SEXUAL HARM, PUBLIC EDUCATION AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Tabachnick, J., DSM Consulting

McCartan, K. F., University of the West of England, Bristol, UK

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Introduction

Sexual harm is an individual, community, societal and global issue (National Sexual Harm Resource Center, 2016; UNICEF, 2014) that is political in nature and is a high profile in modern society. This means that we need to understand public perceptions, societal engagement and societal responses to it before we can truly start to engage with it and change the surrounding narratives. Sexual harm exists in many forms, with a wide diversity in the people who commit these crimes and the individuals who are harmed; consequently, there is a raft of related legislation, policies and laws. The reality of sexual harm becomes particularly complicated if you look at the issues internationally, as opposed to nationally, with different countries defining offences differently, having different tariffs, different approaches to treatment and community management as well as public education. This chapter will start with a general discussion of the reality of, as well as the social constructed nature of, sexual harm; public attitudes to sexual harm and how they are formed; and the interrelationship between public, media and professional attitudes to sexual harm. The chapter will go on to discuss how we can change attitudes to sexual harm, related policy and the surrounding social

construction by taking a holistic approach that combines a public health approach with a criminal justice one, rather than relying on a criminal justice only approach.

Social construction of sexual harm

Society is a socially constructed reality that adapts and changes depending on the cognition of the individuals involved (Giddens, 1991), which is especially true in respect to our attitudes, interpretations, perceptions and societal structures (i.e., policies, practices and legislation) more so than the actual actions that we perform (i.e., activities) (McCartan, 2008, 2010). A popular Broadway play reflected this view in the words of Lily Thomlin, "What is reality anyway? It really is only a collective hunch." (Thomlin & Wagner, 1985) This is why society adapts over time and space , central to this it is argued that the core of the social constructionist position revolves around four basic premises;

> (1) that knowledge is developed through experience,
>
> (2) that everything is culturally and historically specific,
>
> (3) that social processes sustain current knowledge, and
>
> (4) that the complex processes of social interaction construct reality.

Language, communication and context are central to social construction; which means that central players in social construction are individuals, peer networks, organizations, communities, and the mass media. All social concepts are in part socially constructed, including sexual harm. Sexual harm is a complex area as it has widespread social and cultural ramifications, both nationally and internationally, as well as deep seated personal ones (McCartan, Kemshall & Tabachnick, 2015; Tabachnick, McCartan & Panaro, 2016).   When

we discuss sexual harm we typically describe the harm as a one-time event within the binary context of "offenders" and "victims". However, given that people who abuse, the people who are harmed and their friends and families are members of society, plus the fact that offences and the responses (both legitimate and illegitimate) are social constructions, the discourses that are created around sexual harm are very important to understanding the problem and to seeking solutions (see McCartan et al, 2015 for a longer discussion). Societal understandings and responses to sexual harm, the crimes perpetrated by adults, adolescents and even children, and the impact upon the vulnerable people in our communities are shaped by the social discussions involving individuals, peer networks, cultural/social groupings and professionals (i.e., treatment providers, advocates, academics and policy makers), through the media, the publication of empirical research and public debates and public policies. This means that how we think about, talk about, and respond to, sexual harm is, in part, a constructed and contested term which makes it difficult to use consistently in a variety of settings. This reflects Giddens' (1991) idea of reflexive modernisation, which argues that society and the individual constantly re-evaluate life (social, technological and scientific) in relation to new information being produced. Society, the community, and the individual are constantly adapting. Modern social life is a socially constructed reality which can adapt and change over time, in regard to the meaning and power attributed to it by its members. Society may not be able to agree upon definitive and comprehensive truths, only temporary truths which at times may be open to falsification (Giddens, 1991). This means that our understanding of the world is always open to review, critique and adaptation. Consequently, there is a link between modernity and radical doubt, that creates social uncertainty and anxiety for people living in the 'risk society' (Giddens, 1991) which is crystallised though specific issues, like sexual harm, child sexual harm, child neglect and child protection (Scott et al, 1998). Therefore, in order to better understand and respond effectively to sexual harm

we need to recognise how the concept is constructed, maintained, processed, and ultimately changed.

