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Child Porn Seeking predicts real Pedophilia

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A pedophile, as most people know, is someone who is sexually interested in prepubescent children. With rare exceptions, most societies shun and punish pedophiles who act on their interests, as they are abusive to children when they get acted out. The problem is, that it would be better to be able to identify a pedophile before he (or she) acts out than after they have abused a child.

How do you best identify a pedophile, then? You can interview people about the nature of their sexual interests, but given the strongly negative view of pedophiles in society, and the real possibility of punishment, few pedophiles will be willing to step forwards and identify themselves. You can also look at a potential pedophile's arrest and conviction records, but again, this information is only present after the fact. Finally, you can objectively measure a potential pedophile's sexual arousal to a variety of sexually oriented materials. How would you do that? Well, basically, you'd attach a sensor capable of measuring penile blood volume to your subject's penis, hook it up to a biofeedback computer, and then bring on the porn, being careful to show materials featuring children and adults, women and men. As arousal is correlated with erection, and erection depends on increasing penile blood volume, the more blood volume you observe in response to a particular picture, the more arousal is present. When you do this procedure, under normal circumstances, you might expect a real pedophile to show greater arousal to prepubescent child photos than to post-pubescent adult photos. This is in fact what happens

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most of the time, but there are always cases where it doesn't go like you'd think. When you have someone who is good at self-distraction, or particularly anxious, you typically observe little arousal at all, for example.

There is no absolutely conclusive way to determine, beyond a shadow of a doubt whether any single given someone has pedophile interests based solely on this blood volume method. No method of this type can work with absolute precision when dealing with a single individual. The method can be very useful, however, when it is applied to large groups of people, and reliable statistical relationships are extracted.

A team of researchers in Toronto, Canada has recently published a paper, titled, "Child Pornography Offenses Are a Valid Diagnostic Indicator of Pedophilia" in the Journal of Abnormal Psychology (August, 2006, Vol. 115, No. 3, 610-615) averaging their results for this methodology across 685 people (some known child offenders (e.g., known pedophiles), some adult offenders (e.g., standard rapists, etc.), some adult porn addicts, and some convicted of child porn viewing, but otherwise not known to be pedophiles. Their results confirm statistically that a predilection for viewing child porn is closely associated with pedophilia. In fact, study subjects convicted of viewing child porn but not previously convicted of any actual child offenses were almost three times as aroused by child porn photos as actual convicted pedophiles. Adult offenders (e.g., standard rapists), as you might expect, showed arousal far more frequently to adult pictures than to child pictures.

What this study does is to establish that child-porn-seeking behavior is in fact, statistically speaking, powerfully associated with the same sort of sexual arousal patterns (e.g, turned on by children rather than adults) associated with convicted pedophiles. You've heard the phrase, "where there is smoke, there is fire", perhaps? Well, here is mathematical evidence that this association works for child porn and pedophilic behavior too. The presence of child-porn-seeking behavior doesn't *prove* pedophilia, of course, but when it is present, pedophilia is *statistically more likely* to be the case than not.

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