

# **Does Specialized Psychological Treatment for Sexual Offending Reduce Recidivism?**

Theresa A. Gannon

Mark E. Olver

Jaimee S. Mallion

Mark James



Ministry  
of Justice

## Impact evaluation of the prison-based Core Sex Offender Treatment Programme

Aidan Mews, Laura Di Bella and Mark Purver  
Ministry of Justice

Ministry of Justice Analytical Series  
2017

# BAD PSYCHOLOGY

## HOW FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY LEFT SCIENCE BEHIND

Robert A. Forde





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# 25% increase in sexual offending for TREATED group



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# **BAD PSYCHOLOGY**

HOW FORENSIC  
PSYCHOLOGY LEFT  
SCIENCE BEHIND

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“...sex offender programmes have been shown to be dramatically lacking in effectiveness”

p. 273

# BAD PSYCHOLOGY

HOW FORENSIC  
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SCIENCE BEHIND

Robert A. Forde



“[Core] is very similar to those run throughout the Western world”

p. 273









Treatment Effectiveness (Meta-Analyses)



A New Meta-Analysis



Things to Think About



# Treatment Effectiveness (Meta-Analyses)



A New Meta-Analysis



Things to Think About

# Historical Timeline

■ Meta-Analysis

■ Single Study

Recidivism = Rearrest or Reconviction



# Historical Timeline

All = Treatment Effect

BUT:

Comparisons seriously compromised

Hall (1995)  
Alexander (1999)  
Gallagher et al.  
(1999)



1990

2000

2010

2020

Hanson et al. (2002)  
43 studies  
12.3% vs. 16.8%

> 9,000 Individuals

BUT:

Included generic psychological  
treatment

Hall (1995)  
Alexander (1999)  
Gallagher et al.  
(1999)

