



CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN CANADA:
FURTHER ANALYSIS OF THE 1983 NATIONAL SURVEY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 1983 national survey of unwanted sexual acts experienced by a random sample of 2,135 Canadian adults aged 19 to 85 has, in our reanalysis, yielded usable data on 893 Canadian females, and 935 Canadian males. Defining sexual abuse as unwanted sexual touching, or attempted or achieved vaginal or anal intercourse, this further analysis of the data indicates that 17.6 percent of females, and 8.2 percent of males experienced such abuse before their seventeenth birthday. For 10 percent of female victims and 26 percent of male victims these were assaults which continued over a long period of time. In the majority of cases (84% for females and 72% for males) the assailant was known to the victim. While father-daughter sexual abuse was relatively rare, abuse by other family members was not uncommon; but the most frequently mentioned group of abusers were acquaintances and family friends. Immediate emotional harm was experienced by nearly half of the female victims, and by 20 percent of male victims. Similar proportions of male and female victims (some 80%) failed to report the abuse to anyone. The most frequently cited reasons for not reporting were shame, fear of the abuser, and fear that the victim would not be believed. Almost all of those who abused a female victim were male, but 18 percent of those with male victims were female. Thirty percent of the assailants of both males and females were aged under 18. Juvenile assailants tended to use more force and threat, and more brutal methods of assault. Nevertheless, it was the more subtle assaults perpetrated by older males which caused the most emotional harm. Some demographic differences emerged in victimization experience. Male victims were somewhat more likely to come from urban, French-speaking backgrounds, while female victims were more likely to come from English-speaking, small

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town or rural backgrounds. However, overall there was no socio-economic, ethnic, linguistic, religious or regional group which was not at risk for sexual abuse in childhood. Subjects born after 1950 were significantly more likely to have been victims of sexual abuse in childhood, and this may have been related to changes in family circumstances. In conclusion, these data carry some important implications for policy innovation and for further research, particularly that aimed to monitor changes in the prevalence of child sexual abuse and the effects of programs of prevention and integrated care.

1. INTRODUCTION: ADULT RECALL STUDIES OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE
 The Report of the Committee on Sexual Offences Against Children and Youths chaired by Dr. Robin Badgley, and published in 1984 under the auspices of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and the Minister of National Health and Welfare, was a landmark document. The Report was based on a number of national surveys of the extent of and response to the problem, and offered 52 well-reasoned recommendations, a number of which have now been accepted by the government of Canada, and have passed into law (Dawson, 1987). Among the surveys commissioned for the Badgley Committee was a survey of the extent of child sexual abuse recalled by a random sample of Canadian adults. This is the only national survey of the problem in North America, although a number of random surveys of child sexual abuse recalled by adults in local and special communities exist (Finkelhor, 1984; Russell, 1986; Bagley & Young, 1988).

The advantages of a study of sexual abuse recalled by an adult population is that one is able to obtain an estimate of the total prevalence of sexual abuse in childhood in a particular population or community. Adult surveys have both strengths and weaknesses however. Essentially, an adult survey provides historical information about the extent of child sexual abuse in the community in past years. The data provided can lead us however, to make informed guesses about the amount of current abuse by examining the amount of abuse recalled by younger subjects (say, those aged 18 through 25). Data in younger subjects can also give us some idea of change in the amount of abuse reported, provided that the samples of the different age groupings are large enough (see Appendix A). These data on changes in prevalence are valuable in giving possible

clues to sociological indicators which may underlie changes in prevalence. It is also a method by which the success or otherwise of prevention programs, and programs encouraging the reporting of sexual abuse to protection authorities can be assessed.

Recall surveys with young adults as subjects also avoid the ethical and procedural problems involved in asking similar questions of children - problems which involve gaining parental consent before asking such questions in a general, screening sense; and the need to involve child protection authorities when a child reveals abuse. We should stress that in our opinion, screening large populations of school students directly by means of questionnaires, with appropriate counselling and referral facilities is a more ideal way of approaching this problem, both in a therapeutic sense, and in terms of research methodology (Bagley & Thurston, 1988). It is also incumbent, in our own research in this area to offer therapeutic support and referral to adult survivors of child sexual abuse whom we locate in surveys of adults (Bagley & Ramsay, 1986; Bagley & Young, 1988).

The methodology of adult recall studies has been extensively reported and explored by recent writers (Finkelhor & Hotaling, 1984; Finkelhor, 1984; Painter, 1986; Wyatt & Peters, 1986; Russell, 1986; Bagley & Ramsay, 1988). It is clear that estimates derived from child protection authorities and from police give a marked underestimate of the amount of child sexual abuse, and a biased picture of the nature of such abuse. Less than 20 percent of victims (according to the adult recall surveys) report abuse, and only certain types of abuse (e.g., those defined by authorities as "incest") may be referred to treatment agencies.

The methods of research used in adult recall surveys can influence the amount of abuse reported: surveys which involve a personal interview in which rapport is established with the respondent, and in which questions about abuse are asked in several different contexts, are likely to reveal the most abuse. The age range covered (e.g., up to age 17 or 18), and the definitions of sexual abuse (e.g., including or excluding threats or exposure without touching) and the exact wording of questions will also influence the amount of abuse which the study finally reports. Another factor which influences the final figure on "abuse" which a study reports is the degree to which it is assumed that the young person exercised volition in a sexual relationship, and some complicated methods for assessing this have been devised (Finkelhor, 1979). The data from the National Canadian survey which we report below avoided this problem by asking subjects to report only unwanted sexual contact.

Bearing in mind these various methodological approaches and problems, we should note that the prevalence rates for abuse of females which have emerged in various studies range from six to 62 percent in females, and from three to 21 percent in males (Peters, Wyatt, & Finkelhor, 1988). The median rate of abuse reported in twenty-two studies in North America is 22 percent in females. The average rate of child sexual abuse in males, from eleven North American studies, is eight percent. The original estimates offered by Badgley (1984) for serious sexual abuse were quite close to these averages, when only events of sexual touching and attempted or achieved penetration were considered. However, as will emerge from the reanalysis of the National Canadian survey presented below, for a number of reasons the initial estimates contained in the Badgley report have to be significantly revised.

In the initial publicity surrounding the issue of the Badgley Report in 1984, much was made in press handouts of the prevalence of sexual abuse which included exposure and threats as well as unwanted sexual contact, occurring at all ages and not just in childhood. The main report reinforced the initial, sensationalistic, journalistic presentations which were followed by popular disbelief. The Report had suggested that when all types of abuse, at all ages were combined: "About one in two females and one in three males had been the victims of sexual offences" (Badgley, 1984, p. 193). While it was added that "children and youths under 21 constitute a majority of the victims" (p. 193), the "one in two" figure was at first greeted as an unqualified and spectacular estimate of the amount of child sexual abuse. The writer, in speaking to various community groups about the Report and the problem in general, has come across many individuals who have been both astonished and skeptical about what they assume to be a "one in two" figure of serious assaults against children.

2. THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE NATIONAL CANADIAN SURVEY

The survey, undertaken by the Gallup Organization used the methods of stratified random sampling often associated with market survey work. The stratified random sample while not as statistically "pure" as a straightforward random sample (in that sampling error is more difficult to estimate) has stood the test of time in terms of the validity of its results - for example, in the prediction of election outcomes. A stratified survey divides the area to be surveyed into districts according to known population parameters, and takes random samples within selected districts, stratified according to expected age and sex profiles (derived from census data) within these districts. Final choice of the sample, both of strata and of subjects within strata, is carried out by random methods of selection (Hoinville & Jowell, 1978).

The interviewers employed by the survey firm were appropriately experienced in market survey techniques, and specially briefed for this particular national survey. But they had no particular background in administering questionnaire on sensitive areas such as child abuse. In fact, the questionnaire was handed to the respondent with the assurance:

Because of their personal nature, we ask you to answer the questions without the involvement of our interviewer, who has not seen the questionnaire, and will not be able to discuss them with you. . . . The information requested will be held in strictest confidence. There is no place on the questionnaire to identify yourself, and we ask that you do not do so. . . . When you have completed the questions, there is an envelope inside for you to seal your answers. All questionnaires will be returned to the Canadian Gallup Poll, still sealed (Badgley, 1984, p. 177).

The survey was undertaken between the last week of January and the first week of February 1983. The Gallup Organization initially reported a return rate of 94.1 percent (2008 questionnaires returned of the 2135 left with potential respondents). This, it should be said, is an exceptionally high return rate for this type of survey (Peters & Wyatt, 1986). In fact, as we have discovered in a reanalysis of these data, only 1833 questionnaires (85.8%) provided usable or relatively complete information on the questions regarding sexual assault. Males were significantly more likely to complete the questionnaire, so although the sexes were equally balanced in the sampling procedure, 898 questionnaires from female respondents were finally analyzable, compared with 935 questionnaires from males.

The questionnaire was in four parts. The first section asked about knowledge of and attitudes to the availability and distribution of pornography. The second section asked about age at first sexual intercourse - it is not clear why this section was included, although a cross-classification with the sexual assault data indicates that about half the cases in which this experience occurred in someone under 17 involved an "unwanted" sexual act. Virtually all of the cases of sexual intercourse in females under 13 were "unwanted." We could not detect any significant links between attitudes to pornography and sexual abuse experience, and data from that analysis are not reported here.

The third section of the questionnaire, and by far the longest, asked about "unwanted sex acts." The questionnaire is quite complex and detailed, and problems which might have been encountered by those who are functionally illiterate - some 15 percent of the population according to a recent Canadian survey (Bagley, 1988) - are not indicated by the Gallup Organization, nor by Bagley (1984). Our own analysis does indicate a

significant link between poorly completed questionnaires (with many gaps in the information provided) and completing fewer years of education. To the extent that people with less education have a greater risk of victimization as some research has suggested (Kelly & Scott, 1986), this survey will have underestimated the amount of child sexual abuse in Canada.

Other factors also mean that this survey will provide an underestimate of the true prevalence of the sexual exploitation of children. Some individuals, particularly older people, may be reluctant to talk about or reveal episodes of sexual abuse which took place in childhood. Older people may recall only the most serious and traumatizing events. It is known from clinical evidence that some individuals cope with the trauma of childhood sexual abuse by repression, the development of multiple personality, or borderline psychotic states of various kinds (Bagley, 1985). Some individuals, therefore may simply not recall serious sexual abuse in childhood, even though that abuse has significantly impaired their adult adjustment. The same may be said of abuse taking place before the child's fifth year, when memories are particularly likely to be confused (McFarlane, 1986).

Using customary techniques for sampling populations involves another problem. It is known that victims of severe and prolonged child sexual abuse are particularly likely to enter deviant populations (Bagley, 1985; Bagley & Young, 1987, 1988). This means that they are found disproportionately amongst runaway youth, street kids, young prostitutes, and institutionalized populations of various kinds. However, normal sampling procedures will fail to identify these populations, so that a general

population survey is likely to underestimate the amount of serious, long-term abuse.

