Beliefs about the sexual victimization of children.

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BELIEFS ABOUT THE
SEXUAL VICTIMIZATION OF CHILDREN

A Master's Thesis Presented
by
REBECCA ALLEEN SHRUM

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
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BELIEFS ABOUT THE
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the last decade, public awareness of and concern about the sexual victimization of children has grown considerably. The number of reports to social service agencies has increased markedly, partly due to legislation in some states which mandates professionals to report suspected child abuse. Clinicians in mental health clinics are also reporting a substantial increase in the number of adult clients, who in the course of their therapies, report histories of childhood sexual victimization. Several books have been published within the past five years, predominantly about incest (e.g., Herman, 1981; Meiselman, 1978; Rush, 1980; Burgess, Groth, Holmstrom, and Sgroi, 1978). Media attention to the issue has increased phenomenally. Incest victims have been interviewed on television and numerous articles have appeared in popular magazines.

It is difficult for researchers to ascertain whether the actual sexual victimization of children is becoming more common or whether it is the incidence of reporting that is increasing. Estimates of prevalence vary substantially because, as with rape, it is assumed that a large percentage of incidents are never reported to police or social service agencies who would compile statistics. In a survey of approximately 800 students at five New England colleges, Finkelhor (1979) found that 19.2% of women and 8.6% of men reported childhood experiences of sexual victimization. In this college sample,
approximately 90% of the reported perpetrators were male, a figure which is consistent with estimates from other studies (Finkelhor, 1979).

Regardless of whether the actual occurrence of childhood sexual abuse is rising, mental health and social service agencies have experienced an increase in reported cases. Professionals often find themselves in the position of having not been trained to deal with sexual abuse and they lack guidelines for appropriate intervention and treatment strategies. The social or professional norms for what constitutes appropriate or inappropriate sexual activities involving children are complex, confusing, and/or unaddressed. In a recent survey of Boston professionals, Finkelhor, Gomes-Schwartz, and Horowitz (Note 1) found that "There exists a high degree of disagreement among agency personnel about the proper approach to handling sexual abuse. Different agencies give priorities to different kinds of interventions, and are at odds with one another about basic objectives in the management of cases." (p. 17) In particular they point to differences between the criminal justice system (where the primary goal is to prosecute the offender) and child protection agencies (which would rather keep families together and not press charges in some incest cases). This lack of consensus about how sex abuse cases should be handled, in the face of more frequent reports of sexual victimization, suggests that there may be conflicting social norms and beliefs about what constitutes sexual abuse and what should be done about it. It seems curious that the laws of most states identify sexual involvement with children as a
crime and yet the Department of Social Services and mental health personnel are often loathe to prosecute (or even report) perpetrators.

A further confusion in the literature about childhood sexual victimization is that it is not always clear what types of sexual behaviors are being described under the label of "sexual abuse." For example, Finkelhor (Note 2) differentiates between rape (which involves at least attempted intercourse and physical force) and sex abuse (which may involve more subtle forms of coercion and activities such as fondling of the genitals). Sink (Note 3) and Brant and Tisza (1977) further delineate a category that they call "sexual misuse" which includes behaviors that are either age-inappropriate, gender-inappropriate, or sexually overstimulating, but which don't always involve touching the child. For the purposes of this study, "child sexual victimization" and "child sexual abuse" will be used interchangably and in the broadest sense, to mean all inappropriate sexual activities between adults and children including what other authors call incest, child rape, sexual abuse, and sexual misuse. Furthermore, child sexual abuse is conceptualized as one type of sexual victimization (another type of sexual victimization is rape of adult women, for example) and as one type of child abuse and neglect (other categories include physical abuse, psychological abuse, and neglect).

The confusion and lack of consensus among professionals about what constitutes sexual abuse and what are appropriate intervention strategies is probably a reflection of complex and possibly changing social norms, beliefs and attitudes about this subject. The reason that public opinion and beliefs about the sexual victimization of
children are important is that they are presumably linked to behaviors. What a parent thinks about sexual abuse, for example, may determine how he or she responds to the child and the perpetrator following disclosure of a sex abuse situation. Attitudes and beliefs will influence the responses of the criminal justice system and social service agency personnel to the child, the perpetrator and the family as a whole. Beliefs and opinions that are held by a large segment of the population (social norms) will be reflected at an institutional level by the state laws regarding the criminality of adult sexual involvement with children, for example, or the age at which a child can legally "consent" to sexual activity.

Vignette Methodologies That Have Been Used to Study Beliefs About Sexual Victimization

Various vignette methodologies have been used to study beliefs and attitudes about sexual victimization, in addition to methodologies that utilize other self-report measures such as questionnaires, surveys, and interviews. According to Alexander and Becker (1978), "vignettes are short descriptions of a person or social situation which contain precise references to what are thought to be the most important factors in the decision-making or judgement-making processes of respondents." (p. 94) In most studies that utilize vignettes, respondents are presented with short descriptive paragraphs and are then asked to rate these vignettes along a designated dimension or rating scale. The dimension or judgement that is being measured is the dependent variable. The important factors which are thought to
affect the dependent variable and are referred to in the text of the vignettes are the independent variables. The number of factors or predictors of interest (i.e., independent variables) and the number of categories or levels of each independent variable depends on the particular design of the study. For example, independent variables that have been employed in studies of attribution of blame or responsibility to rape victims have included marital status of the victim (married vs. divorced), relationship with assailant (acquaintance vs. stranger), style of dress (revealing vs. covered) and victim's degree of resistance (struggle vs. no struggle) (Alexander and Becker, 1978).

In all vignette methodologies, the total number of possible vignettes is equal to the number of unique combinations of all the independent variables, i.e., the product of the number of values assigned to each independent variable. The most common type of vignette methodology is a fully crossed and balanced design where the respondent is presented with enough vignettes to represent all combinations of the independent variables with each variable appearing the same number of times. The major limitation of this methodology is that the effects of only a few independent variables can be studied at once, since the number of possible vignettes increases geometrically with the addition of each new independent variable. For complex situations such as sexual abuse, where a large number of different variables may influence the respondents' judgements or attitudes, it is difficult to isolate the few factors that may be most relevant.

Another type of vignette methodology, the "factorial survey," has been recently developed by Rossi and allows the experimenter to
examine the effects of a larger number of independent variables (Rossi, 1979; Rossi and Nock, 1982). According to Rossi, "factorial surveys are so named because they combine ideas from balanced multivariate experimental designs with sample survey procedures." (Rossi and Anderson, 1982, p. 15) Rossi points out that many "independent variables" in the "real world" are correlated (e.g., education and occupation; robbery crimes and SES). The factorial survey technique utilizes a computer program to generate vignettes where the levels of each of the independent variables have been randomly selected, thus creating random combinations of all variables in each vignette. Thus in the "vignette world" any combination is possible (e.g., upper middle class robbers) and the multicollinearity of "variables" in the "real world" is avoided. The factorial survey technique appears to be quite useful to study the normative components of complex social judgements and definitions. For example, it has been used in studies of definitions of sexual harassment (Rossi and Anderson, 1982), child abuse (Garrett and Rossi, 1978), sexual abuse (Finkelhor and Redfield, Note 4) and household social standing (Rossi, 1979). This methodology does have some limitations; higher order interactions among variables cannot be measured, and certain combinations of the variables can be nonsensical if the levels are not carefully selected (e.g., children whose parents are younger than they are) (Finkelhor and Redfield, Note 4).
Studies of Public Attitudes and Beliefs about Childhood Sexual Victimization

In contrast to the numerous studies about rape myths, and attitudes and beliefs about rape, the area of beliefs about child sexual abuse has received relatively little attention. The few available studies have all been done in the past couple of years. Two studies using very different methodologies examined the question, "What do people define as childhood sexual abuse?" Sink (Note 3) is examining the attitudes of mental health professionals toward parent-child sexual interactions, in an attempt "to provide needed information about the range of professional attitudes toward different sexual or sexualized behaviors including areas of consensus and areas of disagreement." (Note 3, p. 7) Subjects in the study specified, for each item on a list of parent-child interactions, whether they felt that the interaction was generally appropriate/inappropriate or whether it depended on the child's age or gender. Although this study is still underway, preliminary results suggest that the responses fall into four categories: 1) behaviors considered to be "appropriate sexual exposure" for children of any age, regardless of the sex of the parent; 2) items considered to be "inappropriate sexual exposure" for children of any age (includes sexual abuse items); 3) behaviors which are only appropriate at certain ages and/or between certain parent-child sex pair combinations. According to Sink, this category may "reflect behaviors which would constitute 'sexual misuse' when a parent's norms for sexual exposure consistently deviated from the developmental expectations outlined by professional consensus."
(p. 8); and 4) items about which there is no consensus, including behaviors "too sensitive to the cultural or moral variation among individuals to allow agreement to emerge... This grouping may prove highly important in its ability to isolate those areas too controversial to be used reliably as diagnostic indicators or reasons to evoke social controls even though some individuals may find them reprehensible." (p. 8) This study promises to provide some useful information for mental health professionals who work "diagnostically and protectively with sexually abusing families." (p. 1) (Sink, Note 3).

Finkelhor and Redfield (Note 4) studied public definitions of childhood sexual abuse, using Rossi's vignette methodology. Subjects rated vignettes on a ten-point scale from "Definitely not sexual abuse" to "Definitely sexual abuse." These authors varied eight independent variables in the vignettes; victim's and perpetrator's age and sex, relatedness, the sexual act involved, victim's consent, and consequence to the victim. They concluded that "the norms surrounding a sexual abuse are complex. People take into account a wide variety of factors in assessing abusiveness of any given situation." (p. 24) Their findings confirm what common sense suggests, that situations are more likely to be rated as sexually abusive when the perpetrator is an adult rather than a child and when the sexual act involves intercourse or attempted intercourse. One interesting finding is that "people considered vignettes less abusive when they involved either young victims or old victims." (p. 21) Another interesting finding is that respondents rated the vignettes as much less abusive when the child appeared to "consent" to the sexual
activity. This study did not find support for "the distinction between intra-familial and extra-familial abuse. The abusiveness of family vs. non-family depends too heavily on the exact combination of sex of perpetrator and sex of victim that is being discussed."

Finkelhor and Redfield, Note 4, p. 23)

Finkelhor and his colleagues have also surveyed both Boston-area professionals and parents of children ages six to 14 concerning their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about child sexual abuse (Finkelhor, et al., Note 1; Finkelhor, Note 2). In addition to numerous other factors, both studies examined opinions about whether perpetrators should be punished or treated by the mental health system. After presentation of an hypothetical incest situation, Finkelhor asked Boston parents to choose "being brought to trial" vs. "getting psychological help." Only 12% chose prosecution of the perpetrator. When asked to suppose that the same perpetrator had already been brought to trial and to choose an appropriate punishment, 20% chose "punishment not appropriate" and 32% chose probation. According to Finkelhor, "Forty-eight percent did recommend a jail sentence but only a third of these called for a severe jail sentence (more than five years)." (Finkelhor, Note 2, pp. 11-12). In their study of Boston professionals, Finkelhor, et al. (Note 1) found agency differences in punitiveness toward the stepfather in another hypothetical case of sexual abuse. Criminal justice system personnel (police, district attorneys' staff, etc.) placed a high priority on pressing criminal charges (74%). In contrast, only 26% of mental health agency personnel favored pressing charges against the hypothetical
perpetrator. Finkelhor (Note 2) further found that punitiveness correlated with lower SES (education and income) and religious preference (Catholics, Protestants). These findings suggest that in spite of the criminality of adult sexual involvement with children, there is considerable diversity of public opinion about what should be done to the perpetrator.

The only study that used a vignette methodology and examined punitive attitudes toward the perpetrator was done by Howells (1980). He presented vignettes involving a playground interaction between a nine year old child and a 30 year old male. He used three independent variables: sex of the child, relationship (stranger vs. acquaintance) and sexual vs. aggressive offense ("interfering with the child sexually" vs. "struck the child violently in the face"). Howells found that respondents rated the sexual offense as more damaging to the child than the aggressive offense. Respondents were also more punitive toward the perpetrator of the sexual offense. Another of Howells' major findings was that people were more punitive toward the perpetrator of a sexual act when the victim was a girl. He also reported sex differences among the respondents: "Women perceived the female child as more psychologically damaged by the sexual assault than did men, and were also more likely to see a severe punishment as appropriate for sexual offenses against children." (Howells, 1980, p. 30). The "degree of previous relationship" between the offender and the child did not have a significant effect on ratings of punitiveness or psychological harm to the child.
Study Design

This study focused on three aspects of people's beliefs about the sexual victimization of children: 1) what constitutes sexual abuse of children, 2) the effects on the child, and 3) what should be done to perpetrators of sexual abuse. More specifically, the purpose was to explore the factors that determine people's beliefs about: 1) the definition of sexual abuse, 2) the effect on the child's psychological development, 3) whether the perpetrator should be punished, and 4) whether the perpetrator should receive psychological help.

