

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH POLICE DISPOSITION  
IN THE INVESTIGATION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

by

Michael W. Stephens

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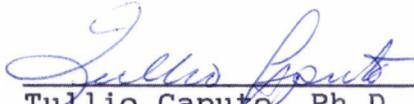
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## ABSTRACT

### Factors Associated with Police Disposition in the Investigation of Child Sexual Abuse

Michael W. Stephens

This study examined the relationships between selected independent variables associated with child sexual abuse and with the outcome of police investigation -- disposition.

The study began by delineating some of the major variables associated with child sexual abuse as recognized by the professional literature. The variables were then organized into component groups. Five of these components were identified: (1) referral, (2) victim, (3) victim's family, (4) perpetrator, and (5) occurrence. Twenty-five of the major variables recognized by the professional literature were then placed into the appropriate component.

A standardized data gathering instrument was developed, tested, and subsequently used to collect data at two agencies; Alberta Social Services, and a major Municipal Police Department.

Each of the twenty-five individual variables were tested for a bivariate association with disposition. Following the bivariate analyses, each of the five components were tested by multivariate analysis for effect

on the probability of disposition.

Results indicate that there were no variables which had a strong enough bivariate correlation coefficient to be predictive of disposition. There were some multivariate relationships which had a significant effect on the probability of disposition.

Discussion concerning the implications of the findings for social work education, social work practice, social policy, and social work research was presented.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## DEDICATION

To Jenny and Erin and Brooke

For being there and for their love and support.

To Rick

For showing me the way of Captain James T. Kirk.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

There are many types of child abuse which are currently recognized by both Federal and Provincial legislation. For example, there are physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect, to name a few. Child sexual abuse is the one type of abuse which has received considerable attention in the recent literature (e.g. Howes, 1986). Child sexual abuse is not a recent phenomenon (Sgroi, 1982). Rather, child sexual abuse has been occurring for quite some time, but is only becoming more apparent due to the increase in the reporting of cases (e.g., Finkelhor & Hotaling, 1984; Russell, 1983; and Howes, 1986).

The most recent data of the American Humane Association (1984) delineates an increase in the number of reported cases of child sexual abuse across the United States. In a period from 1976 to 1982 there was an increase from 1,975 to 22,918 reported child sexual abuse cases. At the present time the same statistics are not available for Canada.

One of the reasons for an increase in reporting may be a loosening of the operational definition of child sexual abuse. Historically, the meaning attached to child sexual abuse was incest, which only involved sexual intercourse. In fact, the terms child sexual abuse and incest were often used interchangeably (Fario & Belohlavek, 1984). Over the years

various authors have defined child sexual abuse and examples range from a very narrow extreme to more open, less restrictive definition (e.g., Wyatt & Peters, 1986; Butler, 1978; Justice, 1979; Sgroi, 1982; Giaretto, 1982). The present study has adopted the definition of child sexual abuse as legislated by the Child Welfare Act of Alberta:

*"A child is sexually abused if the child is inappropriately exposed or subjected to sexual contact, activity, or behavior."* Section 1 (3) (c).

The rising incidence of child sexual abuse raises many social work practice and research questions, not the least of which is that of prevention. There are several levels of prevention from primary to tertiary (Heller & Monahan, 1977) which could be examined in relation to child sexual abuse. One form of prevention is deterrence. Deterrence means that offenders or perpetrators are dealt with severely and in such a manner as to demonstrate not only to the offender, but to society as well, that committing child sexual abuse will not be tolerated. In practice, the child sexual abuse offense is dealt with in a court of law.

How does one then apply deterrence in the Province of Alberta? It is a policy of Alberta Social Services to adopt the "Giarretto Model" in the investigation phase of complaints of child sexual abuse (Giarretto, 1976). A major precept of

the Giarretto Model is not only to have the police involved in the investigation, but also to charge the perpetrator with a criminal code offense in every possible instance. With the Giarretto Model in place as policy, it would seem reasonable for there to be a large percentage of perpetrators charged.

Finkelhor, (1983) in a nationwide study in the United States, determined the national average for a charge being laid against the perpetrator of child sexual abuse to be 24%. The enforcement of criminal action against the offender is not a universally adopted principle. In fact, there is a debate in the human services concerning whether or not a charge should be laid against the perpetrator in cases of child sexual abuse (MacFarlane & Bulkley, 1982). Many legislative bodies adopt the Giarretto Model and the resultant statistics from these jurisdictions show that there is a charge laid in as many as 43% of the cases (Finkelhor, 1983). Since the Province of Alberta adopts the Giarretto Model, one would expect the percentage to be at least equal to that in the study by Finkelhor previously cited (1983). Unfortunately, there are no Canadian data on the actual percentage.

To deter continued child sexual abuse, one method, which has just been discussed, is to charge the perpetrator with the offense in a court of law. In order to charge the perpetrator, the offense must be investigated by the police.

Following the police investigation, a disposition is made by the police, to either charge or not to charge the alleged perpetrator. It is the disposition of charged or not charged which has been addressed by the present study. More specifically, the question addressed by this study concerns the relationship of disposition to other variables associated with child sexual abuse.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationships, if any, between selected variables associated with child sexual abuse and with the resultant disposition of police investigation.

As a process, this study began by delineating some of the major variables associated with child sexual abuse, as recognized by the professional literature. The variables were then organized into component groups. Five of these components were identified: (1) referral, (2) victim, (3) victim's family, (4) perpetrator, and (5) occurrence (the definition for each of these component groups appears in chapter two). Twenty-five of the major variables recognized by the professional literature were then placed into the appropriate component.

From these components, various statistical analyses were

applied to determine the relationships between the major variables identified and disposition. Chapter Two reviews these major variables within the five identified components.

## CHAPTER 2

### VARIABLES ASSOCIATED WITH CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

This chapter describes the dependent and the independent variables. As previously identified, the dependent variable was defined as disposition resulting from police investigation of alleged child sexual abuse cases. The independent variables in the present study are the five components: (1) referral, (2) victim, (3) victim's family, (4) perpetrator, and (5) occurrence. These five components comprise twenty-five different subvariables which have been identified by the professional literature as being significant in the study of child sexual abuse. Each of the variables for the components are defined later in this chapter.

#### The Dependent Variable

As identified earlier, this study focused on what happened to cases of child sexual abuse once they were turned over to the police department. In other words, this study was interested in disposition, as the outcome, or dependent, variable following the police investigation, that is whether the perpetrator was actually charged, or not charged, with any offense concerning the alleged child sexual abuse. More

precisely, this study was concerned with conditions which might affect the disposition, as defined.

There is debate among social work practitioners as to whether a charge should be laid. Greenburg (1979) and Blose (1979) present a variety of reasons why the individual should not be charged. These reasons include the fact that there is a belief that charging the perpetrator interferes with therapeutic and rehabilitative activities for all persons associated with the alleged child sexual abuse (Greenburg, 1979). Additionally, by the charging of the perpetrator, the victim is subject to grueling interrogations and courtroom confrontations, hardly the milieu for successful treatment.

On the other side of the debate, however, there are those who contend that the only effective deterrent is the enforcement of laws against child sexual abuse (Berliner, 1979). Many, including Giarretto (1976), find that the threat of a charge is important to the motivation of offenders and their families to participate in treatment.

The Giarretto Model, as adopted by Alberta Social Services, implies that for the victim to believe they are not guilty and have done nothing wrong, the perpetrators should be charged with child sexual abuse. Charging the perpetrator provides the child and society alike with a clear statement that child sexual abuse is illegal and will not be tolerated.

It is the Giarretto Model policy concerning charging the perpetrator that is being operationalized as a nominal-level dependent variable for this study. In short, was the perpetrator charged or not (disposition)?

### The Independent Variables

There have been many research studies on child sexual abuse. The present study was interested in factors that were associated with child sexual abuse which were predictive of disposition by the police department. Unfortunately, there are no research findings which examine any particular independent variable or component of variables in relation to disposition. Graves and Sgroi (1980) outline the responsibilities of police departments in the investigation of child sexual abuse allegations. Important considerations for the police in determining whether or not to formalize a child sexual abuse charge include victim's age, offender's age, relationship between victim and offender, type of sexual behavior, and degree of force used. Unfortunately, there was no research attempted in Graves and Sgroi's study which indicated a statistical association with disposition.

This study reviewed the variables associated with child sexual abuse in order to establish a reference point by which a variable, once identified by previous studies, could be

associated with disposition. There is ample literature which suggests factors which generally affect police disposition (e.g., (Black, 1967)). Unfortunately, there were no studies which examined the question addressed by the present study concerning the association. Hence, the review of the previously published variables can only establish each variable as being associated with child sexual abuse and not with disposition.

The presentation of independent variables which follows is based upon the five components previously identified: (1) referral, (2) victim, (3) victim's family, (4) perpetrator, and (5) occurrence. Each component will be considered along with the subvariables which make up the component.

### Referral

There has been much written in the professional literature which states that treatment begins at intake (e.g., Zastrow, 1985). This statement is especially true when we look at the evidence concerning child sexual abuse and social workers' investigations of the alleged child sexual abuse. Pierce & Pierce (1985a) report that over one third of all substantiated cases of child sexual abuse had been previously reported as allegations of abuse other than child sexual abuse. Canadian data yield similar results (Corsini-Munt,

1982). Intake and investigation workers were missing critical signs of child sexual abuse, which implies that workers may be unprepared for the investigation of child sexual abuse. Three referral issues; source, place, and reason for referral were examined and were included in the component identified as referral.

Source. Pierce & Pierce (1985a) found there to be a significant relationship between the referral source and the substantiation that child sexual abuse occurred. Substantiated reports were received most often from social workers (31%), medical personnel (22%), law enforcement officers (15%), and mothers (8%). School personnel reported the child sexual abuse in 6% of the cases. Relatives and neighbors were more likely to report unsubstantiated cases as were the schools (Pierce & Pierce, 1985a). Since there have been no reported studies concerning the association between referral source and disposition, and the source of the referral is considered significant in the professional literature, the variable source was included in the study, and measured as who made the referral.

Place. Rosen (1981) reported that social workers in public welfare agencies knew the legal requirements that applied to the investigation of child sexual abuse, but that these workers also used their field experience to substantiate

child sexual abuse cases. Since different workers have differing levels of field experience, there is the consideration that if there are different offices investigating alleged child sexual abuse then there may be disparate dispositions based upon the social workers' interaction with the investigating police officers. The place responsible for investigation has been identified as an important variable in child sexual abuse, but there have been no reported research findings on the association of place with disposition. Therefore, the variable place was included in this study.

Reason. A final variable which one might consider at the time of referral is the reason for the referral itself. That is, whether the report is of intrafamilial or extrafamilial child sexual abuse. It is well-documented that the majority of child sexual abuse occurs within the family (American Humane Society, 1984). For the purposes of this study, intrafamilial child sexual abuse occurs when there is a blood or legal familial relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. When a report is filed alleging child sexual abuse, the reason for referral is specified as either intrafamilial or extrafamilial and therefore the variable reason will be considered in comparison to disposition.

Summary. In considering these variables then, this study

will present data on the component which was known as referral, which explored the associations between disposition and (a) the referral source, (b) the place the referral was made and which was subsequently involved in the investigation, and (c) the reason for referral.

### The Victim

Perhaps the largest body of literature concerning child sexual abuse is that which exists about the victim (e.g., Helfer, 1982). While many variables were feasible, this study explored the association between five victim subvariables and disposition. These five variables were chosen because they were the most prevalent in the literature on child sexual abuse.

