

APPENDIX 38

Memorandum ~~to the Secretary of State~~ Dr R Emerson Dobnsh

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VIOLENCE DIRECTED AT WOMEN AND VIOLENCE DIRECTED AT CHILDREN WITHIN THE FAMILY SETTING

The current concern in Parliament about violence which occurs in the home and between family members is very important because it is a recognition of one of the most frequently occurring forms of violence in Britain. The idea that one is most likely to be assaulted by a stranger in a dark street is very dramatic and arouses much fear and anxiety, but simply does not reflect reality. The fear of the unknown assailant probably arouses more individual anxiety and public concern because of an implicit acceptance of the idea that no acquaintance or relative could possibly do as much harm to one as might be done by a stranger.

The idea that a personal relationship serves as a mediating factor against the infliction of serious injury fails to reflect the reality of the intense demands and stresses of family life, and the general acceptances of the use of physical force as a legitimate means of socialising children and of maintaining control over women and children. The implicit acceptance of this idea, coupled with the view that the family is something sacred and private, has meant that many victims of family violence have gone unaided because they have remained undetected, unassisted because agencies have been unwilling or unable to deal with such problems, or ignored because such behaviour is not really considered to be a problem.

Child abuse has been officially recognised as a public issue rather than a private family matter, but this was not done without challenging some of the accepted ideas concerning the rights of parents to chastise their children free from outside interference or scrutiny. Although the ideas of individual freedom are extremely important and challenges to them are never to be taken lightly or without debate, it has been agreed that the sanctity and privacy of the home cannot be maintained at the expense of the health, wellbeing and lives of its children.

Although it is possible, in retrospect, to skim over this debate as though it never occurred or was unimportant, it is still very much a part of all deliberations involving family violence. The ideas concerning the sanctity of the family are based on, and complementary with, the belief that nothing horrible ever happens within it which necessitates outside intervention. Since the 1960s, child abuse has been recognised and there is now a conflict between this "new" reality and the still persistent idea that "nothing horrible ever happens in the family and therefore it is no one's business what goes on there".

Various compromises have been made and mechanisms developed to deal with the very real possibility of child abuse and the desires for limited intervention. Child abuse has become accepted as a problem which does exist and which anyone can experience. It is increasingly being associated with commonly held, although inappropriate, ideas about children and with physical and environmental conditions rather than with individual pathology or criminality. All of these factors have contributed to the willingness of parents to come forward, and to seek help for themselves and assistance for their children, and of agencies to recognise their plight and to give various forms of assistance.

All of this has required rethinking the accepted ideas concerning the rights and privileges of parents vis-a-vis children and the absolute sanctity of the home versus the protection of some of its members from the violence of others. It has involved the rethinking of the relationship between the family and all social agencies. This new relationship has required a re-evaluation of the nature and adequacy of the services which such agencies provide.

Medical practitioners could no longer just mend breaks and tears, but became involved in the social reasons for those injuries. The police and courts could no longer think of themselves as stopping crime and catching "real" criminals, but had to think in terms of the great proportion of their work which is oriented to community service and to consider that most of these crimes are committed by people who do not fit the stereotype of a villain.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,
PARLIAMENTARY
Select Committee on
Violence in the
Family, 1977

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ACQUISITIONS

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The issue of child abuse has been a difficult one for lay people and social agencies alike because it has challenged so many of our ideals about what family life should be like by making us see what it often is, and because it has demanded a new and creative look at most of the social agencies; a look which has focused both upon the ideology and the policies and practices of social agencies. Anything less cannot be expected to bring about useful and meaningful change for those who are the most frequent victims of family violence, women and children.

The outcome of the deliberations of this committee are vital in the process of creative thinking and change, but it would be naive to believe that this is somehow easier for members of Parliament than for social workers or the police. It would be equally naive to believe that the old debates are not still issues which will affect the decision making of individual members of the group and of the committee as a whole. Or, that the ideas and realities about what such a committee is, does, and can do are any less mixed and conflicting than those of other public bodies.

