A Developmental Life Course Perspective on Sexual Offending: Evidence from Two Longitudinal Studies

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This symposium presents a developmental life course perspective on the origin and development of sexual offending. It follows a symposium presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers in 2014 (San Diego) by this team of researchers. The 2014 symposium focused on the developmental correlates of juvenile sexual offending. This symposium, however, ventures in childhood to examine the onset of normative and nonnormative sexual behaviors and associated developmental correlates. This symposium will emphasize the importance of a developmental perspective by focusing on age-graded manifestations and age-graded risk factors of atypical sexual behaviors. The study will also stress the importance of recognizing both the continuity and discontinuity of atypical sexual behaviors across developmental stages. Contrast between the childhood and the adolescence period will be emphasized. The symposium includes four interrelated studies. We believe that four presentations is adequate here given the overlapping nature of the research methodologies involved (sample, sample designs, variables, etc.).

First, the symposium will present data and findings from the Vancouver Longitudinal Cohort Study, a project that started in 2008, which follows a community-based sample of 400 families from the Vancouver area in British Columbia, Canada. This project, using an accelerated longitudinal study design, aims to examine the development of aggression and sexual behaviors in a clinical, at-risk and representative samples of preschoolers (boys and girls), followed over a three year span. The study includes information for a wide range of risk and protective factors, such as pre/perinatal adversities, socioeconomic factors, familial environment and parental skills, peer and social factors, neighborhood characteristics and exposure to violence, as well as a wide range of individual characteristics of the child (cognitive skills, self-regulation, temperament, callous-unemotional characteristics, etc.). The study provides unique insights as to the development of normative and nonnormative sexual behaviors and associated risk and protective factors. Preliminary findings of the project has been published in journals such as Behavioral Sciences and the Law, International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology and International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies.

The second project, the Serious and Violent Youth Study, is an initiative that started in 1998 and focuses on adolescents involved in chronic, violent and sexual offenses. The Serious and Violent Youth study includes a large sample of youth (n>1000) who were incarcerated at least once during their adolescence. The study aimed to examine the
dynamic risk and protective factors as well as their treatment needs for distinctive offending patterns and developmental trajectories. The study included file data, information gathered through clinical interviews, questionnaires/survey, official and self-reported data regarding youth's cognitions/attitudes, behavior, as well as historical, familial and victimization experiences. The study has helped gather information helping to determine whether or not juvenile sexual offenders present a distinctive clinical profile compare to those involved in nonsexual offenses. Several studies have been published in recent years on juvenile sexual offending issues using this data in journals such as Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment, Journal of Criminal Justice, Justice Quarterly, Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice to name a few.

A Prospective Longitudinal Study of the Normative and Nonnormative Sexual Behaviors in Childhood: A Comparison between Boys and Girls

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For over thirty years now, scholars from the field of developmental life course criminology (DLC) have contributed to the description, explanation and prediction of antisocial behaviors using prospective longitudinal studies (e.g., Farrington, 2005; LeBlanc & Loeber, 1998). These studies have been focused on the development of overt, covert and reckless nonsexual antisocial behaviors. However, DLC criminologists have remained relatively silent about the description, prediction and explanation of atypical sexual behaviors in children. Moreover, the study of the development of non-normative, atypical sexual behaviors stemming from these longitudinal investigations has been limited to a very limited set of behaviors (i.e., sexual assault and rape) (e.g., Lussier, 2014). As a result, it remains unclear as to what constitute a normative and a non-normative sexual development at the earliest developmental stages. The limited research on the earliest developmental stages and the onset of normative and non-normative sexual behavior is not without consequences. For example, description and explanation of what constitutes a normative and non-normative sexual development in children remains equivocal and, at times, somewhat contradictory across studies. Consequently, many professionals are left in the blind as to what is normative and non-normative at different developmental stages.

The past studies on children sexual behaviors showed that a substantial proportion of children manifest some form of sexual and sexualized behaviors as early as three years old (e.g., Kellogg, 2009; DeLamater & Friedrich, 2002; Friedrich et al., 2001). Some of the most common sexual behaviors in young children are exploratory; touching their own genital, and viewing/touching peers and adults genitals. On the other hand, some of the least
prevalent and non-normative sexual behaviors in children are behaviors that involve some form of coercion, adult-like behaviors, and sexual behaviors that are frequent and persistent (e.g., Kellogg, 2009). In general, sexual behaviors increase between 3 and 5 years old and then decrease over the years for both boys and girls (Gray et al., 1997; Friedrich et al., 1991; 1998).

