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Alyscia Mayhugh

University of Kentucky, alyscia.davis@yahoo.com

Author ORCID Identifier:

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2465-4108>

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Alyscia Mayhugh, Student

Dr. Laura Escobar-Ratliff, Director of Doctor of Social Work

Systemic Solutions to Addressing Juvenile Sexual Offending

CAPSTONE

A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Social Work in the College of Social Work at the University of Kentucky

By
Alyscia Mayhugh, MSW, ACSW
Lexington, Kentucky
2022

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<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2465-4108>

ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

Research on and treatment of juvenile sexual offenders has surged since the 1980s. While research on this social justice issue has expanded over the past four decades, little has been done in the United States to systemically address the recidivism rates of juvenile sexual offenders. The systematic literature review explores existing literature on this topic, with a focus on thematic categories that emerged through data extraction and analysis. The conceptual paper presents a unique idea for addressing juvenile sexual offending systemically, emphasizing the value of utilizing incrementalism and trauma theory to enact changes to existing systems. The final practice application paper highlights specific solutions to address this issue from a macro perspective, with specific attention paid towards successful interventions utilized globally. Each of these papers provides unique information about juvenile sexual offending and explores this social justice issue from varying perspectives. While each of these papers exists independently from one another, undoubtedly, they are sewn together with a common thread. Specifically, concerns about biased lawmaking and the Developmental Life Course Criminology perspective seamlessly weave these papers together, to create a cohesive capstone project that provides a comprehensive overview of how to best address this problem.

Keywords: juvenile sexual offending, recidivism reduction, policy change, Development Life Course Criminology perspective, Public Health Model, multidisciplinary approach

Alyscia Mayhugh

(Name of Student)

04/22/2022

Date

DEDICATION

To my husband and mother who have provided me with continuous love and support throughout this process, always reminding me of my strengths. To Dr. Escobar-Ratliff and Dr. Tina Atherall who have given invaluable feedback and guidance during my DSW journey and while developing my capstone project. To Dr. Noël Lipana, Dr. ZaDonna Slay, and Dr. Martha Markward for helping me recognize my strengths as a writer and as a social work leader. Lastly, I want to thank Olivia, Jessica, Da-Net, and Will, members of UK's inaugural DSW cohort, for being my friends, colleagues, and mentors during this process. It is with the love and support from all of you that I have been able to grow as a social worker and person during this amazing, and at times difficult, journey.

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CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this capstone project is to bring recognition to the issue of juvenile sexual offending. Specifically, these papers focus on the need for social work leaders to partner with criminologists and public policy makers to address this issue from a macro and meta level perspective. Juvenile sexual offending research warrants new knowledge as this topic has only been studied consistently since the mid-1980s (Finkelhor, 2009). Additionally, the United States tends to take a correctional approach to addressing sexual offending and has one of the highest incarceration rates out of all industrialized nations. Despite research proving that correctional approaches and current policies aimed at mitigating sexual offending (e.g., registration) are shown to be ineffective at reducing recidivism, we continue to utilize these same methods (Levenson et al., 2010).

The systematic literature review provides an introduction to this topic and creates the foundation for the following papers. Through the literature review, multiple themes emerged that aided in the development of the conceptual idea presented in the second paper. The development of the conceptual paper helped to establish a unique way of approaching the management of juvenile sexual offense recidivism rates using a combination of theories. This paper also expands upon issues discussed in the literature review, specifically biased thinking present in current sex offense legislation. Finally, the practice application paper talks about ways to take the knowledge gained from the literature review and the unique idea created in the concept paper into an actionable response. The three papers combined provide a holistic view on this social justice issue, with a possible avenue for addressing this problem.

Paper 1: Systematic Literature Review

The purpose of the systematic literature review was to better understand current research trends regarding juvenile sexual offender recidivism rates. Additionally, the literature review focused on this topic from a macro perspective, with an emphasis on public policy. The research question posed in the review was: What do social work policymakers need to know about male adolescent/juvenile sexual offending to create programs aimed at reducing recidivism? A comprehensive literature review was completed, and the data was synthesized to answer the proposed research question.

The first step in the methodology was determining keywords that would provide the most comprehensive results while still adhering to the goal of the research question. The search terms utilized were "policymakers" or "legislators," and "male juvenile sexual offending," or "male youth sexual offending," and "recidivism rates," or "recidivism reduction." A variety of databases were searched from disciplines such as social work and criminal justice. Once articles were found, preliminary relevance was determined by title, and after that each of the articles were screened for adherence to the set inclusion and exclusion criteria. The full text for each manuscript was obtained and screened to ensure quality assessment, which narrowed the literature search from one hundred and twenty-five articles down to 21.

The 21 remaining articles were imported into Covidence, a data extraction and analysis tool. Each study was coded by specific features available through Covidence, including sample characteristics and design and data collection methods. The results from the data analysis showed that each of the 21 articles emphasized an important area related to juvenile sexual offending. In order for public policymakers to effectively address

juvenile sexual offending systemically, they must consider the current treatment modalities being used with this population and the efficacy of those treatments, the need for re-entry programs, the connection between childhood trauma and juvenile sexual offending, and additional societal/environmental factors. Additionally, it is important for legislators to understand the impact public policy and the juvenile justice system has on juvenile sexual offenders.

One key finding from this systematic literature review, was that juvenile sexual offending can be influenced by societal issues. For example, it was found that early exposure to hyper-sexualized and violent media had an impact on juveniles engaging in inappropriate sexual behaviors (Blackburn & Scharrer, 2019; Tyler & Quek, 2016). It was also found that gender norms that have become ingrained into society, have created unhealthy views of masculinity and femininity that can develop environments where unhealthy sexual behaviors are more likely to occur (Abma et al., 1998; Thomas et al., 2017; Blackburn & Scharrer, 2019). Lastly, it was found that policymakers, and their potentially biased thinking towards sexual offenders, has a noticeable impact on juvenile sexual offense legislation (Meloy et al., 2013).

Paper 2: Conceptual Paper

Juvenile sexual offending has become of increasing interest to researchers in the social sciences and criminal justice fields since the mid-1980s (Auslander, 1998). This increase in interest is likely due to the frequency at which juvenile sexual offenses occur. While the United States has taken steps to address juvenile sexual assault and recidivism rates, there are many issues that still plague current legislation. The systematic literature review highlighted that legislators and practitioners involved with the juvenile justice

system may be inclined to recommend correctional versus rehabilitative approaches due to their own biased thinking about sex offenders (Meloy et al., 2013). Continuing to utilize correctional approaches with juveniles, when research shows youth offenders are less likely to engage in multiple offenses and oftentimes have their own trauma histories, can lead to a negative impact on these youth (Przybylski & Lobanov-Rostovsky, n.d.).

The proposed conceptual solution discussed in this paper emphasized the value in utilizing a combination of two existing social work theories to view and address juvenile sexual offending. It was recommended that this new concept, combining incrementalism and trauma theory, would best assist policymakers with addressing juvenile sexual offending. Incrementalism allows for the recognition that policy change often comes slowly and that incremental changes to existing legislation are easier to pass than large scale changes (Hayes, n.d.). Trauma theory can be used to assist legislators with recognizing the trauma histories of many youth offenders and with understanding how the juvenile justice system can be an additional source of trauma (Burton et al., 2011). These two approaches work to combine aspects of public policy, criminal justice, and social work to address this issue holistically.

Another important concept discussed in this conceptual paper was the value of the Developmental Life Course (DLC) criminology perspective. This perspective highlights the cognitive and developmental differences between youth and adult offenders (Lussier, 2017). The DLC perspective emphasizes the importance of adjusting current sex offender legislation and punitive measures to match the developmental life stage of the youth being sentenced. Additionally, this perspective exists as a reminder that the juvenile justice system was built on the premise of rehabilitation, not corrections.

The knowledge presented in this paper was developed from the themes that emerged in the systematic literature review, specifically the importance of lawmakers understanding their own roles in mitigating juvenile sexual offending. This conceptual approach also recognizes the need for effective treatment of juvenile sexual offenders with a focus on trauma-informed care. The concept was expanded upon in the practice application paper and aided in the creation of that unique idea.

Paper 3: Practice Application Paper

The main focus of the practice application paper is addressing juvenile sexual offending systemically with recommendations for policy changes. The proposed solution recommends social workers connect with public policy officials to advocate for change to existing juvenile sexual offense legislation. It is also recommended that these changes be made federally so that juvenile sexual offense policies remain consistent between states. While the practice application paper targets change at the policy level with legislators, the goal of this proposed change is to increase access to treatment services and increased rehabilitative approaches to juvenile sexual offending in the United States.

This paper will discuss the importance of examining existing legislation, policy, and treatment initiatives being used across the globe to address juvenile sexual offense recidivism rates. Specific attention is given to the Public Health Model of prevention utilized in Australia and the Persistent Young Offender Project in the United Kingdom, additionally noting their usefulness to juvenile sexual offense policy reform in the United States. It is recommended that a combination of these approaches coupled with the Developmental Life Course criminology perspective be used to amend existing state policies. Using the incrementalist paradigm to address juvenile sexual offending would

direct social workers towards advocating to amend current state legislation to be more rehabilitative. A long-term goal associated with this practice paper would be to advocate for new policies to be created on the federal level to systemically address this social justice issue. Ideally, this knowledge would be shared through partnerships with advocacy groups and through speaking engagements with professionals from relevant disciplines.

