Title: Towards a better understanding of sexual obsessions

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About the PhD

This fully funded, full-time, PhD studentship includes your fees and a stipend of £13,863 per annum. You will be required to be a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) throughout your studentship, with a salary of £5,024.74 per annum for up to 300 hours of undergraduate psychology teaching and related duties per annum. The start date for the combined studentship and GTA position is 1st October 2015.

For further information on the position of Graduate Teaching Assistant (including the studentship), and for details on how to apply, see http://www.jobs.ac.uk/job/ALH908/4-x-graduate-teaching-assistants

Application closing date: 2nd July 2015 (Job reference: HSS290293A)

About the project

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is characterised by recurrent and persistent thoughts, images or impulses that are experienced as intrusive and inappropriate, and that cause marked anxiety or distress (APA, 2013). The nature of these obsessions can vary from thoughts about contamination, mistakes, accidents and asymmetry to sexual, aggressive or religious intrusions.

Sexual obsessions can include unwanted and distressing thoughts about sexual acts with family members or young children, sexually aggressive behaviour, same-sex sexual activity or unfaithfulness (Grant et al., 2006). Approximately 20-30% of adults with OCD report sexual/aggressive obsessions as their primary difficulty (Stein et al., 1997), though actual rates are likely to be higher as many sufferers are too embarrassed to disclose symptoms (Baer, 2001); such concerns may be warranted as sexual obsessions can be misinterpreted by family and professionals as indicating a risk for acting on the thoughts (Veale et al., 2009). Experiencing sexual obsessions is associated with high levels of distress and suicidal thoughts (e.g. Fullana et al., 2009; Torres et al., 2011).

Sexual obsessions have rarely been studied in their own right. Therefore, this project might comprise one/more of the following (other ideas are welcome):

1. Systematically reviewing the sexual obsession literature, identifying the most promising avenues to pursue.
2. Exploring the phenomenology of sexual obsessions (e.g., Moulding et al., 2014);
3. Examining and testing factors that might be implicated in the aetiology of sexual obsessions (e.g., which self/world views might indicate a
propensity for sexual obsessions and whether altering these views may be a viable target for clinical intervention: Doron & Kyrios, 2005).

4. Examining professionals’ assessments of people presenting with sexual obsessions (e.g., Veale et al., 2009).

You should select the methodological approach appropriate to your research question, whether cross-sectional, experimental, quantitative or qualitative.

Contacts for further information

If you are interested in applying, and would like an informal chat or further information about the project, or to talk through your proposal, please contact the supervision team via t.e.shepherd@leedsbeckett.ac.uk and t.turner-moore@leedsbeckett.ac.uk.

Recommended Reading


If you do not have access to the above journals, you are welcome to contact the supervision team for copies of these articles.