

(Adapted from pp. 37-45)

Child Molesters: A Behavioral Analysis

**For Law-Enforcement Officers
Investigating the
Sexual Exploitation of Children
by Acquaintance Molesters**

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IDENTIFYING PREFERENTIAL SEX OFFENDERS

OVERVIEW

Although a variety of individuals sexually abuse children, preferential-type sex offenders, and especially pedophiles, are the **primary** acquaintance sexual exploiters of children. A preferential-acquaintance child molester might molest 10, 50, hundreds, or even thousands children in a lifetime, depending on the offender and how broadly or narrowly child molestation is defined. Although pedophiles vary greatly, their sexual behavior is repetitive and highly predictable. Knowledge of these sexual-behavioral patterns or characteristics is extremely valuable to the law enforcement investigator.

These highly predictable and repetitive behavior patterns make cases involving preferential-type offenders far easier to investigate than those involving situational-type offenders. An important step in investigating cases of sexual exploitation of children by adult acquaintances is to recognize and identify, if present, the highly predictable sexual-behavior patterns of preferential sex offenders or pedophiles. It is important that investigators continually attempt to place a suspected acquaintance child molester along the motivational continuum. If the investigation identifies enough of these patterns, many of the remaining ones can be assumed; however, no particular number constitutes "enough." A few may be enough if they are especially significant. Most of these indicators mean little by themselves, but as they are identified and accumulated through investigation, they can constitute reason to believe a certain offender is a preferential sex offender. One does not have proof beyond a reasonable doubt, but "probable cause" exists.

A classification system or typology to determine the type of offender with whom one is dealing cannot be applied unless the most complete, detailed, and accurate information possible is obtained. In order to properly evaluate the significance of any offender or victim behavior, investigators must have and be able to professionally process the **details** of that behavior. The fact that a suspect was previously convicted of "sodomizing" or engaging in "indecent liberties" with a child is almost meaningless if the **details** (*i.e.*, verbal, physical and sexual behavior) of the crime are not available and known. Law-enforcement reports that sanitize or describe, in politically correct terms, an offender's language and sexual behavior are almost worthless in evaluating sex offenses. This is one reason why investigators who cannot easily and objectively communicate about regular and deviant sex have problems dealing with sex crimes.

The investigator must understand that doing a background investigation on a suspect means more than obtaining the date and place of birth and credit and criminal checks. School, juvenile, military, medical, driving, employment, bank, sex-offender and child-abuse registry, sex-offender assessment, computer, and prior investigative records can all be valuable sources of information about an offender. Relatives, friends, associates, and current and former sex partners can be identified and interviewed. Other investigative techniques (*e.g.*, mail cover, pen register, trash run, surveillance) can also be used. Indicators and counter indicators must be identified and evaluated.

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Understanding behavioral dynamics and recognizing behavioral evidence can often be as important as child interviewing or the collection and preservation of physical evidence in the investigation of sexual victimization of children cases. The amount and kind of corroborative evidence available and recovered might depend on a behavioral understanding of the type of case, type of sexual activity, and type of offender(s) and victim(s) involved. Documenting offender patterns of behavior is an important, and often overlooked, part of developing effective interview strategies, assessing and evaluating information, and attempting to corroborate allegations. This presentation will set forth a descriptive investigative typology that evaluates sex offenders along a motivational continuum. The continuum of intrafamilial, stranger, and acquaintance child molestation cases will also be discussed. It is presented from a law enforcement perspective for a multidisciplinary audience.

Content:

- Pedophile vs. Child Molester
- Situational to Preferential Motivation
- Importance of details
- Collection of child pornography and erotica
- Understanding need-driven mistakes
- Proving intent
- Recognizing prior like acts

Objectives:

1. To communicate the importance and value of recognizing that there are different types of child molesters and sex offenders.
2. To provide a descriptive typology for classifying sex offenders for criminal justice purposes.
3. To illustrate the application of this typology to sex offenders in order to assist in formulating criminal justice strategy.

1. Child molesters: A behavioral analysis
for law enforcement
www.missingkids.com
2. "Capturing the Friedman" Documentary HBO