An issue such as family violence is important to the society and the quality of life of the individuals in it. It is a public issue not just a private problem. This has been recognised by the very existence of this committee. The problems inherent in dealing with family violence should be seen as challenges which the committee deems worth overcoming since the outcome of these deliberations are so important to the victims of such violence.

This committee was originally set up in response to the recognition of the problem of battered wives and the new and growing concern for their plight. Since this issue was new, very little systematic information was available and the expansion of the remit of the committee to include violence directed at children would seem to reflect some of the initial questions concerning the relationships between violence directed at wives and that which is directed at children.

Since the expansion of the committee's remit to include children would seem to represent an expansion of the inquiry into marital violence rather than a departure from it, the information presented here will focus upon the relationship between these two forms of violence. The information presented is based upon some of the initial findings of a two year research project on battered women funded by the Scottish Home and Health Department. Two sources of information are being gathered which overlap and complement each other. Extensive interviews are being conducted with battered women which give a great deal of indepth information about marital violence, the involvement of children and the use of social agencies. This information is being augmented by data from the police and court records. Although the information in the police and court records is, of necessity, more cursory, it covers a much larger segment of the population and thus provides insight into the extent of such violence. Since the interviews have not yet been completed, the data used in this report have come solely from the police and court records examined. The cases examined were taken from one district in Glasgow and from all of Edinburgh for the year 1974. They represent only those cases which were prepared for and/or dealt with by the courts (approximately 34,000). Regardless of the official charge (eg assault, malicious mischief, breach of the peace) all reports were carefully read in order to ascertain if any form of physical violence was involved. For the purpose of our research all such violence incidents were noted and were categorised either as violence between family members, violence between unrelated individuals or violence directed at the police¹. It must be remembered that many

¹ It should be noted that in some cases the individual or individuals involved are charged with more than one offence (ie breach of the peace and assault). For the purpose of this research, only one offence (the most serious) was tallied for each of these cases and this procedure was followed for all of the cases examined. This procedure varies from the one presented in TABLE 1 of the "Report on the State of Crime and the Police Establishment of the County of the City and Royal Burgh of Edinburgh, 1974" which illustrates the total number of offences and the total number of individuals officially reported and/or dealt with. This includes all of the cases involving multiple charges and more than one individual. Since our figures are based on the number of cases prepared for the courts and not on the number of charges made or the number of individuals involved, the total number is less than it would be if the additional charges and individuals had been counted. This is merely a methodological point but it is necessary to explain what appears to be a discrepancy between our findings and those in the "Report".

crimes go unreported and undetected, making it impossible to compile statistics which would reveal an absolute crime rate. This also makes comparisons of rates between cities very risky. Therefore, we have used this information to compare the rates of marital violence with other offences occurring both inside and outside the family. We have also used the written accounts in the police and court reports to describe the nature of such violence and the role of children in it.

It can be seen in TABLE I that relatively few of all cases dealt with by the police in our sample involved the use of violence. Less than 10 per cent involved violence of any form, 5.86 per cent between individuals unrelated to each other and 3.10 per cent between family members.

TABLE I
PERCENTAGE OF ALL CASES REPORTED TO SELECTED POLICE
DEPARTMENTS IN EDINBURGH AND GLASGOW* IN 1974

Offence	Total number of offences reported	Percentage of offences reported
<i>Violent: Family</i>		
Wife Assault	759	2.25
Alleged Wife Assault	32	0.09
Husband Assault	12	0.04
Child Assault	112	0.33
Parent Assault	73	0.22
Sibling Assault	50	0.15
Mutual Assault	6 (1,044)	0.02 (3.10)
<i>Non-Violent: Family</i>		
Threatened Wife Assaults	118	0.35
Disputes:		
Husband-Wife	432	1.28
Other Family Members	33 (583)	0.10 (1.73)
<i>Violent: Non-Family</i>		
Male against Male	1,169	3.47
Male against Female	295	0.87
Male against Police	288	0.85
Female against Female	142	0.42
Female against Male	53	0.16
Female against Police	29 (1,976)	0.09 (5.86)
<i>Non-Violent Offences</i>		
Breach of the Peace/Theft/Other	16,104	47.75
Traffic	13,876	41.14
Miscellaneous	141 (30,121)	0.42 (89.31)
Total	33,724	100.00

* This includes reports for all of Edinburgh and one district in Glasgow which were subsequently prepared for and/or dealt with by the courts.

