

Chapter 2

Overview of Sexual Offender Typologies, Recidivism, and Treatment

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Introduction

Sexual violence is a serious public health problem that can lead to lasting harmful effects for individuals, families, and communities. Accordingly, sexual violence has proven a consistent area of concern for the general public, as evidenced by substantive findings from public opinion studies (Anderson and Sample 2008; Anderson et al. 2015; Burchfield 2012; Button et al. 2013; Kernsmith et al. 2009; Klein 2015; Levenson et al. 2007; Lieb and Nunlist 2008; Phillips 1998; Proctor et al. 2002; Redlich 2001; Schiavone and Jeglic 2009; Zevitz and Farkas 2000). These works highlight two broader, important points. First, over time the general public has remained largely supportive of sexual offender registration and related crime control policies. For example, findings from a 1998 survey of Washington State residents revealed that 80 % of residents viewed community notification laws as very important for public safety (Phillips 1998), which were consistent with a more recent 2007 survey of Florida residents (Levenson et al. 2007). Second, public perceptions about sexual offenders are not aligned, for the most part, with the available research evidence and are based primarily upon myths and misconceptions.

Given the opinions of United States residents, it is perhaps not surprising that sexual violence has also remained at the center of national criminal justice policy debate. Sex offense legislation relies on controversial crime control methods to restrict and regulate individuals convicted of sexual crimes. Despite jurisdictional variations, there are several common forms of sex offender-specific legislation, including registration and community notification laws, residency restrictions,

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electronic monitoring laws, and sexually violent predator legislation (Calkins et al. 2014) that will be addressed and reviewed in Chaps. 3–7. Today, roughly 1 of 181 males in the United States is a registered sexual offender.¹ Critics contend that these policies and laws have adverse effects on individuals, families, and communities (Ackerman et al. 2013; Burchfield and Mingus 2014; Evans and Cubellis 2015; Jennings et al. 2014; Rydberg et al. 2014) and fail to achieve their intended purpose of recidivism reduction (Ackerman and Furman 2012; Barnes et al. 2009; Duwe and Donnay 2010; Freeman 2012; Levenson et al. 2010) and do little to reduce sexual recidivism.

Due to its complicated, emotionally charged nature, sexual offending is a topic that abounds with myths and misconceptions. In light of these dynamics, the purpose of this chapter is to review the current state of empirical knowledge about sexual offender typologies, recidivism, and treatment. Hence, the chapter is divided into three sections: sexual offender typologies, sexual offender recidivism, and sexual offender treatment. Each section provides a comprehensive overview about current knowledge and related empirical literature support.

An Overview of Sexual Offender Typologies

Sexual abuse encompasses a wide range of events and behaviors, and therefore it is not surprising that research consistently finds significant heterogeneity among individuals who commit sexual crimes. Resulting efforts to understand the different characteristics and motivations of individuals who engage in sexual abuse have now produced a plethora of theoretically derived classification schemes that arrange sexual offenders by different discrete typologies (Bickley and Beech 2001; Harris 2010; Ward and Hudson 1998). Classification systems most commonly separate sexual offenders within the broad classifications of adult male rapists, adult male child molesters, and adult female sexual offenders that will form the focus of this section. Effective classification systems are fundamental to the application of scientific evidence criminal justice system problem, yet empirical research on existing sexual offender typologies is limited, and what is available has produced inconsistent results over the years (Bickley and Beech 2001; Harris 2010). Evidence indicates that some sex offenders do not fit neatly into one typology, but instead present with characteristics from multiple typologies, or sometimes none at all. Therefore, it is surprising that, with the exception of Knight and his colleagues (e.g., Knight and Prentky 1990) who have focused their work on the development a multiple dimension classification system (i.e., Massachusetts Treatment Center: Child Molester Version 3 and Rapist Version 3), the majority of sexual offender classification models provide simple unidimensional typologies. The purpose of this

¹The following data sources were used to calculate this statistics: 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

section is to provide an overview of sexual offender typologies. Because exhaustive reviews of sexual offender typologies have been provided elsewhere (see Robertillo and Terry 2007), this section will highlight the characteristics that are common within the various classification systems.

