

2023

## Male Sexual Offender Recidivism Impact on Sex Crime Investigations

Jessica Ann Muccione  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Jessica Muccione

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## Review Committee

Dr. Deborah Laufersweiler-Dwyer, Committee Chairperson,  
Criminal Justice Faculty

Dr. Dale Brooker, Committee Member,  
Criminal Justice Faculty

Dr. Michael Klemp-North, University Reviewer,  
Criminal Justice Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost  
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2023

Abstract

Male Sexual Offender Recidivism Impact on Sex Crime Investigations

by

Jessica Muccione

MA, California University of Pennsylvania, 2019

BS, California University of Pennsylvania, 2018

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore how male sexual offender recidivism impacted sex crime investigations. Recidivism is a widely recognized social problem that affects all of society. Understanding the influence that male sex offender recidivism may have on a sex crime investigation is key to recognizing its relationship to recidivism. The methodology used in this study was a basic qualitative inquiry to explore how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations. Based on Hirschi's social bond theory, the study addressed ways a sexual offender may conform to societal requirements through attachments and personal values. The application of Hirschi's social bond theory offered guidance in this research to identify how recidivism impacted an investigation and the investigators actions. The study utilized a sample size of 15 participants who met the criteria of being law enforcement professionals who investigate sex crimes. The data were collected by conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews that were transcribed using a data collection application. The transcriptions were coded into themes and categories. Results of this study revealed male sex offender recidivism may impact an investigative direction that may reveal specific patterns and methods of the offender. Results revealed the social bonds an offender may have could serve as a focal point during the investigation. This study revealed implications for positive social change and provided suggestions for the development of agency procedures when investigating sex crimes that may create more efficient investigative work.

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## Dedication

This study is dedicated to the criminal justice system, where positive social change is among us.

## Acknowledgments

To my family and friends, thank you for all the support you have shown me throughout my academic journey. To my committee members, thank you for all your guidance.

To the participants in this study, thank you for sharing your most intimate experiences related to this topic.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

In this qualitative study, I focus on how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations. Sexual offending is a worldwide occurrence that takes prevailing waves on the victims who endure such assaults (Smethurst et al., 2021, p. 24). Law enforcement thoroughly investigate sex crimes as they are reported to investigators. There is little known about the way law enforcement investigations are impacted by male sex offenders who recidivate. Recidivism is a widely recognized social problem that affects all of society. Naturally, individuals want to know how much they are at risk of becoming a victim to a sexual offender. It has been signified as a global perception to assume a sexual offender will repeat sexual acts given the opportunity (Smethurst et al., 2021, p. 24). To understand sexual offending, and repeat sexual offenders, there must be an understanding to the factors that promote an offender to sexually act. “Public concern surrounding sexual offending has undoubtedly been one of the catalysts for the plethora of research in this area. Many studies have examined sexual recidivism rates and factors that may serve to extenuate or mitigate reoffending” (Smethurst et al., 2021, p. 24).

Determining recidivism rates is not a conclusive task. There are inconsistencies in determining the factors that are related to a sexual offender who recidivates. Recidivism rates are also scaled to the type of sexual offender. For instance, one type of male sex offender may have a shorter follow up period than another type of male sex offender, which can create inconsistencies in the recidivism rate findings. There are many studies that define recidivism. For example, certain studies identify recidivism as committing a

new sexual offense. Other studies define recidivism as any additional arrests, whether sexual assault related or not. When it comes to determining recidivism rates, it is reasonable to understand that these rates are a mere estimation because of the many sexual offenses that go unreported. Therefore, the recidivism rates cited in the literature may underrate the true rates of reoffending (Smethurst et al., 2021, p. 26). In Chapter 1, I will provide the background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the theoretical foundation, and the nature of the study, along with definitions of key terms used in the study. Discussion of the assumptions, scope, delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study follows. The chapter concludes with a summary of key points.

### **Background**

Recidivism lives within the criminal justice system and occurs when an individual who has been convicted of an offense, repeats one or more criminal offenses. When an individual who is convicted of a crime is released back into society, society automatically forms an expectation of the convicted individual. Society expects this individual to live up to the expectation of being a productive member of the community. When an individual fails to follow society's expectation of living within the law, the individual has recidivated (Maltz, 2001, p. 1). Exploring recidivism has not always been a simple task. Recidivism is a phenomenon that has been thoroughly studied in the past to attain valid and dependable measures of outcome.

There are many factors of recidivism to consider that include how recidivism is measured. As the criminal justice system was being developed, numerous programs have

been accepted and rejected based on inconclusive definitions of the term recidivism. Due to this, the criminal justice system's organizational contexts have had significant impacts on the outcomes where data is developed using unsuitable practices (Maltz, 2001, p. 2). With modern expectations that sexual offenders should refrain from recommitting any crime after they are convicted of one crime, correctional goals involving rehabilitation were developed. "Goals related to the offenders are concerned with reducing the number of crimes they commit, by "caring" them (rehabilitation), frightening them (special deterrence), or imprisoning them (incapacitation)" (Maltz, 2001, p. 8). These implications are what is meant as the goal within criminal justice when rehabilitation and correction for offenders is suggested.

Typically, when an offender is sent to a correctional facility, a rehabilitation program is set in place. "Too little is known about behavioral change or the causes of criminal behavior to make this sequence of implications apply to corrections. Yet this model still may be appropriate for some offender types and some programs designed for them. An evaluation based on the goal of rehabilitation would gauge the extent to which this model of the correctional process actually applies" (Maltz, 2001, p. 8). With this, the behaviors of a convicted individual who has been released from a correctional facility and their environments is beyond the control of these organizations. When it comes to measuring rehabilitation goals for offenders, the measurement problems far exceed what can be definitive because of the many factors. Numerous studies have already delved into recidivism in sexual offenders.

## **Problem Statement**

Furby et al., (1989) produced a comprehensive review of empirical studies for sex offender recidivism. “Unless an effective deterrent is identified, we can expect many sex offenders to repeatedly commit sex offenses. In particular, there is interest in whether simple incarceration or some form of clinical treatment reduces the probability of reoffending” (Furby, et al., 1989). McMunn (2019) examined psychological characteristics of sex offenders. Furthermore, results indicated that there are common behaviors among sex offenders and understanding within their commonalities (McMunn, 2019). Although many policy makers are successful in defining the term recidivism, how this term relates to the impact sex crime investigations have on male sex offender recidivism is under researched. Seto et al., (2004) examined victim characteristics in children from male sex offenders with pedophilic interests. The study’s purpose was to predict recidivism in offenders who take a special interest in prepubescent children. Existing literature shows registered information on sex offenders to determine a correlation between a potential victim’s risk (Agan & Prescott, 2014).

This project is unique because it addresses an under researched area of recidivism by exploring through the lens of how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations. Recidivism has been a force for social change by addressing ways to combat recurrence. The results of this study will provide necessary comprehensions into recidivism by which increasing numbers of criminal justice professionals will recognize to help reduce repeat crimes committed by sex offenders. The need for increased

understanding of recidivism could provide ways to reduce repeat crimes committed by sex offenders.

While deliberation pertaining to the interpretation and policy connotations of research findings occurs in many public safety areas, it is both noticeable and enduring in the context of sex offender recidivism. The relationship to this research problem is related to the criminal justice system and directly involved with sex crime investigations.

Addressing this issue through an impartial lens will help develop policies to investigate sex crimes through another lens to potentially connect the investigation to a recidivated sex offender. Additionally, further develops on the topic of recidivism can help reduce recidivism in male sex offenders to increase positive social change. Of the many aspects of recidivism, examining how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations is key to recognizing relationships to recidivism. Hence, this study will fill a gap in the research by focusing specifically on how sex crime investigations are conducted to determine the impact the investigations have on male sex offender recidivism.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations. The methodology of the study will utilize a basic qualitative inquiry to successfully understand the phenomena of interest. The central phenomenon is recidivism. This study will explore how male sex offenders who recidivate impact the investigations to sex crime by law enforcement to understand the phenomenon and promote positive social change. The research is aimed to study the

research question through process and perspective of the people involved, law enforcement officials who specialize in investigating sex crimes, to understand their investigative views. Furthermore, this study will translate research to policy and practice through credible information regarding sex offender recidivism and the way sex crimes are investigated. With this research, criminal justice policies may be adjusted to fit an improved criterion of battling recidivism. As a goal within the criminal justice system being to help offenders return to society as law-abiding, productive members of the community, the research findings could promote policy reform to provide new outlooks on helping these individuals return to a pure lifestyle. Thus, reducing the recidivism rate.

### **Research Questions**

For this basic qualitative inquiry study, there was one principal question outlining this research. The central research question was as follows:

RQ1. How does male sex offender recidivism impact sex crime investigations?

There are two sub-questions that relate to the central research question. The questions were as follows:

RQ2. How are sex crime investigations affected by male sex offender recidivism?

RQ3. What role does recidivism in male sexual offenders play in sex crime investigations?

I wanted to determine whether male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations and if yes, which policy implications are more effective for these active investigations.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The framework for this study will be based on Hirschi's (1960) social bond theory. This theory addresses ways an individual will conform through their attachments to others and own personal values. Hirschi's theoretical work has been used extensively in all aspects of criminal justice. This study will follow a basic qualitative inquiry to focus on the commonality of the sex offenders' recidivism. Qualitative research is consistent with this viewpoint of knowledge because it leads to a heightened awareness of the purpose of this study. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations. Furthermore, subsequent research and application of Hirschi's theory offers guidance on ways to focus on recidivism to determine its impact to an investigation. To address the gap in this research, the study approach will use the basic qualitative inquiry concept.

### **Nature of the Study**

The nature of this study will be qualitative with a basic qualitative inquiry. Qualitative research is consistent with understanding sex offender recidivism and its impact on sex crime investigations, which is the focus of this dissertation. A basic qualitative inquiry will be utilized to explore law enforcement to seek descriptions and perceptions of their experiences investigating sex crimes. Semi-structured style interviews will be conducted to develop an understanding of male sex offenders to interpret how recidivism impacts an investigation. This viewpoint of knowledge leads to a heightened awareness of the purpose of this study. Furthermore, subsequent research

and application of Hirschi's theory offers guidance on ways to focus on the commonality of the sex offenders' lived experiences within the world (Neubauer, et al., 2019).

### **Definitions**

In this section, I include definitions for relevant terms relating to the study discussed.

*Law Enforcement:* A general term to describe a governmental organization, encompassing police, courts, and corrections, who enforce the law.

*Police Officer:* A certified law enforcement officer whose job is to enforce laws and investigate crimes, including sexual offenses.

*Investigator:* A certified law enforcement official working within a governmental organization who carries out formal inquiries or investigations, including sex crime investigations.

*Recidivism:* A convicted criminal who reoffends.

*Measuring Recidivism:* Ways to document recidivism rates through re-arrest, reincarceration, reconviction, and supervision revocation.

*Sex Offender:* An individual who executes a crime concerning a sexual act.

*Sex Crime:* A crime involving a sexual assault or having a sexual motive.

### **Assumptions**

The primary assumptions within the study understood that all interview notes and documentations were transcribed and encrypted accurately (Yin, 2013). Another assumption within the study was that all participants interviewed answered honestly. All interviews were controlled in the same conduct and with uniformity (Yin, 2013). The last

assumption of the study was the possibility of researcher biases; however, this assumption was recognized and eradicated (Yin, 2013).

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The research problem in this study includes official law enforcement investigators' perceptions of investigating sex crimes as it pertains to male sex offender recidivism. This study was delimited in terms of the sample size. Participation in this study was delimited to official law enforcement investigators belonging to departments within Northeast, Pennsylvania with duties associated with investigating sex crimes throughout this region. Purposive sampling was used to apply the conclusions of the study to other populations. Purposive sampling was chosen because it allowed this research to be provided with in-depth and detailed information about investigating sex crimes and male sex offender recidivism, allowing the participants to be recruited specifically for this topic (Palinkas et al., 2015). Additionally, the results obtained in this study would be generalizable to law enforcement investigators, whose duties relate to sex crime investigations in the Northeast Region of Pennsylvania.

### **Limitations**

There are limitations to a qualitative study. The quality of qualitative research relies heavily on the amount of time for each interview, which could be influenced by individual skill or personal biases (Anderson, 2010). Additionally, there is the possibility that the results of the study are limited geographically because the same type of investigative process for sex crimes could differ in a different region or different law enforcement agency. Also, the participants for this study were specifically based on job

duties relating to sex crime investigations, therefore, the ability to have equal demographic representation was not formally arranged. Another limitation during this study includes the researcher's presence during data gathering, which could affect the participant's responses during the interviews (Anderson, 2010). Limitations to the study also includes sample size. While there is no specified standard to appropriate sample size in qualitative research, this study's sample size may be perceived as weak. Generally, the volume of data is limited to interpretation and not strengthened by any quantitative examination (Anderson, 2010).

### **Significance**

The present research will fill this gap in understanding by focusing specifically on the impact that male sex offender recidivism has on sex crime investigations. Additional existing research shows sexual preferences in the victims as a predictor of sexual recidivism (Hason & Morton-Bourgon, 2019). Remaining literature includes the idea that the geographic location of a sex offender and victim risk are directly connected. Existing literature obtained registered information on sex offenders to determine a correlation between a potential victim's risk (Agan & Prescott, 2014). Blagden et al., (2014) conducted a qualitative phenomenological methodology for making sense of denial in sexual offenders. The study's purpose was to explore the experiences of sex offenders who are in denial. The study provided key findings of an explanatory phenomenological analysis that followed epistemological assumptions concerned with human experience and existence (Blagden, et al.,2014).

With this, there remains the gap in the existing literature to determine how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations. This project is unique because it addresses an under researched area of recidivism by exploring it through the lens of sex crime investigators to explore how male sex offender recidivism impacts an investigation. Recidivism has been a force for social change by addressing ways to combat recurrence. The results of this study will provide necessary comprehensions into recidivism by which increasing numbers of criminal justice professionals will recognize to help reduce repeat crimes committed by sex offenders. The need for increased understanding of recidivism could provide ways to revise the way sex crime investigations are conducted.

### **Summary**

The purpose of Chapter 1 was to inform the research problem and its focus. Chapter 1 included the background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, nature of the study, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance. Chapter 2 will introduce existing research on sexual offenders and factors that impact their recidivism. This poses a literature gap in existing literature. The literature gap was addressed with the current research project. There is a need to establish whether there is impact to a sex crime investigation because of male sex offender recidivism. This qualitative examination of law enforcement investigators added to the literature because I acquired the information directly from those who are actively investigating sex crimes, who are in this expert field. As mentioned above, the following chapter will provide a comprehensive review at the

current literature to show an overview of studies relevant to the problem, purpose, and theoretical framework of this study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

In this qualitative research study, I examined how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations. The populations of interest were criminal justice investigators and male sexual offenders. While recidivism is widely recognized as a social problem across the United States, this problem is not only affecting the criminal justice system but also society in general. Convicted sexual offenders are reintegrated into general society and when they recidivate, it places society as the victim while affecting the criminal justice system. When a sex offender recidivates, it could impact the way an official police investigation is pursued due to the lack of consideration to the offender's modus operandi, potentially placing the public at greater risk.

The United States has been traditionally known for having the greatest number of imprisoned people in its country (Flores, 2018, p. 56). "Despite these accomplishments, the U.S. also holds the highest population rate of incarcerated people in the world.

Although the U.S. holds only 4% of the world's population, it makes up more than 22% of incarcerated individuals. According to the United States Bureau of Justice (BJS), approximately 2.3 million adults are incarcerated at the federal, state, or local level” (Flores, 2018, p. 57). There is specific interest in determining ways to reduce the number of incarcerated individuals and to cease reoffending altogether.

There are many efforts to attempt to reduce recidivism. Efforts include offender conciliation or interventions, educational programs, and special courts for people with substance abuse or mental health problems. Society is concerned with efforts to reduce recidivism because it will reduce crime rates in that community. This can also avoid the problem of criminals spiraling into an ongoing life of criminal activity. Criminal justice professionals within the justice system work to offer more comprehensive services to assist those with criminal records in developing better relationships with the community and with their own families. This helps individuals to want to stay out of jail and to pursue positive connections with the neighborhoods and families (Petersen, 2021).

In the following chapter, I provide an exhaustive comprehensive overview of existing research in relation to sexual offender recidivism and police investigations. Also, I inform the theoretical framework that supplied the foundation for the study. I provide a history of this topic and the current state of knowledge related to sexual offender recidivism and sex crime investigations. Finally, a synopsis at the end of the chapter will provide an overview of the information that I detail within the chapter.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

I conducted this research utilizing many sources of information and various databases. Walden University's online library supplied the substantial mainstream of the resources that were used for this literature review. Multidisciplinary databases including Academic Search Complete, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, and resources provided by Criminal Justice databases of ProQuest Criminal Justice and SAGE were accessed to acquire scholarly articles. The search terms that were used to find the scholarly peer-reviewed articles for this literature review comprised: *sex offenders; male sex offender; recidivism; sexual offender recidivism; police investigations; sex crime investigations; law enforcement; treatment for sexual offenders; measuring recidivism; types of sexual offenders; factors of sex offending; victims of sex crimes; and sex crimes*. Additionally, I utilized the sources in these articles to locate supplementary resources.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Hirschi's social bond theory provided the theoretical framework for this study. Travis Hirschi's social bond theory is also referred to as social control theory and has proven to be a model concept in criminology. According to the social bond theory, it is theorized that criminal behavior requires criminal motivation, in some way. This theory suggests that individuals act in the kind of selfish and aggressive manners that lead them to criminal conduct (Hirschi, 1969, p. 55). Hirschi determined these delinquent behaviors to be part of human nature and individuals engage in criminal acts because they lack the control of these urges. Hirschi identified bonds that people will form in which they will control a person's behavior when being enticed to participate in criminal activity.

