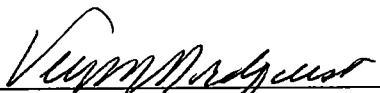


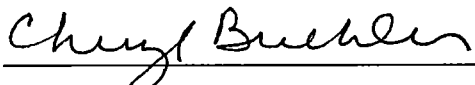
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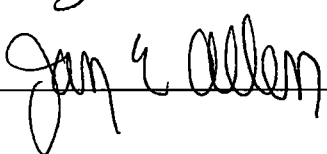
I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Myra Dorene West titled "Professionals' Perceptions of False Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse in the Context of Custody/Visitation Disputes." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Child and Family Studies.



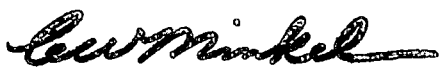
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We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:





Accepted for the Council:



Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of The Graduate School

PROFESSIONALS' PERCEPTIONS OF FALSE ALLEGATIONS OF
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE CONTEXT OF
CUSTODY/VISITATION DISPUTES

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Myra Dorene West
December 1999

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my incredible parents, David and Billie West. Without your love and support, I never would have accomplished all that I have. From the first moment I told you what my dreams for the future were, you encouraged me to follow them and also supported me as much as anyone could. Although it has been a long and difficult road, for me and for the two of you, I am closer now than ever before. As I continue my education, far away from you for the first time, I appreciate all that you have done for me and know that I would not have made it so far without you. This is just another step for me toward the dream I have had for so long. I know that when I walk across the stage to accept my degree you will be there to support me. I just hope you both know that I am forever grateful to have had such wonderful parents.

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thesis right by my side. I will be forever grateful for all you have done for me. As I begin my doctoral program, I know that I need you here with me to support me as I again go through the hard times of completing yet another degree. I hope you will continue to be right there with me.

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Abstract

In this study, professionals were surveyed to obtain their perceptions regarding the occurrence of false allegations of child sexual abuse in the context of custody/visitation disputes. Lists of names from three groups of professionals (attorneys, judges, and psychologists) were obtained from the Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory, the Supreme Court of Tennessee, and the Tennessee Department of Health and questioned regarding the number of child sexual abuse cases they litigated/ adjudicated/evaluated, within and outside the context of custody/visitation. Professionals' perceptions of false allegations, who made the allegations, whether allegations were knowingly or unknowingly false, and the sources professionals used to shape their views about the false allegations issue were examined. Bar graphs, ANOVA's, and Post Hoc Tests were used to analyze and present the data. Results showed that professionals did not perceive that false allegations of child sexual abuse occur more often in the context of custody/visitation disputes than they do in circumstances that do not involve custody/visitation disputes. No significant differences were identified regarding the intent of the person alleging the abuse. Although the findings in this study are interesting, a larger scale study, one that included Department of Children's Services Caseworkers, would be appropriate in order to better determine the true scope of the problem.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Child sexual abuse is a problem that has occupied the public's attention for several years. Reported cases of child sexual abuse have increased continuously throughout the past two decades: In 1976, when the first national data were available, 6,000 child sexual abuse cases were reported. This was approximately 3% of all reported child maltreatment cases. By 1993 there were 300,000 reports of child sexual abuse which constituted 11% of all cases of reported child maltreatment. These figures show an increase in sex abuse reports of nearly 20% between 1976 and 1993 (Ney, 1995). It also has been noted that sexual abuse is not restricted to one gender. Research has shown that as many as 10% - 15% of boys and 20% - 25% of girls experience at least one instance of sexual abuse before they reach the age of 18 (Finkelhor, 1986).

A new problem has arisen with the recent claims of false allegations of child sexual abuse that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes. Clinicians, as well as members of the print and broadcast media, have reported increases in false allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred during custody/visitation disputes (Benedek & Schetky, 1985; Green, 1986; Shuman, 1986; Corwin, Berliner, Goodman, Goodwin, & White, 1987; Dullea, 1987; Zweig, 1987; and Jones & Seig, 1988). Gardner (1992) believes false allegations are occurring at an epidemic rate and attributes them almost exclusively to mothers who,

because of "no fault" laws and "best interest" issues, are, in his view, no longer guaranteed custody. Consequently, the use of a "false allegation" tactic is allegedly increasing when custody/visitation is disputed because it helps to ensure that mothers will be awarded custody of the children. Some researchers, however, have found that false allegations occur at approximately similar rates in both custody and non-custody circumstances (Thonnes & Tjaden, 1990). Unfortunately, empirical support for this finding is based on a very small number of scientific studies. Most examinations of popular media, professional journals, and clinical accounts reveal that support for the custody/visitation-false allegation view is based almost exclusively on clinical case study reports (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982; Green, 1986; Shuman, 1986; and Brooks & Milchman, 1991). More rigorous experimental analyses of the problem are very hard to find.

Empirical studies offer a better opportunity than clinical accounts to examine the false allegation question. Methods of selecting participants, controlling the effects of extraneous variables, and the application of more rigorous statistical analyses strengthen the findings and make it possible to draw more precise conclusions that can be generalized to larger populations. Empirical studies also lend themselves more readily to replication than clinical case studies because procedures are usually clearer and devoid of the vague terms and loose descriptions that frequently characterize the clinical case study literature. It is the empirical literature, therefore, that should serve as the basis for examining the false allegation question.

This paper presents a brief review of the clinical case study literature followed by a more extensive review of relevant empirical

studies that relate to the question of false allegations of child sexual abuse in the context of custody/visitation disputes. Clinical case studies are presented to illustrate the type of arguments that have been used so often to support the conclusion that false allegations of child sexual abuse occur more often in the context of custody/visitation disputes than in non-custody disputes. Empirical studies are presented also to determine if there is more rigorous evidence that supports the "false allegation" position.

Following the review of the clinical and empirical literatures, comparisons are drawn and conclusions presented concerning implications of the existing research that pertains to the "false allegations" argument, especially conclusions about the possible effects on the perceptions of professionals who evaluate, litigate, and adjudicate custody/visitation disputes. The perceptions of professionals are important because they play such key roles in determining the believeability of child sexual abuse allegations that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes. Results of a survey completed by professionals are analyzed and compared to the relevant empirical literature.

To obtain articles for this study, a search was conducted of the major computer databases -- PsychLit, Eric, Sociofile, and Medline -- using the keyterms of "sexual abuse," "child abuse," "false allegations," "custody disputes," and combinations of these terms. Once articles were gathered from the database searches, several additional articles were obtained from the search articles' reference lists. Only articles that included subjects and data were included in the literature reviews; articles of a theoretical nature were not included.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Validity of Allegations

Prior to the presentation of case and empirical studies, the issue of validity must be addressed. The validity of allegations of child sexual abuse is important to evaluate in order to determine whether abuse has occurred. Professionals use several different terms to indicate the final disposition of an allegation. For the information of the reader, they are defined here: **substantiated/founded** - classification used when evidence from an investigation is consistent with the allegation of abuse, **unsubstantiated/unfounded** - classification used when evidence is insufficient to consider the case substantiated or founded, and **false** - classification used for malicious, vindictive allegations as well as for allegations that involve intentional and unintentional coaching, misrepresentation of events, and poor interviewing techniques (Ceci, 1995). Other terms commonly found in the literature include: **fictitious** - the term used when professionals cannot determine that abuse occurred (McGraw & Smith, 1992), and **no determination** - a term used to denote when professionals are not able to make a determination based on the evidence, or lack of evidence (Thoennes & Tjaden, 1990).

Clinical Case Studies

As noted above, a variety of clinical case studies are available on the topic of child sexual abuse allegations that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes. These reports are limited by their reliance on small, non-representative samples, and by a general lack of statistical analyses to substantiate clinical conclusions. Despite these limitations, such reports are important for several reasons. First, clinical reports often provide the first indication of an existing condition or problem. Second, clinical reports may be more likely to be used by practitioners in the field than empirical studies involving complex design and analyses. Finally, clinical reports represent the majority of the available articles on the subject.

Kaplan and Kaplan (1982), both practicing psychiatrists, described a detailed case they saw in their private practice that involved allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred during divorce. An 11 year-old boy and his five year-old-sister made allegations of sexual abuse against their father and paternal grandparents after their parents separated. After the allegations were made the children and their mother moved to their maternal grandmother's home. The father and paternal grandparents continuously denied the accusations and reported that the mother had encouraged the children to make the allegations. Despite this, the children had given testimony, participated in numerous court hearings, and stood by their original accusations. The Kaplans considered the boy's allegations to be false when, in a session with one of the Kaplans and the boy's paternal grandparents, he recanted a portion of his story. The boy's partial recantation led the Kaplans to believe that the girl's allegations of abuse were also false, even though she had exhibited

some emotional and behavioral problems they believed were symptomatic of sexual victimization. Kaplan and Kaplan, (1982) proposed the phenomena of a folie á deux, "a psychiatric entity characterized by the transference of delusional ideas and/or abnormal behavior from one person to one or more others who have been in close association with the primary affected patient" (Gralnick, as cited in Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982, pg. 92), as an explanation for the allegations the children made. A final determination of the truthfulness of the allegations could not be determined. This case demonstrates the importance of evaluating allegations of child sexual abuse in the context of custody/visitation disputes to determine if the allegations are accurate or if they have been encouraged or prompted by an individual (perhaps the mother in this case) in the hopes of securing custody for herself/himself.

Brooks and Milchman (1991), a lawyer and a psychologist, described a similar case. Following a post-divorce visit with his father, a three-year-old boy made allegations of sexual abuse against the father to his grandmother, mother, and aunt. A physician evaluated the child over eight sessions and recognized behavioral symptoms of abuse. As part of the evaluation, the physician also observed responses the boy produced to books and drawings regarding interactions with his father, mother, and others who were close to the boy. The responses were reportedly symptomatic of an abuse victim. Because the child experienced severe separation anxiety, his mother and aunt were present during the sessions, a condition that is not optimal for the assessment of children. This method of evaluating a child is not recommended by experienced clinicians because of the possibility that relatives may serve as "cues" for certain responses or make efforts to influence the child during an evaluation session. A judge eventually

referred the case to a court-appointed psychiatrist and art therapist. The psychiatrist and art therapist could find no evidence that the boy was sexually abused. The judge ruled that the father had not sexually abused the boy, although he did feel that the mother was sincere in her belief that her son had been sexually abused. He felt that the previous therapist had convinced the mother that the abuse had occurred. The mother retained custody, the father retained his unsupervised visits, and the boy started psychotherapy with a court-appointed psychiatrist. Although the allegations in this case were found to be false, the mother believed that abuse might have taken place when the allegations were made. This case, like Kaplan and Kaplan (1982), also demonstrates the importance of evaluating allegations of child sexual abuse in the context of custody/visitation disputes, but it also brings attention to the possibility that false allegations can be intentional (allegations made for malicious reasons) or unintentional (allegations are sincerely believed).

Awad (1987), a psychiatrist, presented two case studies that involved child sexual abuse allegations in the context of divorce disputes. The first case involved an 18-month old girl whose mother accused the father of molesting her. The author determined that the allegation was made the day after the court denied the mother's attempt to prevent the father from seeing the child. The child did not show any symptoms of sexual abuse, but supervised access was recommended in the best interest of the child. The second case involved a 2½ year-old boy who was the alleged victim of paternal sexual abuse. The mother claimed that she witnessed a sexual act by her husband while he was in the bathtub with their son. She left her husband seven months later. The mother's background was important in this case because she had a

nervous breakdown several years earlier. She also had herpes, which she did not reveal to anyone, and failed a polygraph test during an evaluation of the case. Therefore, her true intentions behind the allegations were suspect. The father was a convicted rapist who refused to participate in a sexual assessment and also demonstrated manipulative behavior. Thus, his background was suspect, too. Nevertheless, it was concluded by the author, a clinician, that sexual abuse might have occurred and, consequently, the author recommended supervised visits. Similar to Brooks and Milchman (1991), Awad's study raises the possibility that allegations of child sexual abuse can be made for sincere or malicious reasons.

Green (1986), a practicing psychiatrist, noted that of 11 cases he saw that involved allegations of child sexual abuse during custody/visitation disputes, four (36%) were false. He reached these determinations through psychiatric evaluations that involved individual interviews with the child, with the parents, and then with the child and parents together. Green's findings have been cited frequently in the media and clinical literature to support the "false allegations" argument, but many researchers (Anthony & Watkeys, 1991; Haskett, Wayland, Hutcheson, & Tavana, 1995; Hlady & Gunter, 1990; Jones & McGraw, 1987; Jones & Seig, 1988; McGraw & Smith, 1992; McIntosh & Prinz, 1993; Paradise, Rostain, & Nathanson, 1988; Thonnes & Tjaden, 1990; Yates & Musty, 1988) have criticized Green's findings because of the sample size and bias of the clinical sample. Also, Green determined that some of the cases were false even when there was not enough evidence to substantiate the claims. Including "unsubstantiated cases" in the "false" category of allegations is not acceptable practice and undoubtedly increased the percent of false child sexual

abuse allegations that Green reported. Precisely how inflated the percentage was could not be determined. However, it is clear that Green's findings are probably not accurate and were, of course, subject to multiple sources of bias.

Shuman (1986), a psychiatrist, evaluated seven cases of child abuse that occurred in the context of a custody/visitation dispute. Of these cases, six involved child sexual abuse and one involved child physical abuse. Case information was reviewed by a variety of evaluators including psychiatrists, social service agencies, and a police rape crisis evaluator. Mother's made the allegations in four cases, while a mother and stepfather made the allegations in another. The father made the allegations in one case, and the father and victim, a 13 year-old girl, in another. In six of the cases, the father or stepfather was the alleged perpetrator while in the seventh case it was a teenage friend of the family. After reviewing the findings, charges in three cases were dismissed, the accused (a father) was awarded custody in two cases, unsupervised visits were allowed in one case, and charges were dropped in another. All seven of these cases were determined "false" by the criteria Shuman used for affirmative psychodynamic formulation and subsequent independent justice-system determinations. Psychiatric evaluations were reportedly conducted in accordance with best clinical practice: family members were seen in an office setting, individual and conjoint interviews were conducted, and psychological testing was completed when necessary. Criteria for justice system determination included: allegations that were tried in criminal courts were automatically invalidated by the "beyond a reasonable doubt" standard; those tried in family court were invalidated by the "clear and convincing evidence" standard; and those

evaluated by prosecutors were invalidated by the standard of "insufficient evidence." Like Green (1986), this sample was small and clinically biased. Unfortunately, Shuman did not indicate the total number of such cases that he saw in his practice; he only provided information about the cases that he determined were false. Thus, a percent of false allegations could not be computed. There was no doubt, however, that Shuman felt that the seven cases reflected an increase in the false allegations phenomenon..

Most of the support for the belief that false allegations of child sexual abuse are increasing in the context of custody/visitation disputes comes from the above case studies. The case study method has several limitations, however. Confirmation bias, the tendency to draw a conclusion that seems to be correct but is the product of bias, can occur in at least three ways. First, and most significant, very few cases are included in these reports which places very strict limitations on the ability to generalize to a larger population. Despite the fact that accurate generalization from such samples is virtually impossible, it occurs nevertheless, even though clinical samples are often not representative of the average cases of child sexual abuse. Second, the clinician's decision about the validity of an allegation may be affected by his or her own feelings or beliefs. This is important to consider, because studies (Horner & Guyer, 1991) have shown that professionals rarely agree on the same case, suggesting that some form of "experimenter bias" is affecting clinical outcomes (Thoennes & Tjaden, 1990). Third, it is likely that some clinicians use unreliable and unvalidated evaluation techniques. A universal method of evaluation is not available; only guidelines are recommended by professional organizations (e.g., American Psychological

Association). Variations in methods introduces the possibility of producing different outcomes, independent of any bias individual clinicians might have. Thus, any interpretation of the clinical literature must be taken with a great deal of caution.

Empirical Studies

Empirical studies were included if they met three of the following five criteria. First, samples had to be obtained from more than one location or a treatment program that served large numbers of families. This was done to improve the representativeness of the samples. Second, whenever possible, findings had to be based on a large sample size, at least 100 participants. This criterion was included to improve the chances of drawing conclusions about the generalizability of the findings. Third, clear descriptions of terms and definitions had to be provided for a better understanding of the final determinations. By adhering to this criterion, it was possible to compare findings and have some degree of confidence that measures in different studies were comparable. Fourth, a comparison group of children who were allegedly abused but not the subjects of a custody/visitation dispute was highly desirable because conclusions about the percent of false allegations that occur during custody/visitation disputes could not be drawn without the availability of a non-custodial comparison sample. Finally, researchers had to utilize appropriate statistical methods by which to determine differences between groups. These five criteria were used to obtain a collection of studies that included reasonably high quality data. It was on this basis that

tentative conclusions were drawn about the false allegations views and believability of the case study literature.