Adult Male Rapists

Adult male rapists, like the overall population of sexual offenders, do not represent a homogenous group. Rather, typology research undertaken to date has produced many adult rape typologies in which rapists are commonly classified by motivation—broadly grouped as sexual or non-sexual in nature. For the purpose of this chapter, existing adult male rapists typologies were synthesized into five theoretically meaningful classifications (see Table 2.1): (a) compensatory, (b) sadistic, (c) anger, (d) power/control, and (e) opportunistic/antisocial.

Both compensatory and sadistic rapists are motivated by sexual fantasies. The compensatory rapist, also referred to as the power reassurance or gentleman rapist, achieves social competence and improved self-esteem by way of carrying out sexual fantasies (Rada 1978). Rapists classified as compensatory typically express

Table 2.1 Adult male rape classification

Classification	Behavioral description	Citations
Compensatory	Expression of sexual fantasies with minimal aggression evident	Cohen et al. (1969), Conklin (1992), Groth et al. (1977), Kopp (1962), Guttmacher and Weihofen (1952), Hazelwood (1995) and Prentky et al. (1985)
Sadistic	Expression of aggressive sexual fantasies	Becker and Abel (1978), Bromberg and Coyle (1974), Cohen et al. (1971), Gebhard et al. (1965), Groth (1979), Groth et al. (1977), Guttmacher and Weihofen (1952), Knight (1999), Prentky et al. (1985) and Rada (1978)
Anger	Expression of rage	Cohen et al. (1971), Groth (1979), Groth et al. (1977), Hazelwood (1995) and Knight (1999)
Power/Control	Desire to achieve power and dominance	Groth (1979), Prentky et al. (1985) and Robertillo and Terry (2007)
Opportunistic/Antisocial	Spur of the moment, impulsive, situational	Amir (1971), Conklin (1992), Glueck (1956), Groth et al. (1977), Guttmacher and Weihofen (1952), Hazelwood (1995), Knight (1999), Kopp (1962), Gebhard et al. (1965), Prentky et al. (1985), Rada (1978) and Selkin (1975)

concern for the well-being of their victim and therefore only use force as needed to control the victim (Cohen et al. 1969; Conklin 1992; Groth et al. 1977; Kopp 1962; Guttmacher and Weihofen 1952; Hazelwood 1995; Prentky et al. 1985). Contrary to the compensatory rapist, however, the sadistic rapist's fantasies are sexually aggressive; the sadistic rapist is sexually aroused by aggression and violence (Becker and Abel 1978; Bromberg and Coyle 1974; Cohen et al. 1971; Gebhard et al. 1965; Groth 1979; Groth et al. 1977; Guttmacher and Weihofen 1952).

Rapists falling within the anger and power/control classifications are typically motivated by non-sexual needs. Power/control rapists are motivated primarily by a desire to achieve power and dominance (Groth 1979; Prentky et al. 1985; Robertillo and Terry 2007). Groth (1983) best describes this classification as "the sexual expression of aggression rather than the aggressive expression of sexuality" (p. 165). The anger rapist, also referred to as the anger retaliation rapist, more specifically aims to hurt his victim as a means to get even for the real or imagined injustices he has faced at the hands of women. Anger rapists generally exhibit negative attitudes toward women (Cohen et al. 1971; Groth 1979; Groth et al. 1977; Hazelwood 1995; Knight 1999).

The last classification—the opportunistic/antisocial rapist—is also largely motivated by non-sexual needs in the commission of the crime. Typically, opportunistic/antisocial rapists impulsively commit rape during the commission of another crime. This rapist is more antisocial in nature and therefore generally engages in non-sexual crime more so than sexual-related crime (Amir 1971; Conklin 1992; Glueck 1956; Groth et al. 1977; Guttmacher and Weihofen 1952; Hazelwood 1995; Knight 1999; Kopp 1962; Gebhard et al. 1965; Prentky et al. 1985).

Adult Child Molesters

Adult male child molesters are commonly classified according to a continuum: individuals with a preference for sexual relationships with exclusively children—or preferential child molesters—at one end, and individuals who situationally depart from their primary sexual attraction to adults—or situational child molesters—at the other end.

