Self-Views in Twenty Young Men Who Were Identified as Sexual Offenders in Adolescence: A Mixed-Method Study

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Abstract

Background/Aim: A positive view of oneself is important for most people, whereas a negative view can have serious consequences. For those who have committed acts that hurt their view of themselves it might be difficult to develop a positive self-view. Here, self-views in 20 men identified as adolescent sexual offenders were explored in a mixed methods study using interviews and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES).
Methods: The interviews were coded by content analysis to find all utterances reflecting participants' views of themselves. These utterances were then grouped to indicate either positive or negative self-views; each group included seven sub-categories. Total scores for the RSES, and for its two sub-scales self-competence (assessment of qualities), and self-liking (personal value based on self-understanding and acceptance) were calculated.
Results: Results showed that 19 participants rated themselves within or above the normative range and generally rated their self-competence higher than their self-liking. The men seemed to rate their self-esteem based on who they hoped they were now, but contradictory views of themselves arose in the interviews.
Conclusions: The findings from this study support the idea that using both a questionnaire and an interview provide more information than any of these approaches on their own. For this reason we suggest that self-ratings need to be complemented by interviews, especially in clinical groups. Also, clinicians need to be aware of the discrepancy between self-rated capability and narrated self-worth when treating those who have been identified as sexual offenders.

Keywords: Self-View; Being identified as a sexual offender; Mixed-Method; Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Introduction

A positive view of oneself is important for most people, whereas a negative view of oneself can have serious consequences. For those who have committed acts that hurt their view of themselves it might be difficult to develop a positive self-view. In this study we aimed to investigate self-views in 20 young men who had sexually offended in adolescence.

Although the term "the self" is commonly used, it is difficult to define. One definition of the self is that it consists of one's complete knowledge of oneself (Baumeister, 1997). This view of the self originates in the tradition of social cognition, where the self is seen as a knowledge structure with great influence on cognitive activities and emotions. Accordingly, the self guides one's attention and interpretations and has a great influence on meaning-making (Markus, 1990). It is also assumed that the self is created through individuals' interactions with others in their social world and through this process create a life story (McAdams, 1996).

Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

The terms "self-concept" and "self-esteem" are often used in research to define individuals' evaluations of themselves. Self-concept can be understood as the totality of inferences that people make about themselves; it exists within their own minds and differs from their identity, which is socially defined (Baumeister, 1997). Self-esteem can be defined as the overall evaluative component of the self-concept (Baumeister, 1997). People with high self-esteem are thought to respect themselves and think of themselves as worthy, but no better or worse than others (Rosenberg, 1965). People with low self-esteem, however, may harbor feelings of self-rejection, self-dissatisfaction, self-contempt, and a lack of respect for themselves (Rosenberg, 1965). It has been suggested that there are two different aspects of self-esteem. One aspect concerns the degree to which individuals see themselves as good or bad, the other aspect concerns the degree to which individuals see themselves as capable. Analyzing these two aspects separately instead of as one aspect can broaden the understanding of self-esteem (Taforodi & Milne, 2002).

From a developmental perspective, the foundation of self-esteem is laid early in life, and evaluation of one's self-worth (liking or disliking oneself) develops in early adolescence (Erikson, 1959). Around the ages of 7 or 8 years, children begin to show consistent differences in their self-evaluations; some express high self-esteem, others low, and many others are somewhere in between (Harter, 2006). Self-esteem begins to increase in late adolescence and early adulthood and to stabilize in middle adulthood (Galambos, Barker, & Krahn, 2006; Sinclair et al., 2010; Wagner, Lüdtke, Jonkmann, & Trautwein, 2013). A positive sense of self tends to remain across the life-span for those who are contented with their work and with their relations with others (Sinclair et al., 2010); for many, however, the early years of young adulthood, are characterized by instability. Young adults who have been exposed to adverse childhood experiences may have a more fragile sense of self and be more vulnerable to negative experiences as they navigate through these instable years (Arnett, 2007).