Definition of Sexual Abuse is the same dependent variable that was used in Finkelhor and Redfield's study (Note 4). The other three were added because they also address areas of controversy. Although there are those who would argue that sexual contact with adults is not harmful to children, both professionals and parents in Boston surveys rated sexual abuse as more traumatic to a child than five other traumatic life events, including parental divorce, failing a grade, and the death of a friend (Finkehor, et al., Note 1; Finkelhor, Note 2). It is currently a matter of debate whether adults who sexually victimize children should be punished by the criminal justice system and/or treated by the mental health system.

Rossi's factorial survey approach was chosen as an appropriate methodological approach to the study of beliefs about a topic so complex as the sexual victimization of children. Because childhood sexual abuse is not a unidimensional act, there are a large number
of factors which could enter into a person's evaluation of the abusiveness of a situation and could influence his/her beliefs about the situation. For example, Gomes-Schwartz and Horowitz (Note 6) identify no less than 28 variables that are predicted to influence the impact of sexual abuse on the child. These factors can be roughly grouped according to pre-existing individual characteristics of the child and the parents, pre-existing conditions in the family and the community, the nature of the sexual abuse, the reactions of family and community, and the effects of treatment (Gomes-Schwartz and Horowitz, Note 6). For the purposes of this study, eight independent variables, including two which are respondent characteristics, were selected as being the most salient and influential components which might predict beliefs about sexual abuse. These include:

1) **Sex of the Child.** The results of previous studies are inconsistent with regard to whether the sex of the victim influences attitudes and beliefs about sexual victimization. Garrett and Rossi (1978), in a study of judgements about the seriousness of child abuse (which included sexual abuse), found that the sex of the child did not have a significant effect on respondents' ratings of seriousness. Although Finkelhor and Redfield (Note 4) did not report a main effect for sex of the child, they found that the types of abusive relationships that were rated as most serious (father and male relative) both involved female victims. Howells (1980) found that "sexual offenses against girls elicit more punitive reactions than sexual offenses against boys" (p. 30) Cultural norms also suggest this an important variable; if a 30 year old man invites a 14 year old girl to have
intercourse it may be labeled as sex abuse, whereas if a 30 year old woman invites a 14 year old boy to have intercourse, it may be viewed by some as a fortuitous opportunity for some early sex education.

2) **Sex of the Adult.** Finkelhor and Redfield (Note 4) found that situations describing fathers or male relatives as perpetrators were rated as most sexually abusive, whereas the vignettes that described female perpetrators were rated as least serious. They also make the point that a sexual relationship between older women and boys is currently romanticized in some popular movies. Again, cultural norms appear to indicate a more lenient view of sexual relations between teenage boys and older women than between teenage girls and older men.

3) **Age of the Child.** Finkelhor and Redfield (Note 4) found that vignettes involving youngest and oldest victims of sexual abuse were rated as least abusive. Garrett and Rossi (1978) found that the child's age had a significant effect on ratings of seriousness of child abuse; that incidents involving older children tended to be rated less serious than those involving younger children" (p. 12).

4) **Relationship: Intrafamilial vs. extrafamilial.** Although research findings have thus far failed to show that this variable is significant in ratings of sexual abusiveness (Finkelhor and Redfield, Note 4) or punitiveness (Howells, 1980), the clinical literature suggests that this should be an important variable. Sgroi (1978) summarizes this view when discussing the child's reaction to sexual assault:
In general, the greater the emotional distance between the child and the perpetrator, the less emotional trauma can be expected. Thus an outside perpetrator who is a total stranger will probably have less impact than an outside perpetrator who is known to the child. With an intrafamily perpetrator, the degree of emotional impact will probably vary with the closeness of the relationship. (p. 135)

Clinicians also report that victims and their families are much less willing to prosecute family members than acquaintances or strangers (Burgess, et al., 1978).

In order to make it more salient, the intrafamilial vs. extrafamilial variable was defined in terms of the respondent. The victims in all the vignettes were identified as the sibling (brother or sister) of the respondent; therefore the imagined relationships described by this variable (stranger, acquaintance, relative, parent) were the same for both the victim and the respondent.

5) Type of Activity. The sexual acts included as variables were taken from a list of sexual acts that were rank-ordered by a group of ten clinicians who work with sexually abused children, according to the seriousness of the act and the intrusiveness of the act (Note 7). Garrett and Rossi (1978) report that the act of sexual intercourse between the guardian and the child received the highest average seriousness ratings of all the acts of child abuse included in their study. Similarly, Finkelhor and Redfield found that intercourse, attempted intercourse and fondling the child's genitals were rated by respondents as most sexually abusive. They suggest that although the law considers acts involving intercourse to be more serious, there is
some clinical and empirical evidence to indicate "that the traumatic impact of sexual abuse on a child can be just as great even when penetration or intercourse does not occur." (Finkelhor and Redfield, Note 4, p. 7).

6) Duration of the Experience. The clinical literature suggests that the longer the incidents of sexual assault continue, the greater the emotional impact on the child. Sgroi (1978) states, "In general, a single incident, although disruptive, may be easier for the child to integrate than a series of incidents occurring over time" (p. 135). As Sanford (1980) writes, "Children who have had to live with regular sexual abuse are more impacted, as their survival becomes connected with the abuse" (p. 140).

7) Sex of the Respondent. This has been a very important variable in much of the literature on victimization. For example, the rape literature findings indicate that as a group, males attribute more blame and responsibility to rape victims than do females and are less punitive toward rapists (Howells, 1980). In studies of definitions of sexual abuse (Finkelhor and Redfield, Note 4) and sexual harassment (Rossi and Anderson, 1982) and seriousness of child abuse (Garrett and Rossi, 1978), women consistently rated the vignettes as more serious than did men. Howells (1980) found that women were more punitive toward the perpetrator of a sexual offense against the child than were men in the study.

8) Respondent History of Sexual Victimization. Personal experience turned out to be a significant predictor variable in Rossi and Anderson's (1982) study of sexual harassment. This variable has not
been included in other previous studies.

**Hypotheses**

One major purpose of this study was to determine the relative influence of each independent variable on each of the four dependent variables. That is, for each of the four dependent variables, which independent variables were important determinants of respondents' judgements about that variable?

Additionally, the dependent variables Definition of Sexual Abuse (Scale 1) and Punitiveness toward the Perpetrator (Scale 3) were examined more closely. The hypotheses concerning the relative importance of the levels of each independent variable for ratings of Abusiveness and Punitiveness were as follows:

1) **Sex of the Child.**
   
a. Vignettes depicting girls as victims would be rated as more sexually abusive than those depicting boys.
   
b. Vignettes depicting girls as victims would elicit more punitive reactions from respondents than those depicting boys.

2) **Sex of the Perpetrator.**
   
a. Vignettes in which the adult was male would be rated as more abusive than those in which the adult was female.
   
b. Vignettes in which the adult was male would evoke a more punitive response than those in which the adult was female.
3) Age of the Child.
   a. Respondents would rate vignettes describing older victims as less sexually abusive.
   b. Respondents would be less punitive toward perpetrators when older children were depicted in the vignettes.

4) Relationship.
   a. Respondents' ratings of Abusiveness would be higher when the degree of previous relationship between the adult and child depicted in the vignettes was closer.
   b. Respondents would be more punitive toward perpetrators who were not family members.

5) Type of Activity.
   a. Ratings of Abusiveness would vary according to the intrusiveness and sexual content of the activity.
   b. Ratings of Punitiveness toward the perpetrator would vary according to the intrusiveness and sexual content of the activity.

6) Duration.
   a. Responses to vignettes depicting the sexual activities as longer in duration would receive higher ratings of Abusiveness.
   b. Respondents would be more punitive toward perpetrators for vignettes that depicted the sexual activities as longer in duration.
7) **Sex of the Respondent.**

   a. Women as a group would have higher mean ratings than men on the Abusiveness scale.

   b. Women as a group would be more punitive than men toward the depicted perpetrator.

8) **Respondent History of Victimization.**

   a. The group of respondents who knew about sexual abuse first-hand would have higher mean ratings of Abusiveness.

   b. Those respondents who knew about sexual abuse from personal experience would be more punitive toward perpetrators than those who had no history of victimization.
CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Materials

This study employed Rossi's "factorial survey" vignette methodology to examine the effects of the independent variables on respondents' ratings of their beliefs. It departed from previous studies that used the same methodology in that 1) it asked respondents to rate each vignette on more than one dimension, 2) it framed the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator in terms of the respondent, and 3) it asked subjects to "pretend" or "imagine" that they were involved in the situations described in the vignettes. The children in all the vignettes were identified as siblings (brother or sister) of the respondent; therefore relatives of the victim were presented as the same relatives of the respondent. The hope was that this would enable respondents to distinguish between an incest situation and molestation by a stranger in a more salient and meaningful way because it involved imagining a family in which they were a member.

The vignettes for this study were produced with the use of a computer program (Note 8) which generated random combinations of the independent variables. Six independent variables were used in the construction of the vignettes: Sex of the Child, Age of the Child, Sex of the Adult, Relationship, Type of Activity, and Duration. The
levels for each variable are listed in Table 1. Two restrictions were programmed into the creation of the combinations of independent variables. One was that the descriptions had to be gender-congruent. For example, only male-female or female-male pairs of adults and children could be described as having sexual intercourse. The other was that male children described as having sexual intercourse had to be at least seven years old.

The format for each vignette was the same:

"Imagine the following situation:

   The child is your __________.
   The child's age is __________.
   The adult in the situation is __________.
   The child comes to you and tells you that the adult has been __________.
   The child says this __________.

Given this specific situation..."

Each vignette was then followed by the four rating scales (see Table 2). A model vignette which presents all the possible levels of all the independent variables is included at the beginning of Appendix A. The number of potentially unique combinations of independent variables which could appear as vignettes was 9,216. Seven vignettes were randomly assigned to be rated by each subject. An example of seven randomly generated vignettes is presented in a sample vignette packet included in Appendix A.

Each group of seven vignettes was preceded by three fixed vignettes (the same for all respondents) in order to 1) present the same possible range of situations to each subject, 2) avoid situations where the first few vignettes swayed the ratings by being unusual or
<table>
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<th>TABLE 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Independent Variables Used in the Construction of Vignettes</td>
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</table>

I. Sex of Child
1. male (brother)
2. female (sister)

II. Sex of Adult
1. male
2. female

III. Age of Child: 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, or 17 years

IV. Relationship: Intrafamilial vs. Extratfamilial
1. stranger
2. acquaintance (neighbor)
3. relative (aunt/uncle)
4. parent (mother/father)

V. Type of Activity
1. (A) trying to help (C) with activities
2. (A) wanting to spend free time with (C)
3. (A) holding hands with (C)
4. (A) sitting very close to (C)
5. (A) hugging (C)
6. (A) kissing (C)
7. (A) looking at (C) in a sexual way
8. (A) showing (C) sexually explicit pictures from a magazine
9. (A) showing genitals to (C)
10. (A) fondling the genitals of (C)
11. (A) having oral sex with (C)
12. (A) having anal intercourse with (C)
   (male-male)
   (A) having sexual intercourse with (C)
   (male female or female-male)
   (A) putting her fingers in (C)'s vagina
   (female-female)

VI. Duration of the Activity
1. only once
2. a few times
3. for one month
4. for six months
5. for a year
6. for over a year
weighted in one direction, and 3) give the subject some practice at the task.

The first fixed vignette was designed to have non-sexual content (Mother trying to help 5 year old sister with an activity). The second vignette was deliberately ambiguous or controversial (Neighbor woman showing sexually explicit pictures from a magazine to 15 year old brother). The third vignette was the most sexual and the most victimizing (Father having sexual intercourse with 11 year old sister for over a year).

Each subject rated the 10 vignettes (three practice and seven experimental) on each of the four dependent variable 10-point rating scales. Table 2 presents the questions that the respondents were asked to rate, along with their rating scales.

**Subjects**

The subjects were all undergraduates at the University of Massachusetts who were enrolled in introductory psychology courses. Approximately two-thirds of the 585 respondents were recruited by distributing the vignette packets to entire classes during class meeting times. The others responded to posted notices and volunteered to participate in exchange for experimental credits. Vignette packets that were returned blank (i.e., not filled out) during the classroom distribution were reused and the non-participation rate was approximately 6%. The sample was 58.4% female and 41.6% male with a mean age of 19.9 years. The students were predominantly freshmen and sophomores (74.9%) representing a wide variety of majors. Forty-five
TABLE 2
Dependent Variables

I. Definition of sexual abuse.
   Scale 1: Would you define this as sexual abuse?

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Definitely Sexual Abuse
Not Sexual Abuse

II. Effect on the child.
   Scale 2: How do you think this will affect the child's psychological development?

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</table>

Extremely Helpful
Helpful

III. Punitiveness toward the perpetrator.
   Scale 3: Should the adult in this situation be punished?

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<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Definitely Punishment
Severe Punishment
No Punishment

IV. Whether the perpetrator needs mental health intervention.
   Scale 4: Should the adult have psychological help?

<p>| | | | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Definitely Help
Intensive Treatment for a Long Time
No Help
Severe Help
24 percent were enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences (including 14.7% psychology majors). Another 39% declared majors from the College of Food and Natural Resources and the Schools of Engineering, Health Sciences and Management. Approximately 10% had not declared a major. Respondents reported themselves to be predominantly white (94.7%) and middle (43.8%) and upper-middle (42.4%) class. Some 49.3% of the sample reported their religious affiliations as Catholic, with 19.7% Protestant, and 17.1% Jewish.

