

Abstract

The Criminal Narrative Experience (CNE) is a framework developed within Investigative Psychology, which combines the emotions and narrative roles experienced by the offender during the commission of their offence, to understand their personal experience of crime (Ioannou, 2001). Previous research proposes four distinct themes within CNE; *The Elated Hero*, *The Calm Professional*, *The Distressed Revenger* and *The Depressed Victim* (Ioannou, Canter and Youngs, 2017), however little attention has yet been paid to the potential differences in themes across various offence types.

The current study explored the CNE model within a sample of sexual offenders. Results found evidence of two CNE themes; *The Intrepid Professional-Adventurer* and *The Dejected Revenger-Victim*, this has implications stretching further than theoretical, and are particularly poignant for therapists and treatment managers, who may be providing intervention to groups of sexual offenders at any one time.

Introduction

As of Friday 17th June 2022, there were 80,360 prisoners in custody in England and Wales for a variety of crimes ranging from murder and rape to non-payment of fines and council tax (Ministry of Justice, 2022). Given that the annual cost to hold a prisoner in the United Kingdom is £33,291, the overall resource expenditure for our government is £2,657,264,760 per annum (Ministry of Justice, 2019a). This figure is set to rise, with the need for advanced security measures, the expected overhaul of the Victoria estate, and the ever-evolving requirement for fair and decent conditions.

Historically, prison was used as a method for punishment, however the modern view is that prison can also serve as a means for the reform and rehabilitation of offenders through the use of education, employment, training, therapy and treatment and restorative approaches (Hope, 2017). Whilst politicians and leaders are confident that prison is constructive, records show that current efforts to rehabilitate are poor. In 2018, 44% of adults were reconvicted within one year of release, and for those who served less than 12 months, this figure rose to 59% (Leech, 2018). These findings suggest that while prison has the resources to rehabilitate, the application of these skills is lacking post release.

The current therapy of choice in prisons in England and Wales is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), and this approach underlies the majority of the Accredited Offending behaviour programmes (OBP) offered within the prison estate. The CBT approach emphasises the consequences of behaviour in an attempt to encourage change, through the restructuring of thinking patterns. These techniques were first introduced to the prison service in 1992 (Friendship, Blud, Erikson and Travers, 2002), and initial findings suggested that those who completed the courses

were less likely to reoffend compared to those who had not (Maguire, 1995).

However, inconsistencies in what was being offered across the prison estate, and the publication of 'What Works' framework, which highlighted the key requirements of effective programmes, forced the Home Office to develop a Joint Prison/Probation Service Accreditation Panel (Home Office, 2001). This board was later renamed the Correctional Services Accreditation and Advice Panel (CSAAP)ⁱ.

The majority of programmes are offered to offenders who fall into a particular offence group. For example, there are five programmes offered to men convicted of sexual offences and four programmes for men with a history of violence. However, there are several programmes which do not differentiate between index offence Ministry of Justice (2019b). These programmes take a more 'generic' approach to therapy and target the thinking and attitudes of men who display anti-social and unhealthy behaviours through various 'self-help' techniques (Ministry of Justice, 2019b).

Treatment programmes in England and Wales have often fell under scrutiny, however in 2017 the media amplified this doubt, by publishing the results of an impact evaluation which deemed the Sex Offender Treatment Programme (SOTP) ineffective. The findings of the report written by the Ministry of Justice suggested that the SOTP could in fact, 'make offenders worse' as those who had completed the programme had a higher reconviction rate than those who had not completed any treatment programme during their sentence (Mews, Di Bella, Purver, 2017). This resulted in the SOTP being pulled from delivery across all sites, and the development of new offending behaviour courses, Horizon and Kaizen (which have been accredited but not yet evaluated), being implemented as replacements. The researchers have claimed that one of the possible reasons for the SOTP

programme's ineffectiveness could be the reductionist view of offending, and the 'group' treatment of all sex offenders (Mews, Di Bella, Purver, 2017).

Andrews and Bonta (2010) point out during their review of the rehabilitative approach to the criminal justice system, that a better option for promoting rehabilitation is to adhere to the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model. The model, as described by Andrews and Bonta (2010), prioritises who should receive services, the appropriate targets for services and the influencing strategies for reducing criminal behaviour. They suggest that crime prevention efforts that '*ignore, dismiss or are unaware of the psychology of human behaviour*' are ineffective, and minimise the impact of the person on their own decision making (Andrews and Bonta, 2010, p.40). In their paper, *Rehabilitating Criminal Justice Practice and Theory*, Andrews and Bonta (2010), summarise the criminogenic and non-criminogenic needs which must be addressed, before offenders can live pro-social lives. They describe criminogenic needs as 'dynamic risk factors' and consider them the primary target for any effective treatment programme. They list pro-criminal attitudes, anti-social personality and pro-criminal associates and criminal history as the 'big four' risk factors and provide a comprehensive review and analysis of each of the four within their 2006 book, *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct* (Andrews and Bonta, 2006).

In light of this evidence, and the overall lacking provision which is currently offered within custodial settings in England and Wales, it is clear the current model of treatment offered to sexual offenders has been neglected. The current paper aims to explore whether the Criminal Narrative Experience could develop practitioner understanding of the experience of crime from the perspective of the offender, with the foresight of developing an innovative, evidence-based treatment programme,

which reflects the risk, need, responsivity model outlined by Andrews and Bonta (2010), and targets offenders based on their individual experience, as opposed to the less favourable generic approach based on index offence, location or gender.