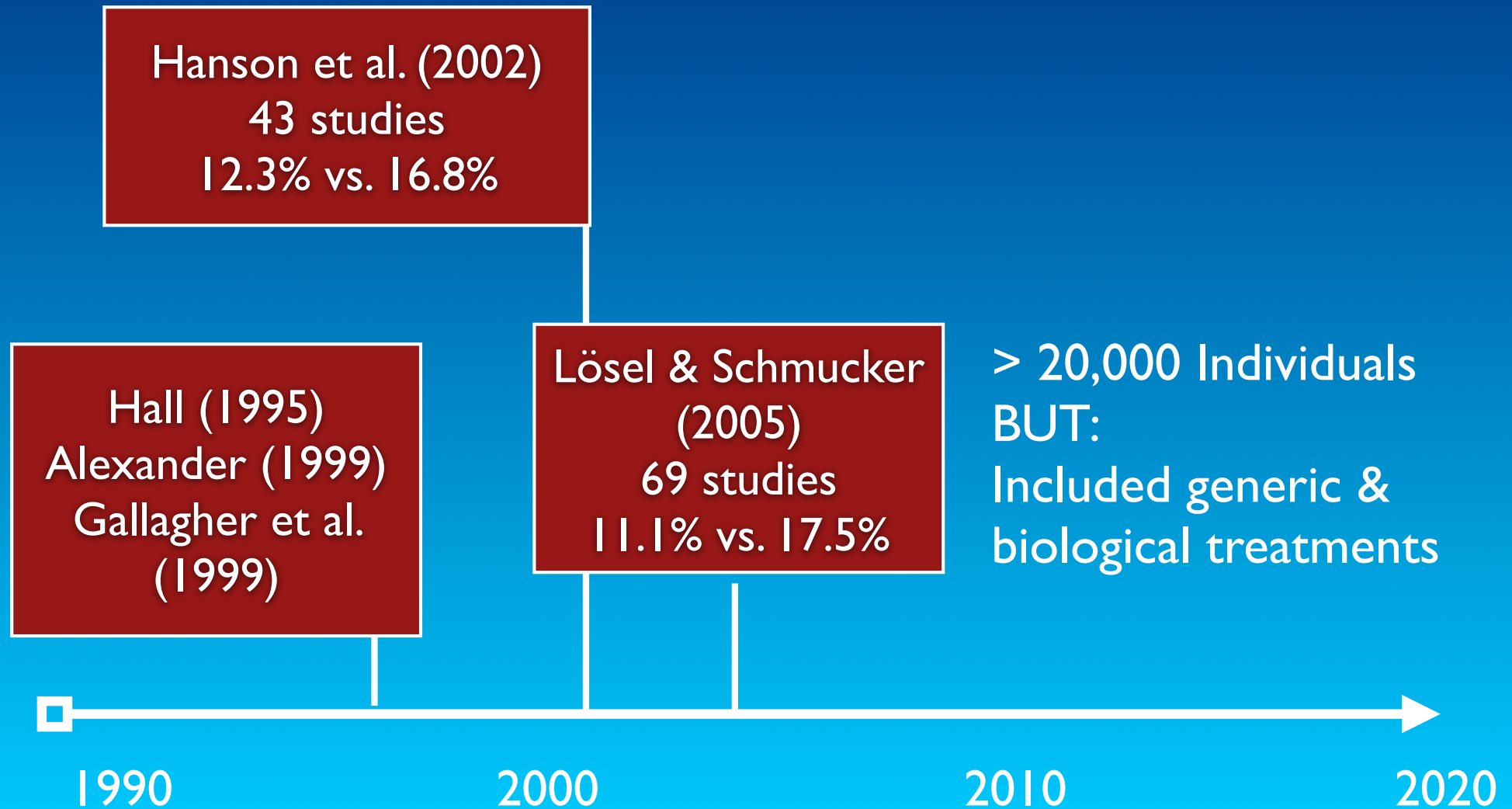


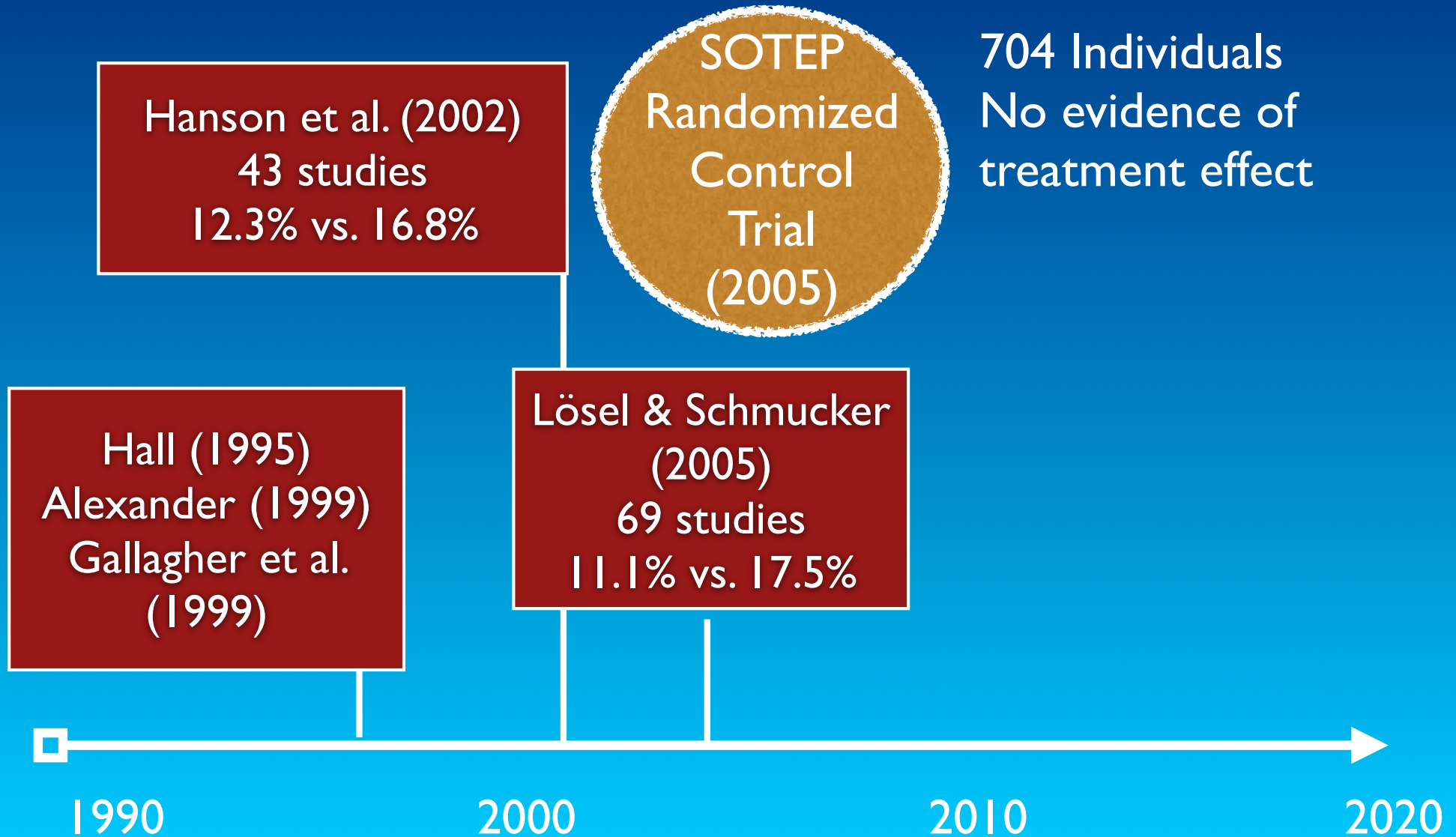
1990

2000

2010

2020







> 10,000 Individuals  
BUT: Included generic  
treatment  
No effect in prisons?

Beech et al. (2015)  
Schmucker & Lösel  
(2015)  
27 studies  
10.1% vs. 13.7%

SOTEP  
Randomized  
Control  
Trial  
(2005)

