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**Sexual and Non-sexual Offenders:
A Secondary Data Analysis**

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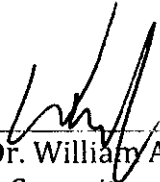
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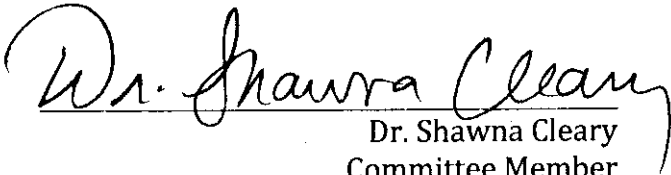
**Sexual and Non-sexual Offenders:
A Secondary Data Analysis**

A THESIS
APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIOLOGY, CRIMINAL JUSTICE, AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE STUDIES

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Abstract

Sexual Offenders and Non-sexual Offenders: A Secondary Data Analysis

In this thesis, the researcher explored the differences between sex offenders and non-sex offenders. Data was gathered from a previous study of 295 convicted inmates, grouped into in-treatment sex offenders, never treated sex offenders, and non-sex offenders. The secondary data analysis attempted to ascertain whether there exists any difference between sex and non-sex offenders and arrest behavior (i.e. – age at first arrest, number of arrests, and types of offenses). In addition, it attempted to determine whether there is any difference between offender type and certain demographic variables (i.e. – family structure, history of abuse, and age at first sexual contact). The findings revealed a significant association between offender type and age at first arrest, number of arrests, and types of offenses. Also significant was the relationship between paternal history of abuse and age at first sexual contact and type of offender. No significant connection was found between type of offender and family structure, as well as between type of offender and both total and maternal history of abuse.

INTRODUCTION

The Sex Offender Problem

Two million, one hundred thousand, four, and .34; these numbers represent the looming sex offender problem in America. Two million is important because it is a conservative estimate of the total population of sex offenders in the United States; only 234,000 of whom are currently in the criminal justice system (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2007). The reason for this disparity? Sexual offenses consistently rank as the most underreported of all crimes, and the consensus is that those offenders in the system *at best* represent one-tenth of the total.

The next number, one hundred thousand, represents the number of convicted sex offenders who have absconded, or who have not registered with local law enforcement. These unaccounted for offenders may signify the limitations of the criminal justice system. In fact, Florida Representative Mark Foley has said that, as a nation, "We track library books better than we do sexual predators" (*Associated Press* 2005). Next, there is a four times greater chance that a sex offender will be rearrested for the same offense after his/her release, when compared with non-sex offenders. And last, .34 is the probability that the victim of a sexual assault will be age twelve or younger (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2007).

However, the above numbers only provide a cursory examination of the larger issues posed by sex offenders. Namely, how should sex offenders be managed in the criminal justice system? Further, how should they be controlled in society? Are there any promising treatments for their deviant behavior? And, most importantly, how dangerous a threat do sex offenders pose to the rest of the social

order? The predicament has become a topical item in today's society, primarily in the criminal justice system (but also in politics and the media).

With this in mind, it is not surprising that there is a recent trend towards the increase of both the probability that a sex offender will serve prison time and the likelihood that the offender will serve an increased prison sentence. An estimated sixty percent of convicted sex offenders are currently serving some form of community-based supervision, but this could soon change (Greenfeld 1997). In Canada, offenders convicted of a sexually related crime comprise almost one-third (31%) of the prison population (Sillars 1996). Interestingly, typically only offenders who specialize in sex related offenses are ostracized in the public eye and in the criminal courts (Quinsey, 1984). This emerging disparity in the disposition of different offender types is creating much debate (Palermo 2005).

There are three ways sex offenders are typically treated in the criminal justice system, they are either incarcerated, placed into a community-based correctional program, or given some type of specialized medical or behavioral treatment. Since these options are not mutually exclusive, some combination of the above is often utilized (Knopp, Freeman-Longo, and Stevenson 1992). So, while proponents of the new sex offender legislation argue that sex offenders should be kept separate, as they are a danger to the public, opponents argue that sex offenders are *no* different from any other offender and as such should be treated equally. The matter of sex offender treatment complicates the issue. That is, whether or not clinical treatment can help to reduce sex offenders' propensity to offend, and thus reduce crime and recidivism.

Treatment of sex offenders can be classified into three different approaches: cognitive-behavioral, psycho-educational, and pharmacological. Cognitive-behavioral methods attempt to alter the way offenders think about their deviant sexual attitudes. The psycho-educational rehabilitation technique moves the focus from the offender's actions and places the attention on the victim so that the offender might accept responsibility and feel remorse. With the pharmacological practice, the focal point is on the use of chemical inhibitors and other drugs in an effort to reduce offender libido. Again, these methods are not mutually exclusive (Quinsey 1998). And for some sex offenders (e.g., preferential pedophiles), there may be no effective treatment (Hall and Hall 2007; Kirsch and Becker 2006).

Recent Sex Offender Legislation

Unfortunately, recent legislation has inflamed an already controversial topic. On July 27, 2006, President George W. Bush signed into law the *Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act*. The bill (H.R. 4472) was the latest in a line of resolutions proposed to regulate sex offenders and increase the scope of power for law enforcement agencies (i.e., widening the net). The bill was named for the murdered son of John Walsh, a former television celebrity and children's advocate. Furthermore, the law was enacted by the President on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the abduction. There were considerable legal effects upon the passing of the bill.

One effect was the systematization of sex offenders into three distinct tiers, arranged by severity of offense. The law further orders Tier III offenders (the most serious group) to inform the government of their location every three months. Another effect was that it created a national sex offender registry to provide to the public basic standardized offender information; it also created a public website. The

act additionally expanded how law enforcement agencies can utilize DNA evidence in solving sex crimes. The law increased funding for the enhancement of state civil commitment programs, and created consistent civil commitment procedures. The act also tightened child pornography definitions and strengthened prohibitions regarding the exploitation of children over the internet, plus it incorporated numerous fiscal programs for community child safety (Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006).

In laymen's terms, there are four major issues that the act addresses. First, sex offenders are now required to register with their local law enforcement agency, and must pay a fee to do so. Second, some offenders are required to wear a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit. Third, there are limited areas where a sex offender may live. Fourth, and last, sex offenders' names and personal information are placed on a publicly accessible registry.

These issues are important, because what happens to offenders who cannot pay the registration fee, or are transient? And GPS usage can cause a multitude of problems. This cutting-edge technique used to track sex offenders is becoming commonplace. In 2006, at least thirteen states required GPS tracking for sex offenders. That number reached at least 23 states in 2007, and the likelihood is high that all 50 states will utilize GPS technology at some point. And this requirement not only costs offenders money, but the daily cost to states using this method is anywhere from five to ten dollars per offender. Also, in some states particular offenders are required to wear the waterproof tracking devices for life (Koch 2006). Critics also argue that registration and GPS units stigmatize offenders who have

already paid their debt to society, and that judges do not have enough discretion when sentencing or setting the registration period (*Associated Press* 2005).

The current legislation also places stringent rules on where convicted sex offenders may reside. The rules center on prohibiting sex offenders from residing in child-dense areas. The problem is that in several cities these restricted areas are so extensive that domicile options for sex offenders are slim to none (Arthur and Parrish 2005). And the idea of a publicly accessible registry is problematic not only for individual rights concerns, but also for fiscal and time resources needed to manage such a registry.

The quandary created by sex offenders is ideal for investigation. It occurs exactly at the cusp of what sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959) might term the intersection, or juncture, of private troubles and public issues. He stated as much in his work *The Sociological Imagination*: "It is the political task of the social scientist... continually to translate personal troubles into public issues, and public issues into the terms of their human meaning for a variety of individuals" (p. 187). For Mills (1959), this ability to interpret and conjoin both levels of society (macro- and microscopic) was paramount to a researcher, as "It is his task to display in his work... this kind of sociological imagination" (p. 187).

