Child Sexual Abuse: Using Research to Prevent and Protect

David Finkelhor

Crimes against Children Research Center
University of New Hampshire

Expert Meeting on Prevalence of Sexual Abuse
Berlin
10 December 2014
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
Coach Jerry Sandusky
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>Under 6</th>
<th>6 - 11 Years</th>
<th>12 - 17 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forcible sodomy</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual assault with object</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forcible fondling</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incest</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forcible rape</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory rape</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

- **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

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

*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
Juvenile Sex Offenders Vs. Female Juvenile Victims

Percent of Offender-Victim Pairs

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

- ??? Internet perpetrator ???
  - 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

✓ Implications: “feel yucky” instruction incomplete. Youth feel guilty and blame themselves. Youth lie about what happened. Youth sometimes devastated by revelation
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

62% Decline (1992-2012)

2.1% Increase (2011-2012)

Source: National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System
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

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

- Neglect ns: 9.4% (1998), 9.9% (2009)
- Physical violence ***: 13.1% (1998), 9.8% (2009)
- Reg verbal aggression ***: 14.5% (1998), 6.0% (2009)
- Coerced sex acts **: 6.8% (1998), 5.0% (2009)

www.nspcc.org.uk/childstudy

Sources: Stadler, L. & Bieneck, S. (2012)
Germany: Trend in Lifetime Sexual Abuse
National Survey of 16-40 Year Olds

- 1992: Women: 10.6%, Men: 3.4%
- 2011: Women: 7.4%, Men: 1.5%

Overall decline of 38%
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
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?


David.finkelhor@unh.edu

www.unh.edu/ccrc

**Childhood Victimization**

*Violence, Crime, and Abuse in the Lives of Young People*

DAVID FINKELHOR

List of Contributors

1. Child Victims: An Introduction
   - Page 3
2. Developmental Victimology
   - Page 22
3. Children at Risk
   - Page 47
4. Developmental Impact
   with Kathy Kendall-Tackett
   - Page 65
5. Just Kids’ Stuff? Peer and Sibling Violence
   with Heather Turner and Richard Ormrod
   - Page 92
6. Getting Help: What Are the Barriers?
   with Janis Wolak and Lucy Berliner
   - Page 102
7. Good News: Child Victimization Has Been
   Declining. Why?
   with Lisa Jones
   - Page 122
8. The Juvenile Victim Justice System: A Concept
   for Helping Victims
   with Ted Cross and Elise N. Pepin
   - Page 148
9. Proposals
   - Page 167
Notes
- Page 185
References
- Page 187

Daniel Schneider Child Welfare Book of the Year Award