Preferential child molesters, also referred to as fixated child molesters, are typically interested in solely children, and often have victim and gender preferences. As summarized in Table 2.2, child molesters within the preferential classification can be described according to three typologies: (a) manipulative, (b) introverted, and (c) sadistic. A manipulative child molester presents with a primary attraction to children and typically grooms a victim over a lengthy period of time in an effort to lower resistance before engaging in sexual abuse. Similarly, an introverted child molester is primarily attracted to children, however, lacks the social skills to adequately engage in grooming and manipulation to access the victim. On the other hand, the sadistic child molester—sexually aroused by the

Table 2.2 Adult male child molester classification

Classification	Behavioral description
Preferential	
Manipulative	Groom victims over time to lower resistance
Introverted	Lacks social skills to access victims
Sadistic	Aroused by inflicting pain on children
Situational	
Inadequate	Low self-esteem; available child becomes a sexual substitution for adult
Indiscriminate	Antisocial orientation; abuse children indiscriminately
Experimentation	Experiment sexually on children out of boredom

infliction of pain on children—uses force to gain access to a victim (Groth et al. 1982; Knight 1992; Lanning 1986).

Situational child molesters are typically not solely attracted to children, but rather, they exhibit a secondary sexual attraction to children. Situational child molesters are most often described according to the following three types: (a) inadequate, (b) indiscriminate, and (c) experimentation. An inadequate child molester has a primarily sexual attraction to age-appropriate adults; however, low self-esteem and poor social skills typically work against the development of an age-appropriate sexual relationship. For these types of child molesters, a child victim becomes a substitute for an adult relationship. An indiscriminate child molester abuses children in general, which includes both physical and sexual abuse, curiosity drives the experimentation child molester, who tends to sexually victimize children out of boredom (Groth et al. 1982; Knight 1992; Lanning 1986).

Adult Female Sexual Offenders

Female-perpetrated sexual abuse has long been thought of as a relatively rare occurrence in comparison to male-perpetrated sexual abuse (Harris 2010; Gannon and Rose 2008; O'Connor 1987; Peter 2009). Indeed, relatively small female sexual offender samples posed significant challenges for early researchers who focused on female sexual offender typology development (Faller 1987; McCarty 1986; Mathews et al. 1990; Sarrel and Masters 1982; Saradjian and Hanks 1996). For example, Sarrel and Masters (1982) were among the first researchers to classify female sexual offenders according to discrete typologies. Four typologies were derived from a sample of eleven male victims: (a) forced assault, (b) babysitter, (c) incestuous, and (d) dominant woman abuser (Sarrel and Masters 1982). Perhaps the most well-known female sexual classification system devised by Matthews et al. (1989) identified three categories of female sexual offenders: (a) teacher/lover, (b) predisposed, and (c) male-coerced. Soon after, relying on an expanded sample, they refined the system to a multidimensional typology that included two broad

categories, (a) self-initiated offenders and (b) accompanied offenders, with subtypes within each category (Mathews et al. 1990).

With increased attention devoted to female-perpetrated sexual abuse by the criminal justice system, the media, and national data collection efforts (e.g., the Uniform Crime Report [2013] shows females are responsible for 10.5 % of sexual offenses, excluding prostitution), there have been recent concerted efforts by researchers to improve the methodological rigor of female sexual offender typology studies (Harris 2010). For example, in one of the most comprehensive classification studies, Vandiver and Kercher (2004) relied on a sample of 471 registered female sexual offenders, which was a sample size noticeably larger than any previous female sexual offender typology study. Additionally, unlike previous studies that consisted of clinical samples and case studies, the sample was drawn from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Sex Offender Registry. Vandiver and Kercher's (2004) resulting female sexual offender classification systems consisted of six typologies: (a) heterosexual nurturer, (b) non-criminal homosexual, (c) female sexual predator, (d) young adult child exploiter, (e) homosexual criminal, and (f) aggressive homosexual. First, the heterosexual nurturer is typically in a caretaking role or described as a "mentor" to the victim (often a young teenage male). Vandiver and Kercher (2006) labeled the second typology the homosexual non-criminal female sexual offender and is described as someone who victimizes a female with a male accomplice, but tends to present with no history of criminal history prior to the offense. The female sexual predator is the third typology and is typically more aggressive, selects young male victims (approximately 11 years of age), and, according to Vandiver and Kercher (2006), is most likely to reoffend sexually. The fourth typology is the youngest among the six female sexual offender typologies. The young adult child exploiter tends to select younger victims (approximately 7 years old) and does not appear to have a gender preference. Vandiver and Kercher (2006) labeled the fifth typology as the homosexual criminal. This type of female sexual offender is described as a female who commits sexual crimes for financial gain, and thus is likely to force young girls into prostitution or sexual acts. Finally, the sixth typology is the aggressive homosexual and is the female sexual offender who tends to victimize adult females. Subsequent efforts to replicate the findings of Vandiver and Kercher (2004) highlighted the view that female sexual offenders are a heterogeneous group (Sandler and Freeman 2007).