The bonds are connected through correlated types. These bonds include attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief (Hirschi, 1969, p. 58). According to Hirschi (1969), attachment relates to the amount of psychological affection someone has for others. The attachment bond suggestively relates to how attachment to people can control someone's behavior. Commitment bond relates to the social relationships that people adore. The commitment bond controls criminal behavior because a person may not want to engage in illegal activity with the risk of threatening a valued relationship. The involvement bond refers to the opportunity a person has. It's noted that those spending their time involved in positive social activities may not engage in negative, criminally delinquent behaviors (Hirschi, 1969, p. 59). The last type of social bond is belief. Hirschi's social bond type of belief relates to the extent in which an individual will follow and value the rules in conformity of the law. The assumption relates to the belief that the individual finds this belief to be of high importance and is less likely to engage in criminal activity (Hirschi, 1969, p. 59).

With the framework for this study based on Hirschi's social bond theory, this theory addresses ways an individual will conform. Hirschi's theoretical work has been used extensively in all aspects of criminal justice. The concepts explored will include a focus on the unity of the experiences on investigating sex crimes by law enforcement regarding male sex offender recidivism. Qualitative research is consistent with this viewpoint of knowledge because it leads to a heightened awareness of the purpose of this study. Furthermore, subsequent research and application of Hirschi's theory offers guidance on ways to focus on recidivism to determine its impact to an investigation. Britt

(1988) utilized social bond theory in an analysis of the National Youth Survey. The National Youth Survey is a representative survey that combines a longitudinal test of the social control theory. The analysis has been shown to have better measures of delinquency, better data on female youths, and a clearer age interpretation (Agnew, 1991, p. 129).

The notions of social bond theory relate to the current study. People who want to improve the community by reducing repeat sexual offending may embrace the ideas of this criminological theory that criminal behaviors are based on such connections (Hirschi, 1969, p. 57). Such connections can be rectified with the determination of sex crime investigations to realize if there is any impact on the way an investigation is conducted. Broadening an understanding of sexual recidivism and what motivates the hedonistic drive to the offender's criminal behavior can reform sex crime investigations subsequently aiming to reduce recidivism rates. The objective is to see if this same theory applies to ways male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations.

### **Literature Review**

Explaining an operational definition of recidivism for the purposes of this study is important. To do such, I must specify the incident that establishes recidivism. Events that constitute recidivism include an arrest, a conviction, or a return to prison. Studies are defined through their operational explanation of recidivism. For the purposes of this study, recidivism will be defined as a return to prison for a new crime charged. It's vital to recognize that this operational definition of recidivism may produce different research findings than another operational definition used in a study (Pzybylski, 2015).

The length of time an offender is followed also determines if recidivism occurred can also vary from each study. When an offender is followed for a longer period, recidivism rates will logically increase because there is more time. Following an offender for a longer period makes them more at risk to reoffend because there is more time for recidivism to be identified (Pzybylski, 2015). Researchers and policymakers should be alert of the length of the follow up period conducted when it comes to interpreting recidivism rates due to the varying findings.

### **Recidivism**

Recidivism has been one of the main concerns within the criminal justice system. Recidivism takes on many forms and has many definitions. However, all the definitions to determine what recidivism actual is, is all related to each other. This term is known as one of the most essential concepts in criminal justice. Overall, recidivism refers to an individual's reversion into criminal activity. This occurs after the same individual already received sanctions or mediation for a previous crime. According to the National Institute of Justice (n.d.), "Recidivism is measured by criminal acts that resulted in rearrest, reconviction or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the person's release." Recidivism is carefully measured by a period to determine if that individual has fallen into the category.

The term recidivism is implanted into the criminal justice system and has embedded itself through research to be better understood through the National Institute of Justice. Understanding recidivism and its many forms can provide opportunity to inform probation and parole policies. The core criminal justice topics include incapacitation,

specific deterrence, rehabilitation, and recidivism (NIJ, n.d.). With this being such an important feature within the core criminal justice topics, it's valuable to understand how each are related. Incapacitation can be understood to the consequence of a sanction to withhold people from committing crime. This is done by eradicating these people from the community. Specific deterrence is used to signify whether a facility stops people from committing additional crime once the sanction has been enforced or concluded. Rehabilitation refers to the degree to which a program is connected to the decline of crime by reorienting that individual in a way that addresses his or her needs and insufficiencies (NIJ, n.d.).

The core criminal justice topics relate to the determination on dissuading repeat criminal activity. An important connection exists between the notion of recidivism to the research done on criminal desistance. Criminal desistance refers to the practice by which an individual remains in an everlasting state of non-offending. With recidivism measuring repeat offenders, desistance measures those who do not reoffend. "In effect, an individual released from prison will either recidivate or desist. To the extent that interventions and sanctions affect the process of desistance, the research overlaps" (NIJ, n.d.). Recidivism has also been occupied in the performance of correctional facilities and has been used to study the difference between the efficiency of privately and publicly fared prisons (NIJ, n.d.).

The Bureau of Justice Statistics examined the recidivism patterns of former prisoners during a nine year follow up period. The Bureau of Justice Statistics studies have found higher rates of recidivism among individuals released from prison. The study

monitored 401,288 state prisoners who were released from prison in 2005. During the nine-year period, the prisoners had 1,994,000 arrests, resulting in an average of five arrests per released prisoner. Sixty percent of the arrests occurred during years four through nine. According to the National Statistics on Recidivism, an estimated 68% of released prisoners were arrested within three years, 79% within six years, and 83% within nine years (NIJ, n.d.).

Though recidivism is signified by a reappearance to criminal activity, criminologists may not have determined a valid way to measure whether a crime has occurred. Furthermore, officially recorded criminal justice incidents that lead a reoffender to be arrested and convicted are recognizably imperfect measures for assessing criminal activity since many crimes are committed without discovery. There are other ways of assessing criminal activity is to interview study participants to ask them to recall crimes that they have committed. However, this is another imperfect measurement due to recollection degeneration or supplementary methodological issues. To combat these imperfect measurements, recidivism is measured in different ways to determine the different assessments to see any correspondence. There are significant attentions involved with measuring recidivism. The National Institute of Justice (n.d.), identifies these considerations as, how the study governs that a re-offense has ensued, when the delinquent recidivates, and how the risk is factored into the research design.

There is great interest in understanding whether intervention or sanction has any effect on repeat criminal behaviors in individuals. As stated before, measuring recidivism doesn't always claim accuracy. However, certain studies can and have been conducted

using arrest data. Even though recidivism is not considered undoubtedly accurate because of the crimes that are not discovered or reported but using arrest data within the criminal justice system can lead to usable data to better understand. Analyzing officially recorded criminal justice incidents can be used to determine recidivism. Other ways that recidivism can be measured is through directly interviewing the offenders to determine if they have committed crimes since they have already been convicted. Of all the ways to measure recidivism in the criminal justice system, it's important to understand one thing, and that is when an offender recidivates. Determining when an offender recidivates is vital to the measurement of recidivism (NIJ, n.d.). The National Institute of Justice (n.d.), states, "Comparing recidivism rates across programs or jurisdictions, however, can be quite difficult because the programs are likely to have significant differences in measurement definitions, between the types of supervision offered, and among the offenders being studied."

### **Measuring Recidivism**

Measuring recidivism depends on the timing that the offender reoffends. It's key to understanding what effects that sanctions and interventions have on offenders that recidivate. Different forms of measurement call for different types of studies on the topic of recidivism. Furthermore, recidivism is demarcated by starting and stopping criminal actions. The starting event occurs when an individual has been convicted of a crime and they are entered into a rehabilitative program or released from incarceration. They are convicted but released into society. The stopping event occurs when the individual is arrested or committed of committing another crime (NIJ, n.d.). Recidivism is recognized

by the stopping event along with the amount of time between starting and stopping criminal justice events.

When measuring recidivism, it is also important to consider the type of environment that is being researched. For example, some environments or certain geographical areas are considered more “at-risk” than others. The offender who has been released from prison might be calculated by their level of risk in a certain area to determine how strict post-release supervision is. When it comes to conducting research on recidivism, the environment that is being studied must be taken into consideration because it cannot be assumed that the risk environment of re-arrest is the same for every individual. Each type of recidivated individual is circumstantial and should be evaluated differently and based on the criminal behaviors being conducted (NIJ, n.d.). The interventions that may show a high success rate for a repeat drug offender may have different results for a repeat sexual offender. Although there are many factors to measuring recidivism, as stated above, the problems are challenging and methods have been established that allow researchers to make reliable contrasts (NIJ, n.d.).

As discussed, recidivism occurs when an offender repeats criminal acts. Recidivism reflects on both the individual committing the acts by failing to abide by the law, and the criminal justice system for failing to reconcile the individual’s criminal behaviors. Though recidivism does occur with many different types of crime, this dissertation is focusing specifically on recidivism among sexual offenders. It’s important to understand that recidivism occurs when an individual has already been convicted of a

crime and has received consequences for that crime, who are then released into society, and repeat their criminal behaviors (Przybylski, 2015).

When it comes to sex crimes, it is difficult to measure. This is because many sex crimes go unreported to authorities. As stated earlier, recidivism is difficult to measure, and measuring sex crimes can be just as difficult because both go undetected or unreported, therefore, are hardly discoverable by the criminal justice system. Researchers who have studied recidivism may not have properly interpreted some research findings and certain conclusions based on the way the recidivism was measured. Furthermore, additional research into sex offender recidivism is key to research findings and policy implications to combat recidivism to sex crimes (Przybylski, 2015).

It is well known that many sexual offenders participate in both sexual and nonsexual unlawful activities. According to Przybylski (2015), it has been indicated that existing research showed that sexual offenders are more likely to recidivate with a nonsexual offense rather than a sexual offense. It's important to realize that some crimes committed by the sexual offender may be nonsexual in context but could be sexually driven in the offender's underlying behavior. Rice et al., (2006) reported that, "Murder and kidnapping are clear examples of apparently nonsexual violent crimes that, when perpetrated by sex offenders, are usually sexually motivated" (p. 526). Furthermore, when an individual is arrested for a nonsexual crime, the charges that appear on the individual's criminal history would not reflect the underlying sexual motivation for the crime. Therefore, measuring recidivism is more complex than some might realize.

Measuring recidivism rates varies by studies. There is no clear-cut way to measure recidivism because of all the different ways that it can be measured. Each study will determine how that study will be measuring recidivism for the purposes of that research. Due to the different ways of measuring recidivism, it can cause disproportionate rates and drastically differing results. These results can lead to inaccurate conclusions if not properly defined. Pzybylski (2015) summarized measurement variation in recidivism as, “Measurement variation across studies can produce disparate findings regarding the recidivism rates of sex offenders.”

Recidivism is a binary measure, meaning that an individual commits a crime, or they do not commit a crime. Researchers cannot rely on recidivism rates to gauge success. If they do, policymakers risk underappreciating change by underestimating the criminal justice intercessions. If a researcher is only looking at someone who recidivates and not in the manner or reason that the person did, there is great risk of missing clues about accelerating hazards or miscalculating the harm by ill-formulated interventions (Klinge, 2019). “Measuring the success of criminal justice interventions by reference to their effects on desistance would mean seeking evidence of progress, not perfection” (Klinge, 2019).

Ostermann et al., (2015) conducted a study involving recidivism in male offenders. Within three years of being released from prison, 21 percent of parolees underwent a parole revocation. Additionally, 50 percent of those released were rearrested for a new crime, and 38 percent were convicted of a new offense. 25 percent were reincarcerated for a new crime. On average, offenders who were on parole were revoked

within 326 days, a rearrest within 414 days, a reconviction and reincarceration within 356 days from their release in prison (Ostermann, et al., 2015).

### **Reconviction**

A way to measure recidivism is through reconviction. Falshaw et al., (n.d.) measured recidivism through reconviction in a study. This study was measured with reconviction of another sexual offense all within a determined period of time. The study aimed to measure reconviction rates in sexual offenders who recommit sexual crimes to determine if treatment evaluations will reduce the likelihood of reconviction (Falshaw, et al., n.d.). The study utilized 173 participants, who were sexual offenders, reconvicted of another sexual offense. Results of the study revealed that sexual offenders receiving treatment that is supervised gives a better understanding to their level of offending sexual behaviors. The results implicated additional outcomes in treatment for sexual offenders based on their intensified level of sexual behaviors (Falshaw et al., n.d.).

Using reconviction rates as a way to measure recidivism is beneficial because it is a precise indicator of conviction data. The data obtained is through documented court records that show the sexual offender is convicted, found guilty, of another crime, therefore the recidivism is accurately depicted. Measuring recidivism through reconviction rates can be best utilized as proxies for reoffending. The reconviction rates are a bold way to measure recidivism to determine desistance (Richards, 2011, p. 5). Using reconvictions to measure recidivism can be limited. Offenders can be reconvicted of minor offenses, which would technically constitute recidivating, but it may not reflect genuine recidivism from that offender. For example, if the offender is convicted of a

sexual crime and six months later are convicted of a traffic infraction, the offender recidivated. It is study dependent on how a sex offender's recidivism is measured.

Reconvictions are also a beneficial way to measure recidivism because of the availability of the documentation for such. The court system documents all convictions, so gathering information to determine recidivism based on reconviction rates can be readily available.

### **Reincarceration**

Reincarceration is another form of measuring recidivism. Reincarceration refers to the arrest date. Reincarceration for a new crime that stems from a new conviction after being released from prison and being placed back into prison for the new conviction is a way to determine recidivism (Ostermann et al., 2015). Han et al., (2021) executed a quasi-experimental design research study to determine the effect of participation in Bridges to Life restorative justice program on reincarceration. The study obtained data from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to use proclivity scores, creating a sample size of 296 participants. The 296 participants were included in a non-participant group of 296 parolees. Reincarceration rates were compared after 1 and 3.5 years. Conclusions of the study showed that parolees who participated in the Bridges to Life restorative program had lower rates of reincarceration. The program sought to reduce reincarceration rates among parolees to effect overall criminal activity and violent crimes (Han, et al., 2021).

McGovern et al., (2009) compared recidivism measurements among white, black, and Hispanic releasees. The study aimed to examine the differences in the likelihood of recidivism between these groups using the recidivism measures of rearrest, reconviction,

and reincarceration. Findings suggested that blacks and Hispanics have a higher recidivism risk than whites do. Black and Hispanic offenders were more likely to be rearrested and resentenced to prison. However, Hispanics are not more likely than whites to be reconvicted (McGovern et al., 2009).

### **Re-Arrest**

Another way to measure recidivism is through re-arrest. Using re-arrest rates to measure recidivism can be used, however does have its limitations. For example, re-arrests rates as a measure may provide an overestimation of levels of offending. This is because a re-arrest doesn't always assume a prosecution for the arrest. Many arrests with charges are dropped or minimalized, with the offender not being convicted of the original arrested crime. This can be problematic to the way a study can measure recidivism. A re-arrest does not guarantee a conviction so using these rates could pose inaccurate results in a study. Furthermore, re-arrest rates are still a measure of recidivism (Richards, 2011, p. 6). When recidivism is measured through re-arrest for another sexual offense, the sentencing time and the amount of time the convicted individual served is irrelevant to measuring sex crime recidivism (Budd & Desmond, 2014).

### **Supervision Revocation**

Supervision revocation is another form of measuring recidivism. With the reduction of recidivism rates being a primary goal in the criminal justice system, there are many supervision programs that the offenders are placed on in an attempt to monitor them. Ostermann et al., (2015) conducted a study based on operationalizations of recidivism impact conclusions of effectiveness of parole supervision. The study reviewed

the definitions of recidivism and how using different definitions may influence a study's conclusions.

The study also recognized that different definitions of recidivism may impact policy recommendations based on the efficacy of supervision of these offenders (i.e., probation or parole). The study used data from released prisoners in 2008, n=12,132, who were placed on supervision programs or unconditional releases. Ten different operationalizations of recidivism were used to compare recidivism rates. The results of this study showed that supervision of offenders can be both effective and ineffective, depending on the definition of recidivism that was used. With, the conclusions suggest an increased need to narrow down the term recidivism as an outcome measure (Ostermann et al., 2011).

### **Recidivism in Sexual Offenders**

Hanson (2009) conducted a study of 23 recidivism outcome studies to understand if there is a hazard, necessity, and responsivity principles related with effective interventions for general offenders as well as apply to sex offender treatment. The meta-analysis study that was conducted recorded an average sexual recidivism rate of 10.9 percent for treated offenders and 19.2 percent for untreated offenders. This meta-analysis study was based on an average follow up period of 4.7 years (Przybylski, 2015). Furthermore, this study produced average overall recidivism rates of 31.8 percent, for any crime, for treated sex offenders and 48.3 percent for untreated sex offenders (Przybylski, 2015).

Hanson (2002) conducted an earlier study prior to another in 2009, which was another meta-analysis of 43 sex offenders. This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of treatment for sexual offenders. Though this study was earlier, it produced similar results from Hanson's later study. With a 46 month follow up period, it showed that 12.3 percent of treated offenders and 16.8 percent of untreated sex offenders have recidivated over the follow up period. Overall, the average recidivism rate was 27.9 percent for treated sexual offenders and 39.2 percent for untreated sexual offenders (Przybylski, 2015). Results from both of these studies that were conducted from two different time periods and years apart show similar results. The results of each show that treated sexual offenders have a lower recidivism rate than those that are untreated.