Gender. The two most significant variables concerning the child victim appear to be age and gender. Mrazek, Lynch, and Bentovim (1983) have reported that there is a considerable and significantly larger number of reported female child sexual abuse victims than male ones. Other studies report similar findings and generally appear to indicate that 80% to 90% of all reported victims are female (e.g., Pierce & Pierce, 1985b). The variable gender was included in this study since there have been no reported studies concerning the association between gender of the victim and disposition.

Age. The other major criterion concerning the victim and child sexual abuse is age of the victim. Meddin (1985) reported that the younger child is viewed as being at greater risk than the older child. Many articles when reviewing data on age of the victim of child sexual abuse, indicate that there is an interesting relationship between gender and age. For example, age of a male victim at time of report is significantly lower than that for females (Russell, 1983).

There are two temporal issues concerning the victim's age. That is, the age of the victim at the time the report/intake was made and the age of the victim when the child sexual abuse began. Age of the child sexual abuse victim has been identified as an important variable in child sexual abuse, but there have been no reported research findings on the association of age with disposition. Therefore, age of the child sexual abuse victim was included in the study. These two age variables, age of the child sexual abuse victim at onset, and age of the child sexual abuse victim at intake were related statistically to disposition.

Relationship to Perpetrator. Another important variable in the study of child sexual abuse is the relationship of the victim to the perpetrator. Summitt (1980) reported that the vast majority of perpetrators came from the victim's family.

In many ways, relationship is an extension of the variable identified in the reason for referral as either intrafamilial or extrafamilial child sexual abuse.

In the relationship to perpetrator category of variables the relationship is further broken down to specific identification such as natural father of the victim or babysitter of the victim. Since there have been no reported studies concerning the association between relationship to the perpetrator and disposition, and relationship is considered significant in the professional literature, the variable relationship to the perpetrator was included.

Number of Perpetrators. A final concern that must be considered is the number of different perpetrators involved with the victim. There is evidence (e.g., Greenburg, 1983) which indicates that those victims with multiple perpetrators have greater difficulty in treatment after the occurrences than do those with single perpetrators. The number of different perpetrators has been identified as an important variable in child sexual abuse, but there have been no reported research findings on the association of number of different perpetrators with disposition. Therefore, the variable number of different perpetrators was included.

Previous History as a Victim. The relationship of how often the victim had been a victim of child abuse (i.e.,

physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, and neglect) with disposition has not been considered in the literature of child sexual abuse. However, as was presented in the section called the referral component, we can see that a substantial number of victims of child sexual abuse had been previously reported as victims of another type of child abuse. The victim's previous history of abuse as a victim of any type of child abuse was considered an important variable. Since there has been no literature relating the previous history variable to disposition, the variable previous history as a victim was related to disposition.

Summary. For the component of variables known as victim variables, this study explored the relationship of (a) the victim's gender; (b) age at (i) onset, and (ii) intake; (c) the number of different perpetrators; and (d) previous history as a victim of child abuse. The relationship between the victim and perpetrator will be dealt with in subsequent chapters as a perpetrator variable.

### The Victim's Family

There are many variables which have been associated with the family of the child sexual abuse victim. This study examined seven subvariables for the component identified as victim's family.

Parental Structure. The family constellation is important to every child growing up, especially in terms of risk to the child's safety and development. There is a large body of literature concerning the family structure for the victim of child sexual abuse (Dietz & Craft, 1980). Family structure is defined as who is the adult responsible for the child victim. The possibilities for the present study include living with one natural parent, both natural parents, a natural parent and another parent, or an extended family.

Family structure has been identified as an important variable in child sexual abuse, but there have been no reported research findings on the association of family structure with disposition. Thus, as a major variable associated with child sexual abuse, the variable family structure was related statistically to disposition.

Marital Status. Marital status is also indicated to be related to child sexual abuse (Wilk & McCarthy, 1986). Possible marital status includes married, divorced, separated, common-law, single, and widowed. Since there have been no reported studies concerning the association between marital status and disposition, and marital status is considered significant in the professional literature, the variable marital status was included.

Family Size. Size of the family is rapidly being found

to be significantly related to child sexual abuse (Taubman, 1984). Many authors are reporting that child sexual abuse occurs more frequently in larger families (MacFarlane & Korbin, 1983). Family size has been identified as an important variable in child sexual abuse, but there have been no reported research findings on the association of family size with disposition. Therefore, the variable family size was included. This study related number of children in the family, number of male and female siblings and number of other known family victims of child sexual abuse to disposition.

Parents' Age. Finally, the age of the parents of the victims of child sexual abuse has been recognized as an important consideration for treatment (Goodwin, Cormier, & Owen, 1983). Since there have been no reported studies concerning the association between parents' age and disposition, and parents' age is considered significant in the professional literature, the variable parents' age was included.

Summary. As indicated, then, this study will consider the following variables within the component victim's family variables in relation to disposition: (a) parental structure; (b) marital status; (c) family size: (i) number of children in the family, (ii) number of male siblings, (iii) number of female siblings, and (iv) number of known family victims; and

(d) parents' age.

### The Perpetrator

There are many issues to be considered in the examination of the perpetrator of child sexual abuse. There were five major perpetrator variables which were included for consideration.

Relationship to Victim. One of the prime issues is the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim. Most studies indicate that the vast majority of the perpetrators are from within the child's family (Summit, 1980). In instances where the perpetrator came from outside the victim's family, only 15% were strangers (Russell, 1983). The relationship to the victim variable was discussed previously under victim variables but was considered for analytical purposes to be a perpetrator variable. Relationship to the victim has been identified as an important variable in child sexual abuse, but there have been no reported research findings on the association of the relationship to the victim with disposition. Therefore, the variable relationship to the victim was included in this study.

Gender. There is an abundance of literature which indicates that males predominate in the commission of child sexual abuse (Finkelhor & Hotaling, 1984). However, as in the

previous variables, there have been no research findings relating gender to disposition. Thus, the gender of the perpetrators of child sexual abuse will be considered in comparison to disposition.

Acknowledgment. Since the perpetrators of child sexual abuse have everything to lose if the children's stories are believed, it is more likely that they will deny the occurrences (Faller, 1984). As previously indicated, the Giarretto Model requires charges to be laid in order for the victims to realize that they were not guilty for the child sexual abuse. Another method for the victims to feel that they are not responsible for the child sexual abuse would be for the perpetrators to acknowledge the fact that the child sexual abuse occurred and that they, the perpetrators, were responsible. Thus allowing the victim of child sexual abuse to not bear the guilt for the offense.

Confessions of guilt have a bearing on the prosecution of charges (Faller, 1984). Since there have been no reported studies concerning the association between acknowledgment and disposition, and acknowledgment is considered significant in the professional literature, the variable acknowledgment by the perpetrator of child sexual abuse was included.

Age. Graves and Sgroi (1980) have reported that the age of the perpetrator of child sexual abuse is an important

factor in the determination of disposition. Since age of the perpetrator of child sexual abuse has been identified as an important variable in child sexual abuse, and there have been reported research findings on the importance of age of the perpetrator of child sexual abuse with disposition, the variable age of the perpetrator was included.

Previous Abusive History. Finkelhor (1983) identified two important variables in predicting whether the perpetrator of child sexual abuse cases will be prosecuted or not. These two factors are (1) if the perpetrator has a previous criminal record, or (2) if the perpetrator has a previous history as a wife abuser. In this study, data were not available for either of these two variables, based upon the study's research design. Data were available, however, concerning whether the perpetrator of child sexual abuse had a previous history of child abuse (i.e., physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect). Therefore these data on the perpetrator of child sexual abuse were gathered.

Since there have been no reported studies concerning the association between previous history of child abuse by the perpetrator and disposition, and previous history is considered significant in the professional literature, previous history as a perpetrator of child sexual abuse was included. Thus the history of the perpetrator as a previous

perpetrator was considered in relation to disposition.

Summary. In summary, the data which were collected on the perpetrator of child sexual abuse were (a) perpetrator's relationship to the victim, (b) perpetrator's gender, (c) perpetrator's admission of commission of child sexual abuse, (d) perpetrator's age at intake, and (e) perpetrator's previous history of child abuse as a perpetrator.

### The Occurrence

The final component of subvariables which plays an important role in the study of child sexual abuse is that related to the occurrence of the child sexual abuse itself. This study considered four subvariables for the component occurrence.

Location. Previous research studies on perpetrators are indicative of the fact that most perpetrators are known to the victim. It is important to understand where the perpetrator had access to the victim. Since children have a need for safety and shelter (Showers, Farber, Joseph, Oshins, & Johnson, 1983), it would be a significant factor should the child sexual abuse occur where safety is assumed.

The location where the child sexual abuse activity has occurred has been identified as an important variable in child sexual abuse, but there have been no reported research

findings on the association of location with disposition. Therefore, the variable location was included in this study. Thus the variable location where the child sexual abuse occurred was examined in relationship to disposition.

Sexual Activity. It is well-documented that attitudes toward child sexual abuse are influenced by the activities which occur at the time of abuse (Wilk & McCarthy, 1986). As people in authority, social workers and police tend to be more tolerant of one incident of fondling of a victim of child sexual abuse than they are of multiple events of sexual intercourse (Finkelhor, 1983). This tolerance or attitude toward child sexual abuse could have a profound effect on disposition. Also related to the type of sexual activity is the question of upon whom the activity was performed. The victim of the child sexual abuse may be required to perform a sexual act on the perpetrator just as frequently as the other way around.

Since there have been no reported studies concerning the association between the sexual activity which occurs with the child sexual abuse and disposition, and sexual activity is considered significant in the professional literature, the sexual activity which occurred during the child sexual abuse was included in the study.

Frequency. The frequency of the occurrence of the child

sexual abuse has been given due attention in the literature (Finkelhor, 1985). It is important to consider the difference between a single occurrence of child sexual abuse and multiple occurrences of child sexual abuse in relation to disposition. Frequency has been identified as an important variable in child sexual abuse, but there has been no reported research on the association of frequency with disposition. Therefore, the variable frequency was included in this study.

Duration. The last subvariable to be examined in the occurrence component deals with the length of time over which the abuse occurred. Studies indicate that there are a large number of cases of child sexual abuse which continue for years before disclosure is made by the victim to a person in authority.

Since there have been no reported studies concerning the association between the duration of the child sexual abuse and disposition, and duration is considered significant in the professional literature, duration of the child sexual abuse was included. Therefore the present study considered the duration of child sexual abuse in comparison to disposition.

Summary In summary, data were collected on the following subvariables of the occurrence component: (a) location of occurrence, (b) frequency of occurrence, (c) sexual activity committed at the time of the child sexual abuse and upon whom

it was committed, and (d) duration of child sexual abuse.

### Summation

As discussed, there were five components of independent variables related to child sexual abuse which the present study considered. The dependent variable of the study was disposition following police investigation. Each of the individual subvariables within the five components was examined for its association with disposition. As well, each component was examined for its relationship to disposition. The independent variables are presented in Figure 2.1 within the appropriate components.

