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The present study examined possible explanations for symptom development and variability in sexually abused adolescents. A theoretical model of sexual abuse, in which appraisal, coping and crisis support play prominent roles, was tested in a clinical group of 100 sexually abused adolescents.

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The objective of this study was to gain an understanding of how multidisciplinary team members in child protection worked together within the team, meeting to provide assessments of, and services to, children and families.

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Child neglect has been hypothesized to be a risk factor for both obesity and underweight in early childhood, although little research has examined the relation between neglect and body mass index (BMI). The current study examined the relation between neglect and BMI among 185 children (91 with a Child Protective Services [CPS] history of neglect) who were initially seen at ages 4–6 years and who were followed through ages 7–9 years. Neglected and comparison children were found to have similar BMIs, although both groups had BMIs that were significantly greater than Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) norms for age, gender, and ethnicity. Neglect chronicity did predict lower BMIs but only at ages 8 and 9 years. The current findings suggest that greater examination of moderators is needed to identify the specific contexts in which neglect is related to children’s weight.

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A concern in the intervention with sexually abused children is the support of their nonoffending guardians after disclosure of the abuse. Approximately a third of nonoffending guardians respond with vacillation in support, and these nonoffending guardians are at greater risk for having their children removed. This article reconceptualizes vacillation in support as an ambivalent response. Drawing on the
interdisciplinary literature, this article suggests that ambivalence in support reflects the confluence between the nonoffending guardian’s valence toward the child and perpetrator. This article further proposes that ambivalence is normative when the costs of disclosure are high and when the nonoffending guardian is ambivalent/preoccupied in attachment. Ambivalence may also be both a precursor to and an effect of the traumatic experience of the disclosure on the nonoffending guardian. In a study of 30 nonoffending mothers whose partners sexually abused their children, these relationships were supported.


Some nonoffending parents experience ambivalence in feelings, belief, and behavior toward their children after their children’s disclosure of sexual abuse. Traditionally, it has been assumed that ambivalent nonoffending parents are not adequately supportive of their children after disclosure. In contrast, this study of 29 nonoffending mothers whose resident partners sexually abused their children tests a theoretical model of postdisclosure responses of nonoffending parents in which it is hypothesized that parental support and ambivalence can coexist. In a partial least squares analysis of this model, no relationship between postdisclosure support and ambivalence is found after controlling for variables related to ambivalence. These findings lend preliminary support to the hypothetical theoretical model, supporting a need for continuing research on the constructs of ambivalence and parental support.


A recent national study found that females offended in 44% of all cases of child sexual abuse reported to child protective services, and that mothers offended in 53% of all cases of parental incest. These findings contradict other data suggesting that the percentage of females and mothers who commit sexual abuse is much lower. The purpose of this article is to explore the historical conceptualization of nonoffending mothers of sexually abused children and the development of child abuse and neglect policies and statutes for the purpose of providing insight into the overidentification of mothers in cases of identified sexual abuse.


Despite the fact that sibling abuse has been documented as the most common form of intrafamilial abuse, it has been largely overlooked. Using data from the 2007 Delaware
Secondary School Student Survey (N= 8,122), this paper focuses on four objectives: to estimate prevalence of sibling abuse, examine the relationship between sibling violence and high risk behaviors such as substance use, delinquency and aggression, explore the interplay of sibling abuse and other forms of family violence in predicting high risk behaviors, and test theory. Results suggest that sibling violence occurs more frequently than other forms of child abuse. Results also confirm that sibling violence is significantly related to substance use, delinquency, and aggression. These effects remain significant after controlling for other forms of family violence. The data suggest support for feminist theory and social learning theory.


The purpose of the Native American Topic-Specific Monograph project is to deliver a variety of booklets that will assist individuals in better understanding issues affecting Native communities and provide information to individuals working in Indian Country. The booklets will also increase the amount and quality of resource materials available to community workers that they can disseminate to Native American victims of crime and the general public. In addition to the information in the booklet, there is also a list of diverse services available to crime victims and resources from the Department of Justice.


This study examined risk of maltreatment among children exiting foster care using a statewide sample of children reunified between 2001 and 2004 in Rhode Island. The objectives were: (1) to compare rates of maltreatment following parental reunification for youth in care as a result of maltreatment with those in care for other reasons: and (2) to assess the effects of child, family and case characteristics on rates of re-maltreatment among children placed in foster care due to maltreatment.


