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NOTES

This Issue in Brief

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ACQUISITIONS

A Diversionary Approach for the 1980's.—Various changes in social thought and policy of the past several years carry important implications for the treatment of young offenders. These changes include a marked decrease in public willingness to spend tax money for social programs, a shift in focus from offender-rights to victim-rights, and an increase in the desire for harsher treatment of serious offenders. The general social ethos reflected in those positions has prompted a reassessment and new direction for the delivery of juvenile diversion services in Orange County, California. Authors Arnold Binder, Michael Schumacher, Gwen Kurz, and Linda Moulson discuss a new Juvenile Diversion/Noncustody Intake Model, which has successfully combined the collaborative efforts of law enforcement, probation, and community-based organizations in providing the least costly and most immediate level of intervention with juvenile offenders necessary to protect the public welfare and to alter delinquent behavioral patterns.

Home as Prison: The Use of House Arrest.—Prison overcrowding has been a major crisis in the correctional field for at least the last few years. Alternatives to incarceration—beyond the usual probation, fines, and suspended sentences—have been tried or proposed. Some—such as restitution, community service, intensive probation supervision—are being implemented; others have simply been proposed. In this article, authors Ronald P. Corbett, Jr. and Ellsworth A.L. Fersch advocate house arrest as a solution to prison overcrowding and as a suitable punishment for many nonviolent, middle-range offenders. The authors contend that with careful and random monitoring of offenders by special probation officers, house arrest can be both a humane and cost-effective punishment for the offender and a protection to the public.

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explains that exclusionary rules developed to keep illegally obtained evidence from being used in court and that both arrests and searches can occur without a warrant in specific circumstances.

Assessing Correctional Officers:—Authors Cindy Wahler and Paul Gendreau review the research on correctional officer selection practices. Traditionally, selection of correctional officers was based upon physical requirements, with height and size being a primary consideration. A number of studies have

employed the use of personality tests to aid in the identification of the qualities of "good" correctional officers. These assessment tools, however, have provided qualities that are global and not unique to the role of a correctional officer. Noting a recent trend towards a behavioral analysis within the field personnel selection, the authors argue that a similar type of analysis may provide a more fruitful avenue for assessment of correctional officers.

All the articles appearing in this magazine are regarded as appropriate expressions of ideas worthy of thought but their publication is not to be taken as an endorsement by the editors or the Federal probation office of the views set forth. The editors may or may not agree with the articles appearing in the magazine, but believe them in any case to be deserving of consideration.

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Recidivism Among Convicted Sex Offenders: A 10-Year Followup Study

BY JOSEPH J. ROMERO AND LINDA MEYER WILLIAMS*

FEAR OF crime is a persistent topic of public concern. One area of particular concern to the public is the extent of recidivism among convicted offenders released to the community. In the case of sex offenders, there is little agreement in the literature on whether they are serious recidivists. The concern with sex offender recidivism is exacerbated by evidence that very few sex offenders are permanently incarcerated (McCahill, et al., 1979). Ultimately sex offenders are returned to the community and little conclusive information is available on the risk they pose to society. In this article, we critically examine the research literature on what is known or believed about sex offender recidivism and identify issues relevant in the study of recidivism. The findings from a 10-year followup study provide support for some of the current approaches in the study of sex offender recidivism. Finally, implications for future research are discussed.

Previous Research

Previous study of sex offender recidivism generally has not portrayed the sex offender as a serious recidivist. Sturup (1968) wrote that "very few sex offenders recidivate with a new sexual crime" (p. 9). He also adds that "the sexual first offender is usually not dangerous and seldom relapses" (p. 6). This impression of the sex offender is also reported by Tappan (1971) and the majority of research reviewed by Amir (1971) and Groth (1982). However, recent research on sex offender recidivism provides a basis for suspecting the accuracy of this impression.