Figure 1: The social construction of the politics of sexual harm and sex offender management
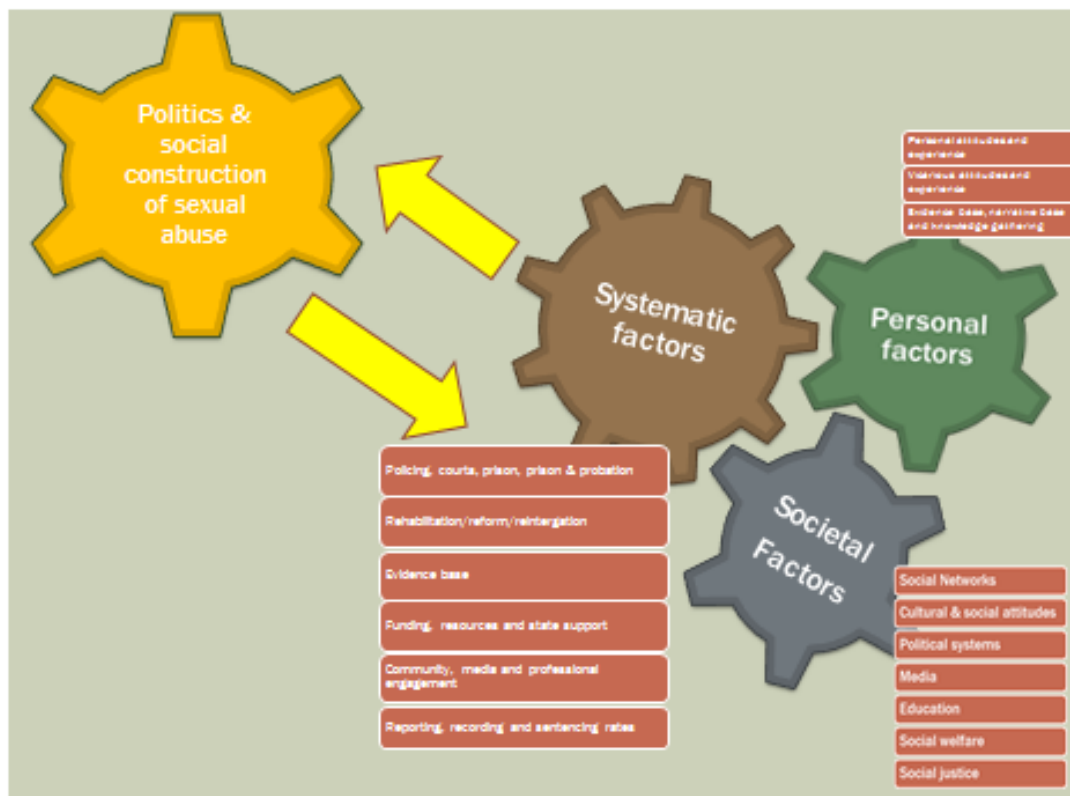
Public attitudes, social construction, crime and criminal justice policy

Societal attitudes towards crime and punishment are becoming less tolerant and more punitive, which has resulted in the current sizeable (and growing) sex offender population being managed in the community in the UK (Crown Prosecution Service, 2016; Ministry of Justice, 2016) as well as in the USA (Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering and Tacking, 2017). Roberts (1992) argued that increases in

imprisonment were due to the perception that politicians are more successful when pushing for stronger law enforcement and more punitive sentencing. However, there is a disconnection between the realities of public opinion and public attitudes to crime and punishment (Yankelovich, 1991), as well as between public opinion and government interpretation and enforcement of these attitudes (Maruna & King, 2004). This is particularly salient in respect to sexual harm given the fact that the public are concerned about perpetrators of sexual harm and do not believe that the State responds appropriately to them or the related risks (McCartan, 2013). This presents a perfect storm of increased punitive polices (see chapters by Kemshall and Williams in this volume for a broader discussion), high profile cases [e.g., Sarah Payne (UK), Jacob Wetterling (USA), Daniel Pelka (Australia), Megan Kanka (USA), and Adam Walsh (USA), among many others], changing sentencing procedures and changes to community management.

The government and public have a complex relationship in respect of sexual harm, sex offender management and reintegration that is both informed by, as well as mediated by, the media. Public attitudes toward the individuals who abuse are beginning to change with studies showing that the public wants more information than they currently have about how to prevent, and not simply respond to, sexually abusive behaviour *before* it has occurred (Bumby et al., 2010). It is increasingly apparent that both the public and legislators rely on the media for their information, and the personal opinions that form out of these media stories, images and snapshots of sexually abusive behaviour directly affect the kind of legislation that is then passed (Sample & Kadleck, 2008; McCartan, 2010). It is apparent that government reactions to public opinion are fed by the media (Wood & Gannon, 2009; Centre for sex offender management, 2010), and that although there is a growing awareness of the realities of sexual harm amongst the public (National Sexual harm Resource Center,

2017) the current understanding is simplistic, reflecting a very broad and non-nuanced depiction of extremely complex issues by the media (McCartan, 2010). This simplistic depiction is clearly reflected by the current one-size-fits-all risk management policies and practices related to the sex offenders register and disclosure schemes [see the chapter by McCartan, Kemshall and Hoggett in Volume 2]. All of which were played out via the media and the notion of public concern, public protectionism and risk aversion. Additionally, the social construction and the related reflexive modernization of ideas, as well as practices, relating to crime and punishment have been also been led and directly influenced by government policy with certain agendas being pushed at different stages (May & Rowlingson, 2008). In the US, a series of laws affecting sex offenders began in the 1990s with the Jacob Wetterling Act which established a sex offender registry. Over the next 20 years, further legislation (e.g., Megan's Law, Jessica's Law, many others, and most recently the Adam Walsh Act) added community notification, civil commitment, residency restrictions and other laws to monitor and contain this specific population (Tabachnick & Klein, 2011). Whereas in the UK, historically different governments have had different attitudes to crime, 'penalty', rehabilitation and social justice policy, resulting in different periods of crime policy ranging from: 'nothing works', espoused by conservative/republican/right leaning governments in the 1980s and the early 1990s; liberalism and 'something works', espoused by the liberal/democrat/left leaning governments in the late 1990s and 2000s; and now into one of increased community partnership and privatisation in the UK ('big society' and the civil society) (McCartan, 2012) (see chapters by Kemshall and Williams in this volume for a further discussion). These changing government attitudes to crime, criminal justice and social control are made more complex in the UK and USA by the reality and implications of local versus national policy and practice. However, due to the fact that prison numbers have increased dramatically over

