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PUBLIC & PROFESSIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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ABSTRACT

In recent years a significant amount of research has been carried out into child sexual abuse. As a result, much information is now available about the sexual abuse of children. However, there are still some aspects of the problem about which very little is known. One such aspect is the sexual abuse of boys. Previous research has either tended to concentrate on the abuse of girls or ignored gender differences altogether. It was the present dearth of empirical research into the abuse of boys which provided the impetus for the study described in this thesis.

The study was specifically about public and professional perceptions of child sexual abuse. The main aim was to explore whether the sexual abuse of boys was perceived differently from that of girls.

The research consisted of two surveys. The first attempted to estimate the prevalence of child sexual abuse amongst the student population living in Glasgow and the second was an exploration into public perceptions of child sexual abuse. In the case of the first study, self-completion questionnaires were completed by samples of students attending university/college in the Glasgow area. The second study utilised the relatively innovative method of the vignette technique. Using a self-completion questionnaire (different from the questionnaire used in the first study), members of the general public were asked to comment on six vignettes. Each of these vignettes described an incident which might be labelled as child sexual abuse. Since the study was also interested in exploring professional perceptions of child sexual abuse, a small number of professionals completed a different version of the questionnaire.

The thesis outlines a number of problems associated with the use of the vignette technique in social research. Of all the possible criticisms of the technique, the most relevant in terms of the present study is the fact that it is impossible to know how accurately the responses elicited by the vignettes represent the behaviour of the respondents in real life situations. Despite the problems associated with the use of the technique, this study appeared to demonstrate the value of using vignettes to research a topic of an extremely sensitive nature.

The prevalence study found that 7.5% of the sample reported possible abuse. This applied to 12% of females and 2.5% of males.

The main study found that the majority of the public were likely to take action about most of the incidents described in the questionnaire. Because the questionnaire which was completed by the professionals was not identical to the questionnaire used with the public, it is not possible to make direct comparisons between the responses elicited from the two groups. However, the overall impression was that the public was not quite as ready as professionals to label a situation as child sexual abuse. More than 60% of the public said that it was likely they would tell someone about five of the six incidents. Overall, even higher proportions of professionals thought it important that someone was told. A number of possible suggestions are made as to why professionals are more likely than the public to suspect that an incident involves sexual abuse.

While the literature suggests that a possible case of child sexual abuse will be treated less seriously if it involves a boy victim rather than a girl, the findings described in this thesis provide no general support for this hypothesis. Although the gender of the young person involved did seem to make a difference to the way in which the public perceived some incidents, it made no such difference in others. This thesis identifies the kind of situations where these gender differences are likely to be present, and discusses some of the implications of these findings. While the gender of the young person involved did appear to make some difference to the way in which the public perceive possible cases of child sexual abuse, the gender of the victim made no difference at all to the perceptions of professionals in this study.

The results of the present study are located within the findings of other studies of public and/or professional perceptions of child sexual abuse.

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Chapter One

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE & GENDER DIFFERENCES:

A Review of Recent Findings and Explanations

The research described in this thesis is about gender differences in relation to child sexual abuse. In particular, it is concerned with variations in the reporting¹ of possible cases of child sexual abuse depending on the gender of the child concerned. Previous research into CSA (ie child sexual abuse) has tended to ignore such differences and concentrated on the abuse of girls.

During recent years, increasing attention has been given to the topic of child abuse. While cases of child physical abuse tended to dominate during the 1960s and 1970s, attention turned to child sexual abuse in the 1980s. As a result of the publicity given to the subject by the media, interest has not been limited to professionals or academics working in the area of child protection. The media's coverage of events in Cleveland and, more recently, in Orkney served to heighten public awareness of the problem.

One of the most fundamental issues associated with child sexual abuse is defining it. "Child sexual abuse" is a relatively new term. Even as late as the early 1980s (eg see Nelson 1982 and MacLeod & Saraga 1988) CSA was thought of in terms of "incest" - sexual intercourse between a girl and a male relation, usually her father or step-father. Today it is acknowledged that girls and boys can be sexually abused by both family and non-family members. It is also accepted that sexual abuse can involve behaviours/acts other than intercourse. However, there are still a number of problems associated with deciding whether or not an incident constitutes sexual abuse. One of these problems is deciding what behaviour should be classified as abuse. Abusive behaviour is often divided into contact abuse (eg sexual kissing, anal and vaginal intercourse, and oral-genital sex) and non-contact abuse (eg exhibitionism, voyeurism, and sexual invitations). While there will be little doubt that behaviour which involves physical contact (especially where penetration is involved) is abuse, non-contact behaviours can be more ambiguous. Defining CSA is complicated by the fact that there are certain kinds of behaviour which are likely to be defined as abuse if they happen outside a child's home but, if the same

¹ This thesis is concerned with the "reporting" of abuse in both an official sense (the involvement of an agency such as the social work department or the police) and an unofficial sense (ie bringing the matter to the attention of family/friends etc)

behaviour happens within the child's home, it might well be dismissed as normal child-rearing behaviour. For example, a parent may insist on bathing or dressing a child and in the process touch or even cuddle the child. Depending on the age of the child, this is likely to be viewed as perfectly natural behaviour and no one would suspect that the parent was seeking sexual gratification. If, however, the same adult attempted to touch or cuddle a child for whom he had no caretaking responsibilities (eg a stranger in the park), then his/her behaviour will not be regarded as normal and his/her intentions are likely to be questioned. This, of course, raises the question of how do we know what is "normal"? Another issue associated with deciding what constitutes sexual abuse, is the question of whether there needs to be a difference in ages between the two people involved in an incident for the experience to be classed as abusive? The literature suggests that children often engage in sexual activity with their peers. But can an incident involving two young people of a similar age be defined as abusive? Does it make a difference if one of the young persons is more sexually mature than the other? A final problem associated with defining child sexual abuse is the issue of consent. If a child agrees to take part in an activity, can the activity be viewed as abuse? Does the child really understand what he/she is agreeing to? What happens if the other person has used coercion to obtain the child's consent? Clearly, the definition of CSA used in a piece of research is likely to have major implications for the findings of that research since the broader the definition used, the larger the problem becomes.

The increasing interest in child sexual abuse has led to a significant amount of research being carried out. As a result of this research, a considerable amount of information is now available. In his book "The Facts about Child Sexual Abuse", Gillham (1991) provides a comprehensive overview of what is presently known about CSA. Prevalence studies suggest that approximately 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused. It would therefore appear that girls and boys are sexually abused on a ratio of approximately 2:1. (These ratios are averages - based on the results of a number of studies. As will be discussed later in this chapter, different studies have produced considerably different prevalence rates.) Research has shown that most children's experiences of sexual abuse are of single events of a relatively minor character. While it is often believed that children are mainly sexually abused within the family, it would appear that the majority of abuse takes place outside the family. (This is quite unlike physical abuse - which nearly always occurs within the child's family.) Although most sexual abuse happens outwith the family, most abusers are known to their victims. It would therefore appear that "stranger danger" is not the main threat to children. Abusers tend to be young, aged between late teens and early thirties. Physical abuse is more common in pre-school children, but sexual abuse is more common in school-aged children and peaks between 11 and 12 years. While girls under 11 years of age are most at risk of sexual abuse, boys over 10

years of age are most at risk. A popular misconception is that children who report that they have been sexually abused are making false allegations. However, research suggest that spontaneous disclosures are rarely false (see especially Anthony and Watkeys 1991).

While there has been a 'major increase' (Monaco & Gaier 1988, p.97) in the number of reported cases of child sexual abuse in recent years, research would suggest that the majority of CSA cases are still not reported to the authorities. It is acknowledged that a large proportion of all crimes involving sexual activity go unreported (Black and DeBlasie 1993, Freeman-Longo 1986), but those involving children (especially male children) are least likely to be reported. While estimates suggest that only one in three rapes are reported, only one in ten (or may be even less) cases of CSA are reported (Freeman-Longo 1986). The literature suggests that there are a number of reasons why so many cases of CSA go unreported. Peake (Peake 1989) argues that some cases of CSA go unreported either because the children do not realise that they are being abused or because they do not have the necessary vocabulary to explain what has happened to them. Some children do not report their abuse because they fear that they will not be believed (Monaco & Gaier 1988). Other children choose not to report that they have been sexually abused because of a fear of the consequences of telling (for themselves, for the abuser - particularly if it was a parent who they love, and for other members of their family). The perpetrator may have used threats or bribes to ensure that the child remains silent about the abuse (eg Finch 1967, Monaco & Gaier 1988, Child and Family Research Trust Team 1993 and Yates 1982). Some children decide not to tell because they feel guilty. They may feel guilty because they believe that they were to blame for what happened to them or because they found the experience pleasurable and/or sexually arousing (eg Blanchard 1986, Rogers & Terry 1984 and Yates 1982). Given that there are so many factors which can serve to inhibit children from reporting that they have been sexually abused, it is perhaps not too surprising that so many choose to remain silent.

Explanations for Child Sexual Abuse

A number of theoretical perspectives have been developed to explain why children are sexually abused. These include the individual/psychological approach, family dysfunction theory and the feminist approach. Individual/psychological explanations for CSA argue that there is "something wrong" with the perpetrator of the abuse. He or she may be "sick", "abnormal" or 'criminal' (Saraga 1993, p.64). Family dysfunction theory shifts attention away from the behaviour of the individual to the functioning of the family. The family is viewed as a system, to be understood in terms of both the patterns of interaction

and communication within the family and the roles that individual family members adopt. Family dysfunction theory argues that CSA can serve the function of keeping together families which would otherwise collapse, as the abuse can help to avoid open conflict between parents. CSA can therefore restore some kind of equilibrium to the family. The classic scenario is the case of a father who abuses his daughter because his wife can no longer fulfil his sexual desires. The feminist approach explains CSA in terms of the inequalities in power which exist between men, women and children. Feminists argue that CSA is 'an extreme example of institutionalized male power over females' (Corby 1993, p.102) and children.

While the individual/psychological, family dysfunction and feminist approaches have been used to explain why children are sexually abused, a quite different approach is taken by the social constructionists. Social constructionists (eg see Rogers 1992) argue that problems such as CSA do not exist in themselves and are only made real by the way in which society thinks and talks about them (Mayes et al 1992). Rogers (1992) argues that masturbation was an example of a socially constructed problem in the nineteenth century when it was considered "self-abuse". Gillian Mayes writes:

....."self-abuse" became real because parents and doctors noticed it, thought about it, worried about it and did something about it. It became a "thing" by the fact that action was taken to prevent it and devices manufactured to implement its prevention.

(Mayes et al 1992, p.165)

Just as the social constructionists would argue that masturbation only became a social problem in the nineteenth century because of the way in which society thought and talked about masturbation at that time, they would argue that child sexual abuse has only become a problem today because of the way in which society presently thinks and talks about CSA. According to the social constructionists, homosexuality (eg see Foucault 1981, Stein 1992 and Weinrich 1992) and pornography are further examples of constructs of our society. If child sexual abuse has indeed been created by a social process, then it is likely that different people will have different understandings of what CSA is. It was therefore thought important that the prevalence study which is described in this thesis allowed the respondents themselves to decide what constitutes CSA. One of the purposes of the main study was to investigate whether or not there is a consensus of opinion amongst members of the public as to what should be considered CSA.

Despite the dramatic increase in interest in the topic, there are still some aspects of child sexual abuse about which very little is known. One of the areas in which very little

research has been undertaken is the sexual abuse of boys. While the literature contains many examples of studies which either concentrate on or are specifically about the sexual abuse of girls, the researcher has to look much harder to find what amount to a much smaller number of studies about the abuse of boys. By focusing on the sexual abuse of boys and comparing the differences in the treatment of alleged cases of CSA involving boys and girls, the present research was inspired by an interest in attempting to go at least some way towards redressing this imbalance.

The Sexual Abuse of Boys: How common a problem is it?

One of the problems associated with understanding the sexual abuse of boys is that nobody really knows how common it is. While a number of researchers have attempted to estimate the prevalence of the problem, their findings have varied considerably. Table 1.0, below, summarises the findings of a number of the more recent studies which were consulted, first hand, by the present researcher. It shows the definition of CSA used in each of the studies. The table also shows the percentage of male and female respondents who reported having ever been sexually abused, according to the definition used. The studies are ranked in order of prevalence, beginning with the studies which found the highest rates.

Table 1.1: Summary of a number of Studies attempting to estimate the Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse

	METHODS USED IN STUDY	DEFINITION OF CSA USED	PREVA LENCE	
			Men	Women
KELLY, REGAN & BURTON (1991)	A detailed questionnaire was completed by 1244 students aged 16-21 attending 7 colleges of Further Education in England, Scotland and Wales. (60% of the sample were female)	Definition included "flashing", being touched, being pressured in to having sex and attempted and actual assaults/rapes before the respondent reached 18 years of age. Perpetrators included adults and peers	27%	59%
MARTIN et al (1993)	Random sample of 3000 women taken from the electoral rolls of one area in New Zealand	Definition included unwanted contact and non-contact incidents with an adult or older person before the respondent reached the age of 16		34.4% all types of abuse 19.7% genital contact
FINKELHOR et al (1990)	National telephone survey of 2626 American adults (1415 men, 1481 women) aged 18+. The sample was randomly generated using 'phone numbers	Definition included contact and non-contact experiences before the respondent reached 18 years of age	16%	27%
FROMUTH & BURKHART (1989)	Questionnaires were distributed to 2 samples of male college students representing different geographic areas. (253 students attended a midwestern university and 329 students attended a south-western university)	Study used a broad definition which included both contact and non-contact experiences, although an age discrepancy between the victim and perpetrator was required for the incident(s) to be defined as abusive	15% mid-western 13% south- eastern	
BAKER & DUNCAN (1985)	2019 men and women aged 15+ interviewed as part of a MORI survey - a nationally representative sample of Great Britain	Incidents (including contact and non-contact experiences) occurring to the respondents before the age of 16 and involving a sexually mature person who expected the activity to lead to their sexual arousal	8%	12%

Table 1.1 (continued): Summary of a number of Studies attempting to estimate the Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse

	METHODS USED IN STUDY	DEFINITION OF CSA USED	PREVA LENCE	
			Men	Women
RISIN & KOSS (1987)	A nationwide survey, using a self-report questionnaire, of sexual assault experiences of 6159 students in 32 US institutions of higher education. The sample included 2972 men. (The data gathered regarding female respondents was not discussed in this report)	Definition included contact and non-contact experiences when the respondent was under 14 years of age	7.3%	
SIEGEL et al (1987)	3132 adults (1480 men, 1645 women ²) living in the Los Angeles area aged 18+ were interviewed using a stratified, household sample	Incidents involving pressure or force on a young person under 16 years of age to allow sexual contact to take place	3.8%	6.8%

² It is acknowledged by the present researcher that these figures, cited by Siegel et al (1987), add up to 3125 and not 3132.

From an initial glance at Table 1.0, two observations can be made immediately. The first of these observations is the considerable variation between studies in the estimated prevalence of CSA. Two possible explanations for the variation in prevalence are that different studies used different research methods (eg self-report questionnaires, interviews and telephone surveys) and each study used a different definition of CSA. Clearly a survey which asks respondents about experiences up to the age of 18 is likely to find a higher percentage of the sample reporting incidents (eg Finkelhor et al 1990; 16% of men) than a study which asks about experiences up to the age of 14 (eg Risin & Koss 1987; 7.3% of men). Besides the age of the respondent, the definitions of abuse also varied in other ways (eg whether or not they let the respondent decide him/herself what constitutes sexual abuse or whether the respondent was provided with a list of behaviours and asked if he/she had ever been forced to participate in any of them, and whether or not the study specified an age difference between the respondent and the perpetrator before the incident could be considered abusive). A third possible explanation for the variation in the prevalence rates given in Table 1.0 is the period in time in which each survey was conducted. Given the increase in public awareness of CSA, it is possible that studies carried out more recently will yield higher prevalence rates. It is likely that some behaviours which are regarded today as abuse would simply have been ignored in the past. There is certainly some evidence in Table 1.0 to suggest that the time when the study was conducted does effect the prevalence rate. While all of the studies carried out in the mid-eighties have prevalence rates for males of less than 10%, the studies conducted since the late eighties have rates of over 10% for males.

The second observation which can be made about Table 1.0 is that each study shows a higher prevalence rate for the sexual abuse of girls than boys. In most studies, the prevalence rates for women was almost twice that for men. This may be a result of the fact that girls are indeed more likely to be sexually abused than boys, or (given that all of these studies are based on self-report and are therefore not necessarily a measure of true prevalence) it may be indicative of the fact that boys are less willing to admit to having been sexually abused.

Of the studies cited in the table, the Baker and Duncan (1985) study and the research by Kelly, Regan and Burton (1991) were the only two surveys to be carried out in Great Britain. With the exception of the research by Martin et al (1993) which was conducted in New Zealand, the remainder of the studies were carried out in the United States of America. In the light of the absence of information on the UK, the research reported in this thesis began with a prevalence study of child sexual abuse amongst a sample of students attending colleges and universities within the Glasgow area. It was hoped that this would give some indication of the prevalence of the problem in Scotland.

The Sexual Abuse of Boys: What we already know

While there is a dearth of research into the sexual abuse of boys, the existing literature does suggest three very important aspects of child abuse which are distinct to the sexual abuse of boys. Each of these aspects would suggest that a male victim of CSA is less likely than a female victim to report the abuse. (Of course, not all reported cases of CSA are reported by the victims themselves.)

The first of these aspects is the fact that, in addition to all the reasons why both male and female victims of CSA might choose not to report the abuse, male victims have to overcome 'the additional taboo of homosexuality' (Faller 1989, p.282). Because boys are more likely than girls to be abused by an offender of the same sex (eg Peake 1989, Blanchard 1986 and Fritz, Stoll & Wagner 1982), this gives rise to a number of concerns around the issue of homosexuality. Some boys who have been sexually abused fear that they may be homosexual and some assume that they were chosen by their abusers because they displayed homosexual signs (Peake 1989 and Watkins & Bentovim 1992). Others worry that their abuse might cause them to become homosexual (Nasjleti 1980). According to Finch (1967), it is possible for a boy to become homosexual through repeated exposure to homosexual activities with an adult male. (Finch also argues that it is possible for a girl to become a lesbian through continued sexual contact with an adult woman.) Questions about his sexual orientation are of even greater concern to a sexually abused boy if he found the experience(s) at all pleasurable/sexually arousing. However, studies have shown that males can be sexually aroused by non-erotic stimuli (eg Ramsey 1943). Many researchers argue that, because of these concerns, many boys who have been sexually abused simply refuse to report the abuse lest they be labelled homosexual (eg Black & DeBlassie 1993, Nasjleti 1980, Pierce & Pierce 1985 and Roane 1992). Dimock writes:

In cases of abuse by another male, the fear of being labelled queer or a wimp might discourage reporting.

(Dimock 1988, p.204)

In addition to considering the consequences for himself if he reports being sexually abused by an other male, the male victim of CSA must also consider the stigma which might fall on his family (Roane 1992).

The second aspect of the sexual abuse of boys which is discussed in the existing literature is the fact that our society does not permit boys to be victims. Nasjleti writes:

From early childhood boys learn that masculinity means not depending on anyone, not being weak, not being passive, not being a loser in confrontation, in short, not being a victim.

(Nasjleti 1980, p.271)

Nasjleti goes on:

Reacting passively to physical aggression of any kind except from females is perceived by males as a feminine trait. Their resistance to asking for help stems from a reluctance to identify themselves as helpless or passive.

(Nasjleti 1980, p.272)

Peake makes a similar point:

Our society does not encourage boys/men to complain when they are hurt; rather the ethos is one of keeping quiet or of retaliation.

(Peake 1989, p.46)

Since society does not expect a male to complain if he has become a victim, it is likely that some boys who have been sexually abused will feel extremely uneasy about their experiences. Asking for help will make a boy feel that he was not able to protect himself (Nasjleti 1980), as he is likely to be ridiculed and considered "sissy" or "unmanly" (Nasjleti 1980). He is also likely to be faced with such comments as "A real boy would never let someone do that without fighting back" and "He must have wanted to do it because he didn't resist" (Rogers & Terry 1980).

A third aspect of the sexual abuse of boys which is highlighted in the existing literature is that society, as a whole, is reluctant to admit that boys can be sexually abused. While society has gradually come to accept that girls can be sexually abused, it is only just beginning to accept that boys can also be sexually abused. According to the literature, there are a whole host of reasons why someone would be more likely to turn a blind eye to a possible case of child abuse involving a male victim rather than actually being prepared to take action and do something about the situation. These reasons will be discussed later in this chapter.

The main research reported in this thesis is about an investigation into how members of the public would react if a child described to them an incident which might be interpreted as child sexual abuse. The aim of the study was to explore the types of behaviour which

the public are likely to tell someone else about because they perceive the behaviour as being sexual abuse.

The importance of members of the general public reporting possible cases of child abuse is outlined in an American article by Dhooper, Royse & Wolfe (1991):

The nature of child protective services is such that voluntary reporting of possible abuse or neglect by the general public is the sine qua non, all other methods of case finding are too late and too little.....Only the observation and involvement of laymen - neighbo[u]rs, friends, family, the general public - can bring the protection system to the service of the abused and neglected children early enough to be effective.

(Dhooper, Royse & Wolfe 1991, p.37)

A number of writers suggest reasons why the public and/or professionals might prefer to deny the existence of child sexual abuse. For example, writing in America, Olafson, Corwin & Summit (1993) claim that CSA has been suppressed for the past 150 years. They argue that the 1980s witnessed 'the emergence of a formidable backlash in courts, clinics, and the media' (p.18) against CSA and they suggest that information concerning the prevalence of child sexual abuse is unwelcome on all shades of the political spectrum. As defenders of the family, Conservatives are unlikely to applaud an apparent challenge to parental authority and Liberals will be wary of the undermining of civil liberties which would come about as a result of state intrusion into the private sphere. Olafson, Corwin & Summit write:

It remains to be seen whether the current backlash will succeed in resuppressing awareness of sexual abuse.....If this occurs, it will not happen because child sexual abuse is peripheral to major social interests, but because it is so central that as a society we choose to reject our knowledge of it rather than make the changes in our thinking, our institutions, and our daily lives that sustained awareness of child sexual victimization demands.

(Olafson, Corwin & Summit 1993, p.19)

Some previous studies which have explored public and/or professional perceptions of child abuse are listed in Table 1.2. The findings of a number of these studies will now be discussed. The discussion will begin with the research on perceptions of general child abuse and then move on to the studies which were specifically concerned with child sexual abuse. Since nearly all of the studies cited in Table 1.2 are American, it is possible that the results of some studies will not be applicable to the UK.

Table 1.2: Summary of a number of Studies which have researched Public and/or Professional Perceptions of general Child Abuse and CSA

	SUMMARY OF STUDY	POPULATION SURVEYED/ INTERVIEWED	COUNTRY IN WHICH STUDY WAS CONDUCTED
Studies exploring Public Perceptions of general Child Abuse			
JOHNSON & SIGLER (1995)	Definitions and punishment of Spouse Abusers and Child Abusers	469 Non-institutionalized adults	USA
DARO & GELLES (1992)	Public attitudes and behaviour with respect to Child Abuse Prevention	1250 Nationally representative sample of adults	USA
DHOOPER, ROYSE & WOLFE (1991)	Public attitudes towards Child Abuse	742 Statewide survey of adults	USA
CRUISE, JACOBS & LYONS (1994)	Children's perceptions of Physical Abuse	35 Children aged 6-11 years	USA
Studies exploring Professional Perceptions of Child Abuse			
LEWANDOWSKI (1995)	Comparison of protective service workers' perceptions of ritual abuse and CSA	24 Protective Service Workers	USA
ABRAHAMS, CASEY & DARO (1992)	Teachers' knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about Child Abuse and its Prevention	568 Teachers	USA
TITE (1993)	How teachers define and respond to Child Abuse	311 Teachers	Canada
WILLIS & WELLS (1988)	An analysis of police decisions to report illegal behaviour	142 Police Officers	USA
MORRIS, JOHNSON & CLASEN (1985)	Physicians' attitudes toward Discipline & Child Abuse	58 Paediatricians and Family Physicians	USA
SNYDER & NEWBERGER (1986)	Hospital professionals' evaluations of Child Maltreatment	295 Paediatric Hospital Professionals	USA
FOX & DINGWALL (1985)	Study of variations in Social Workers' and Health Visitors' definitions of Child Mistreatment	40 Social Workers & Health Visitors	England
WATERHOUSE & CARNIE (1989)	Study of the way in which professionals identify and respond to intra-familial CSA	51 cases of CSA	Scotland
		44 Social Work Profiles	
		48 Police Profiles	

Table 1.2 (continued): Summary of a number of Studies which have researched Public and/or Professional Perceptions of general Child Abuse and CSA

	SUMMARY OF STUDY	POPULATION SURVEYED/ INTERVIEWED	COUNTRY IN WHICH STUDY WAS CONDUCTED
Studies exploring Professional Perceptions of Child Abuse (continued)			
BIRCHALL (1992)	Survey of professional perceptions in Child Protection	339 Child Protection Professionals	UK
GIOVANNONI & BECERRA (1979)	Examined the extent of agreement between members of different professional occupations about child abuse/neglect and between these professionals and members of the community	313 Professionals playing key roles in the Protective Services 1065 Public Community Sample	USA
BURNETT (1993)	Psychological Abuse of latency age children	452 Social Workers 381 Citizens Community Sample	USA
Studies exploring Public Perceptions of CSA			
BROUSSARD, WAGNER & KAZELSKIS (1991)	Perceptions of CSA	360 Undergraduate Students	USA
ATTEBERRY-BENNETT (1987) cited in HAUGAARD & REPPUCCI (1988)	Parents' and professionals' definitions of CSA	255 4 groups of Professionals and group of parents not in these professions	USA
FINKELHOR & REDFIELD (1984)	Exploration of laypersons' definitions of CSA	521 Parents with children aged 6-14 years	USA

Studies exploring Public Perceptions of Child Abuse

A number of the studies summarised in Table 1.2 were concerned with public perceptions of child abuse. For example, Johnson & Sigler (1995) examined community perceptions of domestic abuse. They used four self-administered questionnaires to measure public attitudes towards the use of physical force, child abuse, spouse abuse and elder abuse. The study found that over 70% of subjects consistently defined child abuse in terms of the severe use of force. Another finding from the study was that incidents involving minor levels of physical force were rated as less abusive than situations involving psychological abuse and neglect. Johnson & Sigler argue that this finding would suggest that it is relevant to include psychological and emotional abuse in definitions of child abuse. The study revealed that the use of physical force is perceived as unacceptable in almost any context with the significant exception of disciplinary procedures for children. Although the use of physical force (involving hitting occasionally with an open hand, belt or stick) received low levels of endorsement as an indicator of child abuse, the more frequent the hitting, the more likely it is to be defined as abuse.

The study by Daro and Gelles (1992) was concerned with public attitudes and behaviours in the USA with respect to child abuse prevention and whether these have changed in recent years. The research was based on six National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse (NCPCA) surveys which involved a nationally representative sample of 1250 respondents. The surveys measured three variables: the public's perceptions of the impact of certain behaviours on children, whether or not the respondents had personally engaged in any acts that prevented child abuse and the public's perception of the impact of various factors on child abuse rates. The majority of respondents viewed physical punishment and repeated yelling and swearing as harmful to children's well-being. However, 45% of respondents reported insulting or swearing at their children in the last year and 53% of respondents reported spanking or hitting the children during the past year. The data suggests that fewer children are experiencing abuse, with regard to some acts of violence: while there has been an increase in reports of emotional mistreatment, reported rates of spanking/hitting children and hitting/trying to hit with an object are decreasing. Respondents were asked about the causes of child abuse and neglect. The factors which were considered most likely to contribute to abuse were violence between husband and wife, poverty, television violence, movie violence and racism. The factors which were considered least important were heavy rock music, corporal punishment in school, sexism, war toys and games, the death penalty and contact sports. However, differences were found between different socio-economic groups in their views about the factors which cause child abuse. Daro & Gelles ask whether public education and increased prevention efforts result in changes in parenting practices. As already noted, the data

suggest that parents are less inclined to hit children and less likely to use psychological aggression today, although there appears to have been an increase in emotional abuse. Daro & Gelles warn that the apparent decline in physical violence towards children may be either the result of an actual decline in such behaviour or merely a decline in the willingness to report. They argue that fluctuating rates of physical punishment and emotional abuse are evidence of the need for continued efforts to provide public awareness and public education regarding the harm of physical and psychological aggression and the need for the promotion of alternatives to physical and emotional punishment. The survey suggests that individuals and parents are increasingly willing to take personal action to prevent child abuse. However, Daro & Gelles ask why, if public awareness works, are rates of reporting maltreatment increasing. They suggest that perhaps parents are less willing to report their own behaviour but more willing to report the behaviour of friends and neighbours. Daro & Gelles point out that not all reports of maltreatment involve hitting. Approximately 15% of reports of child abuse involve sexual abuse and 46% involve neglect. Daro & Gelles argue that public education and awareness campaigns are only one type of effort aimed at preventing and reducing child maltreatment. Other efforts include parent support services (eg parent education classes, home visits and parent support groups). Towards the end of their article, Daro & Gelles provide a conceptualisation of three types of families. They discuss the possible success of abuse prevention strategies on each of the three family types.

Dhooper, Royse & Wolfe (1991) were interested in exploring public attitudes towards child abuse and conducted telephone interviews with 742 randomly selected adults. The aim of the study was to investigate whether adults recognise child abuse, the characteristics of child abusers and the characteristics of abused children. Dhooper, Royse & Wolfe also wanted to explore the extent of the public's knowledge of children who have been abused or neglected and the extent of the public's knowledge about laws and procedures for reporting child abuse. The study found that, generally, the American public is well informed about many aspects of child abuse and neglect. The majority of respondents recognised the most widely documented behavioural indicators of abused children. Three-quarters of respondents were aware of their legal obligation in the USA for reporting suspected abuse or neglect. (Although the public have a legal obligation to report suspected child abuse in America, this is not the case in Scotland.) While a fifth of respondents knew someone who had abused a child, only a third of these respondents reported the case to the authorities. Some respondents recognised the most common characteristics of abusers, but many had a deviance perspective of abusers: 64% of respondents viewed abusive adults as mentally ill and 82% believed that abusers are emotionally immature. Dhooper, Royse & Wolfe suggest that the public lack a complete understanding of child abuse because of the media's coverage of sensational cases. They

argue that the cases covered in the media usually result in the removal of the children and the prosecution of the abusing family member. It is suggested that the vast majority of protective services, however, do not get media exposure, and so the general public is not aware that most protected children are not removed from their families and most abusers are not prosecuted. Dhooper, Royse & Wolfe found that the public is willing to pay for child abuse and neglect prevention programmes. They suggest that this willingness should be appropriately directed.

