

PATHWAYS AND RISK WITH ID OFFENDERS

Experimental Analysis of Risk and Recidivism

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Treatment programs and government legislation for individuals who have engaged in sexually abusive behaviours have led to significant external controls being put in place to prevent any access to potential victims (Levenson, 2005; Wright, 2008; & Stevenson et al., 2011). These controls include, but are not limited to, restrictions in areas of residence, cameras in homes, and continuous supervision by staff.

Vita Community Living Services in partnership with Behaviour Management Services provides intensive treatment and a behaviour management approach to individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) who have sexually abused. A number of high –risk individuals reside in treatment homes within the agency. These homes are carefully controlled with environmental modifications, including highly trained and specialized staff, consistent behavioural support, and limited access to potential victims. Current data analysis reveals that inappropriate behaviours are at extremely low levels for each client.

Given the environmental control being exercised there is virtually no opportunity to exhibit inappropriate behaviour without immediate redirection and intervention. This may lead to artificial data and the impression of significant improvements in client’s ability to manage their behaviour. However, the client’s behaviour may be solely under staff and/or environmental control rather than a reflection of true gains in a client’s skill set and reduced risk. This potentially false depiction of risk will be portrayed to new staff in future residential placements, which may result in drastically less supervision and complacency by staff, consequently leading to possible relapse by the abuser.

Analogue assessments have been utilized in the field of Applied Behaviour Analysis for years and have become a critical component of function-based assessments (Iwata et al., 1994). These analogue situations are designed to determine the function of a behaviour by subjecting the target to a variety of experimental conditions in order to determine which condition the behaviour is more or less likely to occur and to what degree. The information provided is invaluable for assessment and treatment and allows for a more individualized plan of intervention. In his article, Vollmer (2011) proposed a number of advances based on technology, which could assist in the assessment and treatment of individuals who sexually abuse. Some of these advances include virtual reality and GPS systems. These advances represent a push for more scientific and creative assessment, treatment and

management of individuals who sexually abuse. They also represent a closer analogy to the environmental conditions clients will encounter in the community; this would allow clinicians to assess client behaviour in a community based setting, in addition to mitigating risk.

A means of assessing treatment gains and an accurate depiction of risk is essential. To this end, a series of experimental conditions were created in order to properly assess the client's skills and self-regulation strategies in a safe, naturalistic environment. These conditions will present the clients with a situation in which there is a perceived opportunity to offend against their target group. Their subsequent responses will be catalogued and coded to determine their treatment progress.

This presentation will explore the rationale and theory for an experimental analysis of sexually abusive behaviour. As well, the presentation will illustrate the application of a number of experimental scenarios in naturalistic settings to assess the self-regulation skills of a group of individuals with an ID who have engaged in sexually abusive behaviours. Specific scenarios and results will be discussed at length, along with the ethical considerations of conducting such work. Future research and implications will be addressed.

Applying Self-Regulation to Offenders with Intellectual Disabilities: An Exploration of Sub-Pathways

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The concept of self-regulation has been an important construct in sexual offender treatment for the past decade (Ward & Hudson, 1998), with its application arising from the shortcomings associated with the relapse prevention (RP) model as applied to this group (Ward & Hudson, 1998). Unlike RP, which presupposed that offenders followed a single pathway to offending, the Self-Regulation Model (SRM; Ward & Hudson, 1998; Yates & Ward, 2008) proposes multiple pathways associated with sexual offending behaviour. These four pathways are based on the combination of the offender's goals and the strategies utilized in obtaining those goals.

While there is research supporting the validity and application of the self-regulation model with sexual offenders in general (Kingston, Yates, & Olver, 2013; Stotler-Turner, Guyton, Gotch, & Carter, 2008; Simons, Yates, Kingston, & Tyler, 2008; Ward, Hudson, & Keenan, 1998; Yates & Kingston, 2006), research is generally lacking with respect to individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID). Preliminary research suggests that this population falls primarily into approach-based self-regulation pathways (Keeling et al., 2006, Lindsay et al., 2008) which suggests that ID offenders hold antisocial beliefs, that they pursue these either automatically (approach-automatic pathway) or explicitly (approach-explicit pathway), and that they demonstrate sexual deviance and antisocial schemas and traits, such as rule violation (Langdon, 2007; Kingston et al., 2011; Yates & Kingston, 2006;). However, given the limited

amount of research and methodological concerns with these studies, the validity and applicability of these pathways with this group are inconclusive. Additionally, research indicates that individuals with intellectual disabilities have limited sexual knowledge and normative sexual experiences (McCabe 1999), suggesting that at least some ID offenders following approach pathways may not demonstrate the explicit antisociality associated with these pathways, thus resulting in an artificial over-representation of this group among the approach pathways.

The present paper discusses the potential for a divergent pathway and specialized subgroup within offenders with intellectual disabilities. The degree to which this population fits within the model and the key characteristics of the offense pathways will be reviewed, as well as a theoretical pathway that would capture approach based offenders whose unique deficits and cultures could differentiate them from the traditional antisocial and deviant classification. Future research and implications for both assessment and treatment will be addressed.