Much of the confusion in the research literature can be attributed to differences in measuring recidivism of sex offenders. The majority of previous research defined recidivism as a new conviction on a sex offense. However, serious objections have been raised against the use of conviction records when investigating sex offender recidivism (Amir, 1971; Groth, et al., 1982). It is the loss in the number of cases as one moves from arrest data to conviction data which makes the use of the latter

problematic as an indicator of recidivism among sex offenders. Sexual assault cases, when reported, are unlikely to be prosecuted and even more unlikely to result in a conviction. As a result, the use of conviction records provides a serious underestimate of the extent of recidivism among sex offenders.

As alternatives to the use of conviction records Amir (1971) has recommended the use of arrest records and Groth, et al. (1982) have recommended the use of self-reports of undetected offenses as most appropriate when investigating sex offender recidivism. In a study of undetected recidivism, Groth, et al. (1982) found that their sample of incarcerated rapists and child molesters committed on the average two to five times as many sexual assaults as resulted in conviction. Other research investigating sex offender recidivism provides support for the view that the scope of the problem is greater than has been portrayed by previous research (Soothill and Gibbens, 1978).

Most researchers agree that long-term followup is crucial in sex offender research, given the low rate at which the offenses are detected and prosecuted and the tendency of sex offenders to have crime-free periods (Soothill, et al., 1976). Short-term followup of sex offenders for 3 to 5 years is likely to miss the bulk of the recidivists and be an underestimate of the extent of recidivism. Furthermore, most researchers indicate the need for research which reports on specific sex offender types. For example, the pedophile's recidivism rate is usually not computed separately and then compared to the rate for rapists. This results in a lack of information on the differences in recidivism between different types of sex offenders.

Study Sample

The sample for this study is comprised of 231 adult males convicted of sex offenses and placed on probation in Philadelphia between October 1966 and November 1969. The sample was part of a research project designed to investigate the effectiveness of group psychotherapy and intensive probation supervision with sex offenders. Effectiveness was measured by a comparative analysis of recidivism rates for two groups of probationed sex offenders—those randomly assigned to group

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psychotherapy and those randomly assigned to probation only. The results of that aspect of the study have been reported elsewhere (Romero and Williams, 1983). The major finding of the study was that group psychotherapy in addition to intensive probation supervision did not significantly reduce sex offense recidivism when compared to intensive probation supervision alone. It must be noted, however, that not all sex offenses are detected and prosecuted, and of those sex offenders who are convicted, not all receive probation. There is no information available on how the current sample would compare to those sex offenders whose crimes go undetected or to those sex offenders who are convicted and incarcerated. Therefore, the findings from the sample discussed below are generalizable only to sex offenders who have been convicted and placed on probation.

The offenders were assigned to one of three mutually exclusive subpopulations which covered the range of sex offenses for the research sample. The three subpopulations were:

- 1) Exhibitionist: individual convicted of exposing his genitals in public (n=48).
- 2) Pedophile: individual convicted of a sex offense against a victim age 10 or younger, or against a victim age 11 or 12 if the age differential between victim and offender was at least 10 years (n = 39).
- 3) Sexual Assaulter: individual convicted of a sex offense against a female victim age 13 or older, or against a female victim age 11 or 12 if the age differential between the victim and offender is less than 10 years; in case the conviction was for Corrupting the Morals of a Minor Child and/or Statutory Rape, only the age differential between offender and victim must be 5 years or more (n=144).

These subpopulations included men with the following legal charges: sodomy, solicitation to commit sodomy, immoral practice, indecent exposure, open lewdness, corrupting the morals of a minor child, statutory rape, rape, indecent assault, and assault and battery with intent to ravish.

Of the 231 in the sample, 33 percent were white and 67 percent were black. The majority of those in the sexual assault (74 percent) and pedophile (68 percent) subpopulations were black, while exhibitionists were predominately white (62 percent). All offenders in the sample were between the ages of 18 and 50. Overall, half of those in the sample were under 25 at the time of the instant offense (1966-69), and almost two-thirds of those in the sexual subpopulation were under 25. The majority of those in

the sample (69 percent) were given a psychiatric diagnosis of personality disorder, with 66 percent of the personality disorders classified as passive-aggressive. Offenders diagnosed as psychotic or chronic alcoholics were excluded from the sample.

