

The Contributory Role of Autism Symptomology in Defendants Charged with a Child Pornography Offense

Offenders with an Intellectual and/or Developmental Disability

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+ Autism Spectrum Disorder

DSM -IV TR

- **Formerly** (DSM-IV-TR):
Required Deficits in **3** Areas:
 - Social Interaction
 - Communication
 - Restricted, Repetitive and Stereotyped Behavior

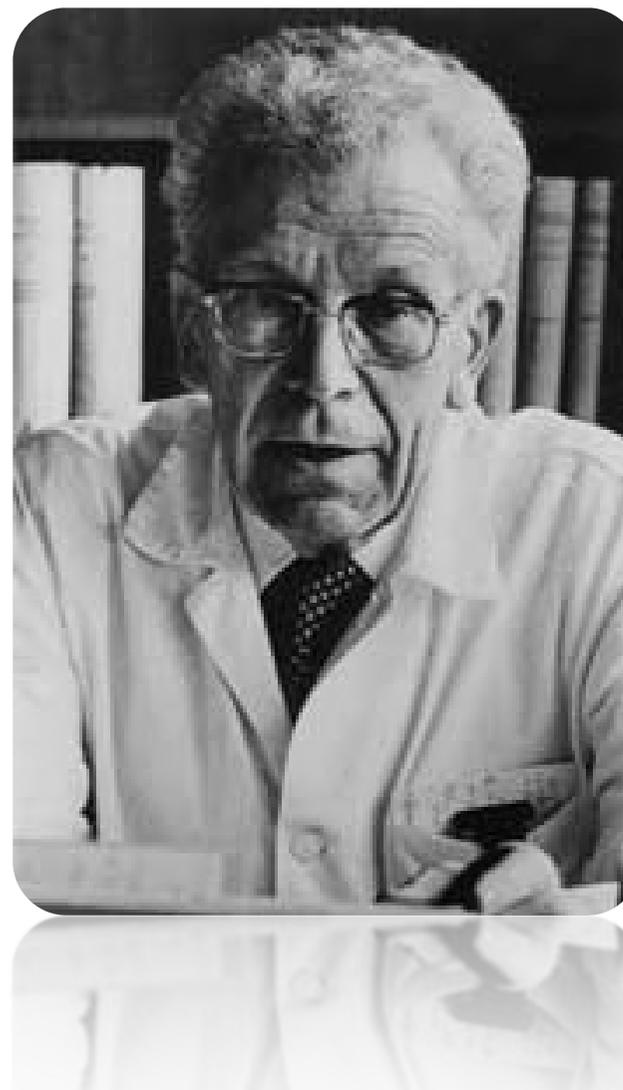
DSM-5

- DSM-V:** Characterized by Deficits in **2** CORE Domains:
- Social Communication and Interaction
 - Restricted & Repetitive Behavior, Interests, and Activities

Deficits in communication are related to social interaction deficits. DSM-5 fixes this double counting.

ASD and Offending

- Study of penal register data regarding Hans Asperger's original group of 177 patients (Hippler et al., 2010).
 - rate & nature of crimes committed by these individuals no different from the general population.
 - In the case records spanning 22 years & 33 convictions, there were only 3 cases of bodily injury, 1 case of robbery and 1 case of violent and threatening behaviour.
- Despite this, media and academic reporting of violent crime committed by offenders with ASDs has served to generate a speculative association between ASDs and offending behaviour.



ASD and Offending

- A number of follow-up studies have found that individuals with ASDs are no more likely to engage in violent offending behaviour compared to the general population (Wing, 1981; Ghaziuddin et al., 1991; Hippler et al., 2010; Robinson et al., 2012). Indeed, there have been some studies which have even found that they may be less likely to engage in such behaviour (Mouridsen et al., 2008; Lundström et al., 2014; Woodbury-Smith et al., 2006).
- The modest number of studies which have been done actually indicate that individuals with developmental disabilities (e.g. ASD) are more likely to be the victims of crime as opposed to being the perpetrators (Sobsey et al., 1995; Modell & Mak, 2008).

Prevalence of ASD in Forensic Settings

- While some studies suggest an over representation of individuals with an ASD in some forensic environments, notably HSPC (e.g., Scragg & Shah, 1994; Hare, Gould, Mills, & Wing, 1999), these are not without methodological limitations.
- For example, single samples, different diagnostic methods and completing research with shifting populations as is often the case within the prison system, as well as the potential ethical issues such as obtaining consent to view records, limit the interpretation and generalization of many studies.
- It is also significant to highlight that most studies to date of individuals with an ASD involved with the CJS have focused on men and very little is known of the socio-economic status or ethnicity of offenders with an ASD (Murphy, 2018).

Characteristics of Offences

More common

Among High functioning:

- Threats to kill
- Arson
- Sexual offending
- Criminal damage
- Stalking



Bowler and Worley (1994), Murrie et al (2002), O' Brien and Bell (2004), Barry-Walsh & Mullen (2004), Berney (2004), Woodbury-Smith et al (2005)



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A psycho-legal perspective on sexual offending in individuals with autism Spectrum disorder



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ABSTRACT

It is important to consider whether there are innate vulnerabilities that increase the risk of an individual with an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), predominantly those defendants with a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome, being charged and convicted of a sexual offence. The significance of such can be readily seen in recent English case law, with judgments on appeal finding convictions unsafe where there have been a number of failings in the Judge's summing up. In this article, we will consider the gravity of Judges omitting to highlight a defendant's diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and the necessity of detailed explanations to jury members regarding the condition and its effect upon thoughts and behaviour. Consideration will be specifically given to the necessity to prove sexual motivation in such offences and the judicial direction required in relation to whether the appellant's actions had been sexually motivated. Recognition of the social impairments inherent in ASDs are vital to this work and we shall consider whether the difficulty with the capacity to develop appropriate, consenting sexual relationships as a result of impaired social cognition may be one of the factors which increases the risk of sexual offending in individuals with ASD (Higgs & Carter, 2015).

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Sexual offending and autism spectrum disorders

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Abstract

Purpose – *Studies have found innate vulnerabilities which potentially may increase the risk of an individual with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) finding themselves involved with the criminal justice system as a result of being charged with a sexual offence. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the literature which has explored sexual offending in individuals with ASD.*

Design/methodology/approach – *A systematic PRISMA review (PRISMA, Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) was conducted using internet-based bibliographic databases (PsycINFO, MEDLINE, Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection and PsycARTICLES) in order to access studies which investigated to any degree the association between ASD and sexual offending.*

Findings – *Only a small number of case reports ($n = 7$) on sexual offending in individuals with ASD and a small number of prevalence studies ($n = 7$) were identified.*

Research limitations/implications – *Research is urgently required to identify the specific requirements and needs of sexual offenders with ASD in order to inform an appropriate treatment strategy for successful outcomes.*

Originality/value – *Relatively few studies and reviews have investigated the area of ASD and sexual offending specifically.*

Keywords *Sexual offending, Sexual offences, ASD, Autism spectrum disorder, Asperger, AS*

Paper type *Literature Review*

Risk Factors and Vulnerabilities

- A range of reviews (e.g., Gomez de la Cuesta, 2010, Im, 2016; Lerner et al., 2012) also suggest that most individuals with an ASD who offend do so because of a combination of reasons.
- Typically, these reasons are linked to personal circumstances, such as dealing with periods of transition or change, and the difficulties associated with having an ASD including social naivety, pursuing a preoccupation or failing to appreciate the consequences of one's actions, theory of mind difficulties, emotional regulation difficulties, as well as co-morbidity with another psychiatric disorder (e.g., Newman & Ghaziuddin, 2008) (Murphy, 2018).