The purpose of this study was to understand why some non-offending mothers did not protect their children consistently after they knew they were sexually abused.
Midwest Regional Children’s Advocacy Center (MRCAC)
Victim Advocate Journal Club Annotated Bibliography


Child abuse and neglect represent major threats to child health and well-being; however, little is known about consequences for adult economic outcomes. Using a prospective cohort design, court substantiated cases of childhood physical and sexual abuse and neglect during 1967–1971 were matched with nonabused and nonneglected children and followed into adulthood (mean age 41). Outcome measures of economic status and productivity were assessed in 2003–2004 (N = 807). Results indicate that adults with documented histories of childhood abuse and/or neglect have lower levels of education, employment, earnings, and fewer assets as adults, compared to matched control children. There is a 14% gap between individuals with histories of abuse/neglect and controls in the probability of employment in middle age, controlling for background characteristics. Maltreatment appears to affect men and women differently, with larger effects for women than men. These new findings demonstrate that abused and neglected children experience large and enduring economic consequences.


Three groups of girls who were sexually abused (by either brothers, fathers, or stepfathers) were compared. The purpose was to identify the differing characteristics of the abuse, the family environments and the psychosocial distress of these children.


The current investigation examined parental efforts to educate their children about sexual abuse. Approximately 750 surveys were distributed to parents of kindergarten through third grade youngsters (mean age 8.5) in three New Jersey elementary schools. Participants were 289 guardians (39% response rate) who voluntarily completed a survey assessing demographic characteristics, caregivers’ direct or indirect experience with child sexual abuse, and their efforts to educate their children about the issue. As found previously, parents continue to disproportionately focus on strangers as potential offenders and provide limited information particularly in terms of the nature of sexual abuse and the secrecy associated with it. Parents with no direct or indirect experience with child sexual abuse were least likely to talk with their children about the issue in general and when they did so provided less information. These findings were surprisingly
similar to earlier investigations despite methodological and sampling differences across investigations. Implications and limitations of the current survey findings discussed


The limited findings on the impact of female-perpetrated sexual abuse of children are often contradictory, particularly in relation to males. In this exploratory qualitative study, a sample of nine men and five women who reported that they had been sexually abused by women in their childhood were recruited from the general community. They completed a questionnaire that asked them to describe various aspects of their abuse experiences and the perceived consequences. For both men and women, the abuse was associated with negative outcomes across a range of functional areas in both childhood and adulthood. Many impacts were similar to those reported by victims of male-perpetrated sexual abuse. It is argued that the consequences of female-perpetrated child sexual abuse are serious, and further research is required to bring these issues to the awareness of both the public and professionals working in the field of child protection and counseling.


This article examines the systemic underpinnings of sibling incest and its relationship to the internal and external factors of offending behavior. Treatment of offenders in the context of their families underscores poor boundaries, the impact on the victim, and the necessity of hierarchical reconstruction. The formulation of a safety plan to prevent future offenses is key throughout the treatment process. Reintegration into the family and community concludes the article.


Ninety-one child sex offenders were interviewed about the methods they used to target children, the age range of their victims, how they selected children and maintained them as victims, and what suggestions they had for preventing child sexual abuse. Offenders were selected from treatment programs, probations, special hospitals, and prisons. They were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire. Results indicate that offenders gained access to children through care taking, such as babysitting; targeted children by using bribes, gifts and games; used force, anger, threats and bribes to ensure their continuing compliance; and systematically desensitized children through touch, talk
about sex and persuasion. Nearly half of the offenders had no bad feelings about sexually abusing children. The implications for prevention programs are discussed.


Some children, whom we have labeled poly-victims, experience very high levels of victimizations of different types. This article finds support for a conceptual model suggesting that there may be four distinct pathways to becoming such a polyvictim: (a) residing in a dangerous community, (b) living in a dangerous family, (c) having a chaotic, multiproblem family environment, or (d) having emotional problems that increase risk behavior, engender antagonism, and compromise the capacity to protect oneself. It uses three waves of the Developmental Victimization Survey, a nationally representative sample of children aged 2–17 years. All four hypothesized pathways showed significant independent association with polyvictim onset. For the younger children, the symptom score representing emotional problems was the only significant predictor. For the older children, the other three pathway variables were significant predictors—dangerous communities, dangerous families, and problem families—but not symptom score. Poly-victimization onset was also disproportionately likely to occur in the year prior to children’s 7th and 15th birthday, corresponding roughly to the entry into elementary school and high school. The identification of such pathways and the ages of high onset should help practitioners design programs for preventing vulnerable children from becoming poly-victims.


This article reports on the results of an analysis of a data set containing information on 667 nonmaltreated and 908 maltreated children. The data also contain information on whether the study subjects were arrested in early adulthood. Because adult arrests are an imperfect and censored measure of antisocial behavior, tobit regression analysis was used to examine the effect of the subjects’ experiences of child maltreatment on later arrests while controlling for those subjects’ demographic characteristics. The analysis finds that children’s age, race, and sex and experiences of child neglect all have an impact on subsequent adult arrests. However, physical abuse and sexual abuse do not emerge as statistically significant predictors of arrests in this model. The study also illustrates a method for the decomposition of tobit coefficients to extract more information from them.

