

# *What Do We Know About Sexual Offending and Sex Offender Management and Treatment*

## Juvenile Etiology and Typologies

June 22, 2015  
2:00-3:30 pm ET

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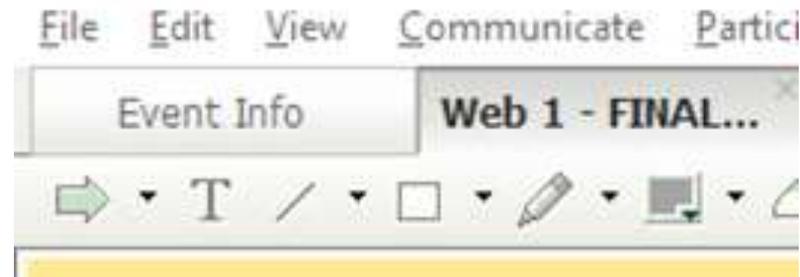
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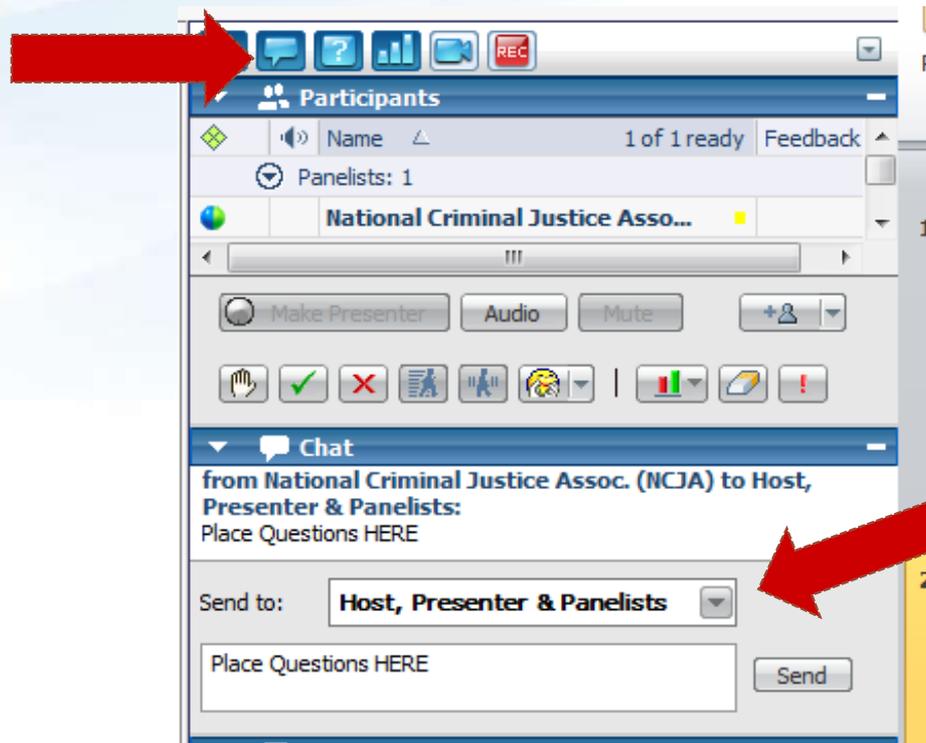
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## *Presenters*

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# *Combating Sexual Offending and Victimization*



- Practitioners and policymakers have a common goal: to protect the public from sex offenders and prevent sexual violence
- A variety of policies and programs exist
- Little known about “what works”
- Programs are more likely to be effective when based on scientific evidence

# *U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs (OJP) Role in Combatting Sexual Offending and Victimization*



- Established in 2006 by AWA
- First federal office devoted solely to sex offender management-related activities
- Responsible for assisting with implementation of SORNA, and for informing about a broader scope of sex offender management activities needed to ensure public safety
- SOMAPI: identify evidence based practices, current gaps/needs of the field, and provide guidance to states and locals

# *SMART Office Sex Offender Management Assessment and Planning Initiative*



- Goal is to identify research-supported programs for replication across the U.S.
  - Inform OJP funding decisions concerning sex offender programming and research
- Assess the state of research and practice of sex offender management
  - Work conducted by subject-matter experts through NCJA
  - Review of the literature on sexual offending and sex offender management
- 2012 Discussion Forum involving national experts

# *SMART Office Sex Offender Management Assessment and Planning Initiative*



Literature reviews on 8 adult and 5 juvenile topics

\*Important to distinguish between adults and juveniles\*

## **Adult Topics**

Incidence and prevalence  
Etiology  
Typologies  
Risk assessment  
Recidivism  
Internet offending  
Treatment effectiveness  
Management strategies