Hanson et al. (2002)  
43 studies  
12.3% vs. 16.8%

Lösel & Schmucker  
(2005)  
69 studies  
11.1% vs. 17.5%

Hall (1995)  
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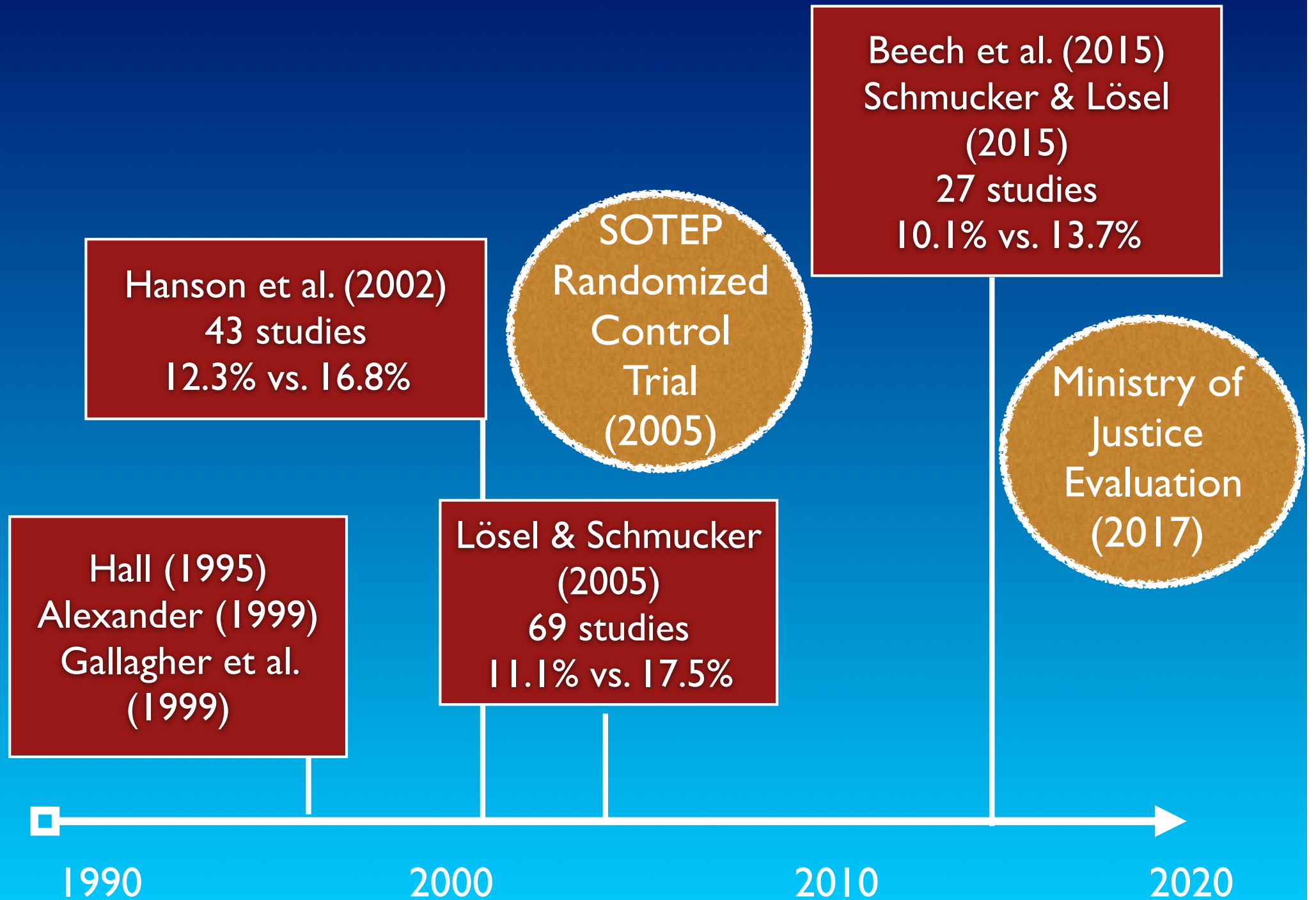


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# 25% increase in sexual offending for TREATED group

Treatment Design?  
Poor Implementation?

SOTEP  
Randomized  
Control  
Trial  
(2005)

