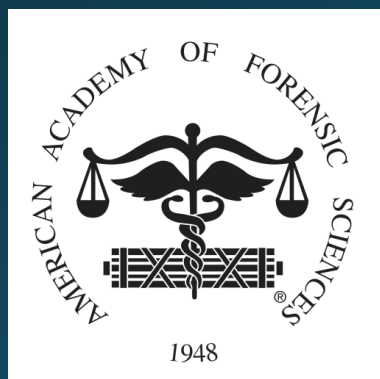




Personality dimensions of sexual offenders

A review of five-factor models



Ingrid BERTSCH, PhD student, Qualipsy EE 1901, University of Tours, France

Robert COURTOIS, MD, PhD, Qualipsy EE 1901, University of Tours, France

Thierry PHAM, PhD, University of Mons, Belgium

Christian REVEILLERE, PhD, Qualipsy EE 1901, University of Tours, France

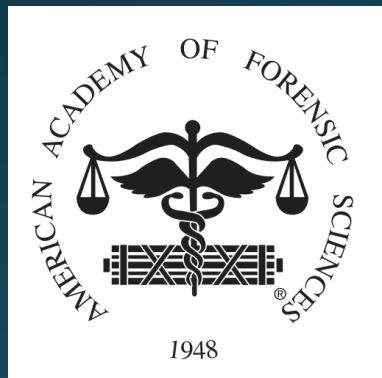
ABOUT TOURS





Personality dimensions of sexual offenders

A review of five-factor models



INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence

- Etiological theories underline several factors implicated in violent sexual behaviors: **personal factors**

Personality

- Personality is one of the main personal factors
- It is important for the therapist to understand the patient's personality in order to establish rapport, adopt an appropriate attitude and select the optimal form of therapy

Dennison et al. (2001)

Mullins-Sweatt & Widiger (2011)

INTRODUCTION

Personality

- Several personality's theories
- Among the several models of personality: **dimensional model** which uses a catalogue of quantifiable dimensions, and allows a general taxonomy of personality

1) **“Pathological” personalities**: personality disorders or maladaptive traits

2) **“Normal” personalities**: for example: five-factor models, which are:

- **Integrative**: combine several descriptive systems in the same model

Plaisant et al. (2010)

- **Universal**: patients' characteristics can be compared individually and collectively

INTRODUCTION

Five-factor personality models

Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) <i>(Eysenck, 1967)</i>	NEO-Personality Inventory-Revised (NEO-PI-R) <i>(Costa & McCrae, 1985)</i>	Big Five Inventory (BFI) <i>(John, Donahue & Kentle, 1991)</i>
EXTRAVERSION Outgoing, talkative, high on positive affect, etc.	EXTRAVERSION Sensation-seeking, gregarious, etc.	EXTRAVERSION <i>Energy, enthusiasm, etc.</i>
NEUROTICISM <i>Anxiety, negative affect, etc.</i>	NEUROTICISM <i>Anxiety, anger, impulsivity, etc.</i>	NEGATIVE EMOTIONS <i>Nervosity, etc.</i>
PSYCHOTICISM <i>Aggression, etc.</i>	CONSCIENTIOUSNESS <i>Competence, sense of duty, etc.</i>	CONSCIOUSNESS <i>Control, restraint, etc.</i>
	AGREEABLENESS <i>Altruism, modesty, sensitivity, etc.</i>	AGREEABLENESS <i>Altruism, affection, etc.</i>
	OPENNESS <i>Openness to dreams, feelings, ideas, etc.</i>	OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE <i>Originality, open-mindedness, etc.</i>

