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Measures of Pedophilic Interest: How Valid Are They?

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Pedophilic interest is the strongest predictor of sexual reoffending among sexual offenders against children (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004). Consequently, accurately identifying and treating (reducing) pedophilic interest is a central part of policy and practice aimed at reducing sexual offenses against children (e.g., McGrath, Cumming, Burchard, Zeoli, & Ellerby, 2010). For this reason, it is essential that measures used to assess pedophilic interest accurately reflect what they intend to measure (i.e., construct validity). Various methods are currently used to assess pedophilic interest, including self-report and indirect measures (e.g., viewing time measures). However, it remains unclear to what extent these different methods truly assess pedophilic interest. This symposium addresses this gap by presenting three studies, each examining the validity of one or more measures for assessing pedophilic interest.

The first presentation quantitatively reviews the available research on indirect measures of pedophilic interest, including Implicit Association Test (IAT), viewing time, and attention-based/cognitive measures, by examining their relationships with independent indicators of pedophilic interest (e.g., sexual offending against children). The second presentation empirically examines the extent to which IAT and viewing time measures are susceptible to faking (e.g., presenting one's self as having the opposite sexual orientation) and will discuss different factors associated with faking success. The final presentation explores the value of using the Wilson Sex Fantasy Questionnaire to assess pedophilic interest among sexual offenders against children by examining its relationships with convergent and discriminant criteria. In sum, each presentation provides information regarding the construct validity of measures used to assess pedophilic interest by examining the extent to which they truly reflect pedophilic interest. Taken together, this symposium makes a valuable methodological contribution to research and practice aimed at reducing sexual offending.

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How Well Do Implicit Measures Assess Pedophilic Interest? A Meta-Analysis

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Sexual interest in children is the strongest predictor of sexual recidivism among child sex offenders and is commonly addressed in treatment programs aimed at reducing this behavior (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004; McGrath, Cumming, Burchard, Zeoli, & Ellerby, 2010). As such, it is important to have valid measures with which to assess pedophilic interest. Widely used methods such as penile plethysmography and self-report have many strengths, but also some disadvantages such as intrusiveness and vulnerability to faking (Akerman & Beech, 2012). For these reasons, researchers have directed their attention to implicit measures of pedophilic interest, which may provide some advantages over more traditional methods. However, the extent to which these measures truly assess pedophilic interest remains unclear. The current meta-analysis quantitatively reviews the available evidence on implicit measures of pedophilic interest, including Implicit Association Test, viewing time, and attention-based measures. If these measures really do assess pedophilic interest, then they should be associated with independent indicators of pedophilic interest, such as sexual offending against children, self-reported sexual interest, and phallometrically assessed arousal.

Overall, implicit measures of pedophilic interest were associated with sexual offending against children ($d = 0.60$, 95% CI [0.47, 0.73], $k = 35$, $N = 4,469$). This association varied by type of implicit measure, such that Implicit Association Test measures were the best at differentiating between child sex-offenders and individuals who had not sexually offended against children ($d = 0.65$), followed by viewing time measures ($d = 0.51$) and attention-based measures ($d = 0.38$). Overall, implicit measures were also correlated with independent indicators of pedophilic interest, such as self-report and victim-characteristic measures, phallometric testing, and risk of sexual recidivism ($r = .22$, 95% CI [.16, .29], $k = 20$, $N = 3,430$). This relationship also differed by type of implicit measure, such that Implicit Association Test measures showed the smallest relationship with self-report measures ($r = .08$) compared to attention-based measures ($r = .24$) and viewing time measures ($r = .34$). These results provide some evidence for the construct validity of implicit measures designed to assess pedophilic interest. Future research should continue to validate these measures as they may represent an alternative to more traditional methods.

Learning Goals:

In this presentation, we will:

- Provide an overview of implicit measures of pedophilic interest and their potential advantages,

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- Quantitatively review their relationships with independent indicators of pedophilic interest
- Discuss how these relationships vary by type of implicit measure.

What Does It Take to Fake Indirect Measures of Sexual Interest?

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A key part of the impetus behind developing indirect measures of sexual interest is to have tools available for clinicians that are resilient to social desirable responding (compared to self-report) and counter-measures (compared to penile plethysmography). It is surprising therefore that there has been little research on the fakeability of some of the established and emerging methods of assessing sexual interest indirectly, such as viewing time (Schmidt, Babchishin, & Lehmann; 2017), and the implicit association test (IAT; Babchishin, Nunes, & Hermann, 2013). At last year's ATSA conference we presented new research suggesting that viewing time, IAT, and pictorial modified Stroop tasks measuring sexual interest were all vulnerable to faking, but that IAT seemed slightly more resilient (Ó Ciardha, Parker, & Tibbels, 2017). That study examined the impact of explicit faking instructions.

In this follow-up study we are manipulating the faking instructions given to participants, looking specifically at viewing time and the IAT. Our primary research question is whether less explicit faking instructions result in less successful faking. In a secondary research question, we are also examining individual difference predictors of successful faking by measuring impulsivity and operation span—a measure of working memory. We further explore whether faking is detectible using cutoff values from the Ó Ciardha et al. (2017) data, and by applying the Quad Process Model (Conrey et al., 2005) to IAT data. This Quad Process model may allow us to quantify distinct processes in IAT responding—activation of association, identifying a correct response, inhibitory responses, and guessing—potentially helping identify faked responses.

