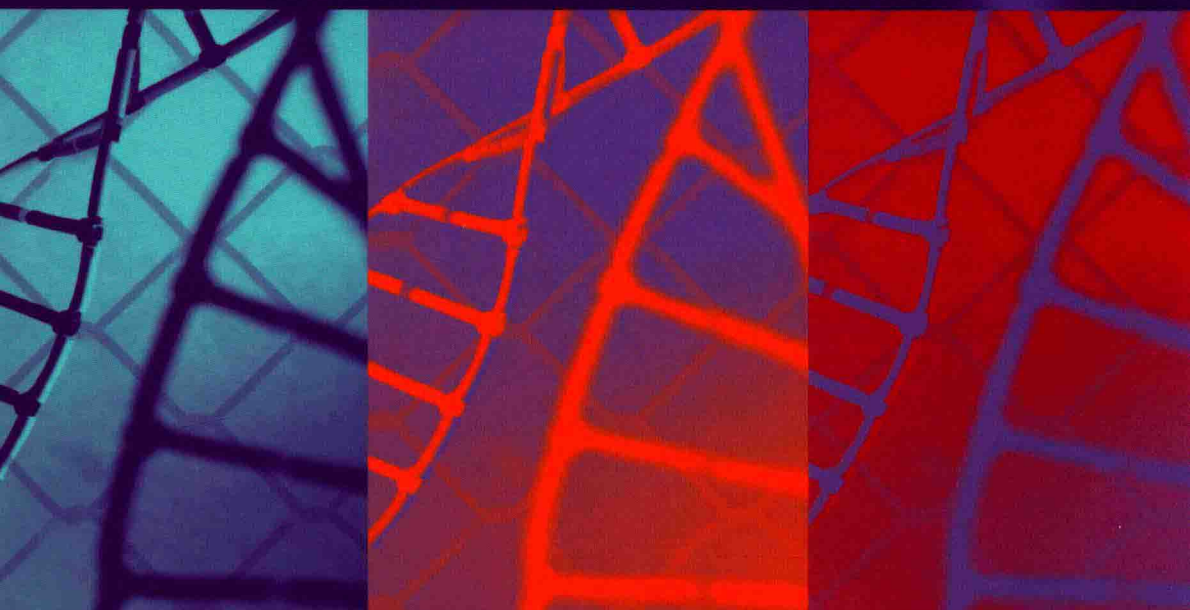


Theories of sexual offending



Anthony Ward, Devon L.L. Polaschek and Anthony R. Beech

f Wiley Series in
Forensic Clinical
Psychology

THEORIES OF SEXUAL OFFENDING

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THEORIES OF SEXUAL OFFENDING

Tony Ward, Anthony Beech and Devon Polaschek

To Claire, the love of my life—TW
To =M=, and to my parents, Jim and Sally—DP
For Dawn and Jake for their love and support in this endeavour—AB

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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SERIES EDITORS' PREFACE

ABOUT THE SERIES

At the time of writing it is clear that we live in a time, certainly in the UK and other parts of Europe, if perhaps less so in other areas of the world, when there is renewed enthusiasm for constructive approaches to working with offenders to prevent crime. What do we mean by this statement and what basis do we have for making it?

First, by 'constructive approaches to working with offenders' we mean bringing the use of effective methods and techniques of behaviour change into work with offenders. Indeed, this view might pass as a definition of forensic clinical psychology. Thus, our focus is the application of theory and research in order to develop practice aimed at bringing about a change in the offender's functioning. The word *constructive* is important and can be set against approaches to behaviour change that seek to operate by destructive means. Such destructive approaches are typically based on the principles of deterrence and punishment, seeking to suppress the offender's actions through fear and intimidation. A constructive approach, on the other hand, seeks to bring about changes in an offender's functioning that will produce, say, enhanced possibilities of employment, greater levels of self-control, better family functioning, or increased awareness of the pain of victims.

A constructive approach faces the criticism of being a 'soft' response to the damage caused by offenders, neither inflicting pain and punishment nor delivering retribution. This point raises a serious question for those involved in working with offenders. Should advocates of constructive approaches oppose retribution as a goal of the criminal justice system as a process that is incompatible with treatment and rehabilitation? Alternatively, should constructive work with offenders take place within a system given to retribution? We believe that this issue merits serious debate.

However, to return to our starting point, history shows that criminal justice systems are littered with many attempts at constructive work with offenders, not all of which have been successful. In raising the spectre of success, the second part of our opening sentence now merits attention: that is, 'constructive approaches to working with offenders *to prevent crime*'. In order to achieve the goal of preventing crime, interventions must focus on the right targets for

behaviour change. In addressing this crucial point, Andrews and Bonta (1994) have formulated the *need principle*:

Many offenders, especially high-risk offenders, have a variety of needs. They need places to live and work and/or they need to stop taking drugs. Some have poor self-esteem, chronic headaches or cavities in their teeth. These are all 'needs'. The need principle draws our attention to the distinction between *criminogenic* and *noncriminogenic* needs. Criminogenic needs are a subset of an offender's risk level. They are dynamic attributes of an offender that, when changed, are associated with changes in the probability of recidivism. Non-criminogenic needs are also dynamic and changeable, but these changes are not necessarily associated with the probability of recidivism. (p. 176)

Thus, successful work with offenders can be judged in terms of bringing about change in noncriminogenic need *or* in terms of bringing about change in criminogenic need. While the former is important and, indeed, may be a necessary precursor to offence-focused work, it is changing criminogenic need that, we argue, should be the touchstone in working with offenders.

