

Adult Attachment Classification in Men Convicted of Sexual Crimes

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Presentation Overview

- 1. Attachment related offender theory**
- 2. Empirical evidence for an attachment developmental pathway**
- 3. Context of the present study**
- 4. Results**



Abusive Family Experience

**Disruptions in
early attachment experiences**

**Parents present but emotionally
unavailable**

**Children attracting parental attention
with disruptive demanding behaviour**

**Children fail to learn appropriate
interpersonal and intimacy skills
within context of a bonded
relationship.**

**Aggressive, coercive, &
manipulative strategies for
interpersonal relationship
management are modelled &
reinforced.**

**Child adopts these coercive,
aggressive, & manipulative strategies
if they prove to provide some success
for coping with family environment**



**Child Adopts
a Maladaptive,
Coercive,
Aggressive, &
Manipulative
Strategy
for Interpersonal
Interactions.**

**Failure of
“Coercive”
Strategy
When
Applied to
Relationships
Outside
Home.**

**Outcome of the Failure of the
Coercive Strategy**

Child fails to form or maintain stable and satisfying relationships with peers and other adults outside of the immediate family system.

The child's social and intimacy skills are not given a developmental pathway which allows their potential to unfold.

Failure to establish successful relationships outside the family leads to a negative self-image and a reduction in self-confidence, further blocking the potential for inter-personal development.

**Intermediate Outcome of the
Abusive Family Experience -
A Syndrome of Social Disability.**

**1. Inability to establish &
maintain intimate relationships.**

2. Low self-esteem.

**3. Diverse antisocial
attitudes & behaviour,
including:**

4. Lack of empathy.

**5. Cognitive distortions
that support and
justify criminal behaviour.**

**Additional Factors
in the Aetiology
of Deviant Sexual
Behaviour.**

**Sexual, physical or
emotional abuse.**

**Inherited
temperamental factors
predisposing
impulsivity.**

Puberty and the failure to establish relationships that appropriately meet the emerging need for the development of an intimate and sexual quality to some relationships.

Personal Outcome.

Feeling of exclusion from experience of intimate relationships.

Feel powerless in establishing healthy relationships through appropriate interaction

Concept of self as masculine is negatively effected.

Feelings of anger & resentment.

Feelings of anger & resentment directed towards girls & women.

Employment of “Coercive” Strategy and Emergence of Sexually Deviant Behaviour.

Desired sexual contact achieved through employment of “coercive” strategy that was learnt within the abusive family.

Sexual contact achieved by force, or with younger, more vulnerable partner.

Memories of sexual contact become elaborated incorporating fantasies. Memories and fantasies are reinforced.

Reinforced memories and fantasies promote urge to act out sexually.

Progressive desensitisation to & distortions concerning fear of being caught and impact of sexual assaults on victims.

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What Is So Special About Male Adolescent Sexual Offending? A Review and Test of Explanations Through Meta-Analysis

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We tested special and general explanations of male adolescent sexual offending by conducting a meta-analysis of 59 independent studies comparing male adolescent sex offenders ($n = 3,855$) with male adolescent non-sex offenders ($n = 13,393$) on theoretically derived variables reflecting general delinquency risk factors (antisocial tendencies), childhood abuse, exposure to violence, family problems, interpersonal problems, sexuality, psychopathology, and cognitive abilities. The results did not support the notion that adolescent sexual offending can be parsimoniously explained as a simple manifestation of general antisocial tendencies. Adolescent sex offenders had much less extensive criminal histories, fewer antisocial peers, and fewer substance use problems compared with non-sex offenders. Special explanations suggesting a role for sexual abuse history, exposure to sexual violence, other abuse or neglect, social isolation, early exposure to sex or pornography, atypical sexual interests, anxiety, and low self-esteem received support. Explanations focusing on attitudes and beliefs about women or sexual offending, family communication problems or poor parent-child attachment, exposure to nonsexual violence, social incompetence, conventional sexual experience, and low intelligence were not supported. Ranked by effect size, the largest group difference was obtained for atypical sexual interests, followed by sexual abuse history, and, in turn, criminal history, antisocial associations, and substance abuse. We discuss the implications of the findings for theory development, as well as for the assessment, treatment, and prevention of adolescent sexual offending.

Keywords: adolescent sexual offending, general delinquency, atypical sexual interests, sexual abuse, meta-analysis

Many resources have been devoted to the prevention of sexual crimes and the management of sex offenders in the past 20 years. Sex offender registration and community notification laws were introduced in the 1990s, civil commitment proceedings against high-risk sex offenders re-emerged during the same time period, and specialized sex offender treatment programs have proliferated in correctional and mental health settings. Social policies and associated clinical practices have benefited from major improve-

ments in clinicians' ability to assess the likelihood of reoffending of individual sex offenders, but less progress has been made in developing successful interventions to reduce such likelihood (for reviews, see Lalumière, Harris, Quinsey, & Rice, 2005; Seto, 2008). Assessment, treatment, and policy efforts could all benefit from a better understanding of the etiology of sexual offending.

Early work on the causes of sexual offending focused almost exclusively on adult offenders.¹ Many investigators are now rec-

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An earlier version of this meta-analysis was presented at the 23rd annual conference of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers in 2004. Part of the results regarding criminal history and conduct problems were published as a book chapter (Seto & Lalumière, 2006).

We would like to thank Judith Becker, James Cantor, Meredith Chivers, Amanda Farnhill, Tracey Skilling, and Kelly Suschinsky for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this article. We would like to especially acknowledge Mark Chaffin, Grant Harris, Vern Quinsey, and Jim Worling for their detailed comments and suggestions for improvement.

We were able to find current contact information for 48 of the 57 (van Wijk was the first author of three studies) first authors (or second authors, if the first author was unavailable) and the first author's academic advisor, in the case of master's theses or doctoral dissertations, for the studies we examined in this meta-analysis. Twenty-three of the 48 first authors or academic advisors we contacted responded to our e-mails or letter. We would like to thank Mary Davis-Rosambal, Kevin Epps, Paul Prick, Gordon Hall, Daniel Hilliker, Clive Hollin, Melissa Jonson-Reid, Brian Jory, Alejandro Leguizamo, Carin Ness,

Hank Schneider, John Sivley, Derek Truscott, Ineke Way, Anton van Wijk, Jeff Wong, and Barry Zakirah for checking the results we reported for their studies, and for their comments. We are also grateful to Michael Miner for providing unpublished data and to Dustin Pardini for conducting additional analyses to determine if we could use data from van Wijk, Loeber, et al. (2005). We apologize to anyone we have missed from this list.

