

Sexual Abuse in Australia and New Zealand

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Abstract

This paper reviews the different treatment modalities used for treating sexual offenders. We provide an overview of the literature comparing group therapy with individual treatment and summarise the main advantages and disadvantages of both treatment modalities. Group treatment appears to be at least as effective as individual treatment, and there are several clinical advantages obtained through group processes which helpfully address the particular criminogenic needs of the sexual offender population and which are less easily obtained in individual therapy. In addition, we also address the debate about the advantages of open-ended versus closed-group formats. Open-ended groups seem to offer more clinical advantages than closed groups, and in particular allow for treatment to be more responsive to individual needs, although there have been no direct comparisons of the two approaches with sexual offenders. We conclude by identifying the next steps for research.

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Rape Supportive Cognition, Sexual Fantasies and Implicit Offence-Scripts: A Comparison Between High and Low Rape Prone Men

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Abstract

It is widely accepted that sexual fantasy can play a role in the aetiology of rape, and it has often been shown that dominant fantasies correlate positively with rape supportive attitudes in men with a proclivity to rape. Furthermore, it has been suggested that frequent use of deviant fantasy can lead to the creation of an implicit-offence script that, if acted out, would constitute a sexual offence. Thus, the aim of the present study was to provide support for the hypotheses that: (1) high rape prone men would report more rape supportive attitudes and dominant fantasies in contrast to men with a low rape proclivity; (2) dominant fantasies are influenced by rape supportive attitudes; and (3) high rape prone men will show more evidence of harbouring implicit-offence scripts. The results supported the first two hypotheses but not the third. Various explanations are offered for these results alongside a discussion of the potential limitations of the study and future research suggestions.

Cognitive Distortions in Sexual Offenders: Should they all be Treatment Targets?

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Abstract

In this paper we consider two sets of so-called “cognitive distortions”: those that have been shown to be unrelated to reoffending (i.e., noncriminogenic factors) and those that have been demonstrated to predict recidivism (i.e., criminogenic factors). While most sexual offender programs target the modification of all these distortions, we argue that treatment should only address the criminogenic attitudes and beliefs. Dissimulation characterises human responses to personal bad behaviour where the person attempts to present themselves as not having behaved in a harmful way and sexual offenders are no exception. As it turns out excuse-making is healthful and results in a reduction in reoffending. It may, therefore, not only be counter to accepted principles of offender treatment to attempt to change noncriminogenic distortions, it may result in increased rates of reoffending. However, those distortions that are criminogenic must be targeted in treatment if we are to reduce reoffending.

Characteristics of Internet Sexual Offenders: A Review

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Abstract

The review presented in this paper provides some descriptive findings regarding Internet Sex Offenders (ISOs) in comparison to contact sex offenders. In general, Internet Sex Offenders are found to be Caucasian, male, relatively young, highly educated, intelligent, and well-employed. ISOs also appear to be highly sexualised, in both their current lifestyle as well as childhood experiences as victims. ISOs can also be classified into several subgroups, such as child pornography offenders, who again are a heterogeneous group themselves. Professionals dealing with ISOs should be aware that they seem to share similar deficits with contact sex offenders but might differ in some important areas. This information should be kept in mind when reading their files, establishing treatment needs, and interpreting psychometric test results. To date no personality and risk measure is validated on this “new” or emerging offender category, hence any results should be interpreted with caution.

Ethical Discussion: Hired Guns in Offender Assessments – What is Appropriate Professional Practice?

Christopher Lennings, The University of Sydney

Abstract

This article provides an overview of philosophical underpinnings of forensic psychology ethics and then invites the reader to apply these ethical principles to two case studies. Ethical positions vary across contexts and practitioners and this article sets out a model for practice ethics, heavily influenced by Emmanuel Kant’s Deontological approach to ethical conduct. It behooves all of us to be thoughtful in our work, to recognise that dilemmas exist and that the more inclined we are to consider easy solutions to hard problems, the more likely we are to make mistakes. Two case studies are presented that illustrate the ethical dilemmas faced by clinicians in sex offender treatment and assessment; it is left to the reader to decide whether the position taken in solving these dilemmas were ones he/she would have taken.

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

M. Proeve