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### Explanations of pedophilia: A four factor model

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# Explanations of Pedophilia: A Four Factor Model

DAVID FINKELHOR AND SHARON ARAJI

We review a variety of theories that have been proposed to explain why adults become sexually interested in and involved with children. All the theories appear to be directed to explaining one of four factors: (a) *emotional congruence*—why the adult has an emotional need to relate to a child; (b) *sexual arousal*—why the adult could become sexually aroused by a child; (c) *blockage*—why alternative sources of sexual and emotional gratification are not available; or (d) *disinhibition*—why the adult is not deterred from such an interest by normal prohibitions. We illustrate how these four factors can be combined to explain more of the diversity in pedophilic behavior than is usually explained by single factor theories. We also introduce the idea of viewing types of pedophilia on a continuum rather than in the traditional way of treating them as dichotomies.

In the last 10 years, there has been an explosion of literature about the problem of children being sexually victimized by adults (Finkelhor, 1979). This literature has provided many new insights into the scope of the problem and its effects on children but many fewer insights about why some adults engage in such behavior. In this paper we review and integrate available ideas on this subject.

The term *pedophilia*, which we have chosen to use in this paper, has been the subject of some controversy and has to some extent fallen out of style in favor of terms such as *sexual abuse* and *child molesting*. Nonetheless, it is the only term which describes a sexual interest in

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children, whether or not that interest is acted upon. This and its long history of use in studies concerning offenders make it appropriate for this paper.

Part of the controversy about the term pedophilia concerns the conflicting ways in which it has been defined (Mohr, Turner, & Jerry, 1964). One major distinction has been whether it is used *inclusively* or *exclusively*. In using the term inclusively, many investigators have applied pedophilia to any sexual contact with or interest in a child however transitory this behavior may have been (Friedman, 1959; Mohr et al.). Others, however, such as the current DSM-III (American Psychiatric Association, 1980) have reserved the term only for a condition where an adult has an enduring, and often exclusive, sexual interest in children. We prefer the inclusive type of definition, considering as pedophilia any adult sexual contact with a child, regardless of motive.

We do this for several reasons. First, if pedophilia is reserved for only exclusive-type offenders, it leaves no term to apply to the broader phenomenon of sexual contact in general between adults and children. We feel that this latter phenomenon is a much more important one and needs a name. Secondly, we believe that reserving pedophilia for exclusive-type offenders reflects a particular theory about pedophilia, one that has some empirical support but is far from being fully substantiated. Finally, the more restricted definition of pedophilia makes it a complex psychological condition, which requires detailed analysis of an individual's history and motivation to deduce. We favor defining the category by some more readily ascertainable behavioral criteria, which is easier to do with the broader definition.

Specifically, we define pedophilia as occurring when an adult<sup>1</sup> has a conscious sexual interest in prepubertal children. We infer that sexual interest from one of two behaviors: either (a) the adult has had some sexual contact with a child (meaning that he touched the child or had the child touch him with the purpose of his becoming sexually

<sup>1</sup>When "adult" is used in this paper, it is, unless otherwise noted, referring to an adult male. There have been virtually no studies of female offenders, reflecting the fact that females engage in pedophilia much less frequently than men. Although some researchers have questioned this presumption, a recent review of all empirical studies concerning sexual contacts between adults and children, irrespective of how these contacts were labeled, showed that females comprised no more than 5% of the older partners of girls and 20% of the older partners of boys (Finkelhor & Russell, 1984). The dynamics for such behavior may or may not fit within the model suggested here.

aroused), or (b) the adult has masturbated to sexual fantasies involving children. This definition recognizes that a person may have a very strong sexual interest in children and be blocked only by circumstances from acting on it more directly with children.

### Need For Multi-Factor Explanation

Most theories of pedophilia have tended to be single factor theories, and they have been inadequate in one way or another to explain the full range and diversity of pedophilic behavior. What seems to be needed is a more complicated model that integrates a variety of single factor explanations in a way that accounts for the many different kinds of pedophilic outcomes.