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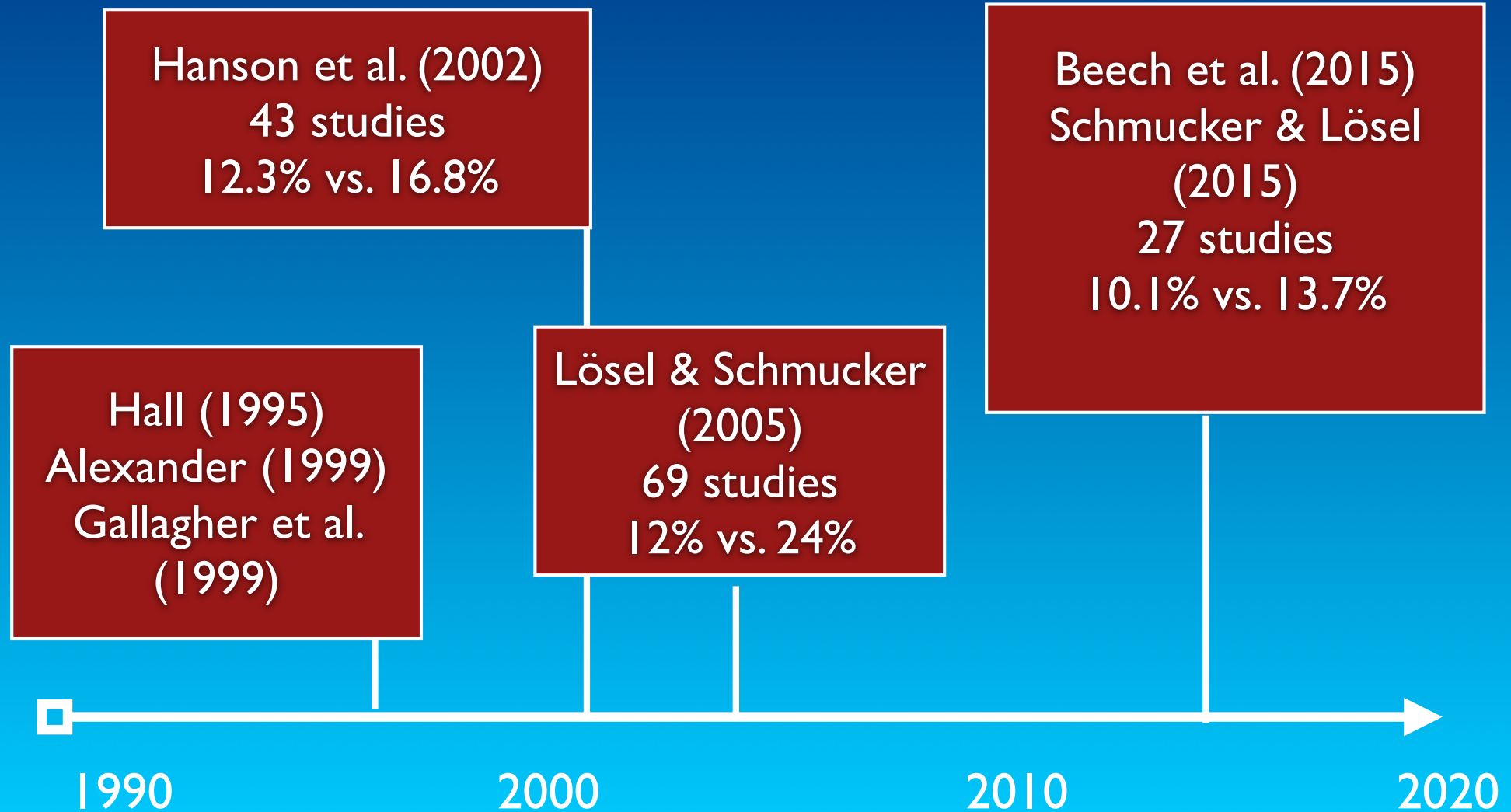
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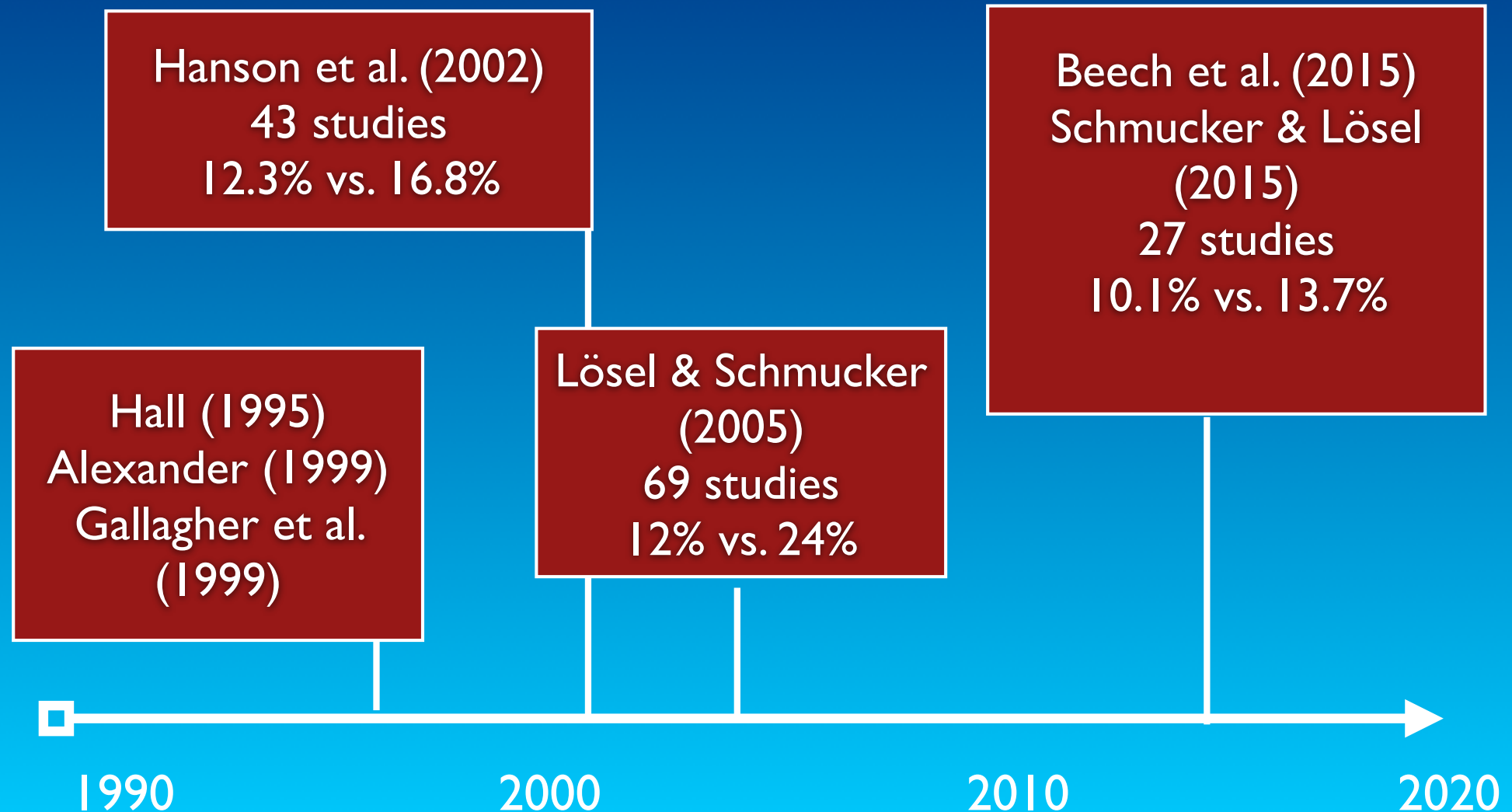
2020

