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# The Relationship Between Sexual Abuse and Juvenile Sexual Offending When Moderated by Family Dysfunction

Dahlia Kaplan-Regan  
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# Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Dahlia Kaplan-Regan

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Walden University  
2022

Abstract

The Relationship Between Sexual Abuse and Juvenile Sexual Offending When  
Moderated by Family Dysfunction

by

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MA, University of Central Florida, 2006

BS, University of Central Florida, 2003

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

Walden University

November 2022

## Abstract

Sexual abuse and victimization can have long-term negative ramifications on victims, their families, and the community. Juveniles account for a notable portion of persons who engage in sexual offending behaviors; therefore, knowing more about the pathway that leads to juvenile sexual offending is beneficial in preventing sexual abuse and promoting community safety. Social cognitive theory was applied to the pathway of juvenile sexual offending behaviors to develop insight into how this behavior may be learned and to inform the selection of variables for this research. The key research question explored how traits of family dysfunction moderated the relationship between childhood sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending behaviors. After initial analysis to evaluate the connection between history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending behavior, variables of family dysfunction were added to see whether they strengthen this relationship. Due to differences in pathways between male and female juvenile sexual offending behaviors, data for males and females were analyzed separately. Using archival data from a southern state's department of juvenile justice, data were organized into two groups of 600 males and 600 females, each containing 300 juveniles with a sexual offense and 300 without. Results from the analysis indicated a statistically significant relationship between sexual abuse and sexual offending in both male and female groups, but family dysfunction was not found to have a moderating effect for either group. Although no moderation effect was indicated, elements of this study may contribute to future research in the field. Findings may be used by psychologists to better serve their clients, thereby contributing to positive social change.

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## Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents and my husband, who have given me the courage and the confidence to embark on this academic journey. My parents instilled in me the value of education and importance of helping others, which ignited the passion I have for psychology and my enthusiasm to always keep learning. My husband is my rock; he helped me stay on course and achieve my goals. They have been a limitless source of support, encouragement, and strength throughout this process. With all my love, thank you for making this possible.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In the United States, there are over 460,000 sexual assaults yearly, with someone being sexually victimized every 68 seconds (RAINN Statistics, 2020). Approximately 1 out of 6 women and 1 out of 33 men will experience an attempted rape or rape at some point throughout their lifetime (RAINN Statistics, 2022). In a study comprised of 4,665 adolescents in a northern state's community public schools spanning Grades 7–12, taken over the course of 2009 to 2013, over half of the females ( $n = 2383$ ) and more than one in three males ( $n = 2282$ ) reported being sexually victimized, with one in four males reported perpetrating a sexual offense (Ngo et al., 2018). Sexual abuse and sexual violence impacts victims in a myriad of ways within one or more areas of physical, emotional, and psychological functioning. The most commonly reported impacts of sexual violence on victims are depression, posttraumatic stress, and substance abuse (RAINN Statistics, 2022). More victims of sexual assault or rape experience moderate to severe psychological distress compared to victims of any other criminal behavior (RAINN Statistics, 2022). The prevalence of sexual violence in the United States, as well as the pervasive detrimental impact to victims, leads to the importance of research on the etiology of sexual crimes to develop effective prevention strategies and treatment interventions to reduce sexual offense behaviors and increase community safety.

Juveniles account for roughly 18% of all sexual offending behaviors committed in the United States annually (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020). Moreover, research has indicated juvenile pathways to sexual offending behaviors vary from their adult counterparts (McKillop et al., 2018), as well as different pathways among male and

female juveniles who sexually offend (Hunter et al, 2006), thereby creating an additional need for research to specifically explore male and female juvenile sexual offending behaviors. The current research contributes to the field of knowledge on the pathways to male and female juvenile sexual offending by exploring the connection between a history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending as moderated by characteristics of family dysfunction. This chapter is an introduction to my research, providing background on the current state of the research on pathways to juvenile sexual offending, a description of the gap in the literature this research addressed, the theoretical lens used to select and interpret the characteristics of family dysfunction, the aims of the research as well as limitations, and its potential to create positive social change.

### **Background of the Study**

A surge in juvenile crimes in the 1990s served as a catalyst for increased research on juvenile delinquency as well as reforms to juvenile justice practices to include juveniles who engaged in sexual offending behaviors to be placed on the sex offender registry (Letourneau et al., 2018). Legislation applying the use of the sex offender registry to juveniles began late in the 1990s and early 2000s (Letourneau et al., 2018). A federal mandate in 2006, the Adam Walsh Act and the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA), required the registration of youth from the age of 14 and above who have been adjudicated for sexual assault, or a sexual offense classified as more serious, to register as a sex offender (Letourneau et al., 2018). The implementation of these policies to be more inclusive with juvenile sex offender registration and notification policies was based on the theory of deterrence; however, there is a lack of

empirical evidence that these policies have a deterrent effect (Najdowski et al., 2016). Furthermore, research on the impact of the sex offender registry on juveniles has indicated negative effects for juveniles in the areas of mental health, peer and family relationships, and school (Letourneau et al., 2018). Due to the potential detrimental ramifications of the sex offender registry on juveniles, combined with the lack of evidence indicating a deterrent effect, a better understanding of the factors that contribute to juvenile sexual offending behaviors is needed.

In further exploring juvenile sexual offending behaviors, social cognitive theory has led some researchers to explore the relationship between early childhood experiences with offending behaviors later in adolescence, otherwise referred to as the victim–offender overlap. In their research, van der Put and de Ruiter (2016) identified a relationship between a history of physical abuse and general criminal offending behaviors in juvenile males. Alain et al. (2018) also conducted research on the relationship between experiences of maltreatment in childhood and later criminal offending patterns. The findings from their analysis suggested a statistically significant relationship between histories of maltreatment and/or neglect and later criminal offending behaviors, which provided support for social cognitive theory in understanding the development of juvenile delinquency.

Taking a more in-depth evaluation of the victim–offender overlap, Miley et al.’s (2020) research assessed the relationship specifically between a history of physical abuse and future violent offending, a history of sexual abuse and future sexual offending, and a history of family substance abuse, and future substance abuse offending in juvenile males

involved in the Department of Juvenile Justice in Florida. Their findings indicated a relationship between physical abuse and violent offending as well as a relationship between sexual abuse and sexual offending, suggesting observations of specific types of behaviors coincide with similar offending behaviors.

