Marital Rapists and Extrafamilial Sexual Offenders Against Women:
Same Offense, Same Issues?

Stephanie Langevin, Ph.D. Candidate
Jean Proulx, Ph.D.
Michel St-Yves, Ph.D.
University of Montreal

While extrafamilial sexual aggressors against women have been the subject of many empirical studies of etiology, criminal career, and treatment, the same cannot be said of intrafamilial sexual aggressors against women (marital rapists). In fact, Camilleri and Quinsey (2009) reported that of 2949 papers on sexual aggression, only 2% of empirical studies were of intrafamilial rape (i.e. sexual aggression committed by a current or former intimate partner).

Marital rape has traditionally been considered simply one of many forms of conjugal violence. However, Basile and Hall (2011) suggest that sexual coercion in intimate relationships is a distinct, non-redundant phenomenon, although it is correlated with forms of nonsexual coercion (physical violence, r = 0.63; stalking, r = 0.68; psychological abuse, r = 0.71). Furthermore, Monson and Langhinrichsen-Rohling (1998) report that 1-10% of women report marital rape unassociated with any other form of marital violence.

Proulx and Beauregard (2014) investigated pathways in the offending process of 43 marital rapists, but, their results did not allow investigation of the extent to which marital rapists differ from extrafamilial sexual aggressors against women. The objective of this study was therefore to compare the psychological, sexual, and criminal characteristics of marital rapists and extrafamilial sexual aggressors against women. To this end, the characteristics of 61 sexual aggressors who had an intimate relationship with their victim (spouse: n = 20; ex-spouse: n = 28; intimate partner: n = 31) were compared to the characteristics of 170 extrafamilial sexual aggressors against women (stranger: n = 87; acquaintance: n = 68; friend: n = 25).

The results suggest that marital rapists and extrafamilial sexual aggressors against women do not differ in terms of sexual characteristics in adulthood (e.g. compulsive masturbation, invasive non-deviant sexual fantasies, deviant sexual fantasies, consumption of pornography). However, marital rapists were characterized by an angry temperament, a dysfunctional environment, precrime anger, conflicts with the victim (e.g. separation from partner, conflict with partner), and a wide variety of sexual acts during the crime. Extrafamilial sexual aggressors against women, on the other hand, were characterized by impulsivity, precrime sexual excitation, and significantly less humiliation and fewer sexual acts during the crime. The clinical and theoretical implications of the results will be discussed.
Goals of the Poster Presentation:
1. Investigate the psychological, sexual, and criminal characteristics of marital rapists.
2. Evaluate the extent to which intrafamilial and extrafamilial sexual aggressors against women have similar sexual issues (e.g. sexual deviance, cognitive distortions).
3. Explore the specific treatment needs of marital rapists, in order to prevent sexual aggression of the partner.