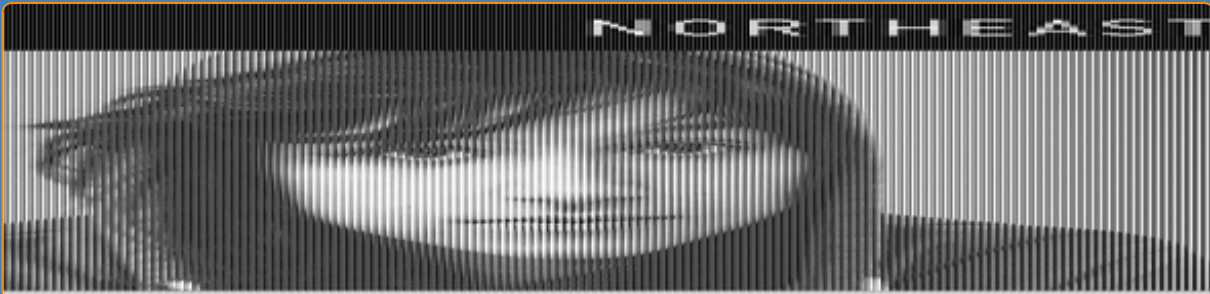


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Dear Colleague:

For this month, the NEARI Press newsletter article looked at some recent research with adolescents about protective factors noted in adults. The authors looked at the impact of three possible protective factors for adolescents: employment, marriage and parenthood. They found a significant association with employment, indicating that **for adolescents, having a job over time is associated with a decrease in offending behaviors**. We hope this short article will open your eyes to new ways of thinking of change in a teen's life and possible directions both for your work and for our field.

As always, if you have any other questions or suggestions for future newsletter topics, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely, Joan Tabachnick and Steven Bengis

Adolescents Who Have Sexually Abused: Criminal Careers and Life Events

by Steven Bengis, David S. Prescott, and Joan Tabachnick

The Question

As adolescents who have sexually abused take on adult life events such as marriage or job, is there an associated decrease in criminal re-offending?

The Research

Chantel van den Berg, Catrien Bijleveld, and Jan Hendriks investigated whether life events such as marriage, parenthood, and employment were associated with a decrease in sexually abusive behaviors. To date, numerous studies have demonstrated that life events associated with adulthood can be a protective factor against further criminal offending (e.g., sexual, violent, property, and drug offenses). However, to date, no study has examined how these life events affect the adult criminal (sexual and nonsexual) career of individuals arrested for a sexual offense as an adolescent. With their sample of 498 adolescents who had sexually abused, van den Berg and her colleagues examined the association of three protective factors, marriage, parenthood, and employment with criminality as they grew into adulthood.

The key finding of this study was that despite the problems in finding jobs, employment was associated with reduction in future criminal offenses. The impact was greatest with those who had sexually abused as part of a group. The authors suggest that this may be a result of their increased responsiveness to their peers. This study also found that the adolescents studied took on adult roles at a lower rate than other emerging adults. From age 25, about 40% were

unemployed, an unemployment rate much higher than the average Dutch male of the same age. This 40% rate was comparable to other adolescents who had spent their youth in juvenile facilities for non-sexual offenses. The authors note that employment may help to prevent re-offense because it limits time and opportunities for abuse, improves prosocial values and skills, and through employment, the young adult may no longer identify with a criminal life.

Like others before them, the authors note that relationship stability has the potential to prevent further abuse. Research shows that relationship stability offers an opportunity for responsibility and a change in self-image, it heightens direct supervision, and last, it creates alternative routines with more prosocial peers. In this study, there was no association between marriage or parenthood and lower rates of criminality. However, for the youth who had sexually abused young children, parenthood appeared to be associated with an increase in future criminal behavior. The authors suggest that this category is so broad that there may be a smaller subset of those adolescents that could be diagnosed with pedophilia. No distinctions were made within this category.