**Figure 2.1**  
**Component Independent Variables**

---

- (1) **Referral variables**
    - a) source of referral
    - b) place which investigated the referral
    - c) reason for the referral
  
  - (2) **Victim variables**
    - a) victim's gender
    - b) victim's age at (i) onset  
(ii) intake
    - c) number of perpetrators
    - d) victim's previous history as a victim
  
  - (3) **Victims family variables**
    - a) parental structure
    - b) marital status of the victim's parents
    - c) family size (i) number of children in the family  
(ii) number of male siblings  
(iii) number of female siblings  
(iv) number of known family victims
    - d) parents age (i) fathers age  
(ii) mothers age
  
  - (4) **Perpetrator variables**
    - a) relationship of the perpetrator to the victim
    - b) perpetrator's gender,
    - c) acknowledgment of the perpetrator
    - d) perpetrator's age at time of intake
    - e) perpetrator's previous history as a perpetrator
  
  - (5) **Occurrence variables**
    - a) location of the child sexual abuse
    - b) sexual activity (i) type  
(ii) recipient
    - c) frequency of child sexual abuse
    - d) duration of the child sexual abuse
-

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Alberta Social Services

In Canada, Child Welfare is a provincially legislated responsibility. In Alberta, The Child Welfare Act of Alberta, Chapter C-8.1, was passed by the Alberta Legislature on 31 May, 1984, and proclaimed on 1 July, 1985. The Child Welfare Act forms the basis for child welfare intervention in Alberta. The Government Ministry which administers the Child Welfare legislation for the Province of Alberta is called Alberta Social Services.

Alberta Social Services delivers child welfare services by a decentralized system of six geographic regions. Each of these regions has a Director, who is designated by the Minister of Social Services. The regional director is responsible for the delivery of child welfare services to the designated region. The current study was carried out in one of these regions.

The region studied includes a large metropolitan city and surrounding rural territory. Within the region there are five geographic offices. The present study will identify these five offices as Places 1 through 5. These five (5) offices

offer an investigation/intake program. It is these 5 offices to which an intake/referral alleging child sexual abuse is made. The three city offices, Place 1, Place 2, and Place 3, have full intake units of several social workers, whereas Place 4 and Place 5, the rural offices, have a designated social worker who is primarily responsible for investigations. As well, Place 2 has a rural child welfare unit which also has an identified primary investigator of child sexual abuse.

#### The Municipal Police Department

The second agency involved in this study was a large Municipal Police Department. The Municipal Police Department is charged with enforcing federal, provincial, and municipal statutes for a city which has a population of over 600,000 people. Within the Police Department there are several detectives whose sole responsibility is the investigation of child sexual abuse.

Summary. There were two agencies which provided data for the study. Alberta Social Services held the files which were used to gather data concerning the independent variables and the Municipal Police Department provided access to the data required for disposition.

### The Sample

In order for a child sexual abuse case to be included in this study, three criteria had to be met. At the first level of screening, cases alleging child sexual abuse had to be referred to Alberta Social Services during the 1985 calendar year. The child sexual abuse itself did not have to occur in 1985, but the child sexual abuse must have been referred for investigation between 1 January, 1985 and 31 December, 1985 inclusive.

The second level of screening focused on the location where the child sexual abuse was referred. The referral had to be to the Region being studied. Having met the first level of referral, the second was met if the child sexual abuse referral was actually investigated by a social worker within the identified Region.

The final criterion to be considered before a case was included in the sample was the assessment by the investigating social worker that child sexual abuse had indeed occurred.

The sample was defined, then, as all cases of alleged child sexual abuse referred to Alberta Social Services in 1985, which were investigated by a child welfare worker within the identified Region, and in which the alleged child sexual abuse was assessed as having occurred.

Having defined the sample, the next step was to establish

a population of child sexual abuse files to be reviewed. Within Alberta Social Services a management information system (MIS) stores selected data on alleged cases of child abuse and neglect. The MIS is known as the Child Welfare Information System (CWIS). In February 1986, using the first two screening levels for the sample, CWIS identified all cases of alleged child sexual abuse which were investigated by the identified region in 1985. The procedure provided an initial population of 330 alleged child sexual abuse victims.

Between April and May of 1986, data collection began at Place 1 and then continued sequentially through the five Places until data collection for the independent variables was completed in July, 1986. The first task at each Place was to compare the CWIS-generated data with the log books of the intake units. The log books are the data collection instruments that each child welfare intake unit keeps in order to keep track of referrals. The process of checking the log books added several potential child sexual abuse cases to the population for screening. A summary of the data available appear in Table 3.1.

As can be seen from Table 3.1, the second column contains the number of child sexual abuse cases identified by CWIS for the appropriate Place identified in the first column. The third column identifies the child sexual abuse cases added to

the population by the log books, while the last column in the table provides information concerning how many child sexual abuse cases met the three criteria required for inclusion in the population of all confirmed cases for the region.

Place 5 had one file identified and this file was no longer available to the region as it had been transferred out. There were no further data collected at Place 5.

**Table 3.1**  
**Source of Data**

Place	Source of Data		Total	Preliminary Sample
	CWIS	Log Books		
Place 1	116	71	187	81
Place 2	102	57	159	46
Place 3	97	74	171	52
Place 4	15	7	22	12
Totals..	330	209	539	191

Within each office there were files which had been transferred out to other offices and regions. When the file was transferred to another office within the region, data were collected for the file during July, 1986 when a return to each office occurred. If the file was transferred to another region's jurisdiction, data were not collected. Files were transferred six (6) times and reduced the number of alleged victims from 545 to 539.

As can be seen from Table 3.1, of the 539 cases reviewed, a total of 191 (35%) met all criteria for inclusion in the sample.

After the collection of data for the independent variables at each of the five places was completed, police files for the 191 cases were then reviewed in July, 1986 to gather data on the dependent variable. This process was completed on 11 July, 1986.

From the 191 child sexual abuse cases a total of 44 had missing data on disposition and 147 cases contained data on disposition and therefore this number (i.e., 147) represents the number of child sexual abuse cases included in the sample for the present study. A summation of the data included for the present study appears in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2  
Distribution of Sample by Disposition  
(from Table 3.1)

Disposition	Number	Percent	Total Percentage
Charged	55	37.4	28.8
Not Charged	92	62.6	48.2
	----	-----	-----
Subtotals..	147	100.0	77.0
Not Recorded	40		21.0
Not Applicable	4		2.0
	----		-----
	44		23.0
	----		-----
Totals ..	191		100

### Instrumentation

Based on the review of the literature which appeared in chapter two, one dependent variable and five components of independent variables were conceptualized and finally operationalized into a standardized data-gathering instrument (see Appendix A).

Validity and Reliability. In order to enhance the content validity of the data-gathering instrument, three staff members who worked for Alberta Social Services were asked to participate on an Advisory Committee. Each member had an extensive knowledge of child sexual abuse cases. The Advisory Committee reviewed a random sample of child sexual abuse

victim files which were included in this study to check the content validity of the data gathering instrument. Upon completion of the task, these data were compared and subsequent deletions, additions, and modifications were made to the format and operational definitions to increase the content validity of the data-gathering instrument.

One member from the Advisory Committee was asked to check for interrater reliability of the instrument and principal data-gathering person. Twenty percent of all files reviewed were randomly selected and checked for reliability of the data collection. Of the 109 files selected (84 variables per file) there were disagreements between the committee member and the principal data gatherer on 7 variables of the total collected. Since each file had 84 variables and there were 109 files reviewed, there were 9,146 response possibilities. Seven errors in 9,146 responses represents an error rate of less than one percent. Where there were errors, they were rechecked by the member of the Advisory Committee along with the principal data-gathering person and corrections were made.

Summary. A data-gathering instrument was designed based upon a review of the professional literature on child sexual abuse. The instrument was refined for content validity and the principal data-gathering person was checked for interrater reliability.

### Methodological Limitations

A major methodological limitation of this study was the amount of data which was not available. While the literature states that some variables are strongly associated with child sexual abuse, they were not always included in the social workers assessment. For example, 57 (30%) of the confirmed cases from this study did not mention the age of the victim at onset and 59 (31%) failed to indicate the period of time during which the child sexual abuse occurred. Several variables had to be excluded from statistical analysis due to the large amount of missing data (e.g., race, source of income, and occupation).

A second methodological limitation was that this study was based on data on child sexual abuse cases which were reported over a one year period in a small geographic area. While this study may be indicative of the identified region, the ability to generalize the results beyond the legislated jurisdiction (i.e., the Province of Alberta) is limited.

A final shortcoming of the methodology was that data were collected ex-post facto and from existing files only. These were subject to error by the social worker, either through omission or by the worker's bias about the data required. The credibility of file information is often times criticized for its lack of reliability as it is never totally accurate and

should be supported by other sources such as interviews with worker, police officer, or victim.

In summary, the major methodological flaws were: missing data on child sexual abuse files, limitation of sample studied in its ability to generalize findings, and collection of data from a single source.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSES AND FINDINGS

This chapter reviews the results of the study in six sections. In the first section, the findings concerning disposition will be described. The second through sixth sections present the five components of independent variables: referral, victim, victim's family, perpetrator, and occurrence.

The beginning level of statistics used for each variable will be descriptive statistics.

The second level of statistics for each variable within the component will be a bivariate test of association between that variable and disposition.

After bivariate analyses have been reported for each component, a multivariate analysis incorporating all independent variables within the component will be associated with disposition.

#### DISPOSITION

The disposition of the police investigation was used as the outcome variable in this study. In many ways, the true outcome variable could be the ultimate decision made in a

court of law by the presiding judge. This study, however, as previously identified, used the decision by the police officer investigating the child sexual abuse as to whether or not to charge the perpetrator with child sexual abuse. As mentioned previously, disposition was a dichotomous variable with the value of 1 assigned to those cases where a charge was laid and the value of 0 was given to those cases where there was no charge. As was seen in Table 3.2, of the 191 substantiated cases, data on disposition were found for 147 perpetrators. Of the 147 cases 55 (37.4%) perpetrators were charged and 92 (62.6%) were not charged.

#### **INDEPENDENT VARIABLES**

As stated earlier, this study examined the association of the five (5) components of variables previously identified (1) the referral variables, (2) the victim variables, (3) the victim's family variables, (4) the perpetrator variables, and (5) the occurrence variables, with disposition.

#### **Referral**

The first independent variable was composed of three subvariables: (a) the referral source (S), (b) the place (P), and, (c) the reason for referral (R). As mentioned on page 9, the three independent subvariables are termed the referral

component in this study.

Source (S). The first subvariable within the referral component was a nominal-level variable that contained 14 mutually exclusive and exhaustive referral sources categories. These referral sources are presented in the left-hand column in Table 4.2 on page 40. As can be seen, 30 (20.4%) of the child sexual abuse cases were referred to Alberta Social Services by the victims' mothers. Of these 30 cases of child sexual abuse, 14, or 46.7%, were charged.

To determine if each referral source was correlated with disposition, a dichotomous dummy variable was created for each referral source where the value of 1 was given to those cases which were in a particular referral source and the value of 0 was given to those cases which were not in a particular referral source. A simple bivariate Pearson's product-moment correlation ( $r$ ) was calculated between each of the 14 referral sources and disposition (right-hand column).

As can be seen in Table 4.2, there were extremely weak associations between all of the 14 referral sources and disposition. The correlation coefficients ranged from  $r = .006$  to  $.152$  (ignoring the minus signs). Thus, by bivariate correlation analyses, it can be safely concluded that each of the 14 referral sources was not individually related to

disposition.

Place (P). The second subvariable within the component known as referral is the place (P) which was responsible for child sexual abuse investigations. As can be seen in Table 4.2, place was a nominal level variable with four categories. These four places (District Offices) are presented in the first column of Table 4.2. As can be seen, Place 1 accounted for 65 (44.2%) of all the investigations of alleged child sexual abuse and 18 (27.7%) of the charges laid.

