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Psychosocial correlates of attitudes towards male sexual violence in a sample of financial crime, property crime, general violent, and homicide offenders

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## **Abstract**

Whilst those currently serving prison sentences for sexual violence can be identified and receive treatment, the number of prisoners with a history of sexual violence against female partners is unknown. Methods to identify prisoners with a proclivity for such violence and accurately assess the risk they pose before and after incarceration are therefore required. Here, we aimed to assess the level of sexually violent attitudes within dating relationships and to examine their associations with experiences of child abuse and neglect (CAN), psychopathic personality traits, prisonization, number of incarcerations, age, years of schooling, relationship status, and parenting among different types of offenders (financial crime, property crime, general violent, and homicide offenders). Data were collected among a large systematically selected sample of adult male inmates ( $N = 1,123$ ). We demonstrated that sexual violence-supportive attitudes appear to be a function of child sexual abuse, psychopathic personality traits, and may be developed through early socialisation experiences as well as incarceration. Practical implications of current findings are discussed.

*Keywords:* Attitudes towards male sexual violence in dating relationships; Child abuse and neglect (CAN); Psychopathic personality traits; Prisonization

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### **Prevalence of violence against women**

Violence against women has been described as one of the most pervasive human right violations of modern times (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2013). Broadly defined as, "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women" (United Nations, 1995, p. 76), recent figures suggest one in three women will be victimised in their lifetime (WHO, 2013). Importantly, the majority of physical and sexual violence is shown to be committed by an intimate partner. Despite variations between countries, large scale population based surveys display many regions where in excess of 60 per cent of women experience some form of intimate partner violence (IPV) (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2006; UNICEF, 2015; WHO, 2013). Whilst the number of convictions for IPV are reportedly increasing throughout Europe as a whole, repeat victimisation remains high (Crown Prosecution Service, 2015) and as many as 66 per cent of IPV offenders have been reported to recidivate within the first year after prison release (Loinaz, 2014). In considering the prevalence, seriousness, and significant monetary costs (see DeLisi *et al.*, 2010; Wickramasekera, Wright, Elsey, Murray, & Tubeuf, 2015) of such offences, a greater understanding of the factors that precipitate perpetration is required to effectively tackle the problem.

### **Attitudes towards sexual violence**

One explanation attempting to account for high prevalence rates of IPV are the commonly held attitudes supportive of violence within relationships, and in particular sexual violence (WHO, 2016). Numerous studies have demonstrated evidence of a relationship between negative attitudes towards women and a proclivity for sexual violence (Alleyne,

Gannon, Ciardha, & Wood, 2014; Blake & Gannon, 2010; Bohner, Pina, Viki, & Sieber, 2010; Bohner, Siebler, & Schmelcher, 2006; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Rape myths are an example of such attitudes, equating to “beliefs that are generally false, but are widely and persistently held and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression” (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, p. 134). Whilst some research displays subscription to such myths varies across differing section of society (Ward, 1995), the function remains consistent - acting as ‘psychological neutralizers’ that allow men to shed any social prohibitions which may otherwise prevent the harm of women (Bohner *et al.*, 1998; Burt, 1980).

Male attitudes that specifically support the sexual abuse of women within dating relationships also appear prevalent within those who perpetrate IPV or have a proclivity to do so (Check & Malamuth, 1985; Clarey, Hokoda, & Ulloa, 2010; Price, Byers, & the Dating Violence Research Team, 1999; Temple, Shorey, Tortolero, Wolfe, & Stuart, 2013). Whilst similar to rape myths, these attitudes tend to centre more upon a direct sense of sexual entitlement and ownership over female partners. Termed *cognitive distortions*, the importance of such offence-supportive attitudes has been highlighted in the commission of sexual offending (Bouffard, 2010). Research and clinical practice argue cognitions to be deterministically connected to internal processes and problematic thinking which rationalise and prolong sexual violence perpetration (Abel, Becker, & Cunningham-Rathner, 1984; Ciardha & Ward, 2013). In fact, cognitive distortions remain one of the major targets of intervention programmes with those incarcerated for sexual offences (Ward & Beech, 2006).

Whilst those currently serving prison sentences for sexual violence can be identified and receive treatment, Day, Richardson, Bowen, and Bernardi (2014) highlight that with a universal offence of IPV lacking, very little published data displays the number of prisoners with a history of sexual violence against partners. Likewise, difficulties associated with obtaining convictions for IPV are likely to mean perpetrators of such offences are convicted

of alternative offences that underlie the broader picture of abuse (such as assault/trespass), distorting true prevalence rates within the prison population. Additional methods are thereby required to identify the extent of intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) offenders within the prison population and accurately assess the risk they pose both before and after incarceration. Moreover, a better understanding of factors associated with increased acceptance of sexual violence may prove useful for designing and implementing appropriate prevention and intervention programmes in prison context.

### **Sexual violence attitudes and child abuse and neglect (CAN)**

Based upon Shaver's (1970) defensive attribution hypothesis, it might be expected that personal experience of sexual victimisation will increase empathy for other victims and result in more negative attitudes towards sexual violence in general. However, this appears not to be the case with research finding no difference in rape myth subscription or blame attribution between those who had experienced sexual victimisation and those who had not (Carmondy & Washington, 2001; Jenkins & Dambrot, 1987). In another study using a rape scenario, participants classified as unacknowledged victims of sexual violence (i.e., those who did not conceptualise their experiences as rape), compared with non-victims and acknowledged victims, attributed the highest responsibility to the victim (Mason, Riger, & Foley, 2004). It was previously suggested that unacknowledged victims are likely to engage in self-blame (Botta & Pingree, 1997; Frazier & Seales, 1997) – a thinking pattern which could be extended onto other victims of similar violence.