the past 20 years and that penal populism is still dominating penal policy formation, it is clear that there are still two over-riding beliefs; that delinquents and offenders need to be controlled and punished.

The notion of social control and the management and methods of providing it are issues which are high on any government's agenda, with the UK government arguing that the community should have more engagement in all aspects of governance, including criminal justice. Over the past 10 years the UK, but not necessarily other countries, has moved from a big society which aims "*to create a climate that empowers local people and communities, building a big society that will 'take power away from politicians and give it to people*" (Cabinet Office, 2010) to a shared society that aims to "*focuses rather more on the responsibilities we have to one another. It's a society that respects the bonds that we share as a union of people and nations. The bonds of family, community, citizenship and strong institutions*" (May, 2016). Communities now have more responsibilities in line with a continued decentralization of large government responsibility. This is evidenced by the promotion of greater community partnership, greater civil/social responsibility including for crime management, and the promotion of an increased role for the public and third sector in the prevention of offending as well in the reintegration and management of offenders in the UK (see Corcoran and Weston, this volume). This trend has been more pronounced in the UK than in the USA and Canada. The 'upskilling' of community members around sexual harm, while positive on a personal and societal level, runs the risk of decoupling responsibility for the management of sexual harm from the State, allowing the State to abrogate responsibility for the management and prevention of sexual harms. This 'responsibiliation' of public and communities is also reflected in the current UK approach to policing, which aims to reduce the number of paid officers and increase the number of police volunteers. Cumulatively these

policies shift Criminal Justice System responses to an increased public as well as victim focus, and make sex offender management (indeed crime management) a partnership responsibility rather than simply a State responsibility. This is also reflected in the previous coalition government's "rehabilitation revolution" which has resulted in much offender management being contracted out to third sector and private providers, incentivized through a payment by results process (see Corcoran and Weston, this volume). Hence, independent contractors will take on traditional CJS roles in a similar vein to what happened when the National Health Service was privatised by the previous conservative government, albeit this time, the process is labelled as community partnership and engagement (McCartan, 2012). When the idea of the rehabilitative revolution is married to notions surrounding the Big Society, the shared society and greater partnership working it emphasizes that the public, community groups, charities, NGO's and private companies (i.e., partner agencies) will be increasing responsible for offender management. However, for this to work there needs to be an implicit and reciprocal trust between the public, communities, partner organisations and the CJS; but in reality, the State does not trust them and that they do not trust the State, as well as the fact that professionals believe that the public cannot be trusted with this material and that it will lead to community conflict (McCartan, 2012).

Public attitudes to sexual offenders and how they are formed

Public opinion polls shows that individuals generally hold punitive attitudes towards sex offenders (Bollinger et al. 2012; Brown 1999; Katz Schiavone et al. 2008; Katz Schiavone & Jeglic 2009; Kleban & Jeglic 2012; McCartan et al. 2015; Mears et al. 2008; Olver & Barlow

2010; Rogers & Ferguson 2011; Rogers et al. 2011; Shackley et al. 2014; Sundt et al. 1998; Willis et al. 2013), and support punitive and exclusionary policies (Brown, Deakin & Spencer 2008; Comartin et al. 2009; Center for Sex Offender Management, 2010; Katz Schiavone & Jeglic 2009; Mears et al. 2008; Thakker 2012). More specifically, the public supports harsher penalties for sexual than non-sexual offenders (Rogers & Ferguson 2011), and for child sex offenders than those who offend against adults (McAlinden 2007; McAVoy 2012; Mears et al. 2008; Rogers et al. 2011; Viki et al. 2012). Despite these punitive attitudes, the research also clearly demonstrates that the public support treatment for sex offenders (Brown 1999; Kleban & Jeglic 2012; Levenson et al. 2007; Mears et al. 2008; Willis et al. 2010), including child sex offenders (Esser-Stuart & Skibinski 1998; Rogers et al. 2011), despite being doubtful about its efficacy (Katz Schiavone et al. 2008; Mancini 2014; McCartan et al. 2015; McCorkle 1993; Payne et al. 2010; Sundt et al. 1998 ; Willis et al. 2010). As Esser-Stuart and Skibinski (1998: 101) put it, "the social response is complex" (see generally Rogers et al. 2011). In the past, the public's belief that sex offenders, but particularly child sex offenders, are evil, dangerous and a constant threat, arguing that treatment does not work and that a punitive response linked to sex offender's isolation is essential to public safety (McCartan, 2004, 2010, 2013a, 2013b). These attitudes are important to understand because public understandings of crime, offenders and offending often feed into the creation of government policy in this area. For instance, in the UK, the impact of public and media reactions to the abduction and murder of Sarah Payne, the killing of Baby P, and the abduction and murders of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman created a different trajectory in public policy towards a punitive response. In the US, the impact of public and media reactions to the abduction and murder of Jacob Wetterling, Megan Kanka, Jessica Lunford, Dru Sjodin, Adam Walsh and manyothers have also generated similar punitive national policies. In fact, all of the major national policies in the US are linked to the public reactions to a single case. Public