Jones and McGraw (1987) conducted a study of several hundred child sexual abuse cases that were reported to two social services agencies in Colorado. There were two phases in the study. One included an analysis of 576 cases of alleged child sexual abuse that were referred to Denver's Department of Social Services (DSS) during 1983; the other included analyses of 717 cases that were referred to the Kempe National Center, a child abuse center in Colorado, between 1983 and 1985. In Phase I, caseworkers from Denver social services identified different categories of reports that were made to them.

They were as follows:

- **Reliable accounts** were reports considered by the caseworkers to be convincing accounts of child sexual abuse (CSA). They included those cases that were corroborated in the legal sense.
- **Recantations** were reliable accounts that were subsequently retracted by the child. The retraction was considered to be falsely made under duress (Summit, 1983).
- **Unsubstantiated suspicions** were reported by an adult about a child. The adult reported his or her suspicion of CSA without malice. The reporter accepted the conclusion of DSS that sex abuse had not occurred. Abuse was not alleged, nor was an adult accused, merely suspicion reported.
- **Insufficient information** reports were those for which DSS did not have enough data to conclude whether or not CSA had occurred.
- **Fictitious reports by adults** were made about children, yet considered by DSS to have not occurred. Deliberate falsifications, misperceptions, and confused interpretations of nonsexual events were all potentially included in this category.
- **Fictitious reports by children** were those in which the child provided an account of sexual abuse that was considered falsely made. As in the previous category, falsifications and misperceptions were included, as well as situations where the child had been coached by an adult to make a false account.

Social service workers classified each of the cases in Phase I and the cases were then reviewed by the research team for agreement of

categories involved. A random selection of cases from each category resulted in a 100% agreement among classifications by caseworkers and researchers. Of the 576 cases, 17% (96 cases) involved unsubstantiated suspicions and 5.9% (34 cases) involved fictitious allegations; 1.4% (8) were made by children and 4.5% (26) were made by adults to whom the children had allegedly disclosed abuse. Of the 26 fictitious cases made by adults, two of the cases involved parents with major psychiatric disturbances, and the other 24 cases involved allegations that arose in the context of custody/visitation disputes. This resulted in 70% (of the total sample) of suspicions of child sexual abuse being determined reliable. The authors of the study did not provide any statistical information on mothers and fathers regarding accusers and perpetrators; they only distinguished among substantiated, unsubstantiated, and fictitious allegations made by children and adults.

In Phase II of the study, a similar analysis was conducted on data available from the second service agency. The authors noted that 21 cases (3%) of false allegations occurred out of a total of 717 child sexual abuse cases that were evaluated at the Kempe National Center. Determinations were made by clinicians based upon a spectrum extending from reliable accounts to fictitious allegations. Although no additional precise definitions were provided for this phase of the study, the authors did state that fictitious accounts included those that lacked corroboration or were recanted by children who gave a reason for the allegations. The authors did not state if the clinicians made determinations individually or as a team. Statements were obtained from each child and the contents were examined for explicit, unique, or distinguishing detail, unusual word and sentence

formation, the child's perspective of abuse, the emotions expressed, any evidence of psychological responses to abuse, a pattern of abuse, elements of secrecy, and pornographic content. Supporting features also were evaluated and included: history of the family; behavior of the child; the child's disclosure of the abuse and statements to other people, and the consistency of the statements; the way the child used toys, playthings, and drawing materials; child's knowledge of sexual autonomy and function; and viewpoints of other children in the household. Also, physical and physiological evidence was evaluated when available.

Ninety-seven percent (696 cases) of the cases were found to be reliable. Of the 21 fictitious cases (3% of the total cases seen), children made the allegations in 24% (5 cases), adults in 43% (9 cases), and the parent and child together in 33% (7 cases). Of the 21 fictitious cases, children made the allegations in five (24%) cases and one (4.7%) of those families was involved in a custody/visitation dispute. Adults made fictitious allegations in nine cases and of those, seven (33% of the 21 fictitious cases) were involved in the context of a custody/visitation dispute. In five (71.4%) of the fictitious cases, the mother made the allegations and non-related professionals made the allegations in two (28.6%) cases. Finally, adults and children made fictitious allegations together in seven cases (33%), all of which were involved in custody/visitation disputes. Although it was not clear who initiated the allegations in these seven cases, the ex-husband was the accused in each case. Although, the percentage of false allegations seems high, but can be explained in part by the fact that all of the mothers in the seven fictitious cases exhibited psychiatric disturbances such as paranoid and hysterical

personality disorders. However, the authors did not specify how many of the substantiated and unsubstantiated cases involved allegations of sexual abuse that occurred in the context of a custody/visitation dispute, consequently, no comparison of fictitious cases to substantiated and unsubstantiated cases that involved such allegations could be made. It was concluded, therefore, that false allegations were unusual and that most of the cases were substantiated.

Limitations of the study included the fact that both samples were obtained from one source in each phase rather than a variety of sources, which may have provided participants with more varied backgrounds. Although there were two samples from two different sources, they were not looked at collectively but separately. The authors also chose to place cases that they were unable to make determinations on, due to lack of evidence, into the fictitious category. Additionally, in Phase I, the team of DSS caseworkers was not able to make determinations in 11 cases and therefore allowed the researchers to do it. In all 11 cases, the researchers placed them into the insufficient evidence category, which could have been the result of some kind of experimenter bias.

Paradise, Rostain, and Nathanson (1988) also collected data on two samples. In the first study, 162 children between the ages of four and 12 were seen at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia between June 1985 and March 1986. The second sample consisted of children seen at the first author's clinical practice during the year prior to data collection at the Children's Hospital. In deciding the classification of the cases, the authors used determination categories offered by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. Substantiation of a child abuse report occurred if, after an investigation, the report was

"indicated"/"founded". An allegation was **indicated** if substantial evidence of the sexual abuse existed based on one of the following sources of information: 1) medical evidence, 2) the child protective services investigation, or 3) the perpetrator admitted the acts of abuse. An allegation was considered **founded** when courtroom adjudication resulted in conviction of the perpetrator. All cases were reported to child protective services and caseworkers made determinations based on these criteria. In the first sample, it was determined that 15% (25 of the 162) of all children between the ages of 4 and 12 who were seen at the hospital between June 1985 and March 1986, were sexually abused. Of these, 28% (7) were involved in a custody/visitation dispute. Mothers alleged abuse in 6 (85.7%) cases in which a custody/visitation dispute was present and in 12 (66.7%) cases where no custody/visitation dispute was present. Fathers alleged child sexual abuse in one case involving a custody/visitation dispute and in one case that did not involve such a dispute. One final case was alleged by someone other than the mother and father and was not associated with a custody/visitation dispute. The authors concluded that of the 162 children who were seen consecutively during this 10-month period, 4.3% (7 cases) included a child custody/visitation dispute where a false allegation of child sexual abuse was made against a parent.

In the second sample of Paradise et al. (1988), six cases from one of the author's clinical practices were evaluated. All six cases were found to involve allegations of child sexual abuse, and 84% (5) of these involved a custody/visitation dispute. The mother made the allegation in 4 of the cases involving custody/visitation disputes and someone other than the mother or father made the allegation in the

fifth case. An additional allegation, also made by a non-parent, was reported but did not involve a custody/visitation dispute. The authors did not report how many of these cases resulted in false or unsubstantiated allegations.

A total of thirty of the 31 (25 from the hospital sample and 6 from the clinical sample) cases were reported to Child Protective Services. Of these, 26 (87%) were later classified as substantiated. Seventy-two percent (8 cases) of the cases that involved... custody/visitation disputes were substantiated compared to 95% of cases that did not involve custody/visitation disputes. Twenty-eight percent of the allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes were not substantiated compared to 5% of the child sexual abuse allegations that were made in non-custody/visitation disputes. However, the authors did not provide information about the gender or relationship of the alleged perpetrator. They also failed to include information on false allegations; they only reported substantiated and unsubstantiated rates. Nevertheless, it is important to note that their sample was obtained from more than one source, which may have reduced sampling biases such as the financial, social, and educational backgrounds of the participants.

Like Paradise et al. (1988), Hlady and Gunter (1990) also utilized a hospital sample, one obtained from the British Columbia Children's Hospital. Individual cases were reviewed by the Child Protection Service Unit. No criteria for substantiation, unsubstantiation, or false determinations were described. Of the 370 children that were seen, 11% (41) were involved in custody/visitation disputes. Allegations were reported to child protective services by the mother in 27% (11) of the cases, the family physician in 29% of the

cases (12 cases, possibly the result of mothers taking the children in), the Ministry of Social Services and Housing in 22% (9) of the cases, the police in 10% (4) of the cases, and the father in 7% (3) of the cases. Of the cases that involved custody/visitation disputes, 83% (34) had been allegedly sexually abused and another 17.1% (7) were allegedly physically abused. In 17.6% (6 of the 34) of the sexually abused children, physical evidence of sexual abuse was found. No findings were reported on the cases that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes that were determined to be false or unsubstantiated. A sample of 219 children also was examined during this time for allegations of child sexual abuse that were not involved in custody/visitation disputes. Of the entire sample, caseworkers identified 15% (33 cases) of the cases that had positive physical evidence of child sexual abuse. The authors pointed out that their findings were similar regarding positive physical findings in custody/visitation, 17.6% (6 of 34 cases), and non-custody/visitation, 15% (33 of 219 cases) disputes. Although the authors acknowledged that false allegations of child sexual abuse that occur in the context of custody/visitations disputes are a concern, this was not reflected in their findings. However, they did not report any information on false allegations of child sexual abuse, only the rates of substantiation of such cases. The CPS Unit at the hospital evaluated the cases in this study in an effort to provide confirmation of the researcher's determinations.

Jones and Seig (1988), practicing psychiatrists, conducted their study with a sample of 20 cases involving custody/visitation disputes and child sexual abuse allegations. The sample consisted of consecutive cases seen at the C. Henry Kempe Center between 1983 and

1985. Twenty-seven children between the ages of two and 13 were involved in the cases. One author was clinically involved with the participants (David Jones) while the other author (Ann Seig) reviewed prior materials in the cases, extracted data, and recorded the validation decision of the clinical review team. This team conducted interviews with each child and their current caregivers together, the current caregivers alone, the child alone, and the child and the alleged perpetrator. The terms used for determinations in this study were the same as those reported by Jones and McGraw (1987). **Reliable** was defined as reports considered to be convincing accounts of child sexual abuse. They included cases that were corroborated in the legal sense. **Fictitious** was defined as cases that were considered by the team not to have occurred. Deliberate falsifications and misperceptions about nonsexual events were included in this category as well as cases in which the child was coached by an adult to make the false allegations. **Unsubstantiated suspicions** were defined as reports of child sexual abuse without malicious intent. The reporter accepted the decision made by the team that abuse had not occurred. Abuse was not alleged, suspicions were only reported. **Uncertain** was defined as reports that did not have enough data available to make a determination of whether child sexual abuse had occurred or not.

Results showed that 14 (70%) of the 20 cases were determined reliable, four (20%) were determined fictitious, one (5%) was an unsubstantiated suspicion, and one (5%) was uncertain. In 95% (3) of the fictitious cases, the accusers were the mother and child, and in the remaining 5% (1 case), a child accused the mother's live-in boyfriend. In 95% (3) of the fictitious cases the accuser - the mother - retained custody. In the final 5% (fourth fictitious case), the

accuser - the child - continued to live with the accused - the live-in boyfriend of the natural mother. Although Jones and Seig found that 20% of the allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes were false, a figure larger than the 5.9% reported previously by Jones & McGraw (1987), they noted that 70% of the cases in this study were substantiated and the remaining 30% were either unsubstantiated or false. Unfortunately, the data used to compute these percentages were not described. It was concluded that child sexual abuse allegations that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes should not be taken lightly because 70% of the cases, nearly ¾ of the sample, were substantiated.

Thoennes and Tjaden (1990) conducted a two-year study on allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes. Court administrators, judges, and evaluators at eight different sights were surveyed. A team of CPS workers and court evaluators made decisions on the cases using the following terminology: "likely abuse occurred," "unlikely abuse occurred," and "worker could not determine whether abuse occurred." No further descriptions of these terms were provided. Final determinations were made on the following basis: if one individual from the team's opinion was available, that determination was used; if two like opinions were available, that determination was used; if two differing opinions were used, the term "indeterminate" was used. Over six months, 9,000 cases that involved custody/visitation disputes were seen at these sights. Of these 9,000 cases, 169 (less than 2%) involved allegations of child sexual abuse. These figures compare favorably to, and are even somewhat lower than Hlady & Gunter (1990) and Paradise et al. (1988). Of the 169 child sexual abuse cases, 40

could not be coded, therefore, 129 cases were used in the statistical analyses. Also, opinions of both the CPS worker and a court-appointed custody evaluator were available in only 43% (approximately 55 cases) of the cases. Of the 55 cases, "likely abuse occurred" occurred in 50%, "unlikely abuse occurred" occurred in 33%, and 17% were determined "indeterminate."

Results showed that mothers made allegations against fathers 48% of the time, stepfathers 6% of the time, and third parties 13% of the time. Fathers were found to accuse mothers 6% of the time, mother's new partner 10% of the time, and third parties 6% of the time. Third parties accused mothers or mothers new partner 4% of the time, fathers 3% of the time, and other relatives 4% of the time. It was concluded that allegations of child sexual abuse were no more likely to be determined "unlikely abuse occurred" in the context of custody/visitation disputes than in cases referred to DCS that did not involve custody/visitation disputes. In fact, false allegations were rare, just as they seem to be in cases referred directly to DCS. Fifty percent of the cases that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes (approximately 65) were substantiated, 33% of the cases (approximately 42) were unsubstantiated, and 17% of the cases (approximately 22) could not be classified reliably. Results also were compared to data from a study funded by the National Center of Child Abuse and Neglect (1986). Center data showed that 2.5 out of 1,000 children in the population had been sexually abused in 1986. Thoennes and Tjaden (1990) identified 209 child victims, which resulted in a proportion of 15 allegations of sexually abused children per 1,000 in the population of families that were involved in custody/visitation disputes. This percentage of allegations of child sexual abuse victims

involved in custody/visitation disputes was 6 times greater than the rate represented in the National Incidence Study which included child sexual abuse victims that were not involved in custody/visitation disputes. Although the authors concluded that allegations of child sexual abuse may be more likely to occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes than in the general population, they did not find that the proportion of false allegations was greater than the proportion that occurs outside the context of custody/visitation disputes (range = 2% to 8%). Also, the authors found that, although mothers made allegations in almost 70% of the cases in the study, only 48% of these cases involved allegations against the father. This was an important finding and comparable to Anthony and Watkeys (1991) finding of 25%. It did not support Gardner's (1991, 1994) claims that mothers, almost exclusively, make false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers in order to ensure they are awarded custody of their children.

Anthony and Watkeys (1991) examined all cases of child sexual abuse allegation that were reported in the South Glamorgan area of the UK between 1986 and 1989. Information was obtained from joint investigations by police, social services, and health professionals, to determine whether abuse had occurred. The terminology and criteria for determinations included:

- **Substantiated** was defined as when workers from all agencies felt that the account given by child/other family members and/or alleged offender indicated that abuse had occurred. It could include a disclosure from the child, occasionally witness to event, confession from alleged offenders, and/or corroborative evidence from a medical examination. It would frequently involve criminal and/or care proceedings. If an allegation was retracted, an additional review was made to determine the validity of the retraction. It was not assumed that a retraction meant that the allegations were false.

- **Unsubstantiated cases were considered in four groups.**

Third Party Referrals - Professional Referrals

No direct allegation of abuse. Suspicions of abuse were made usually by professionals i.e. doctors, social workers, teachers, because of a child's behavior, family lifestyle or medical symptoms. Abuse was not specifically alleged and no adult accused. The cases were monitored but in most cases no direct family intervention made.