Does child maltreatment occur more often in adoptive and stepfamilies than in biological families? Data were collected from all 17 Dutch child protective services (CPS) agencies on 13,538 cases of certified child maltreatment in 2005. Family composition of the maltreated children was compared to a large national representative sample of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS). Larger families, one-parent families, and families with a stepparent showed elevated risks for child maltreatment. Adoptive families, however, showed significantly less child maltreatment than expected. The findings are discussed in the context of parental investment theory that seems to be applicable to stepparents but not to adoptive parents.


The objective of this study is to examine whether shame-proneness mediates the relationship between women’s histories of childhood sexual abuse and their current partner and family conflict and child maltreatment. Previous research has found that women with childhood sexual abuse histories experience heightened shame and interpersonal conflict. However, research examining the relationship of shame to interpersonal conflict is lacking.


This study examined psychosocial characteristics of nonoffending mothers of sexually abused girls. The sample consisted of 72 ethnically diverse mothers of sexually abused girls aged 6 to 16 years, and 55 mothers of girls who were demographically similar with the abused girls on age, socioeconomic status, and family constellation. The variables examined included measures of the mothers’ childhood developmental histories and current functioning (e.g., depression, parenting), as well as their current family environment. The specific questions addressed were (a) whether mothers of sexually abused girls could be distinguished from mothers of comparison girls on various psychosocial characteristics and (b) whether three subgroups of mothers (i.e., mother and daughter sexually abused, daughter-only abused, neither mother nor daughter abused) would exhibit different patterns of psychosocial characteristics. Results show that nonoffending mothers of sexually abused girls may confront considerable psychosocial
challenges following the disclosure of their daughters’ sexual abuse and that mother’s own childhood abuse experiences may be an important factor to understand these challenges.


This study examines the prevalence and correlates of heightened posttraumatic stress (PTS) symptoms in a nationally representative sample of 1,848 children and adolescents (ages 8-14) who were referred to child welfare for investigation of abuse or neglect based on the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being. The severity of current PTS symptoms was assessed using the PTS subscale of the Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children, a standardized child-report scale evaluating common symptoms associated with trauma. The overall prevalence of clinically significant PTS symptoms was 11.7% (overall mean T score ¼ 49.5). The prevalence was higher for cases that were placed in out-of-home care (19.2%) than those maintained at home (10.7%). Multivariate hierarchical regression identified four contributors to heightened PTS symptoms: younger child age, abuse by a nonbiological parent, violence in the home, and child depression. The authors discuss the modest but still lower than expected prevalence of self-reported, clinically significant PTS symptoms and the variables associated with greater risk for heightened PTS symptoms found among cases referred to child welfare services.


Prospective longitudinal data from 585 families were used to examine parents’ reports of child physical abuse in the first 5 years of life as a predictor of substance use at ages 12, 16, and 24. Path analyses revealed that physical abuse in the first 5 years of life predicted subsequent substance use for females but not males. We found a direct effect of early physical abuse on girls’ substance use at age 12 and indirect effects on substance use at age 16 and age 24 through substance use at age 12. For boys, age 12 substance use predicted age 16 substance use, and age 16 substance use predicted age 24 substance use, but physical abuse in the first 5 years of life was unrelated to subsequent substance use. These findings suggest that for females, a mechanism of influence of early physical abuse on substance use into early adulthood appears to be through precocious initiation of substance use in early adolescence.

Children and youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, like all children, deserve a quality education that allows them to develop the skills and competencies necessary for them to become productive adults. Regrettably, this is infrequently the case. Many of these children and youth leave school without a regular diploma, and still others graduate without the academic skills and social-emotional competencies that constitute twenty-first century learning skills. In commissioning this paper, the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform (CJJR) at Georgetown University’s Public Policy Institute has recognized these poor outcomes and the need for greater cross-system collaboration to correct these negative outcomes.


Animal abuse and family violence appear to be “linked” and tend to co-occur in the same households. Companion animals are often regarded as family members, if not by the abuser, than by others within the family. Consequently, in families where any given form of violence exists, animal abuse is also more likely to exist. This paper examines animal abuse in the context of abusive home environments, and the relationship between an abusive home in childhood and the range of behavioral problems that may extend into adulthood. Existing investigations are reviewed with reference to prevalence, epidemiology, and child development theory. It appears that holistic interventions to counter abusive home environments may represent the most effective way to break the association between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence, by addressing the shared situational characteristics common to a range of violent behaviors.


