

# **An Exploration of Racial Differences in Deviant Sexual Interests Among Male Adolescent Sexual Offenders**

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*In many research studies and findings from federal statistics, one of the few areas wherein African Americans are less overrepresented in incarcerated settings is for male juvenile sexual assault. In this study, using a large sample the authors hypothesized that perhaps this was due to less deviant sexual interest among these youth (as reported in prior studies) after controlling for relevant variables that might explain differences in deviant arousal between Caucasian and African American youth. The result supported this hypothesis. The authors offered discussion, implications, and suggested individually and culturally based treatment for male adolescent sexual offenders.*

## INTRODUCTION

African Americans, who are overrepresented in most criminal populations, are oddly missing from the literature on sexual offenders and, indeed, from the places of treatment as well. Based on extant, yet sparse literature, and our clinical experience, we explored the literature on racial differences in sexual offender studies, then, using a large sample, compared Caucasian and African American adolescent male youth who have been incarcerated for sexual assault. After controlling for several salient variables we found differences in deviant sexual arousal between the two groups. This led to implications for social work research and practice.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

Although Caucasians make up 75% of the population and African Americans account for 12.3% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau Summary, 2000c, p. 2), the rates of commission of the majority of violent crimes are quite similar between Caucasians and African Americans (Federal Bureau of Investigations [FBI], 2007). For example, in 2000, Caucasian and African American rates of murder arrests were almost identical at 48.7% and 48.8% reported for the two groups, respectively (FBI, 2000, 2007). Furthermore, in 2007, 42% of arrests for robberies were reportedly committed by Caucasians, whereas 56.7% were reportedly committed by African Americans (FBI, 2000, 2007). These arrest rates indicate that adult African Americans are overrepresented in violent and non-violent crime statistics. Although in this article we are ultimately focused on juveniles, some adult data is included when necessary to highlight larger issues and trends. Similarly so, some of the literature—in some cases the only available articles—are not as recent as might be desired as little research in this area has been reported.

### Differences by Race Amongst Arrested Adults

Racism within the judicial system may account for at least part of this racial overrepresentation. Police officers, usually the initial level of contact with the judicial system, often must make quick decisions in crises and time sensitive activities that are often based on little information, which may create a place for racism among police arrests (Bishop, 2005, p. 38). Once arrested, the outlook for African Americans becomes continually grim. For example, data from the Maryland Administrative Office of the Courts reveals that not only are African Americans more likely than Caucasians to receive a prison sentence for single occurrence person offenses, but also African American's sentences are likely to be longer than those of Caucasians (Bushway & Piehl, 2001, p. 751). There is also, on average, a 20% difference in sentence length between African Americans and Caucasians for single-occurrence person offenses (Bushway & Piehl, 2001, p. 755). Many single-person offenses are sex offenses, which is why, even in 1972, Gebhard wondered whether “the African American child molester is more likely than his white counterpart to be sent to a maximum-custody penitentiary” (Gebhard, 1972, p. 91). Responses to this nearly 40-year-old question, nor continued related speculation on the topic, have been found in recent research.

### Juvenile Arrests

As with adults, African American adolescents (approximately ages 10–19) are overrepresented for violent crime arrests because they account for only 14.9% of the total adolescent population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000b) yet

make up 57.4% of adolescent manslaughter arrests and 67.8% of adolescent robbery arrests (FBI, 2007). Caucasian youth, on the other hand, account for only 40.3% of juvenile manslaughter arrests and 30.9% of juvenile robbery arrests, despite the fact that Caucasian youth account for 69.9% of the total adolescent population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a). This trend of overrepresentation of African American youth in arrest statistics also holds true for most other crimes including robbery, larceny, aggravated assault, burglary, and drug abuse violations (FBI, 2007). As Hawkins and Jones (1989) noted, "It is doubtful that Black adolescents are committing crime at a level comparable to their level of incarceration" (p. 421).

### Judicial System: Juveniles

As with adolescent arrests, in judicial processes African Americans are again overrepresented in sentencing decisions. In Pennsylvania, between 1982 and 1992, African American adolescent males received harsher punishments from judges than their Caucasian counterparts (Steffensmeier, Ulmer, & Kramer, 1998, p. 786). Researchers have shown that although judges first consider the gravity of the crime, other factors, such as race, influence the sentencing decisions negatively—that is, people of non-White racial groups received longer sentences (Steffensmeier, Ulmer, & Kramer, 1998, p. 785).<sup>1,2</sup>

In 2005, 64% of the juvenile males aged 12–17 in the national Juvenile Court Statistics Database were Caucasians, whereas 33.2% were African Americans (National Center for Juvenile Justice, 2005), which again reveals the overrepresentation of African Americans in juvenile judicial processes. Yet the changes in these percentages in 2002 reveal noteworthy trends: Between 2002 and 2005 there was a 5.7% decrease among Caucasian juveniles in the Juvenile Court Statistics Database and a 13.3% increase among the African American juveniles (National Center for Juvenile Justice, 2005). The overrepresentation of African Americans in the judicial system may be increasing.