The Criminal Narrative Experience

Another approach to rehabilitation is through the application of The Criminal Narrative Experience (CNE). The framework is based largely on the role of emotions, and the power of narrative roles as we become masters of our own world. For a true understanding of criminal behaviour, Canter (1994) suggests that one must connect the narratives to particular 'roles', and behaviours, and the self-narratives which are shaped by experiences can allow us to begin to understand why individuals commit crime. Canter states that, "*Through his actions, the criminal tells us about how he has chosen to live his life. The challenge is to reveal his destructive life story, to uncover the plot in which crime appears to play such a significant part*" (Canter, 1994, p.299).

The Criminal Narrative Experience (CNE) was first coined by Ioannou (2006). Ioannou recognised the potential overlap between narrative role themes, and emotional experience, and therefore designed a doctoral study which would test the hypothesis that narrative role themes, and the emotional experience of crime, could identify themes in offending. The aim was to investigate if there was any relationship between McAdams (1988) Narrative Theory, Frye's (1957) Theory of Mythos and Russell's (1997) Circumplex of Emotions.

Ioannou (2006) applied Smallest Space Analysis to the data collected from the Emotions Statement Questionnaire, and the Narrative Role Questionnaire (NRQ v1, Youngs and Canter, 2012). Four themes emerged within the data, and these were titled: *The Calm Professional*, *The Elated Hero*, *The Distressed Revenger* and *The Depressed Victim* (Ioannou, 2006). The Calm Professional linked with Frye's Romance story form. This offender is described by Ioannou (2006) as calm, almost an 'expert', who professionally embraces the task at hand and strives to complete it in a perfect way. She/he is described as a 'master of their environment'. Closely related was The Elated Hero. This theme reflected Frye's Comedy mythoi, and the emotions experienced by this offender were positive, summarised by 'Elation'. As with the calm professional, this narrative role theme was one of positivity. However, the Elated Hero is described as a theme of 'challenges' and 'conquest'. Their experience is one of triumph, as they overcome difficulties. In contrast to this, The Distressed Revenger Victim was summarised as reflective of Frye's Tragedy story form. Ioannou (2006) suggested this theme was associated with a negative emotional state, summarised as 'Distress'. The offender feels unjust and perceived offending as the only way they can overcome such distress. This theme encapsulated blame and revenge. Lastly, Ioannou (2006) found evidence for The Depressed Victim. Again, the theme was one of negativity. It was linked to Frye's Irony mythoi, as the offender described feeling overwhelmed with sadness and despair, reporting both helpless and powerlessness. As with the Distressed Revenger, the offender attributed blame onto others, but here, it was due to confusion and upset rather than vengeance.

Ioannou (2006) successfully discovered a significant relationship between the four narrative role themes, and the circumplex of emotions generated by Russell (1997).

Ioannou therefore labelled the framework '*The Criminal Narrative Experience*' (CNE) (Ioannou, 2006). A more recent study, conducted by Ioannou, Canter and Youngs (2017), also found support for the proposed themes. The four narrative themes were in line with the theoretical framework which was posited for Narrative Offence Roles (Ioannou, 2006; Youngs & Canter, 2012), reflected the four story forms titled by Frye (1957), and also supported the findings of Ioannou's (2006) doctoral dissertation which discovered evidence for Russell's Circumplex of Emotion (1997) within an offending population. This gave rise to the reliability and validity of Ioannou's Criminal Narrative Experience (CNE) model (Ioannou, 2006).

Whilst the findings of these studies suggest strength in the exploration of crime as an experience, there has been no study to date, which explores The Criminal Narrative Experience (CNE) of specific crime types. The doctoral work of Ioannou (2006), and also subsequent projects by Ioannou, Canter and Youngs (2012) and Youngs and Canter (2012), have grouped offenders assuming homogenous experiences, with the only criteria being conviction of an offence. Neither of these studies differentiated, or investigated between offence types, to determine if there are any demonstrable differences in experience within various crime types, such as sexual offending. Therefore, the aim of the current study is to examine the presence of The Criminal Narrative Experience (CNE) framework within a sample of sexual offenders.

Method

Twenty-six, adult male offenders participated in the study. At the time of research, all 26 men were housed in a large Category B prison in the Northwest of England (Category B refers to the level of risk the prison's population poses to the public. A

prisons categorisation determines its physical security – such as wall height – and in the UK, the men’s estate ranges from Category A [maximum security] to Category D [open conditions]). All participants were all serving custodial sentences for a range of contact and non-contact sexual offences, including rape (n= 3), sexual assault (n= 7) and possession of indecent images of a child (n= 7). A full breakdown of the index offences for the sample can be found in the table below (Table 1).