Although results showed that sexually abused children tend to present more non-normative and atypical sexual behaviors than non-abused children, sexual abuse is not the only risk factors of these behaviors (Friedrich, 1993; Trane & Gully, 2005; Chaffin et al., 2008; Hunter & Figueredo, 2000; Lussier & Healey, 2009; Lussier, Tzoumakis, Corrado, Reeebye & Healey, 2010). Furthermore, clinical research conducted with sample of youth having committed a sexual offense have not all been sexually victimized. As an example, Burton (2000) concluded that about 30% of boys who commit sexual acts have never been sexually abused. In their study, Friedrich et al. (2003) demonstrated that 40% of sexually abused children do not show any problematic sexual behaviors. Consequently, it is imperative to study the present of non-normative sexual behaviour in normative sample in order to understand this type of behavior. However, at this time, most of the research has been conducted with small clinical samples of children who have been sexually abused which seriously limits the potential conclusions that can be drawn about the general population and the onset and development of non-normative sexual behaviors (Dennison & Leclerc, 2011; Vizard, 2006; Bladon et al, 2005; Taylor, 2000).

The current study aims to examine the sexual development of children in the general population. Using data from the Vancouver Longitudinal Cohort Study, the study will provide an examination of the nature, prevalence and frequency of normative and non-normative sexual behaviors in a sample of preschoolers. The study includes a sample of 335 preschoolers, boys and girls, recruited mainly from daycares. A subsample of children referred to an infant/child psychiatric clinic for externalizing behaviors was also included for comparison purposes. Using an accelerated longitudinal study design, the study will provide information about the short-term within-individual changes in sexual behaviors over time. Comparisons between boys and girls will be made to highlight whether the presence and extent of gender differences in normative and non-normative sexual behaviors in preschoolers.

Goals of the Paper:
1. Provide information regarding sexual behaviors in children and on the Vancouver Longitudinal Study on the Psychosocial Development of Children.
3. Provide findings regarding possible gender differences about the nature, prevalence and frequency of normative and non-normative sexual behaviors during early childhood.
Nonnormative Sexual Behaviors in Early Childhood:
A Tale of Two Developmental Trajectories

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Research on the origins and development of sexual offending in youth has been focused on the period of adolescence. Consequently, there is little prospective empirical examination of the development of sexual offending over time. On the one hand, clinical research conducted with adolescents who have committed a sexual offenses suggest that, at least one subgroup of them, tend to present a maladaptive sexual development characterized by sexual victimization, atypical sexual behaviors and childhood-onset sexual offending (e.g., Lussier, 2014; Seto & Lalumière, 2010; Vizard et al., 2007). On the other hand, social workers and practitioners are often facing the difficult task of assessing the sexual behaviors of vulnerable children without much empirical information to assist and guide their judgment. Prospective longitudinal studies conducted with children having been sexually victimized and those with children showing sexual behavior problems show little continuity of atypical, nonnormative sexual behavior over time (Carpentier, Silovsky & Chaffin, 2006; Chaffin et al., 2008).

The continuity-discontinuity paradox is well known in developmental research. More specifically, these two lines of research, together, suggest much discontinuity albeit some continuity of atypical nonnormative sexual behaviors over time and across developmental stages. In fact, these two lines of research suggest the presence of two meta-trajectories of atypical sexual development: (a) the childhood-limited; (b) the persisters. Yet, not much is known about these two patterns of maladaptive sexual pattern of development given that there are few prospective longitudinal studies examining the sexual development from early childhood. Indeed, these studies examining the continuity and discontinuity of nonnormative sexual behaviors are often based on clinical samples, using retrospective data or short-term follow-up data.
Following the seminal work of William Friedrich and colleagues (Friedrich, 2003; Friedrich et al., 2004), the current study used prospective longitudinal data collected from a community-based sample to examine the development of nonnormative sexual behaviors. Using data from the Vancouver Longitudinal Cohort Study, the investigation included three yearly waves of data regarding the presence, nature and frequency of nonnormative sexual behaviors. Trajectories of nonnormative sexual behavior between age 3 and 9 were inspected using semi-parametric group-based modeling (Nagin, 2005). Semi-parametric group based modelling allow the investigation of: (a) the number of distinctive trajectory of nonnormative sexual behaviors during the study period; (b) the prevalence of each of these trajectory of nonnormative sexual behavior in a community-based sample; (c) the shape of these trajectory of nonnormative sexual behavior in terms of onset, course, persistence, and termination. In doing so, the empirical analyses provided preliminary information regarding the presence of the childhood-limited and the persistent pattern of nonnormative sexual behaviors throughout childhood, but also the presence of other, maladaptive patterns of sexual development. The developmental patterns of nonnormative sexual development were compared on a series of socioeconomic, familial, parental, and individual characteristics.