Dalskley et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review of the research on childhood traumatic experiences of physical and sexual abuse as related to reoffending rates. The results of the systematic review indicated a relationship, albeit small, between reoffending behaviors and histories of physical and sexual abuse. The final indication from the systematic review was that in studies that controlled for other variables, identified as a confounding factor to physical and/or sexual abuse, such as emotional regulation and substance abuse, a decrease was found in the strength of the relationship between the history of abuse and reoffending, thereby suggesting that the ancillary variables commonly associated with abuse may have a stronger predictive relationship with reoffending behaviors. Levenson et al.'s (2017) research on juvenile sexual offending behaviors indicated family dynamics involving maltreatment and unhealthy relational patterns may play a prominent role in contributing to juvenile sexual offending behaviors. Levenson et al. suggested higher rates of family and household discord are found in juveniles who sexually offend. Further exploration of the relationship between family dynamic factors and juveniles who engaged in sexual offenses will assist in understanding the development of maladaptive behaviors.

In exploring the impact of family dynamics on juvenile offending behaviors, Yoder et al. (2019) suggested physical abuse and neglect as well as sexual abuse in the



family was related to an increase in the likelihood of serious juvenile delinquent behavior to include sexual offending. Furthermore, parental maltreatment and sibling victimization was associated with juvenile delinquency (van Berkel et al., 2018). Manzoni and Schwarzenegger (2019) suggested through their research findings that family relationships are stronger mediators than moral values or school relationships in mediating the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and juvenile delinquency. Research on the impact of domestic violence in the home on juvenile sexual offending found domestic violence increased the likelihood of juvenile sexual offending by six times (Ybarra & Thompson, 2018). Moreover, an increased prevalence of family discord described as problems with parental attachment and unhealthy family interactions, was associated with juveniles who engaged in sexual offending behaviors (Yoder et al., 2018a). From these research findings, the connection of family dynamics to juvenile delinquency, and more specifically sexual offending behaviors, can be seen and establishes the need to further evaluate how family dysfunction may moderate the connection between adverse childhood experiences and juvenile sexual offending.

Research on sexual recidivism is also pertinent to the topic of juvenile sexual offending in order to provide insight into additional factors influencing sexual offending behaviors. Barra et al. (2017) found that sexual recidivism was related to experiences of physical neglect in late childhood and sexual abuse during adolescence, and that experiences of abuse and neglect are a risk factor for sexual recidivism. Additionally, Ozkan et al. (2020) and Morais et al. (2018) suggested, based on their research findings, that juvenile sexual offending is the strongest predictive factor of sexual recidivism. The

significant impact of juvenile sexual offending behaviors on sexual recidivism, and the findings of adverse experiences being related to sexual recidivism, points to a critical need to understand factors contributing to initial juvenile sexual offending behaviors.

Overall, the findings within the current research support a connection between early adverse childhood experiences and sexual offending behaviors. However, findings on the specific factors that increase the likelihood of juvenile sexual offending in youth with a history of sexual abuse are inconsistent, and additional research has been recommended in this area. The research findings from Dalskley et al. (2021) translated into the main recommendation for future research, which was to further explore confounding variables of physical and sexual abuse such as substance use, unstable living environment, and emotional regulation skills. This recommendation for future research was consistent with a limitation noted in Miley et al. (2020), that stated the research did not fully evaluate the impact of other adverse childhood experiences as potentially moderating the relationship between specific forms of victimization and analogous offending behaviors. Similarly, van der Put and de Ruiter (2016) recommended future research to explore underlying factors associated with victimization and the relationship with later offending patterns. The gap in the literature identified to address in my research was the relationship between histories of sexual abuse and subsequent sexual offending behavior patterns in male and female juveniles as moderated by characteristics of family dysfunction.

### **Problem Statement**

As a result of the noteworthy portion of sexual offending behaviors that juveniles are responsible for, as well as juvenile sexual offending being the most significant predictor of sexual recidivism, and the potential relationship between childhood experiences and sexual offending, it is important to understand the factors that contribute to the development of male and female juvenile sexual offending. Additionally, prior research has indicated inconsistent findings regarding the relationship between sexual abuse histories and juvenile sexual offending, further prompting the need to conduct research. Furthermore, differences between males and females noted in research regarding the pathways to juvenile sexual offending indicates a need for males and females to be analyzed separately.

From a social cognitive theory perspective, variables that may reinforce maladaptive behaviors or cognitive patterns developed from a history of abuse may contribute to the connection to juvenile sexual offending. Gaining a deeper understanding of risk factors associated with male and female juvenile sexual offending behaviors can assist in developing targeted interventions to apply towards prevention strategies, assessment of risk, and/or treatment of juvenile sexual offenders. Positive social change may be created from expanding knowledge on the role of family dynamics influencing juvenile sexual offending behaviors and lead to the development of prevention, assessment, and intervention strategies that will target factors found to moderate the relationship between sexual abuse history and male and female juvenile sexual offending.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to apply social cognitive theory in exploring the predictive relationship between a history of sexual abuse and male and female juvenile sexual offending as moderated by characteristics of family dysfunction in a sample of juveniles who entered the juvenile justice system in a southern state after being arrested for an offense. The independent variable, sexual abuse history, was defined as juveniles who have reported a history of sexual abuse. The dependent variables, male and female juvenile sexual offending behavior, were defined as male juveniles who have been arrested of at least one sexual offense behavior and female juveniles who have been arrested of at least one sexual offense behavior. The moderating variables were physical abuse, family violence, and parental separation/divorce. Physical abuse was defined as a physical injury, not caused by an accident, inflicted by a family member on the youth. Family violence was defined by the presence of verbal intimidation, yelling, heated arguments, threats of abuse, domestic violence, and witnessing violence in the home environment. Parental separation/divorce was defined as the absence of either the mother or the father from the family home.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The purpose of this study was to explore the predictive relationship between a history of sexual abuse and male and female juvenile sexual offending behaviors when moderated by characteristics of family dysfunction. Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory provided the framework for the selection of the moderating variables, which were believed to strengthen the relationship between sexual abuse history and later male

juvenile sexual offending. The research questions (labeled RQ1–RQ4) and hypotheses were constructed with the intent to explore these relationships.

RQ1: What was the relationship between history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending in males?

