

Distorted beliefs linked to sexual offending

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Cognitive distortions are considered an important factor in the aetiology and maintenance of sexual offending behaviour. A principal view within the literature is that these distortions arise from underlying distorted core beliefs about the self, others, and the world. There has been much theoretical and empirical work published on this topic. In spite of this, however, it feels like our movement forward in understanding distorted cognition (and its role in sexual offending) has slowed down. This may be because the literature is affected by overlapping concepts, causing the literature to be a confusing landscape to navigate. It could also be due to our focus on identifying the content of distorted beliefs. This is problematic when we consider the array (and interrelation) of constructs that make up ‘what we think’ (e.g., beliefs, attitudes, memories, schemas, state factors), as well as ‘how we think’ (i.e., cognitive processing, decision-making, appraisals). This talk will provide a brief overview of what we know about distorted beliefs, including details of a recent theoretical multi-mechanism theory of cognitive distortions (Szumski, Bartels, Beech, & Fisher, 2018). This will then be followed by a personality-based framework for how we can think about cognition and its relation to sexual offending moving forward. This framework will help consolidate the various aspects of cognition, place it within a fuller understanding of the person as an individual, and potentially guide assessment and therapeutic work.

Experimental investigation of emotion regulation problems in sex offenders against children

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Background & Aim: Despite the prominent role of emotion dysregulation in theoretical accounts of sexual offenders against children (SOCs) (Ward, Beech, 2006; 2016), few studies have examined emotion dysregulation in offenders. This study extends research by providing an experimental investigation of emotion dysregulation among child sexual offenders.

Method: Two experimental measure was used to examine differences between SOCs (n=74), property offenders (n=72) and nonoffenders (n=73). Emotion dysregulation was measured with the Emotion Regulation Difficulty Questionnaire (Gratz & Roemer, 2004) and quasi-experimentally with the PASAT-C (Lejuez, Kahler & Brown, 2003) and the Stop Signal Task (Logan & Cowan, 1984). During the experiments galvanic skin response (GSR) was measured.

Results: SOCs turned out to be characterized by a lower initial level of emotion regulation disturbance than property offenders in experimental measure. No significant differences were found regarding self-report measure. Levels of GSR did not differ between groups. In SOCs GSR was raising in each measurement while in other groups it decreased in last measurement.

Conclusion: Study findings suggest that the main issue in SOCs emotional dysregulation is the impairment of ability to activate adaptive coping strategy when experiencing a stressor which leads to gradual increase of negative emotional arousal.

The development and content of the guided web-based intervention @myTabu for individuals who sexually abused children and individuals who consumed child sexual exploitation material

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Web-based interventions have become increasingly important in the context of psychotherapeutic treatment in recent years. In this talk, the development and content of the guided web-based intervention @myTabu for individuals who sexually abused children (ISAC) and individuals who consumed child sexual exploitation material (ICCSEM) under community supervision will be presented. Past research has identified relevant risk factors for recidivism in persons who sexually offended. Furthermore, it has shown that the treatment of these individuals, especially following cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), can reduce recidivism. Based upon these findings a guided web-based intervention has been developed which focuses on the identified risk factors and follows the principles of CBT with the aim of reducing risk of recidivism. The intervention consists of six modules which form self-contained subject areas addressing overall ten risk factors, e.g., offense-supportive attitudes, sexual preoccupation and lifestyle impulsiveness. Therapeutic techniques used include, for example, cognitive restructuring and motivational interviewing. An implementation of this content with these techniques into an online format has not yet been done in a comparable way and will be further described in this talk.

The importance of the biological and social model for the aetiology of paedophilic interests in child sexual offenders

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Introduction: The theoretical assumptions of the research were based on our own model which main theorems relate to the integrated theory of etiology of sexual offending by Marshall and Barbaree (1990). The aim of this study is to identify the role of temperament, character and experience of sexual socialisation in aetiology of paedophilic interests among child sexual offenders (CSOs).

Methods: Temperament and Character Inventory (Cloninger, et al. 1993) and Questionnaire on Sexual Exploitation in Childhood (Beisert, 2012) were used. Semi structured clinical interview was used to gain information about sexual development of CSOs. Paedophilic interests were assessed with Screening Scale for Pedophilic Interests (Seto, & Lumiere, 2001).

Results: The research group consisted of 262 imprisoned CSOs. The obtained results indicate differences in temperament and character of CSOs with high (4-5 points) and low (0-1 points) SSPI scores. Comparison also showed that CSOs with high SSPI scores were significantly more exposed to sexual abuse during childhood. The statistical analysis also showed significant correlations between the factors distinguished in the proposed research model.

Discussion: Obtained results indicate that in the aetiology of paedophilic interests among CSOs, both biological and social factors, as well as the mutual influence of these factors, are important. Continuation of research in this area is aimed to increase the application possibilities of the obtained model and to identify other factors influencing the development of paedophilic interests in CSOs.

Intergenerational co-occurrence of sexual offending – A case-control study

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Aim: Research strongly suggests that parental criminality is associated with offspring criminal offending. However, less is known about possible familial aggregation of sexual offending. We addressed intergenerational co-occurrence of criminality in children of Danish sexual offenders and controls.

Methods: Sexual offenders convicted following pre-trial forensic psychiatric examination 1980-1992 (n=332) were matched 1:4 on birth year and gender to population controls (n=1,328). We examined familial aggregation in Denmark-born children of sexual offenders (n=267) and control children (n=976) from birth to age 30.