The Narrative Self

From a life-story perspective, young adults face a major psychological challenge in the need to create meaningful and coherent stories about themselves (McAdams, 2013). From this perspective, the view of the self is not only a matter of who individuals believe themselves to be in the present but is also strongly influenced by who they have been and what they believe will happen to them in the future. These beliefs about the future have been labelled possible selves. Possible selves are narrative in nature and consist of the stories people tell themselves about their hypothetical future selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). These stories contain positive elements such as 'what I would like to become', as well as negative ones such as 'what I fear becoming' (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The narratives also function to help people make sense of their lives (McAdams, 2005), to reconstruct the past, and to imagine the future in a way that gives life unity, purpose, and meaning. Thus, life stories evolve over time as people's circumstances and opportunities change (McAdams, 2013).

Self-Esteem and Sexual Offending

Developmental trajectories related to self-view can be different for different people; individuals who have sexually offended may be an especially vulnerable group since they often have a history of adverse experiences in childhood (Jespersen, Lalumière, & Seto, 2009; Seto & Lalumière, 2010). Sexual offending is regarded as a heinous act, and therefore, being identified as someone who has sexually offended is stigmatizing and further adds to a possible vulnerability. Thus, being identified

as someone who has sexually offended may be vitally important to an individual's self-view. Accordingly, some researchers warn against labeling a young person as a sexual offender lest the label be incorporated into the individual's personal narrative and adversely influence the person's self-view (Smith, Wampler, Jones, & Reifman, 2005).

Studies of the propensity to sexually offend (Monto, Zgourides & Harris, 1998; Richardson, Kelly, Graham, & Bhate, 2004) and the risk for reoffending (Thornton, Beech & Marshall, 2004) often include issues of self-esteem. Findings from research about young individuals who have sexually offended imply that the development of sexually aggressive behavior begins with the adolescent's negative sense of self (Camp, Salazar, DiClemente, & Wingood, 2005). Support for a link between low self-esteem and sexual offending in adolescents was also found in a meta-analysis by Seto and Lalumière (2010). It is, however, unclear whether reduced self-esteem exists prior to being detected as someone who has sexually offended or is a result of disclosure (Seto & Lalumière, 2010).

Little is known about self-views in adult young men who sexually offended in adolescence. It is also possible that the use of self-report instruments in previous studies is a limitation since the instruments might have a narrow focus. Therefore, we intended to gain a broader understanding of views of self in a group of young men who sexually offended in adolescence. To enable this broader understanding, these men's views of themselves were examined through their own stories shared in interviews as well as through a questionnaire in which they rated aspects of their self-esteem.

Method

Participants

Data was gathered for 45 male youths aged 13-22 years who were in treatment for having sexually offended in 2003-2007 (Tidefors et al., 2011). Some of the participants were sentenced by court, others were place in treatment by social services. The youths were asked whether they could be contacted for follow-up studies and all consented. When contacted for the present study, about 10 years later, 20 men agreed to participate, 11 declined, and 14 could not be reached. The men who did not answer our first call were called several times over a period of 6 months. Men for whom no correct telephone number could be retrieved were sent an informal letter, not disclosing the aim or subject of the study. After a period of about one month, a second letter was sent out as a reminder to those who had not yet responded. The final 20 participants were aged 22-31 years (M = 25.7, SD = 2.3). The participants (n=20) were compared with non-participants (n=25) concerning background variables such as ethnicity, having experienced parents' separation, parents' alcohol or drug abuse, having lived in a foster-home, having been a victim of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, and offence-characteristics such as having offended a peer/adult or child, having offended a sibling, the age of the victim, and victim gender. No significant differences were found.

Vignettes

A brief presentation of the participants follows to provide context for the quotes from the interviews and the ratings on the questionnaire. The information was taken from intake assessment files, interviews from the initial data collection, and interviews from the present study. Each participant was assigned a fictitious name.