Key Findings

One key finding across all three papers is the need to address biased policymaking to effectively manage juvenile sexual offense recidivism rates (Meloy et al., 2013). It is also important to note that biased thinking, whether implicit or explicit, should be addressed with public policy makers who create legislation for all social justice issues. Another key finding is that there are effective approaches to addressing and mitigating juvenile sexual offending, but that these treatments are not always being utilized (Lussier, 2017). A final key finding, is that many domains that interact with juvenile sexual offenders are often siloed, preventing these groups from working cohesively to develop a solution to this problem (McKibbin et al., 2016).

These findings are both relevant and meaningful as they can be utilized to inform future social work research and practice. Adding to the existing body of literature will allow for additional studies and research to be done, which will hopefully add to the development of a systemic solution to addressing juvenile sexual offending. Finally, these key findings highlight the importance of a multi-disciplinary team working together to enact meaningful large-scale change.

CHAPTER 2. SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW: JUVENILE SEXUAL OFFENDING RECIDIVISM

ABSTRACT

Juvenile sexual offending is a concept not readily understood by the general public, and prior to the 1970s was a subject rarely researched by social workers and other professionals. The lack of knowledge about this social justice issue, led to the crafting of this systematic literature review to better understand what is known about this topic. The goal of this systematic literature review was to answer the following question: What do social work policymakers need to know about male adolescent/juvenile sexual offending to create programs aimed at reducing recidivism? This review began by utilizing relevant keywords related to the research question, embarking on the initial phase of the comprehensive review of the literature. Three different databases were utilized in this search, specifically the Criminal Justice Database, Social Work Abstracts, and the Sociology Database all available to students and instructors through the University of Kentucky. Following the completion of the inclusion screening and quality and eligibility assessment, twenty one relevant articles were included in the final review. Through the exploration and analysis of existing literature, six themes emerged pertinent to the research question (e.g., current treatment approaches, efficacy of existing treatment programs, the necessity of re-entry programs, the need to understand trauma within this population and the importance of trauma-informed care, additional environmental/societal factors, and the importance of effective policymaking and legislation). Utilizing thematic exploration, it was determined that biased thinking in lawmaking is a pertinent issue that must be addressed in order to effectively mitigate and manage juvenile sexual offending. The paper discusses additional

implications for future policy, practice, and research to guide the development of systemic solutions to juvenile sexual offending.

Keywords: juvenile sexual offending, recidivism reduction, policy change, bias in lawmaking

Juvenile Sexual Offending Recidivism

The term sex offender has an increasingly negative connotation within the general population. Society tends to harshly view sexually motivated crimes due to the nature of the crime and the pain inflicted upon the victims of sexual offenses. Society also tends to have a negative view of those who commit offenses against children and youth due to the perceived innocence and vulnerability often associated with childhood. Many in society fail to consider the complexity of why people commit sexual offenses and how providing quality care to those who commit offenses can reduce future recidivism.

Children and those who commit sexual offenses are often linked together as victims and perpetrators (Auslander, 1998). The overlap between those two populations can go unnoticed even in the field of social work. Youth committing sexual offenses has become an increasingly important area of study in the social science fields over the past decade, as researchers have recognized the need to understand this complex phenomenon. As social workers, it is of the utmost importance to recognize the need to prevent the cycle of recidivism early for juvenile sexual offenders to prevent a future of incarceration and reduce the increased risk for victimization of other youth.

Background: Importance of the Issue

Although the general public tends to have trouble understanding the social justice issue of juvenile sexual offending, it is a topic that has become of increasing interest to social workers and researchers. The increased interest in this specific population is likely due to the frequency at which juvenile sexual offending occurs. According to the United

States Department of Justice, "Juveniles account for more than one third (35.6 percent) of those known to police to have committed sex offenses against minors" (Finkelhor et al., 2009, p. 1-2). Despite juvenile sexual offenders committing such a large number of sexual offenses annually, sexual offending is still seen as a crime traditionally committed by adults. Due to the lack of widespread knowledge about juvenile sexual offending, treatment programming and the importance of systematically addressing this social problem lacks recognition.

Additionally, youth sexual offenders pose a unique risk to other youth as their access to other children is higher than the access most adult offenders typically possess. Furthermore, youth sexual offenders do not fit society's typical view of a sexual offender, and therefore parents and adults may be less likely to talk with their children about safety precautions to take and ways to report violence perpetrated by other youth. According to Finkelhor et al. (2009), "Juveniles who commit sex offenses against other children are more likely than adult sex offenders to offend in groups and at schools and to have more male victims and younger victims" (p. 2). Due to juveniles being statistically more likely to offend against other youth because of their increased access to potential victims, many youth are vulnerable to peer victimization. Furthermore, education surrounding sexual offending provided to youth is often geared towards the idea that perpetrators are primarily adults.

Background: Scope of the Problem

While many juveniles may have already engaged in their first sexual offense, leading to involvement with the juvenile justice system and an increased risk for future recidivism, reoffending behaviors can be mitigated. Not only does reoffending impact the

quality of life of the juvenile offender, but it leads to additional cycles of victimization and potential offending behavior for other youth. According to an article published by the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking, "The observed sexual recidivism rates of juveniles who commit sexual offenses ranges from about 7 to 13 percent after 59 months, depending on the study" (Lobanov-Rostovsky, n.d., para. 2). While these numbers are essential to consider and provide general statistical data on this phenomenon, the actual recidivism rates vary widely based on community versus correctional settings and the age of the study. The observed recidivism rate for juvenile sexual offenders is also traditionally lower than for adult sexual offenders. However, juveniles who commit sexual offenses are at an increased risk for general recidivism even though their rate for sexual recidivism remains lower (Lobanov-Rostovsky, n.d.). If this increased risk for recidivism is not managed effectively, it will lead to continued reoffending, impacting the trajectory of youth offenders' futures and increasing the potential victimization of other vulnerable youth. The increased cycling of these youth through the juvenile justice system also poses a financial strain on taxpayers and an additional burden on Child Protective Service systems.

Research Question

While juvenile sexual offending recidivism rates are much lower than the noted rates for adult sexual offenders, this topic of study is still significant. Providing quality care for juvenile sexual offenders allows them to learn healthier behavior patterns and gives them another shot at a prosperous future. In order to provide comprehensive care for juvenile sexual offenders, that is consistent between programs and across state lines, policymakers need to understand best practices in the treatment of these sexual offenders.

Policymakers can utilize advocacy efforts and create policies that align with evidence-based best practices to improve treatment initiatives for youth offenders. This systematic review aims to answer the question: What do social work policymakers need to know about male adolescent/juvenile sexual offending to create programs aimed at reducing recidivism?

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this review is to determine what information social work policymakers need to know to create programs that successfully reduce recidivism rates of male juvenile sexual offenders. This inquiry will focus on treatment initiatives for juvenile sexual offenders instead of correctional or punitive practices. It is crucial to explore the literature to determine if treatment approaches successfully mitigate juvenile sexual offending and what types of treatments are most successful. Additionally, this review will attempt to determine how evidenced-based approaches can be translated into policy/program level initiatives to reduce juvenile sexual offending systemically. Due to the low number of female juvenile sexual offenders, this subset population of sexual offenders is not the primary focus of the research process. Although understanding female juvenile sexual offending is vital to social work, this is an area for future and further study.

Methodology: Literature Search and Evaluation

Inclusion and Exclusion Criterion

This review includes only articles that provided knowledge about juvenile sexual offending that would benefit policymakers at creating programs/policies to reduce recidivism. Various disciplines comprise this review, specifically criminal justice,

sociology, and social work. Only studies written in English or translated into English were considered for this review. There was no timeliness restriction utilized for this review due to the limited research/data on this niche topic of study. Articles were excluded for consideration if they were not peer-reviewed.

Literature Identification

The literature review began by utilizing the following keywords, "policymakers" or "legislators," and "male juvenile sexual offending," or "male youth sexual offending," and "recidivism rates," or "recidivism reduction." For each article, preliminary relevance was determined by the title. From the title, if the content appeared to discuss information connected to the research question, the complete reference was obtained, including the title, author, year of publication, and abstract, for continued evaluation.

Three different databases, the Criminal Justice Database, Social Work Abstracts, and the Sociology Database, were utilized. These databases were available through the University of Kentucky's library, and content was accessible for students and faculty of the university. The first database searched was the Criminal Justice Database which yielded 735 peer-reviewed articles. After reviewing the titles, forty-two articles appeared relevant to the aim of this systematic literature review. The second database utilized was Social Work Abstracts, which was searched utilizing the exact keywords and yielded forty peer-reviewed articles, none relevant to the topic. Due to the limited results of the Social Work Abstracts database, a broader database of a similar field of study was utilized. After searching the Sociology Database, 1,502 peer-reviewed articles were found, with eighty-three that appeared initially relevant to the research question. After the initial title screening, 125 articles related to juvenile sexual offending, policymaking, and recidivism

reduction were obtained. Duplicate articles that were found in both databases were excluded later, removing thirteen of the manuscripts.

Screening for Inclusion

The abstracts of the 112 articles yielded were later reviewed for relevance to the topic of research. Only one researcher screened the 112 studies, which is a limitation of this systematic review. The lack of multiple researchers eliminated the need for parallel independent assessments of the articles and later resolution of discrepancies between the researchers. A total of thirty-six articles were deemed relevant, and the full text for each article was obtained for additional evaluation.

Quality and Eligibility Assessment

The full text for each manuscript was skimmed for additional quality assurance and to verify relevance to the social problem. After careful review, a total of fifteen studies were excluded: three were excluded as the studies were qualitative with few participants; eleven were excluded as they discussed policymaking with no specific focus on sexual offending; one study was excluded because the full-text could not be obtained. Overall, twenty-one articles were deemed relevant and included for full-text analysis.

