

The purpose of *Journal Highlights* is to inform readers of current research on various aspects of child maltreatment. APSAC members are invited to contribute to *Journal Highlights* by sending a copy of current articles (preferably published within the past six months), along with a two- or three-sentence review to Rochelle F. Hanson, PhD, CARE/SHCC, P.O. Box 117500, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-7500 (FAX 352 846-1030).

## Sexual Abuse

**Faller, K.C., & Corwin, D.L.** (1995). Children's interview statements and behaviors; Role in identifying sexually abused children. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 19*, 71-82

This article discusses the use of child interview (CI) data to decide whether a child has been sexually abused. The role of CI findings is examined from a historical perspective, and the challenge of researching criteria indicative of a true allegation is discussed. Existing studies of CI data are reviewed and critiqued. Examining CI findings in cases in which sexual abuse has been independently measured is a potentially useful type of research. Suggestions for future research on the determination of sexual abuse are offered.

**Friedrich, W.N. & Schafer, L.C.** (1995). Somatic symptoms in sexually abused children. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 20*(5), 661-670.

This article examines somatic symptoms in sexually abused versus nonabused children aged 3 to 12. Data were collected via parent reports. Results indicated that abused girls aged 3 to 6 and abused boys aged 7 to 12 were reported to have the greatest number of somatic symptoms. Force and number of perpetrators were abuse-specific variables found to be directly related to the number of somatic symptoms.

**Goodman, G.S., White, C. S., & Friedrich, W.N.** (1995). Psychological science and the use of anatomically detailed dolls in child sexual-abuse assessments, *Psychological Bulletin, 118*, 199-222.

A review of the historical use of anatomically detailed (ATD) dolls in clinical inquiry and in research on sexual behaviors in children, normative use of ATD dolls in nonreferred children, differences in children's play behavior and emotional reactions to ATD dolls, and memory and suggestibility issues relating to ATD doll use, this article is the product of an APA working group formed to review ATD doll research and practice. Recommendations for future research are provided.

**Kaufman, K.L., Hilliker, D.R., Lathrop, P., Daleiden, E.L., & Rudy, L.** (1996). Sexual offenders' modus operandi. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 11*, 19-34.

Two assessment approaches are compared—structured interviews and self-report questionnaires—on their abilities to provide details regarding sexual offenders' modus operandi from the perspectives of victims, incarcerated offenders, and offenders in outpatient treatment. Study findings indicated that structured interviews and questionnaires yielded consistent information. For modus operandi items that were not consistently reported, more information was obtained via the questionnaire format. However, the interview format revealed more about incarcerated offenders' use of threats and coercion to gain victim cooperation in sexual activity. Implications of these findings are discussed.

**Mannarino, A. P., & Cohen, J.A.** (1996). Abuse-related attributions and perceptions, general attributions, and locus of control in sexually abused girls. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 11*, 162-180.

This study examines abuse-related attributions and perceptions, general attributions, and locus of control and their impact on psychological symptomatology in sexually abused girls aged 7 to 12. Compared with normal controls, sexually abused girls endorsed significantly more abuse-related attributions and perceptions and general attributions. In the sexually abused group, abuse-related attributions and perceptions were the most significantly related to and predictive of self-reported psychological symptomatology.

**Vogeltanz, N.D. & Drabman, R.S.** (1995). A procedure for evaluating young children suspected of being sexually abused. "Child Abuse Special Series." *Behavior Therapy, 26*(4), 579-597

A procedure is presented for reducing the suggestibility effects when interviewing young children in suspected cases of sexual abuse, in response to research indicating that certain interviewer behaviors may distort or contaminate a child's memory of the original event or induce the child to change his or her statement about the original event. A primary component of the procedure is the use of a two-person interview team: an intake person and an unbiased interviewer (i.e., an interviewer with no prior knowledge of case details or allegations). The authors argue that such a procedure decreases evaluator bias and child suggestibility through increased statement validity.

**Wolfe, V.V. & Birt, J.** (1995). The psychological sequelae of child sexual abuse. *Advances in Clinical Child Psychology, 17*, 233-263.

