

The Sexual Abuser

Who is this person?

How do they think?

What do they do?

Reference for this Report:

- Browne, K., & Kilcoyne, J. (1995). Child sexual abuse prevention: what offenders tell us. *Child abuse and neglect*, 19(5), 579-594.

Background for this Discussion

- Little research has studied the offender.
- Past research has looked at the incarcerated offender or deals with only the female offender.
- Here, we will discuss what the offender has to say. These are 91 convicted sex offenders against children.

Generalities of the Abuser

- Those who responded to the research reported here were from:
- Community based sex offender treatment programs (n=15).
- Special hospitals (n=22).
- Prisons (n=39).
- Community based and on probation by the court (n=15).

Background Information

- Age - Ranged from 19 to 74 years.
 - Mean age 41 years.
 - Majority between 30 and 42 years.
- Number of victims:
 - 70% claimed 1 to 9 victims.
 - 23% claimed 10 to 40 children victims.
 - 7% claimed 41 to 450 children victims.

Basic Information about Abuser

- Professional background 35%
- Married at time of offense 48%
- Children victims only 93%
- Ten victims or more 30%

Gender of Victim(s)

- Only girls targeted 58%
- Only boys targeted 14%
- Both boys and girls targeted 28%

Relationship to the Victim(s)

- Stranger 34%
- Acquainted 34%
- Parent 32%

The Offenses of the Abuser

- Indecent Assault 100%
- Masturbation 72%
- Intercourse (attempt or actual) 57%
- Oral Sex 31%
- Child Murdered 8%
- Multiple Perpetrators 7%
- Multiple Victims 15%

The Decision to Choose the Child Who was Abused was Based on:

- Pretty child 42%
- Way the child was dressed 27%
- Being young or small 17%
- Innocent and trusting 13%

What Influenced the Abuser to Abuse the Victim

- Child's lack of confidence and self-esteem 49%

- “Special relationship” with the victim 46%

Recruitment of Victims:

- From public places frequented by children 35%
- By becoming welcome in the child’s home 33%
- Recruited when child approached them 14%
- Victim recruited other children 18%

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Recruitment of Victims

Locations where abusers shopped for children:

- Schools Shopping centers
- Arcades Amusement/theme parks
- Parks Playgrounds
- Beaches Swimming pools
- Fairs

Location of Abuse

- Abused in offender's home 61%
- Abused in child's home 49%
- Abused in the outdoors 44%
- Abused in home of offender's friend 13%
- Vicinity of offender's home 6%
- In a car or other vehicle 4%

Strategies Used by Abuser:

- Used play or teaching activities 53%
- Isolated through "baby-sitting" 48%
- Used bribe, outing, or lift home 46%
- Used affection, understanding or love 30%
- Gained trust of the whole family of the individual abused 20%

Strategies Used by Abuser:

- Many offered to play a game with the children, teach them a sport, or how to play a musical instrument (53%).
- Babysitters started by talking to the victim about sex, offering a bath or to dress the child, or told them that the sexual act would be good for them for their education or that this is what people who love each other do.

Strategies Used by Abuser:

- 84% of the abusers said that once they had developed a successful strategy, they would approach the children with the same method every time.

During the First Sexual Contact the Abuser:

- Continued to talk about sex 49%
- Used accidental touches 47%
- Used bribery or gifts 46%
- Used coercion and persuasion 44%
- Used physical force straight away 19%

First Sexual Contact

- Most of the offenders coerced children by first carefully testing the child's reaction to sex; some brought up sexual matters, had sexual materials around, or subtly increased sexual touching.
- Many used sexually explicit videos, magazines, or sexualized talk.

The Child's Showing of Fear or Resistance

- Stopped the abuse, paused, or started again 61%
- Used violence or threats 39%

Maintenance of Victims by the Abuser

- None - Moved to other victim 33%
- Portrayed abuse as education or game 42%
- Threatened dire consequences if child stopped or reported the activity 24%
- Used anger or threat of harm 24%

Maintenance of Victims by the Abuser (continued)

- The abuser threatened to blame the victim 20%
- The abuser threatened a loss of the relationship 20%

The Abusers' Personal Preparation for the Abuse

- Personal stress precipitated the abuse against the victim 61%

The Abuser Became Disinhibited Through:

- Drugs or alcohol 22%
- Pornography 21%
- Own fantasy about previous victim 49%

The Abuser Became Disinhibited Through:

- Talk with other offenders 8%
- Offender keeps in touch with other child sex offenders 8%
- Offender knew where to obtain child prostitutes & child porno 20%

Offenders' Feelings and Concerns About Child Sex

- Less Threatening 41%
- A “new” experience 25%
- Meeting offender’s needs 18%
- More sexually attractive than adult sex 16%