Reading through the literature and relying particularly on excellent reviews by Howells (1981) and Langevin (1983), it appeared to us that most of the theories could be categorized as trying to explain one of

Table 1  
*Explanations of Pedophilia*

Theory type	Level of Explanation	
	Individual	Social/Cultural
<i>Emotional congruence</i>	Arrested development Low self-esteem Symbolic mastery of trauma Identification with aggressor Narcissistic identification	Male socialization to dominance
<i>Sexual arousal</i>	Arousing childhood experience Traumatic childhood sexual experience Operant conditioning Early modeling by others Misattribution of arousal Biological factors	Child pornography Eroticization of children in advertising
<i>Blockage</i>	Oedipal conflict Castration anxiety Fear of adult females Traumatic experience with adult sexuality Inadequate social skills Marital disturbance	Repressive norms about masturbation, extramarital sex
<i>Disinhibition</i>	Impulse disorder Senility Alcohol problem Psychosis Situational stress Failure of incest avoidance mechanism	Cultural toleration Pornography Patriarchal prerogatives

four factors (Table 1): (a) why a person would find relating sexually to a child to be emotionally gratifying and congruent; (b) why a person would be capable of being sexually aroused by a child; (c) why a person would be frustrated or blocked in efforts to obtain sexual and emotional gratification from more normatively approved sources; and (d) why a person would not be deterred by the conventional social restraints and inhibitions against having sexual relationships with a child.

We also noted that explanations of pedophilic behavior focused on two levels: the individual psychological and the socio-cultural. The sections that follow review explanations according to each of the four factors and the two levels.

### *Factor 1: Emotional Congruence*

Some of the most popular theories about pedophilia are essentially attempts to explain why an adult would find it emotionally satisfying to relate sexually to a child. We have called this *emotional congruence* because it conveys the idea of a fit between the adult's emotional needs and the child's characteristics.

Some of the psychological theories which take this approach are psychoanalytic in origin. Theorists like Hammer and Glueck (1957) and Groth and Burgess (1979), for example, talk about pedophiles as having arrested psychological development. Pedophiles experience themselves as children, they have childish emotional needs, and thus they wish to relate to other children (Bell & Hall, 1971).

Another version of this type of theory highlights not just the immaturity but the general sense of low self-esteem and low sense of efficacy that pedophiles feel in their social relationships. Relating to a child is congruent because it gives them the feeling of power, omnipotence, and control (Hammer & Glueck, 1957, p. 338; Loss & Glancy, 1983, p. 328).

In another variation on this theme, Howells (1981) has adapted to pedophilia Stoller's (1975) general theory of sexual deviance. According to this theory, the pedophilic (in Stoller's general terms "the perverse") fantasy comes to serve as a "scene of symbolic mastery over childhood-induced psychological traumas" (Howells, 1981, p. 58). The relationship to children helps the pedophile to overcome a sense of shame, humiliation, or powerlessness that he had experienced as a small child at the hands of an adult.

This process is called by other theorists "identification with the aggressor."

One way in which the male child may try to combat the feelings of powerlessness inherent in being a victim is to ultimately identify with the aggressor and reverse roles; that is, to become the powerful victimizer rather than the helpless victim. The child molester then re-enacts in his offense the characteristics of his own victimization in an attempt to restore to himself a feeling of being in control. (Groth, Hobson, & Gary, 1982, p. 138)

Fraser, in another emotional congruence theory, uses the notion of narcissism or identification with the self, contending that the pedophile, as a result of either emotional deprivation or even over-protection in childhood, "remains in love with the child he then was. This is impossible so he must project his love on to other children of a similar age to his lost childhood who thus become love objects for him" (quoted in Howells, 1981, p. 61).

Some feminist explanations of pedophilia have a surprisingly similar underlying idea, but incorporate themes in male socialization and male culture that make children "appropriate" or, in our terms, emotionally congruent objects for sexual interest. Primary among these themes, for example, is the value that male socialization puts on being dominant, being powerful, and being the initiator in sexual relationships (Hite, 1981; Russell, 1982). Thus, men prefer to relate to partners who are younger, smaller, and weaker than themselves. Children fit in or are an inevitable extension of these role requirements. In fact, they may fit the demands of male cultural expectations better than many adult women would.

