

RECIDIVISM AMONG JUVENILE SEX OFFENDERS IN TEXAS

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Thesis Prepared for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

May 2013

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Martinez, Crystal G. Recidivism among Juvenile Sex Offenders in Texas. Master of Science (Criminal Justice), May 2013, 52 pp., 5 tables, references, 29 titles.

Juvenile sex offenders represent a serious and violent group of delinquents. Despite the severity of their crimes, the literature focusing on risk factors that influence recidivism and the types of re-arrest after incarceration is lacking. This research study examined 499 determinately sentenced juvenile sex offenders that were released from the Texas Juvenile Justice Department. This sample was then followed for three years upon their release. This analysis revealed that 51.5 percent were re-arrested for any offense while 45.91 percent were re-arrested for a felony offense. This study identified a number of risk factors relative to JSO recidivism. These factors include having a history of emotional abuse, race being African American, being gang affiliated, having a larger number of previous adjudications, and having higher counts of institutional misconduct infractions. Those JSOs older at intake and release, and those who were incarcerated for longer periods of time were less likely to re-offend upon release. Lastly, this study ends with suggestions for future research as well as policy implications geared toward juvenile sex offenders.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the help from my entire thesis committee. I would like to especially thank my thesis chair Dr. Chad Trulson for his endless patience, guidance, and support during this journey. His support has enabled me to accomplish the great feat of writing and defending my thesis as well as graduating with my master's degree. I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. Adam Trahan and Dr. Daniel Stewart. Their constant support and advice has motivated me to continuously improve both my writing skills and my studies.

In addition, I would like to thank my family and friends for their encouragement, understanding, and support. I would like to extend a special thank you to Heather McKinney who always made herself available and allowed me to use her as a sounding board for my ideas. I am extremely grateful and indebted to all those who have supported and encouraged me throughout this venture.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Transition of the Juvenile Justice System: From Rehabilitation to Punitive Sanctions

In 1974, Congress implemented the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP). Among other things, the JJDP was intended to steer juveniles away from the adult court system so they would not face the stigma of a prior criminal record. The goals of this act also included removing status offenders from secure institutions, separating incarcerated juveniles from adults in jails (Benekos, Merlo, & Puzanchera, 2011), and encouraging the juvenile justice system to focus on treatment and rehabilitation rather than punishment (Comartin, Kernsmith, & Miles, 2010).

Such an approach was driven by the belief that taking an individualistic approach to juvenile delinquency would address a youth's personal needs and troubles and that this approach would discourage a delinquent lifestyle and progression to criminal offending (Butts & Mitchell, 2000). Indeed, youth were viewed as malleable with the right treatment, and could be swayed from re-offending (Waite, Keller, McGarvey, Wieckowski, Pinkerton, & Brown, 2005).

In order to achieve this mandate, the court adopted a *Parens Patrie* (nation as parent) approach to delinquent youth. One action they took to implement this method was to create a distinct set of terminology in order to separate youthful offenders from adult, criminal-based, processes. Rather than being defendants, youth were now called delinquents. They were no longer found guilty or jailed; rather they were adjudicated or detained. They also did not receive sentences but were given dispositions instead. In order to further protect youth, delinquent records were often sealed or expunged once they became adults (Butts & Mitchell, 2000). This

helped ensure less stringent treatment toward juvenile offenders and reduced the stigma attached to having committed a delinquent act.

Despite the rehabilitative intentions of the JJDP, rehabilitation has eroded for the most serious and violent juvenile offenders in the last several years, in favor of more punishment and accountability based approaches. To be sure, the juvenile justice system still functions as a rehabilitative stop for most juvenile offenders who come into contact with the system. However, the system has shifted focus in recent years for those youth who have demonstrated serious, violent, and chronic involvement in delinquency. Indeed, in the last 40 years several events have converged which have marked the transition from rehabilitation to punishment for the most problematic juvenile offenders (Merlo & Benekos, 2003).

The erosion of the rehabilitative foundation of juvenile justice for the most serious delinquent offenders began in the 1970s, and quickly took shape in the following years. Juvenile crime rates began to increase during the 1970s and kept increasing until it peaked in the mid-1990s (Merlo & Benekos, 2003). For example, juvenile homicide rates had increased drastically and recidivism rates were high as well. Among other reasons, this sparked distrust and skepticism in the current juvenile justice system which many considered soft on juvenile offenders. By this time, roughly the 1980s, there were also claims by some that a new type of super-predator was emerging and was going to wreak havoc on society (Merlo & Benekos, 2003). Rising crime rates, commentary on super-predators, and media coverage of troubling juvenile crimes such as youth drug use, gang membership, and gun possession led to a heightened sense of fear. This fear led to the belief that nothing was working and that rehabilitation for this subset of delinquents was ineffective. To add to the hype, school shootings represented another event that influenced change in juvenile justice. These cases were high

profile events and dominated the landscape relative to juvenile violence (Benekos & Merlo, 2008). The perpetrators of these infrequent but sensational shootings became the new face of delinquent youth: malicious, cold, and calculating. These were not typical delinquents who engaged in minor and petty acts, but represented a much more ominous side of delinquents. The courts and legislators took an active approach to curb the problem and quickly began to revise state laws to address violent and habitual youth offenders with tough, punishment-based laws (Benekos & Merlo, 2008).

Among the changes, many states lowered the age of transfer into an adult court for certain categories of serious and violent juvenile offenders. While the average age of transfer eligibility was previously 16, many states have reduced it to as young as 13. Rather than meeting with the judges behind closed doors and presenting stories about their struggles, these trials were more evidence-based and formal, much like the criminal justice process (Butts & Mitchell, 2000). Courts focused on the severity of the youth's crime rather than his or her personal life and other excuses. In addition, juvenile records became less confidential and more permanent. For the more serious offenders, records remained open longer and were not guaranteed expulsion or sealing once youthful offenders entered adulthood (Butts & Mitchell, 2000; Moak & Wallace, 2003). The rationale behind this change was to decrease re-offense rates of juveniles. It was believed that if youth were committing adult offenses, they should face adult consequences. Rehabilitative methods were deemed ineffective and this was the time for a drastic makeover of the juvenile justice system (Moak & Wallace, 2003).

Although the punitive sanctions still stand for juveniles, arrest rates have been steadily decreasing since its peak in the mid-1990s. According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the total arrest rates for juveniles dropped by 9% from 2008 to

2009. The arrest rates for violent index crimes: murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, declined by 10%. Benekos et al. (2011) found that by the mid-2000s, arrests declined by 30%. Despite these findings, violent and habitual youth offenders still represent a great concern in the juvenile justice system.

Youthful Offenders and Recidivism

The most serious and habitual offenders serve their dispositions in juvenile correctional facilities. Out of the 79,166 youth that are confined, 35% were committed due to a violent offense (OJJDP, 2010). The incarcerated youth and correctional officers face a plethora of challenges in addressing factors that influence recidivism rates. The correctional officers and juvenile correctional facilities must address the distinct challenge of rehabilitating as well as punishing the juvenile offenders (Blackburn, Mullings, Marquart, & Trulson, 2007). Many of the incarcerated youth have other issues in addition to delinquent tendencies and, if unresolved, may attribute to higher recidivism rates. Indeed, a recent study found juvenile recidivism rates to be as high as 90% for any re-arrest and as high as 79% for a repeat felony arrest within five years of the youth's release from a correctional institution (Trulson, Haerle, DeLisi, & Marquart, 2011).

While juvenile correctional facilities offer many more treatment options than adult prisons, not all of the youth's troubles are addressed. Some of these youth suffer from mental illnesses, substance abuse, and trauma from earlier victimization (Blackburn et al., 2007). However, due to a lack of resources, man-power, or motivation, it is difficult to address all the numerous problems that incarcerated youth face. These problems may exacerbate their already violent tendencies and behaviors especially if youth are not treated sufficiently.

Despite these numerous issues facing incarcerated youth, perhaps the single most important focus for youthful offenders who have reached state juvenile incarceration is recidivism upon release. Indeed, beyond other considerations, recidivism is the bottom line measure of success or failure for such deep-end offenders. On the one hand, it is important to understand the recidivism of juvenile offenders as one way to gauge the success of programs and practices in juvenile justice. On the other hand, it is also important to understand juvenile offender recidivism to explore the factors that contribute to continued offending or desistance. As research has shown, juvenile offenders who have extensive and serious juvenile records, including juvenile incarcerations, are more likely to continue into adulthood (Trulson, DeLisi, Caudill, Belshaw, & Marquart, 2010). Among all serious and violent juvenile offenders, perhaps most concern about future offending surrounds a population of offenders thought to be at risk for recidivism-sex offenders.