The figures in TABLE II deal only with cases involving violence and illustrate their relative distribution. It can be seen that 65.6 per cent of all reported cases occur between unrelated individuals while 34.5 per cent involve family members. Of all the violent cases in our sample the most frequent form involved male offenders who directed their violence at another males (38.7 per cent), and this is followed by violent offences committed by husbands and directed at their wives (25.1 per cent). Violence directed at children represented 3.7 per cent of the violence offences reported.

The information contained in TABLE III allows a comparison of the various types of family offences. Forty-seven per cent of all such offences involve physical violence directed at the wife, and another 9.2 per cent are made up by threatened and alleged wife assaults. This means that 56 per cent of all types of family offences involve cases in which the wife has either been assaulted or is in danger of being assaulted. Children only constitute 6.9 per cent of family violence which is reported to the police.

But these are only the cases which were finally reported to the police, and our evidence suggests that this represents only the tip of the iceberg of the actual number of incidents of family violence. For example: many police reports indicate that although there has been a history of assaults, sometimes dating back many years, the incident is the only one actually reported to them. This is also verified by the information given to us in the interviews with battered women. Violence

TABLE II
PERCENTAGE OF ALL CASES INVOLVING VIOLENCE REPORTED TO
SELECTED POLICE DEPARTMENTS IN EDINBURGH AND GLASGOW*
IN 1974

Offence	Total number of offences reported	Percentage of offences reported
<i>Violent: Family</i>		
Wife Assault	759	25.1
Alleged Wife Assault	32	1.1
Husband Assault	12	0.4
Child Assault	112	3.7
Parent Assault	73	2.4
Sibling Assault	50	1.6
Mutual Assault	6 (1,044)	0.2 (34.5)
<i>Violent: Non-Family</i>		
Male against Male	1,169	38.7
Male against Female	295	9.8
Male against Police	288	9.5
Female against Female	142	4.7
Female against Male	53	1.8
Female against Police	29 (1,976)	1.0 (65.5)
Total	3,020	100.0

* This includes the reports for all of Edinburgh and one district in Glasgow which were subsequently prepared for and/or dealt with by the courts.

TABLE III
PERCENTAGE OF ALL OFFENCES INVOLVING FAMILY MEMBERS
REPORTED TO SELECTED POLICE DEPARTMENTS IN EDINBURGH
AND GLASGOW* IN 1974

Offence	Total number of offences reported	Percentage of offences reported
<i>Violent: Family</i>		
Wife Assault	759	46.7
Alleged Wife Assault	32	2.0
Husband Assault	12	0.7
Child Assault	112	6.9
Parent Assault	73	4.5
Sibling Assault	50	3.0
Mutual Assault	6 (1,044)	0.4 (64.2)
<i>Non-Violent: Family</i>		
Threatened Wife Assault	118	7.2
Disputes:		
Husband-Wife	432	26.6
Other Family Members	33 (583)	2.0 (35.8)
Total	1,627	100.0

* This includes the reports for all of Edinburgh and one district in Glasgow which were subsequently prepared for and/or dealt with by the courts.

between family members is more likely to be under-reported compared to other forms of violence because it occurs in private places between people who know each other, and it is more likely to be associated with a fear of subsequent assault and a sense of helplessness and shame. Many women have never told anyone that they have been repeatedly assaulted, others have confided in friends, neighbours or relatives but have never used the police. Those who have reported the assaults to the police or any other authority do so very infrequently. The great majority of assaults on wives and children simply never appear in any official records. It should also be noted that cases of violence directed at children may be more likely to be reported to social workers and to medical staff than to the police. As such, the proportions represented here probably somewhat under-represent children.