Research investigating the impact of child sexual abuse (CSA) in community samples of adolescents has been limited. This study aims to identify sexual abuse among ethnically divers high school adolescents of both genders and evaluate their psycho-emotional consequences.
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A substantial body of research concludes that children in homes marked by intimate partner violence (IPV) and conflict are at increased risk for maladjustment. Although studies often attribute these difficulties to the aggressive acts witnessed, other research and theoretical work suggests that disrupted parenting and co-occurring child maltreatment play an equally critical role in the onset of the children’s psychological and behavioral problems. Despite the clear importance of parenting in the context of IPV, relatively little scholarship has been devoted to the topic, particularly when it comes to examining fathers. The current study sought to better understand the paternal relationships of men arrested for spouse/partner abuse, to examine their beliefs about children’s exposure to interparental conflict and to identify the specific factors that may place their children at risk for maltreatment. The data consisted of questionnaires administered to 3,824 men attending a court-ordered evaluation after they were convicted of assaulting an intimate partner. Analyses revealed that most of the men had some type of fathering role with underage children (n = 2,508; 65.6%) and in most cases these relationships continued following their arrest. Although the majority of the men acknowledged that their children had been exposed to interparental conflicts, few perceived that their children had been affected by the arguing. Also of concern was the fact that risk factors for child maltreatment were highly prevalent in this population. Implications of these findings and suggestions for those working with domestic offenders are discussed.

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This research explores the relationship between hypothesized protective factors and outcomes for children investigated for maltreatment.

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The need to make meaning of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) is common and often persists long after the abuse ends. Although believed to be essential for healthy recovery, there is a paucity of research on how youth process their CSA experiences. The current study identified individual differences in the ways youth process their CSA and examined
associations with psychosocial adjustment. A sample of 108 youth with confirmed abuse histories enrolled in the study within 8 weeks of abuse discovery, when they were between 8 and 15 years old. Six years later, they participated in interviews about their CSA experiences, reactions, and perceived effects. Using a coding system developed for this study, youths’ CSA narratives were reliably classified with one of three processing strategies: Constructive (13.9%), Absorbed (50%), or Avoidant (36.1%). Absorbed youth reported the highest levels of psychopathological symptoms, sexual problems, and abuse-specific stigmatization, whereas Constructive youth tended to report the fewest problems. Avoidant youth showed significantly more problems than Constructive youth in some but not all areas. Interventions that build healthy processing skills may promote positive recovery by providing tools for constructing adaptive meanings of the abuse, both in its immediate aftermath and over time.


Working with groups of people who have been sexually abused introduces mutual experiential themes into the process that can be beneficial and meaningful. This paper discusses brother-sister incestuous sexual abuse with implications for group work. Literature and research is reviewed concerning sexual abuse, incest, family relationships, and theories that aid in explaining incest. Themes covered include: effects of incest, coping methods, blaming, and family of the victim. Common themes are explored and implications for group work are suggested on the basis of length, detail, structure, content, and pre-group contact.


We were interested in understanding how the effects of childhood sexual abuse, in concert with other negative childhood experiences, were carried forward into adult romantic relationships. Data from 15,831 married or cohabiting individuals were gathered via the RELATE Questionnaire. Empirical research, attachment theory, and a general model of adult relationship quality suggested that the path from negative childhood events to adult relationship quality was mediated by a number of individual and relational affect-laden variables. Results showed that childhood abuse and other family-of-origin variables work primarily through the adult survivor’s perceptions of the events of his or her childhood. This “current impact” variable, along with the current level of depression work through an emotion-laden relationship variable-level of emotional flooding during couple conflict-to influence the relationship quality outcome variable. Treatment implications are discussed.

This study compares the Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) model with more traditional child protection services on several important outcomes such as substantiation of abuse, arrest and prosecution of the perpetrator, the efficiency of the multidisciplinary process and child revictimization rates. One hundred and eighty-four child abuse and neglect cases from a large metropolitan area in Florida comprised the sample. Cases were selected over a five year-period from three different modes of child protection services including a CAC. Similar outcomes were found between the CAC model and the Child Protection Team (CPT), a multidisciplinary model, which was first developed in Florida in 1978. In comparison with traditional child protective investigation, these models were associated with improved substantiation rates and investigation efficiency. Results are discussed in terms of the utility of CACs above and beyond the aspect of multidisciplinary coordination and whether the goals of the CAC model need to be redefined. Recommendations for further research in the areas of multidisciplinary team decision-making, the long-term impact of the CACs and the role of supportive professionals on the multidisciplinary team were made.


Little empirical research has examined the impact that child maltreatment may have on victims’ long-term socioeconomic well-being. The current study sought to address this gap by exploring the relationship between childhood experiences of abuse and neglect and several indicators of socioeconomic well-being in adulthood.