The fourth part of the questionnaire used in the national survey asked about the socio-demographic background of the respondent. The information gathered was fairly brief, with few questions about childhood family circumstances, and nothing that could be used to infer adjustment in adulthood. This is disappointing, since such questions would have been simple to ask, and would have greatly added to the value of this survey.

This national survey has both strengths and weaknesses. The questions about sexual abuse have the merit that they ask only about unwanted sex acts. Previous research (e.g., Finkelhor, 1979) had asked about all sexual acts in which under-age persons had participated. This yielded a great deal of data which was difficult to handle - since adolescents are often sexually active, for the most part voluntarily. Younger children too often engage in sexual and play and exploration with peers, and these sexual acts are usually voluntarily rather than abusive or unwanted. The researcher is left with the problem of deciding which of the events are actually abusive, and has to resort to complicated procedures such as establishing the age differences between the two parties (e.g., Finkelhor, 1979), or assessing psychological outcomes (e.g., Sorrenti-Little et al., 1984), or the amount of force, threat or abuse of authority involved. The Badgley definition asked only about unwanted sex acts, and so avoided many of the procedural problems which other researchers have had to face. The Badgley approach does however mean that some illegal sex acts - for example between an adult and a child, which the child decides, in retrospect were not "unwanted" - will not be recorded by this method. In essence then this method is essentially

conservative, and asks only about sexual incidents in childhood which have the possibility for causing some trauma or discomfort, both in the short and the long run.

The Gallup questionnaire (see Appendix B) used by the Badgley Committee Report (1984) has a number of weaknesses, which could have been identified if adequate piloting had occurred. These problems are in essence remediable, so that the questionnaire can be usefully adapted for further work (see Appendix A).

Among the problems of the questionnaire are the following. Respondents are asked to respond to four separate types of questions about unwanted sexual approaches: exposure without touching; sexual threats without touching; sexual touching without penetration; and sexual penetration, attempted or achieved. Badgley (1984) in Table 6.1 on page 180 of the Committee's report claims that these are reports of independent sexual approaches, and are therefore non-cumulative in nature. It is thus suggested that 53.5 percent of women had, at any age, experienced an unwanted sexual approach. This figure is not accurate however, as we found on a reanalysis of the basic data. It is clear that many women and men were describing the same sexual approach in different categories: the assailant may have exposed himself, made sexual threats, touched the person, and then attempted or achieved penetration all in a very short period, as part of the same assault. The questionnaire (Appendix B) does not specifically ask respondents to report different assaults in each section. However, we can usually tell which are reports of different stages of the same assault by the similarity of the victim's age when the approach or assault occurred, and the description of the assault, including age, sex, and relationship to the assailant. Since we are concerned only

with the more serious aspects of sexual assault, we considered only the latter two categories, sexual touching and attempted or achieved penetration, combining these two categories as an index of sexual assault. Where the respondent reported both sexual touching and attempted or achieved intercourse occurring at the same time, these have been assumed to be aspects of the same event.

A number of respondents (5.7% of all females, and 1.5% of all males) reported sexual touching and attempted or achieved intercourse occurring at different times in their childhood, giving indications that these were different assaults. However, for the large majority the touching occurred earlier in their lives than did the intercourse, and there was evidence that these were aspects of the same assault which had been carried on over a period of months or years - since the relationship to the identified perpetrator, usually a family member, was the same. Because of these problems we have recorded a maximum of one abusive event (the most serious) whenever a respondent reports more than one unwanted sexual approach. We have not considered exposure and threats separately, since we had no sure way of knowing whether or not these were aspects of more serious assaults, occurring at the same time, or earlier on.

Another problem with the national survey questionnaire is that respondents were asked to describe only the first unwanted sexual approach or act within any category. Yet is known from other studies that some children are victimized at separate times in their lives, by new assailants (Bagley & Ramsay, 1986). Once a child's victim status has been confirmed, these subsequent assaults are often more serious and more abusive. The national survey entirely failed to ask specifically about subsequent sexual assaults by different assailants. This survey will, for

that reason, be likely to have underestimated the seriousness of the sexual assaults experienced by victims in their childhood years. In parenthesis, one would say that the reason for this less than perfect questionnaire design and data analysis of an extremely expensive national survey almost certainly reflected the pressures upon Dr. Badgley and his committee to produce a report, containing several different analyses of separate national surveys, at great speed. We noted the same problem is a reanalysis of a national survey carried out for a committee of inquiry in the United Kingdom (Bagley, 1970). The Badgley Committee may have erred also in interpretations of another national survey (of juvenile prostitutes). Our previously published critique of that interpretation is offered in Appendix C.

In sum, the questionnaire and the survey method is likely to have both strengths and limitations. The completion of the questionnaire was not supervised or controlled, a factor which probably leads to under-reporting. There is no check on the validity of the information offered, but it is likely that respondents would be likely to under-report events of sexual assault, rather than to fabricate them. The design of the questionnaire is likely to underestimate the prevalence of serious sexual assaults. Only the most serious assault has been considered in the present reanalysis of the national survey data. Problems of sampling, including the failure to reach deviant or institutionalized adult populations mean that many events of the most serious abuse will have been missed in this national survey. For other, psychological reasons, some victims of serious sexual abuse occurring in childhood will be unable or unwilling to recall such abuse. Overall then, the estimates of child sexual abuse which this national Canadian survey gives are likely to be underestimates.

We should also comment on ethical aspects of a survey which asked respondents to reveal, many of them for the first time, an event of sexual abuse occurring in their childhood. Anyone who has to report to a university of hospital ethics review committee would not be able to carry out research in such a sensitive areas which did not incorporate careful referral and access to therapeutic support for individuals who might be distressed by revealing such information. Nor would the academic or clinical researcher be permitted to use interviewers without background or special training in initial counselling and referral of distressed individuals. Such individual interviewing has, in our experience, overcome the problems of illiteracy in some respondents, a problem which the national survey did not overcome and again may have contributed to an underestimate of sexual abuse, particularly in respondents who left large parts of the national survey questionnaire incomplete. The original analysis, contained in Badgley (1984) included 108 females and 67 males who failed to complete most of the questionnaire on unwanted sexual acts. In sum, a number of respondents failed to complete the questionnaire because of problems of illiteracy, prurience, repression or embarrassment.

3. METHODS OF ANALYSIS

In the tables below we have condensed many pages of computer printout, and have not presented the degrees of statistical freedom (the compound of rows and columns in a cross-classification) for any table. Also, for reasons of space we have not given the exact value of Chi Squared, which varies according to the degrees of freedom. The significance of Chi Squared is presented in terms of the probability of a difference as large as the one presented in the table occurring by chance. Thus, the smaller the probability, the greater the significance. A probability level of .05 or a 1 in 20 chance possibility is assumed as the significance level in this study. The higher the level of Cramer's V, the greater the association between the two variables. V has a theoretical range of 0 (no association) to 1 (perfect association).

Our analysis of the national survey data is exploratory rather than hypothesis testing, since the survey was not designed with any particular hypothesis in mind, being quasi-epidemiological in nature. We have, however compared variables related to assaults as well as some background variables, between age groups within the sexes, and between the sexes; and we have compared background variables between the abused and the non-abused. However, the possible under-estimation of the amount of abuse is a factor working against statistical significance in comparison.

The data have been set up for analysis by the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences, established within the Honeywell Multics System at The University of Calgary. The principal statistical test used was the well-known Chi-Squared test, which is a robust method of testing for non-random variations, and makes no assumptions about the linearity or "normality" of any variable's distribution.

A measure of association derived from Chi Squared is presented in most tables. This measure is Cramer's V, which is derived from Chi Squared by a simple formula. In cross-tabulations with two cells and two columns, V is identical with the well-known statistic Phi. The multiple regression analyses presented do make linear assumptions for data, and for this reason a restricted range of variables has been considered, with a reordering of categories for some variables into a smaller number so that an approximation to a normal distribution can be obtained. These various statistical methods and tests are well described in Nie et al. (1975).

4. RESULTS: FEMALE VICTIMS

The Prevalence and Types of Child Sexual Abuse in Females in the National Canadian Survey

We have defined sexual abuse in childhood in this national, Canadian sample as unwanted touching or interference with the child's genital area, buttocks or breasts which occurred prior to the child's seventeenth birthday. According to this definition, 158 of the 898 females in the national survey for whom reasonably complete information was available, reported abuse of this type, or 17.6 percent. For the various reasons indicated above, this must be regarded as a conservative estimate of the prevalence of child sexual abuse.

Table 1 indicates the types of assaults experienced by the female subjects, compared between subjects aged less than 13, and aged 13 to 16. In general, the types of assault experienced by the two age groups were rather similar, although younger subjects reported more touching of the crotch or vagina, while older subjects reported somewhat more attempted vaginal insertion by the assailant, although younger subjects actually reported more achieved vaginal insertion. This could reflect the lack of ability in younger subjects to resist or limit the assault. This is probably reflected too in the fact that somewhat more of those who were younger when the assaults began endured the assaults for a longer frequency. More older subjects reported touching of breasts; this presumably reflects developmental factors, although it should be noted that as many of the younger victims reported oral-breast contact as did those who were older when the assault began.

Finally, it should be noted that the rate of assault is higher in those who were aged between 13 and 16 at first assault: there were 93 assaults

in total, or an average inception of 23 cases per year at risk in the victims aged 13 to 16, compared with an average inception rate of nine cases per year for the younger victim group, making the conservative assumption that assaults which did not continue past the child's fifth year could not be recalled. It is possible too that some subjects whose assault began when they were less than 13 were subject to fresh assaults (by a new assailant) in their teenage years - but this will not usually be recorded in the present survey. It is known from clinical studies (e.g., Russell, 1986) however, that this is a distinct possibility. The national survey questionnaire asked subjects to report only the first "unwanted sex act." This will bias respondents towards reporting assaults taking place before age 13, even though a more serious assault may have taken place in the teenage years. It will, moreover mean that the prevalence figures for assault occurring between ages 13 and 16 are likely to be underestimates. These results point to the teenage years as being ones of greater risk (in purely statistical terms) for sexual assault.

Trauma Which Resulted From the Assault on Female Subjects

Table 2 presents the comparisons of psychological and physical outcomes for the younger and older female victims. Nearly two-thirds of those aged less than 13 reported immediate emotional trauma as a result of the abuse, compared with 31 percent of the older victims. However, significant physical harm was much more likely to result from the assaults on the older subjects. Some ten percent of the older victims became pregnant as a result of the assaults; not all of these pregnancies were carried to term.

