

“The story about me” Psychological perspectives on young men who sexually offended in adolescence.

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Psykologiska institutionen, 2018

Avhandlingen för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i psykologi, som med vederbörligt tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsstyrelsen vid Göteborgs universitet kommer att offentlig försvaras fredagen den 16 mars 2018, klockan 10.00 i sal F1, Psykologiska institutionen, Haraldsgatan 1, Göteborg.

Fakultetsopponent: Liam E. Marshall, PhD, RP, ATSAF, Rockwood Psychotherapy & Consulting, Midland, ON, Canada

Föreliggande uppsats grundar sig på följande artiklar:

- I. Tidefors, I., Ingevaldson, S., & Goulding, A. *Recidivism in criminal behavior—a ten-year follow-up study of 45 adolescent boys identified as sex offenders*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- II. Ingevaldson, S., Goulding, A., Grip, K., & Tidefors, I. *Adult attachment and psychological well-being in young men who sexually offended during adolescence*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- III. Ingevaldson, S., Goulding, A., & Tidefors, I. (2017). Self-views in twenty young men who were identified as sexual offenders in adolescence: A mixed-method study. *Sexual Offender Treatment*, 12. Can be retrieved from <http://www.sexual-offender-treatment.org/161.html>
- IV. Ingevaldson, S., Goulding, A., & Tidefors, I. (2016). Experiences of intimate relationships in young men who sexually offended during adolescence: Interviews 10 years later. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 22, 410-422. doi:10.1080/13552600.2016.1177124



Abstract

Ingevaldson, S. (2018). "The story about me" Psychological perspectives on young men who sexually offended in adolescence. Department of Psychology, University of Gothenburg, PO Box 500, SE-405 30 Gothenburg, Sweden.

In this thesis I aimed to study, from a psychological viewpoint, what adult life is like for young men who sexually offended in adolescence. Data had previously been gathered from a group of 45 adolescents who had sexually offended. About 10 years later, 20 of these 45, now men aged 22–31 years, agreed to participate in the present project. In **Study I**, all original 45 participants were included. In **Studies II, III, and IV**, the 20 participants who agreed to participate in a second data collection were included. In **Study I**, data on recidivism were retrieved; results showed that 29 of the 45 original participants had reoffended, and 7 of these had committed new sexual offenses. The reoffending group were more likely to have had school attendance problems, separated parents, other criminal involvement, problems with drug abuse, and at least one parent born abroad. In the subsample of 20 participants, the reoffending group was found to conform more to masculine norms and to report reduced psychosexual health than the group that had not reoffended. In **Study II**, attachment patterns and psychological well-being was explored. The participants were divided into four groups based on their classification in the Adult Attachment Interview. About half of the participants (12 out of 20) were classified as having an insecure attachment style (9 dismissing and 3 preoccupied), four as having a secure attachment style, and four as having an unresolved/disorganized attachment style. The fact that relatively few participants were classified as unresolved/disorganized, despite most of them having had substantial experiences of abuse in childhood, deviates from earlier studies. There were no significant differences between the attachment groups in background variables or psychological well-being. In **Study III**, a mixed methods design was used to explore participants' views of self through interviews and self-ratings on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). The interviews were coded using content analysis to find all utterances reflecting the participants' views of themselves. These utterances were then divided into two groups: positive views and negative views. Total RSES scores and scores for the Self-Competence and Self-Liking facets were calculated. Results showed that 19 participants rated themselves within or above the normative range and that they generally rated Self-Competence higher than Self-Liking. Combining the quantitative and qualitative data we found contradictions between the rated self and the narrated self. Most of the men seemed to rate their self-esteem aspirationally, but their narratives revealed another picture. In **Study IV**, experiences of intimate relationships and sexuality were examined. The participants were interviewed, and the transcripts thematically analyzed. The main picture that emerged was that of young men with unfulfilled needs and little capacity to meet these needs. The men's experiences of intimate relationships and sexuality seemed to be affected by their experiences of having sexually offended. The young men who participated in the thesis studies seemed to struggle with shame and with contradictory feelings about intimacy. The difficult experiences they carried with them made them vulnerable and their lives fragile in the face of the demands of adult life. The participants were a group because they had all sexually offended in adolescence; however, at the end of this project it remains unclear whether their sexual offending is the most important feature of the group. Children who are neglected, abused, and deprived of a secure and caring childhood environment are at risk for developing several kinds of psychological problems, physical impairments, and delinquent behaviors. What is clear is that no matter what pathway leads from a difficult childhood, strong interventions are necessary to support children and their caregivers.

Keywords: adolescent sexual offending; Adult Attachment Interview; follow-up study; intimate relationships; mixed-method; psychological well-being; sexuality; reoffending; views of self.

ISBN: 978-91-984488-6-3 (Print), ISBN: 978-91-984488-7-0 (PDF)

ISSN: 1101-718X, <http://hdl.handle.net/2077/55059>