Preliminary Findings on Men's Sexual Self-Schema and Sexual Offending: Differences Between Subtypes of Offenders

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Available literature suggests that sexual self-schemas (i.e., cognitive generalizations about sexual aspects of oneself) influence sexual behavior. Nonetheless, there is a lack of research regarding their role in sexual offending. The aim of the present study was to investigate the relationship between the men's sexual self-schema dimensions (passionate-loving, powerful-aggressive, and open-minded-liberal) and different types of sexual-offending behavior. A total of 50 rapists, 65 child molesters (21 pedophilic, 44 nonpedophilic), and 51 nonsexual offenders answered the Men's Sexual Self-Schema Scale, the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI), and the Socially Desirable Response Set Measure (SDRS-5). Data were analyzed using multinomial logistic regression, controlling for age, school education, psychological distress, and social desirability. Results showed that rapists as well as nonsexual offenders were more likely to hold the powerful-aggressive sexual self-view compared to pedophilic and nonpedophilic child molesters. Overall, findings seem to be consistent with both a sociocultural component of aggression and the general cognitive profile of offenders. If further research corroborates these preliminary findings, sexual self-concept may be integrated into a comprehensive multifactorial approach of offending behavior.

Sexual offenders constitute a heterogeneous group at diverse levels, including the type of offending behavior (e.g., exhibitionism, child sexual abuse, rape) and the characteristics/severity of their offenses, which may range from exposure of the genitals, to relatively non-aggressive sexual practices, to serious sexual sadism and violence (Baurmann, 1983; Marshall, 2007). For instance, empirical data have shown that rapists are mainly coercive offenders adopting a raptor or stalker attack method and greater use of force and/or weapons against victims, whereas child molesters are typically manipulative offenders, bribing or tricking children without physical force (Cohen, Frenda, Mojtabai, Katsavdakis, & Galynker, 2007; Rebocho, 2009; Rebocho & Gonçalves, 2012). Such group heterogeneity highlights the importance of designing preventive and therapeutic programs that consider the particular features and needs of each type of offender (Baurmann, 1983; Gannon, Collie, Ward, & Thakker, 2008). Likewise, childhood sexual victimization is estimated around 27% among girls and 14% among boys. In a multicountry study, the prevalence of sexual abuse reported by women ranged from 6% to 59% (see World Health Organization, 2012). Considering this evidence, we think empirical investigation on the factors associated with different types of sexual offending is justified.

In the available literature, several theories aim to explain why some individuals commit sexual offenses against women and children, respectively. There are also some generic multifactorial approaches developed to explain both rape and child sexual abuse (e.g., Marshall & Barbaree, 1990; Ward & Beech, 2006). For instance, Malamuth and colleagues developed the confluence model, showing that sexual aggression against women results from the interaction of two developmental pathways: hostile masculinity (i.e., personality traits related to a defensive and hostile orientation, particularly toward women) and promiscuous/impersonal sex (i.e., a noncommittal and unrestricted pattern in sexual relationships; Malamuth, Linz, Heavey, Barnes, & Acker, 1995; Malamuth, Sockloskie, Koss, & Tanaka, 1991). Ward and Siegert (2002) developed the pathways model of child sexual abuse, proposing four interacting etiological pathways that are involved in sexual offenses against children: intimacy deficits, deviant sexual scripts, emotional dysregulation, and cognitive distortions. In addition, Marshall and Barbaree's (1990) integrated theory argues that biological, developmental, psychological, sociocultural, and situational factors are

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involved in the onset of rape and child sexual abuse, respectively. This theory also proposes that the offending behavior is maintained by cognitive distortions and/or by the reinforcing effects of deviant sexual acts (e.g., sexual arousal, sense of power, or decrease of low mood; Ward, 2002).

