



# **Motivations & pathways into offending in autism**

Dr Katy-Louise Payne

# Session contents

## Brief tour of previous literature

- Prevalence & crime types
- Pathways
- Motivations

## Three studies:

- Risk factors for offending
- Nature of offending in ASD & ASD specific risk factors
- Sexual offending in ASD

# Prevalence

- 1.5% - 48%
  - Screening tools
  - Psychiatric hospitals
  - Single establishments
  - Self-reported crime
- Studies with comparison groups actually found same number of offences or fewer
- Most autistic people are law abiding

# Types of crimes

- Few studies include control groups
- Those that have report:
  - More crimes against the person
  - Less property, driving & drugs offences

# Reasons for offending

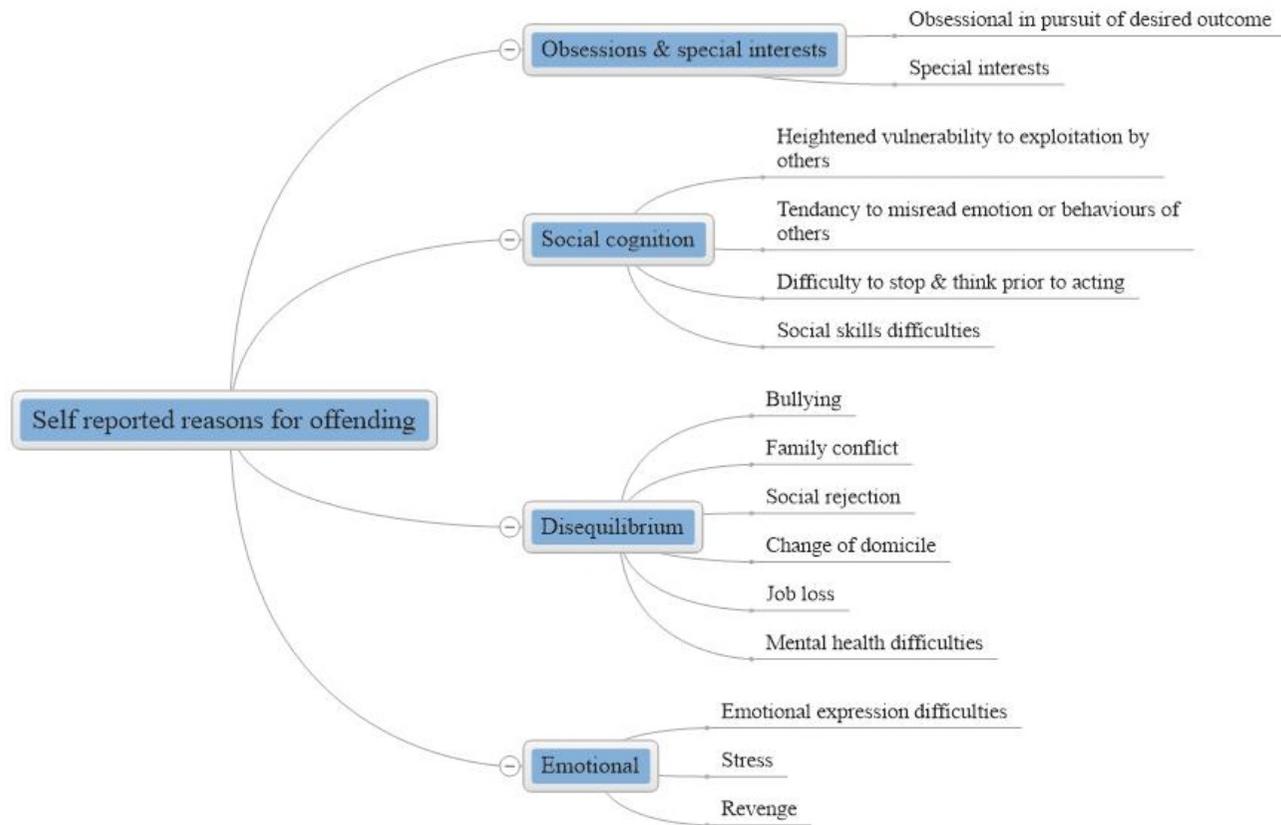
- Previously suggested:
  - Special interests and associated preoccupations
  - Concrete thinking
  - Diminished Theory of Mind with associated social skills difficulties
  - Inability to consider the consequences of actions
- Typically obtained from professional reports, case studies or series of case studies

