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2018 ATSA Conference | Thursday October 18 | 3:30 PM – 5:00 PM

T-44

Early Risk and Protective Factors of Sexual Violence and Abuse: An International Developmental Perspective

Symposium Co-Chair: Stéphanie Chouinard Thivierge, PhD Student

Symposium Co-Chair: Patrick Lussier, PhD

Université Laval

In recent decades, despite the increase in knowledge about the behavior of young people with sexual behavior problems, the scientific knowledge regarding the risk and protective factors remains relatively scarce. In fact, there are significant gaps between the scientific knowledge and the service delivery with this population. As a result, young people who manifest sexual behavior problems are subject to generic intervention methods that are not necessarily adapted to theoretically and clinically relevant risk and protective factors. Further, such generic interventions are not in line with the specific intervention needs and complex socio-developmental profiles of young people with sexual behavior problems. This symposium aims to bridge a gap between knowledge and intervention by presenting three on-going research projects focusing on the development of sexual behavior problems among young people. Of importance, the symposium includes ongoing research from distinct research teams from three different countries which not only provides an international perspective to the issues and challenges facing researchers and practitioners, but also an international outlook on the ongoing research conducted in Australia, Canada, and the United States of America to better understand sexual violence and abuse perpetration among youth. In doing so, three research studies and findings will be discussed in terms of (a) the clinical and theoretical relevance of risk and protective factors for sexual violence perpetration in youth; (b) the sociodevelopmental profiles and child welfare services trajectories of children and adolescents with sexual behavioral problems, and; (c) the long-term offending pathways of child sexual abuse victims. The three presentations will rely on evidence-based information to draw conclusions about the origin and development of sexual violence and abuse perpetration but also the adolescence and adult outcomes of this group. The developmental perspective espoused will allow researchers to highlight issues and challenges related to the study of the continuity and discontinuity of sexual behavioral problems and its various manifestations from childhood to adulthood.

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A Cross-Sectional, Theory Driven Investigation of Potential Risk and Protective Factors for Sexual Violence Perpetration

Michael H. Miner, PhD, LP
University of Minnesota Medical School

This paper reports on a cross-section study conducted at the Program in Human Sexuality at the University of Minnesota over the last 16 years. The purpose of this study was to identify the correlates to sexual perpetration in adolescent males, both child sexual abuse and sexual violence, in order to set the stage for a longitudinal study to test a developmental model grounded in attachment theory. Influential models of sexual abuse describe insecure attachments, which is how one interacts and conceptualizes intimate relationships, as important determinants of sexual perpetration in adult males. These conceptions, which implicate childhood attachment and adolescent experiences, had not previously been explored in adolescents and when investigated in adults, focused on romantic attachments using self-report measures. This study moved the field forward through an exploration of parental attachments in adolescent males, using a semi-structured attachment instrument specifically designed for adolescent males, and explored other factors that could influence the development of adult, romantic attachments, and could lead to sexual perpetration. This paper will discuss the findings from 476 adolescent males, ages 13-18 years, including those who committed sexual offenses against children (n=156), those who committed sexual offenses against peers (n=92), those adjudicated delinquent for non-sexual crimes (n=122), and those in treatment for substance use or other mental health issues (n=92). Data were collected through abstracting of institutional records, semi-structured interviews, and a computer-administered self-report battery. Our results indicate a model of sexual perpetration against children that involves an indirect effect of attachment anxiety through adolescent social isolation and masculine inadequacy. Additionally, sexual perpetration is related to a measure of compulsive sexuality, which measures feelings of lack of control over sexual behaviors and engaging in sexual behavior despite negative outcome expectations. Additionally, we found systematic differences between those sexual offenders who had also committed non-sexual crimes and those whose only offenses were sexual in nature. We will discuss our findings with a focus on their implications for longitudinal investigation and the explication of risk and protective factors.

Learning Goals:

- To acquire a better understanding of the role and importance of parental attachment in relation to the perpetration of sexual violence during adolescence.
- To increase knowledge in order to guide future longitudinal studies investigating the development of sexual perpetration using factors related to attachment.

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- To acquire a better understanding of the heterogeneity among adolescents having perpetrated acts of sexual violence in their developmental profile and intervention needs

A Developmental Study of Child Welfare Referral Trajectories Through Children and Adolescents with Sexual Behavior Problems

Stéphanie Chouinard Thivierge, PhD Student
Patrick Lussier, PhD
Université Laval

In spite of the increasing interest toward children who show sexual behavior problems (SBP), few studies have investigated the development of SBP and the sociodevelopmental context in which they occur. To overcome this important limitation, this study aims to examine and describe the child welfare referral trajectories of children manifesting SBP from birth up to late adolescence. To do so, an overall sample including all children referred to the child welfare services of the Capitale Nationale region between 2002 and 2014 was examined. All participants included in the study showed were investigated by the Child welfare service for SBP according to section 38.f of the Quebec's Youth Protection Act. All children who were 17 years old at the time of data collection were retained for this study (n=957). Using a life course developmental calendar approach, the entire history of child welfare services was examined from birth up to age 17. Data regarding sociodemographic, individual, abuse history, family environment, and referral characteristics were longitudinally investigated on a yearly basis. Semi-parametric group-based modeling was used to explore and identify trajectories of referrals to the Child welfare services throughout the study period. A subsample of 240 cases was further examined to describe the SBP in terms of nature, age of onset, frequency, continuity, seriousness, and persistence of the behavioral throughout the study period and across the childhood-adolescence transition. Distinct profiles and child welfare services trajectories were identified which highlight the heterogeneity of this population across developmental stages with specific intervention needs. It also highlights that many of these youths were referred to the Child welfare services, often several times, for various developmental issues (e.g., sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect) prior to being referred for SBP which adds to the complex sociodevelopmental profile of this population. Theoretical and policy issues raised by these research findings will be addressed.