This article examines individual differences in response to childhood sexual abuse (CSA) and compares commonalities of this population with other groups of children who have experienced stress and trauma.

*continued on next page*

Despite considerable heterogeneity among CSA victims, these children tend to display significantly higher levels of symptomatology than their nonabused, nonclinic-referred peers, with more instances of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptomatology and sexuality problems. Variables mediating CSA sequelae include the severity and course of CSA; the child's age at time of CSA, at time of disclosure, and at time of psychological assessment; the child's attributional style; and family variables.

## **Physical Abuse and Neglect**

**Dodge, K.A., Pettit, G.S., Bates, J.E., & Valente, E.** (1995). Social information-processing patterns partially mediate the effect of early physical abuse on later conduct problems. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 104*, 632-643.

In this study, the authors test the hypothesis that early physical abuse is associated with later externalizing behavior outcomes, and that this relation is mediated by the intervening development of biased social information-processing patterns. They assessed 584 randomly selected boys and girls for the lifetime experience of physical abuse. Early abuse increased the risk of teacher-rated externalizing outcomes in Grades 3 and 4 by fourfold, and this effect could not be accounted for by confounded ecological or child factors. Abuse was associated with later processing patterns (e.g., encoding errors, hostile attributional biases, accessing of aggressive responses, and positive evaluations of aggression), which, in turn, predicted later externalizing outcomes.

**Feldman, R.S., Salzinger, S., Rosario, M., & Alvarado, L.** (1995). Parent, teacher, and peer ratings of physically abused and nonmaltreated children's behavior. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 23*, 317-334.

Disturbances in social development and social behavior are examined in a sample of physically abused children (mean age 10.2 years), and compared with matched controls. Data were gathered from teachers, parents, and classmates of the subjects. Parents and teachers both rated significantly more behavioral disturbance in the abused children; peers' ratings were significantly and positively correlated with adults' ratings, especially those by teachers. Children's exposure to spouse or partner physical abuse reduced the difference in disturbance ratings between children who were themselves physically abused and those who were not.

**Haskett, M.E., Myers, L.W., Pirrello, V.E., & Dombalis, A.O.** (1995). Parenting style as a mediating link between parental emotional health and adjustment of maltreated children. "Child Abuse Special Series." *Behavior Therapy, 26*, 625-642.

This study examines the effects of parental style and parents' emotional health status on children's social-emotional functioning. Approaches to child rearing were expected to mediate the impact of parental emotional health on child adjustment. The sample consisted of 55 parent-child dyads referred to a cognitive-behavioral family treatment program because of child maltreatment. Analyses showed that both aspects of parental functioning predicted child adjustment. However, further analyses yielded support for the mediation mode: the impact of emotional health on child adjustment was significantly reduced when the effects of parenting style were controlled. Results suggest that parental approaches to childrearing play a key role in shaping children's social-emotional functioning.

**Herrenkohl, E.C., Herrenkohl, R.C., Rupert, L.J., & Egolf, B.P.** (1995). Risk factors for behavioral dysfunction: The relative impact of maltreatment, SES, physical health problems, cognitive ability, and quality of parent-child interaction. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 19*, 191-203.

Samples of physically abused and neglected, and nonabused, nonneglected children were assessed at two points in time (preschool age and school age). Variables represented several domains (e.g., parenting, family environment, child characteristics) that significantly affect behavioral functioning. Based on teachers' ratings, subjects were assigned to one of three groups: high, medium, and low functioning. Findings indicated that behavioral functioning was most strongly differentiated by the sociocultural and family climate in which the subject was raised, with physical and emotional maltreatment being significant but less powerful influences.

**Oates, R.K., & Bross, D.C.** (1995). What have we learned about treating child physical abuse? A literature review of the last decade. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 19*, 463-473.

This article reviews the literature on treatment of physically abused children and of physically abusive parents. Specific criteria were used to select studies for inclusion in the review (i.e., more than five subjects in the sample; at least 15% of the children in the sample had been physically abused; and either pre-/posttest, comparison group, or randomization between different treatments in the design were selected). The review revealed that a wide range of treatments have been used, the most popular for children being therapeutic daycare, with emphasis on improving developmental skills.

