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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING:
WHEN GIVEN THE OPTION,
DO YOUTH CHOOSE TO REPORT?

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY

BY

MICHELLE L. VOS

CHICAGO, IL

AUGUST 2014

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Reality is what people are allowed to see, not what actually exists.

Andrew Vachss

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ABSTRACT

Christensen and Prout (2002) explain, “The task of the social scientist is to work for the right of people to have a voice and to be heard. In the case of children, ‘age’ is perhaps one of the most dominant factors used to discriminate against children being heard and listened to” (p. 483). And in the case of children experiencing neglect or abuse, the opportunity for them to be heard is even more limited. This project analyzes data from the National Runway Safeline - one place where children’s voice can be heard. NRS, established in 1971, offers confidential and anonymous services to youth and families nationwide. NRS serves as the federally designated communication system for runaway and homeless youth, providing services to adolescents, families, and those who care about them through toll-free hotline and online services, 1-800-RUNAWAY and www.1800RUNAWAY.org.

Like medical providers and teachers, NRS volunteers and staff are mandated reporters. When they hear of child abuse and have three pieces of information – knowledge of abuse, who the abuser is, and a location (and a telephone number is a location) – the law mandates that they make a report, so that an investigation into the allegation can begin, and possible action to protect the child or prosecute the offender can result. At NRS, because there is no caller ID, it is up to the youth whether he or she would like to disclose their location. 1-800-RUNAWAY is the only place known to this author, where a child can talk about abuse without worrying that it will be reported

without their consent. This project investigates when children who mention abuse in their call choose to have it reported.

This study uses data from NRS call logs from January 2006 to December 2012. From the logs of all callers, this project extracted data on youth callers under the age of 18, who mention experiencing abuse (as opposed to adults or friends of youth calling about abuse). This resulted in a sample of 9,195 cases. Compared with other studies of child abuse reporting, this sample is unique in being a national sample of youth in crisis when they call, rather than being a sample of youth who have already come to official attention, or a sample of adults retrospectively discussing their childhood experiences.

Of those 9,195 youth callers, 5% choose to have their abuse reported. A logistic regression model found that the probabilities of reporting (compared to not reporting) ranged from .01 to .11. The probability of reporting increases from age 11 to 13, and then declines to age 17. The probability of reporting (compared to not reporting) is greater when abuse is physical or sexual (compared to emotional/verbal or neglect). Female callers are more likely to report than males, and the probability of reporting is slightly greater when the abuser is a parent, compared to non-parent. The highest probability of reporting is .11, for female callers, age 13, who mention physical or sexual abuse by a parent. The lowest probability of reporting is .01, for male callers, age 17, mentioning emotional or verbal abuse or neglect by a non-parent.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The data from the National Runaway Safeline (NRS) presented in this study is a national representation of youth who are experiencing crisis at the time of reporting, not retrospectively. The sample is unique in that it isn't made up of individuals sought out for the purposes of asking how they feel about the topic, nor are they necessarily individuals who have come to anyone's (i.e., official) attention. This study expands upon the current research utilizing the rich body of NRS data, and hopefully will encourage others to leverage the opportunity to analyze trends and better understand the population of America's runaway, homeless and at-risk youth.

Child Protective Services (CPS) in the United States

In Ancient Rome, it was legal for a father to disown children, sell them into slavery and kill them (Adkins 1994:376). In Colonial America, children were flogged to instill discipline (Daro 1988). There was no concept of state-sponsored child protective services. This idea began to develop in the United States in the late 19th century. In reviewing this history, Myers (2008), identified three eras in child protection. The first era, extending from colonial times to 1875, Myers refers to as "the era before organized child protection" (p. 449).

It wasn't until 1874 that an organization, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (SPCC), was established to protect children. When New York church worker tried to get help for a badly abused foster child, they found they could only turn to the

Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). As a result, the first chapter for a similar society for children was founded (Giovannoni and Becerra 1979, Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz 1980, Zigler and Hall, 2000), "which may speak volumes about priorities" (Trost 1998:189).

The second era, marked by the establishment of SPCC, “witnessed the creation and growth of organized child protection through nongovernmental child protection societies” (Myers 2008:449).

Child abuse wasn't considered a major national social problem, though, until 100 years later. Through use of x-ray technology, physicians started to notice patterns of healed bone fractures in children that could only be the result of repeated blows (Caffey 1946). While evidence of child abuse could be seen, it wasn't until C. Henry Kempe published "The Battered Child Syndrome” that the issue received public attention (Kempe 1962). Dr. Kempe and other physicians assisted the Children’s Bureau, an agency of the federal government, in developing child abuse reporting legislation, which in turn prompted each of the fifty states to enact legislation in order to receive the federal money. “By the end of the 1960s, each state had legislated a child abuse reporting law” (Gelles 1996:174).

After the rediscovery of child abuse in the 1960s, the model of child maltreatment was a single-factor model – psychopathology or mental illness was why parents abused their children. One of the first social scientist to challenge the mental-illness explanation of abuse, David Gil, found convincing evidence that social factors, such as poverty, unemployment, social isolation, and marital conflict, were strongly related to the risk of abuse. Social scientists began to find only a small portion of child abusers – about 10

percent – could be diagnosed as either suffering from mental illness or psychopathology. Social factors were thought to account for the other 90 percent (Gelles 1996:81).

Using 1962 as marking the beginning, Myers (2008), refers to this third era in child protection as "government sponsored child protective services" (Myers 2008:449). Not only was 1962 significant because of the publication of Kempe's "Battered Child" article, but also because of the federal government's amendment to the Social Security act which, "for the first time, identified Child Protective Services as part of all public child welfare" (De Francis 1967:16). The amendment required states to pledge that by July 1, 1975, they would have "child welfare services available statewide" (Myers 2008: 455). By 1967, all states had reporting laws. Child abuse laws differ by states, including who is mandated to report. Since enacted, these laws continue to change and be modified.

As of November 2013 (states frequently amend laws), with the exception of New Jersey and Wyoming who do not specify certain professions as mandated to report, but rather require all persons to, most states designate individuals as mandated reporters which includes social workers, teachers, principals, other school personnel, physicians, nurses, other health-care workers, counselors, therapists, other mental health professionals, child care providers, medical examiners or coroners, and law enforcement officers. Twelve states mandate commercial film or photograph processors report. In addition,

> Substance abuse counselors are required to report in 14 States, and probation or parole officers are mandatory reporters in 17 States. Directors, employees, and volunteers at entities that provide organized activities for children, such as camps, day camps, youth centers, and recreation centers, are required to report in 12 States. Seven States and the District of Columbia include domestic violence workers on the list of mandated reporters, while seven States and the District of Columbia include animal control or humane officers. Court-appointed special advocates are mandatory reporters in 10 States. Members of the clergy now are required to report in 27

States. (Child Welfare Gateway 2014:2)

All states have a child abuse reporting number. "Social policy separated suspicion/recognition, confirmation/substantiation, and intervention/treatment, so that recognition is performed by one individual who reports to an official agency, whose investigation then determines whether to process further into the system" (Webster, O'Toole and O'Toole 2005:1282). "Once an allegation (called a referral) of abuse and neglect is received by a CPS agency, it is either screened in for further attention by CPS or it is screened out. A screened in referral is called a report" (*Child Maltreatment 2012* 2013:x).

The Children's Bureau, a program of the Administration for Children & Families, which is a division of the Department of Health and Human Services, publishes annual reports based on data provided by the states to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data Systems (NCANDS). Tables 1 through 8 take statistics from these reports for the same years represented in this study, to both provide a snapshot of national incidence, but also for the purpose of comparison. Table 1 shows that after a call is made to the state hotline to make an allegation, 60-62% are screened in.