To determine if each place responsible for investigation was correlated with disposition, a process identical to that described for the source subvariable was followed.

As can be seen in Table 4.2, there were extremely weak associations between all of the place variables and disposition. The correlation coefficients ranged from  $r = .001$  to  $.179$  (ignoring the minus signs). Thus, by bivariate correlation analyses, it can be safely concluded that each of the place variables was not individually related to disposition.

Reason (R). The final variable within the referral component is the reason for referral (R). The study divided reason into the two categorical responses, intrafamilial and extrafamilial. Of the 147 cases, 71 (48%) were originally referred as extrafamilial child sexual abuse and 76 (52%) were

reported as intrafamilial cases. Simple bivariate Pearson's product-moment correlations ( $r$ ) were calculated to determine if a relationship existed between the reason for referral and disposition. Since the variable reason was dichotomous to begin with, creation of dummy variables was not required.

As can be seen from Table 4.2, there is no statistically significant relationship between the variable reason and disposition. The correlation coefficient was very weak ( $r = .012$ ).

**Table 4.2**  
**Distribution and Correlations between**  
**Referral Subvariables and Disposition**

Variable	Number Referred	Number Charged	Percent <sup>a</sup> Charged	<u>r</u> <sup>b</sup>
<b>Source (S):</b>				
Mother	30	14	46.7	.097
School	26	9	34.6	-.027
Other Agency	22	10	45.5	.070
Community	15	6	40.0	.018
Hospital	14	3	21.4	-.107
Police	11	4	36.4	-.006
Relatives	7	1	14.3	-.107
Father	6	2	33.3	-.017
Doctor	6	1	16.7	-.088
Out of Province	3	1	33.3	-.012
Friend	3	2	66.7	.087
Income Security	2	2	100.0	.152 <sup>c</sup>
Self-Referred	1	0	0.0	.064
Mental Health	1	0	0.0	.064
	---	---	----	
Totals ..	147	55	37.4	
<b>Place (P):</b>				
Place 1	65	18	27.7	-.179 <sup>c</sup>
Place 2	31	12	38.7	.014
Place 3	43	22	51.2	.183 <sup>c</sup>
Place 4	8	3	37.5	.001
	---	---	----	
Totals ..	147	55	37.4	
<b>Reasons (R):</b>				
Extrafamilial	71	27	38.0	.012
Intrafamilial	76	28	36.8	-.012
	---	---	----	
Totals ..	147	55	37.4	

<sup>a</sup> Percentages may be misleading since numbers are below 100.  
<sup>b</sup> Two-tailed test.  
<sup>c</sup> Statistically significant at the .05 level (two-tailed test).

### Multivariate Analysis

Multivariate analysis was calculated on all variables contained within the component referral. An appropriate technique to use in multivariate analysis is logit analysis or logit regression. Logit analysis is based upon a log odds model. In other words, it calculates the log odds or the probability of an expected reply occurring in the presence of a series of variables, hence multivariate analysis. When there is one response variable with two levels, it is possible to model the behavior of the log odds of one level of the response to the other on the basis of the explanatory variables. The log odds effects allow us to better understand how changes in the combined levels of the explanatory variables affect the response (Dillon & Goldstein, 1984).

In a methodology similar to that required for the previous categorical variables, each variable was transformed to a dichotomous variable and placed into a logit model which included each of the variables within the component. The logit model provides a single, scaled deviance value for that model. To test for the effect of a variable, that variable was then removed from the formula, which then rendered a new scaled deviance value for the component. By subtracting the overall model value from the new model value, a log odds likelihood-of-fit ratio was calculated.

As outlined above, the three independent variables source (S), place (P), and reason for referral (R) were placed into an overall model for the component. Then each individual independent variable was removed from the formula to test for significant effect. Results of the modelling appear in Table 4.2a.

Table 4.2a  
Scaled Deviance of the Models  
Referral Component of Subvariables  
(from Table 4.2)

Model	Scaled Deviance	<u>df</u>
S + P + R	173.4	129
S + R - P	180.6	132
R + P - S	188.2	142
P + S - R	173.4	130

As can be seen from Table 4.2b, when examined in the presence of referral source and reason for referral, place had no significant effect ( $p = .066$ ) on the log odds of the outcome. Similarly, in the presence of reason for referral and place, the referral source had no significant effect ( $p = .320$ ). Finally, the reason for referral, in the presence of referral source and place, had no significant effect on the probability of disposition ( $p = 1.00$ ).

Table 4.2b  
 Statistical Analysis of the Log-Odds Outcome Model:  
 Referral Component of Independent Variables  
 (from Table 4.2 and 4.2a)

Variable	$L^2$ <sup>a</sup>	df	p <sup>b</sup>
Referral Source	14.8	13	.320
Place	7.2	3	.066
Reason for Referral	0.0	1	1.000

<sup>a</sup>  $L^2$  The likelihood-ratio chi-square  
<sup>b</sup> Two-tailed test

### Summary

For the present sample there are no significant multivariate relationships with disposition. Bivariately there are three statistically significant relationships, but none of these relationships has a sufficiently strong correlation coefficient.

### Victim

The second independent variable component was composed of four subvariables: (a) the victim's gender (VG); (b) the victim's age at (i) onset (AO) and (ii) intake (AI); (c) the number of perpetrators (NP); and (d) the victim's previous history as a victim (PH).

Gender (VG) Gender, the first subvariable of the component victim variables, was a nominal-level dichotomous

variable with responses of either male or female. As can be seen in Table 4.3, twenty-one (21) victims were male and 126 (85.7%) were female.

Since disposition and victim's gender are both dichotomous variables a simple bivariate Pearson's product-moment correlation was calculated. As can be seen in Table 4.3, analysis of gender with disposition indicated no association for the present sample ( $r = .03$ ,  $p = .34$ ).

Age at Onset (AO) The second subvariable of the victim component was two levels of age related to the victim. The first of two levels was the age of the victim at onset of the child sexual abuse. As can be seen in Table 4.3, the present sample had an average age at time of onset of 8 years 7 months (Mean = 8.59 years, SD = 3.56 years).

For age at onset, which were continuous data (N.B., data were collected in months of age), a Pearson's product-moment correlation was calculated giving a coefficient of  $r = -.016$  ( $p = .437$ ) between age at onset and disposition. Thus, by bivariate correlation analyses, it can be safely concluded that age at onset was not related to disposition.

A Student's t-test was also completed to see if there was a statistically significant difference between the mean ages at onset of the two groups of outcome possibilities (i.e., charged or not charged). The average age of the victim at

onset for the group whose perpetrators was charged was 8.52 years old and, for the group that was not charged, 8.63 years old ( $t = .16$ ,  $df = 103$ ,  $p = .88$ ). The data indicates no difference.

Age at Intake (AI) The second level of the age subvariable was the age of the victim of child sexual abuse at the time of intake. As can be seen from Table 4.3, the average age at intake was 9 years 10 months (SD = 4.01 years). The Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was  $r = .13$  ( $p = .06$ ).

A Student's t-test yielded an average age of 10.5 years for victims whose perpetrators were charged and 9.5 years for those who were not charged ( $t = 1.55$ ,  $df = 145$ ,  $p = .123$ ).

Number of Perpetrators (NP) The next subvariable within the component of victim variables examines the number of different perpetrators of the child sexual abuse. Number of different perpetrators was defined as a dichotomous nominal-level variable with possible responses of either single or multiple perpetrators. As can be seen from Table 4.3, there were multiple perpetrators involved in only 8 (5.4%) of the cases from the present study.

Once again a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated between number of perpetrators and disposition. As can be seen from Table 4.3, there is no

significant bivariate association between number of perpetrators and disposition.

History as a Victim (PH) It was found in the present sample that 29 (20%) of the victims had a history (with Social Services) of previous abuse not including the current child sexual abuse.

As can be seen from Table 4.3, this dichotomous variable, defined as presence or absence of previous history of abuse, produced a very weak Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient. Thus, by bivariate correlation analyses, it can be safely concluded that history as a victim was not related to disposition.

Summary. In summary, there were no statistically significant bivariate associations between the individual independent subvariables of the component victim variables and the dependent variable. Multivariate analysis was then used to further test relationships.

Table 4.3  
Distribution and Correlations between  
Victim Subvariables and Disposition

Variable	Number	Number Charged	Percent Charged	$r^a$	$n$
Victim's Gender (VG)				.034	147
Male	21	7	33.3		
Female	126	48	38.1		
Totals..	147	55	37.4		
Number of Perpetrators (NP)				-.001	147
Single	139	52	37.4		
Multiple	8	3	37.5		
Totals..	147	55	37.4		
History as Victim (PH)				.115	116
Yes	29	13	44.8		
No	87	28	32.2		
Totals..	116	41	35.3		

Variable	Mean	SD	$r^a$	$n$	$t^a$	df
Age at Onset (AO)	8.59	3.56	-.016	105	.16	103
Age at Intake (AI)	9.83	4.01	.123	147	1.55	145

a

Two-tailed test.

#### Multivariate Analysis

The variables (a) the victim's gender (VG); (b) the victim's age at (i) onset (AO) and (ii) intake (AI); (c) the number of perpetrators, and (d) the victim's previous history as a victim (PH) were placed into a logistic analysis model

(as described previously on page 41) from which the scaled deviance was calculated for an overall model. Finally, as was done with the referral component of variables, each variable was removed from the model individually in order to test for the likelihood-of-fit chi-square ratio ( $L^2$ ). Introductory data for these models appears in Table 4.3a.

Table 4.3a  
Scaled Deviance of the Models  
Victim Component of Subvariables  
(from Table 4.3)

Model	Scaled Deviance	<u>df</u>
VG + AI + AO + PH + NP	93.28	72
AI + AO + PH + NP - VG	93.30	73
AO + PH + NP + VG - AI	94.86	73
PH + NP + VG + AI - AO	93.78	73
NP + VG + AI + AO - PH	96.85	73
VG + AI + AO + PH - NP	93.50	73

As previously stated, each variable was removed from the overall model in order to test for significant effect on the probability of disposition. As can be seen in Table 4.3b, there were no significant effects found for any of the variables in the presence of all of the other variables.

Table 4.3b  
 Statistical Analysis of the Log-Odds Outcome Model:  
 Victim Component of Independent Variables  
 (from Table 4.3 and 4.3a)

Variable	Symbol	$L^2$ <sup>a</sup>	df	p
Victim's Gender	(VG)	0.02	1	.887
Age at Onset	(AO)	0.50	1	.479
Age at Intake	(AI)	1.58	1	.209
Number of Perpetrators	(NP)	0.22	1	.639
Previous History	(PH)	3.57	1	.059

a Two-tailed test.

### Summary

For the component of subvariables known as the victim there are no statistically significant bivariate relationships. As well, there are no variables which have a significant effect on the probability of disposition in multivariate analysis.

### Victim's Family

The third component of independent variables which were examined were those variables identified and associated with the family of the victim. The victim's family component included: (a) parental structure (P), (b) marital status (M); (c) family size (i) number of children in the family, (ii) number of male siblings, (iii) number of female siblings, and

(iv) number of known family victims; and (d) parents' age (i) father's age (F) and (ii) mother's age (M).

Parental Structure (P) The first variable for which data were collected was the nominal-level variable, parental structure of the family. Parental structure refers to the persons acting in the parental role for the victim at the time of the child sexual abuse and included four mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories. As can be seen in Table 4.4, 73 (49.7%) of the victims lived with both natural parents.