Data Extraction and Analysis

In order to improve quality assessment and analysis of the data, an automated data extraction tool was utilized for this review. First, the manuscripts were imported into the standard version of the tool Covidence. This software was utilized to screen the title and abstracts of each article again to increase the quality of the review. The Covidence software was then utilized to screen the full text of all twenty-one articles to ensure the included data

is relevant to the research question. The data extraction tool for Covidence pulls study details from articles, including country and setting, the author's contact information, information related to the methodology, population, and other relevant data. The data extraction tool also provided a risk of bias assessment for the final articles included. For each study/comparison, the articles were coded by general features, sample characteristics, and design and data collection methods.

Results

The results of this study produced six broad categories that each of the final articles fit within. These categories of information all relate to the overarching goal of this systematic literature review. In order for policymakers to reduce the recidivism rates of juvenile sexual offenders, they must consider 1) current treatment approaches, 2) the efficacy of those programs, 3) the importance of re-entry programs, 4) the need to understand trauma within this population and the importance of trauma-informed care, and 5) additional environmental/societal factors (see Appendix for extraction details and literature synthesis). There was an additional category of articles that specifically focused on legislation and policymaking, emphasizing current policies surrounding juvenile sexual offending and the juvenile justice system. Examining juvenile sexual offending from a policy perspective is valuable as legislators make the policies that impact many juvenile sexual offenders who are involved with the justice system.

The research highlighted that there are many effective programs available to assist with mitigating sexual offending (Perrin et al., 2018; ter Beek et al., 2018; Schmucker & Lösel, 2015; Schmucker & Lösel, 2017; Landenberger & Lipsey, 2005; Lipsey & Landenberger, 2007). However, there was a lack of robust data specifically focused on

reducing recidivism rates of juvenile sexual offenders, and specific implications for working with a youth population. The articles yielded from the initial search also emphasized a lack of consistent and regular treatment programs being utilized nationwide to address juvenile sexual offending (ter Beek et al., 2018; Schmucker & Lösel, 2015; Landenberger & Lipsey, 2005). The lack of consistent treatment programs being utilized systemically, leads to varying treatment success rates and recidivism rates between states. While some articles discussed re-entry programs, many of them were geared towards the adult population of sexual offenders (Duwe, 2018). This gap in the literature highlights the need for increased research on re-entry initiatives for juvenile sexual offenders, emphasizing post-corrections treatment services.

Each article that discussed trauma-informed treatment and the high prevalence of adverse childhood experiences in youth offenders, highlighted the importance of recognizing the background of youth offenders when considering treatment, sentencing, and re-entry services (Ford et al., 2016; Boswell, 2016). Authors in this category provide a basis for policymakers to help reduce recidivism in this population by understanding trauma's impact on them. Furthermore, it is essential to consider possible re-traumatization of this population by introducing them to the traumatic experiences and violence present within the juvenile justice system (Kerig et al., 2016).

While only three articles specifically related to legislation and juvenile sexual offending, they offered valuable insight into the limitations/barriers to effective policymaking (Meloy et al., 2013; Star, 2019; Dopp et al., 2015). Legislators and policymakers need to understand how their personal biases about sex offenders impacts their ability to neutrally react to sex crimes and implement sex offender legislation focusing

on treatment (Meloy et al., 2013). The data also highlighted the need for legislators to partner with practitioners and researchers to create policies informed by evidence-based best practices (Dopp et al., 2015). Therefore, policymakers need to put children at the heart of policymaking to allow for legislation that provides treatment and punitive approaches that are age-appropriate (Star, 2019).

Finally, while many articles did not address juvenile sexual offending specifically, they highlighted other social/societal phenomena that impact or increase the likelihood that problematic sexual behaviors will occur. For example, many articles highlighted how changes in society (the increasing access to pornography, consumption of pornographic materials at younger ages, and exposure to violent and hyper-sexualized media) could impact youth development and views about sexuality and sexual health (Blackburn & Scharrer, 2019; Tyler & Quek, 2016). It was also discussed how gender differences, and gender norms that are embedded and engrained into society, lead to unhealthy views of femininity and masculinity that create an environment where unhealthy sexual behaviors may manifest (Abma et al., 1998; Thomas et al., 2017; Blackburn & Scharrer, 2019). Finally, lack of proper sexual education in elementary and high schools leads to a lack of knowledge about consent and healthy sexual behaviors/boundaries in youth (Landry et al., 2000; Fields, 2008). While these factors may not directly cause juvenile sexual offending, they are essential to consider as they can create environments where sexual offending is more likely and help provide possible avenues for prevention education.

Discussion

Policymakers and legislators must consider many critical factors to address juvenile sexual offending and recidivism reduction effectively. First, policymakers must become

more aware of environmental or societal norms that contribute to and create environments where sexual offending becomes more prevalent. It is also vital for legislators to consider how prevention efforts, such as proper sexual education, can reduce the overall number of sexual assaults committed by juveniles. Recidivism reduction is essential and the focus of this review, but reasonable prevention efforts are also crucial to addressing this problem from a holistic approach.

It is also necessary for policymakers to partner with researchers for two key reasons. First, connecting with researchers and practitioners allows policymakers to understand the etiology of juvenile sexual offending, specifically childhood trauma and attachment issues. Researchers and practitioners can also assist with developing multi-disciplinary committees for policymaking that will allow for policies to be informed by evidence-based best practices and current research. It is recommended that policymakers become aware of their own biases and receive proper training about implicit and explicit bias. Reducing bias in policymaking, and becoming aware of prejudicial beliefs present in the creation of legislation, will allow for sound policymaking that focuses on treatment rather than punitive approaches to addressing juvenile sexual offending.

Limitations

While this systematic literature review provides an initial discussion about this critical topic, it is not without its limitations. One major limitation of this literature review is that only one author reviewed sources and extracted data. Another researcher would have allowed for the possible reduction in bias or errors present in the articles listed. An additional limitation of this review is the utilization of only 21 articles for the final review; a more extensive data pool would have allowed for increased reliability and validity of the

findings and results of this paper. Finally, although the low number of sources could indicate a lack of an exhaustive literature search, it may also be related to the lack of research present on this specific topic.

Recommendations for Future Practice

While there are many different routes of researching juvenile sexual offending, this specific review focused on legislation and recidivism rates. One phenomenon that became apparent while researching this topic was the prevalence of gender differences and the impact of gender norms on problematic and unhealthy sexual behaviors. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers explore this area of interest and its relation to overall rates of juvenile sexual offending. It is also interesting to study gender-specific differences in juvenile sexual offenders due to the lack of research on female offenders. Increasing the research and data on this specific sub-group of juvenile sexual offenders could allow for gender-specific treatment programs for youth offenders.

Conclusion

Juvenile sexual offending is an issue that has become of increasing interest to researchers since the 1970s. While the research and treatment initiatives developed for youth offenders have increased since that time, there is a lack of appropriate research on how legislators and policymakers can address this problem. People in positions of power need to assist with developing consistent sexual offender laws and treatment on the national level to allow for a consistent reduction in juvenile sexual offending across states. Additionally, legislators need to focus on prevention efforts and treatment initiatives instead of punitive options for juvenile offenders. Research has consistently highlighted

that the justice system was not developed for youth offenders, yet we utilize the same system for youth and adults. Utilizing this same system fails to acknowledge the age differences and cognitive capabilities between youth and adult offenders. In order to successfully reduce juvenile sexual offender recidivism rates, policymakers need to advocate for youth and create policies that recognize the complex and often traumatic upbringing of these children.

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APPENDIX

ARTICLE EXTRACTION TABLE & LITERATURE SYNTHESIS

	Author(s)	Year	Title	Aim
Treatment Options & Efficacy	McKay	1998	Sex Research Update	To discuss and provide an update on different areas of sex research, including the treatment of children with sexual behavior problems.
	Perrin, Frost, & Ware	2018	The utility of peer-support in enhancing the treatment of incarcerated sexual offenders	To review peer-support as a mechanism to maximize treatment gains of sexual offenders.
	ter Beek, Spruit, Kuiper, van der Rijejn, Heniks, & Stams	2018	Treatment effect on recidivism for juveniles who have sexually offended: A multilevel meta-analysis	To study the impacts of treatment on recidivism and to explore whether other types of recidivism were moderated by sexual offender treatment programs.
	Schmucker & Losel	2015	The effects of sexual offender treatment on recidivism: an international meta-analysis of sound quality evaluations	To discuss the importance of evaluating the efficacy of sexual offender treatment and need for evidenced-based criminal justice policies.
	Sale, Bellamy, Springer & Wang	2008	Quality of Provider-Participant Relationships and Enhancement of Adolescent Social Skills	To report youth outcomes from participating in traditional and non-traditional mentoring programs.
	Schmucker & Losel	2017	Sexual offender treatment for reducing recidivism among convicted sex offenders: a systematic review and meta-analysis	To determine if current research supports the notion that providing treatment to offenders reduces recidivism rates.
	Landenberger & Lipsey	2005	The positive effects of cognitive-behavioral programs for offenders: A meta-analysis of factors associated with effective treatment	To determine the effectiveness of CBT at reducing recidivism in the offender population.
	Lipsey & Landenberger	2007	PROTOCOL: Cognitive-Behavioral Programs for Juvenile and Adult Offenders: A Meta-Analysis of Controlled Intervention Studies	To examine the effect of cognitive-behavioral treatment (CBT) on the criminal behavior of juvenile and adult offenders.
Policy-Making/Legislation	Meloy, Boatwright & Curtis	2013	Views from the Top and Bottom: Lawmakers and Practitioners Discuss Sex Offender Laws	To discuss how the perceptions and attitudes that policymakers and criminal justice practitioners have about sexual offending affects how state lawmakers respond to sex crimes, and how practitioners implement sex offender legislation.
	Star	2019	Putting Children at the Heart of Policy	To explore different methods used to create policies in Welsh and to discuss how the public health agenda addresses the best interests of children.
	Dopp, Borduin, Brown, Dixon & Leam	2015	Evidence-based treatments for juvenile sexual offenders: review and recommendations	To provide recommendations for treatment providers and policymakers to consider in their decisions about interventions for juvenile sexual offenders.
Re-Entry Programs	Duwe	2018	Can circles of support and accountability (CoSA) significantly reduce sexual recidivism? Results from a randomized controlled trial in Minnesota	To evaluate the effectiveness of a sex offender reentry program.