Third Party Referrals - Non Professional Referrals

Allegations made by parents/family/neighbor against another adult which could not be substantiated despite investigation. This formed two sub-groups:

1. Adults concerned about the well being of children and who reported concern to one of the three agencies. The reports were not regarded as malicious but were received from adults who were seen as acting in the best interest of children.
2. False allegations made by parents against each other, or other adults having care of the child. These were usually malicious and frequently involved custody disputes.

Allegations Made Directly by Child and Not Substantiated

1. Allegations made by child against parents or guardians, which despite investigation could not be substantiated i.e. intrafamilial abuse. In this group where the allegations were made against a parent or guardian, there was evidence that either these were made deliberately to get the accused into trouble, or to enable the child to be removed from the present environment.
2. Allegations made by a child against adults or children outside the family, which again could not be substantiated i.e. extrafamilial abuse. These children made allegations as a method of drawing attention to their unacceptable circumstances. In all these allegations the child could not maintain the allegation, and the circumstances surrounding allegations indicated that abuse could not have occurred.

Third Party Professional Referrals Influenced by

Investigation/Household Referrals/Contact with Offenders

Children referred for assessment regarding sexual abuse because they were siblings of a child who had been abused, or had lived in a household of alleged offender.

A total of 410 children were referred for the possibility of sexual abuse. Only 350 cases were fully investigated. Sexual abuse was substantiated on the basis of interviews with the child, interviews with the family, interviews with the alleged offender, and medical examinations. A total of 197 cases (48%) were substantiated. Twenty-

four (5.8%) cases involved custody/visitation disputes, a figure similar to 11% (Hlady & Gunter, 1990) and somewhat lower than 36% (McIntosh & Prinz, 1993). One hundred fifty-three (37.3%) of the cases were not substantiated. Sixty-three (24.5%) of the unsubstantiated cases were based on false allegations. In thirty of the unsubstantiated cases (11.7%) that were based on false allegations, it was determined that the allegations were intentionally false and malicious. Nineteen (30.2%) of the unsubstantiated cases that included false allegations occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes in comparison to 41 (65.1%) unsubstantiated cases, also based on false allegations, that did not involve custody/visitation disputes. Only twenty-four (5.8%) of the children out of the 410 total child referrals were involved in custody/visitation disputes. In five (20.8%) of these cases, sexual abuse was substantiated; the remaining 19 (79.2%) were unfounded and included attempts to restrict access to the children.

Adults made false allegations of child sexual abuse in 33 cases (16.7% of investigated cases), 79.2% (19 of 24 cases) of which involved adults in custody/visitation disputes. Twenty-five percent of the allegations were from mothers, all of whom had experiences with sexual abuse in their childhoods. These allegations were generally against fathers. No specific information was provided regarding how often mothers accused fathers, or vice versa, in cases involving custody/visitation disputes.

McGraw and Smith (1992), a psychiatrist and a social services director, also provided a study of cases that involved allegations of child sexual abuse and custody/visitation disputes in Colorado. The data were obtained from the Boulder County Sexual Abuse Team

evaluations of all cases seen during the period from March 1986 to July 1987. The total number of cases evaluated was 290, but only 18 (6% of the 290 cases) included allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes. These cases were subsequently put through a validation process to determine their reliability. A sexual abuse review team investigated families and assessed cases that involved a contested custody/visitation dispute. Before determining cases as founded or unfounded, the sexual abuse review team assessed the behavioral indicators of child sexual abuse, cofacilitated an investigation with the local law enforcement, and assessed the child's credibility. Prior to this study, only 1 of the 18 cases was determined to be **founded** due to the alleged perpetrator's confession of abuse. The team then applied the validation process that utilized the categories identified by Jones and McGraw (1987), as discussed above. The terms included: **reliable or substantiated accounts, recantations, unsubstantiated suspicions, insufficient information reports, fictitious reports by adults, and fictitious reports by children.** Definitions were presented previously in this paper. Once the data were gathered, the authors used a continuum of "**credible**"/"**substantiated**" to "**fictitious.**" The authors also conducted an assessment of the child's statement of abuse and a review of supporting features (e.g., family history, child's behavior, etc). Physiological evidence was also considered.

The evaluation team determined that 39% (7) of the cases that involved custody/visitation were founded (substantiated), 5.5% (1) were recanted, 16.5% (3) were fictitious (false), 11% (2) were unfounded (could not be determined because of insufficient information), and 28% (5) were unsubstantiated. No information was provided about the

genders of the accusers or the perpetrators. The authors noted that 44.4% of cases, those determined to be founded and recanted (one case involved a child who recanted his allegation), was just below the 50% reported by Thonnes and Tjaden (1990) while the 16.5% of false child sexual abuse allegations that arose in the context of custody/visitation disputes was less than Green's (1987) estimate of 36%, but quite a bit higher than Thoenes & Tjaden's (1990) range of 2% to 8%. These findings are particularly important because a reliable validation process was used to accurately evaluate the child sexual abuse allegations. Before the validation process was applied, only 5.5% of the allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes were founded in comparison to 44.4% that were eventually substantiated after the validation process was applied. Because a group of professionals evaluated each case, sources of individual bias were probably minimized.

McIntosh and Prinz (1993) looked at cases that involved sexual abuse allegations that were presented in family court over a one-year period. Information was obtained from all cases regarding 1) allegations of child sexual and physical abuse, 2) custody and access and case outcome, and 3) descriptive information profiling each case. All cases containing sexual or physical abuse were coded regarding which parent made the allegation, the alleged perpetrator of the abuse, what the accusing parent wanted regarding custody, and what the accusing parent wanted regarding access to children. Court findings of abuse were recorded for each case. Two undergraduate psychology students and one graduate student in clinical psychology coded the data. After coding the cases independently, decisions were discussed

to clarify coding issues and a 95% intercoder agreement was reported, but definitions of the terms were not presented.

Of the total 1,675 cases of divorcing families that were seen in family court during 1987, 603 (36%) involved custody/access disputes. Of the 603 cases, 588 (35.1%) of the families were seeking divorces; only 15 (.08%) involved post-divorce conflicts. A total of 85 (14.1%) cases were contested custody/access disputes, 74 (12.3%) involved custody/access disputes and 11 (1.8%) involved only access. Allegations of any form of abuse (emotional, physical and sexual) were present in 21 (24.7%) cases (contested and non-contested). Only five (5.9%) of these included allegations of child sexual abuse. Three (3.5%) of the cases that involved allegations of child sexual abuse occurred in the context of a custody/access dispute and two were uncontested. The mother alleged the abuse in 3 cases, the father in one case, and both parents made cross allegations in one case. The alleged perpetrators were the biological father in two cases, the mother's boyfriend in one case, an adult relative in one case, and multiple family members in one case. The validity of the allegations in the custody/access dispute cases were not addressed in the courts, therefore, no findings on false allegations were identified. The authors noted that allegations of child sexual abuse in this sample were rare. Only 2% of contested custody/access cases involved such an allegation in comparison to only 0.8% of non-contested custody cases. These results are similar to those found by Thoennes and Tjaden (1990) who reported that less than 2% of their sample of over 9,000 cases involved families in custody/visitation disputes and included allegations of child sexual abuse. McIntosh and Prinz's (1993) findings are important because professional bias was probably reduced

by the use of multiple evaluators and high percentages of intercoder agreement (95%). However, the sample was obtained from only one location, limiting the generalizability of the findings.

In a recent study (Haskett, Wayland, Hutcheson, & Tavana, 1995) 20 child protection service workers from seven counties evaluated 175 cases that involved allegations of child sexual abuse. Twelve of the workers were recruited from northeast Florida and eight were recruited from northeast North Carolina. These CPS workers were asked to provide information on 10 of their most recent cases of child sexual abuse. The most recent cases were desired so the CPS workers would have a clearer memory of the details. No attempt to balance substantiated and unsubstantiated cases was made. Also, no definitions of terms were provided. The first and fourth authors, Haskett and Tavana, interviewed the CPS workers for approximately one hour. The CPS workers also were asked what factors led to the decisions they made to substantiate or unsubstantiate the allegations. The third author, Hutcheson, and a research assistant coded data without knowledge of the codes reviewed by the first and fourth authors, Haskett and Tavana. Overall interrater reliability was 95.4%.

The CPS workers substantiated 66.9% (approximately 117) of the cases. Fourteen cases (8%) occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes; 14.3% (2) of the custody/visitation cases were substantiated and 85.7% (12) were not substantiated. Of the 12 unsubstantiated cases, six (42.8%) were based on false allegations. This was in comparison to three cases (21.4%) that also included false allegations but did not involve custody/visitation disputes. Although the percentages of alleged offenders [fathers (30.1%), stepfathers (15.7%), mother's boyfriend (15.1%), and mother/grandmother (3.6%)],

were reportedly based on the entire sample. No specific information was provided for the alleged offenders or persons making allegations that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes. Less than 10% of the cases in the sample involved custody/visitation disputes and only 15% of them were substantiated. Many sources were utilized to obtain the sample and several evaluators coded the data. This may have helped to reduce sources of bias and strengthen generalizability of the findings.

Summary and General Conclusions

The literature revealed that the percentages of child sexual abuse allegations that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes vary a great deal across studies. Based on the empirical findings, false allegations can range from less than 1% to nearly 50%. However, if the Paradise et al. (1988) and Haskett et al. (1995) findings are excluded, the range narrows considerably, 1% to 20%. Moreover, in the most rigorous and comprehensive study (Thonnes & Tjaden, 1990) it was found that the proportion of false child sexual abuse allegations that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes was not greater than the proportion that occurred in other contexts. The Haskett et al. (1995) data are more recent, though, than the data from other studies and they were gathered with some care, although the criteria that were used to determine the disposition of individual allegations were not described. Taken together, the findings (generally) are not consistent with Green (1987) or most of the other cases studies (Awad, 1987; Brooks & Milchman, 1991; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982; and Shuman, 1986) that reported higher percentages of

false child sexual abuse allegations that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes.

The differences found between the clinical and empirical literatures that relate to the "false allegations" issue can be explained in several ways. Case studies included small clinical samples that were often evaluated by practicing psychiatrists. Empirical studies, on the other hand, often included large samples drawn from several different populations (e.g., hospitals, child abuse centers, courts, and social service agencies), that were representative of a greater variety of families. Empirical studies often had more than one evaluator, and included a variety of professionals such as social service workers, court appointed evaluators, physicians, researchers, and students. Usually, participants were drawn from populations of children and families referred to a Department of Children's Services (DCS), hospitals, and child treatment centers. Then determinations were made about the number of allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes. However, populations of divorcing parents seeking custody/visitation also were used to determine the percent of cases that involved alleged sexual abuse. Once the number of allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes was determined, it was possible to evaluate the prevalence of the problem. In contrast, samples in the clinical studies were obtained from populations of children who were referred to therapists, presumably because they were experiencing serious problems. The samples were not drawn from families with children who were allegedly sexually abused but not experiencing serious emotional problems, and therefore were not representative of sexually abused children in

general. Also, when psychiatrists evaluated the children and their families, they alone made determinations as to whether the abuse had occurred, raising the possibility of experimenter bias. In contrast, several individuals or teams conducted the evaluations that were used to draw conclusions in the empirical studies. This helped to control for sources of individual experimenter bias. For these reasons, the empirical literature presents a more believable picture of the proportion of false allegations of child sexual abuse that are likely to occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes.

Do more allegations of child sexual abuse, regardless of their validity, occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes than in non-custody/visitation situations? Thoennes and Tjaden (1990) found that allegations of child sexual abuse occurred six times more often in custody/visitation disputes than in situations that did not involve such disputes. Jones and McGraw (1987) found that only 5% of cases referred to the Denver Department of Social Services involved a custody/visitation dispute and included child sexual abuse allegations. Of them, less than 3% were unsubstantiated. As noted above, only 2% of the Kempe National Center sample included allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes. Paradise et al. (1988) found that only 28% of their sample involved custody/visitation disputes and only 4% of those cases included false allegations of child sexual abuse. Although no data were provided on the rate of false allegations, Hlady and Gunter (1990) reported similar substantiation percentages for cases that included allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes (17.6%) and those that did not involve custody/visitation disputes (15%). Anthony and Watkeys (1991) found that only 6% of the

families that were involved in custody/visitation disputes included allegations of child sexual abuse. Haskett et al. (1995) reported similar findings, only 8% of the allegations of child sexual abuse occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes. These findings, with the exception of Thonnes and Tjaden (1990), do not support the notion that allegations of child sexual abuse are occurring more often in the context of custody/visitation disputes than they are in situations that do not involve such disputes.

Despite the "incidence" findings, concerns remain about the occurrence of false allegations of child sexual abuse that occur in the context of custody/visitation. Thoennes and Tjaden (1990) found that false allegations of child sexual abuse were no more likely to occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes than false allegations that occurred in other contexts. Haskett et al. (1995) found that false allegations of child sexual abuse did seem to occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes proportionally more (42.8%) than they occur in situations that do not involve custody/visitation disputes (21.5%). Paradise et al. (1988) did not differentiate between unsubstantiated and false allegations of child sexual abuse. When their percentages of unsubstantiated allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes are considered, it was found that 28% of the cases were unsubstantiated in comparison to 5% of cases that did not involve custody/visitation disputes. Anthony and Watkeys (1991) reported that 24.5% of their sample included false allegations, but 65.1% did not occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes. In comparison, 30.2% of the child sexual abuse allegations that occurred in custody/visitation disputes were false. In this particular study, almost twice as many false allegations were made in non-custody/

visitation disputes than in cases that involved custody/visitation disputes. Taken together, all of these figures suggest that false allegations of child sexual abuse that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes probably are not substantially greater than percentages that occur in other situations and are certainly much lower than the case study literature and media reports suggest.

Regarding the position that mothers who are involved in custody/visitation disputes are more likely to make allegations of child sexual abuse than mothers who are not involved in custody/visitation disputes, the findings are very limited but also in stark contrast to the opinions of clinicians and journalists. Paradise et al. (1988) found that only 24% of mothers involved in custody/visitation disputes made allegations of child sexual abuse compared to 48% of mothers who were not involved in custody/visitation disputes. Thonnes and Tjaden (1990) also reported that 48% of the allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes were made by mothers and were no more likely to be false than allegations made in other contexts. These findings do not support the view that mothers are highly inclined to, 1) make frivolous allegations of child sexual abuse, or 2) make false allegations of child sexual abuse when they are involved in custody/visitation disputes.

Professionals' Perceptions and Concerns Regarding Child Sexual Abuse Allegations That Occur in the Context of Custody/Visitation Disputes

Information contained in the clinical and empirical literatures could have an important impact on professionals who are involved in custody/visitation disputes that include allegations of child sexual abuse. Because different professionals' (attorneys, DCS workers,

judges, and psychologists) often have an impact on final determinations regarding the validity of child sexual abuse allegations, it is important to know what their views are and how they formed them. Psychologists and DCS workers may be exposed quite a lot to the research literature that pertains to allegations of child sexual abuse, even those that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes, because they often are called upon to make determinations about the validity of child sexual abuse allegations. However, judges and attorneys may not have as much exposure to the same empirical literature as DCS workers and psychologists and may obtain most of their information from courtroom experiences and media reports, or perhaps an occasional article that appears in a law journal. Regardless, professional perceptions of this potential problem are likely to affect professional conduct and decision-making. Consequently, it would be important to know whether professionals who evaluate, litigate, and adjudicate custody/visitation disputes have views about the "false allegations" and "mothers are likely accuser," issues that are more consistent with the empirical literature, or biased, on ways that reflect reports in the clinical literature and media.

Because the empirical findings are somewhat dated, more studies need to be conducted in order to determine if the percent of false allegations of child sexual abuse that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes is increasing and whether mothers are more likely to make false allegations than fathers. Also, standardized terminology should be established in order to allow for comparisons between studies. Clear definitions should be used to make determinations about the validity of allegations, and researchers need to agree on the

criterion that are used to classify an allegation "false." Whatever "increases" are reported in either the clinical or empirical literature could be the result of poor definitions of terms, various sources of professional bias, sampling difficulties, or a host of other methodological problems. Having said all of this, it is still important to know whether professionals' perceptions of the "false allegations" and "mothers as likely accusers" issues are in or out of line with the empirical literature. Although it is limited and has its methodological problems, in general, the empirical findings do not support the "epidemic" view that has been portrayed in the media and clinical case accounts.