Risk Factors and Vulnerabilities

- Psychiatric Comorbidities
- Social Naivety
- Intense, restricted interests
(Circumscribed Interests)
- Sensory Sensitivities
- Social-Cognition Deficits
- Social and Communication Impairments



Psychiatric Comorbidities

The prediction of comorbidities on violence in ASD has been substantiated by Langstrom, Grann, Ruchkin, Sjostedt and Fazel, (2008) who found that comorbid substance use disorders and personality disorders were risk factors for violent offending behaviours in ASD.

- Quek, Sofronoff, Sheffield, White and Kelly (2012) found that depression was a significant predictor of anger in young people with ASD.
- Kerns and colleagues (2015) found that comorbid anxiety disorders were associated with increased patient-reported self-harm in youths with ASD.
- Some reviews suggest that individuals with an ASD who commit violent offenses and who are admitted to forensic psychiatric units often display high rates of psychiatric co-morbidity (e.g., King & Murphy, 2014; Im, 2016).
- Some authors have suggested that individuals with an ASD and a co-morbid psychosis may be especially vulnerable to acting on any psychotic impulses (e.g., Wachtel & Shorter, 2013).

Psychiatric Comorbidities

- Newman and Ghaziuddin (2008) reviewed all published articles reporting an association of AS with violence.
- Of 37 cases that met inclusion criteria, 31 (83.7%) had evidence of a definite or probable psychiatric disorder, including ADHD, depression and other mood disorders, “obsessional neurosis,” & disorders resulting in maximum-security hospitalisation.
- Most violent individuals with AS suffer from comorbid psychiatric disorders that raise their risk of offending, as they do in the general population.



Prevalence of Autism in the Intellectual Disability (ID) Literature

- Prevalence of autism among those living with ID of between 8.8 and 30 % has been reported (e.g., Morgan et al., 2002; Hermans & Evenhuis, 2014; Turygin, Matson, & Adams, 2014).
- A UK study involving 571 adults in contact with an ID service suggested that prevalence decreases with age, reporting 36 % identified among those aged 16–25 years compared with only 13 % who were aged 65 years and older (Morgan et al., 2002).



Prevalence of ID in the Autism Literature

- The ASD literature presents similarly disparate estimates of co-morbid ASD and intellectual disability (ID), with methodological differences relating to age and sources of sample, and variation across study country of origin.
- In a review of over 30 epidemiological surveys of autism and other pervasive developmental disorders, Fombonne (2003) found that ID is associated with ~70 % of individuals on the spectrum (among whom 30 % experienced mild to moderate intellectual impairment, with relevant disorders including fragile X, Down syndrome and tuberous sclerosis).
- Mannion et al. (2013) presented a review of comorbid psychiatric and medical disorders across the lifespan, estimating that among children and adolescents, the prevalence of comorbid disorders (defined as the co-occurrence of two or more disorders) was 46.1 % (excluding ID) or 78.7 % when ID was included as a comorbid disorder.

Social Naivety



Their increased social naivety may leave people with an ASD open to manipulation by others.

Intense, restricted interests (Circumscribed Interests)

- Obsessive pursuit or engagement in circumscribed interest.
- Relationship between circumscribed interests in individuals with ASDs and behaviour that leads to contact with the CJS is poorly understood (Woodbury-Smith et al., 2010).
- Convictions for arson were preceded by an interest in fires (e.g., Barry-Walsh & Mullen, 2004)
- Tantam (1988) describes an individual with a fascination with National Socialism, who dressed in Nazi uniform before assaulting a soldier.
- Attempts to discourage certain repetitive behaviours could trigger reactive aggression from individuals with ASD, accounting for the association between repetitive behaviours and aggression.

Sensory Sensitivities

- Individuals with an ASD can present with a range of unusual sensory hypersensitivities or hyposensitivities across several sensory areas (Bogdashina, 2003).
- This is now recognised within the diagnostic criteria as defined in the DSM-5 (APA, 2013).
- In Bjorkly (2008)'s literature review, sensory hypersensitivity was the second largest cause of violence towards others.
- Many individuals with ASD report sensory hypersensitivities as their main cause of stress (Robertson & Simmons, 2015) and in some circumstances offending has been linked to a specific sensory hypersensitivity (Mawson, Grounds, & Tantam, 1985).



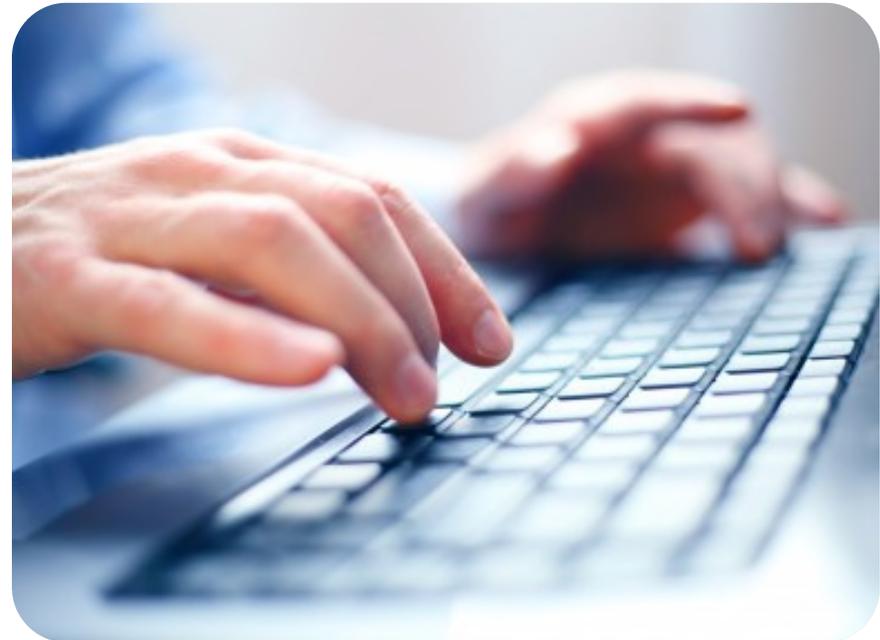
Social-Cognition Deficits

- In Bjorkly (2008)'s literature review of risk factors for violence in Asperger's Syndrome (AS), 35% of violence towards others was reportedly attributed to social misinterpretations of the victims' intentions.
- Burdon and Dickens (2009) have highlighted that impairment in understanding social cues may influence criminal behaviour, in individuals with AS.



Social and Communication Impairments

- Can have difficulties with developing and maintaining friends.
- Internet provides a safe environment (degree of control)
- Internet/social media 'Friends' who validate skills and promise 'justice' and 'moral certainty' can influence an individual very quickly (Al-Attar, 2016).
- Technical skills coupled with social impairments can make an individual with ASD targets for exploitation (Al-Attar, 2016).