The factors which are associated with a report of significant emotional harm at the time of the assault are reported in Table 3. In this multiple regression analysis (which calculates the correlation of each of the variables considered after its correlation with all the other predictor variables is controlled for) being younger at the time of the assault, the seriousness of the assault, and betrayal of trust in a relationship all combined to predict the individual's report of emotional harm. The physical harm which resulted was relevant only for older victims however. These variables compound one another, and a combination of these factors is much more likely to result in emotional harm.

Unfortunately, the national Canadian survey did not ask questions about emotional or psychological status in the long term, and it remains only a hypothesis that those experiencing emotional turmoil at the time of the assault are those who are currently most likely to have poorer adjustment. This is however a reasonable hypothesis, in the light of a number of clinical studies (Bagley, 1985; Bagley & Ramsay, 1986; Bagley & Young, 1988).

Characteristics of the Assailants of Female Victims

The data (Table 3) show that those who carried out the abuse of these female victims were overwhelmingly male. What is surprising however is that some 13 percent of assailants acted together with other males. There are no significant differences in this respect between younger and older victims. We do know, however, that these "gang" situation usually involved groups of older adolescent males, or older boys. Although many victims were unable to recall or report the age of the aggressor, it is clear that a significant minority (some 30%) of those reporting the age of

assailant reported that the assailant was younger than 18. It could be that age is more likely to be recalled, or recalled accurately when the assailant is a known peer. Nevertheless, these findings are of particular interest and have emerged clearly in some previous adult recall surveys (Bagley & Thurston, 1988). There is a statistically significant association between the age of victim and the age(s) of the assailant(s) - younger victims were assaulted by somewhat younger assailants.

The interpersonal circumstances of the assault did not differ significantly between the two age groupings of victims. For both, physical threat, direct force, and/or verbal threat emerged as the most prevalent reasons. The simple use of authority by an older person was not mentioned, since it was not presented to respondents as an option in the questionnaire.

Table 5 indicates a significant difference in the relationship of victim to the abuser between the two age groups of victims: the younger age group were much more likely to be victimized by a family member or a relative, while the largest category for the older victims was an acquaintance of some kind. The largest difference between the two age groups with respect to family relationship was that more of the younger victims had been assaulted by a father, grandfather or uncle. When these categories of relationship are combined, there is a highly significant difference between the two age groups with respect to biological relationship with the assailant. Overall, 14 cases of sexual assault on a female child by her biological father were identified in this national survey, or 1.6 percent of all of those surveyed. Non-victims were not asked to report their family circumstances in detail so it is not known precisely how many of the non-victims were reared away from their biological father, or

with a stepfather. We cannot therefore estimate the risk factors for sexual assault by a biological father, as opposed to the risk of abuse by a stepfather. The unadjusted estimate of 1.6 percent for father-daughter "incest" in the Canadian population does suggest however that this problem is less prevalent than some clinical workers have asserted; this estimate does however accord with that offered in another random sample of Canadian adults (Bagley & Ramsay, 1986). We do not know the overall prevalence of growing up with a stepfather in the national sample; but is likely that the assault rates reported for stepfathers indicate an increased risk factor for this category of relationship, as Russell (1986) and others have found. If, as some other work has suggested, about 10 percent of Canadian women of any age grew up with a stepfather for some of their lives (Eichler, 1983), then about one in 20 (0.4% as a proportion of 10%) of the present sample of Canadian women were subjected to sexual assault by a stepfather. It should be cautioned however that the theoretical sampling error implicit in the National Canadian survey means that estimates such as these should be treated with caution, and deserve careful replication.

It should be noted that abuse by a total stranger occurred in only some 13 percent of cases of sexual assault. Children and young persons are most likely to be assaulted by someone they know, and in the case of girls under 13, someone they trust as well.

Actions Taken by the Female Victims Following the Assault

The most striking finding with respect to action taken (Table 6) is that the majority of victims took no action - 77 percent of younger victims and 86 percent of older victims did not tell anyone about the assault. However, younger victims (15.4%) were more likely to tell someone

immediately afterwards. The main reason given by the younger victims for not telling anyone was being afraid of the person who carried out the abuse. Stranger abuse was most likely to be reported to someone; abuse by a close family member was least likely to be reported. Being ashamed, and assuming that others would not believe them were also given as reasons for not reporting by the younger victims. The most prevalent reasons given by older victims were being too ashamed, and the matter being too personal to tell anyone.

Those victims who did inform an adult were unlikely to be helped. The numbers are too small to be put in tabular form: only five assailants (to the victim's knowledge) were interviewed by police, but only two were charged, one offender being finally jailed. Three of the female victims who reported continued to be sexually assaulted, even after they had told an adult about the sexual abuse. Failure to report abuse to anyone occurred at fairly even rates in victims of all ages. There is no evidence from this survey that there was a greater tendency to report abuse by victims who were assaulted after 1970 when, in theory at least, recognition and understanding of the problem of child sexual abuse had increased.

Unfortunately, questions were not asked about any treatment received by the victims once they had reported, or how adults (including family members) regarding them following the revelation. We can conclude however, that few of the female victims in this National Canadian survey reported the abuse; and when they did report, there was little evidence that significant action was taken by the authorities.

Demographic Profiles of Female Victims

It is important to establish whether victims are in general similar in demographic terms in those in the general population who were not assaulted. It is often claimed in the literature that child sexual abuse has no barriers in terms of region, social class or ethnicity. While the Canadian data show that this generalization is true, there are also some groups who appear to be somewhat more at risk than others.

In terms of region, there are some significant differences, with a trend for there to be somewhat less sexual abuse of females in the Atlantic and Quebec regions, and slightly more in the other regions of Canada. Large cities are somewhat under-represented in terms of adult females recalling events of sexual abuse in their childhood; but residents of smaller towns are somewhat more likely to recall such abuse. There is no over-representation of those living in highly rural and farm areas, however.

Those women who grew up speaking French or another language than English were somewhat less likely to recall sexual abuse before their seventeenth year. Protestants are over-represented amongst those who recall such abuse, and Catholics are under-represented.

Age is a significant variable associated with a recollection of sexual abuse in childhood. Women who are younger at the time they were interviewed were more likely to report sexual abuse in childhood. Thirty-one percent of women aged 43 or less when interviewed reported sexual abuse occurring before their seventeenth birthday, compared with 15.4 percent of women aged 44 and over. This trend is consistent with some previous reports (e.g., Russell, 1986), but is difficult to interpret. It could mean that younger women are more ready or more able to report events of

sexual abuse in childhood (in which case this survey will have significantly underestimated the overall amount of sexual abuse in the childhood of the older population); or it could mean that the prevalence of child sexual abuse is actually increasing. We discuss this possibility in more detail below.

The greater number of young children and the larger household size, the greater number of years of education completed, and the higher household income in the victims of former abuse are all functions of the different age profiles of the two populations: the victims, being somewhat younger, are at a different stage of the life cycle, which is associated with larger households with children at home.

Three key variables distinguishing victims from non-victims - age, community and linguistic background - have been combined in a multiple regression analysis predicting a history of childhood sexual abuse (Table 15). These variables contribute significantly to an additive model in predicting the prevalence of abuse. Women born in larger urban communities before 1950, and whose home language was French had a rate of abuse of 12.4 percent; but those born in smaller, English-speaking communities after 1950 had an average abuse rate of 35.6 percent. This finding is a most interesting one in historical terms, and we cannot advance any particular explanation for the somewhat higher rate of abuse in smaller, English-speaking communities. However, changes in family structure since 1950 could well explain the higher rate of abuse in the younger respondents.

5. RESULTS: MALE VICTIMS

The Prevalence and Types of Child Sexual Abuse Reported by Males in the National Canadian Survey

Table 8 indicates that 8.2 percent of the 935 males for whom reasonably complete data exist in this National Canadian survey reported sexual abuse before their seventeenth birthday, which involved at least the touching of their genital area or buttocks. The commonest type of assault for both age groups (assault occurring before age 13 or between ages 13 and 16) was a manual and/or an oral assault on the victim's penis. Younger victims were somewhat more likely to be subject to such an assault, while older victims were more likely to experience attempted or achieved insertion by a finger, object or penis into their anus. Younger victims experienced a greater frequency of abuse overall, although there was sub-group of older victims who were subjected to very regular assaults.

Nearly twice as many cases of first time assault were reported to have occurred during the teenage years than cases occurring before age 13. As with females then, adolescence is a particular time of risk for unwanted sexual acts for males.

Trauma Which Resulted from the Assault on Male Subjects

Nineteen percent of male victims experienced significant emotional hurt following the unwanted sexual act; this is a lower proportion than in females. Unlike females, a higher proportion of emotional hurt was experienced in males by the age group 13 to 16 years. Only assault involving the child's anus resulted in significant physical harm.

Characteristics of the Assailants of Male Victims

The data (Table 10) indicate the surprising finding that 18 percent of the assailants on these under-age males were females. In every case where age of assailant is reported, the female was older than the victim. These female assailants included both teenagers and adults. In a number of cases (8%) the assailants were males acting in a group. Thirty percent of assailants were under the age of 18, although this figure must be read in the light of the fact that in a significant number of cases the age of the assailant was not recorded. As with females, assault by peers and acquaintances may have involved a more accurate recall of age. A special analysis of characteristics of assault by individuals aged less than 18 is presented later on in this report.

For males aged twelve or less at the time of the first assault, the most frequent reasons given for participation in the assault was the encouragement of someone other than the assailant. For older victims, the drinking behaviour of the assailant was most frequently cited as a factor (in 16% of cases). Physical force or threat was cited rather infrequently in both victim age groups.

Assault by a stranger occurred somewhat more frequently in younger victims than in older male victims (31 versus 26% of cases). For both groups assault by a stranger had greater frequency than for females. Assault by a close relative was relatively rare, and the most frequently cited groups were acquaintances, family friends, neighbours and peers. There was a significant difference in this respect between the victim age groups: those over 12 were more likely to cite a peer or peers as the assailant(s), and less likely to cite a neighbour. No biological fathers

were cited as assailants; the only categories of relatives identified were uncles and stepfathers.

Actions Taken by the Male Victims Following the Assault

Male victims infrequently told anyone about the assault: 73 percent of the younger victims and 80 percent of the older victims told no one (Table 12). Those who said they did inform someone were generally unforthcoming in the questionnaire about the details; however, no victim reported telling the police or anyone in authority about the assault, and none of the assailants was reportedly charged.

Among the reasons given for not reporting, fear of or threats by the assailants were an infrequently given reason. However, younger victims cited the fact that the assault "didn't bother me" as the most frequent reason, while older victims cited the fact that they were "too ashamed" most frequently. Reports of emotional harm were strongly correlated with these feelings of shame, which were reported by four percent of younger victims, but by 20 percent of older victims.

Demographic Profiles of Male Victims

There are a number of significant socio-demographic differences between victims and non-victims in this national Canadian sample of males. However, the victim population is too small to make comparison between older and younger victims meaningful, in comparison with the remaining population (Table 13).

