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CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE ALLEGATIONS
AGAINST TEACHERS IN IOWA SCHOOLS:
IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

by
Virgil W. Murray

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of
Education at Loyola University of
Chicago in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

May

1990

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to especially thank my Chairperson, Dr. Philip Carlin, for his help, encouragement, and friendship. His assistance was invaluable. I also appreciate the comments and direction given to me by Dr. Art Safer and Dr. Max Bailey.

The traditional brevity of this section precludes mention of the many friends and family members who were supportive and who truly deserve inclusion here. However, I do want to thank a few very significant people.

Special kudos to Dr. Norman Krong and Dr. John Hess for their continued support and encouragement.

Much gratitude to Mary Oliver for the many hours of typing and the careful attention to detail that was so necessary to reach completion.

Many thanks to Superintendent Hammann and the Bellevue Community School District which allowed me to be gone from certain assignments when it was necessary. The interest and support given to me by the people of this school system will not be forgotten.

And finally, to those people closest to me, my immediate family. Thank-you Nel, Craig, Mike, and Megan, for the many hours you allowed me to be away from home in order to complete this project. Their sacrifices will be always remembered.

VITA

The author, Virgil Wesly Murray, is the son of Donald Murray and Elizabeth (Duhn) Murray. He was born September 22, 1946, in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

His elementary education was obtained in the public schools of Cedar Falls. His secondary education was completed in 1964 at Cedar Falls High School, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

In January of 1965, Mr. Murray entered the University of Northern Iowa, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Arts in general science in 1969.

From 1969 until he entered Loras College in 1974, he was a mathematics teacher in grades 6, 7, and 8. In 1976, Mr. Murray graduated from Loras with a degree in elementary/secondary administration.

In 1971, Virgil Murray married Nel Lange and that marriage resulted in three children; two boys, Craig and Mike, and one girl, Megan.

Before starting his graduate program at Loyola in 1986, Mr. Murray has served as an associate high school principal and an elementary school principal in the public schools of Iowa.

At the time of his receiving his Doctor of Education degree from Loyola University, Mr. Murray is serving as an elementary school principal in Bellevue, Iowa.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The number of children reported as sexually abused in the United States has steadily increased over the years. One source estimated that the number rose from 7,559 in 1976 to 71,901 in 1983 (Highlights of Official Child Neglect and Abuse Reporting, 1983, p. 12). These figures have continued to rise along with public awareness and sensitivity to the problem (Frost & Seng, 1986, p. 15).

Actual reported figures, however, may be underestimated because sexual abuse often goes unreported to authorities and is not easily identified or diagnosed. Child sexual abuse has been one of the less reported crimes due to its secretive nature (Thomas, 1982, p. 32). It is difficult to assess how extensive this problem is because of a reluctance on the part of the victim to report such an offense.

Since the Child Abuse Act of 1974, there has been continued growth of child protective services, along with increased reporting of abuse (P.L. 93-247). It is now required by law that educators in all 50 states report

suspected cases of child abuse (Bybee & Gee, 1982, p. 108). With child sexual abuse being reported and investigated at an increasing rate and with educators being required to report it, administrators increasingly face the necessity of dealing with child sexual abuse in their schools.

Current headlines on child sexual abuse in the schools is readily available from a perusal of almost any current newspaper. Thus, in the Des Moines Register (1986-1987):

"Urbana coach charged with fondling girls."

"Teacher involved with boy given 5-year prison term."

"Top educator guilty: Traded grades for sex."

"Counselor, 54, charged in sex abuse of boys."

"20-year sentence ordered for teacher's sex offenses."

"Former Albia Coach named in sex complaint."

Similar charges appear daily in newspapers across America, indicating that teachers nationwide are being accused of sexual abuse by their students.

The child is not the only potential victim in this trend; unfounded accusations can cause a great deal of grief for the accused. In 1985, cases of suspected child abuse reported in the United States totaled 1.7 million, of which 80 percent were later determined to be unfounded--up from 40 percent five years earlier (Emans, 1987, p. 740). Laws designed to protect the sexually abused victim have the potential to ruin an innocent person, making him or her

the victim instead. According to Emans (1987):

Accusations of child abuse bring suffering and distress to everyone involved. It is estimated that up to 80 percent of those falsely accused of child abuse lose their jobs or suffer other employment problems. Hundreds of people have had to undergo traumatic investigations to establish their innocence, others have had to take part in corrective activities for things they did not do. Individuals falsely accused of child abuse have been psychologically scarred, and their reputations have been severely tarnished. Whole families have been destroyed. (p. 740)

Ross and Marlowe (1985) cite the case of a teacher that was such a victim:

For example, an acquaintance of the authors, a superintendent who agreed to assist in the research for this book, tells us of a teacher who was accused of taking liberties with a student. The charges were untrue. The superintendent got a confession from the student that the entire story had been concocted to gain revenge for an "unfair" grade. However, after the superintendent resolved the problem, it refused to go away. Parents continued to circulate rumors, school board members wanted to know why the young man was still employed when it was clear that he was preying on young children for sexual favors. After more than a year of battling the absurd irrationalities, the superintendent, still convinced of the teacher's innocence, counseled him to resign. It was a small community and it was perfectly clear that the young man would never overcome the situation. He resigned, an innocent victim of not so innocent sexual harrassment, and moved away. (pp. 6-7)

The administrator in charge of a school building must be ready to face the situation in which a teacher is accused of sexual abuse by a student. Educational administrators may need special skills in dealing with this relatively new phenomenon, especially in view of the large number of false accusations. Yet little literature is available to aid the school administrator on this matter.

Purpose and Need for the Study

All of the sexually abused children in America are of school age, and most are in school. This places the school teachers of America in an ideal position to observe and to report abused children. But it also places teachers in a position where they may be accused of abuse. This second concern, teachers being suspected of child sexual abuse, is the chief subject of the present study.

A school administrator must be knowledgeable about child sexual abuse in order to protect not only the children but falsely accused staff as well. An accusation may be brought against a teacher based upon the lies of one or more individuals. Emans (1987) pointed out that "Adults already believing sexual abuse has occurred often deal with alleged victims in ways heightening their suggestibility" (p. 741). Teachers need to be protected from false allegations just as children have to be protected from sexual abuse.

While the court system is a place where guilt or innocence is legally decided, it is also a system that has great potential for feeding the gossip mill, that part of the public mind wanting to believe that "Where there is smoke, there is fire." Since there is a good chance that a reputation may be ruined despite innocence or guilt, and since a teacher's employment is dependent upon a "clean" reputation, it is imperative that a teacher keep a

"tarnish-free" reputation.

As to the sometimes published notion that "kids don't lie about abuse" and "believe the child," a refutation is offered by Goldman and Wheeler (1986, p. 12), who pointed out that young children are not sophisticated enough to distinguish sexual acts from other acts unless they have been involved sexually with an older person. Wilson (1987) reported the case of an exemplary teacher (for 15 years) accused of sex abuse by a girl who said that this teacher had touched her "inappropriately," whatever that may mean.

Administrators may find themselves involved in this area regardless of their personal preferences. How the administrator responds may, in effect, be the only source of protection for the innocently accused.

Statement of the Problem

Against the foregoing background considerations, the problem narrows down to how school administrators may best deal with sexual abuse accusations made by students against teachers on their staff. The problem was to study the incidence and validity of child sexual abuse accusations against teachers in Iowa schools, along with implications of these allegations for school principals.

The problem was addressed through a consideration of 12 research questions. The first two were general and answered on the basis of a review of literature as well as

a questionnaire survey of Iowa school principals.

1. To what extent are teachers guilty of sexually abusing children in the schools?
2. Of the allegations made against teachers with respect to sexual abuse of a child, what percentage of these turn out to be false or unfounded?

Particular inquiry into the question in Iowa was made through the use of a questionnaire survey sent to 376 Iowa school principals which sought data on the following 8 research questions:

3. Were there teachers on the administrator's staff during the previous five years who were accused of sexual abuse of a child in the school? If so, how many?
4. Did the accusation(s) become a matter of public record?
5. Did the accused teacher lose his/her job?
6. Did the accusations appear to the administrator to be accurate or fictitious?
7. How much time did the administrator have to spend in dealing with a case of alleged sexual molestation of a child by a teacher?
8. Does the administrator believe that a child would deliberately lie or make up a false accusation for mere maliciousness or "getting even"?
9. Can safeguards be put into place for the teacher who is accused in order to prevent a reputation from being ruined should the accusation be false? What are some of them?
10. According to the perception of the administrator, is the problem of false accusations of child sexual abuse a significant one in education today?

Research questions 11 and 12 addressed the possible

actions that a principal may take to prevent false accusations.

11. What are some guidelines that administrators may give teachers in order to help them avoid false allegations?
12. What are some precautions that administrators should take to provide the maximum protection to both the student and teacher until guilt or innocence is established?

Definition of Terms

A number of terms were of special importance for the study. They are defined below:

Child. Any person under the age of 18 years (Code of Iowa 232.68, Section 1). This definition appears to be fairly common and can be found in the U.S. Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1984. It excludes those married or in military service.

Child Sexual Abuse. For purposes of the study, child sexual abuse is defined as: Exposure of a child to sexual stimulation inappropriate for the child's age, level of psychosexual development, and role in the family (Schlesinger, 1982). This definition appeared to be appropriate for schools because of its brevity and comprehensiveness. Three other typical definitions are cited below, the third being a legalistic one:

1. The involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities that they do not fully comprehend and to which they are unable to give informed consent

or that violate the social taboos of family roles (Schechter & Roberge, 1976).

2. The sexual use of a child by an adult for his or her sexual gratification without consideration of the child's psychosocial sexual development (Mrazek & Kempe, 1981).
3. The term "sexual abuse" includes: (i) the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or having a child assist any other person to engage in any sexually explicit conduct (or any simulation of such conduct) for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct, or (ii) the rape, molestation, prostitution, or other such form of sexual exploitation of children or incest with children under circumstances which indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or threatened thereby, as determined in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary (Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, U.S. P.L. 93-247).

Principal. Any principal of an Iowa elementary, middle, junior high, or high school approved by the Department of Education of the State of Iowa.

Teacher. Any teacher in an Iowa elementary, middle, junior high, or high school approved by the Department of Education for the State of Iowa.

Significance of the Study

The study is especially significant in view of the increasing incidence of child sexual abuse in both the home and the school. While sexual abuse of children is criminal, to wrongly accuse a teacher is no less pernicious in view of the consequences. There is a need for principals to be aware of the large percentage of possible

false accusations and to be informed on how they may handle valid accusations as well as false accusations.

Educational administrators must acquire the skill to deal with student accusations which continue to receive media attention and the support of the public. The study is especially significant for those administrators directly or indirectly involved with an accusation made by a student.

Much of the writing in the problem area focuses on protecting the child, on prevention programs, identification programs, and reporting procedures. Some literature sources even claim that children seldom lie about sexual abuse, and accordingly, reading such sources may tend to make the public think that a child could never make up a story about one of his or her teachers. The present research will offer suggestions on how to handle accusations in a way that eliminates or sharply reduces the incidence of false charges.

It is significant that the validity of accusations of child sexual abuse by teachers is not well documented in much of the present literature. It is especially significant that this study may help to point the way for more such studies and to emphasize the prevention of false accusations.

Methodology

The study consisted of a questionnaire survey (see

Appendix B) of a representative sample ($N = 288$) of school principals in the State of Iowa. The questionnaire was designed to address the 12 research questions of the study. This data was supplemented by pertinent interviews with 12 principals, the content of the interviews being especially relevant to questions 11 and 12 (what administrators can do as ameliorative and preventive agents).

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to the State of Iowa. Generalizations to other states must be made with caution. Although the sample was limited to about 20 percent of all school principals in Iowa, this sample ($N = 376$) was randomly selected and therefore considered to be representative of all the principals in the state, posing no serious limitation with respect to sample size.