The present research, therefore, was conducted to examine the perceptions of professionals (attorneys, judges, DCS caseworkers, and psychologists) and answer the following questions:

- 1) In the opinion of professionals, how often do allegations of child sexual abuse occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes?
- 2) In the opinion of professionals, what proportion of child sexual abuse allegations are false?
- 3) What proportion of professionals believe that mothers are more likely to make false allegations than fathers?
- 4) What proportion of professionals believe that false allegations are made knowingly and unknowingly?
- 5) What are professionals' perceptions of allegations of child sexual abuse that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes in Tennessee and the United States?
- 6) On what sources do professionals base their views (e.g. magazines, research articles, colleagues, newspaper accounts, etc.)?

Chapter 3

Methods

Participants

Participants in the study consisted of three groups of professionals who had experience with cases of alleged child sexual abuse. The groups included practicing attorneys, court judges, and licensed clinical psychologists from the state of Tennessee. Initially, the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) was considered for participants, however, they were not included in the study. DCS did not give approval. Lists of all professionals in each group in the state of Tennessee were acquired from the Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory, the Supreme Court of Tennessee, and the Tennessee Department of Health. Based on these data there are a total number of 1,167 professionals currently in practice in the state (473 attorneys; 133 judges; and 561 psychologists). An initial sample was randomly selected from each list. In an attempt to insure that participants were drawn from all areas of the state, the method of sampling described by Dillman (1986) was utilized. All lists of professionals were standardized to reflect alphabetical listings of each professional group by county. Selection of the sample began with the first person listed for each county. To determine the selection criteria for each professional category, the total number of individuals obtained for each group was divided by a figure representing the number of professionals in the county having the

lowest number of professionals. The resulting number represented the selection criteria (i.e., if the number ten was obtained by this method for attorneys, then every tenth individual in each county was chosen). Participant selection thus varied according to the total number of professionals in each group and by the number of professionals representing the county with the lowest number of professionals. It was hoped that a total of 50 participants would be assigned to each professional group, consisting of 25 males and 25 females (excluding judges; only 22 females were available, thus, all females were selected). Following the Dillman method, once 25 participants of one gender were selected, the selection process continued until 25 of the other gender were selected. Prior to data collection, the study had been approved by the University of Tennessee Institutional Review Board for Research with Human Subjects.

Questionnaire

Questionnaires were developed by the author and co-principal investigator based on questionnaires obtained from articles included in the literature review and on the Co-Principal Investigator's clinical experience. The purpose of each questionnaire was to obtain information about the professionals' perceptions of false allegations of child sexual abuse that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes and also their beliefs about the believability of the allegations. In order to promote compliance with the request for information from busy professionals, the questionnaires were short and included only 17-19 questions. Each group of professionals received the same questionnaire; only a few items were different to accommodate differences in professional backgrounds. Participants were questioned

about the estimated number of cases they had evaluated, litigated, or adjudicated, the accuser (mother, father, or other), the accused (mother or father), and the number of cases that, in their opinion, included false allegations. Demographic questions related to age, gender, highest degree earned, professional field, and years of experience were also included (See Appendix A).

Procedure

Prior to mailing the first wave of questionnaires, two individuals from each professional group were asked to review and complete the items and provide feedback on length, format, readability, and content. All 6 professionals believed that the content was consistent with the purpose of the research, providing some degree of content validity for the questionnaire.

Questionnaires were mailed to each professional with a letter describing the research project. An informed consent form requiring their signature also was included. Attempts to contact participants by phone were made approximately two weeks after they received the initial questionnaires if they had not yet returned them. Following the phone calls, a second wave of questionnaires was sent to individuals who had not returned the initial questionnaire.

To insure confidentiality, the respondents were asked not to put any kind of identifying information on the questionnaires. However, a tracking number was included that permitted the authors to selectively send additional questionnaires to non-responding professionals. All respondents had the option to request information about relevant

literature and a summary of the research findings by listing their name and address on a separate sheet of paper (See Appendix B).

Data Analysis

Once questionnaires were returned, responses were coded and entered into SPSS-PC for data analysis. The data were then analyzed for similarities and differences. ANOVAs were used to explore the relationship between the dependent measures of profession, age, and gender with the three independent variables of years of experience, number of cases evaluated, and number of cases thought to be false. Descriptive statistics, reported in the form of bar graphs, also were used to illustrate for each group and gender the means of the professionals' age, years of experience, estimated number of cases evaluated, and estimated number of allegations thought to be false.

Research Questions and Analysis Strategy

1. Do professionals who are involved in custody/visitation disputes believe that allegations of child sexual abuse are more likely to occur in this context than other contexts that do not involve such disputes?
 - a. If professionals believe that allegations of child sexual abuse occur more often in the context of custody/visitation disputes compared to other contexts, by what multiple can the difference be expressed in terms of percent?
 - b. How do the beliefs of professionals compare with information presented in the empirical literature as expressed in the same percents?

- c. Are there differences among the beliefs of attorneys, judges, and psychologists about the occurrence of allegations of child sexual abuse in the context of custody/visitation disputes, expressed in mean percentages and analyzed by ANOVA?
 - d. If there are differences across groups, to what extent do they correspond to or differ from the range of percentages reported in the empirical literature?
2. Do professionals who are involved in custody/visitation disputes believe that mothers are more likely to **knowingly** make false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers than fathers are against mothers?
- a. If so, by what multiple can the difference be expressed in a percent?
 - b. How does the difference compare with information reported in the empirical literature?
 - c. Are there differences across groups? (ANOVA's and Tukey Post Hoc Tests will be used to determine differences among groups.)
 - d. If there are differences, how do they compare with information in the empirical literature?
3. Do professionals who are involved in custody/visitation disputes believe that mothers are more likely to **unknowingly** make false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers than fathers are against mothers?
- a. If so, by what multiple can the difference be expressed in a percent?
 - b. How does the difference compare with information reported in the empirical literature?

- c. Are there differences across groups? (ANOVA's and Tukey Post Hoc Tests will be used to determine differences among groups.)
 - d. If there are differences, how do they compare with information in the empirical literature?
- 4. Do professionals who are involved in custody/visitation disputes believe that mothers are more likely to make false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers than fathers are against mothers? (ANOVA's and Tukey Post Hoc Tests will be used to determine differences among groups.)
 - 5. To what extent have professional beliefs about these allegations influenced final conclusions and recommendations made regarding custody/visitation arrangements? (ANOVA's and Tukey Post Hoc Tests will be used to determine differences among groups.)
(Likert Scale: "Not at All" to "A Very Significant Degree")
 - 6. What do professionals believe is the percentage of mothers who are involved in custody/visitation disputes and make knowingly and unknowingly false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers of their children within the state of Tennessee?
 - 7. What do professionals believe is the percentage of mothers who are involved in custody/visitation disputes and make knowingly and unknowingly false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers of their children at the national level?
 - 8. What sources of information do professionals use to obtain their opinions about false allegations of child sexual abuse that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes?

Chapter IV

Results

In this chapter demographic information is presented as well as the analyses of responses to questions regarding professionals' perceptions of allegations of child sexual abuse that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes.

Return Response Rate

Of the 346 professionals who were surveyed, 120 (34.7%) returned the questionnaires. Judges had the highest response rate (44%), followed by psychologists (33.3%), and attorneys (27.2%). Of the 120 returned questionnaires, 48 (40%) were from judges, 41 (34.2%) were from psychologists, and 31 (25.8%) were from attorneys. These figures are comparable to those of other mail surveys (Dillman, 1986).

Demographics of Participants

With regard to gender, 44 (36.7%) of the total participants were female and 76 (63.3%) were male. Gender frequencies and percentages for the three groups were; judges 9 (18.8%) females and 39 (81.2%) males, psychologists 20 (48.8%) females and 21 (51.2%) males, and attorneys 15 (48.4%) females and 16 (51.6%) males. Gender distributions across groups are presented in Figure 1.

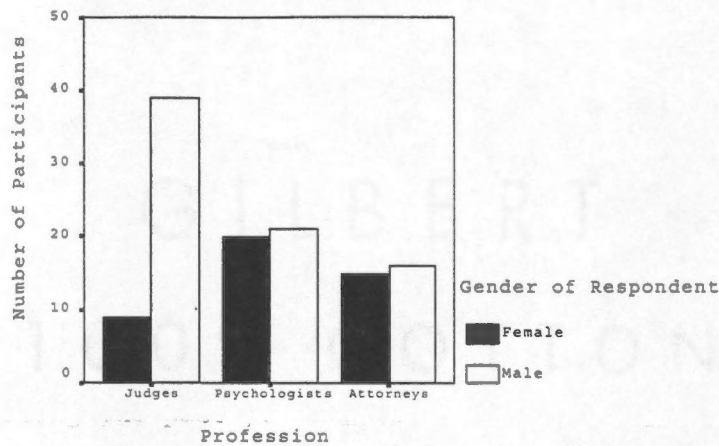


Figure 1. Distribution of Gender by Profession

The ages of the participants ranged from under 30 years to over 50 years. The majority of females (53.5%) were 40-49 years old while the majority of males were over 50 (60.6%). The majority of judges (62.5%) were over 50 years old. Nearly all of the psychologists fell into two age groups, 40 - 49 years (47.5%) and over 50 years (42.5%); so did attorneys who were 30 - 39 years (32.3%) and 40 - 49 years (38.7%). Age distributions across groups are presented in Figure 2.

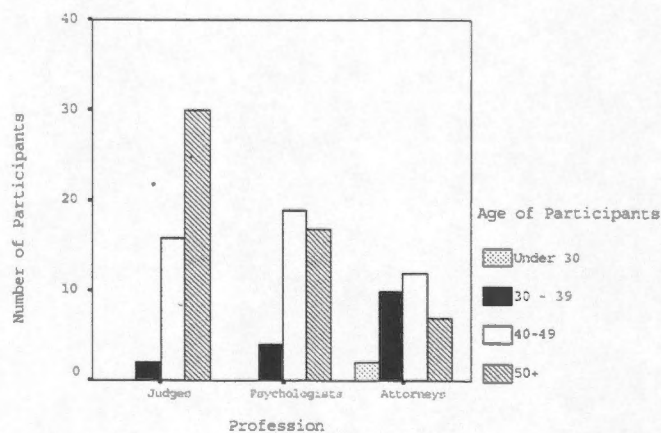


Figure 2. Distribution of Age by Profession

Regarding years of experience, 65.2% of the judges, 51.9% of the psychologists, and 53.3% of the attorneys had eleven or more years of experience. The distribution of years of experience by profession is presented in Figure 3.

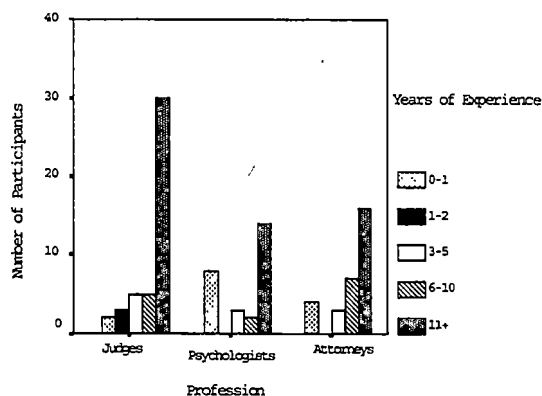


Figure 3. Distribution of Years of Experience by Profession

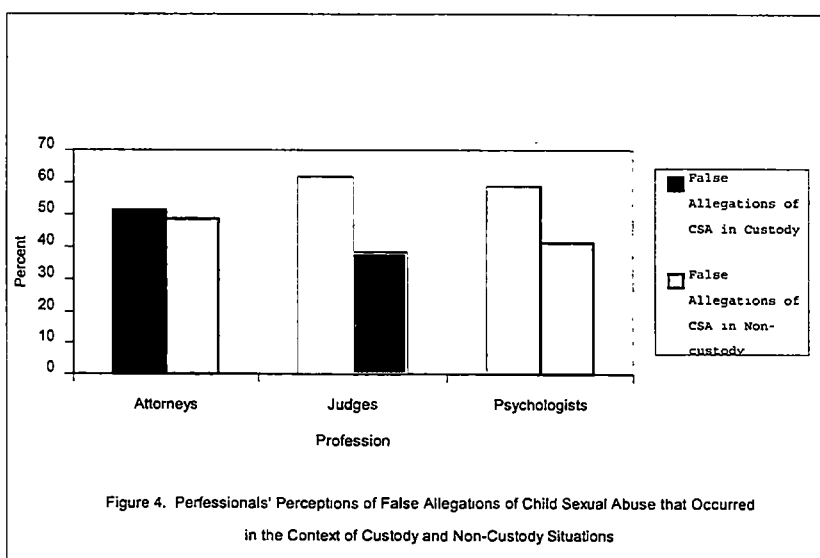
Descriptive Analysis of the False Allegations Question by Profession

Based on self-reports, judges adjudicated 3,324 cases of child sexual abuse and 3,825 cases that involved custody/visitation disputes. A total of 339 cases (8.9%) of the custody/visitation cases involved allegations of child sexual abuse. Approximately 350 (4.9%) of the total cases (cases of child sexual abuse allegations and cases of custody/visitation disputes) involved false allegations. Of the 350 child sexual abuse allegations that judges believed were false, 38.3% (134) did not involve custody/visitation disputes; 61.7% (216) did.

Based on self-reports, psychologists evaluated 468 cases of child sexual abuse and 712 cases of custody/visitation disputes. A total of 41 cases (5.8%) of custody/visitation disputes also involved allegations of child sexual abuse. Psychologists believed that 50 (4.2%) of the total cases (cases that included allegations of child

sexual abuse and cases that involved child sexual abuse allegations in the context of custody/visitation disputes) involved false allegations. Of the 50 cases of false allegations of child sexual abuse, 19 cases (41.3%) did not involve custody/visitation disputes while 31 cases (58.7%) did.

Based on self-report, attorneys litigated 953 cases of child sexual abuse and 2,337 cases that involved custody/visitation disputes. A total of 120 (5.1%) of the custody/visitation disputes included allegations of child sexual abuse. Attorneys believed that 3.37% (111) of the total cases (cases of child sexual abuse allegations and cases of custody/visitation disputes) included false allegations. Of the 111 cases that included false allegations of child sexual abuse, 51.3% (57 cases) occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes and 48.6% (54 cases) did not. Figure 4 presents the percentages of false allegations cases professionals adjudicated, litigated, or evaluated that included custody/visitation disputes and those that did not.



A chi-square test was conducted on professional status and number of false allegations of child sexual abuse in both custody/visitation and non-custody/visitation contexts to give a preliminary examination of the equivalence of the three professional groups. A significant difference was found [$\chi^2(2, N = 511) = 5.79, p < .05$] indicating that attorneys were less likely to indicate false allegations of child sexual abuse during custody/visitation than both judges and psychologists.

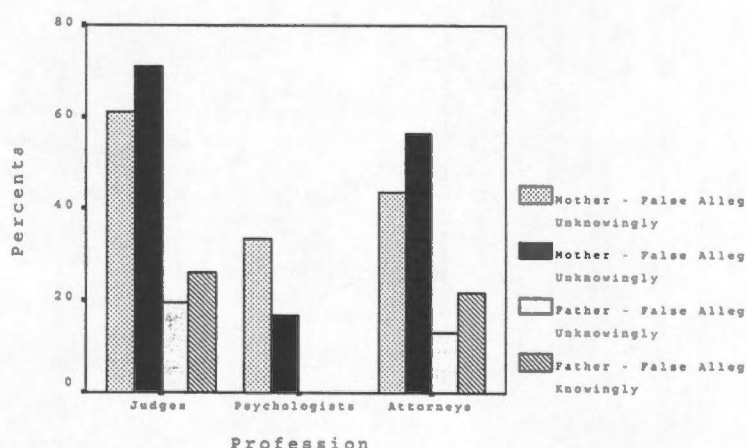


Figure 5. Percentages of Professionals' Perceptions' of Mothers and Fathers who Knowingly and Unknowingly Made False Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse that Occurred in the Context of Custody/Visitation Disputes

The descriptive data reveal a slight difference in attorneys' perceptions' of whether false allegations occur more in the context of custody/visitation disputes compared to other situations. That is, attorneys believe that false allegations of child sexual abuse occur in custody/visitation disputes only 2.7% more often than in non-custody/visitation disputes. This is in large contrast to the findings for psychologists (17.4%) and judges (23.4%).