Sexual Offending and Autism

ASD and Sexual Offending Behaviour

- Mogavero and Mogavero (2016) highlighted that the association between ASD and sexual deviance or sexual offending has been reported for some time (e.g. Chesterman and Rutter, 1993; 't Hart-Kerkhoffs et al., 2009; Sevlever et al., 2013; Higgs and Carter, 2015).
- Deviant and sexual offending behaviours include giving a stranger a kiss (Clements and Zarkowska, 2000), invading the personal space of an individual who is the target of their affection (Green et al., 2000; Howlin, 1997; Katz and Zemishlany, 2006), inappropriate acts of masturbating (e.g. masturbating in public) (Haracopos and Pedersen, 1992; Ray et al., 2004), touching others in a sexual manner, to downloading child pornography (Mahoney, 2009; Steel, 2016).

ASD and Sexual Offending Behaviours

- The majority of studies supporting this association utilised qualitative methods in “select settings or clinical accounts” (Chesterman and Rutter, 1993; ‘t Hart-Kerkhoffs et al., 2009; Sevlever et al., 2013; Griffin-Shelley, 2010; Barry-Walsh and Mullen, 2004).
- Kumar et al. (2017) reviewed the possible factors associated with offending in five individuals with Asperger’s syndrome (AS), who presented with a history of abnormal sexual behaviours (Kumar et al., 2017).
- Inappropriate sexual behaviours may be attributable to the core features of ASD (such as failure to conform to social conventions; impaired ability to decode language and social gestures; a limited repertoire of appropriate behaviour; inappropriate use of speech; impaired theory of mind (ToM); repetitive patterns of behaviour and obsession or preoccupation with specific things such as women’s underwear) (Murrie et al., 2002; Allely & Creaby-Attwood, 2016).

Case Study

Milton, Duggan, Latham & Tantom (2002)

- Case of a Caucasian male in his early thirties with AS. His convictions can be categorised in 3 main types (acquisitive offences, direct sexual assaults & indirect sexual assaults).
- History of recurrent sexual offences which included sexual touching of young female's private regions; watching women in public toilets and pretending to be a gynaecologist and interviewing women about their experiences over the phone.
- He had a long history of being fascinated with women's genitalia.
- Focus of this fascination was the image of a woman being gynaecologically examined by a doctor.
- He would pose as a medical researcher and go on telephone 'chatlines' to ask the women he spoke to for details of their gynaecological examinations while he frequently masturbated.

Case Study

Murrie, Warren, Kistiansson & Dietz (2002)

- **Case (KL)** involving a sexual offence, the male (KL) was arrested following an assault on two women in the female toilets at the local zoo where he was a weekend volunteer and was subsequently referred for forensic evaluation.
- He was open and exhibited no embarrassment or hesitation when revealing intimate details about his life and his significantly active and aggressive sexual fantasies. KL reported feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- He had crushes on numerous women at work and would follow them when they moved around the building.
- His masturbatory fantasies involved following strange women, binding them using rope and climaxing while he used a knife to cut into their breasts.

Case Studies

Haskins & Silva (2006)

Case of Mr B

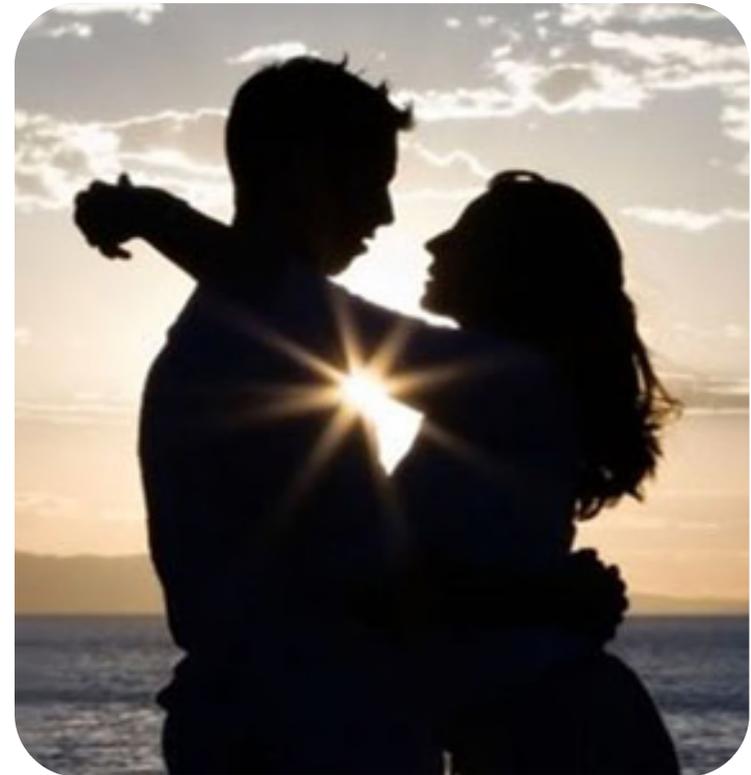
- Middle-aged substitute teacher accused of touching a number of adolescent female students. Mr B was unable to develop friendships or relationships.
- Failed to recognise how his actions might be perceived by the students and others. The compulsive nature of his touching behaviour is consistent with repetitive and stereotyped behavioural patterns.

Case of Mr C

- Deaf man referred for outpatient psychotherapy primarily because of his display of inappropriate sexual behaviour. Compulsively solicited male strangers for sex contact. History of impaired social skills, lacked friends and was unable to maintain a job.
- Exhibited impaired ToM as he compulsively approached males for sexual contact with no recognition of the potential hostile reaction he might receive from heterosexual males.

Expressing Sexuality within the “Context of an Appropriate Relationship”

- One of the challenges for some individuals with ASD is in expressing their sexuality within the “context of an appropriate relationship”.
- There are a number of explanations for this including the following: little or no experience of being in an intimate relationship (and as a result a lack of appropriate courtship scripts) and little or no opportunities to learn from peers. It is important to recognise how such factors may have contributed to sexual offending behaviour due to sexual frustration (Murrie et al., 2002; Stokes & Kaur, 2005).



Child Pornography : ‘Child Sexual Abuse Images’



The contributory role of autism symptomology in child pornography offending: why there is an urgent need for empirical research in this area

Clare Sarah Allely and Larry Dubin

Abstract

Purpose – As recently highlighted by Creaby-Attwood and Allely (2017), it is crucial that the possible innate vulnerabilities that contributed to sexual offending behaviour in an individual with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are taken into consideration for the application of a diversion programme to avoid the stigma of a criminal conviction or during sentencing for a non-custodial outcome. Specifically, in those defendants with a diagnosis of what used to be referred to as Asperger's syndrome (AS) and now is recognised as an ASD and who are charged and convicted of a non-contact sexual offense, education and mental health intervention will best serve the interests of justice. The paper aims to discuss this issue.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper focusses on one particular type of sexual offending behaviour, namely, possession of child pornography. A systematic PRISMA review was conducted.

Findings – The authors linked examples of child pornography in the research literature to the ASD symptomology and describe how the symptomology explains such behaviour as not reflecting actual sexual deviance.

Originality/value – Downloading and viewing of child pornography by individuals with ASD has received relatively little research outside the mental health field. This review is of particular importance to those in the criminal justice system who may not have much knowledge and understanding of ASD. It is suggested that diversion programmes and mental health courts should be set up for this particular population charged with this particular crime in mind so that the necessary treatment/intervention/support and care can be given to this particular group.

Keywords Autism, Sentencing, Aspergers, Child exploitative material, Child pornography, Pre-trial diversion

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Importance of Research in This Area...