The study by Cruise, Jacobs & Lyons (1994) explored children's perceptions of physical abuse. The researchers hypothesised that younger children would perceive physically abusive incidents as less serious than older children and that girls would view physical discipline differently than boys. Data was collected from 35 children (17 girls and 18 boys) during their residence in a shelter for battered women and their children. The children were between 6 and 11 years of age. All had witnessed physical abuse in the family and most had experienced physical abuse. The children were asked to make a seriousness rating about parental behaviour in five incidents. A five point scale which ranged from "not at all serious" to "very serious" was used. Cruise, Jacobs & Lyons found that the children rated most vignettes as serious, although some types of abuse were regarded as more serious than others. The act which was considered most serious was striking the child with an object. Hitting the child in the face was perceived as the least serious, although it was still regarded as fairly serious. As had been predicted, a difference was found between the responses given by children of different ages in that young children consistently rated all incidents as less serious than the older children did. However, the difference was only significant for two of the acts. Cruise, Jacobs & Lyons found that the genders of the victim and the respondents did not make a significant difference to the subjects' responses. The researchers do suggest that, while the gender of the respondents did not make a significant difference to their perceptions of the seriousness of the incidents, gender differences may have been present if their research had been concerned with other types of abuse (eg sexual abuse). Cruise, Jacobs & Lyons warn against the over-interpretation of their findings, since all of the subjects in their study had experienced physical abuse within the home.

Studies exploring Professional Perceptions of Child Abuse

Some of the studies outlined in Table 2.1 explored the perceptions of specific professions. For example, Abrahams, Casey & Daro (1992) and Tite (1993) investigated teachers' perceptions of child abuse. In a National Teacher Survey of 568 elementary or middle school teachers, Abrahams, Casey and Daro assessed teachers' knowledge, attitudes and

beliefs about child abuse and child abuse prevention. The study aimed to explore teachers' familiarity with the schools' formal child abuse reporting procedures, the means by which teachers are informed of these procedures and how often teachers report suspected cases of abuse. The study also explored teacher attitudes towards the use of corporal punishment in the schools, the quality and quantity of in-service workshops and general education for teachers on child abuse and neglect and teachers' perceptions of the barriers they face in reporting suspected child abuse and in implementing child assault prevention programmes. The study found that, overall, the majority of teachers were receiving a minimal amount of education on identifying, reporting and intervening in suspected cases of abuse and neglect. 49% reported that their school provided in-service workshops, 51% said that their school circulated any written material on child abuse and neglect and two-thirds of teachers viewed the child abuse education programme provided as insufficient. 74% of respondents had suspected that a child had been abused or neglected: 90% of those who had suspected maltreatment reported the case. Reports were usually made to other school personnel: only about 23% of teachers had reported cases directly to the Child Protection Services. The survey identified the following barriers to reporting:

- 65% lack of sufficient knowledge on how to detect and report cases of child abuse and neglect
- 63% fear of legal ramifications for false allegations
- 52% fears (more general) concerned with the consequences of child abuse reports (eg reprisal versus the child, damage to parent-teacher and teacher-child relationships)
- 45% parental denial and disapproval of reports
- 35% interference in parent-child relationships and family privacy
- 24% lack of community or school support in making such allegations
- 14% school board or principal disapproval

The study found that 65% of teachers had no reservations about teaching the child assault prevention programmes. Abrahams, Casey and Daro concluded from their study that school systems are not sufficiently educating teachers on identifying, reporting and preventing child abuse. They argue:

Teachers play a critical role in preventing child abuse and in creating safe environments for children. To maximise this potential, current gaps in knowledge, understanding and skills must be addressed. School administrators, either independently or in partnership with other key child

abuse prevention agencies, need to establish ongoing training program[me]s.....

(Abrahams, Casey & Daro 1992, p.236)

Tite (1993) explored how school teachers define and respond to child abuse, using a series of 10 vignettes³. Tite was interested in ascertaining how much experience the teachers had of dealing with such situations and what action they took in each case. The study found that 'most teachers hold a much broader theoretical view of abuse than those put forward in the legal definitions.....it seems that most teachers, in theory at least, would cast a much broader net' (p.595). In line with the findings of Abrahams, Casey & Daro (1992)'s study, Tite found that teachers report approximately 25% of all the suspected cases of child abuse which they encounter. The study found that it is possible for a child to be identified by his/her teacher as a victim of abuse without the situation being officially reported and brought to the attention of the Child Protection Services (CPS). In these circumstances, some of the less formal interventions taken by teachers include monitoring the child's situation and behaviour, consulting with colleagues and holding discussions with parents. One of the conclusions from Tite's study is that there is no clear statistical relationship between teachers' definitions of child abuse and their formal reporting of cases of possible abuse. She writes:

.....the decision to report appears as a complex social process involving the interplay of definitions, institutional response, and teachers' experiences with a range of reactions and personal trials.

(Tite 1993, p.598)

Willis and Wells (1988) were interested in the perceptions of police officers. Their study was concerned with the factors which influence police decisions to report illegal behaviour. 142 law enforcement officers completed and returned Willis and Wells' questionnaire which contained 10 vignettes. Respondents were asked whether they thought that the behaviour described in each vignette should be reported and they were asked what action (if any) they would take to ensure that the situation was reported. Willis and Wells found that the types of incidents which elicited the strongest responses were mutual masturbation, leaving a child outside the home unsupervised and striking the child with a stick. These behaviours were rated as very serious, criminal, and clearly abusive by a high percentage of the respondents. Incidents such as parents ignoring their child or mothers bringing home men for sex elicited a much less serious reaction. Willis

³ A detailed discussion of the use of vignettes in social research can be found in Chapter Two.

and Wells claim that these behaviours were also rated as less abusive in earlier studies (eg Giovannoni & Becerra, 1979). They concluded that the one variable which had a consistently strong impact on the respondents' willingness to report was the definition of the behaviour as serious. The study also found that responses were governed more by the officers' definitions of abuse than by legal definitions.

The study by Waterhouse & Carnie (1989) explored the ways in which professionals identify and respond to intra-familial CSA. Waterhouse & Carnie found that the criteria which was adopted by social workers when deciding whether or not to intervene in an alleged case of child sexual abuse included:

- the attitude of the non-abusing parent to the alleged perpetrator
- access between the referred child and the alleged perpetrator
- the type of abuse alleged
- the age of the child or young person
- the attitude of the alleged perpetrator to the allegation
- the attitude of the parents to social work intervention
- the social worker's belief of disbelief of the child or young person
- the presence of psychological symptoms or physical signs of abuse
- the attitude of the child or young person to remaining at home

Morris, Johnson & Clasen (1985) were interested in exploring the factors which influence the reporting of child physical abuse by physicians. 58 physicians were interviewed about their awareness of the common manifestations of physical child abuse. Morris, Johnson & Clasen wanted to investigate whether personal attitudes and values persist as a major influence in reporting behaviour and they wanted to find out if a physician's attitude about what constitutes appropriate discipline would influence his or her reporting of child abuse. The explanations given by their respondents for the non-reporting of abuse included the low incidence of abuse in the private practice setting, the fear of losing patients, the need for certainty and the lack of confidence in community agencies. Morris, Johnson and Clasen suggest that these beliefs may conflict with the welfare of young patients.

While a number of researchers investigated the perceptions of specific professions, others have compared the views of different occupational groups. One of the earliest studies to explore perceptions of child abuse was a study by Giovannoni and Becerra (1979). Giovannoni and Becerra examined the extent of agreement between members of different professional occupations in health and welfare work in America about what should be defined as child abuse or neglect and how seriously particular instances should be regarded. Clinical experience had led them to believe that such disagreements were

sufficiently common to be a major source of trouble in the child care system, but they could find little empirical evidence to support this. Their sample consisted of 71 lawyers, 79 paediatricians, 50 police officers and 113 social workers. To enable a comparison to be made between the views of these professionals and the views of members of the general public, 1065 lay persons also took part in the study. Although the study found that there were considerable areas of agreement amongst the professionals involved, it did reveal significant differences in the responses given to 69 of the 78 vignettes used. Giovannoni and Becerra do point out that there is at least some value in an element of disagreement between members of different professions - as it acts as a safeguard against over-enthusiastic intervention.

Fox & Dingwall (1985) attempted to replicate Giovannoni & Becerra's study in Britain. However, given the resources available, they could not contemplate a full-scale replication of the American study. Their sample comprised of 20 social workers and 20 health visitors, all of whom were working in a prosperous university town in Southern England. 20 vignettes were selected from the 78 pairs used by Giovannoni and Becerra - including items which yielded the largest variation in responses between American social workers and paediatricians. While Fox and Dingwall do stress the value of their study and the issues raised by it, they failed to identify significant differences in the way health visitors and social workers, as occupational groups, perceived either the absolute or the relative seriousness of incidents possibly definable as mistreatment. Although the study failed to identify significant differences between occupational groups, the research did reveal some variations within each professional group. Fox and Dingwall argue that Giovannoni and Becerra's study paid relatively little attention to intra-group differences.

Snyder and Newberger (1986) also attempted to replicate Giovannoni and Becerra's 1979 study. However, as Snyder and Newberger were particularly interested in researching the degree of consensus among occupational groups working within a hospital-based setting, only medical and mental health professionals were included in their sample (n=295). They used 39 of Giovannoni and Becerra's vignettes and, like Fox and Dingwall, Snyder and Newberger chose the vignettes which were most likely to display differences between the different professionals. Snyder and Newberger's study found that there was some consensus in the responses given by nurses and social workers: both of these groups rated the vignettes as significantly more serious than the paediatricians and the psychiatrists did. Psychologists' responses were somewhere in between those of the nurses/social workers and the paediatricians/psychiatrists. Although the study did reveal these differences between occupational groups, most groups agreed on the same rank ordering of categories of abuse.

Birchall (1992 also Birchall & Hallett 1995) used a series of vignettes to investigate the professional perceptions of child protection in the UK. She explored the varied exposure of social workers, health visitors, teachers, police, general practitioners and paediatricians to child protection training and their experience of cases, their different severity ratings of brief vignettes of abuse, their thought and action proposals and choice of contacts in relation to an unfolding vignette, their perceptions of local procedures and the functioning of their local child protection networks. Her sample consisted of 339 professionals. All of the professional groups involved rated sexual abuse and physical abuse higher than the other categories of abuse. Of the 23 brief vignettes used in the first part of Birchall's study, there was much consensus within each profession regarding the severity of three vignettes involving sexual acts (intercourse, repeated masturbation and nightmares after repeated exposure to pornographic material) and one vignette which involved physical abuse. The part of the study which involved the longer, unfolding vignettes showed that there was also 'an obviously higher index of suspicion and greater anxiety' (Birchall & Hallett 1995, p.182) when the vignettes involved possible sexual abuse. Birchall found that interprofessional co-operation and co-ordination is well accepted by those involved in the child protection system, although certain professionals (eg teachers and general practitioners) have a limited involvement in or knowledge of the system. She also found that there are many points of tension and conflict in the system.

Studies exploring Public Perceptions of Child Sexual Abuse

Of the studies discussed above, all were interested in perceptions of child abuse in general and none was concerned exclusively with child sexual abuse. However, three of the studies cited in Table 1.2 did focus exclusively on public perceptions of child sexual abuse. Given the particular relevance of these three studies for the research on which this thesis is based, each of the studies will be discussed in some detail.

The earliest of the three studies was the study by Finkelhor & Redfield (1984). Finkelhor & Redfield invited a sample of Boston parents (with children aged 6-14 years) to complete a questionnaire containing a series of vignettes. Each vignette described a hypothetical situation of sexual contact involving a child. The respondents (n=521) were asked to indicate on a scale of one to ten whether they regarded each of the vignettes as definitely sexual abuse, definitely not sexual abuse or something in between. The purpose of the study was to test the significance of nine variables which Finkelhor & Redfield suspected influence the public's decisions about whether or not an incident should be labelled "child sexual abuse". These nine variables were:

- age of victim
- age of perpetrator
- relationship between victim and perpetrator
- sex of victim
- sex of perpetrator
- sexual act
- consent
- consequence
- sex of respondent

While Finkelhor & Redfield acknowledge that the situations described in their vignettes were unusual and unlikely, they explain that:

.....this was exactly the purpose of the experiment: to explore the boundaries of people's definitions of sexual abuse. By giving people situations that were unlike the real life situations that they have to classify, we found out just what the rules were that they used to make the classifications.

(Finkelhor & Redfield 1984, pp.110-111)

The results of the study showed that respondents tended to see most of the vignettes as sexually abusive: 60% of all vignettes were rated at 8, 9 or 10.

Finkelhor & Redfield found that the two most important variables were the age of the perpetrator and the type of act committed. They write:

.....once people knew that the perpetrator was an adult, they were pretty certain to rate it as "definitely sexual abuse", no matter what the other variables were.....once they knew the act involved was intercourse or attempted intercourse the same held true.

(Finkelhor & Redfield 1984, p.111)

Conversely, if the perpetrator was another child, or if the act was "calling the child a whore", the respondents were likely to rate the vignette as less abusive.

While Finkelhor & Redfield accept that variables other than the age of the perpetrator and the nature of the sexual act involved also contributed to their respondents perceptions of abuse, they argue that the influence of these other variables was 'considerably smaller' (Finkelhor & Redfield 1984, p.111). Their research found that variables such as the consequence of the incident did not seem to make much difference.

Sexual Act: As has already been stated, the incidents which were most likely to be defined as abusive were those which involved intercourse or attempted intercourse.

However, fondling a child's sex organs was also rated as highly abusive and being exposed to an exhibitionist was considered to be one of the more abusive acts.

Age of Victim: Vignettes which involved either very young children or adolescents were likely to be considered less abusive. Finkelhor & Redfield suggest that incidents involving other children (ie pre-adolescents and early adolescents) are more likely to be considered by the public as abusive because pre-adolescents and early adolescents are old enough to be aware of sexual meanings but too young to be sexually involved.

Age of Perpetrator: While the age of adult perpetrators made little difference to the perceived abusiveness of the situation (ie all incidents involving adults were likely to be rated as abusive), the age of the perpetrator did make a difference if the perpetrator was less than 20 years of age. Sexual acts which were perpetrated by teenagers were considered more abusive than those initiated by younger children.

Relationship: The incidents which were considered most abusive were those which involved a male perpetrator and a female victim. Incidents involving female perpetrators and female victims were rated least abusive. Father-daughter and male relative-girl relationships were rated very highly as abuse by both men and women. As Finkelhor & Redfield argue, these are the sorts of incidents which most often come to public and professional attention. Overall, the study found that respondents made 'only a weak and inconsistent distinction' (Finkelhor & Redfield 1984, p.116) between intrafamilial and extrafamilial relationships. While some incestuous contacts (such as those involving fathers and daughters) were considered significantly more abusive than non-family contacts, other family relationships (particularly if the older person was a woman or a sibling) were not regarded as particularly serious. Thus, Finkelhor & Redfield conclude that "incest" is not one of the stronger norms governing people's judgement of sexual abuse of children. Finkelhor & Redfield write:

.....people do not automatically place any sexual relationship involving a relative in a category of special seriousness. They may do so for some particular family relationships, such as father-daughter incest, but not for family relationships as a whole. Other factors about the sexual contact, the ages and sexes of participants, for example, outweigh and complicate the simple issue of whether or not it was incest.

(Finkelhor & Redfield 1984, p.118)

Conditions of Consent: The vignettes were rated significantly higher if the child objected strongly. Situations in which the young person did anything other than object

strenuously were rated as less abusive. Finkelhor & Redfield argue that this is a result of the popular misconception that children want or deserve to be sexually abused. They suggest that the public should be taught that children can react passively to CSA for a number of reasons.

Consequences: Finkelhor & Redfield found that this variable was the least important. It exerted a very minimal influence over respondents in their ratings of the vignettes.

Gender of Respondent: The study showed that men and women rated the vignettes differently. Males consistently gave lower ratings to the vignettes (regardless of sex, act, relationship and age) than women did. Finkelhor & Redfield (p.120) offer four possible explanations for this finding:

- the influence of a long history of subtle tolerations of this kind of behaviour in the male subculture
- the result of pornographic media which have tended to legitimate such behaviour
- as males are sexually abused less frequently than females, they may be less alarmed and therefore take the problem less seriously
- male socialisation

Some years after Finkelhor & Redfield had conducted their research, Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis (1991) carried out a similar study. Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis were also interested in exploring perceptions of child sexual abuse and surveyed 360 undergraduate students (180 females and 180 males). They asked their respondents to comment on a vignette which described a sexual interaction between an adult and a 15-year-old child. All of the situations described in the vignettes were extra-familial. Each respondent was asked to comment on just one vignette. The vignettes varied according to the following variables:

- sex of victim
- sex of perpetrator
- victim response

A fourth variable which was also considered was the sex of the respondent. Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis asked their respondents to rate (on a five point scale) the extent to which the incident was an example of CSA, the accuracy of the vignette's representation of a child's reaction to sexual abuse and the effect of the sexual experience on the child.

Like Finkelhor & Redfield, Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis found that interactions between male victims and female perpetrators were viewed by the students who took part in their study as less representative of child sexual abuse than other interactions (eg between female victims and male perpetrators). Interactions between male victims and female perpetrators were perceived as less harmful for the victims. The study also showed that the respondents thought that it was more realistic for a male victim to respond in an encouraging manner to a female perpetrator than victims involved in other victim-perpetrator gender combinations. Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis write:

This viewpoint may be due in part to the media's glorification of sexual interaction between teenage boys and older women (eg *The Graduate*, Summer of '42) a belief that may consider the absence of resistance as an indication that sexual interaction between a 15-year-old male and a 35-year-old female is an acceptable means of providing sex education for boys.

(Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis 1991, p.275)

A further finding of the study was that male perpetrators were viewed as significantly more harmful to male victims and female perpetrators were regarded as significantly more harmful to female victims when the child responds in an encouraging way.

In line with the findings of Finkelhor & Redfield, Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis found that female respondents viewed the adult-child interactions described in the vignettes as more representative of child sexual abuse. Female respondents in the Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis study also viewed the incidents described in the vignettes as more realistic in their portrayal of a child's reaction of sexual abuse and they viewed these interactions as more harmful to the victims. Broussard, Wagner and Kazelskis suggest that this might be a result of the fact that females are more likely than males to experience a sexual assault and are therefore more likely to be aware of the issues involved. (A similar suggestion is offered by Finkelhor & Redfield.)

From the results of their study, Broussard, Wagner and Kazelskis conclude that there is a need for continued public education concerning the issues involved in child sexual abuse. They suggest, for example, that such programmes should emphasise that males appear to suffer the same psychological trauma as females.

Broussard, Wagner and Kazelskis warn that the results of their study of undergraduate students should not be generalised to the general population without further research. They argue for the sampling of nonstudent populations and recommend that further studies should involve professionals whose work involves the management of CSA cases.

Broussard, Wagner and Kazelskis suggest that the results of these studies of different occupational groups could be used in developing educational programmes specifically for the needs of these professionals.

Investigating professional perceptions of child sexual abuse was one of the aims of Atteberry-Bennett (1987)'s PhD thesis, which is reported in Haugaard & Reppucci (1988). Atteberry-Bennett's study involved 255 respondents who were selected from four groups of professionals most likely to be involved in cases of CSA (legal professionals, protective service workers, probation and parole workers and mental health professionals) and a group of parents not in these professions. The sample comprised of approximately 50 people from each of the five groups. The respondents were presented with a series of 48 vignettes and were asked to rate each vignette on a five point rating scale which ranged from definitely sexual abuse to definitely not sexual abuse. Atteberry-Bennett varied the following variables:

- age of child (5, 10 or 15 years old)
- sex of parent-child combination (mother-son, father-daughter)
- the act involved
 - parent hugs the child
 - kisses the child on the lips as the parent goes to work in the morning
 - sleeps in the same bed with the child
 - enters the bathroom without knocking while child is bathing
 - is nude in front of the child
 - photographs the child in the nude
 - touches the child's genitals
 - has sexual intercourse with the child

The word "often" was included in each vignette. This ensured that all acts occurred with the same frequency. In addition to inviting his respondents to provide a rating for the extent to which they perceived each incident as sexual abuse, Atteberry-Bennett also asked his respondents to rate eight possible intervention strategies on a five point scale. (These strategies included family therapy, removal of the child from the home and prosecution of the adult in court.) Atteberry-Bennett's study found that acts involving fathers and daughters were rated as more abusive than the same acts involving mothers and sons. For example, while 52% of respondents thought that intervention was necessary if a father entered the bathroom while his five year old daughter was in the bath, only 25% of respondents suggested some sort of intervention if a mother entered the bathroom while her five year old son was in the bath. This finding was in common with the results of the

studies by Finkelhor & Redfield and Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis which found that incidents involving female perpetrators and male victims were less likely to be defined as abusive than other interactions. The study also found that the ratings of abusiveness increased with an increase in the age of the child. (The one exception to this was when the act involved was sexual intercourse. Intercourse was always perceived as abuse, regardless of the age of the child.) The study found a corresponding increase in the percentage of respondents indicating that intervention was necessary with the age of the child. For example, while 74% of respondents indicated that some intervention was necessary if a parent appeared naked in front of a five year old child, 90% suggested that intervention was necessary if the child was 10 or 15 years of age. Haugaard & Reppucci point out that Atteberry-Bennett's findings differ from those of Finkelhor & Redfield in that Finkelhor & Redfield found that acts involving adolescents were viewed as less abusive than acts involving preadolescent and early adolescent children.

In keeping with Finkelhor & Redfield's findings, Atteberry-Bennett found that the most abusive act was sexual intercourse. His study found that there was agreement that some intervention was necessary when sexual intercourse was involved (regardless of the age of the child or the parent-child relationship). Atteberry-Bennett also found much agreement that intervention was necessary if the act involved touching genitals or photographing the child in the nude (again, regardless of the age or parent-child relationship). The least abusive act in Atteberry-Bennett's study was hugging.

When Atteberry-Bennett compared the views of the different professional groupings involved in his study, he found that mental health and legal professionals used consistently different definitions of abuse. For example, the mental health professionals rated vignettes involving parents being nude in front of five and ten year old children as being consistently more abusive than the legal professionals did. Mental health professionals rated vignettes involving parents and children sleeping in the same bed as significantly more abusive than did any other group. Acts which involved parents touching a child's genitals were perceived as significantly less abusive by the legal professionals than they were by any other group. In terms of possible intervention strategies, the mental health professionals recommended family, child and adult therapy more often than legal professionals. While protective service workers were most in favour of referrals to child protective service agencies for investigation, parents and legal professionals were least in favour of this intervention strategy. No group was highly in favour of removing the child from the home, although parents were less opposed to this than the professional groups were. Mental health professionals were significantly more willing to remove the adult from the home than the legal professionals and probation and parole workers were. Prosecution of the perpetrator was not highly endorsed by any

group. However, legal professionals, parents, probation and parole workers were less in favour of this form of intervention than mental health professionals were.

Haugaard & Reppucci outline a number of possible limitations associated with Atteberry-Bennett's study. These include the size of the sample, the use of a restricted number of one line vignettes and the fact that the sample consisted entirely of Virginians. Haugaard and Reppucci also warn that the answers given by Atteberry-Bennett's respondents may have been influenced by the fact that the questionnaire was concerned specifically with child sexual abuse and this may have encouraged them to define situations as abusive which they might not have done in an other situation.

Some conclusions from the Previous Studies of Public and Professional Perceptions of Child Sexual Abuse

A number of conclusions can be made about public perceptions of CSA from the three studies which have been reported in the preceding discussion. Firstly, it would appear that situations which involve sexual intercourse (or attempted intercourse) between a young person and an adult are extremely likely to be defined as abuse. It would seem that an incident which involves fondling a child's genitals is also likely to be perceived as abusive. A second conclusion is that incidents involving a father and his daughter are more likely to be defined as abuse than incidents which involve a mother and her son. Thirdly, while there would appear to be some discrepancies between the findings of Finkelhor & Redfield and Atteberry-Bennett, generally, it would appear that the older the child involved, the more likely it is that the situation will be perceived as abuse. A final conclusion is that female respondents are more likely than male respondents to view an incident as abuse. A number of possible explanations for this conclusion are given.

As was documented earlier in this Chapter, almost all of the studies summarised in Table 1.2 were conducted in America. None of the studies which focused on public perceptions of child sexual abuse were carried out in Britain. Therefore, the main study reported in this thesis differed from the studies reported in Table 1.2 in that it was conducted in Britain. A second way in which the present study differed from previous studies was that the present study was specifically concerned with the effect which the gender of the victim had on perceptions of abuse. Previous studies, especially Finkelhor and Redfield (1984), explored the effect of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator and were particularly interested in the different perceptions of incidents involving adult male-female child and adult female-male child pairs. The present study was specifically interested in what happened if the gender of the victim changes. It was hypothesised that the public are

less likely to take action on a possible case of CSA if the young person involved was a boy rather than a girl.

Five Explanations why the Public might Ignore a Possible Case of CSA involving a Male Victim

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to outlining the explanations given in the existing literature as to why members of the public might be more likely to ignore a possible case of CSA if the victim is a boy. The explanations come under five main headings: disbelief that boys can be sexually abused (especially if the alleged perpetrator is a woman), blaming the boy himself for the abuse, minimisation of the effects of the abuse, concern at what other people might think if the adult (who the boy has chosen to tell about the abuse) decides to take any further action and, finally, the differences between the acting out behaviour of boys and girls who have been sexually abused.

(i) Disbelief

One reason why members of the public might not report a case of CSA involving a boy, is simply a disbelief that boys can be sexually abused. Several researchers have cited cases of boys who have reported being the victims of CSA only to find that their stories were treated with disbelief. For example, Roberts (1992) cites the case of Andrew and Nasjleti (1980) reports on a questionnaire which was completed by a group of boys undertaking a CSA treatment programme. Freeman-Longo (1986) argues that the reason the public does not believe that boys can be sexually abused is that, traditionally, sexual abuse has been thought of as a crime involving a female victim and a male perpetrator. He argues that this view is still popular today, since reported crime statistics continue to reflect the idea that the primary targets of sexual abuse and sexual aggression are women and female children (Freeman-Longo 1986, p.411). Nasjleti (1980) argues that the public find it difficult to believe that boys can be sexually abused because of the lack of attention given to the topic by the media.

According to some of the literature, there are still some professionals (let alone ordinary members of the public) who simply refuse to accept that a boy can be sexually abused. In an article entitled "Twenty myths that justify not tackling child sexual abuse", Morrison Roberts and Will (1987) claim that one of these myths is a belief that boys are never sexually abused. However, Morrison, Roberts and Will write the reality is that:

As our knowledge of sexual abuse grows, it is becoming apparent that the sexual abuse of boys is far more common than was previously supposed.

(Morrison, Roberts & Will 1987, p.9)

Nasjleti (1980) also discusses the fact that some professionals simply do not accept that boys can be sexually abused. She writes:

Many professionals too often disbelieve a boy's report of sexual abuse. A police officer once told the writer that he found it difficult to believe a boy "could be raped" because "a boy could prevent being raped if he wanted to".

(Nasjleti 1980, p.272)

If there are still some professionals who (despite supposedly being educated in such matters) refuse to accept that boys can be sexually abused, how much more likely is it that ordinary members of the public will dismiss a possible case of CSA simply because they do not accept that boys can be sexually abused?

According to the literature (eg Watkins & Bentovim 1992) it is sometimes argued that women do not sexually abuse children. So if a boy claims that he was abused by a woman, then it is possible that the person whom he chooses to tell about his experience(s) might simply dismiss his story because his "abuser" was a woman. Moreover, it is sometimes thought that boys who have sexual intercourse with their mothers suffer from mental illness (eg Nasjleti 1980). However, there is evidence in the literature that boys are indeed abused by women (eg Catanzarite 1980, Faller 1989 & Shengold 1980) and this is not because the boy is mentally ill.

(ii) Blaming the Victim

Another reason why an adult might choose not to report an alleged case of CSA involving a boy, is that it is sometimes thought that boys who have been sexually abused should (and, indeed, could) have done something to prevent the abuse. The blame for the abuse therefore lies with the male victim who was not able to prevent himself from being abused. It is not uncommon to read in the media of cases where a girl has been blamed for her own abuse, but it is often for different reasons than those for which a boy might be blamed for his own abuse. While girls are often blamed for somehow encouraging the abuse (eg by their choice of provocative clothing), boys tend to be blamed for the abuse because it is thought that they could have done something to prevent it. Society, as is

discussed earlier in this chapter, believes that boys should not allow themselves to become victims. Rogers and Terry (1984) write:

.....there is a tendency to blame the boy who fails to forcibly resist the assault. Passive acquiescence in the face of demonstrable threat is reformulated in terms of the victim's own lack of masculinity: "A real boy would never let someone do that without fighting back"; "He must have wanted to do it because he didn't resist";.....

(Rogers & Terry 1984, p.92)

(iii) Minimisation of the Effects of the Abuse

For a variety of reasons it is sometimes thought by society that sexual abuse is less serious for boys than it is for girls. In some ways this belief seems to be supported by the findings of a study of 12-17 year old boys on a CSA treatment programme in America. The study found that most boys "just wanted to forget it ever happened" (Nasjleti 1980, p.240).

Roberts (1992) claims that there is a cultural bias that sexual abuse does not harm boys. However, in a study of the long-term sequelae of sexual abuse, Briere et al (1988) conclude that:

.....the current findings indicate that males are no more immune to the effects of sexual victimization than are females, despite their hypothesized tendency to avoid seeking help for such experiences.

(Briere et al 1988, p.461)

While Blanchard (1986) argues that boys do rate their assault as being less traumatic than girls, he claims that one study concludes that male self-esteem suffers greater damage.

According to Rogers and Terry (1994) and Roane (1992), many of the boys who suffer CSA are abused by other juveniles/teenagers. Rogers and Terry (1984, p.93) claim that while 28% of girls are abused by a juvenile, 56% of boys are abused by another young person. Such incidents are likely to be labelled by members of the public as "inappropriate sex play" (Rogers & Terry 1984), rites of passage or sexual experimentation with peers rather than as abuse. Rogers and Terry claim that this is likely to be true:

.....even in cases where the age differences are extreme (eg six or ten years) or where force or threats of force have been used. While we routinely identify the 8-year-old girl engaged in intercourse by a 16-year-old boy as a victim, we often fail to apply the same standard when the victim is a boy.

(Rogers & Terry 1984, p.92)

It appears that it can sometimes be possible for the boys themselves to be unsure as to whether they have been abused or not. Peake (1989) claims that many boys are unsure whether their experience was a "rite of passage" or an assault. The fact that boys are more likely than girls to be abused in groups means that they are likely to be confused as to whether they were abused or if what happened to them happens to all boys.

Reference has already been made to the fact that cases of CSA involving a female abuser are sometimes dismissed because it is thought that women do not sexually abuse children. However, cases involving a female abuser can also be dismissed because it is thought that such an experience is harmless. Evidence that this belief is accepted by society can be found in the three previous studies - Finkelhor & Redfield (1984), Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis (1991) and Atteberry-Bennet (1987) - which explored perceptions of child sexual abuse. Dimock argues that:

.....the socialization process that encourages males to seek multiple female experiences would make it less likely that a sexual experience with an older female would be recognised as abuse and therefore less likely to be reported.

(Dimock 1988, p.204)

Peake writes:

There is a sense in our society that early sexual experiences are somehow a part of most boys lives. As adults and parents we continue to prefer girls to be innocent, and expect boys to be worldly wise.