Female sexual offender classification research raises important questions about the extent that female sexual offenders are similar to, or different from, male sexual offenders. This highlights the importance of studying female sexual offenders separately from their male sexual offender counterparts. While there are some important similarities between male and female sex offenders, there are also some crucial differences (Nathan and Ward 2001). For example, one important finding that can be gathered from a comprehensive review of female sexual offender typologies is the prevalence of a co-offender classification (Faller 1987; Mathews et al. 1989, 1990; McCarty 1986; Nathan and Ward 2001, 2002; Saradjian and Hanks 1996). Research that specifically compares female sexual offenders who

offend alone to those who offend with a co-offender has found detectable differences in victim, offender, and risk characteristics between groups (Muskens et al. 2011; Gillespie et al. 2014; Vandiver 2006).

Limitations of Traditional Classification Systems and Recent Advances

Typology development to date has yielded substantial insights about both male and female sexual offenders, which has undoubtedly contributed to an organized means for practitioners and researchers to classify and study the behavior characteristics of sexual offenders. However, the inconsistent findings produced from sexual offender typology development efforts have led to criticisms. For example, Bickley and Beech (2001) have thoroughly discussed methodological limitations of typology development including issues of sampling methods, low base rates of sexual reoffense, and social desirability in self-reports.

More recently, sexual offender classification systems have also been questioned within the criminological literature (Harris et al. 2009a; Lussier et al. 2005; Smallbone and Wortley 2004) largely for their reliance on the assumption that sexual offenders are different from conventional, non-sexual offenders (see Blokland and Lussier 2015). Although sexual offender classification systems have acknowledged within group (sexual offender) variation in characteristics and motivations, criminologists have further challenged between offender variation, or the assumption that sexual offenders commit sexual offenses exclusively over the course of their criminal careers. Rather, criminologists argue that offenders who commit sexual offenses are like any other offender and therefore will engage in different types of crime (e.g., drug, property) over the course of their criminal careers (Blumstein et al. 1986; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990).

Harris and her colleagues (e.g., Harris et al. 2009a, b, 2011) have studied the criminal careers of sexual offenders extensively and they have consistently concluded that criminal versatility was the most common offending pattern among sexual offenders. In other words, most sexual offenders commit different types of crime over their criminal careers rather than exclusively sexual crimes. Evidence suggests that most rapists and child molesters engage in non-sexual offenses both before and after their sexual offenses (Broadhurst and Maller 1992; Miethe et al. 2006; Lussier et al. 2005; Sothill et al. 2000). Although the criminal careers of rapists are often more versatile as compared to child molesters, there is evidence to support the versatility in the criminal careers of child molesters as well (Lussier et al. 2005; Smallbone and Wortley 2004; Weinrott and Saylor 1991). One study examined the criminal careers of child molesters and found that 80 % were convicted of a non-sexual offense before their sexual offenses (Smallbone and Wortley 2004). Based on the evidence currently available, it seems fair that criminologists have concluded that "...specialized sexual offenders do exist, but they are an

identifiable minority” (Harris et al. 2011, p. 256). As sexual offender typology development advances, an important question to consider is whether sexual offenders should be regarded as similar or different from non-sexual offenders, particularly because the answer to this question presents different implications for future policy development.

An Overview of Sexual Offender Recidivism

Over the last three decades, jurisdictions across the United States have implemented various crime control methods to restrict and regulate individuals convicted of sexual crimes, including community notification, public registration, and civil commitment legislation (Blasko et al. 2011; Calkins et al. 2014; Fitch 1998; Terry 2011). Despite jurisdictional variations in requirements, recidivism reduction has been a salient policy goal of sex offender legislation articulated in statutes and in court rulings supporting those statutes across jurisdictions. This section will provide an overview of the research on sexual offender recidivism. Research on sexual offenders varies in its approach to measuring recidivism. Given the substantial implications the variations has for interpreting research findings (recidivism rates), this section will first review issues related to how recidivism is defined in sexual offender recidivism research.