The information in Figures I, II, and III is based on data from 928 individual cases taken from police blotters and court records.¹ Although the analysis of these cases has only just begun, it is possible to gain some insight into the relationship between violence directed at wives and that which is directed at children.

It can be seen in Figure I that very few cases of wife assault actually involve a second victim (13 per cent). This is overwhelming evidence that there is very little direct relationship between the actual violence which is directed at wives and that which is directed at other individuals, including children. Assaults on wives tend to be directed only at the wife, and seldom is anyone else assaulted during such an episode. Of those cases in which a second person was assaulted, it was most often as the result of attempts to intervene.

A breakdown of the 122 cases in which a second victim was involved, (Figure II), illustrates the number of cases in which children were assaulted, and also breaks the category of children down by age and sex. This shows that on the rare occasions when there is a second victim involved in a wife assault, it is most likely to be a child (62 cases). This is followed by other adult relatives (33 cases), acquaintances (17 cases), police (9 cases) and strangers (1 case).

A closer examination of the age and sex of those children who were the second victims in cases of wife assault illustrates that adolescents (15 to 19 years) and young children (14 years and under) were equally likely to be assaulted, 29 and 28 cases respectively. It stands to reason that adult children represent a much smaller number of cases (7) since they are less likely to be in the household when violence incidents occur.

Young children and adolescents are equally likely to be the second victim in a wife assault case, and a close inspection of the public accounts of the episodes reveals some possible reasons for this involvement. The incidents of adolescent assaults probably reflects their greater awareness of the events taking place and their increased willingness and ability to intervene. Although young children are often assaulted for similar reasons, many of them are too young to be fully aware of what is happening or to make attempts at intervention. The assault of young children is often accidental, and occurs simply because they are in the way of a blow which is directed at the wife.

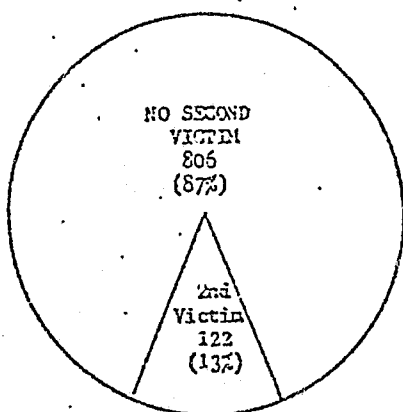
It is important to note that in all age groups it is the female child who is most likely to become the second victim. Adolescent girls make up the largest category (23 cases), followed by young girls (17 cases). It is possible that females are more likely to intervene (in cases in which intervention is the reason for the assault). It is also possible that when males intervene they do so more effectively than females, and are thus less likely to be assaulted themselves. Although the strength differential between male and female children might aid in the explanation of why females are assaulted more frequently than their brothers, it would seem to be very inadequate as a general explanation. This becomes most obvious when one considers the strength differential between fathers and all but the most adult children. But a far more important factor mediating against even the strongest child taking an active

¹ These cases include the 759 in TABLES I, II and III as well as 169 additional cases from 1974 which appeared in the police blotter but did not appear in the court records either because they went to another court or because there is as yet no final disposition.

SECOND VICTIMS

FIGURE I

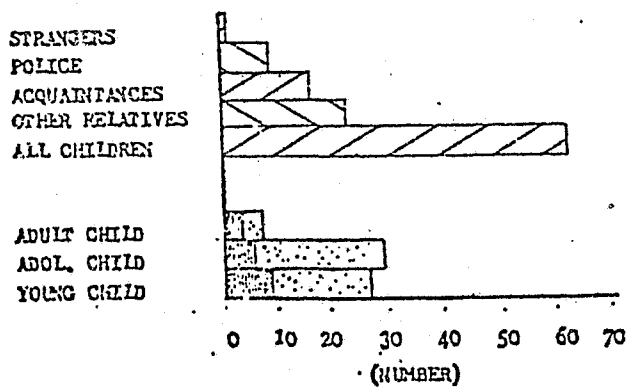
CASE OF WIFE ASSAULT INVOLVING
A SECOND VICTIM



NUMBER = 928

FIGURE II

SECOND VICTIMS IN WIFE ASSAULT CASES



NUMBER = 122

MALE = [diagonal lines]

FEMALE = [dots]

and truly effective part in stopping his or her father from hitting their mother is the differential of power and authority which means that the child has no real 'right' to intervene even if it is for a good reason.

