

ABSTRACT

In this study, we continued the follow-up of provincially registered child pornography offenders initially reported by Seto and Eke (2005). The average length of follow-up was extended to 3.6 years. As expected, prior criminal history predicted future sexual and nonsexual offending by child pornography offenders. The most consistently significant predictor of new offenses in this follow-up study was violent offense history; men with more extensive violent offense histories (nonsexual or sexual) were more likely to offend again, sexually or nonsexually.

Introduction & Methods

Relatively little is known about the risk of future offending posed by child pornography offenders. In 2005, we published the first follow-up study of child pornography offenders, and found that those with a prior criminal history were more likely to commit another offense, including a sexual offense involving physical contact with a victim (Seto & Eke, 2005).

In the present study, we extended the average follow-up to 3.6 years. We examined the predictive validity of offender age (at the time of the index child pornography offense and at the time of his first criminal charge or conviction) and criminal history (number of prior nonviolent offenses; number of prior violent offenses; number of prior contact sexual offenses; and number of prior noncontact sexual offenses, which would include prior child pornography offenses).

We also calculated two indices of cumulative involvement in nonviolent and violent crime, respectively, based on the Cormier-Lang System for Quantifying Criminal History (Quinsey, Harris, Rice & Cormier, 1998). The Cormier-Lang Criminal History System takes into account both the number and seriousness of prior offenses.

PARTICIPANTS

The study sample consisted of men listed on the Ontario Sex Offender Registry who had ever been convicted for possession, distribution, or production of child pornography, as defined by Canadian criminal law.

Methods, cont'd

The Sex Offender Registry is a database of adult sex offenders who reside in the province of Ontario. Adult sex offenders are required to register annually with police, who record the following information: name; date of birth; current address; current photograph; physical description; behaviour related to the offense; and known sexual offenses.

PROCEDURE

We obtained information on each child pornography offender from the Ontario Sex Offender Registry. Interrater reliability was examined for study variables in a total of 24 cases, with 8 cases reviewed at the beginning, middle, and end of the coding process, respectively. Interrater reliability was very good, with Spearman correlations for the continuous variables ranging from .94 to 1.0, and kappas for the categorical variables ranging from .70 to 1.0. Any disagreements between raters were then resolved by consensus for all cases.

We defined a nonviolent offense as a charge or conviction for offenses that did not involve direct contact with a person (e.g., offenses such as theft, fraud, or possession of narcotics). Child pornography and noncontact sexual offenses were also counted in this category. As in other studies on sex offenders that we have conducted, we defined a violent offense as a charge or conviction for a nonsexually violent or sexual offense involving physical contact with a victim (Barbaree, Seto, Langton, & Peacock, 2001; Seto & Barbaree, 1999). We defined a sexual offense as one that could be clearly identified as being sexual in nature based on the category of criminal offense or other information available in the databases.

We obtained information about new offenses (defined as new charges or convictions) as of November-December 2005 by accessing a national database maintained by the Canadian Police Information Centre, a service of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Recidivism data were available for 198 of the 204 male offenders reported in our original study: four men had died and two men were no longer listed on the provincial sex offender registry.

Thirteen (6.6%) of the child pornography offenders committed a contact sexual offense during the follow-up period, while 14 (7.1%) committed another child pornography offense. The violent (including contact sexual offense) offense rate was 9%, and the overall rate for a new offense of any kind was 22%.

Predictive accuracy was examined using receiver operating characteristic (ROC) analysis. The index of accuracy is the area under the ROC curve, which can be interpreted as the probability that a randomly selected recidivist has a higher score on the predictor variable than a randomly selected non-recidivist. An area of 0.50 indicates prediction at chance levels, while an area of 1.0 indicates perfect prediction.

Results

Figure 1. Receiver Operating Characteristic Curves for Criminal History Variables as Predictors of Committing A New Violent Offense During the Follow-Up Period.

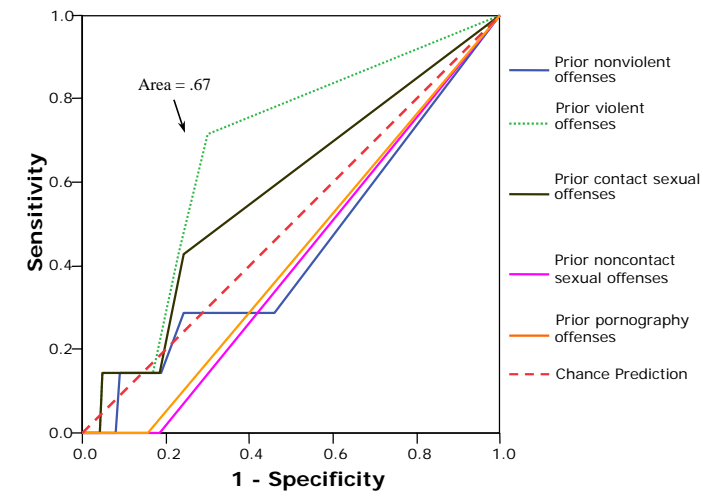


Figure 2. Receiver Operating Characteristic Curves for Cormier-Lang Criminal History Indices as Predictors of Committing A New Violent Offense During the Follow-Up Period.