- One of the primary aims of this paper is to highlight the need to understand and recognise the importance of considering the potential contribution of ASD symptomology in individuals who have been identified as engaging in viewing child pornography.
- By doing this, we also highlight the real need for empirical research investigating this.
- Currently, there are no empirical studies, only the anecdotal reports and the expertise and knowledge of a relatively small number of professionals whom we have quoted and referred to in this article. These individuals are highly respected in the field (e.g. Gary Mesibov, Melissa Sreckovic, Kenneth M. Mogill, Dennis P. Sugrue).
- In this review, we highlight some of the current issues in this area (e.g. issues surrounding appropriate risk assessment in cases involving individuals with ASD who are charged or convicted of possession of child pornography) based on the relatively little work that exists that is predominantly the expert opinions and experience of internationally very well respected and recognised clinicians in the field.

Methodology

6 internet-based bibliographic databases.

The search followed PRISMA guidelines (see Liberati et al., 2009; Moher et al., 2009).

(ASD or “autis* spectrum disorder*” or autis* or “autis* spectrum condition*” or asperger*). M_titl. AND (“child pornography” or “online child related sex offend*” or “online child pornography” or “online child pornography offend*” or “online child sexual exploitation” or “internet child abuse” or “online child sex offend*”). m_titl.

Only one article was returned from this search on the databases (Steel, 2016), and this paper was a review, not an empirical study paper.

All the papers or books identified are included in this review paper. The main source included a recently published book on the topic (Caught in the Web of the Criminal Justice System: Autism, Developmental Disabilities, and Sex Offenses, 2017).

A number of chapters in this book were reviewed for relevant material and integrated in the present review (most notably chapters by: Mesibov and Sreckovic; Sugrue; Mogill; Douard, and Schultz).

Internet as a Sexual Outlet

- When considering ASD and sexuality, “we are often talking about people with strong sexual impulses, little or no information about healthy sexual behavior, and few suitable outlets for sexual gratification” (Sugrue, 2017, p. 177).
- Given this, many adolescents and adults with ASD turn to the internet for information and for a sexual outlet. The internet becomes the ideal solution because it has already established itself as being their “preferred conduit to the outside world” (Sugrue, 2017, p. 117).



ASD and Child Pornography

- Suggested that individuals may explore the internet for sexual education or to satisfy sexual needs due to a lack of sexual outlets with peers/friends (Dubin et al., 2014).
- Many individuals with ASD will have average or above average intelligence while their social maturity is that of someone much younger. This frequently results in them being more interested in befriending people who are much younger than themselves but who are socially and emotionally at the same level (Cutler, 2013).
- Regarding the viewing of child pornography, issues occur when individuals with ASD are unaware that what they have done is a criminal offense. One explanation for the lack of awareness that they have committed a crime is their inability to recognise the facial expressions in the images of the children.
- Such an inability to recognise facial expressions (such as fear) is supported by a large amount of studies (e.g. Woodbury-Smith et al., 2005; Uljarevic & Hamilton, 2013).

ASD and Child Pornography



- Another issue that needs to be considered is that many individuals with ASD may inadvertently view child pornography as a result of their inability to guess correctly the age of the individuals in the images and sometimes the boundaries/distinction between an adult and a child is blurry.
- This is important to understand given that the legality and severity of the offense is determined by the age of the victims in the images being viewed by the defendant (Mahoney, 2009).

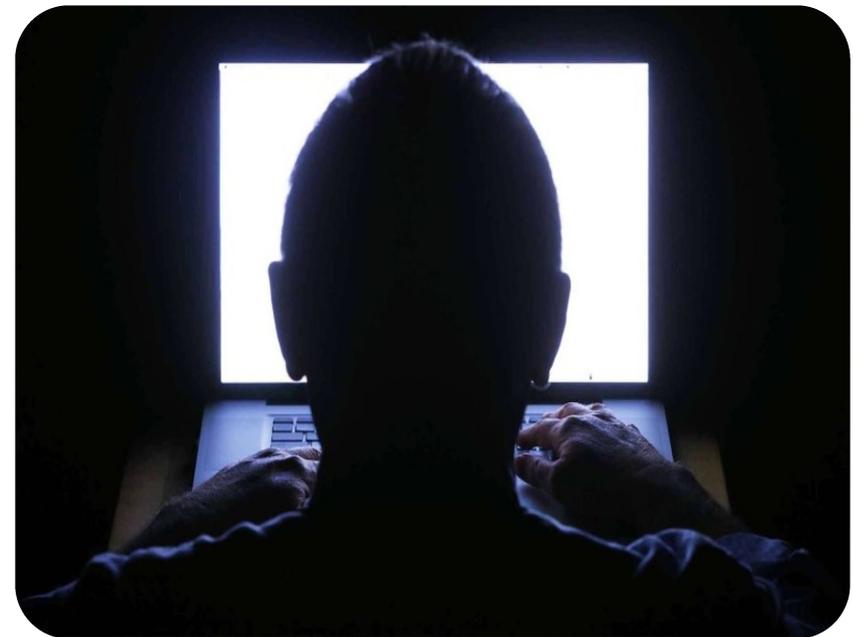
Thylane Blondeau: Controversy



ASD and Child Pornography

- For individuals with ASD, exploring sexuality on the internet through child pornography is one way for them to try to understand relationships and sexuality as opposed to being a precursor to any sexual offending towards a minor. As with many things that interest them, the desire for this material can end up being particularly excessive and compulsive in individuals with ASD (Mesibov and Sreckovic, 2017).

- Numerous cases where the individual with ASD has been found to have large collections of pornographic material (e.g. involving children) (as part of the ritualistic nature of ASD) with thousands of files not even opened.