## **Juvenile Topics**

Etiology/typologies  
Risk assessment  
Recidivism  
Treatment effectiveness  
Registration and notification

# *SMART Office Sex Offender Management Assessment and Planning Initiative*



- Key products:
  - Summaries of the research available online at:  
<http://www.smart.gov/SOMAPI/index.html>
  - Findings, policy implications, future research needs
  - Research briefs
  - Targeted conference presentations
  - Webinars
  - National Symposium

## *Literature Review Methods*

- Source materials identified using abstract databases, internet searches, outreach to relevant organizations and subject matter experts
- Primarily studies conducted within the past 15 years
- Emphasis on individual studies that employed scientifically rigorous methods, as well as on synthesis studies – such as systematic reviews and meta-analyses

# *Juvenile Etiology and Typologies*

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**Etiology**- Addresses the causes or origins of juvenile sexual offending and the pathways related to the development, onset, and maintenance of sexually abusive behavior

**Typology** - Typological research reviewed in this chapter addresses classification schemes based on types or categories of offenders or victims, and offense characteristics.

# *Etiology Research*



- Provides both conceptual frameworks and specific guidance that can be used to develop more effective prevention efforts across a broad continuum from primary to tertiary prevention
- Includes studies that focus on single factors and studies that focus on multiple factors
- Etiological factors typically both co-vary and interact with each other in the development and onset of sexual offending and nonsexual delinquency

# Case conceptualization/formulation



- What are the current problems; how did these problems develop and how are they maintained?
- What were the significant life events, experiences, and interactions (perhaps genetic predispositions) that contributed to his/her problems today?
- What dysfunctional/maladaptive thoughts/beliefs are associated with the problems?
- What cognitive, affective, and behavioral strategies has he/she developed to cope with his/her dysfunctional/maladaptive beliefs?
- What stressors contributed to his/her problems or interfere with his/her ability to solve these problems?

# *Etiology*

## *Sexual victimization*



- Sexually abused juveniles were more likely to select sexual behaviors that were reflective of their own sexual victimization<sup>1</sup>
- Ages 3 to 7 may be a sensitive period when sexual abuse can do the most damage and place a youth at higher risk for engaging in sexually abusive behavior<sup>2</sup>

# *Sexual victimization*

## *Predictors of subsequent sexual offending*

- A younger age at time of sexual victimization, a greater number of incidents, a longer period of waiting to report the abuse, and a lower level of perceived family support after revelation of the abuse<sup>3</sup>
- Sexually victimized youth were likely to repeat what was done to them in regard to the relationship with and gender of their victim(s), modus operandi, and sexual behaviors<sup>4</sup>
  - Suggests that sexually abusive youth may have learned to be sexually abusive from their own sexual perpetrator(s)
  - Submissive and forceful personality traits contributed

## *Etiology*

### *Multiple types of maltreatment*

- Sexual aggression a learned behavior, modeled after what they observed at home<sup>5</sup>
- Physical abuse by the father and sexual abuse by males increased sexual aggression by adolescents. A child's bonding to his mother was found to decrease his sexual aggression<sup>6</sup>
- Findings highlight the importance of assessing and treating co-occurring issues, which can often be influential in sexual offending<sup>7</sup>

# *Sexually offending juveniles compared to non-sexual delinquents*



- Explanations for adolescent sexual offending suggested a role for sexual abuse history, exposure to sexual violence, other abuse or neglect, social isolation, early exposure to sex or pornography, atypical sexual interests, anxiety, and low self-esteem<sup>8</sup>
- Sexually victimized sexual abusers reported experiencing significantly greater levels of all five types of abuse (emotional abuse, emotional neglect, physical abuse, physical neglect, and sexual victimization) than the other two groups<sup>9</sup>

# Definitions for upcoming slides



- **Sexual preoccupation** refers to an abnormally intense interest in sex that dominates psychological functioning. Substantially overlaps with sexual compulsions, sexual addiction, and hypersexuality.
- **Hypermasculinity**- Constellation of beliefs that a masculine identity involves: power, risk taking, toughness, dominance, aggressiveness, honor defending, competitiveness, and impersonal sexuality
- **Misogynistic**- reflecting or exhibiting hatred, dislike, mistrust, or mistreatment of women
- **Callous-Unemotional Traits**
  - Lack of emotional responsiveness (unemotional)
  - Lack of normal empathy responses (callous)
  - Not emotionally invested in others or conventional achievement (uncaring)