Non-Sex Offenders vs. In-treatment and Never-treated Sex Offenders

Still, the question looms, are sex offenders inherently different from their non-sexually offending counterparts? And further, are those sex offenders who receive treatment for their deviant behavior significantly different from those who receive no treatment? And if there is a meaningful difference between the two major groups (sex offenders versus non-sex offenders), or within the subgroups (in-

treatment sex offenders versus never-treated sex offenders), is there any logical way to differentiate between the two? Even better, is it reasonable to conjecture a rational system to predict or prevent the formation of sex offenders before they are allowed the opportunity to offend?

To facilitate the evaluation of these important questions, it is necessary to examine up-to-date research on the topic. In a cursory assessment of the literature, one study is conspicuous. Dr. Shawna Cleary (2004) recently completed an exhaustive study to classify and categorize various types of criminal offenders and some of the more important variables apropos to the offenders. The study utilized a sample of both in-treatment and never-treated sex offenders, as well as a group of non-sex offenders. The data was gathered using an exhaustive survey instrument (administered to all participants) and further information was collected from in-depth interviews (focusing on the sexually offending subjects).

The sample Dr. Cleary selected contained some 295 participants and the survey questionnaire garnered data on over 300 variables. With such a comprehensive research design, it would be improbable to expect the initial study to analyze every variable or combination of variables. After examining Dr. Cleary's study, it is clear that further examination of the dataset is warranted. Therefore, it is determined that the focus of the current researcher will be toward further analysis of the gathered information, There is a valid argument for the concept of secondary data analysis, as it would be advantageous to perform supplementary examination of available research data. This is important, because examining different aspects of the previously gained results would allow a researcher the ability to focus on other specific areas and to test the probability of a variety of hypotheses.

For instance, one hypothesis of interest would inquire whether sex offenders are significantly different from other offenders in their offense patterns and their arrest behaviors. Specifically, do sex offenders engage in criminal activity earlier and more frequently than non-sex offenders; and moreover, do they specialize in offenses against persons? This is critical, because if this hypothesis revealed significance, then it might be logical to assume that sex offenders do pose a dangerous threat to society. Thus, it would give credence to those who would support the ostracizing of sex-offenders; and it would advocate the harsher, more invasive punishments levied to sex-offenders.

Another hypothesis of importance would question whether if there *is* a significant difference between the different types of offenders is it possible to identify any indicators that would signify future sexually offending behavior? If demographic information, such as family structure and abuse or sexual history, is found to be a significant indicator of offending, there are two possibly related conclusions. First, it is of utmost importance to allocate societal resources for the prevention of abuse and to develop a family support structure. And second, the way youthful offenders are treated within the system is in need of analysis, as they might have experienced circumstances that predict the possibility of future sexual offenses.

The purpose of this study is two-fold. First, it will endeavor to examine the variable, type of offender, and its relationship to the variables, age at first arrest, number of arrests, and types of offenses. Second, it will concurrently determine to ascertain whether there is any significant relationship between the independent

variables family structure, history of abuse (mother, father, and total), and age at first sexual contact, and the dependent variable, offender type.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Relevant Theoretical Models

One of the goals of any social science is to identify any patterns of individual behavior that exist in society. This implies that all social research should both rely on, and refer to, some theoretical supposition. Therefore, before evaluating the available research on type of offender as it relates to the numerous variables, it would be advantageous to examine some of the more cognate theoretical constructs related to the research hypotheses. Reviewing established and emerging theories can help to explain and describe the problem, as well as to help locate the study within the discipline. Specifically, this study is focused on discussing criminals who may or may not have self-control issues, or who may have had inappropriate or insufficient parenting.

Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime

One such theory may be Michael R. Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi's General Theory of Crime (1990). This criminological analysis of offender behavior challenged established multi-faceted theories when the researchers published their seminal work. Most classical theories explain crime in relation to social status, strengths of relevant social bonds, or association to a subculture; further, they emphasize the way in which society deters criminal activity (Livingston 1996).

The basic premise of the theory is dualistic, in that it seeks to couple arguments regarding behavioral characteristics of criminal offenders with arguments concerning inherent crime tendencies. In essence, the theory focuses on

crime and self-control. In the study, Gottfredson and Hirschi advocate the concept that crime, to the offender, is akin to similar irresponsible, illegal behaviors because it provides him/her with some temporary gratification and as such occurs as the result of low self-control. This ability (or failure) to censure deviant behaviors and/or actions is an internal mechanism that is typically set at a young age (around eight years of age). Similarly, the researchers describe criminal activity itself as straightforward; it does not require any specific planning or technical knowledge.

There are five central tenets to Gottfredson and Hirschi's view of crime. First, crime provides individuals with immediate gratification; therefore, offenders can applicably be described as having low-self control. Further, if offenders are not committing illegal activities there is a greater than expected chance that they will engage in other risky behavior. Second, since criminal acts are hazardous and exciting, offenders tend to be risk-taking, physical, and dynamic, rather than conservative, intellectual, or sedentary. Third, the same lack of self-control that leads criminals to engage in illegal, instantly satisfying behavior also inhibits them from enjoying long-term relationships or career opportunities. The fourth precept refers to the lack of planning necessary to commit crime. This leads to criminals not appreciating the value of analytical or erudite ability. Fifth and last, because criminals gain resources and satisfaction from the discomfort of others, they are typically egotistical, self-absorbed, and apathetic to others (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990).

However, the researchers stop short of arguing that crime will automatically occur in any situation involving individuals with low self-esteem, as opportunity is also necessary. They do argue that the ideal situation for criminal activity arises

when a potential victim is present, there is a lack of deterrents, and there is a positive imbalance in risks versus rewards. Also, if there is no opportunity for illegal activity, then the offenders will engage in similar risk-taking behaviors when possible.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) also attempt to explain the most logical reason for low self-control in individuals. They tie their theory into the sociological concept of the primary group, or more specifically, unsatisfactory socialization. There are three ways in which improper socialization may produce a lack of self-control. One, there is a lack of parental supervision. Two, parental guardians do not adequately identify deviant behavior in their children. And three, even if they do recognize such behavior, they might not be utilizing the suitable level of punishment for bad behavior. Therefore, the researchers argue that low self control stems from inadequate socialization, due to inadequate parenting and poor parent-child attachment.

In conclusion, the General Theory of Crime is useful for examining criminal activity by focusing not on environmental, social causes of crime, but emphasizing individual results of low self-control. Not surprisingly, the theory has generated criticism as it purports to be the panacea for general crime theories. Critics argue that the theory does not satisfactorily account for criminal activities like white-collar or organized crime. Further, detractors argue that criminal activity is too complex and that biological, psychological, and sociological theories should not be so easily discounted. Arguably, the greatest criticism of the theory is that it excludes historical or socio-cultural factors of crime. For example, what about cross-cultural crime discrepancies (Beirne and Messerschmidt 2000)? Certainly, Gottfredson and

Hirschi's theory does a poor job of explaining why the United States has a higher murder rate than most industrialized countries. But Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that cultural variability is not as important a factor to the origins of crime, rather the focus should be on constancy. Further, a single theory of crime can conceivably cover a multitude of cross-cultural variances in crime rates. Therefore, they argue that a general theory of crime *is* possible.

However, regardless of any inconsistencies found in the hypothesis it is advantageous to examine the theory. Specifically, it would seem to be applicable as it relates to the present study. First, it focuses on opportunity versus specialization; this applies as the study examines type of offender versus type of offense and number of offenses. Second, it also focuses on the potential impact of poor socialization; this applies as the study examines type of offender versus family structure and family history of abuse. And last, it centers on how this inadequate socialization might produce low self-control early in childhood and adolescence, which applies as the study views type of offender versus age at first arrest and age at first sexual contact.

