

BETTER TOGETHER

2018 ATSA Conference | Thursday October 18 | 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

T-09

Better Together: Culturally-Informed Prevention and Intervention Innovations from Down Under

Symposium Chair: Danielle Harris, PhD
Griffith University

Sexual offending and abuse (especially of children) is a global concern and its treatment and prevention warrants international attention. Australia is no exception, with a recent study by the Australian Bureau of Statistics finding that 17% of women and 5% of men report having been sexually abused before their fifteenth birthday. Despite its geographical remoteness, Australia is also home to a remarkably multicultural population. It has the world's 9th largest immigration population with immigrants making up 26% of its population. According to the 2016 census, indigenous Australians make up 3.3% of the nation's population, but as in other parts of the Western world, they are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Although sexual offending crosses all cultural and geographical boundaries, research indicates that rates of interpersonal violence increase as one moves away from more densely populated capital cities. While Australians of all backgrounds reside in the different regions across Australia, the Indigenous population has a much greater concentration in the more remote parts of the country. The extraordinary population heterogeneity in Australia, and the added complexity of so many remote communities has led to a need for the development of innovative approaches to the treatment, management, and prevention of sexual abuse.

This symposium showcases a series of innovations that have been developed to address the widespread impact of sexual abuse, whilst also managing the considerable complexities of such a heterogeneous population. In particular, the symposium presents innovations for managing Indigenous Australians who commit sexual offences and preventing sexual abuse in Indigenous communities. From innovations in safer reintegration, to new research guiding prevention and intervention with this population, these three presentations will paint a rich picture of the inventive and original methods Australian researchers and practitioners have developed to better understand, respond and prevent sexual offending.

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A Comparison of Australian Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Males Who Commit Sexual Offenses

Dimity Adams, BPsych Sc
Griffith Neighbourhoods Project

There is a paucity of research comparing Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian youth who commit sexual offences to inform current understanding of this issue and responses to it. This presentation will disseminate findings of a recent study examining developmental histories and onset sexual offense characteristics of Indigenous ($n = 81$) and non-Indigenous ($n = 130$) Australian male youth adjudicated for sexual offences. Compared to non-Indigenous youth, Indigenous youth were exposed to more systemic risks (e.g., family, peer, school and community-level) prior to the onset of their sexual offending. Onset sexual offense characteristics of Indigenous youth also differed from non-Indigenous youth (e.g., substance use, co-offending, victim-type, location and use of force/weapons). Theoretical and practice implications will be discussed in light of the findings, particularly local, community-level primary and secondary prevention efforts as well as tertiary-level initiatives (i.e., assessment and treatment of Indigenous youth).

Learning Goals:

- Explore the non-equal distribution of systemic developmental risk factors between Australian Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth who commit sexual offences
- Compare the onset sexual offense characteristics of Australian Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth
- Consider the implications of these findings on primary and secondary prevention efforts as well as tertiary-level initiatives (i.e., assessment and treatment of Indigenous youth)

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Indigenous Individuals on Intensive Community Supervision in Townsville, Australia

Kelly Richards, PhD
Queensland University of Technology
Kieran McCartan, PhD
University of the West of England

In Queensland, Australia, offenders released from prison under the *Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003* are subject (in some cases, retrospectively) to punitive offender management measures including electronic monitoring, residency restrictions, and lengthy and strict supervision. The release process can be more challenging for Indigenous prisoners, who are often not allowed to return to their home communities. This group of offenders has a particularly high rate of recidivism and return to prison. One initiative that has been introduced to alleviate these issues is the Cultural Mentoring Program, which provides Indigenous offenders released under the *Act* with one-on-one cultural and spiritual support from an Elder. This presentation will provide an overview of the program and present the results of the first research project into its operation and efficacy. The study was funded by the Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and is part of a larger study about sexual offender reintegration in Australia. Findings from the research will have relevance beyond the Cultural Mentoring Program, as very little has been documented about good practice in reintegrating Indigenous offenders generally or Indigenous sex offenders specifically.

Learning Goals:

- To provide context about the importance of cultural interventions for reintegrating Indigenous sex offenders;
- To present original data on one program that aims to reintegrate Indigenous sex offenders through cultural connection and support; and
- To discuss the implications of these research findings and sketch an agenda for future research and practice.

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Understanding Concentrations of Sexual Violence and Abuse: A New Theory and Implications for Prevention in Indigenous Communities

Susan Rayment-McHugh, PhD Candidate
University of the Sunshine Coast

The prevalence of sexual violence and abuse is not evenly distributed in time and place, with higher concentrations of abuse noted in some countries, communities, organisations or other local contexts. Explanatory theories of complex social phenomenon like sexual violence and abuse are critical to strengthening prevention practice. At present however, most theory and research in this field is focused on non-endemic sexual violence and abuse, largely ignoring the contexts in which concentrations of violence emerge.