INTRODUCTION

Sexual offenders' personality

- Personality traits are one of the factors leading to deviant sexual behaviors

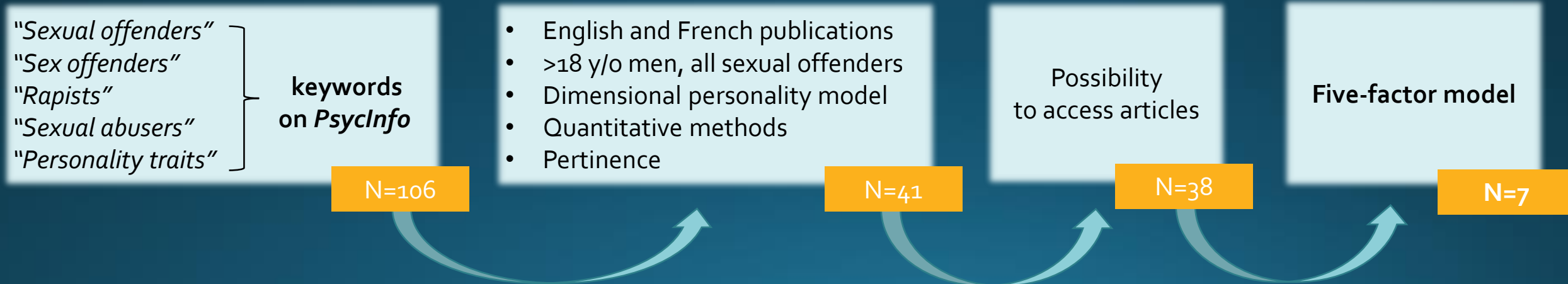
Hall & Hirshman (1992)

Main objective

- Reviewing previous studies dealing with the **personality of sexual offenders analyzed using dimensional models**, and particularly the **five-factor model**

MATERIAL & METHODS

- No limitation in date
- Only scientific publications
- **7 publications** using the five-factor model



RESULTS

Title & authors	Population	Five-factor tool
Gingrich, T.N. & Campbell, J.B. (1995)	96 non-incarcerated adult male sex offenders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 41 regressed pedophiles • 28 fixated pedophiles • 20 exhibitionists • 7 rapists 	Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ)
Gudjonsson, G.H. & Sigurdsson, J.F. (2000)	3 groups of incarcerated men: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32 violent offenders • 36 adult sex offenders • 33 adult sex offenders on children 	Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ)
Egan, V., Kavanagh, B., & Blair, M. (2005)	200 men convicted of sexual offences against children	NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI)
Pandalla, P., Carr, A., Dooley, B. & Rooney, B. (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 clerical men child abusers • 73 laymen child abusers • 30 controls 	NEO Personality Inventory Revised (NEO-PI-R)

RESULTS

Title & authors	Population	Five-factor tool
Becerra-Garcia, J.R. (2013)	112 men convicted and incarcerated for contact sex offences against children	NEO-Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI)
Becerra-Garcia, J.A , Garcia-Leon, A. & Egan, V. (2013)	33 men incarcerated for sex offenses against children	NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI)
Becerra-García, J.A., García-Leóna, A., Muela-Martínez, J.A. & Egan, V. (2013)	131 men: 3 offender groups and 1 control group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32 child molesters • 26 adult molesters • 31 non-sexual offenders • 42 controls 	NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI)

RESULTS

NEUROTICISM

AGREEABLENESS

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

EXTRAVERSION

OPENNESS

PSYCHOTICISM

RESULTS

NEUROTICISM

- Corresponds to **emotional regulation**
- Predisposition to anxiety, anger, depression, shame and other negative emotions

NEUROTICISM: main results

- **Sexual offenders vs. other groups**
 - Higher neuroticism in sexual offenders than in a control group
 - No difference in neuroticism between sexual and non-sexual offenders

Becerra et al. (2013)

Becerra et al. (2013)

RESULTS

NEUROTICISM: main results (continued)

- **Focus on sexual offenders group:** Gingrich & Campbell (2007) compared 3 groups of non-incarcerated sexual offenders and a control group, using EPQ:
 - 20 exhibitionists
 - 7 rapists
 - **28 fixated pedophiles:** *sexually addicted to children to the point of an obsession*
 - **41 regressed pedophiles:** *without pedophilia, "opportunistic child aggression for acceptance stress at crisis points in life"*

Burgess et al. (1978)

TABLE 1
EPQ Scores for the Four Offender Types and Norms for Normal and "Sex Problem" Samples

	EPQScale			
	Psychoticism	Extraversion	Neuroticism	Lie
Regressed Pedophiles				
Mean	3.46	12.07	9.15	8.12
SD	1.95	4.79	5.08	3.94
Fixated Pedophiles				
Mean	2.53	12.82	13.00	7.68
SD	2.35	5.04	5.90	4.92
Exhibitionists				
Mean	3.40	10.35	8.75	8.90
SD	2.84	5.07	4.74	4.53
Rapists				
Mean	3.14	16.43	7.43	7.14
SD	2.04	2.15	4.83	5.15
Normal				
Mean	3.78	13.19	9.83	6.80
SD	3.09	4.91	5.18	4.14
"Sex Problems"				
Mean	5.05	11.47	11.68	6.74
SD	3.31	5.62	6.12	4.33

