

A COMPARITIVE ANALYSIS OF
THE INCIDENCE, TYPE AND
TRENDS OF CHILD ABUSE

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Jane, age 4, was left with her mother's boyfriend. He wanted to marry Jane's mother but did not want the responsibility of the little girl. He beat Jane repeatedly, and the child continually asked her mother, neighbors, and relatives, 'Is 'Daddy' going to kill me?' Jane was never admitted to the hospital, but was taken directly to the morgue. She was beaten to death with fists and an iron rod, and had lacerations all over her body. It seemed that only one thing remained untouched and unharmed, the small cross on a gold chain around her neck, given to her by the man who killed her. (Walters, 1974:5)

The above case history is a severe example of the type of physical abuse which some 200,000 to 500,000 children are subjected to annually in the United States. But physical abuse is only a small part of the overall picture of child abuse. Neglect, is five to eight times more common than physical abuse.

Tommy was considered a perfect baby. Although only six months old, he rarely cried. So when neighbors heard crying coming from the third-floor apartment, they were surprised, but after it continued for three days the surprise became concern. Attempts to get anyone to answer the door prompted a call to the police.

When the eleven-year veteran of the Manchester Police Department forced open the door and saw the child in the crib, he promptly vomited.

Tommy was curled up in a corner of the crib amid several bowls of sour milk and hardened baby food. Although the crib was in front of an opened

window, the stench was unbearable.

The child was covered with urine and feces, but beneath the caked filth the police officer could see that the baby's skin had a bluish coloring.

When Tommy's mother and her boyfriend returned to the apartment four days later, she was furious that her baby had been removed from the apartment. She threatened to sue everyone in sight for invasion of privacy.

Tommy spent three weeks in the critical-care unit of a Boston hospital, where he was treated for exposure, dehydration, and pneumonia. The doctor suspected permanent brain damage. (Gross and Gross, 1977:16)

Americans were only recently awakened to the problem of child abuse in this country. This was due largely to the work of Dr. Henry Kempe and his associates in the 1960's. Dr. Kempe's medical documentation of the existence of the problem and his coining of the term "the battered child syndrome" did much to arouse the concerns of the American public in the area of child abuse (Helfer and Kempe, 1974:18). This new concern for the well-being of children resulted in the proliferation of research studies, government programs, and commissions designed to discover the extent and causes of the problem of child abuse in this country. These various programs have done much to bring out the horrifying realities of child abuse in this nation. Recent statistics show that 200,000 children die annually from "circumstances associated with abuse and neglect" (Julian, 1977:395). It is statistics like these that led Walter Mondale, head of a joint congressional committee investigating child abuse in 1975, to state "our national myth is that we love children" (Gross and Gross, 1977:7).

The reaction to much of this new publicity was the whirl

wind passing of many new state laws regarding child abuse. Most prominent in these laws was the required "report laws" passed in every state by 1977. These laws required, under penalty of law, that any person suspecting a child abuse case must report it to the proper state agencies. The Oklahoma report law is an example of such legislation:

Every physician or surgeon, including doctors of medicine and dentistry, licensed osteopathic physicians, residents and interns, examining, attending or treating a child under the age of eighteen (18) years and every registered nurse examining, attending or treating such a child in the absence of a physician or surgeon, and every other person having reason to believe that a child under the age of eighteen (18) years has had physical injury or injuries inflicted upon him or her by other than accidental means where the injury appears to have been caused as a result of physical abuse or neglect, shall report the matter promptly to the county office of the Department of Institutions, Social and Rehabilitative Services in the county wherein the suspected injury occurred. Provided it shall be a misdemeanor for any person to knowingly and willfully fail to promptly report any incident as provided above. (Chapter 98 O.S.L. Section 846)

Unfortunately little has been done to enforce these report laws and thus they have "contributed little to protecting children. They were intended mainly to safeguard the conscience and legal vulnerability of our adult society" (Eekelear and Katz, 1978:246). The complacent idea that passing a law or proclaiming a national day or year will in some way cure the problem is an oversimplification, particularly in the area of child abuse. 1979 was "The International Year of the Child" and long overdue public attention has been focused on the abused children in this country. This attention must not be allowed to dissipate without further work in the

area of services and further analysis of the problem. By choosing this subject as the topic of my dissertation, I hope to help maintain this focus in years to come.

Problem Definition

"Child abuse and neglect" refers to

. . . the physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child under the age of eighteen by a person who is responsible for the child's welfare under circumstances which indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or threatened thereby. (93rd Congress, 1974)

The term "child abuse" refers to an act of commission by the responsible adult. It is the type which gets the most publicity but it is not the most common. As stated earlier "neglect" is five to eight times more common and refers to an act of omission on the part of the responsible adult. There is considerable discrepancies between the various state laws as to exactly what constitutes neglect. This seems to be a result of disagreement as to how much care and supervision is required for a child.

Child abuse can be categorized into four basic categories; Physical, Psychological, Sexual and Verbal. Physical abuse is any act which results in the physical injury of a child. The amount of injury can range from bruises to brain injury and death. The injury can be invoked by hand or by use of an instrument such as a pipe, belt or stick. Low estimates of the number of children who are severely battered each year in the United States place the number around 10,000

(Trojanowicz, 1978:187). Quite often the injury is inflicted for the purpose of discipline or punishment.

Psychological abuse are those actions "which result in impaired growth and development" (HEW, 1978:9). It quite often is coupled with physical abuse, particularly severe physical abuse, but can occur without it. It can also occur as a result of any of the other two types of abuse; Sexual and Verbal. Psychological abuse can manifest itself from placing the child under excessive pressure to meet inordinate expectations, and degrading him/her when the expectations are not met.

Sexual abuse in our society is very generally defined as "any act of a sexual nature upon or with a child. . . . The most common form is incest between fathers and daughters" (HEW, 1978:9). This type of abuse is very common and accounted for 5.8 percent of all reported child abuse cases in 1978 (American Humane Association, 1979b). Low estimates of the true incidence of the phenomena approximate figures of 50,000 to 75,000 annually (Trojanowicz, 1978:187).

The final category of child abuse is known as Verbal abuse and is a form of psychological or emotional abuse. It consists of the constant verbal badgering and degradation of a child. It is impossible to estimate the full consequences or incidence of this type of abuse but many experts feel that constant verbal abuse can have more permanent damage than physical abuse (HEW, 1978:9).

The phenomenon of neglect can be categorized into five

types; Educational, Medical, Moral, Physical and Psychological/Emotional. Estimates of the full extent of child neglect in our society are impossible due to the problem of definition. There is considerable debate over the question of parental responsibility as well as the question of what is necessary for the child's well being. Despite problems of definition it is an area of abuse in which much more study is needed.

Research Objectives

As an exploratory descriptive study, this study will endeavor to meet the following six research objectives:

1. To determine if amount and type of child abuse is differentiated by various social groups. National and state or regional data will be examined to determine if the amount and type of child abuse varies between social classes (as measured by family income), ethnic groups and other demographic characteristics that can be identified.
2. To determine if amount and type of child abuse is differentiated by region. State and national regions will be examined to determine variances within and between them.
3. To construct a composite demographic profile of the typical child abuser. This will be done with both national and State of Oklahoma data. This objective will help identify some variables that seem most important in the occurrence of the phenomena of child abuse. It will also identify those persons who are most prone to becoming an abuser.
4. To construct a composite demographic profile of the typical abused child. This objective will also be accomplished with both national and State of Oklahoma data. This objective will help identify those children who are most likely to be victims of abuse as well as

recognize important contributing factors.

5. To explore any possible relationships between social variables and cultural characteristics and amount and type of child abuse. This objective will attempt to establish links between cultural variables and child abuse.
6. To determine if amount and type of abuse has substantially changed over time. This objective will be met by examining and comparing national data from the years 1976, 1977 and 1978 to see if any changes are evidenced and what these changes might indicate.

Accomplishment of these research objectives should provide a base for future research into the problem of child abuse. It is hoped that through the identification of significant study variables a better understanding of the phenomena can be derived. All in the eventual hope that a reduction in the incidence of child abuse can be achieved.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Historical Review

Although "child abuse" is a social definition of the 20th century the maltreatment of children has been a constant phenomena throughout the developmental history of Western Civilization. According to Charles Darwin, the practice of infanticide may have marked the beginning of civilization as: "Our early semi-human progenitors would not have practiced infanticide, . . . for the instincts of the lower animals are never so perverted as to lead them to regularly to destroy their own offspring" (Bakan, 1971:XI). As to whether or not child abuse was or was not practiced prior to the dawn of civilization may never be known, but, it is known that child abuse has been with us since the beginning of recorded history.

Today, we would be revulsed in horror and disgust at the actions which our earlier generations took for granted, as children suffered all types of brutality, at the sadistic whims of adults. Though lesser forms of abuse where undoubtedly even more prevalent the major recorded abuse of children was there use as human sacrifices, whether to some god or to serve some other self-indulging purpose of society.

To show the apathy that children's lives were regarded

with, we look first to the ancient world and find:

King Aun of ancient Sweden is said to have sacrificed nine of his sons to Odin at Uppsala in order to prolong his own life nine years at a time. Medea, sorceress-princess of Colchis, murdered her two sons by Jason in revenge for his preference for another woman. In ancient Greece, there were kingly houses of great antiquity in which it was apparently customary to sacrifice the eldest sons when the royal sire's life was threatened or when the royal sire himself was supposed to have been sacrificed but managed to delegate the terrible responsibility. . . . But stronger even than the theme of sacrifice is the theme of the child as a nuisance to be abandoned or as chattel to be used. Greeks and Romans both abandoned infants, consigning them to death by exposure by leaving them on a cold, wolf-haunted mountainside or casting them adrift on a river. (Fontana, 1973:4-5)

In fact, under the Roman law of *Patria Protestas* the acts of creating life and taking life are united, with the former permitting the latter. Many Greek and Roman citizens did not go through the trouble and elaboration of abandoning their children on mountaintops but merely deposited their unwanted children in rivers, dung heaps, cess trenches, or simply potted them in jars to starve to death. The widespread practice of infanticide can be seen in the lopsided sex ratios in the general populations of Greece and Rome. Ratios of three males to one female were quite common during many periods of time. Infanticide became such a common occurrence even for wealthy parents killing off legitimate children, that Polybius blamed it for the depopulation of Greece (Gross and Gross, 1977:22). Rome attempted to curb a similar problem of dwindling populations by paying parents to keep their children alive.

The historical account of the development of the Judeo-Christian religion is also filled with numerous atrocities

committed against children. If one examines the foundation of the Judeo-Christian culture, the Bible, the practice of child abuse runs throughout, including infanticide, beating, burning of children as sacrifices, murdering of the first born and the laying of children's bones into the foundations of buildings. At the beginning of the Christian era we can find excellent examples of the low esteem in which children's lives were held.

Christianity began with a holocaust of the Slaughter of the Innocents, from which Jesus is presumed to have been saved. According to Matthew's account of Jesus' birth, 'Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.' In commemoration of these events, Innocents Day was celebrated historically in most Christian countries by ritually whipping children. (Bakan, 1971:26-27)

Jesus was not the only child mentioned in the Bible to escape a massacre as Moses lived through the Pharaoh's orders to cast all male children into the Nile. Abraham was saved from Nimrod, the King of Babylon, who gathered all women who were with child and placed them in a "large house" to be watched carefully. If they gave birth to a male child it was immediately put to death. A total of 70,000 boys were murdered under Nimrod's orders.

The sacrificing of children is a common occurrence in Biblical history. Abraham attains Gods' favor by his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac. The Bible also cites numerous accounts of the burning of children in large numbers

as sacrifices to God. During the eras of Solomon, Ahaz and Manasseh children were sacrificed in what Jeremiah called the "valley of slaughter" (Bakan, 1971:29). In these cases large fires were started at the bottom of a valley (usually the valley of Hinnom) and the children were forced or thrown into it and burned.

Perhaps the real import of the Bible and its' relationship to contemporary child abuse, is not its' historical account of the phenomena, but its' advocacy of corporal punishment. Relying on their own interpretations of Biblical proverbs, parents today often justify and use brutal physical punishment in the belief that it is best for the child.

Examples of these proverbs is as follows:

'He that spareth the rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him be times. . . . Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying. . . . Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with a rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.' (Walters, 1975:11)

The final point to be made concerning the relationship between child abuse and the Bible is as follows:

In all, the Old Testament laid the foundation for many of the beliefs we hold today in the realms of child rearing, the status of children, and sexual relations. And these injunctions beliefs, and actions are transmitted daily and on Sunday, in many churches throughout America. Those who object to the view that the Bible sanctions this behavior (child abuse) state that the citations are taken out of context and that the meanings of the passages differ; they can also cite passages in which parents are admonished to care for their children. Nevertheless, in their totality, the Biblical injunctions do constitute the grounds on which many punish and, indeed, abuse children. (Walters, 1975:12)

The practices of child abuse and infanticide did not abate during the Middle Ages. The widespread practice of infanticide is evidenced by the lopsided sex ratios of the time as well as accounts of the priests of the time. One priest wrote "the latrines resound with the cries of children who have been plunged into them" (Gross and Gross, 1977:23). Dying babies lying in gutters or rotting on dung heaps was a common sight in many of the major cities in Europe, particularly London. Numerous foundling hospitals were opened throughout Europe to try to combat the growing problem. But they were usually greatly overcrowded and did little to solve the situation. The problem was still so prevalent in the 1700's that Frederick the Great held an essay contest on how to eliminate the practice of infanticide. Abuse of children during the Middle Ages varied greatly from country to country including branding, cutting, burning with hot wax, swaddling, cold immersion etc. Though the abuses were diverse they all showed that many adults had little regard for the well-being of children (Helfer and Kempe, 1974:3-10).

Due to the impoverished state that the majority of the people lived in during the Middle Ages the children were quite often forced to either steal or beg for sustenance. If caught stealing the children were subject to a number of harsh penalties including burning at the stake, drawing and quartering and hanging for minor offenses. The children's parents did little to improve their destitute condition as

many would maim or disfigure their own children. This was done to make them more pitiful sights, thus people would feel sorry for them and be more generous in their donations. In this manner the child would be able to support the rest of the family or at least earn his/her own keep. If a child was unable to earn their keep then their parents would quite often just abandon them or turn them over to one of the many "Houses of Industry". These "Houses of Industry" were established by private citizens through the use of public funds provided by the state (England) through a series of "poor laws" to employ pauper children.

