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Application of the Good Lives Model in China

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During the past week, we were invited to provide a four-day training on the Good Lives Model (GLM) to the Society of Rehabilitation and Crime Prevention (SRACP) in Hong Kong. As many readers will be aware, the GLM has come into widespread use around the world. Originally designed with a focus on people who have sexually abused, the GLM can be (and has been) modified for use with people who have committed a number of harmful behaviors. Indeed, the SRACP works alongside people returning from prison for any type of offending.

In essence, the GLM holds that all human beings seek out certain experiences, goals, and states of being (Prescott, Willis, & Yates, 2015; Willis, Prescott, & Yates, 2013; Ward & Maruna, 2007). For example, virtually everyone wants to be good at something in his or her life. The GLM further holds that in many instances, these good life goals play a central role in problem behavior. For example, one's drive towards independence and autonomy can contribute to harmful behaviors that are as diverse as partner violence and substance abuse. The same goes for good life goals such as being connected to others, finding peace of mind, and experiencing happiness and pleasure. Ultimately, the GLM separates itself from other forms of treatment for problem behaviors through its twin focus on building competencies as well as managing risks. It does this with an explicit focus on "approach goals": those goals we set for ourselves that we can approach instead of simply avoiding.

Applying any model across cultures brings inherent challenges. Fortunately, SRACP had experience in this area. They have been active for many years in selecting empirically grounded methods and approaches that could be useful within their specific context. In recent years, they had worked to import methods for adhering to the principles of risk, need, and responsivity. As a group, the professionals involved (primarily from social work backgrounds) had studied in additional areas of psychotherapy, such as Eugene Gendlin's *Focusing*.



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SAJRT Bloggers' Profile

We are longtime members of ATSA dedicated to furthering the causes of evidenced-based practice, understanding, and prevention in the field of sexual abuse.

The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers is an international, multi-disciplinary organization dedicated to preventing sexual abuse. Through research, education, and shared learning ATSA promotes evidence based practice, public policy, and community strategies that lead to the effective assessment, treatment, and management of individuals who have sexually abused or are risk to abuse.

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The broadest discussion of cultural differences in the application of the GLM was in the area of two of the GLM's overarching [common life goals](#): Personal choice/independence (i.e. having a measure of independence and autonomy in one's life) and relatedness (i.e. being connected to others). In the context of Asian societies with collectivistic orientations, differentiating these goals can be a challenge. For example, the simple question, "How are you doing" brings a different meaning in the Far East than it would in the western world. "How are you doing" implicitly means, "How are you doing, including in the context of your family and other loved ones?" When clarifying the elements of an individual's desired future lifestyle, separating these components out for discussion can be a novel experience. Similarly, the GLM's focus on an individual's conception of a good life and their good life plan was integrally linked to that of their families. Nevertheless, personal choice/independence was implicated in many of the case examples of crime that came up during the four days. The individuals that SRACP treats have often behaved in ways that bring them into conflict with their overarching goal of being connected to others (for example, by committing crimes that bring dishonor to them). Although finding the right balance of independence and connection to others can be difficult for anyone in the world, it provides particularly rich opportunities for clinical discussion in China.

SRACP has also grounded its implementation efforts in research. [Implementation science](#) has shown that these efforts can take very considerable time and effort. It is never as simple as bringing in outside experts and providing training. A major focus for us has been in building on the experience of others to find [implementation strategies](#) that involve and are meaningful to those working at the front lines. To this end, consultation and the development of materials for assessing progress in the SRACP's specific context are ongoing.

References

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