In general, the role of cognitive factors, such as distorted attitudes and beliefs about children/women, and/or about sex is acknowledged in the majority of multifactorial theories of sexual offending as well as in available treatment programs for sexual offenders (e.g., Gannon et al., 2008; Maruna & Mann, 2006; Ward & Beech, 2006; Ward & Siegert, 2002; Yates, 2013). Nonetheless, it is increasingly hypothesized that such cognitive distortions originate from underlying cognitive schemas and these schemas are the most important factor when addressing the offenders' cognition (Beech, Bartels, & Dixon, 2013; Maruna & Mann, 2006; Yates, 2013). A schema consists of a cognitive structure that includes stable beliefs and assumptions about self, others, and the world. It functions as an organizing principle, directing the cognitive processing of life events (Beck, 1995; Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003). Prior research has found schemas of suspicion of and hostility toward women, grievance, entitlement, sexual entitlement, and a need for control in rapists (Mann & Hollin, 2001; Milner & Webster, 2005; Polaschek & Ward, 2002). In turn, child molesters presented a greater sense of worthlessness (Milner & Webster, 2005) and high levels of maladaptive schemas related to rejection, impaired autonomy, other directness, and inhibition themes (Carvalho & Nobre, 2014; Chakhssi, de Ruiter, & Bernstein, 2013). Moreover, Ward (2000) proposed the implicit theories approach, arguing that offenders' underlying schemas could be viewed as implicit theories about themselves, their victims, and broader categories of individuals (women and children). Specifically, Ward and Keenan (1999) identified five core implicit theories in child molesters: children as sexual beings, entitlement, dangerous world, uncontrollability, and nature of harm. In addition, Polaschek and Ward (2002) proposed five implicit theories in rapists, which were empirically supported afterward (Polaschek & Gannon, 2004): entitlement, dangerous world, women as sex objects, male sex drive is uncontrollable, and women are unknowable/dangerous. Overall, the examination of both sexual and nonsexual schemas of offenders is of utmost relevance given that different schematic categories presuppose different treatment needs (Beech et al., 2013; Fisher & Beech, 2007).

Like any other cognitive schema, self-schemas are stable organizations of knowledge that assimilate a set of information and experiences. The specific feature of self-schemas is that they include the individual's thoughts, feelings, and experiences about the self in a specific behavioral domain (Markus, 1977; Markus & Sentis, 1982; Stein, 1995). They trust only information consistent with the content of their self-schema and ignore any discrepant information. As a result, self-schemas are difficult to change. If they present a negative nature, they will orient the processing of negative information about the self, resulting in negative and dysfunctional cognitive products. Accordingly, self-schemas are a relevant type of schema within clinical psychology (Rijo, 2009).

Following a sociocognitive perspective, Andersen and Cyranowski (1994) proposed the concept of the sexual self-schema as a cognitive generalization about sexual aspects of the self. This cognitive view derives from past experience, manifests in current experience, and guides sexual behavior. Sexual self-schemas are proposed as important regulators of sexual cognition, behavior, and affect, influencing perceptual and behavioral responses within sexual and interpersonal situations (Cyranowski & Andersen, 1998). Men's sexual self-schema consists of three dimensions or factors: passionate-loving, powerful-aggressive, and open-minded-liberal (Andersen, Cyranowski, & Espindle, 1999). Factor 1 (passionate-loving) is related to men's capacity for experiencing loving and passionate feelings, and is strongly associated with sexual arousal felt during sexual activities and feelings of love for a romantic partner. Factor 2 (powerful-aggressive) is related to gender-specific traits, such as being powerful, aggressive, and independent. This factor taps behavioral aspects of the sexual drive or motivation for sexual activity and is strongly correlated with various sexual behavior variables, such as sex without commitment, number of one-night stands, number of lifetime sexual partners, and coercive sexual behavior. Finally, Factor 3 (open-minded-liberal) is related to liberal and open-minded sexual attitudes, which seem to be relevant to aspects of both Factors 1 and 2. For instance, Factor 3 is correlated with feelings of love toward a romantic partner (similary to Factor 1), and with number of sexual partners and coercive sexual behavior (similar to Factor 2; Andersen et al., 1999). Overall, a sexually schematic man is one who experiences emotions of passion and love, sees himself as being powerful and aggressive, and is open-minded in his sexual attitudes. The general hypothesis is that men make predictions about sexual behavior that are consistent with their sexual self-representations (Andersen et al., 1999).

Despite being aspects of a self-view that impact sexual behavior, there is a lack of research regarding the role of sexual self-schema on sexual offending. Barner (2003) conducted a study on this topic using data from female and male college students. Findings from the male sample showed that a self-reported history of sexually aggressive behavior was positively correlated with Factor 2 (powerful-aggressive). As previously stated, the powerful-aggressive dimension includes traits that are congruent with stereotypical male characteristics translated to a sexual domain (e.g., domineering, direct, and independent; Andersen et al., 1999). Research has