When researching sexual recidivism, it is not simply just that. Recidivism is measured very differently in each study, therefore results from one may appear to be contradict results from another. However, it depends on multiple factors from which the studies are based on. Hanson's studies showed results that could differ from another study that researched recidivism. For example, Hanson's follow up periods were not as long as other follow up periods for different studies. It has been shown that shorter follow up periods will have lower recidivism rates. When the follow up periods become longer for studies, the recidivism rates of sex offenders will increase (Przybylski, 2015).

For instance, Mercado et al., (2013), conducted a study to examine recidivism rates of sexual offenders. The study incorporated many sex offender supervision, treatment effectiveness, and civil obligation. The study showed that treated and untreated sex offenders had recidivism rates of five percent based on reconviction for a new sex

crime. The study had a longer follow up period of 6.5 years. To compare Mercado's study based on a longer follow up period, results showed that general recidivism rates for sex offenders who received treatment was 25 percent and recidivism rates for sex offenders who did not receive treatment was 51.7 percent (Przyblyski, 2015). "While higher recidivism rates should be expected with longer follow-up periods because there is more time for reoffending to occur and to be detected, findings from these studies illustrate how important follow-up periods of longer than three or five years are for understanding the absolute risk of reoffending in sex offender populations" (Przyblyski, 2015).

While the term recidivism is repeatedly visited within the justice system, it has been revisited specifically relating to adult sexual offenders. As previously indicated, recidivism in sexual offenders is challenging to quantify. Despite the recognition of this dilemma, studies relating to recidivism rates in sexual offenders can still be conducted, with its limitations. Langan et al., (2003) conducted a study that explored recidivism patterns in 9,961 male sex offenders who were released from incarceration in 15 states in 1994. There was a three year follow up period conducted, resulting in sexual recidivism rates to be approximately 5.3 percent for the 9,961 male sex offenders. Furthermore, total arrest recidivism rates were 43 percent in this sample. Violent re-offense rates were 17.1 percent. About four out of ten of the sex offenders in the sample size were arrested and sent to prison for a different crime or a violation of their supervision within the three year follow up period (DeBaca , 2015). Langan et al., (2003) also produced a comparative analysis of sex offender and non-sex offender recidivism. "They found that the sex

offenders in the study had a lower overall rearrest rate than non-sex offenders (43 percent compared to 68 percent), but their sex crime rearrest rate was four times higher than the rate for non-sex offenders (5.3 percent compared to 1.3 percent)” (DeBaca, 2015).

### **Sexual Offender Classification**

Wagner (2021) conducted a qualitative case study that examined the legislative factors that influence the creation of sex offender laws in Pennsylvania. The study expressed those nonviolent and violent sexual offenders are categorized in the same registry in Pennsylvania. The study collected data from eight Pennsylvania legislators who are involved in sex-offense classification and penalty laws. The study concluded that there is an absence of demarcation of violent and nonviolent sex offenders. It was discovered that homogenized registry, such as what Pennsylvania registries are based on, negatively impact the nonviolent sex offender’s life (Wagner, 2021). Wagner (2021) suggested positive social change implications to include social equity for some nonviolent offenders.

There are many different types of sexual offenders. In Pennsylvania, sexual offenders are categorized by tiers based on their risk assessment. Sexual offenders are defined as an individual who is registered under Pennsylvania law Title 42, Pa. C.S. 9799.54 (Pennsylvania State Police, 2022). While there are many sexually related crimes written under Title 18 of the Pennsylvania Crimes Code, the sexual offenders are split into offender categories based on the tier, or violent sexual level they are assessed at. Once a sexual offender is classified, they are registered under Megan’s Law. Megan’s Law consists of Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes under Title 42, Chapter 97,

Subchapters H through I (Pennsylvania State Police, 2022). The offenders are required to register under Megan's Law after being convicted of a primary sexual offense that requires registration under Title 42. Offender classification is specifically divided up in the state of Pennsylvania. There is a Tier 1 Sexual Offender, Tier II Sexual Offender, Tier III Sexual Offender, Ten-year Registrant, Lifetime Registrant, and Sexual Violent Predator.

### **Tier I Sexual Offender**

Tier I Sexual Offenders have a required fifteen-year registration period for their convicted sexual offense. Tier I offenders are the lowest type of sexual offender on the classification list. Tier I offenders have a required reporting interval of annual appearances (Pennsylvania State Police, 2022). There are many crimes that once an individual is convicted of are required to register as a sexual offender under Megan's Law. Offenders convicted of offenses relating to unlawful restraint, false imprisonment, interference with custody of children, luring a child into a motor vehicle, institutional sexual assault,

### **Tier II Sexual Offender**

Tier II Sexual Offenders have a required twenty-five-year registration period for their convicted sexual offense. Tier II offenders are mandated to appear semiannually as their standard for the reporting interval. Semiannually is labeled as appearing twice a year (Pennsylvania State Police, 2022).

**Tier III Sexual Offender**

Tier III Sexual Offenders have a required lifetime registration for their convicted sexual offense. This classification of offenders has a required reporting interval of appearing quarterly, or four times per year (Pennsylvania State Police, 2022).

**Ten-year Registrant**

A ten-year registrant offender has a ten-year registration period for their convicted offense. This registrant is required to appear annually as their reporting interval (Pennsylvania State Police, 2022).

**Lifetime Registrant**

A lifetime registrant has a lifetime registration period as their sexual offender classification. The lifetime registrant is required to appear annually for their reporting interval (Pennsylvania State Police, 2022).

**Sexual Violent Predator**

A sexual violent predator classification has a lifetime registration period. This type of offender is having a reporting interval requirement of appearing quarterly, or four times per year (Pennsylvania State Police, 2022).

**Factors and Correlations to Sex Offending**

When it comes to sexual offenders, studies have been conducted to understand behaviors in order for the offender to cease recurring crimes. While treatment and managing sexual offenders is greatly studied, so is desistance in sexual offending. Sexual recidivism is a large outcome portion used to describe sex offending behaviors that befall over time. Harris (2017) describes factors of internal desistance in a study to recognize

repeat sexual offending. The study viewed offenders on various features that included an offender's lowest point, an offender recognizing that he/she has a problem, understanding the need to change his/her behaviors, and asking for help to make change possible. The study utilized these features as the factors for internal desistance because they are recognized as the offender's self-inspired motivation to change.

Harris (2017) aimed to understand behavioral change in the lack of any perceptible positive change in an offender's identity while being faced with many challenges. It provided insight into desistance from sexual offending in men. The study utilized a sample of 45 men who had committed a serious sexual offense, who served time in prison and have since been released into the community. The men chosen had committed contact offenses. The researcher used a purposive sampling approach to gather data through semi-structured interviews. At the conclusion of the interviews with each man, results were identified through three sections. The first is the positive and negative evidence for the offender's readiness to change his behaviors. Secondly, behavioral change is acknowledged in the absenteeism of any cognitive tuition. The third section identifies the personal consequences of behavioral change without the use of cognitive transformation. Results indicated that in the beginning, the offenders often attended court mandated therapy to avoid staying incarcerated rather than truly wanting to change their behaviors. This showed that the offenders were not mentally prepared to change or desist future sexual crimes because they chose not to seek treatment on their own accord (Harris, 2017).

Sexual offenders are frequently analyzed through various risk assessment tools to determine the likelihood of their recidivism. Tully et al., (2012) conducted a systematic review to understand the effectiveness of risk assessment tools used for sexual offenders to determine their recidivism rates. The review was based on adult male sexual offenders and aimed to assess the current risk management tools within the criminal justice system. The study identified the need to review risk assessments in sexual offenders to determine if these factors contribute to lower or higher recidivism rates.

This study reviewed electronic databases and reference lists to combine relevant data. The electronic searches located 4949 hits. Tully et al., (2012) observed 1419 duplicates, one meta-analysis, and 3382 irrelevant hits that were removed from the research study. The study excluded two non-English language publications. After excluding most searches, the study produced 43 publications utilizing 43 studies as its sample. The population focused on adult male sex offenders because of already existing sex offender risk assessment tools already designed for male sex offenders. The tools that were used specifically focused on sexual recidivism risk of sexual offenders (Tully et al., 2012).

The study selected sexual recidivism as the outcome so that predictive validity could be analyzed. This study chose to define recidivism as reconviction, re-arrest, charge, re-incarceration, or self-reporting recidivism for a sexual offense. Results of the study showed that the existing risk assessment tools for sexual offenders provide moderate ability to predict sexual recidivism (Tully et al., 2012). Furthermore, having only a moderate ability to predict sexual recidivism in these offenders, the need to

continue future studies on recidivism is necessary, especially to provide higher than moderate abilities.

### **Affect Regulation**

Affect regulation has been researched to determine correlations to sexual offending. Affect regulation is a theory based on an emotional response to feelings and expressions. Furthermore, affect regulation is a developmental task that can be interrupted by relationships or traumatic experiences that can conform to varying psychological and behavioral issues in an individual (Gunst et al., 2017). Affect regulation develops through relationships to other people. For example, affect regulation can be directly correlated to attachment theory, where the individual grows an important relationship to a foster or caregiver. When that relationship is interrupted or withdrawn, the affects it has on the individual could result in altering psychological or behavioral problems.

When it comes to researching a sexual offender, the emotions that drive the urge to offend is important to understand. The motivation behind the behaviors to sexually offend can be correlated to affect regulation. Affect regulation is considered a factor to offenders who sexually offend because it is considered to play a role in the onset of sexual abuse (Gunst et al, 2017). “Affect regulation is often described as a developmental task that can be disturbed by attachment problems or traumatic experiences, potentially leading up to different psychological and behavioral problems” (Gunst et al., 2017).

This study looked at adult male sexual offenders and the specific role of affect regulation to determine the development of sexual offending. The study also suggested

ties to other criminogenic factors in addition to affect regulation. Research findings suggested evidence to developmental foundations for deficiencies in affect regulation in male sexual offenders. Furthermore, many of the offenders in the study reported having a negative experience as a child with their parents, to include neglect and traumatic experiences. Also reported were negative social interactions and a lack of friendships with their peers growing up. These experiences growing up can alter the development of affect regulation (Gunst et al., 2017).

The study suggests that awareness of affect regulation and its impact on individuals as they grow into adulthood could change the way an individual acts. Finding commonalities to a cause for deviant sexual behavior can assist in future research to achieve a common goal. Affect regulation allows researchers to understand the linkage between attachment behaviors and sexual behaviors in young adolescents (Gunst et al., 2017).

### **Deviant Sexual Preferences**

Understanding commonalities between the victim, offender, and an offender's characteristics in different studies among sexual offenders can provide great insight to an offender's attack. Iannou et al., (2016) produced a study to bridge the gap between male-on-male sexual assaults. The study aimed to establish the present state of familiarity on this subject, specifically male on male sexual assaults and the characteristics that correlate to offending. The study extracted fifteen empirical studies, finding a total of 5,112 cases involving male on male sexual assaults. The study identified the term 'sexual

assault' through four main categories for the purposes of the research. Sexual assault was categorized as rape; assault by penetration; and sexual assault through touching.

Based on 'An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales, Home Office and the Office for National Statistics,' it was noted that sexual assault victims consist of approximately 400,000 females and 72,000 males each year (Iannou et al., 2016). The British Crime Survey of England and Wales reported an average of 2.5% females and 0.4% males are sexually assaulted each year.

Regarding this study, victim characteristics were identified including a mean age ranging from 20-30 years old. Existing studies showed the victims to be white. Additionally, it is varying on the male's sexual preference with some studies showing more men being heterosexual and being assaulted rather than homosexual and being assaulted. The study also distinguished the offender's characteristics, showing that most of the offenders were white and homosexual. Characteristics were revealed in the findings, indicating that both victims and offenders of this kind of violation tend to be young and heterosexual (Iannou et al., 2016). Additional factors in this study relating to male-on-male sexual offenses showed that the offenders primarily committed the assaults alone and had previously met or been acquainted with the victim. Results of this study also showed that the assaults were violently physical in nature. The victims were mainly assaulted in the victim's or offender's home (Iannou et al., 2016). The male victims of these assaults are subjected to multiple sexual acts, identifying anal penetration as a common act, also including forcible oral sex performed by the victim (Iannou et al.,

2016). The findings for this study urge future research in this underdeveloped area of sexual assault.

### **Victimization**

Factors that correlate to repeat sex offenders also includes a sex offender's motivational patterns. The motivational patterns explore the relation in communal observation of victim liability and offender accountability. Reid et al., (2014) identified patterns of a sexual offender's motivation and assessed that motivation across offenses to estimate the influence of victim specific factors to compare to offender factors. The study utilized sequential explanatory research with confirmatory factor analysis to recognize the motivational factors in 346 crime events. The study sought to assess motivation stability across the offenses committed by 69 participants.

The common motivations underlying these crimes provided an important opportunity to recognize sexual victimization to reduce recidivism rates among sexual offenders. A typology involving motivation was identified that included five offender groupings that was built on two underlying constructs. The first was motivated by sexual gratification and the other motivated by anger and aggression. The motivational factors did not appear to differ in offenders who committed sexual acts multiple times with different victims. Offenders who were driven by victim specific influence and offenders who were driven by offender related influence were correspondingly dispersed with mutually sexual and anger-driven motivation (Reid et al., 2014). With the understanding that motivation is significant for an offender, the offending and victim factors that were identified have substantial influence on that motivation. Regardless of what motivates an

offender, victim blame is never reasonable, disagreeing to common communal observation.

### **Abuse**

Bismpas et al., (2020) conducted a study to identify psychopathology, psychosocial factors, and the sexuality of incarcerated sexual offenders. The researchers identified a need to study sexual offenders and not the sexual behaviors of these incarcerated individuals. The study was based on sexual offenders incarcerated in a Greek prison. The particular interest in the Greek prison in Grevena was used because it has the largest number of sexual offenders being housed there. Inferential statistical methods were used in the study that involved 127 sexual offenders who are incarcerated there. It's been identified that going to prison leads to life altering changes in that individual's life and can be traumatic in some cases. With this disruption made to the offender's personal life is an intense experience due to the nature of their offense (Bismpas et al., 2020).

Factors that were identified included the offender's abuse as a child, controlled substance abuse, inability to maintain intimate relationships, and delinquent behaviors in their childhood, along with subsequent delinquent behaviors. The study did not show high levels of psychopathology except for minimal origins of anxiety and depression (Bismpas et al., (2020). The study revealed highest scores in subscales of Paranoid Idea and Compulsiveness. The lower scores were identified in subscales of Phobic Stress, Aggression, and Psychoticism. Additionally, factors relating to Neuroticism-Stability was listed as a high scoring element to the sexual offender.

Based on the results conducted by this research, it showed that juvenile delinquency is growing more violent. Those who are substance abusers are less likely to sexually abuse a minor. However, the early commencement of sexual activity is associated with an increased risk of adult rape. Furthermore, a sexual offender's own sexual abuse during childhood increases the likelihood that as an adult, he/she will harm his/her relatives. Attraction to underage girls has declined, while homosexual attraction has increased. The study showed a statistical decrease in the use of pornographic material with adult women and minors and the use of pornographic material with homosexual content has increased. Overall, the study investigated psychopathology, sexual behavior, and those psychosocial factors to define the lives of sexual offenders. The study located important data to further develop therapeutic and preventative programs for sexual offenders (Bismpas et al., 2020).

Triune Ethics Theory is a meta-theory introduced by Darcia Narvaez to associate research programs into three ethical motivations. The three ethics identified were security, engagement, and imagination. These ethical motivations were viewed as molding the honorable lives of people (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2009). Early nurturing of an individual drives the moral functions, manifesting itself into the brain. The theory describes its relation to one's own personality. Furthermore, Amador (2015) based a victim to perpetrator hypothesis on Narvaez's Triune Ethics Theory to explore correspondences between physical and sexual abuse to the relations between victimization, limbic system petulance, and socio-moral intellectual.

The study utilized surveys of 68 sex offenders that were identified through New York State's Sex Offender Registry ranging from ages 22-68 years old. The participants were all male and were randomly selected. The participants consisted of 43 white males, 21 black males, and 4 Hispanic males. There was no readily information on whether the male participants had ever recidivated or not. The sexual crimes used in this study included attempted sex against a child, sexual acts of the first degree in New York State, sexual exploitation, sodomy, rape, forcible groping, and sexual misbehavior (Amador, 2015).

The study incorporated multivariate analysis of variance and post hoc analysis of sexual and physical abuse questionnaires and a limbic system check (Amador, 2015). Based on the results of the surveys produced in this study, a significant correlation existed between physical and sexual abuse, as well as limbic system irritability. With the limbic system primarily controlling one's correct response to stimuli to intrinsic compartments, the results of the study showed a sexual offender's to be agitated.

The linkage between sexual offending and limbic system irritability suggests that sex offenders may have a higher central nervous system dysregulation. Amador (2015) discussed socio-moral reasoning in sexual offenders, which was assessed through the maturity of moral judgment in the sexual offender. Results indicated that there were no distinctive differences in the sex offender's overall judgement. However, further looking into socio-moral reasoning, it revealed that when specifically viewing the judgements made by the offenders regarding their own victim, lower scores of socio-moral judgements existed (Amador 2015).