The Gendered Cycle of Violence Theory

Another recent theory that has been the subject of academic examination is the Gendered Cycle of Violence Theory of Crime. This theory should not be confused with Lenore Walker (1979) and her "Cycle Theory of Violence," which is a model used to describe violence in domestic partnerships. The major difference between the two theories is that while Walker's theory focuses on the repetitive cycle that batterers experience (from abuse to penitence to affection), the Gendered Theory focuses on the potentially recurring cycle by which abused children can become

abusive adults. Interestingly, a cursory examination of the theory reveals a similarity to Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory, in that it places an emphasis on the importance of the primary group. As referenced above, the theory itself is self-explanatory. Essentially, it purports a strong relationship between being a victim of maltreatment as a child and engaging in crime in adolescence and adulthood; essentially, individuals who are mistreated in childhood and adolescence internalize that it is acceptable to mistreat others in adulthood, and as such, continue the cycle of violence that began with their birth.

Although there is no consensus on the original architect of the theory, Abigail Fagan's (2001) article "The Gendered Cycle of Violence: Comparing the Effects of Child Abuse and Neglect on Criminal Offending for Males and Females" is often referenced in current research. This behaviorist theory has received substantial support from a number of modern researchers. For example, recent studies have revealed that victims of child maltreatment are significantly more at risk to engage in criminal offenses than non-victims. Furthermore, those same victims may be more likely to engage in criminal activity more frequently than non-victims (Brezina 1998; Kakar 1996; Smith and Thornberry 1995; Thornberry, Ireland, and Smith 2001; Widom 1989; Widom and Maxfield 2001; Zingraff et al. 1993). Also, victims of child maltreatment are at greater risk of being arrested at an earlier age and of committing higher levels of violent crime (Smith and Thornberry 1995; Widom and Maxfield 2001; Mihalic and Elliot 1997). In one recent study, Fagan (2005) found that adolescents who were physically abused exhibited at least 50% higher levels of general offending.

In order for this theory to receive more focus researchers will have to utilize actual independent research data (e.g., self-report data, survey data, and case studies) instead of merely using available government/institutionally supplied record data. Furthermore, studies need to broaden in scope, addressing adolescent offenders, the effect of social resources, the effect of family structure, and specifically focus on the effects of sexual abuse (Finkelhor 1986; Salter et al. 2003; Worling 1995).

Regardless of the limitations found in the research, this theory may be helpful in examining the current research problem. The theory proposes that abuse and mistreatment in childhood should produce higher levels of offending (and violent offending) in adulthood. Therefore, it should be expected that any sample studied will exhibit the same result as the theory predicts. Those participants who disclose higher levels of abuse in childhood, and alternatively, even sexual contact at a younger age than the general public, should also demonstrate higher levels of offending and higher levels of offenses against persons than their counterparts.

General Differences between Sex and Non-sex Offenders

Before examining the relationship, if any, between the central variable of this study, type of offender, and the other variables of interest, it may be beneficial to examine whether there are any general trends in the literature between sexual and non-sexual offenders. Overall, some studies point out that there is not a glaring difference between juvenile sex offenders and their non-sexually offending counterparts in many demographic characteristics (e.g., family functioning, antisocial behaviors, neurological activity, etc.) as they are a heterogeneous group, with the caveat that some non-violent sex offenders may have higher levels of

developmental disorders. But developmental disorders are not necessarily causally linked to sex offending (Van Wijk et al. 2006; 2007). However, there is also contradictory research in the literature that supports the homogeneity of sexual offenders and bolsters sex offender legislation (Sample and Brey 2006).

One surprising finding is that sex offenders (at least in youth) may have less sexual familiarity and less ability to empathize with victims than non-sex offenders. They also appear to have lower levels of self-assurance and individual competence (Kristensen et al. 2006; Hosser and Bosold 2006). Also interesting is that one study found sex offenders are more similar in patterns of offending to general offenders than to violent offenders (Craig et al. 2006).

Type of Offender and Age at First Arrest

Research on the link between offender type and age at first arrest is sparse, at best. However, in general, sexual offenders tend to be older at first arrest than their non-sex offending counterparts. For example, one study found that over 80% of sex offenders were age 18 or older at the time of their first arrest (Canadian Center for Justice Statistics 1999). Further, only 3% to 4% of adolescent individuals in the 15 to 21 age range have been arrested for a sexual offense. This equals about 500,000 annual offenses for mid- to late teenagers (Ageton 1983).

Nevertheless, the two most dangerous age ranges for sexual offending are found in the early teens (around 13) and just after the mid-thirties (Canadian Center for Justice Statistics 1999). The low rate of adolescent offending (mentioned earlier) can also be contrasted with the statistic that adolescent offenders account for some 20% of rapes and one-fourth to one-half of all child sexual abuse cases (Davis and Leitenburg 1987; Deisher et al. 1982; Groth and Lorendo 1981).

Not surprisingly, as is usually the case with correlation-based research, there are also studies that have uncovered a link between early sexual offenses and both frequency and severity of committing sexual assaults (Becker and Abel 1985). For example, some research suggests that individuals who engage in sexual crimes in childhood and adolescence suffer an increased risk of continued offending, even into adulthood (Vandiver 2006; Abel, Mittleman, and Becker 1985; Groth, Longo, and McFadin 1982). Although only half of the research subjects in Vandiver's study (2006) reoffended, the subsequent convictions were more likely to be non-sexual in nature.

Type of Offender and Number of Arrests

The largest body of research is found with the variable type of offender and number of arrests, or more specifically, rates of recidivism. Recidivism can be simply defined as the committing of subsequent offenses. But while the term itself is easy to describe, the concept is more problematic. One reason the idea of recidivism is problematic is because it is difficult to measure sex offender recidivism rates due to the fact that it is such an underreported crime. This lack of sex crime reporting can only enflame the criminal justice research issue known as the low base rate problem (Quinsey 1980; Hanson and Bussière 1998; Grumfeld and Noreik 1986; Gibbens, Soothill, and Way 1978; Quinsey et al. 1995; Quinsey, Rice, and Harris 1995; Prentky et al. 1997; West, Roy, and Nichols 1978; Marshall and Barbaree 1990). As such, sex offenders may offend for a number of years before ever entering the criminal justice system (Marshall and Barbaree 1990; Ahlmeyer et al. 2000).

There are many studies that reinforce the low base rate problem. For example, according to a recent National Crime Victimization Survey statistic (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2007) only one in three sexual assaults is actually reported to law enforcement agencies (when the victim is twelve or older). Further highlighting the inadequacy of our knowledge about recidivism rates for sex offenders is the fact that as few as one out of every twenty child abuse cases is reported to a law enforcement agency (Abel and Osborn 1992; Cohen, Nikiforov, and Gans 2002). Also, one conservative estimate places female unwanted sexual contact anywhere from 17% to 31%; for males the percentages are around 7% to 16% (Johnson 2004; Buhi 2005). Finally, Kilpatrick, Edmunds, and Seymour's (1992) three-year longitudinal study found that some 84% of rape victims may not report their assaults to law enforcement officials. Some reasons given (from the more than 4,000 participants) for not reporting rape crimes were continued victimization or retribution, fear of punishment of offenders who are family members or intimates, the fear of incredulity, continued suffering caused by the criminal justice process, and the inherent ignominy that comes from being victimized.

