Youth with Problematic Sexual Behaviors: Making Decisions Based on Facts Rather Than Misconceptions

Tricia Gardner, JD
and
Stacie LeBlanc, JD, M.Ed.

University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center
National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth

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Impact of Race within PSB

• There is no specific research focused on PSB and race
• What do we know?
  • There is overrepresentation of minorities in the juvenile justice system
  • Youth of color remain far more likely to be committed to juvenile facilities than white youth.
  • The largest disparity is at the front of the system – arrests. In 2013, African American Youth were 129% more likely to be arrested than white youth.

Example of OK Program

• Out of 597 children served through school age program:
  • 17% African American – 9.9% of population
  • 8% American Indian – 11% of population, but low numbers in Oklahoma County
  • 62% Caucasian – 75% of population

Racial Disparities in Youth Incarceration Persists

Josh Rovner
February 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an era of declining youth incarceration, Black and American Indian youth are still overrepresented more likely to be held in custody than their white peers.

The impact of race on the adjudication of sexual assault and other violent crimes

Christopher D. Maxwell*, Amanda L. Robinson**, Lori A. Post*

*University of Michigan, School of Social Science, Ann Arbor, 48109, USA
**University of Michigan, College of Communications Arts and Sciences, East Lansing, 48824, USA

Abstract

This study assessed whether sexual assault offenders were differently adjudicated from other violent offenders and to what extent any differences in adjudication decisions were explained by the defendant's race. Five court decisions were analyzed using a weighted sample of 8,513 cases adjudicated between 1990 and 1996 that were representative of cases in the seventy-five most populous United States counties. The results did not support the hypothesis that sexual assault cases were given, on average, more leniency than less serious violent offenses. However, certain adjudication decisions for the four violent offenses were moderated by the defendant’s race. Interaction models showed minorities were treated more positively compared to whites when they were charged with an assault, robbery, or murder, but they were treated more leniency when they were charged with a sexual assault. Exploratory models, that accounted for the differential processing of minorities that were disproportionately violent or positive, depending on the crime, are discussed.

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Is sexual development just about sex?

- Relationships
- Communication
- Respect
- Boundaries
- Friendship
- Intimacy – level of closeness
- Choices
- Identity
- Connection with others
- As well as physical and emotional changes that occur through puberty

Who are Children with PSB?

- Very diverse group; no profile
- Boys and girls of all ages have PSB
- Some have a variety of other concerns
  - Externalizing (e.g., rule breaking, ADHD)
  - Internalizing (e.g., trauma symptoms, anxiety)
  - Learning and language problems

General Population Facts

- PSB is not related to race or ethnicity.
- There is no research to indicate that American Indian youth have higher rates of PSB than non-American Indian youth.
- Youth in the general population commit more than 26% of all sex offenses and more than 36% of sex offenses against juvenile victims.16
- Early adolescence (ages 12 to 14) is the peak age for sexual offenses against younger children.17
- When youth offend against juvenile victims, 88% of victims are either family members or acquaintances.18

Restoring the Sacred Circle

A Toolkit for American Indian & Alaska Native Tribes

Cultures of Honor

Native cultures are cultures of honor. When Native people look back on the stories of sexual abuse, their honor was taken away. Native people did not want to bring shame to their families, so they kept these stories and guilt sometimes passed down from generation to generation. Many parents, grandparents, and caregivers may carry unspoken stories and memories of sexual abuse with them. Parents may think they know where or how they got sexually abused to start with. As a result, mentioning a term like “problematic sexual behavior” may trigger memories of abuse and shame.

- Appropriate interventions with child sexual abuse victims have been found to reduce the likelihood of long-term negative impacts.14
- Youth who exhibit inappropriate sexual behavior and receive early intervention services are less likely to have future incidents.15
- Treatment services for youth with problematic sexual behavior should also directly involve parents and/or guardians. A child’s ability to recover is influenced by the support he or she receives from caregivers. Caregiver support is critical for recovery.7
- PSB of youth impacts the family. Healing, safety, and treatment must integrate the family.8
- Youth with PSB can be successfully treated in the community with appropriate safety plans and evidence-based interventions that involve family.

Two-Spirit Youth

Contemporary umbrella term that refers to the historical and current American Indian and Alaska Native people whose individual spirits were a blend of female and male. This term has been reclaimed by Native American, LGBT+ communities to honor their heritage and provide an alternative to the Western labels of gay, lesbian or transgender.17 Rates of PSB are not higher among two-spirit youth. LGBT+ youth are more likely to be charged and adjudicated for sexual offenses for developmentally-inappropriate and legal sexual behaviors because professionals perceive LGBT+ behaviors more harshly and abnormally and not because the actual sexual behavior is problematic or illegal. Further, the stressors they may experience place them at higher risk for behavioral health problems. LGBT+ youth experience adverse outcomes because of their sexual minority status, of which mental and behavioral health issues – depression, anxiety, self-harm, substance use – are some of the most common. Other adverse outcomes include family rejection, being bullied, homelessness, prostitution (physically survival-driven work due to homelessness), and general discrimination.