# What's Missing?



# What's Missing?

## Psychological Offense Focussed Treatment Staffing Program Variables



What's Missing?

Psychological Offense Focussed Treatment

Staffing

Program Variables

Biological treatments are different!

General psych programs - not offense specific

# What's Missing?

Psychological Offense Focussed Treatment

Staffing

Program Variables



# What's Missing?

Psychological Offense Focussed Treatment

Staffing

Program Variables

## Specialist Hypothesis Psychological Expertise Required Psychologists Should Treat



# What's Missing?

Psychological Offense Focussed Treatment

Staffing

Program Variables

**Specialist Hypothesis**  
Psychological Expertise Required  
**Psychologists Should Treat**

Or

**Generalist Hypothesis**  
Correctional Psychology Palpable  
**All Can Treat**



# What's Missing?

Psychological Offense Focussed Treatment  
Staffing

Program Variables

# What's Missing?

Psychological Offense Focussed Treatment  
Staffing

## Program Variables

**Modality** (Schmucker & Lösel, 2015)

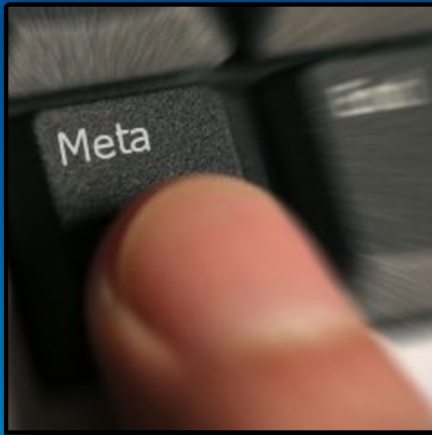
Supervision

Arousal Conditioning

Polygraph Use



Treatment Effectiveness (Meta-Analyses)



## A New Meta-Analysis



Things to Think About



# A New Meta-Analysis

First update since 2010

Includes

Ministry of  
Justice  
Evaluation  
(2017)



# A New Meta-Analysis

- 1 Does Psychological Sexual Offense-Specific Treatment Reduce Sexual Recidivism?
- 2 Is the Psychology Profession Needed?
- 3 What Program Variables are Important?