"Houses of Industry" were used because it was during this time in the development of our civilization that a very valuable commodity was discovered - child labor. Children were consigned to craftsmen of various trades as apprentices. This was virtual slavery for the children as in most cases the children were forced to work long hours under horrendous conditions. The "Houses of Industry" were needed because there were not sufficient tradesmen to handle all the children and the cheap labor force should not be allowed to go to waste. The "poor laws" which established these houses were much like most of the other laws dealing with children, in that it gave some adult absolute control over the child. As late as 1646 in the Massachusetts Bay Colony a father had the right to bring his son before a magistrate and have him put to death if he is found to be stubborn and rebellious (Phelps, 1976).

The onset of the industrial revolution marked a new era of child abuse as the advent of power machinery expanded the exploitation of children as a source of labor:

Industry now transferred their (the children) employment from the home or shop to the factory, which usually worsened the conditions under which they worked and the way in which they were treated; child labor became child slavery. In the cotten, silk, hat, and ribbon trades, for example, children five, six, or seven years old, deprived of all opportunity for an education, were crowded into airless factories and forced to work all day, or sometimes all night, under tortuous conditions for a tiny wage. In the coal mines, where children might work as many as eighteen or twenty hours a day, the ordinary starting age was eight or nine years, but still younger children were used underground where they were harnessed to carts to pull the heavy loads of coal through long, narrow, dark shafts to the openings. In the words of the British Commission of the Employment of Children and Young Persons (1842): 'Chained, belted, harnessed like dogs to a go-cart, black, saturated with wet, and more than half maked - crawling upon their hands and feet, and dragging their heavy loads behind them - (the children) . . . present an appearance indescribably disgusting and unnatural.' Many never survived such degrading and brutalizing conditions; those who did grew up weak, bloodless, miserable and in many cases deformed cripples victimized by almost every disease. (Trattner, 1970:23)

Conditions in the United States were not much better for children as the Puritan Ethic of work for all, i.e., idle hands are the devil's workshop, created the perfect environment for child labor. The textile mills of New England were primary users of child labor. In 1820 children comprised 43 percent of the textile mill labor force in Massachusetts, 47 percent in Connecticut and 55 percent in Rhode Island (Manufacturers and Farmers Journal, 1820).

As the horrendous conditions under which these children worked became common knowledge, legislature's nationwide,

under public pressure, passed many labor laws restricting the use of child labor. But these laws, like those before them, were never really enforced. The census of 1900 showed that 1,750,178 children between 10 and 15 were engaged in "gainful occupations." But this census failed to include the estimated two million children under 10 who worked.

Many descended into the dark and dangerous coal mines each day, or worked above ground in the coal breakers, where harmful clouds of dust were so thick that light could scarcely penetrate even on the brightest days. Others were forced to crouch for hours at a time and face the blinding glare and stifling heat of glass factory furnace rooms. Many children spent their days or nights in the full, monotonous, noisy spinning rooms of cotten mills, where humid, lint-filled air made it difficult to breathe, and where they were kept awake by cold water thrown in their faces. Others, perhaps only five or six years old, shucked oysters and picked shrimp. Some worked in fruit and vegetable canneries sixteen hours a day, seven days a week, in sheds exposed to the weather. Some two million American children were in these ways being robbed of their natural heritage - a healthy and happy upbringing - and even of life itself. (Trattner, 1970:41)

As in the Middle Ages, children that were unable to contribute to the income of the family were frequently abandoned and left to fend for themselves. The problem of gangs of roaming children searching the streets of New York City for sustenance grew to such proportions that the first "Childrens Aid Society" was formed in 1853. The society was formed not out of any altruistic feelings on the part of the people of New York, but as a resolution to save prominent businessmen from the mobs of starving children. Similar self-control reasons were behind the passing of many of the laws in regard to limiting child labor. Many of these laws were passed by

legislatures under the pressures of labor unions and the unemployed masses who felt that the children were an unnecessary competition for higher wages and employment. This is evidenced by the nature of the laws that were passed that dealt with child labor. Rather than cleaning up the horrendous working conditions of the children they merely restricted the number of hours, age, time of day, etc., that children were allowed to work.

It was the infamous case of Mary Ellen in 1874 that best demonstrated the position or attitude of our legal system toward children. In this case a visiting nurse, Etta Wheeler, found a young girl chained to a bed. She was obviously suffering from malnutrition and had been brutally beaten. The nurse tried to get a court to intervene and take the child away from its stepparents but the court stated that it had no authority to do so and that legal parents could bring their children up any way they saw fit. After a lengthy court battle Mary Ellen was finally taken away from her stepparents through court action brought on by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The rationale was that Mary Ellen was a member of the animal kingdom and thus deserved the same rights as a dog in being protected from a cruel master (DeFrancis, 1956:3). This case marked the first time that a child's concerns took precedence over a parent's. Unfortunately little was done to extend the recognition of children's rights or even to enforce those that this case recognized up until the 1960's with the onset of the Kempe

research on child abuse.

Extent of the Problem

Research in the area of child abuse has been very inconsistent and contradictive in its results. The problems involved in defining and measuring the true incidence of the phenomenon of child abuse has made most causal inferences in the area tenuous at best. The severity of the problem of measurement can best be demonstrated by examining the huge disparities between studies attempting to measure the extent of child abuse nationwide.

The first major attempt to go beyond the reported cases of abuse and find the true rate of incidence of child abuse was conducted by the National Opinion Research Center in October, 1965, and later interpreted by Gil (1970). The study was a national survey using:

. . . a standard national multistage area probability sample of the total noninstitutional population of the United States, 21 years old or older, to the block or segment level. Married respondents under 21 years old were considered a part of this population and, accordingly, interviewed whenever encountered in the quota sampling. At the block level, respondents were selected according to quotas of sex, age, race and employment status. This quota sample, consisting of 1,520 respondents, had about the same efficiency as a simple random sample of 1,000 respondents. The standard error of proportions for such a sample does not exceed 1.6 percent. (Gil, 1970:50)

The survey involved a number of questions asked of the respondents to gain their opinions and attitudes on the subject of child abuse. A part of the questioning was an indirect method of obtaining a rough estimate of the "upper

limit of the annual incidence of child abuse in the United States' population" (Gil, 1970:58). This was done by inquiring of the respondents if they had personal knowledge of a case of child abuse in which a child was physically injured within the preceding twelve month period of time. Based on population estimates at the time of the survey Gil estimated, with 95 percent certainty, that the true incidence of physical child abuse was between 2.53 and 4.07 million cases per year nationally.

Light (1974) investigated the same data base as did Gil and came up with a much different figure. Light claimed that he took into account those cases in which more than one family could know about one single case of child abuse. Using this new methodological approach Light estimated that 500,000 children per year are physically abused in the United States. This type of huge discrepancy between studies using the same data base demonstrates the problem of accurate measurement in the area of child abuse.

Other studies using a mixture of different data bases, and different definitions of abuse, have come up with even more diverse estimates of the problem. DeFrancis (1963) using newspaper accounts of the phenomenon found 662 cases and estimated that there were 30,000 children abused annually in the United States. Kempe, Silverman, Steele, Droegemueller and Silver (1962) found 749 cases of physical child abuse by surveying hospitals and district attorneys. Later work by Kempe and Helfer (1972) estimated 60,000 cases of child abuse

nationally using actual reported cases in Denver and New York City as a data base. A survey of community agencies by Nagi (1977) estimated that there were 258,000 abused children nationwide.

The most recent attempt at getting a true accounting of the incidence of child abuse nationally was undertaken by Gelles and Straus (1979:20-1)

The data was based on interviews with a nationally representative sample of 2,143 American couples, of whom 1,146 had one or more children aged 3 to 17 years old living at home at the time of the interview. Interviews were conducted with the husband in a randomly selected half of the families and with the wife in the other half. . . . we interviewed each respondent with respect to one of his or her children (randomly chosen). To interview each parent with respect to all their children would have been too time consuming (and) . . . would have introduced methodological problems involving order effects.

The interviewing was conducted from January to April of 1976 and thus the authors presented the results as representative of 1975 rates. The survey included a wide range of questions on demographic characteristics, attitudes, opinions and parental practices. The results were most surprising to some professionals in the field.

Approximately three children in 100 were kicked, bitten or punched by their parents in that year; many more (8 in 100) had it happen at one time or another in their lives. Slightly more than 1 of 100 children were beaten by a parent in that year; 4 in 100 were beaten at least once while growing up. One child in 1,000 faced a parent who threatened to use a gun or knife during the survey year. Nearly 3 children in 100 have been threatened with a gun or knife by a parent at least once in their lifetimes. The same proportions hold for children whose parents actually used a gun or knife. These data are truly astonishing when we remember that

these numbers are based on parents' own testimony.
(Gelles and Straus, 1979:23)

As dramatic as these statistics are they still fail to show the true incidence of child abuse. This was brought out by Gelles and Straus (1979) who found that in only six percent of the child abuse cases was the abuse a single occurrence. Rather they found that the average number of "serious assaults" was 10.5 per year for those parents who committed at least one act.

Children who had something thrown at them had that happen an average of 4.5 times during the reported year. Children who were pushed, grabbed or shoved experienced that an average of 6.6 times over the 12 month period. . . . The average for kicks, bites and punches was 8.9 times that year, while children who were hit with objects had it happen an average of 8.6 times. For those who were beaten, it was repeated almost ever two months, on the average of 5.9 times over the year. Where a gun or knife was used, though, it happened 'only' once in the survey year. (24)

Based on the obtained data Gelles and Straus developed a "Child Abuse Index" that was used to determine what children had a high probability of being injured. According to their computations 3.6 percent of the children in the study were "at risk of serious injury each year from their parents" (24). From this base they estimated that nationally "between 1.4 and 1.9 million children in the United States were vulnerable to physical injury from their parents during the year of our study" (24). They also felt this was probably an underestimate of the true incidence for several reasons; data was based on self reports of parents, it dealt with only seven specific forms of violence, it deals with only one parents' actions,

it ignores children under three and deals only with unbroken families.

The majority of the previously discussed studies have limited themselves to the incidence of the physical abuse of children and largely ignored the problem of neglect. This is because of the problem of definition (as well as detection) in the area. The amount of responsibility a parent has toward his/her children is a very subjective question, open to much interpretation. Despite the problems of definition most professionals in the field generally agree that neglect is five to eight times more common than physical abuse (Light, 1974; Bybee, 1979). The problems of definition as well as right to privacy laws prohibit a true measurement of the problem.

Nevertheless, despite the problems of measurement, all criminal, legal and social science investigators in the field unanimously agree that child abuse and neglect is common in large proportions in the United States.

Sociological Approaches

Sociological approaches to the phenomenon of child abuse generally either underline points in the social environment that tend to produce stress and tension or emphasize the inadequate or improper learning of the roles of parenthood. In most cases, particularly in dealing with physical abuse, the sociological approach takes on a psychological dimension as the environment produces stress, aggression or frustration

within the parent which manifests itself as child abuse. This socio-psychological approach is not limited to physical abuse as this approach is also included in causal models of neglect. The author will first discuss those theories dealing with the ecological situations and then learning theories.

Foremost among the ecological causal models of child abuse are those that stress environmental factors associated with low socio-economic status. Numerous studies as well as national statistics on reported cases have indicated that abuse and neglect is more prevalent among the lower classes in the United States (Taylor, 1971; Gelles, 1973; Gil, 1973; Gelles and Straus, 1979; and Newberger, 1979). According to this school of thought the problems of the lower classes such as poverty, degradation, occupational dissatisfaction, and difficulties in day to day living cause stress and frustration within lower class families. Proponents hypothesize that this stress and frustration is taken out on the children in the form of physical abuse. The stress and frustration can also manifest itself as neglect by making the children a secondary concern to the survival of the parents. Part of this approach is termed as the "flattened effect." In these cases the lower class parent is so used to seeing poverty and despair around them that they no longer react to the emotional and physical needs of their children. Simply put the parent has been over-stimulated and can no longer react to a given social stimuli; i.e., childrens' crying.

The relationship between socio-economic status and child

abuse has been called into question by a number of different studies (Gil, 1973; Wasserman, 1967; and Steele and Pollock, 1974). These studies and other articles (Bybee, 1979; Gelles and Straus, 1979) point out the methodological problems involved in accrediting higher rates of abuse to the lower classes. They attempt to show that this relationship is actually one of a greater chance of being caught and thus labeled an abuser. They point out that lower class parents must take their abused and neglected children to state or municipal health clinics and emergency rooms at hospitals for treatment while middle or upper class families bring their children to private physicians. Despite mandatory reporting laws private physicians are still far less likely to report abuse cases to the authorities than ward personnel in a hospital or clinic. It is this disparity between reporting practices that accounts for the increased amount of abuse cases not actual differences. However, more recent studies have shown that the relationship between socio-economic class and abuse, though it may be exaggerated by methodological problems, may actually be true (Justice and Justice, 1976; Pelton, 1978; and Gelles and Straus, 1979). In any case the relationship is not empirically clear at this time.

A second ecological factor indicated in many studies that is associated with abuse is social isolation (Helfer and Kempe, 1972; Lenoski, 1975; and Gelles and Straus, 1979). These studies show that families who have few

community relationships, low rate of participation in community organizations, unlisted or no telephone, and high rate of mobility have a much higher rate of abuse than families well integrated in the community. These models hold that this social isolation thwarts the dispensation of stress, tension and/or aggression outside of the home thus it must all be taken out at home. Some professionals question the ad hoc assumptions of the model (Helfer and Kempe, 1974). They point out that instead of social isolation causing abuse it could be vice versa. As a demonstration of this the high mobility rate of families "caught" abusing is often cited (Polansky et al, 1972; Justice and Justice, 1976). Many abusing families once discovered will frequently move rather than submit to intervention on the part of the state agencies.

Large family size is another contributing ecological factor found in several studies that is associated with higher rates of abuse and neglect (Young, 1964; Gil, 1970). These studies contend that this relationship is explained by the increased amount of stress and difficulties associated with raising several children. However this relationship has been questioned by other studies (Gelles and Straus, 1975). They point out that the predicted inverse relationship does not seem to hold for more than two children.