Consistent with an alternative theoretical framework, the cycle of violence hypothesis, victims of child abuse may be more likely than non-victims to exhibit sexually violent attitudes. Support is offered by way of research that found a relationship between experiences of childhood maltreatment and violent offending (Fox, Perez, Cass, Baglivio, & Epps, 2015), rape convictions (Dhawan & Marshall, 1996), violent sexual offending (Widom

& Ames, 1994), and general IPV (Ireland & Smith, 2009) in adulthood. Child sexual abuse has been revealed to be predictive of verbal and physical sexual coercion (Gámez-Guadix, Straus, & Hershberger, 2011; Lyndon, White, & Kadlec, 2007) as well as sexual assault perpetration (DeLisi, Kosloski, Vaughn, Caudill, & Trulson, 2014; Loh & Gidycz, 2006). Directly exploring the relationship between childhood exposure to violence and rape myth acceptance (RMA), recent research indicated such exposure has a significant positive effect upon attitudes towards rape, shown to be associated with proclivity for sexual violence (Debowska, Boduszek, Dhingra, Kola, & Meller-Pruncka, 2015). Being the first known study to display such a relationship, Debowska *et al.*'s (2015) research provides an opportunity to extend our understanding further by investigating whether specific variants of childhood abuse interact consistently in the development of sexually violent attitudes.

In considering those past research findings and increased prevalence rates of CAN among forensic samples, exploring childhood experiences of abuse and neglect as predictors of sexually violent attitudes and behaviour among prisoners appears justified. Indeed, recent figures display that 29 per cent of British prisoners have experienced some form of childhood abuse in comparison to 20 per cent of the general population (Prison Reform Trust, 2015). In a large UK cohort study among a mixed-gender sample of 3,849 prisoners, 62 per cent of respondents reported having experienced emotional abuse, 61 per cent experienced physical abuse, and 31 per cent experienced sexual abuse as a child (Williams, Papadopoulou, & Booth, 2012). In another study, 68 per cent of 301 American adult male prisoners were reported to have experienced some kind of childhood victimisation (Weeks & Widom, 1998).

Overall, it appears that childhood maltreatment may lead to an intergenerational transmission of violence through a process of modelling, whereby observed sexually violent behaviour is learnt and imitated (Ellis, 1989). Despite the apparent applications of the cycle of violence model, however, the explanation does not account for those individuals who were

not exposed to child abuse but still perpetrate sexual violence. This in itself leads to the assertion that other psychosocial factors may play a role in the development of sexually violent attitudes.

### **Sexual violence attitudes and psychopathic traits**

Psychopathy is often described as a distinct cluster of interpersonal (e.g. deceitfulness and manipulation), affective (e.g. lack of empathy, remorse or guilt), lifestyle (e.g. impulsivity, irresponsibility), and behavioural (e.g. social deviance, criminality) features (Hare, 2003; Hare & Neumann, 2008). Despite limitations in past research related to the lack of distinction between sexual and violent offences, some evidence exists suggesting that enhanced psychopathic tendencies may function to increase the probability of violent offending (Corrado, DeLisi, Hart, & McCuish, 2015; McCuish, Corrado, Hart, & DeLisi, 2015) and sexual coercive behaviours (DeGue, DiLillo, & Scalora, 2010; Knight & Guay, 2007). According to DeGue *et al.* (2010), sexual coercers have the ability to manipulate others, whereas sexual aggressors are characterised by increased egocentricity and are more likely to have experienced child abuse. Mouilso and Calhoun (2013) found total psychopathy scores to be significantly positively correlated with RMA scores. Utilising more sophisticated statistical methods, Debowska *et al.* (2015) established a significant link between affective deficits in psychopathy and RMA. Conceptualisations of why psychopaths may be at an increased risk of sexual coercion pertain to a lack of affective responsiveness to typical expressions of distress, resulting from a deficit in the cognitive mechanism thought to be necessary to experience moral emotions, such as guilt or empathy (Blair, 1995). This idea that fostering empathy precludes aggressive behaviour was supported in some research where self-identified sexual aggressive males were found to be less affected by coercive vignettes dependent upon the more callous characteristics they possessed (Bernat, Calhoun, & Adams, 1999).



Of note, although antisocial behaviour has been traditionally presented as an integral part of psychopathy, some current research has indicated that criminality should be interpreted as an outcome of psychopathic personality traits (Boduszek & Debowska, 2016; Boduszek, Dhingra, Hyland, & Debowska, 2015; Cooke & Michie, 2001; Skeem & Cooke, 2010a, b). Boduszek, Debowska, Dhingra, and DeLisi (2016) also suggested that affective deficits in psychopathy should be studied separately from the ability to understand and recognise others' emotional states. Additionally, egocentricity, linked with incapacity for love other than self-love, ought to be considered as a separate psychopathy dimension.