Another issue in recidivism research is the amount of time that researchers utilize to study sex offenders. Generally, viewing a longer time period after offender release provides results that are more valid. For instance, Hagan and Gust-Brey (1999) found that recidivism rates remained constant even five years after release. Other studies support the idea that the longer the time period studied, the higher the overall recidivism rate for sex offenders (Firestone et al. 2000; Hanson and Brussiere 1998; Hanson, Steffy, and Gauthier 1993). These studies expose the weaknesses involved when relying on cross-sectional rather than longitudinal

research. In fact, the majority of sex offender studies limit their follow-up time period to around four years (Furby, Weinrott, and Blackshaw 1989).

One of the more recent, highly controversial studies maintains that sex offenders can have an almost 90% (long-term) recidivism rate (Langevin et al. 2004). This study has been criticized by other researchers (Webster, Gartner, and Doob 2006; Hanson 2006), mainly for the way it measured recidivism. Langevin and his fellow researchers utilized actual reconvictions, but also included further court appearances, as well as estimates in trying to account for the dark figure of sexual crime. Opponents of the study argue that this belies the nature of the term recidivism and creates an unrealistic, inflated figure.

However, while there are problems in determining recidivism rates for sex offenders, there have been studies that have attempted to determine comprehensive criteria and have actually combined a multitude of studies to analyze sex offender recidivism. This process, meta-analysis, was used by Hanson and Bussière (1998). The study included over 61 separate research studies (all the studies were designed as longitudinal and incorporated a comparison group). On average, the mean sex offense recidivism rate was 18.9% for rapists and 12.7% for child molesters. This contrasted with the average rate of recidivism for non-sexual violent offenses (22.1% for rapists and 9.9% for child molesters). To elaborate, about 19% of individuals who were initially arrested for a rape offense were eventually convicted of a subsequent sexual offense (and likewise for 13% of child molesters). Further, close to one-fourth of the rapists would be convicted for some non-sexual violent offense (and similarly for about 10% of the child molesters). In total, the recidivism rate for any *re-offense* was between 36% and 46% over a period of at least four

years. Another factor in recidivism may be the incorporation of deviant sexual arousals. Doren (2004) believes that recidivism research should focus on a multidimensional model used to assess the probability or threat of future reoffending.

Another factor related to recidivism rates may be aging offenders. Some researchers argue that aging acts as a protective factor for sexual recidivism in individuals (Barbaree, Blanchard and Langton 2003; Hanson 2002; Roberts, Thornton and Doren 2002). However, Hanson and Bussière (1998) argue that there is not sufficient data to prove that as a sex offender ages, he or she will stop offending. Overall, individual offenders may offend more, or less, as they grow older. The rate at which criminals sexually offend is similar to other illegal activities in that as individuals grow older they tend to offend less. However, for sexual offenders the decrease is a steady conservative decline, as opposed to a sharp drop-off. Further, according to Hanson (2002), there is a fluctuation in recidivism rates between offender classifications, with incest offenders having the lowest rates of recidivism (8%) and offending less than rapists (17%), and less than extra-familial pedophiles (19%).

Hanson, Scott, and Steffy (1995) also found that while over 80% of non-sexual offenders were convicted for subsequent offenses, one group of sexual offenders (child molesters) only had a 62% reconviction rate. Further, they found that non-sex offenders were responsible for the majority of non-sexual, violent reoffending. In another study, Craig et al. (2006) argue that violent offenders have a significantly higher risk of re-offending than sexual offenders. Other research

further purports that sex offenders reoffend less than non-sex offenders (Langan and Levin 2002; Hanson, Scott, and Steffy 1995; Sapsford 1998; Sipe et al. 1998).

Finally, treatment of sex offenders may play a critical role in recidivism, even though there remains no consensus in the literature. Barbaree and Marshall (1998) found a significant difference in the recidivism rates of in-treatment sex offenders versus never-treated sex offenders. They found that those offenders who participated in a community based cognitive-behavioral treatment program had a rate of recidivism that was over half, of those who did not participate (18% versus 43%). Hall (1995) and Alexander (1999), among others, found that offender-specific treatment might be beneficial for reducing recidivism in certain categories of sex offenders (Nicholaichuk et al. 2000; Marques 1999; Marques et al. 1993; Marshall and Barbaree 1990; Wit, Rambus, and Bosley 1996; Hall 1996; Gallagher et al. 1999; Hanson et al. 2002). On the opposing side, there have been numerous studies that have identified an inconclusive link between treatment and recidivism, so the correlation may be dubious at best (Rice, Quinsey, and Harris 1991; Hanson, Steffy, and Gauthier 1993; Marques et al. 1994; Schweitzer and Dwyer 2003).

Type of Offender and Types of Offenses

One of the weaker associations in the literature is found when examining offender type and types of offenses. This is predictable as recent theories (see the above General Theory of Crime) argue against the concept of criminal specialization. The literature that is available typically reinforces crime generalization. For example, a recent Australian study revealed that the majority of their sex offenders were not reoffending, and that when they did reoffend, the crimes were more likely to be property offenses than sexual offenses (*Associated Press* 2002; Smallbone and

Wortley 2000). Pritchard and Bagley (2000) found that when grouped by sex offenses only, sexual and violent offenses, and sexual and general offenses, the latter two categories of offenders had less than half the number of sexual offenses, compared to non-sex offenses.

Family Structure and Type of Offender

Another variable that has experienced wide-spread research recently is family structure and its influence on type of offender. Overall, there may be a link between sexual and/or violent crime and family structure (McDermott and Nagin 2001; Gallagher 1998; Cernkovich and Gioranado 1987; Gendreau, Little, and Goggin 1996). Specifically, over half of children will be raised at least part-time in a single-parent family (Anderson 2002; Amato and Keith 1991; Astone and McLanahan 1991; Wu 1996; Shaw and McKay 1932; Gove and Crutchfield 1982; Lamborn et al. 1991; Miller et al. 1986; Rankin and Kern 1994; Rollins and Thomas 1979; Wells and Rankin 1988; Crane 1991; Sampson 1987; Wickrama and Bryant 2003; Schwartz 2006). McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) found that there is a significantly higher risk that adolescents will engage in delinquent and/or illegal activities if they are part of a single-parent home. However, in a recent study by Demuth and Brown (2004), the researchers found no significant link between parental absence and adolescent delinquency after accounting for family processes specific to family form, although they did deduce that the highest levels of delinquency are found in single-parent families, especially in single-father families.

Also, the relationship between parent and child can also be affected by, or have an effect on, sexual offending. There are significant disorders displayed in the parent-child relationship of sex offenders, such as poor bonding and abuse (Tingle

et al. 1986). More precisely, some studies have found a significant disorder displayed in the mother-son relationship of sex offenders, as well as in the father-son relationships, typically evidencing itself with lower levels of affection, higher levels of strictness, and increased aggression (Paitich and Langevin 1976; McCollister 2001; Lang and Langevin 1991; Langevin, Wright, and Handy 1989). Hardy (2001) found that children who reported incestuous activities were significantly more likely to have experienced drastic changes in family structure; and Morse (2003) discovered that the probability an adolescent male will engage in illegal activities increases considerably when he is raised by a single-mother.

One reason that family structure and family dynamics play such an integral role in an individual's future may be because of the powerful effect of parents in labeling their children. Children are often labeled after the discovery of an occurrence of sexual abuse (and not just by parents, also by health-professionals and teachers). This label is typically overwhelmingly negative, which can impair the individual's development and recuperation. This may, in turn, help to cauterize feelings of inadequacy and self-acceptance of the negative label, reinforcing future bad behavior (Kouyoumdjian, Perry, and Hanson 2005). Family dynamics can also play a key role in the development of sexually abusive tendencies. Specifically, families that model abusive behavior are more likely to produce children who are abusive themselves. Essentially, abused adolescents are forced to move from a position of trying to defend themselves from their family to psychologically accepting abuse as an acceptable behavior. This can lead the abused to adopting an offensive position where they offend against others (Higgs, Canavan, and Meyer 1992).