perceptions and how they are perceived and understood by politicians and policy makers are critical, as 'public opinion' is often used as a mandate for legislative and policy change (see Thomas 2005). Interestingly, it is important to note that nearly all of the laws created to stop sexual offending and sex offenders are focused on adults who sexually assault children (or in some cases, very young women) outside of the family and are usually unknown to the child or family. As a result, our construct of the sex offender does not reflect what is known about the adults, adolescents and even children who cause the sexual harm in our communities; which means that problematic policy is created based on unrealistic understandings (figure 2).

Figure 2: The social construction of the of problematic sex offender management policies
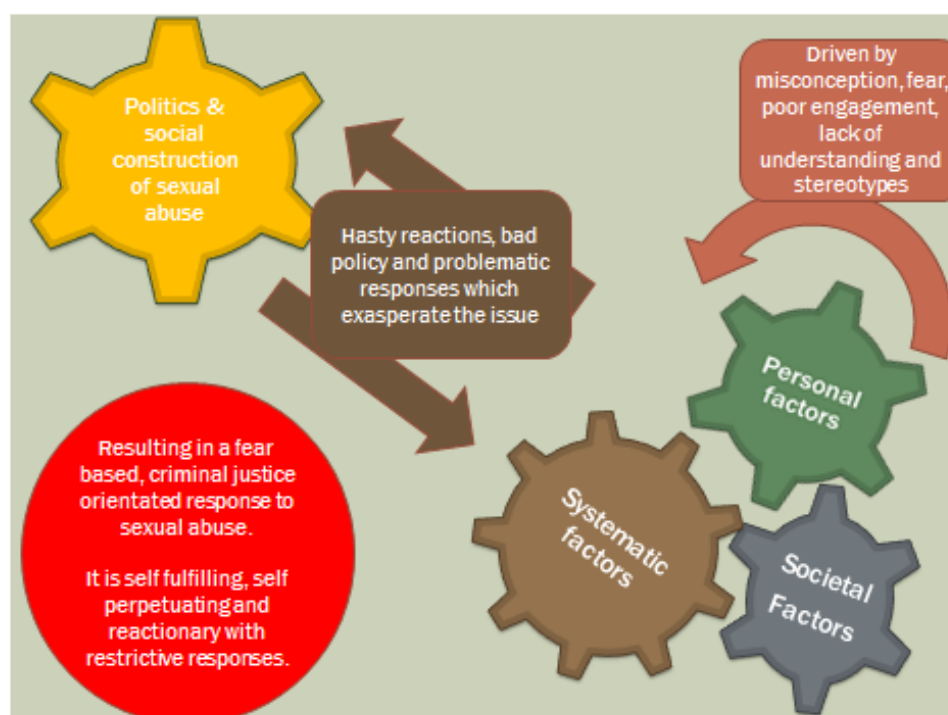
 However, to gain a deeper understanding of the way these policies are created, Kitzinger (2004) explained we are not defining the "public" appropriately as there are actually

"multiple publics" and not simply one amorphous public. This is reinforced by the different cultural, socio-demographic and political publics that make up our multicultural societies. These multiple publics require different levels of engagement on the issue of sexual harm, and all have different attitudes to the State and criminal justice system that impact community engagement. This means that that there are some publics who are interested in and invested in understanding sexual offending behaviours and it is, therefore, these engaged publics who read the available literature, engage with the relevant media and get involved with the associated charities and NGO (i.e., NSPCC [UK], Circles of Support and Accountability [UK, USA, Canada, etc] Prevent Child Abuse America [USA], Darkness 2 Light [USA], Stop It Now! [UK and Ireland, USA, Netherlands]). Consequently, because there is no overarching "public" or any overarching "public" perspective on the individual who commits a sex offense short of a generally accepted dislike and rejection of them (McCartan, 2009). This dislike and rejection, has been fuelled by the media images of these labelled sex offenders as monsters, personal experience that is truly horrific for the individual, or professional experience that is limited to the most sensational situations with multiple victims and significant trauma (Hanvey, Philpot & Wilson, 2010). One area where there is a more nuanced response is within any discussion of adolescents or children who sexually abuse other children. When this distinction between adults and adolescents is made, the public will often have a much more varied response and the policies affecting adolescents and children are not as punitive as with adults. In fact, victim advocacy groups in the US are now including training about children who sexually abuse as part of their trauma informed approach to working with children in sexually abusive families (National Children's Alliance, 2017). Therefore, discussing sex offender punishment, treatment and reintegration is often premised by the question of which public are you speaking with, how much do they know

about this issue, which images they are holding of the "sex offender", and where they receive their information?