Recidivism of Juvenile Sex Offenders

Among all juvenile offenders, perhaps no offender type causes more concern than juveniles who commit sexual offenses. In 2009, 29% of all arrests for rape and other sexual offenses were attributed to juvenile offenders (Puzzanchera & Adams, 2011). It is estimated that adolescents comprise of one-third of those who commit sexual assault of children and may account for 30 to 50% of child molestation (Eastman, 2005; Vandiver, 2006). According to the Texas Penal Code, molestation is defined as indecency, sexual conduct, or sexual abuse of anyone younger than age seventeen. Sexual assault is defined as intentionally or knowingly causing penetration of the mouth, anus, or any sexual organ without consent and with force or the threat of force. One of the most concerning findings was that one half of the incarcerated

adult sex offenders in a study admitted to engaging in sexual offending during adolescence. Even more concerning is the ratio of sexual offenses that are committed compared to the arrests that take place after the fact (Efta-Breitbach & Freeman, 2004).

One attributing factor to the disproportionate amount of arrests is that prior to the 1970s and 1980s, sexual offending by juveniles was not on the radar of the public or legislatures. Sexual acts were generally deemed as non-threatening and were typically dismissed (Wijk, Vermerien, Loeber, Hart-Kerkhoffs, Doreleijers, & Bullens, 2006). A study estimated that between 2 to 4% of adolescents have committed a sexual offense of some sort (Waite et al., 2005). Sex offending was just viewed as boy's play and was taken lightly. However, with the rise of juvenile violence three assumptions came into play that influenced the more punitive trend toward juveniles (Letourneau & Miner, 2005; Wijk et al., 2006). The first assumption was that a new super-predator was on the rise and this led to the belief that juvenile sexual offending was becoming an epidemic as well. The second assumption was that due to the severity of their crimes, it was believed that they had more in common with adult sex offenders than with their juvenile counterparts. This led to more stringent and punitive sanctions being implemented toward juvenile sex offenders (JSOs) (Waite et al., 2005). Indeed, today, juvenile sex offenders now must abide by registration laws, community notification laws and are subject to post-release civil commitment laws, as with their adult counterparts. The third assumption was that sex offenders have a high recidivism rate (Caldwell, 2007).

While the research comparing juvenile sex offenders (JSOs) to other juvenile offenders and adult sex offenders is limited, the findings do suggest that JSOs have more in common with their juvenile counterparts than with adult sex offenders. Letourneau and Miner (2005) focused on deviant sexual arousal and found that it was related to the recidivism rates of adult sex

offenders. However, when researchers conducted the same study on JSOs, the findings supported the notion that recidivism rates are not affected by deviant sexual arousal. This study suggests that re-offense rates of JSOs may not be accurately gauged by deviant sexual arousal and therefore treatment and regulations for adults and juveniles should not be the same. Despite these findings, sex offenders, both youth and adult, are treated and perceived differently than any other group of criminal (Letourneau & Miner, 2005).

Due to these issues, the recidivism of sex offenders is a prime juvenile justice policy issue. The sexual recidivism rates of JSOs have been found to be relatively low (Kemper & Kistner, 2007). Parks and Bard (2006) found that a number of studies concluded sexual recidivism rates to be less than 10%. It has also been found that typically those who do re-offend typically do not commit an additional sex offense. It also appears that many do not continue as life-long sex offenders. Those that do re-offend typically do so within the first three years upon release (Caldwell, 2007), but as mentioned, are typically charged with another non-sexual offense (Kemper & Kistner, 2007; Letourneau & Miner, 2005).

Due to the severity of the offense and the consequences of juvenile sex offenders, the study of juvenile sex offender recidivism represents an important youth and public policy focus. However, the literature on juvenile sex offenders is generally few and far between, especially for juvenile sex offenders who are incarcerated in state juvenile correctional facilities. This thesis seeks to fill some of this gap in literature by focusing on the recidivism of juvenile sex offenders incarcerated in a large southern juvenile correctional system.

Research Questions of the Present Study

Based on all the concerns about serious and violent juvenile offenders, recidivism, and juvenile sex offenders, this thesis examines the following research questions:

1. What are the recidivism outcomes of Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD, formerly the Texas Youth Commission) determinately sentenced sex offenders during the three years following release from TJJD?
2. How do determinately sentenced TJJD sex offender recidivists differ from determinately sentenced TJJD sex offenders who did not recidivate within three years following release from TJJD?
3. What are the factors that would predict recidivism among released determinately sentenced TJJD sex offenders?

Conclusion

While research has primarily been focused on juvenile offenders as a whole, it is time to explore and focus on this specific subgroup of offenders. Although there are some characteristics that they share with non-sexual juvenile offenders that may suggest that they are not as different from their delinquent peers, juvenile sex offender face a number of obstacles and are dealt a different deck of cards than non-sexual juvenile offenders. Due to the sensitive and perturbing nature of sex crimes, this population must be studied more closely in order to understand the root causes of recidivism.

Sexual recidivism among JSOs is extremely low (Caldwell, 2007; Caldwell, 2009; Caldwell, Ziemke, & Vitacco, 2008; Kemper & Kistner, 2007), yet research with large samples of JSOs is limited. As a result, the recidivism rates of JSOs have not been thoroughly explored. This thesis examines the recidivism of a large group of serious and violent sex offenders determinately sentenced to the TJJD and released following a period of incarceration. Next,

Chapter 2 examines the literature surrounding juvenile sex offenders to provide context to this offender type among juveniles.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to Juvenile Sex Offenders

This literature review summarizes the research on juvenile sex offenders with a specific focus on recidivism following release from a treatment center and/or incarceration. Within that focus, this literature review examines sexual and non-sexual offense recidivism. While literature regarding recidivism among juvenile offenders in general is growing, limited research has focused specifically on the recidivism of juvenile sex offenders.

In a generalized view, juvenile sex offenders (JSOs) have historically been a difficult population to deal within juvenile justice. Prior to the 1970s and 1980s, adolescents who had committed a sexual offense were typically sent to a counseling program or received no treatment since their actions were viewed as harmless (Wijk et al., 2006). However, policies such as the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act and Megan's Law have trained focus on sex offenders. These and other mandates have resulted in harsher sentences for sex offenders, including other intensive provisions such as requiring juvenile sex offenders to register on a sex offender registry and to abide by a host of community notification rules (Garfinkle, 2003; Young, 2008). Moreover, as of 2000, JSOs must also report their status when applying to colleges or universities (Garfinkle, 2003).

In light of these changes to the status of JSOs in juvenile justice, Trivits and Reppucci (2002) found that deviant sexual behavior in adolescents is not indicative of a youth who will persist in sexual offending. They found that there is no general consensus as to what constitutes normal sexual misconduct and actions that may appear to be deviant to a court may actually be normal exploratory behavior. At the most fundamental level, it is important to understand what

sexual misconduct consists of before convicting a youth of a sexual offense (Trivits & Reppucci, 2002). For example, if a youth is caught sexually exploring at a young age, the notion that the child will commit sex offenses during his or her adolescence or even adulthood is not empirically supported. Thus, the focus on recidivism rates is important in gauging the re-offense rates of youth who offend sexually.

Some key components to observe are the level of coercion placed on the young offender, the maturity of the victim, and the age difference between the victim and the offender. In addition, there is also a lack of knowledge regarding the etiology of sexual offending and the correlates of sex recidivism among JSOs (Trivits & Reppucci, 2002). These and other issues surround the nature of juvenile sex offending. In order to obtain a better understanding of JSOs and components and factors related to recidivism, some key studies are detailed.

General Juvenile Sex Offender Recidivism

Empirical Research Findings

In one of the most comprehensive studies on juvenile sex offender recidivism, Caldwell (2009) surveyed available data on JSOs and their recidivism rates to gauge a base rate for JSOs. Caldwell also reviewed the risk factors for JSOs relative to the commission of sexual and nonsexual delinquency. Lastly, Caldwell examined characteristics associated with sexual recidivism among juvenile offenders.

After reviewing 63 data sets and focusing specifically on re-offense rates, Caldwell analyzed 11,219 JSOs with an average follow up period of 59 months. He found the general re-offense rate was 43% and 7% for sexual re-offenses. The average age of the JSOs was 15; however, Caldwell found that age was not related to re-offending sexually or generally. While

the majority of the studies focused on JSO recidivism rates or followed JSOs into adulthood, 28 of the studies focused on both juvenile and adult sex offenders. In his review of those studies, he found that the majority of adult sex offenders were not convicted of any sexual crimes during their adolescent years and that short term interventions may reduce the likelihood of a youth committing additional sex offenses.

An additional study by Caldwell and Dickinson (2009) analyzed the recidivism rates among JSOs and compared any differences between registered and unregistered JSOs using the Juvenile Sex Offender Assessment Protocol (JSOAP-II) and the Youth Level of Service/ Case Management (YLS/CMI). The researchers followed 172 JSOs who were incarcerated in a secured facility. Sixty-six were not included in the sex offender registry while the remainder (106) was required to register.