(Peake 1989, p.46)

Just as Peake (1989) argues that boys who have been abused by other boys can be unsure whether what they experienced was abuse or merely a "rite of passage", she also claims that boys who have been sexually abused by a woman are similarly confused about whether they have experienced abuse or a "rite of passage" (Peake 1989, p.46). A number of other researchers claim that sexual activity between a boy and a woman is viewed as being either not harmful to the boy or even a positive experience (Nasjleti 1980). However, Nasjleti (1980) claims that a boy who has been sexually abused by his

mother may become an incestuous father, a rapist or may suffer from schizophrenia. Nasjleti warns that:

.....seduction of a boy by his mother, mother surrogate or significant adult female in his life is detrimental to a boy's psychosocial development. The negative effects of such sexual experience are numerous, and most endanger the well-being of women and children, who become victims of men who, as boys, were sexually abused by women.

(Nasjleti 1980, p.271)

(iv) Concern at What Other People Might Think

Some adults may be prepared to accept that a boy was sexually abused themselves, but they may be concerned whether other people will accept the boy's account of what happened. They may be worried about the ramifications for both the boy and themselves if they decide to take action on what the boy has told them.

Similar concerns may be held by an adult if the victim was a girl, but because of some of the other "myths" which have already been discussed in this chapter it is possible that the story is less likely to be believed if the victim is a boy (eg other people may not believe that boys can be sexually abused, or they may minimise the effects of the abuse on boys).

One possible reason why a case of CSA involving a boy might not be reported is a concern that the boy might be ridiculed for allowing himself to become a victim. At the beginning of this chapter, reference was made to the fact that our society does not permit males to express feelings of helplessness and vulnerability. Because of this, any boy who has allowed himself to become a victim is likely to be ridiculed for this. It might therefore be thought that it would be better for the victim if he simply forgot about the abuse - rather than risk being ridiculed for allowing himself to become a victim.

Some people may be wary of taking action on an incident in which a boy has been sexually abused by another male because of the homosexual nature of the abuse. Reference was also made at the beginning of the chapter to the fact that many sexually abused boys are abused by men and this therefore gives rise to questions about the boy's sexual orientation. Given society's present reaction to homosexuality, it is possible that it might be assumed that it would be better for the victim if he forgot about the abuse rather than taking the matter any further and risk being labelled "homosexual". Society's fear that all abused children go on to become abusers themselves is one of the issues raised in

Roberts' (1992) article on Andrew - a 15-year-old survivor of CSA. Roberts reports that some of Andrew's relatives regarded him as a risk to their children. He writes:

Andrew is a young man at the centre of two of society's misconceptions:
abused boys invariably abuse others; and they become homosexual.

(Roberts 1992, p.17)

It is possible that people might decide that it would be better for a male victim to keep quite about his abuse, rather than go through the rest of his life being regarded by others as a risk to children. Roberts goes on:

It is crucial for those of us involved in this area of work to understand that
not all young males who are sexually abused abuse others.

(Roberts 1992, p.17)

Given the potential problems associated with reporting a suspected case of CSA which involves a male victim, it is perhaps not too surprising that Mike Lew (a survivor of CSA himself) claims that some people fear reporting such a case would be like opening up a can of worms. Lew writes:

It is too ugly, too frightening, or an otherwise too distasteful "can of
worms", and they don't want to touch it.

(Lew 1993, p.263)

(v) Differences in the Acting Out Behaviours of Boys and Girls Who Have Been Abused

A final reason why a case of CSA involving a male victim is less likely to be reported than a case involving a female victim, is the difference in the acting out behaviour of boys and girls who have been sexually abused. Peake (1989) makes the point that the acting out behaviours which serve as warning signs of abuse among male victims of CSA are likely to include aggression, delinquency and sexual offending. She writes:

These behaviours are seen as potentially threatening and so are often dealt
with at face value and in a punitive way, by either social services and/or the
police.

(Peake 1989, p.47)

It is therefore likely that society will be more concerned with dealing with the acting out behaviour of a boy who has been sexually abused than with investigating the cause of the behaviour. In contrast, Peake argues that girls who have been sexually abused are likely to display warning signs which are likely to be treated more sympathetically by the child guidance and protection services such as eating disorders, running away and suicide attempts.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER ONE

This chapter began with a brief overview of what is presently known about child sexual abuse. It then went on to discuss some of the problems which are distinct to the sexual abuse of boys. In particular, it outlined the reasons given in the existing literature as to why someone is less likely to tell about an alleged case of CSA if it involves a male victim rather than a female victim. Also included in this chapter was a review of some previous studies which have explored public and/or professional perceptions of child abuse. Three of these studies were particularly relevant for the present study because they explored public and/or professional perceptions of child sexual abuse. These studies found that the situations which are most likely to be viewed as CSA are those which involve sexual intercourse (or attempted intercourse) between a young person and an adult. Incidents which involve fondling a child's genitals are also likely to be regarded as abuse. A further finding of earlier research is that incidents which involve a father-daughter combination are more likely to be viewed as abuse than incidents involving interactions between mothers and sons. While there are some discrepancies between the findings of different studies in relation to the age of the child involved and the likelihood of the incident being viewed as sexually abusive, generally it would seem that the older the child involved, the more likely it is that the situation will be perceived as abuse. A final finding from previous research is that female respondents are more likely than male respondents to regard an incident as sexual abuse. The aims of the research described in this thesis were to investigate the prevalence of child sexual abuse (particularly with regard to male victims) and to explore whether the likelihood of a member of the public telling about a possible case of CSA is in any way influenced by gender of the young person involved. The aims, design and methods used in the research will be outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter Two

THE RESEARCH AIMS, DESIGN & METHODS

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the design and methods used in the research on which this thesis is based. The chapter will discuss why the particular methods used were chosen, and it will explain how the research was actually carried out. However, before the methods used in the study are discussed, the main aims of the research will be outlined. Although the original intention was that the study would involve gathering data from male survivors of child sexual abuse, the research actually involved collecting data from students, members of the general public and a small sample of professionals whose daily employment is likely to bring them into contact with children who (may) have been sexually abused. This change was necessary because gaining access to a sample of male survivors proved extremely difficult.

The Aims of the Research

The main aims of the research developed over time and corresponded with the evolution of the different elements involved in the study. However, the one key theme which remained constant throughout the various developments in the research was gender differences.

As stated in Chapter One, this research was inspired by the present dearth of empirical knowledge concerning the sexual abuse of boys. While a number of previous studies have investigated the sexual abuse of girls, few have explored the abuse of boys. The intended research had two main aims: the first was to explore the ways in which the sexual abuse of boys has been socially constructed and the second was to evaluate the present provision of services for males who have been sexually abused during childhood. The research therefore depended on the successful identification of a sample of male survivors who could be interviewed about how they came to regard their experiences as sexually abusive.

Two approaches were adopted in an attempt to make contact with a sample of men who had been sexually abused as children. The first approach was simply to write to a number of survivors groups as well as agencies and individuals who provide services for survivors of CSA to enquire if they were aware of any men who would be willing to take

part in the study. The second approach was to conduct a prevalence study of child sexual abuse amongst a sample of university/college students attending institutions in the Glasgow area. The questionnaire used in the prevalence study asked male survivors to provide their names and addresses if they were willing to take part in an interview. It was therefore hoped that, in addition to allowing for a comparison of the experiences of males and females who have been sexually abused, the prevalence study would provide access to a small sample of men who had been sexually abused and who were willing to take part in the study. As was discussed in Chapter One, previous prevalence studies have, in the main, been conducted outside the UK. This study was to be conducted exclusively in Scotland.

While the prevalence study was successful in collecting data on sexual abuse, only a small number of males admitted to having been abused and none of these men provided their names and addresses. Coupled with the fact that only one man responded to the letter which was sent out to survivors' groups and other agencies, it became obvious that it was going to be very difficult to identify a sample of male survivors who were willing to take part in the research. As the identification of a sample of male survivors was so crucial for the original research proposal, it was clear that this would have to be redefined.

When consideration was being given to how the project might be redefined, it was thought important that the distinction between the sexual abuse of girls and boys be retained. Given the difficulties which had already been experienced in attempting to gain access to a sample of survivors of CSA, it was accepted that the new project could not involve direct contact with survivors. In the end, it was decided that the new project would be an investigation of public perceptions of child sexual abuse. While it was anticipated that encouraging members of the public to take part in a study of such an extremely sensitive topic would not be without problems, it was thought that gaining access would be considerably easier than it was for the original proposal since it would involve recruiting ordinary members of the public and not specifically survivors of abuse. (Of course, given the estimates cited in Chapter One of the prevalence of sexual abuse amongst the general population, it was expected that a number of the respondents would be survivors.) The methods which were used in the study are described in detail later in this chapter. Briefly, the study made use of a questionnaire which described a series of six incidents involving children. These six incidents ranged from situations which were likely to be perceived by the public as abusive to incidents where it was less clear whether abuse had taken place. The respondents were asked how likely it was that they would tell someone about each of the six incidents. The aim of the study was to explore which incidents the public perceived as being serious enough to warrant someone being told about them and who it was that should be told. A further aim of the new project was to investigate whether the

gender of the young person involved in a possible case of CSA makes any difference to how the public perceive the incident. (This would allow the researcher to retain his interest in gender differences within child sexual abuse.) As is documented in Chapter One, the literature suggests a number of reasons why the public are much more likely to ignore a possible case of child sexual abuse if the young person involved is male rather than female. While a number of previous studies have investigated professional views of what constitutes CSA, a much smaller number have focused exclusively on the views of ordinary members of the public. It was for this reason that it became very much the main study in the present research.

Once the main study was complete, it was decided that it would be interesting if the responses given by members of the public could be compared with those of a sample of professionals whose daily employment involves bringing them into contact with alleged and/or proven cases of child sexual abuse. Unfortunately the questionnaire which was produced for completion by members of the public was not appropriate for use with the professionals and a number of changes had to be made to the original questionnaire for this purpose. Had the decision to include the professionals been made earlier, then it would have been possible to produce one questionnaire which was suitable for completion by the public and the professionals. All of the revisions which had to be made to the original questionnaire are documented elsewhere in this chapter (together with explanations of why each of the changes was necessary). The most important difference between the two questionnaires was that the question which was asked of the public "How likely is it that you would tell someone about this incident?" had to be altered in the questionnaire for the professionals to "How important do you think is it that someone is told about this incident?". Since the questionnaires which were completed by the public and the professionals were not identical, the extent to which comparisons between the responses given by the two groups are limited. It was, however, hoped that an overall comparison might be made.

Since the main study made use of a comparatively novel research technique (ie the vignette technique), a greater proportion of this chapter will be devoted to this study than will be devoted to the discussion of the earlier prevalence study (which used the more traditional method of the conventional questionnaire).

THE PREVALENCE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to estimate the percentage of the student population living in the Glasgow area who have experienced child sexual abuse. Students were chosen because of ease of access and their wide, though not representative, range of backgrounds.

Choosing a Research Method

Previous research has made use of a variety of methods (and definitions) to estimate the prevalence of child sexual abuse. For example, self-administered questionnaires (eg Kelly, Regan & Burton 1991 and Fromuth & Burkhart 1989), face-to-face interviews (eg Baker & Duncan 1985), telephone interviews (eg Finkelhor et al 1990) and postal interviews (eg Kercher & McShane 1984) have all been used to estimate the prevalence of CSA.

In a review of four prevalence studies, Wyatt and Peters (1986b) argue that surveys using the interview technique tend to produce higher prevalence rates than those using self-administered questionnaires. They write:

A review of the prevalence figures presented earlier suggests that differences in the method of data collection may be a highly significant factor contributing to discrepancies in prevalence rates. In these four studies the use of face-to-face interviews is associated with higher prevalence rates than those derived from self-administered questionnaires. Furthermore, the greatest similarities in prevalence rates are found among studies that share the same method of data collection.

(Wyatt & Peters 1986b)

However, no such relationship can be found in the studies shown in Table 1.0 (which was presented in Chapter One of this thesis). Indeed, of all the surveys included in Table 1.0, the highest prevalence rates were found in a study which used a self-administered questionnaire (Kelly, Regan & Burton 1991). One possible explanation for the discrepancy between the findings of the research by Wyatt and Peters and Table 1.0 is the fact that none of the four studies used by Wyatt and Peters are included in Table 1.0 which summarises the results of a number of more recent studies.

Since it is not clear whether the research method used in a prevalence study makes any difference to the results of the study, the method adopted in the present study was chosen principally on the basis of the practical issues of time and resources. It was decided that a self-completion questionnaire would facilitate the collection of the greatest amount of data over the shortest period of time. Interviewing respondents would, undoubtedly, have taken much longer than asking them to complete a questionnaire. According to McNeill (1990), it is quite common for researchers to choose their research methods with such practical issues in mind. McNeill claims that researchers:

.....do their work in the real world of limited time and resources. Choice of research methods is often decisively affected by choice of topic, and the amount of time, money and work hours available.

(McNeill, 1990, p.9)

In addition to the practical issues of time and resources, using the interview technique would have raised the question of how easy it would be for female respondents to discuss incidents of sexual abuse with a male researcher (particularly when most abusers are male).

The Construction of the Questionnaire

Constructing a questionnaire is no easy task, since careful consideration must be given to the wording of each of the questions which are to be included. Indeed, Newell (1993) argues that:

One of the most important parts of any research survey is the development of the questions. The success of a survey will depend on the questions that are asked, the ways in which they are phrased and the order in which they are placed.

(Newell 1993, p.85)

Newell goes on to provide a list of guidelines for the design of questionnaires:

- (i) questions must be relevant for those who are to answer them
- (ii) questions must be easily understood and not subject to ambiguity (particularly important if the questionnaire is to be completed by the respondents themselves)

- (iii) the use of leading questions must be avoided
- (iv) double-barrelled questions (ie those which ask two questions at once and those which involve the use of double negatives) should not be used
- (v) hypothetical questions should (if possible) be avoided
- (vi) questions which ask for secondary information (ie the views of people other than the respondent) should best be avoided
- (vii) be aware that there might be over- or under-reporting of certain sensitive issues (eg while respondents are likely to over-report contributions to charity, they are likely to under-report the number of cigarettes which they smoke)

(from Newell 1993)

After careful consideration had been given to the questions which have been used in other, similar studies, a 24-item self-administered questionnaire was produced for use in the present study¹. The first six questions included in the questionnaire were of a demographic nature (gender, age and social class etc). Then came question seven - which asked the respondents if they had ever been the victim of child sexual abuse. If the respondent answered "No" to this question, he/she was informed that he/she need not continue any further with the questionnaire but was reminded of the importance of returning the questionnaire anyway. If the respondent answered "Yes" or "Unsure", he/she was asked to complete the remainder of the questionnaire. As it was hoped to explore how the experiences of boys who had been sexually abused differed from those of girls, the remaining questions asked the respondent about his/her experience(s). For example, the respondents were asked about the form which the abuse took. They were asked how old they were when they were first abused, and they were asked how long the abused continued. Respondents were asked about the age of their abuser and they were asked about the relationship between the abuser and themselves. The respondents were also asked who (if anyone) they had told about the abuse. Since one of the aims of the study was to gain access to a sample of males who had been sexually abused as children, the final question was addressed at male respondents only. It asked them to provide a contact name and address if they were willing to take part in a research interview.

¹ A copy of the questionnaire which was used in the prevalence study can be found in Appendix 1.

It was acknowledged that completing a questionnaire such as the one used in the present study could be potentially upsetting for a respondent who had been the victim of CSA². Because of this, the questionnaire suggested where the respondents might go for help³ if they were to find completing the questionnaire upsetting.

For pragmatic reasons it was decided that, wherever possible, closed questions should be used in the questionnaire. While open questions allow respondents to answer the questions in any way they wish, closed questions ask the respondents to choose their answers from a given list of responses⁴. There are a number of advantages of using closed questions for both the researcher and the respondent. From the point of view of the researcher, the advantage of closed questions is that they can be pre-coded. This means that they can be easily put on to computer - thus saving time (and money). From the point of view of the respondent, closed questions are less time consuming to complete than open questions since the respondent simply has to tick the appropriate answer. However, closed questions do force the respondents to choose between the answers provided - and in some cases an appropriate answer may not be included on the list. (One solution to this problem is to include the category "other" in the pre-coded answers.) In reality, most questionnaires use a mixture of both open and closed questionnaires. However, Newell writes that:

.....when large numbers of individuals are to be studied by self-completion questionnaire, it is best to use mainly closed questions.

(Newell 1993, p.103)

² According to Tony Rees (Rees 1991), most researchers are liable to come across a number of ethical problems such as this while conducting their research.

³ Usually the student counselling service at the respondent's own institution.

⁴ A third type of question are field-coded questions. When field-coded questions are used, the respondent gives whatever answer they like and the interviewer codes their answer into one of a number of response categories provided on the interview schedule. Clearly, field-coded questions can only be used in an interview situation and are not appropriate for a self-administered questionnaire - such as the one used in the present study.

The Definition of Child Sexual Abuse used in the Study

While all of the questions used in the questionnaire had to be given careful consideration, particular attention had to be given to the wording of question seven - the question which asked the respondent if he/she had ever, as a child, been sexually abused. This question had to be given special consideration as it contained the definition of CSA used in the survey, and the definition used would have major implications for the prevalence rates which the study was likely to find. The effect which the choice of definition can have on the prevalence rate was discussed in Chapter One and is perhaps best demonstrated in the study by Kelly, Regan and Burton (1991). Depending on the definition used, their study showed that the prevalence rates can range between 5% and 59% for women, and 2% and 27% for men.

Since there are many different definitions of what constitutes child sexual abuse, devising a "perfect" definition of CSA is well nigh impossible. However, the would-be researcher can take comfort in the following advice from Haugaard and Emery:

Rather than searching for the ideal definition, a commitment to providing reasoned, clear definitions of child sexual abuse in each study is needed.

(Haugaard & Emery 1989, p.99)

As one of the aims of the present study was to explore the respondents' own, subjective views of what constitutes CSA, it was decided that the respondents themselves should be allowed to define CSA, rather than enforcing a definition on them. It would appear that allowing respondents themselves to define CSA is uncommon, since all other prevalence studies seem to set down at least one condition as to what constitutes child sexual abuse. The only condition which was laid down in the present study was that the respondent should have been under 16 years of age (ie the age of consent in Britain) at the time when the incident happened for the experience to be considered abusive. In the end, the question put to respondents was:

Before the age of 16, did you ever experience what you considered then, or now, to be sexual abuse?

The answers available to the respondents were "Yes", "Unsure" and "No".

The Sample

For pragmatic reasons, it was decided that a sample of university and college students would be used for the prevalence study. Although other prevalence studies have used samples of students, the dangers of generalising the results of a study using the student population to the general population are well documented in the literature (eg Finkelhor 1979, pp.38-39). Students are not typical of the general population because they are often younger than the rest of the population, they tend to come from middle-class families and they are, clearly, better educated than the general population. This third point is perhaps the most serious in a study of sexual experiences during childhood such as the present study. Because of the devastating effects of CSA on children, it is possible that many victims of CSA do not do academically well enough at school to gain entry to higher education. If this is the case, then prevalence rates found in student samples will be much lower than those for the general population. However, because of the limited time and resources, it was decided that the student population would be used for the present study.

Ideally, the questionnaire would have been consciously distributed amongst a random, representative sample of the student population in Glasgow. However, given the amount of time and effort which would have been involved in constructing a representative sample, it was decided that this would not be a justifiable use of resources. In an attempt to reach students who were studying a range of subjects, the questionnaires were distributed amongst different classes in each of the institutions. This was thought important in case students who have been sexually abused are more likely to study particular subjects (eg social science-based subjects). It was also considered important that the questionnaire be distributed amongst different classes since some subjects tend to be dominated by either male or female students.

The characteristics of the final sample are summarised in Table 2.2.

Table 2.1: Characteristics of Prevalence Study Sample**N=359**

Gender	Male:	167	47.4%
	Female:	185	52.6%
	<i>Unknown:</i>	7	
Age	Under 21:	255	71.6%
	21 & Over:	101	28.4%
	<i>Unknown:</i>	3	
Occupational Background of the Family in which the Respondent grew up	Managerial/Professional:	147	41.5%
	Other Non-Manual:	95	26.8%
	Skilled/Foreman:	76	21.5%
	Semi-Skilled/Unskilled:	24	6.8%
	Other:	12	3.4%
	<i>Unknown:</i>	5	
Ethnic Origin of the Family in which the Respondent grew up	White:	340	95.0%
	Other:	18	5.1%
	<i>Unknown:</i>	1	
Number of Students in the 3 Largest Classes in which the Questionnaire was distributed	Psychology:	228	64.0%
	Engineering:	56	15.7%
	Computing Studies:	52	14.6%
	Other:	20	5.6%
	<i>Unknown:</i>	3	

From Table 2.1 it can be seen that the sample was split almost equally between males and females⁵. As would be expected, over 7 out of 10 respondents were under 21 years of age. Almost 70% of the sample said that the occupational group of the families in which they grew up was non-manual. Over 9 out of 10 respondents described their ethnic background as white. The three largest classes to take part in the study were Psychology, Engineering and Computing Studies.

Because it is not known if the sample was representative of the student population, careful consideration must be given to the extent to which the findings of the study can be

⁵ According to the Government Statistical Service (Government Statistical Service 1995, Table 23b, p.73), the percentage of males and females provisionally enrolled in further and higher education (full time and part time) for the session 1994/95 (ie the session during which this study was carried out) was 45.3% and 54.7% respectively.

generalised to the entire student population. However, in their review of four prevalence studies, Wyatt and Peters (Wyatt & Peters 1986b) argue that the use of a random sample might be desirable but it is not sufficient when estimating prevalence rates for CSA. They argue that both the highest and lowest prevalence rates were derived from random samples.

Whatever methods of sampling a researcher uses, Sara Arber warns that he/she should:

.....recognise the constraints on interpretations which arise from their method of sampling, and honestly and clearly note them for their readers.

(Arber 1993, p.73)

Gaining Access to Sample

An initial approach was made to two universities and two colleges within the Glasgow area. In the first instance, contact was made with the students' associations and questions were asked about who was the best person/department to approach in each institution to request permission to include their students in the sample. While a representative from one institution was happy to give his permission during the initial telephone conversation for the students in his class to be included in the sample, the other three asked that the request be put in writing or that a copy of the questionnaire be sent to them. In the end, three of the institutions (two universities and one college) agreed to take part in the study.

The Distribution of the Questionnaire

Almost all questionnaires were distributed to students at lecture theatres before the commencement of a lecture⁶. The students were asked to complete the questionnaires in their own time and to return them at the next meeting of the class. It was thought important that the questionnaires were completed outwith the confines of the lecture theatre for two reasons. Firstly, it was unlikely that lecturers would have allowed their teaching time to have been "wasted" while the questionnaire was being completed. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it was unlikely that the respondents would have been honest in their responses if they had to complete the questionnaire while sitting beside their fellow students. (Of course, the disadvantage of allowing the students to take the questionnaires

⁶ Prior arrangements having first been made with the lecturer concerned.

away with them was that, inevitably, a significant proportion of the questionnaires would never be seen again by the researcher.) Usually the questionnaires were distributed and collected by the researcher. There were a small number of occasions when this was not possible. A total of 683 questionnaires were distributed between all three institutions. Just over half (52.6%) of the questionnaires were returned.

THE MAIN STUDY

The main study used in this research was an investigation of public perceptions of CSA. The aim of the study was to find out whether there is any consensus amongst the general population as to what constitutes child sexual abuse. In particular, the study was to test the hypothesis that members of the public were less likely to take action about an alleged case of CSA if the victim was male than if the victim was female. The study made use of the comparatively innovative method of the vignette technique. Before the value of the technique can be discussed, it is first necessary to explain what a vignette actually is.

What is a "Vignette" ?

Several descriptions of vignettes can be found in the literature. For example, Janet Finch provides the following description:

These are short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond.

(Finch 1985, p.105)

Alexander and Becker describe vignettes as:

.....short descriptions of a person or a 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. Thus, rather than allowing or requiring respondents to impute such information themselves in reacting to simple, direct, abstract questions about the person or situation, the additional detail is provided by the researcher and is thereby standardised across respondents.

(Alexander & Becker 1978, p.94)

Finally, Patrick West claims that:

Vignettes, are (usually) brief written, spoken or pictorial representations of persons in situations. On the basis of the information provided (the stimulus) respondents are asked one or more questions of relevance to the research interest which might, for example, involve an association of ideas, expression of feeling, a judgement, a recommendation, or all of these or almost none at all save a request for comment.

(West 1982, p.1)

Vignettes, then, are brief descriptions of hypothetical characters or situations, which the researcher asks the respondents to comment on in the hope of gaining some insight into the views, attitudes and/or behaviours of the population from which the sample has been drawn.

As an example of a vignette, Alexander and Becker cite the following case:

Mr Miller is a salesman who works for you. He comes into your office one morning to tell you that he has been drinking, occasionally quite heavily,

while on the job. He is a man with two years of college, black, single, about 22, and had been working for you for just three months, with an average sales record.

(Alexander & Becker 1978, p.94)

If the case of Mr Miller was used as a vignette in a piece of research, the respondents would be asked to comment on how they would react to this particular situation if they were Mr Miller's employer. Depending on the exact topic being researched, it is likely that not all respondents would be presented with exactly the same situation - as different versions of the vignette would be randomly allocated to different respondents. Alexander and Becker (1978, p.94) suggest that in one version of the vignette Mr Miller might become Miss Miller or Mrs Miller and in another version he might become a long-standing employee rather than a recently employed one. If this study was to be carried out, then it would tell us something of the impact of an employee's sex, gender and marital status (as well as any other factors which were varied in the vignettes) on his/her employer's view of what action should be taken following a revelation that the employer has been drinking while at work.

Alexander and Becker (1978, p.95) argue that, in this particular example, the use of the vignette technique allows for an analysis which simply could not be made using more direct questioning (such as asking respondents "Would you react differently to a young worker with little service as opposed to an older worker of longer standing service?"). The fact that the technique allows for an analysis which simply can not be made using more traditional methods is precisely the reason why the vignette technique was chosen for the study of public perceptions of CSA. A discussion of the reasons why the use of vignettes allows for such an analysis now follows.

The Advantages of Using the Vignette Technique

There are a number of advantages of using the vignette technique in social research. One of the most important advantages of using the technique is that the researcher is able to provide the respondent with a concrete description of a situation. Finch (1987, pp.105-106) writes:

Vignettes move further away.....from a direct and abstracted approach, and allow for features of the context to be specified, so that the respondent is being invited to make normative statements about a set of social

circumstances, rather than to express his or her "beliefs" or "values" in a vacuum.

In her study of professional perceptions of child protection issues in the UK, Birchall (1992, p.213) claims that:

The main strengths of vignettes as a research technique are that they offer respondents concrete stimuli which would seem to be easily related to their everyday professional responsibilities and to decisions they may have made in the past.

West (1982, p.2) claims that, in comparison with the vignette technique, the more traditional research methods are 'bland, alien and uninteresting'. Rather than using vignettes in their study of attitudes to the custody, access and maintenance of children following divorce, Clark and Samphier (1984) could simply have asked their respondents "Who should get custody of the children following divorce - the mother or the father?", "How much access should the non-custodial parent be given to the children?" and "Should the non-custodial parent pay maintenance for the children?". However, given the number of details about the family's background which would have to be taken into consideration before such questions could be answered, it was far easier for Clark and Samphier to describe the circumstances of a hypothetical family to the respondents - rather than allow them to define the family's background themselves. Had Clark and Samphier not used vignettes, then it is possible that their respondents might have given answers such as, "It depends how old the children are.....", "It depends on why the parents decided to separate....." or "It depends where each parent is living now.....", or else the respondents may simply have made underlying assumptions about these details. So, the advantage of the vignette technique in research such as that of Clark and Samphier is that it provides the same concrete examples for each of the respondents to comment on.

A second important advantage of the use of vignettes is that they bring in a hypothetical third party to the interview, which has the effect of making the questions seem less personally threatening for the respondent and distances the respondents from the issues involved. This is particularly important when the interview involves issues of a sensitive or possibly illegal nature. For example, in a study about drug-taking behaviour, respondents are likely to be more open with their answers if they are commenting on how "Jim" or "Jane" (or whatever the name of the fictitious character in the vignette) will behave than if they were asked directly about their own drug-taking experiences.

Alexander and Becker (1978, p.95) draw our attention to three advantages of the vignette technique. Firstly, they claim that respondents who are asked to comment on a vignette are not as likely to consciously bias their reports so as to gain the social approval of the interviewer than they might be if they were asked directly about how they personally would handle the situation described in the vignette. So, in a study such as that of Janet Finch (see Finch 1987) which involved making moral decisions, the respondents are less likely to feel pressurised into giving the morally "right" answer if they are answering on behalf of the characters in the vignettes rather than on behalf of themselves. Secondly, Alexander and Becker claim that most people are not particularly insightful about the factors which enter their own decision making-processes. This is one of the main reasons why the vignette technique was used in the study of public perceptions of CSA. While it was hypothesised that the use of the technique would reveal that the gender of the young person involved in a potential case of child sexual abuse would make a difference to the attitude of the public towards the case, it was thought that the respondents would answer either "No" or "I'm not sure" if asked a more direct question such as "Are you less likely to do something about a potentially sexually abusive incident if the young person involved is a boy rather than a girl?". Finally, Alexander and Becker claim that:

.....the systematic variation of characteristics in the vignette allows for a rather precise estimate of the effects of changes in combinations of variables as well as individual variables on corresponding changes in respondent attitude or judgement.

So, for example, in the case of Mr Miller (cited earlier in this chapter), a researcher could systematically test the effect of Mr Miller's sex, race, marital status, age, or length of service etc on the attitude of Mr Miller's employer towards Mr Miller's behaviour.

In short, the main advantages of the vignette technique over other research methods are that it provides the respondents with concrete descriptions of scenarios on which they can comment, and these scenarios introduce a third party to the interviews which distances the issues being researched from the respondents themselves. Another advantage of the vignette technique is that it can reveal factors which enter the respondents' decision-making processes but of which the respondents themselves are not aware. Given these advantages of using the vignette technique, it seemed that it was the most appropriate technique to use in the study of public perceptions of CSA.

The Disadvantages of using the Vignette Technique

While there are a number of distinct advantages of using the vignette technique, there are also a number of problems with the technique and it would be wrong if these problems were not acknowledged in this chapter. According to Finch (1987, p.111), one of these is the construction of the vignettes. Finch warns that vignettes must contain storylines which can be readily followed and understood in an interview situation. She also claims that it is important that the characters and the storylines are believable. Finch warns that the stories must not be too complex, otherwise the respondents will easily lose the thread. Despite these warnings, it would appear that at least some researchers who have used the vignette technique have succeeded in creating realistic vignettes. For example, Fox and Dingwall (1985, p.472) report that most of their respondents seemed to have had some cases which were remarkably similar to those described in the vignettes.