## Review

**Does specialized psychological treatment for offending reduce recidivism? A meta-analysis examining staff and program variables as predictors of treatment effectiveness**Theresa A. Gannon<sup>a,\*</sup>, Mark E. Olver<sup>b</sup>, Jaimee S. Mallion<sup>a</sup>, Mark James<sup>a</sup><sup>a</sup> Centre of Research and Education in Forensic Psychology, School of Psychology, University of Kent, UK<sup>b</sup> Department of Psychology, University of Saskatchewan, Canada

## HIGHLIGHTS

- This meta-analysis examined psychological offense treatment and recidivism.
- Overall, 70 studies were identified; including over 55,000 individuals.
- Treatment was associated with offense-specific and general recidivism reductions.
- Programs with consistent input from a qualified psychologist had best results.

## ARTICLE INFO

**Keywords:**  
Offense treatment  
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Pre-registered with OSF

70 Studies  
- 47 Sexual Offending  
- 23 Violence

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Excluded

ID,  
Adolescents,  
Mental Disorder  
Drop Out Controls

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Study ID \_\_\_\_\_

# CODING MANUAL

Gannon, Olver, Mallion, and James

Coder Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-registered with OSF

70 Studies

- 47 Sexual Offending

- 23 Violence

$N = 41,476$

Excluded ID,  
Adolescents,  
Mental Disorder  
Drop Out Controls

Detailed Coding Manual

Study ID \_\_\_\_\_

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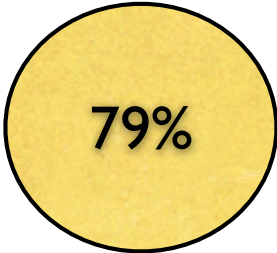
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79%



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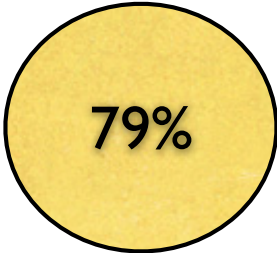
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79%

Unpublished and Published Research



# A New Meta-Analysis

- 1 Does Psychological Sexual Offense-Specific Treatment Reduce Sexual Recidivism?
- 2 Is the Psychology Profession Needed?
- 3 What Program Variables are Important?

# ① Does Psychological Sexual Offense-Specific Treatment Reduce Sexual Recidivism?

Recidivism = Arrests or Reconvictions

Mostly CBT

No Huge Impact of Design Quality

Smaller OR = Better Treatment Effect

# 1 Does Psychological Sexual Offense-Specific Treatment Reduce Sexual Recidivism?

Treated

Untreated

9.5% vs. 14.1% 32.6%

Schmucker  
& Lösel 2015

OR  
10.1% vs. 13.7% 26.3%

Prison and Community Settings!



# A New Meta-Analysis

- ① Does Psychological Sexual Offense-Specific Treatment Reduce Sexual Recidivism?
- ② Is the Psychology Profession Needed?
- ③ What Program Variables are Important?

## 2 Is the Psychology Profession Needed?

How often did an independent registered psychologist facilitate treatment?

Able to practice independently  
Unclear/None      Inconsistently      Consistently

OR: 0.64

OR: 0.74

OR: 0.43

Competent trained professionals  
more expert in responding to  
complex issues?



# A New Meta-Analysis

- 1 Does Psychological Sexual Offense-Specific Treatment Reduce Sexual Recidivism?
- 2 Is the Psychology Profession Needed?
- 3 What Program Variables are Important?