There is a significant relationship between race and status,  $\chi^2(5) = 30.85, p < .001$ , in Table 1. In 2005 there were higher percentages of African Americans in comparison to Caucasian juveniles aged 12–17, who were detained, adjudicated, waived to a higher criminal court, and placed in a treatment facilities. If racism in court rulings is at the root of these discrepancies, it is fitting that more Caucasian juveniles are put on probation compared to African American juveniles, because probation is a lesser consequence in comparison to the others mentioned. However, this overrepresentation in arrests and in the judicial system may be attributed to the researchers seemingly finding that African Americans do commit more crimes than Caucasians. This may be due to the poverty to which African Americans are subject (Harris, 2005, p. 178; Western, 2006).

**TABLE 1** 2005 Judicial Outcomes Among All African American and Caucasian Adolescents Ages 12–17 in the United States

Outcome	Caucasian	African American	Totals
Detained	144,435 (19.60%)	113,697 (29.80%)	258,132
Adjudicated	285,632 (38.70%)	159,336 (41.70%)	444,968
Waived	3,262 (00.44%)	2,399 (00.63%)	5,661
Probation	260,191 (35.30%)	116,046 (30.40%)	376,237
Placed	62,390 (08.50%)	44,838 (11.70%)	107,228
Released	215,354 (29.00%)	133,049 (34.90%)	348,403
Totals	971,264	569,365	1,540,629

*Note.* Data is from the National Center for Juvenile Justice (2005).

### Juvenile Sexual Offense

Given the overrepresentation of African Americans in the arrest and severity of judicial decisions for most crimes, one might assume that these findings would hold true for sexual crimes as well. However, despite the prevalence of the African American rapist myth (Sommerville, 1995; Davis, 1985) that was introduced by Caucasian men during slavery to create an image of a dangerous, sexually unbridled African American culture (Wilson, 1986; Curtis, 1974; Staples, 1973), the majority of sex crimes are intraracial versus interracial (O'Brien, 1987). Further evidence weakening this myth is seen in the higher proportional rates of adolescent Caucasians who are arrested and convicted for sex crimes in comparison to adolescent African Americans (Craun & Kernsmith, 2006; FBI, 2007, Table 43).

An examination of sexual victimization, deviant sexual interest, and the types of sexual offenses committed by race may illuminate possible factors contributing to this potential trend of higher sexual offense rates among Caucasian adolescents in comparison to African American adolescents.

### History of Childhood Sexual Victimization of Juvenile Sexual Offenders by Race

A history of child sexual victimization is found more often amongst juvenile sex offenders than non-sex offenders (Epperson, Ralston, Fowers, DeWitt, & Gore, 2006) yet when compared with Caucasians, African Americans are less likely to have histories of sexual abuse (Burton & Meezan, 2008; Murphy, DiLillo, Haynes, & Steere, 2001). Perhaps this is a partial explanation for lower rates of sexual offense among African Americans.

### Adolescent Deviant Sexual Interest

Not only have adjudicated African American youth committed fewer penetrative sexual assaults in comparison to Caucasian youth within the

same adjudicated group (Burton & Meezan, 2008), but African American youth show significantly lower sexual response in plethysmography assessment than Caucasian youth when exposed to audio stimuli of varying scenarios of sexually deviant actions narrated by a Caucasian adult male (Murphy et al., 2001, p. 96) or the Abel screen (personal communication with Gene Abel, January 2010). Sexual deviancy is a strong predictor of sexual offense recidivism (Worling & Curwen, 2001). If African Americans score lower on assessments of sexual deviancy, perhaps they are not only less likely to re-offend but less likely to offend in the first place.

### Sexual Offense Type

In Table 2, in which we offer some of the FBI Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Statistics, the difference in arrests by race, for rape and child molestation, is examined. Interestingly, the research showing that Caucasians are more likely to be child molesters and African Americans to be rapists (West & Templer, 1994) is supported in the UCR statistics. These numbers may be inflated not by behavioral differences but by racism in the police force or other areas of the justice system, as discussed previously.