Since parental structure, a nominal-level variable, had four possible values, the process which was described for the referral variable source was followed to create dummy variables. As can be seen in Table 4.4, there were extremely weak associations between all of the parental structures and disposition. The correlation coefficients ranged from  $r = .034$  to  $.110$  (ignoring the minus signs). Thus, by bivariate correlation analyses it can be safely concluded that each of the parental structures was not individually related to disposition.

Marital Status (M) The next variable which was examined was marital status of the parent with whom the victim was living with at the time of the child sexual abuse. The possible outcomes of marital status were again categorical with six possible responses. Table 4.4 provides a summary of

the numbers corresponding to each possible response as well as the percentage of each value which were charged.

The same process described earlier for creating dummy variables was used in order to obtain Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients. As can be seen in Table 4.4, there were extremely weak associations between all of the marital statuses and disposition. The correlation coefficients ranged from  $r = .004$  to  $.114$  (ignoring the minus signs). Thus, by bivariate correlation analyses it can be safely concluded that each of the marital statuses was not individually related to disposition.

Number of Children (C) The next set of independent variables within the component of victim's family is size of the family. For the present study there were four categories, the first of which was defined as number of children living in the home at the time of the child sexual abuse. As can be seen from Table 4.4, the average number of children in the home at the time of the child sexual abuse was 2.3 (SD = 0.9), with the maximum family size being five.

Bivariate analysis of the continuous data yields a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient of  $r = .23$  for number of children living in the home ( $p = .003$ ). The correlation coefficient is indicative of a weak association between the number of children in the family and disposition.

As the number of children in the home increases the likelihood of a charge being laid also somewhat increases. Caution should be used in reading the result since it is not a strong correlation.

A Student's  $t$ -test to measure the difference between the mean number of children in the home for the two groups of dispositions indicates an average number of children in the home of 2.6 for those whose perpetrators were charged and 2.1 for the group where the charge was not laid. The test yielded a  $t$ -value of 2.8 ( $df = 139$ ,  $p = .006$ ) and significantly different group means.

Male Siblings (B) As can be seen in Table 4.4 the average number of male siblings was 1.1 ( $SD = 1.1$ ) with the maximum of six.

Bivariate analysis of number of male siblings and disposition yielded a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient of  $r = -.01$  ( $p = .5$ ). Thus, by bivariate correlation analyses, it can be safely concluded that the number of male siblings was not related to disposition.

A Student's  $t$ -test was calculated to test the difference between the average number of male siblings in the two groups of dispositions. Results indicate no difference ( $t = -0.0$ ,  $df = 144$ ,  $p = 1.0$ ).

Female Siblings (G) The average number of female

siblings was 1.7 (SD = 1.3) with a maximum of eight female siblings.

The number of female siblings in the family compared to disposition produced a correlation coefficient of  $r = .005$  ( $p = .477$ ). Thus, by bivariate correlation analyses, it can be safely concluded that the number of female siblings was not related to disposition.

A Student's  $t$ -test yielded a mean number of female siblings for the charged group of 1.8 and 1.7 for the not charged group ( $t = 0.06$ ,  $df = 144$ ,  $p = .953$ ).

Other Family Victims (V) The last independent variable considered for the family size subvariable was number of other known victims in the family. The average number of other victims in the family was .584 (SD = 0.764). The most other family victims was three, giving that family four victims.

Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated between the number of other known family victims and disposition. The coefficient obtained ( $r = .2$ ,  $p = .009$ ) indicates a statistically significant, but weak, association. That is, as the number of other victims increases so does the likelihood of a charge being laid.

A Student's  $t$ -test reveals a difference between the two groups of dependent variable possibilities in light of other family victims ( $t = 2.41$ ,  $df = 135$ ,  $p = .017$ ). The mean

number of other known victims in the charged group was 0.8 while in the not charged group it was 0.5.

Father's Age (F) The first of two subvariables concerning the age of the parents was father's age. The father's average age at intake was 37.6 years (SD = 6.8), with an age range from 22 to 54.

For the continuous variable father's age a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated and results indicated no significant correlation ( $r = .094$ ,  $p = .23$ ). Thus, by bivariate correlation analyses, it can be safely concluded that father's age was not related to disposition.

A Student's  $t$ -test revealed the father's average age for the group where the perpetrator was charged was 38.2 years, while the average age for the group who were not charged was 36.9. The test yielded a  $t$ -value of 0.73 and no significant difference in average age ( $df = 61$ ,  $p = .465$ ) between the two groups of dispositions.

Mother's Age (M) The second subvariable of parents' age was the age of the mother of the victim of child sexual abuse. The average age for the victim's mother at time of intake was 33.3 (SD = 7.448) with the youngest mother being 18 years old and the oldest 57.

Bivariate analysis of mother's age with disposition

indicated no correlation ( $r = .15$ ,  $p = .08$ ). Thus, by bivariate correlation analyses, it can be safely concluded that mother's age was not related to disposition.

A Student's  $t$ -test was calculated to determine if there was a difference between the mean age of the mothers in the group of victims whose perpetrators were charged and that of those who were not charged. The mother's average age for the group where the perpetrator was charged was 34.5 while the average age for the group whose perpetrators were not charged was 32.3. The test yielded a  $t$ -value of 1.44 and no significant difference in average age ( $df = 93$ ,  $p = .15$ ).

Table 4.4  
Distribution and Correlations between  
Family Structure Subvariables and Disposition

Variable	Number	Number Charged	Percent Charged	$r^a$	$n$	
<b>Parental Structure (P)</b>						
Single Parent	48	16	33.3	-.061	144	
Two Parent	73	26	35.6	-.034	144	
One Parent/One Adult	22	11	50.0	.110	144	
Extended Family	1	1	100.0	.108	144	
	----	--	----			
Totals..	144	54	37.5			
<b>Marital Status (M)</b>						
Single	3	0	0.0	-.114	141	
Married	74	30	56.6	.064	141	
Separated	14	3	21.4	-.111	141	
Divorced	21	8	38.1	.004	141	
Common-law	24	10	41.7	.038	141	
Widowed	5	2	40.0	.010	141	
	----	--	----			
Totals..	141	53	37.9			
<hr/>						
Variable	Mean	SD	$r^a$	$n$	$t^a$	df
Number of Children (C)	2.3	1.0	.230	141	2.78	139 <sup>b</sup>
Number of Males (B)	1.1	1.1	-.001	146	0.00	144
Number of Females (G)	1.7	1.3	.005	146	0.06	144
Other Known Victims (V)	.58	.76	.203	137	2.41	135 <sup>b</sup>
Father's Age (F)	37.6	6.8	.094	63	.73	61
Mother's Age (M)	33.3	7.4	.148	95	1.44	93

a Two-tailed test

b Statistically significant at .01 level

### Multivariate Analysis

Multivariate analysis was then completed for the entire group of independent variables known as the family structure component, following the same design as outlined in the referral component on multivariate analysis. A model was developed for the subvariables (a) parental structure (P); (b) marital status (M); (c) family size (i) number of children in the family, (ii) number of male siblings, (iii) number of female siblings, and (iv) number of known family victims; and (d) parents' age (i) father's age (F) and (ii) mother's age (M). The model appears in Table 4.4a.

Table 4.4a  
Scaled Deviance of the Models  
(from Table 4.4)

Model	Scaled Deviance	df
P + M + F + M + C + B + G + V	43.37	37
M + F + M + C + B + G + V - P	46.95	38
F + M + C + B + G + V + P - M	46.75	39
M + C + B + G + V + P + M - F	44.75	38
C + B + G + V + P + M + F - M	46.00	38
B + G + V + P + M + F + M - C	45.09	38
G + V + P + M + F + M + C - B	50.49	38
V + P + M + F + M + C + B - G	43.40	38
P + M + F + M + C + B + G - V	48.79	38

As can be seen from Table 4.4b, when testing for the

likelihood-of-fit chi-square ( $L^2$ ) in the log odds model of logistic analysis there is no significant effect for parental structure, marital status, number of children in the family, number of female siblings, father's age, or mother's age, all in the presence of all the other variables within the component.

Table 4.4b  
Analysis of the Log-Odds Outcome Model:  
Family Structure Component of Independent Variables  
(from Tables 4.4 and 4.4b)

Variable	Symbol	$L^2$	df	p
Parental Structure	(P)	3.58	1	.058
Marital Status	(M)	3.38	2	.184
Number of Children	(C)	1.72	1	.190
Male Siblings	(B)	7.12	1	.008 <sup>a</sup>
Female Siblings	(G)	0.03	1	.862 <sup>b</sup>
Other Known Victims	(V)	5.60	1	.018 <sup>b</sup>
Fathers Age	(F)	1.38	1	.240
Mothers Age	(M)	2.63	1	.105

<sup>a</sup> Statistically significant at the .01 level (two-tailed test).

<sup>b</sup> Statistically significant at the .05 level (two-tailed test).

In the presence of all other factors the number of male siblings had a significant effect ( $L^2 = 7.12$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .008$ ) on the probability of disposition. In the particular case of male siblings, as the number of male siblings decreases in the presence of the other variables, the

likelihood of a charge being laid increases. Multiplicative logit models have the advantage of providing estimates of effect parameters that have a straightforward interpretation: they tell us the effect on the odds of a charge being laid given a unit increase in the independent variable (Wanner & Caputo, 1986). Therefore by taking the estimated value of the variable in the overall model of -1.571 which corresponds to a coefficient value (Table 4.4c), one is able to make an observation concerning direction and strength. As well a pseudo  $R^2$  value of .16 as obtained, indicating that 16% of the total likelihood-of-fit chi-square ( $L^2$ ) can be explained by the fit of the model.

In the presence of all the other factors in the family structure component, the number of other known victims has a significant effect on the outcome of the dependent variable ( $L^2 = 5.60$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .018$ ). As can be seen in Table 4.4c as the number of known victims increases in the presence of the other variables the likelihood of a charge being laid also increases. A pseudo  $R^2$  value of .11 was obtained, indicating that 11% of the total likelihood-of-fit chi-square ( $L^2$ ) can be explained by the fit of the model.

**Table 4.4c**  
**Analysis of the Log-Odds Outcome Model:**  
**Family Structure Component of Independent Variables**  
**Coefficient Estimate Values for Significant Variables**  
**(from Tables 4.4 and 4.4b)**

Variable	Acronym	Main Effects Coefficient	$R^2$
Male Siblings	(B)	-1.571	.16
Other Known Victims	(V)	1.213	.11

#### Summary

As can be seen from the Tables 4.4 through 4.4c, there are weak bivariate correlation associations between the number of children in the home and disposition, and number of other known victims and disposition. As well, there are two variables which in the presence of all other variables have a significant effect on the probability of disposition. These two are number of male siblings and number of other known victims.

#### Perpetrator

There were five variables examined in relation to the component of variables known as perpetrator variables. These were (a) the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim (R), (b) the perpetrator's gender (G), (c) the acknowledgment

by the perpetrator that he/she was involved in the alleged child sexual abuse (K), (d) the age of perpetrator at the time of intake (A), and (e) the previous history of the perpetrator as a perpetrator (H).

Relationship (R) The first variable examined was the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim. There were 16 mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories for this nominal-level independent variable. These relationship categories are presented in the first column of Table 4.5. As can be seen, in the present sample 35 (23.8%) natural fathers of the victim were the perpetrators.