shown that men with high sex-role stereotyping present patterns of sexual arousal that are equivalent to those found in documented rapists, and indicate some likelihood to commit rape (Check & Malamuth, 1983). Likewise, individuals with more traditional gender-role beliefs presented more rape-accepting attitudes or rape myths (e.g., many women enjoy being raped or could resist rapists if they really wanted to; Burt, 1980; Talbot, Neill, & Rankin, 2010). Peters, Nason, and Turner (2007) argued that hypermasculinity is one of the strongest predictors of rape. Similarly, in a recent literature review, Miller (2014) concluded that the endorsement of traditional male-female sex roles and high masculinity are among the common psychosocial characteristics of rapists. Overall, these independent studies suggest a relationship between hypermasculinity, gender-role stereotyping, and rape.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between the men's sexual self-schema dimensions and different types of sexual-offending behavior. Specifically, we compared three subtypes of sex offenders (rapists, pedophilic child molesters, and nonpedophilic child molesters) and a nonsex offender group on the basis of their sexual self-representations. To our knowledge, to date, this was the first study examining the potential relevance of male sexual self-schema (a cognitive construct related specifically to sexuality) using convicted offenders. It is also important to underline that sexual offending against children is not synonymous with pedophilia. Pedophilia is characterized by persistent sexual interest in prepubescent children representing a significant risk factor for sexual recidivism (Seto, 2009). It is estimated that around 40% to 50% of sex offenders with child victims have pedophilic interests (Seto, 2004, 2009, 2012). Prior research found some significant differences between pedophilic and nonpedophilic child molesters, arguing the importance of making a distinction between these two subtypes of offenders (e.g., Strassberg, Eastvold, Kenney, & Suchy, 2012). Overall, despite the exploratory nature of the study, based on the literature reviewed (e.g., Check & Malamuth, 1983; Peters et al., 2007), we expected that rapists would be more likely to present the powerful-aggressive sexual self-view compared to the other offender groups.

Method

Participants

In all, 65 child molesters and 50 rapists participated in the study. A cutoff point of 14 for the victim age was considered for the definition of these groups. Child molesters included men convicted for sexual offense(s) against children under the age of 14 (100%). Their offenses included different forms of contact with the child, such as fondling (64%), oral sex (41%), and/or penetration (65%). Rapists included men convicted for sexual offense(s) against female victims aged between 14 and 18 years (10%), and over 18 years (90%). Their offenses consisted mainly of penetration (88%) involving physical and psychological coercion (68%) and/or the use of weapons (42%). According to data from the Screening Scale for Pedophilic Interests (Seto & Lalumière, 2001; see a description in the Measures section), two child molesters subgroups were constituted: pedophilic child molesters, comprising individuals more likely to have pedophilic sexual interests ($n = 21$; hereafter referred to as *pedophiles*), and nonpedophilic child molesters ($n = 44$; hereafter referred to as *nonpedophiles*). Regarding the gender of the victims, 67% of the pedophiles had at least one male victim, whereas 33% had only female victims. In turn, 91% of the nonpedophiles had solely female victims.

An additional group of 51 men, convicted for nonsexual crimes (e.g., fraud, burglary, robbery, and homicide), also participated in the study. The criminal files of the participants were checked in an attempt to ensure that they had no sexual offenses in their criminal histories. In Table 1, participant characteristics are presented.

Procedure

After the approval of the ethics committee of Direcção Geral dos Serviços Prisionais in Portugal, participants were recruited from four Portuguese prisons. Data were collected between January 2012 and October 2013. All participants were approached individually by the principal investigator and received an explanation about the nature of the study, in a private room. After giving written informed consent, participants answered the questionnaires voluntarily with the assistance of the researcher, who was available to clarify items. Confidentiality of data was guaranteed, and participants were assured that their responses would be used for research purposes only.[1] They also had the right to withdraw from participation at any time. Information about the characteristics of the crimes was obtained through the examination of the participants' criminal files.

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[1]Before participation, all participants signed a consent form that informed them about the confidentiality of their responses as well as about the protection of their personal identities. Specifically, they were assured that all collected data would be used for research purposes only and would not be transmitted to anyone within the prison context. Thus, their participation would not have any (negative) impact on their penal situation. Despite these safeguards, results may be influenced by participants' incarcerated condition. Accordingly, we have statistically controlled some variables that may have affected the validity of their responses, namely, social desirability and psychological distress levels.