Other research indicates a relationship between non-traditional family structures and delinquent behavior in adolescents. However, this model does not account for the impact of parental attachment, which may assist in counter-acting this association (Kierkus and Baer 2002). As integral as family structure is, other aspects are also highly influential, including monitoring and supervision of children and familial intimacy and solidarity (Van Voorhis et al. 1988). Other research on family cohesion and adaptability and high incidence of violent and/or sexual offending is contradictory. However, the researchers were quick to point out the fact that these findings may be due to the *perception* of familial solidarity and not actual cohesion among family members (Bischof, Stith, and Wilson 1992). Similar studies have confirmed this perceived family bond in sexual offenders (Olson et al. 1985). Finally, other factors in family structure are important, including isolation, secret keeping, boundary issues (enmeshment), and general overdependence between all members (James and MacKinnon 1990).

History of Abuse and Type of Offender

Concerning the relationship between abuse history and offender type in the literature, certain key variables may be more important than others. For example, when studying the link between abuse and sexual offending, frequency, relationship intimacy, level of violence, and severity of abuse have all tested as important factors in the formation of sex offenders (Friedrich, Urquiza, and Bielke 1986; Hindman 1989). The most common form of familial sexual abuse is actually from siblings; research shows that around 3% of all children are forced into some type of sexual act by a sibling (Alpert 1991). And surprisingly, while the rate of sibling incest is

five times that of parental incest, all sibling sexual contact may not be abusive (Smith and Israel 1987).

Further review of the available literature garnered over the past two decades designates that youthful sex offenders are significantly over-represented in the population of child abuse victims (Veneziano and Veneziano 2002). Johnson (1988), in a study of 47 youthful sex offenders, found that three-fourths of offenders younger than 6 years old had been abused, and likewise, over forty percent of offenders between the ages of 7-11 had been abused.

Typically, sex offenders who victimize children are more likely than the general population to have been victims of sexual abuse in childhood/adolescence (Edwards and Hendrix 2001; Saunders and Awad 1991; Zgourides, Monto, and Harris 1997). However, most pedophiles do not have a history of sexual abuse (Bergner 2005). Many studies focus on the link between sexual abuse in childhood and the propensity to become a sex offender, while others focus on explaining why all victims of sexual assault do not mature into offenders themselves (Hindman 1989).

Age at First Sexual Contact and Type of Offender

The sixth and final variable, age at first sexual contact (as it relates to offender type) was anomalous, due to the non-existent amount of literature available on the topic. The reason for the complete lack of research on the subject is unclear, but may be related to the problematic nature of the subject. Subjects may not remember, clearly, their sexual history, or it may be unethical to research this issue. Further, this variable is highly related to other variables already discussed, such as history of abuse and age at first arrest (and to some extent, recidivism).

STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES

First, the researcher designed this study to identify any significant relationship between the variables of age at first arrest, number of arrests, and type of offense, as they relate to the variable, type of offender, hereafter identified as *Hypothesis I*. Specifically, it will ascertain whether or not sexual offenders differ from non-sex offenders. Are sexual offenders committing offenses earlier or later than non-sex offenders? Which group exhibits a higher recidivism rate? And also, do sexual offenders specialize in sexual offenses?

Second, the researcher additionally intended this study to measure the *dependent variable*, type of offender, and its relationship with the *independent variables*, family structure, history of abuse (including mother, father, and total), and age at first sexual contact, hereafter identified as *Hypothesis II*. Again, it will attempt to determine whether or not sexual offenders display a significantly difference personal history from non-sex offenders. For example, are sexual offenders more likely to come from broken homes? Are sexual offenders more likely than non-sex offenders to have been abused as a child? Further, are sexual offenders experiencing sexual contact at a lower or higher age than non-sex offenders?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

To examine *Hypothesis I* a purposive sample of 295 convicted felons was utilized, containing two hundred and one sexual offenders and ninety-four non-sex offenders. Regarding *Hypothesis II*, the category of sexual offenders was subdivided into one-hundred and eighteen in-treatment sex offenders, ninety-four non-sex offenders, and eighty-three never-been-treated sex offenders. No institutional

review board application was used, nor was it necessary, due to the use of previously obtained data. The data gained from the study was not in any way identifiable with the participants, and the results were reported in the aggregate, with no allusion to specific subjects whatsoever.

Procedures

The researcher designed the study to further analyze data gathered on sexual, as well as non-sexual offenders. In order to acquire the necessary dataset for this study, the researcher gained the approval of Dr. Shawna Cleary (2004) to utilize information gathered in her study. After obtaining the offender dataset, the researcher then examined the available information for variables germane to the research paradigm. After the selection and reorganization of the apposite variables, the researcher utilized a computer statistical program known as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). With the use of SPSS, the investigator analyzed the dataset with the intent of identifying any pronounced relationships or significant correlations.

Instrument Design

Data for this study was collected via the use of a *self-disclosing questionnaire* to procure information on the following variables specific to each hypothesis:

Hypothesis I

Age at first arrest. The first section of the instrument that was utilized asked subjects what age they were when they were arrested for the first time. This yielded the following categories: 1) less than 5, 2) 6-10, 3) 11-15, 4) 16-20, 5) 21-30, 6) 31-40, 7) 41-50, and 8) over 51. This variable was then recoded into the following categories: 1) 15 and under, 2) 16-20, 3) 21-30, and 4) 31 and over.

Number of arrests. The next section of the instrument that was utilized asked participants “How many times have you been arrested?” Respondents then answered by indicating their total number of arrests.

Type of offense. The next section of the instrument that was utilized asked participants to disclose the types of offenses that they engaged in. This yielded the following categories: 1) violations against property only 2) violations against persons only, 3) violations against persons and property, and 4) violations against neither (i.e., the offender identified other types of offenses, such as crimes against society).

Hypothesis II

Family structure. The first section of the instrument that was used asked participants questions concerning their family structure while growing up. Specifically, it is concerned with *who* raised the participant, one parent or two parents. This was recoded into the following categories: 1) single mother, no father/stepfather, 2) no mother/stepmother, single father, 3) some combination of both parents, and 4) no parents, or other (e.g., grandparents or other guardians).

History of abuse (mother). The next section of the instrument that was utilized was designed to measure the history of abuse of the participant. It was further structured to measure maternal history of abuse. This was accomplished via a 5-item Likert scale. This section yielded scores that ranged from 5 (low abuse) to 25 (high abuse). For a list of the specific instrument items see Appendix 1.

History of abuse (father). The previously mentioned section of the instrument was also designed to measure the paternal history of abuse of the participant. This

was accomplished via a 5-item Likert scale, with scores that ranged from 5 (low abuse) to 25 (high abuse).

History of abuse (total). The preceding section of the instrument was also designed to measure the total history of abuse of the participant. This was accomplished by combining the scores from the above two sections. However, it should be noted that this variable was only employed when applicable, as respondents with single parents or no parents were excluded. This section then yielded scores ranging from 10 (Low Abuse) to 50 (High Abuse).

Age at first sexual contact. The next section of the instrument asked participants to disclose the age at which they had their first sexual experience. This yielded the following categories: 1) less than 5, 2) 6-10, 3) 11-15, 4) 16-20, 5) 21-30, 6) 31-40, 7) 41-50, 8) over 51, and 9) never. This variable was then recoded into the following categories: 1) 10 and under, 2) 11-15, and 3) 16 and over.