**Procedure**

Each subject was given a packet of vignettes preceded by an instruction sheet and followed by a short questionnaire (see Appendix A). After rating the vignettes, subjects filled out the short questionnaire which asked for demographic information (sex, age, race, year of school, major, socioeconomic status, religious preference, religious involvement) and for ratings on how common they think sexual abuse is in our society. Subjects were asked about 1) media exposure to topic of sexual abuse in past year, 2) whether they know someone who was sexually abused as a child, and 3) whether they themselves had had any experiences in which they felt sexually exploited or misused. If subjects responded "yes" or "uncertain" to Question 3, they were asked to provide additional information by checking off items concerning what happened, their relationship to the person with whom it happened and how it affected them. After completing the packet, students were given their experimental credit slips, an explanation of the study, and a list of referral sources for
themselves or others if the questionnaire raised issues for them that they wanted to talk about (see Appendix A).
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Distribution of Ratings on the Four Scales

A total of 600 questionnaire packets which included 4200 randomly generated vignettes were distributed to respondents. Fifteen packets were either not returned or were largely incomplete and the 115 vignettes contained therein were not coded. Additionally, a few respondents failed to rate individual vignettes (n = 11), apparently due to their uncertainty about the situation that the vignette described or due to the packet pages sticking together. The data analyses that follow are based upon a sample of 4084 coded vignettes with missing data making up 2.8% of the sample.

The frequency distribution of respondents' ratings on each of the four rating scales across all vignettes is presented in Table 3. All scales show a bimodal distribution, with Scales 1, 3 and 4 each having the largest number of ratings at 1 and 10. Scale 2 (Effect on the child's psychological development) showed bimodal peaks at ratings 5 and 10 because the range of the scale was different from the others. Scales 1, 3 and 4 were essentially framed from "Definitely not X" to "Definitely X," whereas Scale 2 ranged from "Extremely harmful" to "Extremely helpful." A rating of 5 on Scale 2 then can be interpreted as "Neither harmful nor helpful." These ceiling and floor effects violate the assumption of a normal distribution underlying the
ordinary least squares model of multiple regression data analyses. One method that is sometimes used to correct for the effects of an unusual distribution is to standardize the ratings by transforming them into individual deviation scores for each subject. It was not possible to do this in the present study, however, because there were too few vignettes rated by each respondent. Although the large sample size does mitigate the problem to some extent, the bimodal distribution of the ratings renders the measurement of the effect of the independent variables somewhat less accurate.

Respondents' Uses of the Four Rating Scales

As shown in Table 3 the mean ratings for each of the four scales ranged from 5.76 (Scale 3) to 6.42 (Scale 2) and the median ratings ranged from 6.16 (Scale 3) to 6.92 (Scale 4). The modal rating for scales 1, 2 and 4 was 10 and for Scale 3 it was 1. Scale 3 ("Should the adult be punished?") stands out in the descriptive statistics as having a lower mean, median and mode than the other scales. The similarity among the means (and medians) of the four rating scales is not surprising, given that each mean represents the average rating across 4084 vignettes that range from non-abusive to abusive. However, it does raise the question of whether the respondents differentiated between the scales. This concern was also raised when coding the data for keypunching because it was observed that many respondents gave the same ratings on all four scales, i.e., if they marked a "10" on the first scale, the other three scales were also marked "10." Pearson-r correlations between each pair of
TABLE 3

Distribution of Ratings on the Four Rating Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Scale 1* Adjusted Frequency (percent)</th>
<th>Scale 2* Adjusted Frequency (percent)</th>
<th>Scale 3* Adjusted Frequency (percent)</th>
<th>Scale 4* Adjusted Frequency (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>11.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>11.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>4084</td>
<td>4084</td>
<td>4082</td>
<td>4083</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean                        6.168                                6.419                                5.757                                6.17
Standard deviation          3.368                                2.788                                3.259                                3.283
Mode                        10                                   10                                   1                                   10

*Scale 1: Would you define this as sexual abuse?
1 = Definitely not sexual abuse, 10 = Definitely sexual abuse

Scale 2: How do you think this will affect the child's psychological development?
1 = Extremely helpful, 10 = Extremely harmful

Scale 3: Should the adult in this situation be punished?
1 = Definitely no punishment, 10 = Severe punishment

Scale 4: Should the adult have psychological help?
1 = Definitely no psychological help, 10 = Intensive treatment for a long time
ratings scales all proved to be approximately .9 (see Table 4), but this was predicted since a vignette that was rated as highly abusive would be expected to be rated as more harmful to the child, etc. To address the concern about whether there was a "set" effect from the rating of the first scale, a repeated measures ANOVA was done. This ANOVA, comparing the four rating scales across the ten vignettes rated by each subject, showed a significant main effect for subject ratings ($F = 128.48, p < .001$). This suggests that respondents did in fact differentiate between the scales and thus provides a greater measure of confidence in examining the effects of the independent variables on the second, third and fourth scales.

**Orthogonality of the Independent Variables**

Table 4 reports the intercorrelations among all independent and dependent variables. This set of correlations was generated by a "crude" multiple regression analysis in which values of the categorical variables were ranked along appropriate dimensions (e.g., how sexual the act was) then treated as interval data. This method provides a rougher approximation of the intercorrelations but is comparable to and easier to report than the correlation matrix which resulted from coding the independent variables as dummy (binary) variables (which shows the correlation between every level of every variable). Both approaches generated correlation matrices that showed extremely low correlations among the independent variables, indicating that the effects of the independent variables are independent from one another. Further evidence for the orthogonality
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age of Child</th>
<th>Sex of Adult</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Scale 1</th>
<th>Scale 2</th>
<th>Scale 3</th>
<th>Scale 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex of Child</td>
<td>0.0233</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>-0.0193</td>
<td>-0.0233</td>
<td>-0.0086</td>
<td>-0.0606</td>
<td>-0.0528</td>
<td>-0.0440</td>
<td>-0.0498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of Child</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-0.0050</td>
<td>0.0054</td>
<td>0.0312</td>
<td>0.0067</td>
<td>-0.0078</td>
<td>-0.0096</td>
<td>-0.0197</td>
<td>-0.0133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex of Adult</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.0052</td>
<td>-0.0196</td>
<td>0.0204</td>
<td>0.0652</td>
<td>0.0630</td>
<td>0.0805</td>
<td>0.0644</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.0384</td>
<td>-0.0132</td>
<td>-0.1001</td>
<td>-0.0956</td>
<td>-0.1290</td>
<td>-0.1168</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-0.0014</td>
<td>0.7294</td>
<td>0.7032</td>
<td>0.7058</td>
<td>0.7171</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.0644</td>
<td>0.0867</td>
<td>0.0841</td>
<td>0.0886</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale 1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.8711</td>
<td>0.8883</td>
<td>0.8983</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scale 2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.8547</td>
<td>0.8661</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale 3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.9145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of the independent variables is provided by the fact that the $\hat{\beta}$ weights produced by the "crude" multiple regression analysis are almost identical to the correlation coefficients of the rating scales correlated with the independent variables.

**The Relative Importance of the Independent Variables in Determining Ratings on the Four Rating Scales**

To examine the effects of the independent variables, the levels of each variable were transformed into binary "dummy" variables and entered into an ordinary least squares regression of each set of ratings on the independent variables. The bottom line of Table 5 reports the total $R^2$ for the multiple regression analysis of each rating scale. These $R^2$ values, ranging from .562 for Scale 2 to .604 for Scale 1, indicate that a substantial proportion of the variation in the ratings for each scale is accounted for by the combined influence of the levels of the independent variables.

Table 5 also reports the changes in $R^2$ values when each group of dummy-coded levels for each independent variable is entered last into the regression equation. The independent variable Type of Activity clearly had an overriding impact on respondents' ratings of the vignettes on all four scales. When added last to the regression of ratings of Abusiveness (Scale 1), the change in $R^2$ was .577 whereas the change in $R^2$ for the other five variables combined was only .034. The magnitude of the effect on the ratings of the Type of Activity presented in the vignettes was similar on the other three rating scales.

The second most important variable in determining respondents'}
### TABLE 5

Changes in $R^2$ Values for Each Independent Variable When Added Last to the Multiple Regression Equation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable (df)</th>
<th>Scale 1&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; Change in $R^2$ (F Value)</th>
<th>Scale 2&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; Change in $R^2$ (F Value)</th>
<th>Scale 3&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt; Change in $R^2$ (F Value)</th>
<th>Scale 4&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt; Change in $R^2$ (F Value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex of Child  (1,4052)</td>
<td>.002 (19.17)**</td>
<td>.001 (11.19)</td>
<td>.001 (6.39)&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.001 (9.48)&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child's Age  (7,4052)</td>
<td>.005 (7.49)</td>
<td>.003 (4.63)</td>
<td>.003 (4.45)</td>
<td>.003 (5.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex of Adult (1,4052)</td>
<td>.007 (72.76)</td>
<td>.007 (61.62)</td>
<td>.009 (90.96)</td>
<td>.007 (68.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship  (3,4052)</td>
<td>.017 (57.85)</td>
<td>.016 (50.40)</td>
<td>.025 (80.86)</td>
<td>.022 (72.97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Activity (11,4052)</td>
<td>.576 (539.19)</td>
<td>.535 (453.17)</td>
<td>.543 (477.76)</td>
<td>.558 (506.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration  (5,4052)</td>
<td>.004 (8.92)</td>
<td>.008 (15.72)</td>
<td>.008 (14.82)</td>
<td>.008 (16.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total $R^2$ (28,4052)</td>
<td>.607 (223.35)</td>
<td>.565 (188.20)</td>
<td>.581 (200.87)</td>
<td>.594 (211.63)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**All** the values reported in this table are significant to the $p < .001$ level, except for Sex of Child in Scale 3 and Scale 4.

<sup>a</sup>Would you define this as sexual abuse?

<sup>b</sup>How do you think this will affect the child's psychological development?

<sup>c</sup>Should the adult in this situation be punished?

<sup>d</sup>Should the adult have psychological help?
ratings was Relationship, and it ranked second on all four scales. Although the effect of this variable was significant in and of itself \( p < .001 \), it was clearly less important than the activity that was described in the vignettes, as Relationship accounted for a maximum \( R^2 \) change of .025 (Scale 3). The other four variables (Sex of Child, Age of Child, Sex of Adult, and Duration of the Activity) were much less important than Type of Activity, although significant \( (p < .001, \text{ except for Sex of Child}) \) when examined alone. The Sex of the Child was the least important variable for ratings on all four scales.

**Subgroup Differences in Respondent Ratings**

Two subgroups were hypothesized to show differences in ratings and were included in the data analyses. They were Sex of Respondent and History of Victimization. Other respondent subgroups of potential interest, such as race, family SES, or age, were not included due to the lack of representation in certain categories (for example, minority racial groups).

**Sex of Respondent**

A breakdown of mean ratings by the Sex of the Respondent revealed no significant overall gender differences for Scales 1, 2, and 3, although the average mean ratings for females were slightly higher than those for males. On Scale 4 there was a difference of .33 \( (p < .05) \) with females again having a slightly higher mean rating than males. Initial analyses of respondent ratings on three fixed
vignettes, however, showed significant gender differences on all four scales for the second fixed vignette. The first fixed vignette was designed to be definitely non-abusive (Mother trying to help 5 year old sister with activities) while the third fixed vignette was designed to be very sexually exploitative (Father having sexual intercourse with 11 year old sister for over a year). The second vignette was intended to be more ambiguous (Neighbor woman showing sexually explicit pictures from a magazine to a 15 year old brother).

The mean ratings for males and females on the four rating scales for each of the three fixed vignettes are presented in Table 6. The means for each scale are not significantly different across sexes on the first or the third fixed vignette, except for a difference of .2 (p < .05) on Scale 4 of Vignette 3. Three of the four rating scales for the second fixed vignette show gender differences at a level of significance p < .001. Gender differences for the first rating scale were nearly significant to the p < .01 level (p = .014). Females had higher average ratings than males on all four scales of the second vignette.

Further analyses were performed on the randomly generated vignettes in order to determine whether the responses to the fixed vignettes were revealing a general pattern of significant gender differences on ratings of more ambiguous vignettes or a reaction to some specific aspect of the second fixed vignette, such as the age of the child. The levels of the variable Type of Activity were grouped into three categories: Least Sexual (Help with activities, Spend free time, Holding hands, Sitting close, Hugging); More Ambiguous (Kissing,
TABLE 6

Mean Ratings for Male (n = 241) and Female (n = 339) Respondents for the Three Fixed Vignettes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vignette 1&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; Mean Ratings</th>
<th>Vignette 2&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; Mean Ratings</th>
<th>Vignette 3&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt; Mean Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale 1:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>9.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>6.06</td>
<td>9.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Significance)</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
<td>(p = .014)</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale 2:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>9.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>9.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Significance)</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
<td>(p &lt; .001)</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale 3:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>9.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>9.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Significance)</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
<td>(p &lt; .001)</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale 4:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>9.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>9.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Significance)</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
<td>(p &lt; .001)</td>
<td>(p &lt; .05)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Vignette 1: Mother trying to help 5 year old sister with an activity, once.