Adam was 25 years old and had sporadic jobs. His girlfriend was expecting a child. At a young age, Adams parents divorced and he lived alternately with his mother and father. Adam's mother had severe alcoholism and while living with her, he often witnessed violence and experienced a lack of

sexual boundaries. Adam was also continuously beaten by his father. When Adam was 14 years old he sexually abused a sibling.

Ben was 31 years old and worked full time. He lived with a partner, and was a step-parent. When Ben was a young child, he was sexually abused by his mother and therefore he was placed in foster-care. When he was 9 years old he forced a younger relative to participate in sexual activities and a few years later he sexually abused another child.

Chris was 26 years old. He had recently been left by his girlfriend and lived alone. He was working fulltime. Chris' parents divorced early and he lived alternately with his mother and father. Chris was neglected by his father. Before he reached 14, Chris sexually abused a step-sibling and two acquaintances.

Dan was 28 years old and was married but had no children. He had sporadic jobs. Dan grew up with both his parents but he was neglected during childhood. He was 16 years old when he sexually abused an unknown older woman.

Fred was 27 years old and was married but had no children. Fred had sporadic jobs. His parents divorced and he was raised by his grandmother as a young child, but later by his father and step-mother. At home he was physically and emotionally abused. When Fred was about 15 years old, he and his friends sexually abused a peer.

Gabriel was 25 years old, unemployed and lived on his own. His mother passed away when he was two, so he was raised by his father who physically and emotionally abused him. When he was 15 years old he sexually abused an older woman.

Gareth was 24 years old. He lived with his partner and had a child. He was working full time. Gareth grew up with his father and step-mother. His biological mother had severe alcoholism, was mainly absent and for some time Gareth was placed in foster-care. When he was 15, he sexually abused a younger step-sibling.

Gary was 27 years old. He was studying and was in a long-term relationship. His parents divorced when he was very young and he grew up with a relative who was emotionally and physically abusive. When Gary was 15 years old, he sexually abused a step-sibling.

Henry was 27 years old. He was in a relationship with a woman and had two children. He grew up with both his parents who were abusing drugs. As a child, Henry often witnessed domestic violence. Around the age of 15 he sexually abused an unknown peer.

Jacob was 27 years old. He was single, had no children and lived in a treatment facility. Jacob grew up with both his parents. His father physically abused him at home. At the age of 15, he sexually abused a peer. Later he also abused a younger child and a younger sibling.

Karl was 29 years old and had a child but was not in a relationship with its mother. At the time of the interview for the present study, he was on conditional release. Karl's parents were divorced and he mainly grew up with his mother. When he was 15 years old, he sexually offended a much younger boy, a close relative.

Mark was 26 years old, had a girlfriend and a child. He was working fulltime. Mark grew up with both his parents, but his father was abusing drugs and was absent for long periods. During childhood Mark was beaten by his father and neglected by his mother. He was also sexually abused by family

members. For some time Mark was placed in foster-care. When he was 12 years old, he sexually abused a younger sibling as well as two other young children.

Martin was 22 years old, single and had no children. At the time of the interview for the present study, he was in a treatment facility for drug abuse. During childhood Martin's parents divorced and he lived alternately with his mother and father. Martin was sexually abused by his step-father. When Martin was about 15 years old, he sexually abused a peer and a younger step-sibling.

Patrick was 24 years old. He was single, had no children and lived in a treatment facility for drug abuse. Patrick's parents divorced when he was a little boy, and he mainly lived with his mother. He was sexually abused by his mother's partner and he was for some time placed in foster-care. When he was 12 years old, he sexually abused a younger child.

Ralph was 25 years old and had a partner but no children. At the time of the interview for the present study, Ralph was imprisoned. He grew up with his father and stepmother. Ralph was emotionally abused and severely beaten by his step-mother. He was also sexually abused by a close relative. For some periods, Ralph was placed in foster-care. At the age of 15, he and some of his friends sexually abused a peer.