## **Investigations of Sex Crimes**

There are many factors that contribute to sexual offending and their recidivism. Knowing factors that relate to recidivism in sex crimes is beneficial for criminal investigations because it can provide a better understanding and analysis of the crime. Investigating sex crimes is not a simple task, especially when there are repeat offenders. While there is a certain relationship between criminal justice penalties and sex crime recidivism, there are still many unknown factors that correlate. Budd and Desmond (2014) conducted a study involving a sample size of 8,461 male sex offenders who had been convicted and incarcerated. The study aimed to investigate the role of sentence length and time served (Budd & Desmond, 2014). The study was taken from incarcerated males from 13 different states in the United States. This study categorized the sex offenders into groups of rapists, sexual assaulters, child molesters, and all sex offenders combined (Budd & Desmond, 2014).

Recidivism was identified as rearrests and reconvictions, therefore measuring recidivism into two factors. The concluding results of the study revealed how recidivism is defined or utilized matters. When recidivism is operationalized based on reconviction for additional sex crimes, the length of time the individual is sentenced to positively correlates to recidivism in rapists, sexual assaulters, child molesters, and all sex offenders combined (Budd & Desmond, 2014). Furthermore, time served negatively correlates to recidivism for child molesters and all sex offenders combined. It's suggested that this study has determined correlations to the role of sentence length versus time served and how it relates to recidivism in sex offenders (Budd & Desmond, 2014).

Cann (2012) brought attention to unreported sex crimes in an article that revealed many loopholes into reported sexual activity. For instance, convicted sexual offenders can reside with children under certain parameters. A government review within the article stated that adolescents aged twelve or under who are having sex leave authorities confused as to if this should be reported as child abuse, therefore, many go unreported (Cann, 2012). There are also many sex offenses that go unreported because an individual may not know what constitutes a sexual assault. The WA Police explained in the government review those professional investigators who encounter adolescents who are around 13 years old would not report a sex crime if the child was involved in sexual acts with another who is only a few years older (Cann, 2012).

When it comes to investigating sex crimes, these investigations are delicate and intricate. Sex crime investigations can be impacted by the current laws and criminal procedures by influencing the investigation one way or another (Aspatore, 2011). There are appropriate procedures to take when responding to sex crimes, interviewing victims, interviewing suspects, and upholding the integrity of any evidence that is seized. Sex crime investigations require detailed investigative notes and exhausted leads. Exhausting all the options into a reported sex crime to ensure the investigator is doing his/her due diligence can lead to prosecution of the offender. When it comes to sex crime investigations, there are never too many details.

### **Location**

The location in which a sexual offense takes place can be a vital piece into an investigation for crime scene investigators. Recidivism is a widely studied phenomenon

because legislators aim to reduce or eliminate it. There are numerous preventative initiatives to reduce sex crime recidivism. For example, implications of child safety zones or loitering zones. These zones have been implemented by lawmakers to prohibit a sexual offender from being at these locations where children are likely to be present in larger quantities (Colombino et al., 2011). Policy implications are also done for residential restrictions from sexual offenders returning to a certain household. These policies that are implemented depend widely on the sexual offender perpetration patterns (Colombino et al., 2011).

Colombino et al, (2011) initiated a study to examine locations where sexual offenders met their victims and determined whether sex crime locations differ from those who perpetrate offenses against children compared to offenses against adults. The study examined risk stores and recidivism rates for the sexual offenders who met their victims in public locations where many children congregate. This helped determine if the offenders are at a higher risk of reoffending. With the use of descriptive analyses, the quantitative study showed that offenders primarily enacted their offenses in private residential locations and few offenders met the victims in public child-inhabited areas. Additionally, the study revealed that offenders who commit crimes against children are likely to enact these crimes within a residence, whereas sexual crimes against adults are more likely to occur in a public place or public location (Colombino et al., 2011). Of the 1557 offenders' part of this study, approximately 3.7% of all the offenders sexually recidivated. The ones who recidivated were shown to have met a child victim in a public place than those who did not recidivate. The conclusions of this study suggest policy

review of not only tracking where sexual offenders live, but also tracking where sexual offenders go and public places these offenders may have access to (Colombino, et al., 2011).

Deslauriers-Varin & Beauregard (2013) conducted a study relating to the sites used by serial sex offenders. This study was based on the environmental choices made by serial sexual offenders. The researchers recognized a clear challenge that law enforcement professionals have when it comes to investigating these sex crimes based on the identification of sites used by the offenders and the release sites of their victims. The identification of offending sites and release sites of victims can help provide a better direction of the investigation. Previous literature explains that crime linkage analysis has been developed to assist law enforcement strategies to help determine whether behavioral evidence can inform law enforcement investigators to detect problematical consecutive offenders (Deslauriers-Varin & Beauregard, 2013).

This study used latent class analysis to see victim encounters with the offender and the victim release sites. The study used 72 serial sex offenders who have committed a total of 361 sex offenses. The latent class analysis was used to determine the constancy of the environment that the offenses occurred to regulate a crime series. Results had specified that there are distinctive profiles of crime sites that are recurring across crime series. Furthermore, sites that are labeled to attract potential victims decreases over series and offenders start to become more “daring” by using riskier sites to encounter their victims. The study concluded that the environment in which an offender chooses its victim is a factor in the sex crime that is committed. Consistent with the crime pattern

theory, there is a connection to serial offenders and them selecting a specific environment to commit their crimes, showing that environmental patterns of crime do exist (Deslauriers-Varin & Beauregard, 2013).

### **Victim Contact**

When it comes to investigating a sex offense, the contact with the victim is an important piece of an investigation. When investigators are investigating a sex crime, the victim's statements are vital to helping which way the investigation is going. The statements a victim provides to police investigators is essential because the specific details that the victim provides can steer law enforcement in the right direction. The more details an investigator can obtain, the more information can be shared among various law enforcement agencies. With gathering as much information as possible from the victim during a sexual assault investigation, investigators can determine if there are other reported assaults similar in nature. With, correlating other sexual assaults can reveal a serial offender. While rehabilitating a sexual offender is controversial, many offenders who recidivate remain consistent in their behaviors. Obtaining specific details regarding the victim's attack can connect past behaviors known by convicted sexual offenders and assist in the direction of the investigation (OVC, n.d.).

There are many factors that go into an investigation, especially a sex crime. Sexual assaults are particularly traumatizing for victims of the assault. Most crime victims may find it difficult to discuss their victimization, but a sexual assault victim will be especially difficult. The interaction the victim has with the investigating officers can be useful when investigating the assault.

Victims of sexual assault can feel humiliated by the violation that was taken against them. Additionally, the victims may feel a sense of fear even in the aftermath of what happened to them. Including the victim's fear and humiliation into consideration from the investigators will assist in determining how to approach the victim during this sensitive time. Heydon (2015) conducted a study to involve an innovative approach to confidential reporting and victim interviewing in sexual assault investigations. The study included a confidential reporting of sexual assault suggestions to support the process for victims in sexual assault cases. The study explained that self-reporting forms that already exist do not show accuracies to forensic interviewing techniques by investigators. The study exposed the discrepancies between interviewing practices from law enforcement investigators and information gathered from confidential, self-reporting forms (Heydon, 2015). The study's conclusions suggested a written-response interview protocol (WRIP) to improve the accuracy of the evidence, as well as show comprehensiveness between the statements and the victim's experiences (Heydon, 2015).

Determining how a victim meets their offender is an important factor when investigating sex crimes. Serial sexual offenders may have a calculated decision in which they encounter their victims. Hewitt et al., (2019) utilized geographic profiling literature and victim-searched methods to explain how recidivated sexual offenders hunt for their victims. The study included terminology of hunter, poacher, troller, and trapper (Hewitt et al., 2019). The study included 72 repeat sexual offenders who committed 361 stranger sexual assaults. The study's findings showed that the use of victim search methods, along with an offender's search behavior is specific to certain crime types. Additionally, the

findings concluded that stranger sexual assaults could provide law enforcement officials with leading characteristics of unknown suspects, based on times/places the suspect is likely to target based on past events (Hewitt et al., 2019).

For investigators to thoroughly investigate a sex crime, victim contact is essential. Understanding the victim experienced a trauma can help investigators gauge the type of trauma the victim sustained from the sexual offender. The victim can provide insight to relate the offender to the type of sex act performed. Contact with the victims of sexual assaults require emotional support from investigators to obtain the most accurate information (OVC, n.d.). Each sex crime will have differences, however, for repeat sexual offenders, characteristics of the crime may be similar. Documentation of every detail from the victim of a sex crime can lead to the discovery of commonalities among other victims from repeat offenders.

### **Suspect Contact**

Sexual assault investigations can be categorized into specific types. These types include when the offender is known or when the offender is unknown. Although much of a sex crime investigation relies on the statements of the victims and/or witnesses, the contact with a suspect offender is very important. Sexual assault investigations require expanding the evidence base and improving the comprehension of how these investigations are compiling. (Markey et al., 2021). Positive case outcomes in a sex crime investigation include the probability that the suspect is arrested for committing the offense. While sexual assaults are a widespread issue in society, this violent crime creates challenges for the criminal justice system and the criminal investigators who are carrying

out the case (Markey et al., 2021). Without identifying an offender, there can be no arrest or prosecution made for a sex crime investigation.

Whether an offender is known or unknown, it is common for investigators to seek forensic evidence when processing the crime scene of a sexual offense to identify the suspect. Being able to identify the suspect in a sex offense can link the suspect's involvement to the crime. "According to investigators, the presence of biological evidence can confirm sexual contact or aid in suspect identification but may be of little use in family and acquaintance cases where the suspect is known or likely to claim that contact was consensual" (Gaensslen & Lee, 2001).

For investigators to make initial contact with a suspected sex offender in a case being investigated, it can be difficult to navigate. In many cases, the only evidence that may be present are the statements from the victim and the statements from the suspect. When an investigator is meeting a suspect for a case like this, the way the information is documented needs to be thorough and the investigative interview is a critical part of this investigation. Effective interviewing can mean the difference in the volume of information that the suspect is willing to provide, which can also increase the credibility of the victim's statements (Westera & Kebbell, 2014). Contact with the suspect can also show any discrepancies in the suspect's chain of events or alibis during the date and time of the assault. During interviews with sexual assault suspects, investigators are seeking a confession. Investigators want to place the suspect at the crime scene and be able to fully prosecute the crime of the law. A way to be successful with this societal goal is through suspect interviews.

Suspect contact, or suspect interviews can be telling for the investigator during a sex crime investigation. For repeat sexual offenders, they may have the same modus operandi and feel compelled to perform the same sexual assaults on multiple victims. The contact with the suspect can gauge a law enforcement professional in the direction of the investigation. A sexual offender may have urges that he cannot deviate from, therefore, gathering as much information from a suspect interview can bring those urges to the surface, steering the investigation in a new direction with the focus on a recidivated offender. For a criminal investigator to be thorough in a sex crime investigation, understanding if this is a serial offense by the suspect can assist in the investigation. While there are behaviors that can be exhibited during a suspect contact, documentation of these behaviors by the investigators can reveal similarly reported sex crimes with the same behaviors. Being able to identify repeat sexual offenders is a way to address a part of a sex assault investigation.

### **Evidence**

Although receiving victim statements and recalls to a sexual assault incident, obtaining evidence is a key factor during a sex crime investigation. Evidence can be obtained through many different areas. When evidence is collected for a sex crime, investigators must maintain the chain of custody for the evidence. This includes documentation on when evidence is collected, by whom, where the evidence is transferred to, and who transported it. Often, certain types of evidence may not be easily available to investigators. For example, forensic evidence that includes DNA may not be made available to investigators because a victim may have showered or cleaned

themselves before reporting the sexual assault, washing away any forensic evidence. Additionally, if a victim was taken to an unknown location and the assault occurred, the victim may not be able to relay to offenders the exact location that the assault happened, making any physical evidence difficult to seize. Numerous factors are considered while investigating these crimes because an investigator cannot solely rely on one piece of evidence to prove a case. It involves the totality of the circumstances to the consistencies of the details and evidence (if any) obtained to corroborate a report.

One type of evidence obtained during a sex crime investigation is DNA. Menaker et al., (2016) conducted a study involving the use of forensic evidence in sexual assault investigations from the perceptions of sex crime investigators. The study described that there is a lack of understanding regarding the way forensic evidence is used and how it can impact case dispositions. The qualitative study interviewed investigators from the Houston Police Department to describe how the investigators use DNA evidence during investigations of sexual assaults. The results of the study revealed that DNA has limited influence during an investigation. To determine how effective the DNA is, depends on additional evidentiary factors (Menaker et al., 2016). The results concluded that criminal investigations and prosecutions do not rely on forensic evidence to seal a sexual assault case. Findings of the study also indicate that having solely forensic evidence is not sufficient for prosecution. “Subsequently, it appears that the utility of forensic evidence in sexual assault cases is dependent on the presence of other evidentiary factors such as victim credibility and witness statements” (Menaker et al., 2016).

When DNA is collected from a sex crime investigation, it is typically collected from a Sexual Assault and Evidence Collection Kit (SAECK). Clark et al., (2021) conducted a study to explain the analytical approaches to differential extraction for sexual assault evidence. The study explained that DNA links a sample from the suspect to the victim of the sex crime. The study explains that there are multiple methods for differential extraction (DE) of sexual assault evidence. The study concluded in suggestions into the application of differential extraction to further apply techniques into forensic laboratories to secure and obtain physical DNA evidence in sexual assault cases and to understand future directions of alternative technologies (Clark et al., 2021).

Evidence in sexual assault cases can also be obtained digitally. Dodge et al., (2019) conducted a study regarding digital evidence in sexual assault investigations, explaining that digital progression across the globe appears within multiple crime categories and is a factor in most cases of sexual assault. The study conducted 70 interviews with sex crime investigators to understand the combination of digital evidence into sexual assault investigations can provide new opportunities that affect the victim's experiences within the criminal justice system. Digital evidence provides investigators with detailed context and content of a sexual assault, however, the study indicated that it could cause challenges for the police and victims. According to Dodge et al., (2019), "While officers express that digital evidence may provide more conclusive proof in the notoriously difficult pursuit of proving sexual assault charges, they are also concerned that this evidence provides new challenges for already overburdened sex crime units and makes cases lengthier and more invasive for victims." The study concluded that digital

evidence is a form of evidence that can be obtained during a sex crime investigation, however, the potentially negative impact could affect the outcome of the case.

Evidence is a way to assist prosecutors in finalizing a case factually. Gathering evidence from a sex offense allows law enforcement investigators to thoroughly analyze the crime scene to corroborate the evidence. If a recidivated offender commits another sex offense after being released, investigators attempt to locate evidence to be able to connect the previously convicted offender to the crime scene. Aiming to deter or stop sex offenses through thorough investigation and detailed evidence gathering can help decrease recidivism and identify the sex offenders who commit these crimes.

### **Prosecuting Sex Crimes**

Prosecuting a sex crime only occurs when law enforcement officials have enough physical evidence to charge the individual. Prior to a prosecution occurring, a sexual assault accusation must be made. A sex crime investigation will begin once a complaint has been made. A sex crime can be determined by many areas of crime that relates to a crime involving a sexual act or having a sexual motive. When a complaint for a sex crime has been made, the first step in the process is determining the location in which it occurred. Determining a location of where the sex act was committed, and the nature of the act can be useful in understanding the suspect's motive or intentions.

Campbell et al, (2009) conducted a study to examine the factors that predict sexual assault case investigation and prosecution. The study was conducted in a large Midwestern County that had a program. The study compared victim characteristics, suspect characteristics, and forensic medical evidence when explaining the case outcomes

(Campbell et al, 2009). The study's results showed that medical forensic evidence that is collected by the sexual assault nurse examiner program accounted for a large variance in case outcomes, showing results above victim and offender characteristic factors (Campbell et al., 2009).

McGregor et al., (2002) conducted a study to determine if sexual assault forensic medical examinations evidence is related to successful sex offense prosecutions. The study used the medical-legal findings for a population of adult sexual assault cases in an emergency department setting where the assaults were reported to the police. According to the results of the study, charges were filed in 32.7% of the cases and a conviction was processed in 51 of the 462 cases examined. The study explained there was genital injury in 193 of the cases and sperm-semen results were obtained in 100 of 262 samples tested. The prosecution showed favorable to those with a higher extent of injury. Additionally, results showed that the documentation on the police report indicating that forensic samples were collected by a Sexual Assault Service examiner was significant in filing of charges (McGregor et al., 2002).

Gray-Eurom et al., (2002) presented a review to determine the association between historical and physical evidence with judicial outcome in sexual assault cases. The study examined forensic evidence for all sexual assault cases reported in Duval County, Florida during a two-year period. The study identified 821 sexual assaults that were reported, and 801 forensic examinations were performed (Gray-Eurom et al., 2002). Of these, 446 cases did not have a suspect identified and 355 of the cases identified a suspect. 271 arrests were made based on the study. Police did not have enough evidence

to arrest a suspect after detention in 84 of the cases. In the cases where the suspects were arrested, 153 had charges dropped, 89 were found guilty, 2 were found not guilty, and 27 of the cases were pending (Gray-Eurom et al., 2002). Results of the study revealed evidence of trauma in 57% of victims who were examined and in 31% of the cases where suspects were identified (Gray-Eurom et al., 2002). The study suggests prosecution is more favorable for those who have been identified and physical examinations have been conducted.

Prosecuting sex crimes also relies heavily on the victim's cooperation. The primary source of evidence in a sexual assault report is obtained by the victim, through medical examinations or by the victim's written statement that documents what occurred. Additional sources of evidence can be gathered through DNA or nearby camera footage, depending on the location of the assault. Prosecuting sex crimes does not occur until all evidence has been analyzed by an approved laboratory. Once evidence directs law enforcement officials to a suspect, whether it was a known or unknown suspect, the crime can be prosecuted, or held before a judge in court. Sexual assault prosecution is dependent upon many factors that are taken into consideration. A sexual assault prosecution is influenced by factors that include the victim's age, race, and relationship to the offender. Prior studies have suggested that a victim's credibility is a main factor to law enforcement and prosecutors.