Some men are more affected by these socialization experiences than others or may belong to subcultures which give more or less emphasis to these normative themes (Gebhard, Gagnon, Pomeroy, & Christenson, 1967; Summit & Kryso, 1978).

### *Factor 2: Sexual Arousal To Children*

There are another group of theories about pedophilia, separate from the previous ones, that we see as essentially explanations of how a person comes to find children sexually arousing. By sexually arousing, we mean a physiological response (e.g., penile tumescence) to the presence of children or to fantasies of children in sexual activities.

However, the matter of sexual arousal in explanations of pedophilia appears to be a controversial one. A number of theoretical approaches take the implicit point of view that such arousal does not really need to be explained. First, many of the proponents of theories cited under Factor 1 (Emotional Congruence) presume that what they are explain-

ing is sexual arousal. If a person needs to have their emotional needs met by relating to a child, this, to those theorists, seems a sufficient explanation of why a person would be aroused by a child. However, this is not fully convincing. For one thing, the evidence from clinical work with people experiencing sexual dysfunction (Langevin, 1983; Masters & Johnson, 1979) suggests that sexual preferences or sexual proclivities can have an existence autonomous from people's emotional needs.

Moreover, people who have emotional needs to relate to children, to be with children, to love children, to control children, or to have children dependent on them do not necessarily find children sexually arousing, even when these emotional needs are extraordinarily strong (Kraemer, 1976). Most such people get these emotional needs met by being mothers, fathers, grade school teachers, pediatricians, etc.; in other words, in nonsexual ways. Finding children sexually stimulating would seem to be a component that needs to be explained independent of, or in addition to, having a strong emotional need that can be met only by children.

In other theories arousal to children is treated as not needing any explanation because it is presumed that such arousal is intrinsic. Freud (1948, p. 28), in his concept of polymorphous attraction, posited that in the course of development all people find children sexually attractive and need to be weaned away from such "perverse" attractions by social conditioning and repression.

One major argument against this point of view is that a great many people deny having sexual interest in children, and when they are shown naked children experimentally, they simply do not get sexually aroused (Freund, McKnight, Langevin, & Cibiri, 1972; Glueck, 1965; Henson & Rubin, 1971; Laws & Rubin, 1969).

Moreover, even if most adults did have some degree of arousal to children, this would still not eliminate the need to explain why such arousal is stronger in some adults than in others or occurs for them in a wider variety of circumstances with a wider variety of children.

A final, currently fashionable point of view, holds that pedophilia is not really sexual at all (Sgroi, 1982). Just as rape has been redefined by theorists as a crime of violence, pedophilia has been redefined as a crime of power and domination (Sgroi).

A valuable insight contained in the attempt to redefine pedophilia (and rape) is the idea that there are large nonsexual, motivational components for these behaviors. However, it is a mistake to see these



nonsexual motives as the full story. All sexual behavior is made up of both sexual and nonsexual components. Even the most conventional kind of sexual interaction between a husband and wife is filled with many nonsexual motives, such as the desire for a sense of power, possession, affiliation, and confirmation of adequacy as a male or female. The presence of nonsexual motives does not make pedophilia and rape nonsexual behaviors.

It does make sense to talk about the relative alloy of sexual and nonsexual motives in a variety of sexual behaviors. But even here, compared to acts like rape, much pedophilia qualifies as highly sexually motivated behavior. Many pedophiles have highly eroticized feelings about the children they molest, their smooth skin, hairless bodies, their small statures (Groth et al., 1982). How pedophiles acquire these feelings needs to be explained.

There are a set of theories which have tried to account for why some people are aroused by or have stronger arousal to children. One general theory is that they have early sexual experiences which, through conditioning or imprinting, cause them, later, when they become adults, to find children to be arousing (Money, 1981b; Wenet, Clark, & Hunner, 1981, pp. 149-150). However, well over half of all children have childhood sexual experiences with other children (Finkelhor, 1979), and since not all these people become pedophiles, there are likely to be some special circumstances under which such experiences end up conditioning a pedophilic interest.