Social learning theories have two general approaches to account for child abuse. One holds that the acts of child abuse and neglect are learned by parents from their own

abusing parents. In this case abusing parents think of their abusing actions as being the normal way of bringing up children. The second social learning approach points to inadequate learning of proper or normal parenting practices that results in child abuse. This connection can be direct in the instance of many neglect cases or it can be a preceding factor to abuse cases. Both approaches are based on the manner in which parents learn their roles in our society.

It is an unfortunate social reality that parenting is primarily a generational art. Schools and institutions in the United States provide information on family planning and birth control, but offer little assistance with the care and upbringing of progeny. It is therefore not surprising to find that most people rely on their 'parental instincts', personal experiences, and self selected readings and observations when it comes to child rearing. In essence, all of us are inadequately socialized to the role of parent. (Jayaratne, 1977:6)

The old adage that "violence begetes violence" seems to be reinforced by a number of child abuse studies that show that many abusing parents were abused children themselves (Gil, 1970; Steele and Pollock, 1974; and Walters, 1975). The assumption that people raise their children the same way that they themselves were raised is the directing key of this model. Walters cites such an example of this type of phenomenon.

A mother known to the author was serving a prison term for the death of one of her children. She had placed her children in a tub of very hot water to discipline them. She was distracted and left them in the hot water for some time, and one died. The mother's hand and arms bore quite noticeable scars. As a child her mother forced her to put her hands on the stove when she misbehaved. The grandmother of the decedent showed me scars on the backs of

her legs; her mother had made her stand against an open hot stovepipe. In this family we see the intergenerational persistence of the use of heat as a disciplinary measure. (1975:37-38).

As the citation demonstrates she learned disciplinary practices from her parents. She really had no role model or teacher to show her a different mode of child rearing practice. She had no way of determining that her actions were not normal or average responses to a given disciplinary situation. This type of connection has been found in most every study in which it has been examined. Other connections have been found in families where children have witnessed conjugal violence (Gil, 1970; Gelles and Straus, 1979). From these results it is interpreted that children who are exposed to family violence often use violence in their own families.

The second general learning theory of child abuse, involving inadequate learning, is far more complicated and diverse than the simple "violence begetes violence" approach. This approach can apply to both cases of neglect and physical abuse. In the case of neglect it can be seen in the ignorance of parents over basic health and safety precautions involved in child rearing (Polansky et al, 1972). Such basic care techniques as proper feeding and cleanliness are beyond the capabilities of some parents simply because they do not know or understand the needs of the child. A part of this phenomena deals with what is known as "mothering imprint" (Kempe, 1971). In this case the parent was not loved or "mothered" as a child. Thus now that he/she is a parent

he/she cannot exhibit the loving or nurturing behavior because it is not part of it's behavior repertoire.

Neglect of the child is often connected to physical abuse, as shown in a number of studies (Kempe and Helfer, 1974). This can happen when the results of the neglect are manifested in a cranky or ill child. The crankiness of the child (such as crying for long periods of time from severe diaper rash) can cause considerable frustration on the part of the parent trying to unsuccessfully placate the child. If attempts to soothe the child continue to be unsuccessful, then the frustrated parent may become violent and attempt coercive measures to quiet the child.

Distorted conceptualizations of the normal developmental skills of children also plays a major role in the abuse of children.

From direct observation of parents with children and the descriptions given by them of how they deal with their offspring, it is obvious that they expect and demand a great deal from their infants and children. Not only is the demand for performance great, but it is premature, clearly beyond the ability of the infant to comprehend what is wanted and to respond appropriately. Parents deal with the child as if he were much older than he really is. (Steele and Pollock, 1974:95).

The unmet heightened expectations of the parents causes frustration within the parent which is taken out against the child (Walters, 1975). These heightened expectations seem to arise out of a general misunderstanding of the normal developmental processes of children. Because little education is given to parents as to the proper time frame of

developmental skills of children they must rely upon their own memories which frequently become distorted over time (Kaufman, 1975).

Another factor contributing to frustration due to unmet expectations, and ultimately abuse or neglect, is the phenomena known as role reversal (Justice and Justice, 1976). In this case the parent expects the child to act like a parent and mother and care for the parent instead of the parent caring for the child. When the expectations are unfulfilled the parent will often become violent with the child or else reject the child totally. This phenomena is categorized as part of the learning theory approach because the role reversal phenomena can usually be traced to the parent's own childhood. During their own childhood the parent was not loved or mothered and thus is seeking fulfillment of those needs later in life.

Individualistic Approaches

Individualistic approaches look at the people involved in the abuse rather than the environmental circumstances of the occurrence. The individualistic approach can be divided into two general schools. The first concentrates on the psychological or personality aspects of the participants in the abusive act and the other examining those individual characteristics of abusers and abused children that seem to increase the likelihood of abuse.

The school of thought emphasizing the psychological or

personality traits of the abuser and the abused has been the major area of causative beliefs in the area of child abuse (Gelles, 1973). Dominant among these approaches is the belief that parents (or people in general) who abuse or neglect children are mentally ill or disturbed. Many research studies examining abusive parents have reached this conclusion (Steele and Pollock, 1974). Researchers can cite numerous cases in which the "sickness" of the perpetrator is obvious.

Mrs. L., a 23-year-old mother, forced her daughter, age 1½, to eat feces, which she called 'God's Food.' Her husband, 25, was in the hospital for mental illness, and Mrs. L. had been in and out of mental institutions since she was 16. The abuse of the child was referred to the local mental health clinic, where Mrs. L. was being seen. Three months later the child was killed because, in Mrs. L.'s words, her daughter was 'the Devil.' (Walters, 1975:50)

However the "myth" of mental illness as the major cause of child abuse does not seem to hold up to available empirical evidence. In the national survey cited earlier (Gil, 1970) it was found that 22.3 percent of the respondents felt that given the right circumstances they were capable of injuring a child. Kempe (1971) reported that less than five percent of the abusive parents in his analysis were psychotic. Other researchers point out the problems of the ex post facto mental illness explanation (Gelles, 1973). The so-called "Rosenthal Effect" of finding what one expects to find in research is an oft cited problem with the mental illness approach (Jayaratne, 1977).

The persistence of the belief of mental illness as the major cause of child abuse has been attributed by some professionals to its social implications rather than its intrinsic validity (Gil, 1970; Gelles, 1976).

. . . If we view people who abuse their children as sick, then those of us who use physical violence on our own children do not have to wonder whether or not we are abusers - by definition we are not, because we are not 'sick.' Secondly, 'the abuser as sick' approach turns to spectre of guilt and blame onto the parent who commits the dastardly deed and refrains from focusing on a society which has almost programmed many parents to become abusers . . . the abuser becomes a scapegoat for an inadequate social system. (Gelles, 1976:130)

The psychological phenomenon of "displaced aggression" is also an often cited psychological characteristic of abusing parents (Walters, 1975; Justice and Justice, 1976). This psychological or personality "flaw" is coupled with some frustrating environmental circumstances that produces the abuse. Displaced aggression takes place when the parent (or other adult) experiences some type of frustration or stress producing conditions and takes out his/her frustration on the children. The term is coined from the occurrence of aggression being taken out against someone who did not produce it, thus being displaced. Other researchers point out that it is the environmental conditions that are the true cause and are what must be examined (Gil, 1970).

The psychological process of "bonding" is seen by some as being a major cause of child abuse and neglect (Walters, 1975; Justice and Justice, 1976). Bonding is defined as a

psychological phenomena which begins to take place during the first few days after the birth of a child. Bonding is the closeness or attachment that a parent feels toward their child. If the bonding is either too strong or too weak than abuse and neglect may result. If the bonding is too strong then the parent may be too close and fail to see the distinction between themselves and the child. They try to live their own lives through the child and have exaggerated expectations of the child. These high expectations may be unfulfilled, resulting in frustration and ultimately abuse. The high expectations may also put the child in danger from the expected behavior.

Mr. and Mrs. T. were professional swimmers and divers. They prided themselves on teaching very young children to swim, and they taught their three-year-old to dive from great heights. During one practice, the child hit the bottom of the pool and was killed. (Walters, 1975:45)

Neglect can result if the bonding between the parent and child is too weak. In these cases the parent is so detached from the child that he/she fails to recognize it as a human being that requires care and attention. Physical abuse can also result from weak bonding. This may occur during times of disciplinary procedure where the parent crosses the point of discipline and begins to injure the child. The weak bonded parent will frequently ignore the cries and screams of the child because he/she cannot feel empathy toward the child as a person. Thus, the parent feels that he/she is hitting a thing, not a person.

Another psychological approach stresses various personality traits as the key factors in the occurrence of child abuse. However there seems to be considerable confusion over the utility of this approach.

Child abusers have been described as 'immature,' 'impulse ridden,' 'dependent.' . . . Such adjectives are essentially appropriate to those who abuse children, yet these qualities are so prevalent among people in general that they add little to specific understanding. (Steele and Pollock, 1971:360)

The confusion over which personality traits seem to be most important in the causation of child abuse is pointed out in an examination by Gelles. He performed an investigation into several of the proposed personality disorders and found:

. . . an inability to pinpoint the personality traits that characterize the pathology. Of nineteen traits listed by the authors, there was agreement by two or more authors on only four traits. Each remaining trait was mentioned by only a single author. Thus, there is little agreement as to the make-up of the psychopathy. (Gelles, 1973:616)

The second general school in the individualistic approach examines the influence of individual characteristics of the abuser and the abused on the type and incidence of abuse. Generally speaking the most often asked question, or at least the one most studies have looked at, in the area of child abuse is; what kind of person would hurt or neglect a child? This answer to this question surprises many people as they find that the abuser is not very much different from anyone in the general population. Studies have shown that the adults most likely to abuse a child are the child's own natural or surrogate parents (Gil, 1970; Kempe and Helfer,

1974; Steele and Pollock, 1974; Weston, 1974; and Gelles and Straus, 1979). This should come as no real surprise as it is the child's parents who have responsibility for the care of the child. Thus, if the child is injured or neglected the parents are most often blamed. The upbringing of the child is also the responsibility of the parents, thus the use of disciplinary measures, a major factor in abuse and neglect, falls into the hands of the parents. Another factor considered by many professionals is that the child's parents have more contact with the child than anyone else, thus giving more opportunity for abuse and neglect to take place.

The mother is the most likely parent to abuse and neglect the child (Gil, 1970; Steele and Pollock, 1974; and Gelles and Straus, 1979). In the case of neglect this finding is probably a result of our social definition of who is responsible for the care of children within the family. Socially we expect the mother to care for the children and thus when neglect is detected within a family the mother is usually blamed (Polansky et al, 1972). There have been a number of different approaches to account for the abusive traits of mothers. The psychological approach to maternal abuse rests on the old Freudian thoughts of mothers having an unconscious deep seeded hatred for their children because of the pain and trauma they suffered in child birth (Gelles, 1976; and Justice and Justice, 1976). In this train of thought women are naturally prone to injure, abuse and neglect their children because of the pain the child "inflicted" upon

them during the labor of childbirth. However this explanation fails to account for the fact that the vast majority of women experience pain in childbirth but relatively few abuse and neglect their children (Bybee, 1979).

The sociological approach to abuse by mothers examines a number of different variables (Justice and Justice, 1976; Bybee, 1979; and Gelles and Straus, 1979). First, the mother spends far more time with the child than anyone else, so abuse has a greater opportunity to occur. Second, in our culture, it is primarily the mothers' responsibility to care for the child, thus, it is more likely that the mother would feel imposed upon by the child. She is the one who must stay home and care for the child. In the process giving up any outside ambitions and interests. This may give rise to resentment against the child on the part of the mother. Denial of outside ambitions and interests can also cause a frustration within the mother that expresses itself in abuse against the child.

As discussed in the previous section on learning theories, abusive parents were quite often abused children themselves or at least exposed to family violence at an early age (Zalba, 1967; Lenoski, 1975; and Gelles and Straus, 1979). This circumstance may also be viewed as part of the family's social milieu. The reasons given for this characteristic were discussed earlier in this chapter.

Some studies have found low amount of education to be a characteristic of abusing and neglecting parents (Gil, 1970;

Polansky et al, 1972; and Justice and Justice, 1976). However these findings have been questioned by the results of other studies (Lenoski, 1975; and Gelles and Straus, 1979).

The abused child is apparently not differentiated by sex. Most studies indicate that male and female children have an equal likelihood of being abused (Gil, 1970; Solomon, 1973; and Laver et al, 1974). However there are indications that type of abuse and the perpetrator of the abuse are differentiated by the sex of the abused child (Paulson and Blake, 1969; and Steele and Pollock, 1974).

Many abused children have had complications or problems associated with their birth (Elmer, 1967; and Lenoski, 1975). These complications include premature delivery, low-weight child, and children delivered by Cesarean section. Their high rate of abuse is accounted for by similar psychological explanations as the Freudian approach of unconscience hatred of the child. Because these parents (particularly the mother) have been subjected to an increased amount of pain and discomfort in birth, they take it out against the child. This also suggests another Freudian thought: that men and women have a natural born instinct to kill off weak children. Sociological explanations point to the stress causing factors associated with complications in delivery and cite that as the major factor in the increased abuse of this type of child (Elmer, 1967; and Gil, 1970).

Research into other characteristics of the abused child including legitimacy (Zalba, 1967; and Lenoski, 1975), age

(Gil, 1970; Laver et al, 1974) and birth order (Justice and Justice, 1976; Gelles and Straus, 1979) has been mixed in much of its findings and conclusions.

Summary

Overall the research into the phenomenon of child abuse in this country is severely lacking in quality and empirical validity. Many are generalizations to the entire population based on a very small and bias study group. Others are the result of the "Rosenthal Effect". In these cases the researcher had already formed causative theoretical variables a priori to examining the study data. The data is then interpreted, usually unintentionally, to fit the already accepted theoretical assumptions of causation.