### **Summary/Conclusion**

Research relative to recidivism and sex crime investigations exists. However, there is little to no research available on how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex

crime investigations. Sexual assault cases are different than other crime investigations because they involve more sensitive topics. Investigating sex crimes includes victim engagement, evidence collection, identifying and interviewing suspects, and prosecuting the assailant. When it comes to investigating sex crimes, it's important to realize that this type of crime is one of the least likely to have reported to the police (Markey et al., 2021). While sex crimes mostly go unreported, when they are reported to law enforcement, investigators are presented with challenges to prove and identify a suspect who would have committed it. These challenges result in a small proportion of assailants who are arrested.

There is a need to investigate male sex offender recidivism and the approaches to sex crime investigations. "Sexual assaults present distinct challenges for criminal investigators, including the ability to support and engage victims throughout the investigation, the availability and application of evidence, detective workload, stress, job satisfaction, and the lack opportunities for specialized training" (Markey et al., 2021). Recidivism is a widely known issue that occurs when an offender recommits a crime. Investigating sexual assaults are considered a serious crime that is complex. Understanding how a recidivated sex offender impacts sex crime investigations can potentially aim to improve sex crime investigations to increase arrests of the offenders.

The objective of this qualitative case study is to explore how male sex offender recidivism impact sex crime investigations in Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania. This research provided to the current body of literature by inserting new, updated information from a population that has yet to be thoroughly studied. The results of the study provide

an expanded view of this topic that could provide better understanding of sex crime investigations. This newfound intelligence could be used to improve practices or procedures for sex crime investigators, law enforcement officials, police officers, and the community. In Chapter 3, I will present the methodology of the study.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations, using a basic qualitative inquiry. In the following section, I will describe the research methodology that I used for the study. This chapter on methodology will include a discussion of the following: the research question, design and rationale, my role as the researcher, participant selection, instrumentation, the procedures for participant selection and data collection, the data analysis plan, and the ethical considerations and procedures.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The research question for this study is: How does male sex offender recidivism impact sex crime investigations? Certified law enforcement professional sex crime investigators were chosen to participate in this study. They were chosen because of their expertise related to the topic of this research in order to gain knowledge about their experiences in investigating sex crimes. This study meets the standards of a basic qualitative inquiry approach because I aimed to develop my research through an epistemological stance to find a deeper scope of knowledge of sex crime investigations to determine how it is impacted by male sex offender recidivism.

This study utilized a collective case study because it aims to gain a deeper understanding of male sex offender recidivism from the perspective of law enforcement official investigators. Specifically, the law enforcement investigators were selected for face-to-face semi-structured interviews based on the specialized job duties that included

responsibilities and trainings relating to sex crime investigations. This included male sex offenders and their recidivism, conducting sex crime investigations, and prosecuting male sex offenders. The collective case study design meets standards, allowing comparisons to be made across many different cases and correlating with this research study. The small group of sex crime investigators chosen allows for the exploration of experiences, insights, and viewpoints about how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role as a researcher for this qualitative study is vital because my impartial stance relies on the study's data collection. Sutton and Austin (2015) explained the role of the researcher's importance being tasked with accessing the thoughts and reactions of the participants. The experiences being explored are relevant and can either be reliving past experiences or be fresh cases in the participant's minds. With the data I am collecting for this study, my primary responsibility is to preserve and protect the participants and their interview responses. With, my responsibility is to ensure that I am clearly articulating all details of the research to the participants and the interview questions are to be approved by the ethics review board before the research begins (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

My role as the researcher is also to sustain the reliability of the qualitative research process. My credibility lies within my criminal justice career, including experience interviewing in an investigative manner. I hold certificates in interviewing and interrogation. My role in this research study is to gather the data in a sufficient manner so

that saturation can be reached. I will not allow biases of prior law enforcement experience interfere with the data collection method or results of the study. Each law enforcement official who is participating in the research study was informed that the phenomenon being studied is directly related to my professional career. The participants were notified of the study's intentions and entire selection process. Each participant is guaranteed confidentiality and given the step-by-step process of how the data collected will be secured and have no public access (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

According to Sutton and Austin (2015), qualitative research has a standardization of procedures when selecting participants. "Subject selection in qualitative research is purposeful; participants are selected who can best inform the research questions and enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study" (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Furthermore, this study carefully selected participants who specialized in investigating sex crimes. Additionally, the participants had vast knowledge in understanding male sex offender recidivism. Concepts explored will include a focus on the unity of the experiences on investigating sex crimes by law enforcement regarding male sex offender recidivism.

Another consideration for participant selection logic is the sample size. Qualitative research is more intimate, focusing on the lived experiences of the participants. When considering sample size, the researcher must ensure that the results of the research can be recognized to the population of interest. The number of participants is

dependent upon whether all elements of the phenomenon of interest is completed (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The sample for the study was made up of law enforcement investigators who investigate sex crimes from the Northeastern Region of Pennsylvania. The number of participants for this study was 15-20 individuals. The participants specialized in sex crime investigations. With the use of purposeful sampling and hand selecting my participants who specialize in the phenomenon being studied, the research can provide detailed information specific to this study. Purposeful sampling and hand selecting participants was most suitable for this study because of the specific identification of the investigator's specialties involving sex crimes. This type of selection relies on the researcher's judgment and is the most effective for the type of research being conducted since the population being studied are those who investigate sex crimes and are not part of the general population. I have selected my participants through my own professional network and contacting them directly. The participants have been notified that this is a voluntary experience. Selecting participants from the same general area was desirable because it focuses on one geographical area.

### **Instrumentation**

The method of instrumentation for my study was interviews. I utilized semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Conducting interviews was determined to be the greatest instrumentation method to uphold the study's credibility and alignment to the research questions. Conducting the interviews created an explorative aspect into sex offender recidivism through the lens of law enforcement professionals who investigate

sex crimes. Law enforcement officials were chosen for this study because they can add present knowledge and lived experiences of conducting sex crime investigations.

### **Data Collection**

I was the only individual who gathered and managed the data all through this data collection process. The process was started by contacting sex crime investigators via e-mail to schedule an appointment to meet with each participant individually. The location of the interviews was made up to the participants to ensure they were at ease and comfortable in their own setting (Yin, 2013). The main method of data collection for this research was face-to-face, semi-structured interviews that consisted of open-ended questions. The interviews were recorded and transcribed using a data transcription application. I utilized handwritten notetaking during each interview. In order to preserve the accuracy of the data collected, in-depth notetaking and audio transcriptions were documented precisely (Devers et al., 2000). The duration of the interviews varied until saturation was reached, and with that, follow-up interviews were not necessary.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

This qualitative research contributes to the understanding of how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations. The data analysis plan for this research will follow content analysis plan. Content analysis is suitable for this basic qualitative inquiry because it will focus on all types of written texts and materials (Bengtsson, 2016). Content analysis allows this research to be organized and meaningful from the data compiled to represent credible conclusions from it (Bengtsson, 2016). To prepare for data transcription, I prepared for coding the data by organizing the data into

themes and categories based on keywords. I organized the data by grouping all responses in accordance with the questions. For example, all of Question 1 is grouped with each participant's response to Question 1 as well. I used a transcription application to record and immediately transcribe the responses of the interviewer and the interviewee. This enabled me to take notes while listening to the interviewee's response. Once data is transcribed, I hand coded and organized all the data.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in a study can be described to the amount of confidence in the data collected, the data interpretation, and the methods that were used to execute the study. Listing the issues of trustworthiness allows the researcher to establish the necessary protocols for the study to be considered worthy of published findings (Connelly, 2016). Lincoln and Guba (1985) outlined criteria that focuses on the research being accepted by qualitative researchers. The criteria include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Connelly, 2016).

### **Credibility**

Credibility of a study refers to the confidence in the truth of the study. Furthermore, the findings are the most important criterion because the findings within the study are based on all the data leading up to it. Having truth in the study is what will make the study valid or not. Connelly (2016) reported that credibility is comparable to the internal validity in quantitative research. Accomplishing credibility in a study is consummated through accurate data collection and analysis, along with building rapport with the study participants to enhance truthful data collection during interviews (Yin,

2013). To increase internal validity and to strengthen credibility, the primary focus is to gather credible data. Once credible data is collected, appropriately coding and analysis the data by identifying themes and patterns can increase internal validity (Williams and Morrow, 2016).

### **Transferability**

Transferability refers to how the findings and conclusions of the study can be found useful to other people in other settings (Connelly, 2016). Furthermore, if other individuals can relate to the study from other aspects of research and can be deemed applicable to other situations, the study will attain transferability (Connelly, 2016).

### **Dependability**

Dependability relates to the strength of the data over time. Dependability is concerned with the data collection of the study (Connelly, 2016). To strengthen and achieve dependability, it's important to eliminate biases and remove ethical concerns. To ensure dependability within the study, a consistent technique to assess this is a dependability audit. A dependability audit is a review of all transcriptions, reflective journals, field notes, and coding techniques used within the study (Connelly, 2016). A dependability audit can remove or eliminate any mistakes within the study and can help achieve dependability.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability in the study refers to the degree in which the findings of the study can be confirmed by other researchers. Confirmability verifies that the data and analyses of the findings are not fictitious and are solely based on data obtained and appropriately

interpreted (Connelly, 2016). To achieve confirmability, it's important to include thorough descriptions of the assumptions in the study and explaining that the results of the study are strictly data focused.

### **Ethical Procedures**

This research handled any ethical dilemmas to ensure that the information was obtained in an accurate manner. The participants in this study were all voluntary and made aware that their participation is voluntary. Informed consent is a vital part to recognize the integrity of the research (Sanjari et al., 2014). Each participant was made aware of the entire study including the nature of the study, the participant's role, the objective, and how the results of the study will be used (Sanjari et al., 2014). With the participation being voluntary, there were no threats, compensation, or coercion used against any of the participants in the study. The participants were allowed to stop the interview at any time and discontinue their participation if they so desired. The topic of my research is related to my profession; therefore, I strictly followed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines to ensure that I did not act unethical in any manner.

The participants were law enforcement investigators that specialized in sex crime investigations. The participants for the study were provided with written consent forms that disclosed the entire study along with a detailed description about me to include my contact information should the participant have additional questions. The interviews upheld ethical standards and were executed in a professional manner. Notetaking, audio recordings, and data transcription were all secured in a locked filing cabinet in my office. I am the only one with a key to access the locked filing cabinet, ensuring that any

information regarding the data collection and participant identities are secured and to my knowledge only.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I thoroughly explained the research design, rationale, and methodology of the study. I also included details about exploring the research question and theoretical framework through face-to-face, in-depth interviews with law enforcement professionals who are responsible for sex crime investigations. Outlined in this chapter was information about participation criteria and selection. Data collection and analysis concerned the use of verified qualitative practices. Additionally, information relating to issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations were provided in the chapter. In Chapter 4, I present the results of my study.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations. I used the following research questions to establish how male sexual offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations:

The central research question was as follows:

RQ1. How does male sex offender recidivism impact sex crime investigations?

Two sub-questions relate to the central research question. The questions were as follows:

RQ2. How are sex crime investigations affected by male sex offender recidivism?

RQ3. What role does recidivism in male sexual offenders play in sex crime investigations?

The chapter on the results of the study will include an explanation of the setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and the results of the interviews.

### **Setting**

There were no personal or organizational conditions that influenced the participants or their shared experiences at the time of the study that obstructed the analysis of study results. I interviewed fifteen law enforcement professionals who investigate sex crimes in Northeastern Pennsylvania. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and in a setting of the interviewee's choosing.

### Demographics

For this study, I interviewed fifteen law enforcement professionals who investigate sex crimes in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Each participant in the study was a certified law enforcement officer with at least five years of experience. There was one African American participant, one Caucasian Hispanic participant, and thirteen Caucasian participants. Each participant had direct experience and knowledge of investigating sex crimes involving male sexual offenders. This number of research participants is acceptable because research has suggested a broad range of 5 to 50 participants for a qualitative study (Morse, 2000). This number of participants allowed me to achieve saturation for this study when interviews are used. A breakdown of the participant's gender, years of service, and race is represented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Participant Demographics		
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender		
Female	1	6.66
Male	14	93.33
Years of Service		
5-10	3	20
11-16	5	33.3
17-22	4	26.6
23-28	2	13.3
29-34	1	6.6
Race		
Caucasian	13	86.66

Hispanic Caucasian	1	6.66
African American	1	6.66

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n = 15

### **Data Collection**

I interviewed fifteen participants for this study. Each participant was interviewed one time. The interviews were conducted face to face. The date, time, and location were provided by the interviewee to ensure each participant was comfortable in their preferred setting and without time constraints. Once a participant consented, I contacted each individually to schedule the interview. Each interview was audio-recorded using REV, an audio recording and transcription software. In addition, I took handwritten notes for each interview. Fifteen successful interviews were conducted, which is within the range of interviews I intended on conducting. Due to IRB requirements, participants were recruited via email invitation only. The participants were known to me through my professional network as a law enforcement professional. There were no variations or unusual conditions met throughout the data collection process.

### **Data Analysis**

The qualitative research contributes to the understanding of how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations. The data analysis plan for this research followed content analysis because it focused on all types of written texts and materials (Bengtsson, 2016). The content analysis allowed me to organize the research

into significant data to represent reliable outcomes. I utilized the same resources and applications for each participant. I used REV, a transcription application to transcribe the participant's responses to the interview questions. After collecting the data, I sorted the information by combining all responses with each equivalent question. All of Question 1 responses were grouped with interview Question 1, etc. A total of fifteen interview questions were asked. I hand-coded the data first and then used NVIVO to group all responses. While sifting through the data, I was able to identify repeated words and phrases in the investigators' answers, which helped identify the codes. Once I coded the data, categories and themes were drawn from the specific codes.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

The credibility of a study refers to confidence in the truth of the study. The data collected for this study is based on the findings during the interviews. I followed the credibility strategies I identified in Chapter 3. I achieved credibility through data collection and analysis and accurately sifted through all of the data obtained. This strategy allowed me to build rapport with the study participants to enhance truthful data collection during the interviews (Yin, 2013). The selection of the participants was based on the criteria for this study, being law enforcement professionals and those who investigate sex crimes. Each participant I chose met these criteria. I followed reflexivity to remain impartial and unbiased to maintain credibility in this study because of my current network and career in law enforcement. Furthermore, after hand coding the data, I utilized NVIVO, a qualitative analysis software, to remove the

prospective for researcher bias. Data were collected until saturation took place, which enhances the internal validity of this study.

### **Transferability**

There were no adjustments made to the transferability strategies as described in Chapter 3. Individuals will be able to convey the study through prosperous explanations and descriptions, including precise findings. Other researchers will be able to relate to the study from other aspects of research and be deemed applicable.

### **Dependability**

Dependability was accomplished through the use of credible data collection methods. To ensure this was accomplished, all biases and ethical concerns were eliminated and removed, as described in Chapter 3. The questions asked were open-ended. Each interview was recorded and transcribed using a credible transcription application. The transcriptions were used for me to create codes, categories, and themes from the data. This process was used before concluding the results of the data. In addition to a transcription application, I took field notes during the interview to a degree where I was still able to actively listen to each participant.

### **Confirmability**

There were no adjustments made to the transferability strategies as described in Chapter 3. I achieved confirmability through thorough descriptions of the assumptions in the study. The results of the study are strictly data focused.

## **Results**

The interview questions were based on the three research questions this study was focused on. The research questions were: How do male sex offender recidivism impact sex crime investigations; How are sex crime investigations affected by male sex offender recidivism; What role does recidivism in male sexual offenders play in sex crime investigations? The results of the study were broken down between each interview question.

### **Interview Question 1**

The first interview question was: Tell me about your law enforcement and related experience to the criminal justice field. All fifteen participants explained they began their careers in law enforcement by starting in patrol work and conducting patrol duties. The participants had mentioned working for multiple different agencies when they began their law enforcement careers. Participants discussed the drive for pursuing investigative work early on in their careers as law enforcement professionals and were balanced from getting experience with multiple different departments. Many of the participants described excelling in their patrol work and doing more than what was necessary of them. All participants had at least five years of law enforcement experience and they all had direct knowledge of the criminal justice field. After coding and categorizing each participant's response to this interview question, a common theme among the participants was as follows: Participants began their careers doing patrol duties and excelled in their fields through learning from multiple different agencies to gather a broader perspective of the

criminal justice field. Table 1 shows the codes, categories, and themes for this interview question.

Table 1

<b>Interview Question #1</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>
Tell me about your law enforcement and related experience in the criminal justice field.	Started in patrol work, Multiple departments, Excelling early, Multiple years	Balanced from experience in different departments, Hands on experience, and different geographical perspectives	Participants began their careers doing patrol duties and excelled in their fields through learning from multiple different agencies to gather a broader perspective of the criminal justice field.

### **Interview Question 2**

The second interview question was: Explain how you became an investigator of sex crimes. Twelve participants expressed interest in pursuing a path to becoming an investigator of sex crimes. Participant 2 stated:

“I became an investigator of sex crimes through a course of demonstrating the ability to conduct complex investigations while I had a larger workload in patrol. I also showed an ability through my proactive efforts.”

The twelve participants explained they contributed to doing more than the average workload when they started their law enforcement careers. They explained this proved their capabilities when it comes to investigating crimes and opened the opportunity to become an investigator. Participant 13 stated:

“I just started taking trainings. There’s a lot of trainings available out there and I just started taking a bunch. Showed interest in transferring to the Special Victims Unit.”

