

Pedophilia, Sexual Offending Against Children, and the Puzzle of Incest

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Overview

- How is pedophilia defined?
- What causes pedophilia?
- What is the link between pedophilia and sexual offending against children?
- What role do antisocial tendencies play?
- What factors can explain incest?

Pedophilia and Sexual Offending Against Children

THEORY, ASSESSMENT, AND INTERVENTION



Michael C. Seto

How is Pedophilia Defined?

A persistent sexual interest in prepubescent children, reflected in thoughts, urges, fantasies, sexual arousal, or behaviour.

Strong form of definition: a preference for prepubescent children over sexually mature partners

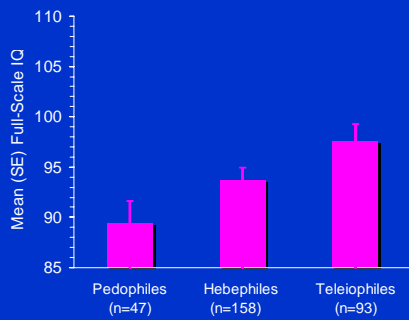
What Causes Pedophilia?

- Pedophilia is partly the result of neurodevelopmental perturbations
 - IQ
 - head injury
 - structural brain differences

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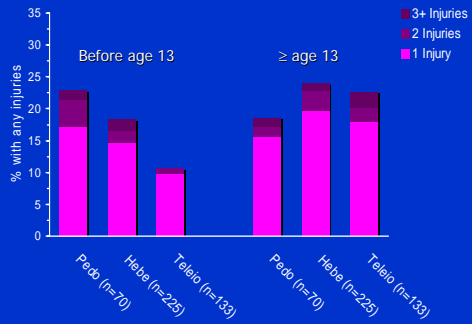
Pedophilia and IQ (Cantor et al., 2004)



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Pedophilia and History of Head Injury (Blanchard et al., 2003)



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Pedophilia and White Matter Volume (Cantor et al., 2006)

Images of MRI scans removed

- Compared 65 pedophiles and 62 nonsex offenders
- Superior occipitofrontal and right arcuate fasciculus

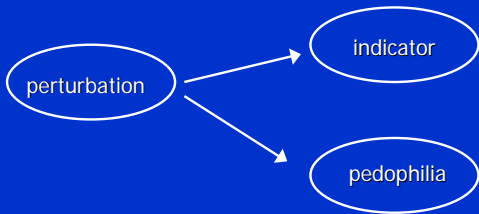
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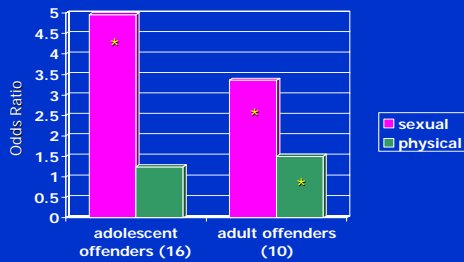


What Causes Pedophilia? Part Deux

- Pedophilia is related to childhood sexual contact with an adult (childhood sexual abuse)

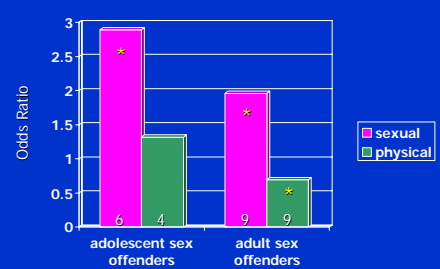
Sexual Offending and Childhood Sexual vs. Physical Abuse (Lalumière et al., 2007)

- Sex offenders vs. non-sex offenders



Sexual Offending Against Children and Childhood Sexual vs. Physical Abuse

- Sex offenders with child victims vs. peer victims



Is the Link to Sexual Abuse History Specific to Pedophilia?