# 3 What Program Variables are Important?

New Findings:

### 3 What Program Variables are Important?

New Findings:

**Modality:** Group (vs. Combined Group & Individual) = Better

**Supervision:** Staff Supervision (vs. None/Unknown) = Better

**Arousal Conditioning:** Yes (vs. None) = Better

**Polygraph Use:** No (vs. Yes) = Better

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**Supporting Evidence**

### 3 What Program Variables are Important?

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# Psychological Skills



Treatment Effectiveness



A New Meta-Analysis



Things to Think About



# Things to Think About



- Psychological Skills & Content





# BAD PSYCHOLOGY

HOW FORENSIC  
PSYCHOLOGY LEFT  
SCIENCE BEHIND

Robert A. Forde



“[Core] is very similar to those run throughout the Western world”

X

p. 273

Psychological Skills & Content



**Impact evaluation of the prison-based  
Core Sex Offender Treatment Programme**

**Aidan Mews, Laura Di Bella and Mark Purver**  
Ministry of Justice

Ministry of Justice Analytical Series  
2017

# Consistent Psychological Input



# Conditioning Procedures



**Effects of a Relapse Prevention Program  
on Sexual Recidivism: Final Results From  
California's Sex Offender Treatment  
and Evaluation Project (SOTEP)**

Janice K. Marques,<sup>1</sup> Mark Wiederanders,<sup>1,3</sup> David M. Day,<sup>1</sup>  
Craig Nelson,<sup>2</sup> and Alice van Ommeren<sup>1</sup>

*Final results from a longitudinal investigation of the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral treatment with sexual offenders are presented. The study was a randomized clinical trial that compared the reoffense rates of offenders treated in an inpatient relapse prevention (RP) program with the rates of offenders in two (untreated) prison control groups. No significant differences were found among the three groups in their rates of sexual or violent reoffending over an 8-year follow-up period. This null result was found for both rapists and child molesters, and was confirmed in analyses using time to reoffense as the outcome and those controlling for static risk differences across the groups. Closer examination of the RP group's performance revealed that individuals who met the program's treatment goals had lower reoffense rates than those who did not. Although our results do not generally support the efficacy of the RP model, they do suggest a number of ways in which this kind of treatment program can be improved. This study also emphasizes the importance of including appropriate control groups in treatment outcome research. Additional controlled investigations are needed to address the many questions that remain about when and how treatment works for sexual offenders.*

**KEY WORDS:** randomized clinical trial; sexual offender treatment; relapse prevention; treatment outcome; recidivism.

<sup>1</sup>California Department of Mental Health, Sacramento, California.

<sup>2</sup>Atascadero State Hospital, Atascadero, California.

<sup>3</sup>To whom correspondence should be addressed at California Department of Mental Health, 1600 Ninth Street, Sacramento, California 95814; e-mail: mwiedera@dmhhq.state.ca.us.

# Consistent Psychological Input



# Conditioning Procedures



# Consistent Psychological Input



# Conditioning Procedures

The cover of the report 'TE WHAKAKOTA HITANGA' features a dark green background with a grid of eight small images showing various natural elements like ferns, woven baskets, and plants. The title and authors' names are printed in white and light green text at the bottom.

**TE WHAKAKOTA HITANGA**

An evaluation of the TE PIRITI SPECIAL TREATMENT PROGRAMME for child sex offenders in New Zealand

By Lavinia Nathan, Nick J Wilson, and David Hillman

Psychological Service, Department of Corrections.

# Conclusions



Treatment Appears Effective!

Prisons and Community



# Most Effective When...

Psychological Expertise “Hands on” & Consistent

Inappropriate Sexual Interest Tackled

Group Based

Supervision Provided

Polygraph Absent

Providing Good  
Psychological Input is  
**EVERYONE's** business

Gannon & Ward (2014)

# Special thanks to:

ATSA ListServe Members

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Jan Looman

Janice Marques

Bill Marshall

Robert McGrath

Terry Nicholaichuk

Derek Perkins

Francine Rattenbury

Martin Schmucker

Anton Schweighofer

Michael Seto

Jeffrey C. Singer

Wineke Smid

Nick Wilson

Robin J. Wilson

Questions?