Gingrich & Campbell (2007)

➔ **Neuroticism is highest in fixated pedophiles, followed in turn by regressed pedophiles, exhibitionists, and rapists**

RESULTS

NEUROTICISM

- Neuroticism does not discriminate sexual offenders from other offenders: *it seems to be constant for all of them*
- A high level of neuroticism seems to be positively associated with:
 - **Personality disorder**, e.g. child molesters: paraphilia
 - **Abusive childhood**: sexual offenders seem to be more affected

RESULTS

NEUROTICISM

AGREEABLENESS

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

EXTRAVERSION

OPENNESS

PSYCHOTICISM

RESULTS

PSYCHOTICISM (including AGREEABLENESS and CONSCIENTIOUSNESS)

- Corresponds to impulsivity, aggression and low empathy

PSYCHOTICISM: main results

- **Sexual offenders vs. other groups:**
 - Sexual offenders show higher psychoticism than controls
- **Focus on sexual offenders group:**
 - Higher psychoticism in rapists than in child molesters

Eysenck & Eysenck (1975)

RESULTS

PSYCHOTICISM: main results (continued)

- A **high degree of psychoticism** is related to:
 - Violence, aggression: antisocial and psychopathic personalities
 - Aggressive and coldly impersonal sexual experiences
 - Sexuality based on desire for domination and power

Eysenck & Gudjonsson (1989)

RESULTS

NEUROTICISM

AGREEABLENESS

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

EXTRAVERSION

OPENNESS

PSYCHOTICISM

RESULTS

AGREEABLENESS

- Concerns interpersonal relationships
- Characterized by compassion and cooperation

AGREEABLENESS: main results

- **Sexual offenders vs. other groups:**
- Conflicting results
 - No difference between **sexual offenders and normal controls**
 - **Sexual offenders show more agreeableness than normal controls**

Becerra et al. (2013)

Randall (2011)

RESULTS

AGREEABLENESS: main results (continued)

- Agreeableness does not discriminate sexual offenders from other offenders
- **Higher agreeableness seems to be associated with:**
 - **Age and maturity** : Studies finding higher agreeableness among sexual offenders are based on samples of older men
- **Social desirability:** Studies showing higher agreeableness have a larger proportion of child molesters, who are sensitive to social desirability

Becerra-Garcia, Garcia-Leon & Egan (2013)

RESULTS

AGREEABLENESS: main results (continued)

- Lower agreeableness seems to be associated with:
 - **Personality disorders** (mainly antisocial)

Madsen, Parson & Grubin (2006)

- **Culture:** *Becerra-Garcia, Garcia-Leon & Egan (2013)* compared Spanish and British pedophiles using NEO-PI-R: **agreeableness is higher among Spanish than British pedophiles:**

- Could be explained by the *collectivistic culture*, which is stronger in Spain than in the UK
- A collectivistic culture is characterized by *"a focus on the primacy of the in-group's goals over individual wishes and desires, requiring individuals to adjust their behavior to the group"*

	Spain sex offenders (n = 36)	UK sex offenders (n = 76)			
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t</i> ₍₁₁₀₎	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Neuroticism	30.53 (8.82)	25.57 (8.77)	2.78	.006	0.56
Extroversion	32.97 (5.16)	24.50 (6.13)	7.16	< .001	1.49
Openness	33.28 (5.43)	23.72 (6.67)	7.48	< .001	1.57
Agreeableness	39.17 (5.80)	30.66 (5.89)	7.17	< .001	1.45
Conscientiousness	46.00 (5.58)	32.46 (6.36)	10.92	< .001	2.26

Becerra-Garcia, Garcia-Leon & Egan (2013)

RESULTS

NEUROTICISM

AGREEABLENESS

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

EXTRAVERSION

OPENNESS

PSYCHOTICISM

RESULTS

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

- Concerns self-control
- Could be related to self-discipline, acting conscientiously with fulfillment as the ultimate goal

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS: main results

- **Sexual offenders vs. other groups:**
- **No difference between sexual offenders and controls**
- **No difference between sexual and non-sexual offenders**

Becerra et al. (2013)

RESULTS

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS: main results (continued)

