Child Victim Selection and Sexual Recidivism

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Child victim characteristics (e.g., having boy victims, having unrelated child victims) are well known to predict sexual recidivism among adult male offenders (Hanson & Bussiere, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). This symposium involves three talks that extend this literature by looking more closely at child victim characteristics and sexual recidivism. The first talk looks at the association between sexual victim choice polymorphism (having victims of different genders or age categories) and sexual recidivism in a large sample of clinically assessed sex offenders in Canada. The second talk looks at the role of incest offending, including type of perpetrator-victim relationship, and sexual recidivism using the same clinical sample. The third talk examines the concurrent and predictive validity of the revised Screening Scale for Pedophilic Interests (SSPI-2: boy victim; multiple child victims; young child victim; unrelated child victim; child pornography offending) in a sample of sex offenders referred as candidates for civil management in New York State.

Victim Choice Polymorphism and Recidivism

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Introduction: A significant amount of research on sexual offending is guided by the belief that victim selection is highly stable, which is known as the offence specific fallacy (Laws, 1994). Recent research suggests there is considerable victim choice polymorphism, which refers to switching between victim types along dimensions such as victim age, victim gender, and victim-offender relationship (e.g., Guay, Cusson, Proulx, & Ouimet, 2001). Of particular interest is the finding that victim age polymorphic offenders (e.g., having both a child and an adult victim) have higher rates of sexual recidivism, yet their reoffending was not predicted by existing actuarial instruments (Parent, Guay, & Knight, 2011).

The present study will expand on research on the role of victim age, gender and relationship polymorphism and sexual recidivism. It will build on previous research by utilizing a more heterogeneous sample while controlling for the influence of multiple victims and time in secure custody. Further, it will examine whether victim choice
polymorphism influences the predictive validity of the Static-99R.

**Method:** Recidivism information was collected from a national database for a sample of 843 adult male sexual offenders referred to a large sexual behaviour clinic. Recidivism was defined as any new criminal charge or conviction for sexual recidivism (e.g., sexual assault) and violent recidivism (including sexual offences). Time at risk – taking into account time in secure custody and the Static-99R score – was recorded for each offender. Further, victim information was gathered at the time of the clinical assessment from official file material (e.g., police documentation) and through clinical interview (e.g., admissions).

**Results:** The final sample consisted of 503 men with two or more victims. Of these offenders, 63% were victim age polymorphic (i.e., having a child and adult victim), 24% were gender polymorphic (i.e., offending against male and victim victims), and 18% were relationship polymorphic (i.e., offending against both intrafamilial and extrafamilial victims). The average Static-99R score was 2.60 ($SD = 2.60$). The average follow-up time was 10 years with 13% reoffending with a sexual contact offence and 6% with a sexual non-contact offence. The total sexual recidivism rate of 16% and the total violent (including sexual contact) recidivism rate was 22%.

There was no difference in recidivism rates for polymorphic and non-polymorphic offenders after controlling for number of victims and time spent in secure custody. Further, AUC results from receiver operating characteristic analyses suggest that there was no difference in the predictive validity of the Static-99R for polymorphic and non-polymorphic offenders. The only exception was that the Static-99R did not predict recidivism in offenders whose offending was marked by victim-offender relationship polymorphism.

**Discussion:** The results differ from Parent and colleagues (2011), who found victim age polymorphic offenders to be higher risk, despite actuarial instruments not predicting recidivism in polymorphic offenders. Methodological reasons (e.g., importance of controlling for multiple victims in polymorphism research) for the present findings, as will implications for the risk assessment and management of polymorphic offenders will be discussed.

**References**


Goals of the Paper:
1. Provide background information on victim choice polymorphism and its importance in sexual offender risk assessment and management.
2. Establish the utility of victim choice polymorphism in the prediction of sexual recidivism.
3. Discuss current risk assessment approaches with polymorphic offenders.

Why are Incest Offenders Less Likely to Recidivate?

