

Mark Rosenthal's

BREAKING THE SCIENCE

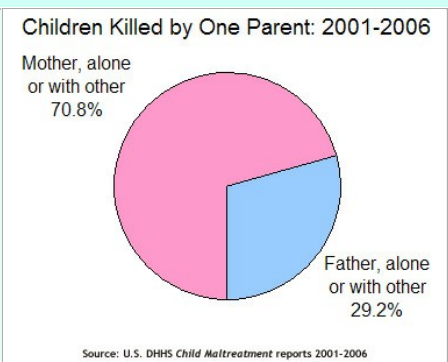
In "soft" sciences like sociology, it's much more difficult to detect manipulation of research, than in "hard" sciences like physics. Soft science researchers who strive for objectivity deserve an extra measure of respect. Sadly, far too many researchers are more concerned with pushing an agenda than with objectivity. These same problems are not unknown in the world of journalism. Since the soft sciences and the media have a powerful influence on social policies in this country, this affects every family and every individual.

BREAKING THE SCIENCE is about the broken "science" that's being used to create law and drive social policy.

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71% OF CHILDREN KILLED BY ONE PARENT ARE KILLED BY THEIR MOTHERS; 60% OF VICTIMS ARE BOYS

By Mark B. Rosenthal
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In 1994, Susan Smith's murder of her sons Michael and Alex made national headlines for months. A couple of factors explain why the Susan Smith case received such high-profile coverage. One factor was Smith's overt racism. Smith initially made up a story about having been carjacked by an African-American man in order to explain the disappearance of her sons. The media, all too ready to believe her horror story, had made it front page news all over the country. Having covered the story of the "carjacking" and the boys' disappearance for 9 days, the media couldn't easily drop the story when it was discovered that Smith had actually strapped her three-year old and one-year old sons into their carseats and then driven her car into a lake to drown them. Furthermore, when it came out that Smith's reason for killing the boys was because she dreamed of marrying a wealthy man who had told her he had no interest in "ready-made" family, the resulting revulsion by the general public helped sell newspapers and increase media ratings.

But when a mother murders her children, it's rare for the news media to react with such high-profile coverage. It's far more common for the press to do high-profile news stories on murdering fathers like Manuel Gehring, who in 2003 killed his children and buried them off an interstate in Ohio, or Mark Castillo, who in 2008 drowned his children in a Baltimore hotel room bathtub before attempting to take his own life.

TV shows and movies likewise hardly ever tell stories of abusive mothers or mothers who kill their children, leaving the viewing public with the misimpression that fathers are a far greater danger to their children than mothers. TV shows and movies are also far more likely to portray girls as victims of maltreatment than boys.

However data from the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services (DHHS) tells a completely opposite story regarding who abuses children. The DHHS publishes an annual report called "*Child Maltreatment*", and each year's report contains a table detailing the parental status of the perpetrator(s).

Shown [below](#) is an analysis of data drawn from the "Child abuse and neglect" and the "Child fatality" tables from each of the DHHS' "*Child Maltreatment*" reports between 2001 and 2006.

The DHHS calculates the percentages of perpetrators in various categories such as Mother, Father, Foster Parent, Daycare Staff, Friend or Neighbor, etc. The percentages are often used to argue whether, on average, it is fathers or mothers that pose a greater risk of harm to their children. But when trying to determine which parent, on average poses the greater danger, categories like Foster Parent, Daycare Staff, Friend or Neighbor, etc. are entirely irrelevant. The calculations below factor out those categories to produce a more accurate picture. The resulting calculations show the percentage of child abuse and deaths caused by one parent acting either alone or in concert with someone other than the child's other parent.

The DHHS data shows that of children abused by one parent between 2001 and 2006, **70.6% were abused by their mothers**, whereas only 29.4% were abused by their fathers.

And of children who died at the hands of one parent between 2001 and 2006, **70.8% were killed by their mothers**, whereas only 29.2% were killed by their fathers.

Furthermore, contrary to media portrayals that leave the viewer with the impression that only girls are ever harmed, **boys constituted fully 60% of child fatalities**. (Table 4-3, p. 71, *Child Maltreatment 2006*, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm06/cm06.pdf>, reports that 675 boys died in 2006 as compared to 454 girls).

The pervasive media bias cannot help but influence judges. Thus the newspapers, TV shows, and movies that promote this bias must bear a significant part of the responsibility for child abuse and deaths of children at the hands of violent mothers.

Data from U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services "Child Maltreatment" reports, 2001-2006*
Victims by Parental Status of Perpetrators

	Child abuse and neglect	Child fatalities
	2001-2006	2001-2006
Mother Only	1,452,099	1,704
Mother and Other	222,836	565
Mother total (alone or with someone other than the father)	1,674,935	2269
Father Only	661,129	859
Father and Other	37,836	77
Father total (alone or with someone other than the mother)	698,965	936
Both total (Involving one parent acting alone or in concert with someone not the child's other parent)	2,373,900	3,205
Percent of cases involving one parent acting either alone or in concert with someone other than the child's other parent		
Mother Involved But Not Father	70.6%	70.8%
Father Involved But Not Mother	29.4%	29.2%

* Sources:

- *Child Maltreatment 2006*, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm06/cm06.pdf>

	Child abuse and neglect Table 3-18, p. 62	Child fatalities Table 4-5, p. 72
Mother Only	284,326	288
Mother and Other	43,175	121
Father Only	125,353	138
Father and Other	7,016	16

- *Child Maltreatment 2005*, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm05/cm05.pdf>

	Child abuse and neglect Table 3-16, p. 58	Child fatalities Table 4-5, p. 67
Mother Only	265,754	287
Mother and Other	40,675	104
Father Only	120,473	159
Father and Other	7,058	16

- *Child Maltreatment 2004*, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm04/cm04.pdf>

	Child abuse and neglect Table 3-20, p. 63	Child fatalities Table 4-5, p. 70
Mother Only	196,257	307
Mother and Other	34,294	91
Father Only	92,492	141
Father and Other	5,820	12

- *Child Maltreatment 2003*, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm03/index.htm>

	Child abuse and neglect Table 3-13 http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm03/table3_13.htm	Child fatalities Table 4-5 http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm03/table4_5.htm
Mother Only	221,153	250
Mother and Other	34,038	67
Father Only	101,848	149
Father and Other	5,878	7

- *Child Maltreatment 2002*, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm02/cm02.pdf>

	Child abuse and neglect Table 3-11, p. 45	Child fatalities Table 4-5, p. 58
Mother Only	243,320	294
Mother and Other	32,459	82
Father Only	115,375	150
Father and Other	5,827	13

- *Child Maltreatment 2001*, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm01/cm01.pdf>

	Child abuse and neglect Table 4-4, p. 50	Child fatalities Table 5-4, p. 56
Mother Only	241,289	278
Mother and Other	38,195	100
Father Only	105,588	122
Father and Other	6,238	13

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