

10-22-2010

The Self-Regulation Model of Sexual Offending: Validation and Relationship to Offender Type and Criminal Versatility/Specialization

Alejandro Leguizamo
Roger Williams University, aleguizamo@rwu.edu

Danielle Harris
San José State University

Mackenzie Lambine
Middlesex University (UK)

Follow this and additional works at: http://docs.rwu.edu/fcas_fp

 Part of the [Criminology and Criminal Justice Commons](#), [Legal Theory Commons](#), and the [Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Leguizamo, Alejandro, Danielle Harris and Mackenzie Lambine. 2010. "The Self-Regulation Model of Sexual Offending: Validation and Relationship to Offender Type and Criminal Versatility/Specialization." Presented at ATSA Conference, Phoenix, AZ.

This Conference Proceeding is brought to you for free and open access by the Feinstein College of Arts and Sciences at DOCS@RWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Feinstein College of Arts & Sciences Faculty Papers by an authorized administrator of DOCS@RWU. For more information, please contact mwu@rwu.edu.

The Self-Regulation Model of Sexual Offending: Validation and Relationship to Offender Type and Criminal Versatility/Specialization

Alejandro Leguízamo, Ph.D.

Roger Williams University

Danielle Harris, Ph.D.

San José State University

Mackenzie Lambine, M.A.

Middlesex University (UK)

ATSA Conference

October 22, 2010

Phoenix, AZ

Previous Validation of the SRM

- Studies have supported the utility of the model by differentiating pathways by offender type, offense characteristics and history, victim type, psychopathy, static and dynamic risk, motivation, treatment change, and GLM (Kingston, 2010; Kingston et al., 2009; Lambine & Leguizamo, 2010a, 2010b; Simons et al., 2008, 2009; Stotler-Turner et al., 2008; Yates et al., 2009; Yates & Kingston, 2006)

Criminal Versatility/Specialization

- The sexual abuse/offender literature assumes that sex offenders become proficient in that type of crime and subsequently “specialize” in it (e.g., Peterson & Braiker, 1994). Thus, they are thought to exhibit Specialization.
- Theories regarding sexual offending tend to rely on social learning, conditioning, and sexual deviance, and assume specialization (e.g., Laws and Marshall, 1990).

- On the other hand, in the criminology literature, sex offenders are considered to be criminals who engage in diverse criminal behaviors, including sexual offenses. Thus, they are thought to exhibit criminal versatility. Criminal behavior is conceptualized as being caused by the presence of opportunity, low self-control, impulsivity, and the pursuit of short-term gratification (e.g., Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Lussier, Proulx, & LeBlanc, 2005).

Specialization Thresholds

- Previous thresholds have been established as the percentage of a subject's criminal history that is comprised by a particular type of crime.
- This threshold, when applied to sexual offenders, has been set at 50% (Cohen, 1986; Harris, Mazerolle, & Knight, 2009), 66% (Wikstrom, 1987), 50%, 75%, and 100% (Miethe, Olson, & Mitchell, 2006; Harris, Smallbone, Dennison, & Knight, 2009), and 80% (Harris, Dennison, Knight, and Smallbone, 2010).

Versatility/Specialization Among Sex Offenders

- Despite what would be expected from the sex offender literature, even sex offenders referred for civil commitment exhibit considerable versatility. However, higher rates of child molesters were classified as specialists than rapists (Harris, Smallbone, Dennison, & Knight 2009).
- Versatile offenders have been found to display antisocial behaviors, whereas specialists, particularly child molesters, exhibit more sexual deviance (Harris, Mazerolle, & Knight, 2009).

Goals/Hypotheses

- Exploration of the utility and psychometric properties of the SRM Coding Scheme.
- Analysis of offense pathways by offender type.
- Provide support for the constructs developed by the SRM using the criminal versatility/specialization approach
 - Hypotheses: Offenders following avoidant pathways will exhibit specialization; offenders following the approach automatic will exhibit more versatility; offenders following the approach explicit pathway will exhibit more specialization.

Methods

- Participants
 - 163 Adult male convicted sex offenders serving state prison sentences at the Massachusetts Treatment Center.
 - Rapists- 57.1% (n=93) Child Molesters- 31.9 (n=53) Mixed Offenders - 11% (n=18)
 - Age at the time of evaluation: 21-76 (M = 41.76, SD = 9.80)
 - Ethnicity: Caucasian- 72.4% (n=118) African American- 17.2 (n=28) Latino- 10.4% (n=17)
 - Marital Status: Single- 46.6% (n=69) Married- 8.8% (n=13) Separated- 6.8% (n=10) Divorced- 37.2% (n=55)
 - Average Level of Education: 10.34 (SD=1.92)
 - Subjects participated in comprehensive assessments as part of their participation in treatment.