- **Focus on sexual offenders group:** Randall (2011) compared 73 lay pedophiles and 30 clerical pedophiles
 - Conscientiousness is higher among clerical than lay pedophiles
 - Could be explained by their life being ruled by religious rites, and by the fact that clergymen have fewer antisocial traits
 - The results suggest that clerical pedophiles are similar to controls

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

- Conscientiousness does not discriminate sexual offenders from other offenders
- Lower conscientiousness is related to **abusive childhood**

Becerra et al. (2013)

RESULTS

NEUROTICISM

AGREEABLENESS

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

EXTRAVERSION

OPENNESS

PSYCHOTICISM

RESULTS

EXTRAVERSION

- Concerns emotions, interpersonal relationships and self-management
- Concerns positive emotions and the tendency to seek out stimulation and the company of others

EXTRAVERSION: main results

- **Sexual offenders vs. other groups:**
- **Lower extraversion among sexual offenders than controls**
- **A lower tendency to extraversion in sexual offenders than non-sexual offenders**

Becerra-Garcia, Garcia-Leon, Muela-Martínez & Egan (2013)

Gundjonsson & Sigurdsson (2000)

RESULTS

EXTRAVERSION

- Concerns emotions, interpersonal relationships and self-management
- Concerns positive emotions and the tendency to seek out stimulation and the company of others

EXTRAVERSION: main results

- **Sexual offenders vs. other groups:**
- **Lower extraversion among sexual offenders than controls**
- **A lower tendency to extraversion in sexual offenders than non-sexual offenders**

Becerra-Garcia, Garcia-Leon, Muela-Martínez & Egan (2013)

Gundjonsson & Sigurdsson (2000)

RESULTS

EXTRAVERSION: main results (continued)

- **Focus on sexual offenders group:** Extraversion is highest in rapists, followed by exhibitionists, regressed pedophiles, and fixated pedophiles

Gingrich & Campbell (2007)

- Fundamental dimension for identifying sexual offenders

- **Higher extraversion in rapists**

- Associated with seek sensations, use of alcohol, more impulsive and aggressive behaviors
- Could be compensation for a social impairment

Rader (1977)

- **Extraversion is lower in child molesters and exhibitionists** because they seem to be shyer and more unfit to live in society

RESULTS

NEUROTICISM

AGREEABLENESS

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

EXTRAVERSION

OPENNESS

PSYCHOTICISM

RESULTS

OPENNESS

- Concerns the intellect, culture, emotions, imagination, unusual ideas, curiosity, and variety of experiences
- **This dimension was not analyzed in the studies of this review**

RESULTS

- Only a few dimensions distinguish sexual offenders from other offenders if they are interpreted one-by-one
- SO, it seems to be important to understand **the dynamics of these emotional dimensions**, by defining **profiles** to really distinguish the different types of sexual offenders from other offenders
- We propose three profiles:
 - **Sexual (versus non-sexual) offenders**
 - **Child molesters**
 - **Rapists**

RESULTS

SEXUAL VS. NON-SEXUAL OFFENDERS

Personality disorders
Abusive childhood

SEXUAL OFFENDERS

DELINQUENT PROFILE (*Blackburn, 2004*)

NEUROTICISM

AGREEABLENESS

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

EXTRAVERSION

OPENNESS

Externalized problem behaviors (violence...)

