

JOURNAL HIGHLIGHTS Ernestine C. Briggs, PhD

The purpose of *Journal Highlights* is to inform readers of current research on various aspects of child maltreatment. APSAC members are invited to contribute by sending a copy of current articles (preferably published within the past 6 months) along with a two- or three-sentence review to Ernestine C. Briggs, Ph.D., Duke University Medical Center, Trauma Evaluation, Research and Treatment Program, Center for Child and Family Health—North Carolina, 3518 Westgate Drive, Suite 100, Durham, NC 27707 (Fax: 919-419-9353).

SEXUAL ABUSE

Developmental Differences in the Utility of Anatomical Dolls During Interviews

This study examined the impact of anatomical dolls on reports provided by 3- to 12-year-old alleged sexual abuse victims (N = 178). Children were split into two age groups (i.e., 3-6 & 7-12) to explore developmental differences. Children produced as many details in response to open-ended invitations with and without the dolls. In response to directive questions, the 3- to 6-year-olds were more likely to reenact behaviorally than to report verbally, whereas the 7- to 12-year-olds produced more verbal details than enactments when using the dolls. Younger children were also more likely than the older children to play suggestively with the dolls and to contradict details provided without the dolls, whereas the older children were more likely to provide details that were consistent. Children in both age groups produced proportionally more fantastic details with the dolls than without the dolls.

Thierry, K. L., Lamb, M. E., Orbach, Y., & Pipe, M. (2005). Developmental differences in the function and use of anatomical dolls during interviews with alleged sexual abuse victims. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 73*(6), 1125-1134.

CSA Linked With Elevated Risk Taking and Relationship Dissatisfaction

The links among childhood sexual abuse (CSA), women's adult sexual risk behaviors, and the quality of their intimate relationships were explored in this article. A model was tested among a household sample of women (n = 732), in which CSA predicted Wave 1 male partner sexual risk and aggression characteristics, resulting in lower relationship satisfaction and, ultimately, in higher numbers of Wave 2 sexual partners. These results were generally replicated among women who entered new relationships at Waves 2 and 3. The authors concluded that elevated sexual risk behaviors among CSA survivors reflect difficulty in establishing stable and safe relationships and may be reduced by interventions aimed at improving intimate relationships.

Testa, M., VanZile-Tamsen, C., & Livingston, J. A. (2005). Childhood sexual abuse, relationship satisfaction, and sexual risk taking in a community sample of women. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 73*(6), 1116-1124.

Relational Outcomes of African American CSA Survivors

This longitudinal study examined the effects of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) on the intimate and marital relationships of adult survivors from a sample composed primarily of African American women. The protective role of maternal support also was explored. Researchers interviewed 136 women, with documented histories of CSA, on the quality and nature of their current marital relationships and other interpersonal connections. Findings suggest that CSA survivors with poor maternal attachment are more likely to enter into marital or cohabiting relationships than CSA survivors with good maternal attachments. The severity of sexual trauma in childhood was correlated with greater marital dissatisfaction. Good maternal attachment during childhood, however, had a negative main effect on adult interpersonal problems and a buffering effect on the relationship between abuse and marital dissatisfaction.

Liang, B., Williams, L. M., & Siegel, J. A. (2006). Relational outcomes of childhood sexual trauma in female survivors: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 21*(1), 42-57.



PHYSICAL ABUSE Is There a Link Between Physical Abuse and Perceived Social Isolation?

Using data from the National Youth Survey, this study examined the relationship between physical abuse and social isolation. Results strongly supported the hypothesis that adolescents who had experienced violence were likely to report more isolation than those who had not. Interestingly, males were more socially isolated than females and Hispanics more than Whites. Parental involvement, neighborhood safety, household density, and stressful life events were also linked to the degree of social isolation.

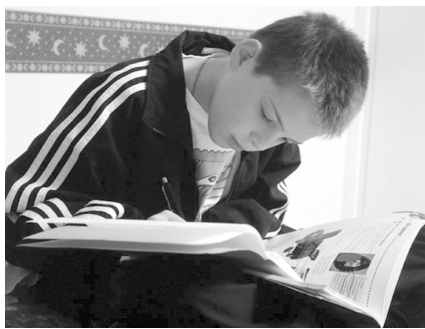
Elliott, G. C., Cunningham, S. M., Linder, M., Colangelo, M., & Gross, M. (2005). Child physical abuse and self-perceived social isolation among adolescents. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 20*(12), 1663-1684.