### **Environmental influence on sexual violence attitudes**

Despite a plethora of research examining the attitudes surrounding rape, less well developed is the understanding of demographic and sociocultural determinants of such attitudes. The relationship between age and RMA for instance is inconsistent (e.g. Anderson, Cooper, & Okamura, 1997); however, results of a recent meta-analysis displayed age to be non-significantly related to RMA (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). Further, acceptance of violence against women appears to be increased among the less educated, irrespective of their gender (WHO, 2016). Current thinking has also indicated that certain sociocultural domains, specifically male-dominated groups or organisations, create an environment in which beliefs supporting violence in sexual relationships become normalised (Boswell & Spade, 1996). Termed 'rape culture', evidence of such belief systems has been found among certain social groups, including college fraternities, sports teams, and aggressive sports in particular. It was demonstrated that such male-dominated milieus promote hypermasculinity<sup>1</sup> and influence the level of rape-supportive attitudes (Bleecker & Murnen, 2005; Forbes, Adam-Curtis, Pakalka, & White, 2006; Sawyer, Thompson, & Chicorelli, 2002). Although characterised by non-

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<sup>1</sup> Hypermasculinity is an extreme form of masculinity based upon factors such as the endorsement of stereotypical views around gender roles and male power (Hunter, 2007).

voluntary membership, prisons appear to be a further example of a context where the combination of masculinity, dominance, and aggression may foster similar rape-supportive attitudes among its members (Kupers, 2005). This is similar to the concept of *prisonization*, explaining that within the prison environment certain individuals adopt the customs and general inmate subculture (Clemmer, 1940), which in turn influences behaviour and thinking.

Recent research tested the effects of confinement upon the development of RMA through the use of propensity score matching techniques. Whilst controlling for background covariates, Debowska, Boduszek, Dhingra, and DeLisi (2016) found evidence to suggest that imprisonment had a significant effect upon stereotypical thinking about rape. Interpretation of findings alongside the aforementioned psychological and behavioural experiences shown to be of significance, appear to offer support in line with an ecological explanation of rape-supportive attitude development. In that, the complex array of interconnected individual, relationship, community, and macro-social factors may lead to the development of shared sexually violent values among prisoners.

### **The current study**

Previous studies have examined correlations between psychopathy, childhood exposure to violence, as well as environmental factors and sexual violence and RMA. However, lacking within the literature is an examination of the aetiology of sexual dating violence-supportive attitudes among differing types of offenders. This is an important omission because these are attitudes which centre more upon a direct sense of sexual entitlement and ownership over female partners than RMA, and hence appear to be a more direct antecedent of IPSV. Moreover, despite the fact that such attitudes have been previously explored among offenders incarcerated for sexual offences (Murphy, 1990), convictions for IPSV are still rare, meaning that more imprisoned individuals than indicated by index offences alone may have a history of such violence (Day *et al.*, 2014). It is envisaged that

research exploring sexually violent attitudes in prisoners may result in the development of (a) improved screening measures and procedures within prison context, and (b) more effective treatment programmes, tailored to the specific needs of different types of offenders.

Consequently, the present study was designed with the following objectives in mind:

1. To assess the level of sexually violent attitudes within dating relationships among different types of offenders (financial crime, property crime, general violent, and homicide offenders).
2. To assess the prevalence of different types of childhood abuse experiences (physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, contact sexual abuse, and penetrative sexual abuse) among various types of offenders.
3. To examine whether different types of childhood abuse, psychopathic personality traits (affective responsiveness, cognitive responsiveness, interpersonal manipulation, and egocentricity), prisonization, number of incarcerations, age, years of schooling, relationship status, and parenting (raised by both parents, mother only, father only, or not raised by biological parents) form significant associations with sexually violent attitudes within dating relationships.
4. To determine whether predictors of sexually violent attitudes within dating relationships differ for various types of offenders.

## **Method**

### **Sampling Procedure**

According to the 2015 census, the total prison population in the Republic of Poland consists of 76,145 inmates. There are 215 correctional units, including main prisons, remand prisons, and detention centres (the focus of this project was only on males from main maximum- and medium-security prisons). In order to minimise sampling bias and maximise

the generalisability of findings, systematic sampling procedure was applied in the current study. First, we randomly selected 10 prisons (five maximum-security and five medium-security) for participation. Access to those prisons was granted by regional prison wardens. Printed self-reported anonymous surveys were delivered by authors to all selected prisons and systematically distributed among inmates (stratification was based on prison blocks and level of recidivism). Data collection occurred in inmates' living units and was monitored by one prison personnel on each block/wing. The prison personnel explained the nature and purpose of the study and provided a summary of the informed consent. Prior to data collection, appropriate training for prison personnel was delivered by authors. Given inmates' standing as a vulnerable population and the potential that they may feel compelled to participate, it was made clear both in the consent form and verbally (by the prison personnel) that participation was voluntary. In addition, inmates were informed verbally that they should not participate in the study if they could not read, but that they did not have to inform data collectors of the specific reason for not participating. Inmates consenting to participate were told that all information they provided in this study was anonymous. Participants were instructed to place completed surveys in envelopes and return them to a data collector or place them in a correspondence box which was available on each prison block. In maximum security units, the prison personnel collected the surveys from each participant upon completion. Completed surveys were collected from all participating prisons by the research team and posted to the home university in the United Kingdom.

## **Sample**

In total, 1,126 of inmates were included in the current analysis (age range from 19 to 76,  $M = 34.26$ ,  $SD = 9.65$ ,  $Mdn = 33$ , and  $Mode = 35$ ). Six hundred and fifty-one ( $n = 651$ ; 57.8%) participants were from maximum and 475 (42.2%) from medium security prisons. Education was measured by years of schooling (range from 6 to 16,  $M = 9.66$ ,  $SD = 2.60$ ,

*Mdn* = 11, and *Mode* = 11). Additionally, 745 prisoners reported being single and 381 were in a relationship. Seven hundred and forty-two ( $n = 742$ ) participants were raised by both parents, 228 by mother only, 33 by father only, whereas the remaining inmates ( $n = 123$ ) were not raised by their biological parents.

