Sex Offending: Social Learning Theory

A criminological theory that I think best explains sex offending is Social Learning Theory. More so, the Neutralization or Drift Theory. This theory begins to explain that offenders are not deviant in the event that they are alone, they are grouped together in behaving criminally together. Neutralization theory helps understand sex offending for many reasons. One being the cognitive distortions of the offender, which is the internal processes that the offender is intaking. More so, their disordered experiences come from the reflections of their cognition, which combine together to end with the deviant behavior of becoming an offender. It was stated in the textbook that cognitive distortion can be recognized if a sex offender were to believe that a child is a sexual being, it most likely came from their “reflections” from when they were a child and sexually abused or sexually active. Now, this can move onto why sex offenders do what they do. This typically does not state why sex offender is involved in sex crimes, but it gives the sex offenders a time in which they can defend and continue the deviant behavior that partakes in. It has been found that amongst these cognitive distortions, specific offender types, relates to what deviant behavior is going to happen. This theory best explains sex offending due to many reasons. It allows you to see why sex offender engages in certain deviant behavior. It also helps identify the different types of sex offender which shows the results of cognitive distortion throughout the different types of offending. Overall, it gives you the ability to see what types of beliefs that sex offenders fail to understand and comply with. This theory allows us to have a better understanding of what sex offending actually is.

Neutralization theory best explains sex offending as a whole, yet it allows you to see it from a different view for different types of sex offenders. One type of sex offender that fit within this theory is child molesters. Child molesters fail to understand the belief of what is acceptable in regards to having sex with a child. Child molesters typically miss the generalization of what social cues are, which makes certain situations into disasters. As child molesters tend to believe that it is normal to have sexual interaction with children, they ought to think that they are similar mentally and sexually to adults. A huge misinterpretation that sex offenders have with the interaction with children is that they take the innocence of a child and compare it with the love and sexually interest of what an adult would have with another adult. Sex offenders sometimes misunderstand “normal” child-like engagements, in which they believe their response is normal and not criminal behavior. As an example used from the text, as what is defined as “proactive behavior”, when a child would ask to be tucked in at bedtime, but the sex offender would see that as the child wanted to engage in sexual activity. Another type of sex offender that can be understood throughout is incest offenders. Incest offender fails the beliefs of what a father-daughter relationship is. Some researchers see it as the father felt “entitled” to have sexual interaction with his daughter, but others say that it has been noted that the offenders say that the daughter will engage to have sex with the father. This type of offender allows us to have an understanding of what cognitive distortion they have about father-daughter relationships.

This theory helps better the explanation of what sex offending is. It allows you to see the different types of sex offending and how they see it as normal when in reality is wrong and deviant behavior. It simply shows that sex offending is a complete defect in cognition. This theory also helps have a better understanding of the etiology of sexual offending, which helps explain sex offending as a whole.

Gender is an important facet of how we understand sex offending, as well as the punishment of the crimes. It is important because of how our society made misperceptions of sex offenders, more so, myths about them. So, with that being said, it is important to know about gender with what is true and not true. Typically when thinking of a sex offender, a male comes to mind. It is rare to think of a sex offender is a woman, but it certainly can happen. It has been found that females are rapidly growing in the criminal justice system (Freeman & Sandler, 2008). It is important to know the differences between male and female sex offenders due to many reasons. Between female and male sex offenders there is a difference in the type of sex crime that they commit. As well as the demographics and offense characteristics. In past research on the comparison of recidivism patterns and risk factors between female and male sex offender, many major findings were found (Freeman & Sandler, 2008). They wanted to find the importance of the difference between female and male sex offenders. Amongst the findings of this research, allows you to realize why understanding the importance of gender in relation to sex offending. It allowed you to see the difference in many factors of sex offending, such as treatment, supervision, and recidivism. The findings concluding that males were more likely to have a rearrests for sexual and nonsexual offenses, which also included their prior criminal histories. Freeman & Sandler concluded that females were more likely to victimize males as males victimized females (2008). That is obvious to see because they are the “normal” cases that are reported. With the female population in the criminal justice system growing, it is now important to include the information on their sex crimes. It is important to understand the severity of the crime because of the fact that sex offenders have to register as a sex offender, in which there are some cases that females or males do not have to register. It has come to the understanding that female sex offenders believed to be under-detected, which is why sex offending is looked at as a male issue (Freeman & Sandler, 2008). It is noticed that the majority of males are the offenders who are convicted of sex crimes, females still have a large portion of sex offenses. It is important to understand some key factors of the difference between female and male sex offenders. Females and males led to having different relationships with their victims. For example, when the offender is a parent of the victim, it shows that it is typically a female. Whereas the offender is either relatives, neighbors, or friends, it typically tends to be a male (Lehmiller, 2015). The length of time that an offender shows the difference in gender. A male will have victims for a long period of time, which differs from a female offender. The background of their childhood life is a key factor in the difference in gender sex offenders. Females offender most likely comes from a home with experiences of sexual abuse or violence, drug interactions, or psychological disorders. That could not be said the same about male sex offenders. Overall, the factors that hold the differences in female and male sex offenders are important to know.