They found that 21 (12.2%) JSOs were charged with a new felony sexual arrest while 102 (59.3%) were charged with any type of offense. Among the 102 JSOs, 62 were rearrested for a violent offense. The researchers did not clarify whether the remaining 49 (28.5%) JSOs were convicted of any additional offenses.

The average age of these JSOs was 17 years and 11 months. The majority (101) was Caucasian, 52 were African American, and the remainder (19) were Hispanic, Asian, or Native American. These youth were followed for an average of four years after their release from a secured facility.

The researchers found few distinct differences between registered and unregistered JSOs on both the scales. Those that were registered sex offenders scored lower or were not as much of a risk on the Impulsive/ Antisocial Behavior section of the JSOAP-II and the YLS/CIM which are used to predict the likelihood of new charges. The registered JSOs scored higher on the

JSOAP-II's Sexual Drive/ Sexual Pre-Occupation section which predicted lower risks of reoffending. The researchers' findings supported the conclusion that registered JSOs were not necessarily a higher risk group of delinquents than non-registered JSOs.

In addition to Caldwell's (2009) thorough review, McCann and Lussier (2008) conducted a meta-analysis to determine whether anti-social tendencies and sexual deviance predicted sexual re-offending in juvenile sex offenders. They did so by reviewing 50 different pieces of literature and selected 18 that met their criteria. Their criteria consisted of literature that included a juvenile sample from a community or institution at the time of first assessment, a longitudinal study, and JSOs who had contact with the authorities in the form of a referral, arrest, charge, or conviction. Additional criteria consisted of the inclusion of an assessment to determine sexual recidivism and information regarding sample size, rates of recidivism, and effect size. The researchers focused on specific factors such as prior sex offenses, age at intake, total number of victims, age and relationship of the victim, and deviant sexual arousal. In order to account for antisocial traits, the researchers looked at the number of prior non-sexual offenses, the use of threats or weapons, measures of psychopathy, aggressive behaviors, and drug use.

Twelve of the studies followed up on the JSOs between five to nine years. The researchers found that the average rate of juveniles who recidivated for any crime was 53%. Of those who did re-offended, 61% committed a nonviolent offense while 29% re-offended with a violent offense. Those who re-offended with a sexual offense ranged from 1.5 to 30%. McCann and colleague also found that juveniles who used a weapon or threats were more likely to recidivate as well as those who had male victims. In addition, the researchers found a larger discrepancy between the ages of the victims and the offenders. The victims were either significantly younger or older than the offender. The researchers also found that sexual deviancy

was related to sexual recidivism, but psychopathy on its own was not related to sexual recidivism.

In another study, Caldwell (2007) followed 2,029 male juveniles upon their release from a secured institution for two and a half years from 1998 to 2000. Forty-eight percent of the offenders in this study were Caucasian, 47% were African American, 2% were Native American, 1% was Asian, and the remaining ethnicities were not specified. The average age of admission to the secure institution was 16 years and the average age of release was 17 years of age.

Caldwell recorded the number of sexual and non-sexual misdemeanors, felonies, and violent offenses among the offender group following release from institutionalization. He categorized the offenders into four groups: violent sex offenders (9.5%), non-violent sex offenders (2.5%), violent non-sexual offenders (27%), and non-violent non-sexual offenders (61%). Violent sex offenders had a recidivism rate of 6.6% for new sexually violent offenses. The non-violent sex offenders had a recidivism rate of 6.8% for new sexual offenses. The non-sexual offenders, which comprised of 90% of the sample, accounted for 85% of new sex offenses. This suggests that JSOs are not specific in the crimes that they commit, in sum; they are not specialists in a particular crime.

Overall, Caldwell found that all four groups were more likely to be charged with a violent or felony non-sexual offense than any type of sexual offense and that the first three years after release were the most important in determining the chances of re-offending.

In another study, Kemper and Kistner (2007) examined the recidivism of 296 male JSOs that were committed to a residential training school operated by the Department of Juvenile Justice in Florida during 1995 and 2001. Only the most serious and chronic offenders between

the ages of 12 and 19 who were adjudicated of at least one third degree felony were sentenced to this facility.

The majority of the JSOs were mandated by the court to the high risk facility to complete a 12 month treatment program for sex offenders. The treatment program used a cognitive and psycho-educational approach and focused on five treatment areas: accountability, self-control, victim empathy, healthy masculinity, and relapse prevention. Those that did not successfully complete the program faced an increased length of incarceration. Kemper and Kistner were interested in studying the age of the victims and the impact that it had on recidivism rates among offenders. They divided the victims into three groups: children which included victims that were four years younger than the perpetrator or were twelve years old or younger, peers which included victims the same age or older than the perpetrator, and mixed which included victims that were younger, the same age, or older than the perpetrator. Sixty-seven percent of the juvenile sex offenders in this study committed their offenses against children, 26% committed their offenses against their peers, and 7% committed their offenses against children and peers.

The researchers followed the arrest rates of this group of JSOs for five years after release and found that the almost half (42.6%) were re-arrested for a non-sexual offense. The sexual offense recidivism rate was 6.48%. Eighty-nine percent of sexual recidivists were child offenders.

Vandiver (2006) conducted a retrospective study of recidivism among 300 juvenile sex offenders in Texas. In this study, youth ranged from 10 to 16 years of age at the time of offense, and the sample was predominantly Caucasian (77%) and the remainder was African American. Vandiver also reviewed the victims' sex, their relationship to the offender, and their age.

Vandiver then reviewed how many of the youth were arrested after they turned seventeen. One-hundred and fifty-eight of the three hundred JSOs (52.6%) were re-arrested at least once, but only 13 (4.3%) of those JSOs were re-arrested for another sexual offense. Of the 13 offenders that were re-arrested for a sexual offense, eleven were Caucasian and two were African American. Their age of first arrest was between 12 and 16 years of age while the most frequent age was 13 years. The majority of victims was female and ranged between six and eleven years of age.

The victims of the JSOs re-offenses that led to their registration comprised of 71% of female victims, 26% of male victims, and 3% of the victims sex being unknown because their sex was missing from the data. One hundred and seventy-nine of the offenders knew the victims or were acquainted with them while only sixteen had no relationship with the victims. As for age, there were some outliers since the youngest victim was still in his or her infancy while the oldest victim was in his or her forties. Discounting these outliers, the average age of the victim was eight years old. The average age difference between the victims and offenders was six years while the majority of victims were either younger or the same age as the offender. Male victims, however, were typically young children.

Vandiver identified which crimes resulted in the offender registering as a sexual offender. One hundred and ninety three (64%) were placed on the registry due to a sexual assault crime. Eighty-four committed an aggravated sexual assault involving a child, 79 committed an aggravated sexual assault, 19 committed a sexual assault, and 11 committed a sexual assault involving a child. The second largest category was indecency with a child which comprised of 35% of the offenders. Ninety-three committed indecency with a child that involved sexual contact and 12 committed indecency with a child that involved exposure. One offender was

placed on the registry because he committed burglary of a habitation with the intent to commit a sexual offense while another was arrested for sexual performance on a child.

Parks and Bard (2006) also reviewed three groups of JSOs that consisted of those that offended against children (47%), those that offended against their peers or adults (33%) and those that did not differentiate against their victims (20%). The researchers compared these three groups in order to analyze any traits that distinguished the non-sexual reoffenders from the sexual reoffenders.

The researchers utilized the JSOAP-II and the PCL-YV in order to distinguish any differences or similarities among the offenders. They found that the mixed group offenders scored risk scores higher than the child or peer/adult offenders on all scales. They also found that mixed group offenders were the least likely to complete treatment. Those that offended against peers/adults scored low on the Sexual Preoccupation Scale suggesting that those crimes may be combined with nonsexual criminal acts.

There were a total of 156 male JSOs that were placed in a secured correctional facility and were released between 1992 and 2004. Their length of stay at the facility ranged from four to sixty-two months with an average of twenty three and a half months. Their age at first offense ranged between 12 to 17 years with an average age of 14.5 years. Lastly, their age of discharge from the correctional facility ranged from 15 to 20 years with an average of 18 years. The majority (62.8%) of JSOs was Caucasian, 18.6% were African American, 10.3% were Native American, and the remainder (8.3%) were Hispanic.

Overall, 6.5% reoffended sexually and 30% reoffended non-sexually. For those that reoffended sexually, 4% were child offenders (those that had victims that were 10 years old or younger or had a 4 year age difference), roughly 10% were peer/ adults offenders, and 6.5%

were mixed type offenders. As for those that offended non-sexually, 32.5% were child offenders, 27.5% were peer/adult offenders, and 29% were mixed group offenders.