Until the methodological problems of the prior studies can be resolved it is currently impossible to accept or reject most of the causative inferences they purport. What is now needed are more methodologically sound studies to replicate and strengthen existing studies or to challenge existing conclusions and suggest new interpretations and causes. This study is intended to suggest new avenues for this future research.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

Data

The data used in this exploratory research project consists of demographic summary data of reported cases of child abuse and neglect in the United States. The demographic summary data is an aggregate of data on several variables involved in the incidence of child abuse. In this case "reported" is defined as becoming known to a state department of public welfare (or other state agency in charge of child welfare). For national analysis the data examined will be primarily from the years 1976, 1977 and 1978. For state and regional comparisons the years 1978 and 1979 will be used depending upon which data set the source was able to provide.

The biases involved in using reported cases of child abuse/neglect as a data base are duly recognized (discussed in Chapter II). Because this study does not use the reported cases of child abuse/neglect as representing all incidence of child abuse/neglect these biases will not invalidate the findings of this study. Rather reported cases are considered to be only a portion of the true incidence. However it will be assumed that the biases involved in reported cases

of abuse and neglect is consistent over both time and region. Thus in dealing with national data it is assumed that the biases involved in the data of 1978 are the same as in the years 1977 and 1976. For state data it is assumed that the biases involved in reported cases are essentially the same nationwide. If any changes do exist in the biases involved it is in the form of a reduction in report bias, not different biases.

Data Sources

National

National demographic data on child abuse and neglect was obtained from the American Humane Association. Their annual publication "National Analysis of Official Child Neglect and Abuse Reporting" was the source of the data used. The years available for analysis are limited to 1976, 1977, and 1978. This limitation is necessary for two major reasons. First, 1976 was the first year in which all 50 states (as well as two territories, Washington D.C. and Guam) nationwide participated in the analysis. Secondly, 1976 was the first year that neglect, as well as abuse cases, were included in national reports.

The American Humane Society was founded in 1877. It was formed out of a Cleveland convention called by Mr. John G. Shortall, then President of the Illinois Humane Society. The purpose of the convention was to organize efforts to gain reform of abuses connected with cattle transportation.

Attendants at the convention included twenty-two representatives of twelve different humane organizations. These representatives decided that a national organization would best serve the purposes of the group. They elected Mr. Edwin Lee Brown as the president of this new national humane organization entitled the "International Humane Society." The name was changed the following year to the one now used, The American Humane Association.

The first few years of the Association's efforts were concerned with documenting the abusive conditions connected with railroad transportation of cattle. Armed with documented evidence of the horrendous abuses of the animals the American Humane Association instigated a number of court suits aimed at forcing the railroad and transportation companies to improve shipping conditions. The American Humane Association also fought for reforms in the practices of slaughterhouses and of cattle and sheep ranchers in the west. In many cases ranchers, rather than feed their cattle, let the cattle run loose over public lands where they frequently either died of exposure or starved to death. A major method of publicizing and solving these problems of cruelty to animals was to offer monetary rewards to inventors of more humane methods of shipping and slaughtering animals. Contests were sponsored for the designing of better cattle cars and for the inventor who could design an instrument to stun cattle about to be slaughtered.

As shown by this short sketch of it's early history, the

American Humane Association was originally concerned only with the mistreatment of animals. It was not until 1885 that the national organization became involved in the problems of the maltreatment of children. It was the horrifying reality of statistics such as the bodies of 3,000 children annually being thrown into the sewers and rivers of Philadelphia in 1891 which prompted greater attention to be paid to the problem (Coleman, 1924). Its major efforts in combating the problem of child abuse has been the wide application of publicity in order to raise the public consciousness of the problem. In addition, the Association has financed a considerable amount of research effort into the study of the phenomena of child abuse.

One of the first surveys of reported abuse was undertaken by American Humane in 1962 based on data reported in newspapers. Six hundred and sixty-two cases of child abuse were reported in 48 states and the District of Columbia. This survey revealed that parents were responsible in more than 70% of the cases, a finding that has been consistently evidenced in subsequent research. (American Humane Association, 1978:1)

The American Humane Association teamed with the Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare to conduct a study of the sexual abuse of children in New York City for the years 1966 to 1969. Findings of the study showed that the sexual abuse of children was a far more frequent occurrence than official reports indicated, and that the perpetrator of the abuse was known to the child in 75% of the cases. The liaison between these two organizations continued and in 1973 the Children's Bureau

of the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare awarded a grant to the American Humane Association to initiate a national clearinghouse for the reporting of child abuse and neglect. Funding for this project has continued under the auspices of the National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect.

The project was initiated by the necessity of consistent, uniform reporting for legislators and professionals in the area. The purpose of the national study is stated as follows:

The objective was to establish the feasibility of a national clearinghouse for systematically gathering data on the nature, reported incidence and characteristics of child abuse and neglect; for collecting information on such related areas as sources of reporting; action taken by receiving agencies and outcomes with respect to impact on children; and to disseminate periodic reports and analyses with respect to trends and to the national status of the problem. It was not the intention of the project to provide a registry of families and children by name nor to measure the full incidence of the problem. The data collected by the clearinghouse was to relate solely the statistical information on officially reported cases. (American Humane Association, 1978:3)

The first year of the national report was of the incidence of child abuse in 1974. However, it was not until 1976 that all 50 states were included in the study.

State and Regional

The obtaining of individual state and regional data was a most difficult task. The American Humane Association was unable to provide child abuse/neglect data on a state by state basis. The American Humane Association advised the

author to write the states on an individual basis and provided the name and address of the American Humane Association's liaison in each state. A letter was sent to 49 state representatives nationwide, excluding Oklahoma, explaining the research project and requesting state data. In many cases the requests were not answered at all. Those that were answered had a wide variety of responses. Several replied that what data they had they were unable to provide and cited a state law prohibiting dispensement of the data. Oklahoma has a similar law, which reads:

All records concerning child abuse shall be confidential and shall be open to inspection only to persons duly authorized by the state or United States in connection with the performance of their official duties. It shall be unlawful and a misdemeanor for the Commission, or any employee working under the direction of the Department of Institutions, Social and Rehabilitative Services or any other public officer or employee, to furnish or permit to be taken off of the records any information therein contained for commercial, political or any other unauthorized purpose. (O.S.L. Section 2, Chapter 98, Section 846)

Those states that did supply data were mostly limited to partial aggregate data that was in a variety of formats. Some of the data was limited to summary data with no explanation of meaning, while others dealt with only one or two special aspects of abuse/neglect cases. The years of the data sets also varied somewhat from state to state. In all cases the responding states sent the latest data they had, either 1978 or 1979, and informed me that they did not keep indepth analysis data sets from past years. Thus, in some cases it will be necessary to do some comparisons between states using

different years. The first finding of this study is the apparent inability of the various agencies to provide accurate up-to-date statistics on the phenomenon of child abuse and neglect.

Fortunately a complete data base was obtained from the State of Oklahoma for the year 1978. This data was obtained from the Oklahoma Department of Public Welfare, Division of Child Welfare. It was obtained by way of several phone calls to the department and following through many of the bureaucratic channels. Ultimately the only reason that access was gained to the data was because the author was an employee of the State of Oklahoma, through Oklahoma State University.

Methods of Analyses

The data obtained from the sources cited were compared on three different levels in order to facilitate the meeting of the stated research objectives. These levels of comparison encompass the following; 1) identification and comparison of national data sets for trends in quantity and type of child abuse, 2) comparison of national and Oklahoma data on the incidence and type of child abuse, 3) comparison of Oklahoma data with data from other states on selected variables. A number of tables have been constructed in order to facilitate better interpretation and comparison of variables. Because this study is exploratory and descriptive in nature, crosstabulation of proportions is the procedure used for analysis of data.

Percentages or proportions of cases will be used as the basic research tool in this analysis, rather than numerics, because of the inner biases of the data used and the assumptions of this study. As stated previously, this study does not wish to fall into the trap of so many previous examinations by assuming that reported data represents all abuse. Rather, it is assumed that these statistics measure a part of the problem. This assumption really invalidates any comparison of numerical occurrence.

To insure the validity of comparisons with different data bases, comparisons will only be made with those variables which use the same category breakdown. In those cases where the variable categories differed between data bases, no comparisons were done. Only in those cases where it was possible to make categorization compatible through simply adding categories together was the data reworked. It was felt that it was better to lose the variable in question as a comparison key rather than risk the chance of misinterpreting the data, thus leading to false results.

National Trends

In order to identify those variables most pertinent to child abuse cases nationally, and to note changes in those variables over time, comparisons of national data from the years 1976, 1977 and 1978 will be made. This analysis will permit an examination of the demographic characteristics of abusers and abused children, as well as identify how child

abuse is differentiated among the categories of the given variable. Changes in the presentation format of the data by the American Humane Association in 1978 has made it impossible to compare all aspects of reported abuse. However, all variables with the same category breakdown, as well as those that could be recalculated to match, are compared.

Oklahoma and National Data

In order to identify how cases of child abuse differ nationally, comparisons will be made of 1978 national data and 1978 data from the State of Oklahoma. A major problem that had to be dealt with is that the State of Oklahoma does not use the standardized national report form and thus do not keep records on as many variables as the national data. Because of this the number of variables compared between the two data sets is small. Nonetheless they are important in that they do give some indication of variances of data among different regions, particularly to Oklahoma in contrast to the nation as a whole.

Oklahoma and Other State Data

In order to identify those variables involved in child abuse cases that vary according to regions of the country, comparisons will be made of Oklahoma data with other state data. Those states from which data was obtained and used (and the year of the data) are as follows: California (1979), Indiana (1978), New Hampshire (1979) and Vermont (1978).

These states were chosen for comparison for two basic reasons. First, they had some of the most complete detailed data among the state data and secondly, each is from a different region of the country, thus greater diversity is offered.

The problems confronted earlier in making comparisons from different data sources were even more pronounced in dealing with the different states. Each of the states used a different type of record keeping, each emphasizing different aspects of the phenomenon of abuse or neglect. The diversity involved in record keeping seemed based on the agency from which the data was obtained (i.e. Department of Social Services, Attorney General's Office, etc.). Each was concerned with different aspects and problems of child abuse. As with prior comparisons, if the data cannot be validly manipulated to match the categories, that state is dropped from the comparison.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

National Trends

As discussed in the review of literature (Chapter II), there is considerable debate over the influence of several demographic variables on the incidence of child abuse. One of the specific research objectives of this study has been to analyze the distribution of child abuse among different social groups. This objective was accomplished by isolating and analyzing each variable and the distribution of abuse associated with the variable. The perpetrator is examined by looking at such factors as education, sex, ethnicity/race and relationship to child. Family factors are analyzed by looking at income and stress factors. Similarly, special characteristics of the abused child are examined as well as seriousness of injury.

Another specific research objective of this study has been to examine changes in quantity or trends in the phenomenon of child abuse over recent years. These changes are of great concern because they would show the possible influences of the increased attention society and social agencies have paid to the problem of child abuse in recent years. All of the aforementioned variables will be considered as well as

the changes in the societal involvement with the problem. This will be examined by looking at the types of reports, the original sources of the reports and the services provided by various agencies. This longitudinal analysis will also serve to validate the findings of the first analysis by examining the consistency of the data.

Report Summary

As indicated in Table I, there appear to be some differences between the proportions of types of abuse. Neglect appears to be found almost twice as often as physical abuse. It is also interesting to note that the majority of reports brought to the attention of the social agency are discovered to be unsubstantiated. It should be noted that the category of Unsubstantiated Reports include not only those cases which are investigated and found to be false but also those reports that are never investigated (American Humane Association, 1978). A case or report may not be investigated for any number of reasons, including, discretion of the social worker, lack of sufficient help or funds for investigation, and lack of interest in a specific case. However the proportion of cases that are never investigated, and thus included in this category, is very small. In many of the states whose data were analyzed, no cases at all were left uninvestigated. Thus the figure of 60 percent reported as the percentage of unsubstantiated cases can be considered accurate within one or two percentage points. This large portion of

TABLE I
 SUMMARY OF CHILD ABUSE CASES, NATIONWIDE
 ALL REPORTS 1976, 1977 AND 1978

Report Type	Percent			Percent Change		
	1976	1977	1978	76-77	77-78	76-78
Substantiated Abuse	14.7	18.8	13.4	42	24	75
Substantiated Neglect	28.3	32.5	24.2	27	30	64
Substantiated Abuse/Neglect	4.2	4.0	2.4	6	3	10
Unsubstantiated Report	52.6	44.6	60.0	-6	128	114
TOTAL	N = 99,581	110,265	191,739	10	73	92

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1978, 1979a and 1979b.

unsubstantiated report cases may indicate a greater willingness to report cases of abuse and neglect in our society today or of increased reporting practices.

Comparing the type of reports over the three years, shows a dramatic increase in the number of cases in all the report categories. However, proportionately there is only an increase in one category of report, that of unsubstantiated cases. The increase in the number of cases probably represents more of an increase in reporting practices than an actual increase in incidence. This can be seen in the increased proportion of unsubstantiated reports. Individuals and/or agencies seem to be more and more willing to report suspected cases of abuse and neglect. The proportional relationship between abuse and neglect seems to hold throughout the three years, with neglect being found twice as often as abuse.

Report Sources

According to the figures in Table II, the most common source of the initial report is the category of Nonprofessionals. This nonprofessionals category is composed of citizens acting on their own initiative and includes relatives, friends, neighbors and self reports. This finding definitely indicates the importance of community involvement in the phenomenon of child abuse and its reduction.

Medical personnel account for approximately only 12% of reported cases. This category includes hospitals, nurses,

TABLE II
 SOURCE OF INITIAL REPORT OF CHILD ABUSE,
 DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE OF ALL
 REPORTS NATIONWIDE

Source	1976	1977	1978
Medical Personnel	11.0	11.7	11.9
School Personnel	11.3	12.4	11.6
Social Service Personnel	9.1	10.0	10.2
Law Enforcement Personnel	11.8	11.6	11.5
Nonprofessionals	39.4	40.1	38.4
Child Care Provider	1.2	1.7	1.6
Anonymous	4.0	5.9	5.7
Other	12.2	6.6	9.1

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1978, 1979a and 1979b.

private physicians, and clinics. This small proportion would seem to bring into question the assertion that lower class children are overrepresented in reported cases of abuse because they must be brought to public health facilities rather than the private physicians middle and upper class children are brought to see. The small portion of cases reported by medical personal should not greatly bias the data, at least not to any huge extent. It is interesting to note that the four areas of public service (Medical, Educational, Social Service and Law Enforcement) all seem to be responsible for an equal proportion of reported cases.