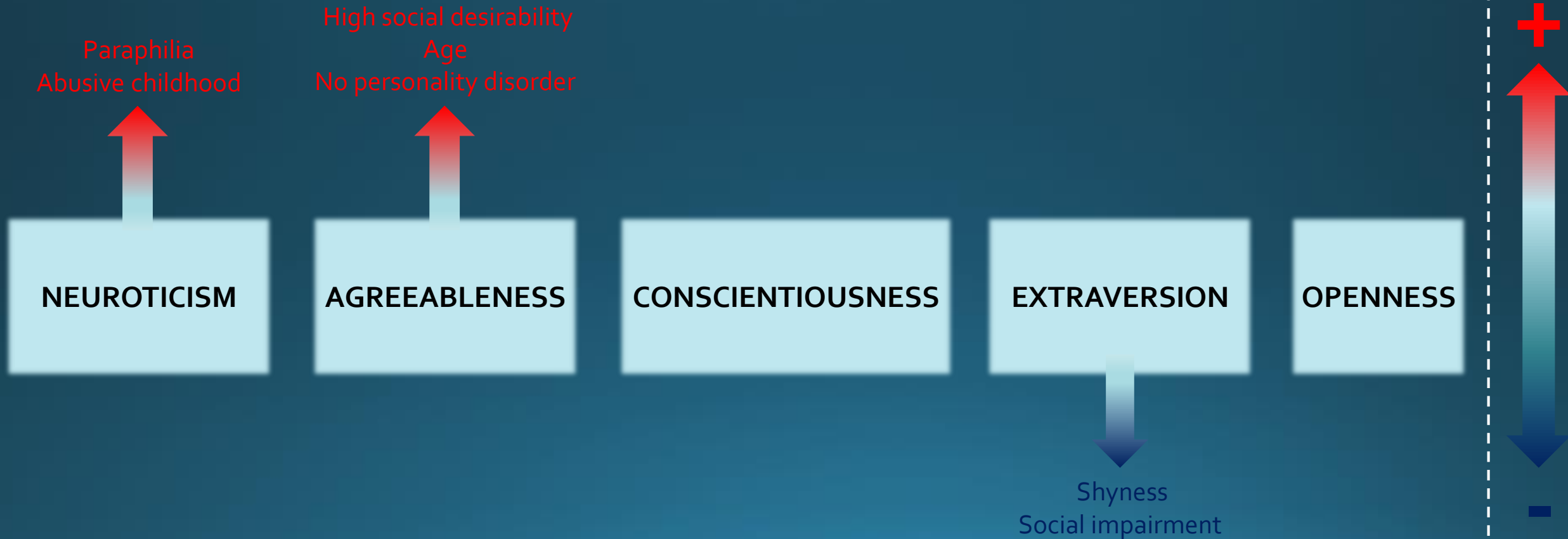
Antisocial, impulsive and aggressive behaviors

Problematic sexual behavior



RESULTS

CHILD MOLESTERS



RESULTS

RAPISTS



DISCUSSION

RESULTS HIGHLIGHT

- Difficulty managing emotions
- Difficulty managing relationships (both cognitively and emotionally)

DISCUSSION

DIFFICULTY MANAGING EMOTIONS (NEUROTICISM)

- Difficulty to identify their own emotions: *“Evidence suggests that sex offenders are likely to use ineffective coping styles when experiencing negative emotions, such as distracting themselves, worrying, impulsive emotional outbursts”*

Serran & Marshall (2006)

DISCUSSION

DIFFICULTY MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS

(AGREEABLENESS, CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, EXTRAVERSION)

- **COGNITIVE RELATIONSHIPS**: Sexual offenders seem to have cognitive distortions, due to implicit theories about others, leading to misunderstanding social interactions

DISCUSSION

DIFFICULTY MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS

(AGREEABLENESS, CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, EXTRAVERSION)

- **EMOTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

- **Facial emotion recognition deficit:** Sexual offenders have difficulty understanding and recognizing the emotions of others. For example, some sexual offenders interpret the fear of their victim as pleasure

McFall (1990)

- **Theory of mind impairment**
- **Emotional contagion deficit**
 - Impaired emotional empathy
 - Could be explained by cognitive distortions

DISCUSSION

Difficulty managing emotions and relationships exist in all sexual offenders but are not explained in the same way

- Deviation mostly explains assault in child molesters
- Whereas antisociality and impulsivity predominate in rapists

Proulx, Lussier, Ouimet & Boutin (2008)

	Rapists	Molesters
NEUROTICISM	Lower: no paraphilia	Higher: due to paraphilia, abusive childhood
AGREEABLENESS	Lower: more aggression, violence, etc.	Higher: social desirability
EXTRAVERSION	Higher: psychoactive substances use, impulsivity	Lower: shyness, social impairment

CONCLUSION

- The goal of studying personality is to **understand patients' overall functioning**
- There are **few studies** using a normal dimensional model to understand the personality of sexual offenders
- **Findings are mixed and difficult to generalize**
- With only five personality factors, earlier models cannot accurately classify the different categories of sexual offenders
- **Avenues for future research**
 - **Recently developed tools based on the five-factor model include more precise facets**, but there is a current paucity of data
 - Future studies using these new tools could help therapists to better understand their patients, and set up appropriate individualized treatment plans

Thank you for your attention



i.bertsch@chu-tours.fr