

Static and Dynamic Risk Potential in Sexual Violence Prevention

The video associated with this presentation can be found at:
<https://youtu.be/eEzoVKKO6TI>

The Realities of Sexual Offending

- ❖ 95% of individuals engaged in sexual violence are male
- ❖ A large age cohort of people who sexually offend is boys aged 13-15
- ❖ People who engage in crime have nearly four times the number of adverse childhood experiences (Reavis et al., 2013)
 - ❖ They have complex needs
- ❖ As many as 95% of people who sexually offend coming into the system are first time caught (Sandler et al., 2008)

The Realities of Sexual Offending

- ❖ Reoffense rates are lower than most people think
- ❖ Meta-analytic studies (now somewhat dated) show that about 15% will reoffend within 5-7 years post-release (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005)
- ❖ Most States and the Federal government (BJS) now report lower rates (e.g., 10% in 10 years)
- ❖ Previously sentenced individuals are more likely to be returned to prison because of technical violations than because they committed a new “crime”
 - ❖ Reiterating that they have complex needs
- ❖ Policy and practice must address those complex needs

Why Assess Risk?

1. Importance of promoting public safety
2. Need to determine who receives routine interventions and who needs exceptional measures
3. Strategic use of scarce resources (volunteers, treatment and supervision personnel)

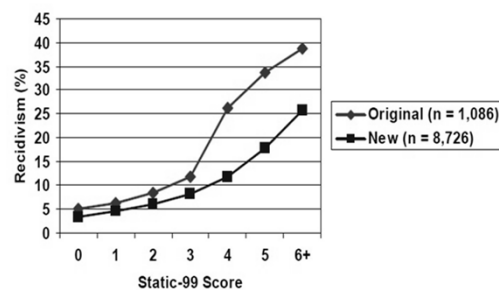
What Risk do Sexual Offenders Pose?

- ❖ At what rate do persons who have sexually offended recidivate?
- ❖ Over what period of time are they likely to be at risk?
- ❖ How should individuals who have offended be held accountable?
- ❖ What are the person's support, rehabilitative, or treatment needs?

The need for “comprehensive”

Rates of sexual recidivism have been declining for a quarter century or more; however, the greatest gains have been made in the past 15 or so years.

Arguably, this is the result of being more comprehensive in our approaches to assessment, treatment, and risk management.



The graph above (Helmus, 2009) shows how science-informed practices can lead to lower rates of reoffending.

Static Indicators

Static Risk Factors

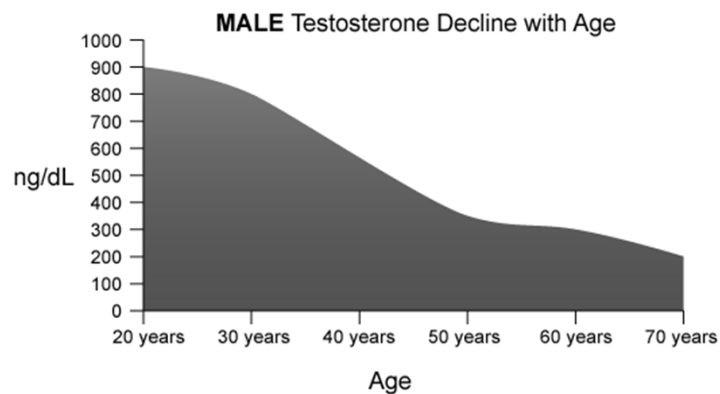
- ❖ Don't change (on the whole)
- ❖ Allow you to gauge the long-term level of risk for sexual recidivism
- ❖ Allows you to determine an appropriate level of intervention for the individual
(Bonta & Andrews, 2016)

Age

- ❖ It is well known that crime is generally more of a problem of youth. That is not to say that there are not some “older” persons at risk, but they are relatively rare by comparison.
- ❖ Age-related desistance applies to sexual offending as much as it does to other types of offenses, but there are complicating factors.

Effects of Aging on Risk

Testosterone levels decrease as men age



How Much Aging is Enough?

- ❖ Clearly, there are some older individuals who reoffend sexually.
- ❖ How does this compare to other age cohorts?
- ❖ Dynamic variables can assist us in understanding the ongoing risk.
 - Sex drive / sex preoccupation

Ability to Form Long-lasting Intimate Relationships

- ❖ In keeping with the Good Lives Model, sexual offending is an inappropriate means of achieving sexual intimacy.
- ❖ People who don't offend meet these needs through relationships with age-appropriate and consenting partners
- ❖ People who have offended and who do not (and maybe cannot) demonstrate an ability to appropriately pair-bond with a partner are at higher risk to reoffend

Non-Sexual Violence

- ❖ All sexual offenses are inherently violent, but not necessarily in the physical sense
- ❖ Those individuals who used more violence than required to ensure compliance were potentially becoming aroused not only to the sexual component but also to the violence, which is a potential marker of Sexual Sadism (leading to increased risk)

