Non Offending Mothers: Guilty or Not Guilty?

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Definitions

- Non-Offending Parent: Not directly involved in sexual abuse; does not appear to have known about abuse.

Definitions

- Failure to Protect: Had knowledge or could have predicted child in high risk situation and failed to show regard for child’s safety.
### A Continuum of Mother’s Knowledge/Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nonoffending</th>
<th>Offending</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not know about the sexual abuse and therefore took no steps to protect the child.</td>
<td>Thought something was wrong but did not suspect sexual abuse; therefore made no attempt to protect the child.</td>
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### Failure to Protect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Failure to Protect</th>
<th>Offending</th>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did not report child's disclosure; tried to protect child sexually without leaving the offender, but abuse continued</td>
<td>Did not report child's disclosure; did not believe child; even after adequate protection for child and the child was abandoned</td>
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### Common Reactions of Non-Offending Mothers

- Disbelief
- Shock
- Confusion
- Alone
- Betrayed
- Angry
- Guilty
- Fearful
- Concern about finances
- Rejected
Needs of Non-Offending Mothers

- Treated as caring parent
- Know what happened
- Know they aren’t the only one this has happened to
- Understanding person to talk to
- Information on survival (emergency food, shelter services)

Factors That Predict Belief, Support, Protection

- Age of the child
  - Higher for young child
  - Preschoolers receive most support
  - Adolescents receive least support and belief
Factors That Predict Belief, Support, Protection

- Gender of child
  - Many studies found no differences
  - When differences present, greater support, belief, and protection for sons from mother, father, and sisters

Maternal Reactions and Child Adjustment

- Non-offending parental support is one of the most powerful predictions of child’s adjustment
  - More powerful than characteristics of CSA
  - Not clear whether abuse-specific support or general supportiveness is most important factor

Non-Offending Mothers – Current Research

- Mother’s history of SA increases chance of her child’s being SA
- Mother’s history affects attachment, providing positive structure, and increases punitive discipline
- Most reliable predictor of charge of failure to protect is failure to consistently protect the child.
N=85 mothers involved with CPS
- 48 consistently protected
- 37 did not

Factors affecting mother's protective behavior:
- Did not ask alleged abuser if abuse occurred
- Attributed responsibility to the abuser
- Consistently believed abuse occurred
- Was not a victim of domestic violence

Factors not related to protective behavior:
- Mother’s mental health
- Mother’s substance abuse

Further research needed to examine multiple variables so children at risk can be protected.

Majority believe the child
- Have slightly higher rates of SA abuse history than general population
- Frequently file the complaint
- No typical personality profile (dependent) or psychopathology
Non-Offending Mothers – Current Research

- Supportive response positively influences child’s adjustment: single most important factor
- Frequently secondary victim of perpetrator
- Mothers in incest families differ from mothers in CSA cases perpetrated by others only in level of domestic violence

Maternal Support and Children’s Adjustment

- N=118 pairs; Children age 7-16
- Recruited from CAC over 3 years
- Assessed post interview and 9 months (N=57)
- Result: Maternal support significantly related to child’s adjustment

Variables Associated with Maternal Protection

- N=85 mother involved with CPS
  - 48 – consistently protected child
  - 37 – did not
- Unrelated variables: Mothers’ mental health and substance use

(2015)
Variables Associated with Maternal Protection

- Did not ask abusers if abuse occurred
- Blamed the abuser
- Consistently believed abuse occurred
- Was not domestic violence victim

(2008)

Conclusions from Research

- Mothers in CSA cases, whether intrafamilial or extrafamilial, are more similar than different; they experience high levels of distress during and after the disclosure
- Many mothers provide appropriate support and protection to their children.

Intervention with Non-Offending Mothers

- Approaches described in clinical literature
  - Support and educational groups
  - Individual psychotherapy
  - Family therapy
  - Collateral involvement in child therapy
- Few have been empirically evaluated for effectiveness
Intervention with Non-Offending Mothers

- Short term TFCBT found effective for:
  - Parenting skills
  - Negative emotional response to the abuse
  - Intrusive thoughts about the abuse

Case Study: Chloe

- Anna H., a 24 year old single mother of a four year old girl, Chloe, noticed that her daughter was touching her private parts frequently. The day care center staff reported that Chloe was touching boys’ and girls’ private parts at school recently. Chloe’s father, Jason, had weekly overnight visits with Chloe. Anna’s parents and her younger brother, Charles, age 14, had contact with Chloe, who often spent the night with her grandparents.

Anna questioned Chloe about the touching and where she learned it. Chloe said she didn’t know and looked upset. She refused to answer any questions from her mother and agreed to stop the behavior.

