

BETTER TOGETHER

2018 ATSA Conference | Thursday October 18 | 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

T-29

Peer Group Influence

The Social Networks and Support of Juvenile Sex Offenders Before, During and After Their Treatment

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Recent empirical studies have found evidence for the rehabilitative effect of social networks and support by these networks. Specifically for individuals convicted for a sexual offense it is assumed that their social network and support by this network are important protective factors against further delinquency (Dong & Krohn, 2017). However, empirical studies have also found that the quality of social support and the network of individuals convicted for a sexual offense is often inadequate, causing sex offenders to experience high levels of social isolation and loneliness (Marshall, 1989; 2010; Miner & Munns, 2005).

For juveniles who committed a sexual offense the role of social networks and support by these networks might be even more salient, because they are in a developmental stage where the social network of family and peers is highly influential on their life outcomes (Sampson & Laub, 1993). This presentation will focus on examining a sample of about 150 juveniles who received treatment for committing a sexual offense. First, the influence of their social network and support by this network on the commission of the sexual offense will be presented. Thus, testing the assumption of an association between social support and the social network of the offender on the type of sexual offense committed. There will be a focus on offense characteristics, like type of offense (e.g., hands-on or hands-off), and victim characteristics (e.g., gender or age). Second, the role of social networks and support during and after treatment will be examined to establish whether and how they have an effect on treatment outcomes.

Learning Goals:

This presentation seeks to:

- Increase the knowledge of juvenile sex offending, focusing on a relatively uncharted terrain of social networks and social support. Specifically, the association with the sexual offense (offense and victim characteristics) and treatment (outcomes).
- In addition, the findings could aid in the development of preventive monitoring programs for juveniles at risk of sexual offending.

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- Also, the current presentation seeks to advance clinical intervention for juvenile sex offenders by presenting risk or protective factors associated with social networks and social support during and after treatment. The presenter welcomes discussion with professionals providing clinical services to juveniles who have engaged in sexual offending behavior.

Chantal van den Berg is an assistant professor of Criminology at the VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands. She did her PhD on the study of long term criminal careers of juvenile sex offenders and their transition into adulthood, in terms of labor market outcomes, romantic relationships and parenthood. Currently, her research interests include (juvenile) sex offending, risk assessment for sexual offenders and social networks.

Jan Hendriks is a clinical and forensic psychologist. He is the head of the youth department of outpatient treatment center De Waag in The Hague. In addition to this, Jan Hendriks is a Professor of forensic psychiatry and psychology at the VU University Amsterdam and a Professor of forensic orthopedagogics at the University of Amsterdam. His research interests include (juvenile) sex offending, juvenile delinquency and female offending.

‘I’m with My Boys Now’: Preventing Group-Perpetrated Sexual Abuse

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Over recent years in the UK between 30 and 50% of identified child sexual exploitation cases are peer-on-peer - much of this involves young people sexually harming others in groups. As a consequence questions have been raised regarding the motivations for and nature of peer-sexual abuse that is perpetrated by young people in groups rather than individuals, and the implications of this for assessment and intervention. Using qualitative data from case reviews into group-perpetrated rape in the UK alongside a study into the profiles of 49 young people who sexually harmed others in groups and alone, this paper will examine the relationships between young people’s friendships, the online, school and public spaces in which these relationships form, and their involvement in group-based abusive behaviours. These studies have used case review, practitioner observation and action research methods to identify both points of contextual and situational escalation towards group-offending and the challenges of using intervention and assessment models designed for use with young people who sexually harm alone. By recognising the social rules at play in a range of extra-familial contexts, this paper will illustrate the importance of thinking beyond individual and familial characteristics often associated with young people who display harmful sexual behaviours and call for more contextual and environmental

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approaches to address, and prevent, this manifestation of sexual abuse. In order to prevent group-perpetrated sexual abuse it is critical to assess and intervene with the social conditions of such behaviour, as well as those affected by it.

Learning Goals:

This paper will provide attendees with:

- Knowledge of the differing profiles and motivations of young people who have sexually abused peers as a group compared to those who have done so alone
- An evidence base for developing assessment and intervention models for young people who sexually harm others in groups
- A conceptual lens for designing ecological, social and community based prevention activities and policy frameworks

Dr Carlene Firmin MBE is a Principal Research Fellow at the University of Bedfordshire, where she leads their Contextual Safeguarding and peer-on-peer abuse research programmes. Carlene develops knowledge in partnership with practitioners across social care, criminal justice and community safety and has created a national contextual safeguarding network for practitioners concerned with the social and cultural contexts in which violence and abuse occurs. Carlene has spent the past 10 years researching young people's experiences of community and group-based violence and advocated for comprehensive approaches that keep young people safe in public places. Carlene is a board member for NOTA and the Prison Reform Trust, has written on the issues of safeguarding and violence in the national newspaper, the Guardian, since 2010, and is widely published in the area of child welfare. Her work has been used by local and national policymakers to reform their approach to safeguarding adolescents and in 2011 she became the youngest black woman to receive an MBE following a seminal study into gang-associated women and girls in the UK.