Shawn was 22 years old and single with no children. At the time of the interview for the present study, Shawn was imprisoned. Shawn grew up with both his parents, who were mentally ill. At home, Shawn was subjected to sexual and physical abuse, and was also exposed to neglect by his parents. When he was 11 years old, he sexually abused a younger sibling.

Ted was 26 years old, was single and had no children. He was involved with work-practice. He grew up with both his parents, but he described ongoing conflicts with his mother during childhood. When he was 14 years old, he sexually abused two younger children.

Tobias was 22 years old. He was studying, lived alone and had no children. During childhood he moved around a lot with his mother. His father was mostly absent. Both his parents were abusing drugs and Tobias was exposed to physical and emotional abuse as a child. There was also a lack of sexual boundaries in the family. For some periods Tobias was placed in foster-care. When Tobias was under the age of 14, he sexually abused a younger sibling.

Vincent was 25 years old. He was studying and lived with his girlfriend. He had no children. His parents divorced because his father was abusive and he then grew up with his mother. Vincent's mother had periods of mental illness and he was physically and emotionally abused by her. Vincent was under the age of 14 when he sexually abused two younger children.

Yosef was 26 years old and had a fulltime job. He had children but was no longer in a relationship with their mother. He grew up with both his parents. Yosef was younger than 13 when he sexually abused some peers on a couple of occasions.

Design

We used two methods to capture participants' views of themselves, with the intention to enable a deeper understanding of the participants than would be possible through either one of only self-reports or only interviews. The mixed methods design used here could be described as convergent (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Qualitative and quantitative data were collected during the same phase. The two data sets were analyzed separately and the results from the interviews and the self-reports were integrated in the interpretation of the data.

Instruments

Qualitative data. A semi-structured interview guide was developed to maintain a similar structure of questions across the interviews, while allowing flexibility within each interview. The participants were interviewed about their childhood, how they perceived their lives now, and about their thoughts concerning the future. They were also asked to reflect on their experiences during the years that had passed since the first data collection. Follow-up questions were used to ensure better comprehension of each participant's experiences.

Quantitative data. Each participant answered the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991; Rosenberg, 1965). This self-rating scale comprises 10 items aimed to measure global self-esteem. The scale contains an equal number of positive (e.g., "I feel that I have a number of good qualities"), and negative (e.g., "At times I think I am no good at all") items. Respondents are asked to rate the 10 items on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (0) to strongly agree (3). The RSES has a reported internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) of 0.81 (Schmitt & Allik, 2005), with a test-retest reliability of 0.85 (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). The RSES has been divided into two parts of 5 items each to measure two facets of self-esteem, that is self-competence (assessment of qualities) and self-liking (my value is based on self-understanding and acceptance), rather than global self-esteem (Tafarodi & Milne, 2002; Tafarodi & Swann, 1995). Total scores on the RSES range from 0 to 30, and the two facets range from 0 to 15. Scores of 15-25 on the entire instrument are considered within the normative range; scores below 15 indicate low self-esteem (Coyle, Lesnik-Emas & Kinney, 1994; Rosenberg, 1965).

Procedure

The participants were contacted by phone or mail by the first or third author. They were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that participation was voluntary, that they could withdraw their consent at any time, and that data would be reported in a way that would secure their anonymity. A date and time was then agreed upon for participation and the first or third author decided upon a meeting place. Since the participants lived in various parts of Sweden, data collection mostly took place in conference rooms in hotels. Some data collection was conducted at the Department of Psychology at the University of Gothenburg, and some in prison or treatment facilities. On meeting with the participants, the researchers further explained the aim of the study, both verbally and in writing. The participants then signed an informed consent form. The study was reviewed by the Regional Ethical Review Board, University of Gothenburg.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and content analysis was used. Content analysis is mainly used in research that aims to detect recurrent aspects of specific texts. The identified aspects have also been described as manifest utterances of what is expressed (Boréus & Bergström, 2005). In this study we stayed as close as possible to the transcripts to find and mark all utterances that reflected participants' views of themselves. These specific parts of the interviews made up the data-set that we coded. To enhance reliability in the coding of the qualitative data, we read the interviews in parallel and independently. Initially, the first author scanned all transcripts for expressions of views of self. In a second independent coding phase, the second and third authors read through half of the original transcripts each, and also scanned for expressions of views of self. The extracts from all interviews were then compiled and compared with the initial scanning in a joint discussion. In a third phase, the compiled extracts were all labeled. Any uncertainties about the labels were discussed. After evaluating our interpretation of the data, several of the original 24