RESULTS

Hypothesis I

Results for the association between type of offender and age at first arrest, number of arrests, and type of offense committed, were obtained using both Independent Samples t-Test and Pearson Chi-Square (χ^2) statistical applications. All of the variables tested revealed a strong association with type of offender.

The most significant ($\chi^2=26.04$, $p<.0005$) association for Design I was found between type of offender and age at first arrest. The Pearson Chi-Square cross-tabulation (see Table 1, pg. 28) reveals that sexual offenders who were first arrested at the age of *15 and Under* were significantly underrepresented (only 38 offenders, when 50.8 were expected by chance), while non-sex offenders arrested at the same

TABLE 1
TYPE OF OFFENDER AS IT RELATES TO AGE AT FIRST ARREST

		Age at First Arrest				Total	
		15 & Under	16-20	21-30	31 & Over		
Type of Offender	Sexual Offender	Count	38	52	56	55	201
		Expected Count	50.8	56.9	51.5	41.8	201.0
		% w/in Offender Type	18.9%	25.9%	27.9%	27.4%	100.0%
		% w/in Offense Type	51.4%	62.7%	74.7%	90.2%	68.6%
		% of Total	13.0%	17.7%	19.1%	18.8%	68.6%
	Non-sex Offender	Count	36	31	19	6	92
		Expected Count	23.2	26.1	23.5	19.2	92.0
		% w/in Offender Type	39.1%	33.7%	20.7%	6.5%	100.0%
		% w/in Offense Type	48.6%	37.3%	25.3%	9.8%	31.4%
		% of Total	12.3%	10.6%	6.5%	2.0%	31.4%
Total	Count	74	83	75	61	293	
	Expected Count	74.0	83.0	75.0	61.0	293.0	
	% w/in Offender Type	25.3%	28.3%	25.6%	20.8%	100.0%	
	% w/in Offense Type	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	25.3%	28.3%	25.6%	20.8%	100.0%	

age range were significantly overrepresented (an actual 36, when only 23.2 were expected by chance). Further, those sexual offenders who were first arrested at the age of *31 and Over* were significantly overrepresented (with 55 actual, when only 41.8 were expected by chance), while non-sex offenders arrested at the same age range were significantly underrepresented (6 actual, with 19.2 expected by chance).

Results from an independent samples t-Test statistic also indicate that there is a significant ($t=-2.98, p=.003$) association between type of offender and number of arrests, with sexual offenders exhibiting a significantly lower number of arrests ($\bar{X}=5.66$) than non-sex offenders ($\bar{X}=10.77$).

The last significant ($\chi^2=7.88, p=.049$) variable tested with type of offender was type of offense committed. The Pearson Chi-Square cross-tabulation (see Table 2, pg. 29) reveals that sexual offenders were significantly overrepresented in the category of *violations against persons* (with 70 actual offenders, when only 59.9

were expected by chance), while non-sex offenders were significantly underrepresented in this category (19 actual, when 29.1 were expected by chance).

TABLE 2
TYPE OF OFFENDER AS IT RELATES TO TYPES OF OFFENSES

		Types of Offenses				Total	
		Violations against Property	Violations against Persons	Violations against Both	Violations against Neither		
Type of Offender	Sexual Offender	Count	17	70	62	38	187
		Expected Count	18.8	59.9	65.9	42.4	187.0
		% w/in Offender Type	9.1%	37.4%	33.2%	20.3%	100.0%
		% w/in Offense Type	60.7%	78.7%	63.3%	60.3%	67.3%
		% of Total	6.1%	25.2%	22.3%	13.7%	67.0%
Non-sex Offender	Non-sex Offender	Count	11	19	36	25	91
		Expected Count	9.2	29.1	32.1	20.6	91.0
		% w/in Offender Type	12.1%	20.9%	39.6%	27.5%	100.0%
		% w/in Offense Type	39.3%	21.3%	36.7%	39.7%	32.7%
		% of Total	4.0%	6.8%	12.9%	9.0%	32.7%
Total	Total	Count	28	89	98	63	278
		Expected Count	28.0	89.0	98.0	63.0	278.0
		% w/in Offender Type	10.1%	32.0%	35.3%	22.7%	100.0%
		% w/in Offense Type	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	10.1%	32.0%	35.3%	22.7%	100.0%

Hypothesis II

Table 3 (p. 30) represents the statistical analysis of the independent variables family structure, history of abuse (subdivided into mother, father, and total), and age at first sexual contact, as they relate to the dependent variable type of offender. The results were attained using Analysis of Variance (AOV) and Chi-Square (χ^2) statistics. Both history of abuse (father) and age at first sexual contact showed a significant association with type of offender. No significant association was found for family structure and history of abuse (mother and total) and offender type.

While results from an AOV statistic did not indicate a significant relationship between history of abuse (mother) or history of abuse (total) and type of offender, they did indicate a significant ($F=3.15, p=.045$) association between history of abuse (father) and the dependent variable, type of offender. A post hoc analysis (see Table

TABLE 3
FAMILY STRUCTURE, HISTORY OF ABUSE, AND
AGE AT FIRST SEXUAL CONTACT
AS IT RELATES TO TYPE OF OFFENDER
(1=In-treatment Sex Offender, 2=Non-Sex Offender, and
3=Never-treated Sex Offender)

Variable	N's	Means	χ^2	F-Value	Probability
Family Structure	292		11.61		= .071
Mother, No Father	63				
Father, No Mother	10				
Both Parents	199				
No Parents/Other	20				
History of Abuse (Mother) (5=Low/25=High)	279	9.74		0.61	= .545
In-treatment Sex Offender	111	10.15			
Non-Sex Offender	89	9.51			
Never-treated Sex Offender	79	9.42			
History of Abuse (Father) (5=Low/25=High)	241	11.79		3.15*	= .045
In-treatment Sex Offender	101	13.03			
Non-Sex Offender	67	10.46			
Never-treated Sex Offender	73	11.29			
History of Abuse (Total) (10=Low/50=High)	235	21.67		2.18	= .116
In-treatment Sex Offender	97	23.30			
Non-Sex Offender	66	20.30			
Never-treated Sex Offender	72	20.74			
Age at First Sexual Contact	293		22.85*		< .0005
10 & Under	110				
11 to 15	118				
16 & Over	65				

*Indicates Significant Association

4, pg. 31) reveals that respondents who were classified as *in-treatment sex offenders* (\bar{X} =13.03) reported significantly (p =.017) higher levels of paternal abuse history than those respondents classified as *non-sex offenders* (\bar{X} =10.46).

TABLE 4
Mean Differences in
History of Abuse (father) and Type of Offender

Groups		In-treatment Sex Offender	Non-Sex Offender	Never-treated Sex Offender
	<u>Means</u>	<u>13.03</u>	<u>10.46</u>	<u>11.29</u>
In-treatment Sex Offender	13.03	--	2.57*	1.74
Non-Sex Offender	10.46	--	--	0.83
Never-treated Sex Offender	11.29	--	--	--

* $p=.017$

The most significant ($\chi^2=22.85$, $p<.0005$) association for *Hypothesis II* was found between age at first sexual contact and type of offender. The Pearson Chi-Square cross-tabulation (see Table 5, p. 32) reveals that in-treatment sex offenders who had first experienced sexual contact at the age of *10 and Under* were significantly overrepresented (with 63 actual offenders, when only 44.3 were expected by chance), meanwhile non-sex offenders and never-treated sex offenders whose first experience of sexual contact was at the age of *10 and Under* were significantly underrepresented (27 and 20 actual offenders, respectively, when 35.3 and 30.4 were expected by chance).