One-Way ANOVA's and Tukey Post Hoc Tests

Due to the small number of psychologists who completed the whole questionnaire, there was concern that the sample was not large enough to meet the criteria for the ANOVA. The analysis of variance test requires a minimum of twenty subjects per cell, a number that obviously was not met with the psychologist group. Therefore, non-parametric equivalents of ANOVA that do not require the assumption of large cell sizes were used to check against the ANOVA findings. Using the SPSS-PC format for Mann-Whitney non-parametric tests, no differences between the results were found between the parametric and non-parametric analyses. Therefore, ANOVA's were used to analyze differences between the group means because the strength of this test is better than the Mann-Whitney test.

A series of one-way ANOVA's were used to examine differences between several of the mean variables. If significant effects were noted in any of the ANOVA's, Tukey Post Hoc tests were conducted to determine where the significant mean differences occurred among the groups. Tukey Post Hoc tests provide a stringent and efficient way of determining these effects.

To answer the following questions, *"How many cases of custody/visitation disputes have professionals adjudicated, evaluated or litigated in the past year?"* and *"How many during their career?"* data were analyzed with an ANOVA and Tukey Post Hoc test. The number of custody/visitation cases that professionals adjudicated, evaluated, or litigated during their career and during the past year were analyzed in the first analysis of variance tests (ANOVA). The results indicated a

significant difference among the groups regarding the number of cases, both during careers [$F(2, 117) = 46.84, p < .05$] and during the past year [$F(2, 117) = 49.11, p < .05$]. These results are presented in Table 1. The Tukey Post Hoc Test, using a 95% confidence level ($p < .05$), revealed that judges and attorneys participated in significantly more cases than psychologists, both during their career ($p=.001$) and throughout the past year ($p=.001$). Also, judges participated in significantly more cases than attorneys during the past year ($p=.006$)... The Tukey Post Hoc Test findings are presented in Table 2.

To answer the following questions, *"How many cases of child sexual abuse allegations have professionals adjudicated, evaluated or litigated in the past year?"* and *"How many during their career?"* data

Table 1.
ANOVA of Custody/Visitation Cases Participants Evaluated,
Litigated, or Adjudicated During their Career and in the
Past Year

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Custody/Visitation Cases During Career	Between Groups	192.07	2	96.03	46.84	.001
	Within Groups	239.90	117	2.05		
	Total	431.97	119			
Custody/Visitation Cases During Past Year	Between Groups	183.43	2	91.72	49.11	.001
	Within Groups	218.49	117	1.87		
	Total	401.93	119			

Table 2.
Tukey Post Hoc Test on Custody/Visitation Cases
Participants Evaluated, Litigated, or Adjudicated During
Their Career and in the Past Year

Dependent Variable	(I) Profession	(J) Profession	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Custody/Visitation Cases During Career	Judges	Psychologists	2.77	.31	.001	2.05	3.50
		Attorneys	.30	.33	.636	-.48	1.08
	Psychologists	Judges	-2.77	.31	.001	-3.50	-2.05
		Attorneys	-2.47	.34	.001	-3.28	-1.66
	Attorneys	Judges	-.30	.33	.636	-1.08	.48
		Psychologists	2.47	.34	.001	1.66	3.28
Custody/Visitation Cases During Past Year	Judges	Psychologists	2.86	.29	.001	2.17	3.55
		Attorneys	.99	.32	.006	.24	1.74
	Psychologists	Judges	-2.86	.29	.001	-3.55	-2.17
		Attorneys	-1.87	.33	.001	-2.64	-1.10
	Attorneys	Judges	-.99	.32	.006	-1.74	-.24
		Psychologists	1.87	.33	.001	1.10	2.64

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

were analyzed with an ANOVA and Tukey Post Hoc Test. ANOVA's on child sexual abuse cases during a career and during the past year resulted in no significant differences for careers [$F(2, 96) = 2.59, p=.080$, n.s.]. However, there was a significant difference among the groups regarding child sexual abuse cases that were litigated, adjudicated, or evaluated during the past year [$F(2, 98) = 10.87, p<.05$]. The Tukey Post Hoc test showed that judges participated in significantly more cases that involved allegations of child sexual abuse than psychologists ($p=.001$) and attorneys ($p=.019$). These findings are presented in Tables 3 and 4 respectively.

Table 3.
ANOVA on Child Sexual Abuse Cases Professionals Evaluated,
Litigated, or Adjudicated in the Past Year and During their
Career

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Child Sexual Abuse Cases in Past Year	Between Groups	477.48	2	238.74	10.87	.001
	Within Groups	2153.21	98	21.97		
	Total	2630.69	100			
Child Sexual Abuses Cases During Career	Between Groups	58968.34	2	29484.17	2.59	.080
	Within Groups	1092036.16	96	11375.38		
	Total	1151004.51	98			

Table 4.
Tukey Post Hoc Tests on Child Sexual Abuse Cases that
Professionals
Evaluated, Litigated, or Adjudicated in the Past Year and
During their Career

Dependent Variable	(I) Profession	(J) Profession	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Child Sexual Abuse Cases in Past Year	Judges	Psychologists	5.17	1.14	.001	2.45	7.89
		Attorneys	3.07	1.12	.019	.41	5.72
	Psychologists	Judges	-5.17	1.14	.001	-7.89	-2.45
		Attorneys	-2.10	1.25	.219	-5.09	.88
	Attorneys	Judges	-3.07	1.12	.019	-5.72	-.41
		Psychologists	2.10	1.25	.219	-.88	5.09
Child Sexual Abuse Cases During Career	Judges	Psychologists	55.87	26.27	.090	-6.68	118.41
		Attorneys	39.83	25.67	.272	-21.28	100.95
	Psychologists	Judges	-55.87	26.27	.090	-118.41	6.68
		Attorneys	-16.04	29.05	.846	-85.19	53.12
	Attorneys	Judges	-39.83	25.67	.272	-100.95	21.28
		Psychologists	16.04	29.05	.846	-53.12	85.19

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

To answer the following question, "*How many years of experience do professionals have regarding child custody/visitation disputes that also involved allegations of child sexual abuse?*" data were analyzed with an ANOVA. An ANOVA was performed on the years of experience of professionals regarding the number of child custody/visitation disputes in which they participated that also involved allegations of child sexual abuse. No significance differences were found among the groups [$F(2, 100) = 1.84, p = .165, n.s.$].

To answer the following question, "*How many cases of child sexual abuse allegations that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes have professionals adjudicated, evaluated, or litigated?*" the data were analyzed with an ANOVA and Tukey Post Hoc test. When cases involving child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes were analyzed, a significant difference was found among the perceptions of the groups [$F(2, 86) = 3.34, p < .05$]. The Tukey Post Hoc test revealed that judges perceived that they adjudicated significantly more cases of child sexual abuse that involved custody/visitation disputes than psychologists perceived they evaluated ($p = .03$): No significant differences were found for attorneys. These findings are depicted in Table 5 and Table 6 respectively.

To answer the following question, "*How many cases of false allegations of child sexual abuse have professionals adjudicated, evaluated, or litigated?*" data were analyzed with ANOVA's. False allegations of child sexual abuse also were examined. Judges reported 350 (4.9%), attorneys reported 111 (3.3%), and psychologists reported 50 (4.2%) total cases that involved false allegations of child sexual

Table 5. ANOVA on Child Sexual Abuse Cases that Occurred in the Context of Custody/Visitation Disputes that were Evaluated, Litigated, or Adjudicated by Professionals

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	540.00	2	270.00	3.34	.040
Within Groups	6953.01	86	80.85		
Total	7493.01	88			

Table 6. Tukey Post Hoc Test on Child Sexual Abuse Cases that Occurred in the Context of Custody/Visitation Disputes that were Evaluated, Litigated, or Adjudicated by Professionals

(I) Profession	(J) Profession	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Judges	Psychologists	6.02	2.36	.033	.40	11.64
	Attorneys	2.88	2.29	.422	-2.58	8.35
Psychologists	Judges	-6.02	2.36	.033	-11.64	-.40
	Attorneys	-3.14	2.65	.467	-9.47	3.19
Attorneys	Judges	-2.88	2.29	.422	-8.35	2.58
	Psychologists	3.14	2.65	.467	-3.19	9.47

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

abuse. These findings are based on cases that included custody/visitation disputes. The ANOVA results were not significant [$F(2, 59) = 2.40, p = .099, n.s.$]. The relevant findings are presented in Table 7.

To answer the following question, *"How many cases of false allegations of child sexual abuse occurred outside the context of custody/visitation disputes? How many occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes?"* the data were analyzed with ANOVA's and Tukey Post Hoc test. An analysis of variance test on false allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred outside the context of custody/visitation disputes was not significant among the three groups [$F(2, 75) = 1.88, p = .160$]. However, a significant difference was found for the number of cases of false allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes [$F(2, 66) = 3.50, p < .05$]. These findings are presented in Table 8. The Tukey Post Hoc test revealed that judges adjudicated more custody/visitation cases in which they believed that false allegations of child sexual abuse occurred than attorneys, but the difference just missed meeting the criterion for significance ($p = .059$).

To answer the following question, *"Do professionals who are involved in custody/visitation disputes believe that mothers are more likely to intentionally or unintentionally false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers than fathers are against mothers?"* the data were analyzed with ANOVA's. Regarding professionals' beliefs about false allegations made by mothers and fathers, no significant differences among the groups were found. This included mothers who, in the opinions of professionals, made intentional [$F(2, 66) = 1.97, p = .148, n.s.$] and unintentional [$F(2, 66) = 1.45, p = .243, n.s.$] allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of

Table 7. ANOVA on False Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse That Occurred in Custody/Visitation Disputes and Situations That Did Not Involve Custody/Visitation Disputes

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	422.04	2	211.02	2.40	.099
Within Groups	5181.65	59	87.83		
Total	5603.69	61			

Table 8. ANOVA on False Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse That Occurred and Did Not Occur in the Context of Custody/Visitation Disputes that were Evaluated, Litigated, or Adjudicated by Professionals

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
False Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse Not involved in Custody/Visitation Disputes	Between Groups	50.40	2	25.20	1.88	.160
	Within Groups	1007.25	75	13.43		
	Total	1057.65	77			
False Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse that Involved Custody/Visitation	Between Groups	289.64	2	144.82	3.50	.036
	Within Groups	2731.00	66	41.38		
	Total	3020.64	68			

custody/visitation disputes, as well as fathers who intentionally [$F(2, 58) = 1.37, p = .262, n.s.$] and unintentionally [$F(2, 60) = 1.15, p = .324, n.s.$] made such allegations.

To answer the following question, *"Do professionals who are involved in custody/visitation disputes believe that allegations of child sexual abuse are more likely to occur in this context than other contexts that do not involve such disputes?"* the data were analyzed with ANOVA's. Professionals' perceptions of whether mothers who were involved in custody/visitation disputes are more likely to make false allegations of child sexual abuse than mothers who are not involved in custody/visitation disputes also resulted in no significant differences [$F(2, 67) = 1.83, p = .168, n.s.$].

To answer the following question, *"To what extent have professionals' beliefs about false allegations influenced final conclusions and recommendations made regarding custody/visitation arrangements?"* the data were analyzed with ANOVA's and Tukey Post Hoc tests. Participants were asked to what extent their beliefs that false allegations of child sexual abuse might have influenced their professional practices. The ANOVA was significant [$F(2, 66) = 3.44, p < .05$]. The Tukey Post Hoc test revealed that attorneys' believed their professional practices were significantly more influenced ("very much") than psychologists when they felt allegations of child sexual abuse were false ($p < .05$). Attorneys were not more influenced by beliefs about false allegations than judges, however. The relevant findings are presented in Tables 9, and 10, and Figure 6.

To answer the following question, *"In the professionals' opinion, what percentage of mothers who are involved in custody/visitation disputes make false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers*

of their children within the state of Tennessee?" data were analyzed with ANOVA's and Tukey Post Hoc tests. Professionals were asked to select a percentage range for the state of Tennessee, based on their experience of mothers that knowingly (intentionally) and unknowingly (unintentionally) made false allegations of child sexual abuse against their children's fathers during custody/visitation disputes. Although no significant differences were found among the groups regarding mothers who knowingly made this type of allegation [$F(2, 67) = 1.81, p = .171, n.s.$], there was a significant difference among the groups regarding mothers who unknowingly make such allegations [$F(2, 62) = 3.62, p < .05$]. Further analysis with the Tukey Post Hoc test revealed that attorneys were more likely than judges to believe that mothers unknowingly made false allegations of child sexual abuse against their children's fathers during custody/visitation disputes ($p = .046$). The ANOVA and Post Hoc findings are presented in Tables 11 and 12.

To answer the following question, *"In the professionals' opinion, what percentage of mothers who are involved in custody/visitation disputes make false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers of their children at the national level?"* the data were analyzed with ANOVA's. Professionals' opinions about the national incidence of mothers who knowingly and unknowingly make false allegations against their children's fathers during custody/visitation disputes also were examined. No significant differences were found among professionals' perceptions for either mothers who unknowingly [$F(2, 56) = .85, p = .434, n.s.$] or knowingly [$F(2, 60) = .87, p = .425, n.s.$] make such allegations.

Table 9. ANOVA on Professionals Beliefs About the Influence of False Allegations on Case Outcome

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12.56	2	6.28	3.44	.038
Within Groups	120.43	66	1.83		
Total	132.99	68			

Table 10. Tukey Post Hoc on Professionals Beliefs About the Influence of Allegations on Case Outcome

(I) Profession	(J) Profession	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Judges	Psychologists	1.11	.48	.063	-4.66	2.27	
	Attorneys	-.19	.36	.854	-1.06	.67	
Psychologists	Judges	-1.11	.48	.063	-2.27	4.66	
	Attorneys	-1.30	.51	.035	-2.53	-7.75	
Attorneys	Judges	.19	.36	.854	-.67	1.06	
	Psychologists	1.30	.51	.035	7.75	2.53	

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

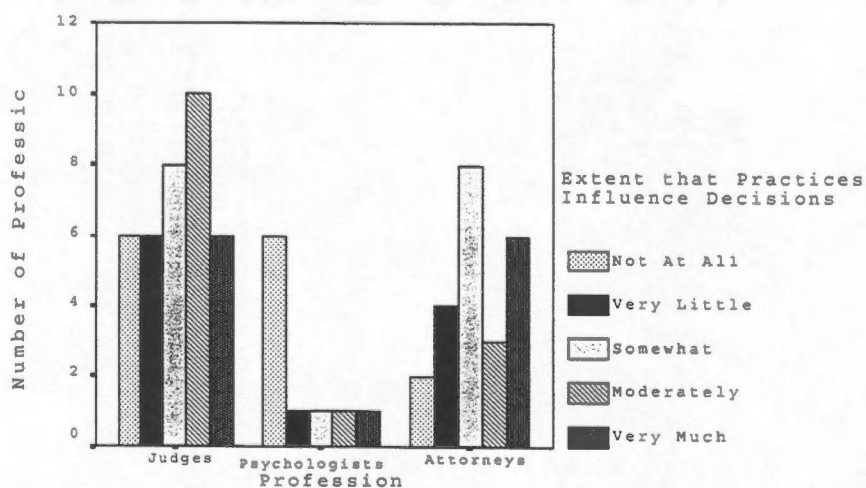


Figure 6. The Extent that Professionals' Practices are Influenced by Beliefs that Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse are False

Table 11. ANOVA on Professionals' Beliefs About Mothers Who Knowingly and Unknowingly Make False Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse Against Fathers in the Context of Custody/Visitation Disputes

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Mothers Who Knowingly Make False Allegations of CSA against Child's Fathers During Custody/Visitation Disputes	Between Groups	4.45	2	2.22	1.45	.171
	Within Groups	82.20	67	1.23		
	Total	86.64	69			
Mothers Who Unknowingly Make False Allegations of CSA against a Child's Father during Custody/Visitation Disputes	Between Groups	6.21	2	3.11	3.62	.033
	Within Groups	53.23	62	.86		
	Total	59.45	64			

Table 12. Tukey Post Hoc Tests on Professionals' Beliefs About Mothers Who Knowingly and Unknowingly Make False Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse Against Fathers in the Context of Custody/Visitation Disputes

Dependent Variable	Profession	(J) Profession	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Mothers Who Knowingly Making False Allegations of CSA against Child's Father During a Custody/ Visitation Dispute	Judges	Psychologists	.43	.38	.494	-.48	1.35
		Attorneys	-.33	.30	.511	-1.04	.38
	Psychologists	Judges	-.43	.38	.494	-1.35	.48
		Attorneys	-.76	.41	.153	-1.74	.21
	Attorneys	Judges	.33	.30	.511	-.38	1.04
		Psychologists	.76	.41	.153	-.21	1.74
Mothers Who Unknowingly Making False Allegations of CSA against Child's Father during a Custody/ Visitation Dispute	Judges	Psychologists	.12	.33	.937	-.69	.92
		Attorneys	-.62*	.26	.046	-1.23	-8.79
	Psychologists	Judges	-.12	.33	.937	-.92	.69
		Attorneys	-.74	.35	.102	-1.59	.11
	Attorneys	Judges	.62*	.26	.046	8.79	1.23
		Psychologists	.74	.35	.102	-.11	1.59

To answer the following question, "*What sources of information do professionals use to obtain their opinions about false allegations of child sexual abuse that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes?*" the data were analyzed with ANOVA's and Tukey Post Hoc tests. Professionals were asked to indicate the sources of their opinions about false allegations of child sexual abuse that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes. Sources included word of mouth, experience with families, experience with professionals in the same field, experience with professionals from related fields, articles that appear in the print and broadcast media, articles published in research journals, workshops attended, and other kinds of experiences. Originally, professionals' were asked to rank the sources of information, 1 (highest) through 8 (lowest), according to the degree they had utilized the sources.