# *Relationship between multiple types of child maltreatment and personality variables*



- Sexual compulsivity and hyper-masculinity → through misogynistic fantasy behavior → significantly discriminate verbally and physically coercive juveniles who commit sexual offenses from those who do not report using force in their offenses<sup>10</sup>
  - Role of sexual victimization, physical abuse, and alcohol
- Three traits- Sexual drive/preoccupation, antisocial behavior/impulsivity, and callous/unemotional traits- predicted sexual coercion against women<sup>11</sup>
  - Early traumatic physical and sexual abuse play an important etiological role

# *Relationship between multiple types of child maltreatment and personality variables*



- Evidence that developmental and early childhood maltreatment experiences and specific, mediating personality traits contribute significantly to predicting adolescent sexual offending against younger victims<sup>12</sup>
- Three categories of risk factors—greater hyper-sexuality or sexual deviance, more violent behavior or fantasies, and an increased history of victimization—are consistent with path models that predict sexually abusive behavior toward peers and adults<sup>13</sup>

## *Pornography*

- Juveniles who had engaged in sexually abusive behavior reported more exposure to pornography when they were both under and over age 10 than nonsexual abusers<sup>14</sup>
- Exposure was not correlated to the age at which their sexually abusive behavior started, to the reported number of victims, or to sexual offense severity<sup>15</sup>

# *Etiology*

## *Conclusions and Policy Implications*

- Sexual victimization plays a disproportionate role in the development of sexually abusive behavior in adolescents but co-varies with other developmental risk factors
- Research supports multiple-factor theories in which early childhood maltreatment (traumatic physical and sexual abuse, neglect, and chaotic family environments) increases the likelihood of sexually abusive behavior, either directly or indirectly, in relationship with personality variables

## *Conclusions and Policy Implications*

- “Identifying the developmental antecedents of sexual aggression not only informs treatment planning (i.e., tertiary intervention), but also will ultimately be the basis for identifying at-risk groups for primary and secondary interventions<sup>1</sup>
- Having a validated model of the etiology of sexual aggression is the cornerstone of any public health approach to sexual aggression and a necessary prerequisite for implementation of a primary prevention perspective (p. 49).”<sup>17</sup>

## *Research Limitations and Future Needs*

- In addition to focusing solely on risk factors, it is likely that juveniles who have committed sexual offenses lack protective factors—such as emotional support and social competence—to buffer against risk in early experience<sup>18</sup>
- Future research should consider the complex relationships between these risk and protective factors in the development of sexually abusive behavior<sup>19</sup>

## *Typologies*

- Typology “shows a specific profile of an offender, victim, and offense characteristics that reflect underlying psychological processes(p. 268)” of the youth that are relevant to etiology, maintenance, treatment, and recidivism<sup>20</sup>
- Identifies key constructs for assessment, possible etiological factors specific to each subtype or typology of juveniles, and unique risks and needs for each subtype that should be targeted in treatment<sup>21</sup>

# *Typologies*

- Typology research dealing with juveniles who commit sexual offenses has focused primarily on the subtyping of juvenile offenders based on:
  - Victim age
  - Delinquent history
  - Personality characteristics

# *Differentiating subtypes based on victim age*



- Adolescents who sexually offended against females their age or older:
  - More generally delinquent/greater antisocial tendencies<sup>22</sup>
  - Display higher levels of aggression and violence in commission of the offense<sup>23</sup>
    - More likely to have used a weapon<sup>24</sup>
  - Less likely to be related to the victim<sup>25</sup>
  - Less likely to be socially isolated than those who offended against children<sup>26</sup>
  - Come from a disturbed family background<sup>27</sup>

# *Differentiating subtypes based on victim age*



- Adolescents who sexually offended against children:
  - More likely to have pessimistic styles and deficits in self-sufficiency<sup>28</sup>
  - More likely to manifest psychosocial deficits/social isolation/attachment anxiety<sup>29</sup>
  - Higher levels of co-occurring anxiety and depression<sup>30</sup>
  - Sexual offending as compensatory behavior<sup>31</sup>
  - Used less aggression in their offenses<sup>32</sup>
  - More likely to victimize relatives<sup>33</sup>

# *Differentiating subtypes based on victim age*



- Small subset of adolescents who target children:
  - Manifest pedophilic interests<sup>34</sup>
  - May be impulsive and aggressive in their offense planning, entertain sadistic fantasies, and demonstrate a high degree of sexual arousal toward young children<sup>35</sup>

# *Juvenile sexual offending and attachment<sup>36</sup>*



- Attachment anxiety affected involvement with peers and interpersonal adequacy
- Feelings of interpersonal inadequacy, combined with oversexualization, and positive attitudes toward others distinguished adolescents who committed sexual offenses against child victims
- Individuals with this constellation of factors may turn to children to meet their exaggerated intimacy and sexual needs
- The data suggest that youth who assault peers or adults were not substantially different from other delinquent youth on most of the measures