# Most rigorous study to date

Helverschou et al., 2015)

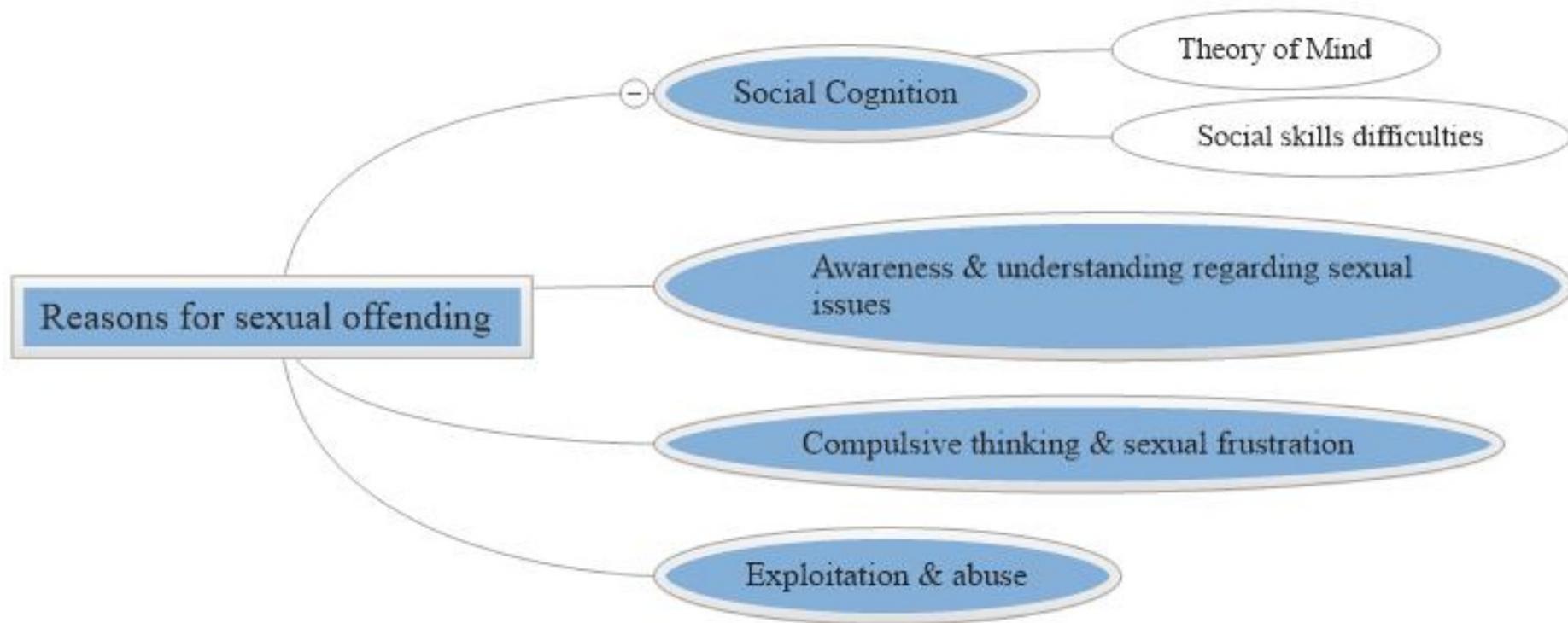
- The reported reasons for offending include:
  - Idiosyncratic rationalisations & explanations (75%)
  - Obsessions & special interests (67%)
  - Social naivety (58%)
  - Revenge (33%)
  - Social misunderstandings (31%)

# Self-reported Reasons for offending



**Self reported  
motivations for  
offending by autistic  
sexual offenders**

# Previous Research



# Rationale

- Interventions specific to behaviours
- Most ASD offender literature looks across offences
- Case studies, psychiatric forensic reports or clinicians experience inform knowledge to date
- Variable recidivism rates in ASD interventions