The emotionally laden nature of the research topic may have influenced principals' responses to the questionnaire. If a principal sought to avoid certain aspects of the topic, the data from his questionnaire would reflect this bias and thereby limit the accuracy of the report. It is assumed, however, that the responses in general were sufficiently honest to warrant the assumption of valid data.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Some ten years ago, Zigler (1979) noted that the area of child sexual abuse was relatively new and research limited. Although since then many studies have occurred in that area, it is still difficult to find many dealing with child sexual abuse in the schools; that is, sexual abuse by teachers. Literature on child sexual abuse typically focuses on the sexual abuse of children by parents or non-school persons, the school being viewed chiefly as a reporting agency that presumably should get involved in prevention and offer assistance to the child victim.

This review of literature deals with four topics fundamental to the present study: sexual abuse of children, incidence of child sexual abuse in the schools, validity of accusations against teachers with respect to child sexual abuse, and implications for school administrators. (These four topics will be taken up in turn in this chapter.)

Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is not entirely a modern phenomenon. Understanding the current condition may be enhanced through a consideration of past precedents.

Historical Perspective

Children have been sexually used as well as abused throughout history. There were times when sexual relations with children were legally and socially acceptable. Kempe and Kempe (1984) note that even before the Judeo-Christian era, historical accounts described sexual abuse of children.

Anal intercourse by adult males (often within the family and by teachers was imposed on young boys and routinely accepted in both Greece and Rome. Early castration of male children helped to preserve a more feminine appearance for enhancement of their beauty as male prostitutes. Some of them became great favorites of men in power and occupied the same kind of position as the royal mistresses of more recent centuries. Well into Christian time, castration of young boys before adolescence to preserve their soprano voices for church choirs was accepted by a series of popes and members of the highest level of the church hierarchy. (p. 4)

Encouragement of sexual relations between very young girls and adult men may be found in the Talmud and the Bible. The woman of biblical times was considered to be a kind of property or chattel. Child rape was held to be a case of theft in that virginity was thereby stolen, a theft that could be legitimized through payment and marriage. Child brides were not uncommon in India (Rush, 1980).

Sexual abuse could be found flourishing in certain quarters of early Christendom. According to Langer (1974, p. 357), crusaders, nobles, Christian knights, and even princes of the Church frequently ravished children and women. Members of the clergy enjoyed the privileges of sex from those they had charge of. Records from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reveal that nuns and novitiates were subjected to the sexual whims of those in the priesthood.

It appeared that a sexually promiscuous society had developed. For reasons too complex and still too obscure, there was a marked increase in sexual immorality, in seduction, and in illegitimacy. The evidence suggests that in all European countries, from Britain to Russia, the upper classes felt perfectly free to exploit, sexually, girls who were at their mercy (Langer, 1974, p. 357).

Later, in America, children continued to be victimized. During the Colonial period, young and indentured girls especially were sexually exploited. Prostitution flourished in America. In the early 1800s, a child could bring \$60 to \$70 a night in a bordello (Goldman & Wheeler, 1986, p. 8).

The most publicized case of individual child abuse in this country was in 1874 in New York City. A nine-year old girl, Mary Ellen, had been chained to her bedside and subjected to beatings and malnourishment. Since there were no laws on the books in regard to the humane treatment of children, the people concerned for

her welfare appealed to the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals on the grounds that Mary Ellen was a member of the animal kingdom. The Society agreed to accept the case and was able to get the child removed from her home (Radbill, 1974).

The Mary Ellen case, although not a case of sexual abuse, initiated a public awareness of child abuse. It led to the creation of the first Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in December of 1874 (Fontana, 1973). National concern for the proper treatment of animals was thus a precursor of a movement to secure better treatment for children (Kempe & Helfer, 1980).

Modern Developments

DePanfilis (1986) noted that the majority of persons guilty of sexual abuse of children, contrary to some public stereotypes, are not "perverts," "molesters," and "dirty old men." Studies show that a large proportion of such cases involve parents or other individuals familiar to the child. DePanfilis points out that of 9,000 cases of sex crimes against children reported by the American Humane Association in 1968, 75 percent were perpetrated by members of the victim's household, relatives, neighbors, or acquaintances of the victim. Between 1976 and 1982, some 57 percent of the perpetrators were natural parents, about 21 percent other

parents (step, foster, adoptive), and 16 percent other relatives, with just 6 percent not related to the child (DePanfilis, 1986, p. 10).

The estimated numbers of children reported as sexually maltreated have steadily risen over the years. Table 1 shows that this figure rose from 7,559 in 1976 to 71,901 in 1983 according to one estimate (Highlights of Official Child Neglect and Abuse Reporting, 1983, p. 12).

The actual figures on incidence of child abuse in the United States each year is difficult to estimate. Estimates range from 200,000 to 500,000 cases each year, and include at least 5,000 cases of incest (Saries, 1982). Professionals in the field generally agree that published figures probably are a gross under-reporting of actual cases. Cultural inhibitions and the secretive nature of the child sexual abuse problem probably combine to keep the actual incidence of sexual abuse of children hidden and obscure (May, 1978).

Table 1

National Estimate of Numbers of Children
Reported as Sexually Maltreated

Year	Estimated Number of Children
1976	7,559
1977	11,617
1978	12,257
1979	27,247
1980	37,356
1981	37,441
1982	56,607
1983	71,901

Davis (1985), based on her review of the literature, concluded that there is agreement on a number of reasons for the under-reporting of child sexual abuse.

Reasons most often given by Davis are:

1. The reluctance of parents and professionals to get involved in suspected cases of child sexual abuse.
2. The problem of having a common definition of child sexual abuse.
3. The sexual taboos connected with child sexual abuse.
4. The lack of standardized laws and reporting procedures. (p. 5)

Long-term effects of sexual abuse can be devastating. DePanfilis (1986) noted that:

Empirical studies with adults confirm the presence of many of the hypothesized long-term effects of sexual abuse mentioned in the clinical literature: suicidal tendencies, fears, isolation and stigma, lowered self-esteem, distrust, revictimization, substance abuse, and sexual dysphoria, sexual dysfunction, and

promiscuity. (p. 12)

Schools are places where children interact with professionals who are trained in child growth and development. Davis (1985) holds that the most reliable indicator of child sexual abuse is in the form of statements by the child, that "educators must also be aware of physical and behavioral indicators of sexual abuse in order to assist their students" (p. 21). DePanfilis (1985, p. 13) indicated that prevention activities have mainly centered on general public awareness efforts, dissemination of printed materials for parents to teach their children about sexual abuse, education for professionals who come in contact with children, and prevention education for children of all ages.

As a result of the U.S. Public Law 93-247 (Child Abuse Reporting) (1974), all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Territories have passed child abuse legislation mandating the reporting of abuse and neglect by persons in the helping professions.

Typically, police, social workers, doctors, and educators must report and others such as neighbors and relatives can also report voluntarily. The majority of states provide a criminal penalty for mandated reporters who fail to make a report (Davis, 1985, p. 23).

In most states, a special unit, Child Protective Services (CPS), has been set up to receive and

investigate reports of suspected child abuse and neglect and to arrange for the services to the child and family. Each of the 50 states also has at least two statutes covering sexual abuse: a criminal statute and a child protection statute. In the majority of states there are both civil and criminal remedies that may be pursued at the same time. The reporting laws and the juvenile or family court jurisdiction acts are for the purpose of protecting abused and neglected children. Laws dealing with sexual exploitation have been enacted in all the states. DePanfilis (1986) believes that new child sexual abuse criminal legislation has improved upon earlier laws for statutory rape and child molestation.

In general, these new statutes specifically define the prohibited acts, establish a tiered structure of offenses with graduated penalties based on the age of the victim and/or perpetrator, and protect children from abuse by family members or others in a position of authority over the child. However, there is still a lack of uniformity in certain provisions from State to State; for example, the upper age limit of the child victim ranges from age 11 to 17 (DePanfilis, 1986, p. 23).

Child Abuse in Iowa

Following P.L. 93-247 in 1974, certain professionals were required by Iowa law (Code of Iowa, 1984: ch. 232, sec. 2) to report suspected cases of child abuse. These professionals included psychologists, social workers, and certified school employees. A teacher, counselor, or social worker was required to

report suspected child abuse to the person in charge of the institution, presumably the principal or superintendent, who was then required to file a report to the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Iowa equivalent of a Child Protective Services unit. The system of reporting was improved upon by the Iowa Legislature in 1984.

In 1984, the Iowa Legislature passed a bill requiring teachers and other certified employees who were mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse to file their report directly to the nearest DHS, thereby eliminating the principal, superintendent, or other middle persons. This law was called the Child Abuse Reporting, Investigation and Rehabilitation Law.

Children in this state are in urgent need of protection from abuse. It is the purpose and policy of this law to provide the greatest possible protection to victims or potential victims of abuse through encouraging and increased reporting of suspected cases of such abuse, insuring the thorough and prompt investigation of these reports, and providing rehabilitative services, where appropriate and whenever possible to abused children and their families which will stabilize the home environment so that the family can remain intact with no further danger to the child (Chapter 232, Section 2, Iowa Code, 1984).

Under this law, all certified school employees became mandatory reporters of child abuse. There was a penalty attached. Any mandatory reporter who knowingly failed to report a suspected case of child abuse could be subjected to a \$100 fine or 30 days in jail along with

being civilly liable for the damages caused by such failure to report (Code of Iowa, Section 232.73, 1985). This law had the effect of increasing the awareness of child abuse in the schools of Iowa. The reports of child abuse were to be made to the nearest DHS. All suspected cases of child abuse were to be reported to the DHS with one exception; if the abuser was suspected to be a teacher, the report could not be made to the DHS.

The DHS under this law can accept only reports on identified "persons responsible for the care of a child" (Chapter 232, Section 2, Iowa Code). School employees do not fall into this category. By omission, teachers were thus not identified as caretakers of children. If a teacher is suspected as an abuser, then the course of action is notification of appropriate law enforcement agencies, either the County Sheriff or the County Attorney. The school administration or local school board can also be contacted if a teacher is suspected as a child abuser. In addition to the local school board, the Iowa Professional Teaching Practices Commission has the authority to investigate a teacher if suspected of wrongdoing.

Under this law, there is an implied recommendation that reporters contact law authorities directly when a teacher is suspected of child abuse. This eliminates any preliminary DHS investigation which might serve to ferret

out false accusations before they gain notoriety and seriousness through law enforcement apparatus. Appendix A lists a number of sexual abuse cases against teachers recorded by the Iowa Professional Teaching Practices Commission since the year 1977.

Iowa continues to wrestle with the problems associated with child abuse, especially child sexual abuse in the schools. In October, 1988, the State Superintendent of Schools mailed a memo to all public and non-public administrators of schools asking for input to the State Board of Education with respect to helping the Board develop model policy. This input would help establish procedures for investigating allegations of abuse of students by school employees or agents. The State is especially concerned with physical and sexual abuse. A uniform investigating procedure is scheduled to be in place in the State of Iowa by July 1, 1989.

Incidence of Child Sexual Abuse by Teachers

It is difficult to determine exactly how many incidents of sexual abuse against children occur every year. The American Humane Association in Denver, Colorado estimates that 231,000 cases were reported in 1984 (the most recent statistics available as of 1987), of which about 100,000 were substantiated. These numbers are based on data from child protective agencies in only

16 states, agencies that deal mainly with family problems. Most complaints against teachers are handled by local police departments, and in many states these cases are not reported to child protective agencies. "So the exact number of sexual abuse complaints involving teachers remains unknown" (Learning87, 1987, p. 48).

Davis (1984) stated that sexual abuse of children within the school environment is far more pervasive than most educators admit, with studies estimating up to 500,000 annual occurrences. Elshtain (1985) quoted Pamela Klein, director of the Rape and Sexual Abuse Center at Southern Illinois University, who holds that "abuse in school systems . . . is pervasive." Klein cites the example of a "popular and respected teacher" who was "suspected of molesting at least seven girls," a "not atypical case" (p. 19).