Participants first complete a viewing time task and an IAT under no instructions other than the standard task instructions. They then complete other measures including a demographics questionnaire, the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (BIS-11; Patton, Stanford & Barratt, 1995), and an Operation Span task – Short Form (Foster, Shipstead, Harrison, Hicks, Redick & Engle, 2014). Once these measures are completed, participants are allocated to one of three faking conditions or a control condition, where they are asked to re-take the viewing time task and IAT and to simply follow the task instructions. In the faking conditions, participants are asked to present themselves as having the opposite sexual orientation by (1) following explicit instructions, replicating the previous study, (2) taking the perspective of someone of the opposite orientation (based on Imhoff, Schmidt,

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Weiβ, Young and Banse, 2012), or (3) naïve faking, where no specific method is suggested. Power analysis indicates that a sample size of 80 is sufficient for our research design.

The discussion will focus on the implications of our findings on the fakeability of viewing time and the IAT depending on participants faking strategy. We will also discuss whether impulsivity and working memory are associated with variation in faking success. Finally, we will examine in detail whether faking is detectable. Findings overall will be discussed in relation to implications for clinical practice and for research on indirect measures of sexual interest.

Learning Goals:

This presentation will:

- Present the case that there is a need to assess the fakeability of indirect measures of forensically relevant sexual interests,
- Explain the rationale for the focus on the IAT and viewing time and justify the methodology chosen
- Report and discuss the fakeability of the two tasks depending on faking instructions, examine whether that faking is detectable, and discuss whether individual difference predict faking ability.

Using the Wilson Sex Fantasy Questionnaire with Men Who Have Sexually Offended Against Children

Ross M. Bartels, PhD
Robert J. B. Lehmann, PhD
David Thornton, PhD

The Wilson Sex Fantasy Questionnaire (WSFQ; Wilson, 1978) assesses how frequently respondents fantasize about 40 specific themes. These themes are grouped into four overarching subscales (Intimate, Exploratory, Impersonal, Sadomasochistic), and totaled to provide an indication of sex drive. It also includes two items that are argued to reflect characteristics associated with children. The present study tested the utility of the WSFQ with men who have sexually offended against children (SOC). Differential validity was assessed by comparing 54 SOCs, 22 community males with a sexual interest in children (C-SIs), and 79 community males with no sexual interest in children (C-NSIs) on each WSFQ subscale, the total score, and the two child-related items. SOCs scored lower on each subscale and total score than both community groups. On the child-related items, the SOCs and C-SIs scored higher than C-NSIs (although the effect between SOCs and C-NSIs disappeared after controlling for age).

Construct validity was assessed using the SOC sample by examining relationships between WSFQ variables and: (1) another measure of deviant sexual fantasy, and (2) offending behavior derived from crime scene data. The Intimate subscale of the WSFQ was

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not related to any deviant sexual fantasies assessed using the alternate sexual fantasy scale, while the other WSFQ subscales (particularly the Sadomasochism subscale) were most strongly associated with force and sadistic fantasies on the other sexual fantasy scale. The child-related WSFQ items were most strongly associated with sexual fantasies about pre-pubescent children on the alternate scale. Regarding behavioral themes derived from crime scene data, the Intimate subscale was negatively associated with the Aggression theme (attesting to discriminant validity). The 'Incestuous sexual relations' item was positively correlated with the Regression theme derived from crime scene data (convergent validity). Together, these findings suggest that the child-related items from the WSFQ may be useful for assessing pedophilic interest among men who have sexually offended against children, as well as those who have not offended. The research and practical implications of the results will be discussed, along with the study's limitations.

Learning Goals:

- Describe the WSFQ and demonstrate how it has been used in sex offender risk assessment, and highlight the supposed child-related items.
- Demonstrate that the child-related items of the WSFQ offer a route to assessing child-related sexual interests, potentially offering more value than the overarching themes.
- Highlight issues associated with assessing sexual fantasies, both in general and with forensic populations.

Chloe Pedneault is completing her Ph.D. in experimental psychology at Carleton University, where she is an active member of the Aggressive Cognitions and Behavior Research lab. Her primary research interests involve examining the role cognitions play in the initiation and maintenance of sexually coercive and aggressive behavior.

Caoilte Ó Ciardha, PhD, is a Lecturer in Forensic Psychology and a member of the Centre of Research and Education in Forensic Psychology at the University of Kent, UK. His research interests focus on the role of cognition in sexual offending. Much of his empirical research examines the utility of indirect methods of measuring cognitive phenomena.

Ross M. Bartels, PhD, is a senior lecturer in forensic psychology and member of the 'Forensic and Clinical Research Group' at the University of Lincoln (UK). Ross' research focuses on adapting socio-cognitive paradigms and indirect measures to gain new insight into the processes underlying and associated with distorted sexual cognitions, interests, and fantasies, as well as attitudes towards sexual offenders and non-offending pedophiles.