Where is Anna on the continuum at this time?
The next week, a day care staff member called and reported that Chloe had taken a boy into the coat closet and told him to pull his pants down so they could play the "Mommy and Daddy" game. The children were found and the boy reported what Chloe had said. Chloe said her uncle Charlie played the game with her at Mawmaw and Poppy's house. Anna questioned Chloe and she reported the same information to her mother.

Case Study: Chloe

She also reported that she had touched Charlie's "pee pee" and that he had touched hers.

Where is Anna on the continuum at this point?

Anna told her parents about Chloe's report and her concerns about her younger brother's behavior with Chloe. Her parents said it was impossible that Charles had done anything sexual to Chloe and that Anna should never suspect her own brother. They said that maybe Jason had done something with Chloe or maybe another child at daycare had played a game with her. Anna felt reassured by her parents' response and agreed that Chloe could spend the night with them the coming weekend.

Where is Anna on the continuum?
Chloe went to spend the night with her grandparents and uncle the following Saturday. On Sunday morning, Anna’s mother called and said that Chloe was upset and that Anna should come pick her up. When questioned at home by Anna, Chloe reported that she slept with Charlie the night before and he touched her private part and made her touch his private part.

She said he tried to put his private part in her “pee pee” and that it “hurt a lot”. She said she didn’t want to see uncle Charlie anymore.

Where would CPS place Anna on the continuum at this point? ________

Anna was very upset and reported the incidents to CPS. She told her parents that she and Chloe would not come back to their house until Charles had been punished and received treatment for his behavior.

Where would CPS place Anna on the continuum at this point? ________
Case Study: Martin

Lisa and Frank M. were divorced and their two boys, Jacob, age 8, and Martin, age 5, spent alternate weeks with their parents, neither of whom had remarried. One night at dinner Jacob said to Martin, “You need to grow up and stop sleeping with Dad every night.” Lisa noticed that Martin had a strange look on his face and didn’t say, “Mind your own business,” as he usually did. When Lisa asked him later, Martin said, “Sometimes I get scared and Dad lets me sleep with him.”

Where was Lisa on the continuum? ________

Case Study: Martin

After his next visit with his father, Martin was quiet and appeared upset. Jacob stated, “He’s just being the baby he is.” Martin denied anything was wrong at his dad’s but said he was sick when it was time to go again. Frank called and accused Lisa of keeping Martin from his week with him. Lisa insisted that Martin go for the next visit even though he cried and begged to stay with her.

Where is Lisa on the continuum? ________

Case Study: Martin

When the boys returned home, Jacob looked upset and said, “Mom, you need to talk to Martin.” Martin started crying and would not say anything. Jacob finally said that he went in the bathroom where his Dad and Martin were taking a shower and that Martin had his Dad’s “wiener” in his mouth. Frank told Jacob it was an accident and he should not mention it to anyone. Lisa called CPS and reported the incident. She talked to her lawyer about stopping all visitation until the investigation was over.

Where is Lisa on the continuum? ________
Case Study: Alexa

Nicky R., a single mother of 9 year old Alexa, has been living with Todd for six months. They have discussed marriage but are waiting on Todd’s divorce to be final. Nicky is currently working a night shift and Todd is at home with Alexa. Recently, Nicky noticed a small bloody discharge in Alexa’s pajamas. When asked, Alexa said she didn’t know what caused it. Nicky decided Alexa did not need to see a doctor at that time.

Where was Nicky on the continuum? ________

Case Study: Alexa

Two weeks later, Alexa’s behavior began to change. She was talking back to her mother at home, missing recess at school due to behavioral problems, and wanting to stay at her aunt’s house at night. Nicky asked and then insisted that Alexa tell her what was bothering her. Alexa hid her face in a pillow and said, “Todd.” When questioned further, she said, “Todd touches my private parts.” Nicky replied, “There is no way he would do that! Why would you make that up?” No report was made to CPS and Todd continued to abuse Alexa.

Where is Nicky on the continuum? ________

Case Study: Alexa

The next week Alexa told her best friend at school what Todd was doing and her friend told the teacher. CPS was notified and, based on Alexa’s report, placed Alexa with her aunt. After CPS and law enforcement investigated the case, Todd was charged with three counts of rape and rape by instrumentation. Alexa testified and he was convicted on all counts. Nicky continued to support Todd after his conviction and voluntarily gave up her parental rights to Alexa.

Where is Nicky on the continuum? ________
Conclusions

- Non-offending mothers
  - Have different responses to reports of CSA
  - Are a diverse group
  - Have high levels of distress related to the abuse
  - Need support, respect, and information
  - Are a crucial factor in the child’s adjustment