# *Research delineating specific subtypes<sup>37</sup>*

- Life Course Persistent—Antisocial
- Adolescent Onset—Experimenters
- Socially Impaired—Anxious and Depressed
- Pedophilic Interests/Antisocial
- Pedophilic Interests/Non-Antisocial

# *Differentiating subtypes based on delinquent history*



- Sexual offending may be part of a broader pattern of serious antisocial behavior for a proportion of the population of sexual offending juveniles<sup>38</sup>
- Compared to adolescents who committed nonsexual offenses, adolescents who had committed sexual offenses only had:<sup>39</sup>
  - Significantly fewer childhood conduct problems
  - Better current adjustment
  - More prosocial attitudes
  - Lower risk for future delinquency

# *Subtypes based on victim age and personality characteristics<sup>40</sup>*



## Sexually offended against children:

- More schizoid, avoidant, and dependent
- Frequently demonstrated a pattern of withdrawing from social encounters with peers
- Commonly experienced loneliness and isolation

## Sexually offended against peer age or older:

- Experienced an inflated self-image
- Were arrogant and interpersonally exploitative

# *Subtypes based on personality characteristics<sup>41</sup>*

- **Antisocial/Impulsive**—Have a propensity for rule violations. Descriptors may include anxious, unhappy, and rebellious
- **Unusual/Isolated**—Emotionally disturbed and insecure. Peculiar presentation and social isolation. Awkward personality features may inhibit their ability to develop and maintain healthy and intimate relationships with consenting peers
- **Overcontrolled/Reserved**—Endorse prosocial attitudes, are cautious to interact with others, and tend to keep their feelings to themselves
- **Confident/Aggressive**—Confident, self-centered, outgoing, aggressive, and sociable.

# *Subtypes based on personality characteristics<sup>42</sup>*

- Five subgroups were derived:
  - Normal, Antisocial, Submissive, Dysthymic/Inhibited, and Dysthymic/Negativistic
- Results provide evidence of the heterogeneity of adolescents who sexually abuse in both personality characteristics and psychopathology
- May be better clinical practice to facilitate treatment planning based on subgroup membership, as evidenced by personality type and clinical presentation

# *Typologies*

## *Conclusions and Policy Implications*

- Typology research dealing with juveniles who commit sexual offenses has focused primarily on the subtyping of juvenile offenders based on:
  - Victim age
  - Delinquent history
  - Personality characteristics
  
- Although the research has produced mixed and certainly not definitive findings, it has yielded substantial insights in regard to identifying differential etiological paths, typological characteristics, and associated treatment targets

## *Research Limitations and Future Needs*

- Given the large number of potential influences and interactions of sexual offending characteristics, sexual offending juveniles may be better described by the use of dimensional measures rather than assigning them to specific types<sup>43</sup>
- These dimensions include trauma and chaotic family environments, attachment, psychosocial adjustment, delinquent history and orientation, co-occurring mental health problems, sexual drive and preoccupation, and atypical sexual interests

# *Individualized treatment and supervision strategies*



- The evolving knowledge on etiological pathways and typologies is increasingly informing intervention practices and programs that address the specific needs of subgroups of juveniles who commit sexual offenses
- Empirical evidence concerning the prevalence of child maltreatment in early development offers support for continuing treatment aimed at victimization and trauma resolution
- Developmental models, which have included early childhood experiences and family functioning, should be broadened to include larger social variables such as exposure to sexually violent media and characteristics of social ecologies

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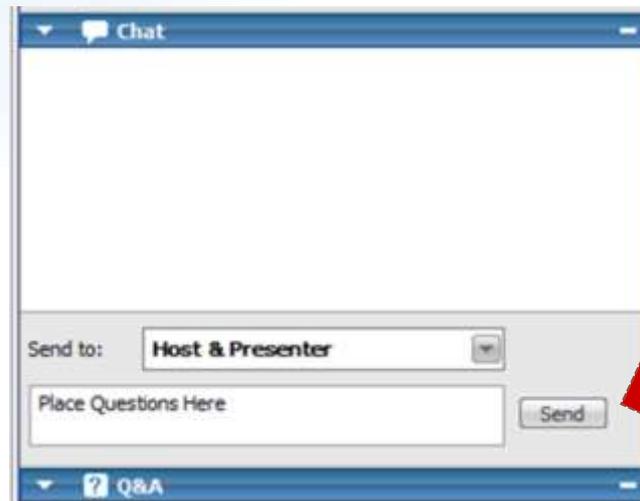
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# Q & A



## Moderator:

Scott Matson  
Senior Policy Advisor  
Office of Justice Programs, SMART Office

## Presenter:

Tom Leverage  
Consultant



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