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¹ Most research has also focused on male offenders, at least in part because the large majority of sexual offenses are committed by males (Steffensmeier, Zhong, Ackerman, Schwartz, & Agha, 2006). Most of the research cited in this review, and all of the theories, have focused on offenses committed by males, either against female peers or adults or against either boys or girls.

Seto, M. C., & Lalumiere, M. (2010).

What Is So Special About Male Adolescent Sexual Offending? A Review and Test of Explanations Through Meta-Analysis.

***Psychological Bulletin*, 136, 526-575.**

similar

1. Anti-Social Tendencies

- Age of onset
- Conduct problems
- Anti-social personality traits
- Anti-social sexual attitudes

2. Exposure to Abuse

- Exposure to family and non-family physical violence

3. Family Problems

- Family relationship problems
- Separation from a parent
- Family substance abuse
- Family criminality

4. Interpersonal, 5. Sexual, 6. Psychopathology, &7 Cognitive

- Similar social skills deficits
- Sexual experience
- Depression
- Neuroticism
- Psychotic symptoms
- Suicidal tendencies
- IQ
- Academic problems
- Neurological anomalies

different

1. Anti-Social Tendencies

- Less previous criminal history
- Less general anti-social attitudes
- Less anti-social association
- Less substance abuse

2. Exposure to Abuse

- Sexual abuse 5 times more likely
- Physical abuse 1.6 times more likely
- Greater exposure to family sexual violence
- More emotional abuse or neglect

3. Family Problems

4. Interpersonal, 5. Sexual, 6. Psychopathology, &7 Cognitive

- Poorer social relations, more isolation and withdrawal
- Greater exposure to sex or pornography
- More atypical sexual interests
- Higher anxiety
- Higher social anxiety
- Lower self-esteem
- Specific learning disability

Sexual Offenders' State-of-Mind Regarding Childhood Attachment: A Controlled Investigation

Tania Stirpe · Jeffrey Abracen · Lana Stermac · Robin Wilson

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Abstract Attachment experiences have been regarded as significant by researchers and clinicians attempting to explain the etiology of sexual offending. Although initial studies have revealed some promising evidence, there are a number of theoretical and methodological problems with this preliminary body of work. While addressing these limitations, the goal of the present study was to investigate state-of-mind regarding childhood attachment among subtypes of sexual offenders, comparing them to both a sample of nonsexual offenders and to the documented patterns of nonoffenders. Sixty-one sexual offenders (extrafamilial child molesters, incest offenders, and rapists) and 40 nonsexual offenders (violent and nonviolent) were administered the "Adult Attachment Interview." Results indicated that the majority of sexual offenders were insecure, representing a marked difference from normative samples. Although insecurity of attachment was common to all groups of offenders, there were important differences in regard to the specific type of insecurity. Most notable were the child molesters, who were significantly more likely to be Preoccupied. Rapists, violent offenders, and, to a lesser degree, incest offenders were more likely to be Dismissing. Although still most likely to be Dismissing, nonviolent offenders were comparatively more Secure.

Keywords Sexual offenders · Attachment · Adult Attachment Interview

Most individuals working with sexual offenders agree that sexual offending is a multifaceted phenomenon that cannot be fully explained by any one available theory. A variety of perspectives have been investigated over the past 40 years including biological underpinnings (Lalumiere, Harris, Quinsey, & Rice, 2005; Moyer, 1976), deviant sexual fantasies (Wright & Schneider, 1997), sociocultural influences (Marshall & Eccles, 1991), cognitive

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Tania Stirpe; Jeffrey Abracen
Lana Stermac Robin
Wilson(2006).

Sexual Offenders' State-of-Mind
Regarding Childhood
Attachment: A Controlled
Investigation.

*Sexual Abuse, A Journal of
Research and Treatment, 18,
289-302.*

AAI & Sexual Offending (Stirpe et al., 2006)

Offence type	n	Secure	Dismissing	Preoccupied
Extra-familial child offenders	22	18.2%	18.2%	63.6%
Incest offenders	19	10.5%	68.4%	21.1%
Rapists	20	10.0%	75.0%	15.0%
Violent non-sex offenders	21	10.5%	78.9%	10.5%
Non-violent non sex offenders	19	28.6%	47.6%	23.8%
Population norms	2000+	45-55%	20-30%	10-15%



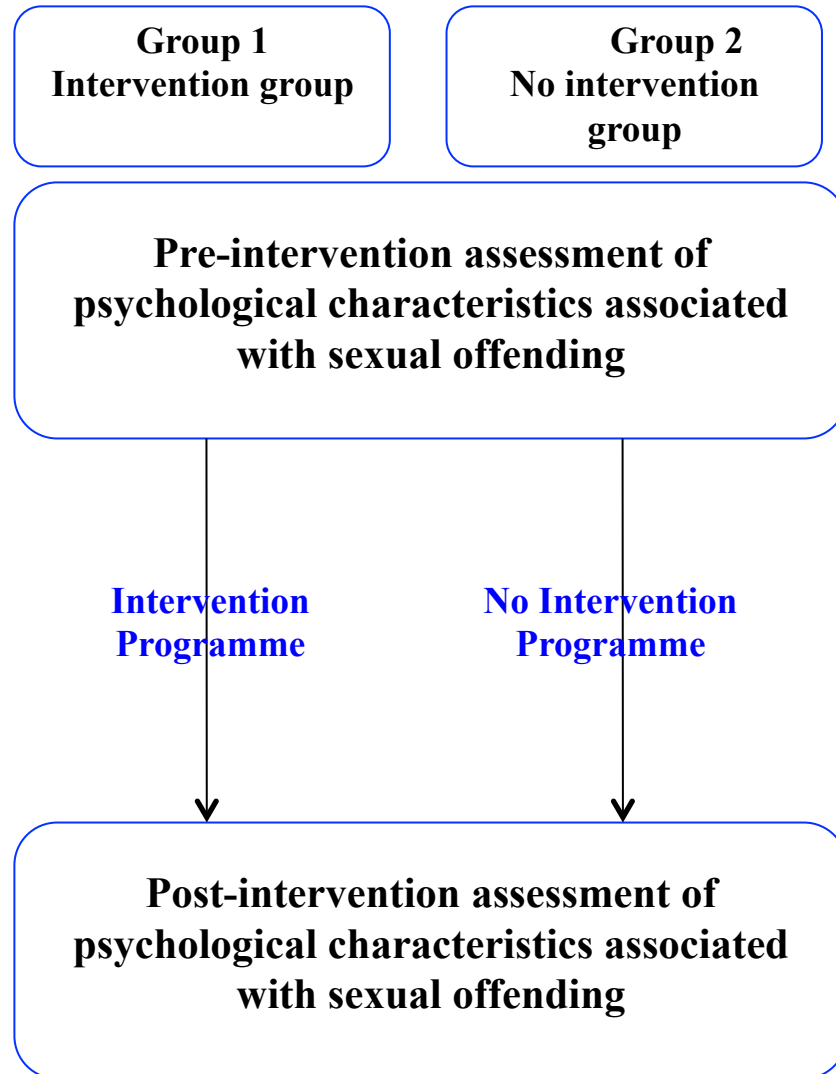
Stirpe, T., Abracen, J., Stermac, L., & Wilson, R., (2006). Sexual Offenders' State-of-Mind Regarding Childhood Attachment: A Controlled Investigation. *Sexual Abuse, A Journal of Research and Therapy*, 18, 289-302.