# Aim

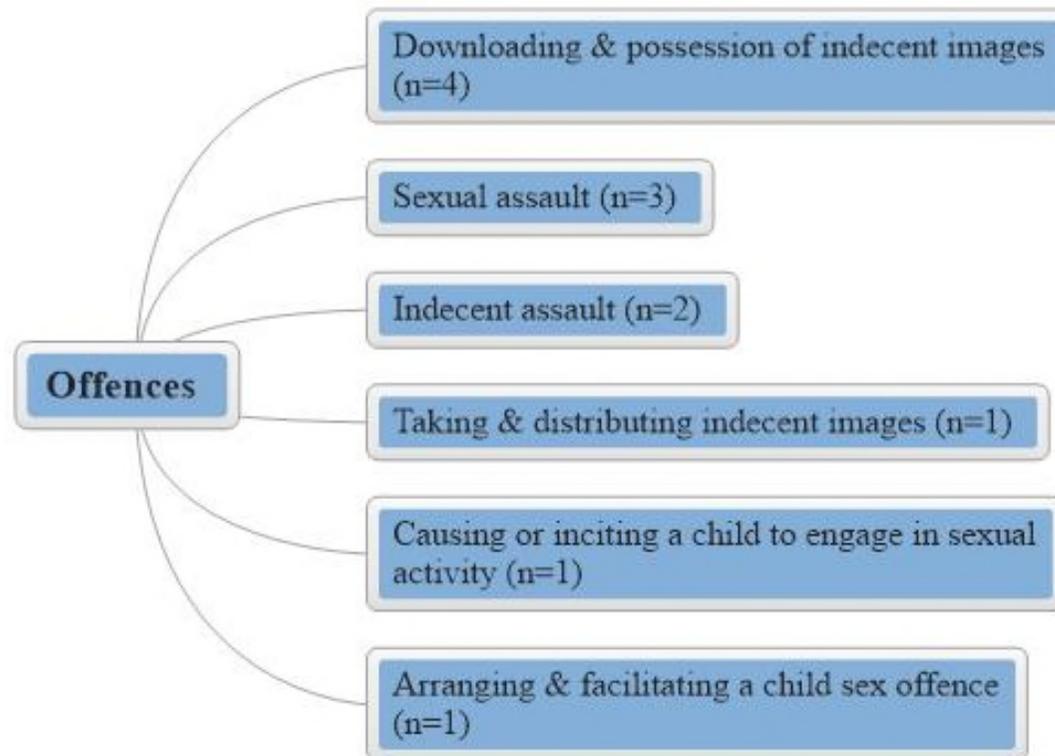
To provide an in depth understanding of the motivations for sexual offending as described by the autistic offenders themselves, as a crucial step to informing interventions and reducing recidivism

