



Recent Research Affecting Child Abuse Investigations

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Our Mission:

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

Learning Objectives

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

Widom, C.S. & Massey, C. (2015).

A prospective examination of whether childhood sexual abuse predicts subsequent sexual offending, JAMA Pediatrics, DOI:
[10.1001/jamapediatrics.2014.3357](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2014.3357)

Is there a victim to offender link?

- Purpose - to determine if a history of child maltreatment makes one at greater risk to commit a sexual offense subsequently in life.
- Cases from the records of a Midwest metropolitan area's county juvenile and adult criminal courts between 1967 and 1971 involving:
 - Children younger than 12 years old at the time of the abuse or neglect

Is there a victim to offender link?

- Children who experienced abuse were matched with children of similar gender, race/ethnicity, DOB, similar neighborhood.
- 1,575 individuals:
 - 908 abuse/neglect cases
 - 667 matched control subjects
 - Gender:
 - 51% were female
 - 49% were male

Is there a victim to offender link?

- Criminal histories were compiled from searches conducted in:
 - 1987-1988
 - 1994
 - 2013
- The 2013 searches included information from:
 - FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC)
 - State law enforcement agency in the Midwestern state where the records were originally obtained regarding the children

Is there a victim to offender link?

- 6.7% of the overall sample had been charged with a sexual offense
 - 84% of these offenders were male
- Individuals with a history of physical abuse or neglect were significantly more likely to be arrested for a sex crime than non-abused peers
 - **Not true for sexual abuse!**

Fedina, L. (2015).

Use and misuse of research in books on sex trafficking: Implications for interdisciplinary researchers, practitioners, and advocates, *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, Vol. 16(2), pp. 188-198.

The Truth Shall Prevail

- **Purpose** - examine research on sex trafficking that is being presented to the general public in books
- **Subjects/Design:**
 - Author reviewed 42 books on sex trafficking published between 2005 and 2012 – all published at least five years since the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in 2000.

The Truth Shall Prevail

- Books Reviewed:
 - 27 were academic in style, published by university and academic presses for use in college classrooms and for colleagues in their respective fields of study
 - 15 books were non-academic and were authored by individuals who had a professional or personal interest in sex trafficking
 - 10 were published by less than mainstream publishers
 - 5 were published by more mainstream publishers (Harper and Free Press)

The Truth Shall Prevail

- A total of 33 books (79%) rely on prevalence data from three main “expert” sources
 - U.S. State Department – used in 27 books (64%)
 - Kevin Bales – used in 15 books (36%)
 - Estes and Weiner – used in 12 books (27%)

The Truth Shall Prevail

- U.S. State Department – used in 27 books (64%)
 - 2001 – estimated that 45,000-50,000 individuals in the U.S. were trafficked each year, and as many as 700,000 worldwide
 - 2003 – reduced estimate to 18,000-20,000 victims
 - 2004 – reduced estimate again to 14,500-17,500
 - 2007 – revised worldwide estimate to 800,000
 - Methodology never published - discovered by NE University and the Urban Institute as flawed
 - 2006 – U.S. GAO released a report criticizing these data for “using incongruous methods and unreliable data to project the final estimations.”

The Truth Shall Prevail

- Kevin Bales – used in 15 books (36%)
 - Published *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* (1999)
 - Estimates over 27 million people are living in slavery worldwide
 - In 2012 (third edition) Bales states, “I am the first person to admit this is a rough and flawed estimate of a hidden and poorly defined crime”

The Truth Shall Prevail

- Estes and Weiner – used in 12 books (27%)
 - Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico (2001)
 - Suggested 326,000 youth are “at-risk for commercial sexual exploitation”
 - Analysis conducted by the Crimes Against Children Research Center at UNH (Stransky & Finkelhor, 2008) found major methodological flaws in this study

The Truth Shall Prevail

- More than \$500 million dollars of federal funding have been expended to fight human trafficking since 2008
- Between 2008 and 2010, only 2,515 human trafficking incidents have been investigated by law enforcement task forces in the U.S.
 - 2,065 were sex trafficking
- Estimate from Northeastern University and the Urban Institute based on all available information on human trafficking in the U.S.
 - 5,166-60,476 victims of human trafficking victims

Adams, W. & Flynn, A. (2017).