A second problem associated with the use of the vignette technique is that the researcher can never be 100 percent sure how the vignettes have been interpreted by the respondents. (This is particularly the case when a researcher deliberately chooses to use an ambiguous vignette.) The researcher does not know whether a specific element in the storyline is triggering a particular response, and he/she does not know what additional details might be "filled in" about the story by the respondents (eg are assumptions being made about the sex or race of the characters described in the vignette?). (Finch [1987, p.112] suggests that these concerns might be minimised by constructing a series of vignettes which vary the age, gender and race etc of the characters involved⁷. This, however, might result in a large number of vignettes if there are a large number of factors which can be varied. Finch also suggests the use of the open-ended question "Why?".) Contrary to what might be expected and as discussed later in this chapter, West (1982) claims that the problem of the researcher not knowing how the vignette has been interpreted by the respondent is no less a problem for researchers using more complex vignettes than it is for those using briefer ones. West claims that the greater the amount of information that is provided for the respondent in the vignette, the more details there are for the respondents to "fill in". He writes:

⁷ One stratagem for maximising the number of vignette characteristics which can be systematically manipulated while minimising the information loss resulting from a reduction in design size is fractional replication design (see Alexander & Becker 1978, pp.95-99).

.....the major problem is contained in the assumption that the researcher's definition of the situation is shared by respondents. It can never be known what they are responding to since that is precluded from emerging. I would also suggest that the disparity is likely to widen the more detail is written into the vignette, since it invites further contextualisation by the respondent which in turn makes it less likely his or her construction of the story corresponds to the researcher's.

(West 1982, p.10)

West found that this was indeed the case in the study of issues relating to the responsibility for the care of dependency groups which was conducted by West and his colleagues (1982, p.13).

A further disadvantage of the vignette technique is the fact that, particularly in the case of studies using short vignettes, the respondents are provided with only a very small amount of information about each case from which they are asked to make fairly important decisions. Fox and Dingwall (1985, pp.472-473) reported that some of the respondents in their study found it difficult to make the necessary decisions on the basis of the limited amount of information made available to them in the vignette. However, Fox and Dingwall do report that one health visitor pointed out to them that sometimes (when a new family moves into the area) the health visitor must determine her priority for visiting the family on little more information than was made available to the respondents in the vignettes. Fox and Dingwall suggest that the same may well be true for intake social workers. Birchall (1992, p.214) makes a similar point when she claims that decisions about whether or not to hold a Case Conference are sometimes based upon little more information than that which is available in vignettes. It would therefore seem that the fact that often only a minimal amount of information is provided in vignettes is not a problem when the research is about perceptions of CSA, since it is not uncommon for only a limited amount of information to be available to decision-makers involved in real life situations.

A final problem of using the vignette technique is that, while (for the reasons which have been outlined) it may be better at eliciting more open and honest responses from respondents than other techniques, it is still impossible to match the responses given by respondents to the vignettes with their actual behaviour in real life situations. There are two reasons for this. The first reason is simply to do with the fact that, in the main, respondents are aware of the fact that they are taking part in some sort of research and they are at least partly aware of the topic being researched. Respondents are therefore likely to become sensitised to the issues being researched. Birchall (1992, p.23) writes on this:

.....it is likely that any case situation included in a questionnaire explicitly concerned with child protection will be more frequently or strongly identified as child abuse than would the same circumstances in everyday life.

The second reason why researchers can not assume that answers elicited from the respondents by the vignettes are a direct indication of how the respondents will behave in real life is even more fundamental than the first. Finch (1987, p.113) explains:

The technique which I have described quite specifically distances the issues from the individual in an attempt to tap cultural norms. Asking about what a third part "ought" to do in a given situation is not the same thing as asking respondents what they themselves think they ought to do for their own relatives; nor is it a means of predicting what a respondent actually would do in a similar situation.

Indeed, Finch (1987, p.113) warns that:

It is in this area of the relationship between belief and actions that I see the biggest danger of the mis-use of vignettes.

West (1982, p.12) also claims that he and his colleagues do not believe that the recommendations made by the respondents in their study correspond with what the respondents would actually do if faced with similar circumstances to the vignette in their own lives. It would appear that no research has ever been carried out into the similarities/differences in how people respond to vignettes and how they actually behave in real life. A study of this nature would, however, make for a very interesting and useful piece of research.

It would appear that the disadvantages of using vignettes in research are that they must be carefully constructed (so that they are believable and easily understood in an interview situation), and the researcher can never be certain as to exactly how the respondent will interpret the vignettes. A further problem associated with the vignette technique is the fact that researchers sometimes ask respondents to make decisions based on very little information. But perhaps the most serious criticism which can be made of the technique is that there is no direct link between the way that respondents respond to the vignettes and the way that they behave in real life situations. (Of course, this criticism is not confined to vignettes since there is not necessarily a link between the answers given by respondents in

either a more traditional questionnaire or an interview and the way they would behave in real life situations.)

Despite the problems associated with using the vignette technique, it was still thought that it was the best approach to use in this study.

Variations in the Construction of Vignettes

The vignettes which have been used in previous research have varied in terms of complexity and ambiguity.

Variations in Complexity

The complexity of the vignettes which have been used in research has varied enormously. While researchers such as Giovannoni and Becerra (1979), Fox and Dingwall (1985) and Alves and Rossi (1978) used single-sentenced descriptions of hypothetical situations, others such as Finch (see Finch 1987) and Clark and Samphier (1984) provided much longer and more complex descriptions. The nature of the requested response to a vignette tends to vary according to the complexity of the vignette. While shorter vignettes often ask for merely a "yes"/"no" type of answer, the more complex vignettes often ask for much more detailed responses (Finch 1987). Birchall (1992) used a combination of short and long vignettes in her study. Her questionnaire began with a series of brief vignettes describing situations which might be defined as child mistreatment, and her respondents were asked to ascribe a severity rating to each of these situations. Birchall then presented her respondents with a small number of much more complex vignettes (again describing cases of possible child abuse), to which the respondents were asked to provide a detailed account of any professional action which they would take if they came across any of these cases in real life.⁸

The more complex the vignettes, then the fewer the number that can be included in any one survey. While surveys using briefer vignettes can include a fair number of these vignettes in one interview (eg Alves and Rossi [1978] included 50 vignettes in a single interview and Giovannoni and Becerra [1979] used as many as 78 vignettes in their study), both West (1982, p.7) and Finch (1987, p.109) suggest that four is the maximum number of the more complex vignettes which can be included in any one interview. Finch

⁸ For examples of the vignettes used by Birchall, see Appendix 2.

also suggests that these more complex vignettes should include no more than three changes to the original story. Given the anticipated length of the vignettes used in the present research into public perceptions of CSA, it was decided that six would be the maximum number which could be included in the questionnaire.

Variations in Ambiguity

Previous research has made use of vignettes which have varied greatly in terms of how ambiguous or precisely defined they have been. West (1982, p.2) argues that there is a continuum of stimulus ambiguity which has been used by researchers. West claims that while at one end of this continuum the vignettes are 'deliberately fuzzy or equivocal in order to permit maximum respondent interpretation', at the other end they are 'precisely defined and manipulated in the manner of a controlled experiment'. Although he admits that they are not usually thought of as being vignettes, West (1982, p.2) argues that the projective tests employed by psychologists have certain general features in common with vignettes and are an extreme example of researchers allowing their respondents to do much of the interpreting. West (1982, p.2) writes:

The Roschach (ink blot) test and more obviously the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) both involve a pictorial representation of a distinctly fuzzy nature about which the respondent is asked to comment.

West goes on:

The fuzziness is of course deliberate in that it is the vagueness or ambiguity of the stimulus that provides the basis for projection.

(West 1982, p.2)

While he does state that he is not aware of researchers using vignettes with the same degree of ambiguity as the projective tests, West (1982, p.3) argues that "non-directive vignettes" have been used. Although these vignettes are not so ambiguous that the respondent alone constructs the definition of the situation, they do provide an extremely limited amount of information of a highly general nature such that the respondent must "fill in" some of the details in order to make sense of the story. According to West, there is something to be gained from the use of these ambiguous vignettes:

The brief sketch merely acts as a cue to the production of general images and attitudes comprising the respondent's definition of the situation. This

conceptualisation of the vignette incorporates one of the original meanings of the term; that it is about the capturing of the central images of a person or situation at the expense of the fuzzy areas around them.

(West 1982, p.5)

The opposite extreme to these highly ambiguous vignettes are those where each detail of the vignette is spelled out in precise detail for the respondent. However, West claims that even the more detailed vignettes require the respondent to "fill in" the missing details:

One of the (ironic) implications.....is that the more information that is supplied in the vignette the more it is contextualised by the researcher and the more likely the respondent will need more (not less) to make sense of it,.....

(West 1982, p.5)

Examples of Previous Studies which have used the Vignette Technique

Despite the fact that both West (1982, p.2) and Birchall (1992, p.18) claim that only a relatively small number of researchers have made use of the vignette technique, the literature contains a growing number of examples of studies which have used the technique.

Some researchers have used the vignette technique to study some of the issues associated with criminal justice. For example, Prytula, Whiteside and Davidson (1975) used a series of 12 short vignettes to show that experienced police officers are less likely than the average citizen to accept the role of environmental factors in explaining criminal behaviour. McGlynn, Megas and Benson (1976) used a number of variations of a vignette describing a violent murder to investigate whether the sex and race of the defendant are likely to affect whether or not the jury find him/her not guilty by reason of insanity. Finally, Sellin and Wolfgang (1964) report on a number of studies (the first of which was conducted in the early 1920's) which used vignettes to explore the social consequences of a number of delinquent acts.

Other studies have used vignettes to explore the extent to which the victim of an attack or an accident is likely to be blamed for the incident. For example, Jones and Aronson (1973) used several variations of a vignette in which a young woman is raped to show that a socially respectable person is more likely to be seen at fault in a crime in which he/she is the victim, and that the defendant is likely to receive a longer term of imprisonment for the rape of a married woman than for the rape of a divorcee. Smith, Keating, Hester and

Mitchell (1976) also used a series of vignettes to assess the extent to which social role and "just world" considerations would affect perceptions and attributions of responsibility to a rape victim. Alexander and Becker (1978) report on a similar study which used the vignette technique to explore the attitudes of policemen and nurses towards the assignment of responsibility to victims of violence. Walster (1966) used four variations of a vignette describing a car accident to demonstrate that the greater the severity of the accident, the more likely it is that the victim of the accident will be held responsible for his/her accident.

Further researchers who have made use of the vignette technique include Finch (1987) - who used a series of 4 vignettes to research beliefs about giving practical and material assistance to one's kin and how these beliefs are translated into actions, West (1982) and his colleagues - who used vignettes to investigate public opinion in Elgin, Aberdeen and South West Glasgow on issues relating to the responsibility for the care of dependency groups such as the disabled, the chronically sick and the elderly, Clark and Samphier (1984) - who used a vignette in 3 stages to explore public attitudes towards issues surrounding the custody, access and maintenance of children following the divorce of their parents, Alves and Rossi (1978) - who used a whole series of vignettes to assess which family circumstances are regarded as being important when deciding whether or not a household is in receipt of a fair income and Wasoff and Dobash (1992) - who used the vignette technique to investigate how solicitors negotiate the financial aspects of divorce with clients.

The use of the vignette technique has not been limited to academic research. For example, a recent television series entitled "Hypotheticals" (BBC 1995) used the technique to gain an insight into how a group of professionals (eg social workers, policemen and lawyers) make decisions in their daily work. While such professionals can not openly discuss actual cases in public, they are quite happy to discuss hypothetical situations (ie vignettes) in a television programme.

The vignette technique was used by a number of the researchers who explored public and/or professional perceptions of child abuse and whose work was cited in Chapter One. For example, Dhooper, Royse & Wolfe (1991) used brief vignettes to investigate public attitudes towards child abuse. While Tite (1993) used a series of vignettes to explore teachers' definitions and responses to child abuse, Willis & Wells (1988)'s survey of the factors which influence police officers' decisions to report illegal behaviour was also based on a series of vignettes. Giovannoni & Becerra (1979), Fox & Dingwall (1985), Snyder & Newberger (1986) and Birchall (1992) all used vignettes to compare the views of different professional groups with regard to child abuse. Finally, the three studies which explored perceptions of child sexual abuse - Finkelhor & Redfield (1984),

Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis (1991) and Atteberry-Bennett (1987) - were all based on the vignette technique.

Other studies cited in Chapter One which made use of the vignette technique to research definitions of child abuse include Morris, Johnson and Clasen (1985) - who used vignettes to ascertain the factors which influence the reporting of child abuse by physicians, Burnett (1993) - who used vignettes to investigate the views of the public and social workers on psychological abuse, and Cruise, Jacobs and Lyons (1994) - who used vignettes to study children's perceptions of abuse.

From this summary of some of the studies which have made use of the vignette technique, it can be seen that vignettes have been used to research a variety of topics - particularly within the field of child protection. However, despite the fact that a significant number of studies have explored the perceptions of different groups about child abuse, none has explored in any detail the views held by ordinary members of the public about child sexual abuse. It was this dearth of knowledge which gave rise to the present research.

The Construction of the Vignettes for the Study of Public Perceptions of CSA

A self-administered questionnaire containing six vignettes was produced for this study using a number of case studies from the existing literature (Bain & Saunders 1990, Bolton, Morris & MacEachron 1989, Krug 1989, Langsley, Schwartz & Fairbairn 1968, Lew 1993 and Rogers & Terry 1984). (As with the earlier prevalence study, the practical issues of time and resources dictated that a questionnaire had to be used in this study.) In each of the vignettes, a child described to the respondent an experience which he/she claimed to have had. Careful consideration was given to the choice of incidents described in the vignettes to ensure that the alleged perpetrators of the abuse ranged from close family members (including siblings) to strangers. The incidents described in the vignettes were also chosen to ensure that the behaviours which they described ranged from those which might be dismissed as "normal" child-rearing activity to those which were more likely to be defined as abusive. The respondent, whose imaginary relationship with the child (eg neighbour, friend's parent and youth club leader⁹) was specified in each of the

⁹ The literature (eg Child and Family Trust Research Team 1993) claims that these are the sorts of people who children are likely to report having been sexually abused to. (In this study the relationship between the respondent and the child was never that of parent-child, as this was thought to be too emotive.)

vignettes, was asked to indicate (on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "very unlikely" to "very likely") how likely it was that he/she would tell someone about what the child had told them. Respondents were also asked who it was that they were most likely to tell about each incident. Consideration was given to making this a closed question - and providing a list of possible answers from which the respondent could have chosen his/her answer(s). However, it was decided that the question should be left open, since providing a list of possible answers might have resulted in the respondent ticking answer(s) which he/she had not thought of him/herself. The respondents were also invited to make further comments about each of the incidents. The questionnaire concluded by asking the respondents about their gender, age, occupation and parental status. It was anticipated that these factors may influence public opinion about CSA.

In an attempt to test out the hypothesis that the gender of the child would effect the public's reaction to each incident, two versions of the questionnaire were produced. While the six incidents described in both versions was identical, the gender of the young person involved was different. In the three incidents which involved the child's parent, the gender of the parent was changed with the gender of the child. In the other three incidents (which involved a sibling or a non-family member) the gender of the other person remained unchanged. (In order to make the coding and analysis of the questionnaire easier, the two versions were printed on different coloured paper.)¹⁰

The Pilot Study

Before the main study was carried out, a small pilot study was conducted. A total of 24 copies of the draft questionnaire (12 copies of each version) was distributed and 19 were returned. Unlike the main survey, all the questionnaires were distributed on a one-to-one basis. A convenience sample was selected which comprised of university students and employees. While it was not considered necessary that the pilot study sample be representative, some care was taken to ensure that the university employees who took part in the pilot study covered a range of socio-economic status - so they included secretaries and ancillary workers (eg cleaners) in addition to lecturing and research staff. The differing occupations of those who took part in the pilot study can be seen in Table 2.2 which shows the characteristics of the sample. One limitation of the sample was that almost all the students and university employees involved in the pilot study were associated with a particular university building which is used by academic Departments

¹⁰ A copy of both versions of the questionnaire used in the main study can be found in Appendix 3.

based within the Faculty of Social Sciences. This means that the sample was likely to have a higher awareness of child protection issues than the general population. Despite this limitation, the pilot study was useful in gaining an insight into how the main sample would react to the vignettes described in the questionnaire.

Table 2.2: Characteristics of Pilot Study (Main Survey) Sample¹¹

N=19

Gender	Male: 4 Female: 13 <i>No Response:</i> 2
Age	Under 40: 10 40+: 8 <i>No Response:</i> 1
Occupation	Lecturer/Academic: 5 Researcher: 2 Secretary: 2 Ancillary: 3 Other: 3 Student: 2 Retired: 1 <i>No Response:</i> 1
Religion	Protestant: 12 Roman Catholic: 2 None: 3 <i>No Response:</i> 2
Ethnic Origin	White: 15 White European: 1 <i>No Response:</i> 3
Parental Status	Parent/Guardian: 10 Non-Parent/Guardian: 8 <i>No Response:</i> 1

¹¹ Percentages have not been included in this table because the numbers involved are small.

On the whole the pilot study worked very well, although it revealed the need for a number of relatively minor changes to the questionnaire. The first of these changes was the alteration of the question "How likely is it that you would report....." to "How likely is it that you would tell someone.....". This change was made so that respondents could note down answers (such as "Would discuss incident with my partner") which might have been excluded by the use of a question which included the word "report". A second revision involved replacing all references to "cases" and "case numbers" with "incidents" and "incident numbers". There was concern that the use of the word "case" would reinforce the fact that the vignettes had all originated from real cases and this might result in people saying that they would tell someone about situations which they might otherwise ignore if they came across them in real life. The third difference between the two questionnaires was the removal of the questions, included in the pilot study, about the respondent's religion and ethnic origin. This was because some of the respondents in the pilot study did not answer these questions, and others provided answers which were difficult to categorise. No amendments were made at all to the wording of the vignettes, but the order in which they appeared in the questionnaire was revised so that the incidents about which the respondents were most likely to tell did not appear next to each other. A final change was that three of the vignettes which had appeared in the pilot study as two-staged scenarios (with questions being asked about each stage), appeared as just one stage in the main study. The pilot study revealed that analysing the results of multi-staged vignettes was complicated, yet they added little to the overall value of the study.

The Distribution of the Questionnaires and the Final Sample

While a representative sample of the general population would have been desirable for this study, time considerations favoured the use of a rather crude form of quota sampling. Although the final sample could in no way be described as representative of the general public, an attempt was made to try and ensure that the sample included people of different ages and social class. Efforts were also made to ensure that the sample consisted of similar numbers of males and females.

The majority of the questionnaires were distributed at group meetings. This allowed the researcher to explain the purpose of the study to the groups and enabled him to encourage participation in the survey. The groups at which the questionnaires were distributed were meeting for purposes other than the completion of the questionnaire. The researcher made an approach to the leader of each group to ask for permission to distribute copies of the questionnaire at a regular meeting of the group. Having introduced the questionnaire to each of the groups, the researcher then extended an invitation to all members of the group

to complete one of the questionnaires. Given the sensitive nature of the topic being researched, it was made clear that members who did not wish to take part in the study should not feel obliged to do so. On the whole, most people agreed to complete a questionnaire. The two versions of the questionnaire were distributed systematically, alternating between the two versions. This ensured that half of each group completed one version and the other half completed the second version. The advantage of this was that similar sorts of people completed both versions. While some respondents enquired about the significance of the colour coding, they were simply told that it did not matter which colour of questionnaire they completed. The significance of the colour coding was not explained until the questionnaires had been completed.

In the initial stages, the researcher approached the leaders of groups with which he was personally acquainted. These groups included church groups and meetings of leaders of youth organisations. The researcher then took stock of the sample before he made an approach to any other organisations. At that stage it was apparent that there was an under-representation of working class respondents and it was clear that there were more female respondents than there were male respondents. In order that the sample might become more similar to the general population, the researcher decided to target groups of working class people (specifically groups of working class men). In order to do this, a copy was obtained of a handbook of local community organisations meeting within one of the more deprived areas of Glasgow. The researcher then approached a number of the groups listed in the handbook to enquire if their organisations would be willing to take part in the study. The organisations which were approached included a drop-in centre for unemployed people, a karate club, a fishing club and an artists' workshop. The groups which agreed to take part in the study included a group of men who were employed in the drop-in centre of a men's health project and the staff of a local community centre. Both the men's health project and the community centre were staffed by local, working class people. While approaches were being made to these groups, copies of the questionnaire were also distributed to groups of mature students attending evening classes in a University in Glasgow. (An assumption was made that a number of working class people would be attending these classes.)

The questionnaires which were not distributed at group meetings were distributed amongst acquaintances of the researcher and his family and friends, on a one-to-one basis. When the questionnaires were being distributed to these individual respondents, the same introduction which was adopted at group meetings was used (ie. the purpose of the study was explained to the respondents and, given the nature of the topic being researched, the respondents were informed that they should not feel obliged to complete the questionnaire

if they did not wish to do so) and the questionnaires were distributed systematically (alternating between the two versions).

A total of 216 completed questionnaires were returned. 114 returned questionnaires were of one version, and the remaining 102 were of the other.

The final sample consisted of people of a wide spread of ages. However, despite the many attempts outlined above to reach working class males, the finale sample had a high proportion of female respondents (66.4%) and there was a comparative lack of respondents employed in manual work. The under-representation of males in the sample is indicative of a reluctance on the part of males to take part in the study. (While no records were kept of the number of potential respondents who refused to take part in the survey, it became clear to the researcher as he was distributing and collecting the questionnaires that there was a greater reluctance on the part of males to become involved in the study.) The characteristics of the final sample are shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Characteristics of the Main Sample

N=216

Gender	Male:	71	33.6%
	Female:	140	66.4%
	<i>Unknown/No Response:</i>	5	
Age	Under 40:	142	66.7%
	40+:	71	33.3%
	<i>No Response:</i>	3	
Occupation	Managerial/Professional:	37	17.5%
	Other Non-Manual:	110	52.1%
	Skilled/Foreman:	10	4.7%
	Semi-Skilled/Unskilled:	10	4.7%
	Housewife:	13	6.2%
	Student:	12	5.7%
	Retired:	7	3.3%
	Unemployed:	8	3.8%
	Self-employed:	3	1.4%
	YTS:	1	0.5%
Respondent is likely to have an Occupational Awareness¹² of Child Sexual Abuse?	<i>No Response:</i>	5	
	Yes:	49	23.3%
	Perhaps:	8	3.7%
	No:	142	67.6%
	<i>Unknown:</i>	11	5.2%
Parental Status	<i>No Response:</i>	6	
	Parent/Guardian:	117	55.2%
	Non-Parent/Guardian:	95	44.8%
	<i>No Response:</i>	4	

¹² The term "Occupational Awareness" has been used in this thesis to refer to occupations which are likely to involve some sort of training in CSA. (This would therefore include respondents in occupations such as Social Work - who are likely to have direct experiences of dealing with CSA, and respondents in occupations such as Teaching and Youth Work - who are likely to have received training in detecting possible signs of CSA.)

The Views of the Professionals

While the primary concern of the study was with public perceptions of CSA, it was decided that it would be useful if a small number of professionals could be asked about their perceptions of the six incidents described in the questionnaire. It was, however, necessary to make some changes to the original questionnaire, because it would not have been appropriate to ask the professionals to complete the original questionnaire. (Unfortunately the decision to involve a sample of professionals in the study was made after the study of public perceptions was undertaken. Had this not been the case, it would have been possible to produce a version of the questionnaire which could have been completed both by the public and the professionals.)

The most fundamental difference between the original and the modified questionnaires was that, while the original version asked the respondents how *likely* it was that they themselves would tell someone about each of the incidents, the respondents in the modified study were asked how *important* they thought it was that the adult (described in the incident) told someone about what the child had said. This change was made because, if the professionals were asked "How likely is it that you would tell someone about this incident?", they may have answered according to how they themselves would respond to the incident rather than how they, as professionals, think the public should react to each of the situations. A second difference between the original questionnaire and the professional questionnaire was that the six incidents were changed slightly to include a description of the child telling an adult about what had happened to him/her. In the original questionnaire, the gender of the person who was told about each incident was automatically determined by the gender of the respondent. As this was not possible in the professional questionnaire, the gender of the person told about each incident was specified and alternated between incidents.

As with the original questionnaire, two versions of the questionnaire for professionals were produced. This allowed the researcher to continue to test his hypothesis that a possible case of CSA is likely to be treated less seriously if the victim is a boy than if the victim is a girl. In the second version, the gender of the people told about the incidents was changed with the gender of the child so that the child was always telling an adult of the same gender as themselves¹³. In the end, a total of 43 questionnaires were completed by professionals. Just as the original questionnaire was distributed at group meetings, the modified questionnaire was also distributed at meetings of social workers. The first was a

¹³ A copy of the two versions of the questionnaire used in the study of professionals can be found in Appendix 4.

group of senior social workers who were attending a conference on child protection. The other two groups comprised of residential care workers. Of the 43 professionals who completed the questionnaire, 22 were male and 21 were female. All but one of the professionals answered that at least some of their work was concerned with children who have/may have been sexually abused.

Because the questionnaire which was completed by the professionals was not identical to the questionnaire which was completed by the public, it was recognised from the outset that it would be impossible to make direct comparisons between the responses given by the two groups - since both were answering two somewhat different sets of questions. The essential difference between the two questionnaires was that the public were asked about what they themselves would do about each incident but the professionals were asked about what they thought other people would do. Despite this difference, it was anticipated that the professional study would be of some value in that it would allow the researcher to gain an overall picture of the professional perceptions of the six incidents described in the questionnaire.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER TWO

This chapter began by outlining the main aims of the present research. It was explained that these aims had developed over time, although gender differences was the one key theme which had remained constant throughout the various developments. The research consisted of two studies and the methods used in each study were detailed in the chapter. A greater proportion of the chapter was devoted to the second study since it was the main investigation and it made use of the relatively new method of the vignette technique. The following chapter will discuss some of the findings of the research.

Chapter Three

PUBLIC & PROFESSIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

This chapter will report the findings of the research. It will present first the findings of the prevalence study and then those of the main study. As with the previous chapter, more discussion will be devoted to the main study than to the prevalence survey.

The results of both the prevalence study and the main study were analysed on computer using SPSS.

In the tables which are presented in this chapter, chi-square was used to test for statistical significance (where appropriate) and the result of each test is reported under the table concerned. In some tables the number of respondents involved was too small to use chi-square, so Fisher's exact test was used instead. The results of the these tests are also displayed under the relevant tables.

THE PREVALENCE STUDY

As was reported in the previous chapter, 359 (52.6%) of the 683 distributed questionnaires were returned. Of the 359 students who completed the questionnaire, 167 (46.5%) were male and 185 (51.5%) were female. The gender of the other 7 (1.9%) respondents was unknown.

A number of the tables included in the following pages have cells which contain low numbers. This is because less than 8% of the sample reported possible abuse. However, it was possible to run statistical tests on most of the data.

Possible abuse¹ was reported by 7.5% (n=26) of respondents. While only 2.5% (n=4) of males reported being the victims of possible abuse, 12% (n=22) of females said that they may have been the victims of child sexual abuse. The difference between the reporting rates for males and females was found to be statistically significant (p=0.00088). The number of respondents who reported possible abuse is documented in table 3.0.1.

Table 3.0.1: Number of Respondents who Reported Possible Abuse

Possible Abuse reported by Respondent	Male	Female	Total Sample ²
Yes	4 2.5%	22 12%	26 7.5%
No	157 97.5%	162 88%	319 92.5%
Total	161	184	345

Pearson $\chi^2=11.06$, with 1 degree of freedom, p=0.00088
which is significant at the .001 level

Although this study does raise some interesting issues about the sexual abuse of boys, it is important to bear in mind that only 4 males reported possible abuse. It is therefore impossible to draw any definite conclusions about the abuse of boys from the study.

Once consideration has been given to the characteristics of the respondents, the characteristics of the abuse will then be reported.

¹ This percentage includes those who answered "unsure" as well as those who answered "yes" to the question about whether they considered themselves to have been the victims of CSA. It also includes those who answered "no" to the question (as well as those who did not answer the question at all) but then went on to describe a potentially sexually abusive incident during childhood. The percentage does not include a few respondents those who answered "yes" or "unsure" but then answered the remainder of the questions in such a way that it was clear that they were not taking the questionnaire seriously. (In this case, the respondents were treated as "unknown"s.)

² Due to a number of "missing observations", it is acknowledged that there are slight variations between the total sample (n=359) and the number of students included in this table and the tables which follow.

(1) CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

AGE: Reports of possible abuse were much more common amongst mature students than younger students. This can be seen in table 3.0.2.

Table 3.0.2: Number of Respondents Reporting Possible Abuse by Age

Possible Abuse reported by Respondent	Respondents <31 years of age		Respondents 31+ years of age		Total	
Yes	17	5.4%	8	22.9%	25	7.2%
No	297	94.6%	27	77.1%	324	92.8%
Total	314		35		349	

Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, $p=0.00144$
which is significant at the .005 level

While over 20% of those aged 31 years of age or more claimed that they may have been the victims of sexual abuse, only 5.4% of respondents aged under 31 years of age reported possible abuse. A Fisher's exact test shows that this difference is significant at the 0.005 level. If the sample is broken down by gender, then it can be seen that older respondents are statistically more likely to report possible abuse whether they are male or female. (The result of a Fisher's exact test is 0.00619 and 0.03824 for female and male respondents respectively. Both of these results are statistically significant at the .05 level.)

While it might well be the case that child sexual abuse was indeed more prevalent 20 or 30 years ago, there are a number of possible explanations for the high discrepancy between these two percentages. (For example, it may be that younger people are less likely to report abuse as their experiences will be much more recent and therefore too painful to report.) However, without further research it is impossible to say whether abuse was more prevalent 20 or 30 years ago or whether this discrepancy is simply a reflection of the respondents' willingness to report sexual abuse.

SOCIAL CLASS: As can be seen from table 3.0.3, it would appear that the chances of a child reporting that he or she may have been sexually abused vary according to the occupational group of the family in which the child grew up.

Table 3.0.3: Number of Respondents Reporting Possible Abuse by Occupational Background of Family in which the Respondent Grew Up

Occupational Background of Family	Total n=349	Number of Respondents reporting Possible Abuse	
Managerial/Professional	n=145	13	9.0%
Other Non-Manual	n=93	4	4.3%
Skilled/Foreman	n=77	9	12.0%
Semi-Skilled/Unskilled	n=22	0	-
Unemployed	n=7	0	-
Retired	n=3	0	-
Not in paid employment	1	0	-
Other	1	0	-

Pearson $\chi^2=6.77$, with 7 degrees of freedom, $p=0.45294$
which is not significant at the .05 level

This test might not be robust, due to low cell counts

While 12.0% of respondents who classed the family in which they grew up as "skilled/foreman" claimed that they may have been abused, only 4.3% of those from a "non-manual" background said that they may have been the victims of sexual abuse. None of the respondents who grew up in families with semi-skilled/unskilled backgrounds claimed that they had been abused. Although these findings are very interesting, given that the literature suggests that child sexual abuse is just as common in families of the higher social classes as it is in families of the lower social classes, the differences found in this study are not statistically significant at the .05 level. Even when the occupations of the respondents' families are collapsed into two groups ("Managerial/Professional, Other Non-Manual, Skilled/foreman and Semi-Skilled/Unskilled" and "Other") the difference between these two groups in the reporting of possible abuse is not significantly significant (at the .05 level).

