

**T-33**

**Pornography and Adolescents Who Have Engaged in Sexually Abusive Behavior**

**Pornography Use Habits of Sexually and Non-Sexually Delinquent Youth**

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Sexually abusive youth and youth with problem sexualized behaviors (PSB) have been found to disclose more frequent and earlier exposures to pornography compared to delinquent youth (Burton, Leibowitz, & Howard, 2010; Dillard et al., 2019; Flood, 2009; Seto & Lalumière, 2010). One study of sexually reactive children and adolescents found that those who used pornography exhibited more aggressive behaviors (Alexy, Burgess, & Prentky, 2009). Still, there is a gap in the literature regarding specific pornography use habits that may differentiate between sexually and non-sexually offending youth. Further, little is known about how aspects of pornography use habits relate to delinquent behavior among a high risk sample of sexually abusive youth. The current study had two research questions: (1) Do sexually and non-sexually delinquent youth differ in their pornography use habits?; and (2) Among sexually delinquent youth, what pornography use habits, if any, are associated with overall delinquent behavior?

Survey data were collected from Colorado youth ( $N = 200$ ) ages 12-23 who were housed in either community residential or juvenile corrections facilities. Youth had committed either a sexual ( $n = 70$ ) or non-sexual ( $n = 130$ ) crime. Binary logistic regression and multiple linear regression were used for analyses. All models included *age* and *race/ethnicity (White/Black/Hispanic/Other)* as control variables. *Offense type (sexual/non-sexual)* was the dependent variable for the first set of models, and a composite score on the Self-Report Delinquency scale (SRD; Elliott & Ageton, 1980) was the dependent variable in the second set.

The first set of models found that sexually and non-sexually delinquent youth did not significantly differ in their frequency of pornography use or the selection criteria they used to choose pornography. However, youth who reported that *for the most part, I believe pornography is realistic* and who *listen to the audio in pornographic videos* had lower odds of reporting that they had committed a sexual offense than a non-sexual offense ( $OR = .627$ ,  $p = .031$ ) and ( $OR = .732$ ,  $p = .032$ ), respectively. Youth who disclosed being sexually excited by pornography that featured *cartoons* and *sex with a man dressed as a much younger boy* were more likely to report having committed a sexual offense ( $OR = 3.896$ ,  $p = .014$ ) and ( $OR = 70.307$ ,  $p = .022$ ), while those who disclosed being sexually excited by pornography

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featuring *sex while someone is “sleeping”* were less likely to report having committed a sexual offense ( $OR = .105, p = .012$ ).

The second set of models only included youth who reported commission of a sexual offense. Frequency of pornography use and beliefs about pornography were not associated with delinquency scores. Results showed that for a one unit increase in how often sexually delinquent youth *watch pornography with a sexual partner* ( $t(48) = 2.384, p = .021$ ) and how often youth selected pornography based on the *sexual act performed* corresponded with significant increases in SRD score ( $t(45) = 2.267, p = .028$ ). Among pornography contents that youth found sexually exciting, an increase in how exciting they found *sexual pain for yourself* ( $t(38) = 3.206, p = .003$ ), *showing your body to others without their permission* ( $t(38) = 3.242, p = .002$ ), and a *woman being forced* ( $t(38) = 2.272, p = .029$ ) resulted in an increase in SRD score, whereas an increase in how exciting they found *“barely legal” males* ( $t(38) = -2.402, p = .020$ ) and *sex while someone is “sleeping”* ( $t(38) = 2.475, p = .018$ ) coincided with decreases in SRD score.

This study has implications for practitioners, providing some insight into the pornography habits that may be distinctive for sexually abusive adolescents, and how those habits relate to overall delinquent behavior for the population. Research has proposed that males who are already predisposed to engage in sexual violence show the strongest effect of pornography exposure (Seto, Maric, & Barbaree 2001). Future research should explore whether the identified differentiating factors may better predict sexually abusive behavior in adolescence.

