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**Child Sexual Abuse  
Dynamics, Realities and  
Strategies for Responders**

Roger A Canaff, JD

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**Thanks and Attribution**

- Victor Vieth and the staff of the **National Child Protection Training Center**, Winona State Univ, Winona Minnesota
- National District Attorneys Association, **National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse**
- Male Survivor staff and board



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## CSA: Basic Realities

- most sexual exploitation of children is **never reported** to anyone
- no research supports the idea that children regularly lie about sexual abuse or that children (unless very young) are any more suggestible than adults
- most abuse of children is serial abuse, not a one-time act (for both perpetrators and victims)
- most offenders are protected by one **institution** or another

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## CSA: Part of The Human Condition

- a connection between poverty and physical abuse is arguable; not so with CSA
- exists in every culture, socio-economic level, circumstance and situation
- **what motivates offenders still unknown**

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## Most Offenders Are Predatory

- usually plan and premeditate offending on children and engage in grooming
- use multiple strategies to make victims vulnerable
- exploit trust in many ways
- authority, religion, family ties, sentimentality
- seek out situations where where families and/or children are vulnerable, in crisis, under-supported, or otherwise in need

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# Grooming

- slow draw of the child into sexual activity through series of acts over time that increase gradually
- the closer the relationship to the child, the more patient with grooming, the less likely the child will report

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## Grooming Across the Lifespan

- method depends on child's age, developmental level, relationship
- with adolescents, "lover" or "teacher"
- with small children, "play" and "love"

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## Not Only A Child is Groomed

- families
- schools, organizations, institutions
- entire communities

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# Barriers to Justice

- Usually no physical trauma or injury
- Targeted children have issues that discourage reporting or compromise credibility
- Often no criminal history on the part of the offender
- Almost always known to the child

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# Predatory Progression

- **victim Identification:** vulnerable, often 'soft targets'
- **manipulation:** using trust, authority, family pressure, gifts, promises, threats, cajoling, etc depending on child
- **planning and entrapment:** sometimes in concert with unknowing "non-offending" parents, sometimes with accomplice care-takers

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# What Predators Look For

- often remarkably mundane or common things for clues of vulnerability
- Condition of clothing like socks (missing or mismatched)
- Clothing inappropriate for weather, or equipment not in sync with what other kids have
- Hair, nails, cleanliness



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# Kids With Disabilities

- abused at alarmingly high rates
- caretakers must be vigilant at all times regarding supervision and outside care
- communication deficits make them attractive targets



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# Myths and Molestation

- stereotypes allow offenders to hide within the population
- we teach "stranger danger" but inculcate our children to OBEY adults in their life
- if detected, often claim a one-time 'mistake'

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# The Institution and CSA

- institutions can be formal or informal
- focus is usually on formal as there is "brick and mortar" facilities, hierarchy, etc
- both provide havens for predators



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## the danger: what institutions provide

- a steady **victim stream**, whether due to power, authority, culture, or other factors
- a **cover**, preventing exposure and providing access
- when institutions fail, an organization that will **conceal and protect** them, and move them when detected



## roman catholic crisis

- broke most publicly around 1991, with two competing theories to explain
  - 1. celibacy general "v people
  - 2. Vatican II and 60s liberalization (gay culture) has led to abuse



## church realities over the centuries

- tremendous moral and spiritual authority, unquestioned in many cultures
- intimate involvement in most major life events
  - education, birth, marriage, death
- global reach, financial and political power

## unwittingly creates a vacuum for predators

- the Church's manufacturing of a vacuum for predators
- unavoidable
- most in religious institutions are abusive, but some are serial predators

**The failure was never because the church's nature. The failure was its institutional response**



## all institutions are vulnerable

- all major religious institutions
- military and para-military
- schools and universities
- service organizations, scouting, AAU, etc etc

## the goal?

- not to seek to "weed out" or "screen"
- will never work
- background checks woefully inadequate
- instead, seek to make the institution as unattractive to predators as possible



# disclosure is a process

- disclosure, even with adults, is far better defined as a **process, not an event**
- particularly in traumatic situations, time is needed for full recall
- consider that IACP suggests allowing 2 sleep cycles for debriefing



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# corroboration

- literally, it is **always** present
- it is not always a 'smoking gun,' but it is a building block
- blocks build cases; in criminal litigation, **more is more**



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# so what's he talking about?