# Sample

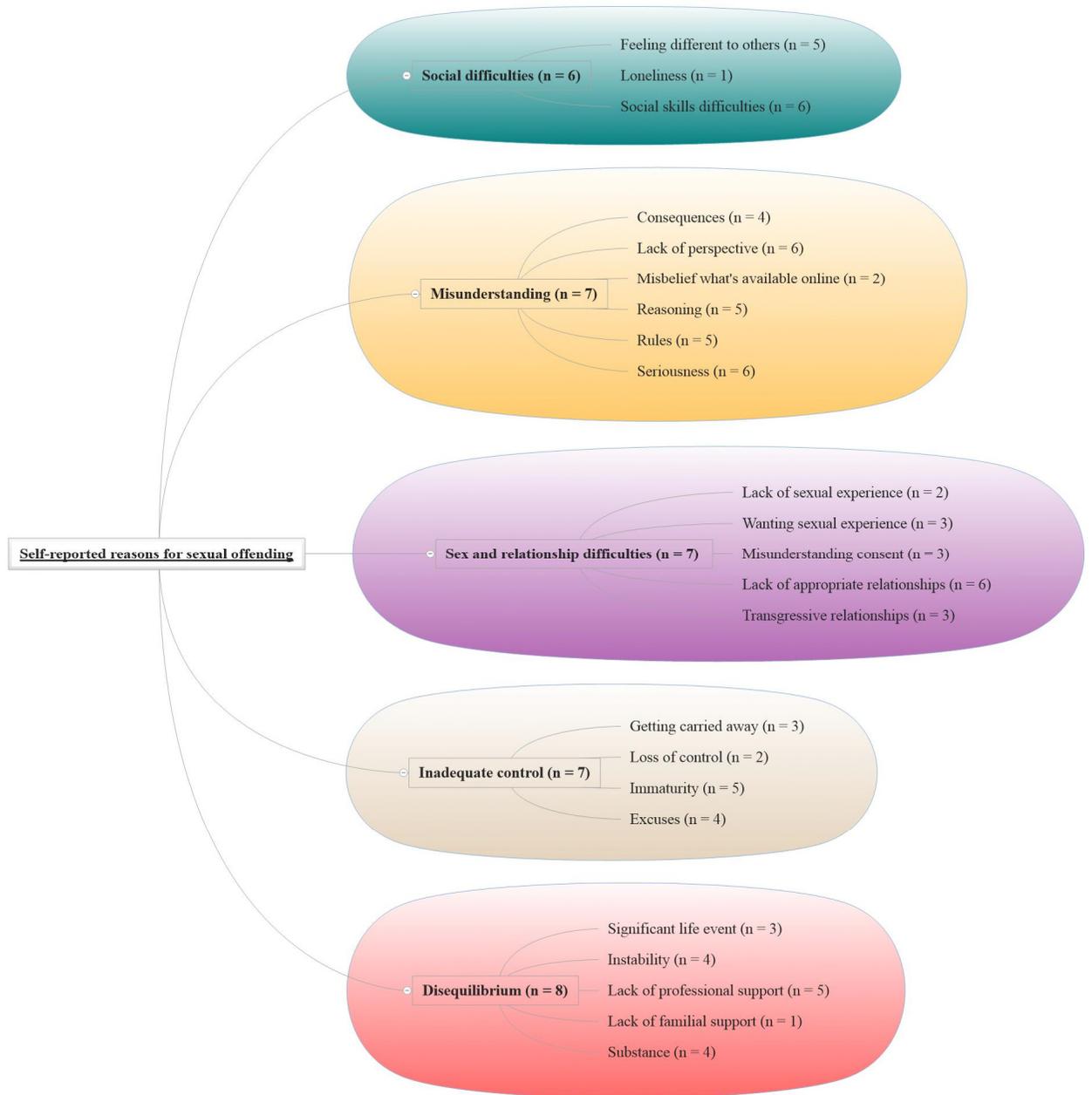
- 9 male autistic sexual offenders
- 4 prisons & 2 probation services
- Mean age = 30
- Mean age at diagnosis = 13
- All single
- Prison (n=6); Rental (n=2); Parent (n=1)
- Education:
  - UG degree (n=3)
  - Diploma (n=1)
  - A Level (n=2)
  - None (n=1)

# Offences

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# Results



# Results by participant

Theme	Sub theme	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	Sub theme	Theme
<b>Social difficulties</b>	Feeling different to others	x	x			x		x	x		5	6
	Loneliness		x								1	
	Social skills difficulties	x	x		x	x		x	x		6	
<b>Misunderstanding</b>	Consequences		x					x	x	x	4	7
	Lack of perspective/WCC	x	x	x		x		x	x		6	
	Misbelief what's available online			x						x	2	
	Reasoning	x		x		x		x		x	5	
	Rules		x	x		x		x		x	5	
	Seriousness		x	x		x		x	x	x	6	
<b>Sex and relationships</b>	Lack of sexual experience	x							x		2	7
	Wanting sexual experience	x				x			x		3	
	Misunderstanding consent					x		x	x		3	
	Lack of appropriate relationships		x		x	x		x	x	x	6	
	Transgressive relationships		x		x			x			3	
<b>Inadequate control</b>	Gets carried away					x			x	x	3	7
	Loss of control		x						x		2	
	Immaturity	x		x		x		x	x		5	
	Excuses	x				x		x		x	4	
<b>Disequilibrium</b>	Significant life event			x		x		x			3	8
	Instability			x	x		x	x			4	
	Lack of professional support		x		x	x		x		x	5	
	Lack of familial support							x			1	
	Substance	x		x		x	x				4	