ETHNIC BACKGROUND: Ethnic background did not make a statistically significant difference to the reporting of possible abuse.

Table 3.0.4: Number of Respondents Reporting Possible Abuse by Ethnic Background of Family in which the Respondent Grew Up

Possible Abuse reported by Respondent	White		Non-White		Total	
Yes	25	7.5%	1	5.9%	26	7.4%
No	309	92.5%	16	94.1%	325	92.6%
Total	334		17		351	

Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, $p=1.00000$
which is not significant at the .05 level

As table 3.0.4 shows, possible abuse³ was reported by 7.5% of respondents whose ethnic background was white and 5.9% of those with non-white ethnic backgrounds.

³ Given the fact that such a small percentage of the sample was of a non-white background, it is acknowledged that no definite conclusions can be drawn from this study about the relationship between a child's ethnic background and the likelihood of the child being sexually abused.

RELIGION: Table 3.0.5 shows the number of respondents who grew up in families with/without a declared faith who reported possible abuse.

Table 3.0.5: Number of Respondents Reporting Possible Abuse who Grew Up in Families With/Without a Declared Faith

Possible Abuse reported by Respondent	Faith		No Declared Faith		Total	
Yes	18	6.1%	8	21.6%	26	7.9%
No	275	93.9%	29	78.4%	304	92.1%
Total	293		37		330	

Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, $p=0.00411$
which is significant at the .005 level

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings of this study was the fact that respondents who grew up in a family with no declared faith were much more likely to report possible abuse than respondents who grew up in a family with a declared faith. While 6.1% of respondents who grew up in families with a faith reported possible abuse, 21.6% of those who grew up in families with no faith reported possible abuse. In other words, while only about 1 in 20 of the respondents who claimed to have at least some religious affiliation reported that they may have been sexually abused during childhood, as many as 1 in 5 respondents who had no religion said that they may have been sexually abused. This difference is statistically significant at the .005 level. However, when the sample is broken down by gender the statistically significant difference only remains for male respondents (Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, $p=0.00558$ for males but 0.05436 for females).

There are a number of possible explanations for these findings. It might be that following a religion enforces a morality on believers which discourages them from sexually abusing children. Another possible explanation is that CSA is just as common amongst those who follow a religion as those who do not but the religion either discourages followers from reporting sexual abuse or it makes them interpret the abuse as something other than abuse. Without further research, no definite conclusions can be made.

SUBJECTS STUDIED AT COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY: From table 3.0.6 it can be seen that there was some variation in the reporting of possible abuse between the students of the different classes in which the questionnaire was distributed. The table would suggest that psychology students were more likely to report possible abuse than students studying other subjects.

Table 3.0.6: Number of Respondents Reporting Possible Abuse in the Three Largest Classes in which the Questionnaire was Distributed

	Total n=332	Number of Respondents reporting Possible Abuse	
Psychology	n=228	21	9.2%
Engineering	n=52	2	3.8%
Computing Studies	n=52	1	2.0%

Table 3.0.7 shows that the respondents who received a copy of the questionnaire in the psychology class were statistically ($p=0.04177$) more likely to report possible abuse than all other students who took part in the study.

Table 3.0.7: Number of Respondents who Received a Copy of the Questionnaire in the Psychology Class/Other Classes and who Reported Possible Abuse

Possible Abuse reported by Respondent	Psychology		All Other Classes		Total	
Yes	21	9.2%	4	3.3%	25	7.2%
No	207	90.8%	117	96.7%	324	92.8%
Total	228		121		349	

Pearson $\chi^2=4.14$, with 1 degree of freedom, $p=0.04177$
which is significant at the .05 level

Two possible explanations for the higher rates of reporting amongst psychology students are, firstly, that victims of CSA are more likely to study social science-based courses (such as psychology) and, secondly, the level of reporting amongst psychology students may be a result of the high proportion of female students in the class. In fact, a closer examination of the data reveals that the high percentage of female students in the psychology class was responsible for the reporting rates of psychology students. As can be seen in table 3.0.8 and table 3.0.9, when the sample was broken down by gender, psychology students were no more likely to report possible abuse than other students.

Table 3.0.8: Number of Male Respondents who Received a Copy of the Questionnaire in the Psychology Class/Other Classes and who Reported Possible Abuse

Possible Abuse reported by Respondent	Psychology	All Other Classes	Total
Yes	2 2.9%	1 1.1%	3 1.9%
No	67 97.1%	89 98.9%	156 98.1%
Total	69	90	159

Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, $p=0.57961$
which is not significant at the .05 level

Table 3.0.9: Number of Female Respondents who Received a Copy of the Questionnaire in the Psychology Class/Other Classes and who Reported Possible Abuse

Possible Abuse reported by Respondent	Psychology	All Other Classes	Total
Yes	19 12.1%	3 11.5%	22 12.0%
No	138 87.9%	23 88.5%	161 88.0%
Total	157	26	183

Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, $p=1.00000$
which is not significant at the .05 level

(2) CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ABUSE

AGE OF CHILD AT ON-SET OF THE ABUSE: While females reported being abused from various ages throughout their childhood, a number were abused when they were 13 or 14 years of age. The males in this study claimed that they had been abused around the ages of 6 to 8 and 13 or 14.

NATURE OF THE ABUSE: The two most common forms of abuse reported by females were another person showing the respondent their sex organs and another person touching the respondent's sex organs. In the case of male respondents, the two most common forms of abuse were another person touching the respondent's sex organs and the respondents touching another person's sex organs.

SEX OF THE ABUSER: All the respondents (ie both males and females) who reported abuse claimed that they had been abused by males. This finding is interesting, given the increasing number of female abusers which have been reported by other researchers (see Chapter One).

RELATIONSHIP OF THE ABUSER TO THE RESPONDENT: While females reported being abused both inside and/or outside the family, none of the males reported being abused within the family. The difference in ages between the female respondents and their abusers varied enormously, but most females reported being abused by others who were either 6-9 years or 50+ years older than themselves. The males, however, tended to be abused by others who were between only 2 and 4 years older than themselves.

REPORTING THE ABUSE: In the case of female respondents, the abuse is likely to be reported (in the first instance) to another woman. Females are likely to report the abuse to a range of other women, but they are most likely to report the abuse to either a relation or a friend. (Too few male respondents answered these questions to allow for any meaningful comparisons.) Of the 26 respondents who reported possible abuse in the questionnaire, only 4 said that they had told someone about their experiences at the time. This is, no doubt, a reflection of the fact that 19 respondents did not regard their experiences as abusive until later. Some of the respondents wrote :

I did not realise until I was an adult + child sex abuse became a more public issue that it (the experience) could be classed as abusive

To start with I didn't realise what was happening.....

I did not understand.....

At the time I was only 14, I was and am confused as to whether it was sexual abuse

From the above examples, it can be seen that it was not until some time after the abuse that a number of respondents came to regard their experiences as abuse. These examples also show that there was a considerable degree of similarity in the responses.

HOW HARMFUL THE EXPERIENCE WAS FELT TO BE: Females were more likely to feel "harmed very badly" or "harmed quite badly" by their abusive experiences than were males. The experiences which were most likely to result in the respondent feeling harmed were sexual intercourse and another person touching the respondent's sex organs.

SUMMARY OF PREVALENCE STUDY FINDINGS

Possible abuse was reported by 7.5% (n=26) of the respondents. While 12% (n=22) of female respondents reported possible abuse, only 2.5% (n=4) of males reported abuse. Compared with the studies summarised in Table 1.0 of Chapter One, the prevalence rate found in this study for females was average. However, the rate for males was much lower than the rates found in these other studies. The difference between the percentage of males and females who reported possible abuse in this study might be a result of differences in the ways in which males and females define child sexual abuse (in the present study the definition of abuse was, of course, left to the respondent), or it may be to do with the sample (perhaps female respondents were more likely to treat the questionnaire seriously than were males).

The two characteristics of the respondents which seemed to make most difference to whether or not they reported possible sexual abuse were age and religion. While students aged 31 years of age or more were statistically ($p=0.00144$) more likely to report possible abuse than younger respondents, those who grew up in a family without a declared faith were statistically (Fisher's exact test, two-tail, $p=0.00411$) more likely to report being the victims of CSA than respondents who grew up in a family without such a faith.

Females reported being sexually abused from a wider range of ages than the small number of males who reported possible abuse. All respondents who reported possible abuse claimed that they were abused by males. While females reported being abused both inside and/or outside the family by others who were either between 6 and 9 years or over 50 years older than themselves, males reported being abused outwith the family by others who were only a few years older. Most respondents said that they did not tell anyone about their experiences at the time and many did not come to regard what they had experienced as abuse until later. Males were less likely to feel harmed by their experiences than were females.

While the purpose of the prevalence study was to investigate the reporting of CSA by the victims themselves, the aim of the main study was explore the ways in which the public made sense of possible cases of child sexual abuse.

THE MAIN STUDY

The main study reported in this thesis was an exploration of public perceptions of child sexual abuse. It made use of a questionnaire containing six brief descriptions of incidents which involved children and could be viewed as sexual abuse. The respondents were invited to indicate how likely it was that they would tell someone about each of the six incidents. They were also asked who (if anyone) they would tell about each incident. Two versions were produced of the questionnaire. While the incidents described in both versions were identical, the gender of the child was changed. As was documented in Chapter Two, a total of 216 members of the public completed the questionnaire. While 114 respondents completed the first version of the questionnaire, the remaining 102 respondents completed the second version.

The findings of the main study will be considered in two sections. The first section will report the findings in relation to the gender of the victim and the second will report the findings in relation to the characteristics of the respondent.

(1) THE GENDER OF THE VICTIM AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF THE RESPONDENT TELLING SOMEONE ABOUT EACH INCIDENT

This first section is concerned with the effect which the gender of the victim has on the likelihood of the respondent telling someone about each incident. It will also consider who the respondent is most likely to tell and whether the gender of the victim is likely to influence the respondent's decision.

Each of the six incidents will be considered in turn. Following a summary of the narrative of each incident, there will be some discussion concerning the likelihood of the respondents telling someone about the incident and who it is that they were most likely to tell. After the views of the public have been considered, the views of the professionals will be presented.

INCIDENT 1

John, a fourteen-year old boy who lives next door to you, has told you that his mother has started coming into the bathroom while he is taking a bath.

Table 3.1.1: The Likelihood of Members of the Public telling someone about Incident 1

	John		Jane		Total	
Likely/Very Likely	17	16.7%	50	44.2%	67	31.2%
Unsure	30	29.4%	32	28.3%	62	28.8%
Unlikely/Very Unlikely	55	53.9%	31	27.4%	86	40.0%
Total	102		113		215	
No. of No Responses	0		1		1	

Pearson $\chi^2=22.51$, with 2 degrees of freedom, $p=0.00001$
which is significant at the .00005 level

Of all six incidents described in the questionnaire, the members of the public in the sample were least likely to tell about incident 1. They were, however, statistically more likely to tell if the victim was Jane than if the victim was John ($p=0.00001$).

Table 3.1.2: The Person/Agency most likely to be told about Incident 1⁴

	John n=102		Jane n=114		Total n=216	
Outside Agency	9	8.8%	17	14.9%	26	12.0%
Child/Child's Family	39	38.2%	68	60.0%	107	49.5%
Respondent's Family/Friends	10	9.8%	16	14.0%	26	12.0%
Other	1	1.0%	1	0.9%	2	0.9%
Response is difficult to interpret	6	5.9%	6	5.3%	12	5.6%
"Don't know"	1	1.0%	0	-	1	0.5%
Total	66	64.7%	108	94.7%	174	80.6%

Pearson $\chi^2=0.08$, with 2 degrees of freedom, $p=0.95929$
which is not significant at the .05 level

The statistical tests carried out on the above data included the first three categories cited in the table only (ie Outside Agency, Child/Child's Family and Respondent's Family/Friends). An explanation for this is given in the text below.

The person/agency most likely to be told about incident 1 by the public was the child's family/friends or the child him/herself. While almost half of the respondents were likely to tell the child's family, only 12% were likely to approach an outside agency. The child's family was most likely to be told whether the victim was John or Jane. The gender of the victim did not make a statistically significant difference ($p>0.05$) to the person/agency most likely to be told about this incident.

The statistical tests carried out on the above data included the first three categories cited in the table only (ie Outside Agency, Child/Child's Family and Respondent's Family/Friends) since they included all the relevant data. While it was considered useful

⁴ Some respondents indicated that they would tell more than one person/agency about this and the other incidents described in the questionnaire. It is therefore possible that in this and other similar tables the number of responses will be greater than 216. Please note that the "total"s given at the foot of each table are not totals of the number of respondents likely to approach an agency/person about each incident but totals of the number of approaches likely to be made to all of the agencies/persons listed in the table.

to include the other three categories in Table 3.1.2, they were not included in the statistical tests because they involve only a small number of respondents and, more importantly, because they do not specify a particular person/agency.

INCIDENT 2

Eight-year-old Gillian (a friend of your daughter) tells you that, while on the way home from school, she was accosted by a twelve-year-old boy who lives in your neighbourhood. The older boy threatened to beat up Gillian if she did not masturbate him. Gillian was frightened of this older boy, and complied.

Table 3.2.1: The Likelihood of Members of the Public telling someone about Incident 2

	Greg		Gillian		Total	
Likely/Very Likely	108	96.4%	98	96.1%	206	96.3%
Unsure	2	1.8%	2	2.0%	4	1.9%
Unlikely/Very Unlikely	2	1.8%	2	2.0%	4	1.9%
Total	112		102		214	
No. of No Responses	2		0		2	

Pearson $\chi^2=0.02$, with 2 degrees of freedom, $p=0.99095$
 which is not significant at the .05 level
This test might not be robust, due to low cell counts

Almost all of the sample were likely to tell someone about incident 2. Indeed, of all six incidents, incident 2 is the second most likely incident to be told about. The gender of the victim did not make a statistical difference ($p>0.05$) to the likelihood of the respondent telling someone about this incident.

Table 3.2.2: The Person/Agency most likely to be told about Incident 2

	Greg n=114		Gillian n=102		Total n=216	
Outside Agency	56	49.1%	55	54.0%	111	51.4%
Child/Child's Family	76	66.7%	74	72.5%	150	69.4%
Respondent's Family/Friends	3	2.6%	4	3.9%	7	3.2%
Other	1	0.9%	0	-	1	0.5%
Response is difficult to interpret	0	-	2	2.0%	2	0.9%
"Don't know"	0	-	0	-	0	-
Total	136	119.3%	135	132.4%	271	125.5%

Pearson $\chi^2=0.16$, with 2 degrees of freedom, $p=0.92145$

which is not significant at the .05 level

This test might not be robust, due to low cell counts

The statistical tests carried out on the above data included the first three categories cited in the table only (ie Outside Agency, Child/Child's Family and Respondent's Family/Friends). An explanation for this is given on page 89.

The person/agency most likely to be told about incident 2 by members of the public was the child's family/friends or the child him/herself. However, while approximately two-thirds of the sample indicated that they would tell the child's family, approximately half would approach an outside agency. The gender of the victim did not make a statistically significant difference ($p>0.05$) to the person/agency most likely to be told about incident 2.

INCIDENT 3

Neil, your fifteen-year-old nephew, tells you that he has shared a bed with his mother since he was about seven years old (the time when Neil's mother and father divorced). The rationale for this was that his mother could not afford a separate bed for him, although Neil's sister (who is three years older than Neil) slept alone in a separate bed.

Table 3.3.1: The Likelihood of Members of the Public telling someone about Incident 3

	Neil		Nicola		Total	
Likely/Very Likely	52	51.5%	78	70.9%	130	61.6%
Unsure	27	26.7%	21	19.1%	48	22.7%
Unlikely/Very Unlikely	22	21.8%	11	10.0%	33	15.6%
Total	101		110		211	
No. of No Responses	1		4		5	

Pearson $\chi^2=9.25$, with 2 degrees of freedom, $p=0.00981$
which is significant at the .01 level

Almost two-thirds of the public indicated that it was likely that they would tell someone about this incident. Respondents were statistically ($p=0.00981$) more likely to tell about this incident if the victim was Nicola rather than Neil.

Table 3.3.2: The Person/Agency most likely to be told about Incident 3

	Neil n=102		Nicola n=114		Total n=216	
Outside Agency	13	12.7%	21	18.4%	34	15.7%
Child/Child's Family	64	62.7%	75	65.8%	139	64.4%
Respondent's Family/Friends	8	7.8%	9	7.9%	17	7.9%
Other	0	-	1	0.9%	1	0.5%
Response is difficult to interpret	2	2.0%	8	7.0%	10	4.6%
"Don't know"	2	2.0%	1	0.9%	3	1.4%
Total	89	87.3%	115	100.9%	204	94.4%

Pearson $\chi^2=0.71$, with 2 degrees of freedom, $p=0.69966$
which is not significant at the .05 level

The statistical tests carried out on the above data included the first three categories cited in the table only (ie Outside Agency, Child/Child's Family and Respondent's Family/Friends). An explanation for this is given on page 89.

The person/agency most likely to be told about incident 3 was the child's family/friends or the child him/herself. While almost two-thirds of the respondents indicated that they were likely to approach the child's family, just over 15% said that they would involve an outside agency. The gender of the victim did not make a statistically significant difference ($p>0.05$) to the person/agency most likely to be told about this incident.

INCIDENT 4

One evening your daughter has a visit from her best friend Ann. While Ann is in your house, she tells you that her brother crawled into her bed and started fondling her. Ann is nine years old, and her brother is fifteen. Ann said that she felt both scared and excited when this happened.

Table 3.4.1: The Likelihood of Members of the Public telling someone about Incident 4

	Alan		Ann		Total	
Likely/Very Likely	76	67.9%	87	85.3%	163	76.2%
Unsure	18	16.1%	11	10.8%	29	13.6%
Unlikely/Very Unlikely	18	16.1%	4	3.9%	22	10.3%
Total	112		102		214	
No. of No Responses	2		-		2	

Pearson $\chi^2=10.90$, with 2 degrees of freedom, $p=0.00430$
which is significant at the .005 level

More than three-quarters of the respondents indicated that it was likely that they would tell someone about incident 4. However, they were statistically ($p=0.00430$) more likely to tell someone if the victim is Ann rather than Alan.

Table 3.4.2: The Person/Agency most likely to be told about Incident 4

	Alan n=114		Ann n=102		Total n=216	
Outside Agency	7	6.1%	14	13.7%	21	9.7%
Child/Child's Family	86	75.4%	88	86.3%	174	80.6%
Respondent's Family/Friends	7	6.1%	6	5.9%	13	6.0%
Other	1	0.9%	0	-	1	0.5%
Response is difficult to interpret	1	0.9%	2	2.0%	3	1.4%
"Don't know"	0	-	0	-	0	-
Total	102	89.5%	110	107.8%	212	98.1%

Pearson $\chi^2=2.13$, with 2 degrees of freedom, $p=0.34495$
which is not significant at the .05 level

The statistical tests carried out on the above data included the first three categories cited in the table only (ie Outside Agency, Child/Child's Family and Respondent's Family/Friends). An explanation for this is given on page 89.

The person/agency most likely to be told about incident 4 was the child's family/friends or the child him/herself. While more than 80% of respondents indicated that they would approach a member of the child's family, less than 10% said that they would approach an outside agency. The gender of the victim did not make a statistically significant difference ($p>0.05$) to the person/agency most likely to be told about incident 4.

INCIDENT 5

Your nine-year-old son has been for a picnic with Stephen (one of his friends), in some local woods. When they come home, Stephen tells you that a man came up to him and asked him if he would like to 'go exploring'. When Stephen said 'no', the man pulled him by the hand towards some bushes. The man then opened his trousers and pulled out his penis. He came towards Stephen telling him to hold it. Stephen turned and ran away at that point.

Table 3.5.1: The Likelihood of Members of the Public telling someone about Incident 5

	Stephen		Susan		Total	
Likely/Very Likely	101	99.0%	109	98.2%	210	98.6%
Unsure	1	1.0%	2	1.8%	3	1.4%
Unlikely/Very Unlikely	0	-	0	-	0	-
Total	102		111		213	
No. of No Responses	0		3		3	

Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, $p=1.00000$
which is not significant at the .05 level

The statistical tests carried out on the above data included the first two categories cited in the table only (ie Likely/Very Likely and Unsure).

Of all 6 incidents, the public were most likely to tell someone about incident 5. Indeed, over 98% indicated that it was likely that they would tell someone about it. The gender of the victim did not make a statistically significant difference ($p>0.05$) to the likelihood of the respondent telling someone about this incident. Incident 5 is also the incident about which the least number of respondents are unsure.

Table 3.5.2: The Person/Agency most likely to be told about Incident 5

	Stephen n=102		Susan n=114		Total n=216	
Outside Agency	94	92.2%	101	88.6%	195	90.3%
Child/Child's Family	26	25.5%	27	23.7%	53	24.5%
Respondent's Family/Friends	2	2.0%	3	2.6%	5	2.3%
Other	5	4.9%	4	3.5%	9	4.2%
Response is difficult to interpret	1	1.0%	4	3.5%	5	2.3%
"Don't know"	0	-	0	-	0	-
Total	128	125.5%	139	121.9%	267	123.6%

Pearson $\chi^2=0.15$, with 2 degrees of freedom, $p=0.92766$

which is not significant at the .05 level

This test might not be robust, due to low cell counts

The statistical tests carried out on the above data included the first three categories cited in the table only (ie Outside Agency, Child/Child's Family and Respondent's Family/Friends). An explanation for this is given on page 89.

Incident 5 is important as it is also the incident which the public were most likely to bring to the attention of an outside agency. While over 90% of respondents indicated that they would tell an outside agency about this incident, less than 25% said that they would approach the child's family/friends or the child him/herself. The gender of the victim did not make a statistically significant difference ($p>0.05$) to the person/agency most likely to be told about this incident.

INCIDENT 6

Mary, a twelve-year-old member of a youth club which you help to organise, tells you one day that she and her mother have started doing aerobic exercises together. She tells you that, after the aerobics, she and her mother massage each other's body. While they are massaging each other's body, they manipulate each other's genitals.

Table 3.6.1: The Likelihood of Members of the Public telling someone about Incident 6

	Mike		Mary		Total	
Likely/Very Likely	67	60.9%	66	65.3%	133	63.0%
Unsure	35	31.8%	30	29.7%	65	30.8%
Unlikely/Very Unlikely	8	7.3%	5	5.0%	13	6.2%
Total	110		101		211	
No. of No Responses	4		1		5	

Pearson $\chi^2=0.70$, with 2 degrees of freedom, $p=0.70404$
which is not significant at the .05 level

Almost two-thirds of respondents indicated that it was likely that they would tell someone about incident 6. The gender of the victim did not make a statistically significant difference ($p>0.05$) to this. Incident 6 was the incident about which the greatest number of respondents are unsure.

Table 3.6.2: The Person/Agency most likely to be told about Incident 6

	Mike n=114		Mary n=102		Total n=216	
Outside Agency	47	41.2%	62	60.8%	109	50.5%
Child/Child's Family	37	32.5%	26	25.5%	63	29.2%
Respondent's Family/Friends	5	4.4%	2	2.0%	7	3.2%
Other	4	3.5%	2	2.0%	6	2.8%
Response is difficult to interpret	2	1.8%	3	2.9%	5	2.3%
"Don't know"	3	2.6%	1	1.0%	4	1.9%
Total	98	86.0%	96	94.1%	194	89.8%

Pearson $\chi^2=5.27$, with 2 degrees of freedom, $p=0.07189$
which is not significant at the .05 level

This test might not be robust, due to low cell counts

The statistical tests carried out on the above data included the first three categories cited in the table only (ie Outside Agency, Child/Child's Family and Respondent's Family/Friends). An explanation for this is given on page 89.

The person/agency that the public were most likely to tell about incident 6 is an outside agency. While just over half of the respondents were likely to approach an outside agency, almost one third are likely to approach the child's family/friends or the child him/herself. If the victim was Mike, then respondents were less likely to approach an outside agency and more likely to approach the child's family than if the victim was Mary. This difference, however, was not statistically significant ($p>0.05$).

SUMMARY OF THE LIKELIHOOD OF RESPONDENTS TELLING SOMEONE ABOUT INCIDENTS 1 TO 6

A table which summarises the results of the study of public perceptions can be found on page 102.

Likelihood of Incident being told about

As Table 3.7 shows, the likelihood of members of the public telling someone varied enormously between incidents: only 31.2% of respondents saying it was likely that they would tell about incident 1, and 98.6% saying they were likely to tell about incident 5. The difference in the likelihood of telling between incidents was statistically significant ($p < 0.00001$).

Table 3.7: Number of Public Respondents Likely/Very Likely to tell about each Incident compared with the number who were either Unsure or Unlikely/Very Unlikely to tell

	Number of Public Respondents Likely/Very Likely to tell		Number of Public Respondents either Unsure or Unlikely/Very Unlikely to tell	
Incident 1	67	31.2%	148	68.8%
Incident 2	206	96.3%	8	3.8%
Incident 3	130	61.6%	81	38.3%
Incident 4	163	76.2%	51	23.9%
Incident 5	210	98.6%	3	1.4%
Incident 6	133	63.0%	78	37.0%

Pearson $\chi^2=329.95$, with 5 degrees of freedom, $p=0.00000$
which is significant at the .00001 level

There was also considerable variation between incidents in the percentage of respondents who were unsure about whether they would tell anyone. Table 3.8 shows that 30.8% of respondents were unsure whether they would tell about incident 6 but only 1.4% were unsure about incident 5. The difference between incidents was statistically significant ($p < 0.00001$)

Table 3.8: Number of Public Respondents Unsure whether they would tell about each incident compared with the number who were Likely/Very Likely/Unlikely/Very Unlikely to tell

	Number of Public Respondents Unsure whether they would tell		Number of Public Respondents Likely/Very Likely/Unlikely/Very Unlikely to tell	
Incident 1	62	28.8%	153	71.2%
Incident 2	4	1.9%	210	98.2%
Incident 3	48	22.7%	163	77.2%
Incident 4	29	13.6%	185	86.5%
Incident 5	3	1.4%	210	98.6%
Incident 6	65	30.8%	146	69.2%

Pearson $\chi^2=130.82$, with 5 degrees of freedom, $p=0.00000$
which is significant at the .00001 level

The incidents about which the respondents were most likely to tell (ie incidents 5 and 2) were those which involved physical contact with someone who is not related to the child. Incidents involving physical contact between the child and a relation were less likely to be told about (ie incidents 4 and 6) and the incidents which were least likely to be told about were those where it was not clear whether physical contact had taken place (especially incident 1).

In three of the six incidents, the gender of the victim makes a statistically significant difference to the likelihood of someone being told about the incident. In incidents 1, 3 and 4 the incident was statistically more likely to be told about if the victim was a girl rather than a boy. The gender of the victim did not make a statistically significant difference in incidents 2, 5 and 6.

Person/Agency most likely to be told

The person/agency most likely to be told about four of the six incidents was the child's family/friends or the child him/herself. An outside agency was most likely to be approached about only two of the incidents. The gender of the victim did not make a statistically significant difference to the person/agency most likely to be told about any of the six incidents.

Table 3.9: Summary of Findings from Study of Members of the Public

Summary of Incident	Characteristics of Incident		Likelihood of Respondents Telling about each Incident			Gender of Child makes Statistical Difference? (p < 0.05)	Person /Agency most likely to be told about Incident
	Occurs inside or outside the family?	Physical contact is involved?	%age of Respondents Likely/Very Likely to tell	%age of Respondents who were Unsure	%age of Respondents Unlikely/Very Unlikely to tell		
1 Parent of opposite sex enters the bathroom while 14-year-old child is taking a bath	In	Unlikely	67 31.2%	62 28.8%	86 40.0%	Yes	Discuss with Child or Child's Family
2 Child is accosted by and forced to masturbate a 12-year-old boy who lives in the neighbourhood	Out	Yes	206 96.3%	4 1.9%	4 1.9%	No	Discuss with Child or Child's Family
3 15-year-old child shares a bed with parent of the opposite sex	In	Possibly	130 61.6%	48 22.7%	33 15.6%	Yes	Discuss with Child or Child's Family
4 Child is fondled by an older brother	In	Yes	163 76.2%	29 13.6%	22 10.3%	Yes	Discuss with Child or Child's Family
5 Child is "flashed at" while on a picnic. "Flasher" tells child to hold his penis	Out	Yes	210 98.6%	3 1.4%	-	No	Outside Agency
6 Child and parent of the same sex massage each other's bodies after physical exercise	In	Yes	133 63.0%	65 30.8%	13 6.2%	No	Outside Agency

(2) **THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF THE RESPONDENTS TELLING SOMEONE ABOUT EACH OF THE INCIDENTS**

This section is concerned with the characteristics of the members of the public who completed the questionnaire and the likelihood of the public telling about each incident. (As the study was primarily concerned with the views of the public, the professionals were not asked the same detailed, demographic questions as the public.)

The Gender of the Respondent

Table 3.10: Number of Male and Female Respondents likely to tell about each Incident

	Number of Male & Female Respondents Indicating that it was Likely/Very Likely they would tell about each Incident				Difference is Statistically Significant? (p<0.05)	Result of Test
	MALE n=71		FEMALE n=140			
Incident 1	20	28.6%	43	30.7%	No	Pearson $\chi^2=0.10$ with 1 df, p=0.74939
Incident 2	65	91.5%	136	98.6%	Yes	Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, p=0.01963
Incident 3	36	52.2%	90	65.7%	No	Pearson $\chi^2=3.53$ with 1 df, p=0.06023
Incident 4	48	67.6%	113	81.9%	Yes	Pearson $\chi^2=5.40$ with 1 df, p=0.02011
Incident 5	71	100.0%	135	97.8%	No	Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, p=0.55249
Incident 6	43	60.6%	88	64.7%	No	Pearson $\chi^2=0.34$ with 1 df, p=0.55723

Female respondents were more likely than male respondents to tell about five of the six incidents. However, the difference was only statistically significant (p<0.05) in two of the incidents (ie incidents 2 and 4).

The Age of the Respondent

Table 3.11: Likelihood of Younger and Older People telling about each Incident

	Number of Younger and Older Respondents Indicating that it was Likely/Very likely they would tell about each Incident				Difference is Statistically Significant? (p<0.05)	Result of Test
	<40 n=142		40+ n=71			
Incident 1	35	24.8%	29	40.8%	Yes	Pearson $\chi^2=5.75$ with 1 df, p=0.01647
Incident 2	135	96.4%	68	95.8%	No	Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, p=1.00000
Incident 3	76	55.1%	52	74.3%	Yes	Pearson $\chi^2=7.24$ with 1 df, p=0.00712
Incident 4	112	80.0%	50	70.4%	No	Pearson $\chi^2=2.42$ with 1 df, p=0.11952
Incident 5	138	97.9%	70	100.0%	No	Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, p=0.55237
Incident 6	91	65.5%	41	58.6%	No	Pearson $\chi^2=0.95$ with 1 df, p=0.32934

It would appear that, overall, the age of the respondent had no consistent effect on the likelihood of the respondent telling about each incident: respondents aged 40 and over were more likely than those aged under 40 to tell about three of the incidents and those under 40 years of age were more likely to tell about the other three incidents. However, the difference was significant in two incidents (ie incidents 1 and 3, where $p=0.01647$ and 0.00712 respectively) and in both of these incidents older people were more likely to tell than younger people.