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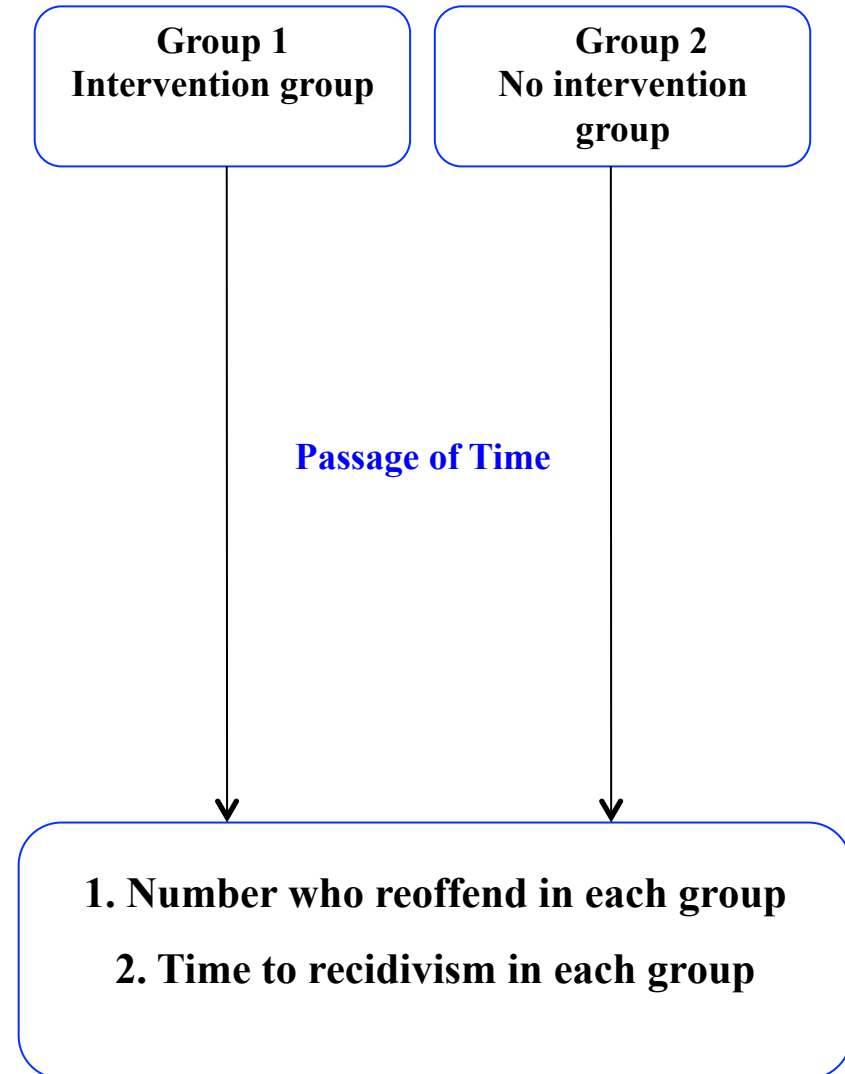
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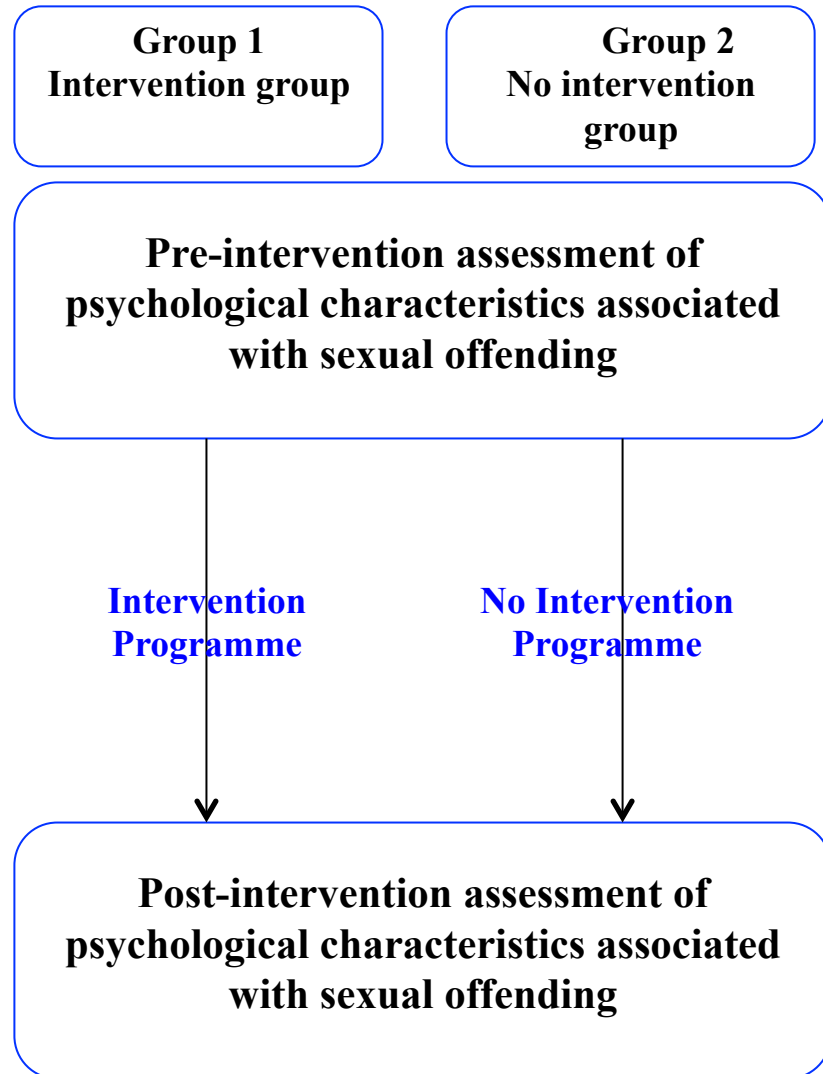
Evidence Strand 1: Psychological Change



