HOW ACCURATELY DO OFFENDERS PERCEIVE RISK FACTORS?

Self-reported and LS/CMI-measured concordance
AP-LS Conference, 2012

Stephanie Brooks-Holliday, Chris King, Anna Danylyuk, Jade Dinh, Kento Yasuhara, Sanjay Shah, Danielle Hamilton, Casey LaDuke, David DeMatteo, & Kirk Heilbrun

Note: This is an extended version of the slides, designed to provide additional detail that could not be presented at the conference due to time constraints.
As clinicians and researchers, our understanding of risk factors for offending behavior has been shaped by a great deal of empirical research (which remains ongoing).

However, how well do offenders – the clientele we are attempting to serve through focused assessment and treatment program – understand risk factors for future offending?

- General risk factors?
- Personal risk factors?
Rationale

- In therapy, there is an empirically supported role for sharing assessment/conceptualization results with clients and obtaining their “buy-in”\(^1\)
  - Results in more favorable therapy outcomes

- In addition, providing assessment feedback has been recommended as part of an RNR-based assessment and case management procedure\(^2\)
Rationale

Potential benefits of sharing assessment results and helping offenders in treatment understand the rationale behind their programming:

- Motivation and treatment engagement are related to treatment completion\(^3\)
- Treatment completion/adherence have better outcomes than non-completers\(^4, 5\)
- Attrition from treatment has been associated with recidivism\(^3\)
  - Moreover, higher risk individuals are more likely to drop out of treatment and have lower motivation
- Others have recommended the importance of motivation and treatment engagement in reducing risk of recidivism\(^6\)
Rationale

- We believe that helping offenders to understand their own personal risk factors would increase treatment engagement/motivation
  - Feel more invested in treatment
  - Feel as if there is a rationale behind treatment
  - Allow a chance to provide feedback regarding assessment results/provide additional information useful to the conceptualization and risk estimate
Method

- Recruited $N = 94$ male participants from an assessment and treatment reentry program
- At beginning of stay at the facility, administered a set of assessments and questionnaires, including the LS/CMI and the Risk Need Perception Survey
  - Total of $N = 88$ completed the Risk Need Perception Survey
Risk Need Perception Survey

- Two, 30-item questionnaires
- Developed by the authors to gauge understanding of risk and need factors
- First questionnaire taps general understanding
  - “Which of these factors do you think may increase the chance that a person will commit a crime in the future?”
  - List of factors
    - Known predictors of offending behavior (e.g., Criminal history)
    - Items that may be considered responsivity factors (e.g., Mental illness)
    - Some with no known relationship to offending (e.g., Athleticism)
  - Three response options
    - 1 = Not Important, 2 = Possibly Important, 3 = Definitely Important
Second questionnaire taps understanding of one’s own risk and need factors

“Which of these factors do you think are present for you that may increase your risk of committing a crime again in the future?”

Same factors, reworded to reflect personal nature of survey

Most remained very similar (e.g., “Education level” vs. “Your education level” [emphasis added])

Some changed slightly (e.g., “Being outgoing” vs. “Your comfort in large groups”)

Three response options

1 = Not Important, 2 = Possibly Important, 3 = Definitely Important
Demographic Information

- Average Age = 34.28
  - SD = 8.53, Range 21-62
- Average Length of Stay = 71.25 days
  - SD = 20.49, Range 15-126

Race/Ethnicity

- White: 70.0%
- Black: 20.0%
- Hispanic/Latino: 5.0%
- Other: 5.0%

Marital Status

- Single: 90.0%
- Married: 10.0%
- Divorced: 0.0%

Level of Education

- Some HS: 20.0%
- HS Diploma: 35.0%
- GED: 25.0%
- College, No Degree: 15.0%
- Associate's: 10.0%
- Bachelor's: 5.0%

Average Age = 34.28
SD = 8.53, Range 21-62

Average Length of Stay = 71.25 days
SD = 20.49, Range 15-126
Demographic Information, cont.

Current Charge

- Violent
- Property
- Drug/alcohol
- Firearms
- "Status" offense
- Violate community supervision
Risk Level

- Average LS/CMI Score = 22.06 (SD = 5.07)
- Range of 9 (in the Low category) to 32 (in the Very High category)
Initial Results, General Survey

- 16 items rated relatively more important
  - Including known risk factors
    - Criminal history, education, employment history, friends/acquaintances, family members, significant other, how free time is spent, use of drugs or alcohol, attitudes and thoughts
  - Some choices may be expected, even if not known risk factors
    - E.g., Mental illness, stress
Initial Results, General Survey

- 14 items rated relatively less important
  - Identified some “fillers”
    - E.g., Physical attractiveness, smoking cigarettes or cigars, athleticism, sleeping habits

- Generally, it appears that the participants have an understanding of the factors that may put someone at risk for future offending
Initial Results, Self Survey

