

# Sex offenders: Persistence, Desistance and Good Lives

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- “The traditional theoretical focus of criminology has tended to be upon criminality and becoming criminal, rather than upon desistance, that is, coming back from criminality to the majority (conformist) position.” (Bottoms et al 2004)

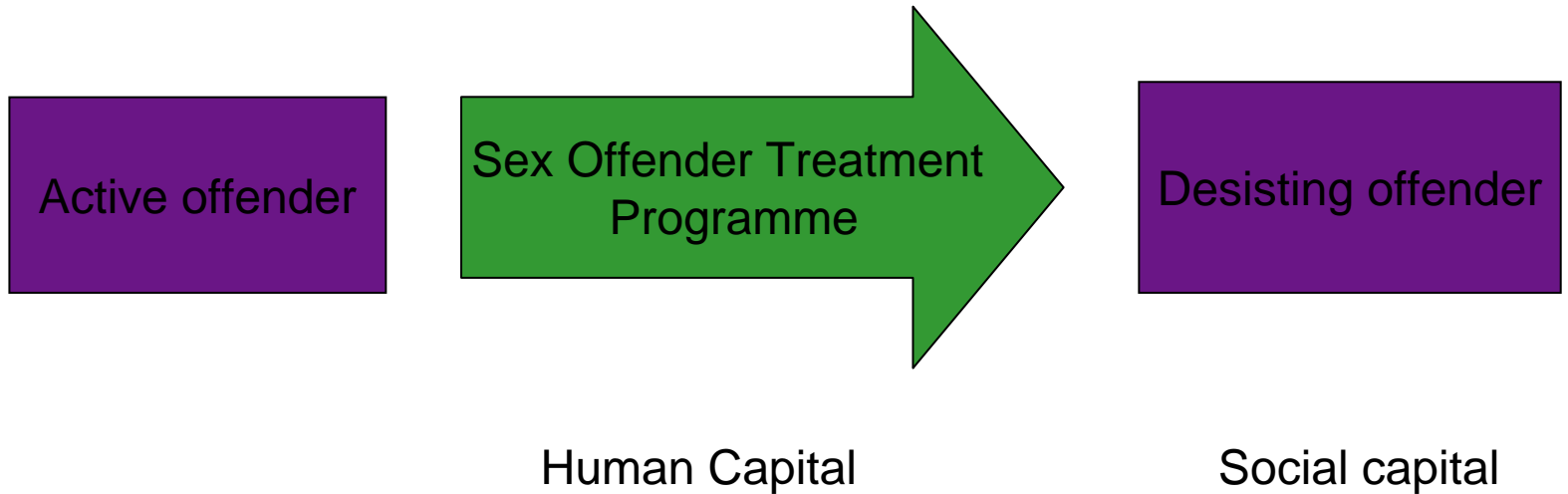
# Overview



1. The Risk Need model
2. Developing social capital and responsivity – some problems
3. Research into desistance from crime
4. Human Rights and sex offenders
5. Desistance based practice with sex offenders – the Good Lives Model

# Sex offender treatment

the Risk Need model



# Some problems with development of social capital

# Responsivity?



“Fury as crooks to be given jobs”

# Responsivity?



# Responsivity?



# Responsivity?



# Responsivity?



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# Responsivity?



# Sex Offenders in the media

- ‘Taxpayers fund support groups for paedos’
- ‘Fury at paedo’s halved jail time’
- ‘Teen rape bid number 2 for beast’
- ‘Watch out there are paedos about’
- ‘Cops let sex offenders off’
- ‘amnesia lie paedo is caged’
- ‘Paedo nailed by ghost is caged’

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# Framing sexual offenders

Frame	Cause	Solution	Accuracy
'Super predator' – irredeemable – 'Folk devils'	Biological/evil	Banishment/incarceration	No

# Theoretical perspective – the nature of shame



- Disintegrative shaming – stigmatization
  - shaming brings about a feeling of deviancy in the shamed
  
- Reintegrative shaming
  - Violators are shamed into knowing what they did is wrong but nonetheless allowed re-entry into the conforming group

John Braithwaite, *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*, Cambridge University Press, 1989

# Theoretical perspective – the nature of shame



- Disintegrative shaming – stigmatization
  - shaming brings about a feeling of deviancy in the shamed
  - Likely to lead to higher crime rates
  
- Reintegrative shaming
  - Violators are shamed into knowing what they did is wrong but nonetheless allowed re-entry into the conforming group
  - Likely to lead to lower crime rates

John Braithwaite, *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*, Cambridge University Press, 1989

# What can we learn from the desistance literature?

# Current research into desistance

(note this relates to persistent antisocial offending – no previous research into desistance from sexual crime)