The ANOVA reached significant results among the following categories: word of mouth [$F(2, 72) = 11.90, p < .05$], experience with professionals from the same field [$F(2, 72) = 4.70, p < .05$], and workshops attended [$F(2, 72) = 3.38, p < .05$]. A Tukey Post Hoc test was performed to determine where the differences among groups were located. Psychologists ($p = .002$) and attorneys ($p = .001$) were significantly more likely than judges to base their opinions on word of mouth. Regarding experience with professionals from the same field, again, psychologists ($p = .042$) and attorneys ($p = .041$) were more likely than judges to base their views on this source. When the Tukey Post Hoc test was applied to the workshops attended data, no significance difference was found among the groups. However, the difference for psychologists approached significance ($p = .065, n.s.$). The ANOVA and Post Hoc findings are presented in Tables 13 and 14. Percentages for

the individual sources of information on which professional's base their views of false allegations of child sexual abuse are presented in Figures 7 through 14.

Table 13. ANOVA on the Sources of Information on Which Professionals Base Their Views of False Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Word of Mouth	Between Groups	4.42	2	2.21	11.90	.001
	Within Groups	13.37	72	.19		
	Total	17.79	74			
My Experience with Families	Between Groups	.87	2	.43	1.98	.146
	Within Groups	15.80	72	.22		
	Total	16.67	74			
My Experience with Professionals from my own Field	Between Groups	2.16	2	1.08	4.70	.012
	Within Groups	16.56	72	.23		
	Total	18.72	74			
My Experience with Professionals From Related Fields	Between Groups	.52	2	.26	1.06	.352
	Within Groups	17.67	72	.25		
	Total	18.19	74			
Articles Read in the Print or Broadcast Media	Between Groups	1.11	2	.56	2.43	.095
	Within Groups	16.44	72	.23		
	Total	17.55	74			
Articles Read in Research Journals	Between Groups	1.11	2	.55	2.51	.089
	Within Groups	15.88	72	.22		
	Total	16.99	74			
Workshops Attended	Between Groups	1.48	2	.74	3.38	.040
	Within Groups	15.80	72	.22		
	Total	17.28	74			
Some other kind of experience	Between Groups	.69	2	.35	1.48	.235
	Within Groups	16.86	72	.23		
	Total	17.55	74			

Table 14. Post Hoc Test on the Sources of Information on Which Professionals Base Their Views of False Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse

Dependent Variable	(I) Profession	(J) Profession	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Word of Mouth	Judges	Psychologists	-.51	.14	.002	-.85	-.17
		Attorneys	-.47	.11	.001	-.74	-.20
	Psychologists	Judges	.51	.14	.002	.17	.85
		Attorneys	4.17	.15	.960	-.32	.41
	Attorneys	Judges	.47	.11	.001	.20	.74
		Psychologists	-4.17	.15	.960	-.41	.32
My Experience w/ Families	Judges	Psychologists	-.19	.16	.456	-.56	.18
		Attorneys	-.23	.12	.154	-.52	.633
	Psychologists	Judges	.19	.16	.456	-.18	.56
		Attorneys	-4.17	.17	.966	-.44	.35
	Attorneys	Judges	.23	.12	.154	-.633	.52
		Psychologists	4.17	.17	.966	-.35	.44
My Experience w/ Professionals from my Field	Judges	Psychologists	-.39	.16	.042	-.77	-1.22
		Attorneys	-.31	.12	.041	-.61	-9.96
	Psychologists	Judges	.39	.16	.042	1.22	.77
		Attorneys	8.33	.17	.876	-.32	.49
	Attorneys	Judges	.31	.12	.041	9.96	.61
		Psychologists	-8.33	.17	.876	-.49	.32
My Experience w/ Professionals From Related Fields	Judges	Psychologists	-.17	.16	.567	-.56	.22
		Attorneys	-.17	.13	.402	-.47	.14
	Psychologists	Judges	.17	.16	.567	-.22	.56
		Attorneys	.00	.18	1.000	-.42	.42
	Attorneys	Judges	.17	.13	.402	-.14	.47
		Psychologists	.00	.18	1.000	-.42	.42
Articles Read in the Print or Broadcast Media	Judges	Psychologists	-.24	.16	.277	-.62	.13
		Attorneys	-.24	.12	.128	-.54	5.31
	Psychologists	Judges	.24	.16	.277	-.13	.62
		Attorneys	.00	.16	1.000	-.40	.40
	Attorneys	Judges	.24	.12	.128	-5.31	.54
		Psychologists	.00	.17	1.000	-.40	.40
Articles Read in Research Journals	Judges	Psychologists	-.27	.16	.199	-.64	.10
		Attorneys	-.23	.12	.156	-.52	6.41
	Psychologists	Judges	.27	.16	.199	-.10	.64
		Attorneys	4.17	.17	.966	-.36	.44
	Attorneys	Judges	.23	.12	.156	-6.40	.52
		Psychologists	-4.17	.17	.966	-.44	.36
Workshops Attended	Judges	Psychologists	-.35	.16	.065	-.72	1.75
		Attorneys	-.23	.12	.154	-.52	6.33
	Psychologists	Judges	.35	.16	.065	-1.75	.72
		Attorneys	.13	.17	.732	-.27	.52
	Attorneys	Judges	.23	.12	.154	-6.33	.52
		Psychologists	-.13	.17	.732	-.52	.27
Some other kind of experience	Judges	Psychologists	.22	.16	.365	-.16	.60
		Attorneys	-7.37	.13	.827	-.37	.23
	Psychologists	Judges	-.22	.16	.365	-.60	.16
		Attorneys	-.29	.17	.210	-.70	.12
	Attorneys	Judges	7.37	.13	.827	-.23	.37
		Psychologists	.29	.17	.210	-.12	.70

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

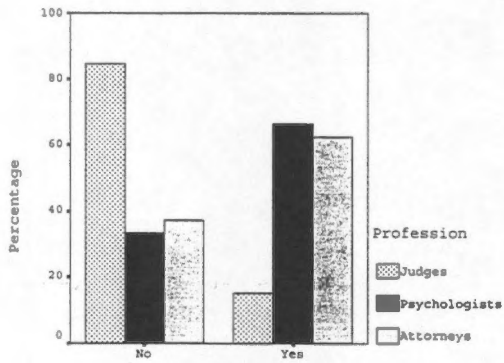


Figure 7. Word of Mouth

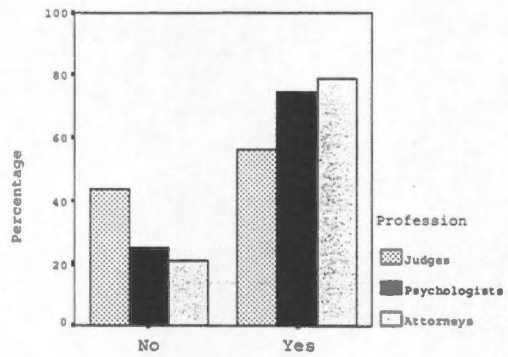


Figure 8. Experience with Families

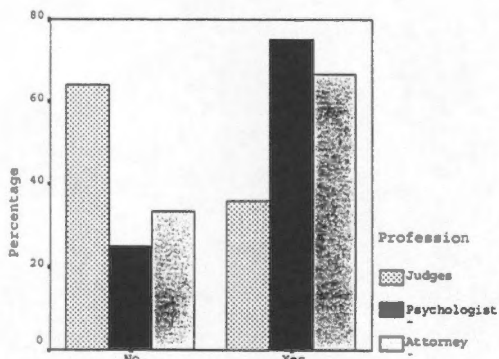


Figure 9. Experiences with Individuals from the Same Field

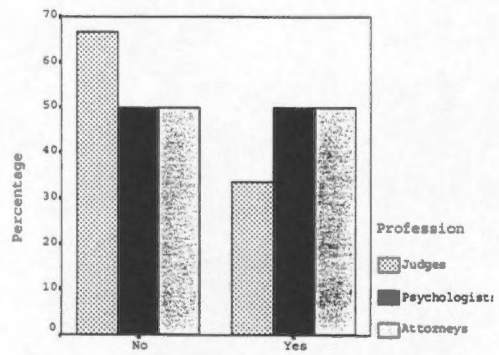


Figure 10. Experience with Others From a Related Field

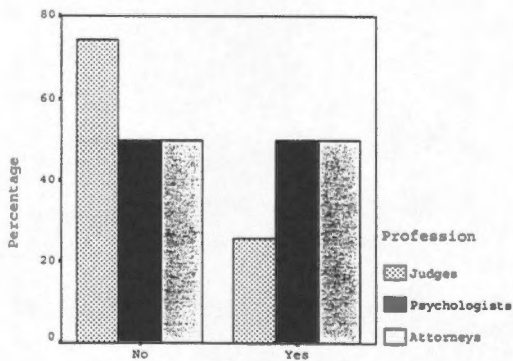


Figure 11. Print & Broadcast Media

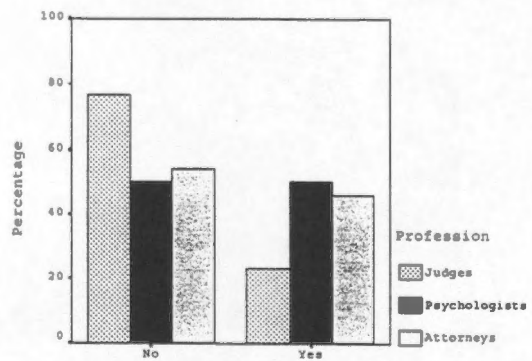


Figure 12. Research Journals

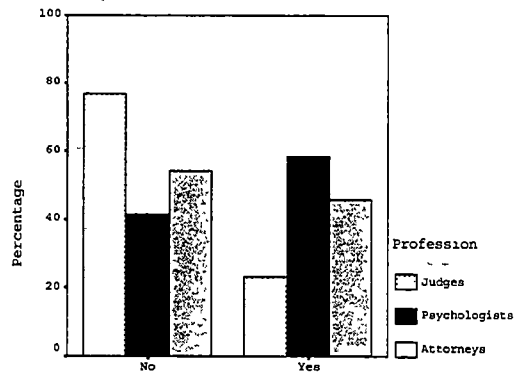


Figure 13. Workshops

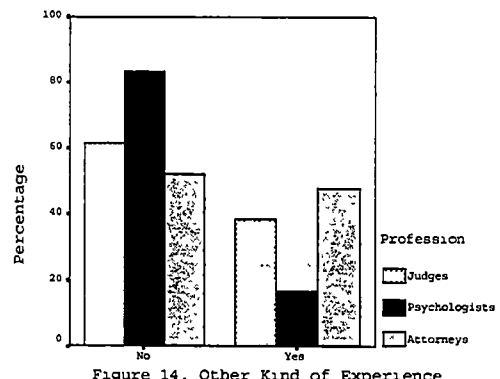


Figure 14. Other Kind of Experience

Chapter V

Discussion

The results indicate that there were differences among the professionals who participated in the present study. However, the majority of those differences were experiential in nature and included the number of cases that were evaluated, litigated, or adjudicated that included false allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes.

The results showed that the groups consisted of experienced, older professionals. Very few young or inexperienced professionals' participated in this study. The majority of judges were over 50 years old, nearly all psychologists were forty years old or older, and the majority of attorneys were 30 - 39 years old or older. Over half of the professionals' in each group had over eleven years of experience and the number of cases of child sexual abuse and child custody/visitation cases they adjudicated, litigated, or evaluated ranged from totals of 7,150 for judges, 3,290 for attorneys, and 1,180 for psychologists. Although the experience of professionals' has not been reported in previous studies, it is very important to consider, particularly as it relates to evolving views regarding allegations of child sexual abuse that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes and other contexts as well.

The results showed that judges adjudicated significantly more custody/visitation cases than attorneys litigated during the year prior to completing the questionnaire. Also, both judges and attorneys participated in more cases during the past year compared to psychologists who evaluated cases. Judges also adjudicated significantly more cases that involved allegations of child sexual abuse than attorneys or psychologists. Regarding cases that involved child sexual abuse allegations that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes, judges adjudicated significantly more cases than psychologists evaluated. All of these findings are not surprising because family law judges and family practice attorneys were specifically selected for the study. Both groups specialize in legal issues and matters related to the divorce process. Psychologists were selected from the field of clinical psychology. Very few clinical psychologists specialize in custody/visitation evaluations, and those that do cannot possibly evaluate the kind of numbers of families that are seen by judges and attorneys. This helps to explain not only the group differences on the measure of experiences, but also the lower rate of returns of questionnaires completed by psychologists.

Descriptive analysis of the data regarding false allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes demonstrated that 38.3% of cases seen by judges included false allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes, 58.7% of cases seen by psychologists, and 51.3% of cases seen by attorneys there were no significant differences found among professionals. Although there appeared to be a significant difference in this category between attorneys and judges when the ANOVA was performed, the Post Hoc test was not significant ($p=.059$). This

was probably due to the low number of psychologists who were included in the sample. Regardless, a significance level of .059 is very close to the .05 level of acceptance and suggests again what the custody/visitation data suggests namely that attorneys and judges are more experienced with these kinds of cases, including ones that involve possible false allegations, than psychologists. However, these numbers are suspect. Because of the wording of questionnaire items regarding false allegations of child sexual abuse, it is not certain that the relevant numbers were accurate. It appears that the professionals, in all three groups, responded to the item representing the total number of cases of false allegations that involved child sexual abuse as if it were the number of cases involving false allegations of child sexual abuse that did not occur in custody/visitation disputes. Fortunately, the item that determined the number of false allegations of child sexual abuse that did occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes was clear and undoubtedly provided an accurate representative of professionals' perceptions.

Nevertheless, the findings regarding false allegations of child sexual abuse were very similar to results reported by Everson, Boat, Bourg, and Robertson (1996) on professionals' perceptions of false allegations of child sexual abuse. Everson et al. (1996) found that professionals' (judges, law enforcement, mental health, and child protection) perceived false allegations of child sexual abuse at a percent of 8.6%, law enforcement at 9.0%, mental health workers at 5.5%, and child protective service workers at 4.7%. The findings from the present study are consistent with the Everson et al. (1996) findings regarding professionals' perceptions of false child sexual abuse allegations: judges 7.8%, attorneys 11.6%, and psychologists

10.7%, regardless of the context in which they occur. Although the psychologist's percent is almost twice that of the mental health group in the Everson et al. (1996) study, it could be a result of the small number of psychologists that completed the questionnaire. In any case, the judges in both studies are extremely similar, as are the attorneys and police officers. It would have been interesting to include the DCS caseworkers in the present study and compare those results to Everson et al. (1996).

Significant differences were not found among the following: professionals' perceptions of intent (knowingly/intentionally or unknowingly/unintentionally) of the person making the allegations, the gender of the parent (mother or father making a child sexual abuse allegation), or mothers who make allegations of child sexual abuse in the context of custody/visitation disputes compared to mothers who make allegations of child sexual abuse in other contexts. These findings contradict the case study literature (Green, 1986; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982; and Shuman, 1986) and also articles that have appeared in the print and broadcast media (Dullea, 1987, and Zweig, 1987). They are more consistent with the findings that appear in the empirical literature.