<sup>b</sup>Vignette 2: Neighbor woman showing 15 year old brother sexually explicit pictures from a magazine, a few times.

<sup>c</sup>Vignette 3: Father having sexual intercourse with 11 year old sister for over a year.
Looking in a sexual way, Showing sexually explicit pictures, Showing genitals); and Most Sexual (Fondling genitals, Oral sex, Intercourse). Mean ratings of male and female respondents were compared on all four scales for each of the three new categories. As shown in Table 7, there were no significant gender differences in ratings (on any scale) of vignettes that were either Least Sexual or Most Sexual. However, the group of vignettes that were More Ambiguous showed highly significant gender differences in the ratings for all scales \( (p < .001 \text{ on three scales}) \), with females rating significantly higher. This appears to confirm a pattern of gender differences in ratings of vignettes that are either milder forms of sexual victimization or are ambiguous in nature.

**Respondent History of Victimization**

Subgroups for this variable were determined by respondents' answers to Question 13 on the questionnaire: "Before the age of 18, did you have any experiences in which you felt sexually exploited or misused by an adult or another child?" It was predicted that those who reported sexually exploitative experiences would rate the vignettes higher on all four scales. One hundred and twenty-four respondents (21.2%) answered "yes" and 50 (8.6%) answered "uncertain" to this question. Seventy percent of the sample \( (n = 410) \) responded "no." Of the women in the sample, 36.3% answered "yes" or "uncertain," whereas 20.7% of the men answered "yes" or "uncertain." A breakdown of mean ratings according to whether or not the respondent reported a history of victimization (Question 13) revealed no
TABLE 7
Mean Ratings for Male and Female Respondents on the Four Rating Scales, According to Type of Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Least Sexual Activities Mean Ratings</th>
<th>More Ambiguous Activities Mean Ratings</th>
<th>Most Sexual Activities Mean Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale 1:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Significance)</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
<td>(p &lt; .001)</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale 2:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Significance)</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
<td>(p &lt; .003)</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale 3:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Significance)</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
<td>(p &lt; .001)</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale 4:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Significance)</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
<td>(p &lt; .001)</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aLeast Sexual Activities: Trying to help with activities, Wanting to spend free time, Holding hands, Sitting very close, Hugging.

bMore Ambiguous Activities: Kissing, Looking in a sexual way, Showing sexually explicit pictures from a magazine, Showing genitals.

cMost Sexual Activities: Fondling genitals, Oral sex, Sexual intercourse (Anal intercourse if M-M, Putting fingers in vagina if F-F).
significant overall differences between groups. This was further confirmed by analyses which indicated that adding this variable into the multiple regression equation last did not change the value of $R^2$. The results of further analyses to see if there were differences according to Type of Activity (Least Sexual vs. More Ambiguous vs. Most Sexual) similarly revealed no differences between mean ratings of the groups.

**The Effects of Each Independent Variable on Ratings of Sexual Abuse (Scale 1)**

The $b$ coefficients for the ratings of Abusiveness for each level of each independent variable are presented in Table 8. Each $b$ coefficient represents the difference between in the mean rating for that level (averaged across the other independent variables) and the mean rating for the omitted level on the Abusiveness scale. The relative importance of the levels within a given variable can thus be determined by examining the $b$ coefficients. The standardized $\beta$ coefficients for the regression equation are also presented in Table 8.

**Sex of the Child**

Averaged across the other variables, vignettes that described the child as "your brother" were rated .3 points lower on Scale 1 than vignettes that described the child as "your sister" (see Table 8). Thus, situations where the child was described as female were rated as more sexually abusive than those involving male children ($F = 15.36, p < .001$).
TABLE 8
Regression of Ratings on Levels of Independent Variables for Scale 1 ("Would you define this as sexual abuse?")

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable and Level</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex of Child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Female</td>
<td>(omitted)(^a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Male</td>
<td>-.2789***</td>
<td>.0667</td>
<td>-.0414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of Child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. 3 years</td>
<td>.4296**</td>
<td>.1376</td>
<td>.0398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 5 years</td>
<td>.5107***</td>
<td>.1334</td>
<td>.0498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 7 years</td>
<td>.6147***</td>
<td>.1334</td>
<td>.0600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 9 years</td>
<td>.7668***</td>
<td>.1307</td>
<td>.0773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 11 years</td>
<td>.7331***</td>
<td>.1306</td>
<td>.0741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 13 years</td>
<td>.7633***</td>
<td>.1312</td>
<td>.0765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 15 years</td>
<td>.4806***</td>
<td>.1342</td>
<td>.0465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. 17 years</td>
<td>(omitted)(^a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex of the Adult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Female</td>
<td>(omitted)(^a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Male</td>
<td>.5661***</td>
<td>.0668</td>
<td>.0840</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 8 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable and Level</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Stranger</td>
<td>(omitted)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Neighbor</td>
<td>-.4654**</td>
<td>.0945</td>
<td>-.0600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Aunt/uncle</td>
<td>-.8328***</td>
<td>.0940</td>
<td>-.1078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parent</td>
<td>-1.1576***</td>
<td>.0950</td>
<td>-.1479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Activity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Trying to help child with activities.</td>
<td>(omitted)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Wanting to spend free time with child.</td>
<td>-.2967 NS</td>
<td>.1771</td>
<td>-.0227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Holding hands with child.</td>
<td>.3612*</td>
<td>.1697</td>
<td>.0300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sitting very close to child.</td>
<td>.2251 NS</td>
<td>.1775</td>
<td>.0171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Hugging child.</td>
<td>.1890 NS</td>
<td>.1693</td>
<td>.0158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Kissing child.</td>
<td>2.7891***</td>
<td>.1741</td>
<td>.2200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Looking at child in a sexual way.</td>
<td>2.1014***</td>
<td>.1755</td>
<td>.1631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Showing child sexually explicit pictures from a magazine.</td>
<td>3.6186***</td>
<td>.1708</td>
<td>.2966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Showing their genitals to child.</td>
<td>4.6552***</td>
<td>.1766</td>
<td>.3576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Fondling child's genitals.</td>
<td>5.8654***</td>
<td>.1742</td>
<td>.4620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Having oral sex with child.</td>
<td>6.1230***</td>
<td>.1735</td>
<td>.4858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Having sexual intercourse with child (M/F).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Having anal intercourse (M/M)]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Putting fingers in child's vagina (F/F)]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable and Level</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Only once.</td>
<td>(omitted)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A few times.</td>
<td>.3088**</td>
<td>.1181</td>
<td>.0327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A month.</td>
<td>.4468***</td>
<td>.1146</td>
<td>.0495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Six months.</td>
<td>.5109***</td>
<td>.1138</td>
<td>.0573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A year.</td>
<td>.6915***</td>
<td>.1140</td>
<td>.0774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Over a year.</td>
<td>.5788***</td>
<td>.1145</td>
<td>.0643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.7205</td>
<td>.1861</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*<sub>p < .05</sub>
**<sub>p < .01</sub>
***<sub>p < .001</sub>

<sup>a</sup>Levels are coded as binary dummy variables, which necessitates omitting one level of each variable in order to compare other levels to it.
Age of the Child

The distribution of the $b$ coefficients for Age of Child in Table 8 appears to be curvilinear in nature: Situations involving younger (3 years, 5 years) and older (15 years, 17 years) children were rated on the average as less sexually abusive than situations involving 7 to 13 year olds.

Sex of the Adult

Respondents rated vignettes that presented the adult as male .6 points higher than those involving females (see Table 8). Averaged across other variables, the situation was rated as more sexually abusive if it involved a male ($F = 15.36, p < .001$).

Relationship

The effects of levels of this independent variable were quite pronounced, with vignettes describing the adult as a stranger receiving the highest average ratings of Abusiveness. Situations involving neighbors were rated .5 points lower than those involving strangers and situations that described aunts or uncles were rated .8 points lower than those with strangers (see Table 8). Vignettes describing the adults as a parent were rated as least sexually abusive.
Type of Activity

The effect of the type of activity described in the vignette was clearly very important. Vignettes that described sexual intercourse were rated on the average 6.2 points higher than the comparison vignette (Trying to Help with Activities). The ratings for Hugging, Sitting Very Close, Holding Hands, or Wanting to Spend Free Time with the Child were not significantly different from the comparison vignette. The rankings of ratings from most to least abusive can be seen in Table 8. Intercourse was rated as most sexually abusive, followed by (in descending order) Oral Sex, Fondling Genitals, Showing Genitals, Showing Sexually Explicit Pictures, Kissing, and Looking in a Sexual Way.

Duration

As shown in Table 8, situations that involved a longer duration were rated more abusive. Vignettes that described the duration as One Year were rated .7 points higher than the comparison level of Only Once.

First Order Interactions Between Type of Activity and the Other Independent Variables for Ratings on Scale 1

Because the variable Type of Activity accounted for such a large proportion of the explained variance in the multiple regression equation for Scale 1, it seemed likely that there would be some significant interactions with the other variables. To test this, sets of interaction variables were created by multiplying each level of
Type of Activity by each level of the other variables. Type of Activity and other variables with numerous levels (e.g., Age of Child) were first recoded into fewer categories so that the set of interaction variables would be less unwieldy. Each set of interaction variables was then entered last into the multiple regression equation for Scale 1 in order to observe the change in $R^2$ value. The results of these analyses, reported in Table 9, show highly significant interactions (all $p$'s < .001) between Type of Activity and three other variables: Age of Child, Relationship, and Sex of the Respondent. The other interactions with Type of Activity were not significant.

Table 10 presents the mean ratings on Scale 1, according to Type of Activity, for the three variables that showed significant interactions. Comparison of the group means in each column for each variable provides information about the nature of the interaction. For Least Sexual Activities, higher ratings on Scale 1 are given for vignettes that described older children. For More Ambiguous Activities, ratings according to age are inconsistent, but for Most Sexual Activities higher ratings are given for younger children. Thus, respondents rated the Least Sexual Activities as more abusive for older children and the Most Sexual Activities as more abusive for younger children.

The nature of the interaction between Relationship and Type of Activity is apparent when comparing the means for the Most Sexual Activities with the other two categories. For both Least Sexual and More Ambiguous Activities, ratings of abusiveness show a fairly clear ranking (from highest to lowest) of Stranger, Neighbor, Aunt/Uncle,
TABLE 9
Changes in R$^2$ Values for Interactions of Independent Variables with Type of Activity, When Added Last to the Multiple Regression Equation for Scale 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction Variable</th>
<th>Change in R$^2$ (F Value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex of Child x Activity (2,4070)</td>
<td>.0002 (1.053)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of Child x Activity (4,4036)</td>
<td>.0075 (18.269)****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex of Adult x Activity (2,4070)</td>
<td>.0004 (1.868)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship x Activity (2,4038)</td>
<td>.0094 (45.953)****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration x Activity (2,4038)</td>
<td>.0000 (0.048)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex of Respondent x Activity (2,4071)</td>
<td>.0024 (11.456)****</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p < .001
TABLE 10

Mean Ratings on Scale 1, According to Type of Activity, for the Variables that Showed a Significant Interaction with Type of Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable and Level</th>
<th>Least Sexual Activities&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; Mean Ratings</th>
<th>More Ambiguous Activities&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; Mean Ratings</th>
<th>Most Sexual Activities&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt; Mean Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age of Child&lt;sup&gt;***&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>9.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>9.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td>9.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>6.83</td>
<td>9.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>9.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>6.86</td>
<td>9.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>9.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>7.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship&lt;sup&gt;***&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>7.27</td>
<td>9.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbor</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>6.57</td>
<td>9.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aunt/Uncle</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>9.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>9.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex of Respondent&lt;sup&gt;***&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>9.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>9.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean rating across all Independent Variables</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>6.51</td>
<td>9.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>***</sup>Significance of interaction between variable and Type of Activity is p < .001.

<sup>a</sup>Least Sexual Activities: Trying to help with activities, Wanting to spend free time, Holding hands, Sitting very close, Hugging.

<sup>b</sup>More Ambiguous Activities: Kissing, Looking in a sexual way, Showing sexually explicit pictures from a magazine, Showing genitals.

<sup>c</sup>Most Sexual Activities: Fondling genitals, Oral sex, Sexual intercourse (Anal intercourse if M-M, Putting fingers in vagina if F-F).
and Parent. For the Most Sexual Activities, however, respondents rated Parent and Neighbor as most (and equally) abusive, whereas Stranger was rated as relatively least abusive.

The nature of the interaction between Type of Activity and Sex of Respondent is two-fold. Males gave slightly higher ratings to vignettes containing the Least Sexual Activities, whereas females gave higher ratings to vignettes from the other two categories. As was presented previously, the difference between the mean ratings of males and females was significantly greater for the More Ambiguous Activities than for the Least Sexual and Most Sexual Activities.

The first-order interactions between the five other independent variables (Sex of Child, Age of Child, Sex of Adult, Relationship and Duration) were similarly tested. No significant interactions were found between any other pairs of the other independent variables for Scale 1.