*H*<sub>0</sub>1: History of sexual abuse does not have a statistically significant relationship with juvenile sexual offending in males.

*H*<sub>1</sub>1: History of sexual abuse does have a statistically significant predictive relationship with juvenile sexual offending in males.

RQ2: How did traits of family dysfunction moderate the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and male juvenile sexual offending?

*H*<sub>0</sub>2: The presence of variables depicting family dysfunction does not have a statistically significant moderating effect on history of sexual abuse in predicting male juvenile sexual offending.

*H*<sub>1</sub>2: The presence of variables depicting family dysfunction was expected to strengthen the relationship between sexual abuse and male juvenile sexual offending.

RQ3: What was the relationship between history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending in females?

*H*<sub>0</sub>3: History of sexual abuse does not have a statistically significant relationship with juvenile sexual offending in females.

*H*<sub>1</sub>3: History of sexual abuse does have a statistically significant predictive relationship with juvenile sexual offending in females.

RQ4: How did traits of family dysfunction moderate the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and female juvenile sexual offending?

*H<sub>04</sub>*: The presence of variables depicting family dysfunction does not have a statistically significant moderating effect on history of sexual abuse in predicting female juvenile sexual offending.

*H<sub>14</sub>*: The presence of variables depicting family dysfunction was expected to strengthen the relationship between sexual abuse and female juvenile sexual offending.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The theory that provided a framework for my research was Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, which suggests that individuals learn behavior through observing the behaviors of others, referred to as modeling. As explained by Bandura, observational learning involves attentional processes, retention processes, production processes, and motivational processes that develop the individual's understanding of the behavior. Through these four processes, the behavior is organized, retained, processed, and decoded by the individual, which then translates to the likelihood of the behavior being repeated (Bandura, 1986); therefore, the reproduction of an observed behavior is extremely dependent on the individual.

There are multiple aspects of an individual that may influence the engagement in behaviors that have been previously observed. An individual's prior knowledge of the behavior influences the ability to retain the modeled behavior (Bandura, 1986). The frequency and duration of an individual's exposure to the modeled behavior is also

influential to whether the behavior will be repeated with increased frequency being more impactful than brief and limited observations (Bandura, 1986). Variations in an individual's capacity to retain and recall information after the modeled behavior is no longer present impacts whether the observation will be integrated into behavior (Bandura, 1986). How an individual encodes and organizes the modeled behavior into symbols, and whether those symbols are identified in other experiences or environments, plays a role in how, if, and when the model may be translated into individual behavior patterns (Bandura, 1986). Furthermore, associations an individual makes with the modeled behavior through reinforcements, rules, punishments, and rewards affects the individual's motivation to engage in the behavior (Bandura, 1986).

In applying Bandura's social cognitive theory to the development of juvenile sexual offending behaviors, it is proposed that juveniles exposed to unhealthy sexual behaviors and then exposed to additional maladaptive cognitive patterns may then demonstrate these patterns through sexually acting out (Burton & Meezan, 2004). For example, a child who experiences sexual victimization and then observes other maladaptive behaviors such as physical abuse or aggression in family interactions may be more prone to act out sexually. Social cognitive theory also assists in understanding how individuals with a history of sexual victimization may not engage in their own sexual offending behaviors based on the four processes of observational learning (Burton & Meezan, 2004). Theoretically, children who have a brief exposure to sexual victimization and are surrounded in a healthy environment able to observe healthy interactions such as respectful communication and nurturing behaviors, may then be less likely to

subsequently engage in sexual offending behaviors. The impact of an individual's ancillary observations and experiences to the modeled behavior contributes to the importance of researching additional factors in the family environment that may continue to reinforce unhealthy behavioral and cognitive patterns leading to juvenile sexual offending by a portion of juveniles who have been sexually victimized.

From a social cognitive theory perspective, the hypothesis of my research was that youth who were sexually victimized and were in a dysfunctional home environment characterized by physical abuse, family violence, and parental separation/divorce were more likely to engage in future unhealthy sexual behaviors as a result of increased opportunities for observing unhealthy behaviors and cognitive patterns. This hypothesis, rooted in social cognitive theory, informed the research questions for my research. Finally, the theoretical framework assisted in providing a structure for the data analysis and interpretation provided in Chapter 5. Further exploration of this theoretical framework is provided in the next chapter.

### **Nature of the Study**

The social problem explored in this study was juvenile sexual offending. Specifically, the identified problem was the deficit in understanding the development of male and female juvenile sexual offending behaviors. To gain a better understanding of how male and female juvenile sexual offending behaviors develop, I needed to further explore factors present in juveniles who have sexually offended compared with non-sexual offending juveniles to identify factors that may be predictive of the sexual offending behavior. The variables being explored were identified through the application



of social cognitive theory in conceptualizing the pathway to juvenile sexual offending. Social cognitive theory asserts learning occurs not only through the direct observation of behaviors, but also through reinforcement and cognitive patterns observed (Bandura, 1986). To evaluate the predictive nature of variables, a quantitative approach was indicated.

The study utilized a quantitative research approach to evaluate the relationship between dynamic variables associated with a history of sexual abuse and sexual offending behaviors during adolescence in males and females. I used a dataset from a southern state consisting of juveniles who have aged out of the juvenile justice system, meaning they were 18 years old, from January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2015. The full dataset included 89,045 juveniles involved with juvenile justice who aged out during the time frame, and within this sample there are 6,237 male juveniles and 312 female juveniles who committed a sexual offense. The data included information obtained through the Community Positive Achievement Change Tool (C-PACT) full assessment. The full assessment included a full range of static and dynamic variables to include but not limited to sexual, physical, and emotional abuse and/or neglect, parental supervision, school involvement, aggression, peer association, emotional regulation skills, substance use, and mental health issues. Dynamic factors identified as potentially reinforcing and validating maladaptive cognitive patterns created from sexual victimization were analyzed to explore a relationship between these factors and male and female sexual offending behaviors.

## Definitions

*Adverse childhood experiences:* A history of emotional, sexual, and/or physical abuse, neglect, mistreatment, exposure to violence/aggression, and/or painful experiences of a child while growing up (Felitti et al., 1998).

*Family violence:* The presence of verbal intimidation, yelling, heated arguments, threats of abuse, domestic violence, and witnessing violence in the home environment (Levenson et al., 2017).