Prior Sexual Offenses

- ❖ There is a some truth in the old adage “the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior.”
- ❖ The more someone has engaged in sexually offensive behavior in the past, the greater the likelihood they will do so again in the future
- ❖ The more someone engages in a specific type of sexual offending (e.g., with children, exhibitionism, downloading child abuse images), the more likely it is that this represents a deviant sexual interest – the most robust predictor

Criminal Persistence

- ❖ The two major risk factors involved in sexual offending – from which all other factors are derived – are sexual deviance and core antisociality
- ❖ Criminal persistence is a good measure of core antisociality
- ❖ The more antisocial a person is, the more content they are to break societal expectations

Non-Contact Sexual Offenses

- ❖ Although they are often thought of as “nuisance offenses,” non-contact sexual offenses are actually potent indicators of sexual deviance
- ❖ Referred to in some instruments as “high density offending patterns,” offenses like exposing, peeping, making obscene telephone calls, and downloading of child abuse images are highly correlated with paraphilic interests
- ❖ Gene Abel (1988) and other sexological researchers have shown that wherever you find one paraphilia, you are likely to find another

Unrelated victims

- ❖ It has been consistently observed that most victims know the person who offends against them
- ❖ Indeed, as many as two-thirds of offenses occur in the victim's own home, at the hands of a family member
- ❖ Individuals who select victims from family environments tend to do so for reasons other than deviant sexual interests (e.g., blurred boundaries, poor problem-solving, impulsivity, alcohol/substance abuse)

Stranger victims

- ❖ Similar to the previous slide, we know that as many as 90% of victims know the person who offends against them
- ❖ Stranger-Danger needs to be qualified to highlight risks from known persons
- ❖ Individuals who choose victims outside the comparatively safer confines of a family or friendly relationship are more likely to be driven by deviant sexual interests (i.e., paraphilia)

Male victims

- ❖ We are not entirely sure why, but the research literature (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005) strongly suggests that the presence of at least one male victim of a sexual offense substantially increases the likelihood that the offender has sexually deviant interests (i.e., paraphilia)

Stable Indicators

Significant Social Influences

- ❖ The people we hang out with often have an influence on how we behave and see the world
- ❖ The research literature is clear that keeping “antisocial associates” is a robust predictor of a return to crime (Bonta & Andrews, 2016)
- ❖ We want our core members to be surrounded by law-abiding, prosocial individuals

Intimacy Deficits

- ❖ Capacity for relationship stability
- ❖ Emotional identification with children
- ❖ Hostility toward women
- ❖ Social rejection/loneliness
- ❖ Lack of concern for others

Capacity for Relationship Stability

- ❖ This is related to the static variable regarding ability to form long-lasting, intimate relationships with age-appropriate partners
- ❖ The static aspects speaks to whether he's ever been able to establish a long-term relationship
- ❖ The dynamic aspect speaks to his capacity to do so in the here and now
- ❖ Being able to meet sexual and intimate needs in a healthy relationship is risk-reducing

Emotional Identification with Children

- ❖ Some people who have sexually offended against prepubescent and pubescent children (collectively 13 or younger) have a tendency to be emotionally identified with that developmental period
- ❖ They tend to be immature and overly interested in child-centered activities, media, and pastimes
- ❖ Individuals who are emotionally identified with children often have a hard time related to adults and seem to have poor interpersonal skills
- ❖ This is not the same as parents who take interest in their children's activities

Hostility Toward Women

- ❖ Some people who have sexually offended seem unable to form warm, constructive relationships with women
- ❖ This is often because they have a prejudice against women, believing that they are a different class of people unworthy of trust or respect
- ❖ People with this orientation believes or endorses sexist attitudes, and are often adversarial towards women

Social Rejection/Loneliness

- ❖ We enjoy life by the help and society of others
- ❖ Few people achieve success and personal happiness without some help from others
- ❖ People who are lonely and prone to feeling socially rejected have more trouble in life
- ❖ Almost all people with problems in life deal with those problems more easily when they have assistance

Lack of Concern for Others

- ❖ Some individuals who have sexually offended are very narcissistic and selfish
- ❖ Their interests and concerns are more important than those of others
- ❖ Those individuals who lack empathy and who are unable to appreciate the effects of their actions on others represent a higher degree of risk for engaging in future harmful actions

General Self-Regulation

- ❖ Impulsive Acts
- ❖ Poor Cognitive Problem Solving Skills
- ❖ Negative Emotionality/Hostility

Impulsive Acts

- ❖ Most successful people engage in life planning and carefully consider their choices
- ❖ Others are easily swayed by opportunistic circumstances
- ❖ This often leads to engagement in behavior that has a high likelihood of negative consequences
- ❖ Impulsive individuals are easily bored, seek thrills, and often fail to consider personal safety or the safety of others

Impulsive Acts

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| ❖ reckless driving | ❖ quitting jobs with no other job in sight |
| ❖ substance abuse | ❖ changing residences |
| ❖ “getting into” partying | ❖ unsafe work practices |
| ❖ accepting bets and dares | ❖ starting fights with men much bigger than himself |