Study Design

Ten-year followup recidivism (rearrest) data on the entire sample were collected from the time of the instant offense (1966-69) through 1979. This allowed for at least a 10-year followup period for all individuals in the sample. These data served as evidence of the recorded criminal activity of the research sample. The Philadelphia Probation Department provided the computerized Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas criminal record on each case. The records listed all the charges lodged in Philadelphia against an individual since age 18 and the outcome of each charge. The outcome specified trial outcome, sentences, and fines. From these data, a complete criminal history on each individual in the research sample was compiled, and rates of recidivism were computed.

Recidivism was measured in two ways, by the number of arrests for a sex offense and the number of arrests for a nonsex offense for each individual in the sample in the 10-year followup period. Arrest records were examined because of the strong rationale for their use when examining recidivism among sex offenders as discussed above. The current study did not have success in interviewing a large number of sex offenders in the sample and, therefore, it is not possible to comment on undetected offenses. In addition, we were unable to obtain national arrest data on the offenders in the sample. The recidivism data are limited to an analysis of recorded arrests in the Philadelphia area only. When using arrest data to measure recidivism, one has to consider that such data may contain a number of false positives—that is, individuals who have been arrested but who have not actually committed a crime. This is a particular problem with sex offenders. Once convicted, a sex offender is more likely to be picked up if a sex offense is committed in his area. The factors outlined above need to be taken into account when using arrest data to measure recidivism and in interpreting the findings from this study.

The findings of this study are, therefore, based on an analysis of the prior arrest records and subsequent arrests for all 231 offenders. In addition, there are findings from an analysis of the offender's criminal background and demographic factors associated with recidivism.

Findings

Prior Record

Differences in measuring criminality create a problem in interpreting the limited research investigating the prior record of sex offenders. The majority of previous research studies were concerned only with sex offenders with prior convictions for sex offenses (Amir, 1971). Therefore, it is not surprising that the conclusion reached is that sex offenders generally do not have a serious prior criminal history or serious sex crimes in their past. However, there is evidence that this view is erroneous. Groth, et al. (1982) found that the modal age at which the offenders in their sample committed their first sex offense was 16. Amir (1971) found evidence of a continuity in the criminal behavior of sex offenders when comparing their juvenile and adult arrests. These studies suggest that many sex offenders begin their criminal careers as juveniles, and in many cases, the behaviors carry over to their adult years. The following analysis is limited to examining the current sample's recorded arrests beginning at age 18.

Overall 73 percent (168) of the sample of 231 convicted sex offenders placed on probation in Philadelphia between 1966 and 1969 were known to have had at least one prior arrest for any offense. Of the 168 individuals with a prior arrest, 61 (36 percent) had at least one prior sex offense arrest. (Most of the individuals did not have prior arrest records which were exclusively comprised of sex offenses. However, 19 (31 percent) of the 61 offenders had been arrested for a prior sex offense only.) Of the subpopulations studied, exhibitionists were the most likely to have had a prior sex offense arrest (43 percent), and the sexual assaulters were the least likely (19 percent) to have had a prior sex offense arrest. The majority of offenders with a history of prior sex offense arrests had only one such arrest. Just six individuals had five or more prior sex offense arrests.

Twenty-six offenders (11 percent of the entire sample and 43 percent of those with a history of sex offense arrests) had a prior arrest of rape. The remaining 35 individuals with prior sex offense arrests had all been previously charged with nonrape sex offenses. It is interesting to note that of those with a prior sex offense arrest, 38 (62 percent) were convicted on those charges and 19 (31 percent) were incarcerated.