The word “recidivism” is derived from the Latin word *recidere*, which means “fall back.” In relation to criminal justice contexts more specifically, recidivism is conceptually defined as “the reversion of an individual to criminal behavior after he or she has been convicted of a prior offense, sanctioned, and (presumably) corrected” (Maltz 2001, p. 1). In recent decades, variability in how recidivism is understood and conceptualized across sexual offender studies is the rule rather than the exception. Moreover, variability in how recidivism is operationalized across sexual offender recidivism studies is problematic. For the purpose of this chapter, a systematic review was conducted to identify common variations in how recidivism is measured in practice.² Six relevant studies were identified that used recidivism as an outcome measure (Duwe and Goldman 2009; Grady et al. 2015; Marques et al. 2005; McGrath et al. 1998; McGuire 2000; Romero and Williams 1983). Reviews of the six studies identified how each study conceptualized and operationalized recidivism. The resulting list of recidivism definitions was systematized by general category to illustrate how sex offender studies operationalized recidivism according to recidivism type (i.e., incarceration, arrest). To facilitate comparison across the studies, Table 2.3 presents the recidivism measures by type of recidivism. Overall, the review of six recidivism studies identified the key differences in recidivism

²The review was limited to studies conducted within the United States because it was expected that variations in criminal justice system processes between countries would influence how recidivism was operationalized.

Table 2.3 Recidivism measures operationalized by types of recidivism

Recidivism type	Recidivism measures
Re-arrest	Any official offense in state; only official felony sexual offense in state; official sexual offense in state; official violent offense (including sexual) in state
Re-conviction	Official non-violent offense (specified as not against a person); official sexual offense (excluded failure to register); official violent offense (including sexual); official sexual offense in state; official violence offense (non-sexual only) in state; any official offense in state; self-report any offense
Re-incarceration	Length of time to within state re-incarceration; return to current state for any official offense; return to current state prison for official felony (only) sexual offense in state; return to current state prison for official violent offense (including sexual felony); any offense within state and out of state (federal records)
Probation violation	Failure to follow conditions (official judicial ruling)
Parole violation	Seriousness of the violation; certainty of guilt
Offense	Severity; certainty of guilt; number of any new offenses (state and federal records)

Note Recidivism measures based on Duwe and Goldman (2009), Grady et al. (2015), Marques et al. (2005), McGrath et al. (1998), McGuire (2000) and Romero and Williams (1983)

definitions. While two studies used the same general type of recidivism, such as sexual offense re-conviction, they often used different specific definitions, for example felony only sexual offense re-conviction as compared to sexual offense re-conviction. Relatedly, most studies used violent re-arrest as a recidivism indicator, however the specific definitions either included (i.e., violent and sexual offenses combined) or excluded (i.e., violent, non-sexual offense) sexual offenses.

This section will now turn to findings from sexual recidivism research. According to national public opinion polls (CSOM 2010) and surveys of local resident (Koon-Magnin 2015; Levenson et al. 2007), the public believes that sexual offenders will almost always commit another sexual offense in the future, Relying on public opinion survey responses to estimate how many sexual offenders commit new sexual crimes would produce a 75 % sexual recidivism rate (CSOM 2010; Levenson et al. 2007). Comparatively, meta-analytic research (e.g., Hanson and Morton-Bourgon 2005; Schmucker and Lösel 2015), which relies on the quantitative combination of results from individual studies in order to determine the overall effect of an outcome (in this case recidivism) (Harkins and Beech 2007), has demonstrated much lower rates. Similarly a low sexual offender recidivism rate was estimated by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) recidivism study, the largest known follow-up study of sexual offenders ($N = 9691$) released from state prisons.

Available data indicate 5.3–13.7 % of adult sexual offenders commit new sexual offenses during follow-up periods of 3–6 years (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2003;

Hanson and Bussière 1995; Hanson and Morton-Bourgon 2005; Helmus et al. 2015). Relying on 82 sexual offender recidivism studies originating from several countries, including the United States, Canada, and United Kingdom, Hanson and Morton-Bourgon (2005) synthesized evidence from 29,450 sexual offenders according to different types of recidivism: (a) any sexual, (b) non-sexual violent, (c) any violent (sexual and non-sexual), and (d) general (any). On average, the observed recidivism rates were 13.7–36.2 % during the 5–6 year follow-up period, with rate variation explained by type of recidivism (e.g., sexual, violent). The average sexual recidivism rate was 13.7 % across studies, as compared to slightly higher violent (14.3 %)—both non-sexual violence and any violence (sexual and non-sexual)—and general (any) recidivism rates (36.2 %) (Hanson and Morton-Bourgon 2005). A more recent meta-analysis (Schmucker and Lösel 2015) demonstrated a similar sexual recidivism rate—sexual offenders recidivated sexually at a mean rate of 13.7 %.

