Adult Report of Childhood Sexual Abuse Annotated Bibliography

Created for Georgia House of Representatives Judicial Committee

The Honorable Vice-Chairman Barry Fleming

and

Representative Jason Spenser

Author, H.B. 17 – The Hidden Predator Act

Dr. Carlene H. Taylor, LPC, CPCS, NCC
Licensed Professional Counselor/Executive Director

February 9, 2015
Adult Report of Childhood Sexual Abuse Annotated Bibliography


The researcher conducted a qualitative study of 24 male and female survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA) in order to examine disclosure patterns in adult victims of childhood sexual abuse. The researchers determined that 58% of the subjects studied did not disclose their abuse until middle to late adulthood. 29% of the study participants had blocked memories of the abuse that were recovered in adulthood, 7 participants withhold disclosure purposefully due to fear of repercussions of disclosure. This article also cited Lamb & Edgar-Smith (1994), Oxman-Martinex, Rowe, Straka, & Thibault, (1997) referencing a mean delay of up to 18 years post abuse. These authors reported that their search supported findings from other studies substantiating that delay is disclosure is viewed skeptically and victims suffer negative post-disclosure experiences including questioning of the victims credibility and skepticism regarding repressed trauma.


This author conducted a large scale study (N = 487) to explore the disclosure process of male survivors of CSA, disclosure differences based on age and the type of abuser and explore a relationship between disclosure attributes and mental health. The authors cited a concern that adult male survivors of CSA are stigmatized, under-studied and marginalized due to negative consequences of disclosure which places this population at risk for long-term mental health problems. The authors noted that little research has been conducted about disclosure across the life span although multiple studies cite CSA disclosure well into later adulthood.

The findings from this study specifically relative to age of disclosure revealed that it took nearly 2 decades (M = 21 years) from the time of the abuse for the victims to first tell someone with the mean age of the first telling being 32 years old. Furthermore the study participants (M = 28 years) indicated it was nearly 3 decades from the abuse before
an in depth discussion about the abuse occurred and (M = 29.98 years) before an in depth discussion that was helpful occurred. These results revealed most participants were in the 40’s before the disclosed their abuse in any form that would result in sufficient details to apprehend or otherwise bring the offender to justice.

This authors confirmed that CSA disclosure is not onetime event, but rather a disclosure process that occurs across the life span and the survivors life stage, social network and personal resources significantly influence the individuals ability to disclose. Only 26% of the participants of this study told of their abuse in childhood or prior to their 20’s and only 15% of the participants of this study reported their abuse to the authorities.


These authors conducted a review of the literature of CSA concerning disclosure of CSA during childhood for the purposes of examining the characteristics of disclosures to provide a basis for the theoretical model of child sexual abuse accommodation syndrome (CSAAS) which addresses posits that children frequently display secrecy, tentative disclosure and retractions of abuse when disclosing. The authors reviewed 11 historical journal articles of retrospective studies of adult reports of CSA and concurrent chart review studies of children currently undergoing treatment for CSA.

The retrospective studies revealed that 60 – 70% of adults do not disclosure their abuse as children and a small minority (10% - 18%) recall their cases being reported to authorities. Unfortunately, the study was examining childhood disclosure patterns so they categorized adult disclosures at > 5 years after adulthood, so all adult disclosure were lumped into a category of more than 5 years. In their study 47% of the victims waiting more than 5 years to disclose (no way to tell how many years more than 5) and 28% revealed they had never disclosed their abuse to anyone until completing the survey.

The authors have compiled a chapter on the subject of disclosure of CSA. The authors thoroughly review the research on the subject and report the preponderance of information available on adult disclosure of CSA comes from adult surveys over the last 20 years. Their findings from a review of the research include: delayed disclosure is frequent; large numbers of participants report first disclosure at the time of the survey; in a survey of over 3400 adults 74% of women and 78% of men did not report abuse in childhood at all and waited until later adulthood to disclose. Reasons for delayed disclosure reportedly were: embarrassment, shame (25% - 46%), expectation that they would be blamed by the recipient of the disclosure (18% - 29%), believe they would not be believed, help by the disclosure (23%), didn’t want to upset anyone/concern for others (24%), fear of the abuser (11%) and a desire to protect the abuser (18%) were reasons cited for delayed reporting.


In a study of 733 participants, the authors noted 44.9% waited more than 20 years to discuss their victimization from CSA as reported in Eaton (2013).


The authors survey 228 female victims of incest. Their findings revealed that disclosure fell into three distinct groups: Those who tell in childhood, those who told in adulthood to friends, family and partners and those who told in adulthood to their therapists (48%) generally waited until later age adulthood to tell anyone about their abuse.

These authors identified the time of delayed disclosure as a mean of 28.6 years for boys and 19.5 years for girls post the cessation of CSA with the average survivor age in 30’s and 40’s prior to disclosure.


The authors used data from the National Women’s Study (NWS; Resnick, et. al., 1993). The NWS surveyed 4,009 adult women on a variety of issues with a prevalence of interpersonal victimization and the presence of various mental health conditions. The average age of the participates was 44.9 years. In this survey 288 women reported experiencing childhood rape, 81 (28%) revealed that they had never told anyone prior to the survey, 48.9% waited more than 99 months. The specific survey instrument would not allow 3 digit responses so the longest time measured was 99 months or more than 5 years post incident. The authors discussed their findings that confirmed delayed disclosure into advanced adulthood is common with a very low disclosure rate among women even into their 30’s.


The authors conducted a qualitative study of 16 male survivors of CSA to examine the barriers to disclosure of CSA. The findings revealed distinct personal barriers (e.g. lack of cognitive awareness, internal avoidance, emotional readiness and shame); relational barriers (e.g. fears of negative repercussions, isolation) and socio-cultural barriers (e.g. lack of acceptance for male victims to experience and/or acknowledge victimization) as reasons for delayed disclosure. The participants of the study ranged in age from 20’s to 60’s with most being in their
40’s at the time of the study. Most of their reported abuse occurred early in life beginning as early as age 2 and continuing or reoccurring until teen years (13 – 17). Men in this study reported: “I had no memory until I was 40, I had blocked it out, took it off the radar screen, in order to cope.”; a 61 year old participant stated, “part of my successful coping mechanism was wiping the memory for 50 years”. Seven of the 16 participants reported lack of awareness or no memory for a significant portion of their life and 3 others reported wanting to forget “shielding it out” as a reason for delayed disclosure. This is an excellent article in total to examine the stories of adult males who shared their CSA in different stages of life.


The authors examined 41 Israeli adult survivors of CSA in order to examine the variables associated with delayed disclosure of CSA. The findings of this study revealed that the young the victim disclosed the more likely they were to receive a hostile/indifferent respond. The average age of the respondents at the time of the abuse was between 7.11 at the age of onset - 14.08 years at the time the abuse ended. The average age of first disclosure was 22.08 years with a range of 10 – 46 years of age for disclosure. However, the findings indicate the older the victims was at the time of the disclosure the more positive outcomes was reported from the disclosure; 73% of those who first disclosed in adulthood reported the experience to be positive (e.g. “I understood it wasn’t my fault” or “It was only after disclosure that I realized I deserved to heal”).