EXAMINING RISK FACTORS AMONG UNDETECTED SEXUAL OFFENDERS

The Psychological Propensities of Risk in Undetected Sexual Offenders

Loren Klein, B.A. (Hons)
Ryerson University

Skye Stephens, Ph.D. Candidate
Ryerson University

Alasdair M. Goodwill, Ph.D.
James M. Cantor, Ph.D., C.Psych.
Michael C. Seto, Ph.D.

Introduction: Antisocial orientation and anomalous sexual interests have been identified as crucial risk dimensions in sexual offenders that should be addressed in treatment in order to reduce recidivism (e.g., Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). However, the body of literature informing the clinical management of sexual offenders is based almost exclusively on samples of detected offenders. The applicability of these risk factors to undetected offenders remains to be examined, which is an important area of study as undetected offenders may present for treatment (e.g., Beier et al., 2009). The present study will examine whether these risk dimensions differ between undetected and detected sexual offenders, as has been suggested in previous research (e.g., Neutze, Grundmann, Scherner, & Beier, 2012; Schaefer et al., 2010). Further, it will examine differences in demographic factors and intelligence that may help undetected offenders remain unidentified and may be important considerations as responsivity factors.

Method: A sample \( n = 359 \) of adult male sexual offenders were assessed at a large sexual behaviours clinic and grouped into the following groups: detected offenders (i.e., those charged or convicted for a sexual offence; \( n = 262 \)), undetected help-seeking offenders (i.e., those without charges or convictions for sexual offences who were self-referred; \( n = 60 \)), and undetected non-help-seeking sexual offenders (i.e., those without charges or convictions for sexual offences who were referred through other referral sources such as Children’s Aid Society; \( n = 37 \)). The separation of undetected offenders by help-seeking status was purposeful as it addresses limitations in previous literature that has found differences between undetected and detected offenders that may have been due to help-seeking status.

All offenders underwent comprehensive clinical assessment which included volumetric phallometry (i.e., measurement of penile blood volume change in response to
potentially erotic stimuli), clinical interviews, and a file review. These sources of information were used to examine paraphilic sexual interests, co-occurring paraphilias, and sexual preoccupation. A composite variable was created for antisocial orientation based on antisocial personality disorder diagnosis/trait, childhood behaviour problems, impulsivity, and substance abuse problems. Further, intelligence testing and demographic information was used in order to examine intellectual functioning and educational attainment.

**Results:** Preliminary results indicate that the three groups did not differ in their sexual interest in children; however, undetected help-seeking offenders did present with a greater likelihood of having a diagnosis of voyeurism \( (p = .05) \) and exhibitionism \( (p = .02) \). Results pertaining to other aspects of anomalous sexual interests and behaviour and antisocial orientation have been collected and will be completed well ahead of the conference. Finally, the groups did not differ on intellectual functioning, but undetected help-seeking offenders were more likely than the other two groups to complete post-secondary education \( (p = .01) \).

**Discussion:** Preliminary results suggest that undetected help-seeking offenders differ in some ways from detected and undetected non-help seeking offenders, some of which may help them remain undetected (e.g., less likely to be detected for voyeuristic offence). This suggests that undetected help-seeking sexual offenders may be a unique group in some respects (e.g., higher educational attainment), but not others (e.g., sexual interest in children). The results will be discussed within the context of the current literature on risk management of sexual offenders with a specific focus on the prevention of sexual abuse.

**Goals of the Paper:**
1. Discuss current research on undetected sexual offenders with a specific focus on the treatment of this population.
2. Examine generalizability of criminogenic needs and responsivity factors to undetected sexual offenders, while controlling for help seeking status.
3. Discuss implications for clinical management of undetected sexual offenders and important prevention efforts.

**References**


Static Risk Factors for Child Sexual Offending in Undetected Pedophiles and Hebephiles

Kuhle, L. F.
Schmidt, R. C.
Beier, K. M.

Background: A recent meta-analysis compared the characteristics of child pornography only (CP only) offenders, child sexual abuse only (CSA only) offenders and mixed offenders (Babshichin, Hanson & Van Zuylen, 2014). Data revealed key differences between groups, particularly on variables reflecting static risk factors such as former criminal history, social background, mental illnesses, sexual preference and sexual history, as well as developmental factors. In addition, data showed that mixed offenders were a particularly high risk group. Included studies have predominantly relied on samples of detected sex offenders. Therefore the generalizability of previous study results on child sexual offenders not known to the criminal justice system (i.e., undetected offenders) remains questionable. Moreover, not all included offenders meet formal diagnostic criteria for pedophilia or hebephilia, which may lead to further confounding. In addition, the characteristics of individuals who have yet not sexually offended against children, but identify themselves at the precipice of offending are unknown.

Aim: The present study aims at examining the generalizability of static risk factors identified in detected child sexual offenders to pedophilic and/or hebephilic child sexual offenders (CP only, CSA only, mixed) from the community. In addition, non-offenders are included for comparisons to gain more insights about that particular subgroup of pedophiles and hebephiles

Study: Participants were recruited within the “Prevention Project Dunkelfeld”. Within a sample of \( N = 242 \) participants, who completed the standard intake assessment between 2005 and 2014, protocols of the clinical interview were retrospectively evaluated. 39 (16.1%) non-offenders, 128 (52.9%) CP only, 29 (12%) CSA only and 46 (19%) mixed offenders were compared on following variables: (1) former criminal history (e.g., detected and undetected non-/violent offenses, non-/contact sexual offenses), (2) sexual preference and history (e.g., exclusivity of sexual body age preference, gender preference, first sexual experiences, number of sexual partners and relationships), (3) developmental factors (e.g., emotional, sexual or physical abuse), (4) social background (employment, relationship,
children, education, age), as well as (5) mental illnesses (e.g., mood/anxiety/personality disorders, ADHD, substance abuse problems).

**Results**: Compared to non-offenders and CSA only offenders, CP offenders (only and mixed) have a more versatile former criminal history in terms of more undetected non-/violent offenses, as well as non-/contact sexual offenses (except CSA). According to their sexual history, both groups of CP offenders show a greater sexual inclination as they report an earlier onset of masturbation, earlier first consensual sexual experience, as well as more relationships and self-reported sexual partners. They also more often indicate emotional abuse in childhood. When it comes to sexual behavior with children not covered by defined CSA offenses, mixed offenders are at the highest risk. CSA only offenders most probably had a job for more than 2 years and have children of their own. Regarding former mental illnesses, all of the four offender groups do not differ in their psychopathology. Further analyses comparing CP only and mixed offenders support the impression that both groups are rather similar. Nonetheless, differentiating factors are for example sexual gender preference, current relationship status and age of first consensual sexual intercourse. Concerning characteristics of their CP offending, mixed offenders more often produced images of children for sexual purposes and more often either collected series of images depicting children or used images of known children for masturbation purposes.

**Discussion**: The results suggest that analyzed static risk factors rather differentiate undetected CP and non-CP offenders but do not account for risk in undetected CSA only and non-offenders. In contrast to the results of Babchishin and colleagues (2014) CP offenders from the community present themselves as more alike than assumed. They seem to be characterized by a greater sexual inclination and difficulties in interpersonal relations. Clinical implications for diagnostic, risk prognostic and treatment efforts of undetected child sexual offenders will be discussed.

**Goals of the Paper:**

1. Discussion of the generalizability of static risk factors for detected child sexual offenses to undetected offender samples.
2. Outline static risk factors that are associated with child pornography and child sexual abuse offending in pedophiles and hebephiles from the community.
3. Provide a deeper understanding of differences and similarities in child pornography offenders (CP only and mixed).