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A Life-Course Approach to Sexual Offending: Examining the Continuity of Juvenile Sexual Offending into Adulthood and Subsequent Patterns of Recidivism

Maude Beaudry-Cyr
University of South Florida, maudebeaudry@mail.usf.edu

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A Life-Course Approach to Sexual Offending: Examining the Continuity of Juvenile Sexual Offending into Adulthood and Subsequent Patterns of Recidivism

by

Maude Beaudry-Cyr

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts Department of Criminology College of Behavioral and Community Sciences University of South Florida

Major Professor: Wesley G. Jennings, Ph.D.
Shayne Jones, Ph.D.
Bryanna Fox, Ph.D.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to three simply amazing individuals in my life. Mom, thank you for giving me the strength and confidence to always strive to be the best person that I can be. Thank you for the constant support and for reminding me to breathe from time to time. Dad, I feel extremely blessed to have you in my life. Thank you for your unconditional love and the many cherished lighthearted talks. Lastly, my most sincere thanks to Nick for standing by my side through every step of this process, and whose daily encouragement helped carry me to the end. Your commitment, patience, and support mean the world.
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ABSTRACT

Current sex offending legislation and public opinion present an image of sexual offenders as specialized predators who are likely to exhibit continued sexually deviant behavior over the life-course. Although sex offending continuity and post-release recidivism has been independently assessed in prior research, the potential link between sex offending continuity and post-release recidivism has yet to be investigated. Using data collected on random samples of sex offenders from a Northeastern state, the present study examines the predictability of sex offender continuity and its potential linkages with general and sex recidivism, as well as identifying distinguishable risk factors related to these outcomes.

Logistic regressions provided support for all but one of the four key hypotheses proposed. Specifically, results indicate a low rate of sex offending continuity among the sample, and the presence of identifiable risk factors that distinguish sex offenders who demonstrate continuity from those adult sex offenders who do not display sex offending continuity. Specifically, non-juvenile sex offending is the most notable of the numerous risk factors found to be associated with those displaying sex offending continuity from adolescence into adulthood. Analyses also reveal a significant association between sex offending continuity and sexual recidivism, but not general recidivism. Evidence of identifiable risks factors for both sex and general recidivism are reported. Policy implications, study limitations, and directions for future research are also presented.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Looking at current laws and regulations that are specific to sex offenders, it is easy to forget that this has not always been the case. In fact, most of the legislation implemented in the past two decades has been in direct response to a few highly publicized occurrences of despicable acts of sexual abuse against children in the 1990s. For instance, the first federally enacted law against sexual offending was the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sex Offender Registration Act in 1994. This first piece of legislation required that specific information on sex offenders be collected and stored in newly created sex offender registries in all states. Soon afterward and following the rape and murder of a young girl at the hands of a released sex offender, Megan’s Law (1996) was enacted to allow for information collected from sex offenders by the registries to be made publicly available. The most recent effort in-line with the requirements of sex offender registration and notification was the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, particularly Title I (Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORN)). In an effort to standardize requirements on the national level, the SORN legislation developed a tiering system according to which sex offenders could be classified as low, medium, or high risk offenders.

Unfortunately, the overwhelming public and political support for such legislation to protect the public from sexual predators may actually have resulted in the implementation of policies that are more harmful than beneficial. In fact, recent investigations of the effectiveness
of SORN requirements have generally shown little support for such policies. Contrary to popular belief, sex offender registration and notification does not appear to noticeably reduce sex recidivism (Zgoba, Witt, Dalessandro, & Veysey, 2008; Tewksbury & Jennings, 2010; Ragusa-Salerno & Zgoba, 2012), or general recidivism (Zgoba, Veysey, & Dalessandro, 2010; Jennings, Zgoba, & Tewksbury, 2012; Tewksbury, Jennings, & Zgoba, 2012) among convicted sex offenders. Instead, significant collateral consequences have been associated with the mandated requirements of SORN legislation. Some of the concerning effects to have resulted from sex offender policies include a higher incidence of depression, violence, public shaming, social stigmatization, unemployment, and housing difficulties (Tewksbury, 2005; Tewksbury & Lees, 2006; Tewksbury & Zgoba, 2010).

Based on this disconnect between legislatively intended goals and empirically assessed outcomes, the present research seeks to further investigate potential explanations for the observed deficiency in these policies. At the core of sex offender legislation is the publicly endorsed belief that sex offenders are specialized in their sexual offending behavior, and that they are prone to re-offend at various points over the life-course. In order for these legislative initiatives to be successful, a few vital questions must be addressed. Using data from random samples of convicted male sex offenders in a Northeastern state, three principal research questions guided the present study:

1. Is it possible to detect an association between juvenile sex offending and adult sex offending?
2. Are there any identifiable risk factors that may distinguish offenders who demonstrate sex offending continuity from adult sex offenders who do not?
3. Is it possible to detect an association between exhibiting sex offending continuity from adolescence into adulthood and subsequent sex and general recidivism in adulthood?

Although sex offending continuity and sex offending recidivism have been investigated separately in prior research (Doshay, 1943; Furby, Weinrott, & Blackshaw, 1989; Rubinstein, Yeager, Goodstein, & Lewis, 1993; Prentky, Lee, Knight, & Cerce, 1997; Hanson & Bussiere, 1998; Sipe, Jensen, & Everett, 1998; Sample & Bray, 2003; Nisbet, Wilson, & Smallbone, 2004; Waite et al., 2005; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Vandiver, 2006; Zimring, Piquero, & Jennings, 2007; Zimring, Jennings, Piquero, & Hays, 2009; Piquero, Farrington, Jennings, Diamond, & Craig, 2012b; Tewksbury et al., 2012), none have examined the role of sex offending continuity and its relationship to post-release general and sex recidivism. As such, the present study attempts to fill this gap in the literature by providing an analysis of random samples of convicted adult male sex offenders in a Northeastern state. In this regard, criminal histories are examined from adolescence and adulthood, and again at post-release follow-up to determine whether earlier offending behavior are related to subsequent offending behavior and recidivism. A developmental life-course approach to criminal offending is employed to provide a theoretical framework to assess the assumptions at the core of current sex offender legislation.
CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Framework

A number of theories have been suggested in the social sciences to explain the causal mechanisms and processes that lead to sexual offending. For the purpose of the present thesis, multifactorial theories of sexual offending will briefly be examined in order to highlight the most influential and commonly accepted theories of sexual offending. Although such theories are quite valued and deserve to be mentioned, the focus of the present thesis pertains more to the criminological approach to explaining sexual deviance. Hence, the majority of the theoretical discussion will focus on criminological explanations through the application of developmental life-course theory as applied to sex offending.

Multifactorial Theories of Sexual Offending

The complexities associated with the process of sexual offending have led researchers to a determination of the need for multifactorial explanations of this deviant behavior grounded in psychological, biological, functional, and sociological perspectives (Finkelhor, 1984; Ward & Hudson, 1998). In an effort to facilitate the process of theory construction in the field, Ward and Hudson (1998) have proposed a meta-theoretical framework for the classification of existing sex offending theories on the basis of both their generality of focus and what the authors refer to as the distal-proximal distinction. In such a context, distal factors are identified as predispositions or causal factors resulting from genetics and developmental processes (i.e., psychological
mechanisms), whereas proximal factors refer to triggers emerging as a result of the functioning of vulnerability factors (i.e., state or contextual variables) (Ward & Sorbello, 2003). Three levels of theory were identified in the Ward and Hudson (1998) framework: Level I (multi-factorial theories), Level II (single factor theories), and Level III (micro-level/offense process theories).

The theories of sexual offending proposed by Finkelhor (1984), Hall and Hirschman (1991), Marshall and Barbaree (1990) follow a Level I multifactorial approach, while Ward and Siegert (2002) apply theory knitting to integrate the previous three Level I theories.

Finkelhor – Precondition Theory

Also known as the Four-Factor Model of Child Sexual Abuse, the theoretical framework presented by Finkelhor (1984) has been one of the most widely accepted models explaining the process of sexual offending against children (Elliott & Beech, 2009). Highlighting the need for theories capable of addressing the many complexities of the sexually deviant behavior, Finkelhor (1984) identified and integrated four underlying factors frequently used to explain incestuous and nonincestous child sexual abuse. The four factors are emotional congruence, sexual arousal to children, blockage, and disinhibition. According to the model, the first three factors (emotional congruence, sexual arousal to children, and blockage) provide an explanation as to why certain individuals become sexually interested in children, whereas the fourth factor (disinhibition) explains why this interest takes the form of sexually abusive behavior.

Hall & Hirschman – Quadripartite Model of Sexual Aggression

Following a more psychological and intrapersonal approach to explain sexual abuse, Hall and Hirschman produced their quadripartite model of sexual aggression against women (1991) and against children (1992). According to this model, four factors are deemed to be motivational
precursors to sexually deviant behavior: physiological sexual arousal, cognitions justifying sexual aggression, affective dyscontrol, and personality problems. Based on these four motivational components, an offender typology is presented, with the most dominant of the four factors acting as the motivational precursor for each of the four subtypes of aggressors.

