

Sexual Abuse in Australia and New Zealand

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

C. Lennings

ARTICLES

Invited Paper: A Thematic Analysis of Contributions to SAANZ 2008-2011

C. Lennings

Abstract

An analysis of the contributions to SAANZ over its first five issues find several themes that have received considerable attention, such as theory development and offender profiling/assessment. A number of areas remain poorly represented, such as young offenders, internet offenders, or cultural aspects of offending, or not at all. For instance no papers on female offending and none on working with survivors of sexual abuse and their families have been received. A need exists to broaden the topics covered by SAANZ so as to meet its original guidelines and to promote research activity by professionals working in the field of sexual abuse.

What's the Buzz? Bumblebees – A Therapeutic Preschool for Abused Children

K. Prentice, T. Signal & N. Taylor

Abstract

Early childhood experience of maltreatment (including neglect, sexual, physical and/or emotional abuse) is well documented as a risk factor for a number of adverse psycho-social outcomes and confers a high risk for life-long impairment across a range of domains. However, there is some research which indicates that early therapeutic intervention (particularly trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy programmes combined with supportive and/or psychodynamic therapies) can mitigate these ongoing effects. The current study examines the outcome of a therapeutic preschool (Bumblebees Therapeutic Preschool – BTPS) for 65 children ranging in age from three to six years of age. Child and family resiliency (suggested as a protective factor against further harm – measured via the Clinical Assessment Package for Risks and Strengths), sexualised (Child Sexual Behavior Inventory) and maladaptive behaviours (Child Behavior Checklist) were measured via Parental/Caregiver report at Intake and Exit of the programme. Analyses demonstrated statistically and clinically significant reductions in problematic behaviour (both sexually-oriented and general) and significant improvement in resiliency scores. The contribution of specific demographic factors such as witnessing family violence, being of Indigenous descent and gender are discussed.

The Assessment of Problem Sexual Behaviours amongst Children: A Human Rights Centred Approach

G. Webster and J. Butcher

Abstract

The International Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) declares that all children have inalienable human rights to special care, assistance, and protection. Each child has the right to mental health care services 'as is necessary for their well-being' and opportunities for rehabilitation at 'the highest attainable standard'. A human rights centred approach to responding to children who display problem sexual behaviours calls upon government, government agencies and professionals to provide accurate assessment and efficacious, evidence-based treatment in a manner that builds the child's sense of dignity and worth. A human rights centred approach to assessment calls upon all professionals to recognise, reflect upon, and respond to children's sexual behaviours in a manner that prioritises the dignity of the child by identifying who should assess and what should be considered in the assessment of children's sexual behaviour.

Who Thinks What about Child Protection: Community Perceptions and Awareness of Child Protection Strategies and their Effectiveness for Reducing Sexual Reoffending

J. Bollinger, K. Seidler and R. Kemp

Abstract

The Child Protection Register of New South Wales (hereafter referred to as the "Register" or "Registers" for the general case) reflects an Australian version of a type of initiative employed internationally in the community management of sex offenders with a view to child protection. Such Registers have come out of a hard line push for "law and order" that has seen sex offenders demonised and the risk they pose to the community inflated, especially by the media. Research, however, has found no tangible effect of Registers in reducing sexual recidivism. Public opinion suggests that Registers are "important" and the current research extends the literature to examine how people living in Sydney, Australia, understand the Register and how this impacts on child protection in the community. The results suggested that participants were ill-informed about the Register, over-estimated risk for reoffending, and that those with children living with them were more likely to desire punitive strategies in managing sex offenders. The implications of this were explored in light of the extant literature and with a view to implications for child protection.

An Integrated Theory of Sexual Recidivism

J. Thakker

Abstract

Over the last twenty years, theories of sexual offending have received a great deal of attention in the literature and there have been a number of important developments. While some theories have focused on the identification of specific causal factors, others have brought together a range of factors in the form of integrated models. Theoreticians who work in this field share the common goal of explaining this highly problematic behaviour so that appropriate interventions can be developed. However, it is interesting to note that, to date, the theoretical research has looked primarily at sexual offending per se, rather than sexual reoffending; thus, there appears to be a gap in the literature. This article seeks to lay out a framework for filling this gap by bringing together two typically disparate bodies of literature; namely, the theories of sexual offending and the risk factors for sexual reoffending.

Integrating Strength-Based Models in the Psychological Treatment of Sexual Offenders

W. Marshall and L. Marshall

Abstract

In this paper we suggest that treatment for sexual offenders will be maximally effective if it is strength-based. We reject the negative and deficit focus of earlier approaches, particularly the Relapse Prevention Model. Effective treatment should incorporate the Risk/Needs/Responsivity principles outlined by Andrews and his colleagues, Ward's Good Lives Model, and Seligman's Positive Psychology approach. We have shown that such a strength-based treatment program effectively reduces long-term reoffending among sexual offenders.

BOOK REVIEWS

A Review of "Crime, Culture and Violence: Understanding how Masculinity and Identity Shapes Offending"

A. Tamatea

A Review of "Is this Normal? Understanding your Child's Sexual Behaviour"

G. Webster