Some slight but statistically significant regional differences occur: the prevalence of assault reported by males is somewhat higher in Quebec, somewhat lower in British Columbia, and about at par in Ontario, the

Prairies and the Atlantic region when proportions in the sample across the regions are compared. Prevalence rates were significantly lower in rural and small communities, and higher in communities of more than 100,000. Male respondents growing up in a French-speaking and/or a Catholic environment reported significantly more abuse in childhood.

Age of respondent at interview is also a statistically significant predictor of assault experience in males. Subjects born after 1960 (aged between 18 and 23 at the time of interview) reported a higher prevalence of abuse: 25.3 percent of these younger subjects reported serious sexual abuse occurring before their seventeenth birthday. In contrast, 7.6 percent of male respondents aged 44 and over, reported serious sexual abuse in childhood or adolescence. It could be (as with females) that older respondents are more reluctant than younger respondents to talk about or reveal abuse; or the higher prevalence in younger subjects could be a reflection of statistical factors (an unknown sampling error); or the difference could be a real one, and reflects sociological factors not yet identified.

Further statistical analysis (not shown in tables) indicates that the other significant difference between the two groups (abused and non-abused) are a reflection of age differences. The younger respondents (amongst whom abuse victims are over-represented) are more likely to have white collar jobs, have more years of education, somewhat higher incomes, and larger household sizes.

In Table 16 we have undertaken a multiple regression of three variables which predict the prevalence of assault experience in males. These variables both interact with and add to one another in a predictive equation: the overall correlation between these three variables and the

experience of abuse is 0.27. The highest risk factors were for a man now aged 18 to 23 living in a large city in Quebec, and speaking French: the assault rate recalled by such individuals in this survey was 32.1 percent. It should be cautioned, however, that this high prevalence could be an artifact of sampling procedure or sampling size, and replication with a larger sample or younger individuals is necessary before generalizations or firm conclusions can be drawn.

6. COMPARISON OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE VICTIM GROUPS IN THE NATIONAL CANADIAN SURVEY

In Table 14 we present a statistical comparison between male and female victim groups on a number of variables, selected because of their salience or presumed importance. When males are assaulted, they are more likely to be victims of an assault continuing over a longer time. However, stranger assault is more common in males, and these tend to one time assaults. Relatives or close family members are much more likely to be the assailants in the case of females. Males are most at risk from acquaintances and peers, and it is these relationships which tend to be associated with continued, unwanted sexual acts. Significant emotional and/or physical hurt immediately following the abuse was significantly more likely to be reported by female rather than male victims.

No significant differences were found when reported age of assailants was compared: for both males and females, about 30 percent of assailants were aged less than 18. Similar proportions of victims in the male and female groups were aged less than 13 when the first assault occurred. Similar, high proportions in both groups failed to report the assault to anyone. Overall, reasons given for not reporting were generally similar.

A comparison of demographic factors between the male and female victims revealed both similarities and differences. Age profiles were generally similar, with victimization rates being highest in those born after 1959. Regional profiles showed no statistical differences, although proportionately more male than female victims came from Quebec. Significantly more male victims than female victims came from a French-speaking background; and proportionately more female victims came from English-speaking backgrounds. Community of residence also indicated

significant male-female differences: victimization of females was more prevalent in smaller communities; while victimization of males was more prevalent in larger communities, with more than 100,000 inhabitants.

In terms of language and community then, male and female victims show some opposite characteristics. Female victims are more likely to come from English-speaking, smaller communities while male victims are more likely to come from larger, French-speaking communities. It should be stressed that overall, these differences although statistically significant, are relatively small. Sexual abuse of children has occurred, according to this survey to a substantial degree in all communities however large or small, and in all linguistic and religious groups. While the differences observed are of sociological interest, they do not carry any immediate policy implications.

7. SEXUAL ASSAULTS COMMITTED BY MINORS

The fact that about 30 percent of assailants (where age was identified by the victim) were aged less than 18 is a matter of both sociological and substantive interest (Table 17). Prevention strategies may have to address this population differently if it can be shown that the characteristics of this population are different from older offenders. Indeed, it has been argued that adolescence is a crucial time for intervention, at a time before their behaviour becomes confirmed or fixated, and difficult or impossible to treat (Stenson & Anderson, 1987).

Table 18 shows the kinds of assaults which perpetrators of various ages inflicted on female victims: although younger assailants were more likely to indulge in manual assaults on the victim's genitalia, and were slightly less likely to engage in attempted or achieved intercourse or insertion, nevertheless their assaults were as gross or as threatening as those of older assailants. The pattern is somewhat different with regard to assaults on males (Table 19): juvenile assailants were more likely to attempt or achieve anal insertion, and were less likely to indulge in manual or oral sex involving the victim's penis. We can speculate, without direct evidence, that the juvenile assailants were often using their victims as a proxy for unavailable female partners, while the adult assailants had a more direct sexual interest in their victims and used methods of assault more traditionally associated with adult pedophilia.

Table 20 summarizes the statistically significant associations of assault by a juvenile (aged less than 18) on a female victim aged less than 17. First of all, there is some consonance between age of victim and age of assailant: young assailants are more likely to choose as victims girls younger than themselves, so the victims aged less than 13 were more likely

to be assaulted by a juvenile (who were usually teenagers). Adult assailants were more likely to be a stranger or a family member than a juvenile assailant; juvenile assailants with female victims tended to be either someone known to the victim or a cousin (but not a sibling). Furthermore, assault by an adult (particularly by a relative) was most likely to result in emotional hurt to the victim. Although the seriousness of the assault reported by female victims did not differ across age categories of abusers, it is clear (table not shown) that assaults by an adult relative were those most likely to continue over a longer period of time, and it was these prolonged assaults which resulted in the most emotional harm reported by the victim.

The assaults by juveniles on females were more likely to be one time or infrequent assaults, and were more likely to result in threats of violence if the victim reported the event. Victims were, in fact, somewhat more likely to report an assault by an adult. Some interesting demographic associations of being the victim of a juvenile occurred in these female respondents. Victims of a younger assailant were more likely to have completed fewer years of education, and to have a currently lower occupational status, and to be currently living in a small town (less than 10,000) or in a rural area. There may be some ecological factors in the type of peer group culture in which the victims of juvenile assailants grew up.

Victims of a juvenile assailant were significantly younger at time of interview than were victims of an adult: the reasons for this are not clear, but it could mean that assaults by juveniles are increasing, so that younger respondents report more such incidents. Finally, it should be

noted that juvenile assailants were more likely to act in groups, in a "gang rape" type of situation.

The situation with regard to male victims (Table 21) shows both similarities and differences when comparisons are made with female victims (Table 20). Male victims of assault by juveniles also completed fewer years of education, and currently have lower occupational status, and lower income. They too are currently younger and are more likely than victims of adults to be resident in a small town (though not in a rural or farm setting). Male victims who were under 13 at the time of the assault were more likely than older victims to have been assaulted by a teenaged juvenile. Most of the female assailants were also juveniles.

Adult assailants with male victims were more likely to use persuasion or gifts to achieve their assault, while juveniles were more likely to use force. Despite this, assault by an adult was more likely to result in emotional harm to the male victim. This seems to reflect relationship to the abuser: assault by an adult involving "gentle" persuasion, bribery and emotional manipulation was more likely to continue for some time, and more likely to result in emotional hurt. Juvenile assailants used more threats and brutality, and more often attempted or achieved anal insertion. But it was the more subtle, rather more gentle assault by an adult relative or family friend which resulted in the most emotional harm to male victims.

8. CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The Canadian national survey of adult experiences of sexual abuse occurring in childhood has provided a valuable picture of the nature and extent of the problem; and although the survey is historical in nature, the survey does have some implications for current social policy.

The survey is essentially historical in that it asks about events of abuse which happened in the past, sometimes long ago. The earliest event of abuse in this survey was reported by a woman in her seventies, and took place in 1908, while the latest event of abuse occurred in 1981. The majority of abusive events occurred after 1950, and respondents aged 18 through 20 actually reported the highest number of abusive events. This means that although child sexual abuse is certainly not a new problem in society, it may be occurring with greater frequency today (although older individuals might be more unwilling to recall abuse). We have some detailed profiles of abuse from this survey occurring as recently as the mid and late 1970s, and the early 1980s, and this information certainly has implications for current social policy. The proportion of sexual abuse by stepfathers and other close family members (but not by biological fathers) seems to have increased during the century. Overall, the amount of abuse by strangers seems to have remained fairly constant during the present century.

For a variety of reasons (both those inherent in adult recall surveys and those specific to the Canadian survey) the figures provided are almost certainly an underestimate of the amount of abuse. A particular problem with the Canadian survey is that since it asked only about the first event of sexual abuse in childhood involving contact, rather than any subsequent

and potentially more serious incident, it will have tended to underestimate the amount of serious abuse in the population. In addition, the method of administering the questionnaires and the failure to control for any reading or comprehension difficulties experienced by subjects may have contributed to under-reporting of abuse, or non-completion of the questionnaire, factors which may be associated with a further underestimate of the amount of child sexual abuse of children recalled by Canadian adults. We cannot say that the estimate is one of the amount of child sexual abuse in Canada in the present century, since an unknown proportion of subjects may have spent their childhood years outside of Canada, and immigrated to this country at a later date, after the abuse occurred. Despite these problems of estimating the true rate of past abuse, the Canadian national survey does indicate a significant amount of sexual abuse occurring in the childhood of both males and females: 8.2 percent of males, and 17.6 percent of females reported abuse (involving at least unwanted sexual touching) occurring before their seventeenth year. These estimates are compatible with those obtained in number of community surveys carried out in Canada and the United States in recent years.

One feature which the abuse experience has in common in the Canadian survey, between subjects of different ages and sexes, is that reporting of the abuse to an adult was a relatively rare occurrence. When reporting did occur, it was in turn unusual for any effective action to be taken against the abuser in terms of therapy or action by the criminal justice system, although the abuse usually (but not always) stopped after the victim reported. Victims whose abuse occurred in the 1970s and early 1980s were no more likely to report abuse than were individuals whose victimization occurred in earlier decades. Whatever recognition of the

problem has been achieved in recent years, any change in thinking and attitudes by professionals had not affected the victims to a noticeable degree. Indeed, any revolution in attitudes and practice must have occurred since January 1983, after this survey was undertaken! It will be valuable to replicate this survey with a new sample aged between 18 and 25, to see if there are changes in the way in which professionals have handled cases, and in overall prevalence. Any decrease in prevalence identified in young adults in random samples of the population would seem to be a useful indicator of any progress made in tackling the problem of child sexual abuse, which we know from other evidence has many social and psychological costs for victims.