Table 1. Child Maltreatment Allegations

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Referrals	3,400,000	3,400,000	3,300,000	3,300,000	3,300,000	3,200,000	3,300,000
Number of children	6,300,000	6,200,000	5,900,000	6,000,000	6,000,000	5,800,000	6,000,000
States reporting	46	47	47	47	44	~	~
Percent screened in	62.0%	60.8%	60.7%	61.9%	62.5%	61.7%	61.7%
Percent screened out	38.0%	39.2%	39.3%	38.1%	37.5%	38.3%	38.3%

Source: *Child Maltreatment* reports 2006-2012

According to the *Child Maltreatment 2012* (2013) report, "reasons for screening out a referral vary by state policy, but may include one or more of the following:

- did not meet the state's intake standard

- did not concern child abuse and neglect
- did not contain enough information for a CPS response to occur
- response by another agency was deemed more appropriate
- children in the referral were the responsibility of another agency or jurisdiction (e.g., military installation or Tribe)
- children in the referral were older than 18 years." (P. 5)

Table 2 provides a breakdown of who reporters are. Professionals typically account for 56-58%, non-professionals for 18-28%, and other for 13-24%.

> Professional report sources are persons who encountered the child as part of their occupation, such as child daycare providers, educators, legal and law enforcement personnel, and medical personnel. State laws require most professionals to notify CPS agencies of suspected maltreatment. Nonprofessional report sources are persons who did not have a relationship with the child based on their occupation, such as friends, relatives, and neighbors. State laws vary as to whether nonprofessionals are required to report suspected abuse and neglect. Unclassified includes anonymous, "other," and unknown report sources. States use the code of "other" for any report source that does not have an NCANDS-designated code. According to comments provided by the states, the "other" report source may include religious leader, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families staff, landlord, tribal official or member, camp counselor, and private agency staff. (*Child Maltreatment 2012* 2013:7)

Table 2. Reporters of Child Maltreatment

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Professional	58.7%	57.6%	58.6%	58.3%	57.9%	57.7%	56.7%
Non-professional	18.0%	18.2%	27.7%	28.1%	28.1%	27.3%	28.2%
Other	23.3%	24.3%	13.7%	13.6%	13.9%	15.0%	15.2%

Source: *Child Maltreatment* reports 2006-2012

The reports further break down each of the reporter categories. Professionals include child daycare providers, education personnel, foster care providers, legal and law enforcement personnel, medical personnel, mental health personnel, and social services personnel. Nonprofessionals include alleged perpetrators, alleged victims, friends and neighbors, other relatives, and parents. Unclassified include anonymous, other, and unknown. Of particular interest regarding this study are the "alleged victims," youth who

are self-reporting abuse. Table 3 presents the number and percentage of allegations self-reported by youth. Over the years, there has been a decline in this number, from 11,298 in 2006 to 7,636 in 2012. There is no discussion found in the *Child Maltreatment* publications regarding these self-reports, nor as to why there may be a decline.

Table 3. Youth Self-reports

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Number	7,636	7,911	8,112	10285	10937	10,498	11,298
Percent	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%	0.6%

Source: *Child Maltreatment* reports 2006-2012

Tables 4 through 8 present information on only the 60-62% of referrals that are screened in, not on those for which an allegation was made. According to *Child Maltreatment 2012* (2013), "an investigation response results in a determination (also known as a disposition) about the alleged child maltreatment" (p. 16). A disposition of **substantiated** "concludes that the allegation of maltreatment or risk of maltreatment was supported or founded by state law or policy" (p. 16). A disposition of **indicated** "concludes that maltreatment could not be substantiated under state law or policy, but there was reason to suspect that at least one child may have been maltreated or was at-risk of maltreatment. This is applicable only to states that distinguish between substantiated and indicated dispositions" (p. 16). Finally, **alternative response victim** is "the provision of a response other than an investigation that determines that a child was a victim of maltreatment. Three states report children in this category, and it refers to cases where the CPS agency or the courts required the family to receive services" (p. 17).

Table 4. Results of Allegations

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Substantiated	17.7%	18.5%	22.0%	22.1%	22.3%	24.1%	25.2%
Indicated	0.9%	1.0%	1.3%	1.3%	0.9%	0.6%	3.0%
Alternative response victim	0.5%	0.5%	9.7%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%
Non-victim	80.9%	80.0%	67.0%	76.1%	76.3%	74.8%	71.4%

Source: *Child Maltreatment* reports 2006-2012

Dispositions that make up the **non-victim** category include unsubstantiated, intentionally false, closed with no finding, uncertain, inconclusive, unable to be determined and alternative response non-victim.

From 2006-2012, the number of substantiated dispositions declines. Indicated stays the same, as does alternative response victim except for 2010. There doesn't seem to be an explanation for what appears to be an anomaly.

After the investigation of the 60-62% of referrals that are screened in, 71-80% are deemed non-victims. Tables 5 through 8 present information on the 20-29% of cases involving a victim. The percentage of victims under the age of 12 increases from 2006 to 2012, while both age categories of 12-15 and 16-17 year olds declines. The gender breakdown is quite consistent across the years, with females accounting for 51% of the victims and males accounting for 49%.

Table 5. Age of Victims

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Under 12	76.9%	76.6%	76.1%	75.5%	75.1%	74.7%	74.6%
12-15	16.8%	17.1%	17.3%	17.8%	18.1%	18.5%	19.3%
16-17	5.8%	6.1%	6.2%	6.3%	6.3%	6.1%	6.1%
unknown	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.8%	~

Source: *Child Maltreatment* reports 2006-2012

Table 6. Gender of Victims

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Female	50.9%	51.1%	51.2%	51.1%	51.3%	51.5%	51.5%
Male	48.7%	48.6%	48.5%	48.2%	48.3%	48.2%	48.2%
Unknown	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.7%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%

Source: *Child Maltreatment* reports 2006-2012

Table 7 presents type of abuse. All years include the three types of neglect, physical and sexual. 2006 includes a fourth category of "emotional maltreatment," 2007-2009 include a fourth category of "psychological maltreatment," and 2010-2012 include a fourth category of "other." Every report explains the percentages add up to more than 100%. Because a victim may have suffered from more than one type of maltreatment, one case may have multiple maltreatment types counted. The data for Tables 5 and 6 however are made of up unique counts.

The breakdown by type of abuse of victims is generally the same for the years 2008-2012, with neglect accounting for three-fourths. There is no explanation in the reports as to why 2006 and 2007 are different.

Table 7. Type of Abuse of Victims

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Neglect	78.3%	78.5%	78.3%	78.3%	71.1%	59.0%	64.1%
Physical	18.3%	17.6%	17.6%	17.8%	16.1%	10.8%	16.0%
Sexual	9.3%	9.1%	9.2%	9.5%	9.1%	4.2%	10.0%

Source: *Child Maltreatment* reports 2006-2012

Table 8 shows it is a parent, rather than a non-parent, who is the abuser 80% of the time. The reports provide a breakdown of both categories parent and non-parent. Parent is broken down to distinguish if the abuser is the mother or father, both parents, only one, or a parent along with an “other.” The non-parent category includes child daycare provider, foster parent, friend and neighbor, legal guardian, other professional, partner of

parent, relative, group home and residential facility staff.

Table 8. Who the Abuser is of Victims

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Parent	81.5%	81.2%	81.3%	80.9%	80.1%	79.9%	79.9%
Non-parent	18.5%	18.8%	18.7%	19.1%	19.9%	20.1%	20.1%

Source: *Child Maltreatment* reports 2006-2012

There is a substantial amount of literature regarding mandated abuse reporting. A large portion is about characteristics of mandated reporters, analysis of the decision to report, perceived deterrents to making an abuse report, and barriers to reporting, such as type of school governance, or betrayal of confidence in a therapist/client relationship (Brown and Strozier 2004; Crenshaw, Crenshaw and Lichtenberg 1995; Webster, O'Toole, O'Toole and Lucal, 1999; Zellman 1990).