Parental Status of the Respondent

Table 3.12: Number of Parents/Guardians and Non-Parents/Guardians likely to tell about each Incident

	Number of Parents/Guardians and Non-Parents/Guardians Indicating that it was Likely/Very Likely they would tell about each Incident				Difference is Statistically Significant ? (p<0.05)	Result of Test
	PARENTS/ GUARDIANS n=117		NON- PARENTS/ GUARDIANS n=95			
Incident 1	39	33.6%	25	26.3%	No	Pearson $\chi^2=1.32$ with 1 df, p=0.25080
Incident 2	113	96.6%	90	96.8%	No	Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, p=1.00000
Incident 3	78	68.4%	50	53.8%	Yes	Pearson $\chi^2=4.66$ with 1 df, p=0.03082
Incident 4	88	75.9%	73	77.7%	No	Pearson $\chi^2=0.09$ with 1 df, p=0.75942
Incident 5	116	100.0%	91	96.8%	No	Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, p=0.08810
Incident 6	72	62.6%	60	64.5%	No	Pearson $\chi^2=0.08$ with 1 df, p=0.77638

Overall, the parental status of the respondents made very little difference to the likelihood of the respondent telling someone about the incidents. However, in one incident (incident 3) parents/guardians were statistically more likely to tell than non-parents/guardians ($p=0.03082$).

Whether Respondent has an Occupational Awareness/Experience⁵ of CSA

Table 3.13: Number of Public Respondents With and Without an Occupational Awareness/Experience of CSA who are likely to tell about each Incident

	Number of Public Respondents With and Without an Occupational Awareness of CSA Indicating that it was Likely/Very Likely they would tell about the Incident				Difference is Statistically Significant? (p<0.05)	Result of Test
	OCCUPA- TIONAL AWARENESS n=49		NO OCCUPA- TIONAL AWARENESS n=142			
Incident 1	13	27.1%	51	31.7%	No	Pearson $\chi^2=0.37$ with 1 df, p=0.54449
Incident 2	49	100.0%	151	95.0%	No	Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, p=0.20239
Incident 3	33	70.2%	93	58.9%	No	Pearson $\chi^2=1.97$ with 1 df, p=0.16036
Incident 4	40	81.6%	120	75.5%	No	Pearson $\chi^2=0.80$ with 1 df, p=0.37082
Incident 5	49	100.0%	156	98.1%	No	Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, p=1.00000
Incident 6	38	77.6%	93	58.9%	Yes	Pearson $\chi^2=5.62$ with 1 df, p=0.01773

In 5 of the 6 incidents, respondents with some occupational experience/training in CSA were more likely to tell someone about the incident than respondents without such an experience. These differences were, however, only statistically significant in incident 6 (p=0.01773).

⁵ As was explained in a note in Chapter Two, the term "Occupational Awareness" has been used in this thesis to refer to occupations which are likely to involve some sort of training in CSA. (This would therefore include respondents in occupations such as Social Work - who are likely to have direct experiences of dealing with CSA, and respondents in occupations such as Teaching and Youth Work - who are likely to have received training in detecting possible signs of CSA.)

SUMMARY OF HOW THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS AFFECT THE LIKELIHOOD OF THE RESPONDENTS TELLING SOMEONE ABOUT EACH INCIDENT

Of the four variables discussed, the two which seemed to make the most consistent differences to the likelihood of members of the public telling someone about each incident were the gender and the occupation of the respondent. In five of the six incidents, female respondents were more likely to tell than male respondents. (In two of the incidents the differences were statistically significant.) Respondents who had some occupational awareness of CSA were more likely to tell about five of the incidents than respondents without such an awareness. (The difference was statistically significant in only one incident.) While it would appear that the respondent's age has a mixed result on the likelihood of the respondents telling about each incident, the parental status of the respondent seemed to make least difference to the likelihood of the respondent telling someone about each incident.

THE VIEWS OF THE PROFESSIONALS

While the primary focus of this study was public perceptions of CSA, it was decided (as is documented in Chapter Two) that it would be interesting if a small sample of professionals whose daily work is likely to involve dealing with possible cases of child sexual abuse could be included in the study. Chapter Two stressed the fact that, unfortunately, no direct comparisons can be made between the responses given by the public and those given by the professionals since both groups were answering a different set of questions: while members of the public were asked how *likely* it was that they themselves would tell someone about each of the six incidents, the professionals were asked how *important* they thought it was that the adult described in each of the vignettes told someone about what had allegedly happened.

Each of the six incidents will now be considered again, but this time the professionals' responses will be presented. (Since the professionals were not asked the same demographic questions as the public, there will not be a section which considers the characteristics of the professionals and how important they thought it was that someone was told about each incident.)

In view of the small number of professionals involved in the study (n=43), one has to be cautious about drawing any definite conclusions from the findings of this small survey.

INCIDENT 1

Table 3.14.1: How important Professionals think it is that someone is told about Incident 1

	John		Jane		Total	
Important/ Very Important	10	47.5%	21	95.5%	31	72.1%
Unsure	8	38.1%	1	4.5%	9	21.0%
Not Important/ Not Important at all	3	14.3%	0	-	3	7.0%
Total	21		22		43	

Pearson $\chi^2=12.22$, with 1 degree of freedom, $p=0.00047$
which is significant at the .0005 level

In order that statistical tests could be carried out on the above data, the three categories cited in the table were reduced to two categories (ie Important/Very Important and Unsure/Not Important/Not Important at all).

Incident 1 was the incident which, overall, the least number of the professional sample thought is important that the public tell someone about. It was the only incident in which the gender of the victim made a statistically significant difference ($p=0.00047$) to the importance given by the professionals to the incident being told about. While almost all professionals thought it was important that the public tell about this incident if the victim was Jane, less than half think someone should be told if the victim was John. Incident 1 was also the incident about which the greatest percentage of professionals were unsure.

Despite the fact that this was the incident about which the public were least likely to tell and the incident which the least number of professionals thought the public should tell someone about, there was a considerable discrepancy between the percentage of the public who were likely to tell about this incident and the percentage of professionals who thought that someone should be told. While less than a third of the public were likely to tell someone about this incident, nearly three-quarters of the professionals thought it was important that someone is told.

Table 3.14.2 The Person/Agency who Professionals think should be told about Incident 1⁶

	John n=21	Jane n=22	Total n=43
Outside Agency	3 14.3%	4 18.2%	7 16.3%
Child/Child's Family	17 81.0%	19 86.4%	36 83.7%
Respondent's Family/Friends	0 -	0 -	0 -
Other	0 -	0 -	0 -
Response is difficult to interpret	0 -	1 4.5%	1 2.3%
"Don't know"	0 -	0 -	0 -
Total	20 95.2%	24 109.1%	44 102.3%

Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, $p=1.00000$
which is not significant at the .05 level

The statistical tests carried out on the above data included the first two categories cited in the table only (ie-Outside Agency and Child/Child's Family). An explanation for this is given below.

The person/agency which the professionals thought it was most important that the public tell about this incident was the child's family/friends or the child him/herself. The gender of the victim did not make a statistically significant difference ($p>0.05$). In line with the views of the public, the professionals suggested that it was far more appropriate that the child's family be approached about this incident rather than an outside agency.

⁶ As was the case with the members of the public who took part in the main study, some of the professional respondents indicated that they would tell more than one person/agency about this and the other incidents described in the questionnaire. It is therefore possible that in this and other similar tables the number of responses will be greater than 216. Please note that the "total"s given at the foot of each table are not totals of the number of respondents likely to approach an agency/person about each incident but totals of the number of approaches likely to be made to all of the agencies/persons listed in the table.

The statistical tests carried out on the above data included the first two categories cited in the table only (ie Outside Agency and Child/Child's Family) since they included all the relevant data. While it was considered useful to include the other four categories in Table 3.14.2, they were not included in the statistical tests because they involved only a small number of respondents and, more importantly, because they did not specify a particular person/agency.

INCIDENT 2

Table 3.15.1: How important Professionals think it is that someone is told about Incident 2

	Greg		Gillian		Total	
Important/ Very Important	22	100.0%	21	100.0%	43	100.0%
Unsure	0	-	0	-	0	-
Not Important/ Not Important at all	0	-	0	-	0	-
Total	22		21		43	

It is not possible to run any statistical tests on the above data as no comparisons can be made

Incident 2 is one of three incidents in which all of the professionals (regardless of the gender of the victim) indicated that they thought it important that the public tell someone about.

This incident was important as there is considerable agreement between the public and the professionals that someone should be told.

Table 3.15.2: The Person/Agency who the Professionals think should be told Incident 2

	Greg n=22	Gillian n=21	Total n=43
Outside Agency	13 59.1%	19 90.5%	32 74.4%
Child/Child's Family	21 95.5%	14 66.7%	35 81.4%
Respondent's Family/Friends	0 -	0 -	0 -
Other	0 -	0 -	0 -
Response is difficult to interpret	0 -	1 4.8%	1 2.3%
"Don't know"	0 -	0 -	0 -
Total	34 154.5%	34 162.0%	68 158.1%

Pearson $\chi^2=2.51$, with 1 degree of freedom, $p=0.11308$
which is not significant at the .05 level

The statistical tests carried out on the above data included the first two categories cited in the table only (ie Outside Agency and Child/Child's Family). An explanation for this is given on page 110.

The person/agency which most professionals thought the public should tell about this incident is the child's family/friends or the child him/herself. However, almost 75% of all professionals indicated that they thought an outside agency should be approached about this incident. Table 3.15.2 would appear to suggest that, if the victim was Greg, the professionals thought it was less important that an approach be made to an outside agency and more important that the child's family be told than if the victim was Gillian. However, the difference was not statistically significant ($p>0.05$).

INCIDENT 3

Table 3.16.1: How important Professionals think it is that someone is told about Incident 3

	Neil		Nicola		Total	
Important/ Very Important	19	91.0%	20	90.5%	39	90.7%
Unsure	2	9.1%	2	9.5%	4	9.3%
Not Important/ Not Important at all	0	-	0	-	0	-
Total	21		22		43	

Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, $p=1.00000$
which is not significant at the .05 level

Over 90% of professionals thought that it is important that the public tell someone about this incident. The gender of the victim did not make a statistically significant difference ($p>0.05$) to this.

It would appear that there is some disagreement between a significant minority of the public and most professionals over incident 3. While more than 90% of the professionals thought it important that someone is told about this incident, less than two-thirds of the public indicated that it was likely that they would tell someone about it.

Table 3.16.2: The Person/Agency who the Professionals think should be told about Incident 3

	Neil n=21		Nicola n=22		Total n=43	
Outside Agency	8	38.1%	9	40.9%	17	39.5%
Child/Child's Family	13	61.9%	14	63.6%	27	62.8%
Respondent's Family/Friends	0	-	0	-	0	-
Other	0	-	0	-	0	-
Response is difficult to interpret	0	-	0	-	0	-
"Don't know"	0	-	0	-	0	-
Total	21	100.0%	23	104.5%	44	102.3%

Pearson $\chi^2=0.005$, with 1 degree of freedom, $p=0.94384$
which is not significant at the .05 level

The statistical tests carried out on the above data included the first two categories cited in the table only (ie Outside Agency and Child/Child's Family). An explanation for this is given on page 110.

The person/agency which most professionals indicated should be told about this incident were the child's family/friends or the child him/herself. However, almost 40% of professionals thought that an outside agency should be approached. The gender of the victim did not make a statistically significant difference ($p>0.05$) to who the professionals thought should be told about this incident.

INCIDENT 4

Table 3.17.1: How Important Professionals think it is that someone is told about Incident 4

	Alan		Ann		Total	
Important/ Very Important	22	100.0%	21	100.0%	43	100.0%
Unsure	0	-	0	-	0	-
Not Important/ Not Important at all	0	-	0	-	0	-
Total	22		21		43	

It is not possible to run any statistical tests on the above data as no comparisons can be made

Incident 4 is one of three incidents which all professionals thought was important that the public tell someone else about (regardless of the gender of the victim).

Table 3.17.2: The Person/Agency who the Professionals think should be told Incident 4

	Alan n=22		Ann n=21		Total n=43	
Outside Agency	6	27.3%	11	52.4%	17	39.5%
Child/Child's Family	8	36.4%	16	76.2%	24	55.8%
Respondent's Family/Friends	0	-	0	-	0	-
Other	0	-	0	-	0	-
Response is difficult to interpret	2	9.1%	1	4.8%	3	7.0%
"Don't know"	0	-	0	-	0	-
Total	16	72.7%	28	133.3%	44	102.3%

Pearson $\chi^2=0.02$, with 1 degree of freedom, $p=0.89622$
which is not significant at the .05 level

The statistical tests carried out on the above data included the first two categories cited in the table only (ie Outside Agency and Child/Child's Family). An explanation for this is given on page 110.

The person/agency which the professionals indicated that they thought it most important the public approach about this incident was the child's family/friends or the child him/herself. However, only 55.8% indicated this to be the case and 39.5% said that they thought that an outside agency should be approached. If the victim was Alan, then fewer professionals think it is important that the public approach an outside agency and/or the child's family than if the victim was Ann. These differences were, however, not statistically significant ($p>0.05$).

While both the public and the professionals indicated that the child's family should be approached about incident 4, it is clear that more professionals thought it was important that an outside agency be approached than did the public.

INCIDENT 5

Table 3.18.1: How Important Professionals think it is that someone is told about Incident 5

	Stephen		Susan		Total	
Important/ Very Important	21	100.0%	22	100.0%	43	100.0%
Unsure	0	-	0	-	0	-
Not Important/ Not Important at all	0	-	0	-	0	-
Total	21		22		43	

It is not possible to run any statistical tests on the above data as no comparisons can be made

Incident 5 is another of the three incidents which all of the professionals (regardless of the gender of the victim) thought it was important that the public tell someone about.

Table 3.18.2: The Person/Agency who the Professionals think should be told Incident 5

	Stephen n=21		Susan n=22		Total n=43	
Outside Agency	19	90.5%	21	95.5%	40	93.0%
Child/Child's Family	6	28.6%	11	50.0%	17	39.5%
Respondent's Family/Friends	0	-	0	-	0	-
Other	0	-	0	-	0	-
Response is difficult to interpret	0	-	0	-	0	-
"Don't know"	0	-	0	-	0	-
Total	25	119.0%	32	145.5%	57	132.6%

Pearson $\chi^2=0.72$, with 1 degree of freedom, $p=0.39555$
which is not significant at the .05 level

The statistical tests carried out on the above data included the first two categories cited in the table only (ie Outside Agency and Child/Child's Family). An explanation for this is given on page 110.

The professionals thought it was important that an outside agency be approached about this incident. Table 3.18.2 would suggest that, if the victim was male, the professionals thought it was less important that the child's family be told than if the victim is female. However, this difference was not statistically significant ($p>0.05$).

Incident 5 was particularly salient because the public and the professionals were in agreement about the importance of involving an outside agency.

INCIDENT 6

Table 3.19.1: How important Professionals think it is that someone is told Incident 6

	Mike		Mary		Total	
Important/ Very Important	21	95.5%	21	100.0%	42	97.7%
Unsure	1	4.5%	0	-	1	2.3%
Not Important/ Not Important at all	0	-	0	-	0	-
Total	22		21		43	

There are no statistical tests available which would give additional meaning to these data

Almost all of the professionals thought it was important that the public tell someone about incident 6. While all the professionals thought it important that the public tell someone about the incident if it involved Mary, one professional was unsure when the victim was Mike. This single exception was too small for statistical testing to be relevant.

Table 3.19.2: The Person/Agency who the Professionals think should be told Incident 6

	Mike n=22		Mary n=21		Total n=43	
Outside Agency	19	86.4%	18	85.7%	37	86.0%
Child/Child's Family	4	18.2%	6	28.6%	10	23.3%
Respondent's Family/Friends	0	-	0	-	0	-
Other	0	-	0	-	0	-
Response is difficult to interpret	0	-	0	-	0	-
"Don't know"	0	-	0	-	0	-
Total	23	104.5%	24	114.3%	47	109.3%

Fisher's exact test, two-tailed, $p=0.72379$
which is not significant at the .05 level

The statistical tests carried out on the above data included the first two categories cited in the table only (ie Outside Agency and Child/Child's Family). An explanation for this is given on page 110.

While the person/agency which the professionals thought it was most important that the public approach about incident 6 was an outside agency, a greater percentage of professionals think this was important than the percentage of the public who indicated that it was likely that they would actually tell an outside agency. The gender of the victim did not make a statistically significant difference ($p>0.05$) to the professionals' views about who should be approached about this incident.

SUMMARY OF HOW IMPORTANT THE PROFESSIONALS THINK IT IS THAT MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TELL SOMEONE ABOUT INCIDENTS 1 TO 6

The results of the study of professionals are summarised on the following page in Table 3.20.

The importance of the Incident being told about

There was some variability amongst professionals about how important they thought it was that someone else was told about each incident. While only 72.1% of professionals indicated that they thought it important that the public tell about incident 1, all professionals thought it important that the public tell about incidents 2, 4 and 5. There was, on the whole, considerably less unsureness about the likelihood of telling about each incident amongst the professionals than there was amongst the public. While 21.0% of professionals were unsure about incident 1, none were unsure about incidents 2, 4, and 5.

The only incident in which the gender of the victim made a statistically significant difference to the professionals' views was incident 1. The gender of the victim made no difference at all in incidents 2, 3, 4 and 5 and little difference in incident 6.

If the six incidents are ranked firstly in order of the likelihood of the public telling about each incident and then in order of the percentage of professionals who thought it was important that each incident is told about, the six incidents appear in a similar order in both lists. However, in some incidents there are considerable differences between the percentage of professionals who thought it was important that the public tell about the incident and the percentage of the public who are likely to tell.

Person/Agency most likely to be told

There was some agreement between the public and the professionals that the same four incidents should be brought to the attention of the child's family/friends or the child him/herself. However, the professionals believe it is more important that an outside agency be told than the public indicated they would tell. The difference may, of course, be a result of the two different versions of the questionnaire which were used with the professionals and the public. Just as the gender of the victim did not make a statistically significant difference to the agency/person most likely to be told about each incident by the public, the victim's gender did not make a statistically significant difference to the

person/agency which the professionals thought ought to be told about each of the six incidents.

Table 3.20: Summary of Findings from Study of Professionals

Summary of Incident	Characteristics of Incident		%age of Respondents who thought it was important that someone is told about each incident			Gender of Child makes Statistical Difference? (p<0.05)	Person /Agency most likely to be told about Incident
	Occurs inside or outside the family?	Physical contact Is Involved?	Important /Very Important	Unsure	Not Important /Not Important at all		
1 Parent of opposite sex enters the bathroom while 14-year-old child is taking a bath.	In	Unlikely	31 72.1%	9 21.0%	3 7.0%	Yes	Discuss with Child or Child's Family
2 Child is accosted by and forced to masturbate a 12-year-old boy who lives in the neighbourhood	Out	Yes	43 100.0%	-	-	*	Discuss with Child or Child's Family
3 15-year-old child shares a bed with parent of the opposite sex	In	Possibly	39 90.7%	4 9.3%	-	No	Discuss with Child or Child's Family
4 Child is fondled by an older brother	In	Yes	43 100.0%	-	-	*	Discuss with Child or Child's Family
5 Child is "flashed at" while on a picnic. "Flasher" tells child to hold his penis	Out	Yes	43 100.0%	-	-	*	Outside Agency
6 Child and parent of the same sex massage each other's bodies after physical exercise	In	Yes	42 97.7%	1 2.3%	-	+	Outside Agency

* It is not possible to run any statistical tests on these data as no comparisons can be made

+ There are no statistical tests available which would give additional meaning to the data

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER THREE

This chapter has reported on the findings of the two studies which were included in this research. It has reported the findings of both the prevalence study and the main study.

The main finding of the prevalence study was that possible abuse was reported by 7.5% of respondents. While 12% (n=22) of females reported possible abuse, only 2.5% (n=4) of males reported that they may have been abused. It would seem that the respondent's age and whether or not he/she was brought up in a family with a religious affiliation made most difference to the reporting of abuse. Many respondents did not tell anyone about the abuse at the time, and most did not come to regard their experiences as abuse until later. Males and females reported differences in their experiences of abuse in terms of the age when they were first abused, the difference in ages between the victim and the perpetrator and whether the abuse happened within or outside the child's home. Males were less likely to feel harmed by their experiences than females. All those who reported possible abuse were abused by males.

In the main study, the percentage of respondents likely to tell someone about each of the incidents varied considerably between incidents. In three of the incidents, the gender of the victim made a statistical difference to the likelihood of the incident being told about. In each of these three cases, the incident was more likely to be told about if it involved a girl rather than a boy. In four of the six incidents, the person/agency most likely to be told is the child's family/friends or the child him/herself. In all six incidents, the gender of the victim did not make a statistically significant difference to the person/agency most likely to be told about each incident. Although the incidents about which the public were most likely to tell were the same as those which the greatest percentage of professionals thought it was important that someone was told about, there were considerable differences between the percentage of professionals who thought it was important that someone was told and the percentage of the public who were likely to tell. In only one incident did the gender of the victim make a statistically significant difference to the professionals' views about the importance of the public telling someone about the incident. While there was some agreement between the public and the professionals that the same four incidents should be brought to the attention of the child's family/friends or the child him/herself, the professionals think that it is more important that an outside agency be involved than do the public. In all six incidents, the gender of the victim did not make a statistical difference to the agency/person who the professionals think should be told about each incident.

The implications of these findings will be discussed in the chapter which follows.

Chapter 4

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The research on which this thesis is based consisted of two studies. The first was a prevalence study of child sexual abuse amongst a sample of students attending colleges /universities in the Glasgow area. The study differed from most other prevalence studies in that it was conducted exclusively in Scotland. The second study (which became very much the main study) was an exploration of perceptions of child sexual abuse. It made use of a questionnaire which described six incidents (which might be viewed as sexual abuse) involving children and asked the respondents to indicate how likely it was that they would tell someone about each incident. While this study was especially interested in public perceptions of CSA, a small sample of professionals was also included in the research. A particular focus of the main study was the effect of the gender of the victim involved in a possible case of child sexual abuse on the likelihood of the respondents telling anyone else about the incidents. Like the prevalence study, the main study differed from most previous studies in that the research was carried out entirely in Scotland. The study found that the majority of respondents were likely to tell someone about five of the six incidents. It was also found that the gender of the child made a statistical difference to the likelihood of the respondents telling about three of the incidents. The person/agency most likely to be approached about four of the incidents was the child, the child's family or the respondent's family. The gender of the child involved in each incident did not make a statistically significant difference to the person/agency most likely to be told.

The purpose of this final chapter is to discuss the implications of the research. It will include some comparisons of the results of the present study with the findings of some previous studies which have explored perceptions of child abuse. However, before the results of the present study are discussed, the limitations of the research will be outlined.

The Limitations of the Study

There are a number of possible criticisms of this study. Perhaps the most important shortcoming is that the main study was based entirely on the use of vignettes. (For a discussion of the advantages and the disadvantages of using the vignette technique in social research, see Chapter Two.)

Of all the problems associated with the use of vignettes, the most important criticism in relation to the present study is the fact that it is impossible to know if the responses provided by the respondents are accurate representations of their behaviour in real life situations. It is possible that fewer (or more) respondents would tell about the incidents described in the questionnaire if they came upon similar situations in real life. There are three possible reasons why the responses given in the present study may not accurately represent real life behaviour. Firstly, it is possible that some of the respondents (either consciously or unconsciously) provided the responses which they thought the researcher wanted to hear. Secondly some of the respondents may have decided to supply answers which they considered to be socially respectable. A further reason why it is possible that the responses provided in the study are not representative of the respondents' behaviour in real life is that the respondents were aware of the topic being explored and were therefore likely to be sensitised to the issues involved. In the case of the present study, they may have interpreted the incidents described in the questionnaire as child sexual abuse because they knew that the study was about CSA. The question of whether respondents became sensitised to the issues being researched is one which is raised by Haugaard & Reppucci (1988) in their criticisms of Atteberry-Bennett (1987)'s study (see Chapter One for a summary of Atteberry-Bennett's work).

While it would be wrong to ignore the fact that we cannot be certain how accurately the responses given in the completed questionnaires represent the real life behaviour of the respondents, it is fair to say that some of the written comments provided by a number of the respondents would suggest that the respondents did spend some time carefully considering their choice of responses.

Of course, the question of how accurately the responses elicited by the vignettes represent the respondents' real life behaviour is not peculiar either to this study or to other studies which have used the vignette technique. It is also appropriate to question the success of more traditional questionnaires in accurately measuring the attitudes and behaviours of the respondents involved.

One method which would have allowed the present researcher to explore the extent to which the responses provided by the respondents represent their behaviour in real life situations would have been to conduct a series of in-depth interviews with a number of the respondents. These interviews would have enabled the researcher to question the respondents about their responses. In particular, the respondents could have been asked to explain their chosen responses. Unfortunately, due to the limited amount of time available for the present research to be carried out, it was necessary for the study to rely upon the quantitative data collected in the questionnaires.

A second possible criticism of the present study was that the sample was not representative of the general population. Chapter Two documented the attempts which were made by the researcher to ensure that the sample included males and females of different ages and socio-economic classes and it explained that there was an over-representation of females and middle class respondents in the final sample. Because of the sensitive nature of the topic being researched, it was decided that it would be almost impossible to gain access to a representative sample since it would be wrong to approach complete strangers and ask them about child sexual abuse without some sort of introduction. Even if resources were available to replicate the present study on a larger scale, some sort of filtering process would have to be involved in the selection of the sample. This filtering process would be likely to result in the final sample not being representative of the general population.

This next section will discuss some of the main findings of the research. Three questions will be addressed: Is there a consensus of opinion about what constitutes child sexual abuse? Is a possible case of CSA involving a boy likely to be treated less seriously than if the case involved a girl? Which agency/person is most likely to be told about a possible case of CSA?

Throughout the discussion which follows, the criticisms of the study which were outlined in the preceding pages should be borne in mind by the reader.

Is there a Consensus of Opinion about what constitutes Child Sexual Abuse?

Table 4.1, below, shows the percentage of the public sample who said it was likely that they would tell someone about each of the incidents and the characteristics of each incident. In the remainder of this chapter, it will be assumed that the incidents which the public are most likely to tell someone about are those which the public believe are most likely to involve CSA. In the same way it will be assumed that the professionals who think it is important that someone else is told about the incident believe that they should be told because the incident may involve sexual abuse.

The Public

Table 4.1: Number of Public Respondents likely to tell about each Incident and the characteristics of the Incidents

Incident Number	Number of Public Respondents likely to tell (n=216)	Description of Incident	Incident happens inside or outside the family	Age of young person involved	Older person is an adult
5	210 98.6%	Child is "flashed at" while on a picnic. "Flasher" tells child to hold his penis	Out	9	Yes
2	206 96.3%	Child is accosted by and forced to masturbate an older boy who lives in the neighbourhood	Out	8	No
4	163 76.2%	Child is fondled by an older brother	In	9	No
6	133 63.0%	Child and parent of the same sex massage each other's bodies after physical exercise	In	12	Yes
3	130 61.6%	15-year-old child shares a bed with parent of the opposite sex	In	15	Yes
1	67 31.2%	Parent of opposite sex has started to enter bathroom while 14-year-old child is in bath	In	14	Yes

Table 4.1 shows that the majority of respondents were likely to tell someone about all but one of the six incidents described in the questionnaire: over 60% of respondents indicated that they were likely to tell about five of the six incidents and more than 95% of respondents were likely to tell about two of the incidents. These findings are in keeping with the results of some previous research studies. For example, Finkelhor and Redfield (1984) found that their respondents also tended to view most of their vignettes as very sexually abusive. On a scale of one to ten, 60% of all their ratings were either an 8, 9 or 10 (Finkelhor and Redfield 1984). In her study of teachers' definitions of child abuse, Tite (1993) discovered that most teachers think of child abuse in much broader terms than those set down in legal definitions. Finally, Cruise et al (1994)'s exploration of children's perceptions of physical abuse revealed that the children rated most vignettes at the high end of a five-point seriousness scale.

While there would appear to be some consensus amongst the public about what constitutes child sexual abuse, it would seem that there is more consensus about some incidents than others. While virtually all respondents said that it was likely that they would tell someone about incident 5, only 61.6% indicated that it was likely that they would tell about incident 3. (Of course even fewer respondents, only one in three, said it was likely that they

would tell about incident 1.) This raises the question of why more respondents were likely to tell about some incidents.

Chapter One summarised some of the general findings from previous studies of public perceptions of child sexual abuse. There are clearly a number of similarities between the findings of these earlier studies and the results of the present study in terms of the behaviours involved in each incident and the incidents which are most likely to be told about. Previous research found that the situations which are most likely to be defined as "sexual abuse" are those which involve sexual intercourse (Finkelhor & Redfield 1984 and Atteberry-Bennett 1987). Incidents involving the fondling of the child's sex organs/touching genitals (Finkelhor & Redfield 1984 and Atteberry-Bennett 1987) and being exposed to an exhibitionist (Finkelhor & Redfield 1984) are also likely to be regarded as abusive. Wells & Willis' (1988) investigation of the factors which influence the reporting of incidents by police officers found that incidents involving mutual masturbation were viewed as "very serious" by over 70% of respondents.

While none of the incidents included in the present study involved sexual intercourse, the five incidents which more than 60% of respondents were likely to tell someone about involved elements of the other acts identified by previous research as likely to be identified as CSA. All five incidents involved either the child being exposed to an exhibitionist, the child's genitals being fondled or the child being forced to fondle the other person's genitals.

While it is important to consider the incidents which the respondents were most likely to tell someone about, it is also important to consider the incident about which the least number of respondents were likely to tell. One possible explanation why so few respondents were likely to tell about incident 1 is that it was the incident which was least likely to involve physical contact between the child and parent. While incident 3 (the second least likely incident to be told about) does not state that any physical contact did take place, it seems more likely that contact could take place in incident 3 (where the child and parent were sharing a bed) than in incident 1.

Table 4.1 shows that almost all respondents (98.6%) indicated that they were likely to tell about incident 5 and 96.3% were likely to tell about incident 2. This raises the question of why so many of the respondents were likely to tell about these two incidents. While there are a number of possible explanations (eg the act involved, the age of the child etc), one characteristic which differentiated incidents 5 and 2 from the other four incidents was that incidents 5 and 2 were the only two incidents to happen outside the child's family. This

would suggest that the public may be less likely to tell someone else about incidents which take place inside the family than those which happen outside the family.

