Experiences of sex offenders in a probation approved premises: neutralisation and normalisation

Original Citation


This version is available at http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/13758/

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk.

http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/
Experiences of Sex Offenders in a Probation Approved Premises:
Neutralisation and Normalisation

Carla Reeves
University of Huddersfield
c.l.reeves@hud.ac.uk
The Study

- Ethnographic study of the experiences of sex offenders living in a Probation Approved Premises (hostel): (21 months)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of data collected</th>
<th>Number of data collection points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation in hostel (including informal interviews)</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with residents</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with Staff</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sykes and Matza (1957)
Techniques of Neutralisation

1. Denial of responsibility
2. Denial of Injury
3. Denial of a Victim
4. Condemnation of the Condemners
5. Appeal to Higher Loyalties
Why are Neutralisations Important?

Offence

Pre-offence use of neutralisations

Post-offence use of neutralisations

Fantasy and offence planning
It’s not my fault

- “She was overly affectionate”
- “My girlfriend miscarried, that’s what prompted me”
- “She was having an affair”
- “She was a bad mother”
- “They were happy with it”
- “I’m being framed”
Admission Without Responsibility: A matter of interpretation?

“He is one of those that doesn’t think it is wrong, so he doesn’t need to justify it to himself” (police officer in MAPPP)
Admission Without Responsibility: A matter of interpretation?

“He is one of those that doesn’t think it is wrong, so he doesn’t need to justify it to himself” (police officer in MAPPP)

• A technique of normalisation?

“[...] everyone in the hostel is a criminal, and 99% of the population are too.” (child sexual abuser)
Limited movement only, with ‘others’ not moving between the two groups.

A solid line denotes additional membership of other groups. A dotted line denotes potential movement between groups. Arrows denote the direction of movement on dotted lines.
“The thing is you listen to these men, they’ve been offending for years...what do you call it?...justifying it to themselves all this time. And they’re much more convincing than the psychologists [....] and they are there all the time.” (Child sex offender)
Resisting Rehabilitation

Challenging post-offence neutralisations → Group resistance of challenges. Normalisation of neutralisation → Development of pre-offence neutralisations
But…. Grouping Can Support Rehabilitation

- Challenging post-offence neutralisations
- Group challenges. Supportive of offence work
- Admission & acceptance of responsibility
What can be taken from this?

• If grouping were managed in residential settings it could be a powerful mechanism to support RSO and PO work
• If not, the negative effect of grouping needs to be acknowledged
• Neutralisations are used to construct identities – survival technique?
References