Elshtain (1985) cites another worker in the field of child care, Suzanne Danilson writing in the New York Times, who identifies possible sex abusers as not only parents but bus drivers, camp counselors, coaches, pediatricians, and ministers as well. She points out that pedophiles are naturally drawn to jobs where they have close contact with children. Elshtain (1985) indicates that some would protect children by making them fearful and suspicious, thereby avoiding contact.

More and more often we hear from divorced or

separated fathers who say they are afraid to hold or hug their children, or even change soiled diapers, for fear that a vindictive spouse may conjure up a tale of sexual abuse (Elshtain, 1985, p. 24).

Preschools

Many of the crucial issues of sex abuse pertinent to preschools also hold for elementary and high school, and accordingly, will be considered here. Mazur and Pekor (1985), in view of the sensationalistic accounts of sexual abuse investigations which have heightened public mistrust, raise the question: "Can teachers touch children anymore?" (p. 10)

Lacayo (1986) tells of four "chilling sexual abuse cases . . . which took a strange turn." Seven teachers and administrators at the prestigious McMartin Preschool in the Los Angeles suburb of Manhattan Beach were eventually indicted on hundreds of counts of child sexual abuse beginning in 1982. "There were tales of drugs, bondage and the mutilation of animals" (p. 64). In January of 1986, after an 18-month preliminary hearing (the longest in California history), a judge ruled that the prosecution of the seven could go forward, but a week later, District Attorney Ira Reiner dropped all charges against five of the defendants, calling the evidence against them "incredibly weak." Two remaining accused were to be tried, but their case was postponed. The defense asserted that the prosecution acted improperly by

withholding important evidence and lawyers for the defense asked to have all remaining charges dropped, or failing that, to have the District Attorney's office removed from the case. The DA insisted, however, that "there is strong, compelling evidence that the two are guilty." One of them had been in jail for 33 months without bail and said on 60 Minutes that the sexual abuse scandal had already ruined his life and that of his family (Time, December 15, 1986, p. 64).

Ted Gest (1987), writing in U.S. News & World Report, followed up the McMartin Preschool case, raising the question: "Can the 'Abused' Kids Be Believed?" Gest indicated that experts had predicted the case would set the pattern for a crack-down on the largely hidden problem of child molestation.

But by the time the trial of two ex-teachers at the now defunct school finally began last week, it appeared the case might instead someday serve as a textbook example of the pitfalls involved in bringing suspected child abusers to justice. (p. 11)

Gest cites the testimony of a mother who had told authorities in 1983 that her 2½-year old son had been molested at the school by Mr. Ray. Doctors found evidence of abuse, but the boy's credibility was challenged when he said he had seen the head of a baby severed and that Mr. Ray could fly. Stories from other parents about "naked games" played by the school employees with 13 students led to the arrest of seven

teachers and a nationwide wave of concern about dangers in the unregulated day-care industry. The scenario had been considerably darkened by reports that screen-writer producer Abby Mann had approached Glenn Stevens, a former member of the prosecution, with a book-and-movie contract. Parents of the McMartin children felt somewhat betrayed by this Hollywood gambit (Hackett, 1986). Hackett reported the disappointment of one mother who felt that the man "has sold us out for 30 pieces of silver." Some of the McMartin families have filed a complaint with the California attorney general's office asking that they investigate whether the man violated a law that prohibits a former prosecutor from advising the defense. "At this rate, the parents--and the children--might very well see their 3-year ordeal portrayed in a made-for-television movie before they see it resolved in court" (p. 43).

Specifically, as of May 1989, U.S. News and World Report (1989) reported somewhat sarcastically, the following vital statistics:

Length of trial: Two years, two days as of April 24, with months of testimony still to come.

Cost to taxpayers: \$15 million.

Number of witnesses: 100.

Charges: 65--one conspiracy allegation and 64 molestation counts.

Number of exhibits: 845.

Length of pretrial hearings: 18 months.

Number of citizens still attending the trial on an average day: 0.

Detention time for defendant Raymond Buckey: Nearly five years, from 1984 arrest to February, 1989 release on bail. Buckey's mother, Peggy, the other

defendant, was released three years ago.

Jury attrition: Four jurors have been excused. Two became ill, one had job troubles, and a fourth was inattentive.

Gest (1987) raises the crucial point of whether or not the testimony of toddlers can be believed:

Pointing to long sessions with therapists in which children were shown dolls' genitals and asked to tell their 'yucky secrets,' defense attorney Daniel Davis charges that 'these children were goaded into making untrue statements.' Prosecutor Rubin retorts that kids accurately 'remember events which occurred when they were 3, 4, or 5 years old.' The trial, which could last a year, will take an emotional toll on both defendants and victims. (p. 10)

In the McMartin pre-trial hearing, children testified by closed-circuit TV, but now must tell their stories to a packed courtroom. Gest notes that in recent years, 34 states declared videotaped testimony admissible, and 27 now allow hearsay evidence of children's statements. "Next term, the Justices [U.S. Supreme Court] will review a ruling that permits Iowa child victims to testify behind screens--which defendants say breaches their right to confront their accusers" (p. 10).

By way of commentary on the notion that "all these children can't possibly be wrong," one might cite a number of precedents that might be relevant here, most notably, the Salem Witchcraft trials over three centuries ago. Every school administrator is undoubtedly aware of cases where an entire class of students will break out in

symptoms that appear to be gas or food poisoning, when in fact, no such stimuli were present.

Michaels (1986) reported on the sex abuse scandal in 1984 at a day-care center at West Point. A Mrs. Patterson felt that she was leaving her three-year old daughter in the "safest place in the world," but soon learned that the child had been sexually abused by a teacher, a story that, according to Michaels, "the U.S. Army tried to hide" (p. 106). Investigators believed that the girl, Jennifer, had been abused and the U.S. Attorney acknowledged the likelihood that someone employed in the day-care center was responsible; yet evidence sufficient for an indictment could not be found. For an indictment, the DA said that adult witnesses and a history regarding the adults in question would have been required. Again, one has here the crucial element of the validity of a child's testimony. If physical/sexual abuse cannot be established even when evident, one might conjecture the almost impossible task of proving psychological abuse of children which may be severe enough to justify charges of malpractice or even dismissal (Lynch, 1984).

Technicalities are thus a means of protecting persons guilty of child sexual abuse. Overly aggressive defense attorneys may be another. Thus in the McMartin Preschool case discussed above, Newsweek (June 24, 1985)

indicated that "Defense attorneys have interrogated the young witnesses so vigorously that Bobb [municipal judge] accused one lawyer of 'abusing' one nine-year old, and parents of 16 of the remaining 28 witnesses said they would refuse to let their children testify--inside the courtroom or out" (p. 39). The defendants of course deny the charges, but nevertheless, the rights of the parents of abused children may be somewhat mangled in the judicial process--a state of affairs parallel to teachers falsely accused of child sexual abuse.

That child sexual abuse incidence has surged in American schools can hardly be denied, but, according to Mazur and Pekor (1985), sensationalist accounts or lack of knowledge by parents may provide parents with a false picture of the problem.

In fact, children are much less likely to be sexually abused in child care than in their neighborhoods or homes. Fewer than 1% of all reported child sexual abuse cases occur in child care. The number of recent cases of abuse in child care reflects a general increase in reporting of sexual, physical, and psychological abuse and neglect. (p. 11)

The heightened concern has not been without impact on educational programs. Mazur and Pekor (1985, p. 10) report the following anecdotal summaries:

1. As free playtime comes to an end for a group of 3- and 4-year olds, one girl darts back and forth across the room instead of sharing in cleanup. A teacher intercepts her with her arms and reminds the child "It's not time for running but for putting toys away." The child wriggles free and firmly states, "Don't touch me. My Mommy told me

teachers can't touch me anymore!"

2. On the day that allegations of sexual abuse in a child care program several miles away are reported by the media, all the parents in a university-affiliated center pick up their children early.
3. A 24-month old boy is sitting on a potty chair, unsuccessfully attempting to direct his urine into the potty. Although for years his teacher has been guiding toddlers in a hand-over-hand fashion as they learn how to use the toilet, she is suddenly worried that her actions may be misunderstood.
4. At a child care staff meeting, the male teachers request that staffing patterns be redesigned so they are never alone with children. The men feel they are being scrutinized and see this step as necessary to protect themselves against false accusations.
5. A child care directive suddenly institutes a new center policy which forbids all of the male caregivers in the program to diaper or in any other way have intimate contact with children.

Mazur and Pekor (1985) point out that physical nurturance of children is a crucial component of child care. "Thoughtful, developmentally appropriate physical contact between teachers and children plays an important role in any early childhood program" (p. 11). This involves cuddles and hugs, physical caretaking, a nurturance that helps to create and sustain the trusting relationships which enable children to feel secure and to become autonomous. Physical contact is also essential when working with special needs children, and can be a valuable part of the learning process. Aggressive children or those with other behavioral disorders may

require physical restraint, not to be confused with sexual molestation. The loss of spontaneous affection could be a serious detriment for both children and teachers.

Therefore, as professionals, we must continue to develop a clear theoretical understanding of the importance of physical contact for facilitating children's development. Just as we understand any other aspect of the curriculum, we can use our understanding of the importance of physical contact as the basis for thoughtful interactions with children (Mazur & Pekor, 1985, p. 12).

Elementary and High School

Not all cases of child sexual abuse, of course, are merely hysterical accusations or simply a matter of "beating the rap" through clever legal courtroom tactics. Plummer (1985) reports the case of "the brave testimony of a 10-year old girl" which led to the conviction of her former foster father. For the young girl, the first day of the trial was just the beginning of four days of excruciating testimony that would pit her horrific account of child abuse against the denials of one James McDermott. The jury deliberated the case for five days.

Although some were concerned about the inconsistencies and the girl's reluctance to answer questions, they agreed that the weight of the physical evidence indicated long-term abuse. They found McDermott guilty on all counts and he has been sentenced to 20 years in state prison (Plummer, 1985, p. 29).

Yet, the horror of ruined lives by mere emotionally laden allegations with no genuine substance looms large. One should be leery of such sensational charges as

explored by Strahinich (1986) in his article: "He Touched Me, The Little Girl Said: The Case of Dennis Demes and the Sunshine School."

Of special implication for the legal role status of children's testimony is the case reported by Van Dusen (1987, p. 56). The Montreal Urban Community (MUC) police filed 250 charges against 14 people following an investigation into allegations of sexual abuse at a government-run group home for problem children in the city's east end. However, none of the accused ever went to trial. For "lack of evidence," Quebec justice department officials ordered the last of the charges dropped on September 1, 1987. Serious complaints from social workers and youth protection officials led to a promise by Quebec Justice Minister Herbert Marx to inquire into the circumstances of the case; not a witch-hunt, "just the truth." Social workers were convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt of sexual abuse, but prosecutors said that the children's accounts of the alleged abuses during the closed preliminary hearings were contradictory.

The chief administrator of the 15 provincially run group homes in Montreal said that he blamed the criminal justice system for the Crown's inability to prosecute the case. This official, who alerted police to his suspicions about his staff's alleged misconduct, stated

the court system is designed by adults for adults. "When you use the same techniques of cross-examination on 10-year olds, their natural reaction is to change their story or to not answer at all" (Van Dusen, 1987, p. 56).

New federal legislation in Canada has been designed to promote more sensitivity to child witnesses on the part of the courts, and has been in effect since early in 1988 and may have some impact on the outcome of the case discussed above by Van Dusen. Under the new legislation, the rule requiring corroboration of evidence from children has been repealed. "Also, children are allowed to testify on videotape outside the courtroom--an important departure from existing practices that require the accused to be present" (Van Dusen, 1987, p. 57).