In 1990, Zellman published results of a national study of mandated reporters and reasons they fail to report. The reason most often cited was the mandated reporter's belief that the evidence was insufficient to warrant a report, such as the injury not being serious enough. The second reason for not reporting is the belief that the mandated reporter could do more to help the child and/or family than child protective services. Third, the belief that reporting would be bad for them as the mandated reporter – too much time involved, fear of being sued for false reports, and feeling uncomfortable in future dealings with the family. Fourth, professionals were unsure how to report or didn't want to breach confidentiality.

Within this body of research are studies analyzing the problem of underreporting and overreporting, often referred to as the Besharov-Finkelhor debate. Both call for reform of the reporting process. Mandated reporting increases the number of cases brought to the attention of authorities, a problem according to Besharov (2005). Besharov (1998)

argues overreporting puts a strain on scarce resources, "leaving child protective workers with less time to respond to children in real danger" (p. 121) and that reporting abuse doesn't guarantee a child's safety. While Besharov recognizes underreporting as a problem, his solution is by addressing ovverreporting and reforming mandatory reporting laws, the underreporting issue will be resolved. Finkelhor, conversely, focuses on underreporting as the bigger issue, and suggests rather than restricting mandatory reporting, there should be more flexibility, perhaps with "registered reporters," qualified and trained professionals "to take more responsibility for the investigation, monitoring, and treatment of abusive families who might not otherwise get much attention from CPS" (Finkelhor and Zellman 1991:338).

Taking the Finkelhor position, Gelles concludes "high rates of 'unsubstantiated' cases are a necessary price for protecting children" (Gelles 1996:43). He explains:

> Besharov, a lawyer and resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research and one of the leading critics of the child welfare system, directs much of his attention to the large number of unsubstantiated, or what he calls 'unfounded,' reports of abuse and neglect...the flaw in [his]...logic is that [he] seems to equate unsubstantiated or unfounded with invalid and false. Just because a report of abuse cannot be determined valid does not mean it is a false report. The dividing line between a substantiated and unsubstantiated case is hardly as clear or definite as those who claim abuse is overreported imply. (P. 41)

Frequently, study of child abuse is conducted with adults retrospectively reporting maltreatment. Sample sizes are typically small, are often convenience samples (college students at the university where the writers are employed) or from clinical settings (Alaggia 2004; Bensley, Van Eenwyk, and Simmons 2000, 2003; Bernstein et al. 1994; Fergusson and Lynskey 1997; Finkelhor 1979; Miller-Perrina, Perrina and Kocur 2009; Straus et al. 1998). Youth voice is often missing from the conversation.

There is, however, as Lynn Nybell (2013) states in *Locating 'Youth Voice:' Considering the Context of Speaking in Foster Car*e:

> An increasingly significant international movement [that] supports giving 'voice' to children and youth regarding the circumstances of their own lives. The concept of 'children's voices' is at the core of a burgeoning interdisciplinary field of childhood studies that investigates the contested and shifting notions of children and youth across time and place. (P. 1227)

Her study, though, falls under the category of research with adults, as she interviews college students who were former foster youth. Nybell calls for "…listen[ing] in new ways and across a range of settings" (p. 1234). Others, too, speak to the need to hear the voice of the child (James and James 2004; Nybell, Shook and Finn 2009; Prout and James 1997; Pufall and Unsworth 2004). Beth Cross (2009) urges to "listen long and listen wide" (p. 351). While Christensen and Prout (2002) explain, "the task of the social scientist is to work for the right of people to have a voice and to be heard. In the case of children, 'age' is perhaps one of the most dominant factors used to discriminate against children being heard and listened to" (p. 483).

Advocacy of giving youth voice comes with warnings, cautions and concerns. One criticism of such endeavors is that efforts are merely token and used to authentic adult views or serve adult agendas. Similarly, Spyrou (2011) heeds that children's voice are "always constrained by our assumptions about them, our particular use of language, the institutional context in which we operate and the overall ideological and discursive climates which prevail" (p. 125).

"Much child-focused research has concerned itself with the problems associated with accessing children and/or their voice" (Spyrou 2011:152). These problems include children not wanting to participate, people not wanting children to participate "because of

their perceived vulnerability or incapacity," and "actualizing children's voices" (p. 153). Concerns about accessing youth voice include interviews feeling like interrogations and the importance of listening to what isn't said in addition to what is. It seems, though, the same could be just as true and just as likely to occur when the subjects of a research study are adults.

"The more you try to see the world from the child's point of view and the safer you make him feel, the better his behavior is likely to be and the more likely you are to find ways of further improving it" (Perry 2006:245). The author both exemplifies and encourages others to pay attention and listen to children.

The data from NRS presented in this study is a national representation of youth who are experiencing crisis at the time of reporting, not retrospectively. The sample is unique in that it isn't made up of individuals sought out for the purposes of asking how they feel about the topic, nor are they necessarily individuals who have come to anyone's (i.e., official) attention. This study expands upon the current research utilizing the rich body of NRS data, and hopefully will encourage others to leverage the opportunity to analyze trends and better understand the population of America's runaway, homeless and at-risk youth.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODS AND ANALYSIS

National Runaway Safeline

NRS, established in 1971, offers confidential and anonymous services to youth and families nationwide. NRS serves as the federally designated communication system for runaway and homeless youth, providing services to adolescents, families, and those who care about them through toll-free hotline and online services, 1-800-RUNAWAY and www.1800RUNAWAY.org.

NRS is a volunteer-run agency. There is a difference between having a volunteer program and being volunteer-run. When an agency has a volunteer program, it is typically staff who provide the service, while a volunteer's role is to support the staff fulfilling tasks such as filing and data entry. Being volunteer-run means that it is volunteers who provide the services with staff existing to support volunteers. Volunteers, after an extensive screening, application and training process, take calls. On average, there are 125-150 active volunteers at any one time. The term NRS uses for those who answer calls is "liner."

No matter who calls, or what the call is about, the service NRS provides on every call is crisis intervention. Other services provided in addition to, or within the model, depending on the call includes referrals, a message relay, conference calls, and Home Free, which in partnership with Greyhound Lines, Inc., reunites runaway youth with their fami-

lies through a free bus ticket home.

Like medical providers and teachers, NRS liners (volunteers and staff) are mandated reporters. What this means, is, when liners hear of abuse and have three pieces of information – knowledge of abuse, who the abuser is, and a location (and a telephone number is a location) – the law mandates a report be made. Because 1-800-RUNAWAY is confidential and anonymous, it is up to the caller whether or not they would like to report. 1-800-RUNAWAY is the only place known to this author, where a child can talk about abuse without worrying that it will be reported. If a student tells a teacher of abuse, the teacher knows where they youth lives, as do medical providers, resulting in all three pieces of information and thus the mandated report. At NRS, because there is no caller ID, it is up to the youth whether he or she would like to disclose their location, or keep it confidential.

Honesty is a tenet of NRS' philosophy and is very much a part of any call pertaining to abuse. As soon as a liner hears of abuse, the first two pieces of information mandating a report are often provided, "my dad hits me." Knowledge of abuse and knowledge of who the abuser is have both been provided. Liners are trained to be honest with the caller and let them know NRS is mandated to report abuse when three pieces of information are obtained. Telling the caller this, and what the three pieces are, is done not to shut down the conversation, but to make the caller feel safe and empowered to self-determine. Knowing what NRS needs to file an abuse report, or knowing what the caller needs to keep from NRS in order to not have an abuse report filed, allows the caller control of the conversation and what occurs. The other tenants of the philosophy include remaining non-judgmental and non-directive.

