Child Sexual Abuse: Using Research to Prevent and Protect

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Expert Meeting on Prevalence of Sexual Abuse
Berlin
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International Prevalence CSA from 331 Self-Report Studies

International Prevalence

✓ Sexual abuse occurs world wide
✓ Rates do vary
✓ But it affects many children in every context where it has been studied
Diversity of Dynamics

✓ Intra-family sexual abuse
✓ Neighborhood, social network
✓ Adult leader/teacher/mentor/authority
✓ Older youth victimizing younger child
✓ Peers
✓ Commercial sexual exploitation
✓ Statutory victim/compliant victim
✓ ??? Internet perpetrator ???
Diversity of Dynamics

✓ Intra-family sexual abuse (25% of cases, but 60-80% of child protection cases)
  ✓ Includes fathers, step-fathers, brothers, uncles, grandfathers
  ✓ Step-fathers, step-families higher risk
  ✓ Earlier onset, longer duration
  ✓ Can involve multiple victims
  ✓ Lower disclosure rate
  ✓ Lower re-offense rate
  ✓ Family violence, poor supervision, neglect risks
Police data – Juvenile victims of sex offenses

Forcible sodomy
- Under 6: 26%
- 6 - 11 Years: 35%
- 12 - 17 Years: 39%

Sexual assault with object
- Under 6: 26%
- 6 - 11 Years: 25%
- 12 - 17 Years: 48%

Forcible fondling
- Under 6: 23%
- 6 - 11 Years: 32%
- 12 - 17 Years: 45%

Incest
- Under 6: 32%
- 6 - 11 Years: 31%
- 12 - 17 Years: 37%

Forcible rape
- Under 6: 9%
- 6 - 11 Years: 14%
- 12 - 17 Years: 77%

Statutory rape
- Under 6: 8%
- 6 - 11 Years: 8%
- 12 - 17 Years: 84%

Percentage of Juvenile Victims for Each Type of Crime
- Under 6
- 6 - 11 Years
- 12 - 17 Years
Diversity of Dynamics

- Acquaintances (60% of cases)
- Neighborhood, social network
  - Friends of family
  - Fathers, brothers of neighbors
Diversity of Dynamics

✓ Adult leader/teacher/mentor/authority
  ✓ School personnel probably most frequent
  ✓ Religious, youth organization, sports
  ✓ Unique grooming resources
  ✓ Divisive disclosures
  ✓ Role of institution
Police Data – Juvenile Victim, Adult v Juvenile Offender

Percentage of All identified Offenders Against Juveniles for Each Type of Crime

- **All crimes**: 48% Adult, 52% Juvenile
- **Kidnapping**: 86% Adult, 14% Juvenile
- **Sex offenses***: 64% Adult, 36% Juvenile
- **Aggravated assault**: 56% Adult, 44% Juvenile
- **Robbery**: 48% Adult, 52% Juvenile
- **Simple assault**: 42% Adult, 59% Juvenile

*Sex offenses against juveniles include forcible (86 percent) and nonforcible (14 percent) offenses.
Diversity of Dynamics

- Other youth (36% of cases)

- Older youth victimizing younger child
  - Baby sitter, older sibling/cousin, neighbor
  - Spike at puberty
  - Female abusers
  - Media influence?
Diversity of Dynamics

✓ Peers
  ✓ Bullying
  ✓ Group assaults
  ✓ Harassment
  ✓ Humiliation motive
  ✓ Peer pressure
  ✓ Dating partners
Juvenile Sex Offenders Vs. Male Juvenile Victims

Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Incident-Based Reporting System, 2004
Diversity of Dynamics

✓ Commercial sexual exploitation
  ✓ Pimp facilitated prostitution
  ✓ Self-prostitution
  ✓ Some involvement of young victims, family facilitated
  ✓ Image production, including internet solicitation
  ✓ “trafficked”, sex tourism
Diversity of Dynamics

✓ Statutory victim/compliant victim (15%)
  ✓ Teens
  ✓ Female offenders
  ✓ LGBT vulnerable
  ✓ Allure of older partners
  ✓ Offenders 18 – 25 vs 25+
Diversity of Dynamics

- Not clear that Internet perpetrator is distinct from other perpetrators
- Majority of internet facilitated CSA involves known not unknown perpetrators
- All CSA forms are migrating to electronic communications media because all relationships are
  - "automobile rapist" "telephone molester"
- Non-molesting child porn possessor may be special category
Risk Factors

✓ Girls
✓ Conditions of family conflict and disruption
✓ Conditions of neglect
  ✓ Inadequate supervision and emotional neediness
✓ Other victimization
Important Misconceptions

- Not all offenders are pedophiles
- Not all offenders are “predatory”
- Enormous diversity of sexual behaviors
- Cannot profile offenders
- Most CSA is not violent
- Victims sometimes protect offenders
- Disclosure does not always bring benefits for victims
Important Misconceptions

✓ Not all offenders are pedophiles
  ✓ half victims are post-pubescent
  ✓ one-third of adult offenders who abuse children < 13 are not pedophiles
  ✓ one-third of offenders are other youth ≠ pedophile

✓ Not all offenders are predatory

✓ Implication: cannot easily identify on basis of interests, sexual orientation, polygraphy, motives, or screening
Important Misconceptions

✓ Most offenders do NOT have offense history
  ✓ Only 10% of newly identified offenders have prior record of abuse

Implication: Even perfect background screening and total offender management success will prevent a small quantity of abuse
Important Misconceptions