labels were deleted since they did not closely enough reflect what the men actually said in the interviews. We separated the remaining 14 labels into two groups: utterances that indicated positive views of self and utterances that indicated negative views of self. Finally, one last check was made of the original transcripts to ensure that we had captured all utterance that could fit into the existing labels.

Quantitative data. We calculated both total RSES scores and total scores for the two facets, self-competence and self-liking.

Results

Qualitative Data

The analysis of the interviews resulted in 14 labels that represent various views of self (Table 1). Some of these views were of the participants as adults, and some were of the future. Some views were more positive, such as seeing oneself as a nice person and having hopes for the future. Other views were more negative, such as seeing oneself as a failure and not being confident about the future.

Table 1: ICC values for VRS-SO dynamic item, factor, and total scores (pre-treatment)

Labels	Examples of quotes from the interviews
I am a nice/good person	I´m actually a happy and funny person, you know. All my friends say so.
I get confidence through what I do	The most important thing for me is that I have a job, that´s what is most important I think.
I turn bad things to something good	I always turn a situation around to "how can I learn from this?" Partly to be able to avoid ending up there again, and partly because, well, if I meet someone, I might be able to help them to avoid what I had to go through.
I am self-reliant	I had to grow up fast. And I thought that I have to take care of myself.
I like being an adult	I´m better off as an adult than as a child anyway.
I can act differently	I will not make the same mistakes as my parents made. I don´t want to be that kind of dad.
I have hope for the future	I hope that I will live in an apartment and have a girlfriend and perhaps a good job and so on. Just live a regular life. really. That´s what I´m hoping for.
I don't want to show weakness	If I feel that I might cry, then I go somewhere else, so that nobody can see or hear me. You just hold it back and ... men shouldn´t cry ... it feels silly.
I am/was a failure	I felt completely worthless. And it´s like things can´t get any worse.
I don't trust myself	I have to realize that I can't control myself. If an eleven-year-old writes about something sexual, I shouldn't answer, but I do.
I harm myself	I had so much to drink and I got so drunk that an ambulance had to come and pick me up. I know I shouldn´t have, but I did it when I was down because I

	had quarreled with my mother.
I am not fully grown up	I know that I´m an adult, but I haven´t progressed like everyone else, I´ve stood still in the same place.
I need to change/I need help	I hope you know, for a life without drugs. I aim for that anyway.
I am unsure about the future	I had a great plan when I was younger, but now I have no idea anymore. I seem to have become lost somewhere along the way.

Quantitative Data

In this study, 19 of 20 participants had scores within the normative range (15-25) of self-esteem or above (26-30); only one person had a score under 15 that placed him in the low self-esteem range. On the facets of self-competence and self-liking, 16 of the participants scored higher on self-competence than self-liking, two had scores that were equally high, and two scored higher on self-liking than self-competence.

Integration of Data

In Table 2, each participant is presented according to his total rating on the RSES and his ratings on self-competence and self-liking. The labels found in the interview are also included in Table 2. The interviews were analyzed separately from, but parallel to, the quantitative data. In the interviews, we were not looking for labels that could be connected to, or be indicative of, certain aspects of the RSES. However, during the integration of the data, it was possible to search for labels that could indicate certain aspects of the RSES.

