatment involving a female victim, subjects said they would be more likely to report and

substantiate the incident (Koski & Mangold, 1988). Another study found that when vignettes depicted physical abuse involving a male victim, subjects said they would be more likely to report the incident than when vignettes involved a female victim (Pillitteri et al., 1992).

It is surprising that there is not more research on the effect of gender on professionals' behavior when working with sexual abuse cases. There is important evidence from other sources that people see and interpret a variety of situations differently when they involve males rather than when they involve females. For instance, Condry (1984) says that males are seen as "active, lively, and in control of the situation" while females are seen as "passive and deferent to males" (p. 501). Sobieszek (1978) found that when subjects were lead to believe a 17 month old child was male, the child was rated more masculine on a scale of adjectives, regardless of the actual sex of the child. Similar results appeared in an earlier study by Meyer and Sobieszek (1972).

There are many other studies that show how Condry came to his conclusion. For example, one study found that women tried to help a crying baby girl more quickly than a crying baby boy (Condry, Condry, & Pogatshnik, 1978, as cited by Condry, 1984). Another study by Rubin, Provenzano, and Luria (1974) asked primiparous parents to describe their newborn infants 24 hours postpartum. All infants were similar in appearance and had similar Apgar scores. However, female infants were

described as significantly softer, finer featured, smaller, and more inattentive. Male infants, on the other hand, were described as firmer, larger featured, better coordinated, more alert, stronger, and hardier.

One final study by Condry and Condry (1976) further illustrates how gender can affect people's perceptions. All subjects were shown the same infant; however, half of the subjects were told the infant was a girl, while the other half were told it was a boy. They found that the subjects who thought they were watching a boy cry were more likely to attribute the crying to the emotion of anger, but subjects who thought they were watching a girl cry (the same behavior) were more likely to attribute the crying to the emotion of fear. Their data also showed that the infant labeled male was seen as more potent and active than the infant labeled female. Finally, they found that when the infant was believed to be a boy, it was seen as displaying more pleasure and less fear than when it was believed to be a girl.

What all of these studies suggest is that the label of male and female is enough to lead to different perceptions of the same behavior. It does not even matter if the label is correct or not. Gender has such a strong influence that in ambiguous situations, an interpretation is made according to sex role stereotypes (Condry & Condry, 1976). This has important implications in the study of child sexual abuse. Perhaps since people do not often think of males as victims of sexual abuse, professionals are less likely to interpret an

abusive situation as sexual abuse when the victim is male than when the victim is female.

Some of the ways gender affects perceptions of sexual abuse have already been mentioned in this paper. Until recently, the sexual abuse of boys was not recognized as a serious problem by professionals in the field and more actions were taken by CPS in cases with female victims than in cases with male victims. Although the reasons for this are not clear, it does seem to suggest that sexual abuse cases involving males and females are perceived and treated differently by the protective services system.

Empirical studies that investigate the effect of case characteristics on substantiation find some similar effects to those in the vignette studies. Whether or not a case is substantiated appears to be affected by characteristics of the child victim, characteristics of the victim's family, and characteristics of the case itself once it has entered the CPS system.

When looking at child victim characteristics, gender appears to have an effect on whether or not a case is substantiated, particularly in sexual abuse cases. A study by Eckenrode, Munsch et al. (1988) found that cases involving male victims are substantiated at a significantly lower rate than cases involving female victims. Interestingly, a study by Mac Murray (1989) which investigated criminal justice intervention in sexual abuse cases found that cases involving male victims are more likely to actually be prosecuted, while cases involving female victims are more often not prosecuted. So

again, gender appears to be a factor which influences decisions in sexual abuse cases. It is surprising that there is not more research in this rather important area. Further research is needed in order to determine the effects of gender on the various steps in the decision making process.

Another victim characteristic, age, appears to influence whether or not a case is substantiated. According to Eckenrode, Powers, Doris, Munsch, and Bolger (1988), sexual abuse cases were substantiated at a higher rate when the victim was older rather than younger. Similarly, the study by Mac Murray (1989) found that sexual abuse cases involving older victims were more likely to result in prosecution, while those cases involving younger victims were more often screened out for non-prosecution. Interestingly, Eckenrode, Powers et al. (1988) found that neglect cases were substantiated at a higher rate when the victim was younger rather than older. Thus, the effect of age differs depending upon the type of maltreatment being considered.

Eckenrode, Munsch et al. (1988) also found a gender by age interaction effect in sexual abuse cases. For victims age 9 and below, substantiation rates for male victims and female victims were roughly the same. However, when the victim was 10 to 17 years old, cases involving a female victim were more likely to be substantiated than cases involving a male victim. Thus, gender appears to have more of an effect on the substantiation of cases involving older rather than younger children.

Some family characteristics such as ethnicity also appear to influence sexual abuse case outcomes. Eckenrode, Munsch et al. (1988) found that ethnicity had a small effect on whether or not a sexual abuse case was substantiated. They found that cases involving black and Hispanic children were substantiated at a higher rate than those involving white children, however, this effect was not statistically significant. Kotch and Thomas (1986), on the other hand, found no difference in the substantiation rates of cases involving black families and cases involving white families when looking at child maltreatment. Eckenrode, Powers et al. (1988) found that both physical abuse and neglect cases involving black and Hispanic children were more likely to be substantiated than cases involving white children. So, it appears that the effect of ethnicity remains unclear at this time and requires further investigation.

The study by Kotch and Thomas (1986) found some interesting interaction effects of different family characteristics on the substantiation decision. Although the effects of marital status, employment status, and ethnicity alone were very small and non-significant, the interaction of these characteristics were quite significant. They found that a black family with an unemployed head of household had a much higher substantiation rate than that for a black family or an unemployed family alone, and much higher than a black family with an employed head of household. Similarly, the substantiation rate for unemployed single parents was much higher than

that for a two-parent family with an unemployed head. Also, the rate for black single parents was higher than the rate for two-parent black families.

Another family characteristic that has an effect on case substantiation is the number of children in the family. The study by Kotch and Thomas (1986) found that substantiation rates were higher in families with two or more children than in families with one child. In concurrence with this finding, Eckenrode, Powers et al. (1988) found that in sexual abuse cases, reports involving a larger household were more likely to be substantiated.

There are several characteristics of the case itself that affect a case outcome. For example, one study found that one third of the substantiated sexual abuse cases in the study had a prior report, usually for physical abuse (Pierce & Pierce, 1985). Similarly, another study found that reports of neglect were more likely to be substantiated when there was the presence of a prior report (Eckenrode, Powers et al., 1988). Also, the study of criminal justice intervention by Mac Murray (1989) found that when the abuse appears to have been occurring for a long period of time, the case is more likely to be prosecuted. In cases of sexual abuse, the number of allegations and the length of the case investigation appear to affect the rate of substantiation (Eckenrode, Powers et al., 1988). An increase in either of these characteristics increases the likelihood of substantiation. One final case characteristic that influences case outcomes is the source of the report. This appears to have an effect across all types of cases. In all these cases,

reports coming from mandated sources are substantiated at a much higher rate than reports from non-mandated sources (Eckenrode, Munsch et al., 1988; Eckenrode, Powers et al., 1988; Pierce & Pierce, 1985).