Table 1. *Participant characteristics*

Characteristics	Rapists ($n = 50$)		Pedophiles ($n = 21$)		Nonpedophiles ($n = 44$)		Nonsex offenders ($n = 51$)	
Age (years)								
M (SD)	38.0[a]	(9.1)	45.7[b]	(14.0)	44.5[b]	(9.6)	40.6[ab]	(12.2)
Range	24–60		23–76		27–73		25–78	
$F(3, 162) = 3.983$; $p < .01$								
Marital status (%)								
Single	58.0		47.6		29.5		43.1	
Married/cohabiting	34.0		28.6		40.9		27.5	
Separated/divorced/widowed	8.0		23.8		29.5		29.4	
$\chi^2 = 12.564$; $df = 6$; $p = .051$								
Education (years)								
M (SD)	7.7[ab]	(3.0)	9.0[bc]	(3.9)	6.6[a]	(3.1)	9.3[c]	(3.7)
Range	4–12		4–15		4–15		4–15	
$F(3, 162) = 5.449$; $p < .01$								
History of sexual victimization (%)	14.0		10.5		10.0		3.9	
$\chi^2 = 3.092$; $df = 3$; $p = .378$								
Alcohol abuse (%)	8.0		4.8		4.5		3.9	
$\chi^2 = .956$; $df = 3$; $p = .812$								
Drug abuse (%)	4.0		4.8		0		2.0	
$\chi^2 = 2.162$; $df = 3$; $p = .539$								
Men's sexual self-schema dimensions: M (SD)								
Factor 1. Passionate-loving	49.72	(6.28)	47.62	(9.44)	45.80	(9.32)	47.29	(9.09)
Factor 2. Powerful-aggressive	50.24	(6.89)	44.86	(9.19)	44.91	(9.86)	49.33	(8.98)
Factor 3. Open-minded-liberal	16.60	(4.52)	16.00	(4.59)	15.14	(3.76)	16.63	(3.87)

Note. Means in the same row with different superscript letters differ significantly from one another other.

Measures

Screening scale for pedophilic interests. The Screening Scale for Pedophilic Interests (SSPI) (Seto & Lalumière, 2001; translated to Portuguese by Carvalho, 2011) is a brief screening instrument that measures pedophilic sexual interests among sex offenders with child victims. It is significantly correlated with phallometrically measured sexual arousal to children (Seto & Lalumière, 2001). The scale is scored based on file information about historical/static offense variables that are reliably associated with pedophilia among sex offenders: (a) any male victim; (b) more than one victim; (c) any prepubescent victim; (d) any unrelated/extrafamilial victim. Possible total score ranged from 0 to 5, given that one of the items (any male victim) is scored as 0 (*Absent*) or 2 (*Present*), whereas the other three items are scored as 0 (*Absent*) or 1 (*Present*). A higher score is indicative of pedophilic sexual interests (Seto, 2009; Seto & Lalumière, 2001). In this study, to identify and compare child molester subtypes, the group of sex offenders with child victims was dichotomized based on high (3 to 5; pedophiles) versus low (0 to 2; nonpedophiles) SSPI scores.

Men's sexual self-Schema scale. The Men's Sexual Self-Schema Scale (Andersen et al., 1999; translated and adapted to Portuguese by Nobre, 2003) is a 45-item measure that assesses male sexual self-schema (i.e., men's cognitive view of the sexual self). It is composed of three factors: (a) passionate-loving, (b) powerful-aggressive,

and (c) open-minded-liberal. The scale has acceptable test-retest reliability ($r = .81$, for a nine-week interval), and internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha values were as follows: .86 for the full scale; .89 for Factor 1; .78 for Factor 2; and .65 for Factor 3; Andersen et al., 1999). The reliability of the scale has also been supported in other studies: $\alpha = .82$ (Villanueva, 2012) and $\alpha = .79$ (Cash, Maikkula, & Yamamiya, 2004). In the present study, we found a Cronbach's alpha of .84 for the full scale.

Brief symptom inventory. The Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) (Derogatis & Spencer, 1982) is a 53-item measure that assesses the presence of psychopathological symptoms according to nine dimensions: somatization, depression, hostility, anxiety, phobic anxiety, psychoticism, obsessive-compulsive, paranoid ideation, and interpersonal sensitivity. Three global indexes can also be calculated from the raw scores on the scale: the General Severity Index (GSI), the Positive Symptom Distress Index (PSDI), and the Positive Symptom Total (PST). The first index (GSI; a weighted frequency score based on the sum of the ratings the subject has assigned to each symptom) is the best single indicator of current distress levels (Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1983). The BSI presents good psychometric properties (Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1983). The Portuguese version of the scale also shows acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .62 [psychoticism] to .80 [somatization]) and test-retest reliability (from $r = .63$ for paranoid ideation to $r = .81$ for depression; Canavarro, 2007).