One possibility is that the critical experiences involved some special kind of fulfillment or frustration. Another possibility is that the critical experiences might have been associated with traumatic victimization. Several researchers have found unusually high amounts of childhood sexual victimization in the backgrounds of pedophiles (de Young, 1982; Gebhard et al., 1967; Groth & Burgess, 1978), and it may be that the traumatic experience facilitates an imprinting or conditioning process.

McGuire, Carlisle, & Young (1965) suggest that what is important in the development of a fixation is that the early experience of arousal be incorporated into a fantasy that is repeated and becomes increasingly arousing in subsequent masturbatory repetitions (also see Wenet et al., 1981, p. 149). Any feature of the experience that makes it prominent in the person's awareness—great pleasure, embarrassment, or shame—will make it likely to come to attention in the course of masturbation.

Another social learning process, modeling, has been proposed to account for some aspects of sexual arousal to children (Wenet et al., 1981, p. 150). In fact, what may be important about the experience of being victimized oneself is not the conditioning but having as a model someone who finds children sexually stimulating (Howells, 1981).

Howells (1981) has also speculated about how a process of attributional error may play a role in creating sexual arousal to children.

Children appear to elicit strong emotional reactions in many people, reactions usually labelled as "parental" or "protective" or "affectionate," but potentially definable as sexual love. The fact that the initial stages of the adult sexual response cycle are not distinct physiologically from patterns of arousal produced by other emotions allows for such misattribution in some individuals and in some (as yet unknown) situations. (pp. 68-69)

Thus, perhaps certain socialization experiences or subjectively felt sexual deprivation may prompt individuals to label any emotional arousal as a sexual response. Once having labeled a response as sexual, they may find ways to reinforce it through repetition and fantasy and thus come to have a much more general sexual arousal to a child in particular or children in general.

There has also been recent clinical work from which researchers have suggested that biological factors, such as hormone levels or chromosomal make-up, contribute to pedophilia (Berlin, 1982; Goy & McEwen, 1977; Money, 1961). Such theorizing stems from findings of physiological abnormalities among pedophiles (Berlin; McAuliffe, 1983) and from evidence of some success in treating pedophilia with anti-androgenic drugs (Berlin & Meinecke, 1981; Money, 1981b).

However, these theories are not yet developed enough for us to specify how biological factors affect the choice of a child as an object of sexual arousal. At the current level of conceptualization, biological factors are seen as a source of instability which may predispose a person to develop deviant patterns of arousal (Money, 1981b). Or they are seen as having a generalized effect on levels of sexual interest and sexual arousability. At this level of generality, however, such theories, useful as they may be for treatment, are not really specific explanations of how a person comes to find children arousing.

The process of how people may come to find children arousing can be looked at from the social as well as the individual level. Feminists who have argued for the role that child pornography and advertising play in pedophilia (Densen-Gerber, 1983; Dworkin, 1983; McCaghy, 1979; Rush, 1980) are talking in part about a form of social learning. It is

possible, as Russell (1982, p. 185) notes, that exposure to pornography involving children teaches such arousal to people who would not otherwise have become so. In some pornography, themes of sex with children are mixed in with themes of sex with adults. In masturbating to this material, the consumers may come to find children arousing.

### *Factor 3: Blockage*

A third group of theories about pedophilia are essentially explanations of why some individuals are blocked in their ability to get their sexual and emotional needs met in adult heterosexual relationships. In these theories, it seems to be presumed that normal development or normal preference would lead a person to fulfill their needs with adult peers. For some reason, in the pedophile, these normal tendencies are blocked, and thus the sexual interest in children develops.

Individual psychological theories that rely on Oedipal dynamics fall into this category. Pedophiles are described in such theories as having intense conflicts about their mothers or "castration anxieties" that make it difficult or impossible to relate to adult women (Fenichel, 1945; Gillespie, 1964; Hammer & Glueck, 1957).