Research Questions and Analysis Strategy

Research questions

1. Is there a difference in the substantiation rate of cases of alleged sexual abuse involving male victims and female victims?

This question will be answered by performing a chi-square analysis to test if there is a significant difference in the percentage of cases involving male victims and female victims that are substantiated.

2. What differences, if any, exist in the child, case, and process variables contained in the reports involving male victims and female victims?

This question will be answered by performing ANOVAs and chi-squares to compare the child, case, and process characteristics of reports of alleged sexual abuse involving female victims to the characteristics of reports involving male victims.

3. How do the child, case, and process variables relate to the decision to substantiate or not to substantiate cases of sexual abuse? Are these relationships the same or different for cases with male victims and cases with female victims?

This question will be answered by performing a discriminant function analysis separately by the gender of the alleged victims to determine which child, case, and process variables best discriminate between substantiated and unsubstantiated cases. These analyses will identify the relative importance of individual variables as well as combinations of these variables that discriminate between groups. The simultaneous estimation or direct method will be used so that all of the independent variables will be considered concurrently. Thus, the discriminant function will be computed based upon the entire set of independent variables, regardless of the discriminating power of each independent variable. By comparing the results of the two functions, we can see whether the same independent variables or different ones are significant discriminators between substantiated and unsubstantiated cases for male and female victims, and how accurately the discriminant function is able to classify cases as substantiated or unsubstantiated.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Please note that the following information on data collection and sample construction was taken from the Final Report submitted by Eckenrode and Doris at the completion of the grant from the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect that funded this research (Eckenrode & Doris, 1987).

Sample

This data set utilizes child maltreatment reports from New York state. The reports used for analyses in this study represent a random sample of abuse and neglect reports received by the New York State Child Abuse and Maltreatment Register between April 1 and August 31, 1985. In New York state, all reports of child maltreatment are required by law to be forwarded immediately to the state central registry (SCR), which, in turn, forwards the reports to the appropriate county child protective agencies for investigation.

In 1985, New York state received a total of 84,119 child maltreatment reports. Less than 11 percent were classified as abuse as opposed to neglect. In order to deal with the low incidence of abuse reports, the investigators used a stratified sampling strategy for selection of reports into the study. The population of reports was divided into strata representing either abuse

or neglect reports. They systematically selected every other abuse report, and every 20th neglect report, because there were many more neglect than abuse reports. This strategy was utilized because it allowed the investigators to obtain a representative sample using a much smaller number of cases than would otherwise be needed. Abuse reports were over-sampled so that a relatively equal number of abuse and neglect reports were chosen for the analysis, such that there would be approximately 1000 cases of abuse and 1000 cases of neglect. This number of cases was more than adequate to ensure sufficient power in their analyses.

All of the incoming reports during this time period were screened and classified as involving abuse or neglect. It should be noted that New York state has a unique way of classifying reports as abuse or neglect. The classification is not directly tied to the allegation. Most of the cases involve multiple allegations, and abuse allegations take precedence over neglect in the classification of the case, so that a case involving both abuse and neglect allegations is classified as abuse. Similarly, if a report contains any allegation of sexual abuse, the sexual abuse allegation takes precedence and the case is classified as sexual abuse.

The final sample consisted of 994 abuse and 880 neglect reports. In the abuse category, the investigators distinguished between physical and sexual abuse reports. Seven hundred ninety-five of the reports contained an

allegation of sexual abuse. The final sample contained 628 reports with female victims and 167 reports with male victims.

Two files were created by the investigators for their analyses: (1) a case level file and (2) a child level file. The case level file held data on all children involved in the report. For the child file, one child from the family was randomly selected as the unit of analysis, and all information on the allegations, alleged perpetrators, and allegation determinations concerning that child were retained in the file. This procedure controlled for the clustering of case characteristics within reports involving several children (e.g., ethnicity of the children) while still maintaining a representative sample of all maltreated children. Because the number of children in a report may have affected the outcome of the case investigation, the investigators constructed a variable using information from the case level file representing the number of children in the report.

Data Collection Procedures

Once cases were selected, the reports were coded by trained SCR staff. Ten technical support staff worked on the sampling component, fifteen professional child protective services staff coded the case records, and six supervisory staff provided supervision for the project and coding assistance. Collaborating with SCR staff had several advantages. Because the staff was already familiar with the forms, codes, and reporting procedures, an

extensive training period was not necessary. Also, measurement error was decreased due to the staff's familiarity and experience with the data.

Concerns regarding the confidentiality of SCR records were alleviated as well. Additionally, the coders were able to interpret caseworker notes in order to resolve any questions about how a variable should be coded.

On-site coding training sessions were conducted just prior to the start of data collection. Throughout the course of data collection, coders were monitored by the six supervisors. In order to ensure that information was correctly coded, supervisors double coded cases and checked for errors (e.g., use of incorrect coding category, improper line up of columns and variables, etc.). The first five cases done by each coder were independently coded by a supervisor to check for errors, and approximately 5% of the subsequent records were check-coded in this way. No reliability estimate for the data was provided by the researchers, however, because of the procedures described above that were used to ensure that the coding procedures were accurate, this author feels confident that the data were accurate.

Measures

New York state requires that caseworkers investigating child maltreatment reports file three written reports with the SCR during the course of the investigation: (1) an initial oral report "intake" form (DSS-2221) which documents the allegations, the alleged perpetrators, the

reporting source(s), and the age, sex, and ethnicity of each child; (2) a Preliminary Report of Investigation form (DSS-2222) submitted no later than seven days following the initial report which documents the progress of the investigation, and any actions taken to that point in time (e.g., court action); (3) a Follow-up Report (DSS-2223) which must be filed within 90 days of the substantiation or unsubstantiation of the allegations and the service plan. Information from these written reports is entered into the SCR computer data base, however the investigators decided to work directly with the hard copies of the actual written reports rather than from the computerized data, because the hard copies of the forms contained more complete data. These hard copies also contained additional descriptive information which could be used to clarify the case material.

All of the information which was routinely and reliably collected on the written SCR forms was coded on standard coding forms. These forms were sent to data entry in batches of several hundred at a time and entered into the mainframe computer at Cornell University by data entry personnel at the computer facility. The individual data files were cleaned and then merged into one final complete file which also contained resolved missing data.

Variables

The outcome variable for this study is a dichotomous variable reflecting the outcome of the investigation coded as either unsubstantiated

(0) or substantiated (1). In practice, a case is considered substantiated if credible evidence is found for any of the allegations reported.