The first and most common subtype of sex offenders, the classic preferential offender, is characterized by deviant sexual arousal, particularly with regards to children, and a tendency to have large numbers of victims. The second subtype, the incest offender, possesses good planning and self-regulatory skills, but is driven by cognitive motivation and often wrongly interprets children’s behaviors as sexual invitations. The situational offender represents the third subtype in this sex offender typology. Those belonging to this subtype are generally driven by a negative affective state and are typically impulsive, opportunistic, and violent offenders. The final subtype identified in the quadripartite model refers to those having difficulties establishing intimate adult relationships as a result of developmentally based personality problems. Chronic offenders are typically found within this subtype, as these offenders are unable to effectively function in society.

Marshall & Barbaree – Integrated Theory of the Etiology of Sexual Offending

Marshall and Barbaree (1990) developed a general theory of sexual offending based on the pretense that sexual abuse results from interactions between distal and proximal factors such as biological influences, childhood experiences, sociocultural context, and transitory situational factors. This integrated theory has been particularly influential in the realm of treatment innovations, as it provides explanations for the development, onset, and maintenance of sexual offending (Parton & Day, 2002; Ward & Hudson, 1998; Ward & Siegert, 2002). According to
the theorists, negative developmental experiences such as poor socialization and inadequate parenting result in young men lacking effective self-regulation, confidence, and social competence. As these individuals reach puberty, their distorted social expectations, in combination with a rise in sex hormones, increase the chances of young men meeting their sexual needs through antisocial means. For many, engaging in a sexually deviant act not only provides sexual satisfaction and reduces sexual tension, but a multitude of needs may additionally be met in the process. Ultimately, the theory contends that offending is maintained through the development of cognitive distortions and the reinforcing effects of sexually offensive activity (Marshall & Barbaree, 1990).

Ward & Siegert – Pathways Model of Child Sexual Abuse


Central to the pathways model is the belief that multiple distinct pathways lead to the sexual abuse of a child, and that four dysfunctional psychological mechanisms are at the source of this deviant behavior: intimacy and social skill deficits; distorted sexual scripts; emotional dysregulation; and cognitive distortions (Ward & Siegert, 2002). Based on these four psychological mechanisms, a total of five pathways to sexual offending are discussed by Ward
and Siegert (2002). The first pathway, or the intimacy pathway, is characterized by individuals who only offend at specific times and who are believed to possess normal sexual scripts. Pathway two is the deviant sexual scripts pathway, which is composed of those having subtle distortions of cognitive scripts guiding sexual conduct in addition to dysfunctional relationship schemas. The third pathway is identified as the emotional dysregulation pathway and includes individuals with normal sexual scripts but whose mechanisms associated with their emotional regulation system is dysfunctional. Individuals belonging to the fourth pathway, antisocial cognitions pathway, also possess normal sexual scripts but their offending tend to reflect their generally pro-criminal attitudes and beliefs. Finally, Ward and Siegert (2002) identify the fifth pathway to child sexual abuse as the multiple dysfunctional mechanisms pathway, according to which offenders are believed to show dysfunctions in all four of the primary psychological mechanisms previously introduced (Elliott & Beech, 2009).

Developmental and Life-Course Theories

The theories and frameworks formulated by Finkelhor (1984), Hall and Hirschman (1991), and Marshall and Barbaree (1990) are regarded as the three primary theories used to explain sexually deviant behavior. Seeking for a more comprehensive explanation to sex offending, Ward and Siegert (2002) followed suit by integrating the strengths of the three theories into what became the pathways model of child sexual abuse. Having recognized the significance of these theoretical advances, it should be noted that the heavy emphasis on the psychological aspects of sex offending and its potential treatment options at the core of these models may be limited in their cross-disciplinary applicability. Specifically, research within the field of criminology seeks to understand the criminal aspects of the deviant behavior with a certain emphasis placed on crime reduction and effective policy. Consequently, the theoretical
framework for the present thesis required a criminological basis, while possessing the qualities of
the psychologically-based explanations. Incorporated within the framework of developmental
and life-course criminology, the concepts of offender typologies (Hall & Hirschman, 1991,
1992), the development, onset, and maintenance of sexual offending (Marshall & Barbaree,
1990), and the existence of multiple pathways to deviance (Ward & Siegert, 2002) theoretically
inform criminological explanations of sex offending over the life-course.

Criminal Career Framework

The increasing focus and interest placed on studying patterns in criminality over the life-
course prompted an initiative by the National Academy of Sciences to form the Panel on
Research on Criminal Careers, which aimed to evaluate the previous, current and future efforts
and directions of criminal career research. In the published final report titled *Criminal Careers
and “Career Criminals”,* Blumstein, Cohen, Roth, and Visher (1986) define a criminal career as
“the characterization of the longitudinal sequence of crimes committed by an individual
offender” (p.12). This definition provides criminologists with a basic foundation that is
consistent with the longitudinal focus of between and within-individual changes in criminality
that is central to the paradigm. Specifically, the criminal career model seeks to identify the onset
(why and when people start offending), persistence (why and how they continue offending),
specialization (involvement in one type of crime or a few closely related types of crime),
escalation (if and why offenses become more specialized or serious over time), and desistance
(why and when people stop offending) of criminal patterns over the life-course (Piquero,
Farrington, & Blumstein, 2003, 2007). As a result, the model follows that four dimensions are
central to criminal careers: participation, frequency, seriousness, and duration or career length (Blumstein et al., 1986). These four dimensions and their various operating components warrant further discussion.

The first key dimension of the criminal career identified by the Panel on Research on Criminal Careers is participation. According to Blumstein and colleagues (1986), participation can be measured cumulatively or currently as “the fraction of a given group ever committing at least one crime before attaining some age or committing at least one crime during a particular observation period” (p.3) using either official or self-reported crime data. By identifying the criminally active subset within the population, research can then focus on the three key active dimensions of criminal careers. Specifically, the career dimensions of frequency, seriousness, and career length identified by Blumstein and colleagues (1986) ultimately reflect both the nature and the extent of the criminality found among this active population subset.

Frequency, or individual offending frequency, is used in this model to refer to the number of crimes committed by an individual in an active year of offending. Factors believed to be associated with variations in frequency rates explored by Blumstein and colleagues (1986) include the demographic characteristics of age, gender, and race, as well as age of onset of criminal activity, drug use, employment, and previous criminal involvement. Specifically, higher rates of offending were associated with those with an early age at criminal career initiation (onset), heavy drug use, extended periods of unemployment, and prior criminal activity (Blumstein et al., 1986). The highly skewed distribution in offending rates points to a small
group of individuals committing the majority of the crimes, a finding consistent with the “chronic offender” phenomenon introduced in research by Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin (1972) and identified by Blumstein and colleagues (1986) as “early starters, high-rate offenders, or offenders with especially long careers” (p.91) (Piquero et al., 2003).

The dimension of seriousness encompasses the components of the criminal career pertaining to the crime-type mix of different criminal activity committed over an individual’s lifetime. The four main components at the core of the study of crime-type mix are seriousness, or the degree of severity of the crimes committed; escalation, or the tendency to move towards more serious crimes; specialization, or the tendency to repeat the same offenses or types of closely related offenses; and crime-type switching, or switching between various types of offenses (Blumstein et al., 1986; Piquero et al., 2007).

The final dimension of the active criminal career revealed in Blumstein and colleagues’ (1986) research explores the duration and termination of an individual’s deviant career. Gaining a better understanding of the variations in career lengths by crime types allows for the effective detection of criminal persisters and desisters. The career length, or duration, of a career is determined by estimating the time frame between an offender’s first offense (initiation) and last offense (termination) (Blumstein et al., 1986).

Developmental and Life-Course Perspectives

The framework proposed by the criminal career paradigm has been particularly influential in the formulation and application of developmental and life-course explanations of criminal and deviant behavior. In addition, several approaches to criminality emerging in the decade following the criminal career work of Blumstein and colleagues have also been
incorporated to form developmental and life-course criminology (DLC), mainly the risk factor prevention paradigm, developmental approaches to crime, and life-course approaches to crime (Farrington, 2005). Put differently, DLC can be interpreted as an extension of the atheoretical criminal career paradigm focusing on the onset, continuation, and desistance of criminal activity blended with the study of risk and protective factors, and the effects of life events on offending (Farrington, 2003; Farrington, 2005).

Unlike generally static, traditional criminological theories that aim to explain between-group differences in offending, developmental criminology offers a more dynamic approach encompassing psychological, biological, and social processes through time and focuses on the “temporal within-individual changes in offending” (Loeber & LeBlanc, 1990, p. 376), in addition to the analysis and comparison of offending rates between individuals (Piquero et al., 2003; Sampson & Laub, 1997). The main focus of developmental criminology is first on the processes of behavioral development and the dynamics of offending over age, and secondly on the identification of explanatory or causal factors that predate or co-occur with behavioral development and have an effect on its course (Loeber & LeBlanc, 1990, p. 377). Given that the particular focus (interest) of the present thesis is sexual offending, only relevant DLC theories will be reviewed.