While the national survey has provided some valuable estimates of the overall prevalence of sexual abuse experienced in the childhood of adults in the Canadian population, the survey missed some valuable opportunities to gather information which would have been both easy to obtain, and which would also have provided valuable information about the context, nature and meaning of the abuse. It would have been easy to ask about family structure and circumstances at the time of the abuse, and any separations antecedent to the abuse; but no such questions were included. The demographic information collected relates to current status, not to past circumstances (with the single exception of language spoken in childhood). We have to make the presumption, for example, that those living in a rural or small town community likely grew up in such a community. Nor has any information been gathered which would give us any clue to adult adjustment, such as consultations with a medical practitioner for any psychological problem, or a nervous or mental illness.

It would have been simple to extend the question about a negative emotional reaction at the time of the unwanted sexual act to a question about long-term or more permanent negative feelings; but this was not done. The design and analysis of the original questionnaire, and its analysis and presentation in the Badgley Committee Report give evidence of haste and pressure - this is almost inevitable, given the huge scope of the Committee's mandate, and the urgent need to report by a certain date.

Two findings from the national survey deserve comment and interpretation, since they have some implications for current policy formation. These findings relate to teenagers as victims, and as assailants. According to the national survey, the majority of under-age victims (both male and female) were aged between 13 and 16, and rates of victimization were also greatest in this age group. This finding has a number of implications for prevention strategies, including educational programs addressed to both potential victims and potential abusers. The survey data also show that some 30 percent of the assailants of both sexes are aged under 18. Sometimes too, teenagers act with others in groups in the assault of younger boys and girls. It is possible that some of the lone, teenage assailants (including the female teenagers who assault younger males) were themselves victims. Recent clinical studies have suggested this possibility, but we have no way of assessing this from the national survey data. There are implications from the findings however for intervention and education programs aimed at adolescents, including education which might enhance non-sexist behaviour and attitudes, and inhibit or control the more brutal expressions of male aggression and sexuality. It is implied too that schools are useful arenas for the early detection and appropriate referral of victims of sexual abuse, and that special training for teachers,

and resources in terms of counsellors (and child care workers in elementary schools) would be valuable.

The increasing prevalence of child sexual abuse by stepfathers which the results of this survey imply has a number of implications for family policy, including educational and support programs which can advise and support women and men entering second marriages and relationships, as well as a strengthening of existing family counselling services.

While some significant trends have emerged in the survey data with respect to the demographic backgrounds of abuse victims, these differences are too small and too difficult to interpret to have any policy significance, although they are intriguing enough to invite further research. What can be said is that the problem of child sexual abuse in Canada, from the evidence of the national survey is a widespread problem, and invites a major commitment by health and welfare programs and services. It is a problem which seriously affects all regions, and potentially threatens all types of individuals from whatever social class, ethnic, linguistic or religious background. Moreover, the problem seems to have been increasing in recent years, in so much as younger respondents report a higher prevalence of sexual abuse in childhood.

Adult recall surveys are a valuable research technique which can give us information about changes in prevalence in recent years, changes in reporting rates, and changing and potentially improved ways in which victims are regarded, handled and treated. In our judgement, repeated surveys of random samples of young adults are by far the most valuable research technique and treatment of victims. Such research surveys can, in addition, explore the issues of long-term psychological harm to victims

as well as the interesting variations in socio-demographic background between victims and non-victims.

Table 1

Nature of Assaults in 158 Female Victims of Unwanted Sexual Acts Prior to Age 17 (in 898 Female Respondents in a National Canadian Survey)

Type of Assault	In 65 Subjects Aged Less 13	In 93 Subjects Aged 13-16	Cramer's V	Significance
Breasts touched	61.5%	80.6%	.36	.000
Crotch/vagina touched	56.9%	34.4%	.27	.000
Buttocks touched	38.5%	43.0%	.20	.036
Anus touched	10.8%	1.1%	.23	.012
Vagina kissed/licked	7.7%	4.3%	.10	.421
Breasts kissed/licked	6.2%	6.5%	.02	.832
Anus kissed/licked	1.5%	0%	.06	.637
Attempted insertion of finger, object or penis into vagina	30.8%	37.6%	.17	.050
Attempted insertion of finger, object or penis into anus	4.6%	3.2%	.05	.733
Achieved insertion of finger, object or penis into vagina	18.5%	15.4%	.12	.406
Achieved insertion of finger, object or penis into anus	7.6%	2.1%	.20	.058
<u>Frequency</u>				
Once	33.8%	49.5%	.19 (combined categories)	.055
Twice	18.5%	19.3%		
3 - 5 times	18.5%	18.2%		
6 - 9 times	15.4%	6.5%		
10+ times	13.8%	6.5%		

Note: Cramer's V is a measure of association derived from Chi-squared. Calculations by SPSS (Nie et al., 1975).

Table 3 Immediate Trauma Following Sexual Assault in Childhood
In 172 Females in a National Random Sample
Of 898 Canadian Females

Variable	In 65 Subjects Less Than 13	In 93 Subjects 13-16	Cramer's V	Significance
Significant emotional hurt	64.6%	30.9%	.38	.000
Significant physical harm	10.8%	35.5%	.24	.005
Bruises and scratches	6.1%	11.8%	.11	.172
Cuts and bites	0%	2.1%	.05	.219
Irritation or redness of anus or vagina	0%	9.7%	.20	.044
Bruised and torn vagina or anus	3.1%	2.1%	.04	.318
Infections of vagina or anus	0%	2.1%	.05	.478
Discharge and bleeding from vagina	4.6%	3.2%	.03	.496
Became pregnant	2.1%	9.7%	.16	.049

Note: Cramer's V is a measure of association derived from Chi-squared. Calculations by SPSS (Nie et al., 1975).

Table 3 Multiple Regression Analysis of Factors Predicting
Immediate Emotional Hurt Resulting From Sexual Assault
In Childhood in 867 Canadian Females

Variable	Simple r	Partial r	Combined r
Age at which assault first occurred	.38	.38	.38
Seriousness of assault(s) (touching/ attempted insertion/achieved insertion)	.35	.17	.42
Physical harm or pregnancy resulted from assault(s)	.32	-.14	.44
Relationship (stranger/acquaintance/ relative/close relative)	.13	.12	.47

Note: A number of cases had to be excluded, since they contained missing data. Correlations of 0.1 and above are significant at the one percent level or beyond. Regression analysis carried out by SPSS, Version 8.0a (Nie et al., 1975). No particular order of entry of variables into the regression equation was specified.

Table 4

Assailants and Circumstances of Sexual Assault
In Childhood in 158 Females in a
National Random Sample of 898 Canadian Females

Variable	In 65 Subjects Less Than 13	In 93 Subjects 13-16	Cramer's V	Significance
Assailant was male	78.5%	84.9%	.13 (combined categories)	.567
Assailant was female	0%	2.1%		
Assailants more than one male	18.5%	9.7%		
Assailants male and female	0%	1.1%		
Did not state	3%	2.2%		
<u>Estimated Age of Assailant</u>				
14 or less	12.3%	4.3%	.30 (combined categories)	.002
15 to 17	12.3%	30.1%		
18 to 24	6.1%	24.7%		
25+	7.6%	16.1%		
Did not state	61.7%	24.8%		
<u>Estimated Age of Second Assailant</u>				
14 or less	3.1%	0%	.11 (combined categories)	.213
15 to 17	4.6%	2.1%		
18 to 24	1.5%	6.4%		
25+	10.8%	4.3%		
Not stated/not relevant	80%	87.2%		
<u>Interpersonal Circumstances</u>				
Encouraged by the person	6.2%	5.4%	.13 (combined categories)	.221
Encouraged by someone else	0%	7.7%		
Promised a gift or favour	10.8%	5.4%		
Threatened verbally	15.4%	9.7%		
Threatened with a weapon	1.5%	1.1%		
Physically forced to do it	15.4%	11.8%	.14	.175
Assailant had been drinking alcohol	4.6%	12.9%		
<u>Any physical threat or force</u>	15.4%	12.9%		

Table 5

Relationship to Assailant, in 158 Child Victims of
Sexual Assault in a National Random Sample
Of 898 Canadian Females

Relationship	In 65 Subjects Aged Less Than 13	In 93 Subjects Aged 13-16	Cramer's V	Significance
<u>Assailant Was:</u>				
A stranger	12.3%	16.4%	.48 (combined categories)	.001
An employer	0%	4.3%		
A co-worker	0%	0%		
An acquaintance	0%	25.8%		
A neighbour	15.4%	4.3%		
A family friend	4.6%	7.5%		
A boyfriend/girlfriend	1.5%	12.9%		
A relative	32.4%	8.4%		
A close family member	33.8%	20.4%		
<u>If A Close Family Member Or Relative:</u>				
Natural father	18.5%	2.1%	.07 (combined categories)	.181
Stepfather	9.2%	4.3%		
Natural brother	7.7%	1.1%		
Step-brother	0%	0%		
Foster brother	3.2%	0%		
Grandfather	4.6%	1.1%		
Uncle	23.2%	17.0%		
Cousin	3.2%	1.1%		
Other relative	4.6%	2.1%		

Table 6

Actions Taken in Relation to Sexual Assault
In Childhood in 158 Females in a National Random Sample
Of 898 Canadian Females

Variable	In 65 Subjects Aged Less Than 13	In 93 Subjects Aged 13-16	Cramer's V	Significance
Did not report/tell about assault to anyone	76.9%	86.0%		
Told someone immediately afterwards	15.4%	5.4%		
Told someone within 1 day	0%	2.1%		
Told someone within 3 days	0%	2.1%	.29	.001
Told someone within one week	0%	0%	(combined categories)	
Told someone after more than one week	3.1%	2.1%		
Told a family member	18.5%	9.6%	.17	.052
Told a friend	1.5%	4.6%	.07	.650
Told police	2.1%	1.1%	.08	.551
Told clinic/hospital	0%	0%	--	--
Told family doctor	1.5%	3.2%	.09	.419
Told teacher/counsellor	0%	0%	--	--
Told social worker	3.1%	0%	.12	.194
Told distress centre/rape centre/help line	0%	0%	--	--
Told other person (priest, lawyer, nurse, other)	0%	0%	--	--

Note: More than one person sometimes told

Reasons for not reporting

Variable	In 65 Subjects Aged Less Than 13	In 93 Subjects Aged 13-16	Cramer's V	Significance
Too personal a matter to tell anyone	9.2%	20.4%		
Afraid I wouldn't be believed	13.8%	9.6%		
Too ashamed	18.5%	21.5%		
Too young to know it was wrong	15.4%	2.1%	.25	.004
Felt partly responsible	7.7%	11.8%	(combined categories)	
Wasn't important enough to do anything	10.8%	3.2%		
Didn't bother me that much	3.1%	2.1%		

Table 6 (Continued)