Thonnes and Tjaden (1990) found that false allegations of child sexual abuse are rare. Their results showed that allegations of child sexual abuse were more likely to occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes, but the proportion of false allegations of child sexual abuse was not larger than the proportion of allegations of child sexual abuse that did not occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes (range of 2%-8%). Although, 48% of mothers accused fathers of sexual abusing their children while fathers accused mothers

at a rate of 6%. This figure was much lower than might be expected if the media account and clinical case study reports were accurate. Paradise et al. (1988) also reported that only 32.3% of the mothers involved in custody/visitation disputes made allegations against fathers of child sexual abuse, 67.7%, on the other hand, did not. Hlady and Gunter (1990) also found that 17.6% of the allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes were founded. This percentage compared very favorably to the 15% figure for non-custody contexts. Moreover, 73% of allegations of child sexual abuse that did not occur in the context of a custody/visitation dispute were substantiated while 95% of the allegations of child sexual abuse in other contexts were substantiated as well. Anthony and Watkeys (1991) found that false allegations of child sexual abuse were made in 19 cases that involved custody/visitation disputes; 14 cases did not involve a custody/visitation dispute. These figures produced a false allegations range of 3%-6% which is similar to the 2%-8% range reported by Thonnes and Tjaden (1990). McGraw and Smith (1992) found that only 16.5% of allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred in the context of custody/visitation were false. An even lower percentage (.08%) was found for allegations of child sexual abuse that did not occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes. Thus, the empirical evidence that relates to false allegations of child sexual abuse that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes is fairly consistent and suggests that false allegations of child sexual abuse do not occur frequently or more often in the context of custody/visitation disputes than they do in other contexts.

One of the most interesting findings is that attorneys were more likely than judges or psychologists to believe that mothers unknowingly

make false allegations of child sexual abuse compared to fathers when they occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes. This is a new finding, one that has not been reported in previous research. Moreover, they have far more direct contact with parents than judges or psychologists and may "know" them better or perhaps have access to information that is confidential and protected by the attorney-client relationship. Also, in their roles of "advocate," it might be expected that they would give their clients the benefit of the doubt and accept the "good faith" argument more than psychologists and judges who are not advocates for parents so much as they are for children.

A significant difference was also found among the groups regarding "sources of information." Psychologists and attorneys were more likely to be influenced by word of mouth and other professionals from their own field compared to judges. These findings are interesting because judges indicated that their views are based largely on their experiences with families (56.4%), other professionals in their field (35.9%), professionals from other fields (33%), and other experiences (38.4). Attorney's views also appeared to be based on word of mouth (62.5%), experience with families (79.2%), and experiences with professionals from the same field (66.7%). The same was true for psychologist's (word of mouth, 66.7%, experience with families, 75%, and experience from professionals in the same field, 75%. However, psychologists relied on workshop sources (58.3%) quite a lot, too, compared to judges (23.1%) and attorneys (45.8%). Half of the psychologists (50%) and nearly half of the attorneys (45.8%) said they based their views, in part, on journal articles, but only 23.1% of judges indicated that they formed opinions about child sexual abuse allegations based on articles they had read in journals. Obviously,

personal experience with other professionals and families have had a greater influence on the participants in the present study than workshop or journal information, especially in the cases of judges. Perhaps this is why their beliefs about false allegations of child sexual abuse are more consistent with case study reports and media accounts than workshop or journal information. Still, almost half of the attorneys and psychologists said that workshops and journals were more important sources of information about the "false allegations" issue. In light of this finding, it is hard to explain why so many of them believed that false allegations occur much more often than the empirical literature indicates. Perhaps they are not attending the right workshops or reading relevant journal articles.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study included the small sample size, particularly the number of participants in the group of psychologists. Only a small portion of the group finished the questionnaire completely, which made analyzing the data difficult. ANOVA's were used to analyze the data; however, a non-parametric test, the Mann-Whitney, also was used to determine if significant differences might be a product of sampling bias rather than real differences per se. The non-parametric findings corresponded very well to the parametric findings, which added some credibility to the ANOVA results. Nevertheless, it would be important to replicate the study using a larger sample of psychologists. Also, the questionnaire has no reliability or validity data to support its use; the study was exploratory in nature and the first to assess professionals' perceptions of child sexual abuse allegations that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes.

An additional limitation was that caseworkers in the Department of Children Services were not allowed to participate in the study. The perceptions of child protective services workers are very important because the determinations they make about the truthfulness of child sexual abuse allegations often serve as the basis for decisions made in court. It is DCS caseworkers who bring to the attention of judges, often through testimony presented in court, whether an allegation is "founded" or "unfounded." Their methods of evaluation and experiences with families are usually different from the methods and experiences of psychologists and judges.

An additional limitation involved the wording of items on the questionnaire regarding false allegations of child sexual abuse. Although the intention was to obtain the total number of false allegations professionals had adjudicated, litigated, or evaluated, including both custody/visitation and non-custody/visitation cases, the participants were not clear about the way they should respond to the relevant item and seemed to respond as though the item called for the number of false allegations of child sexual abuse that occurred separate from custody/visitation disputes. However, the participants did respond correctly to the custody/visitation item, making it possible to calculate percentages and submit responses to the ANOVA and Tukey analyses. To make sure that any doubts about the data are removed, participants will be contacted by phone and asked to confirm or correct their responses. Also, the questionnaire will be revised in an attempt to clarify ambiguous items before it is used in any replication effort. In addition, more psychologists will be contacted to increase the number of participants, and DCS administrators will be

approached once again in an effort to include caseworkers in a future replication and extension of the present research.

Suggestions for Future Research

Some suggestions for future research include attempting to obtain a larger sample size, especially psychologists, if possible. It is hard to know how many psychologists in the state have the forensic experience that would make them eligible for participation, but an effort to contact all of the practicing clinicians in Tennessee may yield a possible answer. Perhaps a larger scale study, one that extended beyond Tennessee, would yield a larger number of psychologists and also permit regional comparisons of professionals' perceptions.

Caseworkers in the Department of Children's Services must be included in any future research. Their views and experiences are bound to be somewhat different from other professionals who are involved in custody/visitation disputes that include allegations of child sexual abuse. How to obtain permission from the State Director of DCS remains uncertain, but it may be possible to circumvent the problem somewhat by approaching DCS professionals in other states if caseworkers in Tennessee are not allowed to participate in future research.

Conclusion

Concerns have been expressed in previous research and the media about the growing incidence of false allegations of child sexual abuse that occur in the context of custody/visitation disputes (Benedek & Schetyky, 1985; Green, 1986; Shuman, 1986; Corwin, Berliner, Goodman, Goodwin, & White, 1987; Dullea, 1987; Zweig, 1987; Jones & Seig, 1988; and Gardner, 1992, 1994). An admittedly limited and methodologically

weak empirical literature suggests that false allegations of child sexual abuse are not occurring at high rates or any more often in custody/visitation disputes. Nevertheless, professionals who participated in the present research appear to believe that the problem is serious and much more prevalent than the empirical literature suggests. In fact, judges, psychologists, and attorneys in Tennessee who participate in the divorce litigation process may believe that the problem of false allegations is more serious than clinical case studies report and media accounts suggest. They do not appear, however, to believe mothers are more likely to make false allegations in custody/visitation disputes compared to other contexts, but they do believe the probability is quite high in both. The implications for mothers who make false allegations of child sexual abuse, regardless of the context, could be very serious in light of Thonnes and Tjaden's (1990) findings.

The results are interesting because they raise the question, "Where does the perception of epidemic rates of false allegations of child sexual abuse come from?" Certainly the print and broadcast media are partly responsible and some clinicians may be, too (Green, 1986; Gardner, 1992). However, the question of even greater interest is, "Why do professionals in Tennessee seem to believe that there is not a national or a local problem when the incidence of child sexual abuse allegations is considered, but do believe there is a serious problem about the incidence of false allegations? Unfortunately, the questionnaire was not designed to address possible reasons. Perhaps professionals in the present study are not aware of the empirical findings that relate to the false allegations question, but are aware of the more prevalent reports of child sexual abuse, absent context.

This possibility seems unlikely, given their years of experience, but the empirical literature is very small and inaccessible, really because it is published in several different journals that are not that well known and represent the interests of many professions. It is not likely, therefore, that judges, psychologists, and attorneys have read the relevant articles. Hopefully, future research will clarify some of these questions.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

1999

Professionals' Perceptions of Allegations
Of Child Sexual Abuse in the
Context of Custody/Visitation Disputes

Attorneys

Thank you
very much for your time
and cooperation in completing
this survey!

Child and Family Studies Department
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The University of Tennessee - Knoxville
Knoxville, TN 37996-1900

ATTORNEY'S QUESTIONNAIRE

DIRECTIONS: For questions that ask for a number of cases, we understand that you may not be able to recall exact numbers. Therefore, we are looking for BEST ESTIMATES. Place a checkmark (Π) on the line adjacent to the appropriate response except in areas where a numerical or written response is requested. It is understood that your responses will reflect only your opinion and therefore, are best estimates rather than actual fact.

1. What is your highest degree earned? BS _____ MS _____ PhD _____ JD _____
Other _____
2. What is your gender? Female _____ Male _____
3. What is your age? Under 30 _____ 30-39 _____ 40-49 _____ 50+ _____
4. Approximately how many custody/visitation cases have you handled during the course of your career?
0-25 _____ 25-50 _____ 50-75 _____ 75-100 _____ 100+ _____
5. Approximately how many custody/visitation cases have you handled during the past year?
0-5 _____ 5-10 _____ 10-15 _____ 15-20 _____ 20+ _____
6. How many years of experience have you had working with children and families and/or performing child custody evaluations in which allegations of child sexual abuse might have been made?
0-1 _____ 1-2 _____ 3-5 _____ 6-10 _____ 11+ _____
7. Approximately what is the number of child sexual abuse cases you have handled during the past year?
_____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
8. Approximately what is the number of child sexual abuse cases you have handled during the course of your career? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
9. Approximately how many of the cases cited in your response to #7 occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
10. Please explain what you believe is the definition of a "false" allegation of child sexual abuse as you would apply it in the context of a custody dispute.
11. Of the cases of child sexual abuse cited by you in response to item #7, approximately how many do you believe involved false allegations of child sexual abuse? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)

THE REMAINDER OF THE QUESTIONS INVOLVE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE ALLEGATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF CUSTODY/VISITATION DISPUTES AND REFER TO THE CASES CITED BY YOU IN RESPONSE TO ITEM #10.

12. In your opinion, approximately how many of the above cases (Item #11) involved false allegations of child sexual abuse? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
13. In your opinion, approximately how many of the cases cited in #12 do you believe involved **MOTHERS** who made allegations of fathers sexually abusing a child without knowing the allegations were untrue? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
14. In your opinion, approximately how many of the cases cited in #12 do you believe involved **MOTHERS** who intentionally made false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers of their children? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)

15. In your opinion, approximately how many of the cases cited in #12 do you believe involved **FATHERS** who made allegations of mothers sexually abusing a child without knowing the allegations were untrue? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
16. In your opinion, approximately how many of the cases cited in #12 do you believe involved **FATHERS** who intentionally made false allegations of child sexual abuse against mothers of their children? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
17. In your opinion, are mothers who are involved in custody/visitation disputes more likely to make false allegations against fathers of their children than mothers who make the same kind of allegations but are not involved in custody/visitation disputes? Yes _____ No _____
If yes, please estimate: 2 times _____ 3 times _____ 4 times _____ 5 times _____ 6 times _____ more than 6 times _____ more likely.
18. To what extent does the belief that an allegation is false influence the outcome of cases that you have handled?
- | Not At All | | Somewhat | | Very Much |
|------------|--|----------|--|-----------|
| 1 | | 3 | | 5 |

19. Please explain why you have the view expressed in the above question? Is it based, for example: on word of mouth; on experience that includes contacts with professionals from related fields; on articles that you have read in the print and broadcast media; articles you have read in research journals; workshops that you have attended; some other kind of experience; or some combination of these experiences? Please rank your responses 1-8.

_____ Word of mouth
 _____ My experience with families
 _____ My experience with professionals from my own field
 _____ My experience with professionals from related fields
 _____ Articles I've read in the print or broadcast media
 _____ Articles I've read in research journals
 _____ Workshops I've attended
 _____ Some other kind of experience. Please explain: _____

20. Based on your own experience, what percentage of mothers who are involved in custody/visitation disputes make false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers of their children?

<u>Knowingly</u>	<u>Unknowingly</u>
0 - 2% _____	0 - 2% _____
2 - 10% _____	2 - 10% _____
10 - 20% _____	10 - 20% _____
20 - 50% _____	20 - 50% _____
50 - 80% _____	50 - 80% _____
80 - 100% _____	80 - 100% _____

21. In your opinion, what is the national percentage of mothers who are involved in custody/visitation disputes make false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers of their children?

<u>Knowingly</u>	<u>Unknowingly</u>
0 - 2% _____	0 - 2% _____
2 - 10% _____	2 - 10% _____
10 - 20% _____	10 - 20% _____
20 - 50% _____	20 - 50% _____
50 - 80% _____	50 - 80% _____
80 - 100% _____	80 - 100% _____

PLEASE RETURN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE ENCLOSED STAMPED ENVELOPE.

1999

Professionals' Perceptions of Allegations
Of Child Sexual Abuse in the
Context of Custody/Visitation Disputes

Judges

Thank you
very much for your time
and cooperation in completing
this survey!

Child and Family Studies Department
(423) 974-6273

The University of Tennessee - Knoxville
Knoxville, TN 37996-1900

JUDGE'S QUESTIONNAIRE

DIRECTIONS: For questions that ask for a number of cases, we understand that you may not be able to recall exact numbers. Therefore, we are looking for BEST ESTIMATES. Place a checkmark (Π) on the line adjacent to the appropriate response except in areas where a numerical or written response is requested. It is understood that your responses will reflect only your opinion and therefore, are best estimates rather than actual fact.

1. What is your highest degree earned? BS _____ MS _____ PhD _____ JD _____ Other _____
2. In what field is this degree? _____
3. What is your gender? Female _____ Male _____
4. What is your age? Under 30 _____ 30-39 _____ 40-49 _____ 50+ _____
5. Approximately how many custody/visitation cases have you adjudicated during the course of your career?
0-25 _____ 25-50 _____ 50-75 _____ 75-100 _____ 100+ _____
6. Approximately how many custody/visitation cases have you adjudicated during the past year?
0-5 _____ 5-10 _____ 10-15 _____ 15-20 _____ 20+ _____
7. How many years of experience have you had working with children and families and/or performing child custody adjudications in which allegations of child sexual abuse might have been made?
0-1 _____ 1-2 _____ 3-5 _____ 6-10 _____ 11+ _____
8. Approximately what is the number of child sexual abuse cases you have adjudicated during the past year?
_____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
9. Approximately what is the number of child sexual abuse cases you have adjudicated during the course of your career? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
10. Approximately how many of the cases cited in your response to #8 occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
11. Please explain what you believe is the definition of a "false" allegation of child sexual abuse as you would apply it in the context of a custody/visitation dispute.
12. Of the above cases of child sexual abuse cited by you in response to item #8, approximately how many do you believe involved false allegations of child sexual abuse? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)

THE REMAINDER OF THE QUESTIONS INVOLVE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE ALLEGATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF CUSTODY/ VISITATION DISPUTES AND REFER TO THE CASES CITED BY YOU IN RESPONSE TO ITEM #11.

13. In your opinion, approximately how many of the above cases (Item #12) involved false allegations of child sexual abuse? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
14. In your opinion, approximately how many of the cases cited in #13 do you believe involved MOTHERS who made allegations of fathers sexually abusing a child without knowing the allegations were untrue? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
15. In your opinion, approximately how many of the cases cited in #13 do you believe involved MOTHERS who intentionally made false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers of their children? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
16. In your opinion, approximately how many of the cases cited in #13 do you believe involved FATHERS who made allegations of mothers sexually abusing a child without knowing the allegations were untrue? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
17. In your opinion, approximately how many of the cases cited in #13 do you believe involved FATHERS who intentionally made false allegations of child sexual abuse against mothers of their children? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
18. In your opinion, are mothers who are involved in custody/ visitation disputes more likely to make false allegations against their husbands than mothers who make the same kind of allegations but are not involved in custody/visitation disputes? Yes _____ No _____ If yes, please estimate: 2 times _____ 3 times _____ 4 times _____ 5 times _____ 6 times _____ more than 6 times _____ more likely.
19. To what extent does this belief that an allegation is false influence the outcome of cases that you have adjudicated?
Not At All _____ Somewhat _____ Very Much _____
1 2 3 4 5

20. Please explain why you have the view expressed in question #18? Is it based, for example: on word of mouth; on experience that includes contacts with professionals from related fields; on articles that you have read in the print and broadcast media; articles you have read in research journals; workshops that you have attended; some other kind of experience; or some combination of these experiences? Please rank your responses 1-7.