To determine if each relationship was correlated with disposition, a dichotomous dummy variable was created for each relationship, where the value of 1 was given to those cases which were in a particular relationship and the value of 0 was given to those cases who were not in that relationship. A simple bivariate Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was calculated between each relationship and disposition.

As can be seen in Table 4.5, there were extremely weak associations between all of the 16 relationships and disposition. The correlation coefficients ranged from  $r = .006$  to  $.187$  (ignoring the minus signs). Thus, by bivariate correlation analyses it can be safely concluded that each of

the relationship variables was not individually related to disposition.

Gender (G) The second variable which was examined was the gender of the perpetrator of the child sexual abuse. As can be seen from Table 4.5, there were 144 (98%) male perpetrators and 3 (2%) female perpetrators.

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated between perpetrator's gender, which is a dichotomous nominal-level variable, and disposition. Bivariate analysis yielded results indicating no significant relationship between gender and disposition (see Table 4.5).

Acknowledgment (K) The third variable considered in the component known as perpetrator variables concerned the acknowledgment by the perpetrator that he/she committed the child sexual abuse. As can be seen from Table 4.5, 44 (29.9%) perpetrators admitted to the child sexual abuse.

As can be seen from Table 4.5, there is a statistically significant, but weak, association between acknowledgment and disposition ( $r = 0.19$ ,  $p = .03$ ). As it is a positive correlation, it would appear that as the number of perpetrators acknowledging increases the likelihood of their being charged also increases, albeit weakly.

Age at Report (A) The average age of the perpetrator at time of report/intake was 29.9 years old (SD = 13.2). The

oldest perpetrator was 67 years old and the youngest was 10.

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated for the continuous variable age at report ( $r = .18, p = .032$ ) indicating a statistically significant, but very weak, association between perpetrator's age at intake and disposition. Thus, by bivariate correlation analyses, it can be safely concluded that age of the perpetrator was not related to disposition.

A Student's  $t$ -test was calculated to determine if there was a difference between the mean ages of perpetrators for the two groups of outcomes. The mean age of perpetrators at time of intake for the charged group was 32.7. For the group of perpetrators who were not charged the mean age was 27.9. There was no significant difference between the two groups in average age at intake/report ( $t = 1.87, df = 104, p = .064$ ).

History (H) Seventy two (49%) of the perpetrators had a previous history of abuse (i.e., physical, sexual, or emotional) as perpetrators. Eight (5.4%) had no previous history as perpetrators.

A Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated between history and disposition. As a nominal dichotomous variable (i.e., was there a history?) results indicated  $r = .16$  ( $p = .08$ ). Thus, by bivariate correlation analyses, it can be safely concluded that history was not

related to disposition.

Table 4.5  
Distribution and Correlations between  
Perpetrator Subvariables and Disposition

Variable	Number Referred	Number Charged	Percent Charged	<u>r</u>
<b>Relationship (R)</b>				
Natural Father	35	15	42.9	.063
Natural Mother	3	0	0.0	.112
Male Sibling	13	5	38.5	-.007
Step-Father	17	7	41.2	.028
Step-Male Sibling	1	1	100.0	-.107
Adoptive Father	3	2	66.7	.087
Uncle	9	2	22.2	.080
Male Cousin	6	1	16.7	.088
Grandfather	5	2	40.0	-.010
Significant Other	18	7	38.9	-.011
Peer	1	0	0.0	.064
Male Babysitter	11	4	36.4	.006 <sup>b</sup>
Male Careprovider	3	3	100.0	.187 <sup>b</sup>
Common-Law father	13	6	46.2	.056
Live-in Boyfriend	4	0	0.0	.129
Step-Grandfather	2	0	0.0	.091
Other Related	3	0	0.0	-.112
	---	--	----	
Totals..	147	55	37.4	
<b>Perpetrator's Gender (G)</b>				
Male	144	55	38.2	-.112
Female	3	0	0.0	
	---	--	----	
Totals..	147	55	37.4	
<b>Acknowledgment (K)</b>				
Yes	44	22	50.0	.192 <sup>b</sup>
No	45	14	31.1	
	---	--	----	
Totals..	89	36	40.4	

(Continued)

Table 4.5  
(Continued)

Variable	Number Referred	Number Charged	Percent Charged	<u>r</u>
Previous History (H)				.158
Yes	72	33	45.8	
No	8	3	37.5	
	--	--	----	
Totals..	80	36	45.0	

Variable	Mean	SD	<u>r</u> <sup>a</sup>	<u>n</u>	<u>t</u> <sup>a</sup>	<u>df</u>
Age at Intake (A)	29.9	13.2	.181	106	1.87	104 <sub>B</sub>

a Two-tailed test

b Statistically significant at .05

#### Multivariate Analysis

The variables (a) the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim (R), (b) the perpetrator's gender (G), (c) the acknowledgment by the perpetrator that he/she was involved in the alleged child sexual abuse (K), (d) the age of perpetrator at the time of intake (A), and (e) the previous history of the perpetrator as a perpetrator were placed into a logistic model from which the scaled deviance for an overall model was calculated, as it was for the three previous variable components. Finally each variable was removed individually from the model in order to test for the

likelihood-of-fit chi-square ratio ( $L^2$ ). Introductory data for these variables appears in Table 4.5a.

Table 4.5a  
Scaled Deviance of the Models:  
(from Table 4.5)

Model	Scaled Deviance	<u>df</u>
R + G + A + H + K	22.72	25
G + A + H + K - R	46.44	33
A + H + K + R - G	22.72	25
H + K + R + G - A	26.67	26
K + R + G + A - H	37.81	28
V + G + A + H - K	24.30	26

As previously stated each variable was removed from the overall model in order to test for the log odds ratio of the outcome. In the component of variables known as the perpetrator there was no significant effect of the log odds outcome for either perpetrator's gender (G) or perpetrator acknowledgment (K) in the presence of all the other variables. Results can be seen in Table 4.5b.

There were three significant effects found for the component of perpetrator. As can be seen from Table 4.5b, the relationship to victim (R) has a very significant effect ( $L^2 = 23.72$ , df = 8,  $p = .002$ ) on the probability of the outcome. The most pronounced effect is with fathers who have adopted the victim (coefficient = 13.15). Other effects are shown in

Table 4.5c. A pseudo  $R^2$  value of .51 was obtained, indicating that 51% of the total likelihood-of-fit chi-square ( $L^2$ ) can be explained by the fit of the model.

Table 4.5b  
Analysis of the Log Odds Outcome Model:  
Perpetrator Component of Independent Variables  
(from Tables 4.5 and 4.5a)

Variable	Symbol	$L^2$	df	p
Relationship to Victim	(R)	23.72	8	.003
Perpetrator's Gender	(G)	0.00	0	
Perpetrator Acknowledgment	(K)	1.58	1	.209
Age at Intake	(A)	3.95	1	.047
History of Abuse	(H)	15.09	3	.002

As can be seen from Table 4.5b, age at intake had a significant effect on the log odds of disposition in the presence of all other variables in the component. As can be seen in Table 4.5c, the relationship is a positive one (.1928) in that, as the age of the perpetrator at intake increases in the presence of the other variables, so does the likelihood of a charge being laid. A pseudo  $R^2$  value of .14 was obtained, indicating that 14% of the total likelihood-of-fit chi-square ( $L^2$ ) can be explained by the fit of the model.

Finally, as can be seen from Table 4.5b, there is a significant effect in the presence of relationship to victim, perpetrator's gender, age at intake, and acknowledgment, for

the subvariable previous history as a perpetrator on the log odds of disposition. The most profound positive effect (see Table 4.5c) is when the previous abuse was sexual abuse (15.85). A pseudo  $R^2$  value of .39 was obtained, indicating that 39% of the total likelihood-of-fit chi-square ( $L^2$ ) can be explained by the fit of the model.

Table 4.5c  
Analysis of the Log-Odds Outcome Model:  
Perpetrator Component of Independent Variables  
Coefficient Estimate Values for Significant Variables  
(from Tables 4.5a and 4.5b)

Variable	Acronym	Main Effects Coefficient	$R^2$
Relationship to Victim	(R)		.51
Natural Father			
Male Sibling		- 6.04	
Step-Father		4.94	
Adoptive Father		13.15	
Male Cousin		-18.04	
Grandfather		-27.19	
Significant Other		- 8.01	
Male Babysitter		3.69	
Common-Law father		4.10	
Age at Intake	(A)	.19	.14
History	(H)		.39
Physical			
Sexual		15.85	
Emotional		14.98	

Summary As can be seen from the preceding sections on the component of subvariables related to the perpetrator, there were three statistically significant bivariate correlation associations. However, these are extremely weak associations, with the strongest being only  $r = .19$ . With multivariate analysis there were three variables which in the presence of all other variables had a significant effect on the probability of disposition. These are relationship (R), age at intake (A), and history (H).

#### Occurrence

The final component of variables is those which are related to the activities surrounding the primary child sexual abuse. The primary child sexual abuse was defined as that child sexual abuse which prompted the referral. There are four subvariables composing the component occurrence: (a) location where the child sexual abuse took place (L); (b) sexual activity (i) type and (ii) recipient; (c) frequency (i) as measured by single occurrence or multiple occurrence (F), and (ii) frequency as measured ordinally as one occurrence, less than ten occurrences, and 10 and more occurrences (A); and (d) duration of the child sexual abuse (D).

Location (L) The first subvariable of the occurrence component was the location where the child sexual abuse took

place. Location was a nominal-level variable with five (5) mutually exclusive and exhaustive location categories. These locations are presented in the first column of Table 4.6. As can be seen, 97 (73.5%) of the child sexual abuse cases occurred in the victim's home.

To determine if each location was correlated with disposition, dichotomous dummy variables were created in an identical manner to that described for the subvariable source of the referral component of variables.

As can be seen in Table 4.6, there were extremely weak associations between all of the location variables and disposition. The correlation coefficients ranged from  $r = .032$  to  $.181$  (ignoring the minus signs). Thus, by bivariate correlation analyses it can be safely concluded that each of the location variables was not individually related to disposition.

#### Sexual Activity (T)

The first of two sexual activity related subvariables referred to the type of activity which occurred during the child sexual abuse. Type of sexual activity contained 18 mutually exclusive and exhaustive type of activity categories. These types of activities are presented in Table 4.6. As can be seen, 50 (37%) of the child sexual abuse cases where the type of activity was identified involved fondling of the

genitalia.

To determine if each type of activity was correlated with disposition, a dichotomous dummy variable was created for each type of activity in a manner identical to that previously identified for the source subvariable of the referral component. A simple bivariate Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated between each type of activity and disposition.

As can be seen in Table 4.6, there were extremely weak associations between all of the types of activities and disposition. The correlation coefficients ranged from  $r = .007$  to  $.144$  (ignoring the minus signs). Thus, by bivariate correlation analyses it can be safely concluded that each of the types of activities was not individually related to disposition.

Recipient of Activity (R) The second variable of the subvariable sexual activity described the person upon whom the activity was performed. A nominal-level subvariable, the possible responses were any one of (i) the victim, (ii) the perpetrator, (iii) a person other than the perpetrator or the victim, or (iv) both perpetrator and victim. As can be seen from Table 4.6, the most frequent response was the activity being carried out on the victim, accounting for 122 (83%) of the cases.

To determine if each category was correlated with disposition a process identical to that described for the subvariable source of the referral component was followed.

As can be seen in Table 4.6, there were extremely weak associations between all of the recipients of the activity and disposition. The correlation coefficients ranged from  $r = .001$  to  $.137$  (ignoring the minus signs). Thus, by bivariate correlation analyses it can be safely concluded that each of the recipient variables was not individually related to disposition.