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Whilst the total sample for the current study appeared low (N= 26), the figure was considered a positive reflection of the target prison’s population. At the time of data collection, 1,373 offenders were housed at the establishment – 131 of these were in custody for a sexual offence. Aside from the criteria concerning index offence, the other mandatory requirement for participation was ability to read and write – this was largely driven by ethical considerations concerning researcher anonymity. The research criteria concerning reading and writing ability is estimated to have impacted the available population by 50%. This estimation was based on recent research from the Shannon’s Trust (a charity which provides reading and writing classes to prisoners) which suggests that approximately 50% of UK offenders are functionally illiterate (Hopkins & Kendall, 2017). This estimation decreased the eligible individuals within the target prison with a sexual offence from 131 to 66 (50% of the 131 sexual offenders within the prison). Although the sample size obtained in the current study appears low (N= 26), this figure was 40% of the total target population, which is considered a positive outcome.

The mean age of participants was 32 ($M= 31.65$, $SD= 12.82$), which is higher than the national average, however this reflected the current trends in convictions for adult male sexual offenders.

To engage in the research, participants were first required to read and sign an information sheet, alongside informed consent paperwork. This stipulation was in line with the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2018), and further required by listed criteria post approval by The University of Huddersfield's Social Research Ethics Panel (SREP). Aside from the ethical considerations outlined by the above organisations, the director of the prison made a further requirement that the researcher remained anonymous to participants due to their current role as a practitioner within the establishment.

Once participants had completed both these tasks, they were asked to complete a questionnaire which comprised three parts. Section one captured basic demographic information of the participant, including age, ethnicity, and previous convictions. Participants were also asked a series of questions concerning their index offence. This included what the events were leading up to the crime, what happened during and after the offence, what measures they took to avoid detection and how clear their memories were of the incident. The role of this section was to give participants the opportunity to recall the offence in detail, this would have allowed for better recall of emotional state and narrative roles during section two and three of the questionnaire.

The second section within the questionnaire aimed to capture the emotional experience of offending. The statements aimed to represent the full gamut of Russell's (1997) circumplex, and were initially developed from pilot research (Odale,

1997; Cross, 1998; Murray, 1998; Ioannou, 2001). The results from the pilot research indicated that emotions made sense to criminals as possible descriptions of their feelings during the crime, as long as the crime in question could be clearly remembered. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the extent to which the offenders felt the emotion during their experience of crime. The scale ranged from "Not at all" (1) to "Very much indeed" (5), with (2) reflecting "Just a little" "Some" (3) being the midpoint and 4 suggesting "A lot". By using a Likert scale, participants were given the opportunity to elaborate on their answers compared to a simple yes/no format. Examples of the emotion statements include: "I felt lonely", "I felt scared", "I felt excited" and "I felt courageous".

The final section of the questionnaire housed the Narrative Role Questionnaire (NRQ v1) (Youngs and Canter, 2012). A list of thirty-three statements reflected the four narrative role themes that were identified from work conducted by Canter, Kaouri and Ioannou (2003), Youngs and Canter (2012) and previously by Ioannou (2001, 2006). A five-point Likert scale was used, in which offenders selected how much they agreed with the statement in regard to their experience. The statements described what it was like while they were committing the crime and included statements such as, "It was like being a professional", "I had power", "I knew I was taking a risk" and "I was a victim". The scale indicated the extent to which the participant agreed and ranged from "Not at all" (1) to "Very much" (5), with "Some" (3) being the midpoint. Such a scale, allows for participants to elaborate on their answers rather than only being given the opportunity to respond yes/no.

Data gathered from section 2 and 3 of questionnaires was subject to analysis using a lesser well-known statistical analysis, titled Smallest Space Analysis. Smallest Space

Analysis (SSA) is a non-metric, multidimensional scaling (MDS) procedure (Lingoes, 1973), based on the assumption that the underlying structure will most readily be appreciated if the relationship between every variable and every other variable is examined (first applied to social research by Canter in 1985). The SSA procedure is given its title as it produces a solution of the smallest dimensionality, compared to any other forms of multidimensional scaling; this is primarily because it operates on the rank order of the original correlations, rather than their absolute values (Guttman, 1968). A measure of stress, called the co-efficient of alienation (see Borg & Lingoes, 1987, for details), indicates how closely the rank orders of the distances between the points in the spatial representation relate to the rank orders or the correlations between the variables. A coefficient of alienation equal to '0' would indicate a perfect fit, while '1' would indicate no relation at all. Each variable is plotted on a graph (or *SSA plot*), and their proximity is determined by the associated correlation to every other variable. The more highly correlated the variables are, the closer they will appear within the SSA plot (Guttman, 1968).

The classification of variables into 'themes' is determined by examining the regional structure, and this approach adopts a method undertaken in Facet Theory (Canter, 1985). Here, the 'facets' are the overall classification of *types* of variables therefore, items with the same facet elements can be found in the same region of space. This method of analysis gives researchers the ability to classify, or group, variables.

A number of studies, from suicide notes (e.g. Ioannou & Debowska, 2014; Synnott, Ioannou, Coyne and Hemingway, 2017) to criminal actions (e.g. Canter and Heritage, 1989; Canter and Fritzon, 1998; Canter & Ioannou, 2004; Ioannou, Hammond & Hambly, 2015; Ioannou and Oostinga, 2015; Ioannou, Synnott,

Reynolds, Pearson, 2018; Youngs & Ioannou, 2013; Canter, Ioannou & Eagles, 2014) have found such MDS models to be productive. Previous research surrounding The Criminal Narrative Experience (CNE) (Ioannou, 2006; Ioannou, Canter & Youngs, 2017) also adopted SSA as the method of analysis. and replication of this approach, allows for a direct comparison of results.

