



Is There a Link between Zoophilia and Pedophilia?

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Abstract

The more we can share our knowledge about the nature of sexual crimes and those who commit them, our experience with dealing with these offenders in custody and the community, our successes and our failure. The more we are likely to move towards our ultimate aim, which must be to protect the public from harm and to reduce the number of sexual crimes which can cause immense human suffering.

Introduction

Sexual activity is crucial for the survival of a species, and the pleasure is a fundamental aspect in the motion of this exercise [1]. After more than 132 years since Krafft-Ebing's publication of *Psychopathia Sexualis* and more than a decade after Sigmund Freud's theories of human sexuality were widely discussed, many aspects of human sexuality remain understood. It can be argued that we live in an increased sexualized world whereas on the contrary, personal sexual identity are considered personal and to some extent taboo to discuss. Although sexuality unquestionable constitutes a powerful biological drive, there is a growing understanding that sexuality is formed by factors such as identity, power and culture. This might be especially so for paraphilic sexual behaviors [2].

Both the public and the policy makers have shown an increasing interest in pedophilia and child sexual offending during the last few years. Online grooming and the spread of Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CTEM) have both given perpetrators easier access to potential victims and at the same time made the public more aware of the problem [3,4]. More individuals than ever are being arrested for child pornography offenses, but probably is the number only the "tip of the iceberg". Data on CTEM traffic in peer-to-peer computer networks indicate that user numbers greatly exceed the number of individuals identified by arrest and a study in Sweden showing that 4.2% of young men reporting having viewed such materials [5].

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Definitions

Pedophilia is defined as the sexual interest towards prepubescent children. It is considered to be an umbrella term as many sub-categories drawing specific age preferences towards children has separated understandings, including hebephilia and nepiophilia.

Zoophilia is defined as "the sexual orientation of a human to an animal" [6]. It is recognized as a paraphilia by both the DSM and ICD [7].

There is a long discussion in the literature on the difference and connection between sexual fantasies and offence. Child sexual offending and bestiality are in this article defines as the sexual acts whilst pedophilia and zoophilia describing the sexual attraction towards them children and animals.

There is scarce knowledge about zoophilia, but the practice of sexual exploitation of animals has been documented through all history. As with the connection between pedophilia and child offending, we do not know how many with zoophilia who actually offend against animals. Some studies estimate the prevalence to be between 3% to 8%, with the preferred animals being dogs, livestock and horses [6]. Other findings, reports that 8% of males and 3.6% of females has had sexual contact with an animal. But as pedophilia and child offending, these numbers are very much uncertain [8].

There is even less knowledge about the connection between pedophilia and zoophilia and between such paraphilias and offending. Still, there seems to be some parallel factors and some evidence suggesting some similarities.

Consent

As with rape, many child offenders will argue that the child victim did not resist the sexual contact or even took the initiative for the sexual contact. Some will even deny that children will get hurt or traumatized by such offences, but rather experience it as a positive experience. Even though children are protected by law against sexual offences and cannot legally give consent under the age of 16, many offenders will argue that even small children can give indirectly consent to sexual contact.

Most countries have laws protecting animals against sexual offences. As with children, animals are especially vulnerable because their life and welfare are dependent upon the adults watching over them. Animals obviously cannot give legally consent to anything, but proponents for zoophilia believe that animals still can signal their willingness to sexual contact. According to Jaen [9] who has addressed this issue regarding consent in human-animal sexual relationships, zoosexuals differentiate themselves from bestiality. This due to their belief that their paraphilia can be nurturing and non-sexual and revolves around an extensive love and care for animals. Miletski (2005) writes that he believes "Sex is inherently good, and one of its main purposes is to provide pleasure". He further believes that "As long as an individual does not harm anyone, anything consensual goes. The key is "consent"! As long as they don't hurt their animal partners", he does "believe they are free to do whatever they want".

