Establishing the Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology: Editorial Introduction

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It is indeed our pleasure to provide a welcome to the inaugural issue of the Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology (JDLCC). We believe that a journal dedicated to this specific area of enquiry is timely if not somewhat overdue. The importance of employing an age-graded approach in criminology was recently well argued by Francis Cullen on receiving the American Society of Criminology's Sutherland Award. Cullen, in his 2010 Sutherland address, encouraged a paradigm shift away from what he termed adolescent-limited criminology (ALC). He argued that the ALC framework, among other things, tended to ignore individual differences in offenders, tended to reject the epidemiology of crime in favour of making new theories and was based on cross-sectional self-report surveys of (mainly school based) adolescents. Cullen argued that to move forward, criminologists need to accept that developmental and life-course criminology is criminology. That it is not just another perspective that competes with traditional theories but rather that it should replace the dominant ALC framework. He argued that it is important to examine not only what happens during adolescence but also before and after adolescence. He was careful to note that he was not arguing that other theories do not matter but rather that existing theories should be age graded and viewed within a wider life course and developmental perspective. As co-editors of the JDLCC, we are proud to say that we wholeheartedly agree with Francis Cullen and this inclusive perspective is the approach that will be embraced for this new journal.

It is worth acknowledging that despite the rapid rise in research on topics of central significance for understanding crime and criminal offending in a developmental and life-course context, the range of academic outlets with a specific focus in this area have been limited. Indeed, before the JDLCC was established, there was limited scope among existing journals to explore the key elements of developmental and life-course criminology in the detail necessary to expand knowledge in this area. It is our hope and indeed our intention to amplify this opportunity, through the JDLCC, for researchers interested in expanding this area of knowledge for the field.

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To facilitate the exploration of key themes of pressing interest and relevance for developmental and life-course researchers, we will develop a suite of special thematic issues over the coming years. A myriad of important topics will be considered, spanning a range of perspectives. As a matter of priority and general principle, as co-editors, we very much endorse an inclusive approach to this task and welcome all rigorous methodological approaches. We especially encourage papers that address the key issues, theories, debates and empirical gaps within developmental and life-course criminology. Moreover, we welcome papers from relevant cognate disciplines such as psychology, statistics, sociology, psychiatry, neuroscience, geography, political science, history, social work, epidemiology, public health and economics. In short, we believe that the area of developmental and life-course criminology has broad inter-disciplinary appeal as well as broad cross-national interest and relevance.

Whilst the JDLCC is in its infancy, it is important to acknowledge its origins. As many of you are aware, the JDLCC is the official journal of the Division of Developmental and Life-course Criminology of the American Society of Criminology. The division was established in 2012, by David Farrington and Tara Renae McGee. The first division meeting was held at the 2012 American Society of Criminology (ASC) conference in Chicago, and it was at this meeting that Adrian Raine suggested that the division should establish a journal. The criminology editor at Springer, Katherine Chabalko, was supportive of the idea, and work began on setting up this journal.

The journal supports two key aims of the division. Through providing a high-quality outlet for research, it facilitates the advancement of developmental and life-course criminology and the study of criminal careers. It also facilitates and encourages interaction and dissemination of developmental and life-course research among ASC members, practitioners, funding agencies, policy-making bodies and other relevant groups.

When the journal was established, it was hoped that it would provide an outlet for the examination and discussion of key concepts and theories within the developmental and life-course perspective. We feel that this has been achieved in this first issue with a range of papers examining issues as diverse as the stability of self-regulation across early childhood, the dearth of research on race and ethnicity within the DLC perspective, the long-term impact of juvenile incarceration, offending across multiple generations and the impact of age of onset on adolescent offending trajectories. Indeed, the first issue of the JDLCC provides a unique illustration of the range of topics of interest across the field. For example, Coyne, Vaske, Boisvert and Wright explore the stability of self-regulation across early childhood. In their examination of approximately 20,000 children from kindergarten through to fifth grade, they found that girls exhibited higher levels of self-control and that for both males and females, self-control was relatively stable over time.

In his paper on race and ethnic differences in offending across the life course, Piquero discusses the impact of differential enforcement and differential selection in the context of theoretical explanations for these phenomena. He also maps out an agenda for the examination of race and ethnicity within the DLC perspective, calling for the collection of data by government agencies on race and ethnicity as well as data collection by researchers of smaller indigenous and immigrant groups, for meaningful analyses in population level data sets.

The long-term impact of juvenile incarceration on adult functioning was examined, by Gilman, Hill and Hawkins, using data from the Seattle Social Development Project. Their analyses demonstrate that juvenile incarceration not only increases the likelihood of adult incarceration when compared to a similar non-incarcerated group of individuals but it also increases the likelihood of adult alcohol abuse and dependence and reliance on government assistance.

Using offending data across three generations from the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development, Farrington, Ttofi, Crago and Coid examined the replicability of risk factors for offending across generations. They identified that factors such as familial (parents and siblings) convictions, poor parental supervision, harsh discipline, family disruption and low family income among others were predictive of offending in the second and third generations. In demonstrating the replicability and acknowledging the importance of cohort effects, they argue that findings from an earlier time period may still have relevance for later time periods.

Examinations of the Pathways to Desistence Study data by Gann, Sullivan and Ilchi focussed on the impact of age of onset on offending trajectories. They found a direct effect for age of onset in predicting low/non-offending, even when controlling for potential mediators such as social support, unsupervised routine activities and antisocial peers. Whilst this finding supports a population heterogeneity perspective, their examination of mediating variables also lends support to the state dependence hypothesis.

Collectively, these papers begin the important contribution that research published in this journal will make to advancing knowledge within the area of developmental and life-course criminology.

In closing, we would like to thank David Farrington and members of the Division of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology and Springer for appointing us as editors of their journal and entrusting it to us to establish and develop. Thanks especially to Katherine Chabalko at Springer for her patient guidance through the process of setting up the journal. We are also very grateful to our Managing Editor, Fiona Saunders, for keeping everything on track in the Editorial Office and the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Griffith University for hosting the journal. Thanks also to our Editorial Board, authors and reviewers for their submissions, considered and timely reviews of papers and their collective energy and enthusiasm in establishing this journal.

We are very honoured to be at the helm of this journal and are confident that it will continue to build on the strength of this first issue given the important and cutting edge research being undertaken throughout the world. We acknowledge that editing a new journal is much like manoeuvring and steering a new car. Without doubt, there will be many bumps, perhaps some potholes, on the road ahead and we will need to navigate several unforeseen or unexpected curves in the road. With the ongoing support of reviewers, the faith of authors and the guidance of our expert editorial board, we aim to ensure that the JDLCC evolves over time to become one of the central platforms for showcasing research that advances knowledge about the developmental dimensions and contexts of offending across the life course. We look forward to doing our part to shape the JDLCC working in concert with the many authors, reviewers and editorial members that will contribute to the success of this new journal.