Federal prosecution of commercial sexual exploitation of children cases, 2004-2013, U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report.

Federal CSEC Prosecutions

- **Purpose** – identify the frequency and relative pattern changes in the federal prosecution of child pornography possession, child pornography production, and child sex trafficking between 2004 and 2013.
- **Data for this report came from three agencies:**
 - Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys National Legal Information Office Network System
 - Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts Criminal Master File
 - Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts' Probation and Pretrial Services Automated Case Tracking System

Federal CSEC Prosecutions

- From 2004-2013, a total of 37,105 suspects referred to U.S. Attorneys' for prosecution had a lead charge of CSEC
 - Possession of Child Pornography – 72%
 - Child Sex Trafficking – 18%
 - Child Pornography Production – 10%
- Growth in cases between 2004-2013
 - Production of Child Pornography – 195% (218 to 643)
 - Child Sex Trafficking – 111% (488 to 1,031)
 - Possession of Child Pornography – 28%
 - No growth since 2007

Federal CSEC Prosecutions

- 2013 Cases
 - Child Pornography Possession – 2,140
 - Child Pornography Production - 528
 - Child Sex Trafficking - 586

Federal CSEC Prosecutions– Suspect Profiles

- Possession of Child Pornography
 - Male (99%)
 - White (87%)
 - U.S. Citizens (98%)
 - Older than other CSEC suspects
 - No prior felony convictions (82%)

Federal CSEC Prosecutions– Suspect Profiles

- Production of Child Pornography
 - Male (93.5%)
 - White (81.1%)
 - U.S. Citizen (97.6%)
 - No prior felony conviction (71.7%)

Federal CSEC Prosecutions– Suspect Profiles

- Child Sex Trafficking
 - Male (89%)
 - Race
 - White – 60%
 - Black – 25%
 - Hispanic – 12%
 - Younger than other CSEC suspects
 - U.S. Citizens (94%)
 - Prior felony conviction (30%)

Varma, S., Gillespie, S., McCracken, C., & Greenbaum, V.J. (2015).

Characteristics of child commercial sexual
exploitation and sex trafficking victims presenting
for medical care in the United States, *Child Abuse
and Neglect*,

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2015.04.004>

CSEC MD – What might you see?

- Purpose - identify characteristics of CSEC patients vs. CSA victims not related to CSEC when seeking medical care at a large metropolitan hospital
- Subjects - All cases of “suspected CSEC” from 2011-2013 with patients ages 12-18 & control group from same hospital records for patients ages 12-18 with a diagnosis of child sexual abuse between 2010-2013.

CSEC MD – What might you see?

- Medical record review was conducted by a senior medical student who received oversight and feedback from the senior researcher.
- CSEC patients were matched with controls on:
 - Age at first CSEC exam
 - Date of CSEC exam
 - Race/ethnicity
 - Gender
- At least two matched control subjects were sought for each suspected CSEC subject.

CSEC MD – What might you see?

- Subjects:
 - CSEC victims – 27
 - CSA victims – 54
- Average Age:
 - CSEC victims – 15.7 years
 - CSA victims – 15.2 years
- Race/Ethnicity:
 - CSEC victims – African-American (56%), White (30%), Non-Hispanic (89%)
 - CSA victims – African-American (53%), White (32%), Non-Hispanic (84%)

CSEC MD – What might you see?

- Significantly more common in the CSEC group:
 - How long the patient had been sexually active
 - Frequency of condom use
 - Prior history of STI
 - Use of contraception other than condoms
 - History of violence by parents/caregivers
 - History of violence with sexual activity
 - Drug/Alcohol use
 - History of running away from home
 - History of Child Protective Services involvement
 - History of Law Enforcement involvement
- 46% of the CSEC victims had seen a medical professional within the past two months

Quayle, E. & Newman, E. (2016).

An exploratory study of public reports to investigate patterns and themes of requests for sexual images of minors online, *Crime Science*, Vol. 5(2), DOI 10.1186/S40163-016-0050-0.

Online Risks??

- Purpose – use online reports from the public to Cybertip.ca to explore:
 - Types of behavior that alerted concerned adults/youth to make a report,
 - Information available about the young person,
 - Information about the suspect,
 - How the suspect and offender interacted with each other.

Online Risks??