Table 2a: Integration of qualitative and quantitative data

	Adam	Ben	Chris	Dan	Fred	Gabriel	Gareth	Gary	Henry	Jacob
Rosenberg Self-Competence	13	14	14	10	13	15	12	14	12	9
Rosenberg Self-Liking	10	12	15	11	6	12	8	14	8	6
Rosenberg total	23	26	29	21	19	27	20	28	20	15
Labels from the interviews indicating positive self-image										
I am a nice/good person			X		X			X		X
I get confidence through what I do		X	X				X			
I turn bad things to something good		X	X	X	X				X	
I am self-reliant			X		X				X	X
I like being an adult		X					X			
I can act differently		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	

I have hope for the future		X	X	X	X	X				X	
Labels from the inteArviews indicating a negative self-image											
I don't want to show weakness									X	X	
I am/was a failure		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
I don't trust myself											
I harm myself				X	X						
I am not fully grown up								X	X		
I need to change/I need help										X	
I am unsure about the future						X			X		X

Table 2b: Integration of qualitative and quantitative data

	Karl	Mark	Martin	Patrick	Ralph	Shawn	Ted	Tobias	Vincent	Yosef
Rosenberg Self-Competence	6	13	13	15	12	13	13	9	11	13
Rosenberg Self-Liking	1	7	8	15	10	12	7	8,5	5	10
Rosenberg total	7	20	21	30	22	25	20	17,5	16	23
Labels from the interviews indicating a positive self-image										
I am a nice/good person	X				X	X	X	X		
I get confidence through what I do		X	X	X	X	X	X			X
I turn bad things to something good	X	X		X	X	X	X			
I am self-reliant	X	X				X	X	X	X	
I like being an adult	X		X	X			X			
I can act differently	X	X		X	X	X		X		
I have hope for the future	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Labels from the interviews indicating a negative self-image										
I don't want to show weakness			X							X
I am/was a failure	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
I don't trust myself	X					X			X	
I harm myself			X					X		X

I am not fully grown up			X	X			X	X	
I need to change/I need help	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
I am unsure about the future	X			X				X	X

On the RSES, 19 of 20 participants rated themselves within or above the normative range of self-esteem. In the interviews, 15 of those 19 mentioned having hopes for the future; 13 described themselves as capable of behaving differently from their parents; 11 said they could find something positive in negative experiences; 10 viewed themselves as gaining confidence through what they do, rather than who they are. These views all seem to fit in with the facet of self-competence. Also, 10 men described themselves as self-reliant and independent and nine described themselves as nice or good people. At first, these views seemed to accord with the facet of self-liking. However, these views were often expressed "through the eyes of others" (see Table 1), and may therefore be more indicative of self-competence because they are self-evaluative rather than focused on self-understanding. Finally, six men described themselves as happy being adults. These views were perhaps in accord with the facet of self-liking through being accepting and happy with oneself.

However, in the interviews the men also expressed negative views of themselves that seemed to indicate low self-esteem although only one man rated his self-esteem as low. Seventeen men expressed feelings of self-contempt such as being, or having been, a failure and eight men described a need to change and/or needing help to change. Six of the men did not consider themselves fully adult. This may indicate their status as emerging adults, or it could be expressions of feelings of self-contempt. Although six men expressed uncertainty about their future, this likely holds true for other young adults. However, in this group these views were connected to earlier or recent failures that might have had a negative effect on the mens' hopes for the future. Five of the men described self-harming behaviors, which we interpreted as indicating a view of oneself as bad and of feelings of self-contempt. Four men expressed unwillingness to show weakness, which could also indicate a view that showing weakness would reveal them as bad or as failures, again indicative of feelings of self-contempt. Two of the men felt that they could not trust themselves, which also could indicate feelings of self-contempt, and perhaps a view of oneself as bad.

Despite the homogeneity in the ratings of self-esteem, the men talked about themselves in different ways. Most men seemed confident that they could be different and could act differently from their own caregivers. Nine participants also stated in the interviews that they perceived themselves both as a nice or good person and as a failure. Some examples follow of various combinations and contradictions between what they told about themselves in the interviews and their self-esteem scores.

