

## **SHAPING THE FUTURE**

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### **Sexual Offending Against Youth: Typology and Etiological Implications**

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Those who sexually offend can be classified according to dimensionally or categorically determined typological differences, and failure to take these differences into consideration can lead to substantial theoretical and practical consequences (Knight, 1992). Distinct typological systems for specific victim age preference groups (child versus adult victims; Knight & Prentky, 1990; Knight, Rosenberg, & Schneider, 1985) have been created and empirically validated (Knight, 2010; Knight & King, 2012). Importantly, such typological differences have been hypothesized to relate to specific etiological pathways (Knight & Sims-Knight, 2017; Knight & King, 2012).

The focus of the present study is the typology created for individuals whose sexual offences have been exclusively committed against youth (SOAY), the fourth version of the Massachusetts Treatment Center Child Molester typology (MTC:CM4; Knight & King, 2012). According to this classification system SOAYs can be differentiated based on where they fit in the multidimensional space defined by the dimensions of fixation, social competence, and externalizing behavior (Knight & King, 2012). This model classifies pedophilia as a distinct category, or taxon, characterized by high fixation and low social competence, and by dimensionally distributed externalizing behaviors. There has been considerable empirical support for the categorical nature of pedophilia (Brankley, 2018; Knight & King, 2012; McPhail, Olver, Brouillette-Alarie, & Looman, 2018; Schmidt, Mokros, & Banse, 2013).

Unlike dimensional phenomena, which likely originate from the additive and interacting influences of multiple biological and environmental causes, taxonic abnormalities are thought to emerge due to specific etiological causes (Meehl, 1992). The quest for specific etiological factors leading to intense or exclusive sexual preference for prepubescent children has produced the growing body of empirical research, with a number of studies reporting the findings in support of the hereditary nature of pedophilia (e.g., Alanko, Salo, Mokros, & Santtila, 2013) and its early neurodevelopmental origins (e.g., Blanchard et al., 2002; Blanchard, Kuban, Klassen, Christensen, Cantor, & Blak, 2003). Specifically, pedophilia has been associated with the established markers of early life neurodevelopmental perturbations, such as lower intelligence, thought disorders, non-right-handedness (left-handedness and ambidexterity), and minor physical abnormalities (Blanchard et al., 2007; Cantor, Blanchard, Robichaud, & Christensen, 2005; Dyshniku, Murray, Fazio, Lykins, & Cantor, 2015; Fazio, Dyshniku, Lykins, & Cantor, 2017; McPhail & Cantor, 2015).

The aim of the present study is to replicate and extend the existing findings by examining the differences between SOAYs and those who sexually offend against adults only (SOAA), and to determine which type of SOAY particularly well captures these differences. To do so, the study will examine measures of cognitive function, including IQ, as well as various cognitive and affective deficiencies, and anthropometric measures, such

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as height and build, in the context of the etiology of pedophilia, i.e., the associated neurodevelopmental perturbations. The analyses will be completed using archival data collected from 900 individuals convicted of sexual offenses and referred to Massachusetts Treatment Center for observation and assessment for potential civil commitment.

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