Collins (1985) pointed out an important distinction with regard to the persons that can be guilty of child sexual abuse in the Iowa school system. While teachers and other certified school employees are mandatory child abuse reporters, they are not "persons responsible for the care of a child." This legal distinction means that school personnel suspected of causing nonaccidental injury to a child cannot be reported to the Department of Human Services in the State of Iowa, a department which lacks jurisdiction over educators. Any school employee suspected of abusing a child must be reported to law enforcement personnel. "The Iowa Professional Teaching

practices Commission also has jurisdiction over all practicing teachers and certificate holders, and a complaint should be filed with the commission" (Collins, 1985, p. 2). It should be noted that the person in charge of the institution, such as a principal, is no longer contacted first. This "going over the head" might create the potential for sensationalist media blitzes that might try to resolve a criminal case in public forum before its validity has been established.

Another potential trouble spot is that a mandated reporter, such as a teacher, who knowingly and willfully fails to report suspected child abuse can be found criminally guilty and subjected to 30 days punishment or a \$100 fine. He or she is civilly liable for all damages flowing from failure to report. "This means that if a teacher suspects child abuse, decides not to report it (for whatever reason), and the child is subsequently abused, the teacher may be held personally liable for the doctor bill, hospitalization charges, and any other damage that naturally follows" (Collins, 1985, p. 2). The "reasonable belief" of child sexual abuse is difficult to define, and teachers "playing it safe" in order to avoid their own prosecution, much less that of any child molester, may run to law enforcement officers at the slightest suspicion.

The analysis of Mazur and Pekor (1985) discussed



earlier in this literature review is brought to mind here. The authors pointed out that necessary nurturing by the teacher of preschoolers could be easily misinterpreted as sexual abuse. One can easily imagine high school or elementary teachers who may have, for example, been willing to offer private assistance (tutoring) to students on school premises now balking at such instruction. The situation is obviously wide open to possible sex abuse charges.

No reliable and comprehensive sex abuse data could be found for just the state of Iowa. However, Appendix A lists 19 sexual abuse cases against teachers recorded by the Iowa Professional Teaching Practices Commission since 1977. In seven of the cases the defendants pled guilty; in two the defendants were convicted; and the remaining ten cases were not determined one way or the other.

The two cases in which the defendant was convicted involved lascivious acts with a child. The seven cases in which the defendant pled guilty involved indecent exposure to a child, indecent contact with a child, lascivious acts with a child, sexual abuse in the third degree, and sexual abuse. In the remaining ten cases not determined in court, the charges included lascivious acts with a child, inappropriate sexual behavior with teachers, improper touching of students, inappropriate touching and sexual acts with students, inappropriate

sexual touching of a child, inappropriate sexual behavior with a child, sexual contact with a minor student, and inappropriate sexual conduct with children.

The impact of false accusations can be disastrous not only to individuals but a community. Nikiforuk (1984) relates how during an eight-month period beginning on October 1, 1983, police in Jordan, Minnesota, charged 25 adults with sexual abuse against more than 40 children between the ages of 2 and 17. But the local district attorney soon announced that she was withdrawing all the outstanding charges to avoid compromising a more important investigation by the FBI having to do with a pornography ring and even murders. Local residents resent the way the case was handled, feeling that dropping charges against 22 defendants meant that the charges were not real. Jurors acquitted one couple because jurors said they could not believe the children's testimony.

Of all the Jordan residents who remain under a cloud of suspicion, probably none has suffered more than Donald Buchan. On June 4, both he and his wife were charged with 22 counts of sexual misconduct involving four children, two of them their own. Deputy Sheriff Buchan, 37, says he and his 27-year old wife, Cindy, were victims of a witch-hunt, fueled by overzealous investigators who manipulated children to distort the truth. On the day of their arrest state social workers seized all three of the Buchans' children, a son and two daughters ranging from 2 to 5, and placed them in foster homes. Although their two-year old son was returned last week, they have not seen their daughters. Said Buchan, echoing a widespread sentiment in Jordan: 'We really feel cheated. With

all the dismissals, we don't know who is guilty, who is innocent--and who in the judicial system screwed it all up' (Nikiforuk, 1984, p. 65).

Validity and Impact of Child Sexual Abuse Accusations

Jones (1985) conducted a study to find out how often reports of child sexual abuse are false (or fictitious). Two samples were used. Sample 1 (N = 576) consisted of all the cases reported to Denver Department of Social Services Sexual Abuse Team during 1983. Sample 2 (N = 21) consisted of fictitious cases of child sexual abuse seen at the Kempe National Center between 1983 and 1985.

With respect to sample 1, 54% of the cases were "founded" and 46% "unfounded." Jones indicates that nearly 17% of all the reports were made by adults who, either on their own initiative or because a counselor or doctor had required them to make a report, were "appropriately concerned" about the possibility of sexual abuse, but when the matter was looked into, they were satisfied with the conclusions of the sex abuse team and did not falsely create an allegation. "These cases were quite distinct from the fictitious accounts" (Jones, 1985, p. 3). It was concluded that 6.25% of the total number of reports were fictitiously made by an adult, and 1.56% fictitiously generated by a child, or a total of 7.81%--so that almost 8% of the reports in Denver for 1983 (with respect to sample 1) were fictional.

With respect to sample 2 fictional accounts, 5 were child accounts, 9 adult, and 7 mixed. Jones (1985) noted two implications of the study:

1. Fictitious accounts of child sexual abuse are not common, but do occur and involve children of all ages and both sexes.
2. The ability to spot such cases means that the evaluator has to entertain the possibility that fictitious cases can occur. (p. 5)

Emans (1987) pointed out that laws governing due process are often misunderstood or ignored in child sexual abuse cases. Accusers enjoy complete anonymity and full legal protection and standard rules of evidence are frequently disregarded. "Often, individuals accused of child abuse are presumed guilty until they establish their innocence" (p. 36).

Emans further notes that anyone--even if emotionally disturbed--can accuse someone of child abuse at any time. Indeed, it is a crime not to report a suspected case of child sexual abuse; social workers and law enforcement officers can be sued for failing to investigate such reports. "Officials investigating suspected child abuse often have limited knowledge of children, and their procedures frequently lack reliability or validity" (Emans, 1987, p. 37).

One reason for this lack of validity, continues Emans (1987), is that, just as Piaget suggests, children do not always discriminate between play and the real

world, often mistaking memories of dreams for memories of actual events. "Children are not able to fully differentiate between internal thoughts and external happenings until about age 11" (Emans, 1987, p. 37). Furthermore, vengeful or disturbed adults may manipulate children into believing they have been sexually abused when they have not.

Questioning by adults they fear and wish to please can induce children to 'lie.' They then come to believe what they have said. After prolonged questioning by investigators, children often confuse fact and fantasy. When adults already (and often too willingly) believe sexual abuse has occurred, they often deal with alleged victims in ways heightening their suggestibility (Emans, 1987, p. 47).

Emans questions the reliability of child protection workers in some instances. Child protection workers "tend to be self-righteous, unwilling to admit mistakes, lacking in ethics, naive about children, willing to use hearsay evidence, likely to conduct one-sided investigations, and blind to contradictory evidence" (Emans, 1987, p. 37).

Emans (1987) cites the American Humane Association's 1985 statement which, in effect, states that lack of evidence does not disprove the charge of sexual abuse, ignoring that even a substantiated case may actually be false. "They also ignore that 'unsubstantiated' cases involving innocent individuals can have disastrous effects on the lives of those individuals" (p. 37).

Emans (1987) believes that investigators are often

insufficiently regulated, and tend to be ignorant of child development and training in procedures for conducting psychological evaluations, often injecting their own personal opinions into reports. "Yet, they often have enough influence to convince a judge to issue a warrant for an arrest--thereby causing a person's name to go on police records as a suspected child abuser" (pp. 37-38).

Very illustrative of what Emans delineates about irresponsible approaches to child sexual abuse is that of Quast-Wheatley (1988) in his article on the subject. He begins by noting that "It is the responsibility of the educator who suspects sexual abuse to report it" (p. 12). However, the author does not concern himself with verification through responsible social workers first, but taking action on mere suspicion. One might wonder what would happen to the administrator of a school, for example, were the board of education to follow such policies regarding their personnel. In the case of child sexual abuse, private preliminary closed-door hearings out of the purview of the legal system seem to be ignored in favor of sensationalist legal entanglements at the very onset.

Emans (1987) states that cases of suspected child abuse reported in the United States amounted to 1.7 million in 1985, and 80 percent of sexual abuse cases

were later determined to be unfounded--40 percent more than five years before. Emans indicates that up to 80 percent of those falsely accused of child abuse lose their jobs or suffer other employment problems. Hundreds falsely accused have undergone traumatic investigations in order to establish their innocence, while others have had to take part in corrective activities for things they did not do.

Individuals falsely accused of child abuse have been psychologically scarred, and their reputations have been severely tarnished. Whole families have been destroyed. Even when cleared of such charges, parents may lose custody of their offspring, and those who work with children may be permanently listed in police records as possible child abusers. Meanwhile, the alleged victims themselves may be stripped, searched, or otherwise subjected to intensive physical and psychological examinations (Emans, 1987, p. 36).

A particularly poignant case is that of C. M. Littleton (1987)--a pseudonym--who tells his story in Learning87. "After 16 years of teaching, my career and my life were shattered by an 11-year old girl's false accusation that I'd grabbed her in the buttocks and crotch during class" (p. 44). The principal stated the charges to Littleton, an art teacher who served four different schools. The teacher's union decided that Littleton shouldn't return to school until they had investigated the charges. The principal was required by law to report the accusation.

My wife was devastated when I told her the news. We

both felt confused, humiliated, shamed, even physically ill. Our doctor prescribed tranquilizers, and we began seeing a stress counselor. I wasted no time in hiring a lawyer He told me that right and wrong, innocence and guilt, even justice and injustice, were irrelevant. As far as my defense was concerned, all that mattered was the accusation (Littleson, 1987, p. 44).

The lawyer informed Littleson that he had two choices: plead innocent to the felony charge of second-degree criminal sexual abuse (one step below rape) and risk a jail sentence--or plead "no contest" to the misdemeanor of simple assault, and receive only one year's probation. The lawyer advised the latter and "after much agony, I finally agreed, even though pleading no contest is the same as pleading guilty" (Littleson, 1987, p. 44). Littleson realizes now that he made the right choice, but "I felt humiliated--and enraged--for admitting to a crime I didn't commit" (Littleson, 1987, p. 44). Littleson and his wife moved to another state.

Littleson suggests the following practices to prevent charges of sexual molestation:

Don't touch students. Don't be alone with them. Don't try to handle their problems yourself. Instead, refer troubled students to a counselor. Protect other teachers. If a student's talking about another teacher, question the student immediately and tell the teacher in question. Stop rumors before they spread (p. 45).

Littleson further cautions teachers about false assumptions, offering a number of them as follows. He cautions teachers to fully expect that the constitutional

rights of the accused will not be respected, that one does not have the right to confront one's accusers.

Accusations need not be proven, and corroboration in some states is not required. Do not assume you can protect your private life, since it will be scrutinized by the police and child protection services who may ask embarrassing personal questions that may be exposed in the press. An accused teacher who is a parent may risk losing his or her children to foster homes. And do not assume that your administration or school board will stand by you. They may also be held liable to a civil suit.

Learning87 noted that the number of teachers falsely accused of sexual abuse has increased. "According to attorney Lynn Ohman, manager of the legal services program for the National Education Association, about 100 insurance claims were processed last year for legal fees provided to teachers accused and exonerated of sexual abuse charges" (Learning87, 1987, p. 48). Five years ago the number was 50. This increase may be due to the passage of laws requiring school officials, including teachers, to report even unsubstantiated abuse charges.

Implications for School Administrators

One can only concur with Davis (1985) that professional educators "must be trained and educated to deal with cases of sexual abuse" (p. 29). Ross (1985)

offered three suggestions to help school superintendents avert problems of sexual abuse by teachers before they happen:

1. Screen employees carefully.
2. Know your principals.
3. Have principals keep a sharp eye on their staff for potentially significant changes in behavior.