### **Learning Goals**

- After the presentation, participants will have a better understanding of the current research regarding how pornography relates to adolescent offending behaviors.
  - Participants will be able describe the etiological significance of pornography use and exposure for sexually abusive youth, as well as the related gaps in the existing literature.
- After the presentation, participants will be able to articulate facets of pornography use that differentiated between sexually and non-sexually delinquent youth.
  - Participants will discuss findings around pornography use habits that differed for sexually and non-sexually delinquent youth and hypothesis that may explain the emergent patterns.
- After the presentation, participants will be able to identify pornography use habits that are associated with delinquency for sexually abusive youth.
  - Participants will be able to identify ways that the study expands the current knowledge base, how distinct pornography use habits are related to overall delinquent behavior among sexually abusive youth, and how pornography habits can be utilized as treatment targets with high risk youth.

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**Rebecca Dillard, MSW** is a doctoral candidate at The Ohio State University in the College of Social Work. In her undergraduate career, Rebecca worked as a research assistant at a program providing collaborative community sexual offender treatment services for court referred juveniles, and her responsibilities involved assessment of incoming clients and their families, and evaluation of program service delivery. Rebecca currently works as a research associate, and her research interests include intervention and prevention services for adolescents who engage in sexually abusive behaviors, childhood experiences of trauma and maltreatment as they relate to subsequent juvenile justice involvement, and developmental antecedents of sexualized behavior problems in youth. Rebecca was the recipient of ATSA's 2018 Pre-doctoral Research Grant, which has helped to fund a study of hers titled *Maltreatment, Emotional Responses to Abuse, and Trauma among Adolescents Engaging in Sexual or non-Sexual Delinquency*.

**Jamie Yoder, PhD, MSW** is Assistant Professor of Social Work at The School of Social Work, Colorado State University. Dr. Yoder has practice experience working with sexually abusive youth and victims of sexual crimes. Her research interests span etiology, prevention initiatives, and equitable and effective intervention strategies for sexually abusive youth with a particular focus on systemic strength-based services. Her scholarship record thus far exemplifies her dedication to advancing theory, practice, and policy in the delinquency and sexual abuse fields. Dr. Yoder has been a lead author and has co-authored many peer-reviewed articles related to these topics. She is currently involved in various projects examining youth sexual offenders and non-sexual offenders in Ohio and Colorado. Dr. Yoder has vast statistical and analytical expertise, evidenced by her substantial academic record as a scholar.

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### **Clinician Perspectives on Treatment of Pornography Use with Adolescents with Sexually Harmful Behaviors**

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Qualitative studies are rare when it comes to treatment of adolescents with sexually harmful behaviors (SHB). This study explores how clinicians understand and address pornography use in treatment for adolescents with SHB. Further, this study will explore how this meaning-making influences the treatment interventions clinicians use. Using a constructivist grounded theory approach, qualitative interviews with clinicians who treat adolescents with SHB are coded and analyzed to provide a picture of the current approaches clinician's in the field are using today. Individual clinicians construct their own understanding of the role of pornography use when working with adolescents with SHB, and each clinician's perspective impacts the treatment interventions they provide. Given the context-driven nature of this topic, constructivist grounded theory allows the researcher to elicit nuanced insights about clinician approaches to treating this issue. Preliminary findings include a variety of attitudes regarding the impact of pornography use prior to and after adolescent sexual offenses. One common theme research participants seem to share is uncertainty about how to keep up to date with the exponential growth of technology use and an increasingly sexualized culture. Implications will be discussed once this study is completed in May 2019.

#### **Learning Goals:**

- Review of current research on the intersection of adolescent sexual offending and pornography use
- Describe findings from qualitative research study
- Discuss implications for treatment and future research

**Ali Tabb** is pursuing her PhD in Social Work at Indiana University. She has worked in adolescent mental and behavioral health for seven years and is credentialed in the state of Indiana to provide treatment for adolescents with sexually harmful or reactive behaviors. Ali's research interests are centered on gaining a deeper understanding of how clinicians are currently providing treatment for adolescents with sexually harmful behaviors, the intersection of excessive pornography use and adolescent brain development, the role of the family in treatment and the impact of shame for individuals with sexually harmful behaviors.