

Self-Mutilation as Expressed in Self-Figure Drawings in Adolescent Sexual Abuse Survivors

By: Angi Jacobs-Kayam, MA, the Graduate School of Creative Art Therapies, University of Haifa.

Supervised by: Prof. Rachel Lev-Wiesel

Given the detrimental long-term physical and emotional effects of self-mutilation (SM) coupled with the tendency not to disclose suffering and the shortcomings of current diagnostic techniques, early detection of the phenomena utilizing an external tool such as a projective drawing test, not based upon a medical examination, might provide an opportunity to identify and consequently assist self-mutilators.

This study aimed to determine if and to what extent indicators of self-mutilating behaviors are expressed in self-figure drawings of female adolescents who were sexually abused. Researchers used a version of (draw yourself) Machover's Draw A Person Test (DAP), because it is an easy to administer and non-intrusive screening tool, hypothesizing that it will improve the detection of SM. This will facilitate practitioners' future location of adolescent females at risk for SM, as well as assist in prioritizing accessibility to treatment.

A convenience sample of 92 adolescent girls was recruited for this study. Participants completed the DAP test in addition to a previously validated self-report questionnaire, The Traumatic Events Questionnaire (TEQ).

Findings include positive correlations between psychometric assessments and two indicators of self-mutilation in the DAP test (body line, sexual signs). The study also provides validation of four indicators of sexual abuse previously documented in research: face line, eyes, hands/arms, and genitals.

Keywords: Self mutilation, self harm, sexual abuse, adolescent, Draw-A-Person test, self-figure drawing.

Corresponding author: Angi Jacobs-Kayam, Email: angi_jk@yahoo.com