Further, those non-sex offenders who first experienced sexual contact at the age of *11 to 15* were significantly overrepresented (an actual 44, when only 37.9 were expected by chance); in-treatment sex offenders were significantly underrepresented (an actual 38, with 26.2 were expected by chance). And finally, those in-treatment sex offenders who first experienced sexual contact at the age of *16 and Over* were significantly underrepresented (with an actual 17 offenders, when 26.2 were expected by chance), while never-treated sex offenders who first

experienced sexual contact at age *16 and Over* were significantly overrepresented (an actual 25 offenders, when 18 were expected by chance).

TABLE 5

AGE AT FIRST SEXUAL CONTACT AS IT RELATES TO TYPE OF OFFENDER

			Type of Offender			Total
			In-treatment Sex Offender	Non-Sex Offender	Never-treated Sex Offender	
Age at First Sexual Contact	10 & Under	Count	63	27	20	110
		Expected Count	44.3	35.3	30.4	110.0
		% w/in Family Structure	57.3%	24.5%	18.2%	100.0%
		% w/in Type of Offender	53.4%	28.7%	24.7%	37.5%
		% of Total	21.5%	9.2%	6.8%	37.5%
	11-15	Count	38	44	36	118
		Expected Count	47.5	37.9	32.6	118.0
		% w/in Family Structure	32.2%	37.9%	30.5%	100.0%
		% w/in Type of Offender	32.3%	46.8%	44.4%	40.3%
		% of Total	13.0%	15.0%	12.3%	40.3%
	16 & Over	Count	17	23	25	65
		Expected Count	26.2	20.9	18.0	65.0
% w/in Family Structure		26.2%	35.4%	38.5%	100.0%	
% w/in Type of Offender		14.4%	24.5%	30.9%	22.2%	
% of Total		5.8%	7.8%	8.5%	22.2%	
Total	Count	118	94	81	293	
	Expected Count	118.0	94.0	81.0	293.0	
	% w/in Family Structure	40.3%	32.1%	27.6%	100.0%	
	% w/in Type of Offender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	40.3%	32.1%	27.6%	100.0%	

DISCUSSION

Interpreting the Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the variable, type of offender (sexual and non-sexual) and its relationship to age at first arrest, number of arrests, and types of offenses. Furthermore, it determined to ascertain whether any significant relationship exists between the variables family structure, history of abuse, and age at first sexual contact and offender type (in-treatment sex offender, never-treated sex offender, and non-sex offender). The findings of *Hypothesis 1* did reveal that a significant association exists between offender type and age at first arrest, number of arrests, and types of offenses. Specifically, sexual offenders

typically begin offending at a later age than non-sexual offenders. They also exhibit fewer offenses on average than their non-sexual offending counterparts (by almost half). Last, sexual offenders in this sample committed offenses that targeted persons more frequently than non-sex offenders.

For *Hypothesis II* a significant relationship was found between paternal history of abuse and age at first sexual contact and type of offender. To elaborate, sexual offenders were more likely than non-sex offenders to report a history of paternal abuse (especially in-treatment sex offenders). Further, in-treatment sexual offenders were more likely to engage in sex at an earlier age than the other categories (conversely never-treated sex offenders were more likely to engage in sex at a later age than the other categories). However, no significant connection was found between type of offender and family structure (number of parents present in the household during childhood and adolescence), and type of offender and total history of abuse and maternal history of abuse.

However, even given the strong association between type of offender and age at first arrest and number of arrests it remains difficult to determine the cause and effect between the variables, as is often the case in association-based quantitative studies. Although logical, it is difficult to argue with any certainty that simply being a sex offender will cause an individual to offend less and later in life. Even more clouded is the causal relationship between paternal history of abuse, age at first sexual contact, and offender type. Is paternal abusiveness enough to drive an individual to later commit sex offenses? The ambiguous nature of the relationship increases the difficulty of determining the validity of the cycle of violence theory.

Regarding early sexual contact, which variable is to blame? Although it is acknowledged that children cannot consent to sex, does sexual abuse create sex offenders, or do sex offenders experiment with sex at an earlier age? In-treatment sex offenders exhibited the highest levels of paternal abuse and early childhood sexual contact. Does the fact that their childhood was significantly different play a role in seeking, or at least accepting treatment, or does treatment make a sex offender more cognizant of former abuse? There may be elements of truth in any of the above explanations, or there could be some other unexplained and unstudied causal factor.

What do these results mean, analytically? For *Hypothesis 1* there are several potential interpretations. For the relationship between type of offender and age at first arrest, it is arguable that sex offenders (and especially in-treatment sex offenders) begin engaging in illegal behavior at a later age as compared to non-sexual offenders. This is supported in the literature (Canadian Center for Justice Statistics 1999). Although you cannot infer from descriptive statistics, it may show that in-treatment sex offenders handle their deviant impulses better than their never-treated counterparts. However, it should be noted that many sex offenses are not reported, so the true age at which offenders begin offending may be unclear. That said, the findings may contradict Gottfredson and Hirschi's argument that impulsive, deviant behavior begins at an early age.

When examining type of offender and number of arrests, the interpretations become more difficult. While it is clear that non-sex offenders are arrested more often, the reasons seem indeterminate. These results are similar to Hanson and Bussière's (1998) findings that in cross-sectional studies sex offenders will exhibit

significantly lower recidivism rates when compared to non-sex offenders. Are these findings enigmatical due to the underreported nature of the crime? It is obvious that sex offenses are a private rather than a public crime, which may serve to obscure the crime rate. Sex offenses typically require a victim to report the crime, and as offenses are often committed by family members, significant others, or acquaintances, it is unrealistic to expect a high level of reporting (Quinsey 1980; Hanson and Bussière 1998; Grumfeld and Noreik 1986; Gibbens, Soothill, and Way 1978; Quinsey et al. 1995; Quinsey, Rice, and Harris 1995; Prentky et al. 1997; West, Roy, and Nichols 1978; Marshall and Barbaree 1990).

One other potential explanation would be that sex offenders are arrested less than non-sex offenders, due to the fact that they are specializing in sexual offenses, but given that type of offense committed showed a significant ($p=.049$) association (but without much confidence) to type of offender this may not be the case. However, the significance does not reiterate the General Theory of Crime and its proposal that offenders value opportunity and convenience more than offence exclusivity.

Regarding *Hypothesis II*, it would seem that it is untenable to predict future sex offending based on family structure, maternal history of abuse, or total history of abuse. However, it is important to note that paternal history of abuse may be a predictive factor as both sex offender categories showed significantly higher levels of paternal abusiveness than expected by chance. While this correlated with some of the existing literature on the subject (see Lang and Langevin 1991; Langevin, Wright, and Handy 1989), it contradicted previous literature that emphasized the importance of the mother-child relationship as a prime indicator of future offending

(Paitich and Langevin 1976; McCollister 2001; Lang and Langevin 1991; Langevin, Wright, and Handy 1989). Also, age at first sexual contact might be predictive as in-treatment sex offenders showed higher percentages of sexual activity in childhood; while non-sex offenders tend to sexually emerge in early adolescence; and never-treated sex offenders expressed higher percentages of sexual contact in late adolescence and adulthood. This somewhat parallels the available research on age at first arrest, as well as the resulting statistical output.

Limitations of the Study

It is important to note that because the research sample was purposive and specific to criminal offenders, the researcher makes no assumptions about the ability to generalize these results to the population as a whole. Further, the sample was drawn from a specific regional area which may, again, limit the generalizability of the study.

There were also procedural limitations in the research design. This is inherent with the utilization of secondary data analysis. The fact is the researcher has the least amount of control over the study in this style of quantitative methodology. It bounds the social scientist to analyzing only the provided information, and only in the technique with which it was collected. This limits the means by which the dataset can be synthesized.