Environmental & Other Important Factors	Abma, Driscoll & Moore	1998	Young Women's Degree of Control Over First Intercourse: An Exploratory Analysis	To explicitly examine the degree of control young women have over their first sexual intercourse.
	Thomas, Weinstein & Selman	2017	Did I Cross the Line?: Gender Differences in Adolescents' Anonymous Digital Self-Reports of Wrongdoing in an Online Anonymous Context	To analyze self-reports of wrong-doing in anonymous online settings with a focus on gender differences.
	Blackburn & Scharrer	2019	Video Game Playing and Beliefs about Masculinity Among Male and Female Emerging Adults	To examine correlations between the amount of time spent playing violent video games and views about masculinity, with a focus on gender differences.
	Tyler & Quek	2016	Conceptualizing Pornographication: A Lack of Clarity and Problems for Feminist Analysis	To understand the academic roots of pornographication, to detail and explain the lack of conceptual clarification about pornographication, and to discuss the differences between pornographication and sexualization.
	Landry, Singh & Darroch	2000	Sexuality Education in Fifth and Sixth Grades in U.S. Public Schools, 1999	To explore the lack of national information about teaching sexual education in elementary schools and potential impacts on juveniles of that age.
	Fields	2008	Risky Lessons: Sex Education and Social Inequality	To discuss how sex education policies in the United States affect and fail to affect students, with an emphasis on race, class, sexuality, and gender relations.
Trauma & Trauma-Informed Care	Ford, Kerig, Desai & Feierman	2016	Psychosocial Interventions for Traumatized Youth in the Juvenile Justice System: Research, Evidence Base, and Clinical/Legal Challenges	To provide an overview of the research, clinical/legal successes, and barriers to developing and implementing trauma-focused interventions with youth involved with the juvenile justice system.
	Boswell	2016	Trauma Experiences in the Backgrounds of Violent Young Offenders	To highlight the high levels of trauma prevalent in the backgrounds of juvenile offenders with an emphasis on how professionals and policy makers should utilize this information to assist with treatment and development of policies.
	Maynard, Farina, Dell & Kelly	2019	Effects of trauma-informed approaches in schools: A systematic review	To assess trauma-informed approaches in schools on trauma symptoms/mental health, academic performance, behavior, and socioemotional functioning.

CHAPTER 3. IMPROVING THE JUSTICE SYSTEM FOR JUVENILE SEXUAL OFFENDERS: A CONCEPTUAL VIEW

ABSTRACT

A review of current literature revealed that the juvenile justice system is ill equipped to effectively manage and treat juvenile sexual offenders. Additionally, the literature search highlighted the impact implicit and explicit bias has on lawmakers' abilities to effectively create legislation aimed at systemically addressing juvenile sexual offending. This gap in knowledge, led to the creation of the unique conceptual idea developed in this paper. The proposed concept emphasizes the importance of utilizing a combined theoretical foundation of trauma theory and incrementalism to effectively reduce the recidivism rates of juvenile sexual offenders. It is believed that this unique synthesis of theories, coupled with the Developmental Life Course criminology perspective, can be utilized to mitigate biased lawmaking, and improve treatment and sentencing for juvenile offenders.

Keywords: juvenile sexual offending, recidivism reduction, bias in lawmaking, incrementalism, trauma theory, Developmental Life Course criminology perspective

Improving the Justice System for Juvenile Sexual Offenders: A Conceptual View

Sexual offending is a topic that has been of frequent study for decades by researchers in the social sciences and criminal justice fields. Sexual offending is also an issue that remains at the forefront of society and is a problem of concern for the general public. What is often under-researched and not as well understood is the phenomenon of juvenile sexual offending. While researchers have had an increasing interest in this social problem over the past few decades, the research focuses primarily on statistics and demographic variables associated with offending and the etiology of this social justice issue. This conceptual paper aims to discuss the impact of implicit and explicit bias on policymaking, focusing on policies surrounding juvenile sexual offending. Policymakers should examine existing legislation and policy to move toward improved treatment options for offenders, similar to the Developmental Life Course criminology perspective, and away from unjustly punitive incarceration. Using incremental theory to make measured policy changes will allow the system to evolve towards effective evidence-based interventions, and using trauma theory to inform treatment options will preserve the humanity of youth offenders. This combination provides a powerful synergy in making systemic changes.

Background

In order to understand the concept of juvenile sexual offending, it is first essential to understand how researchers define this problem. Juvenile sexual offending can be defined as "a youth, from puberty to the legal age of majority, who commits any sexual act with a person of any age, against the victim's will, without consent, or in an aggressive, exploitative or threatening manner" (Auslander, 1998, p. 1). While there is now an abundance of literature on sexual offending, specifically youth offenders, it was not until the 1970s when researchers first began publishing articles about this topic. Research has found that prior to the 1970s, only nine articles

were published on juvenile sexual offending, which increased to 19 published articles in the 1970s, and 88 additional articles were published in the 1980s (Auslander, 1998). This increase in research was vastly significant as research often informs treatment and policymaking decisions.

Rationale

Research on juvenile sexual offending has become of increasing popularity since the 1970s, and for a good reason. While the exact number of sexual offenses committed by juveniles is unknown, many researchers have proposed estimates. For example, in a study by Finkelhor et al. (2009), it was estimated that juveniles accounted for around 1 out of every four sexual offenders known to police, and 1 out of every three who have victimized youth and are known to law enforcement (Przybylski & Lobanov-Rostovsky, n.d.). Another study conducted by the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting program reported that 15% of the rape arrestees in 2009 were younger than 18 (Przybylski & Lobanov-Rostovsky, n.d.). However, when viewing victims' reports, it was estimated that 4 out of 10 sexual assaults had been committed by juveniles (Przybylski & Lobanov-Rostovsky, n.d.). Although the estimated rates of juvenile sexual offending varies widely based on source and the study's age, general estimates showcase how prevalent and frequently these crimes can occur.

Due to the frequency at which these crimes occur, systematic changes need to address this social problem from a policy perspective. If juvenile sexual offender recidivism rates are not mitigated and managed, the number of victims will remain steady. Addressing this concern systemically can reduce overall rates of juvenile sexual assault and improve the future outcomes of the lives of juvenile offenders.

Literature Review

A brief review of the literature is provided, with a focus on conceptualizing juvenile sexual offending as a problem and past attempts to address this issue are discussed. Gaps in the literature are explored to highlight the need for a new conceptual approach to addressing juvenile sexual offending systemically. Finally, the Developmental Life Course criminology perspective is introduced to highlight current flaws in the juvenile justice system and sex offender legislation.

What we Know about the Problem

Although most of the literature on juvenile sexual offending is focused on treatment initiatives and understanding the etiology of offenders, recent research has also started recognizing the limitations of the criminal justice system at addressing and treating juvenile sexual offenders. The central premise of much research is how the criminal justice system was not built for youth and fails to recognize the cognitive differences between youth and adult offenders (Przybylski & Lobanov-Rostovsky, n.d.). Scientific evidence supports that juveniles and adults have different cognitive capabilities, their abilities to manage and regulate their emotions and behaviors differ widely, and there is an increased susceptibility to peer pressure and social influence present during adolescence (Przybylski & Lobanov-Rostovsky, n.d.). Research has also found that "the ability to plan, be aware of time, and anticipate future consequences significantly increases with age" (Przybylski & Lobanov-Rostovsky, n.d., para. 1). These factors are essential to consider and highlight the need for policy changes to address these concerns.

What Has Been Done to Address the Problem?

In order to start addressing the cognitive and other developmental differences between juvenile and adult offenders, researchers developed the Developmental Life Course (DLC) criminology perspective. In an article by Lussier (2017), "DLC criminology is introduced as a theoretical and research paradigm to improve the description and explanation of onset,

developmental course, and termination of sexual offending" (p. 52). The DLC criminology framework also groups offenders into two specific categories, adolescent-limited offenders and life-course-persistent offenders. It is believed that life-course-persistent offenders may have neurodevelopmental impairments that impact self-control, limited healthy socialization, and unhealthy family and socioeconomic circumstances (Piquero et al., 2012). On the other hand, adolescent-limited offenders are said to commit crimes by mimicking the behaviors of others to gain power and status in their social world, and that offending typically subsides during adulthood (Piquero et al., 2012).