Goals of the Paper:
1. Provide empirical information about the childhood trajectories of nonnormative sexual behaviors
2. Provide detailed information about the development of these patterns over a three year period
3. Provide empirical information about the developmental risk and protective factors associated with onset, persistence and termination of nonnormative sexual behaviors during childhood.
A substantial body of empirical research indicates that the origins of adolescent and adult antisocial behavior can be traced to early childhood (e.g., Farrington, 1994; Tremblay, Pihl, Vitaro & Dobkin, 1994; Tremblay & Nagin, 1999; Broidy et al., 2003). In particular, children exhibiting chronic physical aggression are more likely to persist and escalate toward more serious forms of offending in later developmental stages (e.g., Tremblay & Nagin, 1999; Broidy et al., 2003). Not all children exhibiting high levels of physical aggression, however, persist in this or analogous behaviors raising questions about which risk factors are associated with stability in conduct problems. A key developmental risk factor in the progression of antisocial behavior is temperament. Lahey and Waldman (2003, 2005) proposed a temperament based developmental model of conduct problems referred to as the Child and Adolescent Disposition Model (CAD). They theorize three temperament dimensions (i.e., negative emotionality, prosociality, daring), which emerge early in life, are central to the onset and persistence of early childhood conduct problems (e.g., physical aggression), and later antisocial behaviors. Children who are high in negative emotionality and daring, but low in prosociality exhibit the greatest propensity for conduct problems. The temperament profile exhibited by these children is marked by intense negative affect, high irritability, proneness to anger, difficulty regulating emotions and behaviors, thrill seeking, and lack of sympathy toward others. Critically, this temperament profile is directly in line with key constructs observed in juvenile and adult offenders (e.g., low empathy/callous traits, poor self-regulation, negative emotionality). Furthermore, research indicates each of these three dimensions are associated with oppositional defiant disorder and conduct disorder in late childhood (Lahey et al., 2008; Lahey et al., 2010), as well as antisocial behavior in adolescence (e.g., Farrington & West, 1993; Frick, Bodin & Barry, 2000; Russo et al., 1993 Lahey et al., 2008; Lahey et al., 2010). Collectively, this body of work provides strong support for the role of temperament in the onset of conduct problems early in childhood and their development and persistence into more serious antisocial behaviors in adolescence.
To date, the temperament dimensions identified by the CAD model have been focused entirely on indicators such as physical aggression, defiance, truancy, as well as other forms of delinquency. These constructs have not been examined within other related behaviors such as childhood sexual behaviors. Yet, research has shown that children showing more evidence of externalizing behavior, such as physical aggression, are also manifesting more evidence of nonnormative sexual behaviors (Friedrich, 2003; Lussier & Healey, 2010; Schoentjes et al., 1999). This raises a number of important questions: 1) are the sexual behaviors of children also influenced by temperament? 2) to what extent do the sexual behaviors of children exhibiting the high-risk temperament profile follow a similar developmental trajectory to that of physical aggression? The identification of similar risk factors between childhood sexual behaviors and physical aggression has important implications for understanding the etiology of conduct problems, broadly speaking, as well as sexual offending more specifically. Accordingly, the current study has three objectives: 1) to examine the development of sexual behaviors throughout early childhood; 2) to examine the relative role of temperament (i.e., negative emotionality, prosociality, daring) in the development of sexual behaviors throughout childhood; and 3) to determine whether the sexual behaviors of children who exhibit the high-risk temperament profile follow a similar developmental trajectory to that of their physical aggression.