**OTHER ISSUES IN CHILD MALTREATMENT**

**Giovannoni, J.M.** (1995). Reports of child maltreatment from mandated and non-mandated reporters "Special Issue: Rationing child protection." *Children & Youth Services Review, 17*, 487-501.

The similarities and differences in the reports of child maltreatment to child protective services (CPS), received from both mandated and nonmandated reporters, were examined. Although significant differences were found between the kinds of maltreatment reported by various sources, these differences did not necessarily vary according to the reporters' mandated or nonmandated status. The reporters' status was found to be related to the nature of maltreatment being investigated and the degree to which the maltreatment was reported. The author concluded that there should be a mechanism to develop responsive policy.

**Knutson, J.F.** (1995). Psychological characteristics of maltreated children: Putative risk factors and consequences. *Annual Review of Psychology, 46*, 401-431.

This article reviews literature on the psychological characteristics of maltreated children. Methodological and public policy issues related to child sexual abuse are described. The epidemiology of maltreatment and risk factors in physical abuse and neglect are addressed. The article also describes the behavioral characteristics of abused and neglected children, transgenerational physical abuse, and the risk factors and behavioral correlates of sexual abuse. Considerable evidence exists that the maltreatment of children is widespread and that it can have significant adverse effects on the victims.

**McGee, R.A., Wolfe, D.A., Yuen, S.A., & Wilson, S.K.** (1995). The measurement of maltreatment: A comparison of approaches. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 19*, 233-249.

This article examines the comparability and predictive validity of three approaches to the measurement of maltreatment among 160 adolescents (aged 11 to 17) from a child protection agency population. Global ratings of maltreatment severity were made by three reporting sources: researchers on the basis of protection agency case files; protection agency social workers; and the subjects themselves. Ratings were made of five types of maltreatment: physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, and exposure to family violence. Comparison of ratings across sources indicated considerable disagreement with respect to judgments of maltreatment occurrence and severity.

**Reiniger, A., Robison, E., & McHugh, M.** (1995). Mandated training of professionals: A means for improving reporting of suspected child abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 19*, 63-69.

A sample of 1,368 professionals was surveyed 5 to 20 months after completing a two-hour course on the identification and reporting of child abuse and maltreatment. Of the cases of child abuse and neglect recognized by professionals, 69% were not reported to child protective services. The majority of recognized cases came from the police, hospitals, and mental health agencies. Mental health practitioners were better informed than other professionals, and teachers were among the least knowledgeable. All subjects were more familiar with the indicators of abuse and neglect and less familiar with the legal and technical aspects of reporting.

**Thompson, R.A., & Wilcox, B.L.** (1995). Child maltreatment research: Federal support and policy issues. *American Psychologist, 50*, 789-793.

Some of the problems that have been identified in federal research funding, administration, and support of research initiatives and training concerning child abuse and neglect are described. Remedies for these difficulties are outlined and priorities for new research in this area are identified. The authors also discuss ways to rejuvenate the federal government's role in this area, in league with a concerted commitment by behavioral scientists to conduct policy-relevant research.

**Widom, C. S., Ireland, T., & Glynn, P.J.** (1995). Alcohol abuse in abused and neglected children followed-up: Are they at increased risk? *Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 56*, 207-217.

This study investigated whether childhood victimization would lead to increased risk of alcohol abuse in young adulthood and whether there would be differential responses by gender and type of abuse. A sample comprised of male and female abused and/or neglected children were matched for age, race, sex, and approximate family social class with nonabused and nonneglected children. Subjects were followed prospectively into young adulthood. No relationship between childhood victimization and subsequent alcohol abuse was found in men. However, a significant bivariate relationship for women was found, and the relationship persisted when controlling for parental alcohol and/or drug problems, childhood poverty, race, and age.

**Wissow, L.S.** (1995). Child abuse and neglect. *New England Journal of Medicine, 332*, 1425-1431.

Diagnostic and therapeutic issues posed by child abuse and neglect are reviewed, including detection, credibility of children's reports, ways to obtain credible child disclosure, signs and symptoms of physical abuse, and controversies in the diagnosis of sexual abuse. The author also points out the importance of a team approach to treatment when working with abusive families.