Creating this specific paradigm to discuss this social problem was an initial step in creating a framework to address juvenile sexual offending systemically. The creation of the DLC framework has allowed criminologists to recognize how human development, developmental stages, and life events and transitions influence offending behaviors (Lussier, 2017). This framework has also allowed researchers, treatment providers, and criminologists to understand the dynamic processes that influence the development of offending over time (Lussier, 2017). The creation of this framework has been a significant shift in research about juvenile offending and can be utilized to facilitate a paradigm shift in society's thinking about offending. Additionally, the DLC framework can inform policymakers about the origins and development of sexual offending and assist them with creating policies to address offending systematically and from a perspective that considers the developmental capabilities of juvenile offenders (Lussier, 2017).

Gaps in the Research

While research about juvenile sexual offending has developed dramatically since the 1970s, there are still many gaps in the research that prevent this issue from being addressed from a macro-level perspective. The research on juvenile sexual offending surged in the 1980s, with the

primary focus on the etiology and treatment of offenders. However, it was not until the 2000s that researchers started to look at juvenile sexual offending from a systemic and developmental perspective. Creating the Developmental Life Course criminology perspective was the first step in developing a framework to guide policymakers on addressing this issue. However, one of the significant barriers to utilizing this research in practice is the explicit and implicit bias present in policymaking decisions regarding sexual offenders (Meloy et al., 2012).

Current research provides information about why juvenile sexual offending occurs in abundance, and trauma-informed treatment modalities to address offending behaviors and reduce recidivism. Now there are frameworks policymakers can use to assist with the creation of universal sexual offender treatment programs. These articles provide a framework but do not guide how to take this concept from paper to practice. There is also limited research on addressing issues related to the lack of evidence or research-informed legislation. The conceptual idea presented and explored is using incrementalism and trauma theory to address biased policymaking, and allows for the incorporation of the DLC framework to create systemic changes in the treatment of juvenile sexual offenders.

Conceptual Solution

In order to thoroughly understand the proposed conceptual solution, it is first important to understand the biased thinking present in existing legislation. A discussion is had about the differences between explicit and implicit bias, and why these issues are particularly problematic for legislators. The gaps addressed will set the stage for understanding how incrementalism and trauma theory are relevant to improving sexual offense legislation.

Addressing the Gap: Biased Thinking about Sex Offenders

The term bias is not new to the social work lexicon and is a concept that has been researched and discussed throughout the profession's history. Bias can be defined as "the action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing unfairly, because of allowing personal opinions to influence your judgment" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d., para. 1). Two types of biased thinking are primarily discussed, implicit and explicit bias. The main difference between implicit and explicit bias is that implicit bias typically occurs at the subconscious level of thinking, and explicit bias is controllable and intentional. While most people have some biases based on their values and upbringing, not everyone allows these thoughts to influence their choices and interactions with others. Biased thinking becomes incredibly dangerous when left unchecked or unrecognized, specifically when the people who have these biased thoughts hold positions of power or influence.

Sex offenders are typically held in a less than favorable view by the general public due to the nature of their crimes and the fear those crimes instill. This public perception of sex offenders led legislators and policymakers to become central to the criminal justice response to sex crimes (Meloy et al., 2012). Due to the high levels of fear and concern about sex offenders and sex-related crimes, "there are more laws aimed at apprehending, convicting, punishing, and managing sex offenders than there are laws directed towards any other type of criminal" (Meloy et al., 2012, p. 617). Additionally, the number of actions classified as sex crimes has increased, the length of sentences for these crimes has increased, the number of registered sex offenders has doubled, and specialized requirements have been implemented for sex offenders living in the community (Meloy et al., 2012). While the change in laws was likely created to increase the safety of communities across the country, there is limited data about the impact lawmakers' personal views have on the legislative actions they take to address sex crimes.

Bias in Lawmaking

Prior to the study conducted by Meloy et al. (2012) about lawmakers' views on sex crimes, only three other studies had explicitly explored this phenomenon. Some of the main questions asked in the qualitative study by Meloy et al. (2012) explored criminal justice practitioners' and legislators' thoughts on why these laws were created, the purpose of the laws, the efficacy of current sex offender legislation, and the efficacy of sex offender treatment. Of the respondents interviewed, 56% of policymakers and 60% of criminal justice practitioners felt that their state's legislative responses to sex offenders effectively met their intended goals (Meloy et al., 2012). Additionally, 1 in 4 policymakers interviewed were skeptical that sex offender treatment could successfully mitigate sex crimes or manage recidivism rates (Meloy et al., 2012). This data highlights that many policymakers and criminal justice practitioners are likely to suggest punitive measures over treatment approaches to reduce recidivism of sex crimes. Despite research showing the efficacy of treatment approaches to manage sex crimes, specifically with juveniles, the results of this study show that legislators are less likely to incorporate treatment interventions into lawmaking due to their personal beliefs about offenders and influence from their voter base (Meloy et al., 2012).

Conceptual Idea and Theoretical Background

In order to best address juvenile sexual offending from a policy perspective, it is essential to utilize two existing theoretical approaches to address this social justice issue. An integrative approach utilizing incrementalism and trauma theory to address juvenile sexual offending, enhances the ability to create policies aimed at the treatment of juvenile offenders rather than punitive approaches. The combined use of these theories will allow for the management of implicit and explicit bias present in current sex crimes legislation. The following paragraphs will provide

a brief overview on the theoretical backgrounds and strengths/limitations of incrementalism and trauma theory.

Incrementalism: Definition & Key Concepts

The incremental theory was initially developed in the 1950s by political scientist Charles E. Lindblom as an alternative response to beliefs about policymaking present during that time (Hayes, n.d.). Incrementalism focuses on "the plurality of actors involved in the policymaking process and predicts that policymakers will build on past policies, focusing on incremental rather than wholesale changes" (Hayes, n.d., para. 2). Incremental theory has remained relevant to current policymaking and is recommended for use in democratic nations like the United States.

Epistemological and Ontological Assumptions. The central ontological assumption within the incrementalist paradigm is that completely balanced decision-making is unattainable. In order for decision-making to be rational, incrementalism posits that two contradictory ideas must exist simultaneously, "agreement on objectives and a knowledge base sufficient to permit accurate prediction of consequences associated with available alternatives" (Hayes, n.d., para. 3). Another central ontological belief associated with this paradigm focuses on fixing concrete problems rather than addressing abstract concepts like social justice or world peace (Hayes, n.d.).

The primary epistemological assumption connected with this school of thought is that the public brings their problems to their government through a process called the social fragmentation of analysis (Hayes, n.d.). This process states that no single individual possesses sufficient knowledge to make rational decisions about public policy, and "problems are often addressed without ever being fully defined" (Hayes, n.d., para. 4).

Strengths and Limitations. One of the significant strengths of incrementalism is that it is politically expedient. Incrementalism allows for policy changes to be made incrementally, which

assists with mitigating disputes between political parties. Incrementalism is also considered one of the most pragmatic approaches to public policymaking. "Incrementalism is also realistic because it recognizes that policymakers lack the time, intelligence, and other resources needed to engage in a comprehensive analysis of all alternative solutions to existing problems" (Anyebe, 2018, p. 15). The most common criticism of incrementalism is the belief that it discourages innovative thinking (Anyebe, 2018). Although incrementalism is a realistic theory to inform legislative endeavors, without innovative thought, some of the most effective policies in the history of the United States may not have been created.

Implications for Diverse Client Groups. Incrementalism may be both beneficial and harmful to diverse client groups. Incremental theory believes that no single decision-maker has enough knowledge to create rational policies. This theory supports diverse client groups, as it recognizes the need for diverse perspectives when creating legislation. On the other hand, incrementalism pushes for policy changes to occur minimally and at a slower pace. For groups of marginalized individuals who not only need policy changes to occur but also deserve these changes, a slow process may lead to the continued suffering of people within these groups.

Trauma Theory: Definition & Key Concepts

According to Turner (2017), "Trauma is a word that refers to a serious wound; it was adapted from medicine, to refer to a psychic-emotional wound or shock, by Breuer and Freud in 1893– 1895" (p. 556). Trauma theory developed its roots in 1896 when Sigmund Freud created a concept known as "seduction theory." This theory posited that "the source of his patients' unusual behavior—including mutism, feelings of being choked, and seizures—was sexual trauma" (Springer, n.d., p. 1). While Freud later recanted his theory of seduction, this was the initial base on which contemporary trauma theory was built. However, it was not until the 1960s that clinicians

would begin doing studies related to trauma symptoms, and it was not until 1980 that PTSD was added to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Springer, n.d.).

Epistemological and Ontological Assumptions. One of the key ontological assumptions associated with trauma theory is the idea that "the effects of an event may be dispersed and manifested in forms that are not directly linked with the event, but which bear some trace of their source within their mediations" (Cetinic, 2010, para. 7). The ontology of trauma theory focuses on the meaning of the event itself, both consciously and subconsciously, to the survivor. To fully understand the epistemology of trauma theory, it is crucial to understand the concept of epistemic trauma. Epistemic trauma can be defined as "the damage to one's sense that they can know and make sense of their experiences, and make a claim based on this experience" (Stinnett, 2018, p. 2). Epistemic trauma often occurs after repeated silencing of an individual or group of people following a traumatic experience. The concept of epistemic trauma allows for a deeper and more complex understanding of the epistemology of trauma theory.

