



## Literature update: Paraphilias

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# Literature update: paraphilias

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## IN BRIEF

### 1. Group therapy for sex offenders

COOK, D.A.G., FOX, C.A., WEAVER, C.M. & ROTH, F.G. (1991) The Berkeley Group: ten years' experience of a group for non-violent sex offenders. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 158, pp. 238–243.

This paper describes a group run by the Avon Probation Service for the treatment of convicted sex offenders in the community. Attendance levels were consistently over 70%, showing a high degree of commitment to the group. During the period of the study 63 men came into the group. Of the 55 men who left the group during this period, 65% had not re-offended by the end of the study. This is a hopeful outcome in a field where recidivism is high, and the authors comment that long-term support for offenders, especially during adverse life circumstances, might further improve matters.

### 2. Sexual crimes in a social context

BANCROFT, J. (1991) The sexuality of sex offending: the social dimension, *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 1, pp. 181–192.

John Bancroft documents some of the changes in the patterns of sexual offending over the past 20 years, turning his attention to the sexual rather than the aggressive component of the offender's motivation. He argues that the United Kingdom, along with many other societies, is a 'rape-supportive culture'. Attitudes expressed in the media and entrenched in the legal system make women responsible for male arousal and see them as 'property to be taken'. In cases of paedophilia, the child is also seen as an object rather than a person. Although psychiatrists may have relevant skills, Bancroft emphasizes that psychiatry is limited in what it can offer in the treatment of sex offenders.

### **3. Autoerotic self-strangulation**

BLANCHARD, R. & HUCKER, S.J. (1991) Age, transvestism, bondage, and concurrent paraphilic activities in 117 fatal cases of autoerotic asphyxia, *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 159, pp. 371–377.

Partial suffocation, usually achieved by hanging, is well known to enhance sexual arousal and orgasm. This practice is found almost exclusively in men and sometimes results in accidental death. This Canadian study examined the circumstances of death in 117 such cases. Older men were more likely to include transvestism and bondage in their activities, suggesting that the masturbatory ritual became more elaborate over time. Anal self-stimulation and use of mirrors or cameras was more common in those asphyxiators who cross-dressed. This supports a general tendency for different paraphilias to occur together or 'cluster'.

### **4. Family pathology and child abuse**

MOLLERSTROM, W.W., PATCHNER, M.A. & MILNER, J.S. (1992) Family functioning and child abuse potential. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 48, pp. 445–453.

This study of United States military personnel looked for family factors associated with child maltreatment, including sexual abuse, by comparing confirmed abusive parents with non-abusive controls. Rating scales were used to explore family environment, marital satisfaction and child abuse potential. The strongest positive correlation was between family conflict and abuse potential. In families where abuse took place, family cohesion, marital satisfaction and family expressiveness were all low. The sexual abusers were all male, with at least a high-school education.

### **5. Teenage sex offenders grow up**

RUBINSTEIN, M., YEAGER, C.A., GOODSTEIN, C. & LEWIS, D.O. (1993) Sexually assaultive male juveniles: a follow-up, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 150, pp. 262–265.

The topic of young people who commit sexual offences has been very newsworthy recently. Little is known about the future of these adolescents, so a follow-up study is welcome. Nineteen juvenile sex offenders were studied over eight years and compared with similarly violent but non-sexual offenders. The young sex offenders were significantly more likely to commit sexual offences in adulthood, and were frequently violent. They had often suffered childhood sexual abuse themselves, surprisingly frequently perpetrated by adult females. The authors conclude that assessment and treatment methods must be improved for this group of delinquents to prevent further violent or abusive sexual behaviour.