Of the 231 in the total sample of sex offenders studied, 107 (46 percent) had at least one prior nonsex arrest. The average number of prior nonsex

arrests was three per person. Only 10 individuals were arrested exclusively for offenses against the person. The majority had been arrested for other nonsexual offenses (e.g., gambling, liquor law violations, etc.). Of the 107, 77 (72 percent) were convicted on their prior arrests and 44 (41 percent) were incarcerated.

TABLE 1. TYPE OF SEX OFFENDER AND PRIOR ARREST HISTORY

| Total Number Of Arrests For Any Offense | Sexual Assaulter | | Pedophile | | Exhibitionist | | Total | |
|---|------------------|---------|-----------|---------|---------------|---------|-------|---------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| 1 | 3 | (2.8) | — | — | 1 | (4.0) | 4 | (2.3) |
| 2-3 | 54 | (49.5) | 14 | (38.9) | 8 | (32.0) | 76 | (44.8) |
| 4-7 | 38 | (34.9) | 17 | (47.2) | 11 | (44.0) | 66 | (38.8) |
| 8-12 | 10 | (9.2) | 4 | (11.1) | 4 | (16.0) | 18 | (10.6) |
| 13+ | 4 | (3.7) | 1 | (2.8) | 1 | (4.0) | 6 | (3.5) |
| | 109 | (100.0) | 36 | (100.0) | 25 | (100.0) | 170 | (100.0) |

Number Missing = 61

Table 1 summarizes information on the total number of prior arrests for the sample. (Please note that in this table and several of the others, percentages do not total 100 percent because of rounding.) As indicated, over one-third of the sample had between four and seven arrests in their prior record. Amir (1971) found that most rapists were adolescents or young adults. The current sample replicates Amir's finding in that almost two-thirds of the sexual assaulters were between 18 and 25 at the time of the instant offense. Exhibitionists and pedophiles in the sample tended to be older. The findings indicate that the sample, including the more youthful sexual assaulters, had a fairly extensive prior criminal record. Unfortunately juvenile records were not available; therefore, information on the sample's prior criminal record is not complete.

Recorded Recidivism

Of all 231 men, 26 (11.3 percent) were rearrested on a sex offense after their instant sex offense (Table 2). The sexual assaulters had a 10.4 percent sex offense recidivism rate, pedophiles, 6.2 percent, and exhibitionists, the highest rate, 20.5 percent. For the 26 sex offender recidivists, the majority (17, 65 percent) had one subsequent arrest. One man, a pedophilic exhibitionist, had 6 subsequent arrests.

TABLE 2. ANALYSIS OF SUBPOPULATION BY SUBSEQUENT ARREST FOR A SEX OFFENSE

| Subpopulation | No sex arrest | One or more sex arrests | Total |
|------------------|---------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Sexual Assaulter | 129 (89.6) | 15 (10.4) | 144 (62.3) (100.0) |
| Pedophile | 45 (93.8) | 3 (6.2) | 48 (20.8) (100.0) |
| Exhibitionist | 31 (79.5) | 8 (20.5) | 39 (16.9) (100.0) |
| TOTAL | 205 (88.7) | 26 (11.3) | 231 (100.0) (100.0) |

Chi square = 4.65150

df = 2

Significance = .0977

Overall, the 26 sex offender recidivists accumulated 42 arrests for sex offenses in the followup period. Of these arrests, over half (n=23, 55 percent) resulted in convictions; 16 arrests (38 percent) resulted in acquittal. Information was missing on the outcome of three (7 percent) arrests. Over half (n=15, 58 percent) of the 26 recidivists were convicted on at least one of the sex offenses for which they were rearrested. The majority of those convicted (n=10, 67 percent) were sentenced to probation. The remaining recidivists (n=5, 33 percent) were sentenced to periods of incarceration.

Of all 231 in the sample, 57 percent had been rearrested for an offense (sex or nonsex) after their 1966-69 probationary sentence which brought them into the research sample. The sexual assaulters were

more frequently rearrested ($P < .05$) than the other sex offenders (Table 3). Of the sexual assaulters, 63.2 percent were rearrested in the followup period, while 43.8 percent of the pedophiles and 51 percent of the exhibitionists were rearrested. When one examines the recidivism arrest rate for sex offenses (excluding rearrests for nonsex offenses), one finds, however, that the difference among the subpopulations is not statistically significant (see Table 2).