A more tenable explanation would seem to be that daughters, like their mothers, are more likely to be seen as appropriate victims of assault. It is women and children who are defined as those over whom it is appropriate to exercise the greatest amount of control. This basic relationship is reflected in all of our social institutions and in most of the attitudes concerning the acceptable relationship between children and parents and between wives and husbands. Since violence is one means of exercising control or quelling potential threats to it, it is understandable that those who are defined as the appropriate recipients of control are also those most likely to become the victims of its ultimate exercise, violence. Women and children are expected to be controlled and thus become the 'appropriate' victims of family violence. In this sense female children would be more 'appropriate' victims than their brothers.

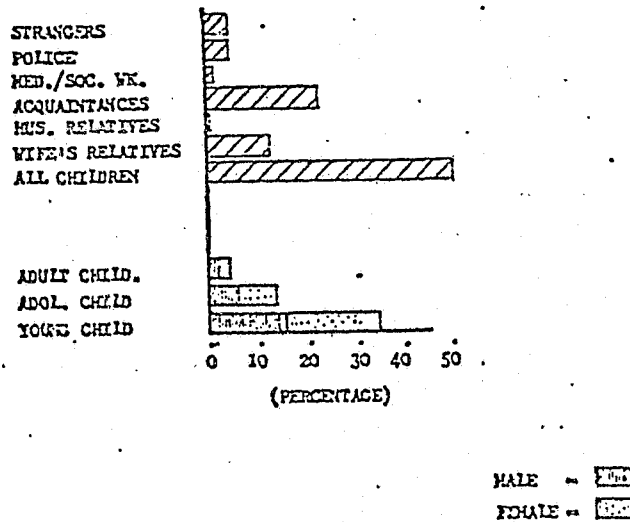
The term 'appropriate' is used to imply that there are very strong attitudes which reflect the 'basic right' of some members of the family (parents and husbands) to control other members (children and wives), even if it requires the use of physical force. These attitudes are not only held by individual family members but are also accepted and supported by representatives of most of the social agencies. The use of physical coercion as a means of gaining or maintaining control is accepted by individuals and agencies alike.

It is only when such coercion becomes too excessive, too blatant or a public nuisance that it is deemed inappropriate. It is not that control and physical coercion are deemed inappropriate but that there is a level beyond which it is seen as inappropriate. It is only when these limits are violated that intervention or attempts at prohibition are deemed necessary and/or appropriate.