Research has also found the sexual recidivism rates for some types of sexual offenders are significantly higher than the average sexual offender recidivism rate (5.3–13.7 %). For example, while a meta-analysis of 61 studies (28,383 sexual offenders) found that the overall recidivism rate for sexual offenders, with an average follow-up period of 4–5 years, was 13.4 % (Hanson and Bussière 1998), the rate varied between type of sexual offender (rapist, child molester). The sexual recidivism rate was 12.7 % for child molesters ($n = 9603$) and 18.9 % for rapists ($n = 1839$). Recidivism rates also vary within sexual offender types. For example, Harris and Hanson (2004) found the highest rates of recidivism for extra-familial child molesters whose victims were boys (35 %) and the lowest rates for the incest child molesters (13 %).

Research confirms several additional points about recidivism among sexual offenders. First, the length of follow-up is important for measuring recidivism because risk of sexual recidivism declines over time (Harris and Hanson 2004; Howard 2011). Second, when sexual offenders do reoffend, they are more likely to commit a non-sexual offense than a sexual offense (Lussier et al. 2005; Miethe et al. 2006; Simon 2000; Smallbone and Wortley 2004; Soothill et al. 2000). Third, on average, treated sexual offenders are less likely to reoffend than untreated controls (Gallagher et al. 2000; Marshall and Pithers 1994; Polizzi et al. 1999; Schmucker and Lösel 2015).

An important connection can also be made between the concept of recidivism and the growing body of research on sexual offender desistance. Desistance refers to the process by which a sexual offender does *not* recidivate. In other words, a sexual offender will either recidivate or desist. Criminological theories of desistance are increasingly used to understand sexual offending behavior (Laws and Ward 2011). Some desistance theories consider external forces such as social control (Laub and Sampson 1993), whereas other theories focus on the internal processes-related desistance (Giordano et al. 2002; Maruna 2001). Nonetheless, recent research suggests that it is also important to consider the characteristics among sexual offenders who desist from crime in addition to the sexual offenders who commit new crimes.

An Overview of Sexual Offender Treatment

During the 1970s, the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (GAP 1977), the American Bar Association (1984), and the President's Commission on Mental Health (1978) all raised concerns about the effectiveness of specialized sexual offender treatment (American Psychiatric Association 1999). In a report on the subject at the time, the GAP (1977) described the policies as "social experiments that have failed and that lack redeeming social value" (p. 840). Soon after, Furby et al. (1989) reviewed available sexual offender treatment studies and concluded that, "there is as yet no evidence that clinical treatment reduces rates of sex offenses in general..." (p. 27). However since Furby and colleagues' study, the methodological rigor of research used to assess the efficacy of sexual offender treatment has evolved in several directions: aggregated (meta-analysis) studies (Alexander 1999; Gallagher et al. 1999; Hall 1995), random assignment (Marques et al. 1994), matched comparison groups (Looman et al. 2000), and effective size calculations (Marshall and McGuire 2003).

By comparison, a relatively consistent pattern of positive findings has now emerged from more recent research on the effectiveness of sex offender treatment. Nearly 10 years after Furby et al.'s (1989) review, Hanson and Bussière's (1998) meta-analysis concluded that "even if we cannot be sure that treatment will be effective, there is reliable evidence that those offenders who attend and cooperate with treatment programs are less likely to offend than those who reject interventions" (p. 358). The most recent meta-analysis to date (Schmucker and Lösel 2015) found that treated sexual offenders demonstrated 26.3 % less sexual recidivism than untreated controls. The Office of Justice Programs' CrimeSolutions.gov, an evidence-rating process used to determine the effectiveness of programs in achieving criminal justice related outcomes, rated sexual offender treatment as "promising," indicating there is some evidence to indicate it achieves the intended outcomes (see www.crimesolutions.gov). The American Psychological Association (APA 2006) defines evidence-based practice as "the integration of the best available research with clinical expertise in the context of patient characteristics, culture, and preferences" (p. 273).