An example of those who rated their self-competence higher than their self-liking was Adam. He scored within the normative range on the RSES and he rated his self-competence as somewhat higher than his self-liking. In the interview he emphasized his capability and his ability to be a better parent than his own had been. He stated that he had become stronger from the difficult experiences of his childhood. These views might explain his rather high rating of total self-esteem and can be understood as expressions of mainly self-competence. However, Adam also rated himself high on the self-liking facet, a rating that contradicted his expressed feelings in the interview of being a failure. A similar pattern was found with Gabriel, although he also expressed doubts about himself in

the future, which seems to contradict his high self-competence rating on the questionnaire.

Gareth also rated his self-competence higher than his self-liking. In the interview, Gareth expressed ambivalent views of himself. He described himself as competent in his work and as having plans and hopes for the future, but he also expressed feelings of being a failure and doubts about his ability to manage the obligations and commitments of adulthood.

Patrick rated himself as high as possible on the RSES, but the views he expressed in the interview did not reflect that high rating. While he described himself as having ambition and viewed himself as strong and capable of turning bad experiences into something good and useful, he also spoke of himself as a failure who was insecure about the future and needed help to change. Patrick's high self-esteem scores may have been due to his motivation to complete the course of treatment for drug abuse that he was enrolled in at the time.

A group of six participants scored relatively low on the facet of self-liking. All but one in this group expressed views of themselves as having been/being a failure. The only one in this group (Fred) who viewed himself as a nice or good person also viewed himself as self-destructive. Some of these men also expressed views that they could take something good from bad experiences and that they could act differently from their caregivers, views that were perhaps more linked to the facet of self-competence.

The only participant, who rated himself low on the total RSES, and especially on the self-liking facet of the scale, was Karl. Through the whole interview he talked about himself as a failure both as a child and as an adult. He also said that he could not trust himself, was in a need of help, and had serious doubts about the future. Thus, Karl is an example of high concordance between self-rated self-esteem and what he expressed in the interview.

To conclude, the men in this study rated their self-esteem on the RSES as within or above the normative range; only one man rated himself in the low range. Therefore, it was not possible to see patterns in low-range, middle-range, and high-range groups. However, one pattern that emerged was that the men generally rated their self-competence (the evaluative facet of self-esteem) higher than their self-liking. Thus, seeing themselves as having power, ability, and efficacy, was rated higher than seeing themselves as having inherent worth.

One interpretation of the combined quantitative and qualitative data is that most of the men rated their self-esteem according to hopeful ideals, as opposed to the picture painted in the interviews. For example, many of the men stated that "I was this way before, but today I am quite different," and such a statement could explain many of the contradictions between how they rated themselves and the way they talked about themselves in the interviews.

Discussion

Knowledge about self-views in adult young men who had been identified as sexual offenders in adolescence is scarce. Moreover, previous studies about self-esteem in adolescents who have sexually offended are often based on self-reports. In this study we intended to gain a broader understanding of views of the self in a group of young men who sexually offended in adolescence. To enable such a broadened understanding, we integrated the results from the RSES with the interview labels derived from the coding of the interviews. This integration of qualitative and quantitative data resulted in different ways to understand the participants' self-views.

The notion that men who have sexually offended have low self-esteem (Seto & Lalumière, 2010)

was not confirmed by the results from the self-rating scale in this study. Instead, the results revealed that all but one of the participants rated themselves within or above the normative range. This result is in line with how the group of 45 participants, including the 20 participants here, rated their self-esteem as adolescents, which was similar to a comparison group of non-offending adolescents (Tidefors, Goulding, & Arvidsson, 2011). However, in another study built on the same sample, a low agreement was found between these adolescents' rating of their self-esteem and how clinicians rated the adolescents' self-esteem. The adolescents rated their self-esteem higher than the clinicians did (Tidefors, Arvidsson, & Rudolfsson, 2012).

