

Sexual Abuse in Australia and New Zealand

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Abstract

Since the early 1990's, there has been a proliferation of legislative initiatives in North America, the United Kingdom, and Australasia that are intended to improve public protection from high risk sexual offenders. These laws include extended supervision of sexual offenders once released from prison and indefinite involuntary civil commitment to secure treatment facilities following the expiration of a prison sentence. The enactment of these laws has sparked intense debate and numerous legal challenges on a variety of issues, including the need to strike a proper balance between public safety and the rights of individual offenders. Recent challenges to Extended Supervision Orders in New Zealand have included the assertion that this approach is inconsistent with the Bill of Rights Act. This article compares the use of Extended Supervision Orders in New Zealand to the use of civil commitment of Sexually Violent Predators in the United States, and particularly in California, which currently confines the largest number of offenders under this type of commitment. It is argued that Extended Supervision is more flexible, less intrusive, less punitive, and less costly than civil commitment. The degree to which it is effective in improving public safety remains an empirical question.

Identifying Offense Pathways and Associated Implicit Theories in a Taiwanese Sample of Convicted Rapists

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Abstract

The study aims were to test two psychological models of offending in a sample of Taiwanese rapists. First, the applicability of Ward and Hudson's (1998) relapse prevention pathways model was tested out in the sample; second whether different offense-related schemas, suggested and termed Implicit Theories by Ward (2000) could be identified in the sample. The results of the study identified the pathways originally reported by Ward and Hudson with the overwhelming majority of the sample (82%) identified as having positive goals to offending. As for the schema/IT analysis, the same motivational schemas were found in the study, that have been previously found in samples in New Zealand and the U.K, with no new (culturally specific) motivational schemas/ITs being identified. These results are discussed in terms of the relative levels of these schemas/ITs, in comparison to those reported in samples from New Zealand and the U.K.

Community Intervention with Sex Offenders: Do Dynamic Risk Factors Change with Treatment?

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Abstract

The present study evaluates the effectiveness of a community based group sex offender treatment program, by exploring which dynamic risk factors change following treatment. Participants ($n = 33$) had been charged with or had admitted to a sexual offence against a child victim and had participated in a Sydney based community treatment program that runs for up to three years, and is based on cognitive-behavioural treatment but within a Christian theology framework. These offenders were retrospectively rated on the SONAR dynamic stable and acute factors at pre- and post-treatment, and results were examined for change. There was a significant change in total SONAR scores from pre-treatment ($M = 3.94$; $SD = 2.15$) to post ($M = .82$; $SD = 3.15$). The individual dynamic factors on which offenders made significant improvements were ratings of intimacy and relationships, social influences and supports, self-regulation to supervision and treatment, reduction in substance abuse, and negative mood. Factors on which participants did not significantly change were sexual attitudes, sexual self-regulation, hostility and opportunity for victim access. The significant reduction in SONAR scores also meant that the risk classification ratings changed considerably. Initially 17 (51%) offenders were categorised as low risk, but this number increased to 28 (84%) post-treatment. The results add to the increasing literature detailing the value of dynamic factors, in combination with other static risk factors, as informing risk prediction and treatment needs of sex offenders in the community.

A Minimal Scale for Assessment of Multiple Offending Risk in Sexual Offenders Against Children

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Abstract

The development of a four-item scale for the prediction of sexual offending against multiple victims is described. The scale is scored from offender age and details of the victim's age, gender, and relationship to victim. The scale showed high inter-rater reliability for the individual items and the scale as a whole. Validity in predicting multiple offending in a community sample of sexual offenders against children and in a sub-sample of voluntarily-referred offenders was moderate. The scale had a positive and moderately large correlation with the RRASOR. The scale may be useful for risk assessment of child molesters in circumstances where minimal collaborative information about sexual offending is available.