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There is strong body of evidence to suggest that incest offenders are at a lower risk of sexual and non-sexual recidivism compared to extrafamilial offenders against children (e.g., Greenberg et al., 2000; Harris & Hanson, 2004). Two major dimensions of risk for sexual recidivism among sexual offenders against children are antisociality and atypical sexual interests (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004). A recent meta-analysis suggests that incest offenders are less problematic than extrafamilial offenders against children on multiple indicators of antisociality and atypical sexual interests (Seto et al., submitted). Are these differences sufficient to explain why incest offenders are less likely to reoffend?

The current study will explore these possibilities by assessing sexual and non-sexual recidivism rates across various groups of sexual offender against children using a large sample of 843 adult male offenders who were assessed at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health between 1995 and 2006. Groups include: (1) biological father incest offenders; (2) stepfather incest offenders; (3) non-paternal biological relative incest offenders, and (4) extrafamilial offenders. Atypical sexual interests were assessed using volumetric phallometry and a clinical interview. Items from the Static-99R that assess antisocial orientation will be combined as a measure of antisociality. If differences in the domains of atypical sexual interests and antisociality are enough to explain why incest offenders are at a lower risk of sexual and general recidivism, we would expect to see similar recidivism rates across groups once these risk factors are statistically controlled. However, if there are other factors that help explain these lower recidivism rates in incestuous offenders, we would still expect extrafamilial offenders to have higher rates of recidivism compared to incest offenders.
**Goals of the Paper:**

1. Replicate previous research which has found that incest offenders have lower recidivism rates than extrafamilial offenders against children.
2. Further differentiate between different types of incest offenders (biological father, stepfathers, non-paternal biological relatives) to determine whether recidivism rates for all types of incest offenders are similar.
3. Determine whether higher rates of antisociality and atypical sexual interests in extrafamilial offenders are sufficient to explain why extrafamilial offenders are more likely to commit subsequent crimes compared to incest offenders.

**SSPI-2 and Sexual Recidivism**

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The present study examined the predictive and concurrent validity of the revised Screening Scale for Pedophilic Interests (SSPI-2) using a large state-wide sample of 2,416 sex offenders with child victims who were not deemed to be in need of civil management in New York State. Specifically, the study examined the ability of the SSPI-2 and the original SSPI (Seto & Lalumière, 2001) to predict sexual rearrest (both within five years of release and at any point following release; predictive validity), as well as how well the SSPI-2 and SSPI relate to measures of antisociality and sexual deviance (concurrent validity).

Results of the recidivism analyses supported the predictive validity of the scales, as both SSPI-2 and SSPI scores were significantly and positively related to sexual rearrest at any point following release and sexual rearrest within five years of release. Although neither scale performed significantly better than the other, logistic estimates indicated that the SSPI-2 provided greater discrimination than the SSPI in terms of predicting sexual rearrest within five years across possible scores. Neither scale significantly added to the prediction of sexual rearrest provided by the Static-99R.

Both the SSPI-2 and SSPI were positively and significantly correlated with ratings of sexual preoccupation, emotional identification with children, and sexual offense-related cognitions (convergent validity), but were not significantly related to ratings of self-regulation problems, noncompliance with supervision, or antisocial personality (divergent validity). The divergent validity of the instruments was further supported by both measures being significantly and negatively associated with rearrest for any reason (i.e., they appear to be measures of sexual deviance and sexual criminality, not general deviance and general criminality). Overall, the results suggest that the SSPI-2 and SSPI are specific and useful screening measures of pedophilic sexual interests.
**Goals of the Paper:**

1. Describe the items of the SSPI and SSPI-2.
2. Understand the predictive validities of the SSPI and SSPI-2.
3. Understand the concurrent validities of the SSPI and SSPI-2 with respect to clinical ratings of sexual preoccupation, emotional identification with children, sexual offense-related cognitions, self-regulation problems, noncompliance with supervision, or antisocial personality.