Moffitt – Developmental Taxonomy of Offending

The dual taxonomy of offending presented by Moffitt (1993) offers typologies of criminal and antisocial behavior or what she refers to as life-course persistent offenders and adolescence-limited offenders (Moffitt, 1993).
Life-course persistent offenders are those who begin exhibiting antisocial behavior from a young age and show a continuation of such behavior into their adult lives. These individuals generally display a greater frequency and versatility in their offending, whereas desistance is seldom observed among this group (Piquero et al., 2007; Piquero & Moffitt, 2005). The reciprocal interactions between early inherited or acquired neuropsychological deficits, such as low self-control, impulsivity, and hyperactivity, and deficient social environments marked by poverty, ineffective parenting, and poor interpersonal relations play a crucial role in the early onset of offending by placing the child in greater risk of developing antisocial behavior (Farrington, 2003; Moffitt, 1993; Piquero & Moffitt, 2005).

In contrast, the majority of criminal offenders fall within the adolescence-limited group characterized by a more temporary and situational adolescent onset of antisocial behavior marked by a desistance in criminality as maturation into adulthood progresses. The theoretical framework for adolescence-limited delinquency identifies two prerequisites for the occurrence of antisocial behavior: “the motivating maturity gap and antisocial role models” (Moffitt, 1993, p. 689). Specifically, delinquency within the adolescence-limited typology is not linked to neuropsychological deficits, but instead is viewed as an adaptive response to a maturity gap that is highly associated with delinquent peers and group-oriented offending (Moffitt & Caspi, 2001). In this regard, Moffitt (1993) postulates that as a result of the increasing maturity gap present in post-modernized society, the adolescence-limited offenders seek to attain desired goals and adult status through a process of ‘social mimicry’, in which they have the ability to assert their status by mimicking the behaviors of life-course persistent offender who have already achieved the
goals they are seeking (Piquero, Jennings, & Barnes, 2012a). Unlike their life-course persistent counterparts, adolescence-limited offenders demonstrate a discontinuation in deviant behaviors once legitimate roles of adulthood become available to them and their desires can be attained through legal means (Moffitt, 1993).

**Loeber – Ordered Pathways Model**

In the model presented by Loeber (1996), the risks and occurrence of chronic offending are explained according to a developmental three-pathway framework. Central to the concept of pathways is their ability to “take into account individuals’ history and temporal sequence of problem behavior on a continuum of increasing seriousness of problem behavior over time” (Loeber, 1996, p.14). Also important for this model is the assumption that behavior follows a ‘stepping-stone’ method, emphasizing that there is a certain order in which an individual’s offending pathway sequentially unfolds. Three developmental pathways toward serious delinquency that account for the majority of delinquent careers are presented: the overt pathway, the covert pathway, and the authority-conflict pathway (Loeber & Hay, 1994; Loeber, Wung, Keenan, Giroux, Stouthamer-Loeber, Van-Kammen, & Maugham, 1993; Loeber, Keenan, & Zhang, 1997).

The first pathway identified by Loeber and colleagues (1993, 1996, 1997), the *overt pathway*, is marked by a progression of person-oriented behaviors first exhibited through acts of minor aggression followed by physical fighting and eventually person-oriented violence. According to this pathway, an individual may exhibit signs of bullying towards others that further escalate into physical or gang fighting and ultimately commit acts as severe as rape, attack, and strong-arm robbery (Loeber, 1996). The *covert pathway* on the other hand, does not
focus on person-oriented behaviors but instead encompasses those associated with property offenses. In this second pathway, individuals may begin with minor acts such as frequent lying or shoplifting, and progress into more serious property damage such as vandalism, and serious forms of theft including fraud, burglary, and serious theft (Loeber, 1996; Loeber et al., 1993; Loeber et al., 1997).

The final pathway identified in Loeber and colleagues’ (1993, 1996, 1997) research, the authority conflict pathway, specifically applies to those displaying such behaviors before age 12. Individuals in this pathway will first exhibit stubbornness, which in turn develops into general defiance and disobedience. Authority avoidance is the final and most serious step within the authority conflict pathway and generally reflects status offenses such as staying out late, running away, and truancy. Given that these problem behaviors unfold before individuals reach their adolescent years, the development of the authority conflict pathway is logically assumed to occur before the potential onset of the overt and covert pathways (Loeber, 1996).
CHAPTER THREE

Literature Review

A significant body of research has provided empirical support for the criminal career paradigm and development and life-course theories of criminal behavior and offending. Among this research is a focus on the four key dimensions of the criminal career framework; participation, frequency, seriousness, and duration. Analyses for participation in offending (Wolfgang et al., 1972; Elliott, 1994; LeBlanc & Frechette, 1989; Piquero et al., 2007) have generally examined the prevalence of offending by identifying the portion of the population that is actively committing crime or has participated in criminal activity in the past. Investigations of offending frequency (Blumstein et al., 1986; Elliott, 1994; Piquero, 2000; Piquero et al., 2003, 2007) have revealed the existence of “chronic offenders”; or the small fraction of offenders responsible for a high percentage of the crimes committed (Wolfgang et al., 1972; Tracy, Wolfgang, & Figlio, 1990; Shannon, 1988; Moffitt, Caspi, Rutter, & Silva, 2001; Farrington, 2003; Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Piquero et al., 2007). The research on the dimension of seriousness (Wolfgang et al., 1972; Blumstein et al., 1986) has mainly explored the components of offense escalation (Tracy et al., 1990; LeBlanc & Frechette, 1989) and specialization (Farrington, 1991; Tracy et al., 1990; Capaldi & Patterson, 1996; LeBlanc & Frechette, 1989; Piquero, 2000; Piquero et al., 2003, 2007). Lastly, a significant number of studies have focused on the duration of the criminal career (Blumstein et al., 1986; Wolfgang et al., 1972; LeBlanc & Frechette, 1989; Farrington, 2003; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Piquero et al., 2007), particularly on
the age of onset (Patterson, Capaldi, & Bank, 1991; Farrington, 1992; Tracy et al., 1990; Capaldi & Patterson, 1996; Krohn, Thornberry, Rivera, & LeBlanc, 2001; Moffitt, 1993; Patterson & Yoerger, 1999; Elliott, 1994) and continuity in offending (Loeber & LeBlanc, 1990; Wilson & Howell, 1993; Tracy & Kempf-Leonard, 1996; Piquero et al., 2007; Elliott, 1994; Farrington, 2003). As a result of this extensive research on the development of offending over the life-course, the following conclusions have emerged (Farrington, 2003, pp. 223-224):

“The prevalence of offending peaks in the late teenage years: between ages 15 and 19; the peak age of onset of offending is most typically between 8 and 14, and the peak age of desistance from offending is typically between 20 and 29; an early age of onset predicts a relatively long criminal career duration and the commission of relatively many offenses; there is marked continuity in offending and antisocial behavior form childhood to the teenage years to adulthood; a small fraction of the population (chronic offenders) commit a large fraction of all crimes; offending is versatile rather than specialized; the types of acts defined as offenses are elements of a larger syndrome of antisocial behavior, including heavy drinking, reckless driving, sexual promiscuity, bullying, and truancy; most offenses up to the late teenage years are committed with others, whereas most offenses from age 20 onwards are committed alone; the reasons given for offending up to the late teenage years are quite variable, whereas from age 20 onwards, utilitarian motives become increasingly dominant; different types of offenses tend to be first committed at distinctively different ages; diversification increases up to age 20, but after age 20, diversification decreases and specialization increases”.
Although the use of longitudinal data has provided developmental and life-course criminology a comprehensive tool to draw general conclusions about deviant and criminal behavior, most of the research has studied the more common crimes (street crime) and few studies have tested the applicability of these findings across offenders with crimes of lower prevalence such as sex offenders/offending. As such, for the purpose of this thesis, the paragraphs to follow will focus on the existing literature concerning patterns of sexual offending over the life-course.

*Developmental and Life-Course Theory and Sexual Offending Research*

To date, the body of longitudinal data on sex offending capable of documenting offending patterns of delinquent juveniles as they become adults has been rather limited (Reingle, 2012), although a surge in research has been noted in more recent years (e.g. Zimring et al., 2007, 2009; Piquero et al., 2012b). The first study to examine the continuity of sexual offending from adolescence into adulthood dates back to 1943 and offered a 6 year follow-up of 256 male juvenile sex offenders treated at the New York City Children’s Court clinics between June 1928-1934 (Doshay, 1943). Among the significant findings from this comparison between sex and non-sex offending delinquents, Doshay (1943) reported a very small percentage (2%) of offenders who displayed sex offending continuity from adolescence into adulthood, especially when compared to the 14% sex recidivism rate among the non-sex offending group at the time of follow-up. These results suggest not only a higher occurrence of sex recidivism for offenders without sex continuity, but also support the criminal career paradigm conclusion suggesting versatility in offending rather than specialization (Farrington, 2003).
With regards to more recent analyses of sex offending continuity over the life-course, only two studies to date have shown support for the existence of a noticeable linkage: Rubinstein and colleagues (1993) and Sipe and colleagues (1998). In their investigation, Rubinstein et al. (1993) compared patterns of offending among a group of 19 sexually assaultive juvenile males and a group of 58 violent juvenile males in Connecticut in the late 1970s. At the time of the eight year follow-up, with a mean age just over 24, seven of the 19 (37%) sexually assaultive juveniles reported an adult sexual offense, whereas only six of the 58 (10%) non-sex violent juvenile offenders reported sexual recidivism. Furthermore, the follow-up data reported an 89% general recidivism rate among the juvenile sex offender group and a 69% rate of general recidivism among the non-sex violent juveniles. Based on these results, Rubinstein and colleagues (1993) conclude that juvenile sex offenders are more likely to commit both sexual offenses and violent non-sexual offenses in adulthood than their non-sex violent juvenile counterparts.

