

NEARI NEWS:

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

An Essential Tool for Professionals Working with those who Sexually Abuse or... A Great New Way to Stay Current with Cutting Edge Sexual Abuse Research.



Volume 5, Issue 1

January 2012

Dear Colleague,

This month's issue focuses on the questions of recidivism for adolescents who have sexually abused and the risk factors for further sexually abusive behaviors. The study echoes others over the last few years which clearly demonstrate that while the recidivism rate for adolescents who sexually abuse is high overall, the number of adolescents who sexually abuse again is much smaller (10% in this study).

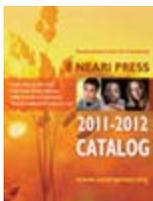
The study reminds us that many of the factors that the public feels are risk factors for further sexual abuse (e.g., empathy) aren't. Clearly, many factors that people overlook (e.g., impulsivity) are in fact predictive.

As always, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at info@nearipress.org or call us at 413-540-0712 x14.

Sincerely,

Joan Tabachnick and Steven Bengis

www.nearipress.org



What is the difference between adolescents who sexually abuse and others who commit non-sexual crimes?

by Steven Bengis, David S. Prescott, and Joan Tabachnick

Question

What differentiates youth who have sexually abused from those who don't reoffend or reoffend in non-sexual ways?

The Research

In September 2011, Julie Carpentier and Jean Proulx published a study designed to identify the risk factors for re-offense among adolescents who had sexually abused. They chose a sample of 351 male adolescents between the ages of 11 and 18, who had sexually offended and had been assessed at an outpatient center in Montreal, Canada. The study examined over 100 variables to correlate with any new criminal charges in three areas: overall recidivism; violent recidivism (including violent sexual recidivism); and, sexual recidivism. With a mean follow-up period of 8 years, the results confirm that adolescents who have sexually abused committed other criminal offenses, but few sexually abused again. More specifically, the study indicated that: 10% were charged with at least one new sexual offense; 30% were charged with a violent offense (including sexual offenses); and 45% were charged with a new offense (of any kind). The study concluded that the youth reoffended relatively quickly (almost half of those who commit another offense do so within two years, 75% do so within four years). Identified risk factors for each of the three areas included:

- **Sexual Recidivists:** paternal abandonment (plays a particularly important role in sexual criminality beyond adolescents) and association with significantly younger children
- **Violent and Overall Recidivists:** an official criminal record, an unofficial history of delinquency, and a diagnosis of ADD (all of which the authors suggest may be understood as indices of impulsivity or low self-control)
- **All Recidivists:** Sexual victimization was the only risk factor associated with an increase in the risk of sexual, violent, and overall recidivism

Implications for Professionals

While using different methodologies, several studies, including the present Carpentier and Proulx contribution, have yielded the same conclusion. Only a very small number of youth who offend sexually (in this study, 10%) go on to offend sexually again. But a far higher

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Save the Date: June 3-8, 2012

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Date: June 3-8, 2012

Location: Massachusetts

Cost: \$1,100 includes CE credits, books and other materials

NEARI in the Media

Part of our mission is to increase the knowledge and understanding of sexual abuse prevention and treatment among professionals and the public. That is true of our staff and authors. We are starting a new feature on the NEARI Press website which features the incredible efforts to make our families, communities, organizations and society free from sexual violence.

To learn more, go to www.nearipress.org or contact info@nearipress.org or call 413-540-0712 x14.

number commit other general criminal offenses. With an increasing understanding of the factors leading to sexual recidivism, professionals need to: 1) focus on intervention approaches, particularly in the years immediately following an offense, that limit contact with younger children; 2) target therapy/treatment approaches that address the ramifications of paternal abandonment (perhaps a proxy for attachment issues); 3) address the impact of sexual victimization and teach self and energy modulation practices (including the use of appropriate medication) for those with comorbid conditions such as ADHD.

Implications for the Field

With the increasing research about recidivism in adolescents who sexually abuse, the field should use every available opportunity to change public opinion and the public narrative from "once an offender always an offender" to "once a sexually abusive adolescent rarely an adult sexual offender". The findings suggest that early intervention is key in the lives of these children and adolescents. The authors also challenge us all to see the harm of labeling all adolescents who sexually abuse as "sex offenders" when so few continue to abuse sexually. Further, this study suggests the need to explore the positive impact of strong male relational opportunities as a protective factor and the powerful impact that prevention approaches can have on future victimization given the victim-victimizer correlates.

Abstract

The Carpentier and Proulx study investigates the recidivism rates of a sample of 351 male adolescents who sexually offended, and were assessed at an outpatient psychiatric clinic in Montreal. Over an 8-year follow-up period, 45% (n = 158) of the participants were charged with a new criminal offense, 30% (n = 104) were charged with a violent offense, and 10% (n = 36) were charged with a sexual offense. Cox regression results suggest that overall, violent, and sexual recidivism can be predicted by a variety of developmental, social, and criminological factors. Paternal abandonment, childhood sexual victimization, association with significantly younger children, and having victimized a stranger were associated with a higher risk of sexual recidivism. Previous delinquency, attention deficit disorder, and childhood sexual victimization were found to increase the risk for both violent and overall recidivism. Also, the use of violence during a sex crime and victimizing a stranger were associated with violent recidivism, and school delay and association with delinquent peers were predictive of overall recidivism. The results confirm that a significant proportion of adolescents who have sexually offended pursue a criminal activity beyond adolescence, although few specialize in sexual offending.

Citation

- Carpentier, J and Proulx, J. (2011). Correlates of Recidivism Among Adolescents Who have Sexually Offended. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 23, 434-455.

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