### **Offender classification**

In the current sample, 364 participants were in prison for the first time, 297 for the second time, 212 for the third time, 109 for the fourth time, and 144 respondents were in prison five times or more (range from 1 to 17 times,  $M = 2.66$ ,  $SD = 1.95$ ,  $Mdn = 2$ , *Mode* = 1). Some of the recruited inmates engaged in a variety of both violent and non-violent criminal activities. Emerging research evidence suggests that IPV perpetration is significantly associated with other types of interpersonal violence, indicating that some individuals may be more prone to aggressive behaviour than others (Kiss, Schraiber, Hossain, Watts, & Zimmerman, 2015). Therefore, in order to create meaningful (in the context of the current research) offender categories, the sample was divided into groups based on the most severe crime of violence committed and the level of engagement with victim, ranging from financial crime offenders (no interpersonal violence involved and no identifiable human victim), crimes against property (no interpersonal violence but an identifiable human victim), general violent offences (interpersonal violence involved and an identifiable human victim), and finally homicide (the most extreme form of interpersonal violence and an identifiable human victim). As such, participants classified as property crime offenders *did not* commit any violent offences, but participants classed as homicides could have also engaged in crimes against property. Based on this procedure, 199 participants were grouped as financial crime offenders (specific crimes included fraud and tax evasion), 393 were classed as property crime offenders (e.g., theft and burglary), 417 were violent offenders (e.g., assault and battery), and 117 were classed as homicides.

## **Response and completion rates**

Completion rate (i.e., the number of respondents who completed the full survey) in the current study was 63%, whereas response rate (i.e., the number of all approached participants who completed the survey) amounted to 45%. These rates are satisfactory by present survey research standards (Babbie, 2007; Finkelhor, Vanderminden, Turner, Shattuck, & Hamby, 2016; Keeter, Kennedy, Dimock, Best, & Craighill, 2006; Kohut, Keeter, Doherty, Dimock, & Christian, 2012). Although the risk of response bias must always be considered, prior research did not reveal any significant association between response rates and non-response bias (Curtin, Presser, & Singer, 2000; Groves, 2006; Merkle & Edelman, 2002). Additionally, it has been demonstrated that the utilisation of appropriate methods (including sampling and design) assures research accuracy (Keeter *et al.*, 2006).

## **Measures**

*Attitudes Towards Male Sexual Dating Violence* (AMDV-Sex; Price *et al.*, 1999) is one of three instruments, labelled the Attitudes Towards Dating Violence Scales, inquiring into the acceptance of physical (Attitudes Towards Male Physical Dating Violence; AMDV-Phys), psychological (Attitudes Towards Male Psychological Dating Violence; AMDV-Psyc), and sexual (AMDV-Sex) violence perpetrated by males in dating relationships. The AMDV-Sex is a 12-item scale assessing the extent to which respondents subscribe to views supportive of sexual violence against women in dating relationships. In the current study, all items were scored on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *disagree*, 4 = *agree*). Possible scores ranged from 12 to 48, with higher scores indicating greater acceptance of sexual violence towards women in dating relationships (Cronbach's alpha = .78).

*Psychopathic Personality Traits Scale* (PPTS; Boduszek *et al.*, 2016) is a self-reported 20-item measure designed to assess psychopathic traits in forensic and non-forensic

populations. The scale was developed to measure four factors labelled affective responsiveness (Factor 1), cognitive responsiveness (Factor 2), interpersonal manipulation (Factor 3), and egocentricity (Factor 4) (for specific items see Table 3). Each subscale consists of five items measured using *agree* (1) and *disagree* (0) format (i.e., a trait is either present or absent). Scores range from 0 to 20, with higher scores indicating elevated levels of psychopathic personality traits. The affective responsiveness subscale (Cronbach's alpha = .86) is made up of items concerning characteristics of low empathy and emotional shallowness (higher scores suggest greater deficits in affective responsiveness). Cognitive responsiveness subscale (Cronbach's alpha = .76) measures the ability to understand others' emotional states, mentally represent another person's emotional processes, and engage with others' emotionally at a cognitive level (higher scores indicate greater deficits in cognitive responsiveness). The interpersonal manipulation subscale (Cronbach's alpha = .84) measures characteristics such as superficial charm, grandiosity, and deceitfulness (higher scores indicate an increased ability to manipulate others). Finally, egocentricity subscale (Cronbach's alpha = .69) assesses an individual's tendency to focus on one's own interests, beliefs, and attitudes (higher scores suggest increased egocentricity).

***Organizational Structure and Prisonization Scale*** (OSPS; Thomas & Zingraff, 1974). Prisonization refers to “the adoption of the folkways, mores, customs, and general culture of the inmate subculture” (Clemmer, 1940, p. 270). The OSPS consists of eight statements relating to how prisoners feel about being in prison. Sample statements include: “It's a good idea to keep to yourself as much as you can”; “When a prisoner deals with a guard, he should stick up for his own beliefs and not let the guard tell him what's good and what's not”. Responses are indexed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Scores range from 8 to 40, with higher scores indicating increased levels of prisonization (Cronbach's alpha = .70).

*Child Abuse and Neglect Questionnaire* was developed for the purpose of the present research. It contains five items: child physical abuse (“How often in your childhood did someone physically hurt you in any way (e.g., hit, beat, kick)?”); child emotional abuse (“How often in your childhood did someone call you names, said mean things to you, or said you were worthless?”); neglect (“How often in your childhood did you have to look after yourself because a parent drank too much alcohol, took drugs, or was completely uninterested in you?”); contact sexual abuse (“How often in your childhood did someone touch your private parts when they shouldn’t have or make you touch their private parts?”); and child penetrative sexual abuse (“How often in your childhood did someone force you to have sex?”). All items are scored on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *never*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3 = *often*, 4 = *every day*).

