



E92 A Proposal for a Universal Classification of Paraphilias

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand the fact that paraphilias which have a wide range of activities from inflicting pain on one's self (masochism) to having sexual intercourse with the dead (necrophilia) can in fact be classified into a common universal pattern. Such a universal pattern of classification may help attendees gain insight into the range of different paraphilic behaviors, which can help practitioners compare and contrast the severity of different paraphilias across the entire spectrum of paraphilic patients. It is believed that ultimately this will also assist in developing some common strategies for treating different paraphilias and may help law enforcement understand the undercurrent of common patterns flowing through all paraphilias. This may have an important bearing on the medicolegal aspects of these paraphilias, for instance, in how each paraphilia has to be viewed and understood in relation to rest of the paraphilias.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by stimulating further research into paraphilic behaviors and their classifications.

Paraphilic behaviors have existed since antiquity.¹ It has been shown that most paraphilic activities span a wide range of behaviors ranging from the most innocuous to the most deviant.² In 2010, it was shown that one of the paraphilias — necrophilia — could be organized into ten classifications. These classifications were named mathematically from Class I to Class X.³ Class I necrophiles represents the most innocuous necrophilic behavior, which is comprised of role players. Role players only want their sexual partners to play dead while having intercourse. At the other extreme, Class X necrophiles or exclusive necrophiles are the most deviant type of necrophiles who commit murder in order to procure a dead body with which to have sexual intercourse. It has been conjectured and proposed that all paraphilic behaviors can be similarly classified into ten classifications.⁴ In 2011, it was shown that all zoophiles could be similarly classified into ten classifications.⁵ Recently, it has been reported that even non-contact paraphilias like exhibitionism can be classified in similar classifications; however, some proposed classifications among non-contact paraphilias have not been encountered so far.⁶ It may be postulated that paraphiles belonging to such classifications do exist but have not yet been discovered. Such gaps may be viewed similar to gaps in Mendeleev's table of elements. It is hoped that just as gaps in Mendeleev's table helped stimulate a search for hitherto undiscovered elements, the current gaps would help discover thus far undescribed forms of different paraphilias.

Tentative names and defining characteristics for each classification are as follows: (1) Class I — role players who require the presence of a "consenting partner"; (2) Class II — romantic paraphiles who have a romantic relationship with the intended partner, which is not, or cannot be, reciprocated; (3) Class III — paraphilic fantasizers whose paraphilic tendency increases to masturbation/self-stimulation, but the target is still an image or an object; (4) Class IV — tactile paraphiles whose paraphilic tendency increases to touching the object of desire (the victim) or his sexual organs. In non-contact paraphilias like exhibitionism, this class is somewhat limited or modified. For instance, Class IV exhibitionists may want to touch the sexual organs in an image of a sexual object and may perform masturbation simultaneously; (5) Class V — fetishistic paraphiles are those who steal a fetishistic object from someone and keep it with them. They may display their organs to the fetish and masturbate; (6) Class VI — sadistic paraphiles whose paraphilic activity combines with torture/mutilation. In non-contact paraphilias like exhibitionism, true sadism or torture is not possible, since these are essentially non-contact paraphilias; however, this may involve an imagery of torture or actually whipping an image of a loved one; (7) Class VII — opportunistic paraphiles who are ordinarily content with normal sexual activity, but may resort to paraphilic activity if opportunity is available. If, by chance, they happen to face a lonely or unguarded victim, they may display their sexual organs. Typically, they are cowardly and docile and are content with just showing their genitals from a distance and masturbating; (8) Class VIII — classic/regular paraphiles whose paraphilic activity involves the classical and most commonly understood definition; (9) Class IX — paraphilic criminals whose paraphilic activity includes serious criminal activities, even homicide. In cases of non-contact paraphilias like exhibitionism, they also engage in other sexual crimes, especially pedophilia and child molestation. Upon finding a child alone, their sexual behavior may start with exhibitionism, but culminate with child molestation. These paraphiles are more dangerous to society; and, (10) Class X — exclusive paraphiles whose paraphilic activity is exclusively limited to a particular paraphilia with complete obliteration of any other form of sexual activity. In the case of non-contact paraphilias like exhibitionism, it is the *sole* outlet for sexual gratification. They cannot form a normal romantic relationship with a person of the opposite sex and cannot engage in normal sexual intercourse.



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In conclusion, this presentation proposes that all paraphilias can be classified in similar gradations of ten classes ranging from the most innocuous to the most severe. This theory has previously been named the “theory of paraphilic equivalence.” Such a holistic view of paraphilias would help understand their psychological and medicolegal aspects in a more comprehensive manner.

Reference(s):

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