In the longitudinal analysis of national data, the reporting proportions seem to be quite consistent, with no real substantive changes. This is noteworthy for two major reasons. First, it would tend to validate a basic assumption of this study; that the same report biases (if there are any) are present during each year. Secondly, it shows that all areas of society are becoming increasingly involved in abuse and neglect reporting. This is evidenced by the increase in the number of cases reported in Table I and the proportional consistency of abuse reporting shown in Table II. This would seem to indicate a shared increase in the concern for the well-being of children through all areas of society or at least those dealt with in this study.

Relationship Between Perpetrator and Child

The person most likely to abuse or neglect a child in

our society is the child's natural parent. The second most likely group to harm/neglect a child is that of a parent substitute. Combining the categories of step parent, adoptive parent and foster parent the figure of 8.9 percent is derived. Add that figure to the natural parent figure of 81.7 percent and it can be seen that the child's legal guardian is responsible for over 90 percent of the cases of abuse and neglect. This would indicate that child abuse and neglect is primarily a family problem. Examination of the other categories listed in Table III shows that abuse outside of the family (including all relatives) represents a small part of the abuse against children.

There have been few changes in the proportions of each of the categories in Table III over the three years under study. Some slight increases can be noted for Institutional Staff and Preschool Care. However, this increase may be a result of the increased responsibility for the child's welfare placed on the personnel in these categories. Another factor to consider to account for this increase is the rise in the number of working mothers. With mothers becoming more involved in the job market, they must confer a greater role on outside agencies in the upbringing of children. This increase in the number of children and the amount of contact with them may be responsible for the increase in abuse among these categories.

TABLE III
 DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE, RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN
 PERPETRATORS AND VICTIM CHILDREN, VALIDATED
 REPORTS ONLY, NATIONWIDE

Relationship	1976	1977	1978
Natural Parent	86.9	86.3	81.7
Step Parent	7.1	7.8	7.7
Adoptive Parent	.6	.7	.9
Foster Parent	.3	.3	.3
Grandparent	.8	.9	1.1
Sibling	.6	.6	.5
Preschool Care	.3	.4	.6
Other Relative	1.6	1.4	1.4
Parent Outside of Home	.1	.1	.3
Institutional Staff	.0	.0	.1
Teacher	.3	.3	.1
Other	1.3	1.2	5.3

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1978, 1979a and 1979b.

Education of Parent

Table IV shows that the education level of the majority of parents and parent substitutes who commit all types of abuse is far below the national proportions. In validated cases of abuse only, summarized in Table V, the education level is higher than in either of the categories involving neglect but it is still below national proportions (see again Table IV). The low education of perpetrators is most pronounced in those categories involving neglect, with little more than 33 percent of the cases graduating from high school. These findings would seem to agree with the purported belief that neglect may be largely a case of ignorance on the part of the parents (Polansky et al, 1972). This causal thought was dealt with in Chapter II under learning theories.

A longitudinal analysis of the data indicates that there seems to be a dichotomization within each of the type of abuse groups, resulting in an increased bimodal distribution. While a higher proportion of abusive parents have a college education there are also increases in the proportion of parents with little or no education. This split seems to be most pronounced in physical abuse cases but is also indicated in neglect cases. A demonstration of this split can be seen in Table IV. In the case of all perpetrators, fewer have graduated from high school, but of those who have, more of them have gone on to graduate from college. However in both cases the proportions are far below the national average.

TABLE IV
 EDUCATION OF PERPETRATORS COMPARED TO
 EDUCATION OF THE GENERAL POPULATION
 ALL VALIDATED CASES, NATIONWIDE

Education Level	Proportion of Perpetrator			General Population
	1976	1977	1978	
High School Graduate	31.5	35.5	28.0	64
College Graduate	2.0	1.9	2.0	15

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1978, 1979a and 1979b.

TABLE V

DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE OF PARENT/SUBSTITUTE PERPETRATOR ACROSS
EDUCATION LEVELS BY TYPE OF REPORT, VALIDATED CASES NATIONWIDE

Education Level	Abuse			Neglect			Abuse/Neglect		
	1976	1977	1978	1976	1977	1978	1976	1977	1978
Grade 0-3	1.8	1.5	2.5	4.8	2.9	5.3	5.1	4.1	6.0
Grade 4-8	12.4	10.3	9.7	23.0	16.6	16.0	25.6	16.3	16.2
Some High School	40.5	38.6	37.4	43.5	49.0	47.2	42.4	44.5	42.3
High School Graduate	33.8	36.8	37.2	21.4	24.6	24.0	20.6	26.8	26.7
Some College	8.8	9.6	9.7	5.5	5.6	5.8	4.7	6.7	6.4
College Graduate	2.7	3.2	3.5	1.6	1.2	1.7	1.7	1.5	2.4

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1978, 1979a and 1979b.

Sex of Perpetrator

Table VI indicates that females are 50 percent more likely to be the perpetrator in all cases of abuse and neglect. However a closer examination, after breaking the categories down into type of report, indicates a distinct difference in sex of perpetrator for physical abuse and neglect. In those cases involving abuse, males were 40 percent more likely to be the perpetrator. While in those cases involving neglect the perpetrator was more likely to be female by a two to one margin. The disproportion of female perpetrators in neglect cases may be an indication of our societal expectations of women as the guardian of children. The high proportion of males in abuse cases may be a result of the physical capability of males to injure rather than a greater frequency of occurrence. No substantive changes were found in the longitudinal analysis.

Ethnicity of Perpetrator

As indicated in Table VII, the most common ethnicity of the perpetrator is caucasian or white. This should not be interpreted as meaning that whites are more likely than other ethnic groups to abuse children. To correctly interpret these figures they must be compared with the proportion of each group in the general population to that proportion of child abuse cases found. Whites make up 87 percent of the population of this country, yet account for only 69.1 percent of abuse and neglect cases. Blacks are 11 percent of the

TABLE VI

DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE, SEX OF PERPETRATOR BY TYPE
OF CHILD ABUSE REPORT, VALIDATED CASES NATIONWIDE

Sex	Abuse			Neglect			Abuse/Neglect			All Reports		
	1976	1977	1978	1976	1977	1978	1976	1977	1978	1976	1977	1978
Male	55.0	56.0	56.7	32.0	33.0	30.4	40.0	45.0	44.1	39	41	40
Female	45.0	44.0	43.3	68.0	67.0	69.6	60.0	55.0	55.9	61	59	60

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1978, 1979a and 1979b.

TABLE VII
 DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE, ETHNICITY OF
 PERPETRATOR VALIDATED REPORTS ONLY
 NATIONWIDE

Ethnic Group	1976	1977	1978
Asian	.5	.5	.6
Black	19.3	17.2	19.2
Caucasian	58.4	65.6	69.1
Spanish Surname	11.5	8.7	8.2
Native American	1.7	1.6	1.6
Other	8.5	6.3	1.3

Data sources; American Humane Association,
 1978, 1979a and 1979b.

general population yet account for 19.2 percent of the validated cases of abuse and neglect. Native Americans make up 1 percent of the general population, while Spanish Surnames represent 4 percent. In both cases the minority group accounts for a greater portion of child abuse and neglect cases than their portion of the population. This may be an indication of a greater propensity for abuse in these groups than in the white population (American Humane Association, 1979b).

The comparisons of proportions over the years indicated that the only major substantive change has occurred in an increase in the white category. However, the proportion now accredited to the white classification is still far below it's proportion of the population. The increase in the white category may be a factor of, or at least influenced by, the decrease in the category of "Other." Groups that were at one time classified as "Other" may now be classified as white or caucasian.

Family Income

As shown in Table VIII, according to reported cases, abuse and neglect is indeed differentiated by class (as measured by family income). This distinction is most prominent in cases involving neglect but is still evident in physical abuse cases. In more than 50 percent of the cases in all categories of type of report the family income is below \$9,000. The 1978 poverty level income was \$6,200 (American Humane Association, 1979b), indicating that the majority

TABLE VIII

DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE, FAMILY INCOME BY TYPE OF REPORT,
VALIDATED CASES OF CHILD ABUSE NATIONWIDE

Family Income	Abuse			Neglect			Abuse/Neglect			All Reports		
	1976	1977	1978	1976	1977	1978	1976	1977	1978	1976	1977	1978
\$ 0 - 4,999	35.1	36.0	23.2	59.6	54.2	45.7	50.4	49.4	37.1	49.6	47.1	36.7
\$ 5,000 - 8,999	30.2	26.2	28.2	24.8	27.6	32.0	31.3	27.0	32.8	27.5	27.1	30.6
\$ 9,000 - 12,999	19.8	19.5	23.1	10.1	11.3	13.6	12.3	15.2	16.7	13.9	14.6	17.4
\$13,000 - 15,999	7.2	8.6	10.6	2.6	3.5	4.4	3.0	4.2	6.2	4.3	5.4	6.9
\$16,000 - 19,999	4.0	4.9	7.5	1.5	1.7	2.4	1.5	2.2	3.8	2.4	2.9	4.4
\$20,000 - 24,999	2.1	2.9	4.1	0.8	0.9	1.2	0.7	1.2	2.0	1.3	1.7	2.3
\$25,000 +	1.7	1.9	2.3	0.7	0.7	0.7	1.0	0.7	1.4	1.0	1.3	1.7

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1978, 1979a and 1979b.

of families involved in abuse and neglect cases were below or not far above the poverty line. In 45.7 percent of the neglect cases the family was at least \$1,200 below the poverty level.

Over the years the proportions of the higher income families involved in child abuse and neglect have increased significantly. However there are no controls in this study for the effect of inflation on family income. Thus the increase in incidence of abuse and neglect among higher income groups may be a result of higher incomes for the lower income groups.

Other Family Factors

Table IX summarizes those factors and circumstances which were present within a family at the time of the abuse or neglect. Dominant among these factors are those of Family Discord and Broken Family. Broken Family indicates that for some reason the original nuclear family has been disrupted. This disruption can occur through divorce, death, desertion or any number of other causes. It does not necessarily mean that it is a single parent home (though it quite often is) as it also includes those cases of remarriage as well as the child being adopted. Other factors such as Insufficient Income, Continuous Child Care, Inadequate Housing, New Baby/Pregnancy and others can be used as measures of stress, indicating that stress, in some form, is present in a large portion of those homes that abuse and neglect occurs. There

TABLE IX

DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE, FACTORS PRESENT IN FAMILY ON
VALIDATED CASES OF CHILD ABUSE NATIONWIDE

Factor	1976	1977	1978
Broken Family	42.0	51.5	45.0
Family Discord	37.7	34.2	42.2
Insufficient Income	39.4	31.4	35.9
Lack of Tolerance	28.6	24.3	30.2
Continuous Child Care	23.7	22.1	27.1
Loss of Control During Discipline	23.3	19.9	25.2
Inadequate Housing	19.9	17.2	20.6
Social Isolation	16.5	15.4	20.5
Mental Health Problem	19.1	15.8	18.6
Physical Abuse of Spouse	14.4	12.1	15.6
History of Abuse as Child	11.8	11.7	15.4
Alcohol Dependency	16.9	13.1	14.6
Authoritarian Discipline Methods	11.8	10.3	13.2
New Baby/Pregnancy	11.7	10.7	13.2
Police/Court Record	10.4	8.0	8.8
Recent Relocation	17.0	9.3	6.2
Incapacitating Physical Handicap	5.1	4.0	4.5
Drug Dependency	4.0	3.5	4.1
Mental Retardation	4.1	3.3	3.5

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1978, 1979a and 1979b.

also seem to be several factors involving specific child rearing practices which have some import in the occurrence of abuse and neglect. These child rearing factors are Authoritarian Discipline Methods, Loss of Control During Discipline and Lack of Tolerance. These factors indicate that attitudes and practices involving disciplinary or correctional methods have an influence on the incidence of abuse.

The three year trend indicates a pattern of consistency in virtually all categories. The only significant change would seem to be a lessening in the proportion of families in the category of Recent Relocation. This reduction may be a result of the greater detection and reporting of lesser forms of abuse.

Special Characteristics of Abused Child

As indicated in Table X the vast majority of abused children have no special characteristics at all. The huge proportion of children with none of the special characteristics listed would seem to indicate considerable weaknesses in the Freudian approach to child abuse (i.e. instinct to kill off weak or abnormal children) as a major cause of the phenomenon of child abuse.

Examining the data for any trends over the three years of analysis also turns up some surprises. The data indicates that there has been a general decrease in the proportion of abused children with all of the listed special characteristics. The only proportional increase has been in the

TABLE X
 DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE OF ABUSED/NEGLECTED
 CHILDREN ACROSS SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS,
 NATIONWIDE

Special Characteristics	1976	1977	1978
Premature Births	1.8	1.7	1.6
Diagnosed Mentally Retarded	2.5	2.6	2.3
Congenital Physical Handicap	1.4	1.3	1.0
Physically Handicapped	1.2	1.0	.9
Chronic Illness	2.1	2.2	1.8
Emotionally Disturbed	7.5	7.5	6.8
No Special Characteristics	85.4	85.7	87.9

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1978,
 1979a and 1979b.

category of No Special Characteristics. This interesting change may be a result of people changing their attitudes toward child abuse. Formerly, people thought that children with the special characteristics listed had a greater chance of being abused, thus, they were watched more closely. However, now that people are beginning to regard child abuse as a phenomenon that affects all types of children, "normal" children are also watched for signs of abuse and neglect.

Severity of Injury

Table XI indicates that in the great majority of abuse and neglect cases is slight enough to not require any treatment of any kind. This would seem to contradict some professionals contention that the only time an abuse and neglect case ever gets reported to the authorities is when it is severe (Kempe and Helfer, 1974). These figures also indicate that in few cases is the physical injury incurred by the child severe enough to disable or kill the child. This seems to be far from the impressions given by reporting agencies with their sensationalist approach to the problem.

A longitudinal comparison of the figures indicates a reduction in the more severe types of abuse. However this apparent reduction in proportion may be a result of an increased amount of reporting the lesser forms of abuse. This can be deduced from the increase in the proportion of cases in which no treatment is needed.