Socially desirable response set measure. The Socially Desirable Response Set Measure (SDRS-5) (Hays, Hayashi, & Stewart, 1989) is a five-item measure that assesses participants' tendencies to respond in a socially desirable way. The five items are rated using a 5-point Likert scale (*Definitely true, Mostly true, Don't know, Mostly false, Definitely false*). Only the most extreme response is considered indicative of social desirability (i.e., *Definitely true* or *Definitely false* is scored with 1 point). Thus, total scores ranged from 0 to 5, with a higher score indicating higher levels of socially desirable responses. Internal consistency of the scale was acceptable (Cronbach's alpha = .68; Hays et al., 1989).

Portuguese psychometric studies supported its internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .70; Carvalho, 2011).

Statistical Analyses

Multinomial logistic regression (MLR) analyses were conducted through SPSS NOMREG (see Maroco, 2011; Petrucci, 2009; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) to investigate the relationship between the men's sexual self-schema dimensions and different types of sexual-offending behavior. Because the dependent variable included four categories/groups (pedophiles, nonpedophiles, rapists, nonsexual offenders) MLR was the analysis of choice.

Table 2. *Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis of Offender Type as a Function of the Men's Sexual Self-schema Dimensions*

Offender Types	Predictor	B	SE_B	Wald Statistic	Odds Ratio	95% CI	p
Rapists vs. Nonsex offenders	Age	−.03	.02	1.61	.97	.93–1.02	.204
	School education	−.14	.07	4.15	.87	.76–1.00	.042
	GSI	.79	.46	2.95	2.21	.90–5.44	.086
	Social desirability	.06	.16	.16	1.07	.78–1.46	.693
	Passionate-loving	.03	.03	.70	1.03	.96–1.10	.402
	Powerful-aggressive	−.01	.03	.10	.99	.94–1.05	.756
	Open-minded-liberal	.02	.06	.15	1.02	.92–1.14	.697
Pedophiles vs. Nonsex offenders	Age	.04	.03	3.07	1.05	1.00–1.10	.080
	School education	.02	.08	.05	1.02	.87–1.19	.829
	GSI	1.02	.62	2.67	2.77	.82–9.37	.102
	Social desirability	.22	.22	.98	1.24	.81–1.92	.322
	Passionate-loving	.05	.04	1.11	1.05	.96–1.14	.291
	Powerful-aggressive	−.09	.04	4.95	.92	.85–.99	.026
	Open-minded-liberal	−.01	.07	.03	.99	.87–1.13	.871
Nonpedophiles vs. Nonsex offenders	Age	.01	.02	.37	1.01	.97–1.06	.542
	School education	−.21	.07	8.97	.81	.71–.93	.003
	GSI	−.21	.53	.16	.81	.29–2.29	.690
	Social desirability	.18	.18	.95	1.19	.84–1.69	.329
	Passionate-loving	.04	.03	1.20	1.04	.97–1.11	.274
	Powerful-aggressive	−.08	.03	5.79	.92	.86–.99	.016
	Open-minded-liberal	−.04	.06	.39	.96	.86–1.08	.531
Pedophiles vs. Rapists	Age	.07	.03	7.21	1.08	1.02–1.13	.007
	School education	.16	.09	3.25	1.17	.99–1.38	.071
	GSI	.23	.59	.15	1.25	.39–3.99	.702
	Social desirability	.16	.27	.47	1.17	.75–1.82	.492
	Passionate-loving	.02	.05	.14	1.02	.93–1.11	.709
	Powerful-aggressive	−.08	.04	3.84	.93	.86–1.00	.050
	Open-minded-liberal	−.03	.07	.23	.97	.85–1.11	.633
Nonpedophiles vs. Rapists	Age	.04	.02	3.32	1.04	1.00–1.09	.069
	School education	−.07	.07	.96	.93	.81–1.08	.327
	GSI	−1.00	.50	4.01	.37	.14–.98	.045
	Social desirability	.11	.18	.38	1.12	.78–1.60	.537
	Passionate-loving	.01	.04	.06	1.01	.94–1.08	.812
	Powerful-aggressive	−.07	.03	4.51	.93	.87–1.00	.034
	Open-minded-liberal	−.06	.06	1.00	.94	.84–1.06	.317
Pedophiles vs. Nonpedophiles	Age	.03	.03	1.54	1.03	.98–1.08	.215
	School education	.23	.09	7.13	1.26	1.06–1.48	.008
	GSI	1.23	.63	3.77	3.42	.99–11.83	.052
	Social desirability	.04	.24	.03	1.04	.66–1.65	.853
	Passionate-loving	.01	.04	.04	1.01	.93–1.10	.850
	Powerful-aggressive	−.01	.04	.02	1.00	.92–1.08	.892
	Open-minded-liberal	.03	.07	.14	1.03	.90–1.18	.711