In addition, the participants stated they showed interest in sex crimes and investigative-related training to further their education. These participants explained their current investigator position was a natural progression from patrol work because of their ability to take initiative. Participant 9 explained their transition into becoming an investigator of sex crimes by stating:

“So our department consists of criminal investigations unit, which handles mainly serious crimes from felonies, homicides, and all sex related crimes. It’s basically a posted position. You apply for it, you take a test, which is a written test, a demonstration of ability, and an oral interview.”

One participant stated they replaced a former sex crime investigator. This participant explained the former investigator was no longer able to continue thorough investigations as it was “getting to him.” The participant explained the former investigator had difficulty separating an investigative role from the trauma-exposed to him when investigating sex crimes. This participant expressed interest in replacing their former colleague and transitioned into the position to investigate sex crimes.

Two participants were told or defaulted to the position of investigating sex crimes within their agency. These participants explained they were told to take on this position and investigative duties by a superior. However, the participants were assigned to this position after demonstrating natural abilities to thoroughly conduct investigations with successful conviction rates, making them desirable for the position of sex crime investigator.

After coding and categorizing each participant's response to this interview question, a common theme among the participants was as follows: Participants demonstrated their value to become an investigator of sex crimes during patrol work by setting themselves to a higher standard and proving their capabilities to conduct thorough investigations of sex crimes. Table 2 shows the codes, categories, and themes for this interview question.

Table 2

<b>Interview Question #2</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>
Explain how you became an investigator of sex crimes.	Intentionally working investigations, Doing more than the average workload, Replacing a former investigator, application, already involved in the duties	Showing interest, Natural progression, taking initiative, coming up with the position	Participants demonstrated their value to become an investigator of sex crimes during patrol work by setting themselves to a higher standard and proving their capabilities to conduct thorough investigations of sex crimes.

### **Interview Question 3**

The third interview question was: Tell me about the role of an investigator when examining sex crimes as opposed to investigating non-sex crimes. All fifteen participants explained the difference between investigating sex crimes opposed investigating non-sex crimes is showing more sensitivity. Each participant explained there is a delicacy when it comes to investigating these crimes. One participant explained a contrast between the two. This participant gave the example of a burglary crime and how someone who fell victim to a burglary is a victim of stolen items. Whereas the victim of a sex crime is

directly violated, and they are a person. The victim of burglary lost something tangible they had, but the victim of a sex crime lost something inside of them, an intangible piece of themselves. Participant 10 stated:

“Well, sex crimes are more delicate, I think you would say, than a traditional criminal investigation. You’re dealing with somebody who’s been personally victimized. Even though, you may deal with somebody who’s a victim of a robbery and they have had a personal item taken from them by force, but when it’s a sex crime, people are victimized in a different way that causes very emotional trauma. It’s a more delicate situation than a normal criminal investigation.”

Some male participants were aware of their limitations when investigating sex crimes. For example, a gender hindrance was explained when it comes to sex crimes by a male investigator when he is speaking to a female victim. It was explained their physical appearance may be difficult for a victim to talk about an assault if they have been victimized by an adult male offender. Participant 3 stated:

“So, you have a six-foot, 230-pound man with a deep voice interviewing you about how a man took your innocence from you. But you just have to approach it in a way that not only makes you comfortable but makes them comfortable.”

Participant 7 described the importance of investigating sex crime cases thoroughly. Participant 7 stated:

“Sex crimes, in general, are a very sensitive topic, and they leave a large amount of civil liability if they’re not investigated properly. They also have a much

further reaching scrutiny. We work these cases very, very seriously and we work them diligently.”

Many participants explained the role of an investigator when examining sex crimes may take a reverse direction for the investigation. Participants stated often, the victims of sex crimes know their assailant and provide that information to the investigators, whereas victims of a non-sex crime often don't readily know who the offender is. When investigating non-sex crimes, the participants gather the information that may lead them to identify the offender. When investigating sex crimes, the participants are provided with the assailant's identity and build their case around knowing who the suspect is first. Participant 5 stated:

“In most of my cases, the people that are my victims, whether it's a child or an adult, they knew they're assailant. So, it's different because when you're handling a burglary, most of the time you don't know. So, all your focus is on figuring out who did this. With my sex cases most of the time, I do know who did it, the person knows who did this to them, and my focus is on proving that this happened and proving that this person did it. So, it's kind of a different focus.”

After coding and categorizing each participant's response to this interview question, a common theme among the participants was as follows: Participants approach sex crime investigations with a particular sensitivity towards the victim due to the violation they endured with the understanding the victim may know the offender and perceived awareness that the investigator's presence may become an obstacle if a victim

cannot confide in them. Table 3 shows the codes, categories, and themes for this interview question.

Table 3

<b>Interview Question #3</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>
Tell me about the role of an investigator when examining sex crimes as opposed to investigating non-sex crimes.	Compassion for others, Awareness of limitations, Gender hindrance, Different type of violation, Knowing the assailant	Humanize, Sensitivity, Reverse investigation, Delicacy	Participants approach sex crime investigations with a particular sensitivity towards the victim due to the violation they endured with the understanding the victim may know the offender and perceived awareness that the investigator's presence may become an obstacle if a victim cannot confide in them.

#### **Interview Question 4**

The fourth interview question was: What is the most difficult part about investigating sex crimes? This question was broken down into four codes, children, psychological, evidence, and communication. Five participants explained that sex crimes against children are the most difficult part of investigating sex crimes. One participant explained when a victim of a sex crime is a child, it can be difficult to prosecute and the main reason being that the child isn't mentally well enough to testify. An investigation of a sex crime with a child victim requires the inclusion of family members as well. One participant explained that some family members don't want to go through a legal process because it takes too long from start to finish and they feel the child is safe now that the child is away from the offender. These participants found that child victims in sex crime

are difficult because innocence has been stolen from them and this trauma may manifest later in their lives by being taken advantage of at a young age. Participant 1 stated:

“Crimes against children, I would say, is the hardest part. Crimes against an adult is also hard, I’m not saying it isn’t. But when it’s someone that’s just beginning their life or a teenager, and they shouldn’t be victimized at that age, it’s a little harder to soak in if your family and friends have children. You’re investigating something that some suspect did to their relative or just a random child. I think it’s harder to investigate that than it is any other crime.”

Three participants described the emotional toll investigating sex crimes has on the investigator. In response to this question, Participant 5 explained struggling with the separation and disassociation of themselves from these crimes. This participant stated:

“I take a lot of it in. It's hard not to, especially when they're children. A lot of the time I need to open myself up and give so much of myself just so that the child will feel comfortable even opening up to me. So, when you open yourself to them, you are also vulnerable. I think that’s the only way it works.”

These participants expressed giving a lot to an investigation, which takes a psychological effect on their mental health. When it comes to investigating sex crimes, the participants invest themselves in it in hopes of reaching a positive resolution to the trauma endured. Participant 14 stated:

“You can’t unsee it. The fact that as much as what you’re investigating and what you’re trying to gain justice for, the injustice that has happened to people and the

terrible things that have happened to people, still leaves a mark on you as a person.”

Participant 8 described overcoming the emotional toll when investigating these crimes as: “checking your emotions at the door” to be a capable and effective law enforcement professional for the sake of the victim.

Participant 2 stated:

“The psychological effect, when you go home, you think about the things that you’re dealing with, the ways that you get these people to engage with you. You have to lower yourself to their level. You have to make them feel like you’re not judging them; and you don’t like them and you mentally can’t help that. You’re looking at this person who may have allegedly raped a twelve-year-old who’s related to him, and you must give him an exit ramp because you want him to confess to his crime. So sometimes you have to tell that person, ‘I don’t think you’re a bad guy’ when in your head you think that they are a very bad person. You must keep your goals in mind. As much as police officers don’t want to admit it, that can take a psychological toll on you if you lose track of why you’re saying what you’re saying.”

Three participants described the most difficult part of investigating a sex crime as a lack of physical evidence. Participant 6 said:

“Sometimes not getting a successful conviction for the victim, even though you believe everything that they’ve said and you truly believe that the events did

happen. Unfortunately, not being able to persuade or properly demonstrate the evidence to a jury and get them to understand and believe these things.”

Participant 4 said the difficulty in investigating these crimes is that they oftentimes cannot be substantiated because the elements of the crime cannot be proven.

This participant stated:

“Even though you do have a victim alleging something occurred, the absence of physical evidence can be detrimental and result in a non-viable prosecution of a case. So, the hardest part for me in that circumstance is trying to explain to a victim that, unfortunately, nothing may be done legally.”

Participant 11 said:

“It’s very hard to prosecute a sex crime, especially if you have no physical evidence.”

Four participants explained talking to the victim is the most difficult part of investigating sex crimes. These participants explained that it's difficult talking to a victim about an assault that occurred to them. Furthermore, it can be difficult for the victim to want to speak about what happened. During an investigation of a sex crime, the victim is asked to speak on the trauma they endured on numerous occasions. Victims are asked to relive the assault by retelling the story repeatedly. Connecting with the victim can be difficult for an investigator to do. There are many considerations to consider when talking to the victims. For example, the victim’s age and background could cause a hindrance to an investigator. One participant explained if a victim had a negative experience with

police in the past, it could become difficult to build a trusting bond with the victim and they may not want to share their story.

After coding and categorizing each participant's response to this interview question, a common theme among the participants was as follows: Participants explained the most difficult part about investigating sex crimes involves the psychological toll it can have on the investigator, especially when it's a sex crime against children. Furthermore, the participants are met with the obstacle of some sex crimes lacking prosecutable evidence from both an investigative standpoint and from a lack of cooperation with a victim, causing a communicative hurdle between law enforcement and a victim's family. Table 4 shows the codes, categories, and themes for this interview question.

Table 4

<b>Interview Question #4</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>

<p>What is the most difficult part about investigating sex crimes?</p>	<p>Children, Psychological, Evidence, Communication</p>	<p>Victims, Emotional Toll, Lack of Prosecution, Cooperation</p>	<p>Participants explained the most difficult part about investigating sex crimes involves the psychological toll it can have on the investigator, especially when it's a sex crime against children. Furthermore, the participants are met with the obstacle of some sex crimes lacking prosecutable evidence from both an investigative standpoint and from a lack of cooperation with a victim, causing a communicative hurdle between law enforcement and a victim's family.</p>
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### Interview Question 5

The fifth interview question was: Explain your initial response to a sex crime and explain if each investigation follows the same steps. All the participants explained that no two cases are exactly alike. Participant 3 stated:

“It’s never the same. We have a set standard, it’s almost like a guideline to help us ask questions. But they’re never the same. That’s just how it goes.”

Participant 10 stated:

“No two circumstances are the same. However, there are some standardized practices though, as far as rape kits and so forth. If somebody has been a victim of a rape or forceful sex act, we’d want an examination, which is done at the hospital by medical staff, so that is very standardized procedure. Then it becomes not so

much standardized after that, just depending on what avenues you have to go to investigate.”

The participants said there is a systematic and standardized protocol that is followed, however, it’s a generalized method of practice for them to follow. For example, the participants said evidence preservation, information gathering, and detailed interviews are initial responses. Oftentimes, a victim may report a sexual assault hours, days, or weeks after it has occurred. The preservation of evidence may not apply to the investigator because the evidence is no longer there. However, if a victim was assaulted and immediately reported it, investigators would preserve all evidence on the victim's person and at the location, the assault occurred. Participant 14 stated:

“The first thing is if it’s a recent or fresh crime, preservation of any physical evidence. Make sure that scene is completely secured, and nothing is touched, manipulated, or messed with.”

Gathering information is an initial response. Gathering information is a broad term used by the participants because each case will vary depending on cooperation and the number of individuals involved. Participant 2 stated:

“My initial response to a sex crime is to gather as much information that I can about what’s being reported, the people involved, to try to either substantiate or disprove what’s coming to you. I feel like as an investigator, you have to investigate whether a crime truly did occur, and if the evidence leads you towards a crime occurring, follow it all the way. But also, if there’s exculpatory evidence

that shows you no crime occurred, you have to follow up as well. So initially, I'm gathering as much information I can get to get me in the right direction.”

A comprehensive interview with the victim is often an initial response to a sex crime. The participants said each case is different and no two cases are exactly alike, although, cases may be similar if an offender assaulted multiple victims using similar patterns.

After coding and categorizing each participant's response to this interview question, a common theme among the participants was as follows: Participants' initial response to a sex crime varies because no two cases are the same, however, participants described a systematic and standardized protocol generally followed when responding to these investigations, to include evidence preservation, information gathering, and detailed interviews as an initial approach. Table 5 shows the codes, categories, and themes for this interview question.

Table 5

<b>Interview Question #5</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>

Explain your initial response to a sex crime and explain if each investigation follows the same steps.	Systematic, Invasive, Different, Evidence	Approach, Practice, Preservation, Information, Protocol	Participants' initial response to a sex crime varies because no two cases are the same, however, participants described a systematic and standardized protocol generally followed when responding to these investigations, including evidence preservation, information gathering, and detailed interviews as an initial approach.
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### Interview Question 6

The sixth interview question was: When you investigate sex crimes, do you consider that this may be a repeat offender? The participants said more likely than not, they do consider the individual to be a repeat offender. The participants based their determination of such on the criminal history of the offender, but with the knowledge that the offender may have never been caught yet. Participant 5 stated:

“It is usually more likely than not that by the time I hear of an offender, he has offended this particular victim numerous times or he has offended before and just hasn’t gotten caught.”

The participants explained that each sex crime investigation is unique, but a thorough investigation can show patterns of behavior by the offender that can lead the investigator to recognize a repeat offender. Participant 13 stated:

“Yes, because it does seem like there are patterns.”

Participant 2 responded to the question by stating:

“Yes. I call it the intelligence-gathering phase. Even if you don't find evidence, whether it be a prior conviction or a prior allegation, that's something you have to keep yourself open to. Sometimes the facts can point you to the fact that this may not be the first time this person committed the crime.”

After coding and categorizing each participant's response to this interview question, a common theme among the participants was as follows: Participants may consider a sex crime to be a repeat offender depending on one's criminal history while keeping an open mind that many sex crimes are underreported so a prior conviction may not appear, but often considered the sex crime may be by a repeat offender based on patterns revealed during the investigation. Table 6 shows the codes, categories, and themes for this interview question.

Table 6

<b>Interview Question #6</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>
When you investigate sex crimes, do you consider that this may be a repeat offender?	Intelligence, Circumstantial, Convicted	Open, Uncaught, Victimization, Underreported, Patterns	Participants may consider a sex crime to be a repeat offender depending on one's criminal history while keeping an open mind that many sex crimes are underreported so a prior conviction may not appear but often considered the sex crime may be by a repeat offender based on patterns revealed during the investigation.

### **Interview Question 7**

The seventh interview question was: How does male sex offender recidivism influence your investigation into a sex crime? The participants explained that male sex offender recidivism can influence a sex crime investigation. Participant 12 stated:

“It depends on the nature of the crime.”

Participants look at each sex assault case individually, with an open mind that the offender may be a repeat. Participant 6 stated:

“It’s open eyes. I’m looking at that from that instance, not as a fact of they’ve done this before or done this again. Unless it comes to using that more in an interview with the suspect, then we’ll see that come into play more so in the interview with the suspect.”

Male sex offender recidivism may influence the direction the investigation goes based on the patterns discovered during the investigation. In addition, convicted offenders are listed in a database, so if a male’s DNA is located at the crime scene and matches one in the national databases, this can influence the investigator's focus of the investigation toward that male. Overall, the participants describe the influence to be dependent upon the circumstances.

Participant 11 stated:

“I’ve interviewed people that you could tell that this wasn’t their first time or they have thought about it. So for example, I interviewed someone that he performed oral sex on somebody that was passed out. Well, he was not intoxicated and this

was his stepdaughter. So he thought about it before. You see your stepdaughter passed out who is a heroin user, and you decide you're going to pull down her pants and sexually assault her. You think about, you fantasize about that. So in my mind, when I was interviewing him, I was like, 'there's no way this is his first time offending somebody like that.' He was 50 years old, so you don't start when you're 50. You don't do minor crimes and then suddenly, you're sexually assaulting somebody at the age of 50. No, you start a lot younger than that."

After coding and categorizing each participant's response to this interview question, a common theme among the participants was as follows: Male sex offender recidivism may influence an investigation of a sex crime by directing the investigation a certain way if patterns of a known offender are discovered, though, in varying degrees, influence is dependent upon the circumstances. Table 7 shows the codes, categories, and themes for this interview question.

Table 7

<b>Interview Question #7</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>
How do male sex offender recidivism influence your investigation into a sex crime?	Considered, Databases, Helpful	Major Influence, Little Influence, No Influence	Male sex offender recidivism may influence an investigation into a sex crime by directing the investigation a certain way if patterns of a known offender are discovered, though, in varying degrees, influence is dependent upon the circumstances.

### **Interview Question 8**

The eighth interview question was: How often does an investigation into a male offender's sex crime determine to be a repeat offender? There is varying experience among the participants when an investigation determines to be a repeat offender.

Although, the participants agree that there is consideration relating to unreported prior offenses. Participant 4 stated:

“It comes down to the interview. Oftentimes, if that suspect feels safe with you, safe in talking to you and confiding in you, you almost have to set a stage of comfort. On occasion, I've used understanding for their actions, their urges, the compulsions that they may not be able to control. And if they perceive that you understand what they're feeling and experiencing, they're more apt to tell you details. And also other offenses, if they have done it before, if they've victimized others or if they've been victims, that's often the case also. You have to look into their prior victimhood. More often than not, but not always, a sex offender has been a victim early in life.”