Data was obtained from the Vancouver Longitudinal Study on the Psychosocial Development of Children, conducted in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The data currently consists of 3 waves. Wave I was conducted with the primary caregiver of a preschool child who was between the ages of 3 and 6. Since this time, follow-up interviews have taken place each year over the last three years. The age-span of the current sample ranges between 3 to 9 years of age. Latent Class Analysis is utilized to investigate patterns of physical aggression and sexual behaviors across childhood (i.e., 3 to 9 years of age). This technique identifies individuals exhibiting similar patterns of behaviors. Following the identification of different clusters of physical aggression and sexual behaviors, group membership will be predicted utilizing three temperament domains found in previous research to be critical for the development of conduct problems: negative emotionality, daring, and prosociality.

Goals of the Paper:
1. Present a temperamental model of childhood antisocial behavior
2. Inform about the link between the temperamental model and nonnormative sexual behaviors in children
3. Provide information about the co-occurrence and co-morbidity between nonnormative sexual behaviors and physical aggression
Does Nonsexual Violence Involvement Help Differentiate Juvenile Sex and Non-Sex Offenders?

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Incarcerated juvenile sex offenders (JSOs) resemble incarcerated juvenile non-sex offenders (JNSOs) in terms of developmental antecedents (McCuish, Lussier, & Corrado, 2014), general criminal career patterns (McCuish, Lussier, & Corrado, 2015), and likelihood of sexually offending in adulthood (Lussier, Corrado, & McCuish, in press). Due to the abundance of similarities between JSOs and JNSOs it has been suggested that perhaps the key difference between these two groups was their exposure to an opportunity for a sex crime. However, this difference of opportunity may not arise simply through random chance. Individuals with symptoms of psychopathic personality disturbance (PPD) are callous and unemotional, seek interpersonal domination, and are impulsive. Such individuals therefore may be more likely to seek out and/or act upon opportunities to sexually offend. Cale et al. (in press) showed that JSOs scored higher on symptoms of PPD compared to JNSOs. However, because JSOs are a heterogeneous group, it is unlikely that PPD is solely responsible for the development of juvenile sex offending or that all JSO are all characterized by psychopathic traits. Separating JSOs based on their involvement in violent offending is one way to account for this heterogeneity. As sexual offending and violent offending have both been linked, separately, to PPD, this construct may be particularly useful for explicating how JSOs involved in violence differ from JNSOs.

Using data from the Incarcerated Serious and Violent Young Offender Study (n = 277), symptoms of PPD measured using the PCL:YV were compared across different types of offenders. Violent JSOs (VJSOs, n = 31) scored higher on the PCL:YV four factor model, three factor model, and individual items representing affective and interpersonal deficits compared to violent JNSOs (VJNSOs, n = 153) and non-violent JNSOs (NVJNSOs, n = 80), whereas non-violent JSOs (NVJSOs, n = 13) did not differ from any group. Other developmental antecedents (e.g., sexual abuse, substance use) as well as offending trajectories and crime mix also differed between JSOs and JNSOs once violent offending was accounted for. Whether these differences were due to JSOs scoring higher on symptoms of PPD was examined. At least among this incarcerated sample, instead of juvenile sexual offending occurring simply due to differences in exposure to opportunities


for sex crimes, VJSOs may be more likely to seek out or act upon these opportunities as they showed a tendency to be more callous and unemotional, impulsive, conning, manipulative, and deceitful compared to other types of offenders. Given the study findings, practitioners working with sexual abusers should account for JSO involvement in violent offending as a way to be better informed of the risk for offending in emerging adulthood as well as potential barriers to treatment as symptoms of PPD are likely also present. The specificity of the sample should be taken into consideration before generalizing these results community-based samples of JSOs.

Goals of the Paper:

1. Inform the audience about the link between symptoms of psychopathy and the development of sexual offending in adolescence.
2. Inform the audience about how involvement in both sexual and violent offending in adolescence is informative of the risk for continuing to re-offend in emerging adulthood.
3. Inform the audience about how violent offenders that also commit sexual offenders in adolescence are likely to have a more serious criminal career compared to violent offenders that do not sexually offend.