Frequency (F) The first of two frequency variables was a dichotomous variable measured as either a single occurrence or multiple occurrence. As can be seen from Table 4.6, 98 (76.6%) of the 128 known responses involved multiple occurrences.

A simple bivariate Pearson's product-moment correlation ( $r$ ) was calculated to determine if a relationship existed between the dichotomous variable frequency and disposition. As can be seen from Table 4.6, there is a statistically significant but weak correlation between frequency and disposition ( $r = .262$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

Frequency (A) The second of two frequency related subvariables was ordinal in nature. The three possible responses were a single occurrence, less than ten occurrences,

or 10 and more occurrences. As can be seen from Table 4.6, information was lost on 28 cases of multiple occurrences between the first frequency variable (F) and the second frequency variable (A). There were 40 (40%) cases where the child sexual abuse occurred ten or more times.

To determine if these frequency variables (A) were correlated with disposition, a process identical to that described for source of the referral component was followed.

As can be seen from Table 4.6, there were two statistically significant relationships between frequency and disposition. As a single vs. multiple occurrence related to disposition the correlation coefficient was  $r = -.333$  ( $p = .000$ ). As an occurrence of ten and more related to disposition the correlation coefficient was  $r = .328$  ( $p = .000$ ). Again, while these correlations are not strong the factors are no longer just weakly related but are moderate.

Duration (D) The next subvariable of the occurrence component is the duration of the child sexual abuse. The average length of child sexual abuse was 19.5 months (Mean = 1.62 years, SD = 2.29 years).

To determine if there was a relationship between duration of child sexual abuse and disposition a simple Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated. As can be seen from Table 4.6, there is a weak correlation between

duration and disposition ( $r = .227$ ,  $p = .01$ ). Thus, by bivariate correlation analyses, it can be safely concluded that duration was not related to disposition.

To determine if there was a difference between the mean durations of child sexual abuse between the two disposition groups a Student's  $t$ -test was calculated. The average duration of child sexual abuse for the group where the perpetrator was charged was 28.1 months, while the group whose perpetrators were not charged averaged only 15 months. The calculated Student's  $t$ -value of 2.34 ( $df = 101$ ,  $p = .02$ ) indicates that there was a significant difference between the mean duration of child sexual abuse for the two groups.

Table 4.6  
Distribution and Correlations between  
Occurrence Subvariables and Disposition

Variable	Number Referred	Number Charged	Percent Charged	$r$
<b>Location (L)</b>				
Victim's Home	97	38	39.2	.097
Perpetrator's Home	23	4	17.4	-.181 <sup>b</sup>
Car	1	0	0.0	-.066
Public Place	4	3	75.0	.142
Other	7	3	42.9	.032
	----	---	----	
Totals..	132	48	36.4	
<b>Type of activity (T)</b>				
Exhibitionism	6	4	66.7	.144 <sup>b</sup>
Exposure/Adult Sex	2	1	50.0	.039

(Continued)

Table 4.6  
(Continued)

Variable	Number Referred	Number Charged	Percent Charged	r
Voyeurism	1	0	0.0	-.063
Attempt Intercourse	9	4	44.4	.054
Fondle Breasts	8	2	25.0	-.052
Fondle Genitalia	50	14	28.0	-.109
Cunnilingus	3	1	33.3	-.005
Fellatio	4	2	50.0	.056
Anal Penetration				
Penile	3	2	66.7	.101
Digital	2	0	0.0	-.090
Penile Attempt	3	1	33.3	-.005
Vaginal Penetration				
Penile	23	11	47.8	.124
Digital	6	2	33.3	-.007
Other	4	1	25.0	-.036
Dry Intercourse	2	0	0.0	-.090
Kissing	2	0	0.0	-.090
Not Classifiable	6	2	33.3	-.007
Prostitution	1	0	0.0	-.063
	---	--	----	
Totals	135	47	34.8	
Recipient (R)				
Victim	122	42	34.4	-.001
Perpetrator	8	4	50.0	.080
Other	2	1	50.0	.039
Both	4	0	0.0	-.137
	---	--	----	
Totals..	136	47	34.6	
Frequency (F)				
Single	30	4	13.3	-.262 <sup>a</sup>
Multiple	98	43	43.9	.262 <sup>a</sup>
	---	--	----	
Totals..	128	47	36.7	
Frequency (A)				
Single	30	4	13.3	-.333 <sup>a</sup>
Less than 10	30	11	36.7	-.081

(continued)

Table 4.6  
(Continued)

Variable	Number Referred	Number Charged	Percent Charged	$r$
10 and More	40	23	57.5	.328 <sup>a</sup>
Totals..	100	38	38.0	

Variable	Mean	SD	$r$	$n$	$t$	$df$
Duration of Abuse (D)	19.5	27.5	.227	103	2.34	101 <sup>b</sup>

a Statistically significant .01 Two-tailed test

b Statistically significant .05 Two-tailed test

**Multivariate Analysis** The six subvariables of the component identified as occurrence variables were (a) location where the child sexual abuse took place (L); (b) sexual activity (i) type and (ii) recipient, (c) frequency (i) as measured by single occurrence or multiple occurrence (F) and (ii) frequency measured ordinally as one occurrence, less than ten occurrences, and 10 and more occurrences (A); and (d) duration of the child sexual abuse (D) were placed into a logit regression model. The model can be seen in Table 4.6a.

Table 4.6a  
Scaled Deviance of the Models:  
(from Table 4.6)

Model	Scaled Deviance	<u>df</u>
L + F + I + D + T + R	52.36	54
L + F + I + D + T - R	53.02	55
F + I + D + T + R - L	65.44	58
I + D + T + R + L - F	55.15	55
D + T + R + L + F - I	60.81	56
T + R + L + F + I - D	52.60	55
R + L + F + I + D - T	84.05	70

As with the previous components, the individual variables within the component were removed from the model one at a time in order to test for the effect of that variable on the probability of disposition.

As can be seen from Table 4.6b, the variables recipient (R), frequency (F) (i.e., single or multiple occurrence), and duration of child sexual abuse (D) had no significant effect on the log odds of the disposition.

There were three significant effects found for the occurrence component. As can be seen from Table 4.6b, the location (L) where the child sexual abuse took place had a very significant effect ( $\chi^2 = 13.08$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .011$ ) on the probability of the outcome. The most pronounced effect is when the child sexual abuse occurred in a car (coefficient =

4.78). Other effects are shown in Table 4.6c. A pseudo  $R^2$  value of .20 was obtained, indicating that 20% of the total likelihood-of-fit chi-square ( $L^2$ ) can be explained by the fit of the model.

Table 4.6b  
Analysis of the Log Odds Odds Outcome Model:  
Occurrence Component of Independent Variables  
(from Tables 4.5 and 4.5a)

Variable	Acronym	$L^2$	<u>df</u>	<u>p</u>
Location	(L)	13.08	4	.011
Type of activity	(T)	31.69	16	.011
Recipient	(R)	.66	1	.416
Frequency	(F)	2.79	1	.095
Frequency	(A)	8.45	2	.015
Duration	(D)	0.24	1	.624

As can be seen from Table 4.6b, the type of activity (T) of the child sexual abuse had a very significant effect ( $L^2 = 31.69$ , df = 16, p = .011) on the probability of the outcome. The most pronounced effect was for digital penetration of the vagina (coefficient = 8.66). All effects are presented in Table 4.6c. A pseudo  $R^2$  value of .38 was obtained, indicating that 38% of the total likelihood-of-fit chi-square ( $L^2$ ) can be explained by the fit of the model.

Finally, as can be seen from Table 4.6b, the frequency (A) of occurrence of child sexual abuse as defined by less than ten or 10 and more occurrences had a very significant

effect ( $L^2 = 8.45$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .015$ ) on the probability of disposition. The most pronounced effect is equally shared between less than 10 and ten and more occurrences (coefficient = 23.61). All effects are shown in Table 4.6c. A pseudo  $R^2$  value of .14 was obtained, indicating that 14% of the total likelihood-of-fit chi-square ( $L^2$ ) can be explained by the fit of the model.

**Table 4.6c**  
**Analysis of the Log-Odds Outcome Model:**  
**Occurrence Component of Independent Variables**  
**Coefficient Estimate Values for Significant Variables**  
**(from Tables 4.6 and 4.6b)**\_\_

Variable	Acronym	Main Effects Coefficient	$R^2$
<b>Location</b>	<b>(L)</b>		<b>.20</b>
Victim's Home			
Perpetrator's Home		- 2.98	
Car		4.78	
Public Place		2.43	
Other		-10.28	

(continued)

Table 4.6c  
(Continued)

Variable	Acronym	Main Effects Coefficient	R <sup>2</sup>
Type of activity	(T)		.38
Exhibitionism			
Exposure/Adult Sex		4.84	
Voyeurism		-10.14	
Attempt Intercourse		- 2.72	
Fondle Breasts		- 4.79	
Fondle Genitalia		- 5.18	
Cunnilingus		-14.87	
Fellatio		1.08	
Anal Penetration			
Penile		4.56	
Digital		- 7.16	
Penile Attempt		1.92	
Vaginal Penetration			
Penile		- 3.61	
Digital		8.66	
Other		.34	
Dry Intercourse		-13.85	
Kissing		-14.92	
Not Classifiable		8.48	
Prostitution		-11.96	
Frequency	(A)		.14
Single			
Less than 10		23.61	
10 and More		23.61	

Summary When searching for bivariate associations between individual subvariables of the occurrence component of child sexual abuse variables, there are many extremely weak associations found. One subvariable does stand out and that is the frequency as defined as (i) a single occurrence, (ii)

less than ten occurrences, and (iii) ten and more occurrences. The third subcategory has a correlation coefficient  $r = .328$  which, while still not strong, is moderately significant in the relationship.

Multivariate analysis on the probability of the outcome indicates three variables which have a significant effect on the log odds of the outcome in the presence of the other five subvariables. Those three subvariables are: (a) location (L) where the child sexual abuse occurred, (ii) the type (T) of activity of the child sexual abuse, and (iii) the frequency (A) of the occurrence of child sexual abuse.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between selected independent variables affiliated with child sexual abuse and with the outcome of police investigation -- disposition.

As a process, this study began by delineating some of the major variables associated with child sexual abuse as recognized by the professional literature. The variables were then organized into component groups. Five of these components were identified: (1) referral, (2) victim, (3) victim's family, (4) perpetrator, and (5) occurrence. Twenty-five of the major variables recognized by the professional literature were then placed into the appropriate component.

A standardized data gathering instrument was developed, tested, and subsequently used to collect data at two agencies; Alberta Social Services, and the Municipal Police Department.

Each of the twenty-five individual variables were tested for a bivariate association with disposition. Following the bivariate analyses, each of the five components were tested by multivariate analysis for effect on the probability of disposition. Each of these relationships were reported on

statistically in Chapter 4.

As was reported in the previous chapter there are no variables which have a strong enough bivariate correlation coefficient to be a predictor of disposition. Several variables had statistical significance, but none reached the minimal  $r = .4$  value which has been described as the minimally accepted correlation value (e.g., Weinbach & Grinnell, 1987).

This chapter will examine each of the five components of independent variables in light of the implications for social work education, social work practice, social policy, and social work research.