An examination of the criminal records of the 26 sex offender recidivists was conducted to determine changes in their sex crime arrests over time. Change is defined as movement from one offense category to another (e.g., from rape to public indecency) and/or a change in the number of the recidivists' offense arrests comparing their prior record with subsequent arrests. Approximately one-third (nine) of the sex offender recidivists had no change either in the number of sex offenses they were arrested for or in the types of crimes for which they were arrested. Eight men evidenced a change in the crime for which they were arrested. Using the Uniform Crime Reports code to rank order seriousness, five of the men were rearrested on sex crimes which were "less severe" than their prior offenses. Three men were rearrested on a "more severe" sex charge.

Overall, 12 men experienced change in the number of sex offense arrests, with eight being arrested for fewer total sex crimes in the 10-year followup period than in their prior arrest history. However, these numbers are small and generalizability is limited. Periods at risk are also uncontrolled, and later incarcerations may have affected these findings.

Recidivism can also be analyzed according to the amount of time that elapsed between an offender's last arrest and his first sex arrest in the followup period (Table 4). For the 26 recidivists, 7 were rearrested within the first year of the followup period. However, the findings indicated that sex offenders are just as, or more, likely to be first arrested for a

TABLE 3. ANALYSIS OF SUBPOPULATION BY SUBSEQUENT ARREST FOR ANY OFFENSE

| Subpopulation | No arrests | One or more arrests | Total |
|------------------|--------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Sexual Assaulter | 53 (36.8) | 91 (63.2) | 144 (100.0) |
| Pedophile | 27 (56.2) | 21 (43.8) | 48 (100.0) |
| Exhibitionist | 19 (48.7) | 20 (51.3) | 39 (100.0) |
| TOTAL | 99 (42.9) | 132 (57.1) | 231 (100.0) |

Chi square = 6.21599

df = 2

Significance = .0447

TABLE 4. LENGTH OF TIME UNTIL FIRST SEX ARREST

| | N | % |
|-------------------|----|-----|
| Less than 1 year | 7 | 27 |
| 1 year to 2 years | 5 | 19 |
| More than 2 years | | |
| to 4 years | 7 | 27 |
| More than 4 years | 7 | 27 |
| Total | 26 | 100 |

sex offense in the fourth year following their previous arrest as in the first year.

Criminal History Profile

The sexual assault, exhibitionist, and pedophile subpopulations (N=231) accumulated 1,347 adult "career" arrests. The sexual assault subpopulation (N=144), 62 percent of the sample, accounted for 868 (64 percent) of the total number of arrests. The pedophiles (N=48) and exhibitionists (N=39) each accounted for approximately 18 percent of the arrests. Of all arrests accumulated by each subpopulation, the exhibitionists had the highest percentage related to a sex offense (41 percent). For the pedophiles, 33 percent of their arrests were for a sex offense, while only 23 percent of the sexual assault subpopulation arrests were for sex offenses.

TABLE 5. ANALYSIS OF A SEX OFFENDER TYPE BY TYPE OF CRIMINAL OFFENSE COMMITTED

| Subpopulation | Sex Crimes | Violent Nonsex Crimes | Other Crimes | Total |
|------------------|------------|-----------------------|--------------|---------|
| Sexual Assaulter | 204 | 168 | 496 | 868 |
| N= 144 | (23.5) | (19.4) | (57.1) | (100.0) |
| Exhibitionist | 98 | 25 | 112 | 235 |
| N= 39 | (41.7) | (10.6) | (47.7) | (100.0) |
| Pedophile | 77 | 38 | 129 | 244 |
| N= 48 | (31.5) | (15.6) | (52.9) | (100.0) |
| TOTAL | 379 | 231 | 737 | 1,347 |
| | (28.1) | (17.1) | (54.7) | (100.0) |

Chi Square = 34.72

df = 4

Significance = $P < .001$

The public's conception of the sexual assaulter as a man continually driven to aberrant sexual behavior is not supported by the current research (Table 5). The sexual assaulter's potential for antisocial behavior is, however, clearly documented, but the vast majority of arrests are not sex-related. The sexual assaulters in the sample were arrested for a total of 868 criminal offenses, but of these, less than one-quarter (23.5 percent) were sex offenses.

