

# Pedophilic Interests and Antisociality Among Adolescent Sex Offenders Who Experienced Childhood Abuse

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## Introduction

- Sex offenders report on average more childhood sexual abuse (CSA) and childhood physical abuse (CPA) than non-sexual offenders, and non-offender samples (Seto & Lalumière, 2010)
- Theories of sexual offending suggest that experiencing abuse as a child can lead to the development of antisocial tendencies, and sexual deviance, which may in turn cause an individual to sexually aggress against peers or children (Marshall & Barbaree, 1990; Malamuth & Heavey, 1996; Seto, 2008)

## Objective

- To examine association between childhood victimization (sexual or physical) and indicators of sexual deviance and antisociality

## Methods

- 488 male adolescent sex offenders evaluated at the Special Problems Unit, at the University of Tennessee
- Data were obtained from clinical files, collateral sources, or self-report questionnaires

## Measures

### Sexual Deviance

**Pedophilic interest:** Screening Scale for Pedophilic Interests (**SSPI**; Seto & Lalumière, 2001);

**Deviant Sexual interests:** Multiphasic Sex Inventory Adolescent version (**MSI-J**; Nichols & Molinder, 1984)

**Number of Sexual Offences:** 1 = one, 2 = two-five, 3 = five or more

**Age at First Sexual Offence:** in years

### Antisociality

Childhood Adolescent Taxon Scale (**CATS**; Quinsey et al., 1998)

## Results

### Participants' Abuse Histories

- 185 (37.9%) were not abused
- 98 (20%) exclusively CSA
- 73 (15%) were exclusively physically abused
- 131 (27%) participants experienced both CSA and CPA

**In CSA Comparison** (mean age CSA began: 7.22 years old)

- 258 (53%) were not abused
- 229 (47%) were abused

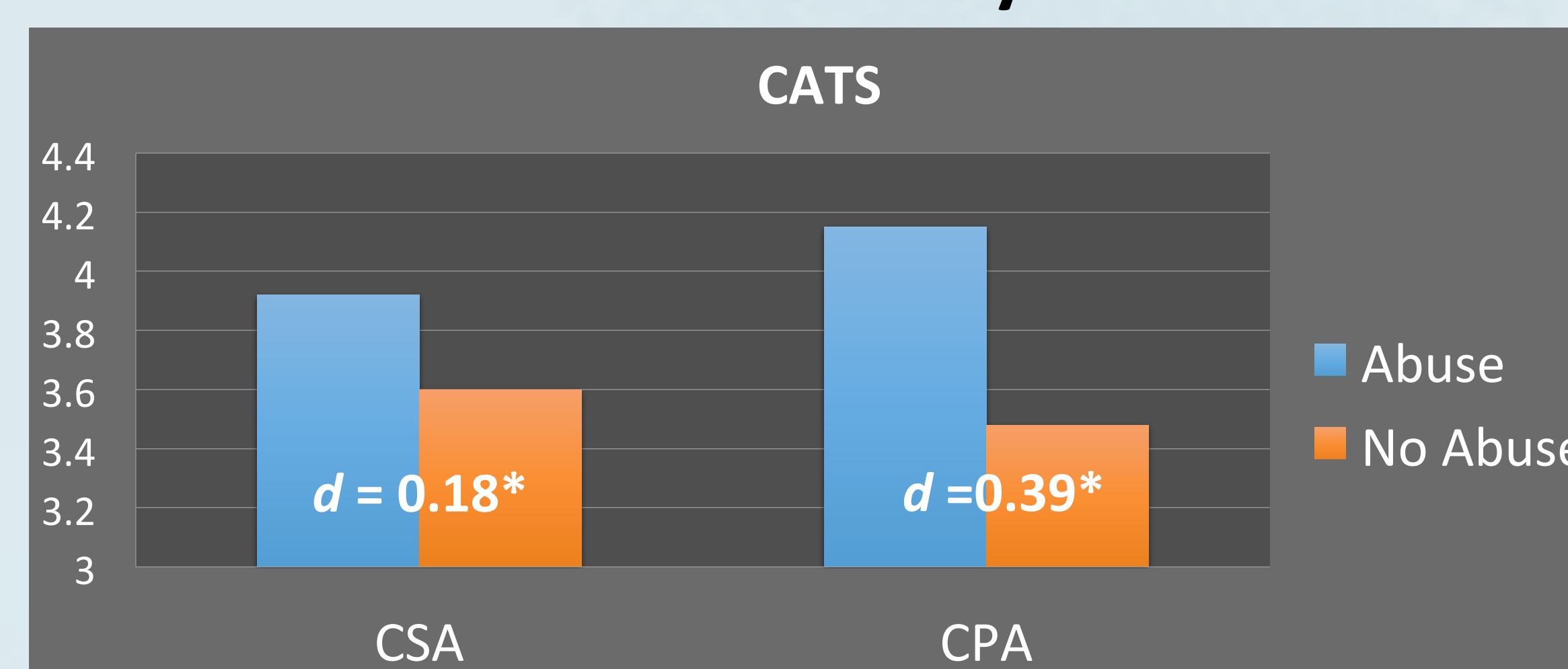
**In CPA Comparison** (mean age CPA began: 6.64 years old)

- 283 (58%) were not abused
- 204 (42%) were abused

## Sexual Deviance Factors



## Antisociality



\*p < .05.

## Discussion

### Findings

- CSA was moderately associated with more sexual deviance (including, but not limited to pedophilic interest), and had a small association with greater antisociality
- CPA was moderately associated with greater antisociality, but was not associated with pedophilic interest
- Generally consistent with theory and past research (e.g. Marshall & Barbaree, 1990; Seto, 2008; Seto & Lalumière, 2010)
- Note:** we found similar results when sample was divided into 4 groups (no abuse vs. exclusively CSA, exclusively CPA, or both CSA and CPA)

### Limitations

- Cross-sectional retrospective observational/correlational design leaves results open to plausible alternative interpretations

### Future Research

- CSA associated with indiscriminate sexual interests ("penile indifference")?
- Sexual deviance and/or antisociality mediate relationship between CSA/CPA and sexual offending?
- More rigorous methodology (e.g., longitudinal designs and statistical control of confounding variables) for more conclusive tests of whether and how childhood abuse may contribute to sexual offending

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