As for the punishment in relation to the gender of sex offending, this is also an important facet due to many reasons. The main reason why is it important to understand the sex difference within sex offenders is because of the stereotypes of female and males. Males tend to have it more harshly than females in any aspect of life (Lehmiller, 2015). It is known that male offenders typically have a prior record, sexual or nonsexual, In which is why that may have a more harsh punishment. As far as the treatment to make the punishment lesser, females are more willing than men to participate in treatment, making their punishment less than male offenders. Another factor to understand the importance of punishment is that since male sex offenders are more likely to keep their victims for a longer period of time, that may have an influence on the punishment of their crime (Lehmiller, 2015). It is important to know the difference in gender punishment and the importance it has to sex offending.

Gender is also important for understanding the victim side of a sex crime. It is important to know that for both male and females victims is that they feel that they are being blamed. They even believe that they are not being treated correctly by the criminal justice system. It is more common of a woman then men to report their sexual abuse or violence, men typically do not report it for the sake of being embarrassed (Lehmiller, 2015). When thinking of a victim of a sex crime, a woman normally comes to mind because males are rare to report the event of sex crimes if they are the victim. Gender is important to understand while dealing with sex offending because of how to treat the victim. Many females will participate in treatment based groups to heal from a horrible incident, but men typically do not want to partake in them.

Correctional treatment of sex offenders is a difficult topic to understand. In comparison to other offenders such as violent and nonviolent, sex offenders could be viewed as different. Many believe that sex offenders can be changed through the treatment process due to the fact that society views their behaviors as compulsive. It is also believed that sex offenders have the lesser ability to have effectiveness in treatment in comparison to other offenders. Treatment as a whole for a sex offender, violent offenders, and non-violent offenders show that if they receive treatment for their crimes, they will have a less likely chance of recidivism. Sex offenders tend to receive correctional treatment slightly different than other violent and not violent offenders. In a research Marshall (1989) found that sex offender would refer to themselves as socially isolated from other offenders. Within other research, it has been found that relationships with staff and other offenders tend to be a negative relationship. In which that creates isolation for them to be involved in the treatment they need while being incarcerated. The main goal for sex offending treatment is to have reduced the chances of recidivism. As well as other violent and nonviolent offenders. As the treatment is not extremely different from one another, it is noticed that correctional treatment for a sex offender is typically more focused on their behavior and treating any occurring disorders (Marshall, 1989). Rather than other violent and nonviolent offenders, will typically have treatment based on the crime they commit, incident-based or have an overall broad treatment for all other offenders. The violent and nonviolent offender will have More so, if the correctional facility does not offer a certain type of sex offending based treatment, they will be offered to have a general therapy session with a professional (Marshall, 1989). There has been a debate on if specific treatment over generalized treatment has more of an effect on offenders recidivism rates. Sex offenders have a more specific based treatment rather than other offenders typically have a broad-based treatment. Some treatment programs that correctional facilities used include the following: chemical castration treatment, behavioral method treatment, and cognitive method treatment (Marshall, 1989). Along with supervision being a major key treatment factor working alongside the programs. Some programs used for the offender of both natures include some but not limited to counseling, medical treatment, and cognitive-behavior therapy. A difference that is noticeable is that within their sentencing if an offender is convicted of a sex crime, they will have court-ordered treatment requirement following their sentence. As for other offenders, they may not have a mandatory treatment or any programs at all. As for violent offenders, typically they will have to fulfill sometime of therapy or program in relation to their type of crime (Marshall, 1989). Other non-violent offenders have the option to volunteer for correctional treatment or program involvement. So, to say is there a big difference in the different types of treatment for offenders, not necessarily. If any difference, it would be that the treatment is more in-depth for the type of offender’s need for different type of correctional treatment (Marshall, 1989). Treatment, in general, is effective no matter what the offenses are because there is a slim chance that these offenders will end up in the community someday.