However, African Americans are consistently overrepresented for sexual offenses because the percentages of sexual offenses are far greater than the actual proportion of African Americans in the population (see Table 2). Deviating somewhat from this trend, Ikomi, Rodney, and McCoy (2009) found only slight differences among races in a statewide dataset. However, this was only one state, and the national samples shown by the FBI UCRs are more representative of the population of offenders in the United States.

An examination of the changes in rape and other sex offense arrests among juveniles between 1995 and 2007 also yields interesting results. There has been a large decrease in African American adolescent rape arrests and a simultaneous increase in Caucasian adolescent rape arrests between 1995 and 2007 (FBI, 1995, 2007) (see Table 3). This trend is clear despite the 5.9% increase in the Caucasian adolescent population and the 15.6% increase

**TABLE 2** FBI Uniform Crime Reports (UCR): Adolescent Sex Offense by Race and Type<sup>a</sup>

Report	Other sex offenses		Rape	
	AA	Caucasian	AA	Caucasian
1995 FBI UCR	28.0%	69.9%	44.6%	53.8%
2000 FBI UCR	26.9%	70.9%	35.4%	63.1%
2005 FBI UCR	26.9%	71.2%	34.0%	64.3%
2007 FBI UCR	28.1%	70.6%	36.9%	61.5%

*Notes.* AA = African American. Other racial groups were included in the study but are not included in this table, which is why percentages do not add up to 100.

**TABLE 3** FBI Uniform Crime Report Changes in Rape and Other Sex Offense Juvenile Arrests Between 1995 and 2007

Other sex offense		Rape	
AA	Caucasian	AA	Caucasian
0.4% increase	2.1% decrease	17.2% decrease	14.3% increase

in the African American population between 1990 and 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000b).

Yet among “other sex offenses,” African American adolescents show a slight increase, whereas Caucasian adolescents reveal a slight decrease in arrests for “other” sex offenses (FBI, 1995, 2007) (see Table 3). However, given that these are slight changes, they are not influential enough to impact the overall trend.

### The Current Study

Based on the prior literature review, in the current study we offer a descriptive examination of three parts of this complex picture. Using a relatively large database ( $N=536$ ) we examined the following questions: Are there differences between adolescent African American and Caucasian sex offenders in terms of trauma history (especially sexual abuse), deviant sexual interest, and type of sexual crime reported (rape vs. child molestation)?

## METHODS

This data is a combination of three datasets of incarcerated residentially based sexually abusive youth from two states ( $N=536$  youth). The first data (Group 1) were collected from a Midwestern state in 2004, the second data (Group 2) from the same Midwestern state in 2009, and the third data (Group 3) from an Eastern state in 2009. The data collected from Groups 1 and 2 were confidential, whereas the data collected from Group 3 were anonymous. Therefore demographics are compared by group below and then considered in subsequent analyses. Appropriate human subjects board’s permissions and consents/assents were obtained prior to data collection.

### Sample Characteristics

Socially desirable responses were controlled for by deletion of youth from the data set of whose responses indicated invalid responding of any sort using the Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory (MACI; Millon, 1993). All youth whose MACI scores did not conform to the validity criteria of the MACI were removed from the subject pool. Therefore youth were removed for

having responded affirmatively to either question 114 or 126 or having raw Scale X (Disclosure) scores less than 202 or greater than 589. This resulted in the deletion of 99 youth from the data, which left 437 youth remaining: 287 in Group 1, 111 in Group 2, and 39 in Group 3, with a total of 116 African American youth, 217 White youth, and 81 youth of five other races (dropped from the further analyses).

There is no association between data collection group and race,  $\chi^2 = 5.63$  (2),  $p = .06$ . Using analysis of variance to assess potential differences in groups for age (as perceptually they seemed different when collecting the data), a significant difference,  $F(431) = 13.03$ ,  $p < .001$ , was found with post hoc Bonferroni tests indicating that the three data collection groups are significantly different from each other, with Group 1 at 16.65 years of age ( $SD = 1.6$  years), Group 2 at 17.18 years of age ( $SD = 2.09$  years), and Group 3 at 12.51 years of age ( $SD = 1.81$  years) at the time the data were collected. Hence, age is included in the multivariate analyses that follow although having age in the models will diminish the effects of having groups in the model and vice versa.