Note. N = 166; GSI = General Severity Index; SE_B = Standard error of the regression coefficient; 95% CI = 95% confidence interval of odds ratio. The reference category is the second offender type listed in each subtable.

Age, school education, psychological distress (GSI), and social desirability were included in the analyses as covariates to control for their possible effects. The results are interpreted in terms of odds ratio rather than regression coefficients. Specifically, an odds ratio greater than 1 indicates an increased likelihood for the event of interest, and an odds ratio less than 1 indicates a decreased likelihood for the event of interest. To identify whether specific dimensions would discriminate each sex offender type, an approach involving comparison of all groups was adopted (i.e., parameter estimates were run for all paired groupings of the dependent variable). Thus, to compare rapists, pedophiles, and nonpedophiles with nonsex offenders, the nonsex offenders were set as the reference category. To compare pedophiles and nonpedophiles with rapists, the regression analyses were rerun with rapists set as the reference category. Finally, to compare pedophiles with nonpedophiles, nonpedophiles were set as the reference category. This is one of the main strengths of MLR (Petrucci, 2009).

Results

Offender Type as a Function of the Men's Sexual Self-Schema Dimensions

A MLR was conducted by entering the covariates and the men's sexual self-schema dimensions (passionate-loving, powerful-aggressive, and open-minded-liberal) as predictors. The full model was significantly reliable, χ^2 (21, $N = 166$) = 51.579, $p < .001$, accounting for between 27% (Cox and Snell R^2) and 29% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in offender status. The overall classification accuracy rate was 50%, which improves on chance by 25% or more (the proportional-by-chance accuracy rate was 33.9%). Thus, the model had adequate accuracy (see Petrucci, 2009).

Table 2 provides the regression coefficients and their standard errors, the Wald statistics, the odds ratios, their 95% confidence intervals, and respective p values from the various runs of the analyses. Specifically, Table 2 is composed of six subtables, each presenting the parameter estimates for a paired grouping of the dependent variable. The reference category is the second offender type listed in each subtable.

An examination of the odds ratio shown in Table 2 indicates that, after controlling for group differences in covariates, pedophiles and nonpedophiles were less likely to hold the powerful-aggressive dimension than nonsex offenders (OR = .92, $p < .05$)—or, using the reciprocal of .92 (see Petrucci, 2009)—nonsex offenders were 1.09 times more likely to hold the powerful-aggressive self-view than pedophiles and nonpedophiles. Similarly, pedophiles as well as nonpedophiles were less likely to hold the powerful-aggressive dimension compared to rapists (OR = .93, $p \leq .05$)—or, using the reciprocal of .93, rapists were

1.08 times more likely to hold the powerful-aggressive self-view than pedophiles and nonpedophiles.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between men's sexual self-schema dimensions and different types of sexual-offending behavior. Specifically, we compared three subtypes of sex offenders (rapists, pedophilic, and nonpedophilic child molesters) and a nonsexual offender group on the basis of their sexual self-representations. We hoped to extend the available literature regarding the role of cognitive factors on sexual offending by examining the potential relevance of a cognitive construct related specifically to sexuality using convicted offenders. Moreover, while empirical research has primarily focused on the differences between rapists and child molesters, in this study a distinction was made between pedophilic and nonpedophilic child molesters. Overall, after accounting for group differences in age, school education, psychological distress, and social desirability, results partially supported our hypothesis.