where

WITNESSES

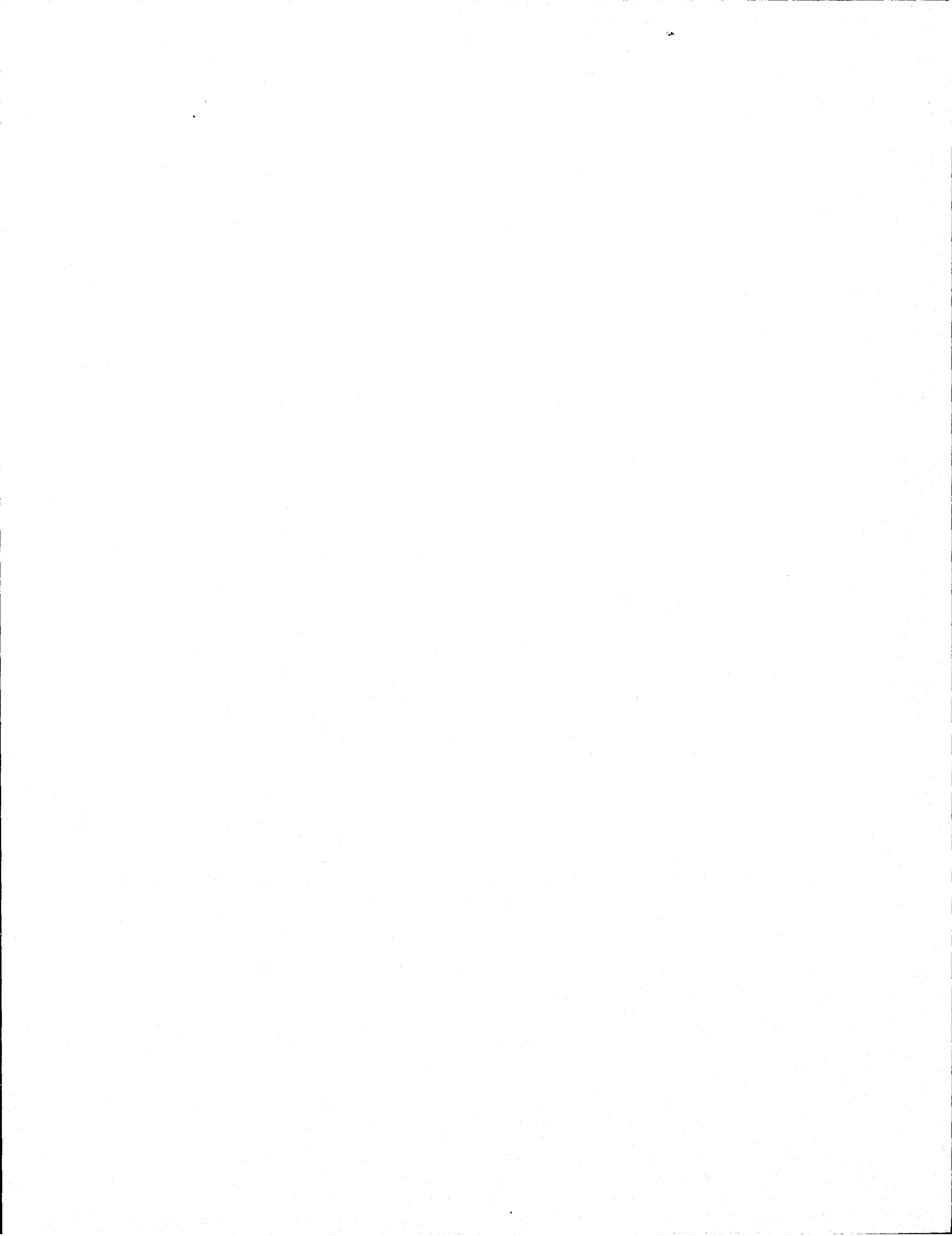
FIGURE III
WITNESSES IN WIFE ASSAULT CASES



Although wives and children are both "appropriate" victims of violence, there appears to be no direct causal relationships between assaults which are directed at wives and those which are directed at children. Rarely is a second person ever assaulted when a wife is being assaulted. In the few cases in which children are assaulted it appears to be the result either of a thwarted intervention attempt or of an accidental blow which is directed at the wife. In such cases children do not appear to be singled out as primary targets nor does there appear to be any reason to believe that on one occasion the wife is assaulted and on another it is the child. The wife is clearly singled out as the primary target not the child. Child abuse and direct assaults on children clearly appear to be a separate and different phenomenon.

Although there appears to be little relationship between the assaults on wives and those on children, the children ~~clearly~~ do become involved, as witnesses. Figure III illustrates that of the 1014 witnesses used in the 928 wife assault cases examined, 50 per cent of them were children. They represented the largest group of witnesses, followed by acquaintances (23 per cent); the wife's relatives (12 per cent) and police and strangers, (5 per cent each). The break-down of the category of children by age and sex, shows the great use of children under fourteen years of age.

Although more information has been gathered concerning the role of children in wife assaults, most of it is still in the process of being analysed. However, the most important finding clearly does not support the concentration that there is any direct casual relationship between child abuse and wife assaults. The involvement of children is in a secondary capacity as witnesses.



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