Similar results were obtained in the 1-14 year follow-up study of 164 juvenile sex offenders and 142 non-sexual offenders conducted by Sipe and colleagues (1998). Specifically, the authors found a higher frequency of sexually related arrests in adulthood among the Idaho sample for the juvenile sex offenders than for the non-sexual juvenile offenders (9.7% vs. 3.0% respectively). With regards to general recidivism, and contrary to the findings in Rubinstein and colleagues (1993), Sipe and colleagues (1998) reported higher rates of general recidivism in adulthood among the non-sexual offenders than the juvenile sex offenders.

Aside from the two above mentioned studies, the remainder of the available and more recent) research assessing the continuity of sexual offending from adolescence into adulthood have indicated that continuity is uncommon within this group of offenders (Nisbet et al.; 2004; Waite et al., 2005; Vandiver, 2006; Zimring et al., 2007; Zimring et al., 2009; Piquero et al.,
The findings relating to general recidivism, sex recidivism, and offense specialization in Vandiver (2006), Nisbet and colleagues (2004), and Waite and colleagues (2005) will be further discussed in the sections to come, although it should be noted that all three of these studies reported relatively low rates of sex offending continuity among their samples: 8%, 5%, and 5% respectively. Nevertheless, the core of this review of the literature on continuity will explore longitudinal data from three large cohort studies further analyzed by Zimring and colleagues (2007): the Racine Data (Shannon, 1988, 1991), Zimring and colleagues (2009: the Second Philadelphia Birth Cohort (Tracy et al., 1990), and Piquero and colleagues (2012b): the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development (Farrington, Coid, & West, 2009).

In their 2007 assessment of sex offending patterns over time, Zimring and colleagues relied on the data collected by Shannon (1988, 1991) in Racine, Wisconsin. Given that most criminal career findings are based on samples from urban cities, the Racine birth cohorts were attractive to the researchers because they offer “a snapshot of sex offenders and sex offending in middle America, in lower crime rate environments, and among non-minority populations” (Zimring et al., 2007, p. 514). This data captured information on police contacts for a total of 6,000 boys and girls across three birth cohorts (1942, 1949, 1955), 92% of which was identified as non-Hispanic whites. The follow-up period beyond adulthood ranged from 4 to 14 years and varied by birth cohort: the 1955 cohort was followed up to age 22, the 1949 cohort up to age 25, and the 1942 cohort up to age 32. The juvenile and adult police contact information employed in the analyses originated from the Juvenile Bureau and the Records Division of the Racine Police Department and included the date, location, contact number, frequency, and type of contacts for each individual. “Sex felony” and “sex misdemeanor” were charges found among the 26 offense categories consistent with UCR Part I and Part II offenses that were used in this research.
A series of logistic regressions were used to assess sex offending continuity based on juvenile sex offender status and the number of juvenile police contacts. Overall, the rates of police contacts (general and sex) were generally consistent across the three birth cohorts. Among the males in the sample (n = 3,129), the prevalence of juvenile sex police contacts was 1.5% and 3.2% in the adult sex contacts, representing a rather small portion of the overall offending committed by the cohort members. Particularly significant among the findings from Zimring and colleagues’ (2007) research in Racine is the overall lack of evidence supporting the continuity of sex offending from adolescence into adulthood. Specifically, analyses indicated that for males, having a juvenile sex police contact was only 2% more predictive of adult sex contacts than for juveniles with non-sex police contacts (8.5% vs. 6.2%). Instead, the study suggests that being male, being non-white, and having more police contacts as a juvenile, regardless of the type of police contact, were significantly related to adult sex offending. Within this sample, the researchers conclude that having a juvenile history of sexual offending is not predictive of adult sex offending, but rather suggest that the best predictor of adult sex offending lies in the frequency and versatility in offending prior to adulthood (Zimring et al., 2007).

Similar logic was followed by Zimring and colleagues (2009) in their analysis of the 1958 Second Philadelphia Birth Cohort. The urban setting of this data allowed for a more diversified sample of offenders consisting of 13,160 boys and 14,000 girls, of which a total of 204 boys and 17 girls reported police contacts for sex offenses as juveniles. The police contact data for juvenile offenses were made available by the Juvenile Aid Division of the Philadelphia Police Department, whereas the data for adult police contacts were retrieved from the Municipal
General recidivism, sex recidivism, specialization, and continuity were among some of the patterns of offending analyzed in the eight year follow-up into adulthood of the cohort members.

In this particular study, Zimring and colleagues (2009) applied the same analytical framework (Zimring et al., 2007) that was conducted with the Racine data in order to analyze the Philadelphia data. Their results indicated that, among males, there was a 1.6% and 2.4% prevalence of police contacts for sexual offenses for juvenile and adult offenses respectively. Continuity of sexual offending into adulthood was reported among only 10% of the 204 juveniles with police contacts for sexual offenses. Although there appears to be a slightly higher prevalence of continuity within the Philadelphia sample, juvenile police contacts for sex offenses remained a poor predictor of adult sex offending. In line with the researchers’ previous analyses (Zimring et al., 2007), the analyses of the Second Philadelphia Birth Cohort revealed that the most efficient predictor of adult sexual offending was a high frequency of juvenile criminal activity rather than sexual offending as a juvenile (Zimring et al., 2009).

More recently, the research presented by Piquero and colleagues (2012b) advances our knowledge on sexual offending over the life-course by offering an analysis of criminal careers from adolescence through mid/late adulthood. Using data from the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development permitted the unique opportunity to examine the prevalence, specialization, frequency, recidivism, and continuity of sexual offending through age 50 in a European sample. The first contact with the 411 male participants of this cohort was initiated in 1961/1962. At the time of contact, the boys were 8-9 years of age, 97% were white, and most belonged to working class families. Searches of this cohort’s conviction records have been conducted through London’s central Criminal Record Office and Police National Computer
records to account for the criminal histories of the participants at age 40 and again at age 50 (Farrington et al., 2006). Among the offense types provided, particular focus was directed toward sexual crimes such as “indecent assault on a female, unlawful sexual intercourse, indecent exposure, indecent telephone message, buggers, indecent photographs of children, and importuning males” (Piquero et al., 2012b, p.6).

With regards to the general criminal career information of the sample as a whole through age 50, Farrington and colleagues (2006) reported a 41% prevalence rate peaking at age 17. The general criminal career information further suggested the evidence of “chronic offenders” within the sample, versatility rather than specialization in offending, and strong evidence for continuity in offending from adolescence into adulthood. In contrast, the data pertaining to sex offending criminal careers varied from the general criminal career offending parameters significantly. With regards to prevalence and frequency, Piquero et al. (2012b) found that only 2.5% of the total sample (n = 10) had been convicted of a sex offense by age 50.

Aligned with Zimring and colleagues (2007, 2009), the conviction data in the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development showed that of the 808 total convictions within the sample, only 13 (1.6%) were sex offenses. Furthermore, little evidence was shown for offense specialization and no evidence was found for continuity of sex offending from adolescence into adulthood. While only three male subjects in the CSDD sample met the offense criteria for sex recidivism (2+ offenses), a comparison of general offending and sex offending criminal career recidivism revealed that approximately 30% of these offenders were recidivists among both
groups of offenders (Piquero et al., 2012b). Based on such findings, Piquero and colleagues (2012b) corroborated the work of Zimring and colleagues (2007, 2009) in the United States by demonstrating the rarity of sexual offending prevalence, frequency, recidivism, and continuity in a sample of British men.

General Recidivism

Regardless of the type of criminal activity under investigation, a high variability in rates of recidivism resulting from methodological differences in the analysis of available samples has been reported (Furby et al., 1989). In spite of this fluctuation, a great deal of studies arrive at the eventual conclusion that sex offenders show higher rates of recidivism for non-sexual offenses than for sexual offenses, and lower rates of general recidivism than non-sex offenders (Caldwell, 2002; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Sample & Bray, 2003; Vandiver, 2006; Sipe et al., 1998; Hanson, Scott, & Steffy, 1995; Tewksbury et al., 2012; Prentky et al., 1997).