Evidence Strand 2: Impact on Offence Recidivism



Irish Prison Service (IPS) Intervention Outcome Study 1

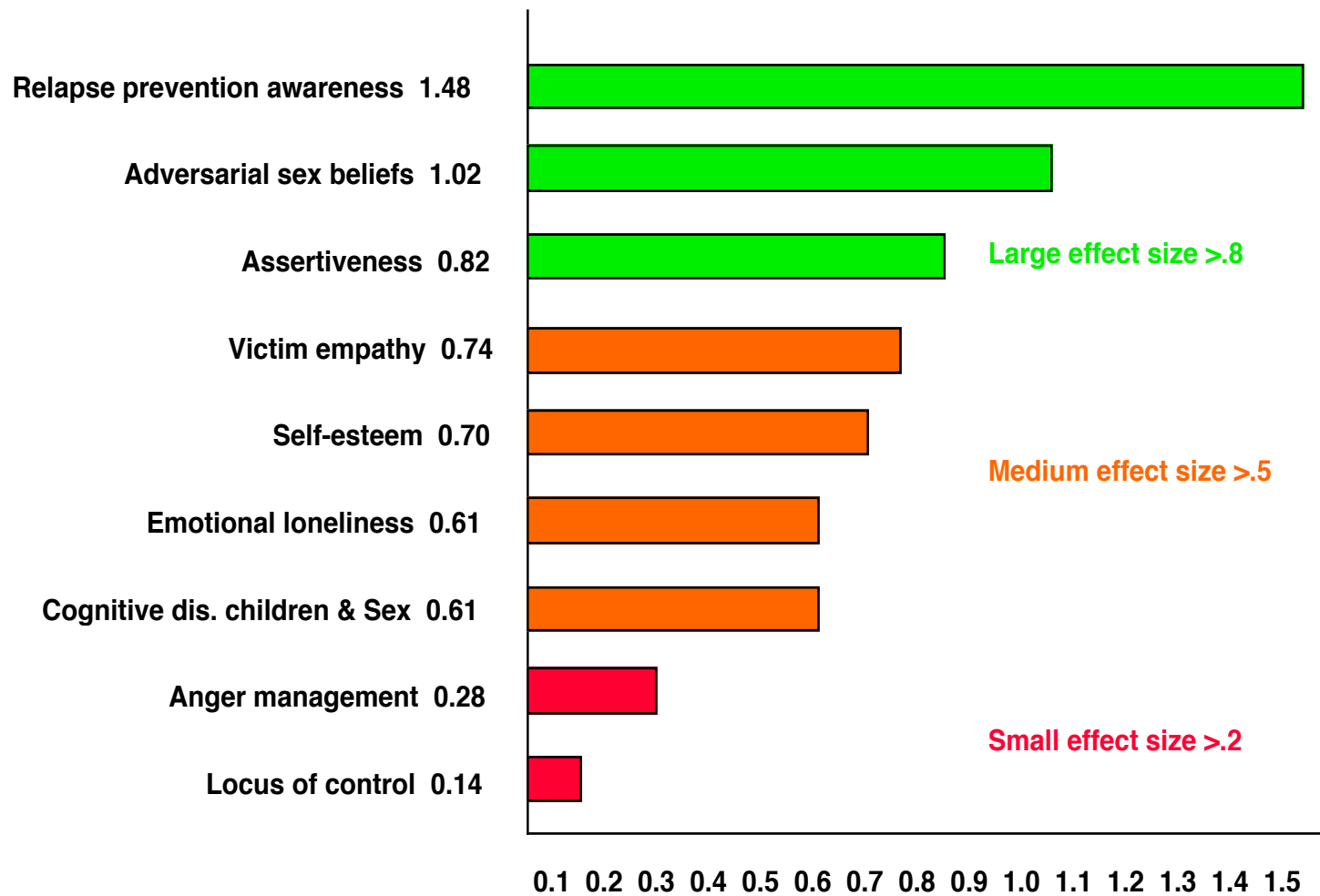


- 76 participants in total
- All 38 programme participants in a 3 year period assessed pre and post intervention compared to an equivalent 38 untreated men
- Represents everyone who the IPS structured CBT programme attempted to treat over a 3 year period



O' Reilly, G, Carr, A ., Murphy, P., & Cotter, A (2010). A controlled evaluation of a prison based sexual offender intervention programme. *Sexual Abuse, A Journal of Research and Therapy*, 22 (1); 95-111

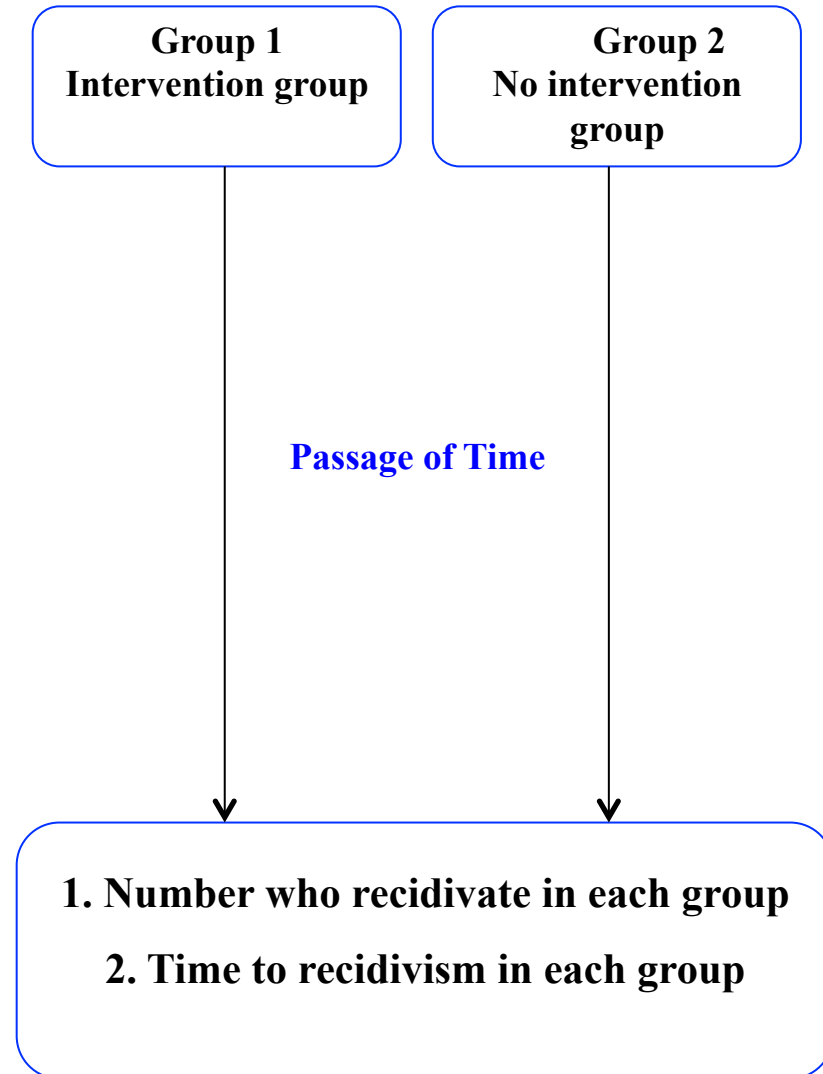
Very Positive Findings...