*Juvenile delinquent/Juvenile with a history of general offending:* A juvenile under the age of 18 who was arrested for a non-sexual misdemeanor or a felony one or more times (Levenson et al., 2017). This includes juveniles who were arrested for any criminal behavior that was not identified as a sexual offense.

*Juvenile sex offender/Juvenile with a history of sexual offending behaviors:* A juvenile under the age of 18 who was arrested for either a misdemeanor or felony sexual offense one or more times (Levenson et al., 2017). This individual may also have been arrested for non-sexual misdemeanor or felony offenses but was classified as a juvenile sex offender due to the one (or more) sexual offense(s) (Levenson et al., 2017).

*Parental separation/divorce:* The absence of either the mother or the father from the family home (Levenson et al., 2017).

*Physical abuse:* A physical injury, not caused by an accident, inflicted by a family member on the youth (Levenson et al., 2017).

*Recidivism:* Reentry into the legal system for any type of misdemeanor or felony charge.

*Sexual abuse:* A history of sexual victimization, to include molestation, rape, sexual assault, or sexual battery, at any time prior to the age of 18.

*Sexual offense:* A misdemeanor or felony sexual offending behavior to include molestation, rape, sexual assault, and sexual battery.

*Sexual recidivism:* Reentry into the legal system for a sexual misdemeanor or felony. This does not include individuals who have a history of sexual offending behavior who were rearrested for a non-sexual behavior.

### **Assumptions**

The primary assumption of this research was the accuracy of the data collected through the C-PACT. This was a rather large assumption and encompasses the accuracy not only of the youth self-report during the C-PACT interview, but also the accuracy of the interviewer to input the information correctly. An additional assumption in regard to accuracy included that the interviewer corroborated the information being provided from the youth via collateral sources such as the parent, arrest reports, reports from other government entities (i.e., the state's Department of Children and Families), guardians, or any additional individuals involved in the youth's care.

A basis for the assumption of accuracy being made in this research was accomplished through the action steps taken to train the staff in administering the C-PACT. All staff administering the C-PACT were trained in risk assessment theory, case planning, juvenile risk factors, as well as motivational interviewing to assist in obtaining reliable information for input into the assessment (Baglivio, 2009). Staff administering the C-PACT were also trained in the software of the assessment, which includes data

entry (Baglivio, 2009), further grounding the assumption of data integrity and accuracy. The training for the administration of the C-PACT also included instruction for the interviewer to corroborate and verify youth responses, when feasible, with individuals involved in the youth's care such as parents, guardians, teachers, arrest records and other government reports (Baglivio, 2009). The verification of youth responses by the interviewer contributed to the reliability of the information and provides additional information regarding interpersonal relationships, youth's level or insight into behaviors, level of youth transparency, all of which contributed to an increase in the accuracy of information being input in the assessment.

Another main assumption being made was the youth with an arrest for any type of sexual offense, thereby being included as a juvenile who engaged in a sexual offense behavior in this research, did in fact perform the sexual offending behavior. This assumption was central to the focus of this research; engagement of a sexual offending behavior as a juvenile was the dependent variable in this research and was identified by an arrest for a sexual offense as a juvenile either misdemeanor or felony. As a result, the assumption was made that a youth arrested for either a misdemeanor or felony sexual offense was evidence that the youth did engage in a sexual offending behavior.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of my research was to explore the connection between a history of sexual abuse during childhood and engagement in male and female juvenile sexual offending behaviors as moderated by characteristics of family dysfunction in a sample of male and female juveniles who were involved in a southern state's department of juvenile

justice (DJJ) subsequent to an arrest for a criminal act committed prior to the age of 18. The population of interest was juveniles who have engaged in sexual offending behaviors, and the sample being utilized is male and female juveniles involved in a juvenile justice system in a southern state. Juveniles are considered a vulnerable and protected population for research, which led to the decision to obtain an archival dataset from the state. Using an archival dataset that consisted of the information needed for the execution of this research was ideal to maintain integrity to the exploration of this juvenile population, while sidestepping any potential challenges in working directly with this vulnerable population. Furthermore, the use of archival data taken at the time of entry into the juvenile justice system was preferable to soliciting an adult population with a history of juvenile justice involvement and asking them to recall details of their individual and family history.

The objective of this research was to investigate potential moderating factors that influence the connection between childhood sexual abuse and male and female juvenile sexual offending behaviors. To explore the potential of a variable(s) to predict an outcome required the use of a quantitative research design. Prior quantitative research has focused on the relationship between prior victimization and future offending patterns referred to as the victim–offender overlap, which is rooted in social cognitive theory suggesting that past direct observations/experiences contribute strongly to the replication of similar behaviors. However, due to inconsistent findings and weak effect sizes, research recommendations have been to explore additional factors that may influence this relationship.

A portion of prior research focused on ancillary factors potentially influencing this victim–offender overlap, which included variables related to family dynamics and characteristics. However, the research including factors regarding family dynamics often used attachment theory as the theoretical framework shifting the focus towards parental/caregiver attachment styles as opposed to holistic family dynamics. With a focus on parent/caregiver attachment, other behaviors, interactions, and/or experiences that the juvenile observed within the family home, which may potentially have a strong influence, were overlooked. This led to the selection of variables that based on social cognitive theory may have moderated this connection. The moderator variables identified for this research were informed by the processes involved with observational learning as indicated by Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory.

### **Limitations**

Generalizability was a primary limitation of this research. The population being addressed through the research was juveniles who have engaged in sexual offending behaviors. The sample utilized to explore this population was a large sample of juveniles ( $n = 89,045$ ) who aged out of a southern state’s juvenile justice system between January 1, 2007, and December 31, 2015. The juveniles in the sample were all arrested for a criminal behavior and comprise 6,237 males and 312 females who were arrested for a sexual offense. As a result of the sample being juveniles involved in juvenile justice, the findings were limited to juvenile-justice-involved youth and may not truly represent the greater population of juveniles who have engaged in sexual offending behaviors in the community that were never reported. According to RAINN Statistics (2020), 28% of

sexual offenses that occur in the home are not reported in order to safeguard the household. Furthermore, only 310 out of 1000 sexual assaults are reported, indicating the majority of individuals who engage in sexual offending behaviors never enter the legal system (RAINN Statistics, 2020). Consequently, the generalizability of these findings did not necessarily extend to youth in the community whose sexual offending behaviors were not reported.