Within my internship, I have been able to work with sex offenders, which has given me a hands-on experience to see the type of correctional treatment that they need. Along with being able to see the differences in treatment offered for other violent and nonviolent offenders. Majority of their treatment is a court-ordered and mandatory to finish with their sentencing. Now for other offenders, they have the option on programs and correctional treatment to attend. With my experience working with this population, I have found that more than half of the offenders will attend treatment, more so, to clear their mind or just to participate in past time. For high-risk offenders, correctional facilities and mental health agency will try to get them into a mental health housing, making them have the chance to receive treatment especially for their type of offending. Treatment for all types of offenders is effective in reducing the rates of recidivism, which helps to see what types of correctional treatment is effective for what type of offender.

My understanding of sex offending changed drastically from when we began the semester. I had many questions because my knowledge of sex offending was only based off of stereotypes and what social media had to say about this broad category. Mainly my understanding of sex offending was the myths that our society has molded for these individuals. With sex offenders being at large within our criminal justice system, there is more to know other than just being able to pinpoint who they are. More so, I have learned key characteristics, misperceptions of crimes and offenders, and methods to reduce recidivism. Along with the attitude of society towards and against them, the legal side of sex offending, and juvenile offenders.

It has come to my understanding that I finally have a full comprehend what sex offending entails. It has filled in all the blanks of the questions I had for what it takes to classify an individual as a sex offender, along with their typology within the crime they have committed. At the start, I did not have much knowledge that there were different types of sex offenders. I knew that there were different types of crime but I just thought there they were called a sex offender. Now I am aware of the different types of them. Since my post discussion was involving the risk assessments used to reduce recidivism and treatment needs, I was able to see how they are not that effective or even slightly used. I was able to grasp the understanding of why it is hard to rely on certain assessments. They have been found to be poor indicators of sex offender recidivism risk within certain offenders, rapists and child molesters.

My understanding of how our legal system and society are going to move forward with how sex offending is going to be reduced, as well as what is going to be done with victims of sex crimes, has changed. Before taking this course, I did not realize that there are more policies than I knew for sex offenders and crimes. I can take many treatment recommendations that I was unaware of, to future options for consumers that are sex offenders. I have learned that as well as it is the importance to have treatment for the victims of sex crimes, it is just as important for the sex offenders themselves. For example, I believe it is just as important to have sex offenders, when released from prison into the community, to have the effective tools to be successful in reentering society. To have them be released into the community with no tools to be successful only sets them up to be right back in the place they started in. overall, I have learned that all sex crimes are not created equally, need to have individual treatment for different types, and recognition of unreported sex crimes.

I have been able to work hand-and-hand with sex offenders, along with their victims. So, with this class teaching me so much about how to identify certain key characteristics, gender differences, and typologies, I have been able to grow within this field of work. Along with the laws and regulations against sex crimes and sex offenders. It has been interesting to see the

differences between all of the types of sex offenders and the treatment that they are offered. I have even been able to experience gender differences in sex offenders. I have noticed from my internship, even this class, that men have a hard time over women. Even with treatment, women are more willing to accept services than men. I feel honored that I am able to work with what I am learning, it has made understanding this topic that much easier. At first, it was difficult to work with offenders of this nature because I was so uneducated about them, as I became more aware of certain issues I was able to cognize them. Since it is challenging to fathom why sex offenders do these abysmal actions, it is thrilling to physically hear why they did what they did, why they do what they do. So, between this class and my internship, I have grasped a full understanding of the broad spectrum of what sex offending actually is.