Predictably, grade level was different across the three data collections,  $F(426) = 7.73$ ,  $p = .001$ , with post hoc Bonferroni tests indicating that Group 1 and Group 2 are significantly different, Group 1 and Group 3 are not significantly different, and Group 2 and Group 3 are significantly different from one another. Group 1 averaged ninth grade and three months ( $SD = 1.6$  grades). Group 2 averaged in the tenth grade ( $SD = 1.6$  grades), and Group 3 averaged in the ninth grade ( $SD = 1.45$  grades).

In a scale of severity of perpetration of sexual aggression (P score), using a 14-point rank-order scale which runs from 1 = exposure to 14 = penetration, oral sex, exposure, and fondling was used to get a sense of sexual crime level. Youth were asked about every sexual crime they have committed and this measure combines the various acts into one scale. The average perpetration severity level across the sample was 8.19 ( $SD = 4.25$  levels). A score of 8 = penetration (vaginal or anal) and exposure. There was no difference by racial group,  $t(282) = .549$ ,  $p = .583$ . Distribution is indicated below in Table 4 with more than 70% of the sample reporting some form of penetration (including oral sex) and close to 50% some form of vaginal or anal penetration. Amongst the African American youth, 51.7% admitted to incest and 67.3% of the White youth admitted committing incest,  $\chi^2(1) = 7.75$ ,  $p = .005$ .

## Administration

The data collection from all three groups was similar in that the data were collected using pencil-and-paper surveys of juvenile sexual offenders incarcerated in residential facilities. In all three cases the surveys were administered in a small (8–12) group format in classrooms; however, participants



**TABLE 4** Perpetration Severity Level Distribution

	Sex offence	Frequency	Valid %
1	Exposure	13	4.6
2	Fondling	38	13.4
3	Exposure & Fondling	14	4.9
4	Oral Sex	24	8.5
5	Oral Sex & Exposure	0	0
6	Oral Sex & Fondling	19	6.7
7	Oral Sex, Fondling & Exposure	17	6.0
8	Penetration (vaginal or anal) with penis, digits or objects	23	8.1
9	Penetration & Exposure	6	2.1
10	Penetration & Fondling	15	5.3
11	Penetration, Exposure & Fondling	13	4.6
12	Penetration & Oral Sex	40	14.1
13	Penetration, Oral sex & Fondling	6	2.1
14	Penetration, oral sex, fondling, and exposure	55	19.4
	Total	283	100.0
	Missing	50	
	Grand total	333	

were separated from one another to ensure that they could not view each other's responses. The youth were not provided with an incentive to complete the survey. For those participants ( $n=8$ , 2.6% for Group 1;  $n=6$ , 3.0%, for Group 2; and  $n=2$ , 4.5% for Group 3) who struggled with reading, the surveys were read aloud by graduate student research assistants. Group 1 and Group 2 were collected with the youths' names for the purpose of follow up and program evaluation. In Groups 1 and 2, all youth were warned in several ways (on assent forms, on the surveys themselves, and out loud) that if we learned of any new abuses we would need to report them to the appropriate authorities. For Group 3 no similar warning was needed as the surveys were anonymous. Notably, Group 1 was the most self-disclosing in terms of negative behaviors during survey administration.

## Measures

For the purposes of this study a detailed demographic and history form was used, previously used in earlier studies (Burton, 2003; Burton, Leibowitz, Booxbaum, & Howard, 2010; Burton, Miller, & Shill, 2002), with which we collected data on life history, age, race, exposure to family violence, education, and so on, although not all of this is salient or reported in the current study.

The Self Report Sexual Aggression Scale is a multi-item inventory used in prior studies (Burton, 2003; Burton et al., 2002). The scale measures sexually aggressive behaviors over the lifespan. Questions about several sexual acts are all prefaced with "Have you ever conned or forced someone to . . .?" This instrument is essentially a checklist of relationships and acts with



8-week test-retest reliability for a small sample of 96% (Burton, 2000). This measure includes a number of behavioral scales including various potential areas of sexual arousal (e.g., arousal to males under 12, females 12–18, etc.). These items used a 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*a great deal*) ordinal scale. While self-report may elicit concerns regarding the validity of such measures, Worling (2006) reported that self-report of sexual arousal was very highly correlated with a measure of viewing time. The 14-point rank-order scale that measures severity of perpetration of sexual aggression also is derived from this measure (1 = exposure to 14 = penetration, oral sex, exposure and fondling).

