

NEARI NEWS:

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

An Essential Tool for Professionals Working with those who Sexually Abuse or... A Great New Way to Stay Current with Cutting Edge Sexual Abuse Research.



Volume 2, Issue 7

July 2009

Dear Colleague,

As summarized in this month's article, over the last 20 years the public has gradually recognized the prevalence of sexual abuse in America. As the awareness about victimization grows, people are slowly coming to ask the questions about what we know of perpetrators--about those that are caught and those that are never reported. We are seeing a trend where those who work with victims are beginning to look at the risk factors and protective factors for perpetration as integral to their work. And those who work with perpetrators are recognizing that they cannot do their work without understanding the issues associated with victimization.

NEARI welcomes this shift and hopes that our online courses and books can begin to offer resources to all aspects of these fields.

As always, we welcome your feedback. And if you want us to

De-Bunking Myths about People who have Sexually Abused

by David S. Prescott, LICSW

The Issue

Over the past 20 years, research has clearly demonstrated the high prevalence of sexual abuse in America. However, professionals are still learning about the people (mostly men) who sexually abuse. Much of the early research was based on reported sexual offenses. The narrow focus of some studies led many to believe that all sex offenders have hundreds of victims and extremely high (90%) rates of recidivism. More recently, professionals are beginning to recognize that there is a broader range of individuals who abuse and that earlier intervention (with adolescents and their families) might be the most promising approach to prevention.

The Research

In a 2005 article reflecting on what we know and don't know about sexual assault perpetration, Antonia Abbey outlines the high rates of sexual aggression among college students. For example, a 1987 study found that 54% of college women reported some kind of sexual assault, while 27% of the men had sexually assaulted someone. Very few of these assaults were reported to authorities. Abbey defined sexual assault as coerced sexual behavior, and reported elsewhere that studies find that 6%-15% of college-aged males have engaged in rape. Abbey notes that there is little evidence linking victim characteristics and likelihood of sexual abuse. She does link the presence of multiple characteristics (risk factors) and the likelihood of perpetrating sexual abuse. Perhaps more importantly, she observes that there have been many more prevention programs focusing on victims of sexual abuse than on those who have abused or are at risk to abuse.

Implications for Professionals

examine a particular issue, please let us know.

Sincerely,
Joan Tabachnick and Steven Bengis



NEARI Press
www.neari.com

NEARI RESOURCES

First Responders: Responding to Sexual Assault Disclosures (2 CEUs)

This online course presents an innovative model for responding to a disclosure of sexual violence. It is an essential tool for creating a safe point of entry for anyone choosing to disclose the sexual violence they experienced. This course was developed by staff of the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, the largest rape crisis center in Massachusetts and the second oldest in the country.

NEW Publication from NEARI

THE THURSDAY GROUP: A Story and Information for Girls Healing From Sexual Abuse by PeggyEllen Kleinleder and Kimber Evensen (2009).

Recognition of the prevalence of sexual abuse. Sexual harm exists everywhere in society, and Abbey suggests that the most important change in the last 20 years is the growing recognition of prevention. With the more recent information about sexual abuse by college age men (18-22), it is important to recognize that these young men are just recently leaving their adolescent years. To intervene with this population, Abbey further suggests that prevention programs should focus on adolescents, developing every adolescent's capacities for wellness and responsibility. It is essential that professionals working with sexually abusive teens bring prevention to their communities and to their work with this population.

Learning about adolescents and how to prevent the perpetration of sexual abuse. Abbey identified a series of risk factors for perpetration, including:

- Hostility towards women
- Endorsement of rape myths
- Adversarial beliefs about relationships between women and men
- Having peers who accept rape myths
- Low levels of empathy
- Heavy drinking
- Casual attitudes about sex
- Engaging in frequent casual sexual relationships
- Having been exposed to sexual abuse and/or violence as a child

While none of these alone would indicate a greater likelihood to abuse, someone who has many of these characteristics is at higher risk to sexually abuse. Although understanding these risk factors is essential, the challenge still lies in translating this information into effective prevention programs.

Implications for the Field

Earlier approaches towards sexual abuse failed, because they didn't reflect an understanding of abuse; current policies are failing because they don't reflect an understanding of those who abuse. All professionals have an opportunity to engage in sexual abuse prevention. Among these opportunities are education about abuse dynamics and healthy sexuality. Given the number of dynamic risk factors in those who abuse, prevention programs have the opportunity to focus on reducing those risk factors and building protective factors within at-risk youth. Abbey further suggests the importance of targeting adolescents as those who may be most responsive to prevention programs.

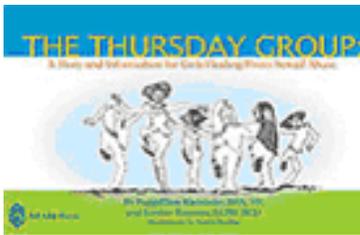
Reference

- Abbey, A. (2005). Lessons learned and unanswered questions about

This book for girls (10-18 years old) breaks new ground using the long-held tradition of sharing wisdom through storytelling. In the all-too-real but fictional story of Abi, her family, and a therapeutic support group, adolescent girls learn to deal with having been sexually abused--as their family members and the larger community reacts to them.

For more information, go to the NEARI website at www.neari.com/press.

Paperback
ISBN #: 978-1-929657-44-5
Cost: \$25, plus s&h



Featured Website

<http://new.vawnet.org>

VAWNET is the National Online Resource Center for Violence Against Women. This comprehensive listing of publications, presentations, reports, etc. is designed for advocates working to end domestic violence, sexual assault, and other violence in the lives of women and their children. Their section about sexual violence and particularly about

sexual assault perpetration. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 20, 39-42.

To print a pdf of this article, click [newsletter](#).

Abstract

The most important lesson learned about interpersonal violence in the past 20 years is the astonishingly high prevalence of sexual assault in American society. The extensiveness of unreported sexual assault has been repeatedly documented through the use of self-report data from well-constructed surveys of victims and perpetrators. In contrast, little has been learned about how to effectively reduce rates of sexual assault perpetration. Theoretically derived universal prevention programs targeted at adolescents are sorely needed.

Upcoming in NEARI e-News

Next month, we will review three paths that antecede sexual coercion in juveniles. The study is "Testing an Etiological Model for Male Juvenile Sexual Offending Against Females" by Raymond A. Knight and Judith E. Sims-Knight.

Questions/Feedback

Please email us at info@neari.com or call us at 413.540.0712 to let us know if you have a question or a topic you would like us to cover.

If at any time you no longer want the e-newsletter, just let us know and we will remove your name from our list.

We value your trust. We will not sell or give your contact information to any other organization.

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

About the Author:
David S. Prescott, LICSW

[David Prescott website](#)

A nationally recognized expert in the field of sexual abuse assessment, treatment, management, and prevention, Mr. Prescott has published numerous articles and authored, edited, and co-edited books on risk assessment, interviewing, and providing residential treatment to youth. He is the President of ATSA and is currently the Clinical Director at the Minnesota Sex Offender Program in Moose Lake, Minnesota.

"Interventions and Programs for Offenders" is worth reviewing.