



Rind (2022) – Your 5-minute Guide

Everything you needed to know about Bruce Rind's [*Reactions to Minor-Older and Minor-Peer Sex as a Function of Personal and Situational Variables in a Finnish Nationally Representative Student Sample from Archives of Sexual Behavior*](#).

Background

Rind (2022) analysed the data from a large-scale nationally representative sample obtained through stratified cluster sampling based on county, type of municipality, and school size. It employed the same sample used by Felson et al. (2019). These Finnish Government-funded victimization surveys of sixth and ninth graders (generally aged 12 and 15, respectively) were conducted in 1988, 2008, and 2013. The samples were merged from these three surveys, and the analysis refers to the first relation of the minor.

Combined, these nationally representative samples contained more than thirty thousand participants, with a total of 474 instances of CSA (defined as per convention: age-gap over 4/5 years) for boys and 1621 for girls, numbers unusually large for research on reactions to CSA. Peer-age sex was 5 times more common for boys and 2 times more common for girls, when compared to CSA. At the time of the minor-older sex, most participants were in the adolescent range, aged 12–14 (49.0%) or 15–16 (39.1%). Most partners were adults aged 18–29 (75.3%) or older (19.4%). Few partners in the CSA sample were minors under age 18 (5.3%). Most older partners in the CSA sample were male (81.0%), friends (38.9%), strangers (26.2%), or others (27.5%). Mean participant and partner ages for girls were 13.50 vs 25.12. For boys, these mean ages were 13.32 vs 24.91.

Contrary to characterizations seen in the professional literature, often based on anecdotes or clinical-forensic cases, these incidents infrequently involved overt coercion (12%), incest (6%), or children younger than 12 (11%).

Findings

Self perception of "abuse"

Most participants did not perceive that they had been abused (54.7%), whereas comparatively few unambiguously did (13.8%). In both minor-older and minor-peer sex, rates of positive reactions were higher for boys vs. girls, adolescents vs. children, when partners were friends vs. strangers or relatives.

In a fine grading of girls' subjective reactions, the most common reaction was disgust, although this was in a minority of girls. It is worth mentioning that even for girls, interest and pleasure were more common than fear and shock. Boys reactions were heavily biased towards *pleasure*, as was to be expected from the previous body of research.

Importance of age difference

In minor-older sex, partner age difference mattered for girls but not boys. Boys reacted positively, equally so for minor-peer and minor-older sex (77 vs. 78% at the time). Girls involved with older persons reacted positively slightly more than a third of the time (35–36%), which was just over half as often as girls involved with peers for reactions at the time (61%). *Adolescent* (12+) girls sexually involved with adult males 5 to 7 years older, however, reacted no more negatively than when involved with peer-aged males.

Girls in younger age groups, going from 15–17 to 12–14 to under 12, progressively reacted more negatively and less positively. For boys, on the other hand, those in the adolescent range (12–14 and 15–17) reacted nearly the same, with only younger boys (under 12) showing more negative and less positive reactions.

Boys with adults reacted negatively at the time (9.8%) significantly less often than boys with older minors (28.6%). They also reacted positively at the time more often than boys with older minors (83.0% vs. 66.7%).

Importance of familiarity, intimacy and frequency

For girls, a majority of sexual experiences with friends were reacted to positively: over half the cases with peers (53%) and two-thirds with older partners (67%). More frequent sexual episodes were rated significantly better than less frequent episodes, and this trend held for both sexes.

For girls, positive reactions increased from non-contact sex to sexual touching to sexual intercourse in both minor-peer and minor-older sex, with similar rates at each level of intimacy (for example, this trend can be seen in the retrospective recall figures). For intercourse, most girls reacted positively in retrospect, whether with peers (57%) or older partners (63%). On the other hand, for non-contact sex, few reacted positively, whether with peers (14%) or older partners (8%). Boys showed a similar pattern in this regard – it can be speculated that the more intimate sex was withheld for favoured partners or higher quality experiences.

Retrospective recall

The myth of increased negative reaction in retrospect is also challenged by the results of this survey. When assessed in relation to their reaction at the time, the positivity of boys' reactions only tailed off by 9%, but for girls, there was no effect, and the negativity actually reduced by over 10%.

Retrospectively, boys reacted positively to minor-older sex (68%), on par with positive reactions to boy-peer sex (67%). Girls reacted positively to minor-older sex less often (36%) and to girl-peer sex half the time (48%). *Retrospectively*, girls involved with adults reacted negatively significantly less often (34.0%) than girls involved with older minors (52.8%).

Initiation of sex by minors

In terms of affirmative willingness, 20.4% of younger participants initiated CSA, and in terms of affirmative unwillingness, 13.1% reported being coerced. 14% of girls, 46% of boys initiated sex acts, and the resulting level of positive reaction was high, and importantly the same between the genders (around 80%).

Era as a modifier

Girls with older partners reacted more negatively (46% vs. 31%) and less positively (26% vs. 47%) in the 2008–2013 surveys than in the 1988 survey. For boys, no significant differences occurred. Rind speculates that this decrease in positive recall may be due to the broadly received social attitudes.

Limitations

1. Referring only to sexual debut.

- To be more relevant to policy, these studies need to survey all examples of sex below or above a certain age, or a general impression thereof.

2. No adult-adult comparison.

- The importance of surveying adult-adult reactions is demonstrated by the Kinsey samples. Unlike the minor-peer reactions in the present study (which were the same or superior to minor-adult reactions), these adult-adult reactions were the same or *inferior* to the minor-adult reactions. This helps us judge whether or not legally restricting debut to an earlier age is policy-relevant or otherwise futile.

3. The subjective nature of subjective reactions.

- A neutral subjective reaction, for example – does not disprove trauma, while a negative reaction does not prove trauma. Many of the negative reactions of girls for example, seem to have been flippant, since their reaction to penetration was significantly better than non-penetrative acts. See also, the overwhelmingly negative reaction of adult women with age peers in the Kinsey sample. Clearly, similar studies such as [Daly \(2021\)](#) have confirmed Rind et al's findings re. the absence of psychological maladjustment in similar samples. Therefore an adjustment questionnaire should be included in future surveys.