Petrie (1987) emphasized the importance of developing procedures for dealing with cases of child sexual abuse, other than merely reporting suspected cases to law enforcement or social agencies. This may involve not only greater awareness of responsibility, but, according to Quast-Wheatley (1989), information on indicators of sexual abuse, issues in reporting sexual abuse, effects of reporting on the child victim, school-based interventions, and school-based preventive programming.

When a principal is faced with investigations of child sexual abuse in his school, Emans (1987) cautions the principal to bear in mind that investigators are often insufficiently regulated, tend to lack knowledge of child development and training in procedures of conducting psychological evaluations, and may even inject their own personal opinions into reports. "Yet, they often have enough influence to convince a judge to issue a warrant for an arrest--thereby causing a person's name to go on police records as a suspected child abuser" (pp. 37-38). Thus the

principal must take great caution when "cooperating" with any such investigator; he must not, in effect, become a co-conspirator in any witch-hunt. Emans (1987) suggests that school administrators, teachers, parents, and other potential victims of child abuse laws can take steps to protect themselves, information being available from Victims of Child Abuse Laws (1989).

The principal may counsel teachers to hire an attorney and not make statements to anyone unless the attorney is present. Emans (1987) further recommends that the accused should document everything, not to naively believe that workers are merely conducting a preliminary investigation when actually they are trying to build a case.

Emans points out that unreasonable attitudes and procedures on the part of the investigators should be exposed to an appropriate official. Child protection workers may be held legally and financially responsible. "Of late, the courts have been finding more child protection workers liable for conducting substandard investigations and ignoring the rights of the accused" (Emans, 1987, p. 38). The threat of a lawsuit, a charge of malpractice, or revocation of a child protection worker's license could be a last resort, and the teacher should be aware of such possible courses of action. Emans recommends that principals develop processes for correcting or removing information from an individual's record when that

information cannot be established as fact.

Mazur and Pekor (1985) noted the importance of teachers keeping themselves informed about the value of appropriate physical contact with young children, to discuss the issues openly. Teachers can share ideas about appropriate types of physical interactions with children and be aware of the vulnerability that male teachers can experience. "Directors [principals] can explore ways with each other to support teachers and consider the role that program policies can play in providing this support" (Mazur & Pekor, 1985, p. 12).

In discussing the Jones (1985) study of reliable and fictitious accounts of sexual abuse in children, Preventing Sexual Abuse (Summer 1985, p. 5) noted a number of his conclusions that could be of special significance for principals wishing to evaluate child sexual abuse accusations. Based on 45 fictitious reports of child sexual abuse, several observations were made.

1. The children who made fictitious reports were girls aged 12-17. All had been sexually abused in earlier childhood and had symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.
2. Two adult reporters suffered from major psychoses.
3. A few of the allegations made by the adults evolved from custody or visitation disputes.
4. Some adults who made fictitious reports had been sexually abused as children and displayed significant psychological distress from this experience.

In the Jones sample of 21 reports (in the same study) that were known to be fictitious at the outset, the following significant observations were made.

1. The child-generated reports were from girls, ages 3-9.
2. All the girls talked about their experience with a lack of emotion and there was no history of threats or coercion.
3. Four had documented histories of sexual abuse and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder were present.
4. One child was the subject of a custody dispute.
5. The adult reporters were women alleging abuse of 2 male and 7 female children, ages 1-6. In 6 of the 9 cases a custody or visitation dispute was in process. Six of the 9 adults were prior victims of sexual abuse themselves.

Such factors are therefore to be looked for in any accusation of sexual abuse against a teacher. The principal should make his teachers falsely accused of child sexual abuse aware of these factors as causes of the accusations and as elements of defense in any possible subsequent lawsuit or court action.

Preventing Sexual Abuse (1986, p. 5) lists some preliminary implications of the Jones report. They are especially relevant to diagnosing fictitious cases.

1. The presence of a motive, family situation and dynamics, custody or visitation disputes, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder in either the adult or child are factors to consider when assessing whether a report might be fictitious.
2. The absence of emotion and of threats or coercive features in the child's account of the abuse are

common to fictitious report cases.

3. Those making fictitious accounts typically require psychological help.
4. A child developmental specialist (therapist, psychiatrist, or psychologist) in the early investigative stages would be helpful in assessing difficult cases.

Jones (1985) indicated that diagnosis of fictitious cases depends upon early interviews with the child and parent, and then upon a search for a possible mechanism to explain a fictitious generation of false accusations. Jones cautions that "the presence of any of the features which did occur in the 21 cases described above should not be taken to mean that the report is false, but should be regarded as a red flag to the evaluator" (p. 5). However, many accounts are reliable even where some of these features exist. For example, "a separate study of custody disputes containing child sex abuse allegations by this author, indicates only in a minority of such cases does the account of sexual abuse appear to be a fictitious one" (Jones, 1985, p. 5).

Quast-Wheatley (1988) raised the question of how many abused and/or neglected children are placed in special education due to the effects of victimization in the home. The principal may likewise keep in mind how many accusations of child sexual abuse against teachers might occur because of problems in the home.

Rich (1987) pointed out that what constitutes

teacher immorality may vary according to the community or court that has jurisdiction. "Teachers must be properly informed about professional and community expectations to conduct themselves appropriately" (p. 6). While child sexual abuse is certainly no mere matter of local folkways and mores but an emotionally laden taboo, nevertheless, what constitutes sexual abuse may not be a simple matter. A teacher may innocently touch a student and then be charged with sexual abuse. The current social mind, informed through sex education and TV fantasy, may find no compunction in projecting lurid intent into almost any act, whether normal or abnormal. The principal must be especially on guard for such possible tendencies in the social mind of his community.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of the study was to explore the incidence and validity of child sexual abuse allegations against teachers in Iowa public schools, along with implications of these allegations for school principals. Toward that purpose a sample of Iowa elementary and high school principals completed a special questionnaire designed to address 12 research questions. In this chapter, the sample, questionnaire (instrumentation), procedures, and data analysis are discussed in detail. These four topics will be taken up in that order.

Sample

It was decided that the best way to address the 12 research questions was to sample the population of all principals in the State of Iowa. The Iowa Department of Education was contacted in the Summer of 1987 to determine the population size. The Department provided a 44-page computer printout for all of the state-recognized schools along with the name of the principal that served for each school during the 1986-87 school year. The numbers and levels of schools are shown in Table 2. From these schools (totalling 1,880), a sample size of 320 was

recommended by the methodology of Isaac and Michael (1983, p. 193). To select the actual sample, the researcher selected every fifth school listed on the computer printout of schools. A total of 376 names were chosen, in this way hoping to obtain at least 320 questionnaire responses from as many individual principals.

Table 2

Total Number, Kind (Public or Non-Public),
and Level of Iowa Schools for 1986-87

Number	Public or Non-Public	
5	Public	Not Classified
466	Public	High School
131	Public	Junior High School
116	Public	Middle School
930	Public	Elementary
28	Non-Public	High School
199	Non-Public	Elementary
5	Non-Public	K-12
<u>1,880</u>		

The Principals Questionnaire

The Principals Questionnaire is shown in Appendix B. Part I of the questionnaire consists of 10 items which provide demographic data for schools and principals with respect to: age, sex, marital status, years teaching experience, years administrative experience, years at present school as an administrator, the various grade levels included in the principal's building, type of

school, the number of students in the building, and the principal's annual salary.

Part II of the questionnaire has to do with child abuse information. Items 11 through 15 provide data pertinent to research questions one through six. Item 16 asks the principal to provide any comments that would help understand the circumstances surrounding responses to items 11-15. Items 11-15 are answered by either a "no" or a "yes" response.

Part III of the questionnaire consists of items 17 through 22 and provide data pertinent to research questions seven through ten. Item 23 asks the respondent to provide any comments desired on items 17 through 22.

Although not part of the questionnaire, a telephone interview was conducted with 12 principals. The data from these 12 interviews were especially relevant to answering research questions 11 and 12. These interviews were guided using seven questions shown in Appendix C (Focused Interview Questions).

Procedures

A total of 376 questionnaires were mailed in April of 1988. Self-addressed stamped envelopes were included for the convenience of the principals.

The follow-up interviews occurred after the questionnaire survey. Those principals asked to

participate in the interview were those who had answered "yes" to item 20 on the questionnaire. A total of 32 survey questionnaires came back with "yes" to this question concerning the principal's involvement in a situation of child sexual abuse against a teacher which turned out to be a false or unfounded accusation. Letters were mailed to these 32 principals along with a return postal card. The letter asked each principal if he or she could be contacted by phone for a follow-up interview. Twelve principals agreed and were interviewed by phone during the month of May, 1988. The results of these interviews are reported separately from the questionnaire data.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was essentially descriptive. The demographic data served to characterize the sample for purpose of assurance that sample bias did not exist in the form of some extreme characteristic such as, for example, an elementary versus high school sample, or as further example, a very experienced versus inexperienced sample.

Most of the questionnaire items required either a "yes" or "no" answer. Sample responses to such items reported as percentages for the entire sample; that is, what percent answered "yes" and what percent answered "no." Items 17 and 18 of the questionnaire required numerical

estimates rather than simple "yes" or "no" answers. These estimates were recorded as incidence counts for the entire sample.

Items 16 and 23 provided data in the form of written comments. These comments were read, and where possible, generalizations made. Where of special value to the research, unique individual comments were noted and recorded as part of the data.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The results of the research are presented in this chapter. Specifically, the questionnaire and telephone survey data will be used for purpose of answering the 12 research questions posed by the study.

Demographic Data

Of the 376 questionnaires mailed to Iowa school principals in April of 1988, there were 288 (75.6%) usable questionnaires returned by the end of May, 1988. Of these, some were only partially filled out. A total of 265 of the questionnaires, or 92% of all returned usable questionnaires, were completely filled out.

Table 3 is a summary of demographic data for the principals and their schools. The data indicate that the preponderant majority of the sample were male in the 35-55 age range (74.4%), mostly married (88.2%). Incomes were mostly in the \$30,000-\$50,000 range (80.9%). About half (51.4%) of the sample were public elementary school principals, a little over one fourth (27.1%) public high school principals. Slightly less than one third (31.3%) had 1-9 years teaching experience, with about half (51.7%) between 10 and 30 years in teaching experience. With

respect to administrative experience, a little less than one third (32.3%) had 1-9 years experience, with 61.1% between 10 and 30 years experience.

Table 3

Demographic Data Summary for Sample of
Iowa School Principals (N = 288)

<u>Sex</u>	Number	Percentage
Male	244	84.7
Female	38	13.2
No Response	6	2.1
<u>Age</u>		
Under 35	20	6.9
35-45	107	37.2
45-55	107	37.2
Over 55	48	16.6
No Response	6	2.1
<u>Marital Status</u>		
Single	20	6.9
Married	254	88.2
Separated	8	2.8
Widowed	1	0.4
Divorced	0	0.0
No Response	5	1.7
<u>Type of School</u>		
Public High School	78	27.1
Public Junior High School	15	5.2
Public Middle School	17	5.9
Public Elementary School	148	51.4
Private High School	2	0.7
Private Elementary School	28	9.7

Table 3 (Continued)

<u>Income</u>	Number	Percentage
Under \$10,000	11	3.8
\$10,000-\$20,000	9	3.1
\$20,000-\$30,000	26	9.0
\$30,000-\$40,000	136	47.2
\$40,000-\$50,000	97	33.7
Over \$50,000	1	0.4
No Response	8	2.8
<u>Teaching Experience (years)</u>		
1- 9	90	31.3
10-19	87	30.2
20-29	62	21.5
30-39	39	13.5
40-49	3	1.0
50-59	1	0.4
No Response	6	2.1
<u>Administrative Experience (years)</u>		
1- 9	93	32.3
10-19	105	36.5
20-29	71	24.6
30-39	16	5.6
40-59	0	0.0
No Response	3	1.0

The Research Questions

Questionnaire Data Summary

Research questions 1 and 2 were addressed by means of a review of literature (see Chapter II). Hence the data summary begins with research question 3.