Strengths and Limitations. The biggest strength of trauma theory is that it allows others to understand that the symptoms often associated with trauma are not related to poor functioning or moral deficits, but are a result of the challenging situation(s) experienced by the survivor. Trauma theory also incorporates a strength-based approach, which emphasizes the resiliency and strength of trauma survivors. One of the most significant weaknesses of trauma theory is the divide between researchers and practitioners about many concepts related to trauma. According to Suleiman (2008), "There exists today both a wide consensus among theorists on a certain definition of trauma and a strong and sometimes violent debate about specific aspects of trauma, notably as regards to its relation to memory" (para. 2). While this debate allows for academic discourse and

the potential to develop this theory further, it also highlights that trauma theory may not be fully developed at this time.

Implications for Diverse Client Groups. It can be argued that trauma theory works incredibly well with diverse groups of clients. Trauma theory has been utilized to explain not just individual traumas but historical traumas and injustices. In addition, trauma theory has been used to explain the concepts of cultural trauma and has been expanded to recognize how racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination can create trauma reactions.

How the Conceptual Solution Improves the Issue

Utilizing a trauma theory approach coupled with an incrementalist paradigm to address biased thinking can aid in the creation of evidence-informed legislation about juvenile sexual offending. Trauma theory seeks to explain how traumatic experiences can impact the functioning of an individual or groups of individuals. Trauma theory would better help legislators understand how sexual offending is not always a character defect but a symptom of adverse childhood experiences (Burton et al., 2011). Many authors have concluded that being the victim of childhood sexual abuse does lead to increased risks for sexual offending as a juvenile (Abbiati et al., 2014; Baglivio & Epps, 2016; Burton et al., 2011; Forsman et al., 2015; Jennings et al., 2014; Levenson et al., 2017). Although the exact factors that lead from cause to effect are not fully established, many authors discuss how the pathways from victim to abuser develop. It has been established within the literature that attachment, early cognitive beliefs, as well as seeing abuse at an early age are all factors that can lead from someone being impacted by trauma to inflicting it upon others (Chakhssi et al., 2013; Ciardha & Ward, 2013; Creeden, 2009; Grady et al., 2016; Levenson et al., 2017; Smallbone & Dadds, 1998).

This theory can also help legislators understand the trauma that can be inflicted on juveniles who are involved with the justice system. According to Kerig et al. (2016), "A significant body of research has emerged attesting to the fact that trauma exposure and posttraumatic stress symptoms are highly prevalent among youth in the juvenile justice system, with rates far exceeding those seen in community samples" (p. 635). Lastly, this trauma theory can be utilized to assist policymakers with understanding how their trauma history may be impacting any implicit or explicit biases they have about juvenile offenders and the effect that may also have on their legislative initiatives.

The incrementalist paradigm, coupled with trauma theory, is a needed theoretical approach to assist legislators with creating evidence-based policies to assist with the rehabilitation of juvenile sexual offenders. The incrementalist paradigm emphasizes making minor changes within an already existing system. While it could be argued that the entirety of the juvenile justice system needs re-designed, that is beyond the scope of this paper. Policy change should be idealistic in ways, striving for significant societal changes, but realism must be present to take legislation from an idea to action. According to Anyebe (2018), "Because policymakers operate under conditions of uncertainty about the future consequences of their actions, incremental decisions tend to reduce the risks and cost of uncertainty" (p. 15). By suggesting that legislators make incremental changes to the juvenile justice system, utilizing the Developmental Life Course (DLC) criminology perspective, emphasizing treatment approaches, the likelihood that these changes occur increases.

Connection to Existing Theory

While a combination of incrementalism and trauma theory is a strong conceptual approach to addressing this social justice issue, other theoretical lenses can be connected to this problem. One existing theory that connects well to this conceptual issue is oppression theory. Anti-

oppressive social work emerged due to social work's longstanding dedication to social justice (Turner, 2017). In order for oppression to exist, two fundamental things must occur. First, there must be a group oppressed and an oppressor who benefits from this oppression (Turner, 2017). Second, there must also be a power differential between the two groups, which causes inequality or injustice (Turner, 2017).

Juvenile sexual offenders struggle with the injustice that legislators and policymakers perpetrate. Juvenile offenders are often sentenced, without consideration of any past trauma, and placed into a system that traditionally favors correctional approaches over rehabilitation. This system additionally places community monitoring and registration requirements onto these youth offenders. These registration requirements, while sometimes necessary based on the severity of the crime and history of recidivism, often create future barriers for these youth. This system of oppression is not just perpetrated by the criminal justice system, but fueled by the voter base and societal stigma associated with sexual offending that permeates current legislation.

What is New & Why is it Necessary?

The proposed conceptual idea is new because it incorporates practices from social work and public policy. Social work and public policy are not always seen as interconnected; however, utilizing social work practitioners, researchers, and theories to create legislation is necessary. Social work interventions, grounded in evidence-based research, will allow for legislation that is proven by data to have a higher efficacy rate. It is also necessary to utilize theory grounded in public policy because this conceptual paper aims to advocate for changes to existing policy. This approach is new and necessary because it combines the strengths of two professions to assist with policy changes aimed at treatment and rehabilitation. Additionally, the DLC criminology perspective was introduced as a possible guideline for future policymaking. It is recommended

that future researchers explore how the DLC framework can specifically assist legislators with crafting age-appropriate sex offender legislation.

Strengths and Limitations

The biggest strength of this conceptual idea is that it allows legislators to have a deeper understanding of the complexities of trauma and their own biases about sexual offenders. This deeper understanding will create socially informed public policy and bridge the gap between the social work profession and government officials. Another strength of this approach is recognizing how policy change works slowly and recognizing that policy change often occurs incrementally.

A limitation of this paper is the use of lesser-known theories to create this conceptual idea. The use of more well-known theories could add to the perceived validity and reliability of this theoretical concept. Utilizing lesser-known theories also leads to a smaller amount of existing research informing these approaches and supporting their efficacy.

Implications for Social Work Policy & Research

This conceptual idea can impact social work policy by serving as a theoretical base to establish future changes to laws surrounding juvenile sexual offending. This conceptual paper also highlights the Developmental Life Course criminology perspective's efficacy, which could serve as a specific guideline for change within the juvenile justice system. One recommendation for future research is to add to the small body of existing literature, which discusses the impact of bias on lawmakers' creation of sex offender legislation. It is additionally recommended that future researchers create a study that explores the specific thoughts of policymakers on juvenile sexual offending legislation and the efficacy of the juvenile justice system as a whole.

Conclusion

Juvenile sexual offending is an issue that remains prevalent in our society and requires the focus of legislators. While legislators have crafted policies that specifically address sexual offending, those policies can frequently be impacted by a legislator's personal views about sex crimes. This conceptual paper addresses the importance of utilizing an incrementalist perspective and a trauma theory lens as a conceptual basis for understanding and addressing this social justice issue. This paper also discussed potential interventions that can guide the process of making the juvenile justice system safer for youth. Lastly, it is recommended that future policymakers and researchers utilize and build upon the concepts developed and expressed in this paper to add to the growing literature on this topic.

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CHAPTER 4. PRACTICE APPLICATION PAPER: SYNTHESIZING A SOLUTION

ABSTRACT

The juvenile justice system was developed from principles originally crafted for adult offenders. While changes have been made to the juvenile justice system since it was first implemented, more work is desperately needed to create a developmentally and cognitively appropriate model of treatment and rehabilitation for youth offenders. Through the exploration of global initiatives that have successfully mitigated juvenile sexual offending, an actionable solution was created to adjust current approaches to managing juvenile sexual offending in the United States. Specifically, the Public Health Model, multi-disciplinary teams, the Persistent Young Offender Project, and Developmental Life Course criminology perspectives were explored as possible solutions to effectively mitigate this social justice issue.

Keywords: juvenile sexual offending, recidivism reduction, Public Health Model, Developmental Life Course criminology perspective, treatment approaches, global initiatives

Practice Application Paper: Synthesizing a Solution

Juvenile sexual offending has been studied by researchers in the social work and criminology fields for over 50 years, however, it was not until the 1980s that interest in this topic surged (Finkelhor, 2009). Since the 1980s many articles have been published about juvenile offending, which has led to an increase in quality data about recidivism rates within this population and overall treatment efficacy. While there is debate about the exact recidivism rates for juvenile sexual offenders, it is estimated that the rate is somewhere between 5 to 14 percent (National Juvenile Justice Network, n.d.). The recidivism rates for juvenile sexual offenders is significantly lower than the traditional sex offense recidivism rates for adult offenders, which is estimated to be around 28 percent (Przybylski, n.d.). Despite lower rates of recidivism and data that supports the notion that the majority of juvenile offenders are unlikely to offend into adulthood, many states still engage in punitive and correctional approaches to addressing juvenile sexual offending.

History of the Juvenile Justice System

The juvenile justice system was first created in the state of Illinois and was a template for how other states enacted their responses to juveniles committing crimes (Howard & Morey, 2007). It was in this same state where the first piece of sexual offense legislation related to registration was enacted for adult offenders. The Habitual Child Sex Offender Registration Act of 1986 stated that anyone convicted more than once of a sex crime against someone under the age of 18 could be placed on the registry (Howard & Morey, 2007). While this policy was initially created for adult offenders, the state of Illinois would incorporate juveniles into this act a little over 20 years later (Howard & Morey, 2007). The history of sex offense legislation in Illinois highlights the concept that many policies and procedures utilized for juvenile offenders were drafted from the same or similar policies for adult offenders.

In January of 2006, the Sex Offender Registration Act was amended to state that once a juvenile who was convicted of a sex offense turned 17 they were required to register within 10 days of their 17th birthday (Howard & Morey, 2007). Additionally, this amendment required that schools receive a more detailed report for any juveniles on the registry, which would include their registration form (Howard & Morey, 2007). This policy change was one of the first that began treating and sentencing juveniles from a correctional and punitive approach. While juvenile sex offense legislation has changed since the early 2000s, the allowance of judicial discretion at sentencing permits similar actions to be taken presently.