Results: Children of sexual offenders were convicted more often than control children for sexual crime (only males, <2% [n<5] vs. <0.5% [n<5]) and any crime (36% [n=96] vs. 24% [n=235]). Having a parent convicted of sexual crime increased sexual offending risk (odds ratio [OR]=4.4); although not significantly controlling for education with multivariable logistic regression (adjusted OR [aOR]=2.2; 95%CI: 0.5-10.2). However, lower education independently predicted sexual offending.

Further, children of sexual offenders had slightly higher risk of any crime (OR=1.8) also when controlling for male gender and lower education (aOR=1.5, 95%CI: 1.1-2.1). The two covariates both independently forecasted any crime.

Children of sexual offenders have low absolute but increased relative criminality risks; lower education may partly mediate this intergenerational co-occurrence.

Aggressive sexual fantasies as a risk factor for sexual coercion: Replication and further development of an etiological model

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Several risk factors like childhood abuse, psychopathy, aggressive behavior or aggressive sexual fantasies promote the development of sexual coercion. Knight and Sims-Knight (2003, 2004) developed a model to explain the etiology of sexual coercion in men. They replicated it in two samples from the U.S., consisting of N=218 male juvenile sex offenders and N=168 men from the normal population. Since then, attempts to replicate the model in larger samples from different countries were missing so far. Based on a subsample from the Finnish Genetics of Sexuality and Aggression (GSA)-project, consisting of N=3331 men (M_age=26.17 years, SD=4.76), we replicated this model again. The latent structural equation model showed very similar effects as the previous ones. Aggressive sexual fantasies and an antisocial/aggressive personality predicted sexual coercion. In turn, aggressive sexual fantasies were predicted by hypersexuality as well as a callous/unemotional personality. Those effects hold stable, when we integrated further established risk factors for sexual aggression, such as distorted perceptions, rape proclivity, alcohol as well as violent pornography consumption, as proposed by the authors of the original model. In line with recent findings, these results illustrate the importance of aggressive sexual fantasies for the etiology of sexual aggression and highlight factors contributing to aggressive sexual fantasy development.

Family treatment of sexual violence

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Family treatment of sexual violence. “Research has shown that close and supportive family relationships are a key ingredient of successful offender rehabilitation and that intimate partners and minor children may play a critical role in the process” (Datchi & Sexton, 2013, p. 280). There is a need for improved understanding of how systemic and psychodynamic family therapy theories can be used with families of various people with different paraphilia disorders. These theories are evidence-based models and define family structures, hierarchies, boundaries, rules, roles and patterns of coalitions and interactions. We have been working since 2012 with families in our specialized unit CRIAVS (Resource Centre for Those Working with Perpetrators of Sexual Violence), that is part of the Emergency and Post-Emergency Psychiatric Department of the University Hospital in Montpellier, France. We will present various case studies exploring the effectiveness of this approach in treating this population.

Individualized treatment of sexual offenders with an intellectual or developmental disability

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Over the past 6 years, the number of referrals to the presenter of sexual offenders with an intellectual disability or developmental disability (ID/DD) has increased in the Australian Capital Territory, but given a concomitant increase in the number of funding bodies and agencies involved in housing and coordinating the care of such individuals, the utility of group programmes has become increasingly problematic. Hence, an individualized sexual offender programme (I-SOP) for sexual offenders with an ID/DD was developed by the presenter based largely on the Good Lives Model and the Relapse Prevention framework. While the I-SOP is admittedly primarily repackaging of the best aspects of both models, it has proven to be a successful means of treating both deniers with an ID or DD, sexual offenders with very low levels of ID or unusual combinations of ID or DD diagnoses.

Zur Rolle von Recht und Kriminologie beim Umgang mit Sexualdelinquenz

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Die Rechtsordnung definiert nicht nur den Bereich der Sexualdelinquenz, sondern gibt auch Regeln für den Umgang mit Sexualdelikten vor. Dabei ist das Verhältnis von rechtlichen Vorgaben zu anderen Maßstäben (wie zum Beispiel Erfahrungsregeln) in der Praxis nicht selten klärungsbedürftig, etwa wenn Rechtsregeln an der Feststellung oder Verwertung von Tatsachen hindern. Auch erzielen rechtliche Vorgaben (Neben-) Wirkungen, die über das intendierte Regelungsanliegen hinausgehen, beispielsweise wenn sie zu schematischen Handhabungen ohne einen gebotenen Einzelfallbezug verleiten. Im Spannungsfeld von Recht und Empirie muss sich insbesondere die Kriminologie behaupten. Ihre Rolle beim Umgang mit Sexualdelinquenz wirft überdies im Verhältnis zu anderen Fachdisziplinen (wie etwa der Psychiatrie oder Psychologie) Fragen auf.

Does psychodynamic thinking still have any significance for the treatment of pedophilia?

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In the current debate on the aetiology of paedophilia, biological, especially neuroscientifically based factors, are being strongly promoted. Paedophilia is constructed as a sexual orientation that should be accepted within the framework of cognitive-behavioral therapies, which are considered as evidence-based in the field. The socially accepted goal of a therapy is to avoid sexual abuse of children through self-control. An understanding and working through of the underlying dynamics and a post-maturation or even a change of paedophile interests through therapy is not a goal or at most of secondary importance. When it comes to the significance of possible real traumatic experiences, the publications mention sexual abuse that pedophilic men have experienced themselves, but question or controversially discuss the significance for the aetiology of paedophilic symptoms. This lecture examines paedophilic sexual interest and paedosexual actions on the basis of the concept of compulsion to repeat and on the background of traumatic experiences of paedophilic men. It is important to point out that it should not be assumed at the same time that the experience of sexual abuse increases the risk of becoming an abuser or of developing a paedophilic disorder. Theoretical considerations are illustrated with clinical case material and their significance for therapy is presented.