The information provided on calls, and entered into logs (and thus available) is self-reported. Meaning, the number of callers who speak about their abuse is based on what information callers provide. It is entirely possible (and extremely likely) that there are callers who were being abused, but did not choose to identify the abuse as an issue on the call. In the call logs, there is a list of 83 possible issues. This is not used as a checklist. Whatever the caller discusses on the call is what liners mark as "issues identified." Meaning, a caller could very well be depressed, but depression isn't marked as an issue, because it wasn't identified on that call, by the caller. On the flip side, callers may mention abuse when it may not be happening (for example, in the case of prank calls). NRS liners are trained to treat each call as though it is real. Some calls are difficult to determine whether or not they are real. Sometimes, laughter or giggling can be an indication the call is a prank. However, it could also be that laughter is a result of nervousness, embarrassment, or fear of judgment.

The context of the hotline is not one dominated by adult authority. Volunteers on the hotline range in age from 16-75. Because it's over the phone, callers do not know how old the person they are speaking to are - they could be, and are in some cases, speaking to a peer. Youth calling the hotline and talking about abuse do not need to worry they are telling an adult who may or may not be required to report and act upon what they say. On the hotline, youth have the power to determine what is done with the information they provide.

Consequently, unlike most data on child abuse and welfare, the data collected from the NRS privileges the voice of youth, not the voice of adults. As a result, this study is one of the few that actually reduces adult authority in data collection, although "vari-

ous attempts have been made to reduce adult authority in research settings involving participant observation within so-called peer culture tradition" (Spyrou 2011:154). Some participant observers with children have adopted a "least-adult" role, a term coined by Mandell (1988). For instance, Barrie Thorne, in *Gender Play: Girls and Boys in School* adopted a least-adult role in her schoolyard observations, but found herself needing to switch to an adult role when working with parents.

For the cases used in this study, parents weren't involved. Liners don't have to switch roles, risk losing trust and rapport established by saying, "We'll have to talk to your parents now." The position of liners is most like that of Mayall, who feels it is more effective to "position herself as an adult who lacks the knowledge that children have about childhood and who wants to learn from them" (Mayall 2000:122). Liners take the position that the caller knows their situation the best, that the caller is the authoritative voice in the conversation. Liners are very intentional about not interviewing callers. Liners are taught, and evaluated on use of, active listening skills and how to allow callers to lead the conversation.

Descriptive Data on Calls

Tables 9 through 14 provide a statistical snap-shot of the broad range of callers, from data NRS makes available to the public on their website, www.1800RUNAWAY.org. For this study, and so for the statistics used to provide the overall snapshot, I used data from January 2006 – December 2012. Call data goes back further, but is less reliable prior to 2006, as 2006 is when the information management system NRS currently uses was put in place.

Table 9 shows the number of calls handled by year. Calls handled include both in-

coming and outgoing calls, since conference calling and advocating on callers behalf with agencies are services provided on the hotline. Calls made to and from U.S. territories and Canada are included in the calls handled count, but are not included in the incoming calls tally.

Table 9. National Runaway Safeline Call Volume

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Calls handled	102,513	107,883	111,059	117,602	114,097	176,609	~
Incoming calls	77,851	83,932	92,965	96,334	98,122	~	~

Source: NRS data 2006-2012

It is not just youth who have runaway who call NRS. Youth also call who are considering running away, or who are in crisis whether that is feeling suicidal, self-injuring, dealing with bullying at school, or getting kicked out of their home (Table 10).

Table 10. Youth Status at Time of Call

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Runaway	33%	37%	40%	42%	42%	42%	48%
Youth in crisis	32%	30%	32%	33%	36%	35%	32%
Contemplating running away	15%	13%	10%	10%	12%	14%	12%
Homeless	13%	12%	11%	9%	5%	4%	4%
Throwaway	6%	6%	5%	5%	4%	4%	4%
Suspected Missing	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%

Source: NRS data 2006-2012

Additionally, it is not just youth who call, but adults as well. Adults who call include parents. Parents may call because their child has runaway, or to ask for discipline advise, or sometimes wanting to know how to get rid of their child. Other callers include neighbors, friends, police officers, and social service agencies.

Table 11. Caller Relationship

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Youth	60%	54%	50%	50%	49%	49%	43%
Parent	20%	25%	29%	31%	30%	30%	35%
Adult	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%
Relative	6%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%
Youth's Friend	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Agency	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Police/Probation Officer	<1%	0%	1%	<1%	2%	1%	2%
Other	1%	1%	1%	<1%	0%	1%	1%

Source: NRS data 2006-2012

Logs are created for each call that is about a youth in crisis. If a call is a prank, wrong number, simply verifying NRS services, etc., then a log is not created. Tables 12 through 14 are based on only those calls for which a log is created. Tables 12 and 13 break down youth in crisis by age and gender. Youth ages 16-19 make of the majority of callers, with three-fourths identifying as female.

Table 12. Reported Age of Caller

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
12 and Under	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	5%	3%
13	4%	4%	3%	3%	5%	7%	6%
14	7%	6%	6%	7%	9%	10%	9%
15	9%	9%	10%	10%	13%	13%	15%
16	13%	14%	14%	15%	18%	18%	21%
17	21%	20%	21%	21%	21%	21%	23%
18	15%	15%	16%	15%	12%	10%	10%
19	14%	14%	14%	12%	9%	7%	6%
20	11%	10%	10%	10%	8%	6%	4%
21	4%	5%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%

S
Source: NRS data 2006-2012

Table 13. Caller Gender

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Female	72%	71%	71%	72%	72%	75%	76%
Male	28%	29%	29%	28%	28%	24%	24%
Transgender	<1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%

Source: NRS data 2006-2012

Table 14 breaks down issues identified by callers, presented here to situate the percentage of calls in which abuse is identified as an issue by callers.

Table 14. Issues Identified by Callers

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Family Dynamics	29%	28%	29%	29%	29%	29%	29%
Peer/Social	10%	11%	11%	13%	14%	13%	14%
School/Education	8%	8%	7%	8%	8%	8%	10%
Mental Health	7%	8%	8%	7%	8%	9%	9%
Economics	7%	7%	6%	6%	4%	4%	4%
Transportation	7%	6%	6%	6%	5%	5%	3%
Alcohol/Drug Use	5%	6%	6%	6%	5%	6%	5%
Physical Abuse	5%	6%	6%	5%	6%	6%	6%
Youth Services	5%	5%	5%	4%	4%	4%	5%
Emotional/Verbal Abuse	4%	4%	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Judicial System	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%	3%
Health	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Neglect	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	2%
Sexual Abuse/Assault	1%	<1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
GLBTQ	1%	<1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Sexual Exploitation	1%	<1%	1%	~	~	~	~

Source: NRS data 2006-2012

After obtaining approval from NRS' Research Oversight Committee to utilize log data in October 2013, I received raw data in excel format exported from the customized managed software used by NRS. For this study, I requested the following variables for the time period of January 2006 - December 2012:

1. ID
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Call Summary
5. EMOTIONAL/VERBAL ABUSE
6. NEGLECT
7. Physical Abuse
8. Physical Abuse by Parents Partner/Step
9. Physical Abuse by Non-Relative
10. Physical Abuse by Other Family Member

11. Physical Abuse by Parent
12. Physical Abuse/Assault
13. Sexual Abuse by Other Family Member
14. Sexual Abuse by Parent
15. Sexual Abuse by Parents Partner/Step
16. Sexual Abuse/Assault

I made a number of transformations, which took a conservatively estimated 300 hours. From the raw data provided by NRS, I took into consideration the following, which resulted in a sample of 9,195 cases.