Problematic Sexual Behavior (PSB) is youth-initiated behavior that involves sexual body parts in a manner that is developmentally inappropriate and potentially harmful.
Continuum of Sexual Behaviors

**Typical Sexual Behavior**
- Involve parts of the body considered to be “private”.
- Developmentally expected & across all areas of development.
- Most experts do not consider to be problematic.
- Influenced by cultural and social factors.

**Problematic Sexual Behavior (PSB) of Youth**
- Youth-initiated behaviors
- Involve sexual body parts (i.e., genitals, anus, buttocks, breasts and/or mouth)
- Potentially harmful to self and/or others
- Developmentally inappropriate
- Potentially illegal per State and/or Federal statutes
- Clinically concerning behavior
- Could reflect a variety of diagnoses

**When are Sexual Behaviors a Problem?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Developmental Considerations</th>
<th>Harm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Frequency</td>
<td>Occurs between Youth of Significantly Divergent Ages/Developmental Abilities</td>
<td>Intrusive Behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excludes Normal Childhood Activities</td>
<td>Behaviors are longer in duration than Developmentally Expected</td>
<td>Includes Force, Intimidation, and/or Coercion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unresponsive (i.e., does not decrease) to Typical Parenting Strategies</td>
<td>Behavior Interferes with Social Development</td>
<td>Elicits Fear &amp; Anxiety in Other Children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bonner, 1995; Decuir, Glaser & Kossoff, 2000; Friedman, 1997; Johnson, 2004; Larsson & Swedin, 2001

**When normal and typical behavior becomes dangerous.**


**The mainstreaming of pornography**

- 90% of young people access pornography online
- 60% of people who view pornography do so at least once a week
- 88% of people who view pornography do so more than once a week
- 30% of people who view pornography do so on a daily basis

*Debates & Pol: 99% of respondents of the Sexual and Family Violence Division of Ontario Police*
Friendship, relationships, communication, nurturance and intimacy are challenging to manage well.

Some children are in need of extra support through the process.

Prevalence of Youth with PSB

How many are there?

- No systematic identification process
- 30% sexual abuse convictions
- Estimates 25% of cases at CAC
- 2/3rds of CSA by youth report

Historical Assumptions

Sexually abused

Problematic Sexual Behavior

Contributing Factors

Models of Coercion
Individual Vulnerabilities
Sexual Abuse
Family Adversity

Protective Factors

Supportive & Protective Factors: Address PSB in Youth

Protect against harm & danger
Parental/guardian supervision
Open communication with a trusted adult
Healthy boundaries, understanding & adherence
Adaptive coping skills
Successful expectations/skills
Healthy transitions
Healthful relationships

Multiple Pathways to PSB
Consider impact of…
• Sexual abuse
• Other maltreatment, violence, and trauma
• Parental capacity
• Child vulnerabilities and strengths
• Family and community vulnerabilities and strengths

Characteristics of Children and Adolescents with PSB
• No distinct profiles
• Co-occurring concerns
  • Disruptive Behavior Disorders: ADHD, ODD, CD
  • Trauma Related Disorders: PTSD, Adjustment
  • Other Internalizing Disorders:
    • Depression, Anxiety
    • Learning and language delays

Characteristics of Adolescent Boys with Illegal Sexual Behavior
• They do not share adult sex offender characteristics
• Different motivations for their behavior; more experimental or curiosity driven behaviors
• Less specific and/or focused sexual behavior
• Less evidence of sexual compulsivity: “cycles,” “grooming” or other features often found in adults
• No evidence that most adolescents have a lifelong, incurable sexual disorder or paraphilia

Possible Pathways to Illegal Sexual Behavior in Adolescents
• Sexual curiosity plus opportunity
• Developmental immaturity (socially awkward/isolated, impulsivity)
• Antisocial personality characteristics (general pattern of delinquency includes sexual behaviors)
• Sexual disorder (e.g., pedophilic interests) = RARE

Adapted from slide by David Prescott (2007)

Children and Teens with PSB is a Family Problem
• Children often act out with children in their social network, especially siblings, cousins, and other family members
• The children's sexual behavior, system’s responses, and caregivers’ reactions impact a range of children in the home and their social network

Effects of Problematic Sexual Behavior on the Other Children
• May depend on…
  • How scary or upsetting it was
  • How often and intrusive it was
  • How the children were doing before
  • How the adults in their life helped
• Effects may include…
  • Confusion
  • Problematic sexual behavior
  • Trauma, fear, anxiety, sadness
  • Problems getting along
  • Behavior problems
How would you react if you were told your child acted out sexually with another child?

