Chapter 6
Adolescent Perpetrators

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Family-Based Theory

- The **ecological model** has been identified as the best suited framework to address the causes, consequences, and treatment formulations for abused children.

- The ecological model incorporates much of the research developed through the three traditional schools of criminological theory.
Ecological Model

FIGURE 6-1 Ecological model of factors associated with family violence.
Family Systems Theory

- **Family systems theory** focuses primarily on family behavior and seeks to identify the problems that are a consequence of dysfunctional relationships among family members.

- Conflict within an intimate relationship is blamed on the lack of communication between the partners.

- Self-imposed social isolation, in addition to rigid expectations of loyalty and privacy, make this a difficult situation for families when battering is introduced as a means of control.
Family Systems Theory

- Concepts related to family structure in this theory:
  - Boundaries
  - Power and intimacy
  - Freedom of expression
  - Warmth, joy, and humor
  - Organization and negotiating skills
  - Value systems

- Parents are the most critical factor in the development of children

- Empirical findings in many studies indicate that parental behavior can either increase or decrease an adolescent’s risk for delinquency and other problem behaviors
Consequences

- Children who have either witnessed violence in their parents or experienced abuse may learn violent behavior, and may also learn to justify violent behavior as appropriate.

- The majority of abuse victims do not commit family or other forms of violence as adults; however, many suffer long after the abuse ends.

- Chronic physical abuse can result in long-term physical disabilities, including brain damage, hearing loss, dental problems, and eye damage.
The intergenerational cycle of violence asserts that abused children are at high risk to become abusers in their own adult intimate relationships.

Often associated with childhood abuse, a cycle of predictable self-inflicted violence may occur in the adolescent addiction model, triggered by negative emotions such as alienation, frustration, rejection, anger, isolation, depression, or sadness.
An incorrect assumption is that all maltreated children will grow up to abuse their own children later in life. Studies have indicated that this is not necessarily true. The majority of children who are victimized through domestic violence do not commit criminal acts as adults.

Many conditions may affect the response to abuse, both as a child victim and later in life as an adult.

Resilience is the manifestation of self-esteem, thought to be one of the factors that mediate the negative effects of child abuse.
Resilience

- **Turning** refers to a major transition in the life of a person when he or she takes on a new set of roles, enters into fresh relationships with a new set of people, and achieves a new self-concept. It is a method of coping that brings about change in an effort to avoid continuing the negative behavior that has been witnessed or experienced.

- The consequences of abuse will vary according to multiple factors, including the form and severity of the abuse.
Abuse and Criminal Behavior

- The most consistent predictor of juvenile violence is childhood physical abuse victimization.

- This “cycle of abuse” suggests strongly that those children who are abused or neglected, either physically or sexually, grow up to engage in criminal activity at a greater rate than those who are not abused or neglected.

- Early intervention, anger management, and peer relationships are important efforts to both prevent delinquency and lessen the psychological distress of victims.
Abuse and Consequences

- Among other things, abuse and neglect increases the likelihood of repressed social information processing, lower performance in school, and relationship problems.

- Distrust of others, overcompliance with authority figures, and a tendency to solve interpersonal problems with aggression are all risk factors for victims of physical abuse.

- **Shame**, the desire to hide the damaged self from others, may result from childhood sexual abuse.
Adolescent Offending Patterns

- It is not uncommon that an adolescent is both a victim and an offender.

- In the juvenile courts, violations of criminal law are referred to as delinquency cases.

- A status offense is an act that would not be an offense if it were committed by an adult.

- A third type of juvenile case concerns juveniles who need supervision.

- States also have laws that allow younger juveniles to be tried as adults for some specific crimes, such as homicide.
**Animal Abuse**

- **Animal abuse** is defined as socially unacceptable behavior that intentionally causes unnecessary pain, suffering, or distress to and/or death of an animal.

- Childhood abuse of animals is predictive of violent crime offending at a later age as well as of committing property offenses, drug offenses, public disorder offenses, and exhibiting a range of antisocial problems.

- Research suggests a connection between child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and animal abuse.
Numerous studies have suggested that children are at risk for sexual abuse at the hands of child-care providers. However, older children account for as much as 40% of the offenses committed in the child-care context.

In a study of child-care providers who sexually abuse children, juvenile offenders charged with supervising younger children tended to victimize 4- and 5-year-olds predominately.

In all age categories, most perpetrators of homicides are male.

Family members account for approximately 6% of the victims killed by a person under age 18.

**Parricide**, the act of killing one’s parent, is one form of murder committed by juveniles.

- **Matricide** is act of killing one’s mother.
- **Patricide** is the act of killing one’s father.

Runaways

- A **runaway** is any child who is separated from the child’s guardian and appears to be in need of emergency housing and other services

- Approximately 1.6 million children and youth (ages 12 to 17) run away every year

- Youth victimization is highly correlated with the decision to run away from home

- The likelihood of running away from home is three times higher for respondents who were physically or verbally abused and twice as likely for sexual abuse survivors, as compared to those youth who were not abused
Sexual Offending

- Frequently sexual offenders report that they began offending in their adolescent years. An early target may be a younger sibling.

- Juvenile offenders make up more than one-third of the sexual offenders against minors that are known to the police.

- Juvenile sexual offenders represent a diverse group; some target only children, whereas others assault peer and adult females.

- Approximately 85-95% of juvenile offenders who abuse minors do not become sex offenders in adolescence or adulthood.

Sibling Violence

- Research has suggested that sibling abuse may be the most common form of family violence.

- Violence between siblings is underreported and underdocumented, and its effects can be serious. Adults and children commit similar types of abuse: physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. The acts involve punching, hitting, kicking, biting, and rape.

- **Emotional sibling abuse** is characterized by the constancy and intensity of the words and actions that express contempt and degradation.
Teen Dating Violence

- **Dating violence** means “an act by an individual that is against another individual with whom that person has or has had a dating relationship and that is intended to result in physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or sexual assault or that is a threat that reasonably places the individual in fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or sexual assault, but does not include defensive measures to protect oneself.”

- Victimization rates for adolescent dating violence are significant.
Parent Abuse

- Studies have revealed that a significant proportion of family violence is perpetrated by a juvenile against parents or siblings.

- Researchers suggest that parent victims feel shame at their inability to control their children; therefore, the problem is grossly underreported.

- In one study, 80% of the youth who were violent toward parents indicated that their parents were violent toward them.

- The data suggest that the percentage of parent abuse has increased and is likely to continue.
Pedophilia

- The term **pedophile** refers to an adult who has a sustained sexual orientation toward children.
- Studies indicate that the mean age of pedophiles is 28 years for male offenders and 26 years old for female offenders. Pedophiles have a more frequent sex preference for their own sex, as compared to adults who commit sex crimes like rape.
- Studies indicate that 75-90% of pedophiles were abused within their own families.

Child Pornography

- Pornography that depicts actual children is not subject to the protection of the Constitution and is in a category of crimes against society.

- Child pornography is a form of child sexual exploitation.

- There are two types of pornography that involve juveniles:
  - Juvenile victim pornography that includes an identifiable victim of sexual abuse.
  - Child exploitation pornography, in which the child is sexually depicted but no additional offense is involved (such as rape).