

**Rapists vs. Child Molesters:
Recent Taxometric, Criminological, Predictive, and Typological Findings**

Raymond Knight, Ph.D., Symposium Chair

Substantial empirical data support the differentiation between rapists and child molesters. Distinct structural equation models account for their etiology (e.g., Daversa & Knight, 2007; Knight & Sims-Knight, 2003, 2004). Specific neurodevelopmental antecedents and their correlates discriminate offenders who focus on children from those who assault women (e.g., Blanchard et al., 2002, 2003; Bogaert, 2001; Cantor et al., 2004, 2005; Cantor, Blanchard, Robichaud, & Christensen, 2005). In addition to their unique erotic preferences (Blanchard, Klassen, Dickey, Kuban, & Blak, 2001), rapists and child molesters can also be differentiated on a number of criminological and behavioral characteristics that are relevant to their treatment and dispositions (Bard et al., 1987; Christie, Marshall, & Lanthier, 1979; Harris, Knight, Smallbone, & Dennison, 2006; Prentky & Knight, 1991; Sitnikov, Goldberg, Daversa, & Knight, 2007). Finally, data suggest that actuarials developed to capture the unique attributes of each group may yield more accurate predictions of each group's sexual recidivism (Knight & Thornton, 2007).

At the 2007 ATSA conference in San Diego we presented preliminary findings of a research program aimed at exploring the differences between rapists and child molesters (Knight, Harris, & Guay, 2007). The intent of the current symposium is to present data generated in our laboratory during the last year since the 2007 symposium on these differences and to discuss the importance of these new findings for treatment, disposition, and prediction. The first talk will review the differences in developmental and neurodevelopmental antecedents that distinguish rapists and child molesters and will present new data on applying taxometrics (e.g., Ruscio, Haslam, & Ruscio, 2006) to determining whether these purported biologically based discriminators identify a child molester taxon. The second talk will extend the pre-release analyses of specialization and generalization presented last year to post-release criminal outcome. Finally, the third talk will present new analyses of the differences between child molesters and rapists on scales of the Multidimensional Assessment of Sex and Aggression (the MASA) and will report recent developments in using Categorical and Regression Tree analyses to create separate actuarial instruments for predicting recidivism in rapists and child molesters.

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Using Neurodevelopmental Antecedents and their Correlates to Search for a Child Molester Taxon

Matthew King, M.A.
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Highly fixated child molesters with persistent sexual interest in prepubescents are, on the average, at high risk of committing future sexual crimes (Hanson & Bussière, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). Whether the classic “pedophile” should be conceptualized as differentiating in kind, as opposed to degree, of fixation from other offenders is, however, an empirical question, one that has thus far received mixed support. Recent findings have identified factors that may be unique to the development of the fixated child molester and might provide the basis for taxonic differentiation. Guay and Knight (2007) found that high-fixation child molesters, relative to low-fixation child molesters and rapists (a) had a higher incidence of pregnancy and birth complications; (b) had the shortest average physical height compared to low fixated child molesters and rapists; (c) were late-maturing and evidenced more developmental difficulties such as sensory, attention, and learning problems, and higher incidences of mental retardation; and (d) generally tested with lower IQs and were more likely to be enrolled in special education classes in school. It could be theorized that these disparate factors are, in fact, unified as all being potential consequences of neurodevelopmental insults that occurred during an individual’s prenatal maturation, and could possibly serve as indicators of a biological etiology for pedophilia that differentiates fixated child molesters in kind from other types of offenders.

The present talk will discuss a series of taxometric analyses that examine the relations among these neurodevelopmental characteristics and the construct of fixation. Results of standard taxometric analyses will be discussed for a large sample of mixed sexual offenders (n = 904). Analyses will include mean above minus below a cut (MAMBAC) and maximum eigenvalue (MAXEIG) (Ruscio et al., 2006). The central discussion points will include whether a set of neurodevelopmental characteristics identify a distinguishable taxon for pedophilia and what are the dispositional and treatment consequences of the presence or absence of such a taxon.

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Offense Specialization and Versatility in Post-Release Crimes of Committed Rapists and Child Molesters

Danielle A. Harris, M.A.
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In a previous study presented last year at ATSA we showed that male sexual offenders were generally more likely to engage in a range of criminal behaviors than they were to specialize in sexual offenses. Important differences emerged between rapists and child molesters. Rapists resembled general versatile criminals with substantial nonsexual criminal histories. Although generally versatile as a group, child molesters were much more likely than rapists to specialize in sexual offenses.

The present talk builds on those earlier findings by exploring the extent of specialization and versatility in the post-release offending of the same sample of 572 men referred for civil commitment. The offending patterns established in the first study were also observed in their post-release offending. Committed offenders were significantly more likely than their non-committed counterparts to commit sexual offences upon release. When compared by offender classification, rapists were slightly more likely to recidivate with non-sexual offenses and child molesters were more likely to specialise in sexual offences in their post-release offending. Offenders previously determined to be versatile were more likely to re-offend in any fashion, as well as to commit violent crimes upon release. Offenders with specialized criminal histories were more likely to re-offend sexually and to specialize in their post-release offending. Our findings are particularly noteworthy in light of current legislation and policy that are fueled by assumptions of specialization and persistence among sexual offenders.

Self-Report and Life-Course Differences between Rapists and Child Molesters

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David Thornton, Ph. D.

The first part of this talk will examine self-report differences between rapists and child molesters on factor-analytically and rationally derived scales of the MASA. A sample of 529 adult sexual offenders incarcerated in generic prisons and treatment facilities in Minnesota and Massachusetts, and a control sample of 166 community males with no arrest histories were participants in this study. All were

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administered one of four versions of the MASA (3, 4, 5, or 6). Differences on sexual compulsivity, juvenile and adult antisocial behavior, expressive aggression and sadism, pornography use as juveniles and adults, feelings of sexual and masculine adequacy, and offense planning will be presented and discussed.

The second part of this talk will focus on a sample comprising both offenders committed as sexually dangerous and those evaluated for commitment, but determined not to be sexually dangerous, who were followed post release for 2 to 25 years. We integrated data from four criminal record sources and determined the criminal recidivism of all offenders in the sample. Subsamples of 225 rapists and 277 child molesters were identified and classified, as appropriate, in the Massachusetts Treatment Center Rapist Typology, Version 3 (MTC:R3) or the Child Molester Typology, Version 3 (MTC:CM3). In a 2007 ATSA talk we concluded that subtype specific actuarials for the separate victim-age groups showed promise of increasing the accuracy of dispositional decisions. The present talk will present and evaluate potential subtype-specific actuarials recently generated.

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