Findings

The objective of the current study was to investigate the presence of The Criminal Narrative Experience (CNE) model within a sample of sexual offenders. The twenty-six emotions variables and the thirty-three role variables were combined to form a new data set, titled The Criminal Narrative Experience, and the data was subject to Smallest Space Analysis. Because an SSA plots closely together the variables which are associated, the hypothesis was that emotions, which are closely related to certain roles, would co-occur in the same region of the plot. A list of the emotion and role variables, and their corresponding labels can be found in the appendix (Appendix 1). Due to the number of variables within the plot, a numerical label was used within the SSA plot rather than the analysis label.

Smallest Space Analysis of The Criminal Narrative Experience in Sexual Offenders

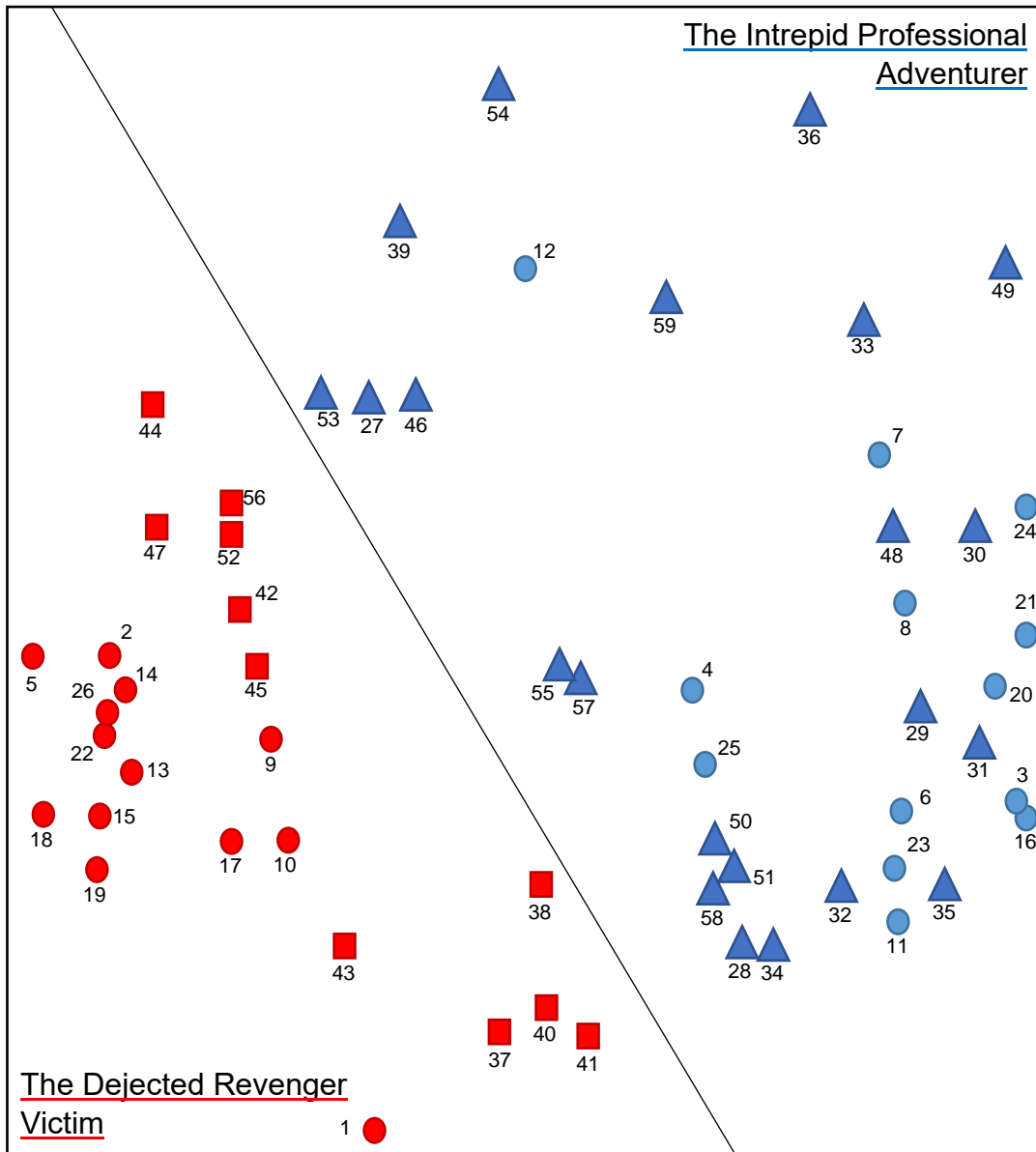


Figure 1.

1 by 2 projection of the two-dimensional Smallest Space Analysis (SSA) of The Criminal Narrative Experience in Sexual Offending.

Coefficient of Alienation= 0.24

The 2-dimensional SSA solution had a Guttman-Lingoes coefficient of alienation 0.24 in 10 iterations, showing a good fit between the Pearson's coefficients of the role variables and their corresponding geometric distances in the configuration (Lingoes, 1973). The two-dimensional SSA solution was used as it was considered to illustrate the pattern of the relationships between emotions and roles variables better than the other, three-dimensional solutions. Figure 1 shows the projection of vector 1 by vector 2 of the two-dimensional space.