- Only five items were rated as relatively more important:
  - Friends/acquaintances
  - Patience
  - How free time is spent
  - Attitudes and thoughts
  - Financial difficulties
Comparing the General and Self Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Survey</th>
<th>Bottom 4 Selections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top 4 Selections</strong></td>
<td><strong>Bottom 4 Selections</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Financial difficulties</td>
<td>1. Smoking cigarettes/cigars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Use of drugs and alcohol</td>
<td>2. Athleticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Attitudes and thoughts</td>
<td>3. Physical attractiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Friends and acquaintances</td>
<td>4. Racial/ethnic background</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Survey</th>
<th>Bottom 4 Selections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top 4 Selections</strong></td>
<td><strong>Bottom 4 Selections</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Financial difficulties</td>
<td>1. Smoking cigarettes/cigars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Attitudes and thoughts</td>
<td>2. Medical history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Friends and acquaintances</td>
<td>3. Athleticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How free time is spent</td>
<td>4. Physical attractiveness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparing the General and Self Surveys

- Compared general and self responses for each item
  - For 24 of the 30 items, the general item was rated as significantly more important than the self-rating

  Exceptions:
  - Being a perfectionist
  - Being outgoing
  - Smoking cigarettes/cigars
  - Athleticism
  - Religious beliefs
  - How free time is spent

  Rated relatively less important, generally and for self

  Rated relatively more important, generally and for self
Comparing the General and Self Surveys

- For all 30 items, the average general rating was higher than the average personal rating

  - Top 4 Discrepancies:
    - Mental illness
    - Use of drugs or alcohol
    - Self-esteem
    - Criminal history
Concordance Between Self-Rated and LS/CMI-Identified Risk/Need Factors

- All study participants completed the LS/CMI within at the beginning of their stay at the facility.
- Are self-rated and LS/CMI-identified risk and need factors significantly related?
**Method**

- Determined which survey items “loaded” onto each LS/CMI-identified risk/need factor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LS/CMI Category</th>
<th>Item on the Risk Need Perception Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criminal History</td>
<td>Criminal history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/Employment</td>
<td>Education history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employment history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Marital</td>
<td>Family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Significant other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure/Recreation</td>
<td>How free time is spent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>Friends and acquaintances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol/Drug Problem</td>
<td>Use of drugs or alcohol</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Method

- **Item loadings, continued**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LS/CMI Category</th>
<th>Item on the Risk Need Perception Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Procriminal Attitude</strong></td>
<td>Patience, Attitudes and thoughts, Religious beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Antisocial Pattern</strong></td>
<td>Patience, Attitudes and thoughts, Religious beliefs, Financial difficulties, Employment History, Education level, Family members, How free time is spent, Friends and acquaintances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(includes items tapping attitude, financial problems, job, education, parents, free time, and friends)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Method

- Summed the scores of the items that load on each category:
  - For criminal history, leisure/rec, companions, alcohol/drug problem, possible range of 1 to 3
  - For education/employment & family/marital, possible range of 2 to 6
  - For procriminal attitude, possible range of 3 to 9
  - For antisocial pattern, possible range of 9 to 27

- Conducted Spearman correlations to determine whether self-rated risk/need factors were significantly related to categorical risk scores on each subscale of the LS/CMI

- Complete ratings were available for 85 participants
Five non-significant relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk/Need Category</th>
<th>Relationship, LS/CMI Score and Risk Need Perception Survey responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criminal History</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/Employment</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure/Recreation</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procriminal Attitude/Orientation</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results, cont.

- Two relationships approaching significance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk/Need Category</th>
<th>Relationship, LS/CMI Score and Risk Need Perception Survey responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family/Marital*</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol/Drug Problem**</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p = 0.053, **p = 0.051

- One significant relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk/Need Category</th>
<th>Relationship, LS/CMI Score and Risk Need Perception Survey responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial Pattern**</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.01
Offenders may have an understanding of factors that generally place individuals at risk of future offending.

However, when asked about personal risk factors, the majority of these items were rated as relatively less important.

What accounts for this discrepancy?

Belief in personal ability to overcome circumstances?
Discussion, continued

- There was only a significant (or approaching significant) relationship between self-rated and LS/CMI-identified risk factors for three categories:
  - Family/Marital
  - Alcohol/Drug Problem
  - Antisocial Pattern
Limitations

- There was not a direct question-to-question match between the Survey and the LS/CMI
- This is a pilot version of this instrument, and participants may have misunderstood some of the questions or items
- Some participants did not complete the survey upon entry
Future Directions

- A revised version of the instrument has been developed and piloted, and we’re in the process of incorporating feedback.
- Examining the impact of structured feedback sessions following administration of the LS/CMI.
  - Do offenders better understand their risk factors following a feedback session?
  - Is offender buy-in greater after a structured feedback session?
- Examining the impact that a match between self-perceived and assessment-identified risk/need factors has on recidivism.
References


Acknowledgements

- In addition to my co-authors, I would like to thank Lizzy Foster, Heidi Strohmaier, Matthew Foran, and Dr. Ralph Fretz for their roles in making this research possible.

- I would also like to thank the American Psychology-Law Society, the American Academy of Forensic Psychology, and the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues for their financial support of this project.