

-edited by
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The purpose of Journal Highlights is to inform Advisor readers of current research on various aspects of child maltreatment. Selected articles from journals representing APSAC's multidisciplinary membership are presented in annotated bibliography form. APSAC members are invited to contribute to Journal Highlights by sending a copy of current articles, along with a two to three sentence review, to Thomas F. Curran, MSW, JD, 1405 72nd Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19126-1645.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Conte, J.R. (1992). Has this child been sexually abused? Dilemmas for the mental health professional who seeks the answer. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 19 (1), 54-73.

This article presents a review and analysis of some of the most important and controversial issues involved in the forensic mental health practice of determining if a child has been sexually abused. It includes a discussion of issues which affect how useful a professional evaluation will be to the legal system.

Dawson, B., Vaughan, A.R. and Wagner, W.G. (1992). Normal responses to sexually anatomically detailed dolls. *Journal of Family Violence*, 7 (2), 135-152.

The purpose of this study was to examine the responses of 20 normal, non-sexually abused children to sexually anatomically detailed dolls. Consistent with previous research in this area, there were no instances in which a child acted out sexually or described sexual intercourse, oral sex or fondling with the dolls. In contrast to this low incidence of sexual aggression, however, a rather high incidence of sexual exploratory play was found. Also, the dolls elicited more behavioral affection and exploratory play from girls than boys, and were of little interest to either gender during free-play periods.

Elliott, D.M. and Briere, J. (1992). The sexually abused boy: Problems in manhood. *Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality*, 26 (2), 68-71.

Common clinical and psychological disorders experienced by many men who were sexually abused as children are reviewed. A concise overview of research findings on the immediate after effects and long-term sequelae of sexual victimization of boys is presented. Includes useful suggestions for physicians who encounter adult men with possible childhood abuse-related symptoms.

Lanktree, C. Briere, J. and Zaidi, L. (1991). The incidence and impact of sexual abuse in a child outpatient sample: The role of direct inquiry. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 15 (4), 447-453.

The impact of direct inquiry about sexual abuse in a sample of child psychiatric outpatients was examined. Rates of sexual abuse were calculated from two groups of 64 total patient charts: 29 randomly selected from outpatient files without abuse inquiry, and 35 examined after clinicians directly asked about sexual abuse. Reports of sexual abuse increased four-fold, from 7% to 31%, when patients were directly asked whether they had been molested. Considering these findings, the devastating and potentially life-threatening consequences of not routinely questioning child and adult patients about abuse are discussed.

Murphy, W.D. and Peters, J.M. (1992). Profiling child sexual abusers: Psychological considerations. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 19 (1), 24-37.

By reviewing the scientific literature on the use of psychological procedures to develop profiles of sexual offenders, this article indicates that there is currently very limited empirical data available to support any clear profiling of child sexual abusers. Offender profiling research using the MMPI and penile plethysmography is examined in detail.

Roane, T.H. (1992). Male victims of sexual abuse: A case review with a child protective team. *Child Welfare*, 71 (3), 231-239.

This article presents descriptive study of 77 cases of sexual abuse of boys seen for assessment by a multidisciplinary child protection team in Florida. An examination of the alleged offenders relationship to their victims revealed that 56% of the boys reported abuse by someone other than a parent or step-parent. Other findings of this study appear to confirm those of earlier research on the sexual victimization of boys.

LEGAL ISSUES

Davies, G. (1992). Protecting the child witness in the courtroom. *Child Abuse Review*, 1 (1), 33-41.

Legal obstacles which, until recently, faced child witnesses testifying in British criminal courts are examined. The article reviews the major changes in the admissibility of children's evidence which have resulted from the 1988 and 1991 Criminal Justice Acts in England and Wales. Both pieces of legislation made it easier for children to offer evidence in court through the use of a video-link or closed-circuit television system. This procedure satisfies the confrontation clause requirements of British law and, according to British research to date, provides for better, more reliable testimony by children. Particularly noteworthy is the overwhelmingly positive response the video-link has received from all levels of the British legal system.

Peters, J. M. and Murphy, W.D. (1992). Profiling child sexual abusers: Legal considerations. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 19 (1), 38-53.