Child variables, case variables, and process variables are available for this secondary analysis of cases involving male and female victims. The child variables are child age (age of the sampled child coded as the numerical age at the time of the report), gender (sex of the sampled child, coded as 0 for female and 1 for male), and ethnicity (the ethnicity of the sampled child coded as 1 for White, 2 for Black, 3 for Hispanic, or 4 for other). The case variables are information that was part of the original intake report. They are the source of the report (whether or not the source of the report was a mandated reporter, coded as 0 for nonmandated or 1 for mandated), number of alleged perpetrators (the total number of perpetrators in the report, coded as the numerical value), number of allegations (the total number of allegations made in the report, coded as the numerical value), number of children in the report (the total number of children in the report, coded as the numerical value), and how many cross references on the family existed with SCR (coded as a numerical value). The process variables are information on what happened during the course of the investigation. They are whether there was court action taken (coded as 0 for no court action taken, or 1 if court action was taken), the number of contacts with the reporter (coded as a numerical value), the number of contacts with the subject of report (coded as a numerical value), the number of contacts with other people who may have

information about the report (coded as a numerical value), and the length of time the case remained open (coded as the numerical value for the total number of days the case remained open). A list of variables appears in the Appendix.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Three types of analyses were run on these data. The first set of analyses was descriptive, intended to describe the variables in this data set. The second set were bivariate analyses. These analyses were run to see if the variables differed significantly by gender. The third and final set of analyses was the discriminant function analyses run separately for male victims and for female victims. These were run to see which variables discriminated between substantiated and non-substantiated cases for male victims and for female victims, and if the significant variables were the same or different for males and females.

Descriptive and Bivariate Statistics

Several of the variables were recoded by the original investigators due to the presence of extreme outliers, which may distort some statistical analyses. The original variables had the exact number of occurrences as the value. The investigators collapsed the range of values to create the new recoded variables. The recoding decisions were based upon the frequencies of the original variables, with the goal of achieving a more normal distribution of the values. As a result of collapsing the original variables, each one was brought closer to a normal distribution. It is the recoded variables that were

used in the subsequent analyses. They are identified by an X preceding the variable name (e.g., XREF is the recoded cross reference variable).

One of these variables dealt with the number of cross references in the State Central Register on the family of the victim. The original variable had a range of 0 to 9, however only .25% of the cases in the female sample were at the maximum level. A value of zero indicated there were no previous reports on the family in the State Central Register. The range of this variable for cases involving male victims was 0 to 6, and only .13% of the sample was represented at the maximum value. The recoded variable was collapsed as follows: 0 = none, 1 = one, 2 = two or more. This recode changed the mean value of this variable for cases with female victims from .46 to .38, and the mean for cases with male victims from .47 to .38.

Another variable that needed to be recoded was the number of contacts with the person who made the report. The original variable had a range of 0 to 53 in the female sample, with only .15% of the sample represented at the maximum value. The male sample had a range of 0 to 24, also with .15% of the sample represented at the maximum value. The recoded variable was collapsed as follows: 0 = none, 1 = one, 2 = two, 3 = three or four, and 4 = five or more. This brought the female mean from 2.40 to 1.75, and the male mean from 2.64 to 1.70.

The next variable to be recoded was the number of contacts made with the subject of the report. The female sample had a range of 0 to 62, with

only .26% of the sample at the maximum value. The male sample had a range of 0 to 43, with .13% at the maximum value. The recoded variable was collapsed as follows: 0 = none, 1 = one or two, 2 = three or four, 3 = five or six, 4 = seven through ten, and 5 = eleven or more. The recoded variable brought the female mean from 7.26 to 3.06, and the male mean from 7.16 to 3.01.

The last variable that was recoded was the number of contacts made with other people who may have information regarding the report. The range of the female sample was 0 to 83, with .13% at the maximum value. The male sample had a range of 0 to 42, also with .13% at the maximum value. The new recoded variable was collapsed as follows: 0 = none, 1 = one, 2 = two, 3 = three or four, 4 = five, six or seven, 5 = eight through fourteen, and 6 = fifteen or more. The recoded variable brings the female mean from 6.83 to 3.31, and the male mean from 7.00 to 3.32.

The descriptive and bivariate statistics for all variables appear in Table 4.1. To answer the first research question, the first variable examined was substantiation, the dependent variable for the subsequent analyses. Substantiation is the case decision made following the investigation of the report. Reports which contained an allegation of sexual abuse of a female victim were substantiated at a significantly higher rate than reports with a male victim ($X^2(1, N = 795) = 6.55, p < .05$). However, because a report can contain more than one allegation and a determination can be made for each

allegation separately, whether the specific allegation of sexual abuse had been substantiated was also examined. The sexual abuse allegation also was more likely to be substantiated in reports involving female victims than male victims ($X^2 (1, N = 795) = 8.10, p < .01$).

To address the second research question, the child, case, and process characteristics of reports containing female and male victims were compared. The first set of variables examined were the child characteristics. The number of reports involving female victims greatly exceeded the number of reports involving male victims. In fact, there were almost four times as many cases with female as male victims. With respect to age, female victims of sexual abuse were significantly older than male victims ($F (1, 792) = 23.13, p < .0001$). Because means can mask variations in the distribution of values in a sample, the age distribution was also examined and appears in Figure 4.1. Interestingly, the number of reports involving male victims peaked at age four, while the reports involving female victims had a bi-modal distribution with peaks at ages four and fifteen. After showing a decline throughout most of the school years, the direction of the trend for females reverses at age 9 and climbs steadily through the preadolescent and early adolescent period until age 15. The ethnic breakdown of the female sample was 58.22% Anglo, 27.96% African-American, 12.83% Hispanic, and .99% other. The ethnic breakdown of the male sample was 61.88% Anglo, 23.13%

African-American, 14.38% Hispanic, and .63% other. The differences in ethnicity were not significant ($X^2 (3, N = 768) = 1.80, p = .62$).

The next group of variables to be examined were the case characteristics. A greater proportion of reports involving female victims came from mandated reporters ($X^2 (1, N = 777) = 6.81, p < .01$). A more detailed description of the specific reporting sources is presented in Table 4.2. The most frequent sources of reports involving female victims were social services personnel (22.8%), school staff (12.9%), hospital staff (12.8%), law enforcement personnel (10.2%), and anonymous reports (7.7%). For reports involving male victims, the most frequent sources of reports were social services personnel (15.0%), law enforcement personnel (14.4%), anonymous reports (12.0%), mothers (9.0%), hospital staff (8.4%), and physicians (7.2%).

On the other hand, neither the number of adults named as alleged perpetrators of the abuse ($F (1, 793) = 3.82, p = .06$), nor the number of allegations contained in the report ($F (1, 794) = .07, p = .79$), nor the number of children who were subjects of the report ($F (1, 794) = .46, p = .50$) differed by the gender of the alleged victim. In fact, these values were remarkably similar in reports for both genders. Similarly, the number of cross references on the family in the State Central Register (that is, the presence of a previously-accepted report in the register) did not differ between reports with female and male victims ($X^2 (2, N = 795) = .42, p = .81$).