O' Reilly, G, Carr, A., Murphy, P., & Cotter, A (2010). A controlled evaluation of a prison based sexual offender intervention programme. *Sexual Abuse, A Journal of Research and Therapy*, 22 (1); 95-111

Irish Prison Service Intervention Outcome Study 2

- Outcome is reoffending
- 248 Participants in total
- All 124 convicted men the IPS ever attempted intervention with from 1994-2009 compared to a very carefully control group of 124 men who received no intervention
- Average follow-up time post release into the community was 6 years

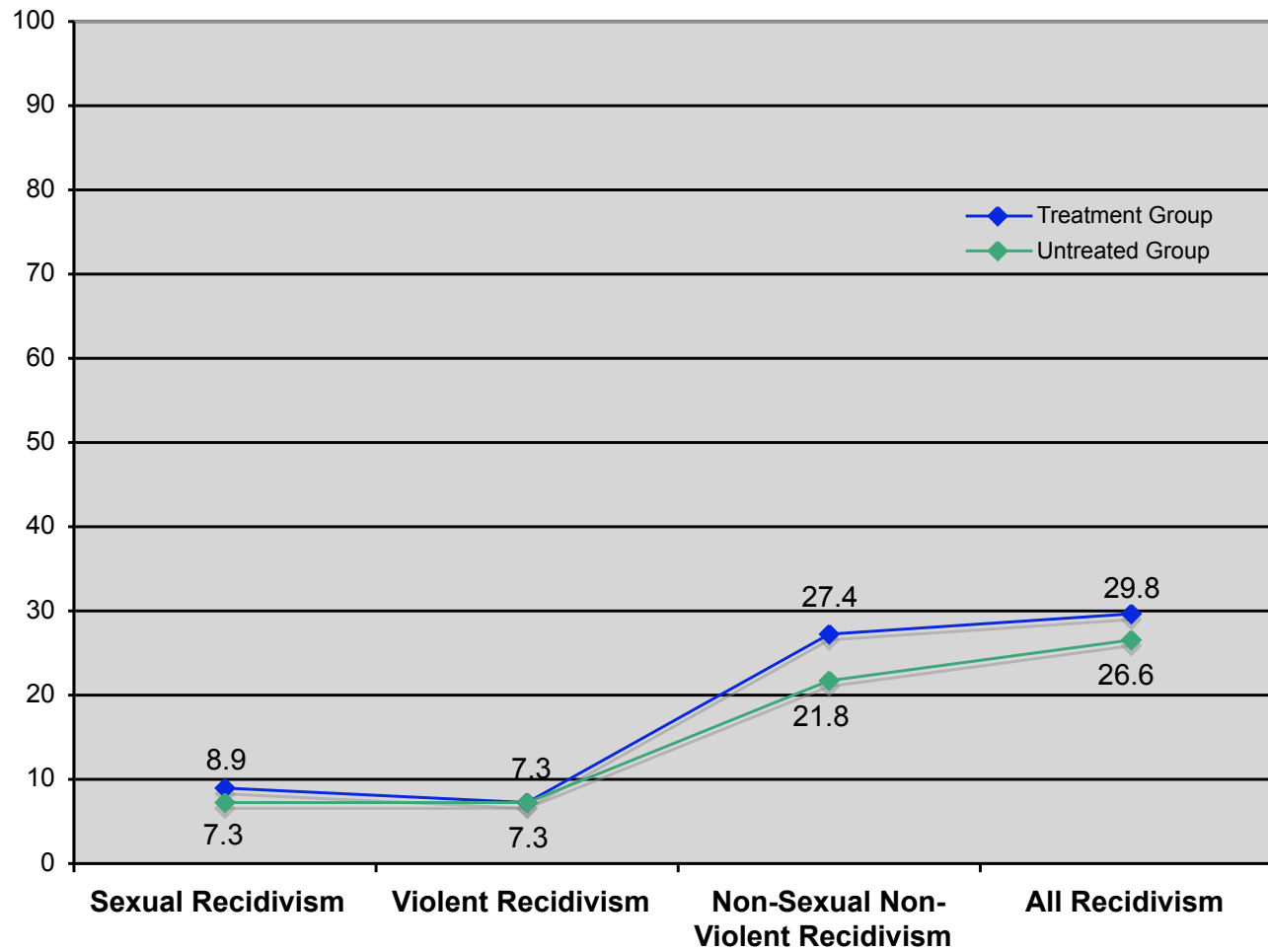


Outcome Data

- Recidivism measured by **re-conviction**, and/or **sentenced re-imprisonment**, and/or **time spent on remand**
- **Re-conviction** data obtained from Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Unit (D.V.S.A) of National Criminal Bureau of Investigation (N.C.B.I) via PULSE system
- **Re-imprisonment and remand** data obtained from PRIS (recent cases) (70% of the full group) and archived files held within the Irish Prison Service (historical cases) (30% of the full group).