The leading case law dealing with the admissibility of sexual offender profile evidence is reviewed. Citing very persuasive psychological and legal support for their position, the authors conclude that such evidence has absolutely no place in the court room. A brief analysis of the minority view of California courts, which admit offender profile testimony, is also presented.

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Briere, J. (1992). Methodological issues in the study of sexual abuse effects. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 60* (2), 196-203.

Several ways in which the methodology of sexual abuse research might be improved are outlined. Methodological issues examined in detail include cross-sectional vs. longitudinal designs, reporter biases, nonequivalent comparison groups, effects of abuse definitions, conclusions regarding causality, and constraints on generalization. While noting the considerable value of the existing studies on abuse sequelae, the author advocates a "second-wave" of abuse research consisting of more tightly controlled and methodologically sophisticated studies aimed at disentangling the antecedents, correlates, and effects of sexual abuse.

Farrar, M.J., and Goodman, G.S. (1992). Developmental changes in event memory. *Child Development, 63*, 173-187.

This study examined developmental differences in children's (age 4 and 7 years) recall of repeated standard events (i.e., a normal routine), and events that deviated from the normal routine. The event was an unfamiliar laboratory event that subjects experienced one or three times. Following the final visit, deviations from the standard routine were introduced. The researchers found that younger subjects had more difficulty distinguishing between the standard routine and deviations, whereas older subjects remembered features of the standard and deviation visits.

Grasmick, H.G., Bursik, R.J. and Kimpel, M. (1991). Protestant fundamentalism and attitudes toward corporal punishment of children. *Violence and Victims, 6* (4), 283-298.

This thought-provoking research article examines the effect of religion and religious orientation, specifically Protestant fundamentalism, on attitudes toward corporal punishment in the home and in the schools. Extensive and sophisticated data analysis from a random sample of 368 adults revealed that Protestant fundamentalism is very closely linked to favorable attitudes regarding corporal punishment of children, with a belief in biblical literalism acting as the major reason for this view.

Kalichman, S.C. and Brosig, C.L. (1992). The effects of statutory requirements on child maltreatment reporting: A comparison of two state laws. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 62* (2), 284-296.

This article reports on two studies that utilized case vignettes to investigate the effects of different abuse indicators and different state reporting laws on the reporting of suspected child abuse by psychologists. Results of both studies showed an increased tendency to report when more evidence of abuse is available.

Kelley, S. J. (1992). Parental stress and child maltreatment in drug-exposed children. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 16* (3), 317-328.

This study examined the relationship between prenatal exposure to drugs and parenting stress and child maltreatment. Although no attempt was made to establish a cause and effect relationship, the results of this study empirically demonstrated that prenatal drug exposure is strongly associated with increased levels of parenting stress and child maltreatment. The discussion of certain characteristics of drug-exposed infants which make them difficult to care for has very important policy implications for intervention with drug-exposed families.

Poole, D.A., and White, L.T. (1991). Effects of question repetition on the eyewitness testimony of children and adults. *Developmental Psychology, 27*, 975-986.

This study examined the effects of repeated questions about a novel and ambiguous event on the accuracy of memory. The subjects were 4-, 6-, 8-year olds, and adults. Children were as accurate as adults when responding to open-ended questions, but 4 year olds were more likely to change responses to yes-no questions, and adults speculated more about specific answers to which they had no information. When open-ended questions were used, a moderate amount of repetition primarily influenced presentation style rather than accuracy.

Rudy, L., and Goodman, G. (1991). Effects of participation on children's reports: Implications for children's testimony. *Developmental Psychology, 27*, 527-538.

This study examined the effects of children's participation in a set of games with a man on their later recall of these games. Did participating, as opposed to only watching, make their memory more accurate? The researchers found that free recall and specific answers were related to age (ages 4 and 7), but not related to participation. However, participation lowered the children's susceptibility to suggestion. Children in both age groups showed few commission errors to false suggestions about actions relevant to child abuse allegations.

Journal reviewers for this issue included Thomas H. Roane, M.A., Child Protection Team, University of Florida Department of Pediatrics, Gainesville, FL, Kathleen Kendell-Tackett, Ph.D., Family Research Laboratory, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, and Thomas F. Curran. The Journal Highlights editor wishes to express special thanks to John Briere, Ph.D. for his help and contributions to this issue.