

Sexual Abuse in Australia and New Zealand

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ARTICLES

Back to Basics: Empirical Support for the Importance of Release Planning in Reducing Sex Offender Recidivism

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Abstract

Research on the factors underlying sex offender recidivism has focussed limited attention on release planning. This article reports findings from a series of empirical studies investigating whether poor release planning might contribute to sex offender recidivism. A coding protocol was developed to measure the comprehensiveness of release planning which included items relating to accommodation, employment, pro-social support, community-based treatment, and the Good Lives Model (T. Ward & C.A. Stewart, 2003) secondary goods. The protocol was retrospectively applied to groups of recidivist and nonrecidivist child molesters, matched on static risk level and time since release. As predicted, overall release planning was significantly poorer for recidivists compared to nonrecidivists. The accommodation, employment, and social support items combined to best predict recidivism, with predictive accuracy comparable to that obtained using static risk models. Results highlighted the importance of release planning in efforts to reduce sex offender recidivism. Implications for policy makers and community members are briefly discussed.

Implicit Theories and Personality Patterns in Child-Victim Sex Offenders

J. Jones & J. Vess 58

Abstract

Research has suggested that child sex offenders hold thematically distinct cognitive distortions, which Ward and Keenan (1999) call Implicit Theories. The aim of this preliminary study was to investigate the relationship between offenders' Implicit Theories and their personality related cognitions. The variables were measured using the Implicit Theory Questionnaire and Millon's (1990) MCMI-III personality scales. Subjects were 28 male sex offenders against children serving a custodial sentence in New Zealand, who elected to participate in a treatment program. A majority of participants had personality scale scores that reached the clinical threshold. Results found that dependant, depressive and schizoid personality patterns significantly correlated with Implicit Theories. Clinical and theoretical implications are discussed.

Community Management of Sex Offenders: Stigma versus Support

K. Seidler 66

Abstract

Sexual offending has come increasingly to the public agenda in recent decades, although much of the community remains ill-informed about the nature of or risk associated with sexual abuse, such that many people see sex offenders as dangerous and predatory. This has seen a solid political and social push for strategies that aim to control and manage sex offenders in the community. One such strategy is sex offender registration. This article explores the experience of registered sex offenders in New South Wales, Australia through qualitative inquiry involving interviewing convicted and registered offenders in the community. In particular, the experience of offenders will be explored in relation to the registration process and how this affects their ability to manage risks and reintegrate into the community.

Application of the Massachusetts Treatment Centre Revised Rapist Typology to New Zealand High-risk Rapists: A Pilot Study

S.L. Reid, N.J. Wilson, & D.P. Boer

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Abstract

Rapist heterogeneity across interpersonal, psychological, cognitive and behavioural domains is a common research finding (Langton & Marshall, 2001). Classification systems offer an organising structure to enable greater understanding of differentiating core characteristics and offence motivations. This pilot study investigated whether the Massachusetts Treatment Centre Revised Rapist Typology (MTC: R3) (Knight & Prentky, 1990) could be applied to a New Zealand sample of 10 high-risk rapists selected by the Department of Corrections to participate in a pilot rape treatment programme. Mean differences between MTC: R3 groups on the Violence Risk Scale-Sexual Offender Version (VRS-SO) (Wong, Olver, Nicholaichuk, & Gordon, 2003) were also investigated. Results supported the application of the MTC: R3 typology to this sample of New Zealand high-risk rapists. Mean differences on risk assessment items suggest that rapists may present differing patterns of risk on the basis of MTC: R3 classification.

Developmental, Individual and Family Characteristics of Specialist, Versatile, and Short-Duration Adolescent Sex Offenders

I. Nisbet, S. Smallbone, & R. Wortley

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Abstract

This article reports on developmental, individual and family characteristics of 108 adjudicated adolescent sexual offenders who had been referred to a specialised assessment and treatment service. A Principal Components Analysis of measures of developmental characteristics (abuse histories, conduct problems), individual characteristics (callous unemotional traits; externalising and internalising behaviours), and family functioning (parental involvement; parental supervision; positive parenting practices; inconsistent discipline and corporal punishment) yielded three main components. These components were designated Negative Environment, Positive Environment and Transgression. Three subgroups were identified on the basis of their criminal histories: specialist offenders ($n = 47$); versatile offenders ($n = 33$), and short-duration offenders ($n = 28$). MANCOVA revealed a significant multivariate main effect for offender subtype. A significant univariate effect was found for Transgression. Results suggest that offence specialisation and versatility among adolescent sexual offenders may arise from somewhat different developmental pathways.