The final group of variables to be examined were the process characteristics. Reports with a female victim were significantly more likely to involve court action than cases with a male victim ($X^2 (1, N = 795) = 6.11, p < .05$). An important part of the case investigatory process involves contacting people who may have information about the alleged incident. However, the numbers of contacts made with various people for cases with alleged male victims and female victims were nearly identical. Reports involving female and male victims did not differ in the number of contacts made with the person who made the report ($F (1, 665) = .17, p = .68$), the subject of the report ($F (1, 781) = .13, p = .72$), or other persons who might have information on the incident ($F (1, 741) = .00, p = .94$). Finally, the average length of time the case remained open was also nearly identical for cases with alleged male and female victims ($F (1, 795) = .00, p = .97$). In terms of the investigatory variables, reports of male victims and female victims were remarkably similar.

In conclusion, although the substantiation rate for reports involving male and female victims differed significantly, there were relatively few differences in the characteristics of the reports detected by the bivariate analysis, with only child age and source of the report emerging as significant. Female victims were older than male victims and reports with female victims were more likely to come from mandated reporting sources. Also, cases involving female victims were more likely to involve court action.

Correlational Analysis

Because multicollinearity can be a problem for many statistical analytic techniques, a correlational analysis was performed on the variables in this data set (see Table 4.3). Many of the correlations were statistically significant, however they were of very low magnitude. The highest correlation between two variables was .54 between substantiation (INDICATE) and whether or not court action was taken (XCOURT). Because the correlation between court action and the dependent variable, substantiation, was so large, court action was not included as an independent variable in the discriminant analysis. There was only one correlation of .4, seven correlations of .2, and the rest were below this value, so multicollinearity was not a threat with any of the other variables.

Discriminant Function Analyses

To address the third research question, a discriminant function analysis was performed using the following independent variables as predictors of membership in either the substantiated or unsubstantiated group: child age, child ethnicity, whether the report came from a mandated reporter, the number of allegations in the report, the number of children in the report, the number of alleged perpetrators, as well as the recoded variables for the number of cross references, the number of contacts made

with the subject of the report, the number of contacts made with the person who made the report, and the number of contacts with other people who may have information about the report, and finally, the length of time the case remained open. The discriminant function analysis was performed separately for males and for females. Table 4.4 presents the mean values or percents for each independent variable by group separately for each gender.

Of the original 628 cases with female victims, only 473 were used in the analyses due to missing data. Missing data appeared to be randomly scattered throughout groups and predictors. The substantiated cases and unsubstantiated cases with female victims differed significantly on the discriminant function, Wilks' lambda (12, 473) = .86, $p < .0001$. The discriminant function had a X^2_{12} of 6.55 ($p < .0001$, $n = 473$) and a canonical correlation of .37 ($p < .0001$). Cases that were unsubstantiated had a lower mean discriminant function score (-.34) than did cases which were substantiated (.45). Five of the independent variables correlated greater than or equal to .30 with the discriminant function (see Table 4.5). The three variables with greatest discriminatory power were number of contacts with the subject of the report, number of contacts with other people who may have information about the report, and child age. All of these correlations are positive. These three variables also have the largest standardized coefficients, reflecting unique contributions to group discrimination above and beyond the other independent variables. They are all significant at the

.001 level. The Wilks' lambda and univariate F-tests for all of the variables are presented in Table 4.5. This function accurately classified 64.34% of the unsubstantiated cases, and 64.18% of the substantiated cases ($X^2(1, N = 473) = 37.67, p < .001$) (see Table 4.7). The overall percent of correctly classified cases was 64.27%.

Forty-seven cases were excluded from the analyses of cases involving male victims due to missing data, yielding a total of 120 cases. The missing data did not appear to be in any systematic pattern, being spread across groups and predictors. There was a significant difference between the substantiated cases and unsubstantiated cases involving male victims on the discriminant function, Wilks' lambda (12, 120) = .78, $p = < .01$. The discriminant function had a X^2_{12} of 28.48 ($p < .01, n = 120$) and a canonical correlation of .47 ($p < .01$). Substantiated cases had a higher discriminant function score (.78) than unsubstantiated cases (-.36). Five of the independent variables had a discriminant loading (correlation with the discriminant function) greater than .30 (see Table 4.6). The three predictor variables with the highest loadings were the three recoded contact variables (number of contacts with the subject of the report, the number of contacts with the person who made the report, and the number of contacts with other people who may have information regarding the report, respectively). All of these correlations are positive. Interestingly, the three variables with the largest standardized coefficients were the number of contacts with the

subject of the report, number of allegations in the report, and number of contacts with the person who made the report, respectively. Independent variables with greater discriminatory power usually have large weights, and those with little discriminatory power usually have small weights; however, multicollinearity among the independent variables will cause an exception to this rule (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1995). Apparently, the number of contacts with other people who may have information about the report was pulled in and ranked as the third variable in the ordering of discriminant loadings due to its modest correlation with the other contact variables, number of contacts with the subject ($r = .41$), and number of contacts with the person who made the report ($r = .27$). The standardized coefficient for the variable “number of contacts with other people” is only .09, the third from the lowest standardized coefficient, indicating it has relatively little discriminatory power. This function accurately classified 73.17% of the unsubstantiated cases, and 65.79% of the substantiated cases ($X^2(1, N = 120) = 16.54, p < .001$) (see Table 4.7). The overall percent of correctly classified cases was 70.83%.

Table 4.1

Descriptive and bivariate statistics.

Variables	Females (<u>n</u> = 628)	Males (<u>n</u> = 167)	p-level
Case substantiation	42.04%	31.14%	.05
Sexual abuse allegation substantiation	37.60%	25.80%	.01
 <u>Child Variables</u>			
Child age	10.05 yrs (5.00)	8.00 yrs (4.64)	.0001
Child ethnicity			.62
Anglo	58.22%	61.88%	
African-American	27.96%	23.13%	
Hispanic	12.83%	14.38%	
Other	.99%	.63%	
 <u>Case Variables</u>			
Mandated reporter	72.48%	61.96%	.01
# of alleged perpetrators	2.24 (.70)	2.12 (.67)	.06
# of allegations	2.03 (1.05)	2.00 (1.13)	.79

Table 4.1. Continued.