Waite, Keller, McGarvey, Wieckowski, Pinkerton, and Brown (2005) were interested in the re-arrest rates, months in the community prior to re-arrest, and the type of offense at re-arrest among offenders in one of two sex offender treatment facilities. They divided their sample of 256 male juvenile offenders that were released from one of two sexual offender treatment facilities during 1992 and 2001 into two groups. The groups comprised of those that were in a self-contained treatment facility and a prescriptive treatment facility. Of the 256 offenders, 144 were in a self-contained treatment facility while 112 were in a prescriptive treatment facility.

The researchers then divided the offenders into three categories which consisted of sexual offenses, non-sexual offenses, and property offenses. The researchers then compared the re-offense rates of all three categories and separated by the type of treatment the juvenile offenders received. For the self-contained groups, the recidivism rate for sexual offenses was 5%, property offenses was 13%, and non-sexual violent offenses was 28%. For those in the prescriptive treatment, the recidivism rates were 4.5%, 20.5%, and 39% respectively. Regardless of the type of treatment received during incarceration, the recidivism rate (less than 5%) for sexual offenses was lower than both property and non-sexual violent offenses.

It was found that those in the self-contained group had higher IQ's, were more likely to have a history of sexual abuse, but had fewer prior and types of offenses. They were also more likely to be convicted of child molestation. The researchers also found that the higher the impulse and antisocial behaviors, the higher the re-offense rates. Despite the small sample size, this study followed these youth offenders for almost a decade which provided a clear idea of sexual recidivism rates among juvenile sex offenders.

Summary of Literature

Overall, there are a few studies that focus on the recidivism rates of JSOs and even fewer that focused on JSOs that were incarcerated in a state facility. Caldwell (2009) and McCann and Lussier (2008) conducted a meta-analysis while Caldwell and Dickinson (2009) and Vandiver (2006) followed JSOs that were on a sex offender registry. Kemper and Kistner (2007), Waite et al. (2005), and Miner's (2002) sample were from a facility that was specifically geared toward sex offenders. Only Caldwell (2007) and Parks and Bard (2006) used a sample from a secured correctional facility.

While the studies mentioned took several different approaches, one component remained the same—the vast majority revealed rates of sexual recidivism among JSOs to be less than 10% (Caldwell, 2007; Caldwell, 2009; Kemper & Kistner, 2007; Parks and Bard, 2006; Vandiver, 2006; Waite et al., 2005). Moreover, even when JSOs did re-offend, the majority were not for sexual based offenses.

The variance and lack of definitions of sexual offenses can be a hindrance to understanding how these youth re-offended sexually. Caldwell (2007) differentiated between violent and non-violent sexual offenses while Vandiver (2006) only specified sexual offenses for which the offenders were initially arrested. The remainder (Kemper & Kistner, 2007; McCann & Lussier, 2008; Waite et al., 2005) did not specify the term or included which actions constituted as a sexual offense. It was not made clear if it was an aggravated sexual offense or the threat of rape through force and or verbal coercion. By having vague definitions of a sexual offense, it is difficult to generalize the findings.

An additional limitation is the variance of time of which these juveniles were followed. One study conducted a retrospective study (Vandiver, 2006) and reviewed adult sex offenders'

juvenile records through official arrest records or conducted a survey and questioned sexual behaviors during adolescence. Kemper and Kistner (2007) conducted a follow-up of their sample of 300 five years after release while Caldwell (2007), whose sample size was the largest, followed for two and a half years upon release.

The present study will help improve upon these limitations and others by further adding to literature regarding recidivism rates among JSOs upon release from a secure juvenile institution at the state level. Male juveniles who were adjudicated of a sexual offense are the primary focus of the present study. This study will help fill a gap by presenting research on a large sample of JSOs that were committed in a state correctional facility for serious sex offenses three years after their release. While this will not fill all gaps, it will certainly contribute to fulfilling a large gap in current literature.

Conclusion

Despite much variation in studies, what is known is that when juvenile sex offenders recidivate, most do not re-offend for sexual offenses. Indeed, recidivism rates for sexual offenses have not exceeded 10% in the majority of studies reviewed in this chapter (Caldwell, 2007; Caldwell, 2009; Kemper & Kistner, 2007; Parks and Bard, 2006; Vandiver, 2006; Waite et al., 2005). However, general recidivism rates have ranged roughly from 29 to 53%.

Next, Chapter 3 introduces the methodology of the present study. This study will attempt to contribute to the gap in literature regarding juvenile sex offenders and their recidivism rates. The recidivism rates of male juveniles who were determinately sentenced to the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) were analyzed. The first three years following release were examined and difference between those who recidivate for a felony offense and those who recidivate for

any offense were examined. The present study also reviewed factors that may predict recidivism rates among this population of serious juvenile offenders. The methods conducted to perform these tasks are outlined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 2, literature regarding juvenile sex offender recidivism is scarce. Despite this fact, the limited literature supports the notion that recidivism rates among juvenile sex offenders generally hover between 30 and 50%, and when juvenile sex offenders (JSOs) re-offend, it is rarely for sexual offenses. Studies have also revealed that juveniles, even those that committed sexual offenses, were more malleable and responsive to treatment (Waite et al., 2005). While juveniles as a whole have a greater chance of rehabilitation, there are certain risk factors that may indicate which juveniles are more likely to recidivate. For example, a study conducted by McCann and Lussier (2008) suggests that juveniles who used a weapon, were violent, or victimized males were more likely to recidivate. In addition, it was also found that those who had both peer and adult age victims were at higher risk of recidivating (Kemper & Kistner, 2007; Parks & Bard, 2006).

This thesis examines the recidivism rates of JSOs three years after their release from the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) (formerly the Texas Youth Commission, hereafter TJJD). This thesis analyzes the factors that were common among those who recidivated as well as the factors that distinguished those that did not recidivate. In order to investigate these differences, three research questions are examined in this thesis.

The first research question explores the descriptive recidivism outcomes of determinately sentenced JSOs during a three year period following their release from the TJJD (each offender in this thesis was followed for exactly three years from his individual release date).

1. What are the recidivism outcomes of Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) determinately sentenced sex offenders three years following release from TJJD?

The second and third questions explore the differences between JSOs who recidivated and those that did not, as well as the factors that predict recidivism among determinately sentenced JSOs released from TJJD.

2. How do determinately sentenced TJJD sex offender recidivists differ from determinately sentenced TJJD sex offenders who did not recidivate within three years following release from TJJD?
3. What are the factors that would predict recidivism among released determinately sentenced TJJD sex offenders?

The first section of this chapter includes information regarding the data, sample, and independent and dependent variables related to this study. The reliability and validity of the study is also addressed, as well as the analysis plan.

Data and Sample

TJJD Secondary Data Collection

Data for this thesis were originally obtained in January 2007 from the then Texas Youth Commission (TYC) as a secondary research protocol. Data requested included all offenders sentenced to TJJD by way of Texas's Violent or Habitual Offenders Act (Texas Family Code, 53.045; also colloquially known as "determinate sentencing"¹) between 1987 and 2006. Of the roughly 2,500 individuals sentenced under this law between 1987 and 2006, 930 were sentenced as serious and violent sexual offending delinquents. Of those offenders, 705 were eventually released from TJJD as opposed to being transferred to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to continue their original determinate sentence. Of the 705 released JSOs, 499 were able

¹ Determinate sentencing is reserved for youth who commit serious and violent criminal acts. Under determinate sentencing, youth serve time in TJJD and then are transferred to a state prison to serve the remainder of their sentence upon reaching adulthood

to be followed for at least three years after their release from TJJD, a standard and recommended follow-up time for recidivism (Langan & Levin, 2002; Legislative Budget Board Staff, 2011).

In terms of original data collected by TJJD, the agency houses serious and chronic juvenile offenders. Upon commitment, TJJD youth are evaluated by intake and other professional staff and these individuals gather information on committed youth regarding their delinquent history, gang affiliation, mental health status, family history, educational history, and institutional behavior during their stay at TJJD, among others. These data are collected through a variety of methods including direct observation, official record review, and on-site diagnostic procedures by TJJD staff. In addition to information on youths and their backgrounds, arrest records were also requested in the original research proposal in order to examine recidivism upon release from TJJD. These data were supplied to TJJD by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) and then provided to the researcher.

Sample

The original sample of those committed to TJJD for serious and violent sexual offenses under Texas's Violent or Habitual Offender Act included 930 delinquents. However, 431 were excluded from the sample for this thesis because their sentence date precluded being followed for at least three years after their release (those sentenced after 2003 or those not released to the community by 2003) or were not released from TJJD and instead faced continued sanctioning in TDCJ (225 offenders). After excluding the previously mentioned individuals, the final sample for this thesis includes 499 male juveniles adjudicated of a serious and violent sex offense under Texas's Violent or Habitual Offender Act and incarcerated in a TJJD facility between 1987 and

2003. Upon their release from TJJD, the offenders were then followed for three years from their individual release dates.