- **Subjects/Design:**

- Cybertip.ca reviewed all reports classified by analysts as **luring** between September 2007-June 2011 to determine if there was presence of “luring” (communication with a person under 18 for the purposes of facilitating a sexual offense or abduction).
- 264 cases meeting this criteria were identified (about one per week), but 74 were excluded due to insufficient confirmation that grooming had occurred.
- N = 150

Online Risks??

- Reporter
 - Family member – 50%
 - Victim – 30.7%
 - Friend – 4.0%
 - Babysitter – 1.3%
 - Neighbor - 0.67%
- Gender of Victim
 - Female – 86%
 - Male 14%
- Age of Victim – mostly teenagers
- Gender of Suspect
 - Male – 90%
 - Female – 10%

Online Risks??

- Additional text (instant messaging, moderated game sites, social networking sites, skype-like programs, games with video and chat functions, etc.) were available in 166 (63%) of the cases
 - 94 of these included chat log data
- Themes observed in these 166 cases:
 - Request for sexual images of victim – 93%
 - Voyeurism (requesting victim to do something sexual) – 83%
 - Exhibitionism by offender – 36%
 - Contact request – 33%
 - Resistance shown by victim – 33%
 - Threats by offender – 24%
 - Victim self-generated content – 19%
 - Mobile phone involved – 17%
 - Deception of offender age and/or gender – 7%

**Earhart, B., Danby, M.C., Brubacher,
S.P., Powell, M.B., & Sharman, S.
(2018).**

A comparison of responses to substantive transition prompts in interviews with children, *Child Maltreatment*, DOI: 10.1177/1077559518756827, 1-5.

Impact of transition prompts in FI's

- **Purpose** – compare children's responses to two transition prompting phrasings on rates of disclosure:
 - “Tell me *what* you're here to talk to me about today”
 - “Tell me *why* you're here to talk to me about today”
- **Subjects/Design:**
 - Children 5 to 9 years old were recruited from primary schools across Australia.
 - They were randomly assigned to the *what* (n=198) or *why* (n=203) conditions.

Impact of transition prompts in FI's

- **Subjects/Design:**

- Children experienced four 25 minute scripted activity sessions which centered around six main activities (e.g., listening to a story, doing a puzzle)
- They were then interviewed 3-14 days after the final activity session.
- All interviews were conducted by the same interviewer who was blind to the assigned condition.
- After building rapport, the interviewer posed the assigned transition prompt.
- Children's initial responses to the transition prompts were coded as ***informative*** (made reference to some aspect of the activities) or ***uninformative*** (no reference to the activities).

Impact of transition prompts in FI's

- Overall, children's answers were *informative* 63% of the time:
 - Older children were *informative* 69% of the time
 - Younger children were *informative* 49% of the time
 - Older children were **1.41 times more informative** than younger children.
- Impact of transition prompt:
 - **What** prompt - responded *informatively* 72% of the time
 - **Why** prompt - responded *informatively* 52% of the time
 - Children who received the **what** prompt were **1.38 times** more informative than those who received the **why** prompt.

Leach, C., Powell, M.B., Sharman, S.J. & Anglim, J. (2016).

The relationship between children's age and disclosures of sexual abuse during forensic interviews, *Child Maltreatment*, 1-10, DOI: 10.1177/1077559516675723.

What predicts disclosure in a FI?

- **Purpose** – examine the association between age and disclosure in conjunction with other variables likely to affect disclosure rates:
 - Child-suspect relationship
 - Suspect's history of violence and sexual assault
 - Suspect having prior charges for violent offenses
- **Subjects/Design:**
 - Data was gathered from a police case management database for sexual abuse cases involving a child between 3-16 during 2011. Suspect had to be at least 10 years old.
 - 527 cases were included in the study. Forensic interviews were done by police or child protection officers who were trained in a modified version of the NICHD protocol.

What predicts disclosure in a FI?

- Mean age was 10.93 years
 - Ages 3-5 - 12.3%
 - Ages 6-12 – 43.1%
 - Ages 13-16 – 44.6%

- Gender:
 - Female – 81.2%
 - Male – 18.8%

What predicts disclosure in a FI?

- 66.0% of cases had at least one form of corroborating evidence (medical evidence, corroborating witness(es), forensic evidence (DNA, suspect phone calls))
- 81% of the children disclosed at least one incident of child sexual abuse during forensic interview
- The proportion of cases in which children disclosed increased from age 3 to age 11, and then decreased to age 16

What predicts disclosure in a FI?