Research Question 3: Were there teachers on your staff during the previous five years who were accused of sexual abuse of a child in the school? If so, how many?

Item 11 of the questionnaire addressed this research question. Four principals gave no response; 23 (8%) said yes; 261 (90.6%) said no. Item 17 of the questionnaire was also related to this research question. In response to item 17, there were 74 principals (about 26% of the respondents) who said they knew of sexual abuse accusations against at least 145 teachers in the school district where they had been employed.

Research Question 4: Did the accusation(s) become a matter of public record?

Item 12 of the questionnaire addressed this research question. Of the 23 principals who answered yes to item 12, 9 (39.1%) said yes to item 12, that the accusation(s) had become a matter of public record; the remaining 14 (60.9%) said no.

Research Question 5: Did the accused teacher lose his/her job?

Item 13 of the questionnaire addressed this research question. Of the 23 principals who answered yes to item 13, 8 (34.8%) said yes, that the accused teacher lost his/her job; the remaining 65.2% said no.

Research Question 6: Did the accusations appear to be accurate or fictitious?

Item 15 of the questionnaire addressed this research question. Because of the ambiguous wording and response alternatives, this question provided no usable data. However, item 20 of the questionnaire asked the principal whether he or she had ever been involved in a situation with a child sexual abuse accusation against a teacher in his or her school which turned out to be false or unfounded. Of the 288 principals reporting, 32 (11%) said yes; 238 (83%) said no, and 18 (6%) did not respond.

Research Question 7: How much time did the administrator have to spend in dealing with a case of alleged sexual molestation of a child by a teacher?

Item 18 of the questionnaire addressed this research question. The breakdown of response data to this item is as follows:

Less than 8 hours	32
8 hours	14
24 hours	12
48 hours	8
More than 48 hours	8
Does not apply to me	214

Responses here refer not only to sexual abuse cases in the last five years, but as in item 17, to all previous experience as school principal, accounting for the 32 principals who indicated "Less than 8 hours," a number higher than the 23 principals responding yes to item 11.

Research Question 8: Does the administrator believe that a child would deliberately lie or make up a false

accusation for mere maliciousness or "getting even"?

Item 18 of the questionnaire addressed this research question. Of the 288 principals reporting, 216 (75%) said yes while 63 (22%) said no; the remaining 3% giving no response.

Research Question 9: Should safeguards be put into place for the teacher who is accused in order to prevent a reputation from being ruined should the accusation be false?

Item 21 of the questionnaire addressed this research question. As expected, the overwhelming majority (273 [95%] of reporting principals) said yes, while 4 (1%) said no; the remaining 11 (4%) not responding.

Research Question 10: Is the problem of false accusations of child sexual abuse a significant one in education that warrants further study?

Item 22 of the questionnaire addressed this research question. There were 143 principals (about 50%) who said yes, 122 (42%) who said no, and the remaining 23 (8%) gave no response.

Insert Table 4 Here

Focused Interviews

Research questions 11 and 12 were addressed by means of a review of literature and the focused telephone

Table 4

Summary of Responses to Selected
Questions on the Questionnaire

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u> <u>RESPONSE</u>
Were there teachers on your staff during the past five years who were accused of the sexual abuse of a child in the school? (#11)	23 8%	261 91%	4 1%
	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u> <u>RESPONSE</u>
Did the accusation become a matter of public record? (#12)	9 39%	14 61%	0 0%
	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u> <u>RESPONSE</u>
Did the accused teacher lose his/her job? (#13)	8 35%	15 65%	0 0%
	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u> <u>RESPONSE</u>
Have you ever been involved in a situation with a child sexual abuse accusation against a teacher which turned out to be false or unfounded? (#20)	32 11%	238 83%	18 6%
	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u> <u>RESPONSE</u>
Do you believe that a child would deliberately lie or make up a false accusation for mere maliciousness or "Getting even"? (#19)	216 75%	63 22%	9 3%
	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u> <u>RESPONSE</u>
Should safeguards be put into place for the teacher who is accused in order to prevent a reputation from being ruined should the accusation be false? (#21)	273 95%	4 1%	11 4%

Table 4 (continued)

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u> <u>RESPONSE</u>
Is the problem of false accusations of child sexual abuse accusations significant enough to warrant further study? (#22)	143 50%	122 42%	23 8%

How many teachers in the school districts where you have been employed have had child sexual abuse accusations, in regard to their students, filed with the school? (#17)	Total Number of Teachers 145		

When you find it necessary to deal directly with an accusation directed toward one of your teachers, what is your best estimate of how much time you spend on the problem? (#18)	Less than 8 hours	32	
	8 hours	14	
	24 hours	12	
	48 hours	8	
	More than 48 hours	8	
	Does not apply to me	214	

interview (see Appendix C for specific questions asked). Of the 13 principals who originally agreed to be interviewed, one reneged, leaving 12 interviews actually made. The principals providing the following anecdotal data are each identified by a number ranging from 1 to 12. Some data has been altered to insure anonymity.

Principal 1: Principal 1 was in charge of an elementary school (K-6) with an enrollment of over 300 students. He related that an accusation was made by a fifth-grade girl to the effect that the PE teacher had fondled her during physical education class. The irate parents reported this to the principal, who listened carefully and took notes. He then contacted the superintendent and the supervisor of administration to set a plan of approach to the problem. There were further discussions and note taking involving the PE teacher who denied the accusation.

The principal met again with the parents who now threatened to go to the newspaper if something was not done about the situation. The principal got the names of five students and their parents who said that they knew about the touching. The principal talked with them for a total of about six hours, from which the names of six other students were obtained; students who allegedly knew about the touching. The principal asked the school attorney to become involved in order to protect the

teacher and to look after the school district's interests.

The parents did not actually go to the newspapers, but they instead talked to other parents in an effort to create pressure towards removing the teacher from the classroom. The teacher was sent out of the school district to a neighboring community for a psychiatric evaluation at the school district's expense. The teacher was also kept on the payroll with no loss in pay during his absence from school.

There remained some doubt about the teacher's guilt or innocence, the sum total of evidence being very inconclusive. The PE teacher was permanently reassigned to another building in the school district and continued to teach.

The incident took about two months to resolve and consumed hours of administrative time. The district did not have a well defined policy and more or less "played it by ear" in an effort to treat the problem as a matter of fact finding and due process.

Principal 2: Principal 2 was in charge of a middle high school (6-12) having an enrollment of over 200 students. He indicated that there were two sexual abuse accusations since he had been at the school (3 years). The first one involved a math teacher who was also a driver for a commercial bus line that took the junior class on a trip to Minneapolis. A chaperone on this trip, who did

not want to be known to the teacher, said that the teacher/bus driver touched some of the girls while on the trip.

The teacher was confronted by the principal. The accusations were denied by the teacher and no further accusations or incidences were reported. The teacher remained on the teaching staff.

A second teacher on the principal's staff was accused of touching some girls prior to the administrator's assuming the role of principal. The teacher was a music teacher accused of touching during private lessons. Nothing was ever substantiated and the teacher did not lose his job. However, a problem remained to be resolved. The school district was planning to merge with a neighboring school district, and the other school district had taken heed of the accusations and did not want the teacher retained on the staff. The principal was not sure how the matter would be resolved, adding that students can be vindictive to the point of making false accusations, a "growing area of concern" which increases the vulnerability of teachers.

Principal 3: Principal 3 was in charge of an elementary school (K-6) with an enrollment of over 400. The principal relates that a female teacher was accused of molesting a fourth-grade male student in her classroom. The parents of the male student contacted the principal to report that the teacher was touching their son in an

inappropriate manner during school time, and that they wanted it "to stop immediately." The principal explained to the parents that the school district had a child abuse policy, that they would be hearing from the high school principal shortly.

The elementary principal indicated that the child abuse policy requires an immediate investigation of a child sexual abuse accusation. The policy also calls for an administrator to be the district child abuse investigator. The elementary principal is the investigator for the district unless it takes place in his building, in which case, the high school principal becomes the investigator.

Upon being contacted by the parents, the principal immediately informed the superintendent and the high school principal of the accusation. The investigator contacted the teacher and it was initially decided to let the teacher remain in the classroom. The parents were contacted and asked to meet with the investigator and the student. This investigation covered a period of about a week, during which time the teacher was removed from the classroom for about three days, but with pay.

Although there was no conclusive evidence to support the student's accusation, rumors began to circulate in the community. The parents finally came forward and said that they did not believe that there had been any sexual abuse

of their child. The boy remained in the accused teacher's classroom until the end of the year. Although she was not asked to resign, the accused teacher did not sign a contract with the school district for the following year. She evidently no longer felt comfortable living in the community and felt that she had to move elsewhere. Even though the accusation had been kept out of the newspaper, the teacher's reputation was tarnished nevertheless.

In order to protect a teacher, the school district has a policy of keeping publicity to a minimum. Also, the school district has a designated investigator who is available, so that parents need not resort to outside investigation--at least initially. If parents feel that the school is thoroughly investigating their accusations, they will be less compelled to go to the newspapers or to the police.

Principal 4: Principal 4 was in charge of a high school (10-12) with an enrollment of over 250. A girl reported that a male teacher had put his hands on her leg and "rubbed down" on the leg. The girl also claimed that other girls were touched by the teacher and that he had put his arms around other female students.

The principal talked with the superintendent concerning the legal responsibilities of the school. He then talked with the accused teacher, visited the classroom, individual students in the class, and former

students of the teacher. Some of the graduates said that this teacher's nickname was "Mr. Touch." Although there seemed to be credibility to the students' accusations, the principal could not find anything substantial.

The principal indicated that if he had the situation to do over again, he would have gotten to the parents immediately, obtained a signed statement, and developed the case immediately. He also would have contacted the Iowa Professional Teaching Practices Board. "I started in a low key manner, did not proceed very quickly, and now I still have the teacher on staff, some unhappy parents, and no resolution to the problem."

Principal 5: Principal 5 was in charge of a middle school (5-9) with an enrollment of over 300 students. A 13-year old boy accused one of his male teachers of putting an arm on the student's shoulder and patting the student on the back. The student claimed that this was done during class time and in an affectionate manner.

The boy had been living in a group home and his background indicated that he had been subject to physical and sexual abuse as he grew up. He made his complaint known to the authorities in the group home. This outside agency contacted the police department who conducted an investigation. The principal was informed of the investigation, but not involved in it. The superintendent was informed of the investigation and checked to see

whether the school board had a sexual abuse policy. No such policy was found.

No charges were filed. The local newspaper did not appear to be aware of the investigation--at least nothing appeared in the paper. The teacher kept his teaching position. The principal commented that if a vindictive student wanted to make a mess of a teacher's life, he or she certainly could do it.

Principal 6: Principal 6 was in charge of an elementary (K-5) school with an enrollment of less than 300 students. Some gossip had been passed along about the male music teacher in his building, evidently touching girls that were now in sixth grade. The "information" came to him from a middle school teacher, never from a parent, never outright accusation, but in the form of gossip. The music teacher was made aware of the gossip.

The principal relates that he always made a point at the beginning of the school year to mention to the entire staff the risk that goes with touching a student. The local school board has a sexual abuse policy but the principal never found out what it was. In this particular case, the principal felt that some "over-active minds" were talking freely without thinking of the implications of their statements.

Principal 7: Principal 7 was in charge of an elementary (K-5) school with an enrollment of under 350

students. Four girls made accusations of touching/fondling by a drama teacher in the principal's building. They further claimed that the teacher was asking them to do specific exercises so that he could look down their blouses.

The principal was not aware of the problem until one of the parents of the four, who was quite evasive and indirect, complained. The principal talked with the four girls, but they were vague and evasive. Another parent called a board member and the superintendent. The superintendent called and angrily demanded to know why the principal had not informed him of a potentially volatile situation. The principal in the meantime had heard from several other parents that the accusations were not true, that the girls were "just making up stories." Four parents demanded that their daughters be removed from the drama teacher's class and that an investigation be conducted.