Table 1 provides basic descriptive information on the 499 serious and violent juvenile sex offenders comprising the sample for this thesis.

Table 1

Descriptives of Sample JSOs

<i>Descriptive</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Demographic Variable		
White	211	42.3
African American	127	25.5
Hispanic	159	31.9
Other	2	.4
Risk Factor Variables		
Youth Suicidal	31	6.2
Youth Substance Abuser	228	45.7
Youth Mentally Disabled	52	10.4
Youth Mentally Ill	39	7.8
Moderate to Severe Physical Abuse	81	16.2
Moderate to Severe Sexual Abuse	118	23.6
Moderate to Severe Emotional Abuse	161	32.3
Chaotic Home Life	361	72.3
Family in Poverty	294	58.9
Family Gang Affiliation	24	4.8
Youth Violent Towards Family	143	28.7
Delinquent History Variables		
Gang Affiliation	108	21.6
Gang Related Commitment Offense	9	1.8
<i>Descriptive</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Average</i>
Delinquent History Variables		
Number of Previous Out of Home Placements	0-15	1.58
Age at TJJD First Commitment	10-18	15.22
Age at TJJD Release	14-21	18.99
Days in TJJD	20-2873	1385.65
Previous Delinquent Adjudications	0-10	1.58
Institutional Misconduct		
Misconduct Involvement	0-743	72.40

The age at commitment for the sample ranged from 10 to 18 years and the average offender was roughly 15 years old at his commitment to TJJD. The majority of the study sample was Caucasian (42%) and roughly 19 years of age upon their release. The average number of previous delinquent adjudications for this sample was one and a half. Roughly half (45.7%) of the JSOs were substance abusers and nearly three-fourths (72.3%) of the juveniles experienced a chaotic home life. The most common type of abuse was emotional abuse (32.3%) followed by sexual abuse (23.6%) and then physical abuse (16.2%). More than half (58.9%) of the juveniles and their families lived in poverty, and roughly 30% of the juveniles were violent toward their family. While roughly a fifth (21.6%) of the JSOs were gang affiliated, less than 2% committed a gang related offense that ultimately led to their commitment to TJJD.

All of the risk factors including abuse, family and home life, gang affiliation, and whether the youth were substance abusers, suicidal, mentally ill or disabled were measured at the youth's initial time of commitment at the TJJD. Delinquent history variables including the number of previous out of home placements, age at TJJD first commitment, and previous delinquent adjudications were also measured at the time of commitment. The only variables that could not be measured during the initial intake were the age at release, number of days in TJJD, and misconduct involvement.

Variables

Independent Variables

Four types of independent variables were used in the analyses in Chapter 4. These include demographic variables, risk factor variables, delinquent history variables, and institutional misconduct variables. These variables are consistently found in both serious and

chronic juvenile offending literature as well as juvenile sexual offending literature as important determinants of recidivism (Eastman, 2005; Efta-Breitbach & Freeman, 2004; McCann & Lussier, 2008; Miner, 2002; Trulson, DeLisi, & Marquart, 2011; Trulson et al., 2011; Wijk et al., 2006). Table 2 includes the variables and coding.

Table 2

Independent Variable List and Coding

<i>Variable Category</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coding</i>
Demographic Variable		
	White	1=yes, 0=no
	African American	1=yes, 0=no
	Hispanic	1=yes, 0=no
	Other	1=yes, 0=no
Risk Factor Variables		
	Youth Suicidal	1=yes, 0=no
	Youth Substance Abuser	1=yes, 0=no
	Youth Mentally Disabled	1=yes, 0=no
	Youth Mentally Ill	1=yes, 0=no
	Moderate to Severe Physical Abuse	1=yes, 0=no
	Moderate to Severe Sexual Abuse	1=yes, 0=no
	Moderate to Severe Emotional Abuse	1=yes, 0=no
	Chaotic Home Life	1=yes, 0=no
	Family in Poverty	1=yes, 0=no
	Family Gang Affiliation	1=yes, 0=no
	Youth Violent Towards Family	1=yes, 0=no
Delinquent History Variables		
	Gang Affiliation	1=yes, 0=no
	Gang Related Commitment Offense	1=yes, 0=no
	Number of Previous Out of Home Placements	Continuous Coding
	Age at TJJD First Commitment	Continuous Coding
	Age at TJJD Release	Continuous Coding
	Days in TJJD	Continuous Coding
	Previous Delinquent Adjudications	Continuous Coding
Institutional Misconduct		
	Misconduct Involvement	Continuous Coding

Since all the delinquents included in the sample are male, the only demographic variable is race. The races include White, African American, Hispanic, and other. These are coded dichotomously as either yes or no. Risk factor variables are also dichotomously coded as either yes or no and include: 1) if the youth was suicidal, 2) if the youth was a substance abuser, 3) if the youth was mentally disabled, 4) if the youth was mentally ill, 5) if the youth experienced moderate to severe physical abuse, 6) if the youth experienced moderate to severe sexual abuse, 7) if the youth experienced moderate to severe emotional abuse, 8) if the youth experienced a chaotic home life, 9) if the youth's family lived in poverty, 10) if the youth's family had any gang affiliation, and 11) if the youth was violent toward his family. Unless otherwise indicated, these variables measure youth characteristics at the time of their commitment to TJJD.

Delinquent history variables are comprised of both continuous and dichotomous variables. Continuously coded variables include 1) number of previous out of home placements, 2) age at TJJD first commitment, 3) age at TJJD release, 4) days in TJJD, and 5) number of previous delinquent adjudications. The remainder of the delinquent history variables include: 1) gang affiliation and 2) whether or not the committing offense was gang related. The final independent variable consists of institutional misconduct which includes the frequency of total infractions committed while in TJJD.

Dependent Variables

The dependent outcome of focus in this study is the recidivism of adjudicated juvenile sexual offenders. Recidivism is defined as any re-arrest within a three year time span upon release from the TJJD. The arrests are categorized as either any arrest or specifically a felony

arrest. Analyses examined if there are any significant factors that influences arrests and which, if any, factors determine the type of arrest.

Reliability and Validity of Data: Official Records versus Self Report

One of the strengths of this thesis is the use of official records. The data in this thesis maintains a number of variables that are found to be relevant in current recidivism literature (Eastman, 2005; Efta-Breitbach & Freeman, 2004; McCann & Lussier, 2008; Miner, 2002; Trulson, DeLisi, & Marquart, 2011; Trulson et al., 2011; Wijk et al., 2006) and includes a detailed record of the delinquent history and personal life of the sample under study.

The official data are extensive and cover many factors which could correlate to levels of recidivism. Not only are the juveniles' delinquent history reviewed, but their educational experiences, health, family, and behavior while incarcerated are documented as well. This allows for a greater analysis to be conducted and considers almost all aspects of a youth's life. Moreover, this thesis takes into account many more variables than other recidivism literature focused specifically on JSOs. A study conducted by Caldwell (2007) only focused on demographic variables, the type of offense committed at the time of commitment, and the offenses committed upon release from a secured institution. A different study conducted by Kemper and Kistner (2007) primarily focused on the age group of the victims and whether or not the delinquent youth completed treatment at a secured institution. A few of the additional studies primarily used tools such as the Estimate Risk of Adolescent Sexual Offense Recidivism (ERASOR), the Psychopathy Checklist: Youth Version (PCL:YV) and Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) to assess the JSOs and account for variables relating to recidivism (Caldwell & Dickinson, 2009; Caldwell et al., 2008; Parks & Bard, 2008). While this

study does not have access to such inventories, as they are not conducted by TJJD, it does include a host of variables that literature has identified to recidivism generally, and specifically, to JSO recidivism.

This thesis also improves or is consistent with the literature in terms of the recidivism follow-up. In recidivism literature, three years is a significant length of time and few studies were able to track such a large group for such an extended amount of years. For example, a couple of noted studies with an extensive follow up time included Vandiver's (2006) study which followed a sample of 300 juveniles for three to six years after they reached adulthood and Caldwell and Dickinson's (2009) study which followed a sample of 172 JSOs for roughly four years. It is important to have a lengthy follow-up since the first three years after release have been noted as the recommended length of time for a recidivism follow-up (Langan & Levin, 2002; Legislative Budget Board Staff, 2011). A study conducted by Caldwell (2007) found that nearly all of the JSOs in his sample were charged with a new offense within three years upon their release from a secured facility. Thus, three years is an adequate follow-up to gauge recidivism.

Not only were members of the study sample followed for three years, but the sample size was quite large considering the specific population that was studied. Juvenile sexual offending is not a common crime among youth, so having a large sample size, especially among serious and violent JSOs, is rare. Indeed, many other studies comprised of a much smaller sample size. A 2005 study conducted by Eastman had a sample size of 138 and Parks and Bard's (2006) sample comprised of 156 JSOs. Kemper and Kistner's (2007) study had a sample size of 296 and Miner's (2002) sample size consisted of 86 JSOs. The large number of variables and the large sample allow for a more accurate reading of which variables are related to or predict recidivism

rates among this population. The results show that any significant correlations are not just by chance, and should be found in other literature regarding recidivism rates of JSOs.