1. The data is limited to youth who are experiencing abuse as callers (as opposed to adults or friends of youth calling about abuse). When the caller is not the person who is experiencing abuse, the mandated reporter status no longer applies. An adult caller could file an abuse report with the state anonymously, and any caller who is not the youth being abused is encouraged to have the youth being abused call NRS.
2. The data extracted were for youth callers ages 17 and younger who identified as having experienced abuse. At the federal level, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act provides guidance and funding to states who in turn each have definitions of maltreatment within their civil and criminal statutes. In looking at these statutes, 17 states define child as someone under or younger than 18.
3. The data is limited to callers. NRS began a live chat (crisis intervention via instant messaging) in 2010. I excluded chat logs as they are a different type of service and only found in two out of the seven years. I limited cases to calls for consistency.

4. Home Free calls are not included in the data set. When a youth wants to go home, liners ask if there is abuse. If there is, the caller is told that if they provide contact information (like the parents telephone number) a report is mandated. Callers can decide to not continue the Home Free process if they would rather not report. However, some callers choose to return to an abusive home. If this is the case, the abuse is reported, with both the caller and parent notified. The reason I am not including the Home Free calls is that whether a youth wants to report abuse or not is influenced by the desire to return home (meaning, they may not report the abuse if they weren't calling for a bus ticket).

From the last twelve variables listed above, I created two new variables of Type (physical, sexual, emotional/verbal, neglect) and Who (parent, parent partner/step, other family, foster family, non-relative/legal guardian). Finally, the outcome variable was created by reading the summary of each call where it is noted when a report was filed or not.

The selected variables I began the model building process were:

- Caller (youth) age – those 17 and younger
- Caller (youth) gender – male, female, transgender
- Type of abuse - physical, sexual, emotional/verbal, neglect
- Who the abuser is - parent, parent partner/step, other family, foster parent
- Was an abuse report filed

Examples from Data Set

The following are just 13 of the 9,915 log summaries that could be shared. These samples provide a glimpse into what is "behind" the numerical analysis that follows. The summaries are organized by type of abuse and were selected to be representational of as many variables as possible in terms of age, gender, who the abuser is, and whether or not

an abuse report was filed.

Physical

The first three summaries touch on interactions of an abused youth with a mandated reporter. In the first summary, the youth caller mentions interacting with a teacher:

> 12 y.o. called to file an abuse report against his mother and sister. He said mom has been hitting him with an electrical cord ever since he was 5. This happens almost every night, and it happened last night when he tried to run away. He also mentioned choking, burning (with a curling iron), and his mother throwing him out into the cold resulting in him almost getting hypothermia. He said his teachers had asked about his scars but his mother threatened him so he told the teachers that he "accidentally cut himself." Youth was currently staying at his friend's house. I called Child Abuse Hotline and put youth in a conference call with a man to file a report with the County. Youth had to go back to his mother, so I made sure that the man with the Abuse hotline was sending someone over to his house to talk to him about what had been going on.

Similarly, the second summary mentions school counselors and police being involved, but as above, no report was filed.

> [A 14 year-old] youth called from friend's house after a verbal and physical altercation with his father and his father's girlfriend. His father choked him and dragged him into the house, and the youth has visible marks on his neck. This is not the first physical altercation they have had. School counselors and police were involved previously, but no charges were filed against the father. The youth decided to file a report, so we conference called the child abuse reporting hotline. They will follow-up with the youth this evening, and he is staying with his friend until then.

Often, callers will speak of at least one person in their life they can trust. In the above summary, the youth stayed with a friend. In this next summary, sisters were support to one another. They lived in a home where police responded to domestic violence calls, the police being the mandated reporters. This summary also mentions a disposition of an allegation, one in which no action was recommended.

> A 16-year-old girl said she and her 14-year-old sister had run away from

> home two weeks ago and now were staying with a relative. They accuse their father and stepmother of physically and emotionally abusing them over a period of several years. This abuse has gotten worse lately. It mostly consists of pushing, pulling, hitting, spanking and yelling. The father has been reported to police 28 times for domestic violence. The caller tried to report him to CPS two weeks ago but was told that they would not be removed from the home because marks of violence were not visible. Police also were of no help. So the kids ran away and are now trying to get help. They do not feel safe to go home and want to go live with their natural mother in Texas. We conducted a three-way call to CPS … but the worker said she could not [open a case] because this case was recently investigated and no action was recommended. She said the teenager should file a CHINS petition herself to get the family into the court system.

Finally, this summary provides an example of why youth may choose to report, the youth's non-abusive parent wasn't protecting her.

> A 13-year-old female called in after getting "beat-up" by her step-dad yesterday. She had been unable to call anyone yesterday, but was able to go to her neighbor's house today to make some calls. She reported that her step-dad has hit her on multiple occasions, often leaving bruises. She stated that yesterday was "the worst it had ever been." Her mom has not done anything about the abuse, so she decided that she was ready to report it. A conference call with…Child Abuse Reporting line was completed, and the report was going to be reviewed in order to determine if an investigation will be possible.

Neglect

Again, the summaries below mention interactions with mandated reporters. In the first summary, the youth was seeking help from the police. Being kicked out by a parent when one is under 17 is neglect. The officer, who before even making a call or an allegation, determined this case to be intentionally false.

> [A 17 year old] youth called after being thrown out of police station for a verbal argument with an officer. She had been thrown out of home and was trying to get shelter with the help of the police. An officer told me he felt she was manipulating the system and that the youth officer refused to write her the necessary CCR (child care referral). I was able to advocate for her to get back into the police station and to receive services from the…provider for her area.

The second summary is included as an example of how incredibly complicated situations can be. It also highlights how things may go wrong within CPS, but also how CPS can prove helpful. Additionally, the summary illustrates the strength and resiliency of youth.

> [A 17 year old] youth called frustrated about being on her own and not being able to access services. Youth wants to finish her last year of school. She wants an independent living assistance and wanted to call DCFS to get her case # and case worker. Caller said that she's been on her own since 12 or 13, has been shuffled around from house to house, has been homeless, slept in cars. Mom was/is addicted to drugs. The first DCFS worker we talked to said her case was closed. She transferred us to a DCFS 800 line advocate who worked with us for a long time and was very helpful. He said that something was "unusual" about what came up (not the normal "closed") screen. Later he said, "something goofy happened with this family." Caller said she had 5 siblings (DCFS worker was trying to find information via brother's info). They were removed from where mom was staying because mom's boyfriend molested her youngest boy (who the caller hasn't spoken with but wants to). Two of the other brothers were assigned to live with their paternal grandmother who became their legal guardian. The two brothers don't live with her though. The two brothers live with the daughter of the caller's god-mother, who the caller's mom gave guardianship to. Caller is now staying with her "cousin" (not really related). We discussed how this family was not served by DCFS in any way and how they desperately need support and services. Mom got on the line with us while talking to DCFS (the worker asked why caller didn't live with mom = awkward silence followed by caller saying she couldn't take care of them). Also joining in the call was the cousin. All three women (caller, mom, cousin) have the 800 number for DCFS and will pursue dependency referral (which mom didn't think would work, cousin and caller thought they would pursue it). We also contacted state homeless education coordinator who transferred us to another guy who gave us the number for the county. When I called, I received a VM. The gang was good with following up themselves. Caller did well at advocating for herself. She has a job interview today and education is important to her.

Emotional/Verbal

In the first summary, the youth chooses not to report. The youth left an emotionally abusive situation, was at a truck stop and the first shelter contacted didn't have an open

bed.

> [A 15 year old] youth ran away after an argument with his parents in which his stepmother told him to commit suicide and his father laughed at this. This altercation upset the youth so much that he left home. He called from a truck station looking for transportation to [a] youth shelter. The shelter had to call us back but did not have a bed available for the youth. We are waiting to see if the youth calls back for more resources. The youth is currently on house arrest for assault of a public servant and has been diagnosed with bi-polar disorder, ADD and depression.