This lack of consistent public understanding is not through lack of material being available in the public sphere (McCartan, Kemshall & Hudson, 2012a; Stopitnow.org.uk; Stopitnow.org.uk/Scotland; NSPCC.org.uk; ceop.police.uk) or through a lack of professional engagement (McCartan, 2011; McCartan et al, 2012), but the disconnection of information and public understanding is much more complex. The lack of public understanding may be a result of the complexity of the issue, the overwhelming information without a clear direction about "what to do" except report and because the public may not want to engage with the emotional difficulties involved when trying to become more informed on the topic (McCartan, 2011). When this is situated in debates around sexual harm, public perceptions of sex offenders are often not in line with professional understandings and research findings (McCartan, 2004, 2010, 2011, 2012a, 2012b; McCartan, Hudson & Kemshall, 2012), are combined with a mixture of stereotyping, misperception, fear, personal experience, and in part are societal constructions created between them and the media (Silverman & Wilson, 2002; Greer, 2012).

One of the main driving forces in the social construction of sexual harm is the media. The media, in its loosest sense, helps to report, discuss, shape and create current affairs especially in respect to crime (McCartan, 2010; McQuail, 2011). This means that the media can, and does, affect, create and change social and personal ideas (Bohne & Wanke, 2008); which is particularity salient as modern society is a media saturated society (McQuail, 2011) with sexual harm being a high profile media issue (McCartan, 2010).

Strategic Frame Analysis is a relatively new research approach utilized in the United States to help explain how the public views complex social issues (FrameWorks Institute, 2016). The *American Perceptions of Sexual harm: A FrameWorks Research Report* (2010) identified significant gaps between experts' understanding of sexual harm and the ideas and the beliefs commonly held by the general public. These cognitive gaps or misunderstandings included the causes of sexual harm, what we know, and don't know about the people who commit sexual harm, the adults and children who are victimized by sexual harm, the impact and trauma caused by sexual harm, and maybe most importantly, the range of possible solutions (O'Neil & Morgan, 2010). The FrameWorks Institute identified two key concepts, or widely held go-to frames related to sexual harm and many other social issues.

1. Mentalism frame: People perceive actions as being solely the responsibility of individuals as a result of personal weakness, moral or character flaws, and negative motivations. (for instance, "a few bad apples" or "evil monsters.

2. The Family Bubble: This is the idea that family, primarily parents, is the only significant source of influence in a child's growth and development, with little or no consideration given to the influence of outside sources (e.g., peers, media, organizations, culture, community, etc).

Taken together, these two predominant frames lead people to think about sexual harm as being the result of poor parenting resulting in "bad actors" OR dangerous criminals. When these are the images of the individuals who perpetrate sexual crimes, then it will be difficult for people see that they have a role in responding to or preventing sexual harm. Even more problematic, is that it will be difficult for people to see that the adults, adolescents, and

children they love are at risk to cause harm, or have sexually abused a child(O'Neil & Morgan, 2010; (Tabachnick & Baker, In Press) The only logical solutions people using these frames can think of are punishment, parent education, and teaching children to avoid strangers and dark alleys. In fact, these have been the primary solutions offered in the United States and around the world. Unless an alternative frame can be provided, other types of solutions will not seem viable (Tabachnick & Baker, In Press).   Until professionals learn to provide alternative frames that the various publics can understand, solutions that encourage public engagement and personal responsibility, solutions such as bystander interventions, may not receive widespread support or be successfully implemented.

The impact of the media is therefore limited, to a certain degree, by both society and the individual's level of engagement (Kitzinger, 2004) and type of engagement (Howitt, 1998) with it. Individuals, communities and society may choose to accept, reject or alter media messages as they see fit. They may not be able to take in the messages at all, and hence, the media feeds into, but does not solely construct, changing societal perceptions. This is particularly salient when we recognise that the public are not one homogenous mass who consume media, information and narratives in the same way; this is not the case. Thus any conversation about crime, criminal justice, risk management and reintegration becomes multifaceted and unique. Therefore, we need to recognise the impact and influence of these different "publics" on the social construction of crime and criminal justice. A good example in te UK of this is volunteering in the criminal justice system with some "publics" being more likely to volunteer to work with offenders.   These individuals are not necessarily representative of the wider public but a self-selected sample with their own motivations (see chapter by Corcoran and Weston in this volume for a broader discussion). Research relating to Circles of Support and Accountability highlights that although members of the public

volunteer to work with sex offenders in their reintegration and support them, these members of the public tend to be university students, retired criminal justice staff, religiously orientated individuals and females (Hanvey et al 2011; McCartan, 2016).

