The Impact of Abuse on the Perceived Speed of Growing Up

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Research Questions
- How does child abuse affect the perceived rate of growing up in terms of adult responsibility?
- Does gender moderate the relationship between abuse and perceived rate of growing up?

Significance
- Annually there are nearly 700,000 children abused in the U.S.
- About 30% of abused children will end up abusing their own children.
- Adults who were abused as children are more likely to develop at least 1 psychological disorder.

Background
- Child abuse is classified as:
  - Emotional, physical, sexual abuse, or neglect.
  - May or may not be violent.
- CPS (2016): 676,000 reports of abuse and neglect:
  - 1/4 children experienced abuse or neglect
  - 1,750 child fatalities.
- Many cases of abuse go unreported.

Hypotheses
- Those who experienced more abuse during their childhood will say they grew up faster, compared to others their age.
- The relationship between abuse and perceptions of growing up faster will be particularly strong among women.

Data and Sample
- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health
- Waves III (2001-2) and IV (2007-8)
- Public use data

Dependent Measure
- Perceived Speed of Growing up
  - "In terms of taking on adult responsibilities, would you say you grew up faster, slower, or at about the same rate?"

Independent Measure
- Types of Abuse Experienced
  - "Before your 18th birthday, how often did a parent or other adult caregiver...
    - say things that hurt your feelings...
    - hit you with a fist, kick you...
    - touch you in a sexual way, force you to touch [them]..."

Results
- Growing Up Faster by Experience of Physical Abuse and Gender
- Growing Up Faster by Experience of Sexual Abuse and Gender

Summary and Conclusion
- Experiencing abuse during childhood speeds up perceptions of growing up compared to those who did not experience abuse.
- Women experiencing physical or sexual abuse are particularly likely to say they grew up faster.
- Women generally feel they grow up at a faster rate due to societal expectations of responsibility.
- Future Research: Look at how depression and other mental illnesses impact the perceived rate of growing up.

References