Variables	Females (<u>n</u> = 628)	Males (<u>n</u> = 167)	p-level
# of children in the report	2.20 (1.23)	2.13 (1.13)	.50
Presence of a cross reference			.81
None	71.97%	73.05%	
One	18.15%	16.17%	
Two or more	9.87%	10.78%	
 <u>Process Variables</u>			
Court action	23.89%	14.97%	.05
# contacts with reporter	1.75 (3.47)	1.69 (1.43)	.68
# contacts with the subject of report	3.06 (1.42)	3.01 (1.38)	.72
# contacts with others	3.31 (1.81)	3.32 (1.82)	.94
Length of time case remained open	80.46 days (70.17)	80.68 days (83.74)	.97

Note. The exact number of cases used in these analyses differs slightly because of missing data. The greatest amount of missing data was for the variable "number of contacts with the person who made the report." Sixteen percent of the caes were missing on this variable because no contacts could be made in a case that came from an anonymous source. In no other analysis were more than 7% of the cases missing.

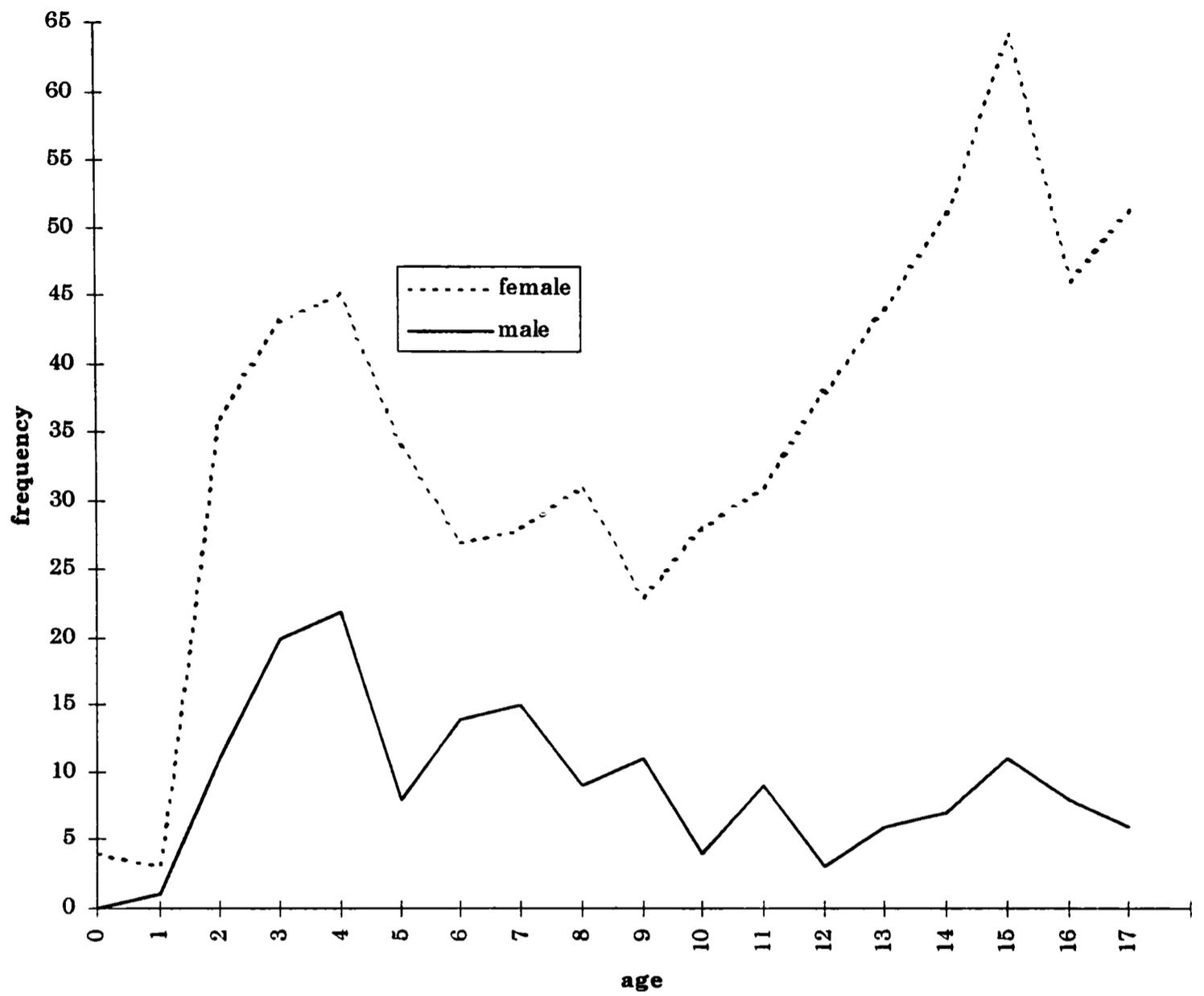


Figure 4.1

Age Distribution of Male and Female Victims.

Table 4.2

Sources of reports of alleged sexual abuse.

Reporter	Victims			
	Female		Male	
	(n = 627)		(n = 167)	
	(Number)	(Percent)	(Number)	(Percent)
Mother	33	5.3	15	9.0
Father	15	2.4	2	1.2
Stepmother	2	0.3	0	.0
Other adult	1	0.2	1	0.6
Relative	27	4.3	5	3.0
Neighbor	9	1.4	2	1.2
Anonymous	48	7.7	20	12.0
Concerned citizen	14	2.2	10	6.0
Social services	143	22.8	25	15.0
Physician	38	6.1	12	7.2
Public health staff	8	1.3	0	.0
Hospital staff	80	12.8	14	8.4
Mental health staff	17	2.7	10	6.0
Law enforcement	64	10.2	24	14.4
School staff	81	12.9	10	6.0
Self referral	9	1.4	3	1.8
Friend	11	1.8	4	2.4
Child care provider	1	0.2	0	.0

Table 4.2 Continued.

Reporter	Victims			
	Female (<u>n</u> = 627)		Male (<u>n</u> = 167)	
	(Number)	(Percent)	(Number)	(Percent)
Family service agency	13	2.1	6	3.6
Other	5	0.8	2	1.2
Unknown	8	1.0	2	.3

Table 4.3

Correlational analysis.

	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
(1) INDICATE	.12	.03	.54	.14	.10	.08	.13	.20	.23	.15	.25
(2) MANDATE		.00	.08	.05	.08	-.11	-.01	.07	.10	.11	.04
(3) XREF			.04	.03	.07	.10	.07	-.04	.04	-.05	-.06
(4) XCOURT				.08	.09	.09	.13	.13	.23	.12	.18
(5) CHAGE					-.02	.05	.19	-.04	-.10	-.03	-.06
(6) ADTOTAL						.04	.04	.03	.06	-.03	.09
(7) ALTOTAL							.26	.14	.06	.04	.08
(8) CHTOTAL								.04	.15	.07	.09
(9) DATEDIF									.09	.02	.15
(10)XOTHCON										.27	.41
(11) XREPCON											.29
(12) XSUBCON											

Note: Please refer to the Appendix for a detailed description of the variables used in this analysis.

Table 4.4

Mean values for the substantiated and unsubstantiated groups by gender.