- Measures

- Demographic data gathered from assessment reports obtained at the Massachusetts Treatment Center
- SRM coding performed by one primary and one secondary rater. Inter-rater reliability was substantial (ICC = .830).
- Versatility/Specialization was assessed by obtaining the percentage of all charges for which subjects were convicted that were sexual. It was analyzed in the following ways: 1) as a continuous variable; 2) using the 80% specialization threshold; and 3) using the percentage that fell in the 75th percentile for this sample.

Results

- Confirmed utility of the SRM Coding Protocol (94.5% of sample was assigned a pathway).
- Psychometrics
 - The components of the SRM exhibited good internal consistency (Cronbach's alphas = .83 for goals and .84 for strategies).
 - Confirmatory Factor Analysis yielded two components. One was comprised of the goal items while the other of the strategy items.

Offender Type

Groups differ significantly on rates of pathway assignment ($X^2 = 22.77, p < .01$)

	Offense Pathway				
	Avoidant Passive	Avoidant Active	Approach Automatic	Approach Explicit	CND*
Rapists n = 93	1 (1.1%)	1 (1.1)	43 (46.2) ^a	45 (48.4)	3 (3.2)
Child Molesters n = 52	1 (1.9%)	4 (7.7) ^b	10 (19.2) ^c	34 (65.4)	3 (5.8)
Mixed Offenders n = 18	1 (5.6%)	0 (0.0)	3 (16.7)	11 (61.1)	3 (16.7) ^d

^a z=2.0, ^b z=1.9, ^c z=-1.9, ^d z=2.0

* Could not determine pathway (either goal, strategy, or both)

SRM Pathway and Criminal Versatility/Specialization as a Continuous Variable

	Approach Automatic n = 50 Mean Rank	Approach Explicit n = 77 Mean Rank	Mann- Whitney U	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
Percentage of sexual charges	52.15	76.69	1332.50	-2.92	.003

The avoidant pathways were not included in the analyses given the low number of subjects who followed them.

SRM Pathway at Specific Specialization Thresholds

Threshold	Approach – Automatic n (%)	Approach – Explicit n (%)	X ² (1df)	Fisher's Exact	p
At 80% (86 th ile)	3 (6) z = -2.1	15 (19.5) z = 2.1		p = .027 (1-sided)	
At 75 th ile (66%)	5 (10) z = -1.8	22 (29.7) z = 1.5	6.82		.007

Possible Confounding Variables?

- Analyses were performed to ensure that the above results were not influenced by offender type.
- Among offenders who followed the approach automatic, we found no significant difference in the percentage of rapists or child molesters.
- The same was true for those who followed the approach explicit pathway. Of note, the difference between number of rapists and child molesters approached significance at the 75th percentile threshold, but disappeared at the 80% threshold.

Discussion

- This study provided empirical support to the utility of the SRM Coding Protocol. The measure exhibited robust psychometric properties.
- Rapists had higher rates of assignment to the Approach-Automatic pathway than expected. The opposite was the case for Child Molesters.
- Child Molesters had higher rates of assignment to the Avoidant-Active pathway.
- Findings similar to those reported by Yates and Kingston (2006) for Rapists. Incest offenders could not be compared.

Discussion

- We found strong evidence of criminal versatility among sex offenders , in support of previous research.
- However, we also found strong evidence of the increased specialization for planful, well-regulated offenders who followed the approach explicit pathway, regardless of method used to assess specialization.
- Findings support the SRM constructs of low-self control, opportunism, and impulsivity among offenders who follow an approach automatic pathway, whereas the opposite was supported for those following the approach explicit pathway.

Treatment Implications

- Findings support for the notion that current treatment methods based on relapse prevention conceptualization of sexual offending may not be helpful to many sex offenders.
- Findings also underscore the need to assess and treat all of offenders' criminogenic needs, beyond those associated with sexual offending.
- Although beyond the scope of this presentation, the SRM's relationship with the Good Lives Model underscores the value of a holistic approach to the conceptualization and treatment of sexual offending.

Limitations

- The present study is retrospective and archival (did not utilize the interview protocol developed by Yates, et al., 2009).
- It did not include information/coding for the Good Lives Model, in which the Self-Regulation Model is embedded.
- Given the nature of the data, more offenders were assigned to the approach pathways than would likely be the case if we had more detailed information about the earlier phases of the subjects' offense progression.

Acknowledgements

- This project was made possible with help from:
 - Massachusetts Department of Correction – Massachusetts Treatment Center (Robert F. Murphy, Jr., superintendent at the time).
 - Roger Williams University’s funding through the Foundation for the Promotion of Teaching and Scholarship.
 - Pamela Yates, Ph.D., R.D. Psych. Cabot Consulting and Research Service. Ottawa, Ontario, CA.
 - Research Assistants: Lauren Flannery, Frank Castorina, Kimberly Moyers, Sara Liebert, Miranda Sarjeant, and Paige Congdon.
- **Contact information: aleguizamo@rwu.edu**