Recidivism rates

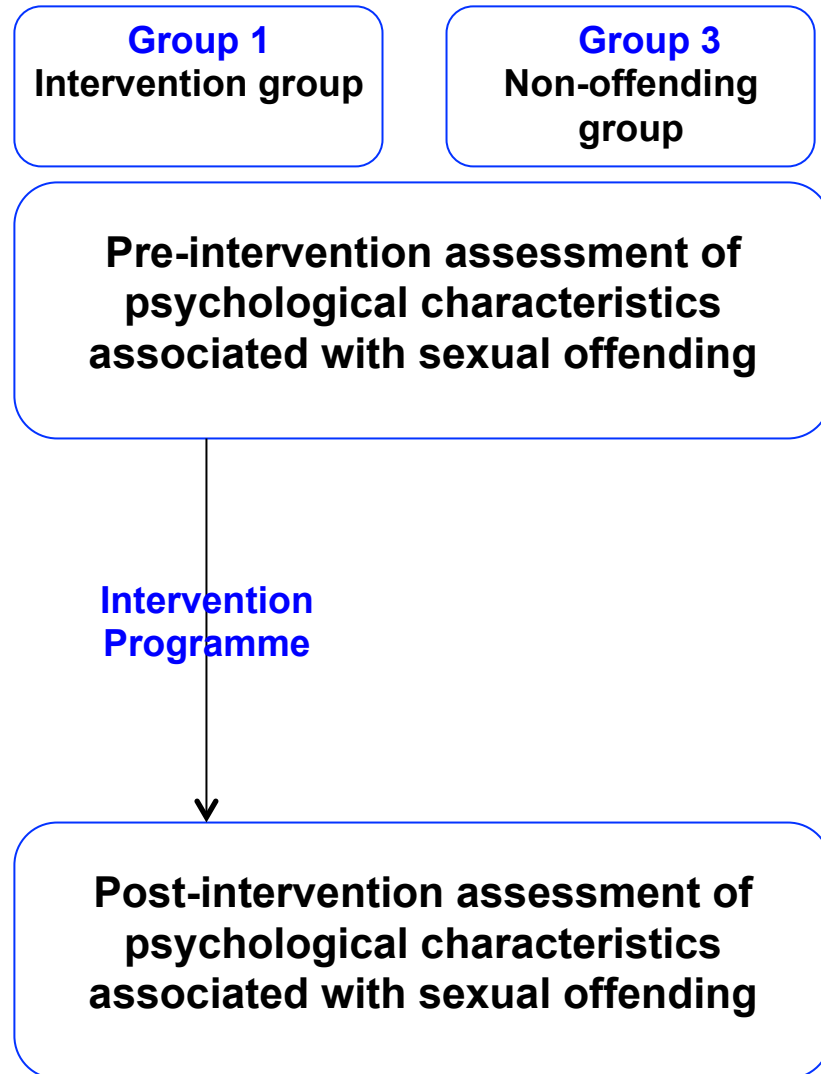


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Study 3: Adult Attachment Functioning



19 men convicted of sexual crimes compared to 19 demographically similar men with no known criminal history

Control group mean age 40.81 (12.86)

Offender group mean age 38.81 (10.71)

