THE EMPEROR HAS NO CLOTHES: WHY CLINICAL JUDGMENT IS ESSENTIAL IN SEXUAL PREDATOR EVALUATIONS

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Actuarial measures based upon studies of recidivism by sexual offenders (ARAIs) are currently being relied upon in sexually violent predator (SVP) evaluations and jury trials for the purpose of determining an individual's risk for committing sexual crimes in the future. However, these instruments were not designed to answer any of the legal or clinical referral questions contained in the SVP criteria. ARIAIs were developed from sample populations of sex offenders without regard for whether subjects would meet the SVP legal criteria for a mental disorder that includes the element of "volitional control." As ARAIs cannot determine the presence of a sex-offense predisposing mental disorder, they cannot provide relevant data regarding "likelihood" (legally defined as a "serious and well founded risk") of an individual with a legally defined mental disorder committing sex crimes in the future, and the risk to society if treatment is not in a custodial setting. Due to this lack of validity specific to SVP criteria, the current reliance on total scores and percentiles derived from these instruments in the context of the SVP evaluation process is considered to be scientifically unfounded. The authors discuss the limitations of actuarial instruments to the SVP process and the legal, social and clinical consequences of over-reliance upon them, as well as the value of employing critical analysis; i.e., clinical judgment, when determining a diagnosis, assessing an individual's likelihood for committing future sexually violent crimes, and addressing any causal relationship between these factors.

TOP CITED JOURNALS IN FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

Chris Piotrowski

The purpose of this article is to gauge the top journals, based on serving as key outlet for published research, in the field of forensic psychology. To that end, a keyword search, using popular terms in forensic psychology practice, was conducted in the APA search platform PsycNET (including the database PsycINFO). A ranking procedure, based on the top 10 journals in terms of frequency of "hits" for each term, was performed. The results were then summed across the 16 terms. In addition, the number of times that an individual journal appeared in the Top 10 listing was determined. The findings indicated that the top five journals in rank order were: Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, PsycCRITIQUES, Law and Human Behavior, Behavioral Sciences and the Law, and American Journal of Forensic Psychology. These same journals were also those that appeared in the Top 10 list the most

frequently across the 16 search terms. Despite the fact that content analyses of the research literature have their limitations, recent studies in both the general field of psychology, as well as in forensic psychology, show that this qualitative research methodology has both practical and investigatory value.

JURORS' JUDGMENTS ACROSS MULTIPLE IDENTIFICATIONS AND DESCRIPTOR INCONSISTENCIES

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Mock jurors read a fictional trial transcript that manipulated the consistency of the witness's first identification (ID) decision (positive versus foil versus non-) with the second lineup and in-court IDs of the defendant. The number of inconsistencies (two versus four versus eight) between the witness's description of the criminal and the defendant's appearance also was manipulated. Jurors perceived the description of the criminal as more reliable when the witness reported fewer versus greater descriptor inconsistencies. Jurors also perceived the witness's first photo lineup ID and in-court ID as more reliable, and the witness more favorably overall when fewer versus greater descriptor inconsistencies were presented. Jurors rated the witness's first photo lineup ID as more reliable and the witness more favorably overall when the witness presented consistent versus inconsistent IDs. Higher guilt ratings to the defendant were provided when the witness made fewer versus greater descriptor inconsistencies and/or when the witness made a non- versus a foil ID. Jurors rendered more guilty verdicts when the witness reported fewer versus greater descriptor inconsistencies, however, only when the witness presented consistent ID decisions.

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE MᴀᴄCAT-CA AND CAST-MR FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

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This study may provide evidence regarding the psychometric properties of particular measures used to determine competency to stand trial for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID). The relationship between The MacArthur Competence Assessment Tool (MacCAT-CA) and the Competence Assessment to Stand Trial for Defendants with Intellectual Disabilities (CAST-MR) was analyzed, including the respective determination of competency for adjudicated adults with ID. The lack of convergent validity between these two commonly used measures raises questions about test validity and whether individuals with ID are held to a lower standard for adjudicative competence. The evidence from this study suggests that competency to stand trial evaluations with an ID population results in different findings based on the measure that the examiner chooses. Consequently, adherence to appropriate and standardized measures is needed in forensic psychology to ensure the quality of the evaluation.