- Informal social controls
- Cognitive transformations/narrative theory

## Desistance in relation to informal social controls



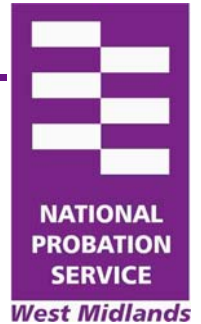
- Sampson and Laub (1993)
  - Structural context mediated by informal family and school social controls
  - In turn a continuity in antisocial behaviour from childhood through adulthood
  - Informal social bonds to family and adulthood explain changes in criminality over life span
- Laub and Sampson (2003)
  - Need to take into account human agency
- Farrell (2002)
  - Examined processes in probation supervision that contribute to desistance or not
  - Changes in social contexts in which offenders live, coupled with motivation, most associated with desistance (finding employment, relationships, housing etc.)
  - Human capital (easy to gain via education etc)
  - But no benefit without social capital (local social and economic circumstances)

## Desistance in relation to “cognitive transformations”



- Giordano, Cernovich and Rudolph (2002)
  - Importance of ‘agency’
  - Environment can provide the scaffolding for change
  - But individuals must be able to attend to new possibilities, discard old habits etc.
    - Shift in openness to change
    - Ability to use ‘hooks for change’ in environment
    - Envision and fashion an appealing ‘replacement self’
    - No longer see deviant behaviours as viable or personally relevant
- Maruna (2001)
  - “To desist from crime ex-offenders need to develop a coherent pro-social identity for themselves. They need to understand and account for their criminal pasts...and they need to understand why they are ‘not like that anymore.’ ” (p7)
  - Desistors did not discover a ‘new me’ but re-invented an ‘old me’ – stories not the opposite of active offenders
  - Active offenders held ‘condemnation script’ – sick of life, offending, prison, but powerless to change

# A desistance paradigm for offender management – Fergus McNeill



- Desistance supporting interventions need to respect and foster agency
- Focussed on legitimate and respectful relationships
- Focus on social capital as well as human capital
- Need to develop strengths as well as address risks and needs
- Rights based approach to rehabilitation

# The Good Lives Model –an attempt at a desistance based intervention

# The Good Lives Model – a more responsive way of dealing with sex offenders? (Tony Ward et al – various publications)



- Strength based rehabilitation theory
- Centred on ideas of human dignity and human rights
- Based on the idea that human beings pursue a life plan in pursuit of a number of 'primary goods'

# Sex Offenders and Human Rights



- ‘A claim for specific human goods made against another person or the state, who has a duty to provide the good claimed’
- ‘because sex offenders have violated others rights the state has the right to punish them by curtailing their right to freedom – but the degree should be carefully considered and justified’
- ‘curtailment of rights is not the same as forfeiture’
- Where human rights of offenders are forfeited criminal dispositions may be unaltered or strengthened
- Ward, T., Gannon, T and Brigden (2007) Human Rights and Treatment of Sex Offenders.

# Good Lives Model - Human Dignity and Human Rights



- Human dignity is grounded in the capacity of human beings to act in pursuit of their own freely chosen goals
- By promoting people's goals the GLM aims to reduce their capacity to harm others

# The Good Lives Model (Tony Ward et al)



- Assumes one of primary purposes of parents, teachers and the wider community is to equip us with tools we need to make our way in the world
- Sometimes this goes horribly awry and it falls to the State to repair the damage
- This can be done by the provision of educational, vocational and psychological capital
- In the case of offenders this is accompanied by criminal sanctions

# Primary 'goods'

- (1) life (i.e., healthy living and a high level of personal functioning)
- (2) knowledge acquisition
- (3) achievements both in work and play (including the ability to be good at something)
- (4) excellence in agency (i.e., being in control and the ability to get things accomplished)
- (5) inner peace (i.e., lack of stress and inner tension/ emotional dysregulation)
- (6) friendship (including intimate, romantic and family relationships)
- (7) community (i.e., involvement with others beyond intimate/ family relationships)
- (8) spirituality (in its broadest sense of finding meaning and purpose in life)
- (9) happiness
- (10) creativity.

- Things go awry when people seek primary goods in inappropriate ways because they lack the skills to do so in pro-social ways
  - Problems with means used to secure goals
  - Lack of scope in selection of goals
  - Conflict amongst goals sought – e.g. relationships vs. autonomy
  - Lack of capability to form good lives plan or adapt to changing world.

# Therefore sex offender treatment should recognise:



- Offenders are whole individuals and will have strengths as well as risks
- Offenders are likely to have experienced adversarial development opportunities
- Consequently they may lack skills to live fulfilling life
- Criminal actions frequently represent attempts to achieve desired goals where skills are not possessed
- The absence of certain goals is more strongly related to offending – agency – inner peace – dignity –relatedness
- Risk may be reduced by assisting offenders to develop skills and capabilities to achieve goals
- Intervention should add to the repertoire of functioning rather than take away of manage a problem

# Good Lives Model and responsivity



<b>Risk/need model</b>	<b>Good Lives model</b>
Risks and needs identified through research and assessment of offender	Goals and strengths identified collaboratively
Treatment provided to address risks and needs	Treatment provided to build strengths/address deficits

**All well and good but...**

# Conclusions



- For the past 10 years we have concentrated on the risk/need model of sex offender treatment
- Until recently we have neglected development of strengths??
- But are we still neglecting an important part of desistance – development of social capital?
- What can probation officers do with sex offenders to develop positive relationships, employment opportunities, education, and other things that appear to assist in desistance?
- Discuss...