

Effect of Sexual Arousal on Child Sexual Offenders' Implicit and Explicit Attitudes towards Child Sexual Abuse

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Introduction

- cognitions supportive of child sexual abuse and sexual arousal may play a role in the cause and maintenance of deviant sexual behaviour

Purpose

- examine if sexual arousal has an effect on child sex offenders' implicit and explicit attitudes towards child sexual abuse

Attitudes

- attitude-behaviour models and empirical evidence demonstrate attitudes predict behaviour (e.g., Ajzen's [1985] theory of planned behaviour; Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2007)

Attitudes

Explicit: consciously reported through introspection; self-report measures

Implicit: unconsciously reported through automatic associations; response latency measures (e.g., Implicit Association Test; IAT)

Attitudes

Implicit Association Test (IAT):
measures the strength of automatic
associations between concepts (sex
with girls vs. sex with women) and
evaluations (positive vs. negative)

Sexual Arousal

■ literature suggests that sexual arousal
has the ability to affect a variety of
deviant attitudes and risk-taking
behaviours (e.g., Ariely & Lowenstein,
2006; Allen et al., 1995a; Bouffard, 2002;
Lowenstein, Nagin, & Paternoster, 1997)

Hypotheses

H1: Child sex offenders' will have
significantly more positive implicit
and explicit attitudes towards sex with
children after the sexual arousal
manipulation

H2: Implicit and explicit attitudes of child
sex offenders will not significantly
change after the control manipulation

Exploratory Analyses

- What will happen to non-sex offenders'
implicit and explicit attitudes towards
child sexual abuse after the sexual
arousal and control manipulation?
- Will child sex offenders' implicit and
explicit attitudes positively
intercorrelate?

Method

Participants:

- 18 adult male child sex offenders and
18 adult male non-sex offenders
- Federal Institutions and Forensic
Hospital in Ontario

Measures

Implicit Measures:

Girls/Women-IAT and Boys/Men-IAT

- measures the strength of automatic
association between concepts and
evaluations
- higher *D* scores (greater than 0) = more
positive attitudes towards sex with
children

Measures

Explicit Measures:

Sex with Children Scale (SWCH; Mann et al., 2007)

- measures beliefs and attitudes that support and justify child sexual abuse
- higher scores = more positive attitudes towards child sexual abuse

Measures

Explicit Measures:

Child Sexual Abuse Semantic Differentials

- measures attitudes supportive of sex with girls and sex with boys
- higher scores = more positive attitudes towards child sexual abuse

Measures

Explicit Measures:

Background Questionnaire

- demographic characteristics including English language ability, education, and sexual orientation

Manipulations

Sexual Arousal Condition

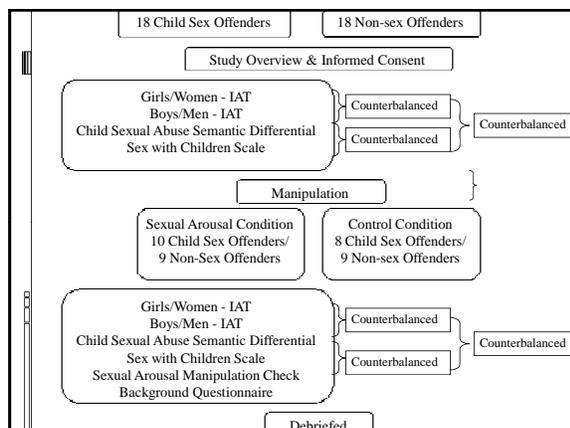
- read erotic story

Control Condition

- read non-erotic story

Sexual Arousal Manipulation Check

- self-reported sexual arousal



Results

H1: Child sex offenders' Girls/Women - IAT scores were significantly more positive towards sex with girls after the sexual arousal manipulation

$$t(9) = -2.57, p = 0.03$$

$$d = 0.80, 95\% \text{ CI} = 0.11 \text{ to } 1.48$$

Results

H2: No significant differences were found between child sex offenders' attitude scores from pre- to post-manipulation in the control condition

Exploratory Analyses

- No significant differences were found on non-sex offenders' pre-to post manipulation attitudes scores in either manipulation condition
- Positive intercorrelations were found between some of the implicit and explicit attitude measures, however, the findings were non-significant

Discussion

- Results provide some support regarding child sexual offending theory and results from a number of empirical studies
- Main hypothesis was partially supported, when child sexual offenders are sexually aroused their implicit attitudes become more positive towards sex with young girls

Discussion

- If sexual arousal caused a change in child sex offenders' implicit attitudes, then why would this change not also occur for non-sex offenders?
 1. men with child sex offences or men accepting
 2. low power, small sample size

Discussion

- Why did child sex offenders' explicit attitudes not become significantly more positive towards sex with children when aroused?
 1. unwilling to respond honestly
 2. do not hold explicit attitudes supportive of sex with children

Discussion

- Why were child sex offenders' explicit attitudes not significantly affected by sexual arousal but their implicit attitudes were?
 1. sexual arousal causes changes in implicit attitudes of which the person has no control

Discussion

Strengths:

- forensic sample
- rigorous control
- successfully induced sexual arousal

Discussion

Limitations:

- relatively small sample size
- generalizability

Discussion

Conclusion and future directions:

- larger sample sizes
- distinct offender typologies
- other arousal modalities
- potential mediating factors

Discussion

Conclusion and future directions:

- researchers continue to explore this experimental research area to help develop effective assessment and treatment practices for child sexual offenders

THANK YOU!