Child Pornography Offending: Examining Factors Relating to Onset or Persistence

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In this symposium, we report on recent child pornography offending research. In the first presentation, we describe a case-control study to identify parental and birth factors that are associated with the onset of child pornography offending. Next, we report on correlates of diagnosed and/or admitted sexual interest in children among adult male child pornography offenders. In the final presentation, we consider the risk for persistence in offending through a cross-validation of the Child Pornography Offender Risk Tool (CPORT).

Parental and Birth Risk Factors for Child Pornography Offending

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Prior studies suggest associations between parental and perinatal risk factors and later violent and sexual offending (Babchishin et al., 2016; Coyne et al., 2013; Kuja-Halkola et al., 2012). Parental factors seem to be stronger risk factors than birth factors for sexual offending (Babchishin et al., 2016). However, birth risk factors may only be detected among sex offenders who are paraphilic and/or hypersexual. Child pornography offenders present a unique opportunity to test this hypothesis, as they tend to be more pedophilic than contact sexual offenders (Babchishin et al., 2015).

The current study examined the link between parental and perinatal risk factors and child pornography offending, using a case-control study. All male convicted child pornography offenders in a nationwide Swedish register from 1973 to 2009 were included in the study. We linked socio-demographic, family relations, and perinatal (obtained at birth) data with information on criminal convictions and parental characteristics. Child pornography offenders \((n=653)\) were born in Sweden between 1973 and 1994 \((Md_1=1981)\) and their age at first child pornography conviction, following the age of criminal responsibility in Sweden, ranged from 15 to 38 years \((M=25.2, SD=5.7)\). A quarter of child pornography offenders also had a conviction for a contact sexual offence against a child (one conviction=15%, 2 or more=10%). Child pornography offenders were matched 1:5 on sex, birth year, and county of birth in Sweden to controls without sexual or non-sexual violent convictions \((n=3,928; \text{also 15-38 years old, } M=25.2, SD=5.7)\).
We examined parental (maternal and paternal age at son’s birth, educational attainment, violent crime, psychiatric disorder, substance misuse, suicide attempt) and perinatal (number of older brothers, Apgar score, birth weight, being small for gestational age, congenital malformations, head size) candidate variables. Conditional logistic regression models found statistically significant, small to moderate associations of parental risk factors with sons’ child pornography offending with the exception of parental psychiatric disorders. For perinatal risk factors, only two risk factors were identified; fewer older brothers and the presence of congenital malformation increased sons’ risk of being convicted for a child pornography offence. A final model identified younger paternal age, lower parental education, parental criminality, fewer number of older brothers, and the presence of any congenital malformation as independent predictors of child pornography offending. This large-scale, nationwide study suggests some parental but few perinatal risk factors for the onset of child pornography offending, and replicates findings found for sexual offending in general.

References

Learning Goals and Objectives:
- To examine the presence and size of possible links between parental factors and child pornography offending in men
- To examine the presence and size of possible links between perinatal factors and child pornography offending in men
- To address if early risk factors are specific to child pornography offenders or common to sexual offenders
- To describe a case control study design for identifying risk factors
- To become familiar with the Swedish national registry system
Measuring Sexual Interest in Children among Child Pornography Offenders

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Sexual interest in children is common among child pornography offenders, although not all child pornography offenders are pedophilic or hebephilic (see Seto, Cantor & Blanchard, 2006). Sexual interest in children is one pathway that has been associated with child pornography offending as well as contact sexual offending against children (see Seto, 2013). Admission or a diagnosis of pedophilic or hebephilic interests has been associated with increased risk of future sexual offending among child pornography offenders (Seto & Eke, 2015).

Pedophilia can be assessed in different ways (Seto, 2013), including self-report, inferences made based on officially recorded information about child victim characteristics or the use of child pornography, and objective assessments of relative viewing time or sexual arousal patterns. Each has their advantages and disadvantages. The purpose of the present study was to identify correlates of pedohebephilic sexual interests among child pornography offenders, focusing on offender demographic characteristics, their online behavior, and the content of their child pornography. We focused on variables difficult to fake and that could be reliably and relatively easily obtained by police investigators and provided in reports available to risk assessors.

We provide data from a sample of 286 convicted adult male child pornography offenders originally described in Seto and Eke (2015) as well as a combined sample that includes 86 offenders from our recent cross-validation. In both studies, we collected data from police investigative case files relating to diagnosis and/or admissions of sexual interest in children. We also coded extensive information relating to the material in offenders' collections (e.g., characteristics of the images, presence of movies), their collecting behavior (e.g., organization, years collecting), and contact with children (e.g., volunteer, online contact). Univariate analysis identified a number of variables, including child pornography content factors and collecting behavior, as significant correlates of diagnosis and/or admission of sexual interest in prepubescent or pubescent children. These variables appear to be psychologically meaningful, for example in relation to the level of involvement in the child material. We discuss the applied combination and use of these variables as a sexual interest scale.

References

**Learning Goals and Objectives:**
- Understand the clinical and theoretical relevance of sexual interest in children among child pornography offenders
- Describe the set of variables found to correlate with sexual interest in children among child pornography offenders
- Examine the combination of these variables into a scale
- Discuss the theoretical and psychological meaningfulness of the variables found to correlate with sexual interest in children
- Discuss the applied use of these variables

**A Cross-validation of the Child Pornography Offender Risk Tool (CPORT)**

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Seto and Eke (2015) recently developed the Child Pornography Offender Risk Tool (CPORT), a structured risk tool to assess the likelihood of future sexual offending among adult male child pornography offenders. The CPORT is comprised of 7 items that are dichotomously scored (no = 0, yes = 1): young offender age; any prior criminal history; prior or concurrent contact sexual offending; prior or concurrent failure on conditional release; evidence of pedophilic/hebephilic sexual interests; more boy than girl images in child pornography content; more boy than girl images in other child content. The CPORT was developed using information from police investigation files that included general police occurrence reports, details of offenders’ child material, interview information, and criminal history information.

The current study assessed CPORT in a more recent sample (no overlap with the development sample) of 86 convicted adult male child pornography offenders from the same setting. CPORT was retrospectively scored using police case file information, with an average recidivism follow-up time (i.e., active time in the community) of 7.1 years ($SD = 1.6; 95\% CI = 6.8 - 7.5$). Given the small sample of new cases, this presentation will compare and integrate the current findings with the previous findings on the CPORT.

CPORT items and total scores showed similar accuracy in predicting any sexual recidivism (which includes contact, non-contact, and specifically child pornography offences) and any
child pornography recidivism in the development and validation samples, with minimal statistical shrinkage in the new data. Recidivism rates for CPORT scores were also similar in the development and validation samples. We also explored the impact of using alternate definitions for the CPORT item that assesses pedophilic/hebephilic interests.

Predictive accuracy in the combined dataset (development and validation cases) was compared to the Risk Matrix 2000/Sex given previous research suggesting a modified version of the scale predicted for online sex offenders (Wakeling Howard, & Barnett., 2011). Although the Risk Matrix 2000 significantly predicted recidivism in most analyses, AUCs tended to be meaningfully lower than CPORT (but not statistically significant).

References

Learning Goals and Objectives:
• Describe the items of the CPORT
• Discuss the relative predictive accuracy (AUCs) of the CPORT in the new validation cases
• Discuss the recidivism rates associated with the CPORT in the new validation cases
• Compare the results of the validation study to the original development study of the CPORT
• Comment on the relative predictive accuracy (AUCs) of the CPORT compared to the Risk Matrix 2000/Sex.