Child only victim: 14

Girls: 9

Boys: 3

Boy & girls: 1

Adult only victim: 4

Child & adult victim: 1

Familial: 7

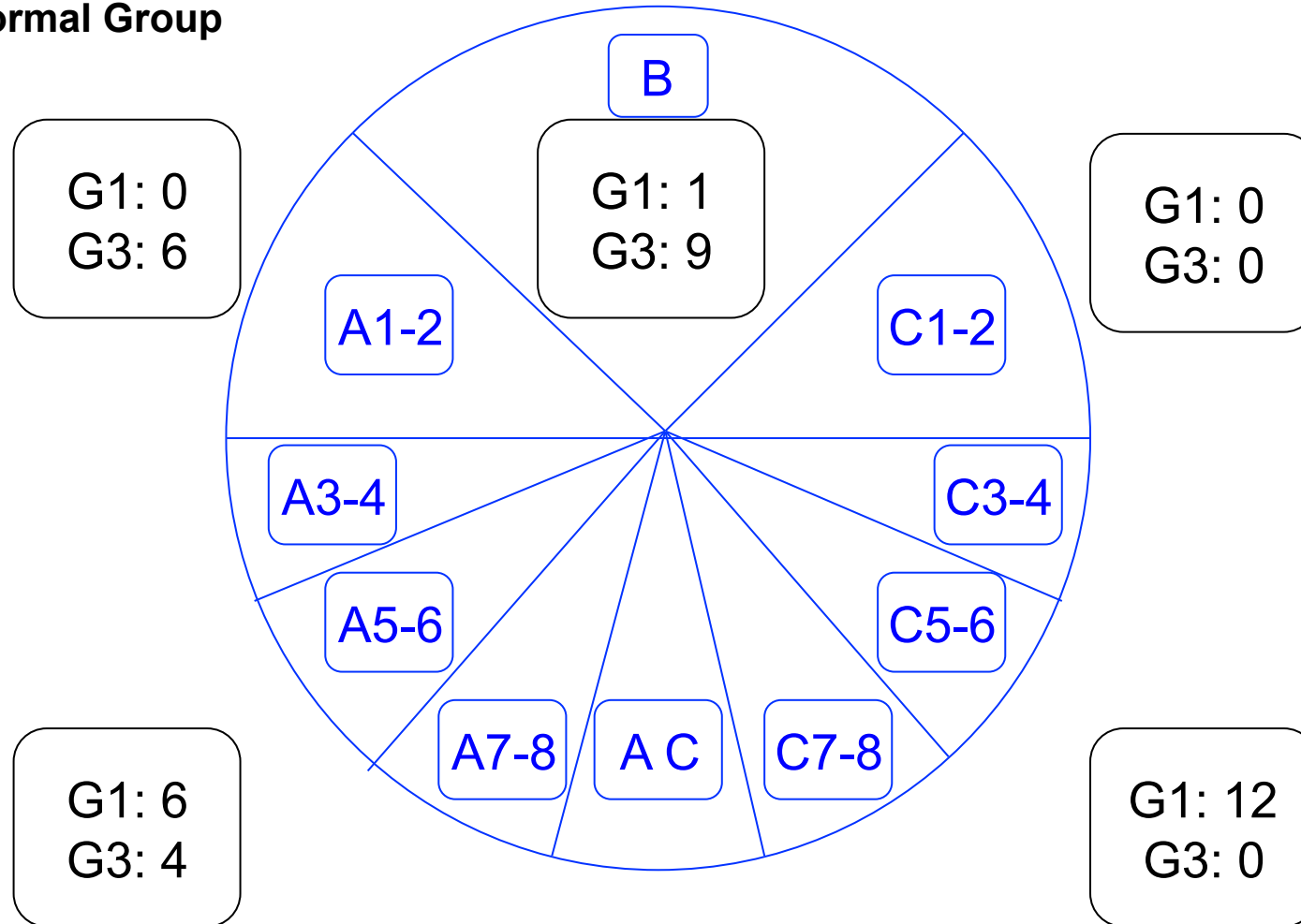
Non-Familial: 11

Both 1

Study 3: Adult Attachment Functioning

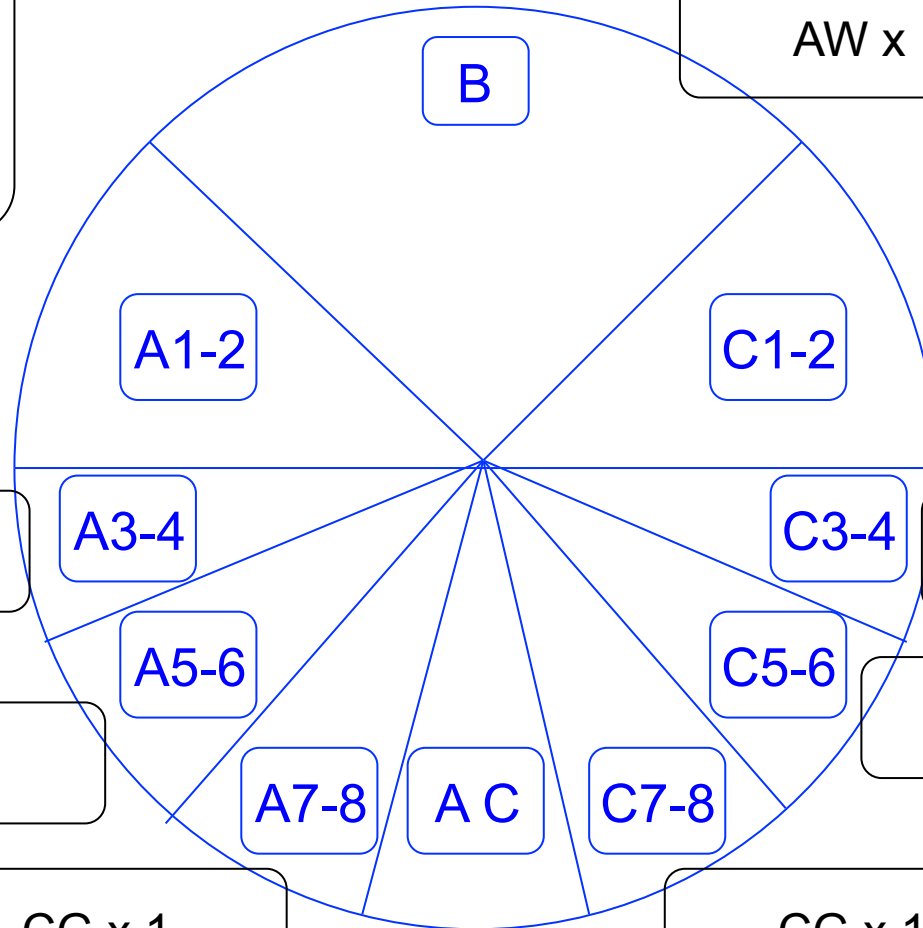
G1: Offender Group

G3: Normal Group



Study 3: Offence Type

AW: adult-woman
 CG: child-girl
 CB: child-boy
 G&B: child girl & boy
 C&A: child & adult