Hanson and Bussiere (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of 61 follow-up studies that assessed mixed groups of adult sex offenders. A 36.3% recidivism rate was reported among the offenders in these studies (n = 19,374) when recidivism was defined as any re-offense. Similar results were obtained in a meta-analysis of 82 adolescent and adult sex offender recidivism studies (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). Specifically, of the 28,972 offenders included in these studies, the researchers found a general recidivism rate of 13.4%, and a 12.2% violent nonsexual recidivism rate.

General recidivism was also examined among samples following juvenile sex offenders into adulthood. Vandiver (2006) reported that among a sample of 299 juvenile sex offenders in Texas followed from 3 to 6 years after reaching adulthood, 52.6% had been rearrested at least
once since becoming an adult at the age of 17. Also utilizing a sample of juvenile males, Sipe and colleagues (1998) investigated rates of recidivism through a comparison of 164 sex and 142 non-sex offenders. Results of their analysis suggested that as adults, general recidivism ranged from anywhere between 5.6% - 32.3% for juvenile sex offenders depending on the offense type. When comparing the two groups, juvenile non-sex offenders were more likely to commit non-sexual recidivism (12.1% - 43.9%) than the juvenile sex offenders, regardless of the type of offense.

Following a similar comparison method among adult offenders only, Sample and Bray (2003) examined general recidivism according to offense types at three specific follow-up times after the initial offense (one, three, and five years). The rates of general recidivism reported for sex offenders were lower than those found for robbery (74.9%), burglary (66%), non-sexual assault (58%), and larceny (52.9%) at the five year follow-up. Specifically, general re-arrest rates were 21.3%, 37.4%, and 45.1% at the time of the one, three, and five year follow-up respectively. Hanson and colleagues (1995) reported similar findings in their comparison of 194 child molesters and 142 non-sexual offenders in Canada, with 61.8% general recidivism among child molesters and 82.5% among non-sex offenders.

Lastly, the analyses conducted in adult samples of sex offenders by Prentky and colleagues (1997) and Tewksbury and colleagues (2012) appear to be consistent with the previous findings. For example, in a sample consisting of 136 rapists and 115 child molesters, Prentky and colleagues report a new non-sexual offense failure (recidivism) rate of 49% for victim-involved crimes and 54% for non-contact crimes among rapists and a respective failure
rate of 23% and 48% for child molesters. Similarly, results from Tewksbury and colleagues’ (2012) comparison of sex offenders pre- (n = 247) and post-SORN (n = 248) reported a general recidivism prevalence of 51.4% among pre-SORN releasees and 48% among those released after SORN laws were implemented.

Sexual Recidivism

Rates of sexual recidivism among sex offenders have generally been shown to be much lower than those of general recidivism among this group of offenders, as evidenced by the findings of the research presented within the general recidivism construct. The following rates of prevalence for sex recidivism have been reported in various samples: 4% (Vandiver, 2006), 4.7% (Waite et al., 2005), 6.5% (Sample & Bray, 2003), 9% (Nisbet et al., 2004), 9.7% (Sipe et al., 1998), 13% (Tewksbury et al., 2012), 13.4% (Hanson & Bussiere, 1998), and 13.7% (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). Although only a small fraction of sex offenders appear to re-offend, variations in rates have been noted with regard to the type of sexual offense. Specifically, rates of re-offending among child molesters have been shown to be significantly greater when compared to non-sex offenders and rapists. Evidence of this phenomenon is made available in the research presented by Hanson and colleagues (1995) and Prentky and colleagues (1997), which show rates of sex recidivism among child molesters in their samples as 35.1% and 52% respectively. Contributing to this higher prevalence in re-offending among child molesters is the reportedly higher frequency in sexual offending than that found among rapists (Parton & Day, 2002; Lussier, LeBlanc, & Proulx, 2005).
Offense Specialization

Within the context of the criminal career, offense specialization is used in the assessment of the key dimension of seriousness and is described as “the tendency to repeat the same offense type on successive arrests” (Blumstein et al., 1986, p.81). Contrary to popular belief reflected in current laws and policies, research carried out on offense specialization among sex offenders is suggestive of versatility in offending rather than specialization (Hanson & Bussiere, 1998; Caldwell, 2002; Nisbet et al., 2004; Waite et al., 2005; Vandiver, 2006; Zimring et al., 2007, 2009, Piquero et al., 2012a). In an effort to investigate the basis for the common misperception of specialization associated with sex offenders, Sample and Bray (2003) assessed recidivism rates for various types of crimes among a sample of approximately 953,000 arrestees with 2,908,000 charges from 1990 to 1997 using criminal history information provided by the Illinois State Police. Results of their analyses showed that five years after the initial offense, only 6.5% of those in the sex offender category had been rearrested for another sex offense, whereas offense-specific re-arrest rates in other categories were significantly higher. Among these crime categories reporting higher offense-specific rates were property damage (38.8%), non-sexual assault (37.2%), larceny (30%), burglary (23.1%), public-order crimes (21.4%), and robbery (17.9%). Only in the case of homicide (5.7%), kidnapping (2.8%), and stalking (5%) were the rates of re-arrests higher for sex offenders, leading the authors to reject the notion of offense specialization among sex offenders.

Similarly, Miethe, Olson, and Mitchell (2006) compared a sample of approximately 10,000 sex offenders and 24,000 non-sex offenders released from prison in 1994 across 15 states to determine their levels of offending persistence and specialization. Versatility in criminal offending was suggested within this sample of which only 5% of sex offenders appeared to
specialize, whereas 60% showed versatile careers with only one sexual offense. Further investigations of adult sex offender samples by Lussier and colleagues (2005) and Harris, Smallbone, Dennison, and Knight (2009) have reached similar conclusions.

It should be noted that although specialization is not typical among the broader sex offender population, higher levels of specialization have been linked to particular types of sexually deviant activities, suggesting that sex offenders may not be such a homogeneous group. The majority of the literature focuses on two types of sexual offenders: those who victimize children (child molesters) and those who victimize adults (rapists). For instance, Harris, Smallbone, and colleagues (2009) reported over 40% specialization at the 50% specialization threshold for child molesters and incest offenders, compared to 4.7% for rapists. Higher specialization among child molesters has been further corroborated across the literature.

For instance, Lussier and colleagues’ (2005) examination of child molesters and rapists revealed a higher specificity of criminal activity among child molesters characterized by a later-onset, a less active criminal career, and a higher frequency of sexual offenses than reported among rapists. Adding to these findings, and thereby supporting the notion that child molesters are more persistent offenders (Parton & Day, 2002), Prentky and colleagues (1997) demonstrated that sexual recidivism rates were higher among child molesters than rapists (52% vs. 39%) in their Massachusetts sample. Higher levels of specialization among child molesters were also reported in Harris, Mazerolle, and Knight (2009), Miethe and colleagues (2005), and Hanson and colleagues (1995).
Summary and Implications for Present Thesis

The previously described studies examined various constructs of the criminal career paradigm as they apply to sex offenders. Significant patterns of offending have emerged across the dimensions of sex offending continuity, general recidivism, sex offending recidivism, and offense specialization as a result of this effort as they relate to sex offending. Although such research has provided considerable advancement in the understanding of sexual offending over the life-course, the interplay among these criminal career dimensions has yet to be explored in a single study as of current date.

Therefore, in an effort to explore sex offending continuity, general recidivism, sex offending recidivism, and any identifiable risk factors associated with these outcomes, this study will analyze data from a random sample of 493 convicted male sex offenders who were all adults at the time of their incarceration in the Department of Corrections in a Northeastern state. Guided by previous findings, this study intends to determine the predictive power of adolescent sex offending and recidivism via a series of key hypotheses:

1. There is likely to be a low rate of sex offending continuity among the sample.
2. There will likely be identifiable risk factors that distinguish sex offenders who demonstrate continuity from those adult sex offenders who do not display sex offending continuity.
3. Sex offending continuity will be significantly associated with sexual recidivism.
4. Sex offending continuity will be significantly associated with general recidivism.
CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

Data

Data used for the present thesis were obtained from various agencies as part of a 2009 National Institute of Justice (NIJ) funded grant (for additional details, see Tewksbury et al., 2012; Jennings et al., 2012). Criminal histories were obtained through the State Police Computerized Criminal History System and the National Crime Information Center’s Interstate Identification Unit. The former provided criminal arrest data for the Northeastern state exclusively, whereas the latter allowed for the inclusion of recorded arrests from various jurisdictions within the United States. The full names, race/ethnicity, and birthdates of subjects were used for the record checks, as were prison identification numbers, and both state and federal criminal record identification numbers whenever available.

Sample

The two samples of adult sex offenders utilized in the present thesis were provided by the Department of Corrections of a Northeastern state following a process of randomization. The first random sample was composed of offenders whose release date preceded the implementation of sex offender registration and notification (SORN) in the state. In total, 247 male sex offenders released from prison between the years 1990 and 1994 were randomly included in the pre-SORN sample. The second random sample consisted of offenders released after the implementation of
SORN, all of whom were matched to the pre-SORN group based on available demographic characteristics such as age, race, and prior criminal history. The post-SORN group was therefore comprised of 248 male sex offenders released from the Department of Corrections in the Northeastern state between 1995 and 1999. An eight year follow-up of both samples allowed for the assessment of post-release recidivism.