- Sex offenders who report sexual abuse history are more likely to admit pedophilia (e.g., Freund et al., 1990)
- Sexual abuse history correlated with age, gender, and number of child victims (e.g., Becker et al., 1992; Hanson & Slater, 1988)
- Sexual abuse history correlated with phallometrically-assessed sexual arousal to children (Becker et al., 1989, 1992)

Pedophilia and Childhood Sexual Abuse: Possible Mechanisms

- Disrupts typical sexual development
- Correlate of true causal factor (e.g., major psychopathology)
- Genetic transmission of predisposition
- Childhood sexual contact with an adult is itself an early sign of atypical sexual development

What is The Link Between Pedophilia and Sexual Offending Against Children?



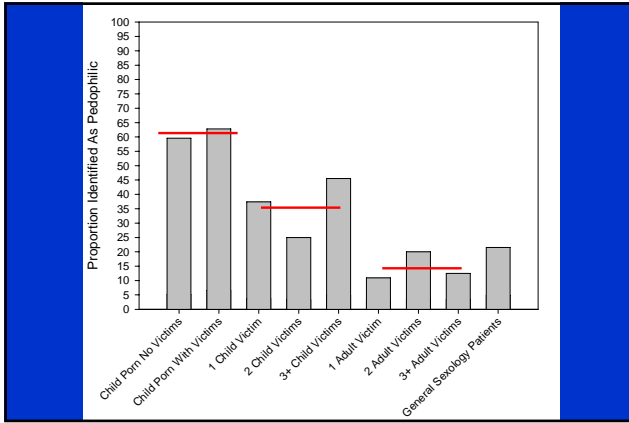
Child Pornography Offenders

(Seto, Cantor, & Blanchard, 2006)

Four groups:

- (1) 100 child pornography offenders
- (2) 178 offenders against children
- (3) 216 offenders against adults
- (4) 191 general sexology patients

- 43 child pornography offenders had victimized child
- Other sex offenders distinguished by # of victims
- Phallometric testing as measure of sexual interests



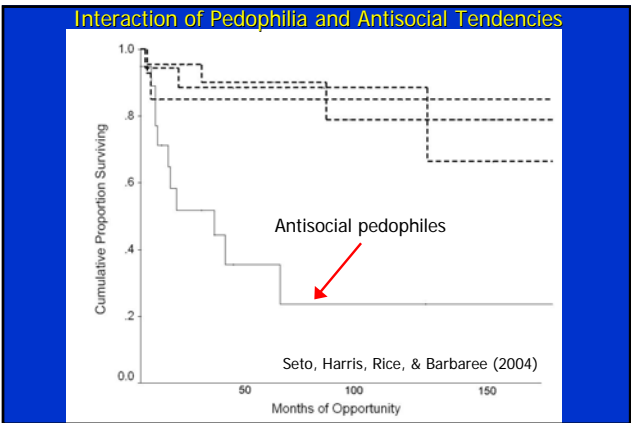
Many Child Pornography Offenders Have Not Had Documented Sexual Contact With a Child

Sample	Description	% With History
Bourke & Hernandez	155 federal inmates	24 (85)
FBI Operation <i>Candyman</i>	94 charged men	31
Seto et al. (2006)	100 clinical referrals	43
Seto & Eke (2005)	205 registered sex offenders	25
Wolak et al. (2005)	429 suspects	40

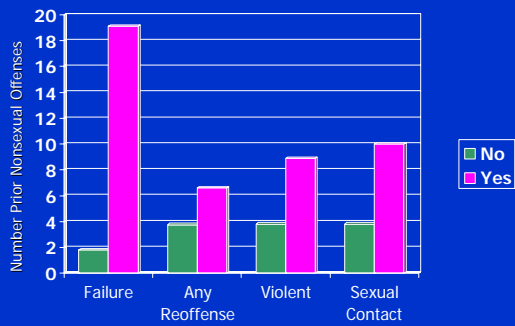
What Role Do Antisocial Tendencies Play in Sexual Offending Against Children?

