

CICC Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, Final Report

Tamsin Higgs

The project, “Reducing risk of violent reoffending: Priority questions in assessment and intervention with high-risk violent offenders” has been actualized over the past year through the preparation of three primary research articles, addressing research questions developed from the original research proposal through subsequent collaboration with Professor Franca Cortoni, School of Criminology and CICC, University of Montreal, Professor Kevin Nunes, Carleton University, and Professor Mark Olver, University of Saskatchewan.

Within the course of this work, specific accomplishments included:

- Identification of variables pertinent to project research questions contained within various SPSS databases and merging data files.
- Attending training relevant to achieving research objectives, i.e., scale scoring instructions for the Violence Risk Scale (VRS; Wong & Gordon, 2000)
 - Violence Risk Scale-Sexual Offense Version (VRS-SO)
Dr. M. Olver, Dr. S. Kelley, & Dr. S. Beggs Christofferson
Kansas City, October 2017
- Data cleaning and coding variables as necessary in line with research questions
 - Writing SPSS syntax to calculate VRS scores from raw data and to pro-rate Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R; Hare, 1991) scores
 - Statistical procedures for dealing with missing data
 - Computation of psychometric pre – post treatment change scores
 - Computation of recidivism variables (e.g. categorical outcome variables; time at risk)
- Literature review on the subject of measuring psychometrically assessed change and analytical methodology (e.g. Reliable Change Index; statistically significant versus clinically significant change; residualized change analysis)
- Studying previously unfamiliar statistical methods required for data analysis appropriate to the specified research questions.
- Travelling to Saskatoon as a visiting researcher at The University of Saskatchewan, December 2017

- Presentation of preliminary results
 - **Higgs, T.** & Cortoni, F. (2017, December). *Priority questions in risk assessment and intervention with high-risk violent offenders*. Seminar conducted at the Joint Seminar of Queen Mary University of London Criminal Justice Centre and Université de Montréal Centre International de Criminologie Comparée, London, UK.
- Manuscripts in preparation
 - Higgs, T., Nunes, K. L., & Cortoni, F. (in preparation). Reducing violence risk? Outcomes for high-risk offenders completing the Canadian Violence Prevention Program.
 - First draft in revision, to be submitted for publication in a peer reviewed scientific journal (Timeline: First draft completed January 2018; Revision and submission to be completed March 2018).
 - Higgs, T., Olver, M. E., Cortoni, F., & Nunes, K. L. (in preparation). Risk relevance of psychometric assessment in high-risk violent offenders.
 - First draft in revision, to be submitted for publication in a peer reviewed scientific journal (Timeline: First draft completed February 2018; Revision and submission to be completed March 2018).
 - Higgs, T., Olver, M. E., Cortoni, F., & Nunes, K. L. (in preparation). Predicting recidivism based on pre-post treatment changes in risk captured by the Violence Risk Scale.
 - First draft expected to be completed March 2018.
- Dissemination of additional research (completed prior to, but submitted or revised for publication/presented while working concurrently on the postdoctoral research project)
 - Stefanska, E., **Higgs, T.**, Carter, A., & Beech, A. R. (2018). "We boil at different degrees" Factors associated with severity of attack in sexual killing. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. Advance online publication doi: 10.1177/0886260518758333
 - **Higgs, T.**, & Stefanska, E. B. (in press). Psychological and criminological factors in diverse types of sexual murderers. In J. Proulx, A. J. Carter, E. Beauregard, A. Mokros, R. Darjee, & J. James (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Sexual Homicide Studies*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
 - Stefanska, E. B. & **Higgs, T.** (in press). Understanding the sexual element in sexual murder. In J. Proulx, A. J. Carter, E. Beauregard, A. Mokros, R. Darjee, & J. James (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Sexual Homicide Studies*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
 - **Higgs, T.** (2017, December). *Towards identification of the true sexual murderer*. Presentation for the Cycle de Conférences du CICC 2017, Montreal, CA.
 - **Higgs, T.** (2017, October). Making a sexual murderer: Distinctive factors in diverse types. In J. Proulx (Chair), *Sexual Homicide: Theoretical and Empirical Issues*. Symposium conducted at the meeting

of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, Kansas City, MO.

- **Higgs, T.**, Stefanska, E. B., Carter, A. J., & Browne, K. D. (2017). The developmental and criminal histories of subgroups of sexual murderers engaging, or not engaging, in post mortem sexual interference, compared to rapists. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *53*, 92-101.
 - **Higgs, T.**, Carter, A. J., Tully, R., & Browne, K. D. (2017). Sexual murderer typologies: A systematic review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *35*, 1-12.
 - **Higgs, T.**, Tully, R. J., & Browne, K. D. (2017). Psychometric properties in forensic application of the screening version of the Psychopathy Checklist. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*. Advance online publication doi: 10.1177/0306624X17719289
 - Stefanska, E. B., **Higgs, T.**, Carter, A. J., & Beech, A. R. (2017). When is a murder a sexual murder? Understanding the sexual element in the classification of sexual killings. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *50*, 53-61.
- Peer review activity
 - Archives of Sexual Behavior (1)
 - Aggression and Violent Behavior, A Review Journal (1)
 - The Royal Institute of Mental Health Research affiliated with The University of Ottawa, University Medical Research Fund (1)
 - Interviewed for a tenure track position at The University of Montreal, Department of Psychology. Decision expected March 2018.

In the immediate period following this fellowship, I will be applying for licensing with the Ordre des Psychologues du Québec, and studying French full-time with a view to securing a permanent position in Québec. I am also a collaborator on the development of an international database of sexual homicide perpetrators, and I am working on an article for a planned special issue on the subject of cognitive-behavioral interventions aiming to reduce recidivism, and two chapters for the next volume in the Wiley 'What works...' series.