**Variables**

**Dependent Variables**

Three dependent variables were included in the present analyses. First, the *juvenile sex offender* measure was used to determine the potential occurrence of continuity of sexual offending from adolescence into adulthood. Specifically, this measure identified all of the adult sex offenders within both samples with an officially documented occurrence of sexual offending as a juvenile. This variable was dichotomous, with offenders who committed sexual juvenile offenses being coded as 1 and those who did not being coded as 0 (1 = yes, 0 = no).

Two variables were used to assess the occurrence of sex recidivism. *Sex recidivism* was measured dichotomously. Offenders exhibiting sexual patterns of recidivism post-release were coded as 1, while those abstaining from such behavior were coded as 0 (1 = yes, 0 = no). Measurement of *general recidivism* followed a similar coding strategy, with those recidivating for any offense being coded as 1 and those who did not recidivate for any offense post-release being coded as 0 (1 = yes, 0 = no). Individuals within both samples were observed for a period of
eight years following their prison release from the Northeastern state’s Department of Corrections to allow for ample time and opportunity to recidivate. In addition, this follow-up period ensured that a standardized time was applied to every offender upon release, regardless of the year at release.

Independent Variables

Additional variables were included to assess the influence of risk factors on sex offending continuity and its potential linkages to recidivism. All of the risk factors included in this analysis were measured dichotomously with the exception of age at release date, which was measured as a continuous variable ranging from 17 to 78 years old. Demographic variables included offender race coded as non-white (0 = white, 1 = non-white), and whether the offender had been raised in a two parent household (0 = no, 1 = yes). Offenders diagnosed with DSM-IV common Axis I disorders and/or mental health problems in childhood were coded 1 representing mental health problems (0 = no, 1 = yes). Following a similar logic, offenders with problems related to alcohol abuse were coded 1 for alcohol problems, whereas those with no alcohol problems were coded as 0 (0 = no, 1 = yes).

A considerable body of research has uncovered varying patterns of sexual and general recidivism post-release among sexual offenders, particularly among rapists and child molesters (Hanson, 2002; Hanson & Bussiere, 1998; Hanson et al., 1995; Prentky et al., 1997; Sample & Bray, 2006). In remaining consistent with such findings, a variable was utilized to measure child molestation to distinguish between those with adult victims (rapist = 0) from those who victimize children (child molester = 1). Consistent with previous research that has demonstrated that the sex of the victim and the intra- or extra-familial relationship of the victim and offender have been
linked to fluctuations in the recidivism rates among adult sex offenders (Becker & Quinsey, 1993; Furby et al., 1989; Hanson, 2002; Parton & Day, 2002), additional variables representing male victim (0 = no, 1 = yes), female victim (0 = no, 1 = yes), male and female victim (0 = no, 1 = yes), e.g., the reference category), and family member victim (0 = no, 1 = yes) were included as risk factors.

The SORN cohort variable was used to account for the potential influence of SORN on sexual and general recidivism. Offenders who were released from prison between the years of 1990 and 1994 were coded pre-SORN (or 0), whereas those released between the years of 1995 and 1999 were coded post-SORN (or 1). Finally, criminal histories were used to identify the adult sex offenders who had been charged with non-sexual criminal acts as juveniles. The non-sex juvenile offender variable was dichotomous, where those who did not have a recorded non-sexual offense as a juvenile were coded 0 and those with a juvenile non-sex offense were coded 1. A summary of all descriptives and coding schemes for this sample are presented in Table 1.

Stages of Analysis

A total of four stages were included in the present analysis. First, descriptive evidence was obtained in order to determine the rate of sex offending continuity in the sample. Second, in an effort to compare sex offenders who demonstrate sex offending continuity over the life-course from those without sex offending continuity, bivariate statistics are compared between the groups using a series of chi-square and t-tests. Based on the dichotomous nature of the dependent variables being examined, logistic regression was used as the statistical procedure for the remaining three stages of the analysis. Specifically, in the latter stage, logistic regression is used to determine if any risk factors distinguish the sex offenders demonstrating continuity from
Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td><strong>Independent</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
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<td>.48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 – yes</td>
<td>47.7</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at release</td>
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<td>12.11</td>
<td>17-78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two parent household</td>
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<td>32.5</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 – yes</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health problems</td>
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<td>.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 – yes</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Alcohol problems</td>
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<td>52.7</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 – yes</td>
<td>46.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child molester</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1 – yes</td>
<td>79.8</td>
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<td>Male victim/s</td>
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<td>.16</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 – yes</td>
<td>15.6</td>
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<td>1 – yes</td>
<td>81.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male and female victim/s</td>
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<td>.03</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 – yes</td>
<td>2.6</td>
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<td>Family member victim/s</td>
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<td>48.5</td>
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<td>.50</td>
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<td>1 – yes</td>
<td>50.1</td>
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<td>Non-sex juvenile offender</td>
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<td>1 – yes</td>
<td>22.2</td>
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<td><strong>Dependent</strong></td>
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<td>.50</td>
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<td>49.7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
adolescence into adulthood from those whose sexual onset was in adulthood. Finally, the predictive power of sex offending continuity on post-release sex recidivism and general recidivism among sex offenders is examined separately.
CHAPTER FIVE

Results

*Sex Offending Continuity*

Table 2 presents the bivariate descriptive statistics for the adult-only sex offender group (n = 465) and the sex offender continuity group (n = 28). As anticipated, the vast majority of the sex offender sample (94%) showed no evidence of criminal offenses that were sexual in nature as juveniles. Specifically, the documented low rate of sex offending continuity from adolescence into adulthood of approximately 6% within the sample provides support for the first research hypothesis.

Overall, the two groups did not differ significantly with regards to two parent households, alcohol problems, child molestation, and having male victims. Over half of the sex offenders within both groups came from two parent households, and approximately 50% reported having alcohol problems. In addition, close to 80% of both groups of sex offenders were convicted child molesters, while less than one fifth had male victims. Aside from these few similarities, identifiable risk factors distinguishing those who displayed sex offending continuity from those who did not were reported.
Table 2. Bivariate Comparisons of Sex Offenders who Demonstrate Sex Offending Continuity versus Adult-Only Sex Offenders (n=493).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Adult-Only Sex Offenders (n=465)</th>
<th>Sex Offenders who Exhibit Sex Offending Continuity (n=28)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M/%</td>
<td>M/%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White*</td>
<td>47.0%</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at release***</td>
<td>39.18</td>
<td>32.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two parent household</td>
<td>66.8%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health problems*</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol problems</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child molester</td>
<td>79.8%</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male victim/s</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female victim/s*</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male and female victim/s**</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member victim/s*</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-sex juvenile offender***</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex recidivism Post-Release (prevalence)***</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General recidivism Post-Release (prevalence)**</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05  **p<.01  ***p<.001
Note: Comparisons were estimated using chi-square tests for dichotomous variables and t-tests for continuous variables.
As suggested in the second hypothesis, the two groups of offenders were significantly different on various levels. The adult-only sex offender group displayed an older age at their time of release (39.18, p<.001), higher rates of female victims (82.6%, p<.05) and higher rates of family member victims (49.5%, p<.05). In contrast, the men who displayed sex offending continuity in the sample showed greater proportions being non-white (64.3%, p<.05), having mental health problems (39.3%, p<.05), reporting both male and female victims (10.7%, p<.01), having committed non-sex offenses as a juvenile (75.0%, p<.001), having sexually re-offended post-release (35.7%, p<.001), and having non-sexually re-offended post-release (75.0%, p<.01).

The data presented in Table 3 provide further support for hypothesis 2 by further extending into the investigation of the risk factors associated with sex offending continuity. Among the risk factors found to predict continuity were being non-white (b = 1.138, SE = 0.546, p < .05), having mental health problems (b = 0.979, SE = 0.510, p < 0.01), being a child molester (b = 0.971, SE = 0.604, p < .05), having male victim(s) (b = -1.708, SE = 0.959, p < .05), having female victim (s) (b = -2.469, SE = 0.878, p < .01), and being a non-sex juvenile offender (b = 2.420, SE = 0.517, p < .001). When controlling for all other variables in the model, being a non-sex juvenile offender was found to have the most significant effect on sex offending continuity. Specifically, the analyses suggest that having a non-sex offense as a juvenile increases the odds of sex offending continuity into adulthood by approximately 1024%\(^1\). This conclusion is also consistent with prior sex offending continuity research highlighting a greater volume of general

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\(^1\) Considering the magnitude of this effect the potential for multicollinearity was investigated and an analysis of the variance of inflation (VIFs) did not indicate multicollinearity concerns. In addition, a chi-square analysis further confirmed the robustness of this association as 75% of those who demonstrated sex offending continuity also had a non-sex juvenile offense ($X^2 = 41.30$, p<.001).
offenses compared to sex offenses among adults displaying sex offending continuity, in addition to the tendency for the sex offenders to “roll the dice more often and increase their chances of accumulating a sex offense in their career” (Zimring et al., 2007, p. 527, 2009).

