Sex Offenders: Understanding a Diverse Population

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1. Immigration
2. Homeland security/Real ID
3. Budget pressures
4. Health insurance
5. Sex offenders/predators
6. Energy and environment
7. Minimum wage
8. Higher education reform
9. Privacy
10. Obesity
Record Legislative Activity:
2006-2007

- Expanded registration, community notification
- Residency restrictions
- Treatment requirements
- Lifetime supervision
- Electronic monitoring and GPS
- Employment restrictions
- Special identification cards
- Enhanced sentencing, death penalty eligibility
- Civil commitment
- Chemical castration
“People want a silver bullet that will protect their children, [but] there is no silver bullet. There is no simple cure to the very complex problem of sexual violence.”

Patty Wetterling, as quoted in the 2007 Human Rights Watch Report, *No Easy Answers: Sex Offender Laws in the US*
Current Status of Sex Offender Management Policy

- Legislative surge
- Net widening
- Significant fiscal implications
- Potential for collateral consequences, including paradoxical effects
- Little/no research on impact or effectiveness
Evidence-Based Policy

The responsible use of the best available research to inform sex offender management policies to prevent sexual victimization and maximize public safety in the most efficient and effective manner.
To what extent are current policies:

• Informed by what the victimization data tells us?
• Based on accurate data about sex offenders?
• Targeting/prioritizing the “right” types of individuals?
• Informed by “what works” (and what doesn’t)?
• Complementary of other effective approaches and strategies?
• Linked to funding for ongoing research on their efficacy?
• Understood and supported by the public?
Evidence-Based Sex Offender Management Policy: Expected Outcomes

- Increased public safety
- Decreased victimization
- Cost effectiveness, better allocation of resources
  - More available funding for primary prevention activities
- Minimized collateral consequences
- A more informed public
- Greater public confidence in management efforts
What We Know

Sex Crimes that Come to the Attention of Authorities
Percentage of Arrests Nationwide Accounted for by Sex Crimes

Sex Crimes vs. Other Criminal Conduct

- Sex offenses < 1%
- Non-sex offenses > 99%

Sex Crimes vs. Other Delinquency

- Sex offenses 1%
- Non-sex offenses 99%

(FBI, 2005; Snyder, 2004)
Arrests for Sex Crimes: Males vs. Females

(FBI, 2005)
Sex Offense Cases in the Juvenile Courts: Males vs. Females

Forcible rape
Other violent sex offense
Non-violent sex offense

(Snyder & Sickmund, 2006)
Forcible Rape
- Adults: 84%
- Juveniles: 16%

Other Sex Offenses
- Adults: 80%
- Juveniles: 20%

Proportion of Adults and Juveniles Accounting for Arrests for Sex Offenses

(FBI, 2005)
But We Don’t Know
What We Don’t Know...
Reporting Rates for Sex Crimes

• Most victims do not report
  – Rape: < 15%
  – Rape/sexual assault: < 33%

(Catalano, 2005; NCVS, 2000)
Reporting to Authorities

*some cases reported to more than one authority

(Kilpatrick et al., 2003)
Sexual Victimization of Children and Adolescents: Victim-Offender Relationship by Victim Age

(NIBRS data from Snyder & Sickmund, 2006)
Sexual Victimization of Children and Adolescents: Victim-Offender Relationship by Victim Age

(NIBRS data from Snyder & Sickmund, 2006)
Rape: Victim-Offender Relationship

Victims who are women
- Non-strangers: 83%
- Strangers: 17%

Victims who are men
- Non-strangers: 77%
- Strangers: 23%

(Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006)
Locations of Rapes/Sexual Assaults

- Victim's home
- Near home
- Parking lot, garage
- School property
- Park, field, playground
- Other street
- Commercial establishment
- Home of friend, relative
- Other
- Public transportation

(NVCS, 2000)
Location Where Sex Offenses Occurred Against Victims Under 18

(NIBRS data from Snyder & Sickmund, 2006)
Who Are The Individuals that Commit Sex Offenses, What Do They “Look Like,” and Why Do They Do What They Do?
Who Commits Sex Crimes?

• “Sex offender” label implies homogeneity

• Diverse, heterogeneous population
Who Commits Sex Crimes?

Medical technician gets jail term

Colchester drama coach charged with lewd act

Convicted sex-offender tossed out of House by voters

Ex-teacher charged in sex crimes

More charges filed against psychiatrist

Ex-officer sentenced in lewd conduct cases

Group home worker guilty in sex case

Disney's Goofy worker charged with child porn

Acclaimed geneticist sentenced for molesting colleague's daughter
Who commits sex crimes?

13% by known sex offenders

87% people arrested for sex crimes were individuals who had not been previously convicted for a sex crime.

U.S. Department of Justice Greenfeld, 1997
Common Characteristics

• Early onset
• Detection lag time
• Multiple victims and offenses
• Crossover offending
• Denial and minimization
Offender Dynamics

“Not All Sex Offenders Are The Same”

1. Motives
   - Sexual Interest
     - age, gender, behavior
   - Emotional Closeness
   - Power and Control
   - Anger/Grievance

2. Willingness
   - Criminality
   - Substance Abuse
   - Distorted Thinking
   - Intelligence
   - Stress
   - Other

3. Opportunity
   - Planned vs. Opportunistic Manipulation vs. Force
Offender Types

• **Incest offenders**
  - Few victims and multiple offenses
  - Have lowest recidivism rates

• **Extrafamilial child sexual abusers**
  - More likely to have deviant sexual preferences
  - Molesters of boys have the highest recidivism

• **Rapists**
  - Often more similar to “general” criminals
  - More prone toward an antisocial lifestyle