### The Effects of Each Independent Variable on Ratings of Punitiveness (Scale 3)

Table 11 presents the unstandardized and standardized coefficients of the multiple regression equation for Scale 3. When compared to the $b$ coefficients and $\beta$ weights for ratings of Abusiveness (see Table 8), it is apparent that while the coefficients for levels of variables on each scale are different, the overall distributions of the regression coefficients for both Scales 1 and 3 are very similar.
### TABLE 11
Regression of Ratings on Levels of Independent Variables for Scale 3 (Should the adult in this situation be punished?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable and Level</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex of Child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Male</td>
<td>-.1527*</td>
<td>.0666</td>
<td>-.0234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of Child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. 3 years</td>
<td>.4289**</td>
<td>.1374</td>
<td>.0410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 5 years</td>
<td>.5914***</td>
<td>.1332</td>
<td>.0596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 7 years</td>
<td>.6276***</td>
<td>.1144</td>
<td>.0633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 9 years</td>
<td>.4912***</td>
<td>.1305</td>
<td>.0512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 11 years</td>
<td>.5898***</td>
<td>.1305</td>
<td>.0616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 13 years</td>
<td>.4704***</td>
<td>.1310</td>
<td>.0487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 15 years</td>
<td>.4142**</td>
<td>.1340</td>
<td>.0414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. 17 years</td>
<td>(omitted)a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex of the Adult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Female</td>
<td>(omitted)a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Male</td>
<td>.6332***</td>
<td>.0667</td>
<td>.0972</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## TABLE 11 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable and Level</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Stranger</td>
<td>(omitted)(^a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Neighbor</td>
<td>-.5158</td>
<td>.0944</td>
<td>-.0688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Aunt/uncle</td>
<td>-1.0226</td>
<td>.0939</td>
<td>-.1368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parent</td>
<td>-1.3422</td>
<td>.0949</td>
<td>-.1772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Activity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Trying to help child with activities.</td>
<td>(omitted)(^a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Wanting to spend free time with child.</td>
<td>-.5852(^**)</td>
<td>.1769</td>
<td>-.0461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Holding hands with child.</td>
<td>.8707 NS</td>
<td>.1694</td>
<td>.0075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sitting very close to child.</td>
<td>-.9193 NS</td>
<td>.1773</td>
<td>-.0072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Hugging child.</td>
<td>-.2361 NS</td>
<td>.1691</td>
<td>-.0002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Kissing child.</td>
<td>2.1384(^***)</td>
<td>.1739</td>
<td>.1744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Looking at child in a sexual way.</td>
<td>1.8109(^***)</td>
<td>.1753</td>
<td>.1453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Showing child sexually explicit pictures from a magazine.</td>
<td>3.3284(^***)</td>
<td>.1705</td>
<td>.2820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Showing their genitals to child.</td>
<td>4.0466(^***)</td>
<td>.1763</td>
<td>.3213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Fondling child's genitals.</td>
<td>5.1161(^***)</td>
<td>.1739</td>
<td>.4166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Having oral sex with child.</td>
<td>5.6142(^***)</td>
<td>.1733</td>
<td>.4604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Having sexual intercourse with child (M/F).</td>
<td>5.6984(^***)</td>
<td>.1511</td>
<td>.6365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Having sexual intercourse (M/M)]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Putting fingers in child's vagina (F/F)]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 11 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable and Level</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Only once.</td>
<td>(omitted)(^a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A few times.</td>
<td>.4171***</td>
<td>.1179</td>
<td>.0457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A month.</td>
<td>.5097***</td>
<td>.1144</td>
<td>.0584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Six months.</td>
<td>.6776***</td>
<td>.1137</td>
<td>.0785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A year.</td>
<td>.8603***</td>
<td>.1139</td>
<td>.0996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Over a year.</td>
<td>.7587***</td>
<td>.1143</td>
<td>.0871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.6980</td>
<td>.1858</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{a}\)Levels are coded as binary dummy variables, which necessitates omitting one level of each variable in order to compare other levels to it.

\(\*p < .05\)
\(\**p < .01\)
\(\***p < .001\)
Sex of the Child

Respondents were slightly, but significantly more punitive in their ratings of vignettes which described the child as a female ($F = 7.85, p < .05$).

Age of the Child

The distribution of the regression of coefficients are roughly curvilinear for the levels of this variable, with respondents rating vignettes that described the oldest children and the youngest children as least punitive. Respondents were most punitive toward the adult when the child described in the vignette was five, seven or eleven years old.

Sex of the Adult

On the average, vignettes that presented the adult as a male were rated .63 points higher on Scale 3 than those that described the adult as female. Thus, respondents were significantly more punitive toward male perpetrators ($F = 26.44, p < .001$).

Relationship

Averaged across other variables, respondents were most punitive toward strangers and least punitive toward parents. Vignettes involving an aunt or uncle were rated approximately .52 points higher than those involving parents, while situations that described neighbors were 1.02 points higher and those that described strangers were
rated 1.34 points higher than those involving parents (see Table 11).

**Type of Activity**

Examination of the regression coefficients in Table 11 reveals that respondents were most punitive toward the adult when the Type of Activity was Intercourse. Vignettes that described sexual intercourse were rated on the average 5.70 points higher than the comparison vignette (Trying to Help with Activities). Oral Sex and Fondling Genitals received the next highest ratings, adding 5.61 and 5.12 points respectively in comparison to the omitted level. Respondents were significantly more punitive (in comparison to the omitted level) when the Type of Activity was Showing Genitals, Showing Sexually Explicit Pictures, Kissing, and Looking in a Sexual Way. The ratings for Hugging, Sitting Very Close, or Holding Hands were not significantly different from the comparison vignette. Respondents were significantly less punitive when the Type of Activity was Wanting to Spend Free Time with the Child, in comparison to the omitted level of Trying to Help with Activities.

**Duration**

In general, situations that involved a longer duration received ratings of greater punishment. The most important level was One Year, which added .86 points more than the mean rating for the comparison level of Only Once.
First Order Interactions Between Independent Variables on Scale 3

Table 12 reports the significant interactions for ratings of Punitiveness (Scale 3). Initial analyses of the interactions for ratings of Punitiveness showed more significant interactions between independent variables for Scale 3 than for Scale 1 (Abusiveness). The most significant interactions, however, were similar for both Scale 3 and Scale 1. As shown in Table 12, highly significant interactions (all p's < .001) were found between Type of Activity and three other variables: Age of Child, Relationship and Sex of Respondent.

The nature of the interactions can be understood by examining the means for levels of each variable, broken down according to Type of Activity (see Table 13). Because the interaction between Age of Child and Type of Activity is not clear when comparing all eight levels across Type of Activity, Age of Child was recoded into three levels: Youngest (Ages 3 to 7), Middle (Ages 9 to 13) and Oldest (Ages 15 and 17). The nature of the interaction becomes clear when summarized in this manner. For Least Sexual Activities, respondents were slightly more punitive in their ratings of older children (although not very punitive for any age group). For both More Ambiguous Activities and Most Sexual Activities, the direction of the mean ratings is reversed and respondents gave higher ratings for younger children.

The nature of the interaction between Relationship and Type of Activity can also be seen in Table 13. For both Least Sexual and More Ambiguous Activities, mean ratings of punitiveness are clearly ranked (lowest to highest) from Parent to Aunt/Uncle to Neighbor to


**TABLE 12**

Interactions Between Independent Variables That Showed Significant Changes in R² Values When Added Last to the Multiple Regression Equation for Scale 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction Variable</th>
<th>Change in R² (F Value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age of Child x Activity (4,4072)</td>
<td>0.0044 (9.314)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship x Activity (2,4075)</td>
<td>0.0078 (34.526)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex of Respondent x Activity (2,4075)</td>
<td>0.0020 (8.144)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of Child x Relationship (2,4073)</td>
<td>0.0009 (3.914)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex of Adult x Relationship (1,4075)</td>
<td>0.0005 (4.066)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex of Adult x Duration</td>
<td>0.0006 (5.3994)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05
** p < .001
### TABLE 13

Mean Ratings on Scale 3, According to Type of Activity, for the Variables that Showed a Significant Interaction with Type of Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable and Level</th>
<th>Least Sexual Activities Mean Ratings</th>
<th>More Ambiguous Activities Mean Ratings</th>
<th>Most Sexual Activities Mean Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age of Child</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngest (Ages 3 to 7)</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>9.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle (Ages 9 to 13)</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>8.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldest (Ages 15 and 17)</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>8.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>6.86</td>
<td>8.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbor</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>8.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aunt/Uncle</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>8.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>8.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex of Respondent</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>8.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td>8.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean rating across all Independent Variables</strong></td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>6.05</td>
<td>8.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***Significance of interaction between variable and Type of Activity is $p < .001$.

*Least Sexual Activities: Trying to help with activities, Wanting to spend free time, Holding hands, Sitting very close, Hugging.

*More Ambiguous Activities: Kissing, Looking in a sexual way, Showing sexually explicit pictures from a magazine, Showing genitals.

For the Most Sexual Activities, Stranger and Neighbor still receive the most punitive ratings, but Parent is rated higher than Aunt/Uncle. Thus, respondents were most punitive toward strangers for all Types of Activities. They were least punitive toward a Parent, except for the Most Sexual Activities, when they were more punitive toward a Parent than toward an Aunt/Uncle.

The nature of the interaction between Sex of Respondent and Type of Activity for Scale 3 is similar to that for Scale 1. For both scales, males gave slightly higher (but not significant) mean ratings for Least Sexual Activities whereas females gave significantly higher mean ratings ($p < .001$) for Ambiguous Activities. For the Most Sexual Activities both males and females gave equally high ratings on both Scale 3 and Scale 1. Thus, males were significantly less punitive than females for More Ambiguous Activities.

Three other interactions between independent variables for Scale 3 were significant to the $p < .05$ level (see Table 12). These were Age of Child x Relationship, Sex of Adult x Relationship, and Sex of Adult x Duration. The changes in the $R^2$ values and the significance levels for these interactions were too small to allow any insight into the nature of the interaction by breaking down the mean ratings for the pairs of variables.
CHAPTER IV
DISCUSSION

In the present chapter, the results of this study are reviewed and compared to the findings of previous studies and their implications assessed and discussed. Methodological considerations of using this particular factorial survey research design are included as part of the discussion.

Subjects' Uses of the Four Rating Scales

The total $R^2$ values for the four rating scales (reported at the bottom of Table 5) are among the highest reported in the literature for this type of study. The fact that such a large proportion of the variance is explained by the effects of the independent variables indicates that respondents' judgements were structured according to the information that was presented and that the respondents were processing the information contained in the vignettes in a systematic way (Rossi and Anderson, 1982). These authors further suggest that such a high $R^2$ value indicates that "there is a fair amount of consensus about what is important" for the topic under study (Rossi and Anderson, 1982, p. 48). It appears then that in this study respondents were serious and systematic in their approach to the rating task and that there is a considerable amount of consensus in this student population regarding the issue of sexual victimization of children. It is also apparent from examination of Table 5 that
most of the explained variance (total $R^2$) for each scale was contributed by Type of Activity. For example, the $R^2$ value obtained from adding Type of Activity last to the multiple regression equation for the Abusiveness scale was .576, whereas the total $R^2$ for the equation was .607. Most other studies (e.g., Finkelhor and Redfield, Note 4; Garrett and Rossi, 1978) did not use the wide range of acts that were included in this study and their $R^2$ values for Act were consequently lower. It is probable that if this study had used a more restricted range of Type of Activity, the total $R^2$ values for each scale would have been lower. In this study then, it appears that respondents' judgements were structured primarily by the Type of Activity that was presented in the vignette.

The bimodal distribution of ratings on all four scales, with "ceiling" and "floor" effects, that was found in this study, has also been reported in other studies. Finkelhor and Redfield (Note 4) reported ceiling effects with respondents rating 60% of the ratings as 8, 9, or 10. Rossi and Anderson (1982) reported a bimodal distribution identical to the ones found in this study with clustering of ratings at the two ends of the rating scales. They point out that the distribution of ratings partly depends on which levels of the independent variables are chosen to be included in this study. In Finkelhor and Redfield's study, all of the acts included had some sexual content (which also results in a smaller $R^2$ value). In the present study a wider range of activities were chosen, including nonsexual activities and more ambiguous activities. Although respondents in this study may have simply been using the scales in
a more dichotomous manner (e.g., yes/no), it seems more likely that they had strong opinions about the subject matter they were rating. Thus if they felt strongly then they rated the "definitely" ends of the scales. Rossi and Anderson's (1982) suggestion to use longer rating scales would be one way to ameliorate the situation. Another approach that might help normalize the distribution of the ratings would be to include a greater number of ambiguous or "gray-area" levels of independent variables such as Type of Activity when designing the study.