Sometimes the source of blockage is not seen so much in Oedipal dynamics as in early traumatic forays into sexual behavior (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948). The man who finds himself to be impotent in his first sexual attempts, or abandoned by his first lover, may come to associate adult sexuality with pain and frustration.

Even theorists who eschew the psychoanalytic explanation still see pedophiles as timid, unassertive, inadequate, awkward, even moralistic types with poor social skills who have an impossible time developing adult social and sexual relationships (Frisbie, 1969; Gebhard et al., 1967; Glueck, 1965; Guttmacher & Weihofen, 1951; Hammer & Glueck, 1957; Langevin, 1983; Storr, 1965).

Some theorists who try to account for incest offenders also rely on this blockage model. In the family dynamics model of incest, for example, the marital relationship has broken down; the wife has become alienated for some reason and the father is too inhibited or moralistic to find sexual satisfaction outside the family; thus, blocked in other avenues of sexual or emotional gratification, he turns to his daughter as a substitute (de Young, 1982; Gebhard et al., 1967; Meiselman, 1978).

Repressive sexual norms may act as a form of blockage. They may operate to make adults feel guilty or conflicted about engaging in adult

sexual relationships, and this may push some into choosing child partners. For example, in the incestuous family some have argued that norms proscribing extramarital affairs may in some cases block the father from seeking out other *adult women*, rather than his child, to substitute for the deteriorating relationship with his wife (Weinberg, 1955). There is also a norm that makes masturbation inappropriate for adults, and this norm may block what would otherwise be another alternative and benign sexual outlet. Goldstein and Kant (1973) report finding that pedophiles were among the most repressed of all sex offenders and were "the least permissive . . . regarding premarital and extramarital intercourse" (p. 144).

In general, this review of blockage-type theories suggests a further subdivision of the category into two types: developmental blockages and situational blockages. Developmental blockages refer to theories like those involving Oedipal conflicts, where the person is seen as prevented from moving into the adult heterosexual stage of development. Situational blockages refer more to theories, such as those related to incest, where a person with apparent adult sexual interests is blocked from normal sexual outlets because of the loss of a relationship or some other transitory crisis.

#### *Factor 4: Disinhibition*

Finally, some theories about pedophilia are essentially accounts of why conventional inhibitions against having sex with children are overcome or are not present in some adults. Among pedophiles, according to such theories, ordinary controls are circumvented or there is a higher level of acceptability for such behavior.

On the individual psychological level, some theorists characterize pedophiles as people who have generally poor impulse control (Gebhard et al., 1967, pp. 80-81; Glueck, 1965, pp. 554-559; Groth et al., 1982, p. 14; Hammer & Glueck, 1957; Knopp, 1982). In addition, factors such as senility (Cushing, 1950; Karpman, 1954, p. 106), neurological impairment (Storr, 1965), alcoholism and alcohol abuse (Frisbie, 1969; McCaghy, 1968; Rada, 1976) and psychosis (Gebhard et al., 1967; Hammer & Glueck, 1957; Marshall & Norgard, 1983; Mohr et al., 1964) have been cited as contributing to pedophilia, presumably lowering or eliminating inhibitions against acting on pedophilic impulses.

Sometimes situational factors, as well as personality factors, are used as explanations for disinhibition. For example, when a person

with no prior history of pedophilic behavior commits a pedophilic act under conditions of great personal stress, the stressors—unemployment, loss of love, death of a relative—are viewed as factors which lowered inhibitions (Gebhard et al., 1967, p. 74; Mohr et al., 1964, p. 95; Swanson, 1968).

Theories of incest also often rely on mechanisms that fall into this category. Men are seen as engaging in sexual acts with girls in their family because these girls are stepdaughters or because the men were away from the family during the child's early life (Gebhard et al., 1967; Lustig, Dresser, Spellman, & Murray, 1966). Being a stepdaughter or being separated presumably works to reduce the ordinary inhibition that would exist against sex between a natural father and a daughter who had lived with each other continuously since the child's birth (Herman, 1981; Shepher, 1971; Van den Berghe, 1983).

