VICTIM AND OFFENDER IN STRANGER CHILD ABDUCTION

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This presentation will cover:

- The aims of the research
- Background about the lessons taught to children and on victim resistance literature
- An explanation of how the research was carried out and data analysed
- Discussion of the key findings
Why are we only looking at this type of abduction?

The main overarching categories of child abduction that appear in the literature are: FAMILY; ACQUAINTANCE; and STRANGER

Previously, acquaintance and family were aggregated as “non-family”. Subsequent studies, most notably Asdigian et. Al (1995), found that acquaintance and stranger cases were fundamentally different.

From then, it has been recommended to maintain this distinction- although this has not been universal.
Estimates of the prevalence of stranger child abduction vary.

- Early studies put it at very low rates compared to overall abduction
- Later found to occur at rates between 24% (Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2000) and 45% (Newiss & Traynor, 2013)
- Studies indicate that around 10% of stranger abduction cases are completed, the rest are attempts (Newiss & Fairbrother, 2004; Gallagher, 2008)

There has been a recent trend towards differentiating attempted and completed cases. These are new key typologies of stranger child abduction.
The aim of the current research was to:

- Consider the lessons being communicated to children regarding how best to avoid an abduction incident.

- Examine real cases of abduction in order to measure:
  - How often these protective behaviours or factors are present
  - How impactful their presence is on case outcome.
The role of victim resistance has not been studied in relation to stranger child abduction, but has been examined in relation to other crimes

- Most notably: Adult-Adult sex offending; Robbery; Violent Assault*.

The findings have been mixed. Resistance can be equally likely to provoke further harm as it is to result in escape.

This raises the follow on question - could resistance have similar negative consequences in stranger child abduction cases?
WHAT ARE CHILDREN BEING TAUGHT?

From a review of materials, documents and academic articles dealing with the area, the main lessons taught to children appear to be:

- **Most Encouraged**
  - Say “No”
  - Running Away
  - Shouting for Help
  - Reporting to Others
  - “Run, Yell, Tell” or equivalent
  - Do not go with anyone unauthorized
  - Always be accompanied
  - Resist Immediately

- **Less Encouraged, Still Present**
  - Self Defence

- **Discouraged**
  - “Indirect Resistance”
No! Yell! Run! Tell!

How to Teach Your Kids About Strangers

from EverydayFamily.com
The study collected information from legal and media sources. Resulted in a sample of 78 OFFENCES.

This covered 55 offenders* and 83 victims.

Only includes cases where the victim and offender were pure strangers, and with a conviction in law, were used.

Combined total of 16 variables covering:
- Victim Resistance- Based on the lessons identified
- Victim Accompaniment- alone, other children, adults, combination
- Victim, Offender and Offence Characteristics- Gender and age groups
- Broad Modus Operandi- Blitz Attack or Lure (All but 2 cases fit).

Main differentiator was attempt vs complete, and whether “escalation” had occurred. Escalation refers to another offence being carried out in the same offence sequence.
Key features of the sample:

- Victim Gender: 48% Male; 52% Female
- Victim Age: Mean 10.86 (SD 3.08). Range 2-17. 42.5% aged 0-10, 48.8% 11-14, 8.8% 15-17.
- 56% of offenders utilized non-coercive means (mostly lures) to facilitate abduction. 44% used coercive means (mostly “blitz” attacks and threats).
- 88% of cases occurred outdoors; 8% indoors; 4% in ambiguous areas (exposed stairwell, doorways).
Types of Resistance Present

- 4.76% Physical resistance, delayed
- 19.05% Physical resistance, immediate
- 23.81% Indirect verbal resistance
- 11.90% Direct Verbal Resistance
- 14.29% Run, Yell, Tell
- 21.43% Running away
- 4.76% Calling for help

What form did the victim’s resistance take?
Key Findings from the study are as follows:

- Overall, there was a relationship between resistance of any kind, and case outcome. Attempted cases had 25.9% no resistance; Completed cases had 40%.

- Female children were twice as likely to resist the offender by some means
  - This is possibly because male victims tended to be younger - the same pattern was observed when comparing under 10’s to 11-14’s.
  - Females also more likely to resist than males. Males over-represented in completed cases.
No resistance (35.5% of all cases)
- 74% of cases completed where the victim offered no resistance

Direct Verbal Resistance and Saying No: (6.6% all; 11.9% with Resistance)
- successful deterrent 80% of the time
- Where the case had gone towards escalation, it also interrupted the offence 80% of the time.

Indirect verbal resistance: (13.2%; 23.81%)
- only resisted 10% of the time

Calling for help: (2.6%; 4.76%)
- present in too few cases to draw conclusions.

Physical resistance: (10.5%; 23.81%)
- resisted 30% of the time.

Running away: (11.84%; 21.43)
- 44% resisted, however, only 11% of those went on to escalate, meaning the victim escaped 89% of the time despite being abducted.

Run yell tell: (7.9%; 14.29)
- 83% resistance rate.
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

- Boys and younger children less likely to adequately protect themselves at all.
  - Need further research to examine why this is happening.

- Overall, resistance does help reduce abduction chances of success.

- Strong endorsement for immediate direct verbal resistance, running away and “run, yell, tell”.
  - Provides empirical evidence for teaching these.

- Evidence that sustained resistance can prevent offence escalation (quicker resistance is better).

- Indirect resistance less effective and physical resistance as effective as no resistance at all.
  - These are also the most commonly used techniques.


10 Ways to Test Your Child About Stranger Danger-http://www.parttimenanny.org/blog/10-ways-to-test-your-child-about-stranger-danger/


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