

MODULE 5

SEX OFFENDERS

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Part 1: Introduction

To effectively identify, apprehend, and interrogate sex offenders, the investigator must have a clear understanding of offender dynamics and motivations. Research on the motivation for sexual assault has led to the conclusion that the crime is one of violence and not primarily sex.¹

Researchers have attempted to classify rapists by their behaviors. Most research has been conducted with incarcerated individuals. The research may not accurately reflect the entire population of offenders and tends to be comprised of disproportionately high percentages of violent sexual offenders and “stranger” rapists. Although not every offender will fit neatly within a model, the classifications can be useful to establish clues to the identity of the offender, and assist in adoption of an interrogation strategy.

Sex offenders often commit “nuisance offenses” such as voyeurism, obscene phone calls, and flashing-type offenses prior to the commission of more serious crimes.¹ Many convicted sex offenders began in their early teens sexually assaulting acquaintances prior to committing stranger sexual assaults for which they were later incarcerated. Research has shown that sex offenders typically committed their first sexual assault by age twenty-one.¹ The majority of these offenders committed numerous sexual assaults for which they were not charged.¹

Perhaps because deviant sexual behavior is personally gratifying to the offender, it is an action that is often quite well thought out. William Pithers explains that “[s]exual offenses may appear impulsive upon first inspection. In reality, many offenders carefully plan offenses so they appear to occur without much forethought.”² Clinicians observe that sex offenders such as child molesters and rapists, frequently report ruminating over sexual fantasies involving the same abusive behaviors in which they engage.²

Following are detailed models of anger, power, and sadistic rapists. After these models, we have included a brief overview of the FBI typology and a chart of all generally accepted available typologies. Finally, we have included one of the more generally accepted typologies of adolescent offenders. It should be noted that adolescent offenders need to be viewed somewhat differently than adult offenders.

Research on spousal and acquaintance rape (also known as marital and date rape) done by Finkelhor has shown that these types of rapes also fall under the 3 Groth categories, with the majority of them being power rapes, the minority (~1%) sadistic rapes, and the rest are anger rapes.

Generally, from an investigative point of view, it is likely that the Groth model will offer the most benefit to police officers at the investigative stage.

Following are some currently documented facts which may be helpful to police officers in understanding behavior patterns of offenders:

- It is assumed that a rapist will attack multiple times over the course of a lifetime. Research suggests that many sex offenders show a continued propensity to reoffend.²
- Fifty percent of offenders are suspected of having a childhood history of sexual or other physical abuse (although many abused children grow up to be non-abusive adults).³
- A variety of federal statistical sources show a remarked similarity in the characteristics of rapists: 99 in 100 are male; 6 in 10 are white; and the average age is the early thirties.³
- Rapists and sexual assaulters serving time in State prisons were less likely to have had a prior conviction history or a history of violence than other incarcerated violent offenders, though they were substantially more likely to have had a history of convictions for violent sex offenses.³
- Violent sex offenders were substantially less likely than other offenders to have committed their crime with a weapon; however, rapists were about as likely as violent offenders to report having used a knife.³

Part 2: Patterns of Rape

In 1979 Dr. Nicholas Groth and H. Jean Birnbaum developed a profile of several types of assault, drawn from their work with people who had been arrested, convicted and incarcerated for crimes of sexual violence.⁴ The information, while not inclusive of all behaviors, can be used by the police officer to develop appropriate investigative questions and to determine patterns of offenders in a given community. Following are those profiles:

ANGER RAPE

1. Aggression: more physical force used than is required to overpower victim; victim is battered and suffers physical trauma to all areas of her body.
2. Assault is more impulsive, spontaneous and unplanned.
3. Offenders mood is one of anger and depression.
4. Offenses are episodic.
5. Language is abusive: cursing, swearing, obscenities, degrading remarks.
6. Assault is of relatively short duration.
7. No weapon, or if one is employed, it is a weapon of opportunity used to hurt not to threaten victim.
8. Victim selection determined by availability; trend towards persons of same age or older.
9. Dynamics: retaliatory aggression; retribution for perceived wrongs, injustices, or putdowns experienced by offender.
10. Prior criminal record: crimes of aggression such as reckless driving, assault and battery, breach of peace.
11. Comprises approximately 31-35% of rapes.

