

ADOLESCENTS: AGE OF ONSET AND CROSSING BEHAVIORS

Does the Onset of a Problematic Sexual Behavior Affect the Probability of Beginning Child Sexual Abuse?

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It has long been known that child sexual abusers also engage in a number of additional paraphilic or problematic sexual behaviors. The relationship between any problematic sexual behavior and child sexual abuse is generally viewed through the lens of one of two hypotheses: the first is that people who were likely to engage in the problematic sexual behavior were already likely to engage in child sexual abuse, and thus there is no causal link. The second hypothesis is that engaging in the problematic sexual behavior actually changes the probability of engaging in child sexual abuse. An example of this is the debate over whether engaging in excessive viewing of pornography increases the likelihood of sexually abusing a child.

In their 2007 ATSA presentation, the authors of Sexual Behavior Predictors of Sexual Abuse of Children, demonstrated that sexually problematic behaviors: bestiality, fetishism, frottage, voyeurism, having affairs, and using pornography predicted an increase in the probability of beginning child sexual abuse, while rape and exhibitionism beginning after age 10 predicted a decrease in the probability of starting child sexual abuse. Building on the methodology used for their 2007 ATSA conference presentation with 44,000 males and using a more complex model, the authors looked at whether certain problematic sexual behaviors affect the probability of beginning child sexual abuse by contrasting these two hypotheses in a survival analysis model.

In the current study, the authors use the same sample to build a more complex model that tests both hypotheses simultaneously. For each problematic sexual behavior, results will be presented in terms of the degree to which the model supports each of the competing hypotheses.

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Preventing Sexual Abuse by Understanding the Importance of Crossing Behaviors in 12,000 Adolescents

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Previous research has shown the importance of understanding the crossing of sexual behaviors in adults as a means to identify, treat, and prevent potential sexual abusers. In this workshop, the presenters will discuss preliminary results on the crossing of sexual behaviors in adolescents from a national study of nearly 12,000 participants, ages 11 to 17, who were evaluated for sexual behavior problems. The researchers found that adolescent males who sexually abused children engaged in other sexual behaviors more frequently than adolescent males who did not sexually abuse children. The results also indicate that adolescent males who engaged in bestiality or sadism were significantly more likely to have sexually abused a child. Also discussed will be the average age of onset of these sexual behaviors among the adolescents in the study.

The researchers will highlight the sexual behaviors that occur more frequently among adolescents who have sexually abused a child compared to adolescents who have not sexually abused a child. Emphasis will be placed on the usefulness of these research findings in preventing child sexual abuse, specifically the practical applications for therapists in the field to identify behaviors that increase the risk of engaging in child sexual abuse among adolescents with sexual behavior problems.