Variable	In 65 Subjects Aged Less Than 13	In 93 Subjects Aged 13-16	Cramer's V	Significance
Didn't want to hurt family members	6.1%	10.7%		
Didn't want to hurt person who did it	4.6%	10.7%		
Afraid of person who did it	23.1%	10.7%		
Threatened not to tell by the person who did it	6.1%	6.4%		
Too angry to do anything	1.5%	4.3%		

(Note: More than one reason for not reporting often given)

Table 7

Demographic Associations of Unwanted Sexual Acts in Childhood,
In a National Sample of 898 Canadian Women

Variable	In 65 subjects Aged less than 13 when assault Occurred	In 93 subjects Aged 13-16 when assault Occurred	In All Remaining 740 Subjects	Cramer's V	P
<u>Region</u>					
Atlantic	6.2%	9.7%	10.8%	.09	.013
Quebec	21.5%	24.7%	27.8%	(combined categories)	
Ontario	41.5%	35.5%	35.5%		
Prairies	15.4%	19.3%	16.2%		
British Columbia	15.4%	10.8%	9.7%		
<u>Urban-Rural</u>					
Community 500,000+	32.3%	34.4%	37.8%	.16	.008
100,000 - 500,000	18.5%	15.0%	14.0%	(combined categories)	
10,000 - 100,000	10.8%	12.9%	14.9%		
1,000 - 10,000	13.8%	15.0%	10.1%		
Under 1,000 and farm	24.6%	22.7%	23.2%		
<u>Language of Childhood</u>					
English	73.8%	79.6%	64.8%	.19	.000
French	20%	17.2%	26.8%	(combined categories)	
Other	6.2%	3.2%	8.4%		
<u>Marital Status</u>					
Single	23.1%	19.3%	16.7%	.17	.000
Married	56.9%	61.3%	69.6%	(combined categories)	
Co-habiting	3.1%	7.6%	3.5%		
Widowed	0%	2.1%	4.8%		
Separated/Divorced	16.9%	9.7%	3.6%		
<u>Religious Preference</u>					
Protestant	55.4%	46.3%	43.2%	.16	.005
Jewish	0%	0%	0.9%	(combined categories)	
Roman Catholic	32.3%	40.9%	47.5%		
Other	0%	5.4%	1.3%		
None	10.8%	7.5%	7.1%		

Table 7 (Continued)

Subject's Occupation

Prof/Executive	9.2%	7.5%	11.8%	.11	.369
Sales/Clerical	32.3%	31%	26.2%	(combined categories)	
Manual Work/Other	9.2%	18.3%	17.9%		
Not currently employed/ unknown	49.3%	43.2%	44.1%		

Education

Grades 0-8	13.3%	8.7%	12.6%	.10	.051
Grades 9-13 completed	60%	54.3%	54.4%	(combined categories)	
Post-secondary but, not completed university	10%	26.1%	12.8%		
Completed university	16.7%	10.9%	8.1%		

Household Size
(including respondent)

1	4.7%	4.3%	7.9%	.11	.055
2	12.3%	25.8%	22.1%	(combined categories)	
3	24.6%	12.9%	21.7%		
4	33.8%	45.2%	26.9%		
5+	24.8%	11.8%	21.4%		

Children Under 7

0	40.0%	49.2%	64.7%	.20	.009
1	30.8%	25.8%	21.2%	(combined categories)	
2	12.3%	17.2%	12.3%		
3+	16.9%	7.8%	1.7%		

Year of Birth

Prior to 1939	20.0%	19.4%	31.9%	.22	.001
1940 to 1949	33.8%	24.7%	25.6%	(combined categories)	
1950 to 1959	27.7%	33.3%	14.3%		
1960 to 1965	18.5%	22.6%	14.7%		

Household Income

Less than \$10,000	21.5%	17.2%	13.5%	.12	.011
\$10,000 - \$14,999	6.1%	11.8%	13.5%	(combined categories)	
\$15,000 - \$19,999	12.3%	17.2%	15.5%		
\$20,000 - \$29,999	24.6%	26.9%	24.2%		
\$30,000 - \$39,999	7.9%	12.9%	16.1%		
\$40,000+	27.6%	14.0%	17.3%		

Table 9

Nature of Assaults in 77 Male Victims of Unwanted Sexual Acts Prior to Age 17 (in 935 Male Respondents in a National Canadian Survey)

Type of Assault	In 26 Subjects Aged Less Than 13	In 51 Subjects Aged 13-16	Cramer's V	Significance
Penis touched	80.8%	64.7%	.30	.017
Buttocks touched	26.9%	25.5%	.04	.272
Anus touched	15.4%	5.9%	.12	.178
Kissed/licked penis	30.8%	27.4%	.04	.192
Kissed/licked anus	3.8%	5.9%	.09	.389
Attempted insertion of finger, object or penis into anus	26.3%	29.4%	.03	.200
Achieved insertion of finger, object or penis into anus	11.5%	13.7%	.02	.190
<u>Frequency</u>				
Once	38.5%	19.4%	.30 (combined categories)	.009
Twice	11.5%	13.7%		
3 - 5 times	15.3%	21.6%		
6 - 9 times	19.2%	3.9%		
10+ times	15.5%	31.4%		

Note: Cramer's V is a measure of association derived from Chi-squared. Calculations by SPSS (Nie et al., 1975).

Table 10

Immediate Trauma Following Sexual Assault in Childhood In 77 Male Victims Prior to Age 17 (In 935 Male Respondents in a National Canadian Study)

Variable	In 26 Subjects Aged Less Than 13	In 51 Subjects Aged 13-16	Cramer's V	Significance
Significant emotional hurt	15.4%	21.6%	.15	.225
Significant physical harm	7.7%	11.8%	.06	.484
Bruises, scratches, cuts or bites	0%	0%	--	--
Irritation, bruising or redness of anus	7.7%	9.7%	.04	.521
Infection	0%	2.0%	.05	.579

Note: Cramer's V is a measure of association derived from Chi-squared. Calculations by SPSS (Nie et al., 1975).

Table 10

Assailants and Circumstances of Sexual Assault in Childhood
In 77 Male Victims in a National Random Sample of
935 Canadian Males

Variable	In 26 Subjects Aged Less Than 13	In 51 Subjects Aged 13-16	Cramer's V	Significance of Chi-Squared
Assailant was male	61.5%	60.8%		
Assailant was female	15.4%	19.6%		
Assailants more than one male	11.5%	5.9%	.18	.417
Assailants more than one female	0%	3.9%	(combined categories)	
Did not state	11.5%	9.8%		
<u>Estimated Age of Assailant</u>				
14 or less	11.5%	2.0%		
15 - 17	30.8%	21.6%		
18 - 24	26.9%	29.4%	.26	.213
25+	11.5%	9.8%	(combined categories)	
Did not state	19.3%	37.2%		
<u>Estimated Age of Second Assailant</u>				
14 or less	0%	0%		
15 - 17	0%	2.0%		
18 - 24	0%	0%	.12	.420
25+	11.5%	3.9%	(combined categories)	
Did not state/not relevant	88.5%	94.1%		
<u>Interpersonal Circumstances</u>				
Persuaded by the person	7.7%	13.7%		
Encouraged by someone else	15.4%	9.8%		
Promised gift or favour	3.8%	7.8%		
Threatened verbally	2.8%	2.0%	.16	.111
Threatened with a weapon	0%	2.0%	(combined categories)	
Physically forced	7.7%	2.0%		
Assailant had been drinking	0%	15.7%		
Any physical force or threat	10.5%	6.0%		

Table 11

Relationship to Assailant, in 77 Male Victims of Sexual Assault
In a National Random Sample of 935 Canadian Males

Relationship	In 26 Subjects Aged Less Than 13	In 51 Subjects Aged 13-16	Cramer's V	Significance
<u>Assailant Was:</u>				
A stranger	30.7%	25.5%		
An employer	0%	2.0%	.24	.042
A co-worker	0%	2.0%	(combined categories)	
An acquaintance	30.9%	23.5%		
A neighbour	19.2%	0%		
A family friend	3.8%	17.6%		
A boyfriend/girlfriend	0%	17.6%		
A relative	7.7%	1.8%		
A close family member	7.7%	0%		
<u>If a Close Family Member or Relative</u>				
Stepfather	7.7%	0%		
Uncle	7.7%	9.8%	.15	.165
Cousin	0%	2.0%		

Table 12

Actions Taken in Relation to Sexual Assault in Childhood
In 77 Male Victims in a National Random Sample of 935 Canadian Males

Variable	In 26 Subjects Aged Less Than 13	In 51 Subjects Aged 13-16	Cramer's V	Significance
Did not report/tell about assault to anyone	73.1%	80.4%		
Told someone immedi- ately after	7.7%	0%		
Told someone within one day	0%	0%	.18	.221
Told someone within three days	0%	3.9%	(combined categories)	
Told someone within one week	7.7%	3.9%		
Told someone after more than one week	7.7%	3.9%		
Did not state	3.8%	7.9%		
<u>Person Told:</u>				
Family member	0%	2.0%		
Told a friend	0%	0%		
Told police	0%	0%		
Told clinic/hospital	0%	0%		
Told family doctor	0%	0%		
Told teacher/counsellor	0%	0%		
Told social worker	0%	0%		
Did not state	26.9%	17.6%		

Table 12 (Continued)

Variable	In 26 Subjects Aged Less Than 13	In 51 Subjects Aged 13-16	Cramer's V	Significance
<u>Reasons For Not Reporting:</u>				
Too personal a matter to tell anyone	7.7%	17.6%		
Afraid I wouldn't be believed	7.7%	5.9%		
Too ashamed	3.9%	19.6%	.20	.056
Too young to know it was wrong	7.7%	0%	(combined categories)	
Didn't bother me that much wasn't important	23.1%	11.8%		
Didn't want to hurt family members	3.8%	3.9%		
Didn't want to hurt person who did it	15.4%	3.9%		
Afraid of person who did it	7.7%	0%		
Threatened not to tell by the person who did it	0%	0%		
Too angry to do anything	0%	3.9%		
(Note: More than one reason for not reporting often given)				

Table 13

Demographic Associations of Unwanted Sexual Acts in Childhood
In a National Sample of 935 Canadian Males

Variable	In 77 Subjects Aged Less Than When Assault Occurred	In All Remaining 858 Subjects	Cramer's V	P
<u>Region</u>				
Atlantic	9.1%	10.5%	.09 (combined categories)	.041
Quebec	29.9%	26.2%		
Ontario	33.8%	34.6%		
Prairies	18.2%	16.5%		
British Columbia	9.1%	12.1%		
<u>Urban-Rural</u>				
Community 500,000+	42.9%	37.6%	.10 (combined categories)	.027
100,000 - 500,000	19.5%	12.8%		
10,000 - 100,000	20.4%	14.7%		
1,000 - 10,000	6.5%	9.7%		
Under 1,000 and farm	20.8%	25.2%		
<u>Language of Childhood</u>				
English	63.6%	65.0%	.11 (combined categories)	.008
French	29.9%	24.9%		
Other	6.5%	10.1%		
<u>Marital Status</u>				
Single	39.0%	26.1%	.18 (combined categories)	.000
Married	50.6%	64.2%		
Co-habiting	5.2%	4.7%		
Widowed	0%	1.9%		
Separated/divorced	5.2%	3.1%		
<u>Religious Preference</u>				
Protestant	32.5%	40.8%	.09 (combined categories)	.051
Jewish	1.3%	0.6%		
Roman Catholic	48.0%	42.1%		
Other	3.9%	1.8%		
None	14.3%	14.7%		