Consequently, an important mechanism for changing public understandings of sexual harm and the individual who cause the harm and are impacted by the harm (e.g., perpetrators, victims and their families), is beyond simply the media. Increasing the contact and conversations with researchers, professionals and practitioners, for example through the use of 'public criminology' (see Loader and Sparks 2010) is equally important and challenging these groups to "translate" their information in a way that the public can understand them. 'Public Criminology' is the engagement of criminologists and related professionals with the public on topics concerning crime in general, but also sexual harm as well, for the purposes of education (Groombridge, 2007) to help shift the social norms towards the understanding that everyone has a role to play in responding to and preventing crime.

This interaction between social construction, media influence and reflexive modernisation (i.e., the idea that society defines itself through modernisation) is central to the changing way that we think about crime, criminal justice, offenders and offender management. Society's perception and response to certain groups, which have been considered deviant or anti-social (e.g., youth offenders, drug users), have changed over time because of research, policy, practice and expert engagement that have offered alternative information, framing, and feasible solutions. Currently, we are at a tipping point in respect to societal views and approaches to sexual harm where we are re-examining the perpetrators so that we can start to look at the issue in a different light and offer new as well as adaptive strategies.

Figure 3: The social construction of proactive and holistic sex offender management
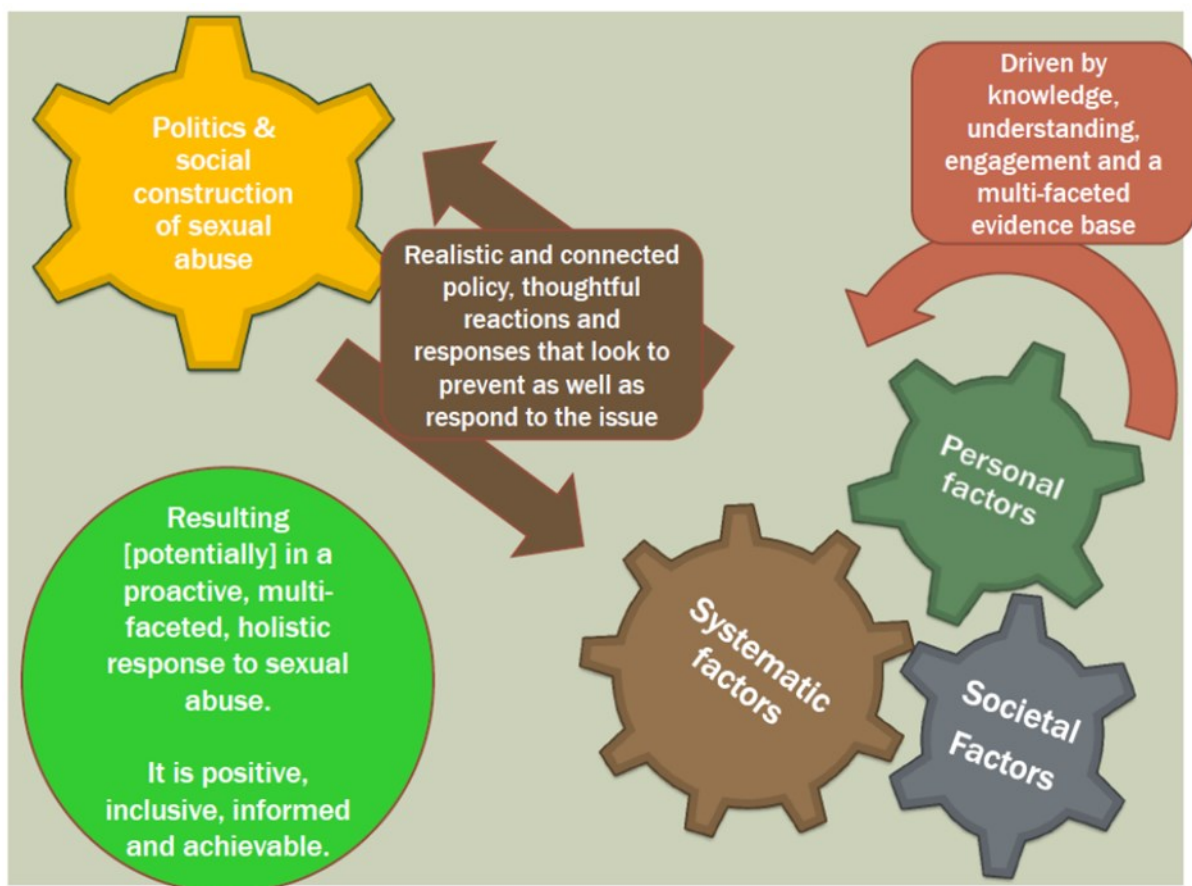
A different approach to sexual harm

When so few sexual crimes are reported and so few families spend significant time talking about the issue, a critical question is how to generate a national discussion about existing, but under reported events that never reach the public's consciousness? Additionally, given that experts agree that we cannot arrest, convict, and imprison our way out of the problem of sexual harm given the volume of offenders, austerity cuts and current criminal justice issues (Guardian Newspaper, 28th February 2017), how can we change the way we address sexual harm and prevent the people from causing the harm in a realistic fashion?