There are also feminist theories of pedophilia that are also essentially disinhibition-type arguments. For example, Rush (1980) has written extensively about how the seduction of children has been sanctioned by religion and law throughout history. Armstrong (1983) argues that the reluctance of the contemporary legal system to prosecute and punish offenders gives a green light to potential molesters. These and other feminists (McIntyre, 1981; Nelson, 1982) have also criticized the tendency among both the public and professionals to blame victims rather than offenders, pointing out that this feeds the justifications that offenders provide for their own violations (Rush, 1980; Russell, 1982). Anything that reinforces excuses for pedophilia, according to these theories, acts to reduce inhibitions.

In accounting for incest, another feminist theme has been to show how inhibitions are lowered by

a father-dominated family system, where the man expects to have his will obeyed as head of household and expects his family to provide him with domestic and sexual services. When patriarchal beliefs about rights of fathers provide further excuse for initiating sexually gratifying relationships within the family, it is not hard to see how many "Mr. Averages" can manage to overcome all the social and emotional barriers to committing incest with their daughters. (Nelson, 1982, pp. 69-70)

### Value Of The Four Factor Model

The four factor model we have just outlined is useful for giving some order to the welter of theories that have been proposed to account for pedophilic behavior. Moreover, the model can also be used to generate theory.

First, the model shows how many single-factor theories of pedophilia imply other processes, which are not fully specified. As we pointed out earlier, for example, theories of emotional congruence (Factor 1) seem to imply that sexual arousal (Factor 2) naturally follows. But the four factor model implies that arousal needs to be explained, not just taken for granted. Similarly, theories of disinhibition (Factor 4) seem to imply prior levels of sexual interest (Factors 1 and 2) which would otherwise be inhibited. But the theories themselves do not specify where these sexual interests come from. This prior interest also needs to be explained.

Secondly, in the model we suggest that a complete theory of pedophilia needs to address issues on a number of different levels. Pedophilic behavior is not adequately explained simply by the fact that an adult is sexually aroused by children (Factor 2). There are adults who are so aroused but who have alternative sources of sexual gratification (Factor 3) or who are inhibited by ordinary social controls from acting on their arousal (Factor 4).

Similarly, pedophilic behavior is not adequately explained by the fact of being blocked from sexual and emotional gratification with adults (Factor 3). Most adults who are so blocked have little emotional congruence for children (Factor 1) or little sexual arousal to children (Factor 2) and may be inhibited from acting on such feelings even if they had them (Factor 4). An adequate theory needs to explain pedophilia addressing several, if not all, of these levels simultaneously.

### Explaining Types Of Pedophilia

The best reviews of theories of pedophilia (Howells, 1981; Langevin, 1983; Mohr et al., 1964; Quinsey, 1977) have generally emphasized the importance of developing different theories to explain different types of pedophilic behavior. Howells, for example, believes distinctions need to be made between pedophiles who prefer boys versus those who prefer girls, pedophiles who are aggressive versus those who are not, and pedophiles who have a strong "sexual preference" for children versus those whose interest is more transitory. The four factor model we have suggested here can be utilized readily in developing explanations for these differences, as we will try to show below.

Let us look at how a preference for a boy or girl child could be determined at each of the various levels of the model.

### *Emotional Congruence*

Different types of developmental experiences may make it more emotionally congruent for a pedophile to relate to a boy or a girl child. For example, if the underlying mechanism is a kind of narcissistic identification, people would be most likely to be attracted to children of the same sex as themselves (Fraser, 1976; Kraemer, 1976; Storr, 1965). If the issue is one of needing to feel powerful and omnipotent, on the other hand, the adult may be more inclined to choose a girl, less imposing or threatening than a boy. Similarly, if the pedophilia grows out of an extension of male sexual socialization, here too, the man may choose a girl, in keeping with a masculine script (Rush, 1980).