# Social Difficulties

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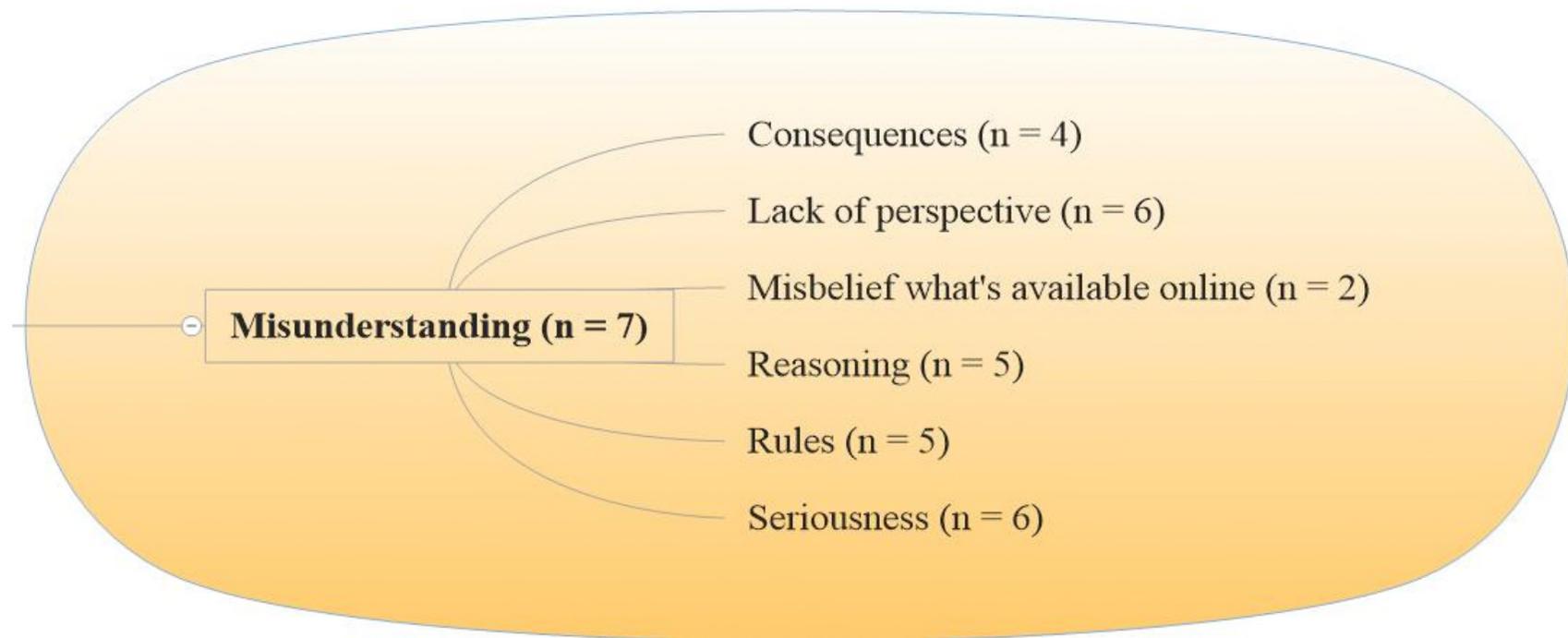
- **Social difficulties (n = 6)**

Feeling different to others (n = 5)

Loneliness (n = 1)

Social skills difficulties (n = 6)

# Misunderstanding



# Sex & relationship difficulties

- **Sex and relationship difficulties (n = 7)**

Lack of sexual experience (n = 2)

Wanting sexual experience (n = 3)

Misunderstanding consent (n = 3)

Lack of appropriate relationships (n = 6)

Transgressive relationships (n = 3)

# Inadequate control

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⊖ **Inadequate control (n = 7)**

Getting carried away (n = 3)

Loss of control (n = 2)

Immaturity (n = 5)

Excuses (n = 4)

# Disequilibrium

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- **Disequilibrium (n = 8)**

Significant life event (n = 3)

Instability (n = 4)

Lack of professional support (n = 5)

Lack of familial support (n = 1)

Substance (n = 4)

# Summary

- Five main motivations
- All offenders referred to more than one theme
- Most frequently reported sub-themes:
  - Social skills difficulties
  - Lack of perspective
  - Misunderstanding the seriousness of their behaviours
  - Lack of appropriate relationships
- Highlights importance to involve offender and consider wide range of motivations

***Any questions?***

***katylouisepayne@gmail.com***