Impact on Parents/Caregivers

- Shame
- Guilt
- Anger
- No hope

Believe Myths
Child the problem
No problem
Divided
Triggered

Barriers in the Community: Identifying Children with PSB

Barriers in the Community: Identifying Children with PSB

What happens to youth who engage in problematic and illegal sexual behavior

“The system that any child [with PSB] ends up in happens in an arbitrary and inconsistent way” (pp. 167) was one descriptive comment by a study participants (Masson & Hackett, 2004)

Does Therapy Work with Children with PSB?

Success Rates

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy 12 Sessions: Caregiver & Child
98%

Dynamic Play Therapy 12 Sessions: Caregiver & Child
89%

10 Year Follow-Up Data: Carpentier, Silovsky, & Chaffin (2016)
Does Therapy Work with Children with PSB?

Rates of Future PSB Compared to Children with No Known PSB

**Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy**
- 12 Sessions: Caregiver & Child
- 98%

**Comparison Group**
- 97%

10-Year Follow-Up Data: Carpenter, Silovsky, & Chaffin (2006)

What Clinical Elements Effectively Treat PSB?

- Caregiver: Behavior parent training
  - Rules about sexual behavior and boundaries
  - Abuse prevention
  - Sexual education
- Child: Impulse-control skills
- Practice elements evolved from treatments for adult sex offenders were not significant predictors

PSB-CBT Treatment Format

- Highly structured and interactive
- Directly addresses sexual behavior
- Rule-based learning experiences
- Directive therapists
- Psycho-educational, cognitive-behavioral format
- Practice time with parents/caregivers
- Weekly homework

OU PSB-CBT School-Age Treatment Topics

- Supervision and safety
- Parenting strategies
- Rules about sexual behavior and boundaries
- Affective and cognitive coping skills
- Self-control strategies
- Social skills
- Abuse prevention
- Sexual education
- Electronic and online sexual behaviors
- Empathy and impact of behavior on others

Resources for Prosecutors Concerning Youth with PSB

Can Children with PSB Live with Other Children?

- Who are the other children in the home?
  - Child Victims?
  - Age, vulnerabilities, strengths, and wishes
- Do the caregivers have the parental capacity to provide supervision and safety?
- Does the child with PSB respond to adult supervision and guidance?
Can Children with PSB Live with Other Children?

- Children with highly aggressive or intrusive sexual behavior, despite treatment and close supervision, should not live with other young children until this behavior is resolved.

- If PSB occurred with other children in the home, then the other child/ren's reactions must be considered.

Can Youth with PSB Attend School Safely?

- Student's risky behavior and strengths
  - Responsiveness to supervision and adult guidance
  - Impulsive behaviors
- School and teachers' risks and strengths
- What do they need to know to be protective?
- Most children can attend regular school and participate in school activities without jeopardizing the safety of other students.
- Youth with serious, aggressive PSB unresponsive to outpatient treatment and supervision may need more restrictive environment.

Do Children with PSB Need Intensive Residential Treatment?

- Most children with PSB can be treated on an outpatient basis while living at home or in the community.

- Residential and inpatient treatment should be reserved for the most severe cases, such as for children with other psychiatric disorders and/or highly aggressive sexual behavior which recurs despite appropriate outpatient treatment and close supervision.

Appropriate & Helpful System Messages for Families

- Convey that the situation is serious
- Without doom and gloom
- Give action steps for
  - Safety
  - Additional supports
  - Communication during process
  - Hope

Appropriate & Helpful System Messages for Families

First Responders’ Message

- Get facts - Not judge
- Serious
- PSB not define child
- Compassion
- Hope

Characteristics of Evidence-Based Treatments for Youth with PSB

- Directly involves caregivers
  - Behavior parent training, guidance, supervision, communication
  - Rules about sexual behavior
  - Caregiver sex education
  - Abuse prevention of children
- Plan for safety and preventing future PSB
- Prosocial peers and positive peer interactions
- Youth with deviant sexual arousal is rare, requiring specialized treatment

~Brown, Silovsky, & Hecht (2001)
Effective Treatments Promote Healthy Relationships

- Modeling,
- Guidance, supervision, monitoring,
- Knowledge and skill building education, and
- Clear rules about privacy, boundaries, and behavior,
- Positive peer interaction options,
- Supports for decision making,
- Open communication
- Prevent trauma exposure