## 1. sensory detail

- the physical reality of what the child experienced

## 2. surrounding, incontrovertible facts

- the independently verifiable truths no one can deny

## 3. behavioral changes and indicators

- changes in a child's life that may be of evidentiary value

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## sensory detail

- the sights, sounds and **smells** that make the event come to life
- smell in particular is a remarkable memory trigger (2009 study suggests that memories triggered by the olfactory senses are done so differently than with others)
- sensory detail is crucial in overcoming some common defenses, particularly in child sex cases

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## obtaining the details

- the **physical reality of the crime- recreate it**
- **start with empathy and remember "child first" doctrine**
  - build rapport and develop trust
  - explain why you need what you need
  - create a safe place for the child to recall

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## invite free recall

- and think **creatively as it comes forth**
- what is the victim saying that can be independently corroborated
  - light, sound, background noise
  - weather conditions, time of day, calendar notations

### Quick example:

child reports sexual abuse by babysitter, late afternoon in her room. Victim recalls that declining sun from west facing window warmed a patch of bedclothes as she sought to 'disconnect' from experience

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## further example

- you ask for free recall; no restrictions
- child remembers concentrating on the ceiling fan as control left her
- remembered the dust on a blade seemed to hang in a fragile manner
- remembered a pattern or a crack in the fan housing
- if the location is known, go there!

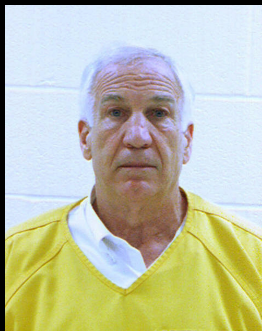


## statements

- when you can, get them **verbatim**, not in paraphrase
- from responders, medical personnel, any witnesses (get to them fast)
- not only the statement itself, but surrounding details are also valuable

## Penn State: Sandusky

- plays football at PSU, then works there 32 years
- while at PSU, starts "Second Mile" charity to "help children who need additional support"
- Sandusky is primary fundraiser; SM raises millions



## Second Mile Charity

- Sandusky gains intimate, complete access to thousands of boys of various ages
- boys in SM stay at Sandusky's house and travel with him. He purchases expensive gifts (golf clubs, computers, etc)
- Sandusky's access is unlimited and his actions unquestioned



## Early Suspicion, No Action

- 1998: Local police investigate report of Sandusky showering naked and alone w/ a boy
- Sandusky overheard by investigators admitting that penis "might have touched" boy's buttocks
- Sandusky admits he won't get forgiveness, "wishes he was dead"
- No prosecution

## More on 1998 Case

- -Authorities also investigate incidents involving a **second** boy "subjected to nearly identical treatment in the shower..."
- -Prosecutor declines to file charges, investigation ceases, no other action taken, says case "severely hampered" by MH opinion that pedophiles don't start at age 52

## 2000: Janitor Witness

- Janitor sees “young boy pinned up against the wall, performing oral sex on boy.”
- Tells fellow employee he had been in Korean War, “seen people w their guts blown out, arms dismembered...I just witnessed something in there I'll never forget.”
- Regardless, no report made; janitor fears for his job b/c of Sandusky's status, etc

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## 2001: Sandusky at Local High School

- Assistant principal Steve Turchetta sees Sandusky as “very controlling” with boys, clingy, needy with them
- Another teacher sees Sandusky w a boy lying face to face in secluded area, both jump up when teacher walks in
- No reports are made from school or county authorities

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## McQueary Observations: February 9, 2001

- McQueary hears “sexual sounds” and sees a 10 year-old boy “with his hands up against the wall, being subjected to anal intercourse” by Sandusky
- reports to his father, next day to Paterno in person
- Paterno to Grand Jury: McQueary was “very upset” and reported Sandusky “fondling or doing something of a sexual nature to a young boy.”