TABLE XI
DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE OF MALTREATED
CHILDREN BY SEVERITY OF INJURY IN ALL
VALIDATED REPORTS NATIONWIDE

Injury	1976	1977	1978
No Treatment	71.9	73.5	75.8
Moderate	21.4	20.9	19.2
Serious/Hospitalization	6.0	5.1	4.5
Permanent Disability	.2	.2	.2
Fatal	.5	.4	.3

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1978,
1979a and 1979b.

Services Provided

Table XII indicates that the most frequently provided service for abusing families by child protective service agencies was Casework Counseling. Casework counseling refers to the functions performed by a social worker on a face-to-face relationship with the abusive family. These functions range from simple arrangement of area services for the family to intensive correctional counseling. No action was taken at all (in the form of services provided) in only 14.8 percent of substantiated cases. No explanation was provided for reasons behind this inaction. Criminal charges were filed against the perpetrator in less than 5 percent of the cases. This may indicate a willingness on the agency's part to try to work within the family to solve the problem rather than punish.

A longitudinal analysis of the Table XII data indicates a significant increase in services in virtually every category with the exception of No Action Taken. This drastic decrease in the proportion of cases in which the state does not get involved involved in shows a greater social concern for the problem of child abuse and neglect. This increase in the services provided by state-agencies may indicate an increased belief in societal responsibility for the well-being of children. The increase in the proportion of cases in the category of Criminal Action Taken may indicate a greater willingness on the part of the state to enforce it's concerns in the public sector.

TABLE XII
 DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE OF SERVICES PROVIDED,
 ALL VALIDATED REPORTS NATIONWIDE

Type of Service	1976	1977	1978
Casework Counseling	48.2	67.9	83.0
Homemaker Services	3.2	3.7	4.3
Day Care Services	3.2	4.2	5.8
Foster Care	9.4	10.7	11.8
Shelter Care	4.7	5.8	8.8
Health Services	17.3	21.9	27.0
Juvenile/Family Court Petition	10.5	15.5	14.4
Criminal Action Taken	4.1	4.1	4.5
No Action Taken	46.4	28.1	14.8
Other Protection Services	9.0	9.5	12.8

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1978, 1979a and 1979b.

Oklahoma and National Data

Another major objective of this study has been to identify differences in the characteristics and factors involved in child abuse by region. This is an important research objective for regional differences on the characteristics and factors involved in child abuse would give evidence that something other than situational factors may be involved in the causation of child abuse. For the purposes of this part of the analysis the state with the most complete data set available (Oklahoma) will be compared with national data from the same year, 1978, to see if discrepancies exist between them. The national data set used for comparison is the same used in the first section of this chapter for the year 1978.

Comparisons were made to see the variances in reporting practices by examining report summaries and the source of the initial report. Differences concerning perpetrators were examined by comparing the variables of sex of perpetrator, relationship between perpetrator and child, and family income. Variances in abused children were investigated by comparing the age and sex of abused children as well as type of abuse inflicted.

Because the variables used in the section were already examined in the first section of analysis the discussion in this section will largely be limited to the area of differences between the two data bases.

Summary of Cases

Oklahoma and national data vary somewhat on proportions of type of report, as shown in Table XIII. The most interesting difference appears to be in the ratio of abuse to neglect cases. In both data sets neglect is more common than abuse. However, in Oklahoma the frequency of neglect, in proportion to abuse, is even more pronounced. The proportion of unsubstantiated cases in Oklahoma was greater than that of the nation and was much greater than substantiated abuse and neglect, as with national data. This might indicate a greater inclination on the part of the Oklahoma populace to report abuse or it may reflect a more conservative interpretation of child abuse and neglect by the social agencies in the state.

Report Sources

As shown in Table XIV, there are major distinctions between the proportions of report rate for the various sources for Oklahoma and nationwide. Oklahoma seems to rely more on state or professional agencies, with the notable exception of school personnel, for abuse reports than the nation as a whole. Because of the increased proportion of unsubstantiated cases in Oklahoma (refer back to Table XIII) the substantiation rates of the report sources in Oklahoma seems to be lower than nationally, except for the category of Child Care Provider. This category is composed of those individuals and agencies that provide care service or "baby sitting."

TABLE XIII
 SUMMARY OF CHILD ABUSE CASES, OKLAHOMA AND NATIONWIDE
 ALL REPORTS 1978

Report Type	OK		U.S.	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Substantiated Abuse	890	9.6	25,656	13.4
Substantiated Neglect	1,964	21.3	46,494	24.2
Substantiated Abuse/Neglect	168	1.8	4,654	2.4
Unsubstantiated Report	6,192	67.2	111,935	60.0
TOTAL		100.0		100.0

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1979b; Oklahoma Department of Public Welfare, 1979.

TABLE XIV

DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE, SOURCE OF INITIAL REPORT OF
CHILD ABUSE AND SUBSTANTIATION RATES, OKLAHOMA AND
NATIONWIDE ALL REPORTS 1978

Source	Validated Reports		Unvalidated Reports		Substantiation Rate	
	U.S.	OK	U.S.	OK	U.S.	OK
Medical Personnel	14.4	7.9	10.2	23.1	48	39
School Personnel	14.9	10.4	9.3	5.8	52	47
Social Service Personnel	10.6	11.6	9.9	11.5	42	33
Law Enforcement Personnel	15.2	18.0	9.1	9.2	60	49
Nonprofessionals	32.1	22.2	42.5	24.5	34	31
Child Care Provider	1.8	3.1	1.5	1.6	45	48
Other	7.5	3.0	10.2	3.4	33	29

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1979b; Oklahoma Department of Public Welfare, 1979.

Relationship Between Perpetrator and Child

As indicated in Table XV the child's natural parent is the most common perpetrator of the abuse or neglect inflicted on a child in both Oklahoma and the nation. The only major difference between Oklahoma and the nation seems to be in the frequency of the child's teacher or other school personnel in abuse cases. In Oklahoma, teachers and school personnel are proportionately much more likely to be the perpetrator of abuse and neglect against a child than the national average. This is in opposition or diametric to the reduced involvement of school personnel in reporting cases of abuse and neglect in Oklahoma (see Table XIV).

Sex of Perpetrator

As shown in Table XVI, if one limits the comparison to the summary of all substantiated cases then no significant differences would be seen in the sex of the perpetrator between Oklahoma and national data. However, when the data is broken down further, to type of abuse, then distinct differences can be seen between the two sets of data. Both national and Oklahoma data sets indicate that in cases of abuse males tend to be the perpetrator more often than females, while in cases involving neglect females are far more often the perpetrator than males. This relationship was noted and discussed earlier in this chapter. While this relationship between type of abuse and sex holds for both Oklahoma and national data, it is far more pronounced in the Oklahoma

TABLE XV
 DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE, RELATIONSHIP OF
 PERPETRATOR TO CHILD IN VALIDATED CASES
 OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT, OKLAHOMA AND
 NATIONWIDE ALL REPORTS 1978

Relationship	Percent of Cases	
	U.S.	OK
Natural Parent	81.7	79.6
Step Parent	7.7	10.9
Adoptive Parent	.9	1.6
Foster Parent	.3	0.1
Other Relative	3.3	3.1
Teacher/School Personnel	0.2	6.5

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1979b; Oklahoma Department of Public Welfare, 1979.

TABLE XVI

DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE, SEX OF PERPETRATOR BY TYPE OF REPORT
 IN VALIDATED CASES OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT, OKLAHOMA
 AND NATIONWIDE ALL REPORTS 1978

Sex	Abuse		Neglect		Abuse/Neglect		All	
	U.S.	OK	U.S.	OK	U.S.	OK	U.S.	OK
Male	56.7	65.7	30.4	28.8	44.1	37.0	40.0	40.8
Female	43.3	34.3	69.6	71.2	55.9	63.0	60.0	59.2
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1979b; Oklahoma Department of Welfare, 1979.

data. In Oklahoma the perpetrator is even more likely to be male in abuse cases and female in neglect cases than in the national data. This increase in each type of report averaged out and produced the insignificant differences noted in the summary of all cases.

Age and Sex of Abused Child

Major differences can be noted between Oklahoma and national data concerning age and sex of abused children, as shown in Table XVII. Concerning age, national data seems to show a fairly even distribution of abuse and neglect cases from newborns right up to 18 year olds, with the exception of the drop off in males 15 years of age and older. This is in marked distinction to the Oklahoma data which is very skewed toward the younger age groups. In Oklahoma over 50 percent of the cases of abuse and neglect involve children 5 years of age or younger, while nationally less than 38 percent are in this age group. This would indicate that in Oklahoma the phenomenon of child abuse is associated largely with younger children.

Type of Abuse/Neglect

Table XVIII indicates that proportions do not vary to any great extent on the frequency of occurrence on several selected types of abuse and neglect between Oklahoma and national data sets. The one major exception is in the incidence of malnutrition. Malnutrition is over three times

TABLE XVII

DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE, AGE AND SEX OF ALL INVOLVED
CHILDREN IN VALIDATED CASES OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT,
OKLAHOMA AND NATIONWIDE ALL REPORTS 1978

Age	Percent of Cases					
	Males		Females		All	
	U.S.	OK	U.S.	OK	U.S.	OK
0-2	19.8	32.8	17.4	24.9	18.6	28.7
3-5	19.8	23.6	17.6	21.2	18.7	22.2
6-8	19.5	15.1	17.5	16.5	18.5	15.8
9-11	17.1	14.0	15.5	13.7	16.3	13.8
12-14	14.9	9.5	17.3	14.3	16.2	12.1
15-17	8.9	5.0	14.7	9.6	11.7	7.4
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1979b; Oklahoma Department of Public Welfare, 1979.

TABLE XVIII
 DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE, SELECTED TYPES OF ABUSE AND
 NEGLECT, OKLAHOMA (1978) AND NATIONWIDE (1977),
 ALL VALIDATED REPORTS

Type of Abuse/Neglect	Percent of All Substantiated Cases	
	U.S.	OK
Burning/Scalding	1.5	.7
Poisoning	.2	.05
Drug Addiction	.2	.2
Sexual Abuse	5.8	4.9
Malnutrition	1.7	5.2
Failure to Thrive	1.6	1.3

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1979b; Oklahoma Department of Welfare, 1979.

more prevalent in validated cases of neglect in Oklahoma than in national data. There is also some distinction between Oklahoma and national data in the rate of occurrence of Burning/Scalding. However, the number of incidents in Oklahoma is too small to make any real judgments from. The same argument can be applied to the variations in the category of Poisoning.

Family Income

Comparisons of family incomes between Oklahoma and national abusive populations in Table XIX shows a marked distinction between the two. In both populations the lower income levels are a disproportionately larger percentage of the number of families containing abused children. However, in Oklahoma this disproportion is particularly pronounced. In Oklahoma over 75 percent of abusive families live below the poverty line income of \$6,200. This huge disparity holds for all types of abuse and neglect. Similarly, Oklahoma has very few families of middle or upper incomes in their data compared to the national data.

Oklahoma and Other State Data

To further examine and illustrate regional differences on the characteristics and factors involved in child abuse Oklahoma data will be compared to available data from other states on selected variables. The Oklahoma data used for this analysis will be the same used in the preceding section.

TABLE XIX

DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE, FAMILY INCOME BY TYPE OF
REPORT, OKLAHOMA AND NATIONWIDE 1978

Family Income	Abuse		Neglect		Abuse/Neglect		All Cases	
	U.S.	OK	U.S.	OK	U.S.	OK	U.S.	OK
\$ 0 - 4,999	23.2	81.4	45.7	78.9	37.1	81.5	36.7	76.8
\$ 5,000 - 8,999	28.2	9.3	32.0	13.9	32.8	13.1	30.6	12.5
\$ 9,000 - 12,999	23.1	3.9	13.6	3.8	16.7	3.6	17.4	3.8
\$13,000 - 15,999	10.6	1.9	4.4	1.2	6.2	1.1	6.9	1.4
\$16,000 - 19,999	7.5	1.2	2.4	0.3	3.8	0.3	4.4	0.6
\$20,000 - 24,999	4.1	0.4	1.2	0.2	2.0	0.0	2.3	0.3
\$25,00 +	3.3	0.1	.7	0.1	1.4	0.1	1.7	0.1
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1979b; Oklahoma Department of Welfare, 1979.

States were selected from different regions of the country in order to accentuate any possible regional differences that might exist.

Because the variables used in this section were previously examined and discussed in the prior two sections, the discussion in this section will be limited to the establishment of disparities between the available data sets of the states.

Relationship Between Perpetrator and Child

As shown in Table XX, all states indicate that the most common perpetrator of abuse and/or neglect against a child is the child's natural parent. However, the proportions of the cases in which natural parents are the perpetrator varies considerably between the examined states. In Indiana, natural parents are the perpetrator in 64.0 percent of the cases. This is a much smaller proportion than is indicated for either Oklahoma (81.7 percent) or California (76.5 percent). The lower proportion in the category of natural parents as perpetrator in Indiana was offset by a proportionally higher figure in the category of Other Parent than the other two states used in this comparison. It was impossible to determine whether or not those people included within the category of Other Parent were a higher portion of the Indiana state population.

TABLE XX
 DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE, STATE COMPARISONS OF
 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERPETRATOR AND ABUSED
 CHILD, VALIDATED CASES ONLY

Relationship	OK	IN	CA
Natural Parent	81.7	64.0	76.5
Other Parent	8.9	14.4	5.7
Sibling	*	1.9	1.0
Other Relative	*	4.0	3.2

Data sources; Oklahoma Department of Public Welfare, 1979; Indiana Department of Public Welfare, 1979; and California Department of Protective Services, 1980.

* Data not available.

Sex of Perpetrator

Table XXI indicates that in all of the states included in this comparison, the perpetrator of the abusive or neglectful act is most likely to be female. However, the proportion of males as the perpetrator varies greatly among the listed states. This is most notable in California, where the perpetrator is a male in less than one-third of the cases, while over 40 percent of the perpetrators were males in both Oklahoma and Vermont. Another interesting way to perceive the sexual differences of perpetrators of abuse and neglect is by the creation of sex ratios. A sex ratio is the number of males per 100 females in the population under study, in this case perpetrators of abuse and neglect. The sex ratio of perpetrators in both Oklahoma and Vermont is approximately 66. Meanwhile, California has a sex ratio of approximately 46. These sex ratio figures give a better illustration of the large disparities that exist between states on the variable of sex of perpetrator.