### *Sexual Arousal*

Preference for a boy or girl child may be affected by conditioning processes surrounding early sexual experiences. Thus, an early pleasurable experience with a girl may lead to sexual preference for girls, an early experience with a boy may lead to preference for boys.

### *Blockage*

Developmental and situational blockages may lead toward different sex object choices. For example, if the man is experiencing an Oedipal conflict which makes his mother threatening, this anxiety may generalize to all contacts with women, even girls, and lead to a preference for boys. If, however, a man is blocked situationally from his normal heterosexual partner, unavailable because of marital disruption, as in theories of incest, he may prefer an object that is most similar to his preferred partner, a girl.

### *Disinhibition*

For given individuals, inhibitions may be stronger for one sex than for another. It may be easier for many men to have sexual contact with girls, because they have been brought up with strong homophobic taboos (Knopp, 1982). On the other hand, some offenders may prefer to have sex with boys because they presume boys can "take care of themselves better," and they are disturbed and inhibited by the rape and seduction taboos that surround the idea of sex with "helpless" girls.

It would seem from this inventory that no one mechanism necessarily explains all preferences for boys or girls. There are a variety of possible mechanisms. Moreover, we can use them to show why one

pedophile may be exclusive in his sex preference, whereas another may not have a preference.

Another classificatory distinction pervasive in the research literature on pedophilia is that between "offenders whose deviant behavior is a product of deviant sexual preference for children and those whose deviant behavior is situationally induced and occurs in the context of a normal sexual preference structure" (Howells 1981, p. 76), what Groth et al. (1982) call "fixated" versus "regressed" offenders.

We suggest a somewhat different approach to this distinction. Rather than seeing two distinct categories into which all pedophiles fall, we suggest the use of two continuous dimensions. The first dimension is the strength of pedophilic interest—that is, how strongly motivated pedophiles are to have sex with children, as evidenced for example by the number of contacts they have and the persistence of this interest over time. The second dimension is the exclusivity of pedophilic interest—that is, what percentage of total sexual experiences and fantasies are involved with children as opposed to other partners.

The idea of a continuum on each of two dimensions has a number of advantages. First, exclusivity and strength of pedophilia are separable issues and need to be looked at separately. Although it seems plausible that strong and exclusive pedophilia tend to co-occur, this is not always the case. For example, take the case of a rather asexual man who, under a great deal of stress, fondles a young boy but does not repeat the behavior. His interest in children may be exclusive but rather weak. Take, for another example, a hypersexual individual who has many sexual contacts with children as well as sexual contacts with adults. His pedophilia may be strong but relatively nonexclusive.

Second, a continuum, as opposed to a dichotomy, allows a focus on the degree of pedophilia in terms of both its strength and exclusivity. Besides people who are very strong pedophiles and those who are very weak pedophiles, there are undoubtedly many in the middle.

Third, use of the two dimensional scheme avoids a reliance on one particular theoretical approach to explaining types of pedophilia. Rather, a variety of processes at the various levels of our model combine to explain pedophilic behavior that is more or less strong and more or less exclusive.

For example, a man who was sexually victimized when he was a child may have the potential for having a strong pedophilic interest. But



suppose that, as an adolescent, he has good heterosocial skills, no pattern of masturbation to fantasies of children, and follows peer pressure into heterosexual behavior. His emotional congruence for children (Factor 1) may be offset by countervailing influences of having no strong sexual arousal to children (Factor 2) and no blockage in his adult relationships (Factor 3). His pedophilic interest may be very weak. Another man with the same kind of childhood victimization, who had a sense of inadequacy and poor social skills (Factor 3) and lived in a subculture where impulsivity was tolerated (Factor 4), might end up with a very much stronger pedophilic interest.

As illustrated in this example, we are reluctant to say that one kind of "pedogenic" process will always lead to the same kind of pedophilic outcome. Depending on the other countervailing or reinforcing factors, similar initial processes may lead to very different outcomes. What is now needed is research to confirm evidence for the four factors and how their interplay accounts for the presence of pedophilia and the variety of its forms.

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