Although there is a growing recognition, from professionals and some "publics" that we need an alternative to traditional criminal justice system (CJS) approaches if alternatives are to work effectively, especially with medium and high risk offenders, difficulties remain. Non-punitive alternatives require trust between the public, communities, partner organisations and the CJS to work. However, the relationship between individuals, communities, society and the government is often fraught, particularly in sensitive policy making areas (Wood, 2009). Crime is a high profile socio-political issue, and in most cases, the public look to politicians and community leaders for a clear vision for community safety and response (McQuail, 2011). However, there is often disagreement and misunderstanding between the government officials, politicians, and the public(s) on crime policy (Wood, 2009). These same issues, when applied to emotional issues such as sexual and/or interpersonal crimes, can be magnified by this distrust (Brown, 2009). Vested interest in the success or perceived success of crime policy can result in disagreement, increased public mistrust, and misunderstanding between communities and government officials (Wood, 2009). The subsequent heightened mistrust is most evident in public reactions to the recent Jimmy Saville and Ian Watkin cases in the UK and the Jerry Sandusky case in the US.

The replacement of incorrect and outdated stereotypes of sexual offenders with coherent and evidence based understandings of sexual offending and the adults, adolescents and children who commit these crimes is a critical step in promoting better societal understanding of the issue, and can form the basis of more effective public policy and community engagement in the reintegration of these individuals. Public health approaches to both sexual and violent offence reduction are important examples of such a step (see the Chapter by Brown in this volume for a greater discussion of this).

A public health approach

In recent years, many have begun to advocate for a public health approach to stopping sexual violence. The solutions that have worked in other public health issues form the basis of a comprehensive approach to the problem (see chapter by Brown in this volume for a broader discussion of a public health approach). Public health offers a unique insight into ending sexual harm by focusing on the safety and benefits for the largest group of people possible and providing a comprehensive response to the problem (Laws, 2000; Smallbone, Marshall and Wortley, 2008; Wortley and Smallbone, 2006; McCartan et al., 2015; Tabachnick, 2013; Kemshall & Moulden, 2016). It is essential that society respond to the urgency and crisis of sexual harm, providing adequate services to victims and their families, as well as adequate funding for both the prosecution of sexual crimes and also for the treatment and management of sex offenders. However, a public health focus on prevention expands that immediate and long term responses to sexual crimes by also addressing the health of an entire population. A public health approach adds into this mix an exploration of how to prevent the violence before anyone is harmed (Laws, 2000; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2004). Public health campaigns have been used successfully to address a variety of simple and complex public health problems from stopping smoking in public places, halting the practice of foot binding, and encouraging the use of car seats for infants. Many of these campaigns began as an educational campaign with a visible messaging component. However, these campaigns are rarely successful if the messages are not linked directly s to changes in attitudes, behaviours, beliefs, strategies and policies (Tabachnick and Newton-Ward, 2010). Furthermore, these messages must be linked to behaviors and policies at the individual, relationship, organizational, community and society levels (Krug et al, 2002).

) It is important to recognise that most public health campaigns are only successful when those messages are linked to specific actions that are also supported by peer and other relationships and reinforced by community and societal policies and norms (Kemshall & Moulden, 2016). For example, in the US, efforts to stop drinking and driving were tied to clear behaviors at the individual level (don't drink and drive); at the relationship level (don't let friends drive drunk – either offer them a ride or take away their keys); at the community level (bar tenders are trained about when to cut off a customer for drinking too much or asking a group for the designated driver); and at the society level there are laws to arrest and prosecute people who drink too much and then drive. When simple messages are targeted to the individuals, only a limited number of people will respond (e.g., clear messages to individuals to stop smoking). However, when a more comprehensive public health approach is used (e.g., increased taxes on cigarettes and laws to stop smoking in public places) there has been a significant drop in smoking in the US and internationally.

Sexual harm prevention campaigns, are most effective when the public thinks that it relates directly to them and is supported by their families, peers and communities. Otherwise they may disengage or dismiss the material. As discussed earlier, the public has existing frames they are comfortable with and to offer additional materials must in some way pull them out of their comfort zones and into that new and more complex understanding of the issues. The original frames and their messages were simple (e.g., don't talk with strangers; don't walk alone at night), but they were not effective in significantly reducing sexual violence. These simple messages did not address the reality or complexity of the situation where most people are harmed by someone they know and often someone they trust. Many sexual violence prevention campaigns begin by focusing on the negative impact of the abuse on one

individual or in a limited situation (e.g., victims of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church) which makes it easy for people to disengage (e.g., it does not happen in my home or my own faith community). When the campaigns begin to enlarge their goals to talk about trends rather than individuals, they can also talk about what the community can do (e.g, it was not one particular priest or coach or TV personality) but includes the system response to these events. Even if the story being told is resonant with personal experience, they may be oversaturated with similar stories, find them too painful to hear, or feel powerless/unwilling to help.