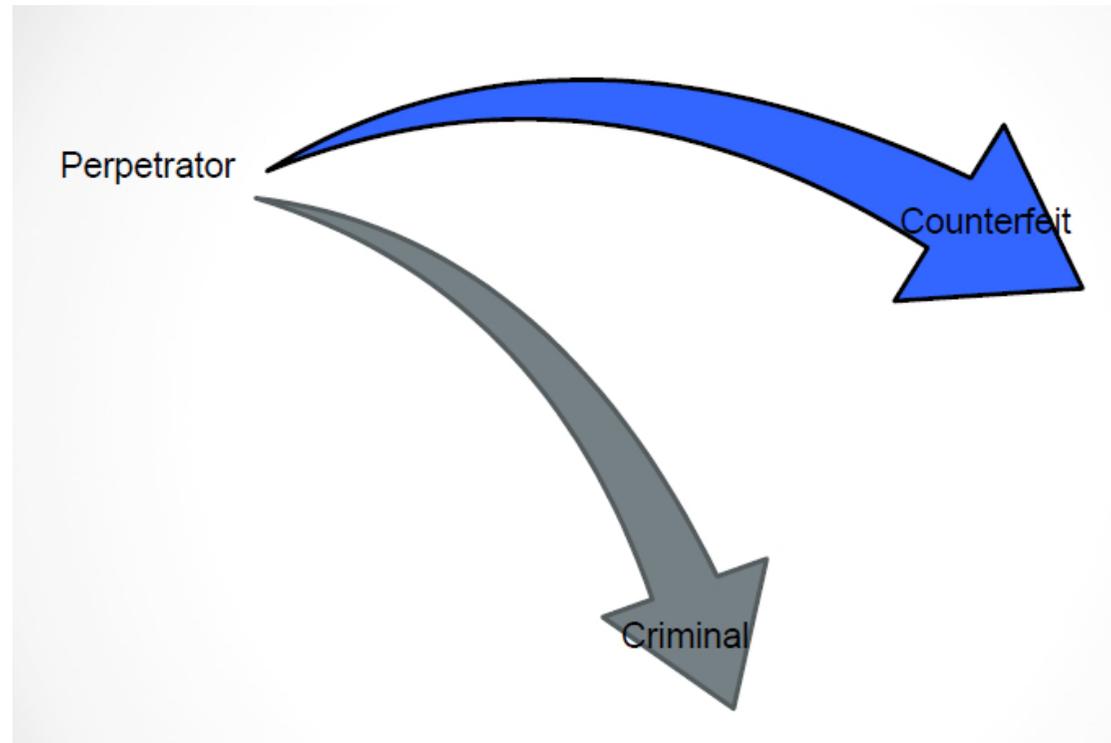
ASD and Child Pornography

- Unaware of the broader issues like where and how they got those files, who else might be able to access them and what the consequences (and impact on) are for the minors in the images they are viewing.
- Because of their literal view of the world, they would not consider that something that is illegal could be so freely available on the internet.
- Media fraught with marketing materials with risky images of teenage models or images where they have made the older models look “barely legal”. Such images can be confusing for the individual with ASD, making it more difficult to determine what is illegal pornography (Mesibov & Sreckovic, 2017).



“Counterfeit Deviance”

An attorney who has defended many ASD males on charges of possession of child pornography incorporates the concept of “counterfeit deviance” in understanding what might seem like acts of deviance but the individual “but lacks the culpable mental state or blameworthiness which would normally attend such actions by persons who are typically developed” (Mahoney, 2017).



Asperger's syndrome and the Criminal Law: The Special Case of Child Pornography

Attorney Mark Mahoney stated in his paper, *Asperger's syndrome and the Criminal Law: The Special Case of Child Pornography*:

The aptitude and comfort of AS individuals with computers, and the prevalence of pornography as a vehicle for AS individuals to try to learn about sexuality and romance, what neurotypical youth learn from their social interactions, has exposed more than a few AS male individuals to child pornography. Their curiosity, unrestrained by social or legal taboos, of which they are unaware, leads them to view images of “underage” (i.e. younger than 18-years old) girls who are nearly their own age and years older than the level of their own social adaptation skills. This has resulted in criminal convictions, lengthy mandatory prison sentences, and a lifetime of reporting, ostracization, and residency restrictions as “sex offenders”. (Mahoney, 2009, p. 1).

Clinical Utility of Risk Assessments for Individuals with ASD

- Sex offender risk assessments are crucial for informing appropriate and effective strategies for individual offender management (e.g. community management) (Grubin, 2008).
- Sugrue (2017) highlighted that these risk assessments have not been normed for individuals with ASD. They also have not been normed for people whose only offense is viewing child pornography.
- Due to the lack of normed risk assessment for use with offenders with ASD, clinicians have to rely on the published literature which is limited in relation to ASD and child pornography in particular. Research based on neurotypicals frequently has to be extrapolated based on clinicians' and other health professionals' knowledge and understanding of ASD (Sugrue, 2017).

Considerations when Assessing Risk in this Group

- Sugrue (2017) points out that there is an assumption that the level of risk is associated with the number of images that the individual has accumulated or the nature of the content. This is because it is believed by some that the more images, the greater the obsession, and they are more at risk of acting on these urges as a result. **However, studies do not support this** (Stabenow, 2011).
- Even more inappropriate for individuals with ASD because it does not take into consideration the relationship between the volume of collected pornography and the compulsive and obsessive features of ASD. No research which indicates that extreme sexual content is predictive of dangerousness (Osborn et al., 2010).
- Looking at extreme sexual material is not always a reflection of the presence of deviant sexuality. Instead, it can be what is referred to as “counterfeit deviance” (e.g. naïve curiosity) in offenders with ASD (Mahoney, 2009).
- However, proper sex education can provide the information necessary to help people with ASD to understand the rules for proper sexual conduct accepted by society that will help prevent watching child pornography or improper sexual conduct as the ASD population are rule followers (Mahoney, 2009).

Child Pornography Offender Risk Tool

(Seto and Eke, 2015)

- Seto and Eke (2015) were the first to develop an actuarial risk-assessment tool which was specifically designed for use with online CPOs.
- This tool reflects criminality or evidence of atypical sexual interests. Factors such as volume of collected child exploitative material are not considered in this risk tool. In offenders with child pornography offenses,
- Comprises of 7 items: age at the time of the index investigation; any prior criminal history; specifically, any contact sexual offending (pre- or at index); any failure on conditional release; indication (admission or diagnosis) of sexual interest in prepubescent or pubescent children; more boy than girl content in child pornography; and more boy than girl content in other child-related materials (Seto and Eke, 2017).
- Preliminary evaluation indicates that the CPORT has moderate levels of predictive accuracy which indicates that, with additional cross validation, it may be useful in the risk assessment of adult male CPOs (Seto and Eke, 2015).
- However, while the CPORT might be more useful for online CPOs with ASD, Seto and Eke (2015) do not advise using the probability estimates of the CPORT without further research investigating the reliability and validity based on larger samples. Nevertheless, the CPORT could still be useful for ranking individuals by risk score and to offer a structured way of reporting information (see Glasgow, 2010; Merdian et al., 2018).

Two Tools which Assess Cognitions and Behaviours

- **Children, Internet and Sex Cognitions scale (Kettleborough and Merdian, 2013)**
- **The Internet Behaviours and Attitudes Questionnaire (O'Brien and Webster, 2007)**



Children, Internet and Sex

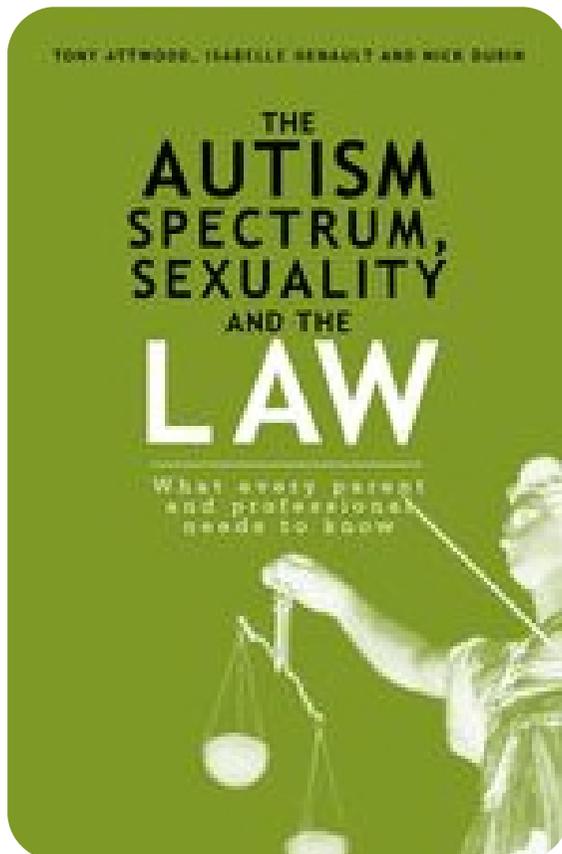
Cognitions scale (Kettleborough and Merdian, 2013)

- The CISC scale consists of a total of 108 items which are rated using a six-point Likert scale which ranges from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.
- The main aim of the CISC scale is assessing offense supporting cognitions of individuals who have been convicted of child pornography offenses.
- It has been indicated by the CISC scale that these cognitions differ between those individuals who engage in contact sexual offenses compared to those who engage in online child pornography-related offenses (Kettleborough, 2015).