Bottom Line: For adolescents, having a job and employment over time is associated with a decrease in offending behaviors.

Implications for Professionals

Because the base rates for adolescent recidivism is so low, and the developmental trajectories for adolescents are so complex, many professionals have moved towards individualized approaches with the youth. The areas that may be most easy to influence for adolescents are changes to the environment surrounding each teenager. Just as one size fits all approaches to treatment didn't work, the same approach to generic protective factors may prove equally inadequate.

This article points to the need to carefully match each impact of research-based protective factors (e.g., work and employment) on recidivism. While this study explored the impact of employment, parenthood and marriage on future offending behaviors, there may be additional protective factors to explore that are more closely matched to early intervention and the adolescent experience. For example, the Search Institute has suggested 40 developmental assets for adolescents and children that might warrant future research. Alternatively, we need to understand which protective factors may not have any impact or even a detrimental impact for which types of adolescents.

Implications for the Field

This article points to the growing focus on how each youth is affected by and interacts with his or her environment. While this trend makes sense, a lot more research is needed to guide practitioners in making effective decisions about how those environmental impacts each youth. Further research is needed that can document which interventions will help which individuals and identify more clearly the positive impact on which adolescents and early adults.

In terms of policy, the key finding of the study -- showing that even with a fractured employment career and many obstacles to getting a job -- gainful employment is still associated with a reduction in criminal behavior. Therefore, programs and policies that interfere with the chance for work may have the unintended consequence of increasing risk for continued offending behaviors. The findings also suggest that future programs and policies should consider focusing resources that would engage adolescents in pro-social work opportunities.

Abstract

In this article, we investigate whether the life events of marriage, parenthood, and employment were associated with general offending for a Dutch sample of 498 juvenile sex offenders (JSOs). In previous empirical studies, these life events were found to limit adult general offending in the population as well as high-risk samples. A hybrid random effects model is used to investigate

within-individual changes of these life events in association with general offending. We also investigated whether the findings differed for child abusers, peer abusers, and group offenders, as they have distinct background profiles.

We found that JSOs make limited transitions into the state of marriage, parenthood, and employment, showing overall stagnating participation rates. For the entire sample of JSOs, employment was found to be associated with a decrease in offending. Group offenders benefited most from employment. Marriage and parenthood were not associated with the general offending patterns, whereas for child abusers, parenthood was associated with an increase in offending. We conclude that policies aimed at guidance toward employment, or inclusion into conventional society, may be effective for JSOs.

Citation

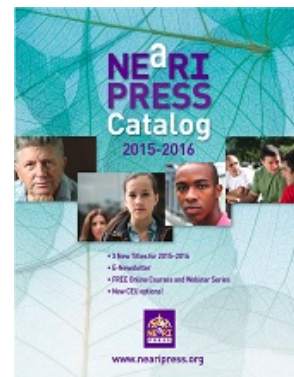
Van Den Berg, C., Bijleveld, C., and Hendriks, J. (2015). The Juvenile sex offender: Criminal careers and life events. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*. pp 1-21. DOI: 10.1177/1079063215580967.

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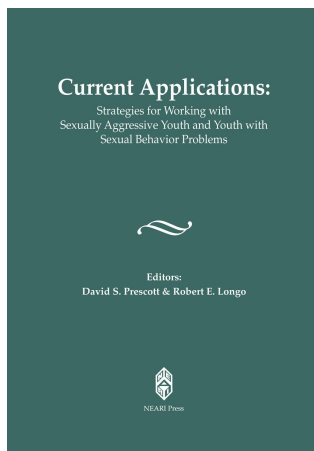
Jan 12th, 19th, 26th, Feb 2nd, 2016 Juvenile Sexual Risk Assessment: Parts 1-4; Phil Rich, EdD, LICSW

March 15, 2016 Family Reunification after Child Sexual Abuse "co-sponsored" with NSVRC; Peter Pollard, MPA and Joan Tabachnick, MBA

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by Craig Latham and Robert Kinscherff

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