The second summary is an example of a non-parent abuser, a foster parent.

> 16 year old female and 13 year old female were wards of the state and their legal guardians was whoever was in charge of the group home at that time…Youth's parents kicked her out and she is legally with the state. Reminded her she could call us back 24/7 and we are confidential and anonymous. She said she was going to call [a] group home after we got off the phone to arrange transportation if at all possible. She said she would call back if she needed anything. They were both verbally abused by the employees there saying things like "You're fucking worthless." and "Every man who has ever touched you was just using you." Tried to report it but it was dismissed. They said their 13 year old friend was sent to juvenile detention after supposedly hitting the manager there. The youth caller said she witnessed it and the youth was protecting herself and the employee was the one that hit the 13 year old girl. Youth was considering reporting the foster home. I gave her the non-emergency police number for [her] county. Youth was going to go with the 14 year old girl to take her to [a shelter] because they didn't feel safe at their current home. She knew to call us because she saw our business cards at the shelter.

The third summary is an example of a youth choosing to report when the type of abuse is emotional/verbal. It also tells of interaction with a mandated reporter, who labels the treatment as abuse. Whether the school counselor reported it or not is unknown.

> [A 16 year old] youth called because her and her step sister are experiencing emotional abuse from their father. (Step mother lives in the home as well, but she goes along with what her husband says and does). He never speaks to them and when he does he yells and puts them down. The youth's school counselor said that what he's doing is emotional child abuse. Youth said she was ready to do whatever it took for her and her step sister to leave the home. I conference called…CPS so that youth could file a report. We had to hang up because youth’s phone was dying, but CPS said

they would call her back to continue filing the report.

The fourth summary illustrates the effect verbal abuse can have on a child, and also shows determination of a young person in a bad situation.

> [A 17 year old] youth wants to run away from home because her parents have been abusing her verbally to the point where she has nightmares about them and was cutting herself. Mother is clinically depressed and has anxiety attacks that stem from her abusive childhood. Youth wants to leave after she graduates high school in two weeks and plans to enroll in a community college for graphic design in Louisiana. She is planning to live with her friend once she gets to Louisiana.

Sexual

The first two summaries touch on a reason why some youth, when given the option, choose to file an abuse report. In both instances, there were other children in the home for whom the youth experiencing abuse wanted to protect.

> A 14 year old male called in because he wanted to file an abuse report. His mother's boyfriend forced him to have sex with him. This occurred 7 times and went on for a period of 7 months. The youth had run away before because of it, but returned home with the hope that it would stop. It still continued, so now the youth has run away again. He said he has been staying with friends from school. He is now concerned for the safety of his younger brothers - and that is the reason why he wanted to file an abuse report. We filed an abuse report, but he did not want to give any information as to where the youth is located. After the abuse report was filed, I gave him the number for RAINN and a shelter for him to stay at.

> [A 16 year old] girl called about mom's bf who has been raping her since she was 9. Has little sister who may be in danger. Took abuse report. Mom left her with this guy and they don't know if mom is coming back. Dude stalks girl at work and has hit her too.

In the third summary, the youth choose not to report, out of a desire to “protect” her mom.

> [A 17 year old] youth called because she ran away from home because her dad was raping her. She didn't want to report him because her mom is dying and she doesn’t want her mom to die alone. She is also pregnant with

his child. She hasn't slept for days because she is afraid to. She feels like she is going crazy, she even thought about killing her mom. We talked for a while, then we called about 3 or 4 shelters, 1 was closed, 1 was disconnected, 1 referred us to another phone number, but she had to get off the phone.

Findings

Data was imported into SPSS version 20 for statistical analysis. The univariate results then, after transforming and cleaning the data are shown in Tables 15 through 19.

Table 15. Univariate Results: Age

	f	%
Under 12	183	2.0%
12	311	3.4%
13	657	7.1%
14	1232	13.4%
15	1937	21.1%
16	2386	25.9%
17	2396	26.1%
Missing	93	1.0%

Source: NRS data 2006-2012

Table 16. Univariate Results: Gender

	f	%
Female	7091	77.1%
Male	2061	22.4%
Transgendered	20	00.2%
Missing	23	00.3%

Source: NRS data 2006-2012

Table 17. Univariate Results: Type of Abuse

	f	%
Physical	4950	53.8%
Neglect	1867	20.3%
Emotional/Verbal	1592	17.3%
Sexual	786	8.5%

Source: NRS data 2006-2012

Table 18. Univariate Results: Who the Abuser is

	f	%
Parent	7276	79.1%
Parent partner/step	887	9.6%
Other family	779	8.5%
Foster parent	134	1.5%
Non-relative/legal guardian	119	1.3%

Source: NRS data 2006-2012

Table 19. Univariate Results: Report Made

	f	%
No	8728	94.90%
Yes	467	5.1%

Source: NRS data 2006-2012

The univariate results show of 9,195 who identified abuse as an issue when calling 1-800-RUNAWAY. The percentage of callers ages in the data set are higher than in the larger caller population, as youth ages 18-21 are not included. There is a slightly higher percentage of female callers who identify abuse as an issue (77%), than within the larger caller population (since 2008, 72% or less). Half (53.8%) described the type of abuse as physical, and parents were most often the person identified as the abuser (79.1%). However, only 5% of youth who identify abuse as an issue when calling 1-800-RUNAWAY – when given the option – choose to report.

Characteristics of victims in the *Child Maltreatment Reports* are somewhat different from characteristics of the young callers in the data from NRS. The *Child Maltreatment* reports show youth under the age of 12 make up most of the victims (74-77%), youth ages 12-15 make up 16-19% of victims, and youth ages 16-17 are 5-6% of the victims. The percentage of callers to NRS identifying abuse as an issue who are under age 12 is only 2%, youth ages 12-15 make up 45%, and youth ages 16-17 account for 52%.

The most common type of abuse among victims according to the *Child Maltreatment* reports is neglect (78%), followed by physical (18%), and then sexual (9%). The youth in the data set from NRS most often identified physical abuse (53.8%), followed by neglect (20.3%), emotional/verbal (17.3%), and then sexual (8.5%). It's important to note that *Child Maltreatment* codes multiple types of abuse for one victim, while the NRS data codes only one type of abuse per caller. If all callers coded for physical abuse in the NRS data were also cases of neglect, then the percentage of neglect in the NRS might be higher.

The one similarity between the sets is in regard to who the abuser is. In both the *Child Maltreatment* reports and the NRS sample, parent (as compared to non-parent) is the abuser 80% of the time.

One might question whether comparing these two data sets is comparing apples and oranges. The youth calling NRS are telling liners they are abused. The youth calling NRS would be in the data from the *Child Maltreatment* reports if an allegation (call to a state reporting line) were made either on their behalf or as a self-report, the referral was screened in, and an investigation was completed with a disposition of substantiated, indicated, or alternative response victim.

Cross-tabulation explores relationships between the outcome of reporting abuse and the predictor variables of age, gender, type of abuse, and who the abuser is. Because of the small percentage, the 00.2% of Transgendered youth was coded as missing. Age was not recorded for a small number of cases (00.3%), and so was also coded as missing. The cross-tabulations, or bivariate results, are shown in Tables 20 through 23.