- Cannot profile offenders
- Higher educated and better social skills than typical criminal population
- Enormous diversity of sexual behaviors

Implication: common sense instincts about who is “risky”, and what is “benign” are often misleading. Better to be alert to behaviors rather than personal characteristics
Important Misconceptions

✓ Most offenders do NOT reoffend
  ✓ 14% adults reoffend within 5 years
  ✓ 24% after 15 years
  ✓ Juvenile re-offense rates are <5%

✓ Implications: Draconian punishment and expensive management are not needed for all offenders. Relatively good risk assessment tools are available.
Important Misconceptions

✔ Youth offenders generally more benign than adult offenders
  ✔ Generally not a sign of incipient pedophilia
  ✔ Recidivism rates are considerably lower
  ✔ Some youth appear to offend due to peer pressure or transient impulses or influences
  ✔ General delinquency more a problem than sexual deviation

Implication: Youth offending may be easier to prevent and treat. Long-term sanctions and supervision often not necessary.
Important Misconceptions

✓ Most CSA is not violent
  ✓ In a relationship of trust
  ✓ Grooming, manipulation
  ✓ Attention, affection, incentives, normalization

Implication: to extent that victims, parents and investigators think “real” CSA is violent and coercive, victims will be blamed and feel guilty
Important Misconceptions

- Children and youth do not always find the contact unpleasant and sometimes participate voluntarily
- Victims sometimes protect offenders

Important Misconceptions

- Disclosure does not always bring benefits for victims
  - Negative response from family and friends
  - Exposure
  - Secondary harm from investigation
  - Studies show: no difference in impact between those that disclosed and those that did not

- Implications: need to improve response. Respect child and family ambivalence about disclosure.
Possible Misconceptions

- CSA is risk factor for later MH problems, but
- Not all victims experience long-term distress
  - Only 20% with current disorder
  - Disorder rates may be falling
  - Not all the disorder can be attributed to CSA
Promising Strategies

✓ School based education
Logic Model

✓ Education

- Knowledge about rules and norms
- Resistance and avoidance training
- Disclosure promotion
- Secondary harm prevention
- Stigma reduction
- Deterrence
- Improved guardianship
School based Education Programs

✓ Virtues
  • Proven prevention paradigm
  • Considerable research
  • Relatively low cost

✓ Limitations
  • No evidence as yet that it prevents sexual abuse
  • Burden on schools and teachers
Considerable Research

- Children learn concepts
- Children acquire skills
- Some sustained learning
Possible New Directions

✓ Integration of sex abuse prevention education into comprehensive prevention and life skills curricula
**CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM**

*Sexual Abuse Substantiations 1990-2012*

![Graph showing a 62% decline in sexual abuse substantiations from 1992 to 2012, with a 2.1% increase from 2011 to 2012.](source: National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System)
FBI Forcible Rape Known to Police &
NCANDS Sexual Abuse Known to CPS

Forcible Rape
36% Decline
(1992-2010)

Sexual Abuse
62% Decline
(1990-2010)

*Source: FBI, Crime in the United States Reports and NCANDS
Rape by Juveniles Known to Police

- 72% 1992-2011
Sexual Assault Victimization, Self-Report, NCVS

Note: Age 12 – 17 years; 3 year averages except 2008 which is a 2 year average. 2006 data excluded.
Source: National Crime Victimization Survey
SEXUAL ABUSE
Minnesota Study Survey

% Reporting Abuse

By Non-Family Adult

By Family Member

29% Decline
28% Decline

Note: respondents are 6th, 9th, and 12th grade students enrolled in public schools in selected Minnesota school districts. Source: Minnesota Student Survey, 1992-2010
STATUTORY RAPE
Percentage of Females, Ages 15-24, Whose First Sexual Intercourse Occurred at Age 15 or Younger with an Individual 3+ Years Older

Sources: National Survey of Family Growth, analyzed by Child Trends
Annual Count of Incidents Reported and Priests Accused, by Year

- Annual totals of incidents
- Annual totals of accused priests
UK National Household Surveys 1998-9 and 2009

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>2009</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neglect ns</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical violence ***</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reg verbal aggression ***</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coerced sex acts **</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Sources: Stadler, L. & Bieneck, S. (2012)
Germany: Trend in Lifetime Sexual Abuse
National Survey of 16-40 Year Olds

Contact Sexual Abuse %
0 2 4 6 8 10 12
1992 2011
10.6 Women
7.1 Overall
3.4 Men
7.4
4.4 38% Decline
1.5

Contact Sexual Abuse %
Germany: Generational Trend in Sexual Abuse
National Survey of 16-40 Year Olds

Contact Sexual Abuse %

31-40 Years Old 21-30 Years Old 16-20 Years Old
5,4 [VALUE] 1,8

66% Decline
Child Maltreatment in New Zealand

OBSERVED NEW ZEALAND ABUSE RATES: New arrivals
Abuse findings per year per 1000 children

Note: Unadjusted rates may reflect increased screening rather than changes to the true underlying rate of abuse in NZ
Explanations in need of study

- More effective programs
- Troop surge
- Changing norms and awareness
- Aggressive policing
- Technology and surveillance
- MH treatment and psychopharmacology
Possible Lessons

✓ Big improvements possible and quickly
✓ Be encouraged by what we have done
✓ Importance of epidemiology (e.g., counting)
✓ Be careful what we abandon
Has the Internet AMPLIFIED danger to children?
Resources


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Daniel Schneider Child Welfare Book of the Year Award