Table 13 (Continued)

Variable	In 77 Subjects Aged Less Than When Assault Occurred	In All Remaining 858 Subjects	Cramer's V	P
<u>Subject's Occupation</u>				
Prof/Executive	37.7%	35.5%	.14 (combined categories)	.000
Sales/Clerical	18.9%	8.5%		
Manual work/Other	35.1%	38.7%		
Not currently employed/unknown	10.3%	17.3%		
<u>Education</u>				
Grades 0-8	3.9%	11.0%	.11 (combined categories)	.002
Grades 9-13 completed	40.3%	40.6%		
Post-secondary, but not completed university	27.2%	25.3%		
Completed university	28.6%	23.1%		
<u>Household Size (Including Respondent)</u>				
1	7.8%	7.3%	.14 (combined categories)	.000
2	22.1%	22.6%		
3	14.3%	22.0%		
4	23.4%	25.0%		
5+	32.4%	23.0%		
<u>Children Under 7</u>				
0	68.8%	68.6%	.08 (combined categories)	.097
1	25.0%	17.5%		
2	5.2%	11.4%		
3+	0%	2.5%		
<u>Year of Birth</u>				
Prior to 1939	24.7%	29.2%	.14 (combined categories)	.019
1940 - 1949	19.5%	23.1%		
1950 - 1959	29.9%	30.3%		
1960 - 1965	25.9%	9.2%		
<u>Household Income</u>				
Less than \$10,000	11.7%	11.2%	.05 (combined categories)	.361
\$10,000 - \$14,999	10.4%	10.2%		
\$15,000 - \$19,999	13.0%	13.7%		
\$20,000 - \$29,999	20.8%	26.2%		
\$30,000 - \$39,999	19.5%	18.2%		
\$40,000+	24.6%	20.5%		

Table 14

Selected Differences Between Males and Females Reporting
Sexual Abuse in Childhood in a National Canadian Sample

Variable	In 158 Females	In 77 Males	Cramer's V	Significance
<u>Frequency of Assault:</u>				
Once	43.0%	32.5%	.27 (combined categories)	.009
Twice	19.0%	13.0%		
3 - 5 times	18.3%	19.5%		
6 - 9 times	10.1%	9.1%		
10+ times	9.6%	25.9%		
<u>Assailant Was:</u>				
A stranger	14.6%	27.3%	.33 (combined categories)	.002
A known person, not a relative	42.4%	59.7%		
A relative	18.3%	10.4%		
A close family member	24.7%	2.6%		
<u>Assault Resulted In:</u>				
Significant emotional hurt	44.9%	19.5%	.40	.001
Significant physical harm	19.0%	10.4%	.23	.023
<u>Estimated Age of Assailant</u>				
13 or less	7.6%	5.2%	.20 (combined categories)	.219
14 - 17	23.4%	24.7%		
18+	29.7%	38.5%		
Did not state	39.3%	31.6%		
<u>Subject's Age at First Assault</u>				
12 or less	41.1%	33.8%	.08 (combined categories)	.351
13 to 16	58.9%	66.2%		
<u>Reporting of Assault</u>				
Did not tell anyone	82.3%	77.9%	.05	.751
Afraid I wouldn't be believed	11.4%	6.5%	.07	.439
Too ashamed to tell anyone	20.2%	14.3%	(combined categories)	

Table 14 (Continued)

Variable	In 158 Females	In 77 Males	Cramer's V	Significance
<u>Region</u>				
Atlantic	8.2%	9.1%	.08 (combined categories)	.277
Quebec	23.4%	29.9%		
Ontario	38.0%	33.8%		
Prairies	17.7%	18.2%		
British Columbia	12.7%	9.1%		
<u>Urban-Rural</u>				
Community 500,000+	33.5%	42.9%	.12 (combined categories)	.049
100,000 - 500,000	16.5%	19.5%		
10,000 - 100,000	12.0%	10.4%		
1,000 - 10,000	14.6%	6.5%		
Under 1,000 and farm	23.4%	20.8%		
<u>Language in Childhood</u>				
English	77.2%	63.6%	.15 (combined categories)	.037
French	18.3%	29.9%		
Other	4.4%	6.5%		
<u>Religious Preference</u>				
Protestant	50.0%	32.5%	.17 (combined categories)	.022
Jewish	0%	1.3%		
Roman Catholic	37.3%	48.0%		
Other	3.2%	3.9%		
None	8.9%	14.3%		
<u>Year of Birth</u>				
Prior to 1939	24.7%	20.2%	.09 (combined categories)	.137
1940 - 1949	19.5%	28.5%		
1950 - 1959	29.9%	31.0%		
1960 - 1965	25.9%	20.3%		

Table 15

Multiple Regression Analysis of Demographic Predictors of Sexual Assault in Childhood in 847 Women
In a National Canadian Survey

Variable	Simple r	Partial r	Combined r
Year of Birth: born before 1940 versus born 1940 or later	.26	.26	.20
Community: 10,000 plus versus smaller than 10,000	.14	.11	.27
Language: French versus English or other	.13	.10	.31

Note: Regression carried out by SPSS version 8.0a (Nie et al., 1975). Correlations of 0.1 and above are significant at the one percent level or beyond. Some cases with missing data were excluded.

Table 16

Multiple Regression Analysis of Demographic Predictors of Sexual Assault in Childhood in 895 Men
In a National Canadian Survey

Variable	Simple r	Partial r	Combined r
Year of birth: born before 1960 versus born 1960 or later	.23	.23	.23
Community: 100,000 plus versus smaller than 100,000	-.12	-.10	.18
Language: French versus English or other	-.11	-.08	.27

Note: Regression carried out by SPSS version 8.0a (Nie et al., 1975). Correlations of 0.1 and above are significant at the one percent level or beyond. Some cases with missing data were excluded.

Note: For purposes of this analysis, age of assailants was dichotomized according to the groups: Juvenile Assailant (aged less than 18) versus Adult Assailant (aged 18 or more) -Ns of 49 versus 49. Sixty-two cases in which age of assailant was not known were excluded from the analysis.

Cramer's V (Phi for 2x2 tables) is a measure of association derived from Chi-squared (Nie et al., 1975). In the above table, a value of 0.22 is significant at the 5 percent level, and a correlation of 0.30 is significant at the 1 percent level or beyond.

Non-Significant Variables: Persuaded or encouraged by assailant; gift by assailant; drinking behaviour of assailant; drug use of assailant; physical injuries or infections resulting from assailant; pregnancy resulting from assault; non-reporting because of shame, or "too personal," or "felt responsible" or "too young to understand" or "did not want to hurt family member" or "too angry to do anything"; whether the offence reported; type of agency reported to; current marital status; language used (French or English); region; province.

Note: For purposes of this analysis, age of assailants was dichotomized according to the groups: Juvenile Assailant (aged less than 18) versus Adult Assailant (18 or more) - Ns of 23 versus 30. Twenty-four cases in which age of assailant was not known were excluded from this analysis.

Cramer's V (Phi for 2x2 tables) is a measure of association derived from Chi-squared (Nie et al., 1975). In the above table, a value of 0.30 is significant at the 5 percent level, and value of 0.39 is significant at the 1 percent level or beyond.

Non-Significant Variables: Assailants use of verbal threat; drink or drug use by assailant, physical harm resulting from assault; reported the assault; agency reported to; reasons for not reporting; current marital status; linguistic community; religious status; region or province; sex of assailant.

APPENDIX A

Is Child Sexual Abuse Increasing in Prevalence? Implications for Clinical and Prevention Programs, and Future Research

We have reviewed studies of sexual abuse of children published between 1978 and 1984 in detail (Bagley, 1985). These studies have indicated that sexual abuse of children is much more common than previously supposed; moreover, special populations (e.g., runaways, delinquents, children with behaviour problems, and adults with a variety of psychological and interpersonal problems) report a significantly higher prevalence of sexual abuse in their childhood years than do groups without these behavioural problems. It is inferred from these comparison studies that child sexual abuse has had a significant causal role in the development of these psychological problems, although the methodologies employed usually cannot prove such as assertion conclusively. For example, in a study of 45 ex-prostitutes (Bagley & Young, 1987) we found that over 70 percent had experienced serious sexual abuse in childhood, prior to entering prostitution, compared with 29 percent in a control group. However, less than half of the former prostitutes attributed their entry to prostitution directly to their experience of child sexual abuse. Nevertheless, detailed accounts of the hazards of street life for adolescents do lead us to the view that various kinds of abuse in the home, either singly or in combination are important causal factors in the entry to prostitution (Bagley, 1985; Bagley & Young, 1987).

A second type of study has been to survey general population groups, or non-clinical populations such as students, enquiring about current mental health and possible antecedent factors in childhood (Bagley, 1984). While such studies have shown clear statistical associations between

current adjustment and prior abuse, the inference of causal associations has usually had to be intuitive (Bagley & Ramsay, 1986).

A third type of methodology is to follow up into adulthood children known to have been sexually, physically or emotionally abused (either one type of abuse or in a combination of types of abuse), in comparison with a non-abused control group. The only study of which we are aware which has employed such a methodology is our own follow-up of 56 children removed from home because of abuse and neglect in the late 1960s, and studied as young adults in the later 1970s and early 1980s (Bagley & MacDonald, 1984). This study was designed to test the hypothesis that intervention and removal of a child would have a more deleterious effect than the abuse itself (Bagley, 1969). This hypothesis was not confirmed, and we concluded that the type of abuse played a major role in outcome. In particular, sexual abuse victims had much poorer psychiatric profiles than all other groups, except victims of combined physical and sexual abuse, who had the poorest outcomes of all. We concluded, after controlling for the effects of a range of possible intervening variables, that sexual abuse within the family does have long-term causal implications for the mental health of victims, independently of other factors.

Methodology of Surveys of Prevalence and Outcome of Sexual Abuse in Childhood

Surveys in this area (Finkelhor, 1979; Russell, 1983; Badgley, 1984; Sorrenti-Little, Bagley, & Robertson, 1984; Kercher & McShane, 1984; Wyatt, 1985; Sedney & Brooks, 1984; Fromuth, 1986; Kilpatrick, 1986; Bagley & Ramsay, 1986) have produced differing estimates of prevalence. The reasons for these differences can be accounted for by the nature of

the populations sampled; the types of question asked; whether subjects were interviewed personally; and the upper age limit, ranging from 12 to 17, for defining "childhood" (Peters, Wyatt, & Finkelhor, 1986). As Painter (1986) has urged, new studies ". . . should concentrate on gathering information about specific aspects of the problem which are needed to guide policy and practice."