Table 20. Bivariate Results: Age

			Under 12	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total
report made	No	*f*	170	288	621	1143	1822	2262	2329	8635
		%	1.9%	3.2%	6.8%	12.6%	20.0%	24.9%	25.6%	94.9%
	Yes	*f*	13	23	36	89	115	124	67	467
		%	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%	1.0%	1.3%	1.4%	0.7%	5.1%
	Total	*f*	183	311	657	1232	1937	2386	2396	9102
		%	2.0%	3.4%	7.2%	13.5%	21.3%	26.2%	26.3%	100.0%

Source: NRS data 2006-2012

Table 21. Bivariate Results: Gender

			Female	Male	Total
report made	No	*f*	6751	1934	8685
		%	73.8%	21.1%	94.9%
	Yes	*f*	340	127	467
		%	3.7%	1.4%	5.1%
	Total	*f*	7091	2061	9152
		%	77.5%	22.5%	100.0%

Source: NRS data 2006-2012

Table 22. Bivariate Results: Type of Abuse

			Physical	Neglect	Emotional/ Verbal	Sexual	Total
report made	No	*f*	4588	1814	1576	750	8728
		%	49.9%	19.7%	17.1%	8.2%	94.9%
	Yes	*f*	362	53	16	36	467
		%	3.9%	0.6%	0.2%	0.4%	5.1%
	Total	*f*	4950	1867	1592	786	9195
		%	53.8%	20.3%	17.3%	8.5%	100.0%

Source: NRS data 2006-2012

While choosing to report abuse if rare, for those who do, it is more likely for 16 year olds (1.4%), 15 year olds (1.3%), and 14 year olds (1%) respectively, than youth ages 17 (0.7%), 13 (0.4%), 12 (0.3%) and under 12 (0.1%). Female callers choose to report abuse (3.7%) more often than male callers (1.4%). When type of abuse is considered,

those who experience physical abuse were more likely to report (3.9%) than if the abuse were neglect (0.6%), sexual (0.4%), or emotional/verbal (0.2%). Finally, callers identifying abuse as an issue, and identifying a parent as the abuser are more likely to report abuse (3.8%), than when the abuser is a parent's partner/step (0.6%), other family member (0.5%), a foster parent (0.1%), or a non-relative/legal guardian (0.1%).

Table 23. Bivariate Results: Who the Abuser is

			Parent	Parent partner/ Step	Other family	Foster parent	Non-relative/ Legal Guardian	Total
report made	No	*f*	6923	832	735	128	110	8728
		%	75.3%	9.0%	8.0%	1.4%	1.2%	94.9%
	Yes	*f*	353	55	44	6	9	467
		%	3.8%	0.6%	0.5%	0.1%	0.1%	5.1%
	Total	*f*	7276	887	779	134	119	9195
		%	79.1%	9.6%	8.5%	1.5%	1.3%	100.0%

Source: NRS data 2006-2012

A logistic regression model was used to predict which youth callers mentioning abuse choose to report the abuse. A logistic regression model allows for establishing a relationship between a binary outcome variable and a group of predictor variables. In order to avoid too many "empty cells" in the data for the logistic regression model, I collapsed the predictor variables of age, type of abuse, and who the abuser is. For the logistic regression model, age is coded as 13 and under, 14, 15, 16 and 17. The four original types of abuse were collapsed into either physical/sexual or neglect/verbal and emotional. I collapsed the "who" variable into parent and non-parent. For logistic regression, the minimum ratio of the number of cases with an "event" to the number of independent variables is 10 to 1, with a preferred ratio of 20 to 1. In this analysis, there are 496 valid cases of reporting abuse and 4 independent variables. The ratio of cases to independent

variables is 124 to 1, which more than satisfies the minimum requirement as well as the preferred ratio of 20 to 1.

In a logistic regression model, the dependent variable (whether or not youth chose to report abuse), is actually the natural logarithm of an odds ratio [ln(odds ratio)] comparing the odds of being in one category (reporting abuse) or another (not reporting abuse).

> While this allows the ln(odds ratio) or logit to be linearly related to the independent variables, it means that the logistic regression coefficients do not have the same interpretation as OLS multiple regression coefficients. The unstandardized logistic regression coefficient, *b*, is the effect of a unit change in an independent variable on the ln(odds ratio) or logit. Because this coefficient is difficult to interpret, other than a positive coefficient means an increase in the ln(odds ratio) or logit and a negative coefficient means a decrease, most software programs provide the exponentiated value of *b* or exp(*b*). This coefficient is the value of e raised to the (*b*) power, in other words e^b. This coefficient is interpreted as the effect of a unit change in an independent variable on the odds ratio. Because the value of $b = 0$ results in $\exp(b) = e^0 = 1$, for the latter coefficient its value is compared to 1 or equal odds of being in either category. (Webster et al. 2005:1287)

In SPSS, the "Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients" was used to test the hypothesis that in the population, the model coefficients are all zero. With a likelihood ratio degree of freedom of five, a critical alpha of .01, the critical chi-square is 15. In comparing the constant-only model to the full model, the -2LL was reduced from 3679 to 3531. The obtained "chi-square," 147, is greater than critical chi-square 15, so the null hypothesis can be rejected. According to the log likelihood chi-square test, the model as a whole is statistically significant.

Table 24 provides the SPSS model coefficients. This table provides the regression coefficient (B), and the odds ratio (Exp (B)) for each variable. The regression coefficient (B) for age and type of abuse are significant and positive. The coefficients show that the

age of the caller and type of abuse have more effect on whether the caller will report than gender or who the abuser is. The odds (Exp (B)) of youth reporting (compared to not reporting) are multiplied by 3.785 for those who identify the type of abuse as physical or sexual (compared to those who identify the type of abuse as emotional/verbal or neglect). When the abuser is a parent, the odds of youth reporting (compared to not reporting) are multiplied by .978.

Table 24. SPSS Output

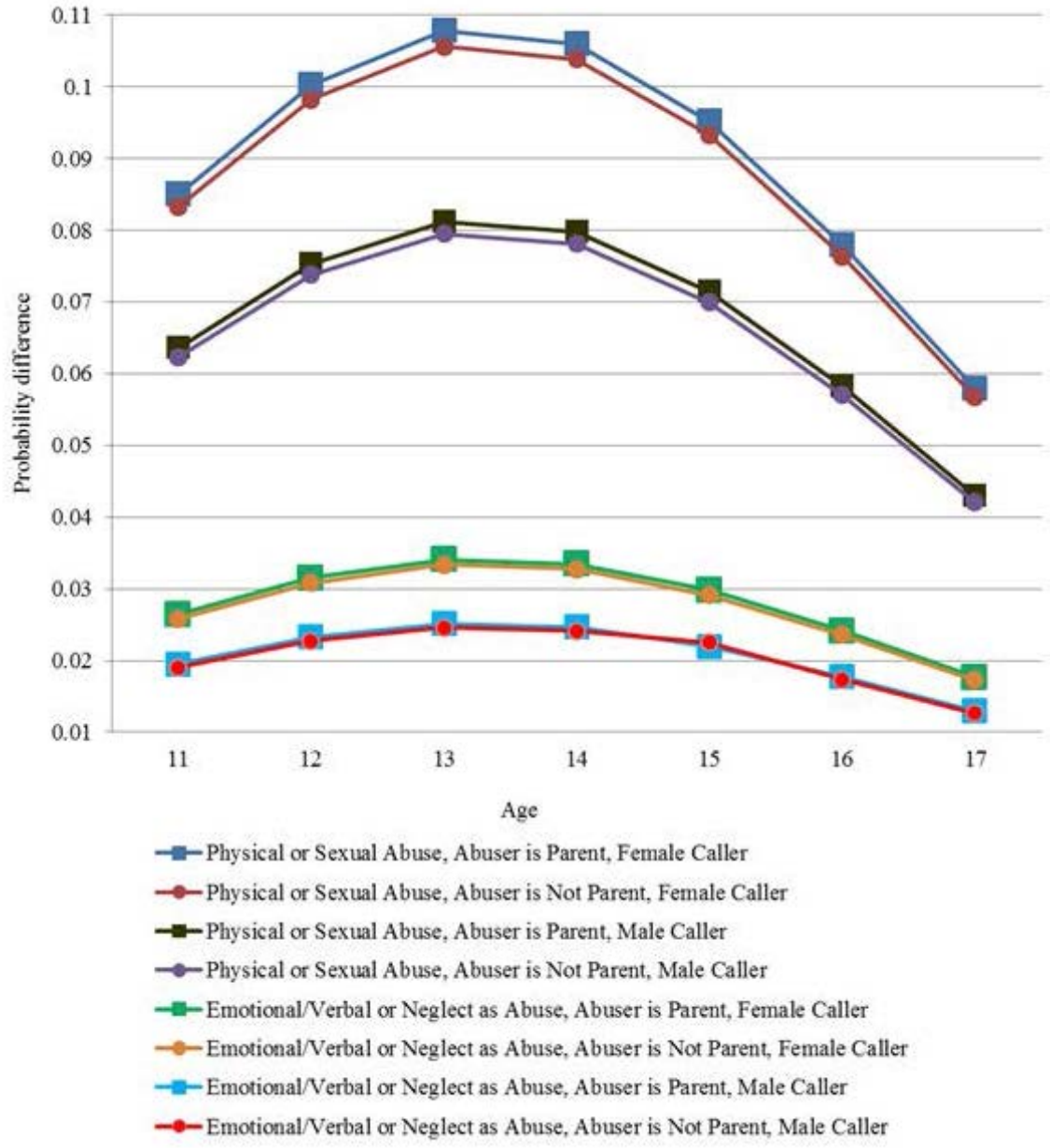
	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
CallersAge	1.331	.517	6.629	1	.010	3.785
AgeSquared	-.050	.018	7.888	1	.005	.951
gender	-.313	.108	8.334	1	.004	.732
type	1.231	.134	83.865	1	.000	3.424
who	-.023	.113	.040	1	.841	.978
Constant	-12.197	3.744	10.616	1	.001	.000
Source: NRS data 2006-2012						