Consent also has a relevance for the motivation of offending. The argument that non-human animals and children seek sexual contact by adult humans can be described as evidence of cognitive distortions; the human brain ability to justify acts that normally is considered unmoral [10]. Whilst some offenders suffer from cognitive distortions in their sexual "relationships" which are believed to be consensual, nurturing and loving, some offenders are triggered by the aggressive aspect of their sexuality [10]. Both motivations are considered as risk factors for doing sexual offences, although they are quite different. "Emotional congruence" is a term for adults who consider them to have special abilities in assessing and meeting the needs of children. These offenders do not use physical force or threats to exploit children, but rather consider themselves as protectors for the children. A multinational survey by Sendler [11] showed that relationship seeking behavior as well as interest in forming a long-term relationship with an animal partner were the most essential basis of zoophilia.

For other offenders, aggression, domination and humiliation constitute the core of the offence. Consent will for this group probably be sexually interesting.

Access

One can argue that you will find the same dichotomy in the motivation to offend against animals. Animals, whether it is a pet or a domestic animal, can easily be subjugated to humiliation or aggression without anyone noticing it. Animals and children alike can also be used as substitute for consenting human to human sexual relationships. This because of its proximity to the offender in combination with the factors described above. And as the saying goes; when you have tasted blood, it is more tempting to do another offence when the urge strikes the next time. This is maybe why a vast majority of child sexual offending occur in a familial environment, perpetrated by the family members or other relatives [12].

Subgroups

Both pedophilia and zoophilia seem to be heterogeneous groups. As described above, pedophilia incorporates both fantasies towards peri-pubertal girls and infants, emotional congruence and aggression. Some pedophiles also consider themselves to be children, so called auto-pedophilia.

People who consider themselves as "zoosexuals" often highlight their emotional congruence to animals in the same way as pedophiles do with children. But some prefer pets, but not live stock and *vice versa*. Some are attracted to fur, others to "big, open eyes". Others are attracted to pictures or animation of sexual contact between animals and humans only. And some are attracted to sexual contact between animals and children.

The latter should not be surprising considering that several studies show a comorbidity of paraphilias and enhanced risk for sexual offences in the presence of paraphilia [13].

New Findings

There has traditionally been little research in the field of paraphilia. Instead, research has tended to examine specific facets of paraphilia, such as sexual preferences or interests or physiological activity in response to specific inappropriate sexual stimuli. Also, this research has focused on sexual offenders (i.e. people with a history of sexual violence); there is no population- or community-based research on paraphilia and sexual violence.

The lack of good data is also understandable when we take into consideration that diagnosing paraphilias in general and pedophilia and zoophilia in particular are fraught with difficulties. People with these paraphilias seldom admit their sexual interest and we lack psychological and medical assessment with high accuracy.

There are however some new findings from neuropsychological research and statistical data that might shed some light on the connection between pedophilia and zoophilia.

Ponseti et al. [14] found increased brain responses in pedophiles when viewing images of infant animals. This opens the possibility that pedophilia is linked to an "over-active nurturing system" in addition to or instead of an abnormal sexual system. This research is consistent with previous research finding increased brain responses of men with pedophilia not only to pictures of naked children but also to pictures of child faces. This is also particularly consistent with the subgroups of pedophilia and zoophilia showing emotional congruence's with children and animals.

Findings from statistical analysis from police records and convictions conclude that 38 percent of child sex offenders have previously sexually abused an animal, 35 percent of arrests of human sexual contact with a non-human animal involved child sexual abuse, and that almost 40 percent of offenders being arrested have prior criminal records for both bestiality and child sexual abuse [6].

Conclusion

The history of both sexual offending and research in human sexuality has shown that we often underestimate the variance in sexuality and often do not see what we should because the reality is too gruesome. Children and animals are both dependent on others taking care of them. Most adults do. But we should expand our knowledge both in pedophilia and zoophilia to better understand how people

with these sexual attractions think. Both to help them not offend and to protect our children and animals.

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