While empirical evidence is not conclusive with regard to the effectiveness of sexual offender treatment, recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses suggest certain approaches are more effective than others (Gallagher et al. 1999; Grossman et al. 1999; Hanson et al. 2002, 2004, 2009a, b; Hanson and Bussière 1998, 2004; Kim et al. 2016; Lösel 2000; Lösel and Schmucker 2005; Marshall et al. 1991; Polizzi et al. 1999; Schmucker and Lösel 2015). To assist with the implementation of evidence-based practices, the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA 2014) has established practice guidelines "designed to assist ATSA members provide quality treatment services by recommending clinical practices that reflect the best available knowledge."

Specifically, empirical evidence supports the use of cognitive behavioral approaches in both community and institutional treatment of sexual offenders (Craig et al. 2003; Hall 1985; Hanson and Bussière 1998; Hanson et al. 2002; Kim et al. 2016; Lösel and Schmucker 2005; Schmucker and Lösel 2015). According to the most recent Safer Society Foundation (SSF) survey of sexual offender treatment programs ($n = 1307$), cognitive behavioral models are the most commonly used (92.0 %) treatment approaches among United States sexual offender treatment programs (McGrath et al. 2010). Briefly, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is focused on changing thinking, behavior, and emotional responses (Beck 1991, 2002). Topics and materials covered over the course of sexual offender treatment might include identifying distorted thinking, modify beliefs, learning to relate to others in different ways, and learning to change behaviors (Schaffer et al. 2010).

Adhering to the risk-need-responsivity (RNR) principles of effective correctional intervention is also considered best practice in the treatment of sexual offenders (Andrews and Bonta 2010; Hanson et al. 2009a, b; Yates 2004). Guided by the research on “what works” in the treatment of general offenders (Andrews and Bonta 2010), the RNR principles provide a framework for sexual offender program implementation. According to the RNR framework, those at higher risk for recidivism should receive the most intensive services; services should target dynamic, criminogenic; and services should be tailored to meet the individual needs of sexual offenders. Hanson et al. (2009a, b) found that when sexual offenders participated in treatment programs adhering to principles of the RNR model they were less likely to reoffend sexually. Moreover, their meta-analysis showed that for each additional principle adhered to by programs (e.g., only the risk principle, both the risk and need principles) there was a subsequent increase in program effectiveness as demonstrated by reductions in sexual recidivism (Hanson et al. 2009a, b). Another study by Lovins et al. (2007) examined the impact of adhering to the risk principle of the RNR framework in the treatment of sexual offenders. Consistent with the RNR framework, results showed that intensive treatment was effective in reducing recidivism for high-risk but not low-risk sexual offenders. Specifically, high-risk sexual offenders who completed intensive residential treatment were more than two times less likely to reoffend than their high-risk counterparts who did not participate in intensive treatment (Lovins et al. 2009).

Recently, in part due to the emphasis on deficits (i.e., risk and need factors) in the RNR model, the good lives model (GLM) has been developed as an alternative framework to existing models of sexual offender treatment. Treatment directed by the RNR framework aims primarily to reduce risk of re-offending among sexual offenders by motivating them to address criminogenic needs and dynamic risk factors. Under the GLM framework, clinicians and providers are directed to not only consider the criminogenic or deficit based dynamic factors which contribute to offending, but also to understand each sexual offender’s unique values, life position, and goals when conceptualizing management strategies and treatment planning (Yates et al. 2010).

Conclusion

Taken together, the empirical knowledge on sexual offender typologies, recidivism, and treatment calls into question the current crime control methods used to restrict and regulate individuals convicted of sexual crimes, including registration and community notification laws, residency restrictions, electronic monitoring laws, and sexually violent predator legislation (Calkins et al. 2014) as will be discussed in the subsequent chapters. Findings from contemporary typology research reveal that sexual offenders tend to be versatile in their criminal behavior. Recidivism reduction has been a salient policy goal of sex offender legislation despite low recidivism rates of sexual offenders. Sexual offenders who attend sexual offender-specific treatment are less likely to reoffend than sexual offenders who do not attend treatment. In conclusion, it remains to be determined what steps will be taken by policymakers to align sex offender legislation with sexual offender research evidence.

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