The use of four rating scales in the present study was a departure from previous studies that used the same methodology, but with a single rating scale. Though there appears to be no inherent methodological reason not to use more than one rating scale, one concern that was raised here is whether there might be "set" effects, with respondents using Scale 1 to determine the ratings for the rest of the scales. Although a within-subject comparison of ratings showed significant differences, the question of the set effects needs to be explored in greater depth. This could be accomplished in future studies in several ways. One would be to randomly vary the order of the presentation of the scales after each vignette. Another would be to reverse the ends of some of the scales. A third approach would be to give vignettes followed by single rating scales to four groups of subjects and vignettes followed by all four rating scales to another group of subjects. Given a large enough sample size, if there are no set effects, then there should be no difference in mean ratings between groups for each rating scale. If this is the case then it
will provide a much greater measure of confidence for future studies in the interpretation of the results of the analyses of any scales that follow the first scale.

**The Relative Importance of the Independent Variables for Ratings on the Four Scales**

The Type of Activity was clearly the most important variable in respondents' judgements of Abusiveness, the Psychological effect on the child, and Whether the adult should be punished and/or receive psychological help. This finding is consistent with Finkelhor and Redfield's (Note 4) findings that type of act and perpetrator's age were the most important variables in their study. The magnitude of the change in $R^2$ value when Type of Activity is entered into the regression equation last (see Table 5) is quite striking. For example, it accounts for 95% of the explained variance (total $R^2$) for the entire regression equation for ratings of Abusiveness (Scale 1). It can be explained to some extent by the choice of levels that were included for Type of Activity (see Table 1). If a more restricted range of activities had been included, such as only sexual activities (as was the case in Finkelhor and Redfield's study, Note 4), it would have lessened the importance of the variable. The overriding importance of the Type of Activity for all four scales, however, indicates that it was certainly the most salient characteristic of the vignettes for respondents in this study.

The variable Relationship was the second most important variable on all four scales, although much less important than Type of Activity
One interesting finding is that of the four scales, it accounted for the greatest change in $R^2$ value for Scale 3. This suggests that Relationship had more of an influence on ratings of Punitiveness than it did on ratings of Abusiveness or Effect on the child. Each of the other variables had a highly significant ($p < .001$) effect on ratings on all four scales, except for Sex of Child, which was the least influential variable for ratings on all scales. The Sex of of the Adult was the third most important variable in terms of ratings of both Abusiveness and Punitiveness (see Table 5).

While very gratifying, the fact that all variables had a significant influence on ratings does raise the question of whether there might be variables that are important but were not included in the study. One of the uses of this methodology is to determine which variables are important in determining the respondents' judgements. Other studies (e.g., Rossi and Anderson, 1982) typically identify certain independent variables that do not contribute significantly to respondents' judgements of vignettes. In future studies of this nature it would be useful to include additional variables in the construction of vignettes. For example, one such variable might be the degree of threat that accompanied the activities.
The Effects of Each Level of Each Independent Variable on Ratings of Sexual Abusiveness and Punitiveness

Sex of the Child

The findings reported here offer strong support for Finkelhor and Redfield's (Note 4) observation that the situations that were rated as most abusive involved female victims. Averaged across other variables, respondents in this study rated situations as more abusive when girls were involved than when boys were involved. This may reflect gender-role stereotypes that girls are more vulnerable and more in need of protection than boys. It may also reflect more permissive social norms about males being sexually active; that is, if a girl is sexually involved with an adult it might be labelled "abuse" whereas the same situation for a boy might be labelled "experimenting" or "getting some education."

Consistent with Howells' (1980) findings, respondents were more punitive when the sex of the child in the vignettes was female. However, this finding was not as robust ($p < .05$) as that for Scale 1. Howells also speculates that this may be a reflection of cultural norms that see girls as "less able to defend themselves and as in greater need of 'protection'" (p. 30). He also suggests that "the sexual status of the female victim may be viewed as 'spoiled' by the sexual assault. It may be that our culture ascribes a value to being 'untouched' for females but is less likely to do so for males" (p. 30).
Age of the Child

The findings regarding Age of the Child support Finkelhor and Redfield's findings (Note 4) that vignettes involving the oldest and youngest children were rated as least sexually abusive. As can be seen in Table 8, the vignettes that were rated as most sexually abusive involved 9, 11, and 13 year olds. Finkelhor and Redfield (Note 4) speculate that youngest victims are probably seen as being "so naive about sex that they are not tainted and abused by being involved in sexual activity with an older person." (p. 21). This view is also supported in the clinical literature. Sanford (1980) points out that a very young victim may not understand what happened and therefore is not necessarily traumatized whereas "an older child who has an understanding of sexuality might know that what has happened is wrong and feel violated as well as responsible for the crime" (p. 141). Vignettes that involved oldest children were also rated as least abusive, a finding that is consistent with previous studies (Finkelhor and Redfield, Note 4; Garrett and Rossi, 1978). In this society many 15 and 17 year olds are already sexually active, so the sexual activity (averaged across other variables) might be seen as less abusive by respondents because they see older teenagers as being more knowing participants rather than victims.

The meaning of the significant interaction between Age of the Child and Type of Activity for Scale 1 is not entirely clear. The results indicate that for the Most Sexual Activities, higher ratings were ascribed to vignettes describing younger children, whereas for
the Least Sexual Activities, lower ratings were ascribed to those describing younger children. It seems likely that nonsexual activities such as holding hands and hugging would be viewed as a normal part of adult-child interactions with younger children, but with older children may take on more sexual implications.

The hypothesis that respondents would be more punitive toward perpetrators when younger children were involved was indirectly supported. The distribution of the $\beta$ weights for levels of Age of Child was inconsistent but roughly curvilinear (see Table 11), initially suggesting that averaged across all variables respondents were less punitive for situations involving the youngest children. However, this variable interacted significantly with Type of Activity. When the Type of Activity was either Most Sexual or Ambiguous, respondents were most punitive in their ratings of vignettes that involved the youngest children. These results seem to indicate that people believe that sexual interactions are more serious for younger children, possibly because they are seen as having less resources to avoid being victimized and are thus more vulnerable. It makes sense that people would be more punishing of a perpetrator when the child is clearly a victim.

**Sex of the Adult**

The predicted findings that respondents would rate vignettes as more abusive and would be more punitive toward the perpetrator when the adult was male were quite robust in this study. Finkelhor and Redfield (Note 4) similarly report that vignettes involving female
perpetrators were rated as least serious. These results are probably a reflection of at least two cultural phenomena: gender differences in caretaking roles for adults and more lenient views of sexual activity for male children. Because women in this culture are typically the primary child-rearers and men typically are less involved with caretaking, it might be seen as more natural for women to be involved with children in more physically intimate ways whereas the same contact from males would be seen as sexualized. It has been argued that men's lack of involvement in child-rearing is one of the very conditions in this culture that leads to the sexual victimization of children--that because men do not form nurturing emotional relationships with their children they are more able to view the child as a "sex object" with little awareness of the child's needs (Herman, 1981). The findings reported here may also reflect cultural norms that adult women having sexual contact with boys is viewed as a fortunate opportunity for the young man whereas adult men having sexual contact with barely pubescent girls is seen as more violating and exploitative. The findings that respondents were significantly more punitive toward male perpetrators may again be a reflection of the caretaking issue and/or gender-role stereotypes that women are more fragile and more in need of protection and thus not submitted to a punitive experience.

Relationship

Initial findings included a main effect for this variable; vignettes describing strangers and neighbors were rated as more
sexually abusive than those describing relatives or family members. This initially suggested that extrafamilial involvement was seen as more serious than intrafamilial involvement. However the significant interaction of this variable with Type of Activity suggests that the picture is more complex. Indeed it does appear to be the case that for activities that are nonsexual or less abusive in nature, that vignettes involving strangers are rated as most abusive whereas those involving parents are rated as least sexually abusive. But when the act involved is clearly sexual (fondling genitals, oral sex, sexual intercourse) then the distinction disappears and vignettes involving parents and neighbors are rated as more (and equally) abusive than those involving strangers (see Table 10). Thus, the distinction between intrafamilial versus extrafamilial relationships of the adult to the child does not hold up when the activity is clearly sexual. The fact that sexual involvement with a parent was seen as more serious than clearly sexual activities with a stranger does lend partial support to Sgroi's (1978) assertion that emotional trauma to the child varies according to the degree of emotional distance between the adult and child. It may be that respondents in this study viewed Neighbor as a closer relationship than Aunt/Uncle. When the activities do not involve having obvious sexual contact with the child, then a distinction can be made between intrafamilial and extrafamilial situations in terms of abusiveness, with extrafamilial interactions rated as more abusive. This makes sense in that interactions such as kissing and hugging would naturally be considered more appropriate (and less sexually abusive) between a parent and a child than between
a stranger and a child.

Ratings of Punitiveness also showed a main effect, with respondents most punitive toward strangers and least punitive toward parents. Although there was a significant interaction between Relationship and Type of Activity, Stranger and Neighbor consistently received the most punitive ratings, even for the Most Sexual Activities (see Table 13). This lends tentative (the differences were not very great) support to the clinical observation that people are less willing to involve family members in the criminal justice system. This is an area of great interest and controversy (whether family members should be prosecuted) and is certainly deserving of further empirical investigation. In Massachusetts, for example, a law was recently passed that requires the Department of Social Services (the agency responsible for the investigation of child abuse) to report cases of sexual abuse and severe physical abuse to the District Attorney's Office.

Type of Activity

This was clearly the most important variable in determination of ratings of sexual abuse and it interacted significantly with three other variables. As predicted, for the more sexually intrusive acts, respondents rated them as more sexually abusive and were more punitive toward the perpetrator. Consistent with Finkelhor and Redfield's findings (Note 4), the results of this study indicate that fondling a child's genitals is rated nearly as abusive as having sexual intercourse. Having oral sex with the child, a level of Type of Activity
that was not included in the Finkelhor and Redfield study, was also clumped with Fondling genitals and Intercourse in terms of the most abusive ratings. This lends support to Finkelhor and Redfield's (Note 4) suggestion that the public sees sexual interactions other than intercourse (e.g., fondling, oral sex) as about as serious as intercourse even though the law in many states considers sexual intercourse to be more abusive.

Duration

The longer the duration of the events described in the vignettes, the higher were the ratings of both sexual Abusiveness and Punitive-ness. The only unexpected finding regarding this variable was that vignettes depicting the duration as One Year were rated higher on both scales than those describing the duration as Over a Year (see Table 8), when it was hypothesized that longest duration (Over a Year) would receive highest ratings. Although this may have been a statistical anomaly or may have resulted from the wording of the categories, it may also reflect a belief among respondents that adult-child sexual involvement of long-standing duration is less serious. Perhaps respondents believe that the child has to be "consenting" or "willing" in order for sexual involvement to go on for so long, or that it must be part of a family lifestyle. Further research is certainly necessary to explore beliefs about childhood sexual abuse that is long-standing in nature. Future studies that employ a similar vignette methodology might include additional levels for Duration (e.g., Two years, Three years, Four years).
Subgroup Differences in Ratings of Sexual Abusiveness and Punitiveness

Sex of Respondent

Averaged across other variables, the results of this study failed to show the predicted differences between male and female respondents on ratings of Abusiveness. This was surprising in light of consistent previous findings (Finkelhor and Redfield, Note 4; Garrett and Rossi, 1978) of such gender differences. These discrepant findings may be due to differences in the populations that were studied. Finkelhor and Redfield's subjects were all parents with children between the ages of six and fourteen, so the subjects were considerably older than the college-age adults in this study. The college students in this sample may also have been more aware of the problem of childhood sexual victimization due to all the media attention this topic has received, especially in the three years since Finkelhor and Redfield surveyed the Boston parents. The students in this study seemed very aware of the issue of childhood sexual abuse; over 73% reported that they had had exposure to the topic in the last year from two or more media sources. Only 4.5% of the sample reported no media exposure to the topic. Some 46% of the respondents indicated that they personally knew someone (friend, family member, etc.) who had had a sexually exploitative experience. It appears initially, then, that there is greater consensus among college-age males and females with regard to what they define as sexual abuse.

A closer examination of the results, however, suggests that the
agreement between college-age males and females about what they define as sexual abuse is limited to activities that are either Least Sexual or Most Sexual in their content. This study found a significant interaction between Sex of Respondent and Type of Activity. When the act was either clearly sexually intrusive (Fondling genitals, Oral sex, Intercourse) or clearly nonsexual, there were no significant differences between male and female ratings on Scale 1. When the Type of Activity was More Ambiguous (Kissing, Showing genitals, etc.), then female respondents gave significantly ($p < .001$) higher mean ratings (see Table 7). These findings may to some extent reflect changing norms in the younger generation with regard to definitions of sexual abuse, since Finkelhor and Redfield found significant gender differences and all of the acts in their study were sexual in content. The highly significant respondent gender differences for ratings of the More Ambiguous Activities lends support to what Finkelhor and Redfield call "the idea of dual cultures, one male and one female ... This may well be the influence of a long history of subtle toleration of this kind of behavior in the male subculture" (Finkelhor and Redfield, Note 4, pp. 25-26). Indeed, males in this study do appear to have an overall more lenient view of activities such as Kissing, Looking in a sexual way, Showing sexually explicit pictures from a magazine, and Showing genitals.

