Child abusers may develop subtle distortions in their sexual scripts that interact with dysfunctional relationship schemas. These mental representations might develop as a result of early and inappropriate sexual experiences where periods of rejection, disappointment, or loneliness can lead to deviant learning...

- Deviant sexual arousal, intimacy deficits, inappropriate emotions, and cognitive distortions play a role in developing socially appropriate relationships and might therefore increase the risk of improper sexual behaviour with a child.
- Hypothesized that initially there are no major distortions regarding the development of sexual preferences for children and/or sexually abusive behaviours
  - Deviant sexual scripts are ‘acquired’ during the course of an individual’s development, through sensitivity to rejection and a need for love and approval.
  - Thus, child sexual offending is likely to occur when the abuser has had little opportunity of establishing alternative relationships with an adult.
- **Disinhibition** factor: disinhibition alone is not a source of motivation but the reason motivation is ‘unleashed’
  - focuses on situational factors such as stress in relation to alcohol abuse or marital breakdown
  - Sexual abuse of a child cannot be explained simply by the fact that an adult is sexually aroused by a child → arousal may be negated through alternative sources of sexual gratification or as a result of inhibitory mechanisms such as adherence to social controls
  - it appears unlikely that an individual, who has no prior motive to sexually abuse children, will be encouraged to do so due to a loss of inhibitions.

**STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Strength: the precondition model that it links motives and processes of offending with environmental factors
- But – failure to consider external factors – predisposition of person or vulnerability to offend → from development and genetics

**Adolescent offenders**

- Behaviour = compulsive, mindless, and habitual where there is a focus on the pleasurable features such as sexual arousal and the anticipated orgasm
- Might not have developed self-regulation that would enable them to evaluate long-term consequences, the victim’s response or harm to the victim. Consequently, it has been noted that adolescents that have been abused as a child show less empathy than non-abused children, have trouble recognizing appropriate emotions in others, and have difficulty taking another person’s perspective
- Early negative childhood experiences = major precursor

**PATHWAY 3 – EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION** etiological pathway perceives that child abusers possess normal sexual scripts but as a result of a dysfunctional emotional regulation system, problems occur in the management of emotions → strong negative mood leads to a lack of control
Level 3 = rich theories about the offense and relapse

Need to come back to...

Gobbels et al- desistance from offending

- More usefully conceptualized as a gradual process with a number of false starts finally culminating in cessation of all offending

Integrated theory of desistance from offending

**Phase 1 – decisive momentum**

- Factors like marriage, work, and military service are turning points that promote desistance
- Criminal desistance is not a discrete point in time
- It is important to emphasize that capitalizing on decisive momentum is only possible if a person is open to change
- The offender starts to see his offending behaviour as problematic and considers the possibility of change.

**Phase 2 – rehabilitation**

**Phase 3 – re-entry**
People either make internal attributions, in which causal explanations for actions are located within an individual, or external attributions, which locate causal explanations for behaviour in outside social and environmental factors.

For offenders to blame their behaviour on societal factors or the victims’ provocation → purpose of reducing guilt and anxiety and maintaining self-esteem.

Gudjonsson (1984) constructed the Blame Attribution Inventory (BAI) which was designed to measure the way in which offenders attribute blame for their misdemeanors.

- External attribution
- Mental element attribution
- Guilt feeling attribution

Loza and Clements (1991) found that rapists who were also alcoholics blamed their offences on alcohol more than nonalcoholics.

Gudjonsson and Singh (1988) found sex offenders to have the highest guilt feeling scores.

- This suggests that blaming mental factors for the offence does not reduce feelings of guilt whereas blaming external factors does.
- While blame attribution relates to an individual’s perception of the specific circumstances of the offence, cognitive distortions relate to more global attitudes and beliefs about the acceptability of sexual offending behavior in general.
- Relationship between BA and CD → a significant relationship between cognitive distortions and external attribution, suggesting that the more this group justify the idea of child sex offending, the more likely they are to blame their offence on the victim or social circumstances.

Current study

- Comparing men who sexually abused adults to men who sexually abused children
- No indication for social desirability influenced responses in this study
- Suggest that child sex offenders have a greater investment in impression management because of the perceived seriousness of their offences
- Child offenders scored higher on the MOLEST Scale than sexual offenders against adults, but that there was no difference between groups on the RAPE Scale
- It may be that while child sexual offenders are so distorted in their thinking that they fail to identify societal expectations, offenders against adults are not as extreme in this regard. The finding may therefore indicate the extent of distorted thinking among child sexual offenders.
  - the incidence of multiple paraphilias among child sexual offenders to be substantially higher than among offenders against adults. There may therefore be a higher incidence of distorted attitudes and beliefs about sexual offending in general among child sexual offenders.
  - Justifying attitudes towards rape are much more common than justifying attitudes towards child sex
  - Cognitive distortions of child sexual offenders are more deviant than those of offenders against adults since the latter group may be able to find cultural support for justificatory attitudes, but equivalent support for children as sexual objects is more uncommon.