Also found to be positively related to sex offending continuity was being non-white. Specifically, being non-white increased the odds of sex offending continuity by approximately 212%, whereas having mental health problems and being a child molester increased the odds of offense continuity by 166% and 164% respectively.

Table 3. Logistic Regression: Predicting Sex Offending Continuity (erg. sex offenders who have a juvenile and adult sex offense) (n=467).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>1.138</td>
<td>0.546</td>
<td>3.119*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at release</td>
<td>-0.025</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two parent household</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>0.478</td>
<td>1.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health problems</td>
<td>0.979</td>
<td>0.510</td>
<td>2.661**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol problems</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>0.450</td>
<td>1.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child molester</td>
<td>0.971</td>
<td>0.604</td>
<td>2.641*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male victim/s</td>
<td>-1.708</td>
<td>0.959</td>
<td>0.181*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female victim/s</td>
<td>-2.469</td>
<td>0.878</td>
<td>0.085**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member victim</td>
<td>-0.476</td>
<td>0.526</td>
<td>0.621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sex Juvenile Offender</td>
<td>2.420</td>
<td>0.517</td>
<td>11.242***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Nagelkerke $R^2$* 0.329

*p<.05  **p<.01  ***p<.001 (one-tailed).
Note: Models include control for SORN cohort status.
Predictors found to be negatively related to sex offending continuity over the life-course were having male victim(s), and having female victim(s). Specifically, having male-only victims and having female-only victims decreased the odds of sex offending continuity by 82% and 92% respectively.

Finally, while seven of the variables in the model presented in Table 3 were found to be predictive of continuity, in turn providing support for hypothesis 2, several others were not. To be precise, age at time of release, being from a two-parent household, having alcohol problems, and having a family member victim did not significantly impact the odds of sex offending continuity.

*Sexual Recidivism*

The third stage of analysis assessing the relationship between sex offending continuity and sexual recidivism is presented in Table 4. This model primarily seeks to determine the predictive power of sex offending continuity on post-release sex recidivism.

The only variable shown to significantly increase the odds of sexual recidivism when controlling for all other variables was sex offending continuity (b = 1.175, SE = 0.488, p < .01). Specifically, the third key hypothesis of the present research was supported, as analyses suggested that those displaying sex offending continuity from adolescence into adulthood were 224% more likely to sexually recidivate post-release when compared to the adult-only sex offenders. Such results are in line with prior investigations of similarly constructed samples of rapists and child molesters reporting higher levels of specialization among those with underage victims (Lussier et al., 2005; Harris, Smallbone, et al., 2009).
Table 4. Logistic Regression: Predicting Sex Recidivism based on Sex Offending Continuity (n = 467).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>-0.116</td>
<td>0.340</td>
<td>0.891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at release</td>
<td>-0.037</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.964*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two parent household</td>
<td>0.275</td>
<td>0.342</td>
<td>1.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health problems</td>
<td>0.328</td>
<td>0.363</td>
<td>1.388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol problems</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>0.313</td>
<td>0.988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male victim/s</td>
<td>0.569</td>
<td>1.200</td>
<td>1.767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female victim/s</td>
<td>0.661</td>
<td>1.155</td>
<td>1.938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member victim</td>
<td>-0.809</td>
<td>0.349</td>
<td>0.445*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-sex juvenile offender</td>
<td>0.384</td>
<td>0.360</td>
<td>1.468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex offending continuity</td>
<td>1.175</td>
<td>0.488</td>
<td>3.237*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke R²</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001 (one-tailed).
Note: Models include control for SORN cohort status.

Only two additional variables were found to have an effect on sexual recidivism post-release: age at release (b = -0.037, SE = 0.017, p < .05) and having a family member victim (b = -0.809, SE = 0.349, p < .05). Both of these predictors significantly decreased the odds of sex recidivism post-release: a one year increase in the age at the time of release resulted in a 3.6% decrease in the likelihood of sexual reoffending, whereas having a family member victim
decreased the odds of sex recidivism by 55.5%. The latter has also been demonstrated in prior studies that report higher risks of sexual recidivism among sex offenders with extra-familial victims (Hanson & Bussiere, 1998; Kruttschnitt, Uggen, & Shelton, 2000; Broadhurst & Loh, 2003).

Aside from the three risk factors identified above, no other associations were reported as significantly predictive of sexual recidivism. Hence, being non-white, coming from a two parent household, having mental health problems, having alcohol problems, having male victim(s), having female victim(s), and being a non-sex juvenile offenders did not predict sex recidivism².

**General Recidivism**

Table 5 provides the results from the final stage of analysis focusing on general recidivism post-release.

Several identifiable risk factors were associated with general recidivism. The highest predictive power for general recidivism in this model was attributed to being a non-sex juvenile offender \( (b = 1.194, \ SE = 0.304, p < .001) \). Specifically, according to the results of this final logistic regression, having committed a non-sexual crime as a juvenile increased the odds of general recidivism in adult sex offenders by 229%. Similar conclusions have been suggested in previous research on general recidivism among child molesters (Parton & Day, 2002; Lussier et al., 2005, Harris et al., 2009), and with regards to offense versatility among sex offenders as a group (Nisbet et al., 2004; Miethe et al., 2005; Waite et al., 2005; Vandiver, 2006; Zimring et al.,

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² The measure of child molestation was not included in the analysis based on evidence of a lack of variability within the measure. Approximately one fifth (21.4%) of all individuals displaying sex offending continuity from adolescence into adulthood were rapists, all of whom reported both sex and non-sex juvenile offenses.
The only other variable in the model showing a positive and predictive relationship to general recidivism was being non-white ($b = 0.707$, $SE = 0.227$, $p < .01$). Specifically, being non-white was indicative of a 103% increase in the odds of general recidivism.

Table 5. Logistic Regression: Predicting General Recidivism based on Sex Offending Continuity (n = 495).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>0.707</td>
<td>0.227</td>
<td>2.029**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at release</td>
<td>-0.072</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.930***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two parent household</td>
<td>-0.188</td>
<td>0.238</td>
<td>0.829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health problems</td>
<td>0.173</td>
<td>0.265</td>
<td>1.189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol problems</td>
<td>-0.032</td>
<td>0.221</td>
<td>0.969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male victim/s</td>
<td>1.030</td>
<td>0.802</td>
<td>2.802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female victim/s</td>
<td>1.202</td>
<td>0.756</td>
<td>3.328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member victim</td>
<td>-0.537</td>
<td>0.225</td>
<td>0.584**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-sex juvenile offender</td>
<td>1.194</td>
<td>0.304</td>
<td>3.299***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex offending continuity</td>
<td>0.144</td>
<td>0.547</td>
<td>1.155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nagelkerke $R^2$</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.346</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05  **p<.01  ***p<.001 (one-tailed).
Note: Models include control for SORN cohort status.
Both the age at the time of release (b = -0.072, SE = 0.012, p < .001) and having a family member victim (b = -0.537, SE = 0.225, p < .01) were found to be negatively and significantly related to general recidivism. With regards to age, a one year increase in age at the time of release was shown to decrease the odds of general recidivism post-release by 7%, whereas having a victim who was a family member decreased these odds by 41.6%.

No additional significant effects were reported to predict general recidivism. Specifically, coming from a two parent household, having mental health problems, having alcohol problems, having male victim(s), having female victim(s), and displaying sex offending continuity all failed to significantly predict general recidivism. Consequently, no support was found for the fourth hypothesis given the absence of a significant relationship between sex offending continuity and general recidivism.
CHAPTER SIX

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to examine several key dimensions of the sexual offending criminal career following a life-course criminological approach. Most importantly, this study aimed to expand on the current literature by not only providing an assessment of sex offending continuity and both sex and general recidivism among sex offenders, but also further linking these dimensions to determine their predictive effects at various stages of the criminal career. In other words, the nature of the data analyzed in the various models of this investigation allowed for a more comprehensive assessment of the defining characteristics of the sex offending criminal careers of offenders previously researched as they are manifested in adolescence, adulthood, and eight years post-release.