Unfortunately, some of the previous studies which have explored perceptions of child abuse did not consider differences between incidents happening within and outwith the family. For example, Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis (1991) were only concerned with extrafamilial relationships. On the other hand, Willis and Wells (1988) concerned themselves only with intrafamilial incidents involving a parent and a child. However, Finkelhor & Redfield (1984) did test for differences in perceptions of incidents happening within and outwith the family. They found that, like the respondents of the present study, overall, their respondents did not rate incidents involving incestuous relationships as being particularly serious. While situations involving certain relationships (eg fathers and daughters) were considered more abusive than other situations involving two individuals who were not related to each other, the ratings for incestuous relationships, in general, were not especially high. Finkelhor & Redfield write:

.....people do not automatically place any sexual relationship involving a relative in a category of special seriousness. They may do so for some particular family relationships, such as father-daughter incest, but not for family relationships as a whole. Other factors about the sexual contact, the ages and sexes of participants, for example, outweigh and complicate the simple issue of whether or not it was incest.

(Finkelhor & Redfield 1984, p.118)

Finkelhor & Redfield argue that certain categories of incestuous sexual contact are ranked fairly low on the scale of abusiveness. They claim that some forms of non-incestuous sexual contact (eg between an adult neighbour and a young child) are viewed as more seriously abusive than many forms of incest (eg contact between similarly aged siblings).

While the literature suggests that CSA is more common outside the family than within it (eg Gillham 1991 and Saraga 1993), it is acknowledged that children can be sexually abused within the family. However, the evidence from both the present research and Finkelhor and Redfield (1984)'s study would suggest that the public is less likely to tell someone about a sexually abusive incident within a family. This would suggest that either the public do not like to admit that children can be sexually abused within the family, or they believe that such situations should be left for the family to deal with privately without any outside interference at all.

In addition to the nature of the act involved and whether or not the incident happened within the child's family, Finkelhor & Redfield (1984) discovered that two other characteristics of their vignettes made a difference to the likelihood of the incidents being perceived as sexual abuse.

Firstly, Finkelhor & Redfield (1984) found that the incidents used in their study were more likely to be viewed as abusive if the older person involved was an adult. Unfortunately, this finding cannot be compared directly with the present study because Finkelhor & Redfield altered the age of the perpetrator within vignettes and the age of the perpetrator only changes in the present study between vignettes. However, Table 4.1 suggests that whether or not the perpetrator was an adult may not have had a consistent effect in the present study. While the other person involved in incident 5 (ie the incident which the greatest percentage of respondents are likely to tell someone about) was an adult, the older person involved in incidents 2 and 4 (the second and third incidents most likely to be told about) was not an adult. However, because the present study did not vary the age of the perpetrator within vignettes it is not possible to say if the age of the perpetrator really did have an effect on the percentage of the public likely to tell about each incident or if it was other characteristics (such as the nature of the act involved) which influenced the respondents' decision about how likely it was that they would tell.

The second relationship which Finkelhor & Redfield discovered was that incidents involving victims who were either adolescents or young children were considered less abusive than those involving preadolescent victims. Atteberry-Bennett (1987) found a slightly simpler relationship between the age of the victim and the perceived abusiveness of the incident. He found that the older the child involved, the more abusive the situation was considered to be. Since the present study did not specifically test for the relationship between the age of the victim and the likelihood of the respondents telling about each incident, no definite conclusions can be made. While Table 4.1 does show that it was the incidents involving the younger children which were considered most abusive, it is impossible to say if the age of the child did influence the likelihood of the respondents telling about each incident or if other variables were more important.

Previous studies of public perceptions of CSA have found that female respondents are more likely than male respondents to view a situation as sexually abusive (Finkelhor & Redfield 1984 and Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis 1991). Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis (1991) discovered that the female respondents in their study not only rated the vignettes as more representative of CSA, but also rated the victims' responses as more characteristic of sexual abuse and the impact of the incident as more harmful for the victim. Of the six incidents used in the present study, female respondents were more

likely than male respondents to tell about five of the incidents (in the case of two incidents, the difference was statistically significant). A number of explanations are given in Chapter One as to why males appear to be less likely than females to label a situation as sexual abuse.

In line with the findings of previous studies, the majority of respondents in the present study indicated that they were likely to tell about most incidents: they were most likely to tell about incidents in which a child was exposed to an exhibitionist or incidents which involved the child's genitals being fondled or the child being forced to touch someone else's genitals. This would suggest that there is a consensus amongst most members of the public concerning the types of behaviours which are considered sexually abusive. It would appear that the respondents were more likely to tell about an incident which happened outside a family than they were about a situation within the family. In the present study, the incidents which were most likely to be told about were those which involved younger victims and whether or not the perpetrator was an adult would seem not to have a consistent effect on the likelihood of the incident being told about. However, since the age of the victim and the perpetrator were not specifically tested for in this study, it is important to remember that any findings in relation to them must be treated with extreme caution since it is possible that other variables were viewed as more important in terms of defining each incident as sexual abuse. The present study found that male respondents are less likely than female respondents to define a situation as abusive. This finding is in line with the findings of previous research.

The Professionals

Table 4.2: Number of Professionals who thought it is important that someone is told about each Incident, Number of Public Respondents likely to tell about each Incident and the characteristics of the Incidents

Incident Number	Number of Professionals who thought it is important that someone is told about each incident (n=43)	Number of Public Respondents likely to tell (n=216)	Description of Incident
5	43 100.0%	210 98.6%	Child is "flashed at" while on a picnic. "Flasher" tells child to hold his penis
2	43 100.0%	206 96.3%	Child is accosted by and forced to masturbate an older boy who lives in the neighbourhood
4	43 100.0%	163 76.2%	Child is fondled by an older brother
6	42 97.7%	133 63.0%	Child and parent of the same sex massage each other's bodies after physical exercise
3	39 90.7%	130 61.6%	15-year-old child shares a bed with parent of the opposite sex
1	31 72.1%	67 31.2%	Parent of opposite sex has started to enter bathroom while 14-year-old child is in bath

When considering the views of the professionals, it is important to remember that the questionnaire which was completed by the professionals was not identical to the questionnaire which used with the public (see Chapter Two). Any comparisons between public and professional responses must therefore be made with considerable caution. Since the professionals were asked about other people's behaviour, it is possible that their responses would have been more realistic than those of the public (who were asked about their own behaviour). Because the public were asked about their own behaviour, it is possible that they were more concerned with playing the role of the "good citizen" than providing accurate indications of their own behaviour. If any of the public respondents did indeed adopt the role of the "good citizen", then it is probable that the level of intervention they claim is higher than it would be in real life.

While extreme caution must be exercised if comparing views of the professionals and the public it is possible to compare the responses of the professionals between the six incidents. As Table 4.2 shows, there would appear to be considerable agreement amongst professionals about how important it was that someone was told about each incident. This

would suggest that there is much agreement amongst professionals about what constitutes child sexual abuse. Indeed, in three incidents all professionals indicated that they thought it important that someone else was told about the incidents. Over 90% of professionals said that it was important that someone else is told about another two of the incidents. The incident which the professionals viewed as being least serious was incident 1.

For the professionals, there seems to be a consensus about any incident which involves physical contact whether that contact is with a relative or a non-relative of the child. It would appear that professionals make little distinction between incidents which occur within and outwith the family. This would suggest that professionals are willing to acknowledge that children can be sexually abused within the family.

The Public and the Professionals compared

Because of the differences between the questionnaires which were completed by the public and the professionals, it was never intended that a direct statistical comparison could be made between the responses elicited from the two groups. Rather, it was hoped that the comparison would yield some general impressions. The overriding impression is that while the incidents which professionals thought it was most important that someone was told about were the same incidents as those which the public were most likely to tell someone about, the professionals seem more likely to assume that an incident involves child sexual abuse than are members of the public. This finding is interesting, given that one previous study (Giovannoni and Becerra 1979) which compared the views of child mistreatment held by professionals and members of the public found that the lay respondents were less likely than the professionals to regard incidents as abusive.

It is acknowledged that this difference between professionals and public perceptions may simply be a result of the two different questionnaires which were used. However, there are a number of other possible explanations.

One possibility would be that the professionals have become so sensitised to child sexual abuse that they see CSA in situations which are not, in the view of the general public, abusive. A second possible explanation why professionals appear to think it is so important that someone else is told about each of the six incidents is that, as professionals, the "buck" ultimately stops with them. Failure to take action on a possible case of CSA which later turns out to be something more serious could result in the professional as an individual, or his/her profession as a whole, being severely criticised. (Of course, over-reaction to possible cases of abuse can also result in professionals being heavily criticised.

eg Cleveland and Orkney.) A further possible explanation why so many professionals seem to think it is important that someone is told about each of the incident is professional aggrandisement. It may be that professionals believe that they need to justify the role of their own profession in society by finding cases of CSA for their profession to deal with.

Because of the differences between the questionnaires used with the professionals and the public, it would be wrong to attribute too much to this finding. However, it would appear that professionals may be more ready to define a situation as child sexual abuse than the public. (Of course, while professionals do appear to be more ready to label a situation as CSA, it is important to remember that over half the public indicated that it was likely that they would take action in 5 out of the 6 incidents.)

Does the gender of the young person involved in a possible case of CSA make a difference to the likelihood of the Incident being told about?

While there was some interest in ascertaining whether there is a consensus of opinion about what constitutes CSA and which person/agency was most likely to be told about a possible case of CSA, one of the main aims of this research was to investigate whether the gender of the young person involved in an incident made any difference to the likelihood of any further action being taken. It was hypothesised that a possible case of CSA involving a boy was likely to be treated less seriously than the same incident if it involved a girl, and Chapter One outlined a number of possible reasons why this might be the case. It is to this issue that attention is now turned.

Table 4.3: Whether the Gender of the Victim makes a Statistical Difference to the Incident being told about, Number of Public Respondents likely to tell about each Incident and the Characteristics of the Incidents

Incident Number	Incident is statistically* less likely to be told about by the public if victim is male	Number of Public Respondents likely to tell (n=216)	Incident happens inside or outside child's family?	Incident involves a parent of the opposite sex to the child	Incident involves physical contact?
5	No	210 98.6%	Out	No	Yes
2	No	206 96.3%	Out	No	Yes
4	Yes	163 76.2%	In	No	Yes
6	No	133 63.0%	In	No	Yes
3	Yes	130 61.6%	In	Yes	Possibly
1	Yes	67 31.2%	In	Yes	Unlikely

* Chi-square was used to test for statistical significance. (Values for χ^2 , p and degrees of freedom are reported in the tables included in Chapter 3.)

Table 4.3 shows that, in three of the six incidents used in the present research, the public respondents were statistically less likely to tell someone else about the incident if the victim was a boy rather than a girl.

This raises the question of why this statistical difference is present in only three of the incidents. One common characteristic of the three incidents where the statistical difference is present, is that they all involve someone else who is related to the child. In two incidents the other person is the boy's mother and in the third incident the perpetrator is an older brother. In Chapter One it was suggested that a possible case of CSA might be ignored if the perpetrator is a woman or another juvenile. The suggestion that the effects of an incident are likely to be minimised if the incident involves a boy's mother is supported by this research, since the gender difference is present in the two cases which involve a boy and his mother. The suggestion that the effect will be similarly minimised if the perpetrator is another juvenile is not supported quite so convincingly, since the gender difference is not present in incident 2 which involves an older boy.

There would appear to be some relationship between the existence of the gender difference and the perceived seriousness of the incident, since two of the incidents in which the gender difference is present are the incidents which the respondents are least likely to tell someone about. The same two incidents are also those where it is not clear if there has been any physical contact between the child and the other person involved.

It would seem that a possible case of CSA involving a boy is likely to be treated less seriously than if the incident involved a girl if it is not clear whether physical contact has taken place or if the incident is believed to be of a relatively less serious nature. However, the variable which seems to indicate that the incident will definitely be treated less seriously is if the incident involves the boy's mother.

Previous research has explored the perceived seriousness of different victim-perpetrator gender combinations. Finkelhor & Redfield (1984)'s study showed that the most abusive incidents were those involving male perpetrators and a female victims. Atteberry-Bennett (1987) found that incidents involving fathers and daughters were rated as being more abusive than the same acts involving mothers and sons. In their reviews of Atteberry-Bennett's study, Haugaard & Reppucci write:

.....a mother touching a five- or ten-year-old son's genitals was rated as less abusive than the same act involving a father and daughter. Such results suggest that mothers may be allowed more leeway in what is recognized as acceptable behavior than fathers, possibly because of mothers' caretaker role.

(Haugaard & Reppucci 1988, p.26)

Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis (1991)'s study showed that interactions between male victims and female perpetrators were viewed as less representative of CSA and less harmful for the victim than other victim-perpetrator combinations.

As has been noted above, two of the incidents used in the present study involve a child and a parent of the opposite sex and in both of these situations the gender of the child makes a statistical difference to the likelihood of the incidents being reported/told about. Clearly this finding would support the findings of earlier studies which suggest that an incident involving a father and daughter is more likely to be construed as sexual abuse than a similar incident involving a mother and son.

The Professionals

In Chapter One it was suggested that professionals, like members of the general public, were likely to treat possible cases of CSA differently depending upon the gender of the young person involved. Indeed, Black and DeBlassie (1993) argue that professionals are 'no more immune to the effects of socialization than are the victims and their families'. Black & DeBlassie go on:

Helpers must not only become aware of their own biases, but also the interplay of their biases and those exerted by societal denial on both victims and their families in the domain of sexuality - especially in regard to male sex role identity.

(Black & DeBlassie 1993, p.129)

Black and DeBlassie are certainly not alone in their belief that professionals make decisions about possible cases of CSA based on their own personal biases and assumptions.

Before the main study used in the present research was carried out, data was obtained from the Child Protection Register for Strathclyde Social Work Department to find out the percentage of referrals of suspected child sexual abuse which became registered cases. If professionals do treat possible cases of CSA involving boys less seriously than those involving girls, then one would expect that cases referred to the Social Work Department involving boys would be less likely to become registered than those involving girls. The number of referrals made in 1992-1994 which became Registered Cases is shown in table 4.4, below.

Table 4.4: Number of Referrals made in 1992-94 to Strathclyde Region's Social Work Department which became Registered Cases in their Respective Years

	Female	Male	Total
1992	66	24	90
1993	89	54	143
1994	39	19	58

While there are indeed more girls than boys on the Child Protection Register for each of the three years included in the table, the differences are not nearly as great as might be expected given the difference in prevalence rates (1 in 3 girls and 1 in 6 boys [Gillham 1991]). A similar picture can be seen when a comparison is made of the number of boys and girls registered as having telephoned ChildLine with the main problem being sexual abuse. In November 1993 (ChildLine 1993), 235 (65.83%) girls and 122 (34.17%) boys were registered by ChildLine as having telephoned for help because they were being sexually abused. Finally, the number of girls and boys under the age of 16 being counselled for CSA in one office of the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in March 1990 was 24 and 22 respectively (RSSPCC 1990). Clearly, these three sets of figures would suggest that the literature is wrong to argue that professionals employ personal prejudices and assumptions in relation to gender when making decisions about possible cases of CSA. The evidence from these three set of figures is that professionals are just as willing to recognise a possible case of CSA if the victim is a boy than if the victim is a girl. Indeed, in relation to prevalence rates, professionals seem more likely to refer boys.

Table 4.5, on the following page, shows that the gender of the victim only made a statistical difference to whether or not the professionals thought it important that the incident be told about in only one (incident 1) of the six incidents used in the present study. (However, it is important to remember that only a relatively small number of professionals, n=43, took part in this study.)

Table 4.5: Whether the Gender of the Victim makes a Statistical Difference to the Incident being told about and the Number of Professionals who think it is important that someone else is told about each Incident

Incident Number	Professionals thought it was statistically* more important that Incident was told about if victim is male	Number of Professionals who thought it was important that someone was told about each Incident (n=43)	Incident happens inside or outside child's family?	Incident involves a parent of the opposite sex to the child	Incident involves physical contact?
5	+	43 100.0%	Out	No	Yes
2	+	43 100.0%	Out	No	Yes
4	+	43 100.0%	In	No	Yes
6	++	42 97.7%	In	No	Yes
3	No	39 90.7%	In	Yes	Possibly
1	Yes	31 72.1%	In	Yes	Unlikely

* Chi-square was used to test for statistical significance. (Values for χ^2 , p and degrees of freedom are reported in the tables included in Chapter 3.)

+ It is not possible to run any statistical test on these data as no comparisons can be made

++ There are no statistical tests available which would give additional meaning to the data

Although the professionals indicated that it was statistically more important that someone was told about incident 1 if the victim is a boy rather than a girl, overall it would appear (despite what the literature would say) that the gender of the victim makes very little difference to whether the professionals are likely to regard an incident as sexual abuse. So the present study provides further evidence that professionals do not allow personal biases in this respect to influence their judgements about possible cases of CSA.

(Again it is important to remember that the questionnaire which was used with the professionals was different from the questionnaire which the public completed. Because the question which was put to the professionals was about other people's behaviour, it is likely that, overall, they would indicate that it was more important that someone was told about each incident than the public said it was likely that they would tell. If levels of reporting were higher overall, then there would be less scope for gender differences.)

One possible explanation for the discrepancy between the claims made in the literature and the evidence found in this and other research is that in the last few years attitudes of

professionals have undergone radical change. The fact that the study found that the gender of the child made a difference to the likelihood of the public telling about three of the incidents would suggest that public attitudes have also changed in the last few years. However, it would seem that public attitudes have not changed to the same extent as the attitudes of professions.

Which agency/person is most likely to be told about a possible case of CSA?

Table 4.6: Person/Agency most likely to be told about each Incident by the Public and Person/Agency who Professionals think should be told about each Incident

Incident Number	Description of Incident	Number of Public likely to tell (n=216)	Person or Agency most likely to be told about Incident by Public	Number of Professionals who thought it important that someone is told (n=43)	Person or Agency who Professionals thought should be told about Incident
5	Child is "flashed at" while on a picnic. "Flasher" tells child to hold his penis	210 98.6%	Outside Agency	43 100.0%	Outside Agency
2	Child is accosted by and forced to masturbate an older boy who lives in the neighbourhood	206 96.3%	Child/Child's Family	43 100.0%	Child/Child's Family
4	Child is fondled by an older brother	163 76.2%	Child/Child's Family	43 100.0%	Child/Child's Family
6	Child and parent of the same sex massage each other's bodies after physical exercise	133 63.0%	Outside Agency	42 97.7%	Outside Agency
3	15-year-old child shares a bed with parent of the opposite sex	130 61.6%	Child/Child's Family	39 90.7%	Child/Child's Family
1	Parent of opposite sex has started to enter bathroom while 14-year-old child is in bath	67 31.2%	Child/Child's Family	31 72.1%	Child/Child's Family

In four of the six incidents, members of the public and professionals agree that the most appropriate agency/person to be approached is the child's family/friends or the child

him/herself. It would appear that, on the whole, professionals suggest that it is more important that the public approach an outside agency than the public indicate that they would actually do, but in these four cases the professionals still believe that the child's family is the most appropriate agency to be approached. (Once again it is important to remember that the professionals were commenting on the behaviour of others and not themselves. It is therefore possible that they were more likely to indicate that an outside agency should be involved.)

One might well ask what it is about incidents 5 and 6 that, unlike the other four incidents, they are likely to be reported to an outside agency. While both of these incidents involve physical contact, incident 6 involves the child's parent and incident 5 involves a stranger. It might be assumed that there is an association between the appropriateness of approaching an outside agency and the perceived seriousness of the incident. However, while incident 5 is the incident which the public and the professionals agree is the most serious, the second most serious incident (incident number 2) is not likely to be reported to an outside agency.

The fact that four of the incidents are most likely to be brought to the attention of the child's family is particularly interesting, given the number of agencies (statutory, voluntary and private) presently offering support to victims of child sexual abuse. Clearly, whatever changes may be happening in relation to the role of the family in society today, it would appear that the family is still seen as the major provider of support.

Of course, while one of the main findings of this study was that the most likely person/agency to be told about each incident was the child's family, it is not clear exactly what the respondents mean when they said that they would approach the child's family. For example, did the respondents think that the incident was private and should be kept within the child's family or did the respondents plan to approach the child's family in the anticipation that the child's family would involve an outside agency? Did the respondents intend to approach an outside agency themselves after they had informed the child's family? A similar limitation of the study relates to those respondents who indicated that they would speak with their own family or friends about the situation. Did the respondents intend to inform someone else after the discussions with their partners etc? One of the limitations of this research which was identified as the beginning of this Chapter was that the study was based entirely on written responses to a series of vignettes. Had the vignettes been complimented by some qualitative interviews, then the respondents could have been asked why they intended to approach either the child's family or members of their own families and whether they planned any further action.

Neither Finkelhor & Redfield (1984) nor Broussard, Wager & Kazelskis (1991) asked their respondents who it was that they would approach about the incidents described in their studies. However, Atteberry-Bennett (1987) did explore possible intervention strategies. He asked his respondents to rate eight possible intervention strategies on a five-point scale which ranged from "definitely would not recommend" to "definitely would recommend". The intervention strategies included family therapy, investigation by a child protective service agency and prosecution of the adult in court. Atteberry-Bennett found that there was complete agreement amongst respondents that some intervention was necessary when the act involved was sexual intercourse. He also found a high level of agreement when the act involved touching genitals or photographing the child in the nude. While none of the incidents used in the present study involved either sexual intercourse or the child being photographed in the nude, five of the incidents did involve either the child touching someone else's genitals or the other person touching the child's genitals. However, the respondents indicated that they were most likely to approach the child's family about three of these five incidents. In common with the findings of the present study, Atteberry-Bennett found that protective service workers were most in favour of referrals to child protection service agencies for investigation, while parents were least in favour of this method of intervention. Atteberry-Bennett's study showed that no group was highly in favour of removing the child from the home. (He found that parents were less opposed to removing the child from the home than the professional groups were.)

In line with the findings from the present research, Tite (1993)'s investigation of teachers' definitions of child abuse found that some teachers preferred less formal intervention strategies. These strategies included monitoring the child's situation and behaviour, consulting with colleagues and discussions with parents. Tite found that a number of teachers even provided personal care for their pupils themselves.

Conclusions

There are a number of conclusions which can be drawn from this research. Firstly, if the views of the sample are representative of the general public, then the public is more willing to recognise possible cases of child abuse than the reaction to events in Cleveland and Orkney would suggest. However, it would seem that some situations are more likely to be viewed as abuse than others. Incidents involving physical contact are most likely to be labelled as CSA by both the public and the professionals, although it would appear that the public are less willing to label a situation as abuse if it happens within rather than

outwith the child's family. It would seem that more professionals are ready to define an incident as sexual abuse than are members of the public, but because of differences in the questionnaires used in the two surveys this finding has to be viewed with considerable caution. A further conclusion is that both the public and the professionals suggest that the most appropriate person/agency to be told about most incidents is the child's family/friends and not an official agency. Finally, while there is some evidence that the public is likely to treat a possible case of CSA involving a boy less seriously than if the incident involved a girl, the gender of the victim appears to make little difference to the attitude of the professionals.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This final section will consider some of the possible implications of the research. Consideration will be given to the implications for policy and practice, theory and future research.

Implications for Policy & Practice

Perhaps the most important finding from this research is the considerable consensus of opinion found amongst members of the public about the sorts of incidents which require further action as they may involve child sexual abuse. (However, it is important to bear in mind that the responses given by some of the respondents may not be an accurate reflection of their real life behaviour. It is possible that fewer respondents would have told someone about the incidents described in the questionnaire in real life. Of course, it is equally possible that more respondents would have told in real life situations.) Although the percentage of respondents who were likely to tell someone about each incident varied considerably between incidents, the overall impression was that the majority of the public were likely to tell someone about all but one of the incidents. This finding is important because, while it is in line with the results of earlier research, the present study differed from previous studies in that it was carried out in Scotland and not the USA. Although the survey of professionals would suggest that professionals may be more inclined than members of the public to view a situation as sexually abusive, it would appear from this research that the views of the professionals are not as far out of line as the media has portrayed in recent years. If it is assumed that the public were likely to tell someone about the incidents described in the questionnaire because they suspected that CSA may be

involved, then clearly the professionals can proceed in the knowledge that, in general, the public are likely to be in support of their work.

Throughout this thesis much attention has been paid to the fact that, because two slightly different questionnaires were used, it is hazardous to make any exact comparisons between the views expressed by the professionals and the public. However, a strong impression which emerged from the study was that, while the public seem to make a distinction between incidents which happen within or outwith the family, professionals do not make such a distinction. The differences between the readiness of the public and professionals to label an incident which happens within a family as CSA raises the question of who is right? Is the public either "turning a blind eye" and simply failing to recognise certain potential cases of CSA or are the professionals being over-protective of children and looking for cases of abuse which simply do not exist? Are members of the public too trusting of parents and other relatives or do professionals need to learn that parents may wish to have physical contact with their children which is perfectly innocent and does not involve some hidden motive such as their sexual gratification?

Should members of the public be taught that some awful things can happen to children within the family? Is there a need for the public to be trained in the recognition of signs of possible abuse? Or do professionals need to learn that child sexual abuse is not as great a problem as they presently seem to believe? Should professionals be trained not to over-react to what might well be innocent situations?

The results of the present research would suggest that the public's attention should be drawn to the fact that children can be abused in situations in which they currently regard as unlikely (eg within the family). However, this should be done in such a way as not to cause concern or to bring about the result of adults being afraid to have any contact with their children lest their actions be misinterpreted.

In chapter one it was hypothesised that a possible case of CSA involving a boy victim would be treated less seriously than if it involved a girl. On the basis of the literature reviewed in chapter one, it was thought that the research would prove that both the public and professionals need to be made aware that a boy can be just as easily sexually abused as a girl. However, from the main study it would appear that the literature is wrong since the reality is that the gender of the victim makes no such difference to the attitudes of professionals and it only makes a difference to the attitudes of the public in certain situations. Generally speaking, it would seem that it is only in the less serious incidents that the gender of the victim makes a difference to the likelihood of the public telling. Therefore, while it would seem that the public do need to be alerted to the fact that they

should not minimise the seriousness of a possible case of CSA because the victim is a boy, it would appear that they do not need to be made aware of this to the extent that it was originally thought might be necessary.

Previous research (Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis 1991) has argued the need for educational programmes in the USA which emphasise that boys can be sexually abused and that they appear to suffer the same psychological trauma as females. The present research would suggest that there is still a need for such programmes in Britain. Dhooper, Royse & Wolfe (1991) have claimed that more general child abuse education programmes are needed. Their research found that the public is willing to pay for prevention programmes. They suggest that formal and informal education programmes should be introduced which are:

.....aimed at increasing the public's concern and responsibility regarding child abuse, improving its understanding of how cases of abuse are generally dealt with, and addressing its indifference and fear of getting involved.'

(Dhooper, Royse & Wolfe 1991 pp.43-44)

Implications for Theory

Chapter one introduced the social constructionist argument that the concept of child sexual abuse has been constructed by our society - that CSA has only become a problem in recent years because of the way in which our society has thought and talked about it. Certainly, there was evidence in both the prevalence study and the main study which could be used to support the social constructionist argument.

The majority of the respondents in the prevalence study reported that they had not regarded their experiences as CSA until some time after the abuse. Chapter Three included a number of explanations which had been given by the respondents as to why they had not told anyone about their experiences at the time. It was clear that it is only in recent years that some respondents have come to label their experiences as abuse. While this could have been because the respondents were too young at the time to realise that what was happening to them was abuse, it might be that they have only come to define their experiences of abuse because of the attention which society has given to CSA in recent years. Further evidence found in the prevalence study for the social constructionist argument is that many of the responses given by those who claimed that they have been

abused appeared to have been heavily scripted, in the sense that most respondents tended to provide the same, standard answers.

The degree of consensus which was found amongst both the public and the professionals in the main study could also be used in support of the social constructionist argument. Social constructionists would argue that it is society's present concern with CSA which led so many of the respondents in the main study to interpret the incidents described in the questionnaire in terms of child sexual abuse. It would be interesting to know if such a high degree of agreement would be found amongst respondents if the study was repeated in perhaps 5 or 10 years time. Will society be as concerned with CSA in future years, or has interest in CSA reached an all time high?

It could be argued that the apparent discrepancy between the view taken in the literature about the ignoring of possible cases of CSA because of the gender of the victim and the findings of the present research supports the social constructionist argument. While the literature suggests that the public are likely to ignore a possible case of CSA if the victim is a boy, the research demonstrated that in certain incidents this is not always the case. Social constructionists might argue that, in the short space of time since the literature reviewed in this thesis was written, society has come to accept that it is possible for boys to be sexually abused.

Chapter One outlined a number of theoretical perspectives which have been developed to explain why children are sexually abused. One of these perspectives is the feminist account. As Chapter One states, the feminist approach explains CSA in terms of the inequalities of power which exist between men, women and children. Saraga (1993) claims that males are encouraged to express their sexuality in terms of power, domination and control. She writes that boys.....

.....learn to objectify women and girls, and to view their sexuality as something powerful that can be used to dominate, to compensate for feelings of powerlessness, or to express anger. Boys have to make sense of their sexuality within the context of ideologies of childhood, femininity and masculinity which legitimate and encourage these feelings.

(Saraga 1993, p.70)

While incidents of CSA involving a male perpetrator and a female victim could certainly be explained by the more extreme feminist accounts as examples of males using their power to abuse females, it would be difficult to explain incidents in which it is a boy who is abused or a woman who is the abuser in terms of extreme feminism. Yet previous

research (eg Kelly, Regan & Burton 1991 or any of the prevalence studies cited in Chapter One which included male samples) has clearly shown that boys can be sexually abused and the present study found that the public were willing to recognise a possible case of CSA in which the victim was male (although, admittedly, they were more willing to label a situation as "sexual abuse" if the victim was female). The present study also found that some of the public were willing to endorse cases of abuse where the perpetrator was a woman and previous studies (eg Kelly, Regan & Burton 1991) have found that women do sexually abuse children. The question which arises from this is how appropriate is it to apply the feminist explanation to these situations? There are different versions of the feminist perspective: less extreme accounts explain CSA in terms of the abuse of power and are not as concerned as the more extreme accounts are with the gender imbalance. Certainly, in all six incidents used in the present study the perpetrator was in a position of power over the child: all perpetrators were older than their victims (some more so than other) and a number were in a position of authority over the child (eg parent). It would therefore seem appropriate to explain the incidents in which the victim was a boy and/or the perpetrator a woman in terms of the perpetrator using his/her power over the victim to encourage him/her to take part in the act involved.

Implications for Future Research

Perhaps one of the main lessons to be learned from this research is the value of the vignette technique in social research. While it is acknowledged that the use of the technique can be problematic (see Chapter Two and the beginning of the present Chapter), the main study clearly demonstrated that vignettes can be used successfully to explore issues of an extremely sensitive nature which would be difficult to investigate using more traditional research methods. The use of the technique should not, however, be rushed into, since it is essential that careful consideration be given to the construction of the vignettes (eg in terms of the wording of the vignettes and the order in which they are presented to the respondent). The success of the present research was, in part, a result of the time and effort which had been invested in the construction of the vignettes which were used in the study.