The participants can obtain the criminal histories of all suspects during a sex crime investigation. While the male offender may not have a prior sex offense listed on his criminal history, the participants acknowledge that this sex act reported may not be the first one they've committed. The participants determine if a male offender is a repeat offender through intensive interviews with him. It was explained that the participants will carefully study the offender during an interview and note body language indicators.

Participant 1 stated:

“Once you start seeing the body language and stuff like that, you start to pick up that they’re getting excited about what you’re asking.”

In addition to gathering non-verbal cues from the offender, participants will ask him about his personal life and how he grew up. The participants consider an offender’s past victimization to help determine if he is a repeat offender. One participant described sex offending as a learned behavior therefore, establishing an offender's victimization may lead to the determination that he is a repeat offender. One participant described repeating male sex offending as a compulsion or a sickness that doesn’t go away. The participants agreed that it is unlikely the offender who is caught in his a first-time offender. Participant 2 stated:

“There is a notable amount of recidivism.”

Participant 6 explained:

“I know personally, I’ve done a dozen that they’ve been repeat offenders where they have come into an area from another area, or they’ve done prison time and then have gone and done something similar again.”

After coding and categorizing each participant's response to this interview question, a common theme among the participants was as follows: Participants have varying experiences when an investigation determines to be a repeat offender, however, many participants consider unreported prior offenses and a male offender's victimization during an investigation into the sex crime because when an offender is caught for a sex crime, it is unlikely it's his first-time offending. Table 8 shows the codes, categories, and themes for this interview question.

Table 8

Interview Question #8	Code	Category	Theme
How often does an investigation into a male offender's sex crime determine to be a repeat offender?	Indicators, Notable, Unreported, Priors	Unreported past, High, Victimization	Participants have varying experiences when an investigation determines to be a repeat offender, however, many participants consider unreported prior offenses and a male offender's victimization during an investigation into the sex crime because when an offender is caught for a sex crime, it is unlikely it's his first-time offending.

### Interview Question 9

The ninth interview question was: If an investigation determines the male sex offender has recidivated, what are the different processes the investigation follows as opposed to a first-time offender? The participants all agreed that there are a few different processes the investigation follows as opposed to a first-time offender. The initial response to a sex crime and standardized steps would remain the same. If an initial response to a sex crime leads to the discovery of DNA, the national databases would be more useful to the participants than they would be for a first-time offender. The investigation would follow the process based on the DNA results.

The participants noted that they would utilize other interviewing techniques on a recidivated offender. They stated they can find relationships and build rapport quickly

with a first-time offender than a repeat offender. Repeat offenders may be more reserved in an interview because they may have admitted to a sex offense the first time they were convicted, leaving the offender to blame the investigator for causing the confession.

Participant 6 stated:

“We’re a little more cautious. Now it’s more of they’re very savvy. They’re a little bit more educated with things.”

The participants agreed that they would review the prior offenses and case files of the offender. This allows them to direct the interview in a certain way. The participants stated they would bring past cases involving the offender into the interview room.

Participant 3 stated:

“They’ve been through the system, they’ve been through the classes, and they know what to say. So, it makes it harder for us. But if you could use it as a tactic to get to them, that’s the way to do it.”

Another participant described this method as a theme to present to the offender and use prior cases to build rapport and direct the interview to find the offender's help to finally stop recidivating.

A major investigative process for repeat offenders as opposed to first-time offenders is sentencing. The participants agreed that they would document prior bad acts in their case that will lead to stricter sentencing of the offender. All the participants agreed that sentencing is different for recidivated offenders than it is for a first-time offenders. Participant 8 stated:

“If we can establish a very strong pattern, if there are a lot of similarities, we could use it as part of the affidavit, and obviously in court as a prior bad act, and then on with sentencing.”

After coding and categorizing each participant's response to this interview question, a common theme among the participants was as follows: Participants report the initial investigation remains similar; however, DNA databases would be useful, along with different interviewing techniques for a re-offender because an offender may attempt to manipulate the system to avoid conviction. Participants attempt to prove prior bad acts and patterns against the offender to enhance sentencing for recidivating during the conviction process. Table 9 shows the codes, categories, and themes for this interview question.

Table 9

<b>Interview Question #9</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>

<p>If an investigation determines the male sex offender has recidivated, what are the different processes the investigation follows as opposed to a first-time offender?</p>	<p>Same, Interview, Priors</p>	<p>Techniques, Sentencing, Bad Acts</p>	<p>Participants report the initial investigation remains similar; however, DNA databases would be useful, along with different interviewing techniques for a re-offender because an offender may attempt to manipulate the system to avoid conviction. Participants attempt to prove prior bad acts and patterns against the offender to enhance sentencing for recidivating during the conviction process.</p>
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### Interview Question 10

The tenth interview question was: Based on your training and experience, how often do you recognize recidivism when investigating sex crimes by male sex offenders?

The participants expressed varying opinions on recognizing recidivism based on their training and experience. Participant 6 stated:

“It’s something we’re always looking at. I don’t think it’s something that we’re never constantly aware of. There’s currently one where we’re working on where the victim was 16 years old. The suspect recorded the sexual interaction. She didn’t want the mom to know. She was a troubled youth to begin with and that’s been a year going process, and in that time period of trying to get her to the right place. We took one look at the suspect and knew he was exhibiting grooming behavior. So, the fear was there were other victims. Sure enough, we started

getting other reports and they were the same type of females of the same demographics that were at risk.”

Participant 12 stated:

“I would say it’s a very high percentage. Normally, if we have a person that’s committing these crimes, I normally have a list of suspects because I know that this person was arrested prior to this for doing this certain crime. They normally stay on the same pattern.”

Participant 9 stated:

“I would say more often than not.”

Some participants specifically recognize recidivism based on an offender’s criminal history and if they are on Megan’s Law. Some participants recognize recidivism through behavioral patterns throughout the investigation and during the interview. The participants acknowledge the possibility of there being undocumented, unreported sexual assaults committed by the sex offender. One participant described a child rape case by a fifty-year-old offender. While the offender did not have a criminal history revealing a past conviction, the participant considers this rape was not the first sexual assault committed by the male offender at fifty years old. Participant 2 stated:

“I’m looking for past prior instances in every sex case and every interview. Even after you get a confession, you’re opening the door for them to tell you about any other prior incidents so that you can appropriately address all of the criminal behavior.”

After coding and categorizing each participant's response to this interview question, a common theme among the participants was as follows: Although participants have varying opinions on recognizing recidivism based on their training and experience, participants recognize recidivism through behavioral patterns discovered throughout the investigation and during the interview with the offender to reveal past undocumented offenses the offender committed but did not get caught. Table 10 shows the codes, categories, and themes for this interview question.

Table 10

<b>Interview Question #10</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>
Based on your training and experience, how often do you recognize recidivism when investigating sex crimes by male sex offenders?	History, Interview, Uncaught, Patterns	Very Often, Often, Somewhat	Although participants have varying opinions on recognizing recidivism based on their training and experience, participants recognize recidivism through behavioral patterns discovered throughout the investigation and during the interview with the offender to reveal past undocumented offenses the offender committed but did not get caught.

### **Interview Question 11**

The eleventh interview question was: How often are your sex crime investigations involving male offenders? All the participants explained that their sex crime investigations are involving male offenders most of the time. Some participants have only

experienced male offenders throughout their careers as sex crime investigators. Each participant provided an approximation of 85% - 100% of their sex crime cases consisting of male offenders. Participant 9 stated:

“I would say that I could speak for certain, all of my investigation shave been male offenders.”

Participant 10 stated:

“Male offenders, I would say the vast majority of the time.”

Participant 7 stated:

“Probably 95% plus.”

Participant 14 stated:

“Probably 96 to 98% of the time. Although I do think it’s underreported.”

Participant 4 stated:

“I’ve had one female. One. I would easily say 98% of the time, 95% of the time.”

After coding and categorizing each participant's response to this interview question, a common theme among the participants was as follows: Participants report their sex crime investigations to involve male offenders approximately 85-100 percent of the time and seldom involve female offenders. Table 11 shows the codes, categories, and themes for this interview question.

Table 11

<b>Interview Question #11</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>

How often are your sex crime investigations involving male offenders?	100%, 99%, 96%, 95%, 85%	All the time, the Vast majority, mostly	Participants report their sex crime investigations to involve male offenders approximately 85-100 percent of the time and seldomly involve female offenders.
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### Interview Question 12

The twelfth interview question was: How does a sex offender's relationships with family members and peers over the course of their lives have an effect on their recidivism? The participants agreed that sex offenders' relationships throughout their lives may have an impactful effect on their recidivism. Participant 3 stated:

“It’s huge. I don’t know if I’ve ever talked to a single offender that wasn’t offended upon or just grew up in a terrible situation. Now I’m sure that there’s your golden goose out there that grew up in a million dollar mansion with great parents that has become a rapist. But we don’t deal with them here. Parents are drug addicts; dad’s friends did something to them. So they grew up thinking that it was OK to do it. So, these offenders have seen it, they’ve been hurt themselves, and then they’re doing it to their kids. And that’s how it goes.”

One participant also noted that some sex offenders who have positive relationships and family upbringings as they grow up still commit sex crimes. It depends on the person and their urges. In addition, sex offending was described by many participants as a “learned behavior” and an offender’s past victimization could play a role in their recidivism. Participant 2 followed up with:

“It has a huge impact. So they’re observing these problem sexual behaviors from people who influenced them in their lives.”

After coding and categorizing each participant's response to this interview question, a common theme among the participants was as follows: Participants explain that a sex offender's relationships throughout their lives have an impactful effect on their recidivism, though it varies, the offender's childhood or past victimization can reflect a learned behavior which may influence his recidivism. Table 12 shows the codes, categories, and themes for this interview question.

Table 12

<b>Interview Question #12</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>
How does a sex offender’s relationships with family members and peers over the course of their lives have an effect on their recidivism?	Victimization, Upbringing, Depends, Learned Behaviors	Impactful, Childhood, Varies	Participants explain that sex offenders' relationships throughout their lives have an impactful effect on their recidivism, though it varies, the offender's childhood or past victimization can reflect a learned behavior that may influence his recidivism.

### **Interview Question 13**

The thirteenth interview question was: In investigating sex crimes, do you consider the strong social bonds an offender may have? Such as church, family, etc.

Participants consider the strong social bonds an offender may have in varying degrees.

One participant explained the social bonds are often not considered in their investigations. Participant 5 stated:

“I don’t really care if they are transient with absolutely no ties or an upstanding citizen with a good home life and present themselves to be a model person.”

Participant 14 considers social bonds as a major part of their investigation of the sex

crimes. Participant 14 stated:

“Oh, God yeah. There are victims all over the place.”

Strong social bonds are considered by some participants when investigating the background of the offender. Social bonds are considered during an investigation as a means of gathering more information and demographics of the individual. Some participants explained that the social bonds an offender has would be considered more depending on the type of sex crime. For example, one participant explained if an investigation leads to a clergy member being a suspect, then the strong social bonds of the church would be considered in the investigation. Participant 2 considers the strong social bonds an offender may have and stated:

“So those social bonds, whether it be church or family, are important to them.

Those can be ways that you can develop themes to elicit a confession.”

After coding and categorizing each participant's response to this interview question, a common theme among the participants was as follows: Participants consider the strong social bonds an offender may have to understand the offender’s demographics and may be used to gather information on the offender to better identify the types of

interactions he has with others. Table 13 shows the codes, categories, and themes for this interview question.

Table 13

<b>Interview Question #13</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>
In investigating sex crimes, do you consider the strong social bonds an offender may have? Such as church, family, etc.	Considered, Background, Information	Depends, Techniques, Demographics	Participants consider the strong social bonds an offender may have to understand the offender's demographics and may be used to gather information on the offender to better identify the types of interactions he has with others.

#### **Interview Question 14**

The fourteenth interview question was: How do these bonds direct your investigation? The participants explained that strong social bonds may direct an investigation by drawing connections to the offender in a case. Participant 12 described how social bonds simplify a case. This participant stated:

“Sometimes you have a suspect that wants to repent and feels bad for what they do, so they do confess. It does assist with the investigation because there was a family connection.”

The participants can use these social bonds to direct their investigation during the interview process. The participants can establish what the offender's strongest social bonds are and use them as a way to strategize the interview. Participant 5 stated:

“If they have more family connections, then that’s more people I can interview to try to get more evidence and things of that nature.”

Overall, these bonds can enhance the investigation and allow the participants to build rapport with the offender. Participant 2 said:

“I call it a commitment to truthfulness. It’s like a psychological ploy, to try to get this person to feel obligated to be truthful with me. And by that point, I’ve already established what the strongest bonds are in their life.”

After coding and categorizing each participant's response to this interview question, a common theme among the participants was as follows: Participants explain these bonds direct their investigation as a way to strategize the interview process to build connections with the strongest bonds in the offender's life to uncover the truth. Table 14 shows the codes, categories, and themes for this interview question.

Table 14

<b>Interview Question #14</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>
How do these bonds direct your investigation?	Interviews, Strategize, Evidence	Technique, Connection, Enhances	Participants explain these bonds direct their investigation as a way to strategize the interview process to build connections with the strongest bonds in the offender's life to uncover the truth.

### Interview Question 15

The fifteenth interview question was: If an offender is known to you but hasn't been necessarily identified, do you look at those social bonds as positive or negative? The participants had varying responses to this interview question. Some participants decided they view the social bonds from a positive outlook because it can direct an investigation and lead to identifying an offender. Identifying one's social bonds can connect an investigator with the identity of the offender. Some participants remained neutral with this question and stated they don't find the social bonds to be either positive or negative. Participant 14 stated:

“I consider it as an investigative direction.”

The participants described their sex crime investigations as ongoing and said these investigations will never stop occurring, therefore, any investigative lead that may discover the identity of the offender, is a lead worth following. Participant 5 stated:

“It just doesn't stop. It's just like an open faucet.”

After coding and categorizing each participant's response to this interview question, a common theme among the participants was as follows: Overall, the participants describe the social bonds as positive to determine an investigative direction and they explain that sex crimes are ongoing, therefore recognizing an offender's social connections can play a significant role in the investigation. Table 15 shows the codes, categories, and themes for this interview question.

Table 15

Interview Question #15	Code	Category	Theme

If an offender is known to you but hasn't been necessarily identified, do you look at those social bonds as positive or negative?	Varies, Both, Doesn't stop, Direction	Positive, Neutral, Ongoing	Overall, the participants describe the social bonds as positive to determine an investigative direction and they explain that sex crimes are ongoing, therefore recognizing an offender's social connections can play a significant role in the investigation.
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### Summary

In chapter 4, I provided a detailed explanation of the research questions and interview questions of the study. The participants provided thorough detail that explains male sex offender recidivism may impact a sex crime investigation based on patterns left by an offender that are discovered throughout the investigation. Furthermore, most of the participants agreed that male sex offender recidivism determines an investigative direction and alters an investigation in the form of an approach.

In chapter 5 I will provide a comprehensive review of the interpretation of the findings in this study. The following chapter will also provide an overview of the study's limitations, recommendations, and conclusions.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

This study sought to explore how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations. The participants invited were invited based on job descriptions and duties. The criteria were to be a law enforcement professional and to investigate sex crimes. Specifically, the selection of the law enforcement professionals included those who had the duty to follow procedure to investigate sex crimes. The law enforcement professionals were interviewed to gather direct knowledge and experience of sex crime investigations to determine how male sex offender recidivism impacts these cases. The study used a qualitative research method and a content analysis plan. A total of 15 law enforcement professionals participated in the study.

The study followed a qualitative approach using face-to-face interviews with the law enforcement professionals who investigate sex crimes. A basic qualitative inquiry approach was used because the research aimed to gather a better understanding through direct experience of the participants. Furthermore, this approach was suitable for the research because the goal of the study was to investigate the subject matter from a particular perspective for the purpose of obtaining truthful reporting and meaningful understanding in the responses (California State University, n.d.). Through analysis of the data, theme findings were produced from each research question.

This chapter discusses the key findings of the study relayed in Chapter 4 and compares the results to the literature review discussed in Chapter 2. In addition, this chapter discusses the application of the theoretical/conceptual framework, discusses the

study's limitations, and provides recommendations for future research. This chapter discusses positive social change implications followed by a study conclusion.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The research outlined in the literature review revealed minimal research conducted on this topic. The findings of this study expanded the knowledge within the discipline from a distinctive viewpoint, law enforcement professionals who investigate sex crimes. The participants believed that most, if not all, of their sex crime investigations involve male offenders. The participants remained open minded when considering the sex crime being investigated to be perpetrated by a repeat offender based on differing factors. Factors varied among participants that included a suspect's criminal history. Many participants describe underreporting to be a major issue when investigating these crimes. It was explained that a prior conviction may not appear on a criminal history, but consider it is not the first time an offender has committed a sex crime.

Male sexual offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigation by directing the investigation towards a known male offender. Participants explained they may recognize patterns and behaviors that are identified at the crime scene and from the victim's recounts of the act. Recognizing these patterns may direct the investigation towards an already known offender. Additionally, this alters the approach to the sex crime investigation by focusing the direction on one offender based on known behaviors to determine if he committed the crime.

Sex crime investigations are affected by male sex offender recidivism through the interview process. Participants agreed the interview process is different when it involves

a repeat offender because the repeat offender is already aware of how the process works. Many participants discussed a repeat offender being more reserved and unwilling to confess in an interview. To overcome this, participants strategize the interview to appear favorable to the repeat offender and guide him towards a rehabilitative perspective in an attempt to gain a confession. Participants prepare for an interview of a repeat offender by reviewing past cases and convictions.