Figure 1 is a graph of predicted probabilities for all combinations of values of the independent variables. As most callers do not report, the probabilities of reporting are all below .50, ranging from .01 to .11. The probability of reporting increases from age 11 to 13, and then declines to age 17. The probability of reporting (compared to not reporting) is greater when abuse is physical or sexual (compared to emotional/verbal or neglect). Female callers are more likely to report than males, and the probability of reporting is slightly greater when the abuser is a parent, compared to non-parent. The highest probability of reporting is .11, for female callers, age 13, who mention physical or sexual abuse by a parent. The lowest probability of reporting is .01, for male callers, age 17, mentioning emotional or verbal abuse or neglect by a non-parent.

Model Diagnostics and Fit

One diagnostic is to examine a graph of predicted probabilities and observed group membership (Figure 2). The classification plot shows the frequency of categorizations for different predicted probabilities and whether they were 'yes' or 'no' categorizations. This provides a useful visual guide to how accurate the model is by displaying how

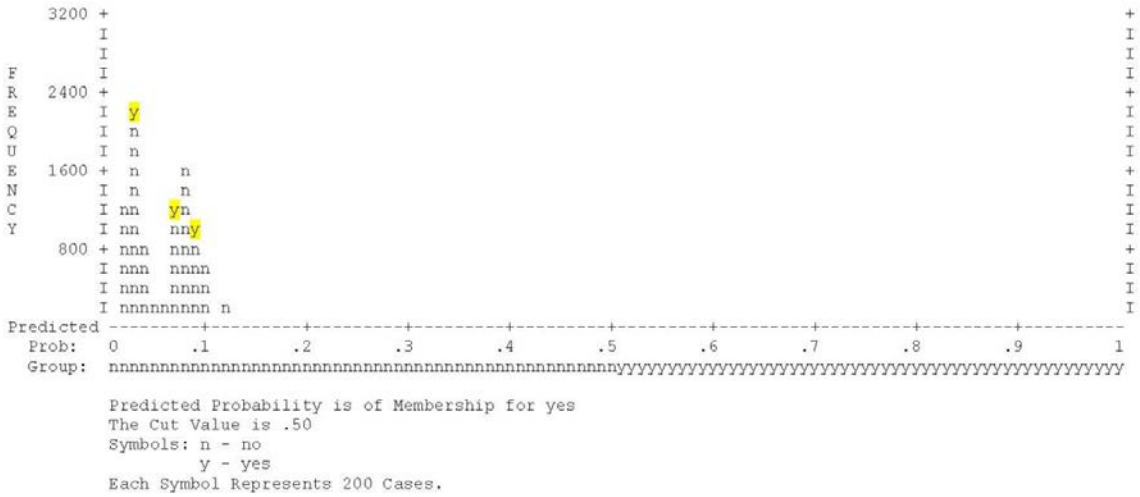
Figure 1. Predicted Probabilities



many times the model would predict a ‘yes’ outcome based on the calculated predicted probability when in fact the outcome for the participant was ‘no.’

A predicted probability less than .50 is classified as a “no,” a report was not made, and a predicted probability greater than .50 is classified as a “yes,” a report was made. As all the predicted probabilities from the model are .11 and under, the cases are clustered to the far left of the graph. The “y’s” highlighted in yellow indicate the cases where the caller, in fact, made a report.

Figure 2. Observed Groups and Predicted Probabilities



Source: NRS data 2006-2012

Goodness of fit is a gauge on how well a model fits the data. One way to assess goodness of fit is classification accuracy, which compares the accuracy of predicted group membership without using the model to the accuracy of predicted group membership using the model. Group membership can be predicted some accuracy without using the model, especially when the event in question is relatively rare. For instance, if only 10% of the cases experience the event, one can accurately predict the outcome 90% of the

time simply by predicting that all cases experience the event. Another way to assess the accuracy of predicted group membership without a model is called "by chance accuracy." The estimate of by chance accuracy used here is the proportional by chance accuracy rate, computed by summing the squared percentage of cases in each group: $(.948^2 + .052^2)$ = .898704 + .002704 = .901 or 90.1%. The classification accuracy rate must be better than could be obtained by chance alone. The classification accuracy rate of 94.8% using the model (Table 25) is slightly better than the by chance accuracy rate of 90.1%. Moreover, the classification accuracy surpassed the proportional by chance accuracy criteria, supporting the utility of the model.

Table 25. SPSS Output Classification Table

	Observed		Predicted		
			reportmadedummy report-madedummy		Percentage Correct
			0 no	1 yes	
Step 1	reportmadedummy	0 no	8596	0	100.0
	reportmadedummy	1 yes	467	0	.0
	Overall Percentage				94.8

a. The cut value is .500

Source: NRS data 2006-2012

Conclusion

While in some cases, youth callers to NRS report their abusers, in most cases, they do not. To adult observers concerned about their safety and well-being, this can be very distressing.

To better understand young people, however, Spyrou (2001) suggests that adults access the voice of children and place the voice of the child in context. It strikes me, however, the most concerning issue about youth voice is not how to access it, but rather

that adults (including social scientist) aren't listening. Or, if they are listening, they question the validity of what is said.

Youth have a lot to say and will say it. Children need to be listened to. Children need to be asked about what is happening to them, how it makes them feel, and what they would like to see happen. As was stated in the literature review, there is a substantial body of work regarding child abuse and mandated reporting, including calls to reform if and how abuse is reported and whether it need to be mandatory. There are some calls to eliminate mandated reported. Mandated reporting – claims making often on behalf of an abused child – certainly needs to be improved upon. It might be prudent, however, to first attempt at correcting current flaws prior to doing away with it completely. Of course, listening to the child would be a first step.

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