One of the problems in asking questions about sexual abuse in childhood has been that of classifying information given about apparently voluntary sexual relations with close in age peers. Finkelhor (1979) for example, found that such experiences were frequently reported, but did not appear to be abusive. His solution was to classify "sexual victimization" of children as that involving a much older partner. In a partial replication of Finkelhor's design, we found that this definition, in combination with any report of force or threat (whatever the age difference) to achieve the sexual relationship, had operational significance in that it predicted self-esteem problems in young adulthood (Sorrenti-Little et al., 1984). We have subsequently used a simpler questionnaire, simply asking subjects to give details of any "sexual assault" whilst a child or adolescent (Bagley & Ramsay, 1986). We have also replicated our study of students, using the "sexual assault" definition in half of the questionnaires (given to 1,200 subjects), and the Badgley (1984) definition in the other half. Both types of question gave very similar results, with 19 percent of females and eight percent of males reporting sexual assault or unwanted sexual acts involving at least touching of the person's body (Bagley, 1987). We have also reanalyzed the data set used by Badgley (1984), and this reanalysis of the most serious sexual assault categories has led us to conclude that the Badgley (1984) definition is the best that is currently

available. Peters and Wyatt (1986) also conclude that the Badgley definition is preferable to many others. Using the Badgley definition, with some modification, has the additional advantage that the data obtained in a new Canadian survey can, with some qualification, be compared with those in the 1983 national study.

Is Child Sexual Abuse Increasing?

A major question which new research must address is whether or not the amount of child sexual abuse in Canadian society is increasing. This is a key policy question, with major implications for programs of prevention and intervention. While it is acknowledged that the sexual misuse of children has occurred at all times in history (Rush, 1980), and that rates of reporting has risen dramatically in the past decade (Finkelhor & Hotaling, 1984), it also remains possible that there has also been a real increase in the amount of sexual abuse of children in the past decades. This could be for a number of reasons (Finkelhor, 1979). It could be that changes in sexual mores in the postwar period have meant that sexual exploitation of children has become more acceptable, or at least more attractive to some individuals. The increase in the amount of pornography depicting both adults and children (O'Brien, 1983) may have been associated with an increased amount of sexual use of children in the consumers of such material. Since a number of studies have shown that sexual abuse, especially that occurring with families follows the separation of a parent and the introduction of new adult figures, or at least the seemingly vulnerability of children in one-parent situations, it could be that the rapid increase in divorce seen after 1950 is associated with a real increase in sexual abuse within families (Russell, 1986).

A further possibility outlined by Chesnais (1981) is that abuse, both physical and sexual has decreased in postwar years in western societies, as problems of poverty and large families have largely disappeared; only now, Chesnais argues, are families able to control fertility adequately, and nurture and care for properly the children they have chosen to bear. Simultaneously, children have largely ceased to become the property of the patriarchal head of the family. The assertion of women's rights in this respect should bring a greater protection for children from both sexual and physical abuse by males. If this thesis is correct, then, other things being equal, women born before 1945 should report greater amounts of sexual abuse than later-born women. However, using the age of the respondent reporting abuse as an indicator of changes in recent historical patterns of abuse is subject to the qualification that older people may be more reluctant to reveal any abuse; and it is known too that in some cases severe sexual abuse may have cognitive sequels (e.g., regression, or psychotic disorganization) which may impair recall of earlier abusive events (Bagley, 1985). Most observers agree that current figures on the prevalence of child sexual abuse underestimate the true rate, for these and other reasons. An additional problem is that if some victims of abuse are deeply traumatized, their subsequent careers, in prison, mental hospital or in prostitution will make them unavailable to research using conventional random sampling methods.

The prevalence studies which have been used, random samples have in fact produced some conflicting results on prevalence of childhood sexual abuse in subjects of different ages. The findings available to us are summarized:

Study	Sample Size, Location and Age Range	Trends
National Canadian study (1983) - reanalysis by the present author	Random survey, of 1,833 adults in Canada aged 18-70+	Rates much higher at ages 18 to 24
Russell (1983)	Random survey of 930 women aged 18 to 66 in San Francisco	Rates much higher in subjects 18 to 29
Wyatt (1985)	Random survey of 248 women aged 18 to 36 in Los Angeles	Rates somewhat higher in 27-36 group
Kilpatrick (1986)	Quasi-random survey of 505 middle-class women aged 18 to 61 in Southern U.S.A.	Rates much higher in subjects 35+
Bagley and Ramsay (1986)	Random survey of 387 women aged 18 to 73 in Calgary	Rates much higher in subjects 18 to 30

It will be clear from an inspection of the above table that the studies located give varying and sometimes conflicting results. All show departures from a purely random pattern, and in the two data sets for which we have the original data (the Canadian national and the Calgary surveys) these non-random variations are significant at beyond the one percent level. The Canadian national survey shows a rate in subjects under 25 which is twice the rate in those in the aged 44 plus. Both the Canadian national and the Calgary studies are in agreement in seeing a significant increase in the prevalence of child sexual abuse reported by subjects under 25. There is some confusion between studies however, as to whether this increase also applies to subjects between 25 and 40. Only the Canadian national study contains information on sexual abuse of boys, but it is interesting to note that the trend on reporting by current age of subject is very similar for both males and females, with a marked increase in reported abuse in younger subjects. We conclude that the way of judging whether or not the amount of child sexual abuse in society is increasing has considerable promise but has not so far yielded consistent results. We need larger random samples of specific age groups before we produce more definitive answers.

It is worth noting that despite disagreements about the prevalence of amounts of child sexual abuse reported by adults of different ages, the studies listed in the table above show a reasonable consistency in the amount of serious abuse reported across all age categories: the range is from 18 to 28 percent for females, with a mean of 23 percent. In our Calgary study 21 percent of women reported an event of serious sexual abuse in childhood or adolescence, involving at least the fondling of the child's unclothed genital area. Women who reported such abuse had

markedly poorer mental health as adults than did subjects not reporting abuse.

Family Antecedents and Correlates of Abuse

A number of possible reasons have been advanced to account for the possible increase in the amount of child sexual abuse in recent years. Although various studies, including the Canadian work indicate that less than 20 percent of victims actually report the abuse to any authority, it is likely that the large increase in cases being serviced by agencies in recent years is due to the fact that more victims are willing to report the abuse. However, parallel to this trend is the possibility that the total amount of child sexual abuse in society is increasing, because of a variety of sociological factors (Finkelhor, 1979). In our reading of the literature the most important of these factors is the increase in family disruption and divorce, which has increased dramatically in Canada since the 1950s (Eichler, 1983). Several research studies in this area have in fact shown that the absence of a biological parent, and the presence of a stepfather, or the lack of protection, physical or psychological, which two biological parent seem to provide, puts a girl at considerable risk for sexual victimization (Bagley, 1985). Finkelhor (1980) found that half of the women in his survey of students who had a stepfather had been sexually abused (either by the stepfather or by other males). Similar findings emerged in Russell's (1983) study of a random sample of women in San Francisco. We also confirmed these findings in our work with students in Calgary (Sorrenti-Little et al., 1984), and in the survey of a population of adult women in Calgary (Bagley & Ramsay, 1986). We also found, as did Finkelhor (1980) that lack of physical affection and the absence of

psychological closeness with parents increased the risk of sexual abuse, and was often associated with family disruption.

It is known that loss of a parent through death or divorce, without any other complications or stresses, has implications for the development of mental health problems in adulthood (Brown & Harris, 1978). In our mental health study in Calgary, we found that such loss was independently related to poorer mental health in adulthood (Ramsay & Bagley, 1985). Although loss, lack of parental warmth and support, and sexual abuse of the child were intercorrelated, regression analysis showed that each of these factors made an independent, statistically significant outcome to poorer mental health. Women who had experienced sexual abuse in childhood were twice as likely to be currently experiencing severe mental health problems (including suicidal behaviour and psychosis in the recent past) in comparison with non-abused women. We found, moreover, that younger women had significantly poorer mental health than older women, a difference we were able to attribute statistically to the higher prevalence of family disruption and of associated sexual abuse in childhood for the younger subjects. The Calgary research has shown, in sum, that younger subjects report significantly more sexual abuse in childhood; this abuse is linked to the greater risk of divorce and family disruption in the period post-1950 when these adults were growing up.

Hypotheses for a Future Study

We believe that these issues, surrounding the possible increased prevalence of child sexual abuse in recent years and the family conditions antecedent to that abuse, are of crucial importance in understanding the phenomenon of sexual victimization of children in Canada, and can give us

important clues which can guide prevention programs. Looking at the prevalence of child sexual abuse in age cohorts in random population samples cannot only give indications of increases in prevalence and associated conditions over time; it can also provide a possible indication of the success of strategies designed to prevent child sexual abuse. These various programs began operating in Canada in the early 1980s. If these programs are successful in a broad sense, then prevalence rates should actually begin to fall, other things being equal, in young adults in contemporary surveys who were adolescents in the early 1980s. Such data could, in theory, be obtained from interviewing adolescent populations in the school system. This kind of study has not been attempted in Canada however for a variety of reasons, including problems of obtaining the permission of school boards and parents, ethical issues, and problems of the obligation to report to child protection authorities when minors reveal sexual abuse. For these reasons we have confined our work in this field to surveys of adults.

The basic hypotheses of a proposed study are:

- (1) In a survey of a large, representative sample of individuals aged 18 to 39, there will be a significant difference in the prevalence of sexual abuse in childhood which subjects report, according to age of subject. Subject to the possibility that the very youngest subjects may report a lower prevalence, perhaps reflecting recent prevention programs, younger subjects will in general report more sexual abuse.
- (2) Reports of sexual abuse will in many cases reflect a history of family disruption through divorce or unstable common-law arrangements. Younger adults will report more such abuse.

- (3) Family disruption will be accompanied to a significant degree by the subject's recall (on a standardized measure) of parental figures being cold, authoritarian or unsupporting. These two factors will in turn be linked to a significant degree to a history of child sexual abuse, and combinations of sexual abuse with other stresses in childhood will be particularly likely to be linked to mental health problems in young adulthood.
- (4) The same trends, linking age to rates of sexual abuse reported, and links between family disruption, child sexual abuse and mental health problems in adulthood, will apply to males as well as to females.

Methodologically, it is important to obtain larger samples of each age group than were available in previous studies (including the Canadian national survey) in order to reduce sampling error - such errors could account for the somewhat conflicting results of earlier studies in relation to age of subjects and amount of abuse reported.

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