### Referral

There are several important aspects which the social work educator must keep in mind when reviewing this study. As a community educator the social worker must examine the findings as to whom the referral source was. The data reported about child sexual abuse, indicate that there are major professions (e.g., doctors and mental health professionals) which are not reporting child sexual abuse as frequently as others. This may be due to several factors including the need for an education program for these professions aimed at teaching the practitioners methods of identification of victims of child

sexual abuse.

The social work practitioner must be concerned with consistency. While there was no district office which had a strong correlation with disposition, there were disparities between the rates of success in having a charge laid. For example Place Three investigated 43 cases of child sexual abuse and had charges laid in 51.2% of these cases. Place One, on the other hand, investigated 65 cases of child sexual abuse and had charges laid in 27.7% of them. Perpetrators in the geographic area for which Place One was responsible were charged in fewer cases than Place Three. The implication of this statistic is that there is a need for training or education for the some of the practitioners who are responsible for the investigation of child sexual abuse. This training should involve both social workers and police officers and result in an integration of education and practice.

The social policy person must be concerned that there is a discrepancy of charging rates between offices. The question which must be asked relates to how policy is being implemented in each office. Is the discrepancy due to differences in interpretation of policy for investigations or is there some other explanation?

Finally the social work researcher must stay in tune with

the implications stated above. For example, to assist the social work educator, the researcher may do a needs survey to determine who needs the community education and what information specifically needs to be provided? The researcher may become involved in program evaluation to identify the level of compliance each office has with policy. The researcher may wish to compare the disposition rates achieved by social workers who are specialists in child sexual abuse investigation with social workers who are not specialists in this area in their investigative responsibilities. In other words, the researcher must work in conjunction with the educator, the practitioner, and the policy maker. Ideally each person in those roles is an educator/researcher, a practitioner/ researcher, and a policy maker/researcher.

### Victim

As reported in Chapter Two, within the victim component of independent variables there are five reported female victims for each reported male victim. In this study there was a six to one ratio of females to males. Research findings have indicated that there may be many more male victims who are not reported (Sgroi, 1982). The social work educator must concern him/herself with developing a programme to alert the

community at large and the various professions to the fact that males too can be sexually abused.

The social work practitioner must become more attentive to cases being investigated which were not initially referred as child sexual abuse. Twenty-five percent of the victims in this study had been previously referred for a reason other than child sexual abuse. The trained practitioner might have been alerted to certain indicators of child sexual abuse if they had been aware of the frequency with which this occurs (Pierce & Pierce, 1985a).

Finally, the social work researcher has to work alongside the educator, the practitioner, and the policy maker to provide answers and directions. For example, the researcher might try and find out why there is such a low reported incidence of child sexual abuse for males as compared to females. Having completed this analysis, the researcher could provide the details necessary to develop an educational programme for alerting the community to identification of male victims. To assist the practitioner, the researcher could study the characteristics of child sexual abuse victims who had been previously reported for a reason other than child sexual abuse. Armed with the characteristic indicators, the practitioner may be able to identify the child sexual abuse victim much earlier and thus, prevent further occurrences.

### Victim's Family

In the component of independent variables known as victim's family, there were two variables which had weak correlations with disposition. These two variables were the number of children in the family and the number of other known family victims. For the 135 families where the information was available, the average number of other known family victims was .58. In other words, in almost every second investigation there was another known family victim. The social work educator must devote energies to alerting the community, professionals, and social work practitioners to the fact that there may be other silent victims in the family.

The practitioner then has to take the information provided to him/her by the educator and investigate the possibility that there are other victims in the family and not just to focus on the identified client/referral.

The social policy maker must once again consider the importance and practicality of adhering to the Giarretto Model. There were no variables with the victim's family component that can be used to predict disposition.

The social work researcher can lend his/her skills to the educator, the practitioner, and the policy maker. In the case

of the educator and practitioner, the researcher could once again detail the characteristics and indicators of multi-victim families as an aid to both. The educator can teach the characteristics which the practitioner could use as a checklist. Finally, the researcher could once again assist the policy maker in the evaluation of the feasibility of continuing with the current policy of the Giarretto Model.

### Perpetrator

As with most of the findings for this study there were no strong bivariate relationships with disposition for the perpetrator variables. The variable which had the strongest statistically significant correlation was the acknowledgement by the perpetrator that he/she was responsible for the child sexual abuse. What is of interest with this finding is that the relationship ( $r = .19$ ) was not stronger. The Giarretto Model which requires that the perpetrator be charged would not seem to be difficult to adhere to in cases where the perpetrator actually acknowledged participation. Yet, only 50% of those perpetrators who acknowledged being involved in child sexual abuse were charged. For the policy maker this fact raises serious questions about the adherence of departmental staff to the Giarretto Model.

A second alarming statistic is that a total of 72 perpetrators had a previous history as a perpetrator with a different victim. Of these 72 perpetrators only 33 were charged. Again, the policy maker has to take notice of this statistic. It would appear that despite having been a perpetrator before and acknowledging involvement, a different set of actions are taken than adherence to the departmental policy.

If the department is to continue to use the Giarretto Model as policy, social work educators must concentrate their efforts on giving the practitioner an understanding of the importance of the theory and philosophy the Model is based on.

The social work researcher has a need to concentrate his/her efforts on an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Giarretto Model. To do this, a comparative study must be undertaken in areas where the Model is adhered to and in areas where the perpetrator is not routinely charged. As a relatively new theoretical proposition, the Model needs to be tested as to its' effectiveness.

### Occurrence

It is within the component of independent variables known as the occurrence variables where the study yields results

coming close to a strong predictor of disposition. When the child sexual abuse occurs greater than 10 times there is a correlation coefficient of  $r = .33$ . In cases where there was a frequency of greater than ten times, 57% of the perpetrators were charged. In cases of a single occurrence only 13% were charged.

The social work educator must emphasize to all professionals involved in the investigation of child sexual abuse that there is emotional damage done even when the child sexual abuse occurs on a single occasion. When investigating and making a decision concerning the potential continuation of intervention the practitioner has to acknowledge that in 70% of the cases there has been more than one occurrence of child sexual abuse. In cases where there has only been one occurrence there is a strong potential that the event may happen again.

A second finding of this study was that in 58 of the cases, the type of activity involved fondling of the victim by the perpetrator. When one considers that charges were laid in only 27% of these fondling cases, it would appear that those responsible for investigation are more tolerant of fondling than they are with other types of activities where the percentage of charges laid is often as high as 66%. What makes this observation interesting is that the definition of

child sexual abuse presented above, does not rank the types of activities from least damaging to most. In fact, all types of activities are defined as equally damaging. For the practitioner, it demands an examination into the effect the child sexual abuse had on the client and to not allow the judgmental attitude to pervade that this type or that type may be tolerable.

### Summary

This study began by stating that the department of Social Services adhered to the Giarretto Model which requires the perpetrator to be charged in all cases of child sexual abuse. The findings indicate that a charge is laid in only 37% of all cases. Clearly there appears to be a conflict between policy and practice. As was repeated several times in the preceding five sections, an evaluation must be done on the effectiveness of the Giarretto Model and the effectiveness of the Model as policy. There are several research possibilities surrounding the issue of the Giarretto Model.

The goal of this study was to determine if there were any of the major variables associated with child sexual abuse were correlated with disposition. The findings indicated that none of the twenty-five variables were strongly associated with

disposition. The fact that these lack of findings occurred is important in itself.

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APPENDICESData Gathering InstrumentReferralReferral Source

001 anonymous	012 city soc. serv.
002 police	013 out of province
003 mother	014 child self referral
004 father	015 income security
005 relative	016 other agency/professional
006 community	017 court
007 school	018 solicitor general
008 doctor	019 friend
009 hospital	020 other department referral
010 health unit	021 adult self referral
011 mental health	

Place

06 Place One  
 07 Place Two  
 49 Place Three  
 41 Place Four

Reason for Referral

019 extra familial  
 020 intra familial

VictimGender

1=male  
 0=female

Age at reportAge at onsetNumber of different perpetrators

1 = single perpetrator  
 2 = multiple perpetrator  
 7 not recorded  
 8 not applicable  
 9 unknown

Previous history of abuse as a victim

1=physical            4=neglect  
2=sexual             5=no  
3=emotional  
7 not recorded  
8 not applicable  
9 unknown

Victim's Family VariablesParental Structure

1 single parent  
2 two parent  
3 two adults  
4 extended family  
5 other  
7 not recorded  
8 not applicable  
9 unknown

Marital status

1 single  
2 married  
3 separated  
4 divorced  
5 c/l  
6 widowed  
7 not recorded  
8 not applicable  
9 unknown

Number of children in the home (18 & under living in home)Male Siblings anywhereFemale Siblings anywhereNumber of other known family victimsFathers ageMothers agePerpetrator Variables

Relationship to perpetrator (i.e. what is perpetrator to victim)

01=birth father  
02=birth mother  
03=male sibling  
04=female sibling  
05=step father  
06=step mother  
07=step male sibling  
08=step female sibling  
09=adoptive father  
10=adoptive mother  
11=adoptive male sibling  
12=adoptive female sibling  
13=aunt  
14=uncle  
15=male cousin  
16=female cousin  
17=grandfather  
18=grandmother  
19=other blood relative \_\_\_\_\_(indicate)  
20=significant other non-related \_\_\_\_\_(indicate)  
21=previously unknown  
22=peer non-related  
23=babysitter male  
24=babysitter female  
25=boyfriend  
26=girlfriend  
27=teacher  
28=other caretaker male  
29=other caretaker female  
30=c/l father  
31=c/l mother  
32=c/l male sibling  
33=c/l female sibling  
34=natural parents non-live-in boyfriend  
35=natural parents non-live-in girlfriend  
36=unknown perpetrator  
37=other \_\_\_\_\_(indicate)  
77 not recorded  
88 not applicable  
99 unknown

Gender

1=male  
 0=female  
 7 not recorded  
 8 not applicable  
 9 unknown

Perpetrator's Acknowledgement

1=Yes  
 0=no

Age at reportHistory of abuse as a perpetrator

1=physical            4=neglect  
 2=sexual            5=no  
 3=emotional  
 7 not recorded  
 8 not applicable  
 9 unknown

OccurrenceLocation of primary occurrence

1 victims home            5 car  
 2 perpetrators home    6 other public place  
 3 school  
 4 park  
 7 not recorded  
 8 not applicable  
 9 unknown

Primary type

01 exposure to exhibitionism  
 02 " " adult sexual activity  
 03 " " child/adolescence sexual activity  
 04 " " pornography  
 05 voyeurism  
 06 threatened to have sex  
 07 fondling of breasts  
 08 fondling of genitalia  
 09 cunnilingus  
 10 fellatio

11 anal penetration penile  
 12 " " digital  
 13 " " other  
 14 vaginal penetration penile  
 15 " " digital  
 16 " " other  
 17 threats  
 18 emotional  
 19 bribery  
 20 on top clothed  
 21 kissing  
 22 other  
 77 not recorded  
 88 not applicable  
 99 unknown

Upon whom was activity performed

1 victim  
 2 perpetrator  
 3 other  
 7 not recorded  
 8 not applicable  
 9 unknown

Frequency

1 single occurrence  
 2 multiple occurrence  
 7 not recorded  
 8 not applicable  
 9 unknown

Frequency II

1 single occurrence  
 2 less than ten times  
 3 10 times and more  
 7 not recorded  
 8 not applicable  
 9 unknown

Duration (converted to months)

777 not recorded  
 888 not applicable  
 999 unknown

Police DispositionCharged

1=yes  
2=no  
7 not recorded  
8 not applicable  
9 unknown