Poor Cognitive Problem Solving

- ❖ Good problem-solvers can do three things:
 - Identify the existence of a problem
 - Generate alternative behaviors for next time
 - Assess the effectiveness of the alternative behaviors
- ❖ Many people who have sexually offended have a hard time linking their circumstances to their own choices
- ❖ The research says that being able to carefully consider options before acting aids in making choices that do not include additional offending behavior (Hanson et al., 2007)

Negative Emotionality/Hostility

- ❖ Many core members have been in “the system” for a very long time, leading to institutionalization
- ❖ While some individuals were prone to negative emotionality and hostility prior to incarceration, which ultimately influenced their involvement in poor decision-making, others obtained these traits while in prison
- ❖ Individuals who are frequently negative and hard to engage socially are statistically more likely to re-engage in inappropriate conduct, including sexual offending

Sexual Self-regulation

- ❖ Sex drive/Pre-occupations
- ❖ Sex as coping
- ❖ Deviant sexual interests

Sex Drive/Pre-occupations

- ❖ Some persons who have engaged in sexually inappropriate conduct report recurrent sexual thoughts and behavior that are not directed to a current romantic partner
- ❖ Many report engagement in casual or impersonal sexual activity that interferes with pro-social goals and activities
- ❖ Some report these urges as intrusive or excessive, as if their life revolves around sex

Sex Drive/Pre-occupations

- ❖ Some clues that your core member might be sexually preoccupied include:
 - Masturbation most days (15+ times a month)
 - Regular use of prostitutes, strip bars, massage parlors, phone-sex, sexually explicit websites (e.g., large amounts of time spent “surfing the web” for pornography sites)
 - Pornography collection (videos, magazines, parent/baby magazines, materials downloaded from the Internet)
 - A history of multiple sexual partners (e.g., 30 or more)
 - Excessive sexual content in typical conversations
 - Self-report of difficulty controlling sexual impulses
 - Any disturbing sexual thoughts

Sex as Coping

- ❖ We all have ways to deal with stress and negative emotions (exercise, wine, shopping)
- ❖ For some core members, life stress and negative emotions trigger sexual thoughts or behavior, which may be normal or deviant
- ❖ People who use sexuality to dissipate anger, humiliation, or frustration are at a statistically higher risk to engage in new sexually inappropriate conduct

Deviant Sexual Interests

- ❖ In the scientific literature, possession of sexually deviant interests was the largest contributor to reoffense risk (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005)
- ❖ These interests are sometimes difficult to assess, but looking at behavior, preference testing, and stated preferences can help to identify problem areas
- ❖ Sometimes deviance is indicated by the frequency of engagement in the behavior, while other times the unusualness of the behavior can provide clues

Cooperation with Supervision

- ❖ Often, being released to the community comes with a lot of rules and expectations for the core member
- ❖ Ultimately, we have to ask whether we feel he/she is working with us or against us?
- ❖ This can be evidenced in number of domains, including Circle meetings, probation/parole conditions, adherence to treatment, etc.

Acute Risk

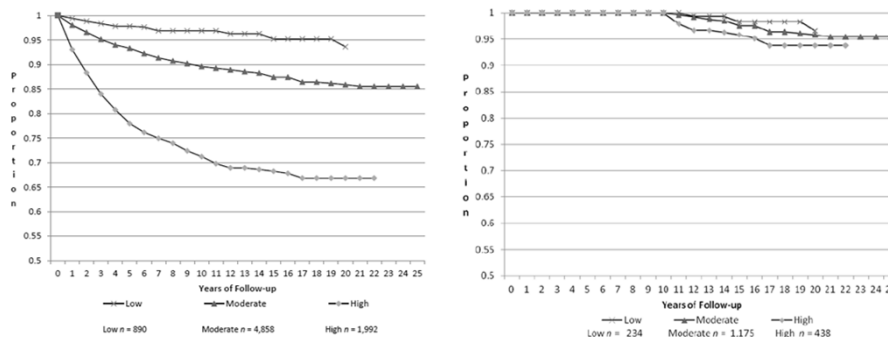
- ❖ Sometimes, the environment in which the core member finds himself can have an impact on coping abilities and temptation to reoffend
- ❖ This is where stable indicators can be inflamed by circumstance, such as in the following scenarios:
 - Increased access or proximity to potential victims
 - Increased hostility/negativity in response to a life event
 - Increased sexual pre-occupation
 - Rejection of supervision (e.g., failing to follow rules)
 - Emotional collapse (possible due to changes in life circumstances)
 - Changes in social supports (death of a friend, etc.)
 - Returning to or new use of substance/alcohol abuse

Treatment & Risk Management What does all this mean?

- ❖ Stable indicators are often our best intervention targets, but Acute indicators may greatly influence what we need to focus on in the short term
- ❖ Use of a comprehensive, multi-tiered approach best informs our support, treatment, and supervision efforts
- ❖ Working together as a team, including the core member, is the best approach overall

Are high risk offenders high risk forever?

from Hanson et al. (2014)



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