

## **Childhood abuse and criminal behavior: testing a general strain theory model.**

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## **Childhood abuse and criminal behavior: testing a general strain theory model.**

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### **Source**

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### **Abstract**

This article draws on general strain theory (GST) to develop and test a model of the childhood abuse-crime relationship. Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health),(1) we find that early childhood physical and sexual abuse are robust predictors of offending in adolescence, for the full sample and in equations disaggregated by gender. GST is partially supported in that the effects of childhood physical abuse on offending for both females and males are mediated by an index of depression symptoms, whereas the effect of sexual abuse among females appears to be mediated largely by closeness to mother. The effect of childhood sexual abuse among males, however, is more robust than among females and it persists despite controls for low self-control, ties to delinquent peers, school attachment, and closeness to mother. Theoretical implications of the findings are discussed.

### **KEYWORDS:**

childhood abuse, crime, depression, general strain theory, victimization

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