Although a number of previous studies have been carried out into public perceptions of child sexual abuse, nearly all were conducted in the USA. A number of the findings of the present study were in line with the results of those studies. For example, previous studies have also found that the majority of their respondents have viewed most of incidents used in their studies as abuse (eg Finkelhor & Redfield 1984 and Cruise et al 1994) and there are certain acts which the respondents of a number of studies have viewed

as abusive (eg sexual intercourse and fondling the child's sex organs/touching genitals, Finkelhor & Redfield 1984 and Atteberry-Bennett 1987). A third finding from the present research which is in common with the findings of previous studies is that male respondents are less likely than female respondents to label as situation as "sexual abuse" (Finkelhor & Redfield 1984 and Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis 1991). A final result of previous research which was endorsed by the present research is that the public are less likely to view a situation involving a female perpetrator and a male victim as abuse than an incident involving a male perpetrator and a female victim (Atteberry-Bennett 1987, Broussard, Wagner & Kazelskis 1991 and Finkelhor & Redfield 1984).

One of the findings of previous research (Finkelhor & Redfield 1984) which was endorsed by the present study is that the public appear to be less likely to take action over certain incidents involving a child and a relative of the child than an incident which involves a child and a stranger. This issue could be explored further in a future study by using two sets of vignettes not unlike those used in the present study. However, instead of varying the gender of the victim between versions of the vignettes, the relationship between the child and the other person involved could be varied. So while one version of the questionnaire might describe an incident involving the child's parent, the other version would describe the same incident but involve an adult who was not related to the child.

Finkelhor & Redfield (1984) discovered that the incidents which they used in their study were likely to be viewed as abusive if the older person was an adult. They also found that incidents involving adolescents or young children were considered less abusive than incidents which involved preadolescent victims. Unlike Finkelhor and Redfield, the present study did not explore the effect of these variables on the likelihood of the incident being told about. However, when the six incidents were ranked in order of the likelihood of the respondents telling about them, there appeared to be no relationship between whether the perpetrator was an adult and the likelihood of the incident being told about. It was also found that the situations which involved the youngest victims were the incidents which were most likely to be told about. The age of the perpetrator and the age of the victim are two further issues which might usefully be explored in any future research involving public perceptions of CSA.

The present study was, of course, primarily interested in public perceptions of abuse. Because of this, only a small sample of professionals was used in the research. A future study might involve a larger sample of professionals. It would also be useful if the sample included a wider range of professionals based in different occupational settings. All of the professionals involved in the present study were social workers. However, a future study might include police officers, teachers, health visitors, General Practitioners

and hospital staff based in an accident and emergency ward. While a number of other researchers (eg Abrahams, Casey & Daro 1992, Birchall 1992, Fox & Dingwall 1985, Giovannoni & Becerra 1979 and Willis & Wells 1988) have explored professional attitudes towards incidents of possible child abuse, few have asked professionals about what incidents they think the public should become involved in or who they think the public should tell about these incidents.

APPENDIX 1:

Copy of Questionnaire used in Prevalence Study



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I am carrying out postgraduate research into child sexual abuse in the Department of Social Policy and Social Work at the University of Glasgow. This questionnaire is an attempt to add to the present lack of knowledge about certain aspects of child sexual abuse, and I hope that you will help by agreeing to fill it in. Any information which you give will, of course, be treated in the strictest of confidence.

The purpose of this questionnaire is twofold. Firstly, it is an attempt to calculate the approximate percentage of the student population (both male and female) who experienced sexual abuse as children. So whether or not you were abused as a child (and whether or not you are male or female), it is important that you complete as much as you can of this questionnaire.

The second purpose of this questionnaire is to gain access to a sample of male students who were sexually abused as children and who are willing to take part in a research interview. If you are a male who was sexually abused as a child and you are interested in taking part in a research interview, then you will be asked to provide your name and address at the end of the questionnaire. This will only be used to make contact for the interview (provided that you are selected for interview) and will not be discussed with anyone else. It may be that you were abused as a child but you are not willing to take part in an interview. If this is the case, then please still complete the questionnaire (otherwise an accurate calculation of the abused population can not be made) - but leave the space for your name and address blank.

Please do not be put off by the length of the questionnaire. Many of the questions can be answered by simply placing a tick in the appropriate box, and many people will find that they do not need to answer all of the questions.

Filling in questionnaires like this can sometimes raise personal issues for the people completing them. If you would like to talk to someone else about the issues raised in this questionnaire, then you may wish to contact the Counselling and Advice team in the Student Services Department of your University.

Thanking you in anticipation for your help

Euan S McKay

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL POLICY & SOCIAL WORK
Liljebank House, Ryle Garden, Glasgow G12 8RT
Telephone 041 340 8855 Fax 041 6

For Office
Use Only

--	--	--

Q1 Are you ☐ Male ☐ Female

--

Q2 To which of the following age groups do you belong?

☐ 16-18 ☐ 21-30 ☐ 41-50 ☐ 60+
☐ 19-20 ☐ 31-40 ☐ 51-60

--

Q3 How would you describe the occupational group of the family in which you grew up? (Tick more than one answer if you parents' occupations belonged to different groups)

Non-Manual: ☐ Managerial/Professional (eg Lawyer, Banker)
☐ Other Non-Manual (eg Nurse, Shop or Office Worker)
Manual: ☐ Skilled/Foreman (eg Plumber, Electrician)
☐ Semi-skilled/Unskilled (eg Storeman, Refuse Collector)
Other: ☐ Unemployed
☐ Retired
☐ Not in paid employment

--

Other (please specify) _____

Q4 How would you describe your ethnic background?

☐ Arab ☐ Bangladeshi ☐ Black-African ☐ Black-Caribbean
☐ Black-Other ☐ Chinese ☐ Indian ☐ Pakistani
☐ White ☐ Other (please specify) _____

--	--

Q5 To which religion do you belong?

☐ Hindu ☐ Jewish ☐ Muslim ☐ Sikh
☐ Protestant ☐ Roman Catholic ☐ Other (please specify) _____

--

Q6 Which subjects are you studying at College/University?

--	--

Q7 Before the age of 16, did you ever experience what you considered then, or now, to be sexual abuse?

☐ Yes - please go to Q8
☐ Unsure - please go to Q8
☐ No - there is no need for you to answer any further questions, but it is still important that you return this questionnaire.

--

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Q8 What form did the abuse take? (Tick more than one box if necessary)

- ☐ Another person showing his/her sex organs to you
- ☐ You showing your sex organs to another person
- ☐ Another person touching your sex organs
- ☐ You touching another person's sex organs
- ☐ Oral sex
- ☐ Sexual intercourse
- ☐ Anal intercourse
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

--	--

Q9 To be answered only by respondents who have ticked more than one box in Q8 : Please indicate which of the experiences ticked in Q8 you found to be the most serious by placing a cross beside it. In the questions which follow you should refer only to the experience which you have placed a cross beside.

--	--

Q10 When did you first regard the experience as sexual abuse?

- ☐ At the time
- ☐ Later

--

Q11 What age were you when this experience first happened?

--	--

Q12 If the experience happened more than once, over what length of time did it continue? _____

--	--

Q13 Was the other person involved in the experience..... ☐ Male
☐ Female

--

Q14 Was this other person.... ☐ Younger than you - please go to Q15
☐ The same age as you - please go to Q16
☐ Older than you - please go to Q15

--

Q15 What was the difference in ages between this other person and yourself? _____ years

--

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Q16 What was the relationship of the other person to you?

- ☐ Grandparent ☐ Parent ☐ Step-parent ☐ Sibling
☐ Other relation ☐ Friend of the Family ☐ Friend ☐ Teacher
☐ Stranger ☐ Other (please specify) _____

--	--

Q17 Did you tell anyone about the experience while it was happening?

- ☐ Yes - please go to Q21 ☐ No - please go to Q18

--

Q18 If no, why did you not tell anyone about the experience?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

--	--

Q19 Did you tell anyone about the experience later?

- ☐ Yes - please go to Q20 ☐ No - please go to Q23

--

Q20 How long after the experience did you tell someone? _____

--	--

Q21 Who did you first tell about the experience?

- ☐ Relation ☐ Friend ☐ Teacher ☐ Social Worker
☐ Police ☐ Other (please specify) _____

--

Q22 Was the person referred to in Q21..... ☐ Male ☐ Female

--

Q23 On a scale of 1 to 5, how harmful did you find the experience?

- ☐ 1 Not harmed at all
☐ 2 Harmed a little
☐ 3 Harmed
☐ 4 Harmed quite badly
☐ 5 Harmed very badly

--

Q24 Males Only: If you are willing to take part in a research interview, please write your name and address in the space provided below.

--

APPENDIX 2:

Some examples of Vignettes¹

(i) Brief Vignettes

Below are some examples of Birchall's shorter vignettes. The respondents were asked to rate each vignette on a scale of one to nine with one as the "least serious" and nine as the "most serious".

- The parents constantly compare their child with the younger sibling, sometimes implying that the child is not really their own. The child continually fights with other children.
- The parents always let their child run around the house and garden without any clothes on.
- On one occasion the parent and the child engaged in sexual intercourse.
- Although clean, the baby has a sore bottom and is difficult to feed. The toddler is poorly clad and difficult to control but healthy.
- The parents immersed the child in a tub of hot water.
- On one occasion the parent fondled the child's genital area.

(ii) More complex Vignettes

Below is an example of one of the more complex vignettes used by Birchall.

Stage 1:

In the course of your duties, you hear that a neighbour has said the 6 month old baby next door has chilblains on her hands and is often crying. The mother is a 19 year old and has a toddler. She lives on Social Security and her fuel had been cut off.

¹ The vignettes contained in this Appendix all come from Birchall's study (Birchall 1992).

Stage 2:

You now learn that the baby Sarah is below the third centile in weight and height. Margaret, the mother, says she is difficult to feed and is anxious about her. She is clean but has a sore bottom.

The toddler Jimmy is robust though not very warmly dressed. He is very active and rather rough with his toys and his mother.

Sarah had a bruise on her lower cheek.

Stage 3:

At Case Conference it emerges that Margaret has been depressed since Sarah's birth. Sarah's father walked out on her just before and left a pile of debts. He still comes back about once a week for the night and they sleep together. Margaret would like him back even though he sometimes beats her for not keeping the children quiet.

Margaret is not cooking or feeding herself very well. She gives Jimmy fish and chips and apples, which he eats wandering about outside the house.

At times she says she gets very angry with the children's "whining" demands and crying. Two days ago the Day Nursery noticed that Jimmy had red weals on his calves and fingertip bruises on his upper arm. He has several bruises around his lower legs and on his forehead. Margaret admits she wallops him on the bottom and she did hit his head when he wet his pants.

The baby's weight has fallen from 25th centile at birth to 3rd now. She has had several minor chest infections and a recent diarrhoea.

Margaret had a child by another father. The child was adopted after strong suspicions that he had broken her arm and ribs when exasperated with her crying at night. She parted from this man when she was expecting Jimmy because she did not want any further difficulties with Social Services.

The social worker and health visitor have been weekly since the first message 2 months ago. Margaret has been willing to talk to them, but finds it difficult to follow their advice on the children's needs. She has not told either of them

much of this history, which has been collated from agency records. She says she intends to attend a psychiatric Outpatient clinic soon.

APPENDIX 3:
Copy of both versions of the Questionnaire used in
Main Study

Version 1



QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE CARE
& PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

As a result of the increasing attention given to the topic, we have all become alerted to the sexual abuse of children. One of the most difficult issues confronting workers dealing with child abuse is deciding when or ~~when~~ not to act. There is the danger of over-reacting to possible cases of abuse as well as ignoring them.

In this questionnaire you will be presented with six brief descriptions of incidents (based on real cases) involving children. After reading each description, you will be asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 how likely it is that you would tell someone about each incident. If you do decide that action is appropriate, you will be asked to say who it is that you would tell. There is space for you to note any further comments which you might like to make about each incident (eg why you would or would not do anything about it).

You might find it difficult to make a decision about some of the incidents because of the limited amount of information provided, but this is often the reality for professionals and others working in the child protection field.

Because of the sequence of the questions, it is important that you answer each question before you read the next one.

Thank you for giving ~~up~~ your time to complete this questionnaire.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL POLICY & SOCIAL WORK
Lilbank House, Rure Gardens, Glasgow G12 8RT
Telephone: 041-339 8855 Ext: 6818

INCIDENT 1

John, a fourteen-year old boy who lives next door to you, has told you that his mother has started coming into the bathroom while he is taking a bath.

How likely is it that you would tell someone about this incident? *(Please place a tick in the appropriate box)*

- ☐ 5 *Very likely*
- ☐ 4 *Likely*
- ☐ 3 *Unsure*
- ☐ 2 *Unlikely*
- ☐ 1 *Very unlikely*

If you were to tell someone about this incident, who would it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 2

Eight-year-old Gillian (a friend of your daughter) tells you that, while on the way home from school, she was accosted by a twelve-year-old boy who lives in your neighbourhood. The older boy threatened to beat up Gillian if she did not masturbate him. Gillian was frightened of this older boy, and complied.

How likely is it that you would tell someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 Very likely
- ☐ 4 Likely
- ☐ 3 Unsure
- ☐ 2 Unlikely
- ☐ 1 Very unlikely

If you were to tell someone about this incident, who would it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 3

Neil, your fifteen-year-old nephew, tells you that he has shared a bed with his mother since he was about seven years old (the time when Neil's mother and father divorced). The rationale for this was that his mother could not afford a separate bed for him, although Neil's sister (who is three years older than Neil) slept alone in a separate bed.

How likely is it that you would tell someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 Very likely
- ☐ 4 Likely
- ☐ 3 Unsure
- ☐ 2 Unlikely
- ☐ 1 Very unlikely

If you were to tell someone about this incident, who would it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 4

One evening your daughter has a visit from her best friend Ann. While Ann is in your house, she tells you that her brother crawled into her bed and started fondling her. Ann is nine years old, and her brother is fifteen. Ann said that she felt both scared and excited when this happened.

How likely is it that you would tell someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 *Very likely*
- ☐ 4 *Likely*
- ☐ 3 *Unsure*
- ☐ 2 *Unlikely*
- ☐ 1 *Very unlikely*

If you were to tell someone about this incident, who would it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 5

Your nine-year-old son has been for a picnic with Stephen (one of his friends), in some local woods. When they come home, Stephen tells you that a man came up to him and asked him if he would like to 'go exploring'. When Stephen said 'no', the man pulled him by the hand towards some bushes. The man then opened his trousers and pulled out his penis. He came towards Stephen telling him to hold it. Stephen turned and ran away at that point.

How likely is it that you would tell someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 Very likely
- ☐ 4 Likely
- ☐ 3 Unsure
- ☐ 2 Unlikely
- ☐ 1 Very unlikely

If you were to tell someone about this incident, who would it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 6

Mary, a twelve-year-old member of a youth club which you help to organise, tells you one day that she and her mother have started doing aerobic exercises together. She tells you that, after the aerobics, she and her mother massage each other's body. While they are massaging each other's body, they manipulate each other's genitals.

How likely is it that you would tell someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 *Very likely*
- ☐ 4 *Likely*
- ☐ 3 *Unsure*
- ☐ 2 *Unlikely*
- ☐ 1 *Very unlikely*

If you were to tell someone about this incident, who would it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

FINALLY. SOME QUESTIONS
ABOUT YOURSELF:

- Are you ☐ Male ☐ Female

- To which of the following age groups do you belong?

☐ 16-19

☐ 40-49

☐ 70+

☐ 20-29

☐ 50-59

☐ 30-39

☐ 60-69

- What is your occupation?

(Please write in) _____

- Are you a Parent/Guardian? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Version 2



UNIVERSITY
of
GLASGOW

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE CARE & PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

As a result of the increasing attention given to the topic, we have all become alerted to the sexual abuse of children. One of the most difficult issues confronting workers dealing with child abuse is deciding when or when not to act. There is the danger of over-reacting to possible cases of abuse as well as ignoring them.

In this questionnaire you will be presented with six brief descriptions of incidents (based on real cases) involving children. After reading each description, you will be asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 how likely it is that you would tell someone about each incident. If you do decide that action is appropriate, you will be asked to say who it is that you would tell. There is space for you to note any further comments which you might like to make about each incident (eg why you would or would not do anything about it).

You might find it difficult to make a decision about some of the incidents because of the limited amount of information provided, but this is often the reality for professionals and others working in the child protection field.

Because of the sequence of the questions, it is important that you answer each question before you read the next one.

Thank you for giving up your time to complete this questionnaire.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL POLICY & SOCIAL WORK
Lilvbank House, Bute Gardens, Glasgow G12 8RT
Telephone: 041-359 8855 Ext: 5818

INCIDENT 1

Jane, a fourteen-year old girl who lives next door to you, has told you that her father has started coming into the bathroom while she is taking a bath.

How likely is it that you would tell someone about this incident? *(Please place a tick in the appropriate box)*

- ☐ 5 *Very likely*
- ☐ 4 *Likely*
- ☐ 3 *Unsure*
- ☐ 2 *Unlikely*
- ☐ 1 *Very unlikely*

If you were to tell someone about this incident, who would it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 2

Eight-year-old Greg (a friend of your son) tells you that, while on the way home from school, he was accosted by a twelve-year-old boy who lives in your neighbourhood. The older boy threatened to beat up Greg if he did not masturbate him. Greg was frightened of this older boy, and complied.

How likely is it that you would tell someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 Very likely
- ☐ 4 Likely
- ☐ 3 Unsure
- ☐ 2 Unlikely
- ☐ 1 Very unlikely

If you were to tell someone about this incident, who would it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 3

Nicola, your fifteen-year-old niece, tells you that she has shared a bed with her father since she was about seven years old (the time when Nicola's mother and father divorced). The rationale for this was that her father could not afford a separate bed for her, although Nicola's brother (who is three years older than Nicola) slept alone in a separate bed.

How likely is it that you would tell someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 Very likely
- ☐ 4 Likely
- ☐ 3 Unsure
- ☐ 2 Unlikely
- ☐ 1 Very unlikely

If you were to do tell someone about this incident, who would it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 4

One evening your son has a visit from his best friend Alan. While Alan is in your house, he tells you that his brother crawled into his bed and started fondling him. Alan is nine years old, and his brother is fifteen. Alan said that he felt both scared and excited when this happened.

How likely is it that you would tell someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 *Very likely*
- ☐ 4 *Likely*
- ☐ 3 *Unsure*
- ☐ 2 *Unlikely*
- ☐ 1 *Very unlikely*

If you were to tell someone about this incident, who would it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 5

Your nine-year-old daughter has been for a picnic with Susan (one of her friends), in some local woods. When they come home, Susan tells you that a man came up to her and asked her if she would like to 'go exploring'. When Susan said 'no', the man pulled her by the hand towards some bushes. The man then opened his trousers and pulled out his penis. He came towards Susan telling her to hold it. Susan turned and ran away at that point.

How likely is it that you would tell someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 Very likely
- ☐ 4 Likely
- ☐ 3 Unsure
- ☐ 2 Unlikely
- ☐ 1 Very unlikely

If you were to were to tell someone about this incident, who would it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 6

Mike, a twelve-year-old member of a youth club which you help to organise, tells you one day that he and his father have started lifting weights together. He tells you that, after the exercises, he and his father massage each other's body. While they are massaging each other's body, they manipulate each other's genitals.

How likely is it that you would tell someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 Very likely
- ☐ 4 Likely
- ☐ 3 Unsure
- ☐ 2 Unlikely
- ☐ 1 Very unlikely

If you were to tell someone about this incident, who would it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

**FINALLY, SOME QUESTIONS
ABOUT YOURSELF:**

- Are you ☐ Male ☐ Female

- To which of the following age groups do you belong?

☐ 16-19

☐ 40-49

☐ 70+

☐ 20-29

☐ 50-59

☐ 30-39

☐ 60-69

- What is your occupation?

(Please write in) _____

- Are you a Parent/Guardian? ☐ Yes ☐ No

APPENDIX 4:
Copy of both versions of the Questionnaire used in
Study of Professionals

Version 1



UNIVERSITY
of
GLASGOW

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE CARE
& PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

As a professional whose work is likely to involve dealing with suspected cases of child sexual abuse, you will be aware that one of the most difficult issues confronting workers dealing with child abuse is deciding when or when not to act. There is the danger of over-reacting to possible cases of abuse as well as ignoring them.

In this questionnaire you will be presented with six brief descriptions of incidents (based on real cases) in which a child describes to an adult an experience which he/she claims to have had. After reading each description, you will be asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 how important you (as a professional) think it is that the adult described in each incident tells someone else about the claim which the child is making. If you do decide that action is appropriate, you will be asked to say who it is that you think the adult should tell. There is space for you to note any further comments which you might like to make about each incident (eg why you think that the adult should or should not do anything about it).

You might find it difficult to make a decision about some of the incidents because of the limited amount of information provided, but this (of course) is often the reality for professionals and others working in the child protection field.

Because of the sequence of the questions, it is important that you answer each question before you read the next one.

Thank you for giving up your time to complete this questionnaire.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL POLICY & SOCIAL WORK
12 Ivybank House, Bute Gardens, Glasgow G12 8RT
Telephone: 041-359 8855 Ext 6818

INCIDENT 1

Fourteen-year-old John tells the man who lives next door to him that his mother has started coming into the bathroom while he is taking a bath.

How important do you think it is that the man tells someone about this incident? *(Please place a tick in the appropriate box)*

- ☐ 5 Very important
- ☐ 4 Important
- ☐ 3 Unsure
- ☐ 2 Not important
- ☐ 1 Not important at all

If you think that the man should tell someone about this incident, who should it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 2

Eight-year-old Gillian tells her friend's mother that, while on the way home from school, she was accosted by a twelve-year-old boy who lives in the neighbourhood. The older boy threatened to beat her up if she did not masturbate him. Gillian was frightened of this older boy, and complied.

How important do you think it is that the friend's mother tells someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 Very important
- ☐ 4 Important
- ☐ 3 Unsure
- ☐ 2 Not important
- ☐ 1 Not important at all

If you think that the friend's mother should tell someone about this incident, who should it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 3

Fifteen-year-old Neil tells his uncle that he has shared a bed with his mother since he was about seven years old (the time when Neil's mother and father divorced). The rationale for this was that his mother could not afford a separate bed for him, although Neil's sister (who is three years older than him) slept alone in a separate bed.

How important do you think it is that Neil's uncle tells someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 *Very important*
- ☐ 4 *Important*
- ☐ 3 *Unsure*
- ☐ 2 *Not important*
- ☐ 1 *Not important at all*

If you think Neil's uncle should tell someone about this incident, who should it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 4

One evening, Ann visits her best friend Jennifer. During the visit, Ann tells Jennifer's mother that Ann's brother crawled into Ann's bed and started fondling her. Ann is nine years old, and her brother is fifteen. Ann said that she felt both scared and excited when this happened.

How important do you think it is that Jennifer's mother tells someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 *Very important*
- ☐ 4 *Important*
- ☐ 3 *Unsure*
- ☐ 2 *Not important*
- ☐ 1 *Not important at all*

If you think that Jennifer's mother should tell someone about this incident, who should it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 5

Nine-year-old David has been for a picnic, in some local woods, with his friend Stephen . When they come home, Stephen tells David's father that a man came up to him and asked him if he would like to 'go exploring'. The man then pulled Stephen by the hand towards some bushes, opened his trousers and pulled out his penis. He told Stephen to hold it. At that point, Stephen turned and ran away.

How important do you think it is that David's father tells someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 Very important
- ☐ 4 Important
- ☐ 3 Unsure
- ☐ 2 Not important
- ☐ 1 Not important at all

If you think that David's father should tell someone about this incident, who should it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 6

One day, twelve-year-old Mary tells one of her youth club leaders that she and her mother have started doing aerobic exercises together. She says that, after the aerobics, they massage each other's bodies. While they are massaging each other's bodies, they manipulate each other's genitals.

How important do you think it is that the youth club leader tells someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 Very important
- ☐ 4 Important
- ☐ 3 Unsure
- ☐ 2 Not important
- ☐ 1 Not important at all

If you think that the youth club leader should tell someone about this incident, who should it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

FINALLY, SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF:

- How much of your work is concerned with children who have/may have been sexually abused?

☐ ₁ Most/All
☐ ₂ Some
☐ ₃ Little/None

- Are you ☐ ₁ Male ☐ ₂ Female

- To which of the following age groups do you belong?

☐ ₁ 16-19 ☐ ₄ 40-49 ☐ ₇ 70+
☐ ₂ 20-29 ☐ ₅ 50-59
☐ ₃ 30-39 ☐ ₆ 60-69

- Are you a Parent/Guardian? ☐ ₁ Yes ☐ ₂ No

Version 2



UNIVERSITY
of
GLASGOW

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE CARE & PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

As a professional whose work is likely to involve dealing with suspected cases of child sexual abuse, you will be aware that one of the most difficult issues confronting workers dealing with child abuse is deciding when or when not to act. There is the danger of over-reacting to possible cases of abuse as well as ignoring them.

In this questionnaire you will be presented with six brief descriptions of incidents (based on real cases) in which a child describes to an adult an experience which he/she claims to have had. After reading each description, you will be asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 how important you (as a professional) think it is that the adult described in each incident tells someone else about the claim which the child is making. If you do decide that action is appropriate, you will be asked to say who it is that you think the adult should tell. There is space for you to note any further comments which you might like to make about each incident (eg why you think that the adult should or should not do anything about it).

You might find it difficult to make a decision about some of the incidents because of the limited amount of information provided, but this (of course) is often the reality for professionals and others working in the child protection field.

Because of the sequence of the questions, it is important that you answer each question before you read the next one.

Thank you for giving up your time to complete this questionnaire.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL POLICY & SOCIAL WORK
Lilybank House, Bute Gardens, Glasgow G12 8RT
Telephone: 041-359 8955 Ext: 6818

INCIDENT 1

Fourteen-year-old Jane tells the woman who lives next door to her that her father has started coming into the bathroom while she is taking a bath.

How important do you think it is that the woman tells someone about this incident? *(Please place a tick in the appropriate box)*

- ☐ 5 *Very important*
- ☐ 4 *Important*
- ☐ 3 *Unsure*
- ☐ 2 *Not important*
- ☐ 1 *Not important at all*

If you think that the woman should tell someone about this incident, who should it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 2

Eight-year-old Greg tells his friend's father that, while on the way home from school, he was accosted by a twelve-year-old boy who lives in the neighbourhood. The older boy threatened to beat him up if he did not masturbate him. Greg was frightened of this older boy, and complied.

How important do you think it is that the friend's father tells someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 *Very important*
- ☐ 4 *Important*
- ☐ 3 *Unsure*
- ☐ 2 *Not important*
- ☐ 1 *Not important at all*

If you think that the friend's father should tell someone about this incident, who should it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 3

Fifteen-year-old Nicola tells her aunt that she has shared a bed with her father since she was about seven years old (the time when Nicola's mother and father divorced). The rationale for this was that her father could not afford a separate bed for her, although Nicola's brother (who is three years older than her) slept alone in a separate bed.

How important do you think it is that Nicola's aunt tells someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 Very important
- ☐ 4 Important
- ☐ 3 Unsure
- ☐ 2 Not important
- ☐ 1 Not important at all

If you think that Nicola's aunt should tell someone about this incident, who should it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 4

One evening, Alan visits his best friend James. During the visit, Alan tells James' father that Alan's brother crawled into Alan's bed and started fondling him. Alan is nine years old, and his brother is fifteen. Alan said that he felt both scared and excited when this happened.

How important do you think it is that James' father tells someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 Very important
- ☐ 4 Important
- ☐ 3 Unsure
- ☐ 2 Not important
- ☐ 1 Not important at all

If you think that James' father should tell someone about this incident, who should it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 5

Nine-year-old Debbie has been for a picnic, in some local woods, with her friend Susan. When they come home, Susan tells Debbie's mother that a man came up to her and asked her if she would like to 'go exploring'. The man then pulled Susan by the hand towards some bushes, opened his trousers and pulled out his penis. He told Susan to hold it. At that point, Susan turned and ran away.

How important do you think it is that Debbie's mother tells someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 Very important
- ☐ 4 Important
- ☐ 3 Unsure
- ☐ 2 Not important
- ☐ 1 Not important at all

If you think that Debbie's mother should tell someone about this incident, who should it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

INCIDENT 6

One day, twelve-year-old Mike tells one of his youth club leaders that he and his father have started lifting weights together. He says that, after the exercises, he and his father massage each other's bodies. While they are massaging each other's bodies, they manipulate each other's genitals.

How important do you think it is that the youth club leader tells someone about this incident?

- ☐ 5 *Very important*
- ☐ 4 *Important*
- ☐ 3 *Unsure*
- ☐ 2 *Not important*
- ☐ 1 *Not important at all*

If you think that the youth club leader should tell someone about this incident, who should it be?

(Please write) _____

Are there any further comments which you would like to make about this incident?

(Please write) _____

FINALLY, SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF:

- How much of your work is concerned with children who have/may have been sexually abused?

☐ Most/All
☐ Some
☐ Little/None

- Are you ☐ Male ☐ Female

- To which of the following age groups do you belong?

☐ 16-19 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 70+
☐ 20-29 ☐ 50-59
☐ 30-39 ☐ 60-69

- Are you a Parent/Guardian? ☐ Yes ☐ No

APPENDIX 5:

Table summarising Results of Main Study

	Incident 1	Incident 2	Incident 3	Incident 4	Incident 5	Incident 6
% age of Respondents likely/very likely to tell about Incident	31.2%	96.3%	61.6%	76.2%	98.6%	63.0%
% age of Respondents unsure whether they would tell about Incident	28.8%	1.9%	22.7%	13.6%	1.4%	30.8%
Gender of "Victim"	Incident was more likely to be told about if victim was female	Very little difference	Incident was more likely to be told about if victim was female	Incident was more likely to be told about if victim was female	Very little difference	Very little difference
Gender of Respondent	Females were slightly more likely to tell	Females were more likely to tell	Females were more likely to tell	Females were more likely to tell	Males were slightly more likely to tell	Females were slightly more likely to tell
Age of Respondent	Older people were more likely to tell	Very little difference	Older people were more likely to tell	Younger people were more likely to tell	Older people were slightly more likely to tell	Younger people were more likely to tell
Whether Respondent is a Parent/Guardian	Parents/guardians were slightly more likely to tell than non-parents/guardians	Very little difference	Parents/guardians were more likely to tell than non-parents/guardians	Parents/guardians were very slightly less likely to tell than non-parents/guardians	Parents/guardians were very slightly more likely to tell	Parents/guardians were slightly less likely to tell
Whether Respondent is likely to have an Occupational Awareness of CSA	Those likely to have an awareness were slightly less likely to tell	Those likely to have an awareness were slightly more likely to tell	Those likely to have an awareness were more likely to tell	Those likely to have an awareness were slightly more likely to tell	Those likely to have an awareness were very slightly more likely to tell	Those likely to have an awareness were more likely to tell
Person/Agency most likely to be told by Public	49.5% Child/child's family 12.0% Outside Agency 12.0% Respondent's family/friends	69.4% Child/child's family 51.4% Outside Agency 3.2% Respondent's family/friends	64.4% Child/child's family 15.7% Outside Agency 7.9% Respondent's family/friends	80.6% Child/child's family 9.7% Outside Agency 6.0% Respondent's family/friends	90.3% Outside Agency 24.5% Child/child's family 2.3% Respondent's family/friends	50.5% Outside Agency 29.2% Child/child's family 3.2% Respondent's family/friends

Entries in bold typeface denote a statistical difference

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