Patchwork Legislation

While the state of Illinois created the juvenile justice system in the United States, all other states have since adopted some form of correctional or treatment approaches to address juvenile crime. Every state has a legal response to juvenile sexual offending, but the exact laws, sentencing, and requirements for juvenile offenders varies widely between states. Some states favor a treatment approach, other states prefer a strong correctional approach to juvenile offending, whereas some reside in the middle. Currently, 33 of the 50 United States require juvenile sex offenders to be put on a registry list under some circumstances and at times this is a mandatory and automatic process (Salerno et al., 2014). Additionally, many state policies fail to consider the developmental and psychological differences between juveniles of varying ages. For example, the cognitive capabilities and ability to understand right from wrong skews widely between an 8-year-old and a 16-year-old. Despite the recognized biological and neurological differences between adolescents throughout different stages of growth, there are only 4 states in the U.S. that explicitly prohibit anyone under the age of 14 from being required to register as a sex offender if convicted (Salerno et al., 2014).

Additionally, it is important to consider that in some states, registration requirements of juvenile sexual offenders may extend long past adolescence. In almost half of the states, registration is required for at least 10 years and in a few states, lifetime registration can be required of juvenile offenders (Salerno et al., 2014). Furthermore, the ability of youth to advocate for appeals or petitions to their sentencing and registration requirements is limited (Salerno et al., 2014). Despite the juvenile justice system initially being established on the basis of rehabilitation, many correctional and overly punitive approaches plague current legislation.

Bias in Lawmaking

There currently exists a public consensus about the nature of sex offenders, which supports the notion of harsh, punitive approaches to addressing sex crimes. In a study conducted by Redlich (2002), it was found that while individuals were more afraid of other violent offenders (e.g., those convicted of murder), they tended to have higher levels of anger directed towards sex offenders than any other violent crime. While the general public does not create sex offense legislation, the pressure from society can hold a tremendous weight with elected officials. In the United States, elected officials are traditionally up for re-election once every pre-determined amount of years. Many lawmakers and legislators strive to remain in their current positions and are aware that their voter base significantly impacts their ability to do so. As such, many government officials will make crucial legislative decisions based upon the primary consensus of their voters. Allowing public policy to be dictated by societal emotions, can lead to a reduction in policies that are supported by evidence-based best practices and current research (Roselli & Jeglic, 2017).

In addition to the impact of the public on lawmakers, it is important to recognize the implicit and explicit biases of policymakers themselves. In a study conducted by Meloy et al. (2012), 61 policymakers and 25 practitioners who had experience working with sex offender

legislation were surveyed regarding their views on sex offender laws. Many of the individuals surveyed linked the victimization of children as the primary factor in the creation of state level sex offender laws (Meloy et al., 2012). Multiple participants in the study recounted specific situations that led to these laws, however, a large number of those responses were about cases that made national headlines and were often situations that occurred outside of the state where they currently worked. Additionally, the respondents noted public pressure, concerns about losing federal funding, and the demands of local law enforcement agencies as factors that contributed to the creation and continued support of current state level sex offender legislation (Meloy et al., 2012).

Proposed Solution

In order to best address biased lawmaking and issues within the juvenile justice system that negatively impact juvenile sex offenders, action must be taken. To adequately address these concerns, it will be imperative to examine how other countries have responded to juvenile offenders. The United States has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world, especially within industrialized nations, and tends to favor corrections versus rehabilitative approaches. Not only will other approaches be considered, but the efficacy of rehabilitative practices in other countries will be evaluated based on recidivism rates and overall quality of life outcomes for youth offenders. By examining the different approaches to juvenile offending present across the globe, a blueprint can be created that incorporates effective and best practices to develop a comprehensive solution to address this social justice issue.

Additionally, the Developmental Life Course (DLC) criminology perspective will be discussed and analyzed as a solution to addressing fundamental issues within the juvenile justice system. Utilizing a DLC criminology perspective would allow for the creation of a juvenile justice system that is developmentally and cognitively appropriate for all youth offenders. The purpose of

this practice application paper will be to propose a new idea that could be implemented to enact changes to state and local juvenile sexual offense legislation.

Literature Review

After reviewing the literature related to juvenile sexual offending treatment across the globe, many themes emerged. The literature highlighted the increased need for prevention efforts to address juvenile sexual offending, the importance of connecting networks involved with the sentencing and treatment of youth offenders, and the increased need for long-term and specialized treatment programs for youth. Below is a brief review of the current literature.

Prevention Initiatives

While this practice application paper will propose solutions to address juvenile sexual offense recidivism rates after a crime occurs, one important piece to systemically addressing juvenile sexual offending is preventing it from happening. One solution in Australia to preventing juvenile sexual offending was incorporating the Public Health Model into the child welfare and child protection systems (Child Family Community Australia, 2014). According to Child Family Community Australia (2014) the, “Public health models aim to prevent problems occurring in the first place by targeting policies and interventions at the known risk indicators for the problem, quickly identifying and responding to problems if they do occur, and minimizing the long-term effects of the problems” (para. 4). The Public Health Model is currently utilized in a variety of domains, most notably for physical health treatment, however, there is limited use of this model in the criminology field.

In Australia, this model takes a three-pronged approach to addressing issues related to child welfare. Primary prevention utilizes targeted strategies to stop abuse before it occurs, secondary

interventions are geared towards families who indicate early concerns for abuse, and tertiary strategies take a statutory and service delivery response when abuse has already occurred (McKibbin et al., 2016). This unique model of service delivery not only addresses juvenile sexual offending before it occurs, but it has developed strategies to assist at risk youth and families and to provide treatment and correctional approaches after an offense has already happened.

Opening Silos

Another major issue plaguing the systemic treatment of juvenile sexual offenders is a lack of connection among various domains that interact with youth offenders. In a study conducted by McKibbin et al. (2016), the authors explored the various domains that interact with juvenile sexual offenders with a discussion on how to bridge the gaps between these domains. The domains identified through this study were characteristics, causes, communications, interventions, and treatments (McKibbin et al., 2016). The key finding from this article was that the five domains tended to have limited interaction with one another and have become siloed. According to McKibbin et al. (2016), “Siloing occurs when areas of research, policy and practice become segregated from other areas on the basis of particular disciplinary traditions and associated epistemological and ontological frameworks” (p. 668). Keeping each of the domains siloed from one another prohibits the development of a comprehensive and systemic framework to addressing juvenile sexual offending.

Long-Term Treatment Needs

In order to prevent juvenile sexual offense recidivism, it is important that effective treatment interventions are targeted to youth of all ages and cognitive abilities. While the United States and other industrialized nations have been providing treatment to juvenile offenders,

research suggests that there is limited evidence for what works best with younger offenders (Nee & Ellis, 2005). According to Nee & Ellis (2005), “The most prolific researchers in this field, Loeber and Farrington (and their co-authors), have stressed that the majority of UK and US resources are spent on adolescent and older offenders and that earlier intervention is both very rare and urgently needed” (p. 134). Nee and Ellis (2005) conducted a study with 41 juveniles, ages 7 to 16, who were involved long-term with the Persistent Young Offender Project (PYOP) in the United Kingdom. This study found that the long-term approach of the PYOP, which allows youth to remain involved with the program for as long as they deem necessary, successfully led to a drop in risk levels after a year with the program (Nee & Ellis, 2005). This data is in line with recommendations for adult sexual offenders, which suggest long-term treatment is more effective at reducing risk of relapse. The research from this study highlights the importance of allowing for long-term treatment of juvenile sexual offenders, and for individualized treatment length based on the needs and cognitive abilities of each youth.

DLC Criminology Perspective

There currently exists multiple theories related to development and criminality and these concepts were first created in the 1970s (Schram & Tibbetts, 2021). Of the numerous developmental theories of criminology, there are two that are most noted in the literature. Sampson and Laub first created their developmental model based on prior data collected by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck in the 1940s (Schram & Tibbetts, 2021). This model emphasized that antisocial tendencies in juveniles was the biggest predictor of continued offending in adulthood. According to Schram & Tibbetts (2021) Sampson and Laub believed, “some social-structure factors (e.g., family structure, poverty, etc.) also tend to lead to problems in social and educational development,

which then lead to crime” (p. 320). Finally, this developmental model asserted the importance of life transitions in altering the trajectories of youth offenders.

Another well-known model of development was Moffitt’s Developmental Taxonomy, which was created by Terrie Moffitt and proposed in 1993 (Schram & Tibbetts, 2021). Moffitt’s theory asserts the difference between two groups of juvenile offenders, adolescence-limited offenders and life-course persistent offenders. Adolescence-limited offenders are believed to commit crimes based on social influences, specifically peer pressure and attempts to emulate the adults in their lives (Schram & Tibbetts, 2021). Moffitt theorized that life-course persistent offenders had a combination of neurological problems and a disadvantaged or criminological environment in which they were raised (Schram & Tibbetts, 2021). The main difference noted between these types of offenders is that adolescence-limited offenders tend to commit crimes as teenagers or young adults and tend not to have long-term engagement in crime. Life-course persistent offenders typically begin committing crimes at an early age and continue to engage in such behaviors long into adulthood.