The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (Bernstein & Fink, 1998) is a 33-item scale that provides a brief and relatively noninvasive screening of traumatic experiences in childhood using a 5-point frequency scale ranging from 1 (*never true*) to 5 (*very often true*). There are five subscales: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect, and emotional neglect. All of the subscales have acceptable to good internal consistency in this study, Cronbach's alpha for the sexual abuse scale = .85.

The MACI was designed for youth in treatment facilities. It was normed on 579 adolescents in such facilities with two smaller cross-validation samples. The scales derived from the 160 true–false items are based on Millon's theory of personality (Millon & Davis, 1996). For the purposes of this study, only Millon's valid responding measures were used to ascertain socially desirable responding as described above.

Data were entered in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15 and analyses with SPSS versions 16 and 17. Analysis started with group differences using *t* tests and then a number of multivariate models to control for age, group, and level of perpetration (sexual crime).

## RESULTS

Using Student's *t* tests to compare trauma scales on the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, the African American youth were higher (experienced more trauma) on the Sexual Abuse and Physical Neglect scales, and Caucasian youth were higher on the Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, and Emotional Neglect scales. However the only statistically significant differences were that the Caucasian youth were higher on the Emotional Abuse and Physical Neglect scales (see Table 5).

Comparing crime type (molestation ever or rape only) by race, a significant association was found,  $\chi^2(1) = 3.75, p = .048$ , between race and crime type (see Table 6).

Results from Student's *t* tests to assess difference by race on deviant (i.e., rape) and normative sexual arousal (i.e., peers) indicated several differences prior to multivariate analyses controlling for various potential confounding

**TABLE 5** Trauma Scales Means by Race

Trauma	African American	Caucasian	<i>t</i>
Sexual abuse	11.67 (6.15)	11.54 (6.63)	.171
Physical abuse	10.56 (5.51)	11.52 (6.16)	1.41
Emotional abuse	9.92 (5.29)	11.80 (6.21)	2.76**
Physical neglect	16.21 (5.68)	14.45 (5.54)	2.73**
Emotional neglect	18.13 (9.08)	19.01 (8.96)	.85
Total	68.38 (25.75)	70.14 (26.49)	.58

\*\* $p < .01$ .

**TABLE 6** Crime Type by Race

Crime type	African American	Caucasian
Rape only <sup>a</sup>	44 (75.9%)	68 (60.7%)
Ever committed child molestation <sup>b</sup>	14 (24.1%)	44 (39.3%)

<sup>a</sup>Youth were placed in this category if both the victim(s) and the perpetrator were more than 12 years of age when the abuse started, or if both the victim(s) and the perpetrator were under 12 when the abuse started.

<sup>b</sup>Youth were placed in this category if when the abuse started, the victim(s) was under age 13 and the perpetrator was over age 13. If a youth committed both rape and child molestation they were also placed in this category.

variables. The White youth were higher in 12 of 14 of the categories and significantly higher in 5 of 6 categories where there were significant differences between the races (see Table 7). Means and standard deviations allow

**TABLE 7** Race by Sexual Interests (shading indicates the group that is higher)

Interest <sup>†</sup>	Black <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	White <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Bestiality	.00 (.00)	.12 (.744)
Exhibitionism	.27 (.708)	.28 (.846)
Females under 12**	.31 (.599)	.58 (.829)
Females 13–18	2.50 (1.396)	2.68 (1.156)
Frottage	.22 (.561)	.37 (.743)
Males under 12	.18 (.486)	.27 (.748)
Males 13–18	.38 (.923)	.29 (.768)
Masochism*	.03 (.184)	.24 (.898)
Masturbating in public*	.03 (.211)	.14 (.482)
Obscene phone calls**	.38 (.827)	.24 (.663)
Peeping**	.32 (.720)	.50 (.945)
Rape	.34 (.748)	.45 (.824)
Sadism*	.13 (.474)	.33 (.962)
Underwear*	.23 (.652)	.44 (.920)

<sup>†</sup>Sorted alphabetically.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