Recidivism in male sexual offenders may play a more significant role in a sex crime investigation through the conviction process. Male sex offender recidivism may have impact during an active investigation, but also impacts the investigation during the conviction process, more specifically during sentencing of the offender. Participants believe that a significant role in a sex crime investigation occurs through the conviction process because investigators aim to prove prior bad acts by the offender. Prior bad acts are based on the offender's past conviction and known sexually deviant behaviors. These acts are brought to the court's attention by the law enforcement professionals prior to determining sentencing. Investigators aim to prove the offender's prior bad acts record to enhance penalties for repeat behaviors. The participants revealed ways male sex offender recidivism can impact the sex crime investigations. However, they have not revealed any ways the investigator's initial response or beginning approach to a sex crime investigation is impacted by male sex offender recidivism.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for the study followed Hirschi's social bond theory. Travis Hirschi's social bond theory is also referred to as social control theory and has

proven to be a model concept in criminology. According to the social bond theory, it is theorized that criminal behavior requires criminal motivation, in some way. This theory suggests that individuals act in the kind of selfish and aggressive manners that lead them to criminal conduct (Hirschi, 1969, p. 55). Hirschi determined these delinquent behaviors to be part of human nature and individuals engage in criminal acts because they lack the control of these urges. Hirschi identified bonds that people will conform to over time and will control a person's behavior when being enticed to participate in criminal activity.

Hirschi's social bond theory discusses the elements of social bonds to include attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief (Wickert, 2022). The element of attachment explains the strong bonds between relationships that exist with the individual's social environment. In this study, the participants supported the idea that a sex offender's relationship with family members and peers over the course of their lives have an effect on their recidivism. The idea that an offender's relationships with family members and peers effects their recidivism varies on differing factors from that individual. The participants individualize the offender's relationships over the course of their lives has. Furthermore, the offender's childhood and upbringing with family and peers is considered along with past victimization which can reflect a learned behavior that may influence his recidivism.

Hirschi describes the fourth factor in social bonding as belief. According to Wickert (2022), "This refers to the belief in and validity of the values and norms of the mainstream society. The more these values and norms have been internalized, the more difficult it becomes to violate them." The participants were asked if they consider the

strong social bonds an offender may have. One participant did not consider the social bonds an offender has during their investigation. The other participants described these strong social bonds as providing a better understanding of the offender's demographics, which helps an investigation. The participant discovers the offender's part in society through their investigation. The participant learns if the offender often engages in standard activities and identifies any self-discipline he has. The participants understand the offender may be a productive member of society, while still engaging in sexually deviant behaviors. However, the participants further develop an understanding of the offender's childhood to determine if his environment impacted his behaviors as an adult. These participants described the bonds as useful when identifying the types of interactions, the offender has with others to provide different viewpoints to the investigation.

The participants explained that strong social bonds may direct an investigation by drawing connections to the offender in a case. The participants supported the idea that these bonds may direct an investigation as a way to strategize their investigation. Strategizing an investigation involves directing the investigator's focus towards a specific angle to establish reasonable grounds against the suspect to prove the suspect committed the crime. The participants suggested organizing their conversation with the suspect around the social bonds the suspect has. Identifying the suspect's social bonds allow the investigator to identify the attachments the suspect has to conventional society. The bonds become a critical aspect to an investigation for the participants during a discussion with the suspect. Furthermore, the participants described the strong social bonds can

direct an investigation primarily through the interview process so the investigators can build connections with the offender with the goal of reaching a confession. While the participants had varying responses to viewing these social bonds as positive or negative, they agreed that these bonds provide an investigative direction. The social bonds can play a significant role in the investigation once the social bonds are recognized as forming a connection with the investigation and the offender.

Using the concepts of Hirschi's social bond theory, I found that law enforcement investigators view strong social bonds as an investigative technique to guide their direction and to learn more about the offender. "Travis Hirschi claims that social bonds like attachment, commitment, involvement and belief prevent acts to behave deviantly" (Wickert, 2022). The participants suggested Hirschi's social bonds have a significant impact on an offender's sexual behaviors. For example, the social bond element of attachment is significant to an investigation. The participants aim to understand the relationship that exists between the offender and his social environment. This relationship may have a substantial impact on the offender's deviant behavior because these relationships have affected the offender's learned behaviors during his adolescent years. The participants describe the attachments to the offender's social environment to be impactful to his sexual behavior and recidivism. An offender may have observed deviant sexual behaviors from a young age through their attachments. The offender's attachments are people who influenced him over the course of his life and may impact his sexual behaviors as an adult.

The participants discussed recognizing patterns during an investigation based on the offender's upbringing and past victimization that is discovered mainly through an interview with the offender. The patterns identified by the offender may include the type of sexual offense he is committing. The participants discussed mimicked behaviors from the offender. For example, if a sex offender was abused by his father as a child, this learned behavior may result in the offender to grow up and abuse his children. An investigator aims to learn about the offender and attempt to understand the offender's thought process. The participants explained they gather this information primarily during the interview stage. The offender's social bonds are learned and discussed to the investigator. Hirschi's social bonds of attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief and often discovered during the interview phase because the offender speaks of his background.

When a sex offender begins to discuss his attachments and his upbringing, the participants realize the offender may not have learned the values and norms of conventional society. The participants suggest the sex offender's social bonds impact his recidivism because the values and beliefs to obey are not learned. Learning a sex offender's social bonds is impactful to an investigation and recidivism because it can identify whether or not the offender has deviant sexual behavior internalized from adolescent years. This learned sexual behavior may affect the sex offender's recidivism because he formed attachments and was influenced by this activity from individuals he trusted as an adolescent, therefore resisting the deviant sexual impulses may fail.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The quality of qualitative research relies heavily on the amount of time for each interview, which could be influenced by individual skill or personal biases (Anderson, 2010). Additionally, there is the possibility that the results of the study are limited geographically because the same type of investigative process for sex crimes could differ in a different region or different law enforcement agency. The results of this study were limited to the Northeastern area of Pennsylvania. Also, the participants for this study were specifically based on job duties relating to sex crime investigations, therefore, the ability to have equal demographic representation was not formally arranged. The sample of participants in this study was not illustrative to represent a diversity of ethnic backgrounds and gender. Limitations to the study also includes sample size. While there is no specified standard to appropriate sample size in qualitative research, this study's sample size may be perceived as weak. Generally, the volume of data is limited to interpretation and not strengthened by any quantitative examination (Anderson, 2010).

### **Recommendations**

There are recommendations for future research that can be made. This is a newly researched topic with a lack of current literature for this exploration and suggestions for additional research is expansive. Due to the sample size and the population representing one demographic region of Pennsylvania, a larger sample size is recommended, to include future research in other states. A larger sample size is recommended because the study's results are drawn from one region in Pennsylvania. The study's results are drawn

from the Northeastern area of Pennsylvania, therefore experience with this topic outside of this region is recommended to be researched.

The results are drawn from the experience of law enforcement investigators who similarly investigate sex crimes from being in one region. It is recommended to expand on the geographical area for future research because the investigative process for sex crimes may differ in other regions. Expanding on this topic to other geographical areas and states may reveal data to be comparable to this study and further validate its findings. In addition, it is recommended that additional law enforcement agencies be researched. While this study focused on police department law enforcement investigators, it is recommended that the study extend participants to outside agencies, including but not limited to, Federal Bureau of Investigations, District Attorney's Office, and the Attorney General's Office.

There were no restrictions on the participant's years of service. In addition, there were no restrictions on the participant's age. It is recommended that there be a minimum number of years served for the participants in the criteria. This will also set a basic experience level and may increase the participant's ages to a common group. This standard may increase investigators experience with this topic, overall enhancing the findings of the study. There was a large gap between each participant's experience. Data analysis showed a potential relationship between years of service with overall recognition of recidivism during an investigation and experience with recidivated male offenders. The participants with extended years of service were able to provide more personal experiences and reflect extensive experience with recidivated sex offenders.

Participants' gender for this study were not restricted. It is recommended to include a gender criterion when seeking participants. This study mostly encompassed the experience of male law enforcement investigators and there was one female participant. Balancing the gender in future research may conclude additional findings based on the direct experiences between male and female investigators because they may differ.

It is recommended that a quantitative research study be conducted to determine if a relationship exists between the participant's age, years of service, and experience with recidivism in male sex offenders. Future research collected should compare results to this study's findings to further develop this topic. Further exploration of these recommendations could provide a new perspective on how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations.

### **Implications**

The results of this study explore how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations. All the law enforcement professionals displayed passion and commitment to investigating sex crimes thoroughly. As expected, interviews with the law enforcement professionals who directly investigate sex crimes provided new insight into recidivism and how recidivism impacts their investigations. The law enforcement professionals were able to provide professional experience in this field and determine a lack of standard procedure in an investigation when recidivism is recognized.

The results of the study suggest that the investigators determine behaviors and patterns to recognize recidivism individually, without utilizing different practices or protocols within the agency. Furthermore, the results conclude there are no different

practices within the agency to impact a sex crime investigation unless initiated by the individual investigator. It is suggested law enforcement investigators receive training in familiarizing themselves with recidivism in male offenders.

In addition, the findings may be important for practice and policy during the initial investigation of the sex crime. Recognition of patterns and behaviors may be observed during a sex crime investigation and direct the investigative path to an efficient conclusion. Implementing practices and protocol for sex crime investigations include a shared intelligence database with outside law enforcement agencies to review behavioral patterns in a suspect to increase recognition of recidivism. This may reveal actions of a serial sex offender to prove a justified prosecution. Also, implementing this practice may result in higher clearance rates which serve justice to the victims and their families.

Based on the participant's experience, a male offender who is convicted of a sex crime is most likely not his first offense. Knowing this, agencies may consider updating procedures when investigating sex crimes to reflect recidivism and integrate the mindset of recidivism when conducting these investigations. Training law enforcement investigators to consider recidivism during a sex crime investigation may provide more accurate recidivism statistics. Overall, this can inform other agencies to revise current protocol to enhance investigative techniques. Revised procedures for sex crime investigations can provide an increased understanding of recidivism. In addition, revised procedures can support consideration of the offender's social bonds to assist in building rapport and learning more about the offender to conduct thorough investigations to

readily identify patterns if recidivism occurs. A revised approach could enhance safety and include a positive impact to social change among the communities.

While this study suggests the findings are important to policy and practice, subsequent research is suggested. The quality of qualitative research relies heavily on the amount of time for each interview, which could be influenced by individual skill or personal biases (Anderson, 2010). It is suggested that future research implement stricter criteria for the participants. The criteria may include a minimum year of service as a law enforcement investigator. Setting a standard to include a minimum time as an investigator may enhance future qualitative research findings. The participant may be likely to spend more time discussing their experiences and have more encounters on this topic in an interview than a law enforcement investigator with minimal years of experience.

Future research suggests arranging equal demographic representation. While this study focused on job descriptions, subsequent research may benefit additional findings from having an equal number of demographics among the participants. This study proposes future research to consider a larger sample size. While this study's sample size reached saturation, a larger sample size in future research may provide more precise findings to generalize the outcomes. In addition to a larger sample size for this research topic, expanding on its geographical area may provide additional experience. Law enforcement investigators from different geographical areas may have differing experience and contrasting investigative techniques, making subsequent research beneficial to evaluate. Future research should compare its findings to this study to

discover new data to focus on implementing effective policy and procedure for a law enforcement investigator who is investigating sex crimes.

### **Conclusion**

This study was designed to explore how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations. Study findings revealed that male sex offender recidivism impacts an investigative direction as opposed to a male who has not recidivated. Additionally, male sex offender recidivism may influence an investigation into a sex crime by directing the investigation towards a known male offender if certain patterns and methods are discovered. It was learned that the investigative direction when the sex crime being investigated involves a repeat offender alters during the interview process. It was determined the interview process is strategized in a way to support the offender and guide him towards a rehabilitative perspective in an attempt to gain a confession. Male sex offender recidivism may have impact during an active investigation, but also impacts the investigation during a conviction process, more specifically during sentencing of the offender. Male sex offender recidivism impacts the conviction process because investigators aim to prove the offender's prior bad acts record for recidivating to enhance penalties for repeat behavior. The strong social bonds an offender may have allows investigators to use the social bonds as a focus point during an investigation. Social bonds are important when building rapport with an offender and determining if an offender's upbringing relates to his recidivism. The law enforcement professionals in this study provided an opportunity for the development of agency procedures when investigating sex crimes.

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## Appendix A

## CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study about sex crime investigations and male sex offender recidivism. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study seeks 15-20 volunteers who are:

- Law enforcement professionals
- Those who investigate sex crimes

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Jessica Muccione, who is a doctoral student studying criminal justice at Walden University. You might already know the researcher as a law enforcement officer, but this role is separate from that.

**Study Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to explore how male sexual offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations.

**Procedures:**

This study will involve you completing the following steps:

- Take part in a confidential, audio recorded interview that will take approximately 45-60 minutes
- Review a typed transcript of your interview to make any corrections if needed (email option available)
- Speak to the researcher one more time after the interview to hear the researcher’s interpretations of your responses as well as share your feedback. This will take approximately 20-30 minutes.

Here are some sample questions:

- How does male sex offender recidivism influence your investigation to a sex crime?
- How often does an investigation into a male offender sex crime determine to be a repeat offender?

- If an investigation determines the male sex offender has recidivated, what are the different processes the investigation follows as opposed to a first-time offender?

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Research should only be done with those who freely volunteer. So everyone involved will respect your decision to join or not. No one within your organization will treat you differently based on whether you volunteer or not.

If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. The study is requesting approximately 15-20 volunteers. Please note the possibility that not all volunteers may be contacted to take part in this study. The researcher will follow up with all volunteers to let them know whether they were selected for this study.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Being in this study could involve some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life such as sharing sensitive information. With the protections in place, this study would pose minimal risk to your wellbeing. This study may involve a sensitive topic that could trigger distress or PTSD from a previous investigation. A confidential helpline for members of US law enforcement only is 1800-267-5463 if you need any support.

This study offers no direct benefits to individual volunteers. The aim of this study is to benefit society by determining whether male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations and if yes, which policy implications are more effective for these active investigations. Once the analysis is complete, the researcher will share the overall results by emailing each participant a summary. When the researcher graduates, the study's results will be automatically posted online in Scholarworks (a publication of Walden University research). The Scholarworks link will be shared with each volunteer as well.

**Payment:**

A thank you gift will be provided to each participant in the form of a \$10 Dunkin Donuts gift card. Each participant will receive this thank you gift once the interviews are completed.

**Privacy:**

The researcher is required to protect your privacy. Your identity will be kept anonymous aside from the researcher's knowledge of your name, within the limits of the law. The researcher will not link you're your responses to your contact information. The researcher is only allowed to share your identity as needed with Walden University supervisors (who are also required to protect your privacy) or with authorities if court-ordered (very rare). The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. If the researcher were to share this dataset with

another researcher in the future, the dataset would contain no identifiers so this would not involve another round of obtaining informed consent. Data will be kept secure by including password protection, data encryption, use of codes in place of names, and storing names separately from the data. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You can ask questions of the researcher by telephone (5709778751) or email (Jessica.Muccione@waldenu.edu). If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant or any negative parts of the study, you can call Walden University's Research Participant Advocate at 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here**. It expires on **IRB will enter expiration date**.

You might wish to retain this consent form for your records. You may ask the researcher or Walden University for a copy at any time using the contact info above.

**Obtaining Your Consent**

If you feel you understand the study and wish to volunteer, please indicate your consent by stating "I consent."

## Appendix B

### **Seeking Study Participants:**

Interviewing law enforcement professionals who investigate sex crimes (\$10 thank you gift at conclusion)

### **Email message:**

There is a new study about the experiences about how male sex offender recidivism impacts sex crime investigations. For this study, you are invited to describe your experiences investigating sex crimes.

### **About the study:**

- One 45-60 minute in-person interview that will be audiorecorded
- You would receive a \$10 Dunkin Donuts gift card as a thank you
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not use your name

### **Volunteers must meet these requirements:**

- Investigate sex crimes
- A law enforcement professional

This interview is part of the doctoral study for Jessica Muccione, a Ph.D. student at Walden University. Interviews will take place during November 2022.

Please respond to this email to let the researcher know of your interest. You are welcome to forward it to others who might be interested.

## Appendix C

### Interview Questionnaire

- Tell me about your law enforcement and related experience to the criminal justice field.
- Explain how you became an investigator of sex crimes.
- Tell me about the role of an investigator when examining sex crimes as opposed to investigating non-sex crimes.
- What is the most difficult part about investigating sex crimes?
- Explain your initial response to a sex crime and explain if each investigation follows the same steps.
- When you investigate sex crimes, do you consider that this may be a repeat offender?
- How does male sex offender recidivism influence your investigation to a sex crime?
- How often does an investigation into a male offender sex crime determine to be a repeat offender?
- If an investigation determines the male sex offender has recidivated, what are the different processes the investigation follows as opposed to a first-time offender?
- Based on your training and experience, how often do you recognize recidivism when investigating sex crimes by male sex offenders?
- How often are your sex crime investigations involving male offenders?

- How does a sex offender's relationships with family members and peers over the course of their lives have an effect on their recidivism?
- In investigating sex crimes, do you consider the strong social bonds an offender may have? Such as, church, family, etc.
- How do these bonds direct your investigation?
- If an offender is known to you but hasn't been necessarily identified, do you look at those social bonds as positive or negative?