*Lie scale* (Francis, Brown, & Philipchalk, 1992) is a 6-item subscale of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised-Abbreviated (EPQR-A) devised to control for social desirability bias. It is scored in a dichotomous fashion (0 = “no”, 1 = “yes”). Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .72.

### **Analytic procedure**

First, percentages of financial crime, property crime, general violent, and homicide offenders who experienced child physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, contact sexual abuse, and penetrative sexual abuse were calculated. Second, we performed nine between-subjects ANOVAs to compare different groups of offenders on all continuous variables (attitudes towards male sexual dating violence, affective responsiveness, cognitive responsiveness, interpersonal manipulation, and egocentricity, prisonization, number of incarcerations, age, and years of schooling) included in the study. Finally, we conducted a multiple linear regression analysis for the full sample of offenders, followed by four separate analyses for different groups of offenders in order to assess whether CAN, psychopathy



factors, prisonization, number of incarcerations, age, years of schooling, relationship status, and parenting (raised by both parents, mother only, father only, or not raised by biological parents) were significantly correlated with attitudes towards male sexual dating violence.

## **Results**

### **Descriptive statistics and ANOVAs**

Percentages of financial crime, property crime, general violent, and homicide offenders who reported to have experienced child physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, contact sexual abuse, as well as penetrative sexual abuse are presented in Table 1. Overall, these findings suggest that emotional abuse was the most common type of maltreatment for the full sample. Further, homicide offenders, compared with the remaining groups of inmates, were most likely to have been affected by all forms of child abuse and neglect.

Table 1.

*Percentage of financial crime offenders (n = 199), property crime offenders (n = 393), general violent offenders (n = 417), and homicide offenders (n = 117) who reported to have experienced (never/sometimes/often/every day) child physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, contact sexual abuse, and penetrative sexual abuse*

Abuse Type & Frequency of Occurrence	Financial Crime	Property Crime	General Violence	Homicide
<b>Physical abuse</b>				
<i>Never</i>	49.5	46.7	43.0	29.2
<i>Sometimes</i>	39.6	40.5	35.7	44.3
<i>Often</i>	8.8	10.9	16.3	21.7
<i>Every day</i>	2.2	1.9	5.1	4.7
<b>Emotional abuse</b>				
<i>Never</i>	39.6	39.1	37.9	24.5
<i>Sometimes</i>	50.0	47.2	42.7	48.1
<i>Often</i>	8.8	12.1	12.6	23.6
<i>Every day</i>	1.6	1.6	6.7	3.8
<b>Neglect</b>				
<i>Never</i>	59.3	64.8	58.7	41.9
<i>Sometimes</i>	27.5	22.1	21.9	34.3
<i>Often</i>	10.4	11.2	12.9	17.1
<i>Every day</i>	2.7	1.9	6.5	6.7
<b>Contact sexual abuse</b>				
<i>Never</i>	96.2	94.4	96.1	93.3
<i>Sometimes</i>	2.2	3.7	2.8	3.8
<i>Often</i>	0	1.9	.8	2.9
<i>Every day</i>	1.6	0	.3	0
<b>Penetrative sexual abuse</b>				
<i>Never</i>	97.3	94.7	96.6	93.3
<i>Sometimes</i>	1.6	4.0	2.8	4.8
<i>Often</i>	.5	.9	.3	1.9
<i>Every day</i>	.5	.3	.3	0

Descriptive statistics, including means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*), together with ANOVA results for all continuous variables (attitudes towards male sexual dating violence, affective responsiveness, cognitive responsiveness, interpersonal manipulation, egocentricity, prisonization, number of incarcerations, age, and years of schooling) are shown in Table 2. Property crime offenders scored significantly higher on attitudes towards male

sexual dating violence than financial crime offenders and homicide offenders. As for prisonization, property crime offenders scored significantly higher compared to financial crime offenders. Violent offenders, on the other hand, scored significantly higher than financial crime offenders and homicide offenders. Results also indicated significant differences in scores between different types of offenders on age, with financial crime and homicide offenders being on average older than both property crime and violent offenders. Violent offenders reported a significantly higher number of incarcerations than homicide offenders. Additionally, financial crime offenders were significantly more educated than property and violent crime offenders. No significant differences in scores between different types of offenders for four psychopathy factors (affective responsiveness, cognitive responsiveness, interpersonal manipulation, and egocentricity) were found.

As indicated earlier, significant differences in the scores on attitudes towards male sexual dating violence between the groups were reported. Since these attitudes are expressed differently in various types of offenders, it appears that they may also form differential associations with external criteria. In order to explore this further, we ran separate analyses for financial crime, property crime, general violent, and homicide offenders.

Table 2.

*Descriptive statistics and ANOVA results for financial crime offenders, property crime offenders, general violent offenders, and homicide offenders*