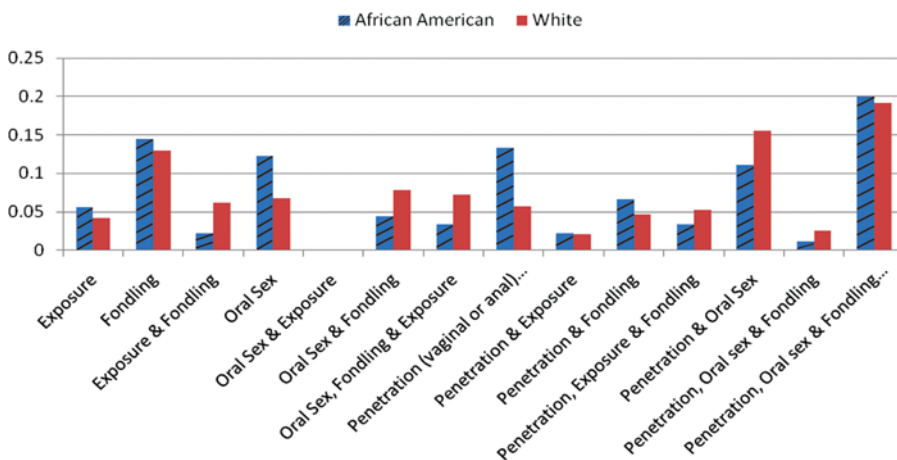
**TABLE 8** Perpetration Severity Level by Race<sup>†</sup>

Sex offence	African American (n)	%	White (n)	%
Exposure	5	5.56	8	4.00
Fondling	13	14.44	25	13.00
Exposure and fondling	2	2.22	12	6.00
Oral sex	11	12.22	13	7.00
Oral sex and exposure	0	0.00	0	0.00
Oral sex and fondling	4	4.44	15	8.00
Oral sex, fondling, and exposure	3	3.33	14	7.00
Penetration (vaginal or anal) with penis, digits, or objects	12	13.33	11	6.00
Penetration and exposure	2	2.22	4	2.00
Penetration and fondling	6	6.67	9	5.00
Penetration, exposure, and fondling	3	3.33	10	5.00
Penetration and oral sex	10	11.11	30	16.00
Penetration, oral sex, and fondling	1	1.11	5	3.00
Penetration, oral sex, fondling, and exposure	18	20.00	37	19.00
Total	90	100.00	193	100.00

<sup>†</sup>Sorted by least to most severe level.

examination of the lower rates of endorsement of some categories and comparison between the items.

A composite deviant arousal score was created by adding together responses to five of the more deviant arousal categories (females under 12, males under 12, masochism, sadism, and rape). Each question was scored from 0 (*not at all aroused*) to 4 (*aroused a great deal*). The racial groups were significantly different,  $t(326) = 3.45, p = .001$ , on this score with African American youth having an average of 1.00 ( $SD = 1.47$ ) and White youth an average 100% higher at 1.96 ( $SD = 2.75$ ).



**FIGURE 1** Frequency of worst sexual crime by category by race. (Color figure available online.)

**TABLE 9** Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Race (0 = African American, 1 = White)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	SE B	Exp (B)	B	SE B	Exp (B)	B	SE B	Exp (B)	B	SE (B)	Exp (B)
Age	.006	.065	1.006	-.015	.068	.985	-.015	.076	.985	-.018	.078	.982
Group Dummy Variable <sup>†</sup>				.506	.283	1.66	.572	.301	1.77	.693*	.310	2.00
Emotional Abuse							.160***	.031	1.173	.155***	.032	1.17
Physical Neglect							-.155***	.030	.857	-.163**	.031	.850
Deviant Arousal										.246**	.075	1.28
$\chi^2$			.008			3.32			40.48***			58.43***
Nagelkerke $R^2$			.000			.014			.176			.230

<sup>†</sup> = presence, or 1 = membership in Data Collection Group 1.

$p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

An assessment of race by perpetration severity level indicated no mean difference by racial group (see Methods section) and, to make sure that distribution was somewhat equal by race, we examined frequency by race (see Table 8) and found no association between act severity and race,  $\chi^2(12) = 13.94, p = .304$ .

A perhaps easier way to see this data in comparison is in Figure 1, which portrays the percentage values for each group by the areas of arousal assessed. As can be seen in this figure, the two groups vary in numerous areas.

Linear hierarchical regression was selected to assess the effects of the variables that may explain deviant arousal differences between racial groups. The three data collections varied by age and in data collection method (confidential vs. anonymous), so age was entered in the first block, followed by data collection group. The P score was not entered as it did not differ by race. Then, the significantly different (in the group comparisons above) trauma scores, physical neglect and emotional abuse were entered. In the fourth and final block, the deviant arousal score was entered. In this way, age, data collection group, and differences in trauma by racial group, all of which could account for racial group based on the literature and earlier analyses, are controlled for prior to testing the effect of deviant arousal on prediction of racial group membership (see Table 9) with resultant model  $\chi^2(5) = 58.43, p < .001$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .230$ . In the final model, the significant variable predicting racial group are group membership (Group 1), emotional abuse, physical neglect, and, finally, deviant arousal. This model predicts 40.5% of the African American youth and 87.1% of the Caucasian groups correctly for an overall prediction of 71.0% of the entire sample.