☐ Word of mouth
☐ My experience with families
☐ My experience with professionals from my own field
☐ My experience with professionals from related fields
☐ Articles I've read in the print or broadcast media
☐ Articles I've read in research journals
☐ Workshops I've attended
☐ Some other kind of experience. Please explain: _____

20. Based on your own experience of cases you have adjudicated, what percentage of mothers who are involved in custody/visitation disputes make false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers of their children?

Knowingly

Unknowingly

0 - 2% _____

0 - 2% _____

2 - 10% _____

2 - 10% _____

10 - 20% _____

10 - 20% _____

20 - 50% _____

20 - 50% _____

50 - 80% _____

50 - 80% _____

80 - 100% _____

80 - 100% _____

21. In your opinion, what is the national percentage of mothers who are involved in custody/visitation disputes make false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers of their children?

Knowingly

Unknowingly

0 - 2% _____

0 - 2% _____

2 - 10% _____

2 - 10% _____

10 - 20% _____

10 - 20% _____

20 - 50% _____

20 - 50% _____

50 - 80% _____

50 - 80% _____

80 - 100% _____

80 - 100% _____

PLEASE RETURN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE ENCLOSED STAMPED ENVELOPE.

1999

Professionals' Perceptions of Allegations
Of Child Sexual Abuse in the
Context of Custody/Visitation Disputes

Psychologists

Thank you
very much for your time
and cooperation in completing
this survey!

Child and Family Studies Department
(423) 974-6273

The University of Tennessee - Knoxville
Knoxville, TN 37996-1900

PSYCHOLOGIST'S QUESTIONNAIRE

DIRECTIONS: For questions that ask for a number of cases, we understand that you may not be able to recall exact numbers. Therefore, we are looking for BEST ESTIMATES. Place a checkmark (II) on the line adjacent to the appropriate response except in areas where a numerical or written response is requested. It is understood that your responses will reflect only your opinion and therefore, are best estimates rather than actual fact.

1. What is your highest degree earned? BS _____ MS _____ PhD _____ Other _____
2. In what field is this degree? _____
3. What is your gender? Female _____ Male _____
4. What is your age? Under 30 _____ 30-39 _____ 40-49 _____ 50+ _____
5. Approximately how many custody/visitation cases have you evaluated during the course of your career?
0-25 _____ 25-50 _____ 50-75 _____ 75-100 _____ 100+ _____
6. Approximately how many custody/visitation cases have you evaluated during the past year?
0-5 _____ 5-10 _____ 10-15 _____ 15-20 _____ 20+ _____
7. How many years of experience have you had working with children and families and/or performing child custody evaluations in which allegations of child sexual abuse might have been made?
0-1 _____ 1-2 _____ 3-5 _____ 6-10 _____ 11+ _____
8. Approximately what is the number of child sexual abuse cases you have evaluated during the past year? _____
(Please give a number, not a percent.)
9. Approximately what is the number of child sexual abuse cases you have evaluated during the course of your career? _____
(Please give a number, not a percent.)
10. Approximately how many of the cases cited in your response to #8 occurred in the context of custody/visitation disputes? _____
(Please give a number, not a percent.)
11. Please explain what you believe is the definition of a "false" allegation of child sexual abuse as you would apply it in the context of a custody/visitation dispute.

12. Of the cases of child sexual abuse cited by you in response to item #8, approximately how many do you believe involved false allegations of child sexual abuse? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)

THE REMAINDER OF THE QUESTIONS INVOLVE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE ALLEGATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF CUSTODY/VISITATION DISPUTES AND REFER TO THE CASES CITED BY YOU IN RESPONSE TO ITEM #11.

13. In your opinion, approximately how many cases have involved false allegations of child sexual abuse? _____
(Please give a number, not a percent.)
14. In your opinion, approximately how many of the cases cited in #13 do you believe involved MOTHERS who made allegations of fathers sexually abusing a child without knowing the allegations were untrue? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
15. In your opinion, approximately how many of the cases cited in #13 do you believe involved MOTHERS who intentionally made false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
16. In your opinion, approximately how many of the cases cited in #13 do you believe involved FATHERS who made allegations of fathers sexually abusing a child without knowing the allegations were untrue? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
17. In your opinion, approximately how many of the cases cited in #13 do you believe involved FATHERS who intentionally made false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.)
18. In your opinion, are mothers who are involved in custody/visitation disputes more likely to make false allegations of sexual abuse against the children's father than are mothers who make allegations of sexual abuse but are not involved in custody/visitation disputes? _____ (Please give a number, not a percent.) Yes _____ No _____
If yes, please estimate: 2 times___ 3 times___ 4 times___ 5 times___ 6 times___ more than 6 times___ more likely.
19. To what extent does this belief that an allegation is false influence the outcome of cases that you have evaluated?

Not At All

Somewhat

Very Much

20. Please explain why you have the view expressed in the above question? Is it based, for example: on word of mouth; on experience that includes contacts with professionals from related fields; on articles you have read in the print and broadcast media; articles you have read in research journals; workshops you have attended; some other kind of experience; or some combination of these experiences? Please rank your responses 1-7.

☐ Word of mouth
☐ My experience with families
☐ My experience with professionals from my own field
☐ My experience with professionals from related fields
☐ Articles I've read in the print or broadcast media
☐ Articles I've read in research journals
☐ Workshops I've attended
☐ Some other kind of experience. Please explain: _____

21. Based on your own experience, what percentage of mothers who are involved in custody/visitation disputes make false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers of their children?

<u>Knowingly</u>	<u>Unknowningly</u>
0 - 2% _____	0 - 2% _____
2 - 10% _____	2 - 10% _____
10 - 20% _____	10 - 20% _____
20 - 50% _____	20 - 50% _____
50 - 80% _____	50 - 80% _____
80 - 100% _____	80 - 100% _____

22. In your opinion, what is the national percentage of mothers who are involved in custody/visitation disputes make false allegations of child sexual abuse against fathers of their children?

<u>Knowingly</u>	<u>Unknowningly</u>
0 - 2% _____	0 - 2% _____
2 - 10% _____	2 - 10% _____
10 - 20% _____	10 - 20% _____
20 - 50% _____	20 - 50% _____
50 - 80% _____	50 - 80% _____
80 - 100% _____	80 - 100% _____

PLEASE RETURN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE ENCLOSED STAMPED ENVELOPE.

APPENDIX B

July 23, 1999

«FirstName» «LastName»
«Address1»
«Address2»
«City», «State» «PostalCode»

Dear «FirstName» «LastName»:

The attached questionnaire is part of a research project that we are conducting in the department of Child and Family Studies at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. This research focuses on the issue of allegations of child sexual abuse in the context of custody/visitation disputes in families involved in divorce or post-divorce proceedings. The purpose of this questionnaire is to learn about professionals' perceptions of this problem based on the evaluations they have conducted.

As an attorney you are no doubt aware of the increasing prevalence of child sexual abuse. Knowledge of the number and type of child sexual abuse cases that workers face in the field is important for gaining an understanding of the current scope of the problem.

If you have participated in litigations of a child who was reportedly sexually abused, please take a moment to complete the enclosed questionnaire. If not, we would be very grateful if you would complete questions 1-10 of the enclosed questionnaire and return to us by mail using the enclosed envelope. Benefits of this project may be to provide lawyers, judges, psychologists, CPS workers, and other professionals with information about the nature and extent of professionals' views regarding the incidence of false allegations of child sexual abuse.

You are one of several attorneys who is being asked to describe her or his experiences and views on this matter. Your name was drawn randomly from a list of attorneys within the state of Tennessee. In order that the results of the study truly represent the state of affairs within the field, it is important that each questionnaire be completed and returned in the enclosed envelope. If you decide not to participate in the evaluation, even if eligible, please take a moment to return the uncompleted questionnaire in the envelope provided.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality. The questionnaire has an identification number for mailing purposes only. This is so we may check your name off the mailing list when your questionnaire is returned. You will never be directly linked with the responses you provide. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may terminate your participation at any time without concern for any negative consequences. If we do not receive this questionnaire within two weeks of the mailing date, we will mail out an additional questionnaire and attempt to contact you.

We would greatly appreciate your help in completing and returning the enclosed questionnaire so that we can all benefit from the results of such a study in the hopes that it will provide more information on the scope of this problem. If you do return the questionnaire, we will be happy to send you a review article we recently completed which describes the literature relevant to this topic along with the results from the present study. If you choose to receive this information, please include your name and address on the form provided.

We would be happy to answer any questions you may have about the study. Please feel free to write, call (423) 974-5316, or send an email message to "mdwest@utk.edu". Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Myra D. West, B.S.
Graduate Student

Vey M. Nordquist, Ph.D.
Professor

July 23, 1999

«FirstName» «LastName»
«Address1»
«Address2»
«City», «State» «PostalCode»

Dear «FirstName» «LastName»:

The attached questionnaire is part of a research project that we are conducting in the department of Child and Family Studies at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. This research focuses on the issue of allegations of child sexual abuse in the context of custody/visitation disputes in families involved in divorce or post-divorce proceedings. The purpose of this questionnaire is to learn about professionals' perceptions of this problem based on the evaluations they have conducted.

As a judge you are no doubt aware of the increasing prevalence of child sexual abuse. Knowledge of the number and type of child sexual abuse cases that workers face in the field is important for gaining an understanding of the current scope of the problem.

If you have participated in adjudications of a child who was reportedly sexually abused, please take a moment to complete the enclosed questionnaire. If not, we would be very grateful if you would complete questions 1-6 of the enclosed questionnaire and return to us by mail using the enclosed envelope. Benefits of this project may be to provide lawyers, judges, psychologists, CPS workers, and other professionals with information about the nature and extent of professionals' views regarding the incidence of false allegations of child sexual abuse.

You are one of several judges who is being asked to describe her or his experiences and views on this matter. Your name was drawn randomly from a list of judges within the state of Tennessee. In order that the results of the study truly represent the state of affairs within the field, it is important that each questionnaire be completed and returned in the enclosed envelope. If you decide not to participate in the evaluation, even if eligible, please take a moment to return the uncompleted questionnaire in the envelope provided.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality. The questionnaire has an identification number for mailing purposes only. This is so we may check your name off the mailing list when your questionnaire is returned. You will never be directly linked with the responses you provide. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may terminate your participation at any time without concern for any negative consequences. If we do not receive this questionnaire within two weeks of the mailing date, we will mail out an additional questionnaire and attempt to contact you.

We would greatly appreciate your help in completing and returning the enclosed questionnaire so that we can all benefit from the results of such a study in the hopes that it will provide more information on the scope of this problem. If you do return the questionnaire, we will be happy to send you a review article we recently completed which describes the literature relevant to this topic along with the results from the present study. If you choose to receive this information, please include your name and address on the form provided.

We would be happy to answer any questions you may have about the study. Please feel free to write, call (423) 974-5316, or send an email message to "mdwest@utk.edu". Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Myra D. West, B.S.
Graduate Student

Vey M. Nordquist, Ph.D.
Professor

July 23, 1999

<FirstName> <LastName>
<Address1>
<Address2>
<City>, <State> <PostalCode>

Dear <FirstName> <LastName>:

The attached questionnaire is part of a research project that we are conducting in the department of Child and Family Studies at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. This research focuses on the issue of allegations of child sexual abuse in the context of custody/visitation disputes in families involved in divorce or post-divorce proceedings. The purpose of this questionnaire is to learn about professionals' perceptions of this problem based on the evaluations they have conducted.

As a psychologist you are no doubt aware of the increasing prevalence of child sexual abuse. Knowledge of the number and type of child sexual abuse cases that workers face in the field is important for gaining an understanding of the current scope of the problem.

If you have participated in evaluations of a child who was reportedly sexually abused, please take a moment to complete the enclosed questionnaire. If not, we would be very grateful if you would complete questions 1-12 of the enclosed questionnaire and return to us by mail using the enclosed envelope. Benefits of this project may be to provide lawyers, judges, psychologists, CPS workers, and other professionals with information about the nature and extent of professionals' views regarding the incidence of false allegations of child sexual abuse.

You are one of several psychologists who is being asked to describe her or his experiences and views on this matter. Your name was drawn randomly from a list of psychologists within the state of Tennessee. In order that the results of the study truly represent the state of affairs within the field, it is important that each questionnaire be completed and returned in the enclosed envelope. If you decide not to participate in the evaluation, even if eligible, please take a moment to return the uncompleted questionnaire in the envelope provided.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality. The questionnaire has an identification number for mailing purposes only. This is so we may check your name off the mailing list when your questionnaire is returned. You will never be directly linked with the responses you provide. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may terminate your participation at any time without concern for any negative consequences. If we do not receive this questionnaire within two weeks of the mailing date, we will mail out an additional questionnaire and attempt to contact you.

We would greatly appreciate your help in completing and returning the enclosed questionnaire so that we can all benefit from the results of such a study in the hopes that it will provide more information on the scope of this problem. If you do return the questionnaire, we will be happy to send you a review article we recently completed which describes the literature relevant to this topic along with the results from the present study. If you choose to receive this information, please include your name and address on the form provided.

We would be happy to answer any questions you may have about the study. Please feel free to write, call (423) 974-5316, or send an email message to "mdwest@utk.edu". Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Myra D. West, B.S.
Graduate Student

Vey M. Nordquist, Ph.D.
Professor

INFORMED CONSENT

Professionals' Perceptions of False Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse in the Context of
Custody/Visitation Disputes

The purpose of this study is to examine professionals' perceptions of the issue of allegations of child sexual abuse in the context of custody/visitation disputes in families involved in divorce or post-divorce proceedings based on the evaluations they have conducted. Please fill out the enclosed questionnaire and return it in our self-addressed, stamped envelope. The questionnaire consists of multiple choice and short answer items that ask for your opinions and estimates of cases you have evaluated involving the issue of allegations of child sexual abuse in the context of custody/visitation disputes. The enclosed questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

This project will benefit attorneys, judges, psychologists, CPS workers, and other professionals by providing information about the nature and extent of professionals' views regarding the incidence of false allegations of child sexual abuse. In addition, if you choose to complete and return the questionnaire, and provide your address, you will receive a recent review article completed by the Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigator that describes the literature relevant to this topic along with the results from the present study. Your participation is completely voluntary and are free to withdraw without penalty at any time during the study. There is minimal risk, if any at all, to participants.

Your identity will be kept confidential. Only the Principal and Co-Principal Investigators will have access to your questionnaire, which will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal Investigators' office. Data will be archived separate from consent forms or requests for information for three years upon which time they will be destroyed or returned to you. The data will be used for educational purposes, publications, and presentations, etc.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Dr. Vey M. Nordquist, Department of Child and Family Studies, 115 Jesse Harris Building, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996-1900, or call (423) 974-6269.

.....
I have read and understood the explanation of this study and agree to participate.

Name

Date

Signature

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

If you would like to receive literature relevant to the issue of child sexual abuse allegations in the context of custody/visitation disputes, as well as the resulting research findings, please provide the following information and a packet will be sent to you upon completion of the study.

PLEASE PRINT

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

VITA

Myra West was born in Taylor, Michigan on November 7, 1971. She attended public schools in the Taylor School District where she graduated from Harry S. Truman High School in 1989. She began working full-time during high school and continued to do so while she enrolled in night classes for the first five years of her educational career. As her parents retired to Tennessee, she decided to join them. She received her Associate Degree in 1994 from Cleveland State Community College. She enrolled at the University of Tennessee with a major in psychology and graduated in 1996. In the spring of 1999, she was accepted to the University of Denver's Clinical Psychology PsyD program in Denver, Colorado. She moved west that fall and has started the program.

She is currently working as a supervised visitation therapist for clients of Adams County social services in Colorado, who have pending neglect or abuse charges. She also works at an elementary school in Littleton, Colorado, doing group and individual therapy with children in Kindergarten through 5th grade.