In addition, the purpose of solely including those that are re-arrested is due to the fact that some may continuously engage in delinquent behavior and are never re-arrested. Focusing on re-arrests create a more consistent method of defining recidivism. The large sample size, the extended length of the follow-up, the numerous variables, and the use of official data makes this thesis an important contribution to current literature. It focuses on a group that is not well-researched and takes advantage of the expansive amount of data collected by TJJD. This thesis further breaks down the factors that contribute to recidivism and allows for further studies to take those factors into account.

Analysis Plan

Chapter 4 begins with a descriptive analysis of the recidivism outcomes of JSOs. This analysis will, at an initial level, present basic recidivism outcomes. Next, Chapter 4 examines differences and similarities between recidivists and non-recidivists using chi-square, t-tests, and Mann-Whitney U tests as appropriate to measurement of the data (e.g. a t-test for differences between means). Finally, logistic regression was utilized to examine the impact of the independent variables on the dichotomous recidivism outcomes. These outcomes include any arrest (yes or no) and then a separate model examining felony arrest only (yes or no). Since the outcome is dichotomous, logistic regression is the appropriate statistical test to the dependent variables.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to analyze factors that either contribute or predict recidivism among the sample of 499 JSOs. The data was obtained from the TJJD and contains information regarding their delinquent history, gang affiliation, mental health status, family history, educational history, and institutional behavior. A strength of this study was the ample amount of data, the large sample size, and the lengthy three year follow-up. The independent variables are categorized by demographics, risk factors, delinquent history, and institutional misconduct. The dependent variables, analyzed in the next chapter, are the number of any arrests and the number of felony arrests. Chapter 4 goes into greater depth of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The recidivism rates of this sample and the factors that contribute or predict them are also broken down in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

Extant research has indicated that several characteristics influence recidivism among juvenile sex offenders. Research has revealed that those who had a history of family dysfunction and prior sexual and physical abuse or mistreatment were more likely to re-offend. In addition, those who had mental health defects or learning problems were also more likely to recidivate. Research had also indicated that those who were younger at their time of arrest had a greater likelihood of re-offending and that JSOs typically had a more extensive delinquent history than non-sexual offenders. Despite these findings, the vast majority of research has supported the notion that recidivism rates for JSOs were typically less than 10%, and for those that did re-offend, most did not reoffend for sexual offenses. However, very few studies have focused specifically on state institutionalized JSOs and the factors that may have influenced their recidivism rates. This study will help fill this gap in current literature.

This chapter addresses the research questions posed in previous chapters, with an overall focus on the recidivism rates of determinately sentenced JSOs three years following release from the TJJD. In addition, demographic, risk factor, delinquent history, and institutional measures among the 499 released JSOs from TJJD are analyzed and described. Descriptive differences between those JSOs who did not recidivate versus those that did recidivate are addressed with a focus on examining those who were re-arrested for any offense and those who were re-arrested for a felony offense. This thesis then addresses which factors can be used to predict recidivism among released determinately sentenced TJJD sex offenders by utilizing multivariate analyses.

Descriptive and Bivariate Analyses

Recidivism Outcomes of Determinately Sentenced Juvenile Sex Offender during the Three Years Following Release from TJJD

The first research question addressed the recidivism outcomes of JSOs during the three years after their release from TJJD.

1. What are the recidivism outcomes of Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) determinately sentenced sex offenders during the three years following release from TJJD?

This study focused on 499 determinately sentenced JSOs that were released from TJJD. JSOs were then followed for three years upon their release and their re-arrests were divided between those that were re-arrested for any offense and those that were re-arrested for a felony offense. The percentage of those that were arrested at least once for any offense within three years was 51.5%. The percentage of those that were arrested for a felony offense as their most serious offense within three years was 45.91%.

Comparisons between Determinately Sentenced TJJD Juvenile Sex Offender Recidivists and Non-Recidivists

The second research question addressed the differences between those youth who recidivated and those that did not recidivate within three years upon their release.

2. How do determinately sentenced TJJD sex offender recidivists differ from determinately sentenced TJJD sex offenders who did not recidivate within three years following release from TJJD?

Table 3 provided data on each JSO's demographic, risk factor, delinquent history, and institutional misconduct variables. The table was divided into two groups: recidivists and non-recidivists. The last column denoted whether there were any significant differences between recidivists and non-recidivists relative to the variable measures. Significant differences among

nominal variables were determined using chi-square tests, while differences among metric variables were utilized with *t*-tests.

Table 3

Comparisons of Any Arrest between Recidivists and Non-Recidivists within Three Years Following Release from TJJD

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Recidivists (Percentages) N=257</i>	<i>Non- Recidivists (Percentages) N=242</i>	<i>Comparisons</i>
Demographic Variable			
White	0.39	0.46	No significance
African American	0.32	0.19	$p \leq .001$
Hispanic	0.29	0.35	No significance
Other	0.00	0.00	No significance
Risk Factor Variables			
Youth Suicidal	0.05	0.07	No significance
Youth Substance Abuser	0.49	0.42	No significance
Youth Mentally Disabled	0.12	0.09	No significance
Youth Mentally Ill	0.10	0.06	No significance
Moderate to Severe Physical Abuse	0.16	0.16	No significance
Moderate to Severe Sexual Abuse	0.23	0.24	No significance
Moderate to Severe Emotional Abuse	0.37	0.28	$p \leq .05$
Chaotic Home Life	0.74	0.71	No significance
Family in Poverty	0.61	0.57	No significance
Family Gang Affiliation	0.06	0.03	No significance
Youth Violent Towards Family	0.30	0.27	No significance
Delinquent History Variables			
Gang Affiliation	0.26	0.17	$p \leq .01$
Gang Related Commitment Offense	0.03	0.01	No significance
<i>Variables</i>	<i>Recidivists (Averages) N=257</i>	<i>Non- Recidivists (Averages) N=242</i>	<i>Comparisons</i>
Number of Previous Out of Home Placements	0.64	0.46	No significance
Age at TJJD First Commitment	15.20	15.24	No significance
Age at TJJD Release	19.07	18.91	No significance
Days in TJJD	1410.72	1359.03	No significance
Previous Delinquent Adjudications	1.74	1.41	$p \leq .000$
Institutional Misconduct			
Misconduct Involvement	97.04	45.88	$p \leq .000$

Among all of the variables, results of the analysis showed five significant differences at the bivariate level between recidivists and non-recidivists. Relative to comparisons, a significantly greater proportion of African Americans were recidivists compared to non-recidivists (32% vs. 19%). Recidivists were also more likely to experience moderate to severe emotional abuse (37% vs. 28%) and to be gang affiliated prior to commitment (26% vs. 17%) than non-recidivists. Recidivists also evinced a greater number of previous adjudications prior to state commitment (1.74 vs. 1.41) and demonstrated significantly greater involvement in misconduct while confined (97.04 incidents vs. 45.88 incidents) compared to non-recidivist JSOs.

Multivariate Analyses

Logistic regression was used to address the final research question. Logistic regression is used when the dependent variable is binary, in this case, indicating re-arrested or not for any offense and any felony offense. These factors were then divided into two groups and the following two tables display the factors that predict any re-arrest and the factors that predict any felony re-arrest, accounting for the influence of other variables in the model. For the any re-arrest category, it was found that 13 to 17% of the variance in recidivism was explained by the variables in the model; whereas 15 to 20% of the variance in recidivism for a felony arrest was explained by the variables in the model.

Discussion of Factors that may Predict Recidivism among Released Determinately Sentenced TJJJ Juvenile Sex Offenders

The final research question addressed the factors that can be used to predict recidivism among determinately sentenced TJJJ JSOs. This was separated into two groups: factors that influenced arrests for any offense and factors that influenced arrests for a felony offense.

3. What are the factors that would predict recidivism among released determinately sentenced TJJD sex offenders?

Three factors were found to be significant in explaining re-arrest for any offense post-TJJD release: race being African American, the number of previous adjudications, and the frequency of institutional misconduct. Table 4 illustrates the results of these analyses.

Additional factors were found significant in the model examining felony re-arrest only. Those factors included race being African American, emotional abuse, gang affiliation, age at admission to and release from TJJD, the number of days in TJJD, prior delinquent adjudications, and frequency of involvement institutional misconduct. Table 5 illustrates the results of these analyses.