Even so, the results from the self-rating scale, that the participants rated themselves within and above the normative range, is not unexpected considering that positive self-evaluations appear to be universal (Schmitt & Allik, 2005). In that sense, this group of men do not appear to be different from the general population. A central assumption has been that high self-esteem relates to positive outcomes and benefits for the individual and that low self-esteem relates to negative outcomes and is unfavorable (Crocker & Park, 2004). However, it has been suggested that the benefits of high self-esteem could be inflated and that these benefits are restricted to enhanced initiative and happiness (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). High self-esteem can also be associated with self-focus in relationships or focus on achieving goals, which can lead to a loss of relatedness or increased competitiveness (Crocker & Park, 2004).

Compared with the self-esteem ratings, the story told in the interviews revealed a more complex picture of how the men in this study viewed themselves. This was exemplified by utterances about being a failure or being unsure about the future. Because of this discrepancy the different views were labeled "the rated self" and the "narrated self." There might be several reasons for such a discrepancy. One possible explanation is that participants put forth a genuine view of themselves in the self-rating scale and tailored their responses in the interviews. Or the opposite, that they put forth a genuine view of themselves in the interview and tailored their responses in the self-rating scale. These tailored responses may be attempts at social desirability, either as a strategy to protect one's sense of self or as a conscious response bias strategy driven by a need for approval (Tan & Grace, 2008). An alternative explanation is that the high rated self-esteem seen in this study was a façade created by psychological defense mechanisms and an expression of illusory high self-esteem (Shedler, Mayman, & Manis, 1993). This may indicate that such highly rated self-esteem is an expression of fragile rather than secure high self-esteem (Kernis, 2003).

Creating a façade to protect one's sense of self or preserve a positive view of oneself, may be a strategy to avoid painful feelings of shame (Gilligan, 2003). The 20 men in this study were drawn from a group of 45 adolescents identified as sexual offenders 10 years previously (Tidefors et al., 2011). On that occasion, these adolescents scored their self-esteem within the normative range and also had high social desirability ratings. All but one of the participants had RSES scores within or above the normative range in the current study. It is possible that it was easier for the participants to "put on a good face" when answering the self-rating scale than to maintain it throughout a whole interview. If that was the case the interviews gave a truer picture of their sense of self then the questionnaire.

Another finding from this study was that the participants' had higher ratings on self-competence than on self-liking. In the interviews, many participants emphasized their endeavors in their work and studies which is congruent with the high ratings on self-competence. One group of participants scored relatively low on the self-liking facet. According to Tafarodi and Swann (1995), low scores on self-liking is an expression of having an evaluative experience of oneself as mostly bad according to one's own internalized sense of worth. Such an evaluation of oneself is partly in line with how the majority in this group talked about themselves as being failures. It is important to note, however,

that the generally higher scores on self-competence than on self-liking might be expected in individualistic societies (Schmitt & Allik, 2005; Sinclair et al., 2010). We do not know if our results can be explained by a similar emphasis on individuality in our study group, but it is possible.

The participants' view of themselves related in the interviews concerned other domains of their lives than those included in the self-rating scale, such as narratives about their past and narratives of themselves in the future. The men described consistent histories of adverse experiences during childhood, as mentioned in the vignettes. Narratives about the past and about possible selves in the future are important in creating a coherent narrative of the self. Several of the men in this study asserted that they were quite different people from who they had been in the past, especially who they were as adolescents. This may have been an expression of their inability to create a coherent narrative about themselves; the narrative they put forth was perhaps one that was possible for them to live with.

Our overall interpretation is that the men in this study rated their self-esteem based on the people they hoped they were today, while the narratives showed another view. For the men in this study, it is entirely possible that their truth is in their rated selves, a sort of ideal self or a future possible self, made up of who they would like to become.

These findings support the idea that using both a questionnaire and an interview provide more information than any of these approaches on their own. For this reason, we suggest that self-ratings need to be complemented by interviews, especially in clinical groups. Also, clinicians need to be aware of the discrepancy between self-rated capability and narrated self-worth when treating those who have been identified as sexual offenders.

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