

## **BETTER TOGETHER**

2018 ATSA Conference | Thursday October 18 | 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

**T-24**

### **Applying Environmental Criminology to Sexual Offending**

Symposium Chair: Amelie Pedneault, PhD  
Washington State University

Environmental criminology focuses on criminal events and the immediate context in which they occur. This approach has been identified as holding important prevention implications for sexual offending, notably since the publication of the book *Situational Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse* by Wortley and Smallbone in 2006. To enable preventative efforts, more research investigating the variety of environments and contexts of sexual crimes is needed. The current symposium aims to expand the knowledge provided by this approach by exploring various aspects of the environment in sexual crimes. For this purpose, Julien Chopin will first present a geospatial analysis of extrafamilial sexual delinquency and discuss the role of environmental constraints during this type of sexual assaults, while distinguishing important factors based on victim age. Second, Amelie Pedneault will present on the crime environment differences between disrupted and completed sexual assaults committed by individuals who knew their victims. Third, Ashley Hewitt will discuss the characteristics of places that experienced high counts of sexual crimes reported to law enforcement. At the end of the panel, all three presenters will summarize their results, analyze the larger patterns that can be identified in sexual crime environments, and discuss concrete prevention implications.

#### **Geospatial Analysis of Extra Familial Sexual Delinquency Following the Mobility Triangle Typologies and the Factors Associated With**

Julien Chopin, PhD  
University of Lausanne

This study—based on a national dataset ( $N = 2080$ )—focuses on extra familial sexual assaults against victims of less than 15 years old and 15 years old and more. Specifically, this research explores crime mobility and the factors associated with. Spatial information about the offender's house, the victim's house, and the crime scene was combined. For both types of victims, results show the validity of the distance decay function for the journey to crime and to victimization. Over 50% of aggression occurred within 3 km (2 mi) of the offender's house. Findings confirm the heuristic value of crime mobility triangle for sexual extra familial

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assaults excepted for the offence mobility pattern. Most of the cases concerning the older group of victims falls in the categories of total mobility (42.71%) and offender mobility (33.31%) whereas for the younger group of victims the distribution change with the majority of cases in the offender mobility (27.78%) and the neighborhood mobility (27.29%). For both victim groups, the study also suggests that environmental factors are more significant than individual ones when it comes to explaining the variation among mobility patterns in sexual assaults. Offenders appear to adapt their mobility patterns and modus operandi according to the environmental constraints and also the age of victims. Often, offenders choose their own or their victim's house as a safe environment for sexual intercourse.

### **Learning Goals:**

- To identify the spatial patterns of extra-familial sex offenders in France
- To identify the factors (personal and modus operandi) that influence each spatial patterns
- To analyze the differences of mobility according to the age of victims and their implications

### **Characteristics of Disrupted Events of Sexual Assault: Implications for Prevention**

Amelie Pedneault, PhD  
Washington State University

One of the core principles of environmental criminology is that individuals committing sexual crimes consider costs and benefits. This suggest that prevention is possible by disrupting these costs and benefits (i.e., heightening the costs and reducing the benefits). In the present paper, we focused specifically on incidents of sexual assaults committed by individuals who attempted or completed a sexual crime against a known victim ( $N = 864$ ). We specifically compared incidents that were disrupted before completion to completed incidents to examine the differences in the crime environment. The impact of various crime locations and their characteristics will be discussed, along with other components relative to the crime situation, including time and presence of third parties and potential bystanders. The goal of the presentation is to derive concrete prevention strategies from these empirical observations and to identify ways in which a sexual assault incident can be interrupted and its repetition prevented. As such, situational crime prevention strategies will be discussed at length.

### **Learning Goals:**

- Identify which characteristics of the crime location renders it susceptible to disruption.

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- Examine additional characteristics of the crime situation which are often present in incidents of sexual assault that are not completed.
- Discuss concrete situational crime prevention strategies in sexual assault incidents involving a known perpetrator.

### **Identifying the Environmental Context of Sexual Crime Hotspots**

Ashley N. Hewitt, PhD  
Texas State University

Previous research has shown that crime, in general, and sexual assault, in particular, is spatially concentrated. Yet, few researchers have studied why such spatial concentration exists in particular places. The aim of this study, then, is to investigate the characteristics of those places that experienced high counts of sexual crimes reported to police services within a large city in British Columbia between August 1, 2002 and July 31, 2006 ( $N = 2,180$ ). Using negative binomial regression, the current study draws from the crime pattern and social disorganization theoretical frameworks to test whether neighborhood socio-demographic factors, ecological variables, land use, and specific sexual crime attractors, predict dissemination areas with high counts of sexual crime. Findings indicate that both theories can be used to explain the spatial variation of sexual crime within this city. Specifically, dissemination areas that have residents with a certain socio-demographic and socio-economic profile, that also contain a concentration of liquor-serving establishments and schools, characterize sexually violent neighborhoods. Implications for situational crime prevention are discussed.

#### **Learning Goals:**

- To examine the spatial distribution of the population of sexual crimes reported to police services within a large Western Canadian city.
- To examine the physical and social characteristics of places that experience high counts of sexual crimes.
- To identify situational crime prevention approaches that may reduce criminal opportunities for sexual crimes in the identified areas.

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**Amelie Pedneault** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Washington State University. She completed her Ph.D. in Criminology from Simon Fraser University in 2015. Her research examines various aspects of sexual offending: offending decision making; criminal achievement; mobility; and situational approaches to sex offending.

**Julien Chopin** is a postdoctoral researcher at the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University since the mid of 2018. Before, he was a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Lausanne where he has completed her Ph.D. in criminology in 2017. His research focuses on the situational and rational choice analysis of various types of sexual crimes. He also works on the methodological aspects of the crime linkage systems.

**Ashley N. Hewitt** is an Assistant Professor in the School of Criminal Justice at Texas State University, a Research Associate with the Institute for Canadian Urban Research Studies, and a member of the Western Society of Criminology's Executive Board. Her research interests involve the application of environmental criminology principles to the study of sexual crime. Specifically, she is interested in offender crime site selection, space-time dynamics of sexual offending, offender mobility, and situational crime prevention.