

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 6, Issue 9

September 2013

Dear Colleague,

This month's NEARI News offers another study about risk and protective factors for adolescents who have sexually abused. The research confirms what we know: we simply cannot use adult research when we work with teens AND we need more research if we truly want to conduct research-based assessments on this population.

The authors of this study found that one clear risk factor for further abuse was having access to children or other teens. Our hope is that this study adds to the body of existing research which will ultimately lead to answering the critical question both professionals and the public are asking: how can we help prevent further sexual abuse by teens or even children?

As part of NEARI Press' efforts to prevent anyone from abusing others, please consider becoming a sponsor of our exciting new 2013-2014 NEARI Press Webinar series. We will continue to feature nationally recognized authors including, but not limited to: David Prescott, Rob Longo, Kevin Creeden, Robin Wilson, Toni Cavanagh Johnson, and Robert Kinscherff. To launch the series in September, we need your help. For \$98 as an individual or \$250 as an organization, we guarantee your seat in the webinar, we do all of the work to sign you up each month, and we offer you two free books for your support. It really is a win-win situation for all. For

Risk and Protective Factors

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

Question

What factors predict risk or protect against risk to reoffend in youth who sexually abuse?

The Research

Spice, Viljoen, Latzman, Scalora, and Ullman followed a group of 193 male adolescents for 7.24 years after they left a residential sex offender treatment program to determine the relationship between risk and protective factors among youth who had abused sexually, as well as those who committed non-sexual offenses.

The authors acknowledge a number of limitations, including that only 16 of the 193 adolescents sexually re-offended, the relatively short time frame of the study, the apparent effectiveness of the treatment program, and the lack of information about possible risk factors considered in other studies.

Even within the study's limitations, the findings suggest that adolescents who abuse sexually and those who commit non-sexual crimes both display risk factors for nonsexual re-offense. These included *prior nonsexual offending, age at first offense, and delinquent peer groups*. However, only one risk factor for sexual offending (opportunities to reoffend) was associated with sexual re-offense by adolescents in this sample. Although no protective factors were associated with sexual re-offense, having *strong attachments and bonds* served as a protective factor against non-violent recidivism. The authors conclude that:

1. Further research is needed to determine if there are any distinct protective factors and/or risk factors that may influence risk management decisions and recidivism outcomes.
2. Given the lack of evidence on risk factors and protective factors, risk assessment is extremely difficult and should be used with caution, especially considering the increasingly punitive public policies involving adolescents.

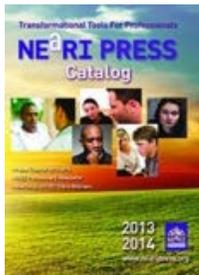
Implications for Professionals

Every day, clinicians are asked to assess a teenager's risk to sexually reoffend. This can have profound consequences to both the youth and others who might be victimized in the future. Given the limits of our current knowledge, clinicians must remain humble about their assessment findings, even in the face of pressure from

more information or to sign up, please contact Diane Langelier at 413.540.0712 x14.

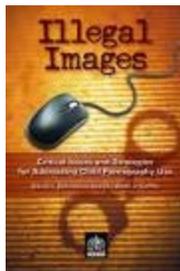
As always, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at info@nearipress.org or call us at 413-540-0712, x14.

Sincerely,
Joan Tabachnick and Steven Bengis



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[Illegal Images: Critical Issues and Strategies for Addressing Child Pornography Use](#)

by David L. Delmonico and
Elizabeth J. Griffin

Illegal Images provides helping professionals (e.g., mental health professionals, child advocates, pastoral counselors, and community supervision officers) with information regarding the key issues to be addressed when working with anyone viewing online child pornography. This book answers critical questions about the use of child pornography and gives practical solutions for working with these individuals.

Paperback, 88 pages

courts and referring agencies. This includes communicating the limits of one's conclusions, acknowledging aspects that are unknown, and providing an expiration date (e.g., "this report is valid for only the next six months"). Further detailed research about protective factors will help clinicians provide research-based recommendations for placement and treatment. In the present "knowledge climate," clinicians must recognize the limitations of the current risk assessment tools for adolescents, while acknowledging that these tools are a dramatic improvement over unstructured judgment. Clinicians should also be able to argue persuasively against past assumptions that most youth are at high risk to re-offend sexually is simply untrue.

Implications for the Field

After 30 years of adolescent sexual-abuse research, this article reminds professionals again of the limitations of the present knowledge about risk and protective factors. This information is necessary for all professionals grappling with the responsibility of assessing the future risk of sexual re-offense and reporting individualized findings to decision-makers.

As the NEARI Press newsletter has cautioned many times in the past, clinicians working with teens still lack a sufficient research basis for concluding that any individual youth will sexually abuse again in the future. If clinicians working with teens are to avoid repetition of the mistakes made early in the field's development, advocating for and investing in additional adolescent risk and protective factor research is critical given the significant consequences to individual lives of each assessment. Support for such research must become a central focus of every clinician's work over the next five years, as both these young people and community safety deserve no less.

Abstract

Literature on risk factors for recidivism among juveniles who have sexually offended (JSOs) is limited. In addition, no studies have been published concerning protective factors among this population. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of risk and protective factors to sexual and nonsexual recidivism among a sample of 193 male JSOs (mean age = 15.26). Youths were followed for an average of 7.24 years following discharge from a residential sex offender treatment program. The risk factor *opportunities to reoffend*, as coded based on the Estimate of Risk of Adolescent Sexual Offense Recidivism, was associated with sexual recidivism.

Several risk factors (e.g., *prior offending; peer delinquency*) were associated with nonsexual recidivism. No protective factors examined were associated with sexual recidivism, although *strong attachments and bonds* as measured by the Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth was negatively related to nonsexual recidivism.

These findings indicate that risk factors for nonsexual recidivism may be consistent across both general adolescent offender populations and JSOs, but that there may be distinct protective factors that apply to sexual recidivism among JSOs. Results also indicate important needs for further research on risk factors, protective factors, and risk management strategies for JSOs.

Citation

- Spice, A., Viljoen J., Latzman, N., Scalora, M., & Ullman, D. (2013). Risk and protective factors for recidivism among juveniles who have offended sexually. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*. Sage Publications.

ISBN: 978-1-929657-72-8
Catalog Number: 9729
PRICE: \$12.00

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