Rapists but also nonsexual offenders were more likely to hold the powerful-aggressive sexual self-view (i.e., traits that are congruent with stereotypical male characteristics, such as being independent, domineering, powerful, and direct; Andersen et al., 1999) compared to pedophiles and nonpedophiles. These findings seem to be consistent with a sociocultural component of aggression. Indeed, prior research has shown an association between high traditional gender-role stereotyping and both acceptance of rape myths (Burt, 1980; Talbot et al., 2010) and rape proclivity (Check & Malamuth, 1983). In particular, feminist theories argue that rape-prone cultures present higher acceptance of macho attitudes and support of male supremacy (see Burt, 1980; Gannon et al., 2008). According to Drieschner and Lange (1999), men who have macho attitudes adhere to a notion of masculinity that includes power, competitiveness, and aggression, and rape might be viewed as a way to validate masculinity.

Besides this sociocultural perspective, the results also appear consistent with prior findings on cognitive schemata in sex offenders. Particularly, schemas related to powerful, controlling, and aggressive themes (i.e., suspicion of or hostility toward women, sexual entitlement, grievance, uncontrollability of male sex drive, and a need for control over situations and people) have been found in rapists (Mann & Hollin, 2001; Milner & Webster, 2005; Polaschek & Gannon, 2004; Polaschek & Ward, 2002).

Furthermore, prior research has also indicated a relationship between masculine gender identity and the propensity for nonsexual criminality (Beesley & McGuire, 2009). Thus, our results on the relationship

between the powerful-aggressive dimension and nonsexual crimes seem to be in line with these findings. Specifically, hypermasculine men were identified as more aggressive in general—and in particular toward females who demonstrate gender-role violations (Parrot & Zeichner, 2003; Reidy, Shirk, Sloan, & Zeichner, 2009). In addition, similarly to rapists, nonsexual violent offenders presented a need for control. They also showed higher scores on schemas of passive victim and vengeful entitlement when compared to rapists and child molesters (Milner & Webster, 2005). Overall, it seems there is a congruence between the nonsex offenders' general cognitive profile and the masculine traits of the powerful-aggressive dimension of the sexual self-schema.

Contrary to these two types of offenders, available research has shown that child molesters presented a high sense of worthlessness and general high levels of dysfunctional schemas related to self-perception (Carvalho & Nobre, 2014; Chakhssi et al., 2013; Milner & Webster, 2005). Looking particularly at male pedophiles, previous studies concluded that they have an impaired interpersonal functioning, reduced assertiveness, and poor self-esteem (Bridges, Wilson, & Gacono, 1998; Cohen et al., 2002). In addition, rapists were significantly more aggressive than child molesters (Shechory and Ben-David, 2005). In line with both these previous findings and the present results, we may speculate that passionate-loving, liberal, or mainly powerful traits may not be particularly descriptive of or congruent with the cognitive representations of child molesters' sexual selves. Given the lack of research on the potential relationship between sexual self-schema and sexual offending, our results are preliminary; further investigation on this topic is necessary.

Overall, considering the present findings, we may hypothesize that individuals who perceive themselves as being powerful-aggressive may have an increased likelihood of committing rape but also general nonsexual crimes (i.e., crimes against adults/peers). This may happen when they feel that their self-concept as a man is being threatened. This hypothesis is consistent with previous studies suggesting that hypermasculinity-driven aggression may be precipitated in situations that interfere with the "normal" pattern of masculine gender identity (e.g., Mosher & Sirkin, 1984; Reidy et al., 2009). It is important to highlight the congruence that seems to exist between the offenders' general cognitive profile and this specific aspect of the individual self-concept. Specifically, prior research indicated that rapists and nonsexual violent offenders showed cognitive schemata related to power and control themes (Milner & Webster, 2005). Considering the present results, these cognitive features also seem to manifest in self-perception regarding particular behavioral domains (i.e., sexuality).

Furthermore, we also propose that, alongside this powerful-aggressive sexual self-representation, the endorsement of dysfunctional cognitive structures or

implicit theories regarding women and sexuality may be of utmost relevance to understand why rapists choose sex to validate their masculinity, unlike nonsex offenders. This hypothesis seems to be congruent with the confluence model of sexual aggression developed by Malamuth and colleagues (1991). Indeed, using a sample of aggressive college students, Malamuth and colleagues (1991) found that hostile masculinity led to both sexual and nonsexual coercion toward women, whereas sexual promiscuity, especially in interaction with hostile masculinity, led to sexual aggression.