- As age increased:
 - The proportion of cases with extrafamilial suspects and penetration increased
 - The cases with male victims and juvenile suspects decreased
- Two case characteristics were significantly associated with a disclosure in forensic interview:
 - Delay to police report:
 - If the abuse occurred more than 12 months prior to the interview 89.9% of the children disclosed.
 - If it was less than 12 months since the abuse occurred, only 79.5% of the children disclosed.
 - Prior disclosure:
 - 82.8% of the children who had made a prior disclosure disclosed during the forensic interview
 - 65.3% of those who had not previously disclosed made a disclosure in the forensic interview

What predicts disclosure in a FI?

- Younger children were more likely to disclose when suspects had histories of violence
- Older children were less likely to disclose when suspects had histories of violence
- QUOTE – “the results of the current study indicate that disclosures during forensic interviews are not only related to children’s ages but also to other case characteristics, such as the relationship between the child and the suspect, the severity of the abuse, the length of delay between the offense and the report to police, whether the child had previously disclosed, and whether the suspect had a previous charge for a violent crime.”

Malloy, L.C. & Mugno, A.P. (2016).

Children's recantation of adult wrongdoing: An experimental investigation, *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 145 (2016), 11-21.

Recantation

- Purpose – conduct the first experimental study of children's recantation of adult wrongdoing to shed light on:
 - How often children recant true allegations of adult wrongdoing after disclosing
 - Factors that predict recantation of true allegations
 - Note: two factors of particular interest based on prior research – caregiver supportiveness and children's age
- **Subjects/Design:**
- 73 children fully participated:
 - Ages 6-7 – 38
 - Ages 8-9 - 35

Recantation

- Children participated in a 15 minute “health and safety event”:
- Children were told a box labeled “Do Not Touch” should not be there and should have been taken to a local school. They were put aside after children were told they were fragile and should not be played with.
- Children visited three stations:
 - Temperature check
 - Care of Cuts
 - Dangers

Recantation

- In Dangers presentation:
 - Experimenter took three dolls from the “Do Not Touch” box which were relevant to the Danger presentation, and told the child “I know we are not supposed to touch them, but I think it will be okay as long as we are very careful with them since they are fragile”.
 - The child was given two puppets, and the experimenter took one which was set to break.
 - When this puppet broke, the experimenter said, *“Oh no! I broke it! We shouldn’t have touched these puppets when we were told not to. I will just put them away and maybe nobody will notice. Let’s have this be our secret and not tell anybody that the fireman puppet broke. I might get into trouble if anyone finds out I broke the puppet!”*

Recantation

- A different person interviewed the children immediately following the event using a modified version of the NICHD Investigative Interview Protocol.
 - This interview included some suggestive questions, and if the child did not disclose about the broken puppet, then the puppet was shown to the child who was asked what happened (introduction of evidence)
- Children were given a Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-IV (PPVT-4) to assess for verbal abilities

Recantation

- Children's mothers were coached to be either:
 - Supportive – “you did a great job of telling the truth”
 - Non-supportive condition – “you are getting her in a lot of trouble – need to fix it if anyone else talks to you”
- Child was then interviewed by a different person after mothers had communicated the above to their kids.
- This interviewer used the same approach as in Interview 1, but told the child they had lost the notes from Interview 1 so they needed to find out exactly what had happened during the event.

Recantation

- Recantation was not related to any demographic variables
- Children's verbal ability was equivalent across the various conditions and not related to recantation
- Timing of children's disclosure about broken puppet:
 - Free Recall – 20.5%
 - Focused Questions – 38.4%
 - Suggestive Questions – 31.5%

Recantation

- 23.3% of the children recanted their prior disclosure about the broken puppet during Interview 2
 - None of the children in the supportive caregiver condition recanted
 - 46% of the children in the non-supportive caregiver condition recanted
- No significant age differences were found related to recantation

Katz, C. & Barnett, Z. (2015).