While, as noted above, the history of work with offenders is not replete with success, the research base developed since the early 1990s, particularly the meta-analyses (e.g. Lösel, 1995), now strongly supports the position that effective work with offenders to prevent further offending is possible. The parameters of such evidence-based practice have become well established and widely disseminated under the banner of '*What Works*' (McGuire, 1995).

It is important to state that we are not advocating that there is only one approach to preventing crime. Clearly there are many approaches, with different theoretical underpinnings, that can be applied. Nonetheless, a tangible momentum has grown in the wake of the '*What Works*' movement as academics, practitioners and policy makers seek to capitalise on the possibilities that this research raises for preventing crime. The task now facing many service agencies lies in turning the research into effective practice.

Our aim in developing this Series in Forensic Clinical Psychology is to produce texts that review research and draw on clinical expertise to advance effective work with offenders. We are both committed to the ideal of evidence-based practice and we will encourage contributors to the Series to follow this approach. Thus, the books published in the Series will not be practice manuals or 'cook-books': they will offer readers authoritative and critical information through which forensic clinical practice can develop. We are both enthusiastic about the contribution to effective practice that this Series can make and look forward to continuing to develop it in the years to come.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

In the current enthusiasm for offending behaviour programmes, much is made of the need for such programmes to be cognitive-behavioural in orientation. However, in reading the academic literature, across disciplines, it is evident that there is a distinct level of conceptual confusion about exactly what is meant by the term

'cognitive-behavioural'. For example, Kendall (2004) makes the comment 'Cognitive behaviouralism essentially regards offending behaviour to be a consequence of distorted or deficit thinking' (p. 73). This is a very selective view of a cognitive-behavioural perspective, which is, in fact, a complex theoretical position (Bandura, 1977, 1986). As one of us has commented previously, a cognitive-behavioural position 'Suggests that a person be seen as a complex interplay of biological, private, and motor behaviours. The term *private* refers to activities within the skin, such as cognition and emotion. A person does not exist in a vacuum. The functioning of the human system is related to previous events including, for example, biological insult, type of upbringing, level of education, and so forth. Current functioning is related to the available reinforcement and punishment in the environment. ... Cognition is not afforded an autonomous, independent role as in some cognitive theories; rather it is viewed as an integral, if covert, aspect of human behaviour having a reciprocal relationship to overt behaviour' (Hollin, 1990, pp. 16-17). In other words, the application of a cognitive-behavioural perspective would typically see offending behaviour as a form of social behaviour, shaped and maintained by the social environment in which the person lives their life. Certainly, cognition would be a part of this understanding, but not afforded the primacy given by Kendall. Further, as cognitive-behavioural theory is a theory based in learning, those working with an understanding of this perspective see behaviour as a product of an interaction between the person and their environment rather than in pathological terms as suggested by words such as 'deficit'. Indeed, the invocation of pathology whenever a psychological theory is mentioned within the context of offending is simply not to understand that most psychological theories, including cognitive-behavioural, are concerned with normal, rather than abnormal, human behaviour (Hollin, 2002).

The reduction of complex theories, of any persuasion, to sound-bite proportions may make them easy to criticise in an academic piece and, indeed, this might all be brushed off as an irrelevancy or of minor importance in the busy world of practice. However, we would argue that a lack of theoretical understanding or sophistication is a highly undesirable state of affairs in engendering good practice. We take this position for several reasons. First, if practitioners are to use theory to inform their work, then a full appreciation of the basic premises of a theory, alongside its subtleties and nuances, is not only desirable but essential. A practitioner with limited comprehension of theory can have little or no depth to their understanding of the procedures they are undertaking with their clients. Second, a practitioner with no theoretical sophistication will be much more likely to adopt a 'cook-book' approach to practice, rather than a flexible approach that is based on a sophisticated, theoretically informed, formulation of the issues at hand. Third, theories shift and change over time as knowledge grows and, accordingly, trends in practice shift and change. A theoretically aware practitioner will be aware of such shifts in theory and see the logic in developing their practice. Fourth, as theory, research and practice are often bound together, practitioners with an appreciation of theory may well be likely both to use and to contribute to research.

In this book we see the principles regarding theory outlined above being brought sharply into focus and centred on the topic of sex offenders. The primacy

of theory in informing both practice and research is implicit throughout this book; the critical role of theory in understanding sex offending is made absolutely explicit. Yet further, a strength of this book is to be seen in the rigour by which theories are tested and evaluated. The careful evaluation of theory is one important route that leads to effective practice. It is with the importance of theory uppermost in our thoughts that we are pleased to welcome this book to the Wiley Series.

Clive Hollin and Mary McMurren

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PART I

INTRODUCTION LOCATION, DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION

