ISSUES IN INTERNET CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION MATERIALS

An International Approach towards Understanding and Preventing Child Sexual Exploitation Material Offending

Danielle Kettleborough, MSc., University of Lincoln  
Sarah Wefers, MSc., University Clinic Düsseldorf  
Hannah Merdian, Ph.D.  
Derek Perkins, Ph.D.  
Amanda Roberts  
Kirsten Dammertz-Hölterhoff  
Hans-Christoph Friederich

Since the advent of the Internet, online sexual offending against children has become an increasing problem worldwide, reflected e.g. in the growing number of convictions (see Quayle & Sinclair, 2012). However, conviction rates do not mirror the true extent of offending, since most sexual offending stays undetected by the justice system (see Beier et al., 2015). Sexual offending online can manifest in different forms, one of which includes the use, possession, and trade of Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CSEM). Research suggests that CSEM users differ from “hands-on” (or “contact”) child sexual abusers (Babchishin et al., 2014) but also that CSEM users represent a heterogeneous group themselves with different motivations for offending (Merdian, 2012). Understanding the perpetrators’ motivations and their risk factors for offending is essential for the development of appropriate risk assessment tools, as well as both intervention and prevention strategies.

The present paper therefore explores demographic and psychological factors associated with CSEM offending. To include a broad range of CSEM offenders, this paper investigates both detected and “undetected” online offenders recruited internationally from the UK’s justice system (predominantly via the Lucy Faithfull Foundation and the National Probation Service) and Germany’s Prevention Project Dunkelfeld, which offers preventative treatment for people attracted to children (and/or adolescents). The data is based on self-report questionnaires assessing personality, sexuality and general wellbeing, early life experiences, sexual and relationship history, education and employment, and details of offending behaviour.

The paper aims at identifying subgroups of a heterogeneous group of online offenders. Characterisation of subgroups will allow the identification of treatment targets for each group and the development of prevention and intervention strategies. In
particular, international approaches for combating child sexual exploitation online will be developed and discussed, as well as an exploration of what can be learned from cross-cultural research.

**Learning Goals and Objectives:**

- To compare different approaches with regards to the management and treatment of CSEM offenders across international jurisdictions.
- To explore the identification of potential subgroups of CSEM offenders, and the development of risk-proportionate prevention strategies targeted at the specific CSEM offending groups, in an approach to combat this large-scale problem.
- To discuss potential international strategies to combat CSEM offending, and empirically derived suggestions for treatment programmes, based on the identified risks and needs of CSEM users.

**Collecting Behaviours among Internet Sex Offenders and Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Gayle Dillon, Ph.D., Nottingham Trent University  
Belinda Winder, Ph.D., Nottingham Trent University  
Kerensa Hocken, Ph.D., Nottingham Trent University

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is characterised by difficulties in social interaction and communication, and restrictive and repetitive thoughts, interests and physical behaviours. Although the core difficulties associated with ASD are not suggested to increase the likelihood of offending behaviour, specific aspects of ASD can serve as risk factors for offending and make a person with ASD vulnerable to committing a range of sexual crimes, which includes non-contact offences such as collecting child abuse images from the Internet (Mouridsen, 2012).

Research examining Internet sex offenders (ISOs) over the last two decades has consistently shown that ISOs who download child abuse images are also typically engaged in some form of collecting behaviour (Aiken, Moran & Berry, 2011). Offenders often call themselves ‘collectors’, and use this term to differentiate themselves from ‘paedophiles’. Sheldon and Howitt (2007) report that some offenders regard their collections as benign as those of cigarette cards and matchbooks. However, the fact remains that the content of abuse images is illegal, and they function as an aid to inappropriate sexual arousal. This talk will discuss research evidence which is suggestive of a link between offending behaviour in the form of collecting and ASD. This is an important issue to raise within the forensic community as there is evidence to suggest that offenders with ASD that has gone undiagnosed are considered by the judiciary as more deviant than they actually are. This, in turn, may have important implications for both sentence length and treatment options.
Currently, no definitive statistics exist in the UK on the numbers of individuals with either a confirmed diagnosis, or suspected ASD, who are serving a prison sentence for a sexual offence, despite the growing recognition that this group of offenders require targeted support. Meeting the needs of such a clinically diverse group of individuals with ASD in forensic settings is currently reported to be inadequate, with a call for more extensive research in this area (Browning & Caufield, 2011). The need for more focused research exploring the role of ASDs and offending behaviour, particularly in relation to sexual offences has recently been highlighted by Higgs and Carter (2015). Therefore, this talk will conclude with a discussion of the over-representation of ASD in a population of Internet sex offenders and the very specific treatment needs of this group.

**Learning Goals and Objectives:**
- To explore behavioural characteristics of Internet sex offenders
- To examine the relationship between collecting behaviours and the links to Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- To highlight the need for a systematic approach to identifying sex offenders with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as they come into the prison environment.
- To explore the impact of undiagnosed ASD on sentence length in relation to perceived levels of deviance in collecting behaviours.
- To discuss the particular treatment needs and pathways for offenders displaying collecting behaviour and ASD.