

# Sexual Abuse in Australia and New Zealand

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## CONTENTS

### EDITORIAL

1

*D. Boer*

### ARTICLES

#### **Samoan Fa'afafine - Navigating the New Zealand Prison Environment: A Single Case Study**

4

*M. Hansen-Reid*

#### **Increased Self-Disclosure of Offending by Intrafamilial Child Sex Offenders**

10

*J. Pratley & J. Goodman-Delahunty*

#### **Abstract**

Acceptance of intrafamilial child sex offenders into a treatment program generally requires the offender to admit and accept responsibility for the crimes with which he was charged. Once this level of disclosure has been reached, it is rare for him to be challenged regarding other offences that he may have committed. Anecdotal clinical reports indicated that some offenders disclosed a higher level of abuse than that provided by the victim. This study built on the limited empirical research on this topic. The sample consisted of 124 male offenders referred for treatment at the NSW Pre-Trial Diversion of Offenders Program (Cedar Cottage) between 1989 and 2003. Analyses of disclosures by offenders referred to the program revealed that following contact with the Cedar Cottage personnel, all offenders disclosed significantly more details regarding their offending behaviour, irrespective of whether they were accepted into the program for treatment or declined. Eleven percent of the offenders disclosed victims beyond the individual identified in the index offence. Expanded details were also provided regarding victim age when offending began, the duration and frequency of offending, the number of locations where abuse occurred, and the range and intrusiveness of abusive acts committed. Program completers did not disclose more than noncompleters. These results suggested that the extent and nature of abuse by intrafamilial child sex offenders in the early stages of detection is underestimated. Refusal of offenders into treatment programs based on denial and minimisation is a practice that warrants review.

#### **A Qualitative Study of Denial in Catholic Clergy Child Sexual Abusers**

23

*J. Winship, G. Straker, & T. Robinson*

#### **Abstract**

The role of denial in sexual offending has received a great deal of research attention and there has been increasing recognition that denial is a complex phenomenon which is more than just the negation of the existence of an offence. This paper identifies and illustrates themes of denial in a qualitative study of Catholic clergy who had sexually abused children aged 13 years or under, with denial being defined in terms of the cognitive distortions used to discount responsibility for the abuse. Three themes emerged and were labelled denial of impact, denial of personal salience and denial of meaning. The first two are equivalent to minimisation and depersonalisation as defined by Schneider and Wright (2004). The third, denial of meaning, is particularly related to denial of the sexual meaning of the offence. This appeared to implicate two distinct cognitive processes, which were labelled disbelieving and disallowing. In disbelieving there is a cognitive split between two contradictory mind states, one that knows that the offence was indeed sexual and another which is unable to believe this. Disallowing, on the other hand, involves an inaccurate coding of cues at the time of the offence which leaves pertinent information relating to the sexual nature of the offence unassimilated.

**Age and the Static 99R**

34

*C. Lennings, K. Seidler, R. Heard, E. Collins, & R. Nasr***Abstract**

A total of 51 client files referred for sex offender risk assessment through 2010 were re-analysed to allow for a comparison of the relative efficacy of the Static 99 and the Static 99R in risk of recidivism. Of this group only eleven clients retained the same actuarial risk score when re-assessed on the Static 99R, and a total of two clients increased their risk rating, whilst eleven reduced their risk rating. In particular, no client previously rated as high risk remained in the high-risk group once the Static 99R was used. Implications for risk assessment with a predominantly elderly client group are discussed.

**A Review of “Understanding, Assessing, and Rehabilitating Juvenile Sexual Offending (Second Edition)”**

42

*E. Collins***A Review of “Rehabilitating Sexual offenders: A Strength-Based Approach”**

44

*J. Ware*