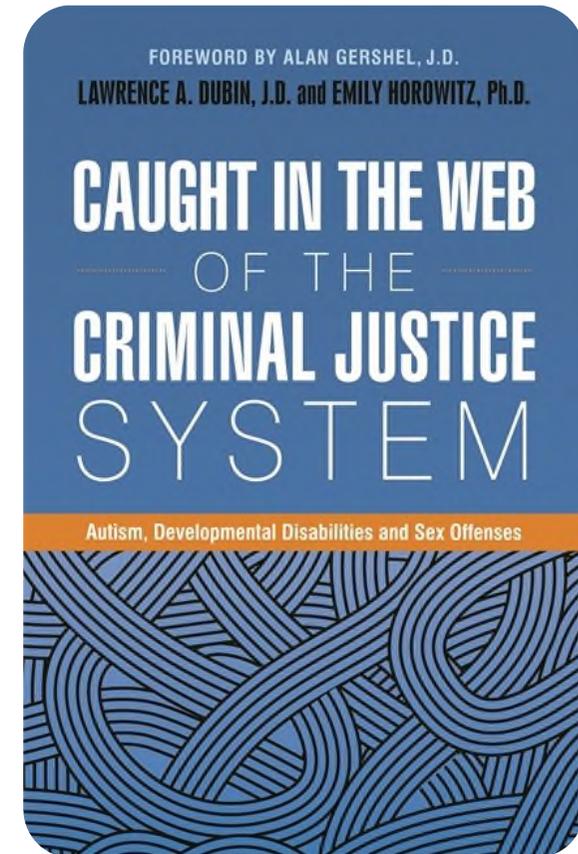
The Internet Behaviours and Attitudes Questionnaire (O'Brien and Webster, 2007)

- The IBAQ comprises of 2 scales: behaviour and attitude. 42 behaviour items that require a “yes”/“no” response and 34 attitude items. Questions investigate the nature of the offender’s internet behaviour in relation to indecent child images and general attitudes towards internet abuse. A number of these statements aim to explore denial and minimisation with respect to the seriousness and extent of the behaviour.
- Examples Behaviour Items: “I used to carefully categorise into ‘folders’ the child pornography I’d downloaded”; “I knew that the child pornography I was downloading was illegal”; & “I used to seek out progressively more intense sexual experiences”.
- Examples Attitude Items: “Looking at sexual pictures of children on the internet does not mean I have committed a sexual offence”; “There were no negative consequences associated with downloading child pornography”; “The child was often smiling in the child pornography that I have looked at, and so I believe that the child is not being harmed”; and “Children pictured in sexual positions on the internet experience bad effects afterwards”.
- It has also been indicated that the IBAQ may be a useful screening and evaluative tool in order to guide the work of practitioners. However, there does need to be further evaluation of the tool (Davidson, 2007).

Autism and Child Pornography



Case of Nick Dubin



Conventional Sex Offender Treatment and ASD

- In any discussion of sex offending and ASD, it is important to look at the clinical utility of sex offender treatment programmes for this population.
- Conventional sex offender treatment focusses predominantly on group therapy. There is a focus on the offender's understanding of his offending pattern, learning about thinking errors, practicing empathic responses to the victims and stopping deviant thoughts and fantasies.
- Sugrue (2017) argues that this style of treatment (which can be effective with neurotypicals) is not suitable for individuals with ASD (Griffiths et al., 2009; Ray et al., 2004). A specialised treatment which includes very explicit sex education with a focus on learning "specific responses to specific situations" is needed for individuals with ASD (Griffiths et al., 2009).
- Moreover, repetition is also important in treatment for individuals with ASD due to their difficulty in understanding abstract concepts (Klin et al., 1995).

Conventional Sex Offender Treatment and ASD

- The treatment programmes for those who are convicted of child pornography are not only inappropriate for adolescents and adults with ASD but they are potentially harmful.
- Specifically, it could cause further harm by “confusing them about the law, their privacy rights and what and how they are supposed to deal with certain situations that present themselves when they are using their computer in their home” (p. 88).
- There is an urgent need for autism-specific training in this field. For instance, for individuals with ASD on diversion programmes, there would need to be explicit training on the consequences of child pornography (Mesibov and Sreckovic, 2017).
- Douard and Schultz (2017) argue that to classify individuals with an ASD as sex offenders and for them to be criminally liable for behaviour which they fail to appreciate is morally wrong.

Conventional Sex Offender Treatment and ASD

- Given the difficulties that individuals with ASD who have been found guilty of violating child pornography statutes have in fully appreciating the wrongfulness and consequences of their actions, having the expertise of a psychologist or psychiatrist who has experience of working with both sex offenders and individuals on the spectrum would be most suitable.
- Unfortunately, mental health professionals who have both these strands of expertise are rare. Therefore, the consultation with more than one professional may be prudent (Sugrue, 2017).

**“Having highly restricted interests and having sensory peculiarities in ASD may possibly set the stage for developing fetishism and other paraphilias in individuals with certain sensory profiles among other factors”
(Kellaheer, 2015, pp. 30).**

- Case described by Kellaheer (2015), which involved the young man with ASD whose interest in wolves as a child transformed into a preferential canine zoophilia as an adolescent. This young man admitted that he was sexually excited at seeing and touching the fur and scrotum of a large wolf-like dog.
- This is an example of an interest in the sensory parts of ‘the whole’ for sexual excitement. Kellaheer argues that this partialism or body part fetishism (which is ‘part’ oriented as opposed to ‘whole’ other person-oriented) is relatively commonly identified in individuals with ASD. So, for instance, “just as an ASD individual may be interested in the wheels of a car, he may also be drawn sexually to the feet or hair of another person” (pp. 30).
- This is consistent with numerous case studies involving individuals with ASD who have a paraphilia or sexual interest in a particular body part such as feet (e.g., Dozier et al., 2011).

Early Conditioning to Deviant Stimuli

- Diagnosing cases of paraphilic disorders (such as zoophilia) in individuals with ASD can be challenging.
- One of the main reasons for this is that specific behaviours can be stimulated by sensory (and other) disorders, with no sexual element being involved.
- However, restricted, repetitive interests and behaviors which have no sexual element in childhood may, in adolescence, develop into sexualised or sexual, restricted, repetitive interests. In other words, “early, inadvertent conditioning to sensory stimuli that is appealing during pre-puberty may lead to a powerful union between specific ASD sensory-seeking and sexual arousal through masturbation” (Kellaheer, 2015, pp. 30).
- However, it has never been examined as a factor by itself and studied empirically (Kellaheer, 2015; Kellaheer, 2019, personal communication).