- Antisocial personality traits, attitudes, and values are important risk factors for sexual offending (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004)

Antisocial Tendencies	Correlation	k	N
Nonsexual criminal history	.29	12	8,151
Psychopathy	.25	13	2,783
Child behaviour problems	.17	8	1,996



Child Pornography Offender Recidivism: Prior Nonsexual Offense History (Seto & Eke, 2005)



The Puzzle of Incest

- Biologically, incest occurs between genetic relatives
- Incest laws and norms include sociolegal relatives
- Inclusive fitness costs for genetic relatives

The Puzzle of Incest, cont'd

- Costs of incest depend on genetic relatedness, yet human incest studies often do not distinguish according to genetic relatedness
- Genetic fathers > extended family > step-fathers
- Children are at much higher risk of maltreatment from step-relatives than from genetic relatives (Daly & Wilson, 1999)

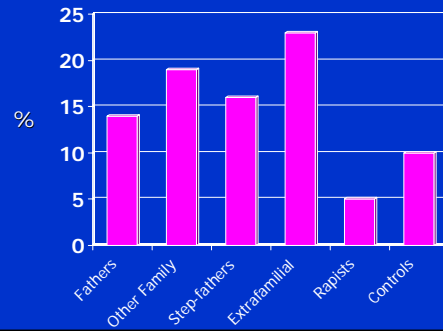
The Puzzle of Incest, cont'd

- Incest avoidance & incest taboos are ubiquitous
- Yet third to half of all sexual offences against children are incestuous (including sociolegal cases)
- What interferes with incest avoidance and overwhelms incest taboos?

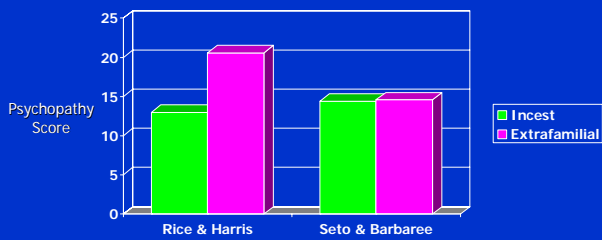
The Puzzle of Incest, cont'd

- Could pedophilia and/or antisociality overwhelm incest avoidance in genetic fathers?
- Then predict: genetic fathers > other incest offenders on measures of pedophilia and/or antisociality

Incest Offenders Are Not More Likely To Show Pedophilic Sexual Response (Seto, Lalumière, & Kuban, 1999)



Incest Offenders Are Not More Antisocial (Rice & Harris, 2002; Seto & Barbaree, 1999)



What Factors Can Explain Incest?

- Only a small minority of incest offenders are pedophiles or high in antisocial tendencies
- What about the others?
- Disruptions in early propinquity (Westermarck, 1891)



Evidence for Early Propinquity

- Kibbutzim children: few marriages w/i rearing groups (Shepher, 1983)
- "Minor" Taiwanese marriages: more divorce, fewer children (Wolf, 1995)
- Brothers & sisters who attempted or engaged in intercourse: more likely to be separated for year or more in early life (Bevc & Silverman, 1993, 2000)
- Navy (genetic) fathers: those absent in early childhood are more likely to commit incest (Williams & Finkelhor, 1995)

Is Paternity Uncertainty Relevant?

- Familiarity is a good proximal cue for relatedness, but it is not perfect
- Nonpaternity rates from 2% to 30% (Anderson, 2006)
- Paternity uncertainty associated with being unmarried and unplanned pregnancy (Anderson et al., in press)
- Other cues? Relationship dissatisfaction and conflict, sexual jealousy, infidelity, and propinquity at time of conception
- If not genetically related, then not biological incest

Summary

- Pedophilia is a persistent sexual interest in, or preference for, prepubertal children
- Pedophilia is partly the result of neurodevelopmental perturbations, and is related to childhood sexual abuse
- At least half of sex offenders against children are pedophiles, but how many pedophiles have had sexual contact with a child?

Summary, cont'd

- Antisociality explains persistence of sexual offending, and perhaps onset
- Incest is only partly explained by propinquity, pedophilia, and antisocial tendencies; perhaps it is also related to paternity uncertainty?

Acknowledgements

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