Variables	Females (<u>n</u> = 473)		Males (<u>n</u> = 120)	
	Unsubstantiated (<u>n</u> = 272)	Substantiated (<u>n</u> = 201)	Unsubstantiated (<u>n</u> = 82)	Substantiated (<u>n</u> = 38)
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>
<u>Child Variables</u>				
Child age	9.38	(5.14)	11.24	(4.59)
Child ethnicity				
African-American*	28%		30%	
Hispanic*	12%		13%	
			7.93	(5.06)
			8.24	(4.35)
<u>Case Variables</u>				
Mandated reporter	70%		59%	66%
# of allegations in the report	2.00	(.97)	1.89	(.92)
# of children in the report	2.11	(1.22)	2.01	(1.01)
# of alleged perpetrators in the report	2.22	(.73)	2.07	(.70)
# of cross-references in the State Central Register	.38	(.65)	.42	(.68)
			.50	(.76)

Table 4.4 Continued.

Variables	Females (<u>n</u> = 473)		Males (<u>n</u> = 120)	
	Unsubstantiated (<u>n</u> = 272)	Substantiated (<u>n</u> = 201)	Unsubstantiated (<u>n</u> = 82)	Substantiated (<u>n</u> = 38)
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>
<u>Process Variables</u>				
# of contacts with the subject of the report	2.86	(1.41)	2.73	(1.29)
# of contacts with the person who made the report	1.63	(1.45)	1.46	(1.41)
# of contacts with other people	2.94	(1.83)	2.96	(1.67)
length of time the case remained open	71.71	(58.48)	69.09	(61.15)
			104.21	(105.17)

*0 = White; 1 = Hispanic or Black

Table 4.5

Discriminant function analysis for female victims ($n = 473$).

Independent Variable	Analysis				
	\bar{I}	\bar{B}	Wilks' Lambda	F Statistic	p-level
# of contacts with the subject of the report	.54	.41	.96	21.15	.001
# of contacts with other people	.51	.36	.96	19.52	.001
Child age	.47	.57	.97	16.47	.001
Length of time the case remained open	.39	.34	.98	10.97	.001
# of children in the report	.34	.13	.98	8.33	.01
Mandated reporter	.29	.21	.99	6.40	.05
# of contacts with the person who made the report	.25	.07	.99	4.67	.05
# of allegations in the report	.24	.12	.99	4.36	.05
# of alleged perpetrators	.16	.16	1.00	2.00	.16
# of cross-references in the State Central Register	.07	.10	1.00	.37	.54
Hispanic*	.06	.18	1.00	.29	.59
African-American*	.06	.10	1.00	.29	.59

*0 = White; 1 = Hispanic or Black

Table 4.6

Discriminant function analysis for male victims (n = 120).

Independent Variable	Analysis				
	r	B	Wilks' Lambda	F Statistic	p-level
# of contacts with the subject of the report	.74	.55	.86	18.77	.0001
# of contacts with the person who made the report	.50	.30	.93	8.70	.01
# of contacts with other people	.47	.09	.94	7.60	.01
# of allegations in the report	.45	.37	.95	6.80	.05
Length of time the case remained open	.39	.27	.96	5.31	.05
# of alleged perpetrators	.29	.19	.98	3.0	.09
# of children in the report	.24	.11	.98	2.0	.16
Mandated reporter	.13	.26	1.00	.57	.45
# of cross-references in the State Central Register	.10	.02	1.00	.38	.54
African-American*	-.06	.04	1.00	.13	.72
Child age	.06	.22	1.00	.11	.75
Hispanic*	-.01	-.19	1.00	.00	.97

*0 = White; 1 = Hispanic or Black

Table 4.7

Classification matrices.

Female Victims ($n = 473$)

Actual Group	No. of Cases	Predicted Group Membership	
		<u>(0)</u>	<u>(1)</u>
Unsubstantiated (0)	272	175 64.34%	97 35.66%
Substantiated (1)	201	72 35.82%	129 64.18%
Percent of cases correctly classified			64.27%

Male Victims ($n = 120$)

Actual Group	No. of Cases	Predicted Group Membership	
		<u>(0)</u>	<u>(1)</u>
Unsubstantiated (0)	82	60 73.17%	22 26.83%
Substantiated (1)	38	13 34.21%	25 65.79%
Percent of cases correctly classified			70.83%

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The results of this research provide some insight into the role that gender differences play in the substantiation of sexual abuse cases. There were two sets of analyses, the descriptive analyses and the discriminant analyses. They will be discussed separately, as they contribute quite different types of information. The results of the descriptive analyses reveal how remarkably similar the cases with male victims and the cases with female victims are, leaving the question of why there is a difference in the rate of substantiation unanswered. However, the results of the discriminant analyses shed some light on this. Perhaps the answer lies not in differences in the variables themselves, but rather in the different way they contribute to the substantiation decision for males and females.

Descriptive Analyses

Substantiation

As was expected, the rate of substantiation was significantly different for male victims and female victims. This is quite consistent with existing research (American Association for Protecting Children, 1986; Conte & Berliner, 1981; Finkelhor, 1980, 1984; Pierce & Pierce, 1985). Further, the rate of substantiation for the specific allegation of sexual abuse was

significantly different for males and females. The specific allegation of sexual abuse was examined because in New York state, an entire case is substantiated if one allegation is substantiated. Remember that a case is classified as a sexual abuse case if there is an allegation of sexual abuse anywhere in the report. It was suspected that perhaps it was some allegation other than sexual abuse that was resulting in the substantiation of these cases. Therefore, it would be misleading to say that sexual abuse cases are substantiated at different rates if indeed it was some other allegation that was leading to the case substantiation. However, this was not the case. In fact, the actual sexual abuse allegation also was being substantiated at a significantly higher rate for females than for males.

Child characteristics

It was found that female victims of sexual abuse were significantly older than male victims. This is consistent with some previous research (De Jong et al., 1982; Pierce & Pierce, 1985), but inconsistent with other research (Black & DeBlassie, 1993; Faller, 1989). This finding is difficult to interpret because there is no consensus in the literature about the age of victims and what effect this may or may not have on the outcome of a case (Kalichman & Craig, 1991; Mandel et al., 1995; O'Toole et al., 1993; Wagner et al., 1993; Zellman, 1992).

An interesting finding with respect to age was that for both males and females, there is a drop in the number of reports of sexual abuse during the school years. One possible explanation for this finding is that when victims are at school all day, they are removed from extended contact with the potential abuser. Another possible explanation for the drop is that the risk of possible detection by school officials causes abusers to reduce or discontinue abusing the child.