The first stage in the interpretation of the SSA was to test the hypothesis that the emotions and roles would form identifiable regions. It was clear from initial visual interpretation that there were two clusters evident in the plot, one on the right side of the SSA plot, and one on the left. Before looking for identifiable themes, the SSA was colour coded based on Pleasure/ Displeasure emotions, and Narrative Role Themes; The Professional, The Adventurer and The Revenger-Victim. By examining the space based on colour coding, themes began to emerge in the plot.

The left region of the space was dominated by displeasure emotions whilst the right region was dominated in pleasurable emotions. In terms of themes within the roles, there appeared to be no distinct cluster per role, but rather groupings of similar role themes. The left region appeared to house role variables associated with the

Revenger-Victim theme, whilst the right region housed role variables associated with Adventure and Professional themes. When dividing the plot based on these themes it became clear that there were two main themes of sexual offending experience. Those who offend for pleasure, adopting a positive narrative role, and those who offend out of displeasure, adopting negative narrative roles. As a result of the variables present within the two themes, they were subsequently titled The Intrepid Professional-Adventurer and The Dejected Revenger-Victim.

The Intrepid Professional-Adventurer

The 24 elements that can be conceptually linked as The Intrepid Professional-Adventurer CNE can be found in the table below (Table 2). This region consists of the Adventurer and Professional role themes and the pleasurable emotions. It could be concluded that this type of offender perceives the experience of crime as a positive thing – an experience which he enjoys. He reports feeling ‘excited’ and ‘courageous’, as he embarks on his ‘interesting’ and ‘fun’ ‘adventure’. This offender views himself as ‘manly’ (both emotionally and in role) and sees his offence as a ‘mission’ which he is ‘confident’ he will achieve.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

To test the reliability of the suggested theme, Cronbach’s alpha was applied to the data reported by sexual offenders. Scale scores were derived from the questionnaire as follows; “Not at all” (1), “Just a little” (2), “Some” (3), “A Lot” (4) and “Very much indeed” (5). The Cronbach’s alpha was used to examine the reliability coefficient of

the sets of emotions and role that define the region. The 22 items for The Intrepid Professional-Adventurer CNE theme for sexual offenders had an alpha coefficient of 0.92. This suggests a high degree of association between the variables within the theme, which further supports the existence of the theme within the SSA plot.

The Dejected Revenger-Victim

The second theme which was evident within the SSA plot for sexual offenders was titled The Dejected Revenger-Victim, as it appeared to house the variables which associated to displeasure emotions and negative role themes. The 35 elements that can be conceptually linked as The Dejected Revenger-Victim CNE can be found in the table below (Table 3). This region consists of the Revenger-Victim role theme and the displeasure emotions. It could be concluded that this type of offender perceives the commission of his crime as a negative experience. He described feeling 'confused' (both emotionally and through role theme) and suggested that it was the 'only thing' he could think of doing. He suggest he was 'helpless' in the sequence of events, and 'just wanted to get it over' with as he felt 'worried'. He identified with emotions such as 'lonely', 'scared', 'upset' and 'depressed', which reflect the persona of a 'helpless' 'victim'.

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

To test the reliability of the suggested theme, Cronbach's alpha was applied to the data reported by sexual offenders. Scale scores were derived from the questionnaire as follows; "Not at all" (1), "Just a little" (2), "Some" (3), "A Lot" (4) and "Very much

indeed” (5). The Cronbach’s alpha was used to examine the reliability coefficient of the sets of emotions and role that define the region. The 35 items for The Dejected Revenger-Victim CNE theme for sexual offenders had an alpha coefficient of 0.93. Which again, suggests a very high degree of association between the variables within the theme, which further supports the existence of the theme within the SSA plot.

In order to test the regional thematic split of the SSA for sexual offenders (two identified CNE themes, The Intrepid Professional-Adventurer and The Dejected Revenger-Victim, see Figure 1), each of the 26 cases were individually examined to ascertain whether they could be assigned to one of the two themes. This further analysis was conducted due to the inability of SSA to assign cases to themes. The SSA plot purely generates a visual representation of the relationship between each variable and every other, and provides no information relating to quantities of cases in any given region.

To begin, every case was given a percentage score for the two themes. Cases having a higher percent of occurrence in one of the two themes naturally assigned to the higher percentage theme. Using this criterion, all but one of the cases could be classified into one of the two themes. The findings of this analysis can be found in the table below (Table 4).

INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

The table above (Table 4) indicates that there was one case did not classify into one of the two CNE themes. This was due to the scores being identical for the two

themes. This case remained unclassified. The findings of this step of analysis support the suggestions made by the SSA plot, by reinforcing the proposal that sexual offenders experience their offence as either a pleasurable or displeasure experience. All but one of the cases could be categorised into one of the two themes.

Discussion

The plot generated via Smallest Space Analysis (SSA) for sexual offenders suggested two CNE themes were evident: The Intrepid Professional-Adventurer and The Dejected Revenger-Victim. These themes were titled descriptively, given the grouping of displeasure emotions with the Revenger-Victim role themes, and the grouping of pleasurable emotions with the Professional Adventurer role themes.