The finding of no overall significant subject gender differences for ratings of punitiveness (Scale 3) initially suggests a lack of support for Howells' (1980) finding that women were more punitive toward a perpetrator of a sexual offense. However, Sex of Respondent
also interacted significantly with Type of Activity. For More Ambiguous Activities, female respondents were significantly (p < .001) more punitive in their ratings. The vignette description that Howells (1980) used ("interfering with the child sexually") was fairly ambiguous in nature and thus the findings here may not be inconsistent with those from his study. For the Least Sexual Activities there were no significant differences between male and female ratings of abusiveness. Again these findings seem to reflect the existence of "dual cultures." Women may well be more punitive because they believe the More Ambiguous Activities to be more abusive in nature.

**Respondent History of Victimization**

The hypothesized differences in ratings of abusiveness and punitiveness according to whether or not the subjects had been victims themselves were not found to be significant. Personal experience was found to be a significant predictor variable in Rossi and Anderson's (1982) study of sexual harrassment. Methodological considerations may have suppressed any significant findings according to History of Victimization. Because of the wording of the question ("Before the age of 18, did you have any experiences in which you felt sexually exploited or misused by an adult or another child?") and because of subjects' young ages, the question failed to discriminate between childhood sex abuse situations (where the perpetrator is clearly older, or in a position of power or authority) and teenage pressured sexual activities with peers. While the latter can be definitely sexually exploitive and/or abusive, it can be argued that it is a
qualitatively different experience to be involved with a boyfriend or same age acquaintance. Teenagers may have more resources to cope with this kind of experience so that it would not have the same lasting effects that an earlier sexually exploitive experience might have. Future studies of this nature might ask the question in such a way as to more clearly define what is meant by sexual victimization.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

Certain findings from this study were fairly predictable. More intrusive sexual acts such as intercourse and oral sex are rated as more abusive than acts which are less clearly sexual in nature. Similarly, people are most punitive toward the perpetrator of clearly sexual acts. When the child involved is an older teenager, people see the situation as less abusive and they are less punitive toward the adult involved.

Other findings were less predictable and raise some very interesting questions. When assessing a potentially sexually abusive situation, the sexes of the perpetrator and the victim appear to be important factors (aside from the act involved) that people take into consideration. This study offers further support for previous observations that people believe situations to be more abusive when the victim is a girl and/or the perpetrator is male. Similarly, people are more punitive when the victim is female and/or the adult is male. We can speculate that these findings reflect gender-role stereotypes that females are more fragile and in need of protection, but the possible reasons for this difference need to be explored further. The implications for this finding, however, are that people believe sexual victimization to be less serious when it involves boys as victims and/or women as perpetrators. There is some corroborating evidence from the reports of college students who are victimized.
in their childhoods that this might be the case. Finkelhor (1979) found that males in general reported their victimization experiences to be less traumatizing and upsetting than did the females in the study. However, reports from clinicians indicate that, although it rarely gets reported, sexually victimizing experiences can be extremely disruptive for boys (Burgess et al., 1978). Further study of victims' actual experiences is needed to clarify whether victimization experiences involving male victims or female perpetrators is less serious or whether we are doing a disservice to the children involved by believing it to be so.

The questions of whether and which perpetrators should be punished are currently quite controversial and deserving of further research. Although types of punishment were not specified in this study, people were quite punitive in their ratings when the acts were clearly sexual. Tentative, though not statistically significant, support was found for the idea that people are more punitive when the perpetrator is not a family member. This is probably an area of changing social norms and conflicting interests between professional and demographic subgroups, as the public becomes increasingly educated about the prevalence of childhood sexual victimization.

The effects of a previous victimization experience upon attitudes and beliefs about the issue was not clarified in this study, probably due to methodological considerations. This remains a very important question, however, since it is probable that some one-fifth of the population has experienced sexual victimization. If personal
experience affects beliefs, it is important to know the nature of the effect. It is likely that former victims will be included among the group of adults who are in a position to make important decisions about what happens to sexually abused children, i.e., the social workers and/or police officers who investigate, the clinicians who treat the victims and perpetrators, and the judges and jury members who make decisions about the criminality of the situation.

One of the most interesting findings from this study is that of respondent gender differences regarding the abusiveness of acts which have sexual content but do not involve genital touching or penetration. Women in the study thought that these "grey-area" sexual abuse activities were significantly more abusive than did the men in the study. Feminists have been making the point for a number of years that men and women are socialized differently with regard to the meaning of sex in their lives. Again, this difference has important implications in terms of how a revealed sexually abusive situation might be handled by social workers (who are predominantly female) and police and judges (who are predominantly male). One can also speculate that perhaps the belief that certain sexual interactions are not very abusive lowers the social and legal inhibitions against the sexual misuse of children by men.

Continued research on childhood sexual victimization is extremely important, given that there is still not much known about the topic and that more current victims and former victims are seeking help. Such studies are useful for identifying the public attitudes and beliefs which influence personal or social responses to this
phenomenon, and for providing part of the knowledge base upon which appropriate intervention strategies can be formulated.
REFERENCE NOTES


7. The rank-ordered list of sexual acts were provided by Dr. Beverly Gomes-Schwartz, Research Director, Family Crisis Program for Sexually Abused Children, Tufts-New England Medical Center, Boston, MA.
The generalized computer program to randomly generate vignettes was written by Robert K. Lazarsfeld. It was adapted to the present study with the assistance of Dee Weber-Burdin and Melanie R. Madaio, Dr. Peter Rossi's research associates. It is available from the Social and Demographic Research Institute, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX
APPENDIX A

Part I: Vignette Model

Imagine the following situation:

The child is your (brother/sister).

The child's age is (3-5-7-9-11-13-15-17).

The adult in the situation is (a man/woman whom neither of know.)
(a man/woman who is your neighbor.)
(your uncle/your aunt.)
(your father/your mother.)

The child comes to you and tells you that the adult has been
(trying to help him/her with activities.)
(wanting to spend free time with him/her.)
(holding hands with him/her.)
(sitting very close to him/her.)
(hugging him/her.)
(looking at him/her in a sexual way.)
(showing him/her sexually explicit pictures from a magazine.)
(showing their genitals to him/her.)
(fondling his/her genitals.)
(having oral sex with him/her.)
(having anal/sexual intercourse with him/her.)
(putting her fingers in the child's vagina.) (female-female only)

The child says this (happened once.)
(happened a few times.)
(has been going on for a month.)
(has been going on for six months.)
(has been going on for a year.)
(has been going on for over a year.)
INSTRUCTIONS AND CONSENT FORM

The questionnaire that follows is divided into two sections. In the first part, you will read paragraphs that describe various interactions between children and adults. You will be asked to give your opinion about the described situations by rating each one on your different scales. In part II, you will be asked to provide some background information about yourself (age, college major, etc.) and to answer some questions about your childhood sexual experiences. A more complete explanation of the study will be provided after you finish filling out the questionnaire.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you fill out the questionnaire, all your answers will be completely anonymous and confidential. Over 500 people will be filling out this questionnaire and there is no way you can be identified from your answers. --please do not put your name on the materials--

This questionnaire contains some sexually explicit material that may make some people feel uncomfortable or embarrassed. Because of this, it is very important that we have your fully informed consent before we can use your questionnaire in the study. If you choose to participate, make a check in the box below indicating your consent.

You will receive 1 experimental credit for filling out this questionnaire, which takes about 20 minutes. Thank you for your cooperation.

**Check here if you wish to participate**

I have read the above and I agree to participate / /

Directions:

In the paragraphs that follow, please pretend that the child being described is your brother or sister. This means, for example, that if the adult is described as your aunt then she would be the child's aunt, too (since the child is your brother or sister).

For each paragraph and try to imagine how you would feel and what you would do in the particular situation. Then rate the situation by placing an "X" on each of the four rating scales.

X: /-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/
IMAGINE THE FOLLOWING SITUATION:
THE CHILD IS YOUR SISTER.
THE CHILD’S AGE IS 5 YEARS.
THE ADULT IN THE SITUATION IS YOUR MOTHER.
THE CHILD COMES TO YOU AND TELLS YOU THAT THE ADULT HAS BEEN TRYING TO HELP HER WITH AN ACTIVITY.
THE CHILD SAYS THIS HAPPENED ONLY ONCE.

GIVEN THIS SPECIFIC SITUATION...

1. WOULD YOU DEFINE THIS AS SEXUAL ABUSE?

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
\text{DEFINITELY} & \text{NOT SEXUAL} & \text{SEXUAL ABUSE}
\end{array}
\]

2. HOW DO YOU THINK THIS WILL AFFECT THE CHILD’S PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT?

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
\text{EXEMPLARY} & \text{HELPFUL} & \text{HARMFUL}
\end{array}
\]

3. SHOULD THE ADULT IN THIS SITUATION BE PUNISHED?

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
\text{DEFINITELY NO} & \text{SEVERE PUNITMENT}
\end{array}
\]

4. SHOULD THE ADULT HAVE PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP?

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
\text{DEFINITELY NO} & \text{INTENSIVE TREATMENT FOR A LONG TIME}
\end{array}
\]
IMAGINE THE FOLLOWING SITUATION:

THE CHILD IS YOUR BROTHER.
THE CHILD'S AGE IS 15 YEARS.
THE ADULT IN THE SITUATION IS A WOMAN WHO IS YOUR NEIGHBOR.
THE CHILD COMES TO YOU AND TELLS YOU THAT THE ADULT HAS BEEN SHOWING HIM SEXUALLY EXPLICIT PICTURES FROM A MAGAZINE.
THE CHILD SAYS THIS HAPPENED A FEW TIMES.

GIVEN THIS SPECIFIC SITUATION...

1. WOULD YOU DEFINE THIS AS SEXUAL ABUSE?

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DEFINITELY
NOT SEXUAL
ABUSE

2. HOW DO YOU THINK THIS WILL AFFECT THE CHILD'S PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT?

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EXTREMELY
HELPFUL

3. SHOULD THE ADULT IN THIS SITUATION BE PUNISHED?

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DEFINITELY
NO
PUNISHMENT

4. SHOULD THE ADULT HAVE PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP?

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DEFINITELY NO
PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP

INTENSIVE TREATMENT
FOR A LONG TIME
IMAGINE THE FOLLOWING SITUATION:

THE CHILD IS YOUR SISTER.

THE CHILD'S AGE IS 11 YEARS.

THE ADULT IN THE SITUATION IS YOUR FATHER.

THE CHILD COMES TO YOU AND TELLS YOU THAT THE ADULT HAS BEEN HAVING SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITH HER.

THE CHILD SAYS THIS HAS BEEN HAPPENING FOR OVER A YEAR.

GIVEN THIS SPECIFIC SITUATION...

1. WOULD YOU DEFINE THIS AS SEXUAL ABUSE?

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
\\
\text{DEFINITY surprising} & \text{NOT SEXUAL ABUSE} & \text{SEXUAL ABUSE} \\
\end{array}
\]

2. HOW DO YOU THINK THIS WILL AFFECT THE CHILD'S PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT?

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
\\
\text{EXTREMELY helpful} & \text{HELPFUL} & \text{HARMFUL} \\
\end{array}
\]

3. SHOULD THE ADULT IN THIS SITUATION BE PUNISHED?

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
\\
\text{DEFINITELY SEVERE PUNISHMENT} & \text{SEVERE PUNISHMENT} \\
\end{array}
\]

4. SHOULD THE ADULT HAVE PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP?

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
\\
\text{DEFINITELY NO PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP} & \text{INTENSIVE TREATMENT FOR A LONG TIME} \\
\end{array}
\]
IMAGINE THE FOLLOWING SITUATION:

THE CHILD IS YOUR BROTHER.

THE CHILD'S AGE IS 9 YEARS.

THE ADULT IN THE SITUATION IS A WOMAN WHO IS YOUR NEIGHBOR.

THE CHILD COMES TO YOU AND TELLS YOU THAT THE ADULT HAS BEEN TRYING TO HELP HIM WITH ACTIVITIES.

THE CHILD SAYS THIS HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR SIX MONTHS.

GIVEN THIS SPECIFIC SITUATION...

1. WOULD YOU DEFINE THIS AS SEXUAL ABUSE?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

DEFINITELY  NOT SEXUAL  DEFINITELY  SEXUAL  ABUSE

2. HOW DO YOU THINK THIS WILL AFFECT THE CHILD'S PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

EXTREMELY HELPFUL  EXTREMELY HARMFUL

3. SHOULD THE ADULT IN THIS SITUATION BE PUNISHED?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

DEFINITELY  NO  SEVERE  PUNISHMENT

4. SHOULD THE ADULT HAVE PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

DEFINITELY NO  INTENSIVE TREATMENT  FOR A LONG TIME
IMAGINE THE FOLLOWING SITUATION:
THE CHILD IS YOUR BROTHER.
THE CHILD'S AGE IS 13 YEARS.
THE ADULT IN THE SITUATION IS YOUR AUNT.
THE CHILD COMES TO YOU AND TELLS YOU THAT THE ADULT HAS BEEN HAVING ORAL SEX WITH HIM.
THE CHILD SAYS THIS HAPPENED A FEW TIMES.

GIVEN THIS SPECIFIC SITUATION...