## DISCUSSION

The finding that African American male adolescent sexual offenders were less likely to have been sexually abused is supported by prior research (Burton & Meezan, 2008; Murphy et al., 2001). High levels of religiosity (Brown, Orbuch, & Bauermeister, 2008; Hunt & Hunt, 2001), the significance of extended familial (Randolph, 1995), and church-based social networks (Mattis, 2005) within diverse African American cultures may account for protective factors that prevent higher rates of sexual abuse. In fact, these protective factors are linked; formal religiosity (i.e., going to church) predicts greater family cohesion amongst African Americans (Brody, Stoneman, & Flor, 1996) and thus greater resiliency in African American families (McCubbin, 1998; McCubbin, Futrell, Thompson, & Thompson, 1998).

Other protective factors in African American families may include more parental discipline (strictness, rule setting, etc.; Clark, Novak, & Dupree,

2002, p. 381), more leisure time spent with family members (Larson, Richards, Sims, & Dworkin, 2001), and African Americans' tendency toward collectivism (Allen & Bagozzi, 2001). In peer social settings, too, it appears that African American adolescents stick together in groups, self-segregating, as a means of protecting and supporting one another from the racism that is targeted at them as members of the subordinate group (Tatum, 1997, p. 59).

The finding that African American adolescent male sexual offenders had lower deviant sexual arousal scores than their Caucasian counterparts is supported by prior research (Murphy et al., 2001). Evidence of this lower deviant arousal score and the higher proportion of African American rapists compared to African American child molesters is also consistent with prior findings (West & Templer, 1994). Cultural indicators of this decreased sexual deviancy amongst African American male adolescents may be explained by more liberal attitudes, behaviors, and views on sex in diverse African American cultures (Lewis, 1975; Weinberg & Williams, 1988) that emphasize the importance of reproduction rather than the weight of sin and guilt associated with sex in traditional Christian theology (Frazier, 1971). Furthermore, contrary to the myth of "abuse tolerance" among African Americans, one study found that 93% of African American respondents did not condone sexual relations between an adult and a child (Haskins, 1997).

Lower levels of sexual deviancy amongst African Americans may further be explained by a greater cultural equality between men and women, as evidenced by more egalitarian roles between African American spouses (Landry, 2000) due to the historical role of the African American female as partial or primary breadwinner (Landry & Jendreck, 1978), and the self-classification of both African American men and women as androgynous (Dade & Sloan, 2000). Furthermore, a study comparing gender equality in verbal interactions between African American and Caucasian American adolescents found gender to not be a significant status characteristic for African Americans; in other words, the African American subjects exhibited greater gender equality (Filardo, 1996). Additionally, if African American sex-role stereotypes are more fluid and egalitarian (Lewis, 1975), then perhaps women hold a more powerful, respected role within African American cultures than Caucasian American women do within Caucasian American cultures. By respecting women more, then perhaps African American men will be less likely to sexually abuse.

Finally, research relating male sexual aggressiveness to exaggerations of the male gender role and the re-assertion of masculinity (Eisler et al., 2000; Hunter, Figueredo, Malamuth, & Becker, 2003, p. 43) imply that hegemony plays a role in sexual offense: the domination of men over women. In other words, sexual deviancy, which leads to sexual aggression, may be a product of male hegemony. As members of the cultural minority, it is possible that African American male adolescents experience less need to exaggerate their

masculinity, for they do not suffer from the pressure of the dual hegemony experienced by Caucasian American males. In other words, by having experience as part of a subordinated culture, perhaps African American males experience less male hegemony, and thus, less sexual deviancy.