POWER RAPE

1. Aggression: offender uses whatever threat or force is necessary to gain control of victim and overcome resistance; victim may be physically unharmed; physical injury would be inadvertent rather than intentional.
2. Assault is premeditated and preceded by persistent rape fantasies.
3. Offender's mood state is one of anxiety.
4. Offenses are repetitive and may show an increase in aggression over time.
5. Language is instructional and inquisitive: giving orders, asking personal questions, inquiring as to victim's response.
6. Assault may extend over a short period of time with victim held captive for a number of hours.
7. Weapon frequently employed and brought to crime scene for the purpose of threat or intimidation more than injury.
8. Victim selection determined by vulnerability; trend towards persons of the same age or younger.
9. Dynamics: compensatory aggression to feel powerful and deny deep-seated feelings of insecurity and inadequacy.
10. Prior criminal record: crimes of exploitation such as theft, breaking and entering, robbery and/or prior sex offenses.
11. Comprises approximately 60-65% of rapes.

SADISTIC RAPE

Trainer's Notes

1. Aggression: physical force is eroticized; if power is eroticized victim is subjected to ritualistic acts such as bondage or shaving. If anger is eroticized, victim is subjected to torture and sexual abuse.
2. Assault is calculated and preplanned.
3. Offender's mood state is one of intense excitement.
4. Offenses are compulsive, structured, and ritualistic, generally involving bondage, torture or bizarre sexual acts.
5. Language is commanding and degrading, alternately reassuring and threatening.
6. Assault may be for an extended duration in which victim is abducted, held hostage, assaulted and disposed of.
7. Weapon generally employed to capture victim; instruments for restraints and/or torture may be used.
8. Victim selection determined by specific characteristics or symbolic representation; usually complete strangers.
9. Dynamics: eroticized aggression, symbolic control, elimination, or destruction of threat or temptation in order to regain psychological equilibrium.
10. Prior criminal record: none or a bizarre ritualistic or violent offense.
11. Comprises approximately 3-7% of rapes.

Recent efforts to elaborate on these profiles have resulted in the development of additional behavior measures to apply to rapists. Raymond Knight and Robert Prentky, from Brandeis University and the Massachusetts Treatment Center offer the following criteria to use when developing an offender profile:

1. Degree of aggression used to force compliance;
2. Was the attack sexually or opportunistically motivated?;
3. Pervasiveness of other antisocial behaviors.⁵

As research in this area continues, a clearer profile of offenders may emerge to aid police professionals in responding to crimes of sexual assault.

Part 3: FBI Typology (Child Molesters)

The FBI has developed a typology based loosely on Groth's work but expanded to include seven subgroups (Lanning, 1986). The classification system is designed for use in criminal investigations. Elaborating on the concept of the regressed pedophile, Lanning describes the situational child molester as an individual who does not have a defined sexual preference for children. Such individuals are stereotyped as rather benign persons who are relatively easy to treat. However, as Lanning points out, this subgroup may include highly predatory individuals. Situational offenders include the following types:

- **Regressed.** Immature, socially inept individuals who relate to children as peers. These individuals may be experiencing a brief period of low self-esteem and turn to their own children or other available juveniles.
- **Morally Indiscriminate.** These are antisocial individuals who use and abuse everything they touch. Their victims are chosen on the basis of vulnerability and opportunity and only coincidentally because they are children.
- **Sexually indiscriminate.** These individuals are referred to in the psychoanalytic literature as "polymorphous perverse." They have vaguely defined sexual preferences and will experiment with almost any type of sexual behavior.
- **Inadequate.** These individuals are social misfits who may be developmentally disabled, psychotic, senile, or organically dysfunctional. They rarely have contact with others and may see children as vulnerable objects with which to satisfy their sexual curiosity. These individuals have been known to murder their victims. However, any type of molester is capable of murder in order to avoid detection.