Other crimes of violence against the person (homicide, aggravated and simple assault, robbery and weapons offenses) comprised 19.4 percent of their offenses. This pattern differs significantly ($P < .001$) from that of the exhibitionists (41.7 percent sex offenses and 10.6 percent other crimes of violence) and pedophiles (31.5 percent sex offenses and 15.6 percent other crimes of violence). While the pedophiles also reveal a large percentage of violent nonsexual offenses, the sexual assaulters were arrested for more homicides (six) and serious violent crimes against the person, than were pedophiles and exhibitionists.

The sexual assaulters were less likely, although not significantly so, to recidivate for a sex offense and statistically significantly more likely ($P < .001$) to recidivate for a violent nonsexual offense. In the sexual assault subpopulation, 57 percent were arrested at least once for a nonsexual violent assault against another person or a weapons offense. For the same offenses only 37 percent of the pedophiles and 30 percent of the exhibitionists were arrested in the course of their criminal career.

Predictors of Recidivism

In an analysis of offender characteristics, the most significant predictors of future arrests for any type of offense were found to be age, income, and number of prior arrests. Income significantly differentiated ($P < .05$) among the sample in terms of recidivism. Whereas 67 percent of those earning \$51 to \$100 a week (1966-69) recidivated, only 36 percent of those earning over \$150 were subsequently arrested.

Those who were younger when they were arrested for the sex offense for which they were ultimately assigned to the research sample were more likely to be rearrested ($P < .05$). Approximately 75 percent of the offenders who were 18 to 20 years old recidivated compared with 50 percent of those who entered the research when they were 26 to 34 years old.

The variable most strongly associated ($P < .001$) with a new arrest for a sex offense was the prior sex arrest rate per year (Table 6). That is, past criminal behavior was the best predictor of future criminal behavior (as measured by arrest). For those whose adult sex offense arrest rate was zero to one arrest every 3 years, 7.9 percent had a subsequent sex offense arrest. For those whose sex arrest rate was greater than one arrest every 3 years, the sex offense recidivism rate was 26.2 percent.

The second variable most strongly associated with a subsequent sex offense arrest was a self-

TABLE 6. ANALYSIS OF PRIOR SEX ARREST RATE BY SUBSEQUENT ARREST FOR A SEX OFFENSE

| Rate of adult sex offense arrests per year prior to research | No sex arrests | One or more sex arrests | Total |
|--|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 0-1 arrest every 3 years | 174 (92.1) | 15 (7.9) | 189 (81.8) 100.0 |
| Greater than 1 arrest every 3 years | 31 (73.8) | 11 (26.2) | 42 (18.2) 100.0 |
| TOTAL | 205 (88.7) | 26 (11.3) | 231 (100.0) 100.0 |

Corrected chi square = 10.69090
 df = 1
 Significance = .0011
 phi = .23319

reported history of indecent exposure ($P < .05$). Of those who reported such a prior history, 30.4 percent were subsequently arrested, while only 9.1 percent of those who reported no such history recidivated (Table 7). Those self-confessed exhibitionists (23) were asked how many times they had exposed themselves. For those who answered "once," no one recidivated, while 58.3 percent of those who answered "two or more times" recidivated.