Age of Victim

Table XXII demonstrates that in all of the states included in the comparison, the victim of the abusive or neglectful act is most likely to be over five years of age. Once again, there is considerable differences in proportions between the states. The proportions of the children below and above five years of age varies greatly between each of the states. Oklahoma has the lowest proportion of abused

TABLE XXI
DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE, STATE
COMPARISONS OF SEX OF PERPETRATOR
ALL VALIDATED CASES

Sex	OK	VT	CA
Male	40.8	40.1	28.9
Female	59.2	59.9	62.4

Data sources; Oklahoma Department of Public Welfare, 1979; Vermont Department of Human Services, 1980; and California Department of Protective Services, 1980.

TABLE XXII
DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE, STATE COMPARISONS
OF AGE OF VICTIM, VALIDATED CASES ONLY

Age	OK	VT	NH	CA
Birth - 5	49.8	40.4	35.7	40.2
6 - 17	50.2	59.6	64.3	59.8

Data sources; Oklahoma Department of Public Welfare, 1979; Vermont Department of Human Services, 1980; New Hampshire Department of Public Welfare, 1979; and California Department of Protective Services, 1980.

children over five years of age with 50.2 percent of it's cases in that category. Vermont has 59.6 percent of it's abused children over five years of age, while California has 59.8 percent of it's cases, followed by New Hampshire with 64.3 percent. These differences in proportions indicates that the age of the abused or neglected child does vary by region.

Sex of Abused Child

As shown in Table XXIII, in four of the five states examined, the victim of the abuse or neglect is most likely to be female. In this case, however, disparities between proportions on this variable are very small. The difference between the sex proportions is smallest in Vermont with a .2 percent difference, followed by California with a 1.0 percent difference, Oklahoma with a 2.0 percent difference, New Hampshire with a 4.2 percent difference and finally Indiana with a 9.6 percent difference. Sex ratios computed for these states would be as follows; Vermont 100, California 102, Oklahoma 96, New Hampshire 93 and Indiana 86.

Though the differences and ratios cited in the above paragraph are not significant for three of the states, sex does seem to be a factor of concern in at least two states (New Hampshire and Indiana). Further exploration with other states would need to be done to either confirm or disprove the significance of sex in incidence of child abuse found in this comparison.

TABLE XXIII

DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE, STATE COMPARISONS OF SEX
OF INVOLVED CHILDREN, VALIDATED CASES ONLY

Sex	OK	VT	IN	NH	CA
Male	48.5	49.9	45.2	47.9	50.5
Female	51.5	50.1	54.8	52.1	49.5

Data sources; Oklahoma Department of Public Welfare, 1979; Vermont Department of Human Services, 1980; Indiana Department of Public Welfare, 1979; New Hampshire Department of Public Welfare, 1979; and California Department of Protective Services, 1980.

Race of Abused Child

Table XXIV indicates that there are considerable disparities between all of the states examined on the proportional figures of race of victim. In all three of the states examined, whites account for the largest proportion of victims. Indiana was the largest, with whites accounting for 77.4 percent of the victims. Oklahoma was next with 75.2 percent white victims, followed by California with 51.9 percent white children as victims. However, much of this distinction may be accounted for by the diversity in the population make ups of each state.

Type of Abuse/Neglect

Table XXV indicates that there are large disparities between the compared states in the proportion of the cases on several selected types of abuse and/or neglect. Malnutrition seems to be a much greater problem in Oklahoma than in the two New England states used for this comparison. It would seem that malnutrition is five to ten times more likely to exist in a reported case of abuse and/or neglect in Oklahoma than in Vermont or New Hampshire.

In the cases of Failure to Thrive and Poisoning, no significant differences seemed indicated by the data. In the category of Sexual Abuse some disparities are seen between virtually all states. It seems most common in Indiana, where it occurs in 19.4 percent of reported cases. Sexual Abuse occurs less frequently in the other three states

TABLE XXIV
 DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE, STATE COMPARISONS
 OF RACE OF INVOLVED CHILDREN,
 VALIDATED CASES ONLY

Race	OK	IN	CA
White	75.2	77.4	51.9
Black	11.7	15.5	20.6
Spanish	1.9	1.2	20.9
Asian	0.2	6.7	1.8
Other	10.7	5.0	3.3

Data sources; Oklahoma Department of Public Welfare, 1979; Indiana Department of Public Welfare, 1979; and California Department of Protective Services, 1980.

TABLE XXV
 DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE, STATE COMPARISONS
 OF SELECTED TYPES OF ABUSE/NEGLECT,
 VALIDATED CASES ONLY

Type of Abuse/Neglect	OK	VT	IN	NH
Malnutrition	5.2	1.1	*	.5
Failure to Thrive	1.3	1.8	*	1.0
Poisoning	.05	*	*	0.0
Sexual Abuse	4.9	3.7	19.4	7.1
Burns/Scalds	.7	.7	4.1	.4

Data sources; Oklahoma Department of Public Welfare, 1979; Vermont Department of Human Services, 1980; Indiana Department of Public Welfare, 1979; and New Hampshire Department of Public Welfare, 1979.

* Date not available.

involved in this comparison, but the proportions between them still vary greatly; New Hampshire 7.1 percent, Oklahoma 4.9 percent, and 3.7 percent of the cases in Vermont. The final type of selected abuse and/or neglect dealt with in this comparison is Burns/Scalds. The only meaningful difference here exists between Indiana and the other states. In Indiana, 4.1 percent of the cases involve sexual abuse, while the other states vary between .4 and .7 percent.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

This research study was designed as an exploratory comparison and analysis of existing data sets. The general purpose of this examination being the establishment of possible relationships of variables, denoted in these data sets, with the problem of child abuse. The establishment of these relationships in this descriptive analysis should serve as a reference point for future studies in the area. The relationship of variables was focused by six specific research objectives. Each of these objectives will be reviewed as findings are interpreted and explained.

Objectives

Objective 1

The first objective of this research study was to determine if the amount and type of abuse is differentiated by various social groups. As shown in Chapter IV there is evidence in the existing data sets of reported abuse that there is a considerable disparity in the proportion of abuse among different social groups. The statistics demonstrate that the proportion of child abuse varies between groups based on

ethnicity, income and education. For example, blacks account for a higher portion of abuse than their proportion of the general population, thus indicating that the abuse rate is higher among blacks than whites. The lower socioeconomic groups (as measured by family income) also have a higher rate of abuse than middle and upper classes. The relationship between income and abuse is definitely an inverse one as the amount of abuse and neglect seem to decrease as income goes up. The final group distinction made in this analysis is that of amount of education. An inverse relationship also seems to exist between amount of education and amount of child abuse. As education increases, amount of child abuse decreases.

As discussed in the Review of Literature (Chapter II) the relationship between some of these variables and amount of abuse may be a result of reporting bias. However, as noted in Chapter II, this contention of a false relationship, though stated by several professionals, has no empirical validity. Thus it is open to doubt and should be scrutinized carefully. Limitations of the data sets prohibited determining differences in type of abuse.

Objective 2

The second objective of this research study was to determine if the amount and type of child abuse is differentiated by regional differences. Comparisons of Oklahoma data with national data and other state data indicate that

regional differences do indeed exist in the measured variables involved in child abuse. Huge disparities could be found in comparisons involving relationship of perpetrator to child, sex of perpetrator, age of victim, income level and proportions of types of abuse. Small disparities are found on the variables of age of victim and source of initial report. These disparities indicate the region of the country in which the abuse takes place in is an important variable in the phenomena of child abuse.

Objective 3

The third objective of this study was to construct a composite demographic profile from available data of the typical child abuser. This objective was met by the construction of Table XXVI. According to national data the most likely abuser of a child is the child's own natural mother. She is most likely to be white, between twenty and twenty-nine years of age. She has had some high school education but did not graduate. Her family income would place her below the poverty line. In nearly half the cases she is raising the child in a broken home often as a result of the death, separation, desertion or divorce of her spouse. If a husband is present than a considerable amount of discord may exist.

Of those characteristics that are available through Oklahoma there are few discrepancies demonstrated between the general characteristics indicated in the national data.

TABLE XXVI

NATIONAL AND OKLAHOMA DATA, MOST COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF PERPETRATOR (1978)

Characteristics	U.S.		OK	
	Most Common	Frequency	Most Common	Frequency
Relationship	Natural Parent	81.7	Natural Parent	79.6
Age	20-29	38.4	20-27	30.8
Sex	Female	60.0	Female	59.0
Ethnicity	Caucasian	69.1	*	*
Education	Some High School	42.3	*	*
Income (Family)	\$0 - 4,999	36.7	\$0 - 2,999	74.8
Stress Factors	Broken Family	45.0	*	*
	Family Discord	42.2	*	*

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1979b; Oklahoma Department of Welfare, 1979.

* Data not available.

However, there is a considerable difference in the proportion of their occurrence according to family income and in the conditions of their occurrence according to the sex of the perpetrator. In Oklahoma the proportion of abusive families below the poverty line is more than twice the amount cited in the national population. Concerning the sex of the perpetrator, the propensity for a male to be the perpetrator in physical abuse cases and females in neglect cases is far more pronounced in Oklahoma than in the rest of the nation (as shown in Table XVI). This finding will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Objective 4

The fourth objective of this study was to construct a composite demographic profile from available data of the abused child. This objective was met by the construction of Table XXVII. According to national data the most likely victim of child abuse in our society is a girl with no brothers and sisters. There does not seem to be any distinct age of the abused girl (see Table XVII). As the abuse appears to be proportionately distributed among all ages of females. The girl would most likely be void of any of the special characteristics listed in Table X. The type of abuse most likely to take place would be a form of neglect referred to as Deprivation of Necessities. Encompassed within Deprivation of Necessities are a number of varied kinds of neglect. It basically accounts for any denial of the

TABLE XXVII

NATIONAL AND OKLAHOMA DATA, MOST COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF ABUSED CHILDREN (1978)

Characteristics	U.S.		OK	
	Most Common	Frequency	Most Common	Frequency
Age	No Distinct Group		Under 2	26.3
Sex	Female	52.0	Female	51.5
Special Characteristics	None	87.9	*	*
Number of Sibling	None	39.2	*	*
Type of Maltreatment	Deprived Necessities	86.4	Environmental Neglect	46.2
Treatment	None	75.8	None	66.9
Ethnicity	*	*	White	75.2

Data sources; American Humane Association, 1979b; Oklahoma Department of Welfare, 1979.

* Data not available.

necessities of life including food, shelter, clothing and sanitary care, as well as lack of close parental supervision and guidance. However, the injury incurred is usually not severe enough to require treatment of any kind.

Available data from Oklahoma would seem to be in accord with the national findings in the area of occurrence, but vary slightly in incidence. The major difference is in the age of the child. As discussed in the last chapter Oklahoma child abuse deals more with young children than nationally.

Objective 5

The fifth objective of this study was to explore and establish any possible relationships between social variables and cultural characteristics and the amount and type of abuse. This objective is met through interpreting the findings and understanding the implications of the first two objectives. By establishing disparities between regional and social groups in the characteristics involving child abuse, social and cultural influences may then be introduced to account for them. Some of these influences are the topic of this discussion but the full examination and implications of these factors is dealt with later in this chapter.

Since the incidence of child abuse is greatest among the lower socio-economic groups then the social and cultural context of these classes must be examined to discover those factors which most influence the incidence of child abuse.

Factors involving stress causing situations among the lower

classes must be investigated as well as the incidence of various family problems such as broken home, family discord and social isolation. Increased incidence of child abuse among some ethnic minorities indicates the possible influence of subcultural beliefs and values on such variables as child rearing practices and family relationships. The large proportion of perpetrators with low education indicates that increased schooling decreases the chances of abuse taking place. This would give rise to examining what is being taught in the schools. Since few schools have courses in child rearing the relationship cannot be a simple matter of learning more about child rearing. Instead an examination should be made of all aspects, both social and academic, of the schooling experience.

Regional differences found in a considerable number of variables indicates the possible influences of subcultural attitudes. The differences found in sex of perpetrator, relationship of perpetrator to child and type of abuse may be indicative of differences in child rearing practices or changes in the family structure.

Objective 6

The sixth objective of this study was to determine if any changes in amount and type of abuse had occurred over time. This was accomplished by comparing national data from the years 1976, 1977 and 1978 on a number of variables. A pattern of consistency was discovered over all the variables

measured concerning the child abuse act itself other than a huge increase in the number of cases reported. This would seem to verify one of the major assumptions of this study, that the reported cases of child abuse are measuring the same portion of child abuse over time, just an increased proportion of it.

What small changes were found, such as in special characteristics of abused child, family income and severity of injury, are probably more of a function of increased reporting than substantive changes. A major change however in type of services provided seems to indicate a greater willingness on the part of social agencies to get involved in the problem in recent years than in the past.

Interpretation of Results

Tables referred to in this section appear in Chapter IV of this study. The different proportions of abuse found between various social groups in our society (i.e. income, education and race) must be examined very carefully in order to facilitate the proper interpretation of these findings. It appears that the overrepresentation of minorities, particularly blacks, in the proportion of reported cases of child abuse and neglect should not be interpreted as a causal relationship but a spurious one. Based on my findings and experience, I would argue that the overrepresentation of these minorities in reported cases is indicative of the greater proportion of minority group members among the lower income

levels of society and not an increased rate of abuse based on racial factors. I would also hold that the lower education level of abusive and/or neglectful parents found in this study is at the most an indirect relationship with the incidence of child abuse. The lower education level found among abusers is also a function of the larger proportion of the lower class population with low amounts of education. As discussed earlier, few schools teach specific childrearing and parenting practices thus, there seems to be little direct relationship between the two variables.

