

## **S57-02**

### **THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE - AN OUTDATED CONCEPT FOR FORENSIC PSYCHIATRY?**

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The cycle of violence theory proposed in the early sixties suggested that children growing up exposed to violence would themselves become violent.

Testing this theory incidence studies found elevated levels of child abuse in offender populations compared to the general public, whereas prospective studies found significant associations between child abuse and subsequent adult criminality. However, prospective studies also showed that a large proportion of children exposed to violence did not grow up to become violent or criminal, which in turn lead to the assumption that the cycle of violence theory was to be rejected.

Recent studies have found indications of more specific relationships between early traumata and subsequent adult criminality. For example elevated levels of both risky sexual behavior as well as adult sexual victimization experiences have been found in persons having suffered childhood sexual abuse (CSA). These findings have raised the question if a specific association exists between the experience of CSA and subsequent adult sex offending.