The largest limitation of the study, if it can be labeled as such, is in the survey instrument. The survey questionnaire is not deficient, per se, but should be examined. This is primarily for two factors, face-value validity and instrument length. Validity is a measure of precision and occurs when an instrument measures the criteria it purports to measure. Face-value validity occurs, often unintentionally,

whenever the attitude (or opinion) a survey instrument is attempting to measure is clearly interpretable. This is positive because it simplifies analysis, but can be detrimental if research participants interpret the instrument and acquiesce with responses they believe the researcher desires, or give false information that will reflect a better self-image. The survey instrument used in this particular study does contain items that exhibit high face-value validity. This was necessary to gather pertinent information, but arouses questions when the instrument inquires about highly sensitive and confidential knowledge.

The other major issue, instrument length, should also be noted. First, because an exhaustive survey can require a good-faith expectation by the researcher that participants will answer the survey completely, honestly, and will give each question equal consideration. Second, the lengthy nature of the survey necessitated nominalizing a majority of the questions to expedite completion time. Nominal categorizing provides information that is non-parametric, and as such, is limited in its ability for hypothesis testing and decision making. If several of the questions had been formatted as open-ended, then the instrument could have yielded interval level data (e.g., age at first arrest, age at first sexual contact). Interval level data can always be recoded into an ordinal or nominal level of measurement, but with nominal and ordinal level data the researcher cannot transform the information into interval, or scale data.

There is another general issue that should be noted in the survey instrument, the questions concerning the variable family structure while growing-up. The issue with the variable, and this is a general issue for many quantitative studies, is that invariably the question becomes too simplified (Johnstone 1978; Rankin 1983;

Wells and Rankin 1986; Van Voorhis et al. 1988; Flewelling and Bauman 1990; Needle, Su, and Doherty 1990; Free 1991; Schwartz 2006). In today's society, it is unrealistic to classify individuals into one family structure category. For example, how should a researcher categorize an individual who is raised by both parents until a divorce occurs in adolescence? Should he/she be considered as raised by both-parents or one-parent? Or, another growing trend in society, is that more grandparents are taking on the role of primary caregiver, how should this be addressed? This affected the present study as the variable history of abuse had to be altered into three different categorical variables (mother, father, and total). Further, there were many participant scores for the various 'history of abuse' variables (especially total history of abuse) that were unacceptable due to responses on the family structure section.

The last limitation that should be noted is also typical with criminal justice studies in general. The study gathers a significant amount of demographic, attitudinal, and behavioral information on the criminal offenders as a whole, but does not include a true control group from the general population. This lack of a non-offender control group leaves the researcher with no baseline with which to compare data with the other offending groups, and as such, may or may not be problematic. In conclusion, the sample used may provide insights to the sex offending population, but further extrapolation is tenuous, at best.

CONCLUSIONS

Suggestions for Future Research

In conclusion, further research (other than the ever-important replication of completed studies) might consider focusing on a better method of determining

family structure while growing up, and its counterpart, history of abuse. These two variables are often assumed to be related to sexual offending, but currently the methods used to ascertain this information seem flawed. Also helpful would be to utilize comprehensive sex offender case studies along with some control-type survey to establish a baseline to determine if there are significant differences in sex offenders, their primary groups, and their up-bringing when compared to the general population. If an alternate variable was incorporated, it might be profitable to include the impact of education. This would be interesting, particularly if sex education and sexual assault prevention education were added. These variables could be especially useful when studying sexual offending in youthful offenders. Also, as stated above, it would be beneficial to further determine the effectiveness of treatment for sex offenders.

Also, what about the disparity when comparing the number of male sex offenders to female sex offenders? Are there differences that exist between the sexes that limit the propensity of females (other than physical ability) to sexually offend? This is an important issue, given the increasing number of high profile cases regarding female adults sexually abusing male minors (Mathews 1996).

Implications of the Study

In closing, even after allowing for the sample limitations, the researcher would be averse to completely disregard the results of the study; even more so given the relevant nature of the topic of sex offender public policy. After acknowledging both past research and the limitations of this current data analysis, there are a number of arguable implications can be made regarding sex offenders, given the relationship between type of offender and the remaining variables.

Specifically, there are implications regarding both resource allocation and the ever-present issue of sex offender targeting that is currently occurring in both the law enforcement and legislative arenas of our society.

The first suggestion would be to question the amount of resources being targeted toward sex offenders, in comparison to other offending populations. In the present study it was found that non-sex offenders were more likely to offend more frequently and were nearly as likely to offend against both persons and property. While it is both logical and ethical to attempt to regulate, punish, and track sex offenders, one must question whether the monetary and time-management aspects of current legislation are tenable. Given the fact that sex offenses are so underreported, it would seem to be more logical to focus on prevention, improvement in reporting, reducing victim blaming, and childhood/adolescent education on the problem of sexual abuse. The idea of prevention is particularly striking, as there should be similar resources allocated to educating young men on the nature of sexual assault, rape myths, consent issues, and acceptable sexual behavior, as are allocated to educating young females on how not to be the victim of a sexual assault. At the least, there needs to be a concerted effort to address the issue of the viability of treatment, counseling, and rehabilitation (when appropriate).

Second, in today's society, too much emphasis is placed on the issue of sex offenders. Protecting children is important, but often public policy focuses on the wrong aspects of a problem. Current sex offender legislation focuses on exacting harsher penalties for sex offenders and stigmatizes individuals caught engaging in illegal sexual activities. Unquestionably, no one condones sex offending, but it may

be necessary to examine policy provisions concerning individual perpetrators. If it is logically assumed that certain sex offenders pose no great threat, why exert so many resources on their management (Sample and Bray 2003)? At the very least, offender-specific legislation should focus on the effectiveness of offender management. Clearly, focusing on improving the results of sex offender management in the criminal justice system is more important than the current environment (where ill-conceived political policy surfaces as a knee-jerk response to social concerns). In the end, there are other categories of offenders that society is neglecting. Society might be better served focusing more attention toward non-sex offending violent criminals, career criminals, and white collar or corporate criminals.

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**APPENDIX A:
SURVEY QUESTIONS USED**

APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS USED

Type of Offender: (Researcher Classification)

- In-treatment Sex Offender
 Never-treated Sex Offender
 Non-sex Offender

Q20. How old were you at your first arrest?

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Less than 6 _____ | 31-40 _____ |
| 6-10 _____ | 41-50 _____ |
| 11-15 _____ | Over 51 _____ |
| 16-20 _____ | Never _____ |
| 21-30 _____ | |

Q22. How many times have you been arrested? _____

Q24. Nature of criminal acts:

- violations against property only
 violations against persons only
 violations against persons and property
 violations against neither

Q35. When I was a child I was raised by (check ALL that apply)

- My mother only
 My father only
 My mother and father together
 My mother and stepfather
 My father and stepmother
 My grandparents
 Other relatives
 Foster parents or others

Q28. I would like you to think about some things you may have experienced as a child. Please tell me how often each of the following occurred:

	Never	Rarely	Some- times	Often	Almost Always
My mother punished me even over small offenses.					
My mother gave me more physical punishment than I deserved.					
I felt my mother thought it was my fault when she was unhappy.					
I think my mother was mean and grudging toward me.					
My mother criticized me in front of others.					

APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS USED (cont.)

Q31. I would like you to think about some things you may have experienced as a child. Please tell me how often each of the following occurred:

	Never	Rarely	Some- times	Often	Almost Always
My father punished me even over small offenses.					
My father gave me more physical punishment than I deserved.					
I felt my mother thought it was my fault when she was unhappy.					
I think my father was mean and grudging toward me.					
My father criticized me in front of others.					

Q36. How old were you when you had your first sexual experience?

Less than 6 _____

6-10 _____

11-15 _____

16-20 _____

21-30 _____

31-40 _____

41-50 _____

Over 51 _____

Never _____