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2010

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Alejandro Leguizamo

*Roger Williams University*, [aleguizamo@rwu.edu](mailto:aleguizamo@rwu.edu)

Brooke Peltzman

Nicolas Carrasco

April Kraft

*Roger Williams University*

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### Recommended Citation

Leguizamo, Alejandro, Brooke Peltzman, Nicolas Carrasco and April Kraft. 2010. "Risk Assessment of Ethnically Diverse Sex Offenders."

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# RISK ASSESSMENT OF ETHNICALLY DIVERSE SEX OFFENDERS

Alejandro Leguizamo, Ph.D.

*Roger Williams University, Bristol, RI*

Brooke Peltzman, Psy.D.

*Massachusetts Treatment Center, Bridgewater, MA*

Nicolas Carrasco, Ph.D.

*Private Practice, Austin, TX*

April Kraft

*Roger Williams University*

# Sexual Offense Recidivism Risk Background

- Actuarial methods are more predictive of sexual and violent recidivism than structured or unstructured professional judgment (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2009).
- Static-99 (Hanson & Thornton, 2000) remains the most studied risk assessment measure and has been found to have good predictive validity (e.g., Barbaree, Seto, Langton, & Peacock, 2001; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2009).
- The Static-99 has 10 items, with a highest possible score of 12. Scores on the measure range from 0-10; 0-1 Low, 2-3 Moderate Low, 4-5 Moderate High, 6+ High.

# Assessing Risk with the Static-99 Around the World

- The normative sample included Canadian and British subjects (Hanson & Thornton, 2000). It has been validated in many countries, for example:
  - United Kingdom (Soothill, Harman, Francis, & Kirby, 2005)
  - Sweden (Sjöstedt & Långström, 2001)
  - Canada (e.g., Barbaree, Seto, Langton, & Peacock, 2001)

- New Zealand (Skelton, Riley, Wales, & Vess, 2006). Although the sample was 40% Maori and 10% Pacific Islander, no ethnic comparisons were made.
- Australia (Allan, Dawson, & Allan, 2006).
- Japan (Sudo, Sato, Obata, & Yamagami, 2006). Initial look into measure, there was no follow up to assess predictive validity.

# Static 99 and non-Whites

- ◎ The predictive validity of the Static-99 has been found to be poorer for non-Whites:
  - Långström (2004) – African/Asian sample (overestimation of risk).
  - Allan, Dawson, & Allan (2006) – Indigenous Australian sample. No analysis possible due to small sample size, but advised caution using the measure with them.
  - Nicholaichuk (2001) reported only moderate predictive validity across ethnicity.

# Forbes 2007

- Dissertation in which Whites and African Americans' level of risk was compared using three actuarial measures (Static-99, RRASOR, and MnSOST-R). No follow-up conducted.
- Static-99 findings:
  - African Americans' overall average score was significantly higher than that of Whites' (means = 3.52, SD = 1.8 vs. 2.36, SD = 1.87, respectively)

# Goals

- Assess Static-99 scores across three ethnic groups (Whites, African Americans, and Latinos).
- Assess differences in individual items across ethnic groups
- Replicate previous findings (from Forbes, 2007).



# Method

## ◎ Participants

- State inmates entering SOT at the Massachusetts Treatment Center (MTC; N=316).
- Sample was 46.2% White (n=146), 23.7% African American (n=75), and 30.1 Latino (n=95).
- Marital status, Whites more likely to be divorced and African Americans more likely to be engaged/have girlfriends.
- Whites significantly older (Mean age 43.9 vs. 38.02 for African Americans, and 36.48 for Latinos).
- Latinos were significantly less educated (Mean years of education 8.56 vs. 10.24 for Whites, respectively, and 10.05 for African Americans) and more likely to report having been raised in Low SES (48.8% vs. 27.9% for Whites, respectively, and 23.3% for African Americans)

# Measures and Procedure

- ① Archival study
- ① Static – 99 consensus scores obtained from the MTC
- ① Intake Assessments coded for demographic information

# Results

- There was an overall significant difference in Static-99 scores between ethnicities ( $F = 5.28, p < .01$ )
- Post-hoc analysis (Tukey HSD) revealed that Latinos' scores were significantly lower than those of African Americans ( $p < .01$ ;  $M = 3.24, SD = 2.02$  and  $M = 4.44, SD = 2.32$ , respectively). Whites did not differ from either group ( $M = 3.69, SD = 2.28$ )

# Static – 99 Item Analysis

Static – 99 Item	Present Study n=243	Forbes (2007) n=1265
1. Offender age		African Americans higher
2. Ever lived with partner > two years		
3. Index Non-sexual Offense $X^2 = 9.79$ (2df), $p < .01$	African Americans higher $z=2.2$	African Americans higher
4. Prior Non-sex Offense $X^2 = 18.91$ (2df) $p < .001$	African Americans higher $z=2.5$	African Americans higher
5. Prior Sex Offense Convictions		African Americans higher
6. Prior Sentencing Dates	<i>Trend</i> <i>African Americans higher</i>	African Americans higher
7. Non-contact Sex Offense		
8. Unrelated Victims	<i>Trend</i> <i>African Americans higher</i> <i>Latinos lower</i>	African Americans higher
9. Stranger Victims $X^2 = 12.07$ (2df) $p < .01$	African Americans higher $z=2.6$	African Americans higher
10. Male Victims $X^2 = 21.66$ (2df) $p < .001$	Whites higher, $z=3.2$ Latinos lower, $z=-2.1$	Whites higher

- ⦿ However, groups did not differ significantly on assignment to risk level on the Static-99 ( $X^2 = 9.64, p = .14$ )

# Conclusions

- ⦿ Differences suggest that African Americans score higher than other ethnic groups on the overall measure and on items dealing with criminal history and the victimization of strangers.
- ⦿ Whites were found to be more likely to have male victims, while the opposite was true for Latinos.
- ⦿ Latinos' scores tended to be similar to those of Whites, with the above exception.
- ⦿ Findings corroborated in part those found by Forbes (2007).
- ⦿ Given the paucity of research, at the very least caution is strongly suggested when using actuarial risk assessment measures on ethnic minorities in the U.S. and elsewhere. In jurisdictions where they play a significant role in the civil commitment of sex offenders, use cannot be recommended until norms for various ethnic groups have been established.

# Limitations and future research

## ⦿ Limitations

- Retrospective study using only archival data.
- Sample size was relatively low.
- No follow up to assess ethnic differences in recidivism and on the predictive validity of the Static-99 were possible.

## ⦿ Future research

- Continued research of ethnic differences among sex offenders.
- Follow up needed to assess recidivism and predictive validity of risk assessment measures across ethnic groups
- Norms need to be established for each ethnic group.

# Thanks to...

- The Massachusetts Department of Correction and the Massachusetts Treatment Center (Robert F. Murphy, Jr., superintendent at the time).
- The generous support from Roger Williams University through the Foundation for the Promotion of Teaching and Scholarship.
- Research Assistants:
  - Leslie Woods, Michelle Nosal, Michele Waldron, Amanda Spikes, Brandy Campbell (grad students), Kimberly Moyers, Sara Liebert, Christa DiCasparro, Amber-Leigh Brzezinski, Thea Rowan, Paige Congdon, Miranda Sarjeant, Lauren Flannery, Frank Castorina, and Maggie Hanvey (undergrad students).
- **Contact information: [aleguizamo@rwu.edu](mailto:aleguizamo@rwu.edu)**



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