CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN NICARAGUA:

Clinical Responses and the Impact of Short-Term Therapeutic Treatment
Child Sexual Abuse in Nicaragua

- High incidence

Affected by:
- Extreme poverty
- Overcrowded living conditions
- Transitory family structures
- Cultural practices
Methodology:

One-group pre/post test design

Subjects:
• 14 females (6–17 years)
• 4 males (7–9 years)

Instrument: The Achenbach CBCL 4/18 (2 applications: pre- and post-therapy)
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Which groups symptoms into the following 8 scales:

• Internalizing Symptoms:
  - Withdrawal
  - Depression/Anxiety
  - Somatic Complaints

• Externalizing Symptoms:
  - Aggressive behavior
  - Delinquent behavior

• Attention Problems
• Social Problems
• Thought Problems
Findings: Family Structure & Relationship with Abuser

60% of abused females came from households with single-parent or stepfather

- In households with stepfather: 100% of abusers were stepfathers.
- In single-parent households: 100% of abusers were someone close to family (relative/neighbor/family friend)
- In households with father and mother: 60% of abusers were fathers.
Findings: Nature of the Abuse

• 100% of victims knew their abuser
  43% of females were abused by fathers or stepfathers
• 93% of cases with female victims involved penetration
• Onset < 8 years in 75% of all cases
Clinical Findings:

1st Application of CBCL

% of all subjects in *clinical/borderline range*
Most common clinical range scales
(1st Application)

Females and Males:

- Attention Problems
- Anxiety/Depression
- Withdrawal
  *(internalizing)*

- Delinquency/
  Aggressive behavior
  *(externalizing)*
Differences in Recovery

Significant Positive Changes

Females vs. Males

Females
Internalizing Scales:
Withdrawal
Somatic complaints
Anxiety / Depression

Males
Externalizing Scales:
Aggressive Behavior
Attention Problems
Differences in Recovery

Significant Negative Changes

Females vs. Males

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Externalizing Scales:</td>
<td>Social Problems</td>
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<td>Aggressive Behavior</td>
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<td>Delinquent Behavior</td>
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Differences in Recovery
Younger girls (< 12 yrs) vs. older girls (> 12 yrs)

Significant Positive Changes
Younger girls: 75%
Older girls: 25%

Significant Negative Changes
Younger girls: 0
Older girls: 50%
Conclusions about Recovery

• *Most significant positive* changes:
  Younger girls (< 12 yrs)
• *Least significant positive* changes:
  Older girls (> 12 yrs)
• *Most significant negative* changes:
  Older girls (> 12 yrs) and boys

• Successful completion of therapeutic program:
  Younger girls and boys
  *(50% of adolescent girls dropped out)*
Some questions for the future:

• How does the nature of child sex abuse vary from country to country?
• How does poverty increase the risk of child sex abuse?
• Are there significant differences in clinical responses to child sex abuse, or do children all over the world react in similar ways?
• How should treatment approaches be adapted to different cultural contexts?
SPECIAL THANKS

• From the University of Barcelona: 
  *Dr. Eduardo Marti, Dr. Elena Requena*
• Dos Generaciones, Managua
• Dr. Nina Shepard Fields