The data would indicate to me that the most important social variable, of the three in which significant disparities were discovered, involved in the incidence of child abuse and neglect is family income. This conclusion is in line with several other studies which found that lower class families have a higher rate of abuse than middle and upper class families (Taylor, 1971; Gelles, 1973; Gelles and Straus, 1979; and Newburger, 1979). While these studies usually emphasize various environmental stress factors in the surrounding milieu (i.e. poverty, unemployment, low job satisfaction, etc.) to account for this higher rate of abuse, I propose an additional explanation of this finding. I would argue that the higher proportion among lower socioeconomic groups of cases of child abuse, as well as some of the increases shown in recent years (see Table I), might be explained by the abdication of parental responsibility in our society. The increase of the phenomenon of abdication

of parental responsibility has been noted by some researchers in the area (Chase, 1975).

This abdication of parental responsibility involves either the turning over of responsibility of parenthood to another party or just ignoring of the responsibility. It can be evidenced in a wide range of different forms including leaving a child at a child care center while the parent works, sending a child off to summer camp or just leaving a child home by itself while the parent or parents go out to dinner or the movies. In all of these cases the parent is discharging his/her responsibility of direct parental guidance and supervision. The transfer may be implemented either out of selfishness or ignorance.

. . . women who are middle-aged, talk about their ignorance and anxieties when confronted with their own infants. A young lawyer who had her first child in her mid-thirties says, 'Believe me, my Doctor of Law degree was no help. I saw that baby and I simply didn't know what to do. I solved the problem. I got a housekeeper fast and went back to work.'
(Chase, 1975:196)

The abdication of parental responsibility is a wide spread cultural phenomenon of our present society that can be seen in all income groups. However, the effects of this abdication vary greatly between the groups. As seen in the aforementioned case the woman was able to abdicate her parental responsibilities to another person, thus solving her problem. She was able to hire an apparently competent professional to take charge of her child. This option is usually not open to the lower class families. They must either

ignore their parental responsibilities or turn the child over to an often incompetent child caretaker (often a sibling). This type of resolution will often result in neglect. The lower class parent may attempt to resolve the situation themselves, in which case he/she will usually choose the most expeditious mode of resolution available. These expeditious resolutions are usually of a coercive nature and can end up in the abuse of the child. These coercive measures are frequently implemented because of the lack of alternatives known to the parent. This implies a learning theory approach to the problem that will be expanded on in the chapter to follow.

Other disparities in the data analyses can be accounted for by the increased proportion of abusive low income families, particularly in the family factors cited in Table IX. The large proportion of broken families that are abusive may be explained by the large increase in divorces, separations, and desertions nationwide in this category across all levels of income (Scarpitti, 1980). Some of it may also be accounted for by the disproportionate number of blacks represented in the study population. Studies have found that blacks have as much as a 30 percent higher divorce rate than whites in some circumstances (Scarpitti, 1980).

Other significant family factors such as "Inadequate Housing and Insufficient Income" would seem to go in hand with lower income families. The factor of "Family Discord" may be accounted for by the other factors associated with low income (Elmer, 1967). As the stress caused by the

problems of living in the substandard environments of inner city and ghetto living often manifests itself in the disruption of family harmony (Elmer, 1979).

The high proportional occurrence of the category Continuous Child Care would seem to lend some support to my earlier contention that lower class families lack the monetary ability to abdicate their parental responsibilities to a competent surrogate. Thus, lower class families are forced by financial considerations to continually provide for the child. This unrelenting strain on the parent has been found to be a causal in stress by several studies (Gil, 1970; Helfer and Kempe, 1974; and Elmer, 1979).

Differences between Oklahoma, national and other state data bases apparently indicate strong cultural or subcultural influences in the phenomenon of child abuse. The learning of these cultural values will be dealt with in the following section. This discussion here will be limited to discussing the possible inferences derived from the disparities.

The frequent proportional occurrence in Table IX of several factors dealing with childrearing practices such as Loss of Control During Discipline, Lack of Tolerance and Authoritarian Discipline Methods indicates that the attitudes and correctional practices that parents have and use in rearing their child are a great influence in the incidence of abuse. Disparities between states in Table XXV on types of abuse and neglect seem to indicate that these attitudes vary between regions of the country. As amazing as it seems, the

large differences in the category of Burns/Scalds may indicate that this type of abuse is used as a disciplinary measure in some areas of the country (remember example cited in Chapter II). Thus, resulting in a marked increase in the proportion on those states.

The differences noted in proportions of sexual abuse cases (see Table XXV) may also be a reflection of the different region's attitudes toward children (as well as toward sex). If children are considered to be the private property of their parents (owners) than this property can be used in any manner best seen by the owner. This attitude has existed throughout the history of Western Civilization (see Chapter II, Historical Review). Variances in the strength of this belief may account for the disparities between states as acceptance of this attitude would leave a child open to this type of abuse. Obviously, until the findings of this study are replicated, these conclusions must be tentative.

Other differences which can be accounted for through cultural explanations involve the disparities which seem to exist in the sex of perpetrator. As shown in Table XVI, females are far more likely to be the perpetrator in neglect cases, while males are more likely to be the perpetrator in physical abuse cases. Thus, since neglect is far more common than physical abuse, females are more likely to be the perpetrator when all cases are combined. I would argue that these findings are an indication of the family sex roles that are socially defined in our culture rather than some

increased propensity on the part of females to injure a child. The increased tendencies for males to be the perpetrators in physical abuse cases and females in neglect cases found in the Oklahoma data (Table XVI) may also be explained through cultural sex roles. The "macho" cowboy image of males in this region may be demonstrated through increased aggression on the part of these "tough" males. The more domestic submissive role of women here would account for the larger proportion of neglect cases reported as fewer abdicate child care responsibility to males. Fewer of the "macho" men would accept this responsibility also.

The final finding I will examine in this section is the interesting discrepancies discovered involving school personnel and child abuse in Oklahoma. As denoted in Table XV, Oklahoma school personnel are the perpetrators of abuse and neglect against children in Oklahoma to a much higher degree than school personnel nationwide. This increased proportion of abuse would seem to be followed by an increased amount of reporting on the part of Oklahoma school personnel, but such is not the case. Compared to the rest of the nation, Oklahoma school personnel are responsible for a significantly lower proportion of reports of abuse and neglect (see Table XIV). This apparent silence by the school personnel of Oklahoma on a major problem in the state's schools should give rise to a considerable amount of concern on the part of the parents of the children of Oklahoma. The existence of a professional subculture of silence may be the best

explanation for this finding. However this attitude of "not turning in" a fellow teacher could be a great source of future danger. State officials should look into this disparity as soon as possible to determine the exact reasons for the reporting discrepancy found in this study. If a subculture of silence is found to exist, then the welfare of the children in this state demands that action be taken immediately to eradicate this subcultural norm.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study have repeatedly pointed to the logical applicability of a learning theory approach to the identification of the causes of child abuse. Man is not driven by instinct. Instead his behavior, or at least it's components, must be learned largely through socialization. The importance of socialization into a new social role in life is pointed out by Cain in his discussion of "Life Course Theory" (1964). An individual must be prepared through anticipatory socialization to perform adequately in new social roles, such as parenthood. However, as discussed throughout this study, apparently our social institutions provide little direct information on the development, care or upbringing of children.

This lack of specific knowledge is further complicated by the absence of adequate definition and communication of the social role and responsibilities of parenthood by our social institutions. I feel that the combination of these

two factors, lack of role definition and specific knowledge of responsibility are major contributors to the problem of increased abdication of parental responsibilities in our society, discussed earlier in this section.

Faced with the lack of any specific direction in the social role of parent, new parents seek out some sources of guidance and direction. They are found in two general areas; the parent's memories of his/her own childhood upbringing and the inferred cultural definitions of the role. I would argue that even the parent's memories would be interpreted in light of the cultural definitions, thus making the inferred cultural definitions the major determinant of childrearing practices.

The violent nature of our American culture, particularly in the area of children, has been discussed by many researchers in the area (Elmer, 1967; Gil, 1970; Bybee, 1979; and Gelles and Straus, 1979). Children in our society have been considered, both legally and socially, as the legal property of their parents. This theme is apparent throughout the development of our Western culture (see Chapter II, Historical Review). Also apparent in our culture is the advocacy and use of corporal punishment in the raising of children. Proverbs such as "Spare the rod and spoil the child" are a major influence on the childrearing practices of many parents (lacking other socialized options).

The license to inflict corporal punishment and the privacy associated with personal property provides a dangerous

breeding ground for child abuse. The lack of outside judgmental influences leaves parents largely at their own discretion in the use and amount of physical punishment inflicted on the child. Scattered news accounts of "sensationalized" reports of gross forms of abuse would be the only comparisons between a parents correctional methods and abuse cases. This would give evidence to the parent that he/she is not an abuser because he/she doesn't go "that far" in physical punishment of the child.

The lack of publicity and social action in dealing with the lesser forms of abuse give inferences that these types of behavior are acceptable. Inaction is an indication of acceptance ("Silence means consent"). Thus, the lesser abuser would see no indications from the social institutions of society that his current childrearing practices are indeed abusive. This lack of direction in the social milieu of the negative aspects of any but the most gross forms of abuse allows the phenomenon of child abuse to continue to flourish both within specific abuse families and in society at large.

Suggestions for Control

The application of learning theory to the phenomenon of child abuse would indicate an educational solution to the reduction of the problem. The first suggestion as an approach would be in the establishment of parental education classes. These classes should deal with and expose the "students" to

the problems and responsibilities of parenthood. The "students" should be made aware of the developmental and cognitive processes involved in child development, alternatives to the use of corporal punishment, the possible implications of using corporal punishment (i.e. violence begets violence) and the legal and moral responsibilities of parenthood. This class could be done in many different ways ranging from including it in the public school curriculum, educational TV, to making it compulsory for expectant parents. In my opinion the maximum effect of the classes would be achieved through incorporation within the public school system, preferably beginning at around grade 7 or even earlier. The legal complexities involved in making these classes compulsory in a "free" society such as ours would be insurmountable. However, these classes should also be made available to interested adults, free of charge. They may also be required of any abusive or neglectful parents as part of their sentence. This could be handled in a manner similar to drunken drivers being required to attend alcohol abuse programs.

Another suggestion would be for the government to attempt to increase the number of three generational families. The presence of a specific role model, particularly one that was a parent before the drastic increase in abdication of parental responsibility, may help to educate parents in terms of expectations of their children as well as allow the parents an occasional respite from continuous child care.

The drastic decrease in three generation families in this country may be a major factor in the increase in abuse and neglect (Scarpitti, 1980). The government could accomplish this by legislation in two areas. First, the limitation on income of retired people must be raised substantially. In this way a senior citizen would be able to work and help aid the family financially without losing any social security money. The second area of legislation is in the area of tax reform. Incentives such as extra tax deductions for households with senior citizens could offset much of the monetary hardships of an extra person in the family. The reduction in tax revenue by this proposal could be offset by reducing the public assistance to elderly care institutions, at least for those individuals with no physical handicap and relatives living that have the capacity to house him/her.

A third suggestion for reducing the problem is in the area of law enforcement. Society must not allow the inference of the acceptance of child abuse to exist in any form, particularly by way of lenient or nonexistent law enforcement. Laws regarding child abuse must be clarified and publicized to a greater degree. They then must be enforced. A major area of enforcement reform is in the area of the report laws discussed in Chapter I. Though every state has a law on the books which makes it a crime to not report a suspected case of abuse or neglect these laws are seldom enforced. In my five years of work in the area of child abuse, in three different states, I have never heard of one

single case prosecuted for nonreporting. Prosecution of these cases must be increased and made public. Society must show it's full condemnation of the problem of child abuse.

My final suggestion for reduction of the incidence of child abuse is most controversial but perhaps a necessary response to the problem. As stated earlier, parents have used memories of their own childhood upbringing as the major guide in their own parental practices. Because of this generational link abuse is frequently passed on from generation to generation within a family. The high rate of abused children becoming abusing parents has been well documented by many studies (Gil, 1970; Steele and Pollock, 1974; Walters, 1975; and Justice and Justice, 1976). It is most important to break this chain of abuse because once broken it may never again occur within that family. As a method of breaking this linkage abusive generations a national registry should be established to record and keep track of the "records" and the movements of abusive families. Laws requiring the "reporting in" of these abusive families to the registry would facilitate this. Continuous checks should be made for a few years to insure that the abuse has not been renewed within the family. If the abuse is not renewed after an established period then the registry should limit it's activities to recording the movements of the family (unless other services are requested). When the former abused child approaches childbearing or marital age the registry should reestablish contact with the family to

provide counseling services for the child and to insure that he will not become an abusive parent. This national registry should have constant contact with area hospitals and when a child is born to a former abused child the registry should once again reestablish contact with the new parents and provide counseling. Contact should be maintained for several years, after which, if no abuse takes place, the registry should sever contact with the parent.

The problems involved in the labeling of a person as an abused child, and thus a potential abuser, as well as the legal ramifications of this constant governmental intrusion in cases where no crime has yet taken place are quite severe. However, the problem of child abuse in our society is also severe and we must begin to recognize the rights of our yet unborn children to a healthy, safe environment.

Limitations of the Study

From the outset of this study it has been an accepted assumption that reported cases of child abuse do not represent all incidents of child abuse in this country. Because this assumption accepts the incompleteness of the available data sets there is a problem of generality of the findings to the general population. Several professionals in the field of child abuse have argued that reported cases of abuse represent incomplete and biased data sets. The possible biases of reported cases have already been discussed in depth in Chapter II and in passing in Chapters III and

IV. However, these biases have never been empirically validated.

In those cases where survey techniques have been used (Gil, 1970; Gelles and Straus, 1979) to measure the characteristics of abused children, the results have been very similar to those given by an analysis of reported cases. The only major exception to this is in the measurement of the true incidence of the problem. Reported cases of child abuse is only a portion of the actual number of cases in the general population. Different studies argue over the percentage of this proportion (see Chapter II) but all show a greater incidence of child abuse than accounted for in reported cases.

The final note to be made concerning the validity of representativeness of the reported cases data is that even if it is biased in estimating the true incidence of the phenomena it still deals with a large number of validated cases of child abuse and neglect. The lives and health of over 75,000 children were known to be in jeopardy in 1978, according to these reported statistics. Even if these 75,000 cases represent only a portion of the true cases of child abuse, as much as possible should be done to increase the understanding of the phenomena in these cases. To just dismiss the knowledge obtainable through this data because of purported (and unproven) biases in the data may condemn these children and many future ones to much needless suffering.

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