1. WOULD YOU DEFINE THIS AS SEXUAL ABUSE?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   DEFINITELY
   NOT SEXUAL
   ABUSE

2. HOW DO YOU THINK THIS WILL AFFECT THE CHILD'S PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   EXTREMELY
   HELPFUL
   EXTREMELY
   HARMFUL

3. SHOULD THE ADULT IN THIS SITUATION BE PUNISHED?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   DEFINITELY
   NO
   PUNISHMENT

4. SHOULD THE ADULT HAVE PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   DEFINITELY
   NO
   PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP
   INTENSIVE TREATMENT
   FOR A LONG TIME
Imagine the following situation:

The child is your sister.
The child's age is 10 years.
The adult in the situation is your mother.
The child comes to you and tells you that the adult has been having oral sex with her.
The child says this happened only once.

Given this specific situation...

1. Would you define this as sexual abuse?

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2. How do you think this will affect the child's psychological development?

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3. Should the adult in this situation be punished?

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4. Should the adult have psychological help?

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Imagine the following situation:

The child is your sister.

The child’s age is 13 years.

The adult in the situation is a man whom neither of you know.

The child comes to you and tells you that the adult has been trying to help her with activities.

The child says this has been going on for a year.

Given this specific situation...

1. Would you define this as sexual abuse?

   /-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

   DEFINITELY NOT SEXUAL

   SEXUAL ABUSE

2. How do you think this will affect the child’s psychological development?

   /-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

   EXTREMELY HELPFUL

   EXTREMELY HARMFUL

3. Should the adult in this situation be punished?

   /-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

   DEFINITELY NO

   SEVERE PUNISHMENT

4. Should the adult have psychological help?

   /-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

   DEFINITELY NO

   INTENSIVE TREATMENT FOR A LONG TIME
IMAGINE THE FOLLOWING SITUATION:

THE CHILD IS YOUR BROTHER.

THE CHILD'S AGE IS 11 YEARS.

THE ADULT IN THE SITUATION IS YOUR FATHER.

THE CHILD COMES TO YOU AND TELLS YOU THAT THE ADULT HAS BEEN LOOKING AT HIM IN A SEXUAL WAY.

THE CHILD SAYS THIS HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR OVER A YEAR.

GIVEN THIS SPECIFIC SITUATION...

1. WOULD YOU DEFINE THIS AS SEXUAL ABUSE?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
DEFINITELY NOT SEXUAL
SEXUAL ABUSE

2. HOW DO YOU THINK THIS WILL AFFECT THE CHILD'S PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
EXTREMELY HELPFUL
HARMFUL

3. SHOULD THE ADULT IN THIS SITUATION BE PUNISHED?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
DEFINITELY NO
PUNISHMENT

4. SHOULD THE ADULT HAVE PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
DEFINITELY NO
PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP
INTENSIVE TREATMENT FOR A LONG TIME
Imagine the following situation:

The child is your sister.
The child’s age is 15 years.
The adult in the situation is a man who is your neighbor.
The child comes to you and tells you that the adult has been showing their genitals to her.
The child says this happened a few times.

Given this specific situation...

1. Would you define this as sexual abuse?

   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
DEFINITELY | | | | | | | | | | |
NOT SEXUAL | | | | | | | | | | |
ABUSE | | | | | | | | | | |

2. How do you think this will affect the child’s psychological development?

   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
EXTREMELY | | | | | | | | | | |
HELPFUL | | | | | | | | | | |
EXTREMELY | | | | | | | | | | |
HARMFUL | | | | | | | | | | |

3. Should the adult in this situation be punished?

   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
DEFINITELY | | | | | | | | | | |
NO | | | | | | | | | | |
PUNISHMENT | | | | | | | | | | |

4. Should the adult have psychological help?

   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
DEFINITELY | | | | | | | | | | |
NO | | | | | | | | | | |
PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP | | | | | | | | | | |
INTENSIVE TREATMENT FOR A LONG TIME | | | | | | | | | | |
Imagine the following situation:

The child is your brother.
The child's age is 7 years.
The adult in the situation is a woman whom neither of you know.
The child comes to you and tells you that the adult has been hugging him.
The child says this happened only once.

Given this specific situation...

1. Would you define this as sexual abuse?

   \[
   \begin{array}{ccccccccccc}
   & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
   \text{Definitely} & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
   \text{Not sexual abuse} & \text{Definitely}
   \end{array}
   \]

2. How do you think this will affect the child's psychological development?

   \[
   \begin{array}{ccccccccccc}
   & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
   \text{Extremely helpful} & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
   \text{Extremely harmful}
   \end{array}
   \]

3. Should the adult in this situation be punished?

   \[
   \begin{array}{ccccccccccc}
   & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
   \text{Definitely} & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
   \text{No punishment}
   \end{array}
   \]

4. Should the adult have psychological help?

   \[
   \begin{array}{ccccccccccc}
   & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
   \text{Definitely} & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
   \text{Psychological help}
   \end{array}
   \]

   \[
   \begin{array}{ccccccccccc}
   & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
   \text{Definitely} & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
   \text{Intensive treatment for a long time}
   \end{array}
   \]
PART II

THE SECOND HALF OF THIS QUESTIONNAIRE ASKS FOR SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND ASKS A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR CHILDHOOD SEXUAL EXPERIENCES. PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT YOUR ANSWERS ARE CONFIDENTIAL AND ANONYMOUS.

PLEASE CIRCLE THE CORRECT INFORMATION OR FILL IN THE BLANKS:

Q1 YOUR SEX?
1 MALE
2 FEMALE

Q2 YOUR AGE? ( )

Q3 CURRENT YEAR IN COLLEGE?
1 FRESHMAN
2 SOPHOMORE
3 JUNIOR
4 SENIOR
5 OTHER (SPECIFY: )

Q4 MAJOR? ( )

Q5 RACE?
1 CAUCASIAN (WHITE)
2 BLACK
3 HISPANIC
4 ASIAN
5 OTHER (SPECIFY: )

Q6 HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR FAMILY'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS?
1 LOW-INCOME
2 WORKING CLASS
3 MIDDLE CLASS
4 UPPER MIDDLE CLASS
5 UPPER CLASS
6 OTHER (SPECIFY: )

Q7 RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION (PAST OR PRESENT)?
1 CATHOLIC
2 PROTESTANT (SPECIFY: )
3 JEWISH
4 NONE
5 OTHER (SPECIFY: )

Q8 CURRENT RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT?
1 NO RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY
2 MINOR RELIGIOUS OBSERVATION (E.G., ATTENDANCE AT MAJOR HOLIDAYS)
3 MODERATE RELIGIOUS OBSERVATION
4 RELIGION VERY IMPORTANT PART OF LIFE
5 OTHER (SPECIFY: )
27-10 MANY OF THE PARAGRAPHS THAT YOU RATED IN PART 1 OF THIS QUESTIONNAIRE INVOLVED SEXUAL INTERACTIONS BETWEEN ADULTS AND CHILDREN. ON THE FOLLOWING SCALES, PLEASE RATE HOW OFTEN YOU THINK THIS KIND OF THING HAPPENS IN OUR SOCIETY. I.E. HOW USUAL OR UNUSUAL IT IS FOR CHILDREN TO HAVE SEXUAL INTERACTIONS WITH ADULTS.

Q11 HOW COMMON/UNCOMMON IS IT FOR GIRLS TO HAVE A SEXUAL EXPERIENCE WITH AN ADULT SOMETIME IN THEIR CHILDHOOD?

1 \(\rightarrow\) 10

EXTREMELY UNCOMMON
NEVER 
HAPPENS

EXTREMELY COMMON
HAPPENS ALL THE TIME

Q12 HOW COMMON/UNCOMMON IS IT FOR BOYS TO HAVE A SEXUAL EXPERIENCE WITH AN ADULT SOMETIME IN THEIR CHILDHOOD?

1 \(\rightarrow\) 10

EXTREMELY UNCOMMON
NEVER 
HAPPENS

EXTREMELY COMMON
HAPPENS ALL THE TIME

Q13 IN THE LAST YEAR, DO YOU REMEMBER READING ABOUT, SEEING OR HEARING ANY DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE OR MISUSE?
(CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)

1 No
2 Don’t Remember
3 Yes, in a Newspaper
4 Yes, on Television
5 Yes, on the Radio
6 Yes, in a Magazine
7 Yes, in a Book
8 Yes, Other (Specify: )

Q14 DO YOU PERSONALLY KNOW ANYONE ELSE (FRIEND, FAMILY MEMBER, ETC.) WHO HAD ANY EXPERIENCES BEFORE THE AGE OF 12 IN WHICH THEY WERE SEXUALLY EXPLOITED OR MISUSED BY AN ADULT OR ANOTHER CHILD?

1 Yes
2 No

Q15 BEFORE THE AGE OF 12, DID YOU HAVE ANY EXPERIENCES IN WHICH YOU FELT SEXUALLY EXPLOITED OR MISUSED BY AN ADULT OR ANOTHER CHILD?

1 Yes
2 No
3 Uncertain

IF YOU ANSWERED "YES" OR "UNCERTAIN" TO THE ABOVE QUESTION, PLEASE CONTINUE WITH THE REMAINING ITEMS.
Q14 OF THE SEXUAL EXPERIENCE(S) THAT HAPPENED TO YOU, DID IT INVOLVE:

1. A SINGLE INCIDENT WITH ONE PERSON
2. MULTIPLE INCIDENTS WITH THE SAME PERSON
3. MULTIPLE INCIDENTS WITH DIFFERENT PEOPLE
4. OTHER (SPECIFY:)

Q15 WHAT KINDS OF SEXUAL THINGS HAPPENED? (CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)

1. PERSON REQUESTED YOU TO DO SOMETHING SEXUAL BUT YOU DIDN'T
2. PERSON EXPOSED HIS/HER GENITALS TO YOU
3. PERSON TOUCHED YOUR SEX ORGANS
4. YOU TOUCHED THE PERSON'S SEXUAL PARTS
5. PERSON TOUCHED HIS/HER MOUTH TO YOUR SEX ORGANS
6. PERSON HAD YOU TOUCH YOUR MOUTH TO HIS/HER SEX ORGANS
7. PERSON TRIED TO HAVE INTERCOURSE WITH YOU
8. OTHER (SPECIFY:)

Q16 WHAT WAS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PERSON(S) INVOLVED?
(CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)

1. STRANGER (1) MALE OR (2) FEMALE?
2. NEIGHBOR (1) MALE OR (2) FEMALE?
3. BROTHER
4. SISTER
5. PARENT
6. MOTHER
7. STEP-MOTHER
8. UNCLE
9. AUNT
10. COUSIN (1) MALE OR (2) FEMALE?
11. OTHER (SPECIFY:)

Q17 HOW DO YOU THINK THE SEXUAL EXPERIENCE(S) THAT HAPPENED TO YOU AFFECTED YOUR LONG-RANGE PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT?

1. VERY HELPFUL OR POSITIVE EFFECTS
2. SOMEWHAT HELPFUL OR POSITIVE EFFECTS
3. NO EFFECTS
4. SOMEWHAT HARMFUL OR NEGATIVE EFFECTS
5. VERY HARMFUL OR NEGATIVE EFFECTS

Q18 HAVE YOU EVER SOUGHT COUNSELING OR OTHER THERAPEUTIC HELP TO DEAL WITH FEELINGS ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE?
1. YES
2. NO

Q19 PLEASE USE THE BACK OF THIS PAGE TO WRITE DOWN OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION OR ANY COMMENTS ABOUT EITHER YOUR CHILDHOOD SEXUAL EXPERIENCES OR THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.
Explanation of Study

This is a study of people's beliefs and opinions about the sexual victimization of children. Even though childhood sexual abuse is now recognized as a common social problem, not much is known about what people think about it. In the paragraphs that you rated, a number of different activities between adults and children were described. Some of these were blatantly sexual, some were not sexual and some were ambiguous. This study looks at what you (and other people) define as sexual abuse, how much of a psychological effect people think it has on children, and whether people think that the adults involved should be punished and/or receive psychological help.

Many types of sexual activities are normal at various times during childhood and adolescence (for example, sex-exploration play with other children is typical in early childhood). What is different about childhood sexual victimization is that it involves a situation where the child is misused or exploited for another person's sexual gratification. Sometimes this involves the use of force or violence, but more often it is a situation where an adult or another child uses his or her position of authority over the child in more subtle ways to get involved with the child sexually. Recent statistics estimate that approximately one out of five women and one out of eleven men have had childhood sexual experiences that could be defined as sexually exploitive. Contrary to popular belief, most children are not sexually molested by strangers, but by family friends and relatives. Most children are afraid to tell anyone out of fear of being blamed or that the parents will be angry.

**IF FILLING OUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE HAS UPSET YOU and/or caused you to remember childhood sexual experiences that you had forgotten, you might find it helpful to talk to someone about it. In the Amherst area, there are several places which provide counselling services to students, including:**

Everywoman's Center (545-0883) - Peer counselling, groups for victims of rape and incest.

Student Mental Health (545-2337) - Individual counselling

Psychological Services Center (545-0041) - Individual counselling

Thank you very much for your participation in this study. For further information or the results of this study (will be available after 8/83), please contact: Rebecca Newberry Tobin 610 545-0675