A recent study conducted by Ioannou, Synnott, Lowe and Tzani-Pepelasi (2018) also found support for mixed Revenger-Victim CNE theme. They found that the revenger and victim narrative role themes existed in the same regional space of the SSA, and they were present alongside the array of displeasure emotions. This supports the notion that The Dejected Revenger-Victim exists as a standalone theme, rather than two separate themes. Nonetheless, they continued to report the Professional and Adventurer as two separate CNE themes (despite the variables existing closely together on the SSA plot), which conforms with the findings of earlier studies (Ioannou, 2006; Ioannou, Canter & Youngs, 2017).

When exploring the impact of these CNE themes on the experience of offending, it became apparent that the themes related to motivation to act. Those offenders, who

were experiencing The Dejected Revenger-Victim theme, generally rated highly for displeasure emotions, and also reported themselves highly for role variables, which described them as 'victims' of the world who need to 'seek revenge' and take 'power and control' of the situation around them. These offenders who reported experiencing a type of vengeance-victim motivation present their crimes as a *need*. A need that had to be fulfilled through offending, a need that was no fault of their own, but rather forced upon them by the world. These types of offenders saw no other way out and felt as though they needed to commit the offence in order to accomplish their irrepressible need. The second theme which emerged from both of the SSA plots was The Intrepid Professional-Adventurer, and these individuals portrayed crime as a positive experience. They reported experiencing mainly pleasurable emotions, and viewed themselves as a hero, who was on an adventure, carrying out a professional role which they claim to be exciting and interesting. These offenders described their offence with so much enjoyment, that for them it appears more of a choice, a *want* to commit the crime. The individuals committing these types of pleasurable offences appear to be motivated by the thrill; they take from the crime enjoyment and use the adventure/professional roles as an excuse to offend.

Despite finding evidence of two CNE Themes within the data, there was variation in frequency within the sample. The Dejected Revenger-Victim was the most common CNE theme, reported by 80% of offenders. These findings provide support to earlier research on narrative roles per offence type. Ioannou et al (2015), found that for acquisitive offenders, the most prevalent themes related to the adventurer (50%), the professional (35%), whilst sexual offenders were more likely to assign to victim (45%) and revenger (25%) role themes. They propose that the excitement that

acquisitive offending presents, is what 'seduces' the adventurer to engage in the crime (as suggested earlier by Flemming, 1999; Katz, 1988; McCarthy, 1995), and the *skill* of the offence entices the professional (as suggested earlier by Cronwell, Olson, & Avery, 1991; Maguire and Bennett, 1982; Merry & Harsent, 2002; Walsh, 1986). For sexual offending, Ioannou et al (2015) draw upon Canter's (1994) victim role model. They postulate that the high prevalence of victim and revenger role themes within sexual offending relates to the need of the offender. They suggest the offender exploits the role of victim as a method for them to achieve intimacy and express repressed emotion. The similarities between the current study, and the findings of Ioannou et al (2015), provide evidence for various themes being more prevalent within certain crime types.

Whilst the current study has provided research findings which enhance and develop the Criminal Narrative Experience framework, there are implications which stretch outside of the literature. Most existing social science explanations of crime emphasise the social context and antecedent events as the motivation for a 'normal' individual making the decision to enter a criminal lifestyle. Yet both the legal processing of offenders, and the rehabilitation efforts post-sentencing, focus on the conscious intent and agency of the individual committing the criminal act. The results of the current study can therefore be understood as an attempt to bridge the gap between the legal and social science perspective on criminality. The study of the Criminal Narrative Experience (CNE) signifies an important development in the understanding of crime, and therefore generates a number of implications for perception of crime as it stands (Ioannou, 2006).

The study of the criminal experience as an individual journey, helps us to move away from traditional explanations of crime, and enhances our psychological understanding of the impact of emotions on offending behaviour and repeat offending behaviour. The study of emotions, and the development of theories applying the influence of emotion to crime, has implications, which spread wider than the realms of academia. At present, the favoured method for intervention, or 'therapy', in prisons is the application of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), which aims to emphasise the consequences of behaviour in an attempt to encourage change through the restructuring of thinking patterns. Her Majesties Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) delivers the majority of its Offending Behaviour Programmes (OBPs) through the use of CBT techniques, and does so in a group setting of approximately ten prisoners. Many researchers, however, criticise the use of CBT in all cases, as it undervalues the emotional significance of crimes to offenders (Ioannou, 2013). By linking CBT and the influence of the Criminal Narrative Experience, therapists can uncover the offender's emotions, and recognise the significance of the event to the individual and aim to remodel their view of themselves within the world into a more pro-social and positive individual. As Ioannou (2013) notes, therapy is ultimately aimed at modifying a select human behaviour, and by understanding the emotional attachment to the behaviour, the treatment itself can become an extremely powerful tool.

The current study also emphasises the variation of the Criminal Narrative Experience not only across the whole offending population (as evidenced by Ioannou, 2006, Youngs and Canter, 2012 and Ioannou, Canter and Youngs, 2017), but also within the same crime type. This stresses the need for interventions to be tailored to meet the needs of the individual. At present, individuals are 'categorised' based on index

offence and treatment need, and same offence offenders, are subsequently offered the same intervention if all the relevant boxes are ticked. This method ignores the significant difference in experience between offenders of the same crime. For example, for high risk sexual offenders, the programme of most suitability would be the newly written KAIZENⁱⁱ. Two sexual offenders may be referred to the programme with the same index offence and will be exposed to the same intervention throughout the course, in the hopes that they will be 'rehabilitated'. Despite these offenders committing a similar offence, their experience of the offence could be significantly different. Two rapists, for example, could be polar opposite in terms of experience (i.e. one experiencing The Dejected Revenger-Victim, whilst one experiences The Intrepid Professional-Adventurer), and this needs to be 'treated' through different approaches and methods. This study highlights that a 'one size fits all' approach to crime specific interventions may not be the most effective approach, and researcher should explore the possibility of developing an intervention which recognises and challenges the impact that the Criminal Narrative Experience has on decision making and criminal behaviour.

