

Research to Practice Summary Chris Newlin

ARTICLE:

Walsh, W. A., Cross, P. C., & Jones, L. M. (2012). Do parents blame or doubt their child more when sexually abused by adolescents versus adults? *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 27(3), 453-470.

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this study was to examine whether sexual abuse case characteristics with adolescent versus adult suspects differ, whether parents have higher levels of blame or doubt toward their child when minors are sexually abused by adolescents versus adults.

Method:

Data were collected as part of the multi-site evaluation of CACs
Cases with a report of sexual abuse in which the suspect was 12 or older, and the child victim was 5 or older (n=161)
Vast majority of respondents were the child's biological parent (89%)

Parental blame or doubt was assessed using the Maternal Self-Report Support Questionnaire which seeks to measure two primary domains:

1. Emotional Support
2. Blame and Doubt

Findings:

1. Cases with adolescent suspects were more likely to:
 - a. include male victims
 - b. have suspect and victims of same sex
2. Cases with adolescent suspects were less likely to:
 - a. Have suspects who lived with victims
3. Cases with adolescent offenders involved younger child victims (average of 1.0 years younger)
4. Majority of both adult and adolescent suspects were family members
5. Parents were significantly more likely to blame and doubt their child when their child was sexually abused by an adolescent versus an adult
6. As the alleged victim age increased, there were higher levels of blame and doubt
 - a. Parents of 13-15 year olds had significantly higher levels of blame and doubt compared to parents of 5-9 year old children
7. As victim's age increased, so did the parent levels of blame and doubt
8. Parents with black (non-hispanic) children had significantly higher levels of blame and doubt

National Children's Advocacy Center (2014). Do parents blame or doubt their child more when sexually abused by adolescents versus adults? Research to Practice Summary. Huntsville, AL: Author.

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