Relationship of Independent Variables to Re-Arrest for Any Offense

Table 4 displays all of the measures and showed which specific ones were significant in predicting which youth would be re-arrested for any offense. As shown in Table 4, Whites and Hispanics were significantly less likely to be re-arrested for any offense, compared to African American offenders (African American was the dummy coded variable and thus not included in the table). Despite several variables found to be significant in predicting juvenile offender recidivism in the literature, only two other variables were significant in predicting any re-arrest. Here, Table 4 indicates that youthful offenders with a higher number of delinquent adjudications at commitment were 43% more likely to recidivate. Moreover, youthful offenders with greater involvement in institutional misconduct were significantly more likely to recidivate. Overall, the model explained 13 to 17% of the variance in recidivism.

Table 4

Factors that may Predict Any Re-Arrest

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Any Re-Arrest²</i>			
	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Demographic Variable				
White	-0.67	0.26	0.51	p≤.05
Hispanic	-0.52	0.27	0.59	p≤.05
Other	0.07	1.46	1.08	No significance
Risk Factor Variables				
Youth Suicidal	-0.32	0.42	0.72	No significance
Youth Substance Abuser	0.01	0.22	1.01	No significance
Youth Mentally Disabled	0.18	0.35	1.20	No significance
Youth Mentally Ill	0.34	0.40	1.40	No significance
Moderate to Severe Physical Abuse	-0.26	0.31	0.77	No significance
Moderate to Severe Sexual Abuse	0.06	0.25	1.07	No significance
Moderate to Severe Emotional Abuse	0.37	0.25	1.44	No significance
Chaotic Home Life	-0.13	0.24	0.88	No significance
Family in Poverty	0.03	0.22	1.03	No significance
Family Gang Affiliation	0.15	0.52	1.16	No significance
Youth Violent Towards Family	-0.01	0.25	1.00	No significance
Delinquent History Variables				
Gang Affiliation	0.17	0.27	1.19	No significance
Gang Related Commitment Offense	1.29	0.85	3.64	No significance
Number of Previous Out of Home Placements	0.02	0.08	1.02	No significance
Age at TJJJ First Commitment	-0.31	0.22	0.73	No significance
Age at TJJJ Release	0.34	0.22	1.40	No significance
Days in TJJJ	-0.00	0.00	1.00	No significance
Previous Delinquent Adjudications	0.36	0.12	1.43	p≤.01
Institutional Misconduct				
Misconduct Involvement	0.01	0.00	1.01	p≤.001
-2log: 613.962				
R ² : .128				
R ² : .171				

Relationship of Independent Variables to Re-Arrest for Any Felony Offense

Table 5 examined the factors related to felony re-arrest only. Consistent with the analysis

² Sample of 492- 7 cases were missing in the analysis

in Table 4, results revealed that Hispanics and Whites were significantly less likely to recidivate when compared to the reference group of African Americans.

Table 5

Factors that may Predict Felony Re-Arrest

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Felony Re-Arrest³</i>			
	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Demographic Variable				
White	-0.86	0.27	0.42	p≤.001
Hispanic	-0.72	0.27	0.49	p≤.01
Other	0.67	1.48	1.96	No significance
Risk Factor Variables				
Youth Suicidal	0.03	0.43	1.03	No significance
Youth Substance Abuser	0.43	0.22	1.54	No significance
Youth Mentally Disabled	0.60	0.35	1.81	No significance
Youth Mentally Ill	-0.01	0.40	0.99	No significance
Moderate to Severe Physical Abuse	-0.52	0.32	0.60	No significance
Moderate to Severe Sexual Abuse	-0.33	0.26	0.72	No significance
Moderate to Severe Emotional Abuse	0.66	0.25	1.90	p≤.01
Chaotic Home Life	-0.5	0.25	0.96	No significance
Family in Poverty	-0.18	0.23	0.83	No significance
Family Gang Affiliation	-0.38	0.51	0.69	No significance
Youth Violent Towards Family	0.19	0.26	1.21	No significance
Delinquent History Variables				
Gang Affiliation	0.53	0.27	1.70	p≤.05
Gang Related Commitment Offense	2.16	1.13	8.70	No significance
Number of Previous Out of Home Placements	-0.03	0.08	0.97	No significance
Age at TJJJ First Commitment	-0.60	0.23	0.55	p≤.01
Age at TJJJ Release	0.54	.23	1.72	p≤.05
Days in TJJJ	-0.00	0.00	1.00	p≤.005
Previous Delinquent Adjudications	0.29	0.12	1.34	p≤.05
Institutional Misconduct				
Misconduct Involvement	0.00	0.00	1.00	p≤.05
-2log: 589.513 R ² : .149 R ² : .199				

³ Sample of 483- 16 cases were missing in the analysis.

Youth who were moderately to severely emotionally abused were significantly more likely to be re-arrested for a felony, as were gang affiliates. Relative to age, those offenders who were older at their commitment to TJJD were predicted to be significantly less likely to recidivate. In addition, those who were older at their release from TJJD were significantly less likely to recidivate for a felony. As in the previous model, those offenders with higher adjudications at commitment and those involved in higher frequencies of institutional misconduct were significantly more likely to recidivate for a felony in the post-release follow-up period. Overall, the model explained between roughly 15 to 20% of the variance in recidivism.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the recidivism outcomes and the variables that impacted recidivism among state incarcerated and released determinately sentenced JSOs. Overall, 51.5% of JSOs were re-arrested within three years after their release for any offense, while 45.92% of those offenders were re-arrested at least once for a felony offense. The variables and factors that were found significant in determining recidivism among JSOs in this thesis have been found as significant determinants in previous JSO recidivism research. At an overall level; it is important to understand which factors influenced recidivism since a person's past behavior is often a good barometer of future behavior. As mentioned, there were three factors that were common among those that were arrested for any offense and those that were specifically arrested for a felony offense. Race was, and typically has been found as, a factor in the likelihood of recidivating. Whether this was the result of higher offending rates among minority offenders or whether there was bias in juvenile justice decision-making cannot be answered in this thesis. In addition to findings associated with race, those that are older at initial intake and commitment but served a

longer time within the institution are less likely to re-offend. This suggests that those who have a late start to serious delinquency and a lengthier amount of time dedicated to correcting their behaviors are less likely to recidivate upon release.

The number of previous delinquent adjudications was found to be a significant factor in both re-arrest for any offense and for a felony offense. This could indicate that juveniles with an extensive delinquent history are more likely to continue offending despite serving time in secured institutional facility. It may also suggest that the possibility of serving additional time does not serve as a deterrent for these particular youth. This could also explain why misconduct involvement was found in both models as predictive of recidivism. These youth may not consider the impact that offending during their disposition in TJJD may have, and may merely consider their behavior as a way to receive more credential among their delinquent peers. However, while there was a significant relationship between institutional misconduct and recidivism, it was a weak relationship. While it may appear that a youth's behavior during confinement would hint at his behavior upon release, these findings suggest that may not be the case. Additional research should be conducted in order to determine and validate the strength of the relationship between institutional misconduct and recidivism.

While many other studies have found that sexual and physical abuse have a major role in predicting who will re-offend, this study did not reach that conclusion specific to JSOs. Emotional abuse was the key component. Emotional abuse may not have been included in previous studies due to its difficulties in defining and verifying this measure; however, considering its impact it may be beneficial to further study the relationship between emotional abuse and recidivism rates among JSOs. In addition, gang affiliation was found to be significant in the felony recidivism model. This could be due to gang members continuously engaging in

crime, and more specifically, serious and violent crime due to the negative influence of gang association.

The following chapter concludes this study and discusses the implications that recidivism rates of JSOs have on current policy and research. Moreover, the significance of the analyses and their impact on determining which JSOs may recidivate upon release from a secured institutional facility is expanded on in the next chapter. In an overall view, this particular group of offenders is important to study and understand so to create effective treatment and correctional plans due to the severity and perturbing nature of their crimes.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings

This thesis explored the factors that influenced recidivism outcomes among released determinately sentenced JSOs from TJJD. The juveniles in this sample were comprised exclusively of serious and violent JSOs, originally adjudicated and sentenced under Texas's Determinate Sentencing Law. While a major push in researching juvenile delinquency was sparked during the 1980s and 1990s, research regarding JSOs is still in its infancy (Benekos & Merlo, 2008). Previous research on JSOs, while limited, has generally revealed that recidivism rates among this population fall between 30 and 50%, though many do not re-offend for another sexually based offense (Caldwell, 2007; Caldwell, 2009; Kemper & Kistner, 2007; Parks and Bard, 2006; Vandiver, 2006; Waite et al., 2005). Additionally, risk factors for JSO recidivism in previous research have included but are not limited to committing a sexual offense with a weapon, using threats and violence, victim being a male, victim being younger than the perpetrator, offender history of abuse and chaotic home life, gang affiliation, and a lengthier delinquent career (Caldwell, 2007; Caldwell, 2009; Kemper & Kistner, 2007; Parks and Bard, 2006; Vandiver, 2006; Waite et al., 2005).