Learning Goals:

- With this presentation, attendees should be able to acquire a better understanding of the importance of the development of SBP among young people, and the context in which they occur.

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- This presentation will contextualize the onset and the development of sexual behavior problems among young people by taking into consideration developmental stage in which they occur.
- Of importance, this presentation will provide evidence-based information about the sociodevelopmental profiles of young people with SBP, especially regarding their intervention needs.

Exploring the Longitudinal Offending Pathways of Child Sexual Abuse Victims

Nina Papalia, PhD
Swinburne University of Technology

Little research has been conducted to show the way in which criminal behavior unfolds over the life-course in children who have been sexually abused, and whether it differs from the 'age-crime' patterns consistently documented in the criminology literature. This study investigated the temporal pathways of criminal offending between the ages of 10-25 years among medically confirmed cases of child sexual abuse (CSA), and considered whether abuse variables, offense variables, and the presence of other adverse outcomes, were associated with heterogeneity in offending pathways among CSA survivors. This study utilized data gathered as part of a large-scale study involving the linkage of forensic examinations on 2,759 cases of medically ascertained CSA between 1964-1995, to criminal justice and public psychiatric databases 13-44 years following abuse, together with a matched comparison sample of 2,677 individuals. We used the subsample of 283 offending individuals (191 victims; 92 comparisons) for whom complete offending data were available. We compared the aggregate age-crime curves for CSA victims and comparisons, and applied longitudinal latent class analysis to identify distinct subgroups of offending pathways between ages 10-25 years within the abuse sample. Four latent pathways emerged among sexually abused offenders, labeled: *Early-Onset/High-Risk/Adolescence-Limited*; *Intermediate-Onset/Low-Risk/Adolescence-Limited*; *Late-Onset/Low-Risk/Slow-Declining*; and *Early-Onset/High-Risk/Persistent* offenders. Age at abuse, the nature and frequency of offending, and mental health problems, were associated with the offending pathway followed by CSA victims. Consistent with criminological literature, findings indicate considerable heterogeneity in the longitudinal offending patterns of offenders exposed to CSA. Implications for clinical practice and directions for research are highlighted.

Learning Goals:

- To provide an overview of the current state of the literature with respect to the relationship between child sexual abuse victimisation and subsequent offending behaviour.

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- To investigate the longitudinal offending pathways of child sexual abuse victims over the early life courser.
- To consider some of the factors that might be associated with the nature of offending trajectories followed by child sexual abuse victims.

Stephanie Chouinard Thivierge is a Ph.D. student in social work at the School of Social Work and Criminology at Université Laval. Her master's thesis focused on the continuity and discontinuity of sexual behavior problems among young people who have been referred to the Child welfare services in the province of Quebec, Canada. More precisely, her thesis consisted of an exploratory longitudinal study of the continuity and the discontinuity of sexual behavior problems across the childhood-adolescence period. Furthermore, Stephanie is working as a research and teaching assistant at the School of Social Work and Criminology as well as a research assistant for the *Centre de Recherche Universitaire sur les Jeunes et les Familles* (CRUJeF) in Quebec City, Canada.

Dr. Patrick Lussier is a Professor of criminology at the School of social work and criminology at Université Laval, in Quebec City, Canada. He is a researcher at the Centre International de Criminologie Comparée (CICC) and the Centre de Recherche Universitaire sur les Jeunes et les Familles (CRUJeF). Professor Lussier has more than 130 publications related to developmental life course criminology, sexual offending, risk assessment/management, community reentry and reintegration, and criminal justice policy. His work has been published in journals such as *Aggression and Violence*, *Criminology*, *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *Justice Quarterly*, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*. Professor Lussier is also the assistant editor for the *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*.

Dr. Miner is Professor of Family Medicine and Community Health and Research Director for the Program in Human Sexuality at the University of Minnesota Medical School. His career has involved the application of psychological methods and statistics in the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, cardiovascular disease, child sexual abuse, and HIV infection. He began his research in sexual aggression as the experimental psychologist for the Sex Offender Treatment and Evaluation Project at the California Department of Mental Health and has continued exploring causes of sexual perpetration in adolescent males since joining the faculty of the Program in Human Sexuality. Dr. Miner is immediate Past President of ATSA and past Vice President of the International Association for the Treatment of Sex Offenders.

Nina Papalia is an early career research fellow and psychologist. She received her Doctor of Psychology in Clinical and Forensic Psychology from Swinburne University of Technology, Australia, in 2017. Her dissertation examined the long-term negative outcomes among child sexual abuse survivors, with a particular focus on criminal offending, further victimisation, and mental health morbidity outcomes. Nina is undertaking post-doctoral research with the Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science, working on a large-scale project designed to

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systematically address persistent violence and sexual offending. Clinically, Nina works in an intensive therapeutic unit at a men's correctional facility in Victoria, providing intervention to high-risk violent and sexual offenders with entrenched complex and challenging behaviours.