Discussing the variables in the order of entry in the multiple regression analysis, the significance of the dummy variable indicating membership in Group 1 may be explained in that the youth, both in person and on the surveys, were the most revealing of the three groups regarding their treatment and issues. At the time of the data collection, that group was about 1 year into treatment with licensed social workers. The units were full of treatment materials on the walls, and the youth were encouraged to share information and discuss things with each other in a modified “positive peer culture” (Kapp, 2000) model. Five years later, when Group 2 data were collected, this same state had a natural cyclical drop and was about to start a treatment renewal process. But the youth were not as talkative and the units had a more corrections facility culture rather than a treatment-oriented culture (e.g., more discipline was in place, no decorations in the central areas, louder orders given to the youth, etc.). Group 3, however, was in a state that was using correctional facilities and many of the youth were housed in units that were not as treatment-centered as Group 1. The trauma variables were both significant predictors of race, which was unsurprising based on the univariate analyses in the same direction: Greater physical neglect predicted being White, whereas less emotional abuse predicted being White. Finally, deviant arousal was entered in the final block. Significance indicates, that as one might predict, after age, group, and trauma are controlled for, some of the variation in deviant arousal predicts racial group with higher deviant arousal predicting being in the White group. However, as with all hypotheses and analyses, alternate hypotheses must be considered.

One possible explanation for the racial differences in this set of delinquents, as compared to nearly all others, may be that some families from the diverse African American cultures may not share sexual abuse information with authorities. As one of us is a clinician of many years, we can say that families of all races may regret “telling the authorities” due to the legal involvement, removal of the child from the home, costs, registration consequences, and so on. Perhaps this is then simply an underreporting issue. However when considering this possibility, the control variables, based on racial group differences and univariate assessments, would belie this explanation and underreporting would not seem to be able to logically account for differences in deviant interest.

If, on the other hand the data are valid and there is a true difference between the races several explanations are possible. Based on long conversations with groups of African American clinicians at the 2008 National Adolescent Perpetration Network conference in Portland, Oregon and the annual Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers Conference in the



same year, and several conversations with colleagues and clients over the past three years, a partial and tentative list includes the following:

1. African American cultures often are matriarchal and mothers may protect their younger children from their older children more effectively.
2. African American families may be more punitive and strict regarding sexual expression in families.
3. Religion may play a strong role in diverse African American cultures resulting in less inappropriate sexual exploration and misbehavior.
4. African American families may have had to become more used to protecting each other due to oppression and under this same rubric less likely to harm one another (note the significant difference between the groups on the commission of incest).

### Research Implications

This is a first of its kind study and obviously somewhat controversial. However, there is no intent here other than to investigate and support clinical and statistical findings as previously outlined. Given that this is a new area of research, further research is needed to offer any validation of these findings. In discussing that with Dr. Gene Abel, who arguably has the largest databases available on juvenile sexual abusers and arousal, he found the same results in a preliminary analysis of his data which has a study population exceeding 6,000 youth (Gene Abel, personal communication, December 2009).

Future researchers may want to validate or disprove these findings or assess them using within-group analyses to understand differences among the African American group. In addition, testing related research findings such as racial differences on incest versus non-incest and child molestation versus rape may be of interest. Cultural differences (e.g., family differences, value differences) may also be optimum research targets to understand the potential strengths in the overarching African American culture that may be serving as protective factors for these youth.

### Treatment Implications

Afro-centered treatment, such as that delivered at Black Family Development in Detroit, Michigan, may be a consideration. As documented in a prior related article (Burton & Meezan, 2004), culturally based treatment for youth has been found to be quite effective. Another potential interpretation, if under-reporting is occurring in either racial group, even through controlled for in this study, would be to reach out to families regarding red flags and indicators of sexual abuse and the utility of reporting to the appropriate authorities. Family-centered treatments such as Multi Systemic Treatment (Henggeler et al., 1997) may be well suited to African American families.

Treatment that is based less on deviant arousal and more on the other known treatment and etiological variables, such as power and control, substance abuse, and antisociality, may make more sense for the African American youth.

In a more detailed way, workbooks used in treatment, exercises designed to develop social skills, and relapse prevention plan manuals and the like tend to be quite Euro-centered—at least to our observation. Examples of African American youth going through the process of treatment may be helpful in these materials, or plans that include the family or church more often as exemplars may be useful to some of these youth. All in all, however, no group of youthful sexual offenders is truly homogeneous and youth should not be treated as other than individuals in their path to recovery. Indeed, relationship-centered (Marshall & Burton, 2009) individualized treatment is the most appropriate for all these youth.

### Limits

As always, self-report data may be suspect, but we did control for this quite extensively and, based on Worling's (2006) research, hope that self-reported deviant arousal is somewhat accurate. Other measures of arousal might be stronger, such as plethysmography. This entire sample was in residential facilities and of similar socioeconomic background; community-based and more diverse socioeconomic background samples are needed for further research as these variables certainly may affect racial differences. More variables that may affect these differences, such as family cohesion religiosity and other unknown variables, would strengthen this and future studies.

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