Variable	Financial Crime (F) <i>M (SD)</i>	Property Crime (P) <i>M (SD)</i>	General Violence (V) <i>M (SD)</i>	Homicide (H) <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>F</i> ratio	Significant differences (Cohen's <i>d</i> )
AMDV-Sex	18.59 (5.70)	20.26 (6.17)	19.59 (6.19)	18.94 (6.15)	3.19*	P > F (.28); P > H (.21)
Affective responsiveness	1.01 (1.38)	1.24 (1.35)	1.27 (1.39)	1.07 (1.20)	1.84	
Cognitive responsiveness	1.34 (1.24)	1.59 (1.35)	1.60 (1.34)	1.41 (1.24)	2.05	
Interpersonal manipulation	2.20 (1.74)	2.01 (1.70)	1.87 (1.52)	1.87 (1.58)	1.76	
Egocentricity	1.86 (1.42)	2.02 (1.34)	1.81 (1.31)	1.68 (1.38)	2.20	
Prisonization	23.65 (5.77)	25.25 (5.44)	25.81 (5.77)	24.48 (6.15)	6.10**	P > F (.29); V > F (.37)
Number of incarcerations	2.68 (1.60)	2.57 (1.98)	2.85 (2.12)	2.29 (1.69)	2.92*	V > H (.29)
Age	37.08 (9.93)	32.58 (8.53)	33.48 (9.78)	37.91 (10.33)	16.81**	F > P (.49); H > P (.56); F > V (.37); H > V (.44)
Years of schooling	10.42 (2.74)	9.57 (2.64)	9.35 (2.40)	9.75 (2.68)	8.04**	F > P (.32); F > V (.42)

*Note.* AMDV-Sex = Attitudes towards male sexual dating violence.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .001$

## Multiple linear regression models

A multiple linear regression analysis was performed for the full sample of offenders, followed by four separate analyses for financial crime, property crime, general violent, and homicide offenders in order to examine whether CAN (physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, contact sexual abuse, and penetrative sexual abuse), psychopathy factors (affective responsiveness, cognitive responsiveness, interpersonal manipulation, and egocentricity), prisonization, number of incarcerations, age, years of schooling, relationship status, and parenting (raised by both parents, mother only, father only, or not raised by biological parents) were significantly associated with attitudes towards male sexual dating violence (see Table 3). Since no *a priori* hypotheses had been made to determine the order of entry of the predictor variables, a direct method was used for all analyses. Preliminary analyses revealed no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity.

In the full sample, the 18 independent variables explained 22% ( $R^2 = .22$ ) of variance in attitudes towards male sexual dating violence ( $F_{(18, 880)} = 13.91, p < .001$ ). Five variables made a statistically significant contribution to the model, with affective responsiveness recording a higher Beta value ( $\beta = .17, p < .001$ ) than penetrative sexual abuse ( $\beta = .16, p < .001$ ), prisonization ( $\beta = .15, p < .001$ ), egocentricity ( $\beta = .14, p < .001$ ), and cognitive responsiveness ( $\beta = .11, p < .001$ ).

As for financial crime offenders, all independent variables included in the analysis explained 30% ( $R^2 = .30$ ) of variance in the outcome variable ( $F_{(18, 145)} = 3.47, p < .001$ ). Five predictors were statistically significant, with not raised by parents recording the highest Beta value ( $\beta = .39, p < .05$ ), followed by penetrative sexual abuse ( $\beta = .25, p < .01$ ), prisonization ( $\beta = .25, p < .001$ ), cognitive responsiveness ( $\beta = .17, p < .05$ ), as well as egocentricity ( $\beta = .17, p < .05$ ).

The model was also statistically significant for property crime offenders ( $F_{(18, 278)} = 3.77, p < .001$ ) and explained 23% ( $R^2 = .23$ ) of variance in the outcome variable. The best predictor of attitudes towards male sexual dating violence was affective responsiveness ( $\beta = .19, p < .001$ ) and egocentricity ( $\beta = .19, p < .001$ ), followed by prisonization ( $\beta = .17, p < .01$ ).

In the violent offender sample, the model was statistically significant ( $F_{(18, 309)} = 4.66, p < .001$ ) and the 18 independent variables explained 25% ( $R^2 = .25$ ) of variance in attitudes towards male sexual dating violence. Five variables were found to be statistically significant, namely contact sexual abuse ( $\beta = .26, p < .05$ ), cognitive responsiveness ( $\beta = .18, p < .01$ ), affective responsiveness ( $\beta = .15, p < .05$ ), prisonization ( $\beta = .14, p < .01$ ), and interpersonal manipulation ( $\beta = .12, p < .05$ ).

Finally, the model was also statistically significant for homicide offenders ( $F_{(18, 82)} = 3.00, p < .001$ ) and explained 40% ( $R^2 = .40$ ) of variance in attitudes towards male sexual dating violence. penetrative sexual abuse ( $\beta = .64, p < .001$ ) and affective responsiveness ( $\beta = .45, p < .01$ ) were the only significant correlates of attitudes towards male sexual dating violence in this sample.

Table 3.

*Multiple regression models of factors influencing attitudes towards male sexual dating violence for the full sample and separately for financial crime offenders, property crime offenders, general violent offenders, and homicide offenders*