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## PSU Leadership Action

- Paterno reports on the next day (Sunday) to Athletic Director Tim Curley
- About 10 days later, Curley (AD) and Gary Schultz (Vice President for Finance and Business) meet w McQueary
- Two weeks later: Curley to McQueary: Sandusky's keys to locker room taken away, SM notified
- **NO report to authorities**

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## PSU Leadership Action

- February 26-27, 2001 email between Curley, Schultz and Spanier suggests a three-part plan:
  - report Sandusky to 2nd Mile
  - restrict Sandusky from bringing kids to PSU facilities
  - report Sandusky to Penn DPW
- Feb 27, email revised; Curley tells Schultz that, after talking to Paterno, "uncomfortable" with report to authorities. Will consider not telling authorities if Sandusky agrees to get help. Spanier approves, calls it humane

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## 2011 Grand Jury Testimony

- Curley to GJ: Reported to PSU president but not authorities because McQueary's description was not sexual but "only horsing around"
- Schultz to GJ: McQueary reported "inappropriate sexual contact," but it was "not that serious" nor criminal
- **GJ rejects this testimony and believes McQueary**

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## Grand Jury Action

- 2001 Investigative Grand Jury recommends perjury, conspiracy and obstruction of justice charges against Curley, Schultz and Spanier
- GJ charges PSU leadership with stonewalling against a December, 2010 subpoena (answered in April 2012)
- Felonies dropped against the three because testimony rule inadmissible (child endangerment charges remain)

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## Freeh Investigation

- Former FBI director Louis Freeh commissioned to investigate and report on PSU failings by board of trustees
- Freeh Report: PSU officials failed for a decade out of fear of bad publicity
- "...in order to avoid the consequences of bad publicity, the four most powerful leaders at the university—Spanier, Curley, Paterno and Schultz—repeatedly concealed critical facts relating to Sandusky's child abuse from the authorities, the Penn State Board of Trustees, the Penn State community, and the public at large."

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## Repercussions: PSU

- \$60 million in fines
- Voided football wins for past 14 years
- Reduced scholarships from 25 to 15
- No bowl games for 4 years
- Big Ten: additional sanctions of \$13 million dollars

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## Key Failings: PSU

- Failure to report suspicions, even clear evidence of abuse
- Inadequate, perhaps incompetent investigation of the one report made
- Failure to recognize that even in the absence of a criminal prosecution, there was a sufficient basis to take action

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## How Many Failed?

- 19 adults, many highly educated
- 3 adults actually witnessed abuse with their own eyes
- 1998 case investigated by University Police, State College Police, Centre County District Attorney, PA Dept. of Public Welfare
- Sandusky actually admitted to showering w the boy and being wrong

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## Even if Criminal Charges Not Possible

- What several people witnessed or knew about would have been enough for PSU leadership to:
- Take disciplinary action against Sandusky
- Alert parents and conduct inquiriesRemoval of Sandusky from charity
- PSU inaction is NOT the exception but a national norm

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## Most Child Abuse Not Reported: Even by Mandated Reporters

- -Only 40% of maltreatment cases and 35% of the most serious cases known to mandated reporters are reported (Finkelhor 1990)
- -65% of social workers, 53% of physicians and 58% of physicians assistants do not report all cases of suspected abuse (Delaronde, et al, 2000)

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## Seeking A Better Response

- National Child Protection Training Center, Winona State University, Winona Minn
- Creating college level curriculum focused on child protection and strategies for improving reporting rates and response
- Expanding nationally to several schools in the US
- Only the beginning of a larger effort

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## Going Forward

- Reduce the power and mystique of institutions by valuing individual human beings above them
- Explore what inspires sexual violence
- Be realistic and fair about prevention
- Abandon baseless ideas that most sexual violence is fabricated

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Accept that sexual violence, for now, is  
a part of the human condition

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