Ratings of Evidence of Programs

- **OU PSB-CBT**
  - Classified as effective on the OJJDP Model Programs Guide [View](http://www.crimesolutions.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?ID=380)
  - California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare rated PSB-CBT as “Supported by Research Evidence” [www.cebc4cw.org/program/children-sexual-behavior-problems-cognitive-behavioral-treatment-program-school-age-group/]
  - Adapted for American Indian children and families, Honoring Children, Respectful Ways, through the Indian Country Child Trauma Center [www.icctc.org]
- **MST-PSB**
  - Classified as Promising on OJJDP Model Programs Guide [www.crimesolutions.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?ID=62]

Policy and Practice

Accountability Rehabilitation

Healing for Family

*History informs the present and the future. There are so many historical traumas that have impacted communities of color. It helps me to keep these issues at the forefront of my work as an educator.*

We need to start by recognizing the issues.

In order to identify how racism can be utilized to advance racial justice, it is important to

For instance, ways in which sex education fails to reach young people of color.

Unfortunately, many sex education offers across the country have been designed for or by white people—either insulting their ability to successfully reach young people of color.

Habermas (2003) explores more about our future to reach young people of color, with sex education.

For the future, the language we use within sex education programs points young people of color as “problems” or risks. These needs to stop.

Women-centered language is consistently omitting the narratives that black and brown girls and boys.

Unfortunately, many sex education offers across the country have been designed for or by white people—either insulting their ability to successfully reach young people of color.

Habermas (2003) explores more about our future to reach young people of color, with sex education.

Sex ed is a vehicle for racial justice.

*By Zach Eisenstein, Senior Communications Manager*

At the start of the year, SIECUS announced its new framework: sex ed for social change. This blog post explores one of many social issues that sex education can play a role in advancing: racial justice. Race Forward defines racial justice as “the systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all.”

Community Response Goals

- Accurate messages to families
  - Dopey myths, provide accurate information
- Assess needs, resources
  - All family members
  - Recognize needs are fluid – continue to assess changes over time
- Evidence therapy with individualized plan for safety and services
- Coordinated care and support
Learning Collaborative Mission

- To improve access for young children and their families to the evidence-based treatment implemented with fidelity.
- To build organizational and community capacity necessary for participating agencies to implement, sustain & continue to improve the delivery of evidence-based practices over time.

Training and Technical Assistance

National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth: NCSBY

- Mission: Promote better lives, through better choices by youth, caregivers, and professionals for healthier responses to and prevention of problematic sexual behavior of youth.
- NCSBY provides national training and technical assistance to improve the accessibility and strategic use of accurate information about the nature, incidence, prevalence, treatment, and management of youth with problematic sexual behavior.
- Website includes resources and sections designed for caregivers and professionals:
  - Topics include definitions, causes, treatment intervention and efficacy, safety planning, implications for public policy, and more.
  - News, websites, factsheets, bibliography, and other resources are readily available.

National Children’s Alliance – PSB Video Series and Fact Sheets

To achieve their goals of healing, justice, and prevention, NCA developed this video training series and fact sheets to support CACs addressing this issue and serving youth with problematic sexual behaviors (PSBs), their victims, and families.

www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/psb
The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

- Mission: to raise the standard of care and improve access to services for children, their families, and communities throughout the United States.
- Funded by SAMHSA
- Publications and other information for parents and caregivers as well as professionals on trauma
- Fact sheets on children with PSB collaboratively developed with NCSBY

www.nctsn.org

California Clearinghouse of Evidence-Based Treatment for Child Welfare

- Provides child welfare professionals with easy access to vital information about selected child welfare related programs.

www.cebc4cw.org/

Indian Country Child Trauma Center (ICCTC)

- The mission of the ICCTC is to improve treatment and services for Native children and adolescents in Indian Country who have experienced traumatic events. Originally, a member of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network funded by SAMHSA
- Honoring Children, Respectful Ways
- A treatment program for American Indian/Alaska Native children with PSB
- Adapted with Lorena Burris, Ph.D.
- NCSBY’s fact sheets modified for parents

www.icctc.org

Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers

- ATSA was founded to foster research, facilitate information exchange, further professional education and provide for the advancement of professional standards and practices in the field of sex offender evaluation and treatment.
- Taskforce Report on Adolescents with Illegal Sexual Behavior
- Taskforce Report on Children with Sexual Behavior Problems

Contact Information

Tricia Gardner, JD
Tricia-gardner@ouhsc.edu
Stacie LeBlanc, JD
Stacie@theupinstitute.com
National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth
OU-YPSB@ouhsc.edu