Another limitation of this research was related to the construction of the variables used in the research and the statistical analysis conducted. The variables explored in this research were all dichotomous and thereby only indicated the presence or the absence of the variable for each youth. The outcomes of this research would be improved with increased measurement sensitivity indicating the frequency and duration of the history of sexual abuse, family violence, and physical abuse. Additionally, a natural limitation of multiple logistic regression is the results are only able to indicate the likelihood of an outcome based on the independent and moderator variables selected (Warner, 2013). Therefore, the findings were limited to discussing the likelihood of male and female juvenile sexual offending behaviors occurring among legally involved juveniles with a history of sexual abuse as moderated by traits of family dysfunction.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study assisted in filling the gap of understanding related to the development of male and female juvenile sexual offending. The need for this knowledge derived from the prevalence of juvenile sexual offending in the United States as well as juvenile sexual offending being a strong predictor of sexual offender recidivism. Therefore, by gaining a

deeper understanding of the factors that contributed to the development of juvenile sexual offending behaviors we could improve risk assessments, prevention strategies, and treatment interventions to decrease the prevalence of juvenile sexual offending. The decrease of juvenile sexual offending could thereby lead to a reduction in sexual offender recidivism and further promote community safety.

### **Significance to Theory**

The exploration of the connection between a history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending as moderated by family dysfunction furthers the understanding of how sexual offending behaviors develop in adolescence. Exploring this pathway through the lens of social cognitive theory may enhance the understanding of how these behaviors are learned. If the outcomes suggested the additional observations/behaviors in the home strengthen this relationship, this may have provided further support for social cognitive theory and the influence of observational learning which helps to inform on how to enhance youth learning of prevention strategies and treatment interventions. Through research that provides additional support for the impact of learning through observation, prevention strategies or treatment interventions may be enhanced to be more inclusive of experiential learning practices. These practices may include activities that provide opportunities to observe and demonstrate healthy communication skills, interpersonal relationship dynamics, and conflict resolution skills. Additionally, methods for prevention and treatment would have support to be expanded to account for all potential observations of behaviors within the treatment environment by all individuals involved in treatment of the youth.



**Significance to Practice**

The outcomes of this research could assist in identifying factors that are more likely predictive of juvenile sexual offending thus pointing to factors to be targeted in prevention strategies, risk assessments, and treatment interventions. Risk assessments are used to assess an individual's potential risk for future violence and/or aggression. Juveniles engaging in harmful behaviors and become involved in the juvenile justice system are administered risk assessments to determine level of risk for future violence/aggression that is then used to identify placement and/or treatment options. If the results of this research pointed towards strong predictors of juvenile sexual offending behaviors, these risk factors could be added, or enhanced, on/to the risk assessments to help evaluators assess the risk of a juvenile engaging in future sexual offending.

Additionally, the findings could assist in the development of prevention strategies, specifically strategies that target those risk factors. Similarly, the outcomes of this research may assist in developing stronger treatment interventions through focusing on the variables that are found to strengthen the connection to sexual abuse history of juvenile sexual offending. For example, if my findings suggested that family violence characterized by use of verbal aggression from the caregiver contributes to an increased likelihood of juvenile sexual offending, treatment providers can then specifically address family verbal aggression in treatment to work towards establishing healthier communication skills, leading to healthier relationships and decreasing risk for juvenile sexual offending.

### **Significance to Social Change**

The prevalence of juvenile sexual offending and the harmful effects of sexual abuse on victims justified the need to further understand the pathology of juvenile sexual offending in hopes to reduce the development of these behaviors. Additionally, one of the strongest predictors of sexual recidivism is juvenile sexual offending; further amplifying the need to understand the risk factors that are predictive of juvenile sexual offending. The outcomes of this study may contribute to understanding the risk factors of juvenile sexual offending. This knowledge could create positive social change by applying the results to improving risk assessments, prevention strategies, and treatment interventions to reduce juvenile sexual offending. Improvement of the risk assessment tools utilized to screen offenders for additional community supervision, either civil commitment or sexual offender registration, may assist in focusing on individuals with a higher level of risk of sexual recidivism to additional community sanctions. The potential enhancements in the areas of risk assessment, prevention strategies, and treatment interventions may have a wide impact on community safety. If juvenile sexual offending decreases, this may contribute to a reduction in adult sexual offender recidivism, based on the research indicating that juvenile sexual offending is the main risk factor of sexual recidivism; successively, a decrease in sexual recidivism will lead to an overall decline in victims of sexual abuse, and an increase in community safety.

### **Summary and Transition**

The prevalence of juveniles who have engaged in sexual offense type behaviors were presented indicating the need for additional research in this area. Moreover, a brief

introduction to the legislature regarding this population highlighted the potentially detrimental impact of the sexual offender registration on juveniles thus further justifying the research need. A review of the current research on the topic showcased the gap in the literature this research addressed. An overview of social cognitive theory provided the rationale for the selection of variables and this theoretical framework was applied to the interpretation of the results; more detail on social cognitive theory is provided in Chapter 2. Finally, a discussion of the potential implications for positive social change was presented, suggesting the practical importance of these particular research findings to the community.

In Chapter 2, I further explore the social problem of male and female juvenile sexual offending behaviors through an exhaustive review of the literature. The groundwork for the literature review is discussed by detailing the search strategies utilized to explore this population and social problem. More detail on the theoretical framework is outlined, thereby assisting in the development of a richer understanding of how this framework has served in the selection of variables. The literature review provides an in-depth exploration of the research that has been conducted with the population in the last 5 years and states specific recommendations for future research highlighting the demand for this current study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in 2020, juveniles accounted for approximately 17%–19% of all sexual offenses committed in the United States (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020). The prevalence of juvenile sexual offenders promotes the need to understand the development of sexual offending behaviors to assist in the creation of prevention and intervention strategies to reduce sexual harm in communities. The purpose of this study was to explore the predictive relationship between a history of sexual abuse and male and female juvenile sexual offending behaviors when moderated by characteristics of family dysfunction. The assumption of this study, grounded in social cognitive theory, was that observational learning from exposure to sexual abuse will be reinforced through unhealthy family dynamics that will strengthen the relationship between sexual abuse to male and female juvenile sexual offending.