AW x 1

AW x 1
 CG x 2

CB x 1

CG x 2

AW x 2
 CG x 3 CB x 2
 G&B x 2 C&A x 1

10

CG x 1

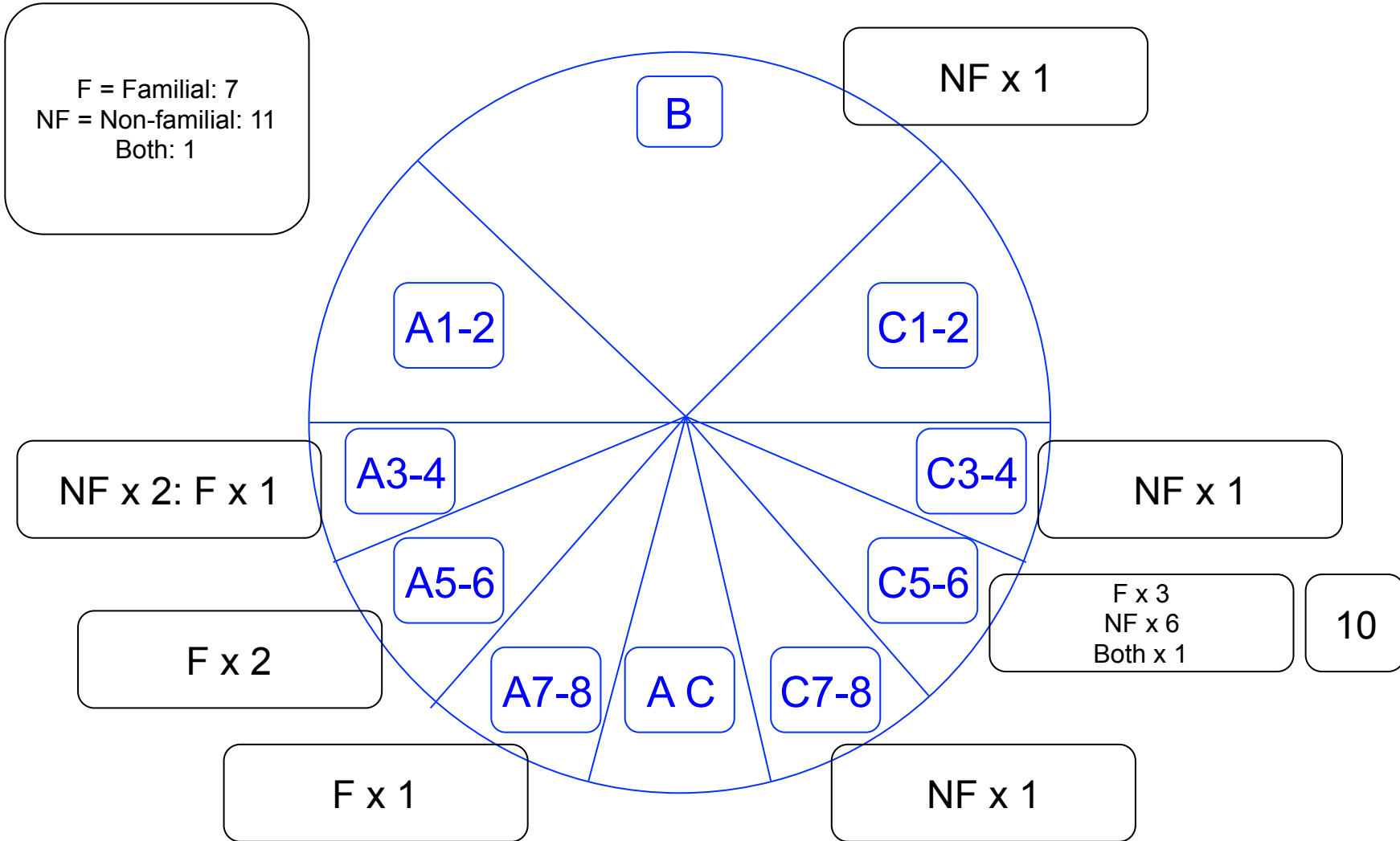
CG x 1

G1: 6
 G3: 4

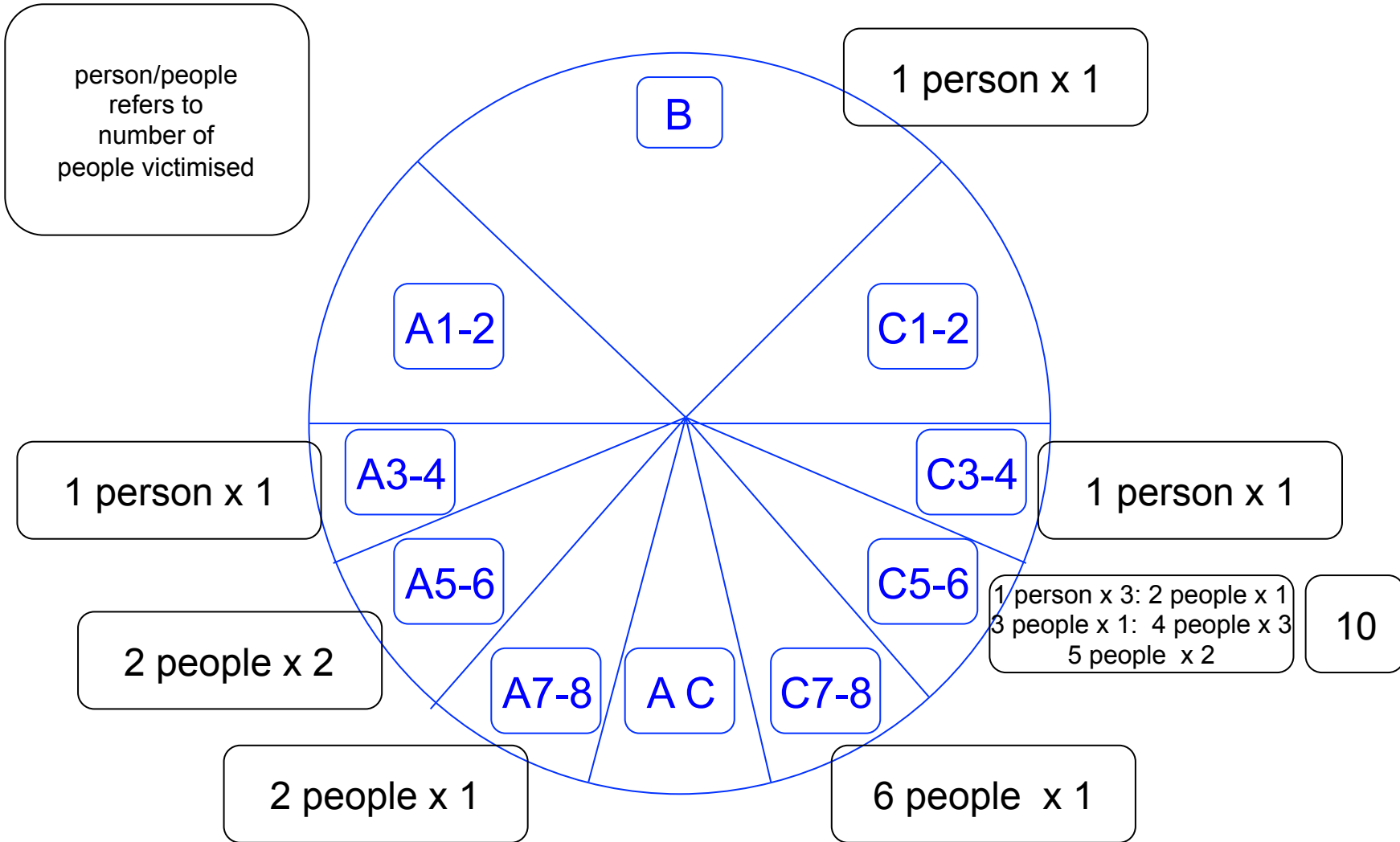
G1: 12
 G3: 0



Study 3: Familial or Non-familial



Study 3: Number of victims



Study 3: Unresolved loss

	Group 1 Offender Group	Group 2 Non-offender Group
Yes	5	3
No	14	16

Chi-square = 0.63 NS



Study 3: Unresolved trauma

	Group 1 Offender Group	Group 2 Non-offender Group
Yes	14	2
No	5	17

Chi-square = 15.55 $P < 0.001$



Conclusions

- 1. Offender group more likely to have non-normative A & C classifications**
- 2. C5-6 most frequent AAI classification (10/19)**
- 3. C3-4, C5-6 were associate with child boy victims**
- 4. C5-6, C7-8 associated with multiple victims**
- 5. Unresolved loss not associated with offending**
- 6. Unresolved trauma more likely in offender group**

Bill Marshall attachment theory and sexual offending...



- **Responsible for applying ideas on attachment to sexual offending behaviour**
- **Disruptions in childhood attachment...**
- **Leads to coercive manipulative relationship style**
- **Lead to peer relationship failure...**
- **Lead to a failure to establish intimate relationships in adolescent and adult life...**
- **Leads to chronic emotional loneliness which is associated with increased aggressiveness, and self-centredness**
- **Which increases risk of offending through application of maladaptive coercive insecure attachment driven relationship template**

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Applying models of adult attachment –Ward, Marshall & Siegert (1995).

- **Extend Marshall's ideas and introduce considerations on adult attachment rather than childhood attachment.**
- **Utilise a model of adult attachment developed by Bartholomew (1990) that has two dimensions:**
 - **Self regard (positive or negative)**
 - **Other regard (positive or negative)**
- **Different types of offending associated with different adult attachment styles**

Bartholomew Adult Attachment Model