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Development of PTSD Among Bipolar Patients With Abuse Histories

The authors studied 100 patients, diagnosed as bipolar using DSM-IV criteria, who were evaluated for childhood physical, sexual and emotional abuse, traumatic events in adulthood, and lifetime PTSD. Adult comorbid PTSD was evident in 24% of subjects and was significantly associated with childhood sexual abuse, adult sexual assault, and adult survival of the suicide, homicide, or accidental death of a close friend or relative. Severe childhood abuse was reported by about half of bipolar patients, but only one-third of abused patients developed PTSD. Risk for PTSD rose in linear fashion to the number of childhood abuse subtypes present. The findings suggest that about one-third of bipolar patients with severe childhood abuse histories, particularly sexual abuse, manifest comorbid adult PTSD. Childhood sexual abuse, as well as severe interpersonal loss, may sensitize individuals who are predisposed to bipolar disorder also to develop eventual PTSD.

Goldberg, J. F., & Garno, J. L. (2005). Development of posttraumatic stress disorder in adult bipolar patients with histories of severe childhood abuse. *Journal of Psychiatric Research, 39*(6), 595-601.



Are There Divergent Pathways for the Intergenerational Transmission of Destructive Behaviors?

This study examined abuse during childhood as a potential mediator of the intergenerational transmission of externalizing behaviors in adulthood. Community participants, drawn from the National Comorbidity Survey (N = 5,424), underwent diagnostic and psychosocial interviews and reported on their own adult symptoms in several domains. Multiple group structural equation modeling revealed that (a) externalizing behavior in parents was associated with childhood abuse in offspring, particularly among mother-daughter dyads, (b) abuse had a unique influence on adult externalizing behaviors in offspring above parental externalizing behaviors, and (c) abuse accounted for the relationship between parental and offspring externalizing behaviors in female but not male participants. This article emphasized the importance of examining different environmental processes that may explain familial transmission of destructive behaviors in men and women and highlighted the importance of family interventions that target parental symptoms to ameliorate risk to offspring.

Verona, E., & Sachs-Ericsson, N. (2005). The intergenerational transmission of externalizing behaviors in adult participants: The mediating role of childhood abuse. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 73*(6), 1135-1145.

OTHER ISSUES IN CHILD MALTREATMENT

Are School Counselors Reporting Abuse?

A sample of school counselors (N = 263) completed questionnaires to share their child abuse reporting behaviors, influences with regard to making a decision to report, and perceived barriers to the reporting process. Participants indicated reporting the majority of suspected cases, and elementary school counselors reported more cases than did high school counselors. Implications and recommendations are presented.

Bryant, J., & Milsom, A. (2005). Child abuse reporting by school counselors. *Professional School Counseling, 9*(1), 63-71.

Strategies for Conducting Bonding Evaluations

Involuntary termination of parental rights is one step the court can take in intractable child abuse cases. The court or the child protection agency frequently requires a psychological evaluation that includes an assessment of the child's psychological bond with various caretakers, sometimes referred to as a bonding evaluation. The principles underlying such psychological evaluations and accepted methods of conducting these evaluations are delineated in this article.

Barone, N. M., Weitz, E., & Witt, P. H. (2005). Psychological bonding evaluations in termination of parental rights cases. *Journal of Psychiatry & Law, 33*(3), 387-411.

Can Public Policy Be a Powerful Tool for Maltreated Children and Their Families?

This article addressed how psychologists and other child-oriented researchers can utilize public policy to ensure that child and family issues, specifically issues related to child abuse and neglect, receive adequate attention. The authors encourage the development of bidirectional relationships between policymakers and experts in child maltreatment. To facilitate such relationships, the article offered practical guidance to psychologists on understanding the policymaking process, gaining familiarity with relevant policy, communicating effectively with policymakers, and understanding the unique contributions that psychologists can make to the policy process.

Portwood, S. G., & Dodgen, D. W. (2005). Influencing policymaking for maltreated children and their families. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 34*(4), 628-637.