As a whole, several conclusions can be drawn from the analyses presented in the current research. First, the findings from the present analyses supported a number of theoretically-based assumptions relating to sexual offending. Specifically, while direct support for the multifactorial theories of sex offending of Finkelhor, Hall and Hirschman, and Marshall and Barbaree was not apparent, patterns of offending among those displaying continuity from adolescence into adulthood did fit the antisocial cognitions pathway described in Ward and Siegert’s (2002) integrated pathways model. Consistent with the authors’ fourth pathway to sexual offending, those exhibiting continuity in sex offending generally held pro-criminal attitudes and beliefs, as evidenced by this group’s versatile patterns of adolescent criminality marked by both sex and
Several of the various key dimensions central to the criminal career framework were also reflected in the present study. In particular, the data allowed for a comprehensive investigation of the dimensions of seriousness, which encompasses crime-type mix and offense specialization, as well as duration, which accounts for the initiation, continuity, and termination of criminal careers. Finally, support for Moffitt and Loeber’s developmental and life-course approaches to criminal behavior was reported among those exhibiting sex offending continuity. Consistent with the life-course persistent offender typology described in Moffitt’s dual taxonomy of offending, a continuation of antisocial behavior from youth into adulthood was reported among those displaying sex offending continuity. Further analyses of the men in the sample found both mental health problems and non-sex juvenile offending to be predictive of sex offending continuity, which again corroborates Moffitt’s characterization of life-course persistent offenders. Alternatively, the offending patterns of the men exhibiting sex offending continuity in the sample could also be explained according to Loeber’s ordered pathways model (1996). Given the versatility in juvenile offending reported among the continuity group, the trajectories of these sex offenders reflect the high rates of delinquency characteristic of offenders belonging to the exceedingly disruptive overt-covert dual pathway and the triple pathway (overt-covert-authority conflict) presented in Loeber’s model.

With regards to the central research questions, the relationship between juvenile delinquency and adult sex criminality was assessed in an effort to determine the prevalence and risk factors associated with sex offending continuity among adult male offenders. When looking at the criminal histories of the 495 adult males convicted of a sex crime in the sample, only twenty eight men displayed both a juvenile and adult sexual offense. Although several risk factors were associated with sex offending continuity among the sample, non-sex juvenile
offending was by far the most significant predictor of continued sex offending in adulthood. Based on these observations, it can therefore be deduced that a significant characteristic found among those manifesting sex continuity was a reported versatility in juvenile offending, rather than a specialization in crimes that were sexual in nature. As Zimring and colleagues (2007, 2009) point out, sex offenders tend to “roll the dice” more often, which increases their odds of sexually criminal behavior. In this manner, the sex offenders in the present sample do not appear to be different in adolescence and early adulthood from the violent non-sex offenders examined in prior criminal career research (Capaldi & Patterson, 1996; Piquero, 2000; Farrington, 2003).

Furthermore, significant conclusions can also be drawn from the present study’s analyses centered on whether post-release recidivism could be predicted among the males exhibiting continuity in sex offending. Specifically, the results from both the sex and general recidivism investigations suggest that although there appears to be versatility in offending in adolescence and early adulthood, those exhibiting sexual offending continuity showed increased specialization as they become older. Specifically, the assessment of sex recidivism indicated that continuity in sexual offending was predictive of sex recidivism post-release, but was not predictive of general recidivism among the sample. In other words, the results suggest that following their release from prison, the men in the sample were likely to continue sexually offending, while mainly desisting from general offending.

In answering the related research question, sex offending continuity allowed for the prediction of sexual recidivism but was not found to be predictive of general recidivism. Several risk factors appeared to be predictive of both sex and general recidivism, while others were linked to a single type of re-offending. As was discovered among those displaying sex offending continuity, non-sex juvenile offending was identified as the strongest predictor of general
recidivism among the male sex offender sample. Sexual recidivism, on the other hand, appeared best predicted by continuity of sexual offending from adolescence into adulthood. Stated differently, non-sex juvenile delinquency best predicted general re-offending in the present research, while sexual recidivism was best predicted by sex offending continuity, also previously shown to be strongly associated with non-sex juvenile offending.

In light of the results, it is important to consider some policy implications. For the convicted offenders who do not possess strong bonds to adult social institutions, formal criminal justice sanctioning can have significant unintended consequences that increase the risk of continued criminality post-release (Tewksbury & Lees, 2006). Among sex offenders, this bond to adult social institutions is further diminished by recent sex offender legislation. As a result, the push in public policies across states for mandatory sex offender registration and notification (SORN) over the last twenty years has greatly impacted the ability of sex offenders to re-enter into society as productive members of the community. With only the best of intentions in mind, the policies that have emerged from the various sex offending laws passed since the 1990s have been guided by four common themes: registration and notification, civil commitment, residence restrictions, and risk assessment (Ragusa-Salerno & Zgoba, 2012).

Unfortunately, the many restrictions and requirements associated with this SORN legislation have had a particularly detrimental effect on the lives of sex offenders since the implementation of Megan’s Law in 1996. Specifically, the incidence of unemployment, housing difficulties, social stigmatization, public shaming, depression, vulnerability, increased levels of stress, loss of social relationships, and violence have been reported at a greater frequency since the passing of the legislation (Tewksbury, 2005; Tewksbury & Lees, 2006; Tewksbury & Zgoba, 2010). Further support for the negative impact of SORN laws among sex offenders following
Megan’s Law has been reported in a comparison of pre- and post-SORN sex offender trajectories in New Jersey (Jennings et al., 2012), and again among family members of registered sex offenders in fifty states in the United States (Levenson & Tewksbury, 2009). Further inquiries have also demonstrated the inability of sex offender registration and notification to successfully reduce sex recidivism (Zgoba et al., 2008; Tewksbury & Jennings, 2010; Ragusa-Salerno & Zgoba, 2012).

Given the reported collateral consequences, the significant costs, and the inability of SORN to reduce recidivism among sex offenders, policy efforts should focus more on those individuals who are at higher risk of recidivating, rather than on all sex offenders. The results of the current study support the argument that “sex offenders should not be treated as a homogeneous group under the law” (Sample & Bray, 2006, p. 98). In the current sample, the men who demonstrated higher probabilities of sex recidivism were those exhibiting sex offending continuity. In other words, those who displayed sex offending as juveniles and continued sexually offending as adults were the most likely group to reoffend sexually once having been released from prison. It should be noted that although sex offending continuity was found to predict sex recidivism, juvenile sex offending was not itself predictive of adult sex offending. Instead, the strongest predictor of sex offending continuity was non-sex juvenile offending.

As such, according to these findings, mandatory registration only for the juvenile sex offenders in the sample would result in the misidentification of the actual offenders who will develop continuity into adulthood. A more effective approach should focus on the group most at risk of recidivating: adult sex offenders displaying continuity from adolescence into adulthood. By focusing on the group with the highest chance of reoffending, not only will the negative
effects associated with SORN be reduced but proper assistance will be given to those offenders who can benefit from the supervision. Given the costs of SORN and the limited resources allocated to such policies, the present research reinforces the need for a shift from the current all-encompassing practice to a more individualized, risk-based approach (Sample & Bray, 2006; Skelton & Vess, 2008; Freiburger et al., 2012).

A few limitations of the present thesis should be noted. First, the research relied strictly on official records and arrest data to determine the occurrence of sex and non-sex juvenile, adult, and post-release offending in the sample. Given the personal nature of sex crimes, sexual offenses may often be left unreported due to feelings of shame, guilt, or fear in the victim. Rather than resting solely on official data, a more comprehensive investigation of sexual offending patterns should incorporate findings from self-report surveys, victimization surveys, and official records when available.

Second, it should not be assumed that the present findings are reflective of all jurisdictions. Variability in the application of sex offender policies across locations directly impacts the composition of the sex offender sample, as well as the extent of post-release sex recidivism. Until further investigations can replicate these results across various jurisdictions, the present findings can only be representative of the state in which the research was conducted.

The types of sexual offenders included in the present research highlight a third limitation of the thesis. Since all of the men found in the present analyses were incarcerated on charges of a rape or child molestation, the results may not be predictive of patterns of sexual offending among those, for example, who commit acts of indecent exposure, prostitution, or possess child
pornography. Furthermore, the 4 to 1 ratio of child molesters to rapists in the present sample suggests that conclusions emerging from investigation may only more accurately reflect patterns of offending among child molesters. Future sample selection should seek greater diversification of offenses with a balanced distribution across the sample.

Importantly, further investigation is warranted with regards to the findings of sex offending continuity as a predictor of sex recidivism. This is the first study to the author’s knowledge to suggest such predictability. Additional assessments of this proposed relationship must be undertaken in larger samples of sex offenders displaying continuity. Future research should also investigate whether the findings of the current study were influenced by the generally higher rates of specialization documented in child molesters. A similar analysis with a more diverse sample composition would be beneficial.

Finally, given the lack of evidence in support of SORN policies among sex offenders as a group, research efforts should concentrate on the identification of those at higher risk for sex offending continuity, as they display the highest probabilities of sex recidivism. Focusing on this distinct group of high risk individuals could potentially spare a significant number of offenders the collateral consequences associated with sex offender registration and notification, while providing those at higher risk the appropriate treatments and services.

In the end, the present research sought to explore the possible relationship between two sexual offending constructs that to date had been independently investigated. Within the sample, sex offending continuity was reported at an expected rate of 6%. Non-sex juvenile offending was revealed as the greatest predictor of continuity in sexual offending, which in turn was the only measure significantly predictive of sex recidivism. Sex offender registration and notification was
linked to a decrease in sex offending continuity but had no significant impact on either sex or
general recidivism among the remaining ninety-four percent of the sample. Continued research
should strive to generalize the present findings to allow current sex offender legislation to
recalibrate their focus on high risk offenders rather than continuing the ineffective and
potentially harmful practice of SORN as it is currently and universally applied.
REFERENCES