When the age of puberty is reached, however, there is a diverging path in the age curve of males and females. The rate of abuse tends to drop off for males, but it increases sharply for females. It might be tempting to intuit that the drop in the rate of male victims is because male adolescents are becoming stronger and more able to fight back. However, explanations such as this could inadvertently result in blaming the victim. Very seldom is physical force used by a perpetrator in controlling a victim; coercion is the more effective method, and is therefore the one most commonly used (Nielsen, 1983). "Secrecy and silence are the perpetrator's first line of defense" (Herman, 1992, p.8). In attempting to explain the drop in the rate of abuse for adolescent males, one must consider the nature of pedophilia, which is defined as sexual attraction of an adult toward a child. Perhaps, sexual abuse is defined differently for adolescent males and adolescent females. Maybe any sex involving an adolescent male is, by its very nature, not defined as abuse. This is consistent with the myth that any sex for a

male adolescent is “good” sex. Another plausible explanation for this drop is that adolescent males are more adult-like in appearance and behavior, so they are no longer as attractive to pedophiles. Finkelhor (1984) has suggested that perhaps it is an emotional congruence (i.e., the abuser needs to relate to someone on his own emotional level) that causes abusers to be sexually attracted to children. Finkelhor also suggests that men are socialized to be attracted to younger, smaller, and less powerful partners, which lends credence to the idea that the adolescent male is no longer attractive to a child molester. As for the dramatic increase in the incidence of sexual abuse for females during adolescence, perhaps an explanation is that, as girls become more woman-like in appearance, a different kind of abuser is entering the picture, one that is not interested in young children.

Case characteristics

The only case characteristic that differed significantly by gender was the source of the report. Reports involving female victims were more likely to come from a mandated reporter than reports involving male victims. This might help to explain the difference in substantiation rates because research has shown that reports from mandated sources are more reliable and more likely to lead to substantiation (American Association for Protecting Children, 1986; Groenveld & Giovannoni, 1977; Jason, Andereck, Marks, &

Tyler, 1982; Pierce & Pierce, 1985). This may be one factor explaining why the cases with female victims are more likely to be substantiated.

Another factor related to the source of the report that may play a role is the fact that reports with male victims are nearly 50% more likely to come from anonymous reporters than reports with female victims. This is an important fact given the relative discriminatory power of the variable “contacts with the person who made the report.” If the reporter is anonymous, the caseworker cannot contact him/her for additional information as the investigation progresses. So, this lack of opportunity to contact the reporter in the larger percentage of anonymous reports involving male victims may contribute to the lower rate of substantiation of these cases.

For the most part, however, the case characteristics for cases with male and female victims are remarkably similar. The number of alleged perpetrators, the number of allegations, and the number of children in the report did not differ by the gender of the victim. It is, therefore, difficult to use case characteristics as an explanation for the difference in substantiation rate.

Process characteristics

It was expected that the substantiated and unsubstantiated cases would differ on the process variables. One possible explanation for the

difference in substantiation rates between cases with male and cases with female victims could be that caseworkers pursue reports that involve female victims more vigorously. Several of the process variables that were available could be considered indices of the vigor or tenacity with which a case is investigated, but no support was found for this explanation. The case and process variables were very similar in the two types of cases. The number of contacts made with the reporter, the subject of the report, and other people who may have information about the report are almost identical in cases with female victims and cases with male victims. These analyses suggest that caseworkers are not bringing any gender bias to how vigorously they are pursuing cases.

Another variable that provides an indication of the vigor or tenacity of the investigatory process is the length of time the case remains open. If the cases involving a female victim remained open longer than cases with a male victim, it could be argued that this is why they are substantiated at a higher rate. However, cases with male and female victims were remarkably similar in this respect as well. The actual number of days is almost identical for males and females, so this variable did not offer any insight into the differential rate of substantiation either.

One difference that did exist was that reports with a female victim were significantly more likely to result in court action than reports with male victims. However, one must be careful in interpreting this finding. It would

be tempting to say that this is what leads to the differential substantiation rate. Nevertheless, if there is enough evidence to take the case to court, most likely there is enough evidence to substantiate the case. The temporal ordering of these two variables is not clear. In other words, the court action may be taken near or at the same time as the substantiation of the case. Therefore, one cannot say that the court action is predictive of substantiation. It was mentioned earlier that of all the variables, these two were the most highly correlated, and therefore, court action was not used in the discriminant analysis.

However, if court involvement is a proxy for the severity of the abuse, it might explain the difference in substantiation rates. Unfortunately, this data set contains no measure of the severity of the abuse, so this idea could not be further explored. The literature on gender differences does little to help clarify this relationship because the literature on the severity of abuse is mixed. Some studies in the literature have reported that the sexual abuse of males is more severe than the abuse of females in that it involves more threat and use of force (e.g., Black & DeBlassie, 1993; Roane, 1992). Other researchers (e.g., Levesque, 1994), however, dispute this idea and suggest that boys exaggerate their description of the violence the abuse entailed to appear more believable or to preserve their masculinity. If this is the case, perhaps caseworkers perceive this exaggeration and therefore are less likely to believe any part of the victim's story, or that any abuse occurred at all. In

other words, exaggeration may actually lessen the credibility of the male victim leading to a lower substantiation rate.

Discriminant Analyses

It is because the descriptive analyses found relatively few differences in the cases with male victims and the cases with female victims that the discriminant analyses are so interesting. It is difficult to ascertain why, if the characteristics of the cases do not look different, the case outcomes are so different. This is the question the discriminant analyses try to answer. The variables may look the same, but they may make different contributions to the outcome decision.

The statistical significance of the discriminant analysis may be a poor indicator of the function's ability to discriminate between the two groups, because with ample sample size, differences in group means may not be great, but will still achieve statistical significance. Therefore, the classification matrix (Table 4.7) is necessary to determine the predictive ability of a discriminant function (Hair et al., 1995). These discriminant analyses did an excellent job of classifying the cases as substantiated or unsubstantiated. The analysis for the male sample correctly classified 70.83% of the cases, while the analysis for the female sample correctly classified 64.27% of the cases.

Interestingly, the number one discriminator between substantiated and unsubstantiated cases for both males and females was the number of contacts made with the subject of the report. This suggests that caseworkers are really listening to the victims of abuse. As they have more contacts with the victim, the likelihood of substantiation goes up. These results emphasize what an important source of information the victim is. As the number of contacts with the victim of the alleged abuse increases, the caseworker has increased opportunity to uncover credible evidence to substantiate the allegation. However, it is also possible that caseworkers are willing to invest time and energy making contacts in cases that appear credible from the beginning.

The number of contacts with the person who made the report is an important discriminatory variable for males but not females. One possible explanation for this finding is that males are younger and maybe are not able to provide as high quality information as the older female victims. So, perhaps the contacts with the person who made the report become all the more important because the reporter is an adult and able to provide more reliable information. This finding is also relevant given the finding that reports with male victims are more likely to come from anonymous reporters than reports with female victims. Again, if the reporter is anonymous, the caseworker cannot have any contacts with him/her; therefore, it is possible

that this lack of contact with the reporter may contribute to lower substantiation rates for cases with male victims.