Counteracting Media Influence

- Explicit instruction
- Rules
- Appropriate models for relationships
(Rachel Loftin)



Stereotypes Surrounding the Sexuality of Individuals with ASD

- Individuals with ASD often experience prejudicial stereotypes that they are asexual, hyper- or hypo sexual, child-like and dependent, and/or uninterested in sex (MacKenzie, 2018).
- MacKenzie (2018) have also highlighted that their sexuality is considered by some be problematic and needs to be 'treated' or managed.
- Some of the stereotypes surrounding the sexuality of individuals with ASD are perpetuated by some of the features of ASD such as aversion to being touched by others and that because they are 'unemotional' they would not be interested in sexual relationships (Kellaher, 2015).
- As young people with ASD enter into adulthood, they may find themselves faced with significant difficulties in developing and maintaining social and romantic relationships as a result of their social impairments and sexual 'anomalies' (Henault & Attwood, 2006; MacKenzie, 2018).

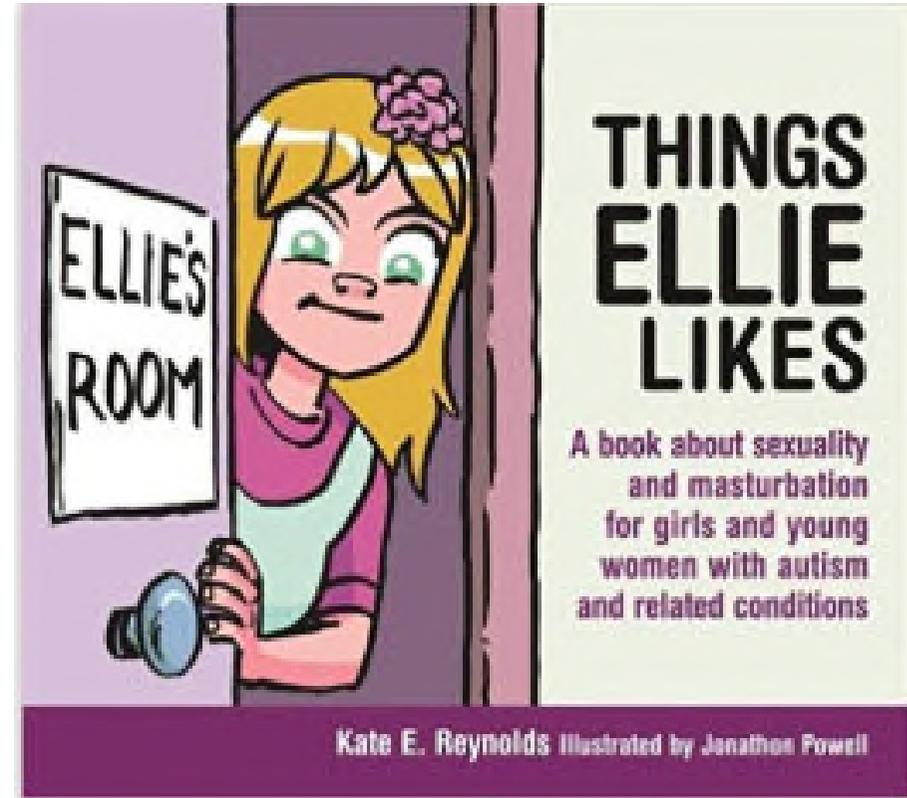
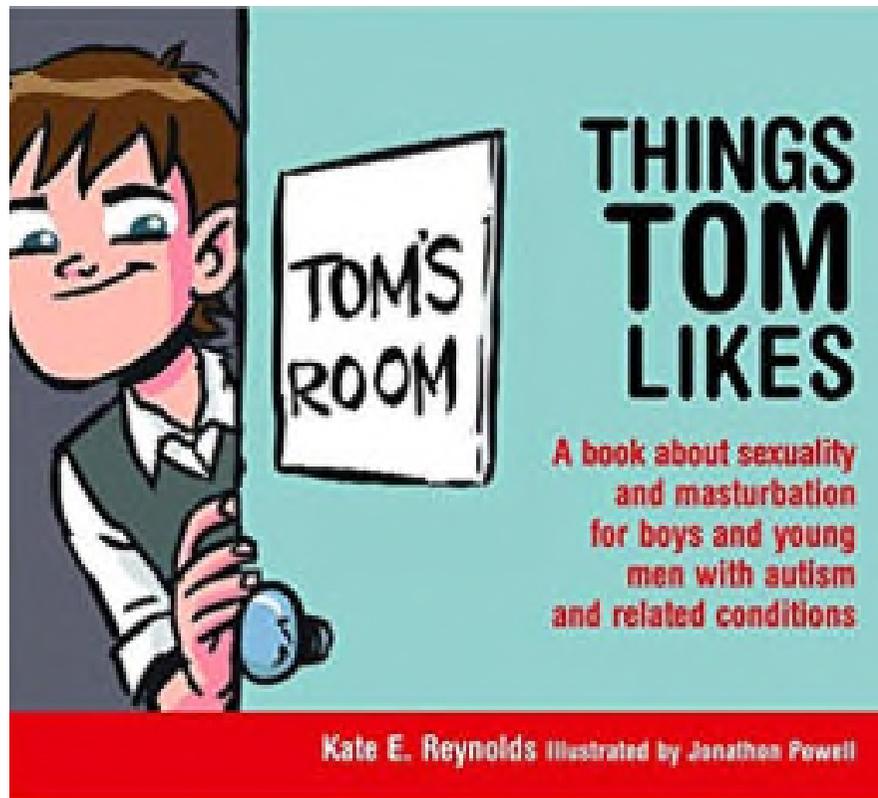
ASD and Sexuality

- Although considerable challenges in sexual development is experienced by many on the spectrum, the intensity of their sexual interest is no different to that of the neurotypical population (e.g. Henault, 2006, Byers, Nichols, & Voyer, 2013; Byers, Nichols, Voyer, & Reilly, 2013; Turner et al., 2017).
- Important to emphasise that there is no evidence which suggests that the physical maturation of adolescents with ASD follows a different trajectory compared to typically developing peers (Gabriels & Van Bourgondien, 2007).
- Natalie Gougeon in a detailed study acknowledged that ASD individuals are sexual beings but are often frustrated in being able to develop that part of themselves. This fact causes the sexual experience to significantly lag behind their sexual hormonal development (Gougeon, 2010, Gougeon, 2013).

Access to Sex and Sexuality Education

- It has been argued that the lack of support and services (in schools, etc) to help autistic adults with ASD develop the necessary skills to help them understand the social nuances of dating, intimacy and relationships further exacerbate these difficulties faced by individuals with ASD (MacKenzie, 2018).
- Adolescents with ASD frequently do not have links with extensive peer groups where informal discussions relating to sex occur (Mehzabin & Stokes, 2011).
- Individuals with ASD are less likely to receive sex and sexuality education, or an education in sex and social relationships that is tailored to their specific needs (MacKenzie, 2018).
- Individuals with ASD are also less likely to gain knowledge about sex from their parents or teachers. It has also been suggested that they more often access the media and pornography in an attempt to gain information about sex. This can often lead to unintentional online offending in some cases (Allely & Dubin, 2018).