This chapter reviews the search strategies utilized to gather scholarly research on the topic of juvenile sexual offenders and provides an overview of social cognitive theory, which was the framework for the selection of variables in the study. Next, the literature review summarizes the current research on juvenile sexual offenders, starting with the factors that distinguish juvenile sexual offenders from juvenile non-sexual offenders and adult sexual offenders, followed by an overview of female juvenile sexual offenders, a review of the research on risk factors for juvenile sexual offending, an exploration of the connection between adverse childhood experiences and juvenile sexual offending, a presentation of the research on the victim–offender overlap, and finally a

description of the impact of family on juvenile sexual offending. Through an understanding of this population and review of the previous research, I identify the need for additional research to help develop an understanding of juvenile sexual offenders.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The search strategy for the literature review consisted of a systematic exploration of the psychology and criminal justice databases within the Walden University Library. The following psychology databases were used: APA PsycInfo, SAGE Journals, SociINDEX, Taylor Francis Online, Academic Search Complete, APA PsychArticles, Gale Academic OneFile, Project Muse, ProQuest Central, Psychiatry Online, and ScienceDirect. The criminal justice databases searched were the Criminal Justice Database and Political Science Complete. I used a combination of five sets of keywords for each search across all databases to ensure all research potentially related to the topic of contributing factors to juvenile sexual offending were identified for review. The main keywords used were *risk factors or contributing factors or predisposing factors, juvenile delinquency or juvenile offenders or youth offenders, sexual assault or rape or sexual violence or sexual abuse or sexual offense, social cognitive theory or SCT or social-cognitive theory, delinquency or crime or delinquent behavior*. A detailed account of the five sets of keyword combinations used in each search is provided in Appendix A.

In addition to the strategic use of keywords, parameters for the literature search were used to limit the results to relevant research from 2017 through 2021 and credible research from peer-reviewed scholarly journals. After review of the abstracts from the search results of all the psychology databases and criminal justice databases, a total of 88

potentially relevant research articles were identified (85 from the psychology databases and three from the criminal justice databases). Once all the research articles were reviewed in full, a total of 68 articles were deemed relevant to this study. Due to the limited amount of current literature on this topic matter, three additional studies were sourced from within the most pertinent articles. Moreover, to delve deeper into the subject of juvenile sexual offending and social cognitive theory, I acquired seminal books on the topics such as Bandura's (1986) *Social Foundations of Thought and Action* and Barbaree and Marshall's (2006) *The Juvenile Sex Offender*.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

Social cognitive theory, more widely known and referred to as social learning theory, is a widely adopted framework for understanding the process of learning (Bandura, 1986). Over time, Bandura felt "social learning theory" was a broad term, often being confused and/or associated with other learning theories and that the label did not capture the cognitive, social, emotional, and motivating processes in which his theory was grounded, leading him to formally switch the name to "social cognitive theory" (Bandura, 2007). Social cognitive theory posits human nature is an interaction between behaviors, cognitive and personal factors, and environmental events that interrelate to create basic capabilities that set the foundation for learning (Bandura, 1986). According to Bandura (1986), the basic capabilities that shape an individual's learning are (a) forethought capability, (b) vicarious capability, (c) symbolizing capability, (d) self-regulatory capability, and (e) self-reflective capability. The forethought capability refers to the ability to anticipate outcomes, which translates into motivation to engage in or

avoid the behavior. Vicarious capability is the ability to learn through indirect observations of others' behaviors and consequences. Symbolizing capability describes the ability to process experiences into internal symbols that organize the information and create parameters for future behavior. Self-regulatory capability refers to the person's ability to interpret external factors through their individual standards that influence behaviors. Self-reflective capability, attributed as the capability most unique to the human experience, is the ability to contemplate and evaluate individual thought processes. An individual's ability to perform and engage with each of the basic capabilities informs their individual capacity for learning, which is predominantly achieved through observation (Bandura, 1986).

Observational learning, otherwise referred to as modeling, is held as the predominant method of learning (Bandura, 1986). Through observing the behaviors of others, an individual is able to form rules and predictions of potential outcomes that then serves as a guide for individual behaviors (Bandura, 1986). Learning through observation goes beyond simple mimicking of behaviors as once thought, in part because modeling has been seen to have a broad psychological impact on the observer (Bandura, 1986). The modeled behavior can have environmental effect as well as evoke emotion within the observer, shifting individual perceptions of the behavior (Bandura, 1986). The extent to which the modeled behavior is then translated into behavior produced by the observer is dependent on the observer's self-efficacy, belief they can perform the behavior, the observer's view of the consequences produced from the modeled behavior, and the observer's prediction on whether they would incur similar outcomes if they performed

the behavior (Bandura, 1986). These governing processes that determine how observed behavior is translated into learning, and consequently engaged in, have been categorized as attentional processes, retention processes, production processes, and motivational processes (Bandura, 1986).

Performance of observed behaviors is dependent on more than an individual's cognitive competency, intrinsic motivations, interpersonal skills, and/or self-appraisal; the process of learning and subsequently engaging in modeled behaviors are determined by the four processes: attentional, retention, production, and motivational (Bandura, 1986). Attentional processes refer to the individual's ability to perceive and attend to the modeling behavior and the meaning extracted (Bandura, 1986). Prior knowledge of the behavior predisposes the attentional process as well as the frequency and duration of the modeling with brief exposures not being as impactful as increased frequency to process the behavior (Bandura, 1986). The retention process is the person's ability to retain the information from the modeling behavior even after the model is no longer present (Bandura, 1986). The retention process is enhanced through the observer's transformation of the information into symbols, providing an organizational structure to the information, which can be applied to future observations and reinforce the parameters of the behavior (Bandura, 1986). Production processes involve the observer's assessment of the skills to perform the behavior through the conversion of symbols and spatial awareness into actionable behaviors (Bandura, 1986). The production process may be impacted by an individual's physical limitations as well as their ability to conceive the modeled behavior into a sequence of actions which they can perform (Bandura, 1986). Motivational



processes refer to the observer's intrinsic drive to engage in the behavior, which is derived from perceived incentives either directly or vicariously observed and/or self-produced (Bandura, 1986). Not all behaviors learned are performed; behaviors not viewed as functional and/or beneficial are less likely to be performed (Bandura, 1986). The observer's assessment of the consequences or benefits from the behavior are in part a result of anticipated outcomes not actually observed, and therefore learning from observation can take place from exposure to the behavior prior to observing an outcome (Bandura, 1986). These processes of how observed behavior is learned can assist in understanding the relationship between a history of being abused and subsequently engaging in abusive behaviors.

