

## **SHAPING THE FUTURE**

2019 ATSA Conference | Friday November 8 | 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

**F-01**

### **Assessing Sexual Interest in Rape**

Symposium Chair: David Thornton, PhD  
Private Practice

This symposium will explore three ways of assessing sexual interest in rape, through structured rating scales, through PPG and through diagnosis. Across these different approaches questions will be asked regarding the structure of this sexual interest, how it should be conceptualized, and whether it can be assessed in ways that are reliable and useful. The first paper focuses on structured ratings using the Structured Risk Assessment = Forensic Version – 2 (SRA-FV-2), the second uses the MONARCH Rape Stimulus PPG assessment, and the third identifies problems with diagnostic practice and suggests ways of diagnosing that may be more defensible.

### **Assessing Sexual Interest in Rape and Children with SRA-FV-2**

Gina Ambroziak, BS  
Sand Ridge Secure Treatment Center  
David Thornton, PhD  
Private Practice

This presentation will describe how sexualized violence and sexual interest in children is assessed with SRA-FV-2. The first part of the presentation will examine how reliably these factors can be rated and will explore the way in which the availability of PPG and polygraph assured sexual histories affect conclusions regarding the presence of these sexual interests. The second part of the presentation will use Cox Regression to examine the independent contribution of these two interests to the prediction of sexual recidivism. Conclusions about the utility of this way of assessing sexual interests will be drawn and its application in treatment planning illustrated.

#### **Learning Goals:**

*By the end of the presentation attendees will be able to ...*

- Describe the typical IRR found for Sexualized Violence and Sexual Interest in Children

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- State whether Sexualized Violence and Sexual Interest in Children independently contribute to recidivism
- Describe how PPG and Sexual Histories contribute to the identification of Sexualized Violence and Sexual Interest in Children

### **PPG Assessment of Arousal to Rape: Coercion vs Sexual Sadism**

Rachel E. Kahn, PhD  
Sand Ridge Secure Treatment Center  
David Thornton, PhD  
Private Practice

Sexual arousal to rape has been explained in terms of three potential underlying mechanisms: an abnormal failure of inhibitory mechanisms, abnormal arousal to coercion, and sexual sadism. Research using Penile Plethysmography (PPG) suggests arousal patterns to coercive and sadistic scenarios are qualitatively distinct (e.g. Seto et al., 2012). In contrast, research using self-report measures (Knight et al., 2013) suggests a dimensional framework in which arousal to coercion can be regarded as a less intense form of the same underlying disorder as sexual sadism. Our presentation will present new data examining sexual arousal responses to the MONARCH Rape Stimulus set. Patterns of response to different stimuli will be compared to the different theoretical models and correlated with DSM-5 diagnoses. Implications for treatment and for diagnostic practice will be drawn.

#### **Learning Goals:**

*By the end of the presentation attendees will be able to ...*

- Describe whether Rapists PPG data can be explained solely by a failure of inhibitory mechanisms
- Describe whether Rapists PPG data provides evidence for preferential arousal to coercion
- Describe whether Rapists PPG data provides evidence for arousal to coercion being independent of arousal to brutality

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### **Diagnosing Paraphilic Coercion**

David Thornton, PhD  
Private Practice

Evaluators have struggled with how to diagnose rape-related paraphilias. This has led to low inter-rater reliability, especially under adversarial conditions, and to questions about whether related diagnoses should be admissible in court under Frye or Daubert standards. This presentation will review related clinical guidelines, theory and empirical findings and will suggest diagnostic practices that may be easier to justify because they would be more closely based on research and easier to apply consistently. Particular attention will be paid to understanding the nature of rape-related paraphilias at a theoretical level and to the kinds of indicators that forensic evaluators may use to make inferences about the presence of rape-related arousal patterns. These recommended practices will be contrasted with some of the practices encountered in clinical practice.

#### **Learning Goals:**

*By the end of the presentation attendees will be able to ...*

- Describe the core features of paraphilic coercion as indicated by research
- Describe indicators evaluators may use to distinguish paraphilic coercion from general antisocial traits
- Describe indicators evaluators may use to distinguish paraphilic coercion from severe sexual sadism

**Gina Ambroziak** has worked for Sand Ridge Secure Treatment Center, Wisconsin's sex offender civil commitment program, for over ten years. She is currently the Quality Improvement and Research Supervisor and held previous positions with the program as a Research Analyst and Treatment Specialist. She has been involved in research related to risk assessment practices of forensic evaluators, individuals with a history of sexual offending and major mental illness, and nutrition and mental health. She obtained her Bachelor of Science in psychology and legal studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

**Dr. Rachel Kahn** is employed as a psychological associate with the Research Unit of Sand Ridge Secure Treatment Center in Madison, WI. She received her Doctoral degree in Applied Developmental Psychology with specializations in developmental psychopathology and forensic psychology. She has authored numerous publications primarily related to the development and expression of psychopathic traits in adolescents and adults. Her most recent work has focused on adverse childhood experiences among those who sexually offend, biases in risk determinations for civil commitment evaluations, and using

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electroencephalogram (EEG) to help accurately identify treatment needs in sex offender populations.

**David Thornton, Ph.D.**, is a psychologist in private practice in Wisconsin and holds a part time position as a professor in the department of clinical psychology at the University of Bergen in Norway. He was research director for Wisconsin's program for sexually violent persons for three years and previously was the treatment director for that program for over a decade. He has published on evidence-based standards for effective correctional programs and on the importance of therapist style in the provision of treatment designed to reduce sexual recidivism. He has been involved in the development of static actuarial instruments to assess sexual recidivism risk, contributing to the development of such scales as Static-99, Static-2002, Static-99R, Static-2002R and Risk Matrix 2000. He has been involved in the development of psychological risk assessment, creating the Structured Risk Assessment (SRA) framework. David Thornton has published three books, over 15 chapters in edited books, and over 75 papers in peer-reviewed scientific journals.