When one looks at the means for the discriminant function analysis, an interesting finding with respect to victim age emerges. There is a big difference in the ages of female victims in substantiated versus unsubstantiated cases, however this is not the case for males. Cases with older girls are more likely to be substantiated than cases with younger girls. We know that in this sample, girls are on the average older than males and that cases with female victims are more likely to be substantiated. With this in mind, perhaps it is the case that older girls are a better source of information than younger girls, and that girls are a better or more reliable source of information than boys in general because they are older. Although the age difference between girls and boys is only a couple of years, developmentally that couple of years is important because girls are more developmentally advanced than boys. This explanation once more goes back to the issue of the ability of male victims to effectively communicate with the caseworker about the alleged abuse incident.

The variable "total number of allegations in the report" was listed fourth in discriminatory power for males; however, if we disregard the variable "number of contacts with other people" due to its modest correlation with the other contact variables (see Table 4.3) and low standardized discriminant function coefficient (see Table 4.6), and look at the value of the

standardized discriminant function coefficient for “number of allegations,” it seems to be important to substantiation for males but not females (see Table 4.6 and Table 4.5, respectively). Objectively, the number of allegations does not differ between cases with male victims (mean = 2.00) and cases with female victims (mean = 2.03), and does not make a difference in terms of the total substantiation rate. Nevertheless, it is more likely that for females it is the sex abuse allegation that is being substantiated. Of the substantiated cases with female victims, 89.5% have a substantiated sex abuse allegation, but in only 82.9% of the substantiated cases with a male victim is it the sex abuse allegation that is being substantiated. This means that the remainder of the cases with male victims were being substantiated on some other allegation. Remember that in New York state, for a case to be substantiated, only one of the allegations in the report needs to be substantiated for the entire case to be substantiated. In general, sexual abuse is not as easily observed in males as in females. So, since sexual abuse is harder to prove in males, perhaps caseworkers are looking for other possible allegations to substantiate the case so that victims get the help they need. If there is a greater number of allegations, there are more possibilities for case substantiation.

Limitations and Implications of the Research

Limitations of the study

A possible limitation of this study is that the data it utilizes are eleven years old. This might jeopardize the generalizability of the results, however a study by Knudsen (1988) using CPS reports over a 20 year period, found that there was stability in the characteristics of victims and perpetrators and the pattern of mistreatment over that length of time. Similarly, according to the NCCAN statistics for 1992 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1994), the characteristics of victims look very similar to this data set. The age distribution for sexual abuse nearly parallels this data set. In 1992, both genders have a peak in the rate of abuse during the preschool years, there is a drop off for both sexes during the school years, and there is a diverging path during adolescence, with the rate for males dropping sharply, and the rate for females rising sharply.

Also despite the age of the data, this is a unique data set consisting of actual reports of alleged abuse and information on actual case determinations, and the information yielded by these analyses reveals some interesting findings which can be used as a springboard for future research.

Another limitation is the sample size. Unfortunately, the size of the sample of cases with male victims was not large enough to split for the purpose of cross-validation of the discriminant function analysis.

One final limitation was that the coding reliability was not available from the original researchers. However, the researchers appear to have used very stringent procedures to ensure the accuracy of the data. The coders were monitored by six supervisors who double coded cases to check for errors. The supervisors independently recoded the first five cases done by each coder to check for errors, and approximately 5% of the subsequent records were check-coded in this way. Therefore, it seems that the data should be quite accurate.

Implications of the research

An implication of this research is that maybe we are doing a better job of educating mandated reporters about what sexual abuse looks like for females, but not males. The literature on sexual abuse shows that the signs or symptoms of abuse are different for male victims and female victims (Black & DeBlassie, 1993; Roane, 1992; Young et al., 1994). Also, the characteristics of the abuse itself are different for abuse involving a female victims and abuse involving a male victim (Black & DeBlassie, 1993; Dube & Hebert, 1988; Farber et al., 1984; Levesque, 1994; Roane, 1992). One way to improve the likelihood of substantiation for reports of alleged sexual abuse involving male victims would be to have more of these reports come from mandated reporting sources. To do this, we may need to better educate them about what sexual abuse looks like when it involves a male victim, and how

that differs from when it involves a female victim. This education might increase the likelihood that they will recognize possible signs of sexual abuse in male children and then be willing to report their suspicions to protective services.

Specific targets for this education about the differences in sexual abuse for males and females are social services personnel and school staff. These two mandated reporting sources report abuse involving a female victim far more often than abuse involving a male victim. Social services reported more female victims than male victims of sexual abuse at a ratio of about 5:3, and school staff reported approximately only one male victim for every two female victims.

Some directions for future research might include obtaining more detailed data about what kind of information caseworkers get from a “contact” with the victim or someone else with relevant information. This would help us understand how the contact variables relate to the substantiation decision. Another interesting idea worth exploring is the role that the severity of the abuse plays in the decision to substantiate, and if it differs by gender. It also will be necessary for other studies to try to replicate these results to increase our confidence in the conclusion that reports involving male and female victims are not being handled differently. Future research must continue to explore why it is that cases with female victims are substantiated at a higher rate than cases with male victims.

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APPENDIX: LIST OF VARIABLES

Table A.1

List of Variables.

Variable Name	Description	Values
SEXABUSE	Whether or not an allegation of sex abuse was in the report	1=Sexual Abuse 0=Not Present
CHAGE	Age of the sampled child at time of report	Numerical Age
CHETHN	Ethnicity of the sampled child	1=White 2=Black 3=Hispanic 4=Other
CHSEX	Sex of the sampled child	0=Female 1=Male
ADTOTAL	Total number of perpetrators in the report	# of adults

Table A.1 Continued.

Variable Name	Description	Values
ALTOTAL	Total number of allegations in the report	# of allegations
CHTOTAL	Total number of children in the report	# of children
MANDATE	Whether or not the source of the report was a mandated reporter.	0=Nonmandated 1=Mandated
XREF	Whether or not there was a cross reference on that family in the central register	0=None 1=One 2=Two or more
DATEDIF	Total number of days the investigation remained open	# of days

Table A.1 Continued.

Variable Name	Description	Values
XCOURT	Whether or not court action was taken	0=No Court Action Taken 1=Court Action Taken
XOTHCON	Number of contacts made with other people who may have information about the case.	0=None 1=One 2=Two 3=Three or Four 4=Five, Six, or Seven 5=Eight through Fourteen 6=Fifteen or more
XREPCON	Number of contacts made with the reporter	0=None 1=One 2=Two 3=Three or Four 4=Five or more

Table A.1 Continued.

Variable Name	Description	Values
XSUBCON	Number of contacts made with the subject of the report	0=None 1=One or Two 2=Three or Four 3=Five or Six 4=Seven through Ten 5=Eleven or more
INDICATE	Whether or not the report was substantiated (indicated)	1=Indicated report 0=Unfounded report

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