• **Non-contact offenders**
  - Tend to be compulsive and have multiple victims
WHAT WE KNOW:

Adult Sex Offenders ≠ Juvenile Sex Offenders
Suggested Differences between Juvenile and Adult Sex Offenders

- More fluidity in sexual arousal vs. “fixed” patterns
- Social competency deficits
- More impulsivity
- Exposure to trauma or maltreatment
- More likely to commit offenses within the family
- Less intrusive sex offenses
- Fewer victims
- Lower recidivism rates
WHAT WE KNOW:

All Sex Offenders Do Not Inevitably Recidivate

But Some Are More Likely Than Others
Adult Sex Offenders:
Sexual vs. Non-Sexual 3-year Recidivism

Most adult sex offenders who reoffend commit non-sexual crimes

3% Sexual reconviction
24% Any new conviction

(Langan et al., 2003)
Juvenile Sex Offenders: Sexual vs. Non-Sexual 7 Year Recidivism

Most juvenile sex offenders who reoffend commit non-sexual crimes (Nisbet et al., 2004)
**Sexual Reoffense Rates**

**Adult Male Sex Offenders**

Hanson & Harris (2004); 10 samples; N = 4,724

- 5 yrs.: 14%
- 10 yrs.: 20%
- 15 yrs.: 24%
- 20 yrs.: 27%
“Predicting things is difficult, especially when they’re in the future.”

Yogi Berra
## Risk Instruments:
Weighing Risk Factors to Assess Risk for Sexual Reoffense

### Unchangeable Risk Factors
- Prior sex offenses
- Prior non-sex offenses
- Prior non-contact sex offenses
- Unrelated victims
- Stranger victims
- Male victims
- Never lived as married

### Changeable Risk Factors
- Victim Access
- Deviant sexual interests
- Attitudes supportive of offending
- Impulsive
- Substance abuse
- Cooperative with supervision
- Collapse of social supports
  - Family
  - Residence
  - Work
Example of a Risk Instrument: Static-99
Hanson & Thornton (1999)

1. Prior Sex Offenses
2. Prior Sentencing Dates
3. Non-Contact Offenses
4. Index Non-sexual Violence
5. Prior Non-sexual Violence
6. Unrelated Victim
7. Stranger Victim
8. Male Victim
9. Offender Young
10. Never lived as married
Static-99 Risk Instrument

10-Year Detected Sexual Reoffense Rate

- **Risk Category**
  - Low: 9%
  - Moderate-Low: 14%
  - Moderate-High: 33%
  - High: 45%
Jim’s Static-99 Risk Score = High
45% Sexual Reoffense Rate at 10 Years

★ = 45 sexual reoffenders
● = 55 non-reoffenders
Bill’s Static-99 Risk Score = Low
9% Sexual Reoffense Rate at 10 Years

★ = 9 sexual reoffenders
○ = 91 non-reoffenders

Bill?
Static-99: Percent of Offenders in Each Risk Category and 10-Year Sexual Reoffense Rates

- **Low Risk**
  Score = 0-1
  24% of sexual offenders

- **Moderate-Low Risk**
  Score = 2-3
  38% of sexual offenders

- **Moderate-High Risk**
  Score = 4-5
  27% of sex offenders

- **High Risk**
  Score = 6 or higher
  12% of sex offenders
Sex Offender Treatment and Supervision

“What Works and What Doesn’t”
Supervision: All Criminal Offenders

“What Works and What Does Not”
Aos, Miller, & Drake, 2006; www.wsipp.wa.gov

% reduction in recidivism

9 studies of juvenile sex offenders at an average follow-up of 5 years

60% reduction

(Reitzel & Carbonell, 2006)
Hanson et al., Meta-Analysis (2002)
15 studies of primarily adults, using current treatments and a follow-up of 4-5 years

- **Sexual Recidivism**: 10% (Treatment Group) vs. 17% (Comparison Group) with a 41% reduction.
- **General Recidivism**: 32% (Treatment Group) vs. 51% (Comparison Group) with a 37% reduction.
Principles of Effective Management

1. Risk Principle - Who to treat?
   Focus on offenders who are likely to reoffend, that is, offenders at moderate risk or higher.

2. Need Principle - What to treat?
   Focus on offender problems that are closely linked to offending.

3. Responsivity Principle - How to treat?
   Focus on methods that work and match services to offenders’ learning styles.

(Andrews & Bonta, 2007; Hanson, 2006)
Hanson Meta-analysis (2006)

• 23 studies
  - Reasonably good research designs
  - Compared treated and untreated offenders

• Examined impact of following the:
  - Risk principle
  - Need principle
  - Responsivity principle
Sex Offender Treatment Outcome
Slide courtesy of Hanson (2006)

Example: treatment works
Example: treatment does not work
Example: treatment really does not work
Low Adherence to R/N/R (10)

Sex Offender Treatment Outcome
Slide courtesy of Hanson (2006)

Odds Ratio      Lower CI         Upper CI         Q              Study N
.97                  .76                   1.23          15.42             10 (2409)
Sex Offender Treatment Outcome

Slide courtesy of Hanson (2006)

Some Adherence to R/N/R (k = 13)

Comparison Group

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<td>.46</td>
<td>.70</td>
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Take Away Points

- Effective management = victim and community safety
- Sex offenders are not all the same
- Juvenile offenders differ from adults
- A “one size fits all” approach is ineffective
- Well implemented programs can reduce reoffense rates
- Collaboration among organizations is critical
- Local “experts” can be a tremendous resource in advancing effective policy
- Well-informed sex offender management policies are key