If sexual abuse prevention campaigns begin to add in the focus on trends, systemic responses, structure and function then this might change the outcome, as with other crime related public health campaigns. If communities and their institutions are given effective tools, strategies, policies and messages about how to respond and prevent sexual abuse, then they may feel empowered and more likely to act. A community conversation and a societal response also contradicts the isolation that so many people may feel when they are sexually abused or are aware of a situation of sexual abuse.

. With the recent cases of Jimmy Saville in the UK and Jerry Sandusky in the US (as well as cases in the Catholic Church and other organizations working with children and youth), there has been an increased focus on how organizations can respond when they see behaviours that are problematic. Organizations do not need to wait for a report of sexual abuse but can intervene earlier, especially with children and youth when they see problematic behaviors and behaviors that violate the organization's existing code of conduct. A relatively new field of study is emerging about what policies and programs organizations can put into place to better prevent someone from being sexually harmed in the first place. It is becoming increasingly clear that education campaigns are important, but that they must be linked to real changes in

policies and protocols so that if someone does reach out for help, the organizations and systems know how to effectively respond.

Whether developing public messages, educational campaigns, programs or policies, it is becoming increasingly clear that these must be simple, easy to understand and framed as both positive and hopeful. . Recognizing how difficult it is for some to even talk about these issues, other public health campaigns have shown that the messages and strateges must be positive (not mired in the pain of sexual harm but in the hope that adults can intervene and protect children and youth and that all victims will be believed and resources will be made available to them).   The messages and strategies must be linked to simple changes in behaviour – not just what the public must understand about sexual harm but also what the public must do to intervene – what to look for, how to talk about it, how to respond when they see warning signs or risks for sexually harmful behaviours. The messages and strategies must also be linked to changes in the environment that will reinforce the behaviour changes in the individual. These changes would include policies within organizations that work with children and youth, social norms in the community about people looking after each other, and changes in society and laws that allow for individuals to come forward and not be revictimized in the courts and the media. Finally, changes are required in how the media reports on the issue, and the way in which intervention policies are made. While it is true that the media tends to report about sexual abuse as a crisis some of the more recent cases that have also included the organizations and communities affected will also report on the response and the solutions offered by that community. These solution focused reports allow for people to talk about the impact of the abuse on everyone involved and offer alternative solutions outside of the victim-offender binary. These solutions move the community to allow for policies that also include early intervention and prevention opportunities.

Conclusions

The reality of sexual harm is that the causes and consequences are beyond just the individual and include an impact on families, friends and communities in multiple ways – each possibly being affected quite differently. This makes this emotional issue even more complicated and difficult to easily communicate or construct in a simple understandable fashion. Furthermore, as the public begins to see that people who sexually abuse can be adults, adolescents or even children, there is a shift in the way the issue is constructed socially. For example, in the UK and US, as people begin to recognize the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses (Durham University, 2017; Fenton, Mott, McCartan & Rumney, 2016; NSVRC, 2015), the image of a sex offender as a monster may be replaced by the fear that "this could be my son." And when that image changes and the diversity and complexity of the issue is discussed, then the public begins to ask for alternative solutions. They may even ask for ways to become more engaged in those solutions. Consequently, this means that professional, public, policy and media engagement in education, as well as discussion, around sexual harm becomes essential for a realistic construction to emerge. In the past, most public engagement and education campaigns to stop sexual harm have focused on strengthening individual knowledge and skills using the traditional perpetrator/victim paradigm (i.e., all perpetrators are atypical monsters partaking in snatch and grab techniques and all victims are vulnerable children easily manipulated) which is not the case and only helps to reinforce a simplistic understanding and simplistic solutions that simply won't work. These approaches have been valuable in raising awareness that sexual abuse exists, but to truly stop sexual harm a broader comprehensive approach is needed. On an individual level,

any new public health response needs to address and talk directly with a variety of different publics. On a community and society level, this requires a multi-faceted, multi-directional approach using both evidence based messages, programs, and policies that are grounded in personal stories from people who have caused the harm, people who have been victimized by sexual abuse as well as their friends, families and communities. and delivered by trusted/reliable sources (i.e., opinion makers and opinion reinforcers). Given the prevalence of sexual abuse and the profound impact of sexual harm in our society, the various publics need to be guided through both the emotional impact of these crimes as well as the practical evidence-based solutions that professionals have begun to identify. The sharing of personal stories is one feasible strategy that can help disperse the shame and isolation of these individuals and families. However, to be truly successful, any first step must be linked to a comprehensive public health approach that incudes individual behaviour change, community and organizational engagement, as well as public policies and strategies as a systemic approach to preventing sexual harm.

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