Children's narratives of alleged child sexual abuse
offender behaviors and the manipulation process,
Psychology of Violence,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0039023>

Manipulation Process

- Purpose – increase our understanding of offenders' manipulation tactics identified during FI's
 - First article to specifically reframe the seduction and solicitation of children from **grooming to manipulation**
- 95 investigative interviews with children (5-13 years old) conducted in 2011 which met criteria:
 - Alleged sexual abuse of a child
 - The was the first forensic interview of the child
 - Determined to be a high probability that the abuse occurred based on external evidence
 - Child made allegations & disclosed in the FI
 - No developmental disabilities identified

Manipulation Process

- Case characteristics:
 - All alleged offenders were male
 - More than half of the children involved were abused by offenders known to the child, but not family members
 - More than half involved multiple incidents of abuse
 - Forensic interviews were conducted using NICHD protocol.
- Manipulation Process – any action performed by the alleged abuser before or immediately after the incident of abuse (establishment of emotional rapport with child, manipulation of the child's family, use of temptation or coercion immediately before and/or after the abuse).

Manipulation Process

- Most commonly used Manipulation Tactics:
 - “Manipulation of the Family” – 68%
 - “Establishment of Emotional Rapport” – 59%
 - “Coercion” – 39%
 - “Providing treats” – 17%
- Although coercion was only identified by 39% of children, it was the second most reported offender behavior in children’s narratives – after the actual abuse

Manipulation Process

- Building Emotional Rapport – significantly more present with female victims
- Manipulation of the Family – significantly more associated with multiple incidents of abuse and the alleged offender being a family member

DeLorenzi, L., Daire, A.P., & Bloom, Z.D. (2016).

Predicting treatment attrition for child sexual abuse victims: The role of child trauma and co-occurring caregiver intimate partner violence, *Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation*, Vol. 7(1), 40-52.

Does IPV affect kids completing treatment?

- **Purpose** - determine whether a relationship exists between child trauma symptomatology and a CSA client's therapy graduation status; and a relationship on a caregiver's exposure to interpersonal violence predicts whether a child completes treatment.

Subjects/Design:

- 132 case records from NCAtrak for children seen at a CAC in Florida between 2010 and 2012:
- Sexual abuse victims
- Children were no longer in treatment
- Completed both the Trauma and Attachment Belief Scale (TABS) and Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children (TSCC) at intake
- Had caregivers who either confirmed or denied past or current Interpersonal Violence (IPV)

Does IPV affect kids completing treatment?

Findings:

- Rates for completing treatment:
 - No IPV in home – 50%
 - IPV in home – 29%
- The odds of a CSA victim prematurely terminating treatment are 2.5 times higher if parents confirm past or current IPV than children whose parents denied IPV.

Eldred, M.L., Gifford, E.J., & McCutchan, S.A. (2016).

Factors predicting prosecution of child maltreatment cases, *Children and Youth Services Review*, 70(2016), 201-205.

What predicts a case being prosecuted?

- **Purpose** – to expand on existing literature in identifying case characteristics affecting the prosecution of child abuse
- **Subjects/Design** - Data came from five sources:
 - Electronic court records (2005-2013)
 - Child Protective Services records
 - Court files
 - Birth records
 - Geolytics
- Ratio was calculated for number of cases with criminal child maltreatment charges/total CPS reports.
 - Court records were then pulled from two counties with the highest ratio, two counties with the lowest ratio, and the four most populous counties.
 - A total of 406 court records were included in analysis.

What predicts a case being prosecuted?

- 40% of persons charged with child maltreatment were prosecuted for child maltreatment or another charge
- 24.5% of those prosecuted were not convicted on any charge
- 21% of those arrested were convicted of the child maltreatment charge
- 39% of those arrested were also charged with a concurrent charge (11% of these were felonies)
- There was physical evidence in only 18% of the arrests.

What predicts a case being prosecuted?

- Two case characteristics significantly associated with being prosecuted:
 - Presence of any concurrent non-child maltreatment charge
 - Current felony non-child maltreatment charge
- CPS factors significantly associated with a case being prosecuted:
 - Prior CPS report more than 30 days prior to the arrest date
 - CPS investigation or assessment for abuse within 30 days of the arrest date
- QUOTE – “if the goal is not to prosecute and convict specifically for child maltreatment, but rather to incapacitate the offender under any charged offense, it is logical, as the data suggest, for a prosecutor to pursue cases with clearer burdens of proof that do not require the trauma of having a child testify” (p. 205)

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