USEFUL BOOKS



USEFUL BOOKS

Intimate Relationships and Sexual Health

A Curriculum for Teaching Adolescents/Adults
With High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders
and Other Social Challenges

Catherine Davies, MEd, MSc, CPsychol, LMHC, & Melissa Dubie, MS

Foreword by Gary B. Mesibov, PhD



Parents of Children and Adolescents with ASD

- In a survey with individuals with ASD and typically developing individuals, Mehzabin and Stokes (2011) found that individuals with ASD have less adaptive sexual knowledge and behaviours, reported less social behaviour, less education about sex and sexuality and less sexual experience.
- Corona and colleagues (2016) found that parents of adolescents with ASD believe that their children are interested in sexual and romantic relationships. However, they are not aware of how to effectively and appropriately instigate conversations with their child with ASD regarding such topics.
- Interviews with 18 parents of children with ASD (6–13 years), Ballan (2012) found that some parents believed that broad-ranging discussions about sexuality and relationships would not be relevant. Parents reported that their sexuality-related discussions with their child did not include topics relating to their child's future social and sexual behaviours.
- Mackin and colleagues (2016) found that few parents of children with ASD could quickly imagine the likelihood of their child ever experiencing a romantic relationship.

Parents Engagement in Sex Education with their Children with ASD

Some parents of children with ASD who do not engage in any sex education discussions because they assume that because their ASD child is asocial they are also asexual or that it would be potentially dangerous to give explicit sexual instruction to their ASD child because they would not be able to handle the information or apply it in an inappropriate way (Gougeon, 2010).



Conclusion

- The internet coupled with sexuality can result in what Mark Mahoney calls a “lethal combination” for individuals with ASD (Mahoney, 2009).
- There is a general consensus that adolescents with ASD need to be able to access education about sexuality and relationships needs.
- The education would consist of the core topics covered in standard sex education programmes (e.g., sexual development, safe sex, contraception, and sexually-transmitted infections) in addition to topics such as: social skills development (e.g., empathy, perspective-taking) and social conventions relating to flirting and dating (Gilmour, Smith, & Schalomon, 2014).
- It is possible for individuals with ASD to learn that child pornography is illegal. However, they need to be explicitly taught this. To the authors’ knowledge, there is currently no sexual education curriculum which is designed for individuals with ASD which includes the issue of child pornography (Mesibov and Sreckovic, 2017).

Conclusion

- Dr Ami Klin, Head of the Autism Center, Emory University, Atlanta, GA, also emphasised the devastating impact of men with ASD who innocently are charged with possession of child pornography and are given a long prison sentence as opposed to being given a more appropriate disposition of diversion from the criminal justice system (Dubin et al., 2014).
- It has been suggested that diversion programmes and mental health courts should be set up for this particular population with this crime in mind so that the necessary treatment/intervention/support and care can be given to this particular group (Dubin, 2017, p. 272).



Experiences of prison inmates with autism spectrum disorders and the knowledge and understanding of the spectrum amongst prison staff: a review

Clare Allely

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Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this paper is to explore the research which has examined the link between autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) and offending behaviour and the impact of prison on individuals with ASDs. Studies suggest that inmates with ASDs may be at an increased risk of bullying, confrontations, exploitation, anxiety and social isolation as a result of their ASD traits such as obsessions, social naivety and impaired empathy.*

Design/methodology/approach – *An extensive review of the literature.*

Findings – *The review identifies a modest amount of studies ($n = 4$) which have explored the experience of individuals with ASD in prison and highlights that inmates with ASDs face a multitude of problems when they enter prison. Despite an extensive literature search only one study was identified which investigated the*

Autism spectrum disorders in high secure psychiatric care: a review of literature, future research and clinical directions

David Murphy and Clare Allely

Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this paper is to review available literature targeting the assessment and management of individuals with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) admitted to high secure psychiatric care (HSPC). Key areas of examination include the prevalence of ASD in HSPC, how individuals with an ASD differ from other patient groups in clinical and cognitive characteristics, the views of staff regarding patients with an ASD, an exploration of the experiences and quality of life of patients with an ASD, as well as treatment and interventions.*

Design/methodology/approach – *A review of the published literature.*

Findings – *Although individuals with an ASD comprise a relatively small proportion of the total HSPC cohort, they appear to be over represented relative to the general population prevalence. Several research projects suggest that individuals with an ASD present with difficulties and needs different to other patient groups, as well as being viewed by staff as potentially vulnerable and requiring a different care approach. Individuals with an ASD report both positive and negative aspects to life in HSPC.*

Practical implications – *Suggestions are made with regard to how individuals with an ASD might be better managed in HSPC. Following the spirit of various pieces of government legislation such as the Autism Act (2009) and the Equalities Act (2010) the role of a specialist ASD HSPC service is proposed.*

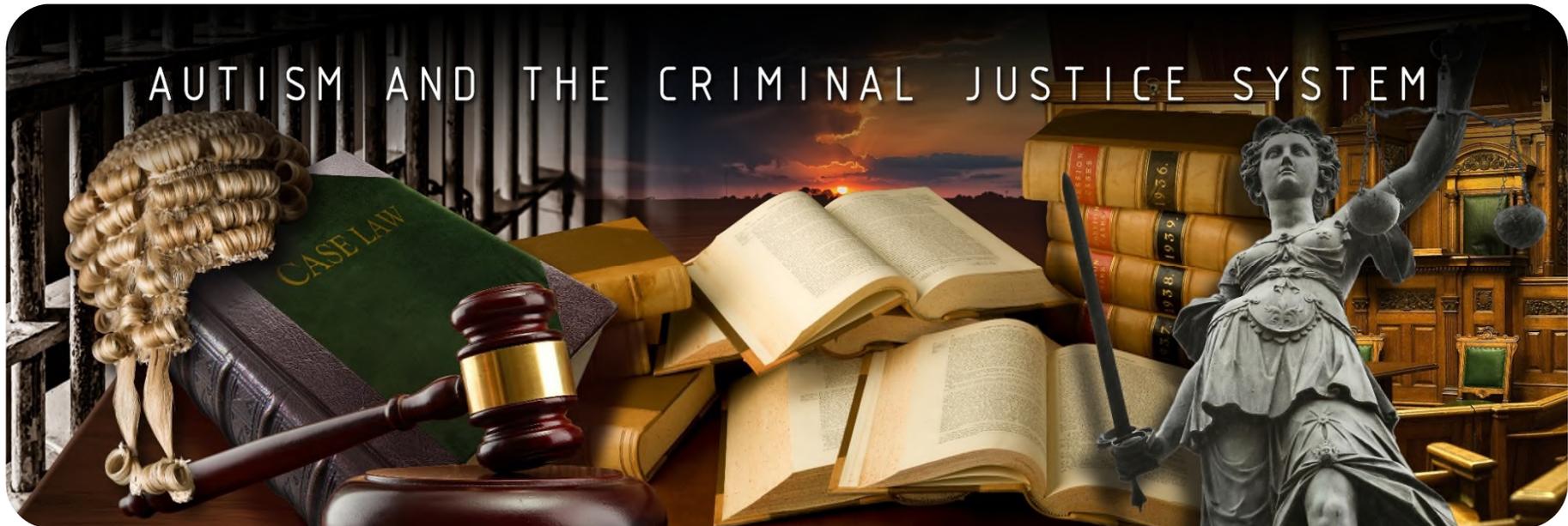
Originality/value – *This paper provides a detailed review of the research to date exploring the assessment and management of individuals with an ASD detained in HSPC. It outlines key research findings, highlights limitations with it and provides a personal perspective on future research and clinical targets.*

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AUTISM
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