The Criminal Narrative Experience (CNE) also has implications for the ways in which the criminal justice system understand crime. By increasing the general understanding of crime, and the motivations and significance for the offender, appropriate investigation and sentencing decisions can be made. This implication relates to the notion of *intention*, which is defined in criminal law as, '*the determination for an individual to act in a certain way, despite knowing the consequences of their actions*' (Foster, 2004). The association of feelings, and narrative roles, can broaden the legal perspective by providing a richer understanding of what makes up the experience for the offender. This may also

provide police officers with an alternative framework for thinking about crime, which has direct implications for the handling of cases and management of offenders in different ways. For example, police officers faced with rape case may intrinsically follow a specific set of steps or procedural routine. By narrowing down the pool of likely offenders based on behaviours exhibited at the crime scene, and the likely narrative role and emotion of such offenders, police may be able to narrow their searches at an earlier stage. This is because the narratives roles model begins to answer the question of '*why this action here and now?*' (Presser, 2009, p.189), and by exploring the intention to act through the four narrative role themes, our understanding of the processes through which the action is instigated and sustained through the offence is widened (Canter, 1994).

Despite the implications for this research spanning a range of subject areas, it is not without limitations. Firstly, twenty-six adult male offenders participated in the study. Given than the offending population for England and Wales in 2017 was just short of 85,863 (Office of National Statistics, 2017), the sample used in the current study cannot be representative of the offending populace, nor can it be assumed the findings from a female sample would be reflective. The study also took place within only one of the 114 prisons within England and Wales and represents one region out of a total of 15. This questions the ability for the study to be generalised cross region as well as cross culturally.

The sample within the current study also featured repeat offenders, on average, participants had nine previous convictions prior to their index offence ($M = 9.00$). Compared to official statistics, the sample used within the current study was atypical of the general population. Figures from January to March 2018 recorded the rate of

proven reoffending at 62% for adult male offenders who had recently been released from custody (Ministry of Justice, 2020). Not only does the high reoffending rate in the current study impact the findings generalisation, the high reoffending rates could have influenced individual responses on the emotional statement measure and the Narrative Roles Questionnaire. Bernasco (2013) notes how, over time, an offender's ability to recall crime specific details deteriorates, and that altered memories are a risk of retrospective research. He goes on to suggest that present biases influence an offender's perception of the past, and as time passes and people age, their memories are presented in the current context and scenario (Bernasco, 2013). It could well be that the offender's recollection of their index offence has merged into their typical style of offending, and rather than recalling the specific details of their index offence, they are recalling information based their *typical* offending pattern.

Also worth noting is the limitation that the current study only explores the criminal narrative experience of incarcerated offenders. The experiences, both emotionally and through narrative roles, can only stretch as wide as those offenders who have been caught for their offences. What is yet to be explored is whether the experience and individual differences of non-incarcerated offenders would be any different. However, exploring these factors within offenders who are willing to discuss the offending experience for crimes which they are yet to be caught for would be extremely complex, both methodologically, legally, and ethically.

Future research should also seek to explore differences *within* offence categories. Despite this study being the first to examine the CNE within sexual offending, previous research has suggested substantial variation within such offending categories (see Robertiello and Terry [2007] as a review of heterogeneity and

typology). A proposed idea for future research could be to examine the evidenced two-theme model (Dejected Revenger-Victim and Intrepid Professional-Adventurer) within a larger sample of sexual offenders, differentiating based on crime type (e.g., rape, sexual assault, possession of indecent images). This would explore the notion of heterogeneity within sexual offenders when Criminal Narrative Experience is concerned.

Conclusion

“If such an enormous life transformation is to be believed, the person needs a coherent narrative to explain and justify this turnaround” (Maruna, 2001, p.85). Re-offending rates for sexual offenders are relatively low in comparison to other crime types, however the impact these crimes have on victims, families and the wider public is great. Current attempts to reform sexual offenders group individuals based on risk, however, if narratives are the personal stories which guide and motivate human behaviour, then the narratives of criminals need reforming as a first.

The current study aimed to examine the emotions and narratives of sexual offenders, to being to understand the role they play in commission of a sexual crime. The current study has also demonstrated how intrinsically linked narratives are to emotions, and so, the impact that the emotional experience can have for an offender during their offence should not be overlooked. The combination of both these factors, narratives, and emotions, are considered to epitomise The Criminal Narrative Experience.

The current study demonstrated two distinct themes of The Criminal Narrative Experience; The Intrepid Professional-Adventurer and The Dejected Revenger-Victim, and for treatment to be effective, the CNE of the offender must be taken into account. The reforming of a positive, Intrepid Professional-Adventurer, requires different methods and approaches than the reforming of a negative, Dejected Revenger-Victim.