This presentation will outline a new explanatory theory of endemic (concentrated) sexual violence and abuse, which has been guided by a realist social explanatory framework (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). This theory integrates knowledge from environmental criminology and social psychology, as well as literature on non-endemic SVA, to identify the key causal mechanisms for sexual violence and abuse, and the contextual conditions which lead to these concentrations in time and place. Mixed-methods research investigating this theory will also reviewed. Whilst endemic sexual violence and abuse is observed in diverse contexts, such as in international crisis zones, remote and marginalised communities, and youth-serving institutions, this presentation will focus specifically on Indigenous communities in Australia. Specifically, the theory of endemic sexual violence and abuse will be used to explain concentrations of abuse in these settings. The presentation will conclude with discussion of the implications for prevention practice in these contexts. A critique of existing prevention approaches will help highlight new opportunities for prevention informed by this theory.

Learning Goals:

- Understand the uneven distribution of sexual violence and abuse and the diverse contexts in which these concentrations are observed
- Access a new explanatory theory for endemic (concentrated) sexual violence and abuse, including both causal mechanisms and the contextual conditions under which they are activated
- Develop an awareness of new prevention initiatives informed by the theory of endemic SVA, with specific attention to Indigenous communities

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Dr. Danielle Harris is the Deputy Director-Research of the Griffith Youth Forensic Service and a Lecturer in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Griffith University. She holds a doctorate in Criminology from Griffith University (2008), a Masters in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the University of Maryland (2004) and a Bachelor of Arts (hons) in Justice Studies from the Queensland University of Technology and the University of Westminster (2001). She has published more than 25 articles and book chapters and has given over 50 presentations at international conferences. Her research examines sexual aggression through a life course perspective, examining onset, specialization/versatility, desistance, and related public policy. Her first book—which draws on the narratives of 74 men convicted of sexual offenses and released from custody—was released in December.

Dimity Adams is a psychologist and Project Leader on the Griffith Neighbourhoods Project. Dimity has worked as a psychologist and researcher in the sexual violence and abuse field for the past 12 years. In this time, her primary focus has been the effective provision of clinical services for Indigenous clients and their families, within rural and remote locations throughout Queensland. She holds postgraduate qualifications in Indigenous Mental Health and Wellbeing and will soon complete her Masters' Degree in Clinical Psychology. Widely consulted on best-practice clinical interventions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Dimity presents nationally and internationally on the assessment and treatment of Australian Indigenous youth who commit sexual offences and the prevention of youth sexual violence and abuse in Australian Indigenous communities. Combining her experience as a psychologist and practice-based researcher in the area of sexual abuse prevention, Dimity's work also includes collaborating with a number of social welfare organisations to create child safe and child friendly organisational environments.

Dr Kelly Richards is a Senior Lecturer in Queensland University of Technology's Faculty of Law, School of Justice. She completed a PhD on restorative justice at Western Sydney University in 2007 and in 2010 was awarded the ACT Government Office for Women Audrey Fagan Churchill Fellowship to study Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) in Canada, the USA and the UK. Her current research, funded by the Australian National Organisation for Women's Safety (with Dr Jodi Death, Queensland University of Technology, and Associate Professor Kieran McCartan, University of the West of England) includes the first study into CoSA in Australia. This research also examines the role of cultural mentoring support for Indigenous offenders released under Queensland's *Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2006* as well as the views of victim/survivors of sexual violence on sex offender reintegration broadly and on CoSA specifically. Dr Richards has also undertaken research on public opinion about CoSA and the causes of child sexual abuse, global media coverage of CoSA, and the desistance narratives of CoSA Core Members.

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Dr McCartan is an Associate Professor in Criminology at the University of the West of England and an Adjunct Associate Professor in Criminology at QUT, Brisbane. He has a track record of public, academic and professional engagement on criminological issues, including the origins and causes of sex offending, and societal responses to sex offenders. He has experience of qualitative, quantitative and mixed method research from funders including Ministry of Justice, Cabinet Office, Public Health England, ESRC, The Leverhulme Trust, Bristol City Council & various UK police forces. Dr McCartan has published widely, generated over 1/2 million pounds in external research funding, given 120+ presentations at national and internationally as well as taken part in numerous media interviews and debates. Dr McCartan serves on the editorial boards of *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, is the lead blogger for the *Sexual Abuse* blog and the *NOTA Prevention* blog. He is a member of the ATSA Executive Board and has recently been co-opted to the NOTA executive board.

Sue Rayment-McHugh is a psychologist, Lecturer in Criminology and Justice at the University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland Australia, and Adjunct Research Fellow with the Griffith Criminology Institute. Sue has over 24 years' combined experience as a psychologist and researcher in the sexual violence and abuse fields. This includes as Clinical Manager of the Griffith Youth Forensic Service, a specialist forensic psychology service providing assessment and treatment for youth adjudicated for sexual offences; and as Project Co-Leader of the Neighbourhoods Project, Australia's first place based initiative for preventing youth sexual violence and abuse in Indigenous communities, based on situational crime prevention principles. Sue has a Master's Degree in Forensic Psychology and submitted her PhD on endemic sexual violence and abuse in 2017. Her current research interests are focused on understanding and preventing sexual violence and abuse, including in Indigenous communities and in youth-serving institutions. Sue presents nationally and internationally in relation to sexual violence and abuse prevention and intervention.