The principal met with the elementary education director and the girls were removed from the class as requested and there was an agreement to conduct an investigation. The irate parents did not feel this adequate and went to the police. The teacher was removed from the classroom and sent to work at central office while the police conducted an investigation. After a three or four week investigation, the police found no

cause for child abuse, and no charges were filed. The investigating officer indicated that the four girls were lying and that their stories were too "perfect" to be true. It appears that the girls, for whatever reason, were being vindictive.

The teacher returned to his teaching responsibilities with no punishment or apology. He had no recourse for the inconvenience and embarrassment caused to him by the accusation.

The school district did not have a policy which covered teachers who have been accused of sexually abusing a student. The principal indicated that teachers should have a due process procedure which places some control on the potential accuser, one which would involve accountability in a way that would discourage saying whatever one wishes to say.

Principal 8: Principal 8 was in charge of an elementary (K-6) school with an enrollment of under 600 students. A teacher of some 20 years experience was replaced by another because of inability to control the class. The replacement teacher, a former principal, was not well received by the students because she was seeking to bring some order back into the classroom. One of the boys accused her of touching him in a sexual way during school time. The boy's family went to the newspaper immediately and his story was printed. The newspaper

contacted the Iowa Professional Teaching Practices Board and an investigation followed. The Iowa Professional Teaching Practices Board investigated and a hearing followed.

The end result was that the parents finally stated, for the record, that their boy had made up the story to get even with the teacher. He and some other students did not like this teacher.

The school board then developed a policy to cope with situations such as this. An internal investigation by a school administrator is now required. The building administrator cannot investigate in his own building. The elementary principal is designated as the investigator for the district unless the accusation is in his building. If the accusation is in the elementary building, then the middle school principal becomes the investigator, according to the new district policy.

The principal recommended that all school districts have a written policy publicized to both parents and school staff. This knowledge of the new policy may prevent parents from feeling the need to go outside the school to get results. If the problem can be resolved within the district, it gives the accused teacher the best chance of keeping his or her reputation intact if the accusation is false or unfounded.

Principal 9: Principal 9 was in charge of a high

school (9-12) with an enrollment of over 350 students. Two female students complained to the principal that two male teachers had pinched them on their buttocks, snapped their bra straps, and made lewd remarks when they were present on more than one occasion. The principal talked to each girl separately and asked for details. Although their stories were inconsistent and conflicted with one another, there was still enough to cause concern.

The principal then talked to each male teacher individually. They admitted that they had put their arms on the girls' shoulders, and one teacher admitted hitting one of the girls on her buttocks with a book. They both insisted that there were no sexual overtones to their actions. The principal told the teachers that if the parents came to him demanding that an investigation take place, he would go to the board and do a more thorough investigation. The teachers were informed to "keep their hands off of the students."

The parents never became involved and this accusation was dropped with no more accusations being made. Although the school board had a policy on physical abuse, it had none on sexual abuse. The principal made five recommendations for situations where a principal is faced with a sexual abuse accusation against one of his teachers: (1) conduct a private investigation; (2) get all of the facts; (3) keep the investigation on a

professional level; (4) do not jump to conclusions; and, (5) get back to the person who came with the accusation as soon as possible.

Principal 10: Principal 10 was in charge of an elementary school (K-6) with an enrollment of under 400 students. A mother came to the principal complaining about a sixth-grade male teacher who put his hands on the breasts, back, and buttocks of her daughter during school hours. The principal took careful notes, thanked her for coming to him, and said that he would get back to her.

An immediate investigation showed nothing in the file of the teacher of a suspicious nature. Two previous principals who had employed him likewise revealed nothing negative. Personally, the principal thought that the teacher was immature, lacked control of the class he taught, and "trying to be a kid himself." Upon being presented by the principal with the accusation, he admitted that he liked to be a pal to his students, but denied the accusation. The teacher wished to meet with the parent immediately.

The principal met with the parent before the teacher did because of what the latter might say. An appointment was set up to have the mother meet with the teacher. The mother was satisfied with the outcome of the meeting and the girl remained in the teacher's classroom. The principal made three recommendations with regard to such

cases: (1) look into the accused teacher's past; (2) do not jump to conclusions; and, (3) do not become emotionally involved and remain detached.

Principal 11: Principal 11 was in charge of an elementary school (K-6) with an enrollment of over 375 students. The superintendent had been informed by the county attorney that two sets of parents had contacted his office to complain of a teacher in his building. Two boys had accused their fifth-grade teacher of touching them in the private parts of their bodies, that this had happened on more than one occasion. The principal was allowed to leave the teacher in the classroom. The superintendent met with the teacher to inform him of the accusation, a meeting attended by the principal also. The teacher denied the accusation and appeared very upset.

The county attorney's office conducted an investigation over a two-week period with the conclusions that there was not any evidence to support the boys' accusations. Their stories conflicted with one another. Furthermore, the teacher had been in the school system for 15 years without a complaint of this nature. It turned out that the two boys had been disciplined by the teacher, one being suspended from school because of the repeated trips to the office and misbehavior in the classroom.

No action was taken. The parents, however, were dissatisfied and asked to present their case to the local

school board. The principal recommended to the teacher that he hire an attorney, which he did.

The result was that the teacher retained his position. One of the students and his family moved to another city and the family of the other student removed their boy from the school and put him into a private school. The principal concluded that the boys were unhappy with the teacher and were trying to get even; the parents remained convinced that something of a sexual nature had taken place and were unhappy with the outcome. The parents did not pursue the matter further.

It may be remarked here that parents who have problems with their children may sometimes use outside agencies or individuals as scapegoats; the teacher may have represented an outside source responsible for their unhappy parent/son relationship, and the parents diligently pursued the matter as a kind of expiation, possibly, of their own guilt. In any case, the principal's recommendation was that the staff at the beginning and throughout the school year be advised to keep their hands off students, and not to spend time alone with students.

Principal 12: Principal 12 was in charge of an elementary school (1-5) with an enrollment of over 220 students. A female elementary teacher was accused of molesting a boy. The county attorney looked into this

case but did not pursue it. The parents were unhappy with the county attorney's decision so they went to the Iowa Professional Teaching Practices Commission. The case is now in the court system, so the principal did not think it proper to make any other comments on it. However, the classroom teacher has remained in the classroom throughout the incident.

On the basis of these 12 interviews, research questions 11 and 12 were addressed as follows:

Research Question 11. What are some guidelines that administrators may give teachers in order to help them avoid false allegations?

The following guidelines reflect suggestions made by the 12 principals who were interviewed.

1. Follow a strict policy of not touching or "hands off" students, other than routine courtesy such as, for example, a handshake where called for by the situation.

2. If the school district has a child sexual abuse policy, find out what it is and inform the staff.

3. Insist on immediate investigation of a problem by school authorities to resolve the case before law enforcement or other agencies are called in.

4. If a teacher's case does go into the law enforcement/judicial arena, get good legal representation immediately.

Research Question 12. What are some precautions

that administrators should take to provide the maximum protection to both the student and teacher until guilt or innocence is established?

The following guidelines reflect suggestions made by the 12 principals interviewed.

1. The principal should first conduct his or her own private investigation of accusations of child sexual abuse immediately.
2. Get all the facts, not just those from one side. Listen carefully and take notes. Look for consistencies/inconsistencies.
3. Confine the initial investigation to the professional level.
4. Do not jump to conclusions.
5. Get back to the person who came with the accusation as soon as possible.
6. Look into the accused teacher's past.
7. Do not become emotionally involved in the case and remain detached.
8. Find out what the school district policy is on child sexual abuse. If none exists, try to get one.
9. Keep publicity to a minimum. Mere accusations should not be interpreted as valid charges which have to be made automatically to a law enforcement agency. Accusation should not be equated to valid grounds for suspicion. If investigation reveals a valid case, then

and only then should the law enforcement and other agencies be involved. Many false cases can be resolved without involvement of the law, thereby sparing the falsely accused of much anguish.

10. The teacher should be removed from the classroom if there remains reasonable doubt about the truth or falsehood of the accusation while the investigation is being conducted. Meanwhile, the teacher should not forfeit pay during that time.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore the incidence and validity of child sexual abuse allegations against teachers in Iowa schools, along with implications of these allegations for school principals. Toward that purpose a questionnaire survey of a representative sample (N = 288) of school principals in the State of Iowa was conducted. The questionnaire was designed to address 12 research questions of the study. This data was supplemented by special telephone interviews with 11 principals. Some of the research questions were also addressed on the basis of a review of literature. The findings were as follows:

1. To what extent are teachers guilty of sexually abusing children in the schools?

Estimates of reported (not necessarily substantiated) instances of child sexual abuse by teachers varies. Davis (1984) estimated the figure may be as high as 500,000 per year, but most of these are unsubstantiated, and the true extent not ascertainable, nationwide as well as in Iowa.

2. Of the allegations made against teachers with

respect to sexual abuse of a child, what percentage turned out to be false or unfounded?

Emans (1987) reported that of the 1.7 million cases of suspected child abuse reported in the United States in 1985, about 80 percent were later determined to be unfounded. Jones' (1985) study of 576 cases showed 46 percent of the cases to be unfounded. While no extensive national surveys are available for teachers, the figures for all children in general suggest that a large percentage of accusations are unfounded, with the number of teachers falsely accused of child sexual abuse on the increase (Learning87, 1987), although not specifically known for the state of Iowa.

Research questions 3 through 10 concerned data from the questionnaires returned by the Iowa principals.

3. Were there teachers on the administrative staff during the previous five years who were accused of sexual abuse of a child in the school?

Eight percent of the principals said that teachers on their staff had been accused of sexual abuse of a child in the school during the previous five years. Furthermore, some 26% indicated that they knew of sexual abuse accusations against teachers in the school districts at large (at least 145 teachers involved).

4. Did the accusation(s) become a matter of public record?

Of the 23 principals who reported accusations of child sexual abuse by teachers on their staff, 39% said

that the accusations had become a matter of public record.

5. Did the accused teacher lose his/her job?

Of the 23 principals who reported accusations of child sexual abuse by teachers on their staff, about 35% indicated that the teacher accused did lose his/her job.

6. Did the accusations appear to be accurate or fictitious?

Eleven percent of the principals indicated that of the cases that he or she were familiar with, the charges turned out to be false. How many were true or unsubstantiated were not determined by this question.

7. How much time did the administrator have to spend in dealing with a case of alleged sexual molestation of a child by a teacher?

Sixteen principals reported having to spend 48 or more hours on cases of alleged sexual molestation of a child by a teacher, a significant diversion of time that could have been better spent on other duties. Even the 32 principals who said they spent less than 8 hours is significant, especially when such cases are of the kind that a principal takes home with him in the form of worry and frustration.

8. Does the administrator believe that a child would deliberately lie or make up a false accusation for mere maliciousness or "getting even"?

Seventy-five percent of the sample believed that a child would make up such a false accusation.

9. Should safeguards be put into place for the teacher who is accused in order to prevent a

reputation from being ruined should the accusation be false?

The overwhelming majority (95%) said yes, that such safeguards should be put in place.

10. Is the problem of false accusations of child sexual abuse a significant one in education that warrants further study?

Half the principals responded in the affirmative, that the problem is a significant one warranting further study. Questions 11 and 12 provide specifics relevant to their affirmative responses.

Research questions 11 and 12 were assessed on the basis of responses from 11 principals in telephone interviews.

11. What are some guidelines that administrators may give teachers in order to help them avoid false allegations?

An overview of the anecdotal summaries suggested at least four guidelines:

- A. A teacher should follow a strict policy of not touching or "hands off" students.
- B. If the school district has a child sexual abuse policy, the principal should know what it is and inform the teacher accordingly.
- C. A teacher should seek immediate investigation of a problem by school authorities to resolve the case in order to avoid becoming involved with law enforcement or other agencies should the accusation be false.