TABLE 7. ANALYSIS OF SELF-REPORT OF PRIOR EXPOSURE BY SUBSEQUENT ARREST FOR A SEX OFFENSE

| Admits exposing | No sex arrests | One or more sex arrests | Total |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Admits exposing | 16 (69.6) | 7 (30.4) | 23 (10.0) (100.0) |
| Denies exposing | 189 (90.0) | 19 (9.1) | 208 (90.0) (100.0) |
| TOTAL | 205 (88.7) | 26 (11.3) | 231 (100.0) (100.0) |

Corrected chi square = 7.39520
 df = 1
 significance = .0065

A number of variables were found not to be significant in predicting recidivism for the sample. Variables pertaining to the offender's relationship with his father; sexual relations with woman; feelings about self, marital status; history of childhood sexual abuse; history of drinking; age at first nonsex arrest; nonsex arrest rate; and education were all found not to be significant factors in predicting

whether one would be arrested for a sex offense. These findings may be important for use in future research.

Discussion

In general, the findings from this study confirm the usefulness and feasibility of conducting long-term followup research of sex offenders. For the 26 sex offender recidivists detected in the current study's followup, 7 were not arrested for a sex offense until 4 years or more had passed. This equals the number of recidivists who were arrested on a sex offense in the first year of the followup. This finding provides additional evidence that 5 years is minimal as an effective followup period when investigating recidivism among sex offenders.

Furthermore, it would appear that there are significant differences in the criminal histories of sex offenders. The findings confirm previous research findings that certain types of sex offenders have higher rates of recorded recidivism (Soothill and Gibbens, 1978). Exhibitionists in the sample were arrested on sex-related offenses twice as often as were sexual assaulters. Sexual assaulters in the sample were found to commit almost as many nonsexual violent offenses as sexual offenses. The exhibitionists and pedophiles studied had a lower rate of nonsex crimes and a higher rate of sex crimes than the sexual assaulters. Soothill, et al. (1976) have examined the criminal careers of sexual assaulters and found that the offense of rape is usually linked with an overall pattern of violent behavior, which at times is sexually expressed. The current finding further indicates that all forms of bodily assault committed by sex offenders, particularly sexual assaulters, should be carefully examined as parallels may exist between the two types of offenses. If this is the case, then the distinction between sex offenses and violent nonsex offenses may be conceptually weak where sexual assaulters are concerned.

Finally, the results indicate that an extensive history of sex offenses can be useful in establishing the likelihood of recidivism. However, it is misleading to conclude from these findings that the one time offender has no potential to recidivate or that his offense should not be given serious attention. The data do suggest, however, that individuals with a history of sex offenses and sexual assaulters with a history of any violent offenses are more likely to recidivate over a long timespan than individuals with one sex offense.

There are several factors which must be noted when interpreting the results. There is reason to

believe that the rate of recorded recidivism for the sample may be an underestimate. First, only arrest records for Philadelphia county were used in computing recidivism for the sample. Therefore, sex offenses committed elsewhere went undetected. The use of FBI records is recommended as a means to overcome this problem.

Second, even though those in the sample were on probation at the beginning of the followup period and, therefore, at risk to recidivate, subsequent incapacitations of those in the sample could not be documented. Removing individuals who are then not at risk to recidivate (via incarceration) increases the rate of recidivism among those who are at risk (Soothill and Gibbens, 1978). Third, an unsuccessful effort was made to uncover undetected offenses among the sample. Most likely, there would have been a substantial increase in the number of sex offenses committed by the sample, raising the recidivism rate.

Conclusion

Clearly there are gaps in our understanding of sex offender recidivism. Some areas of prime concern, such as research on the escalation of aggression in the crimes of sex offenders, have not been addressed very extensively. The current research design proved to be valuable in the study of sex offender recidivism, and future research should be attentive

to the findings and implications discussed above. If we are ever to know the extent of sex offender recidivism, long-term research with a large heterogeneous sample of sex offenders would be preferable. In addition, efforts should be made to uncover undetected offenses among sex offenders. Finally, research efforts should provide information about specific types of offenders. These efforts should provide more information useful to all concerned with the problem of sex offender recidivism.

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