Are Sex Offenders More Likely To Have Been Sexually Abused Than Other Types Of Offenders? A Quantitative Examination

Research Questions
1. How strong is the association?
2. Is it specific to sexual abuse?
3. Is it a self-report phenomenon?
4. Does it vary as a function of victim choice?

Two Meta-Analyses
k = 26 studies of adolescent sex offenders (n = 1,569) and non-sex offenders (n = 2,535)
k = 17 studies of adult sex offenders (n = 1,037) and non-sex offenders (n = 1,762)

Selection Criteria:
1. Two groups: Sex offenders and non-sex offenders
2. Published after 1975
3. Publicly available
4. Provided frequency, proportion, or mean scores for childhood sexual abuse for each group

Effect Size
Odds Ratio
1.0 no group difference in history of childhood abuse
>1.0 first group more often abused (sex offenders versus non-sex offenders, or rapists versus child molesters)
<1.0 second group more often abused

Results
1. How strong is the association?
2. Is it specific to sexual abuse?

Sex offenders vs Non-sex offenders

3. Is it a self-report phenomenon?

Adolescents
Adults

4. Does it vary as a function of victim choice?

Offenders with peer victim (rapists) vs. Offenders with child victim (child molesters)

Conclusions
1. How strong is the association? Pretty Strong
2. Is it specific to sexual abuse? Probably
3. Is it a self-report phenomenon? No
4. Does it vary as a function of victim choice? Perhaps

What is the mechanism?

Presented at the International Academy of Sex Research, Vancouver, BC (August 2007)