Implementation of Solution

It is recommended that policymakers in the United States take a three-pronged approach to addressing juvenile sexual offending systemically. First, it is important for policymakers to focus on prevention initiatives and ways to mitigate juvenile sexual offending before it occurs. Developmental criminology perspectives should be utilized to inform the creation of public prevention programs, and highlights the need for early intervention to address developmental issues that could lead to persistent and long-term patterns of criminal behaviors. Specifically, it is recommended that legislators in the United States partner with policymakers in Australia to bring the Public Health Model into the child welfare and child protection systems here. The partnering

with lawmakers in other countries connects directly to the second prong in this strategy, which is opening siloes. It is incredibly important for those involved with mitigating and treating juvenile sexual offending to collaborate with other professionals to create cohesive solutions to address this issue holistically. In order for this collaboration to occur, it is recommended that multi-disciplinary think tanks or committees be created to craft holistic solutions to this issue. Important disciplines to include would be social workers/therapists, policymakers and legislators, leaders within the juvenile justice system, as well as professionals from other countries who have lower rates of juvenile sexual offending.

Finally, it is recommended that current treatment approaches be re-assessed to best fit the needs of juvenile sexual offenders. Treatment in the United States often swings towards and away from a managed care model of public health. The United States Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (n.d.) defines managed care as, “the delivery of Medicaid health benefits and additional services through contracted arrangements between state Medicaid agencies and managed care organizations (MCOs) that accept a set per member per month (capitation) payment for these services” (para. 1). While there are benefits to managed care plans, one of the often-cited issues is with managed care organizations putting limits on the number of treatment episodes and focusing on short-term treatment needs. Data from the Persistent Young Offender Project (PYOP) in the United Kingdom highlights the efficacy of long-term treatment services for juvenile sexual offenders. It is recommended that policymakers work with MCOs to create caveats for those with chronic conditions, whether physical or psychological, to allow for long-term treatment rather than brief, episodic care.

Impact on Practice

It is believed that the three-pronged approach recommended in this practice application paper will have a profound impact on juvenile sexual offense recidivism rates. The creation of prevention initiatives for juveniles and at-risk families will allow for unhealthy sexual behaviors to be mitigated before sexual offending occurs. Reducing the number of initial sexual assaults perpetrated by juveniles, will not only impact the overall recidivism rates but will allow for the decrease in victimization of other vulnerable youth. Additionally, the allowance for long-term treatment interventions may be an avenue for managing sexually inappropriate behaviors in life-course persistent offenders.

Strengths & Limitations

One of the limitations of this proposed solution is it would require re-allocation of funding from the juvenile justice system to prevention and treatment initiatives. Re-allocating funding from the juvenile justice system would likely receive criticism and resistance as the criminal justice system and private prisons have become profitable in the United States. Convincing legislators to allocate funding from a profitable business would likely be a difficult endeavor. Additionally, managed care organizations may be hesitant to allow for long-term treatment of chronic conditions due to concerns about the costs of these services. Working with MCOs to establish specific funding for conditions that require long-term treatment, such as juvenile sexual offending, may prove difficult.

The biggest strength of this proposed conceptual solution is that it draws from different countries and different approaches to create a holistic solution to addressing juvenile sexual offending. While there may be initial costs when switching to this approach, it is believed that

overtime the increased and targeted prevention efforts combined with long-term treatment availability will reduce the strain on taxpayers and the juvenile justice system as a whole. Finally, this concept recognizes the value in a multi-disciplinary team and allows for professionals from many fields to be a part of the solution.

Recommendations for Future Practice, Policy, & Research

It is recommended that future studies focus on the importance of addressing juvenile sexual offending with a specific focus on differences in gender. Much of the research in this practice application paper was derived from studies that focused on male juvenile sexual offenders. Female juvenile sexual offenders make up a smaller portion of this population, which has led to a reduction in the amount of literature available about this niche sub-group. Additionally, it is recommended that there is continued research on treatment efficacy with life-course persistent offenders. A final recommendation for future research, is to create a system to more effectively calculate the actual recidivism rates of juvenile sexual offenders as the numbers vary widely based on the study. Creating a more cohesive system to measure rates of recidivism will make it easier to evaluate which interventions are best mitigating this issue.

Conclusion

Juvenile sexual offending has become of increasing study since the 1980s, which has allowed social workers and the general public to recognize this unique subset of sexual offenders. While recidivism rates for juvenile sexual offenders remains lower than the rates of adult offenders, it is still important to mitigate and manage these rates to improve the quality of life for youth offenders and to reduce the potential victimization of other youth. It is recommended that a three-pronged approach which incorporates prevention initiatives, multi-disciplinary teams, and

long-term treatment interventions be utilized to holistically address juvenile sexual offending. While this approach is not without its limitations, it is believed that this unique concept could be valuable in managing this social justice issue.

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CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

Juvenile sexual offending is a topic that warrants continued study and research by social work professionals. While the recidivism rates for juvenile offenders is traditionally lower than the rates for adult offenders, there is still more work that must be done to improve the justice system's response to juvenile sexual offending (Lobanov-Rostovsky, n.d.). It is imperative that policymakers and legislators recognize the important role they play in creating policies and programs that could reduce the overall recidivism rates of juvenile sexual offenders. Improving access to treatment, increasing prevention efforts, and providing youth offenders with developmentally appropriate sentencing will allow juvenile offenders to have another chance at life and increase their ability to have a healthy future free of offending. Additionally, reducing the recidivism rates of juvenile offenders will likely decrease the overall rates of juvenile sexual assault, which prevents additional youth from entering a vicious cycle of victimization.

Findings

This capstone project is comprised of three distinct papers that provide standalone knowledge about juvenile sexual offending but are also inextricably linked together. As each paper was developed and the research increased, many pertinent findings emerged. The most significant finding across all three papers surfaced during the creation of the systematic literature review. During the research, data extraction, and data analysis phases it was discovered that biased thinking in lawmaking exists, which impacts the treatment and legislative initiatives utilized to address sexual offending in the United States (Meloy et al., 2012). This finding was utilized as the basis for the creation of the unique conceptual idea presented in chapter three of the final capstone project.

Another important finding appeared while drafting the distinctive conceptual idea for chapter three, which discusses the importance of utilizing a combined approach of incrementalism and trauma theory to address juvenile sexual offending. It was discovered that not only do many youth offenders have their own trauma histories, but many youth offenders are re-victimized by their exposure to the juvenile justice system (Abbiati et al., 2014; Baglivio & Epps, 2016; Burton et al., 2011; Forsman et al., 2015; Jennings et al., 2014; Kerig et al., 2016; Levenson et al., 2017). While this information was presented independently in chapter three, it also served as a foundational idea for the solution crafted and described in the practice application paper.

A final significant finding that was discovered during the creation of the final paper in this capstone project, the practice application paper, was the importance of the Developmental Life Course (DLC) criminology perspective in combating juvenile sexual offending. The DLC criminology perspective talks about the significance of recognizing the developmental differences inherent between youth and adult offenders (Lussier, 2017). This concept was a fundamental building block for the unique practice solution to juvenile sexual offending developed in chapter four of this capstone project.

Conclusions

Based on the findings across all three papers, one main conclusion can be drawn about the juvenile justice system. The findings in this project highlight the inadequate response of the juvenile justice system to juvenile sexual offending (Howard & Morey, 2007; Salerno et al., 2014). Additionally, it can be concluded that the current justice system, which was developed based on the adult correctional system, fails to consider the developmental and cognitive differences between youth and adult offenders (Howard & Morey, 2007; Salerno et al., 2014). Despite research highlighting that youth and adult offenders have largely different motivations for offending, that

youth offending typically subsides prior to adulthood, and that youth offenders traditionally commit offenses at significantly lower rates than adult offenders, we continue to utilize unsuccessful and damaging approaches (e.g., mandatory youth registration) to address this social justice issue (Lobanov-Rostovsky, n.d.; Lussier, 2017; Salerno et al., 2014).

Implications

After drawing conclusions from the findings of this capstone project, specific implications emerge related to social work policy and practice. The conclusion drawn highlights the need for reform to the juvenile justice system and the need for new practice responses to effectively address juvenile sexual offending (Child Family Community Australia, 2014; Nee & Ellis, 2005). Specifically, it is recommended that small changes, influenced by the concept of incrementalism, be made to the existing structure of the juvenile justice system. Recommending small changes to the existing structure will allow for increased support from legislators, who operate in a system where change oftentimes comes slowly (Anyebe, 2018; Hayes, n.d.). Another significant implication is the need for increased trauma-informed care for juvenile offenders both by treatment providers and social workers in the community, and practitioners involved with the juvenile justice system (Kerig et al., 2016). Allowing for improved trauma-informed care while youth are involved with the justice system and during their transition to the community, will likely lead to a decrease in future offending behaviors.

Recommendations

The implications inherent throughout this capstone project showcase the need for direct solutions applicable to addressing juvenile sexual offending systemically. It is recommended that legislators in the United States take a multi-pronged approach to addressing juvenile sexual offending, which is discussed in detail in chapter four of this

project. It is recommended that policymakers divert funding from the juvenile justice system to prevention and treatment initiatives to reduce initial instances of juvenile offending and continued recidivism. Additionally, it is recommended that legislators create committees or think tanks with a vast array of professionals to assist with the development of solutions and legislation to address this social justice issue. Specifically, the inclusion of criminal justice practitioners, researchers, social workers, and community-based providers would allow for diverse and varying perspectives on this topic and could aid in the development of a comprehensive solution. A final recommendation is that researchers continue to study this phenomenon to find improved evidence-based solutions to reducing the overall recidivism rates of juvenile sexual offenders.

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