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Tables

Table 1.

The breakdown of crime types represented within the sample of sexual offenders.

Offence Type	Frequency within the sample
Indecent Images	7
Sexual Assault	7
Breach of Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPO)	4
Rape	3
Underage Sex	2
Attempted Rape	1
Child Abduction	1
Entice Sexual Activity with a Minor	1

Table 2.

*The Emotion and Role Variables assigned to The Intrepid Professional-Adventurer
CNE Theme for Sexual Offenders.*

The Intrepid Professional-Adventurer

Emotions Variables	Narrative Role Variables
3. Exhilarated	27. I was like a professional
4. Confident	28. I had to do it
6. Pleased	29. It was fun
7. Calm	30. It was right
8. Safe	31. It was interesting
11. Enthusiastic	32. It was like an adventure
12. Thoughtful	33. It was routine
16. Excited	34. I was in control
20. Relaxed	35. It was exciting
21. Delighted	36. I was doing a job
23. Courageous	39. It was a mission
24. Contented	43. It was my only choice
25. Manly	46. I was looking for recognition

49. What was happening was just fate

50. It all went to plan

51. I couldn't stop myself

53. It was a manly thing to do

54. For me it was just like a usual day's work

55. I was trying to get revenge

57. I was getting my own back

58. I knew I was taking a risk

59. I guess I always knew it was going to
happen

Table 3.

The Emotions and Role Variables assigned to The Dejected Revenger-Victim CNE Theme for Sexual Offenders.

The Dejected Revenger-Victim

Emotions Variables	Narrative Role Variables
1. Lonely	37. I knew what I was doing
2. Scared	38. It was the only thing I could think of doing
5. Upset	40. Nothing else mattered
9. Worried	41. I had power
10. Depressed	42. I was helpless
13. Annoyed	44. I was a victim
14. Angry	45. I was confused about what was happening
15. Sad	47. I just wanted to get it over with
17. Confused	48. I didn't care what would happen
18. Miserable	52. It was like I wasn't part of it
19. Irritated	56. There was nothing special about what happened
22. Unhappy	
26. Pointless	

Table 4.

The number and percentage of cases in the two CNE Themes for Sexual Offenders.

Theme	Number	Percentage
The Dejected Revenger-Victim	20	77
The Intrepid Professional- Adventurer	5	19
Not Classified	1	4

Appendix

Appendix 1.

The emotion and narrative role variables which form The Criminal Narrative Experience, and their corresponding labels used within the current study.

Question Number	Question	Analysis Label	SSA Label
1	I felt lonely	Lonely	1
2	I felt scared	Scared	2
3	I felt exhilarated	Exhilarated	3
4	I felt confident	Confident	4
5	I felt upset	Upset	5
6	I felt pleased	Pleased	6
7	I felt calm	Calm	7
8	I felt safe	Safe	8
9	I felt worried	Worried	9
10	I felt depressed	Depressed	10
11	I felt enthusiastic	Enthusiastic	11
12	I felt thoughtful	Thoughtful	12
13	I felt annoyed	Annoyed	13
14	I felt angry	Angry	14
15	I felt sad	Sad	15
16	I felt excited	Excited	16
17	I felt confused	Confused	17
18	I felt miserable	Miserable	18
19	I felt irritated	Irritated	19
20	I felt relaxed	Relaxed	20
21	I felt delighted	Delighted	21
22	I felt unhappy	Unhappy	22
23	I felt courageous	Courageous	23

24	I felt contented	Contented	24
25	I felt manly	Manly	25
26	I felt pointless	Pointless	26
27	It was interesting	Interesting	27
28	It was fun	Fun	28
29	I knew I was taking a risk	Risk	29
30	It was like an adventure	Adventure	30
31	It was exciting	Exciting	31
32	I was looking for recognition	Recognition	32
33	It was a manly thing to do	Manly	33
34	It all went to plan	Plan	34
35	I was in control	Control	35
36	It was right	Right	36
37	I had power	Power	37
38	I was trying to get revenge	Revenge	38
39	I just wanted to get it over with	Get over	39
40	It was a mission	Mission	40
41	I was getting my own back	Own back	41
42	I couldn't stop myself	No stop	42
43	I had to do it	Had to	43
44	It was my only choice	Only choice	44
45	I didn't care what would happen	No care	45
46	It was like I wasn't part of it	No part	46
47	I guess I always knew it was going to happen	Knew happen	47
48	What was happening was just fate	Fate	48
49	I was helpless	Helpless	49
50	It was the only thing I could think of doing	Only thing	50
51	I was confused about what was happening	Confused	51
52	I was a victim	Victim	52
53	Nothing else mattered	No matter	53
54	I knew what I was doing	Knew what	54
55	I was doing a job	Job	55
56	For me it was just like a usual day's work	Work	56
57	I was like a professional	Professional	57
58	There was nothing special about what	No special	58
59	It was routine	Routine	59

ⁱ CSAAP is a non-statutory advisory body for HMPPS. It provides independent expert advice on effective corrections for the Ministry of Justice and HMPPS.

ⁱⁱ KAIZEN is a treatment programme designed by the Ministry of Justice. The programme aims to use strength-based, goal orientated exercises to reduce reoffending within a sample of high-risk sexual offenders (Ministry of Justice, 2019b).