	Full Sample	Financial Crime	Property Crime	General Violence	Homicide
	$\beta$ (95% CI)	$\beta$ (95% CI)	$\beta$ (95% CI)	$\beta$ (95% CI)	$\beta$ (95% CI)
Physical abuse	.02 (-.07/.10)	-.07 (-.28/.14)	.01 (-.15/.17)	.01 (-.12/.13)	.02 (-.30/.30)
Emotional abuse	.01 (-.08/.08)	-.01 (-.21/.20)	.02 (-.14/.18)	.03 (-.09/.15)	-.06 (-.35/.22)
Neglect	-.02 (-.10/.05)	.01 (-.18/.19)	.02 (-.12/.17)	-.02 (-.13/.10)	.02 (-.20/.24)
Contact sexual abuse	.05 (-.05/.15)	.01 (-.14/.16)	.08 (-.10/.25)	.26* (.03/.49)	.07 (-.12/.19)
Penetrative sexual abuse	.16*** (.07/.26)	.25** (.06/.43)	.10 (-.06/.26)	-.03 (-.26/.20)	.64*** (.22/.97)
Affective responsiveness	.17*** (.07/.23)	-.07 (-.25/.11)	.19*** (.07/.32)	.15* (.03/.27)	.45** (.16/.73)
Cognitive responsiveness	.11*** (.04/.18)	.17* (.01/.34)	.06 (-.06/.18)	.18** (.06/.29)	.06 (-.20/.31)
Interpersonal manipulation	.03 (-.03/.10)	.01 (-.12/.15)	.02 (-.10/.14)	.12* (.01/.24)	-.04 (-.28/.21)
Egocentricity	.14*** (.07/.21)	.17* (.01/.33)	.19*** (.06/.33)	.09 (-.04/.21)	.06 (-.18/.29)
Prisonization	.15*** (.09/.21)	.25*** (.10/.40)	.17** (.05/.28)	.14** (.04/.25)	-.06 (-.26/.15)
Number of incarcerations	.04 (-.02/.10)	-.08 (-.25/.08)	.01 (-.10/.13)	.05 (-.06/.15)	.13 (-.13/.38)
Age	-.02 (-.09/.05)	-.03 (-.17/.12)	-.03 (-.17/.11)	-.01 (-.13/.11)	.05 (-.17/.27)
Years of schooling	-.03 (-.10/.03)	-.03 (-.17/.11)	-.03 (-.14/.08)	-.04 (-.16/.07)	.02 (-.18/.22)
Relationship status (single)	-.04 (-.10/.02)	-.10 (-.20/.01)	-.03 (-.14/.08)	.03 (-.08/.14)	-.16 (-.41/.07)
Raised by both parents	.07 (-.25/.38)	.33 (-.18/.84)	.04 (-.67/.76)	-.12 (-.80/.57)	.19 (-.50/.87)
Raised by mother	.11 (-.16/.37)	.22 (-.22/.66)	.12 (-.48/.72)	-.03 (-.60/.55)	.09 (-.51/.69)
Raised by father	.03 (-.09/.16)	.13 (-.13/.38)	.01 (-.28/.29)	-.01 (-.26/.25)	-.03 (-.32/.27)
Not raised by parents	.05 (-.16/.27)	.39* (.02/.75)	-.05 (-.53/.43)	-.08 (-.54/.38)	.14 (-.34/.62)

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## Discussion

This study was performed with four objectives in mind. First, we sought to provide an assessment of the level of sexually violent attitudes within dating relationships among different types of offenders (financial crime, property crime, general violent, and homicide offenders). Second, since childhood violence was previously linked with increased acceptance of sexual violence (e.g., Debowska *et al.*, 2015) and convicts are thought to have higher rates of such adverse events than adults in the general population (Williams *et al.*, 2012), we sought to assess the prevalence of CAN experiences in prisoners. Our third goal was to examine the role of CAN, psychopathic personality traits, prisonization, number of incarcerations, age, years of schooling, relationship status, and parenting in attitudes towards male sexual violence within dating relationships. Lastly, we sought to determine whether predictors of sexually violent attitudes differ for various types of offenders.

The highest scores on the measure of attitudes towards male sexual violence in the current study were reported for property crime offenders, followed by general violent offenders, homicide offenders, and financial crime offenders. Inferential analyses revealed statistically significant differences between some groups of participants. More specifically, it was found that property crime offenders were more likely to condone sexual violence compared with homicide and financial crime offenders. These results indicate that individuals convicted of violent crimes (such as assault, battery, and homicide) do not necessarily subscribe to sexually violent views and that those classified as non-violent criminals may pose a greater risk of engaging in IPSV offences. This is in line with research suggesting that not all maritally violent men resort to interpersonal violence outside the home, indicating the importance of gender role stereotypes in IPV perpetration (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Holtzworth-Munroe & Meehan, 2004). Consequently, it appears that appropriate screening



measures within prison context ought to be undertaken among *all* inmates regardless of crime they were convicted of.

Pertaining to our second objective, we established that emotional abuse was the most common type of abuse in the present sample, followed by physical abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse. Additionally, homicide offenders were most likely to have experienced all forms of maltreatment. This is partly congruent with Williams *et al.*'s (2012) study findings suggesting that emotional and physical abuse are experienced by an excess of 60 per cent of prisoners. Williams *et al.*, however, also reported that as many as 31 per cent of participating inmates have experienced child sexual abuse. This is in stark disproportion to the present findings; with 6.7 per cent (an aggregate percentage; 4.8 per cent – “*sometimes*” and 1.9 per cent – “*often*”) of homicide offenders, i.e., the most disadvantaged group in this respect, having experienced penetrative sexual abuse. This discrepancy, however, could be partly due to differences in the nature of studied populations – Williams *et al.* utilised a mixed-gender sample, whereas our sample was exclusively male. Worthy of note, prior profiling research employing latent class analysis, established that sexual abuse among forensic samples is unlikely to occur alone. Rather, prisoners who have experienced this form of maltreatment were most likely to be poly-victimised; such offenders constituted eight per cent of the total sample (Aebi *et al.*, 2015).