In social cognitive theory, behavior is not simply viewed as a reaction to a stimulus; instead it is conceptualized as an interpretation of a stimulus through cognitive processes that organize the information based on previous observations, of either direct or vicarious experiences, and generate predictions of potential outcomes leading to action (Bandura, 1986), which can aid in understanding juvenile sexual offending behaviors in youth who were previously exposed to sexually abusive behaviors. Not all youth who have been victims of sexual abuse go on to engage in sexual offending behaviors; however, for those that do, this pathway may be in part due to additional behaviors observed within the family relationships that impacted attentional, retention, and motivational processes. Youth who were sexually victimized directly observed unhealthy sexual behaviors. In this experience, the youth convert the information into representational symbols and interpret and analyze outcomes impacting the production

and motivational processes. Additionally, the frequency, intensity, and duration of the behavior would influence attentional and retention processes. Based on the understanding of the processes of observational learning, additional exposures to similar behaviors demonstrating similar themes, such as family violence, physical abuse, and parental separation/divorce, may be processed similarly and reinforce learning, thereby increasing the likelihood of the youth replicating the behaviors. Family violence, physical abuse history, and parental separation/divorce have been selected as moderating variables in this study because they share overarching themes with sexual abuse history, such as disregarding the rights of others, unhealthy satisfaction of emotional/sexual needs, and unhealthy relationship dynamics. Through social cognitive theory, it was theorized that a youth's exposure to these behaviors within their family will reinforce prior direct observation of sexual abuse and thereby strengthen the relationship between sexual abuse history and juvenile sexual offending.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Juvenile Sexual Offender**

Prior to the 1990s, the concern for juvenile sexual offending was minimized and attributed to adolescent experimentation without serious consequences (Barbaree & Marshall, 2006). Often, the sexual behaviors of juveniles were dismissed as a minor irritant and diminished to a typical male adolescent exploration without any connection to delinquent pathology of concern for future harm. It was not until the early 1990s when juvenile sexual offending behaviors began to be recognized as a clinical and legal concern with juveniles accounting for approximately 20% of all sexual offenses

(Barbaree & Marshall, 2006). With the increased awareness of the prevalence and potential harm of juvenile sexual offending, research began to focus on understanding the characteristics of the juvenile sexual offender, which may distinguish this offender from other offender populations (Smallbone, 2006). To gain a better understanding of the juvenile sex offender population, it is important to look at how the predominant traits of this group compare to other juvenile delinquency groups as well as the adult sex offender population.

Evaluating the differences and similarities between general juvenile delinquency and juvenile sexual offending will inform us as to whether the strategies for addressing general delinquency can effectively be applied to juvenile sex offenders. Collectively, research evaluating the characteristics of the juvenile sexual offending group compared to other juvenile non-sexual offending groups revealed more similarities among these groups than differences (Smallbone, 2006). Specifically, Falligant et al. (2017) conducted research to identify differences among cognitive processes in a juvenile sexual offending group compared to a juvenile non-sexual offending group and found a lack of difference in the cognitive performance between the juvenile sex offender group and the juvenile non-sexual offender group, suggesting these two groups are more closely related in cognitive processes. Furthermore, Joyal et al.'s (2020) study indicated both juveniles who engaged in sexual offending and juveniles with non-sexual offending presented with similar impairments in executive functioning. Fox's (2017) study on juvenile offenders revealed similarities between the sexual offender group and non-sexual offender group regarding histories of emotional and physical abuse. Rose et al. (2020) explored

differences in psychopathy among sexual and non-sexual offending youth and found characteristics of psychopathy did not differentiate these two groups of offenders. Researchers have also indicated within both juvenile sex offender and juvenile non-sex offender groups, continued engagement in criminal activity is related to increased frequency as well as diversity of the offending behaviors (Smallbone, 2006). However, some differences among these groups in the research has also been found that contribute to the complexity of understanding the juvenile sexual offender population.

Identifying the distinctions between juveniles who engage in sexually offending behaviors from juveniles who do not engage in sexual offending behaviors is key to the development of effective interventions. Fanniff et al. (2017) sought to evaluate the characteristics of juveniles with a history of sexual offending compared to juveniles who have a history of non-sexual offending. They concluded from their results that juveniles with a history of sexual offending presented with a decrease in antisocial behaviors, less difficulty in school, engaged less with delinquent peers, and were overall less likely to have an issue with substance use (Fanniff et al., 2017). Although Fox (2017) found similarities among offender groups regarding their emotional and physical abuse histories, he did find differences in other areas. The study indicated juveniles were at increased odds of being a part of the sexual offender group, as opposed to the non-sexual offender group, if they presented with earlier onset of criminal behaviors, had multiple felonies, had a history of sexual abuse, showed low empathy, demonstrated impulsivity, had a history of depression, and a history of psychosis (Fox, 2017). Juveniles who have engaged in sexual offending behaviors have also been found to have increased rates of

victimization histories than non-sexual juvenile delinquents (Dillard & Beaujolais, 2019; Siria et al., 2020). The subtle differences among the juvenile sex offender and juvenile non-sex offender groups described in the above research promotes the idea that juvenile sex offenders may have more differences from their non-sexual juvenile offender counterparts. Moreover, it is also important to understand if they are distinguished from the adult sexual offender population.

The connection between adult sexual offending and juvenile sexual offending is also not as clear as it was initially presumed. Early on, as the need for research on juvenile sexual offending emerged, it was assumed that if juveniles who sexually offended did not receive treatment, they would continue to sexually offend into adulthood (Smallbone, 2006). This belief informed another assumption that if adult sexual offenders and juvenile sexual offenders shared similar pathologies, the knowledge of adult sexual offenders could be applied to juvenile sexual offenders (Smallbone, 2006). Research from the 1970s and 1980s with adult sexual offenders suggested adolescent onset of deviant sexual interests (Smallbone, 2006). These findings of sexual deviancy beginning in adolescence added to the suspicion that juvenile sexual offenders and adult sexual offenders were similar. However, as the definitions of deviant sexual interests, sexual offending behavior, and paraphilia became more clearly defined and distinguished from one another over the years, research from the 1990s found the average onset for sexual offending paraphilia was more toward early adulthood, around age 22–27 (Smallbone, 2006), thus promoting the distinction between the adult and juvenile sexual offender groups. In research conducted by McKillop et al. (2018), factors that contributed to the

onset of sexual offending behaviors in adolescents and adults were evaluated. Their comparative analysis suggested a history of involvement with the juvenile justice system for non-sexual delinquency was predictive of onset of sexual offending in adolescence, whereas adult sexual offending was predicted by negative moods and intoxication from substances (McKillop et al., 2018). Overall, the information from all these studies, which at times is conflicting, highlights the distinction of the juvenile sex offender group thereby stressing the need for research to further explore risk factors specifically pertaining to the juvenile sex offender population.

