NEUROCOGNITIVE FACTORS AND SEXUAL OFFENDING

The Relationship between IQ and Dynamic Risk Factor for Sexual Offending

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The nature of the relationship between IQ and dynamic risk factors for sexual offending (as measured by the Structured Assessment for Risk and Need; SARN) were explored. The aim was to establish if any dynamic risk factors were related to lower IQ in order to draw conclusions about the factors that are most relevant to sexual offenders with intellectual disability. The study used a Bayesian regression analysis to examine the relationship between IQ score and risk factor score for each of the 15 dynamic risk factors measured by the SARN on a sample of 1061 incarcerated male sexual offenders in the UK. The regression analysis showed that the SARN risk factors can be divided into three distinct groups related to IQ: those that have a relationship with low IQ, those that have a relationship with high IQ and those that have no relationship to IQ.

Against expectation, there were distinct relationships observed between high IQ and risk factors related to paedophilia (Sexual Preference for Children, Child Abuse Supportive Beliefs and Emotional Congruence with Children). Post hoc analysis showed a statistically significant association between IQ and victim type with offenders against children having a significantly higher IQ than offenders against adults.

The study also found that that three of the propensities associated with sexual offending found in the SARN (Inadequacy, Lack of Adult Inmate Relationships and Poor Problem Solving) are more problematic for sexual offenders with low IQ in their life generally than sexual offenders with high IQ, as the literature would suggest, but that they are also relevant to their offending and are thus criminogenic.

Risk factors that showed no relationship to IQ and were all items on which the whole sample scored consistently high (e.g. between a 1-2) were Sexual Preoccupation, Inadequacy, Lack of Intimate Relationships with Adults and Poor Problem Solving. This suggests that these are risk factors for all sexual offenders regardless of IQ and is consistent with research which shows that Sexual Preoccupation, Lack of Intimate Relationships with Adults and Poor Problem Solving have good support for their ability to predict sexual recidivism (Mann, Thornton & Hanson, 2010).
This research draws attention to a forgotten group within the literature: sexual offenders with a high IQ, and suggests that paedophilia may not be as clearly linked to low IQ as previous research might suggest. It also suggests that established dynamic risk factors for sexual offending maybe relevant to sexual offenders with ID.

Goals of the Paper:
1. To highlight which established dynamic risk factors appear to also be criminogenic for sexual offenders with ID.
2. To draw attention to offenders with a high IQ and introduce the results of this study highlighting a link between high IQ and pedophilia.
3. To understand which established dynamic risk factors for sexual offending appear relevant to all sexual offenders, regardless of IQ of victim type.

Sex Offenders with Traumatic Brain Injury

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The role of brain injury in the initiation of sex offending behavior is relatively complex. Sex offenders with traumatic brain injury (TBI) often show cognitive disabilities with minimal, but associated brain dysfunction. Sustained physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes can be resultant from various types of TBI. These outcomes may or may not lead to problematic or deviant sexual behavior, though rates of TBI seem elevated in offender populations compared to non-offenders. Understanding the quantifiable differences between these two populations could inform and improve policies around the allocation of resources for prevention and treatment efforts for offenders with TBI.

The current study seeks to elaborate on our understanding of the characteristics of sex offenders with TBI in comparison with cognitively-normal sexual offenders, the potential role of TBI in the development and manifestation of deviant or unusual sexual interests and behaviors among convicted or known sexual offenders, and the impact of impulsivity – a characteristic frequently associated with TBI – in manifestations of sex offending behavior. Results will provide information for further empirical study with this marginal and relatively isolated subpopulation of sexual offenders.

A total of 128 patients were selected from a larger group of forensic mental health inpatients in secure care who had committed illegal sexual behaviors in community and residential settings. The group included those with documented traumatic brain injury (n =
Motor vehicle accidents were a major causative factor, though lifestyle variables such as interpersonal violence and drug abuse also contributed. Participants presented with significant histories of childhood maltreatment and adversity, frequent histories of institutionalization and out-of-home placement, and criminal histories marked by multiple arrests and serious violent behavior.

Overall, those with TBI’s were convicted for fewer total sexual offenses but arrested at comparable rates in comparison with non-brain-injured offenders. In general, offenders with a history of TBI committed a wider range of sexual offenses, with slightly more variegated sexual behavior. These individuals engaged in a diverse range of deviant sexual behavior including voyeurism, exhibitionism, and forcible sexual contact with victimology consisting of both adults (92.0%) and children (33.3%), as well as both males (52.0%) and females (96.0%).

Despite similar victim demographics and sexual deviance, no brain-injured individuals were diagnosed with a paraphilia, as opposed to marginally significant 13.6% of non-injured individuals diagnosed with some type of paraphilia ($t(126)=2.74, p=.007$). This could speak to lack of impulse control versus a pervasive mental disorder or sexual preference that influences offending behavior. Of brain-injured individuals with a known age at first arrest, a majority experienced their TBI(s) prior to this arrest (57.9%). Further research is required to determine if TBI can be a causative factor for some sex offenses.

For the most part, the current empirical literature seemingly overlooks the association of sexual offending and TBI for a subgroup of offenders. Results indicate the importance of a documented history of brain injury for those who perpetrate sexual offenses. Such findings could have valuable implications for diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of offenders with TBIs.

Goals of the Paper:
Individuals with traumatic brain injury who have committed criminal offenses and who receive services through secure forensic care are a group with complex needs, often underrepresented within the empirical literature. This study is meant to add to the limited available literature in the hopes of:
1. Gaining a better understanding of the characteristics and diverse needs of this population within the criminal justice system;
2. Identifying potential areas of prevention or intervention among those with TBI’s and problematic sexual behaviors; and
3. Noting developmental pathways that differentiate sexual offenders with and without TBI and subsequent sexual behavior problems.