D. If a teacher's case does go into the law enforcement/judicial arena, the teacher should secure good legal representation immediately.

12. What are some precautions that administrators should take to provide the maximum protection to both the student and teacher until guilt or innocence is established?

A. First conduct own private investigation of accusations of child sexual abuse immediately.

B. Get all the facts, not just those from one side. Listen carefully and take notes. Look for consistencies/inconsistencies.

C. Confine the initial investigation to the professional level, not the radio, press, law enforcement, or social agencies.

D. Do not jump to conclusions.

E. Get back to the person who came with the accusation as soon as possible.

F. Look into the accused teacher's past.

G. Do not become emotionally involved in the case and remain detached.

H. Find out what the school district policy is on child sexual abuse. If none exists, try to get one.

I. Keep publicity to a minimum. Mere accusations should not be interpreted as valid charges which have to be made automatically to a law enforcement agency. Accusation should not be equated to valid grounds for suspicion. If

investigation reveals a valid case, then and only then should the law enforcement and other agencies be involved. Many false cases can be resolved without involvement of the law, thereby sparing the falsely accused of much anguish.

J. The teacher should be removed from the classroom if there remains reasonable doubt about the truth or falsehood of the accusation while the investigation is being conducted. In the meanwhile, the teacher should not forfeit pay during that time.

Conclusions

A major conclusion of this study was that child sexual abuse accusations against teachers was a problem in Iowa schools. The literature, however, could not provide comprehensive national or state data in regard to an accurate number of these accusations. The sample of Iowa principals in this study indicated that 26 percent, a sizable percentage, knew of child sexual abuse accusations against teachers, in various school districts, although only 8 percent reported incidents in their own buildings.

A second major conclusion of this study was that 35 percent of the teachers accused of child sexual abuse lost their jobs as a result of the accusation. Although the number of teachers accused was quite small, the percentage of teachers that lost their jobs, appeared to

be significant. Of the 23 principals who reported accusations of child sexual abuse against a teacher, 8 indicated the teacher had lost his/her job.

A third major conclusion was that a number of accusations of child sexual abuse against teachers have turned out to be false or unfounded. For example, of Iowa school principals, of the 23 principals who reported accusations of child sexual abuse by teachers on their staff, 11 percent indicated that charges turned out to be false. Even though the percentage of false accusations was not especially high, they do exist. Teachers have had their reputations tarnished and lost their jobs because of false or unfounded accusations.

A fourth major conclusion was an assessment made by a majority of the Iowa principals surveyed. The assessment was in regard to possible motives behind sexual abuse accusation against teachers in general. Seventy-five percent of the Iowa sample believed that a child would make up false accusations out of maliciousness or out of the desire to "get even" for something, consistent with the findings of Jones (1985), Davis (1984), and Mazur and Pekor (1984). The implications of such collective judgment for investigators was especially significant.

A fifth major conclusion had to do with safeguards that ought to be put into place to protect the teacher against false or unfounded cases of child sexual abuse.

An overwhelming majority of the Iowa sample, 95 percent of the reporting principals, thought that some sort of protection ought to be put into place, so that the teacher would be protected against false reporting in order to prevent a reputation from being ruined. (No usable data was collected that would indicate what kind of protection ought to be put into place to protect the teacher.)

A sixth major conclusion was related to the amount of time that a principal would have to spend on an accusation directed toward one of the teachers on his/her staff. The amount of time that would have to be spent on accusations of this nature was considerable. Seventy-four principals estimated that the amount of time that would have to be spent by themselves on child sexual abuse accusations directed toward a teacher on their staff ranged from less than 8 hours to more than 48 hours. This averaged out to be approximately 15 to 20 hours per accusation, which is valuable time that must be taken from many other duties of a principal.

A seventh major conclusion was that Iowa principals were not in agreement as to whether or not the problem of false or unfounded sexual abuse accusations was a significant problem in education, significant enough to warrant further study. The respondents were almost evenly divided on this issue. In this study, half (50%) of the principals said that this topic warrants further study, and

just a little less than half (41%) said that no further study of this topic was necessary.

A final conclusion was that child sexual abuse accusations have been made against some teachers in the schools of Iowa; however, there was not a great number of accusations relative to the total number of teachers in Iowa. Therefore, the incidence of child sexual abuse accusations was "small". Of the accusations in Iowa schools, some have turned out to be false or unfounded. The number of false or unfounded accusations is also small relative to the number of teachers in Iowa, but a number large enough to be of concern. The number of false or unfounded accusations as a sub group of all child sexual abuse accusations toward teachers in Iowa was 11% as reported in this study.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that principals remind teachers throughout the year to adhere to a "hands off" policy, to inform faculty what the child sexual abuse policy is, if there is one, to advise teachers to insist on an immediate investigation of any accusations, and if the case goes to court, to secure the best possible legal representation immediately.

It should be noted that the survey sample of 12 principals strongly suggested that accusations should be

first investigated and evaluated by school personnel rather than outside law or other social agencies. In effect, this suggestion reduces much of the potential damage that occurs in the case of false accusation, the assumption here being that an accusation is not a statement of fact, that all accusations must be investigated prior to making public or legal charges.

2. It is recommended that schools be given the latitude and the authority to internally investigate sexual abuse accusations toward one of its teachers before it goes to the law or other outside agency. Whether true or false, charges of child sexual abuse by teachers have the potential of detracting from the educational environment of the school, draining much of the principal's time and energy, not to mention that of total staff, agencies, and the community. Such charges can do much damage to a school district and certain individuals. Learning to deal with this problem may save a school district and certain individuals from unnecessary embarrassment and shame. If the school would be allowed to handle the situation without outside intervention, the teacher has a better chance of preserving a "good" reputation if the accusations turn out to be false.

3. It is recommended that principals have someone from outside of their building be the investigator for a school building in cases of child sexual abuse accusations

against teachers. A principal from another school building in the same district would be an ideal investigator in such cases. It appears that a principal would best serve as an investigator in a building other than his/her own.

4. It is recommended that school boards have an established policy with regard to child sexual abuse accusations and that this policy be well publicized. This will not only help prevent some accusations in the first place but better enable teachers falsely accused to avoid much of the damage that currently occurs in such cases.

5. It is recommended that school districts put out handbooks based on studies such as the present for the use of the staff in their district. Such handbooks could both prevent unfounded child sexual abuse accusations and expedite their handling when made.

6. It is recommended that stricter policies be established for dealing with cases of proven false accusations. In particular, the fate of the teacher, including restitution, should be better provided for. Also, what are the consequences for those making the false accusations? For example, are actions being taken against those children, who have admittedly made false accusations resulting in the loss of a teacher's job?

7. It is recommended that similar studies be replicated in other states. Too little data now exists and much of it is for child sexual abuse in general and not

systematic with respect to schools. The research design of the present study might be improved in order to determine the actual number of cases each principal has had in his school rather than just whether or not the school has had one or more cases.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

Sexual Abuse Cases Against Teachers Recorded By The
Iowa Professional Teaching Practices Commission Since 1977

- Ankeny Community School District vs. Robert Novak
(convicted of lascivious acts with a child) Case
No. 77-4
- Ankeny Community School District vs. John Buck (convicted
of lascivious acts with a child) Case No. 77-5
- Webner vs. Matlin, Case No. 80-15 (lascivious acts with a
child)
- Anamosa Schools vs. Paul Hawkins, Case No. 81-14
(lascivious acts with a child)
- Sigourney Community School District vs. Wayne Yohn, Case
No. 82-19 (lascivious acts with a child)
- North Polk Education Association, Case No. 82-17
(inappropriate sexual behavior with teachers)
- Colfax Community Schools vs. Robert Rongstad, Case No.
83-7 (improper touching of students)
- Murphy vs. Terry Lowe, Case No. 84-2 (inappropriate
touching and sexual acts with students)
- Ames School District vs. Yanderzyl (pled guilty to indecent
exposure to a child) Case in District Court
- Urbana School District vs. Ross Lamansky (pled guilty to
indecent contact with a child)
- Mason City Community School District vs. Daniel Decker,
Case No. 85-7 (pled guilty to lascivious acts with a
child)
- Sioux Rapids-Rembrandt Community Schools vs. Eugene Freier,
Case No. 86-10 (pled guilty to sexual abuse in the
3rd degree)
- Des Moines School District vs. Stephen Woodcock, Case No.
86-9, (pled guilty of sexual abuse)
- Des Moines School District vs. David Graham, Case No.
86-11, (pled guilty to sexual abuse in the 3rd degree)

APPENDIX A (cont'd)

Waukee Community School District vs. Thomas Yandelinden,
Case No. 86-15 (pled guilty to sexual abuse)

Chris Hatton vs. Cindy Struthers, Case No. 86-21
(inappropriate sexual touching of a child)

Payton vs. James Gephart, Case No. 87-13 (inappropriate
sexual behavior with a child)

Nora Springs-Rock Falls Community Schools vs. Richard
Drueger, Case No. 86-27 (sexual contact with a minor
student) in District Court

Roster vs. Taylor, Case No. 87-15 and Lerch vs. Taylor,
Case No. 87-16 (inappropriate sexual conduct with
children--case heard in June and decision has not
been made by commission)

APPENDIX B

THE PRINCIPAL'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire

Child Sexual Abuse by Teachers

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Part I

Circle answers where appropriate to do so ...

Part I refers to the responding administrator

- 1 Age
 Under 35 36-45 46-55 Over 55
- 2 Sex
 Male Female
- 3 Marital Status
 Single Widowed Married Divorced Separated
- 4 Total years of teaching as of 09/87..... _____
- 5 Total years of administrative experience
 as of 09/87..... _____
- 6 Years at this school as an administrator... _____
- 7 Grades included in your building K 1 2 3 4 5 6
 7 8 9 10 11 12
 other
- 8 Type of school Public
 Private
- 9 Total number of students in your building.. _____
- 10 Your annual administrator's salary for the
 1986-87 school year
- Under \$10,000 \$10,000-\$20,000 \$20,000-\$30,000
 \$30,000-\$40,000 \$40,000-\$50,000 Over \$50,000

CHILD ABUSE INFORMATION

Part III

Circle answers where appropriate to do so ...

- 17 During your years as an administrator, how many teachers in the school districts where you have been employed have had child sexual abuse accusations, in regard to their students, filed with the school?
.....
- 18 When you find it necessary to deal directly with an accusation directed toward one of your teachers, what is your best estimate of how much time you spend on the problem? (Total working time including investigation, written reports, testifying, etc.)
Less than 8 hours 8 hours 24 hours 48 hours
More than 48 hours Does not apply to me
- 19 Do you believe that a child or children would "make up" a story about a teacher in regard to sexual abuse if they wanted to cause a problem for or "get even" with a particular teacher?
yes no
- 20 Have you ever been involved in a situation with a child sexual abuse accusation against a teacher involving his or her student(s) where it turned out to be a false or unfounded accusation?
yes no
- 21 Do you feel that safeguards ought to be put into place for the teacher who is accused of the sexual abuse of one of his or her students so that his reputation is not ruined if it turns out later not to be true?
yes no
- 22 Do you feel that false accusations of child sexual abuse is a significant problem in education, significant enough to warrant further study?
yes no
- 23 Include any written comments that you feel may be useful.

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

Focused Interview Questions

1. Explain the facts, as you know them, about the child abuse accusation that you had to deal with ...
2. How did you handle the situation ... What did you do first, second, third, and so on ... ?
3. If you had this situation to handle all over again, what would you do differently?
4. What can you tell me that I should pass along to other principals that might be helpful to them as they face a similar situation?
5. Did your district have any policy to follow related to child abuse accusations; and if they did not, did they make a policy as a result of the incident that you have described?
6. Would you like to see any changes in the current child abuse laws that would make a principal's job of dealing with child abuse accusations toward his staff any easier?
7. What other comments would you like to make?

APPROVAL SHEET

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

April 19, 1990
Date


Director's Signature