The Offenders' Perception of Distress Exhibited by Victim

- Saw no distress in victim 49%
- Continued regardless of distress 25%
- Stopped the abuse when the victim distressed 26%
- Felt uncomfortable with the victim’s distress 51%
- Worried about child disclosing 61%

Feelings of Abuser After Committing the Act (not caught)

- Feeling of anxiety 44%
- Very little emotion 39%
- Need to justify action 17%

Offender Failed to Seek Professional Help Because:

Offender Failed to Seek Professional Help Because:

- No help was available 46%
- Help was ineffective 17%
- Didn't realize they needed help 37%

Offender's Pertinent Personal History

- Negative experience as a child or adolescent 67%
- Under 16 when first attracted to children 34%
- First offense was committed as juvenile 34%

Offender's Pertinent Personal History

- Offenses became more serious with time 55%
- Offender was victim of contact sexual abuse as a child 59%

Strategies used by Abuser:

- Abuser used stories, lies, magic, or treasure hunts 14%

- Asked the abused child for help 9%
- Abuser consistently used one or two strategies (had a designed scheme or plan) 84%

The Offenders Strategy was Influenced by:

- Their own previous experience 30%
- The Media (TV, films, or newspapers) 14%
- Abuser has no idea what influenced their strategy 56%

The First Move Made by the Abuser

- Genital touching & kissing 40%
- Asked child to get undressed and/or lie down 32%
- Slowly desensitized child with sex talk 28%

Selection of Victim's

- "I am turned on by little girls wearing tights and mini skirts."
- 18% of abusers looked for young and small victims.
- 49% reported attraction to children who lacked confidence or self esteem: "you can spot the child who is unsure of himself and target him with compliments and positive attention."

Special Relationships to Victims

- 46% of abusers looked for a special relationship.

- “Unless the child and I like each other and find each other attractive, it doesn’t work. I have to feel as if I am important and special to the child and giving the child the love she needs and isn’t getting.”

Selection of Victims

- According to the offender’s perceptions, the child who was the most vulnerable had:
- Family Problems Alone
- Not confident Curious
- Pretty Young
- Provocatively dressed
- Trusting
- Small

Offender’s Recommendations Relevant to Prevention

- Kids & parents need a guidebook: “kids are easy to trick when they don’t have a clue about what I’m trying to do.”
- Kids should avoid secluded, remote places. Don’t play in deserted stairways or streets at night; don’t ever play hide and seek alone - hide in groups.

Offender’s Recommendations Relevant to Prevention

- Kids are too trusting and need to be told that everyone is not trustworthy.
- Kids should tell if anyone tries to trick them, “makes strange suggestions or talks about sexual things or seems to touch or brush up against them accidentally.

Offender's Recommendations Relevant to Prevention

- Kids should have a fib ready to tell if the babysitter tries or suggests anything.
- Babysitters say that kids will always fall for any idea that will let them stay up late if they will play a secret game with them.

Babysitters also recommend:

- Parents should tell the kids that if the babysitter tries to do them a special favor, they should not be fooled.
- "I never approach children in groups; there are plenty of children on their own. It isn't worth the risk to approach several kids together."
- Never go into public toilets alone.
- A great place to hang out is in a kiddies hamburger-type restaurant. Little boys, especially, go into toilets alone and they aren't expecting someone to try to touch them. Most of the time the kids are too embarrassed even to shout. Tell kids to leave the toilet yelling if someone tries to touch them.
- The best time of day to get at children is when they are walking home from school alone.
- Never accept lifts or rides.
- "Children are so trusting. I first ask them for the time. Quickly gain their trust & it's hard for them to get away."
- I look respectable - they are tricked.
- When followed, run to any house and knock on the door.
- Kids should tell their parents where they are going.
- Kids should be told not to pretend that nothing is happening and to hide it; it will only get worse.

Offender's Recommendations Relevant to Parents

- Watch for people, anyone, who is more interested in your child than you are.
- Over-loving people are potentially dangerous.
- Our offenses occur gently.
- Be careful of everyone, including relatives.
- I used to abuse kids in the same room with their parents and no one ever knew.
- Parents are too trustworthy.
- Parents should teach kids the “right” and “wrong” places where people might touch them.
- Kids need to be told that if they are not comfortable with someone that they have the right to not be with them.
- Kids who are heavily punished at home are easy targets. “I give them love.”
- Single mothers families are easy targets: mom is overworked and grateful when I take the kids for a while.”

Offender's Recommendations Relevant to Teachers

- Schools should have prevention programs where they report strange behaviors automatically.
- Have kids run and yell!! Make them practice doing this.
- Believe children if they say something is happening.
- Kids should report being “accidentally” touched .
- Teachers, believe your students!!