Penetrative sexual abuse was also a significant correlate of attitudes towards male sexual dating violence within the full sample, financial crime offenders, and homicide offenders. Contact sexual abuse, in turn, formed a significant association with sexually violent attitudes among general violent offenders. Previous research found a significant relationship between childhood maltreatment and sexual offending and general IPV (e.g., DeLisi *et al.*, 2014; Dhawan & Marshall, 1996; Ireland & Smith, 2009; Widom & Ames, 1994). More directly related to the current investigation, Debowska *et al.* (2015) reported an

aggregate score for childhood exposure to violence to be correlated with cognitive distortions pertaining to rape. The present findings expand upon this past research by accounting for different forms of child maltreatment. The significant correlations reported here may be explained by the tendency towards self-blame evidenced by some victims, resulting in greater acceptance of violence (Graham & Juvonen, 1998). It appears that personal experience of sexual victimisation increases the acceptance of such violence in adulthood, which may be due to the lack of acknowledgment of own trauma. It is hence advisable that information about such experiences is retrieved for all inmates as part of an entry screening procedure, in order to address abuse-related distress and associated cognitive distortions during prevention and intervention programmes in correctional facilities.

Congruent with past research linking enhanced callous affect with RMA (Debowska *et al.*, 2015), greater deficits in affective responsiveness in the present study were significantly related to increased scores on attitudes towards male sexual dating violence for the total sample, property crime, general violent, and homicide offenders. Deficits in cognitive responsiveness predicted sexually violent attitudes among the full sample, general violent offenders, and financial crime offenders. Although some differing associations were found depending on criminal charges, it appears that the inability to empathise with victim on both emotional and cognitive level, generally results in greater acceptance of sexual coercion; lending support to Blair's (1995) supposition that empathic reactions act as violence inhibitors. Further, as in DeGue *et al.*'s (2010) investigation, egocentricity was predictive of increased acceptance of sexual violence, but only within the full sample, financial crime offenders, and property crime offenders. Non-violent offenders, compared with their violent counterparts (general violent and homicide offenders), evidenced higher levels of egocentricity, which may play a role in the commission of their crimes, as well as in forming attitudes which allow them to disregard harm to their female partners. Another psychopathy

factor, interpersonal manipulation, was a significant correlate of attitudes towards male sexual dating violence among our sample of general violent offenders. It appears that those skilled at manipulating others may also hold attitudes which condone violent behaviour. Since manipulative tactics were previously linked with sexual coercion (DeGue *et al.*, 2010), IPV prevention programmes should focus on remodelling perceptions of such tactics as unacceptable.

Some past studies suggested that beliefs supporting sexual violence in interpersonal relationships may be formed through the process of socialisation. All-male circles, such as sports teams and college fraternities, are posited to create an environment in which violence-supportive attitudes are fostered (e.g., Bleecker & Murnen, 2005; Forbes *et al.*, 2006). A similar impact of prison environment has been found in a study by Debowska *et al.* (2016), the results of which indicated that incarceration can lead to increased RMA. Our findings are in keeping with the above, with prisonization being a significant correlate of male sexual dating violence for the full sample as well as prisoners charged with property, violent, and financial offences. The evidence that being exposed to prison culture can exacerbate sexual violence-supportive attitudes, highlights the importance of implementing appropriate screening procedures (which may be in the form of a brief attitudinal questionnaire) during confinement and before release from prison. Interestingly, prisonization was *not* a significant correlate of male sexual dating violence among homicide offenders. It appears that this specific group of prisoners is not affected by group dynamics and hence does not adopt shared attitudes related to sexual violence. Sherretts, Boduszek, and Debowska (2016) demonstrated that murderers do not create strong social bonds with and tend not to identify with other criminals, providing a plausible explanation for the current findings. Another factor relating to socialisation, i.e., parenting, was a significant correlate of sexually violent attitudes in financial crime offenders. Inmates who were *not* raised by their biological parents

were likely to condone sexual violence in dating relationships, revealing the importance of early socialisation experiences in attitudes towards female partners.

As with all research, the current study presents some limitations. First, we utilised a sample of Polish offenders and hence the current findings may not be applicable to the worldwide offender population. Second, the number of homicide offenders was relatively low, however, such offenders are extremely difficult to recruit for research purposes. Third, since the data used were cross-sectional, concurrent rather than temporal validity could only be determined. In the future, longitudinal studies are needed to establish the temporal order of associations reported here. Fourth, self-report measures have been criticised for their lack of reliability due to response bias. However, in considering that we assessed prisoners' attitudes as opposed to behaviour, this method of data collection could not be avoided. Next, the chosen offender classification strategy is not free from drawbacks. Although prior research demonstrated a significant link between IPV and interpersonal violence in general (e.g., Kiss *et al.*, 2015), some other studies revealed that certain individuals may resort to violence against women exclusively (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Holtzworth-Munroe & Meehan, 2004). It is recommended that future studies explore the usefulness of other classification procedures (e.g., based on the variety of crimes committed or victim's gender) to enable development of most effective intervention programmes targeting IPSV. Finally, even though attitudinal studies will not reveal the prevalence of IPSV among forensic populations, they may assist in recognising a high-risk group capable of such violence and designing more cost-effective interventions. Notwithstanding the above-listed limitations, the present research has some important practical implications. Namely, we demonstrated which psychosocial factors may lead to increased acceptance of male sexual dating violence, which may subsequently translate into sexually violent behaviour. Our findings suggest that prison-based IPSV prevention programmes should focus on addressing child sexual abuse-related

trauma, cognitive and affective responsiveness to others, self-centredness, and the negative influence of early socialisation experiences and prisonization. Of importance, it appears that various groups of prisoners will benefit from a different focus of such interventions.

To conclude, using a large systematically selected sample of prisoners, we demonstrated that sexual violence-supportive attitudes are not exclusive to violent criminals, but may also be increased among non-violent offenders. Those attitudes appear to be a function of child sexual abuse, early socialisation experiences, as well as psychopathic personality traits and may be developed/intensified during the process of prisonization. Through offering new insights into attitudes towards male sexual dating violence, the present findings provide scope for development of more efficient interventions.

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