This study identified a number of risk factors relative to JSO recidivism. These factors include having a history of emotional abuse, race being African American, being gang affiliated, having a larger number of previous adjudications, and having higher counts of institutional misconduct infractions. Those JSOs older at intake and release, and those who were incarcerated for longer periods of time were less likely to re-offend upon release. Overall, arrest outcomes for this serious and violent group of JSOs was 51.5% for any offense and 45.91% for a felony

offense. This research added to the limited findings of risk factors that attribute to recidivism among JSOs. In order to better understand this group of offenders, the implications of this study must be discussed to assist researchers with studying similar populations of delinquent youth.

Policy Implications

Despite the serious and violent crimes that the youth under study committed, previous research has indicated that JSOs in general can respond to treatment (Waite et al., 2005). In this study, some measures that were found to be significant risk factors of recidivism, such as emotional abuse and gang affiliation, are factors that can be addressed in treatment programming while JSOs are institutionalized. For example, JSOs can receive counseling to cope with prior abuse and familial problems and after-school activities to keep them from roaming the streets and interacting with other delinquent youth. In short, this thesis uncovered a number of factors that can be focused on both by institutional authorities during periods of juvenile confinement and other authorities if these offenders are released from juvenile confinement for another chance to change.

It was found that JSOs who served a longer time in TJJD and were released at an older age were less likely to be re-arrested after their release. With this knowledge, it may be more beneficial for JSOs to receive a longer sentence than non-JSOs. During their time incarcerated, JSOs may have the opportunity to work on their studies, mature without the influence of delinquent friends, and work on the core issues which contributed to their delinquent acts. It appears that one of the biggest advantages of youth remaining at an institution is that it removes them from their environment. JSOs may be a product of their environment, and while switching home environments for youth cannot easily be done, what can be done are interventions during

institutionalization which can play a vital role in preventing delinquency, especially among violent delinquents, as they make the transition from incarceration to freedom.

Counseling should be mandated once they enter TJJD since many of the JSOs were found to have been emotionally abused. This was found to have played a more significant role than physical or sexual abuse and its long-lasting impact is apparent. Not only was it a significant factor in recidivism generally, but it was also significant among those that were arrested for a felony offense. Juvenile authorities should place renewed focus on this type of abuse in order to understand the effects that it has on JSOs. This may be the most effective way in allowing JSOs to open up about their experiences and address the issues which may be at the core of the delinquent activities.

Lastly, it was found that gang affiliation was another salient risk factor for recidivism. Factors at home may influence JSOs to join a gang where they feel acceptance, and once they are in a gang they may engage in delinquent activities in order to remain a member of the gang. If these youth were brought up in a different environment where there was more parental care and supervision, then it may be likely that they will not feel the need to seek out gang affiliation and engage in delinquent activities. This could be addressed by setting up JSOs with an older mentor who assists them with social skills and checks on them periodically. Hopefully, with a mentor the JSO can alter their habits and allow for the youth to spend time with a better influence. One of the better known organizations is Big Brothers Big Sisters which involves volunteers who commit to spending time with a youth. The YMCA also hosts a number of after-school and summer programs for youth. Volunteers from those organizations could be set up with the youth during and after their stay at TJJD.

Suggestions for Future Research

One of the key risk factors for JSO recidivism identified in this study was whether or not the youth experienced emotional abuse. This is not a well-researched concept, but may play a vital role in better understanding the youth that are at the most risk. While emotional abuse does not leave visual scars as does physical abuse, this study indicated that such abuse is a risk factor for recidivism, even after controlling for numerous factors related to recidivism. The findings are especially concerning considering the number of youth that were re-arrested for a felony offense that had experienced this type of abuse (66%). Emotional abuse can consist of manipulation or degradation and youth exposed to that may not know how to cope. Unlike physical abuse, wounds of emotional abuse may never fully heal and youth cannot physically defend themselves against this type of abuse (Burns, Jackson, & Harding, 2010). Additionally, since it leaves no wounds or marks, it is more difficult to corroborate the occurrence of emotional abuse. However, until more research is dedicated to understanding the relationship between emotional abuse and recidivism rates, only assumptions can be made about its impact. However, this study seemed to indicate that emotional abuse is a real risk factor for future re-offending.

Furthermore, this study focused on the more hardened delinquents that have already established a head start on a life of crime. More research should be focused on first time JSOs and/ or JSOs of a less serious nature in order to grasp the initial motives behind youth who sexually offend. Their backgrounds and circumstances surrounding the crime should also be taken into consideration. This would allow for researchers to determine the type of intent behind the offense and whether the perpetrator was also a victim. It has been found that in some cases of sexual offending, the perpetrator himself was sexually abused and may be acting out what was done to him, has witnessed delinquent sexual activity and is acting out what he has seen, or is

merely exploring sexually and does not understand the magnitude of his actions. Understanding the youth's history of abuse and intentions will allow for counselors or juvenile authorities to determine how at-risk he is for committing additional sex offenses.

The primary reason of recognizing the motive behind the sexual offense is because of the severe consequences that the youth faces if convicted of a sexual offense. JSOs must register as sex offender, abide by community notification laws, and may have to wait up to 10 years or until they reach a certain age before they can appeal to have their names taken off the sex-offender registry (Butts & Mitchell, 2000; Garfinkle, 2003; Moak & Wallace, 2003). The increase in severity of the consequences was a result of the Adam Walsh Child Safety and Protection Act and Megan's Law (Garfinkle 2003; Young, 2008). In order to achieve a more thorough comprehension of first time offenders, researchers outside the scope of criminal justice should contribute as well.

Limitations

While this thesis does help fill a gap in current literature, it is not without its limitations. The primary source of data for this thesis was official data from TJJD. While official data is always beneficial, the use of self-reports from the JSOs would strengthen this study. Self-reports are helpful because it can be compared to the official data. More information pertaining to JSOs could be extracted from self-reports. While abuse was recorded, the severity and chronicity of the abuse is not known. The involvement of gang membership and the details of their initial offenses are also not known. Whether or not the youth committed other delinquent acts that did not result in an arrest are unknown and leaves room for speculation about the extent of their delinquent history.

In addition, only the type of re-arrest was recorded after their release from TJJD. The types of offenses for their re-arrests are not known. The category of any re-arrest or felony arrest is broad and does not include information regarding conviction or re-incarceration. The circumstances surrounding JSO's arrest are also not known. More detailed information would allow researchers to gauge the seriousness of the offense and the criminal habits of JSOs. More information could imply if JSOs were typically re-arrested for the same types of crimes or if they were general offenders who were arrested for a variety of crimes.

This thesis only followed the sample for three years after release from TJJD. It does not follow most well into adulthood which would shed more light on the recidivism of JSOs as they make the transition from juvenile to adult. Since the specific type of re-arrest offense was not available in the data, the number of JSOs arrested for a sexual offense is not known and how at-risk these youth are of becoming adult sex offenders cannot be assessed. Furthermore, this thesis only narrowed in on the more serious juvenile offenders who were institutionalized for their offenses. Due to that, it may not be possible to generalize these findings to JSOs who do not have a lengthy delinquent history and have not been institutionalized.

Conclusion

This study focused on an infrequently researched group of offenders. There still is not enough consistent literature about JSOs to truly determine their threat level within general society. While this study contributes to that gap, it is still unclear how responsive JSOs are to treatment, how effective current policies are at deterring them from committing additional crimes, and what types of crimes they are re-arrested for following release from institutionalization.

Regardless of the circumstances around or intent behind their sexual offenses, they are still treated as serious threats to society. The policies and laws surrounding JSOs categorize them as adult offenders. While this thesis did not follow the JSOs into adulthood, their recidivism rates, 51.5% for any offense and 45.91% for a felony offense, supported the notion that at least half of the JSOs will commit a serious offense after incarceration.

While sexual offenses are one of the most serious crimes that can be committed, some headway in determining and understanding risk factors has been made. This thesis found several risk factors among JSOs who were re-arrested. Those risk factors include having a history of emotional abuse, race being African American, being gang affiliated, having a larger number of previous adjudications, and engaging in higher counts of institutional misconduct. Those JSOs older at intake and release and those who were incarcerated for longer periods of time were less likely to re-offend upon release.

Due to the severity of their crime, researchers and authorities alike cannot tread lightly when JSOs are involved. Considering their high recidivism rates, especially for felony offenses, it may be beneficial to the both the offenders and general society to incarcerate JSOs for a lengthier amount of time, but allow them to have access to resources such as education, counseling, mentorship programs, and treatment. With those set in place, it may be possible to reduce the likelihood of JSOs recidivating and increase their chances of changing the route of their current path. This study, as well as past studies, should be considered in order to provide juvenile authorities with the knowledge they need in order to fully grasp, treat, and sentence JSOs.

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