Preferential child molesters correspond to fixated offenders in Groth's system. These individuals show a strong sexual preference for children which has characterized their sexual attraction pattern throughout their lives. The subtypes include:

- **Seduction.** These individuals have exclusive sexual interest in children, and court and groom them. They usually are able to identify those children who will not divulge the sexual behavior.
- **Introverted.** These individuals have a fixated interest in children, but do not have the social skills to seduce them. Typically, they molest strangers or very young children or they may marry women with children in the age range of their preference.
- **Sadistic.** These individuals' sexual preference for children is coupled with a need to inflict pain in order to obtain sexual gratification. These individuals are obviously dangerous and fortunately, rare.

Part 8: Sex Offender Treatment

Under current law, the court may require a person convicted of serious sexual offenses (§53-21, §53a-70, §53a-70a, §53a-70b, §53a-71, §53a-72a, or §53a-72b) to participate in specialized sex offender treatment as a condition of probation or conditional discharge.

It is currently recognized nationally that specialized skills are needed to effectively treat sex offenders. In order for treatment to be called Specialized Sex Offender Treatment, at least the following components must be included: Relapse Prevention, Victim Awareness and Empathy, and Social Competence Development.

Sexual deviance is a complicated, multi-determined behavioral disorder. Treatment intervention is focused on assisting the individual to accept responsibility, increase recognition, institute change and manage sexually deviant thoughts, attitudes and behavior. The focus of contemporary treatment is on techniques designed to assist sexual abusers in maintaining control of their sexual deviance throughout their lifetime. Therefore, treatment should include simple, practical techniques that can be applied for the remainder of their lives.

Considerations

- Involvement in and successful completion of treatment regimen does not cure sexual deviance.
- Every offender is different. It is imperative that treatment interventions, including the individual's primary treatment plan, meet the differing needs of every individual.
- Many sexual abusers require long term, comprehensive, offense-specific treatment.
- There may be situations in which a clinician should refuse to accept an offender for treatment because essential ancillary resources do not exist to provide the necessary levels of intervention or risk management.

The Connecticut Association for the Treatment of Sexual Offenders (CATSO) is an association of individuals and agencies committed to serving the welfare of the community by promoting safe, effective, and humane interventions for the problems of men and women who have committed sex crimes. CATSO is made up of mental health and allied professionals who recognize the importance of providing up-to-date, effective treatment services for sexual offenders.

CATSO members adhere to a set of ethical principles specific to the special circumstances which often arise in the treatment of sexual offenders. The membership is actively concerned with questions of professional responsibility to sexual offenders, their families, and to the community at large. Members operate in a manner which is consistent with the ethical requirements of mental health and addictions treatment disciplines, and observe statutory reporting laws.

References

- ¹ Model Guidelines and Sex Crimes Investigation Manual for Illinois Law Enforcement. Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board and Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault, May 1996.
- ² English, Kim; Pullen, Suzanne; Jones, Linda; Krauth, Barbara (1996) *Managing Adult Sex Offenders on Probation and Parole: A Containment Approach*.
- ³ Greenfeld, Lawrence A. *Sex Offenses and Sex Offenders: An Analysis of Data on Rape and Sexual Assault*. Bureau of Justice Statistics, February 1997.
- ⁴ Groth, A. Nicholas (1979). *Men Who Rape: The Psychology of the Offender*. Plenum Press: New York.
- ⁵ Knight and Prentky. *Classifying Sexual Offenders: The Development and Corroboration of Taxonomic Models*, Chapter 3 in *Handbook of Sexual Assault: Issues, Theories, and Treatment of the Offender*. Marshall, Laws, and Barbaree, eds. (1990). New York: Plenum Press.