Because of the cross-sectional and retrospective nature of the study, the findings should not be interpreted as proposing causal relationships. Moreover, results should be interpreted with caution due to important limitations. One main limitation was related to the small sample size. We recognize that further studies with larger samples, particularly of pedophilic and non-pedophilic child molesters, are needed to enhance the power of these preliminary analyses. Furthermore, the use of the SSPI as a measure to assess pedophilia was another limitation. It is not a diagnostic tool, and to date relatively few studies have used this instrument. In addition, the scoring method adopted for this scale (a dichotomized score rather than a continuous score) may have resulted in possible errors in the formation of the child molester subgroups. However, it was used to differentiate and compare pedophilic and nonpedophilic child molesters given its nonintrusive nature and its validity in the assessment of pedophilic interests (Seto, 2009; Seto & Lalumière, 2001). It is also relevant to note that participants were not asked directly about their offenses and the constitution of the groups was based only on the information contained in the offenders' criminal files. Thus, the group assignment relied on official information only. Likewise, the responses of the sex offenders may have been affected by the fact that they were convicted for some of their sexual behavior. Nonetheless, we statistically controlled some variables that may have affected the validity of their responses, such as social desirability and psychological distress levels. Furthermore, the study used a Portuguese sample; thus, findings may be related to this specific sociocultural context. Further research with larger Portuguese samples of sex offenders, as well as samples from other countries, is recommended to extend analyses cross-culturally. It is also suggested that future studies should include additional criteria for pedophilia (e.g., phallometric testing and/or *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fifth Edition (*DSM*-5) criteria; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) and make a distinction between violent and nonviolent nonsexual offenders. Such a distinction is recommended given that the use or nonuse of force/violence may result in differential victims' reactions and outcomes (Baurmann, 1983; Marshall, 2007; Rind, Tromovitch, & Bauserman, 1998). Marshall (2007)

noted that a small group of rapists and an even smaller group of child molesters may be considered sexual sadists. Such diagnosis of sexual sadism is of utmost relevance, given that these individuals likely use very high levels of violence, causing serious harm to their victims. Therefore, understanding the specific features of sex offenders on the basis of the severity of their deviant behaviors may have important implications for increasing effective assessment, intervention, and risk management of offenders. Finally, further research on this topic using a nonoffender/nonconvicted control group is required to extend these preliminary data and to draw more powerful conclusions.[2]

In conclusion, similarly to any cognitive schema, self-schemas trust only the information consistent with their content, ignoring any discrepant information (Rijo, 2009). If self-schemas are negative (or, as in this case, related to a powerful-aggressive self-perception), they will orient both the processing of social/interpersonal information and the individual's behavioral response in a congruent manner. Accordingly, if further research corroborates these preliminary findings, sexual self-concept may be integrated into a more comprehensive assessment and management programs of rapists and nonsex offenders. It constitutes a specific type of self-schema whose change may guide offenders to a more adaptive way of perceiving themselves, as well as sexual/interpersonal situations. We think that such change of self-perception may have an impact on the likelihood of future offending and risk management of offenders. However, it is important to underline the multifactorial nature of antisocial behavior, including sexual offending (e.g., Malamuth et al., 1991; Marshall & Barbaree, 1990; Ward & Beech, 2006). It is necessary to consider different biological, psychological, social, and situational factors to understand the etiology and maintenance of criminal behavior. It is proposed that male sexual self-schema may be incorporated into a comprehensive multifactorial approach of offending behavior. Moreover, prevention strategies attending to developmental and socialization experiences about gender-role stereotyping could be implemented. Investigation on the relationship between

sexual self-schema dimensions, hypermasculinity/sexrole stereotyping, and interpersonal behavior styles in offenders may be a relevant area of study.

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[2]We are currently collecting data from nonconvicted Portuguese men on sexual self-schema, given the lack of normative data in Portugal. We have already recruited 43 men with the following mean scores: Factor 1. Passionate-loving: $M = 42.26$, $SD = 7.05$; Factor 2. Powerful-aggressive: $M = 43.63$, $SD = 8.04$; Factor 3. Open-minded-liberal: $M = 16.77$, $SD = 3.74$. Regarding specifically to the powerful-aggressive dimension, we conducted two One-sample t tests, respectively, for rapists and nonsex offenders. We found that rapists ($M = 50.24$, $SD = 6.89$) as well as nonsex offenders ($M = 49.33$, $SD = 8.98$; see Table 1) presented significantly higher scores on this dimension compared to the nonconvicted men ($M = 43.63$; $SD = 8.04$; $p < .001$). However, these results are only preliminary, and we will continue to collect more data, aiming to match the offender groups in terms of sociodemographics as much as possible (for instance, the 43 nonconvicted men are younger and significantly more educated than the convicted men).

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