### **The Female Juvenile Sexual Offender**

Research on juvenile females who engage in sexual offense type behaviors is limited (Oliver & Holmes, 2015). Compared to their male counterparts, the prevalence of female juvenile sexual offending is significantly low, which may be in part due to underreporting issues and presumptions that sexual offending behaviors are only perpetrated by males or that sexual offense behaviors by females are not as harmful. Sexual victimization research conducted with community samples suggested the rates of female perpetrated sexual offending behaviors are significantly higher than the rates being reported to authorities. The underrepresentation of research on female juvenile sexual offenders, contributes to a limited understanding how juvenile female pathways may differ from their male counterparts, and justifies the need for further research in this area.

One of the primary areas of differences between males and females is physical development, specifically during puberty. The developmental changes occurring during

puberty, both physically and emotionally, in females may be associated with increased risk of sexual offending behaviors. Developmental factors specific to females that directly impact physical appearance and functioning are the start of menstruation, development of secondary sexual characteristics and the ability to reproduce (Hunter et al., 2006). These physical changes occurring during puberty in females lead to mental and emotional changes and may be additionally challenging for females who develop at different rates than their peer group. Research has suggested females who experience puberty earlier may be at an increased risk of having mood and behavioral difficulties (Hunter et al., 2006). Puberty is a time where females also experience an increased sensitivity to how they are perceived by others and a focus on these perceptions of others has been associated with increased risk for depression and anxiety (Hunter et al., 2006). Furthermore, research suggests females have a greater emotional need to gain acceptance from their peer groups (Hunter et al., 2006); this focus may contribute to engaging in behaviors that the individual perceives will provide validation and acceptance from the peer group. Experiences during puberty between males and females is vastly different and may contribute to some of the differences found in risk factors and traits of male and female juveniles who have engaged in sexual offense type behaviors.

Oliver and Holmes (2015) conducted a review of the risk factors commonly found in research on female juveniles who commit sexual offending behaviors. From their research the following risk factors for female juveniles who engaged in sexual offenses were identified: previous sexual victimization, history of maltreatment in childhood, dysfunction in family unit, limited social skills, and psychopathology. Previous sexual

victimization in juvenile females who committed sexual offenses were described as occurring at a young age, often times involved penetration, and by more than one perpetrator. Physical and emotional abuse and neglect were the most predominant forms of childhood maltreatment found among this population's histories. Family dysfunction was characterized by witnessing domestic violence and violence in the family, parental engagement in substance abuse, lack of sexual boundaries, erratic parenting strategies, limited parental supervision, and separation and abandonment from parent. Associating with delinquent peers and having few healthy relationships with peers contributed to limited social skills in these females. Psychopathology found in juvenile females who committed sexual offenses were comprised of depression, suicidal ideation, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, impulsivity, attention deficit, and conduct disorders.

Roe-Sepowitz and Krysik (2008) conducted research with a large non-clinical sample of females who were involved with the legal system and who engaged in sexual offending behaviors to identify risk factors. Their findings indicated the majority of females who engaged in sexual offending behaviors had also engaged in previous delinquency. Mental health problems were also prominent in the population, with females who also had a history of maltreatment displaying higher rates of mental illness compared to those who did not have a history of maltreatment. Additionally, among those females with a history of maltreatment, they were more likely to sexually offend against siblings and relatives. The findings from the research also suggested female juveniles who sexually offended and who had a history of sexual abuse were more likely to use force in their offense. Although these risk factors are similar to those found in the general



population of juvenile's sex offenders, differences in frequency, intensity, and presentation have been found between male and female juveniles who sexually offend.

Both males and females who have engaged in sexual offending behaviors have been found to have histories of childhood maltreatment. However, increased rates of childhood maltreatment, specifically sexual victimization, have been found in female juvenile sexual offenders compared to their male counterparts (Hunter et al., 2006; Hickey et al., 2008). Furthermore, the histories of sexual victimization among female juvenile sexual offenders have been suggested by the research to involve more severe abuse and be more extensive with higher frequency and longer duration than males (Hunter et al., 2006). Sexual victimization in females who sexual offend on average started at a younger age (Hickey et al., 2008) and involved more coercion and force than their male counterparts (Hunter et al., 2006). Furthermore, the sexual abuse and victimization of females who later sexually offended were more likely to be perpetrated by relatives or acquaintances (Hickey et al., 2008). A difference in the commission of the sexual offense noted was that female juveniles were found to engage in sexual offending behaviors at younger ages than males (Hickey et al., 2008). Additionally, although psychiatric comorbidity has been found in both males and females juveniles who engage in sexual offending behaviors, the presence of multiple mental illnesses was more prevalent in female samples and often were characterized by mood disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder (Hunter et al., 2006). In consideration of the differences found in the risk factors and the presentation of the sexual offending behaviors between male and

female juveniles, it may be possible the pathways to sexual offending differ among genders and therefore, will be beneficial to analyze separately.

### **Risk Factors**

Criminological theories provide a largescale understanding of the etiology and main risk factors for delinquency through psychosocial stages of development. Given the overall similarities between juvenile sexual offending and juvenile non-sexual offending groups noted in the research (Smallbone, 2006; Falligant et al., 2017; Fox, 2017; Joyal et al., 2020), it is beneficial to evaluate the risk factors for delinquency in general. Research on risk factors of delinquency have identified clusters of risk factors that are categorized as individual, family, school, and environmental risk factors (Smallbone, 2006).

Individual risk factors found to contribute to juvenile delinquency are lower intelligence, poor concentration, impulsivity, and sensation seeking. Risk factors in the family cluster include parental separation, parental conflict, harsh or inconsistent discipline within the home, lack of parental supervision/monitoring, limited involvement by the parent/caregiver, and perceived rejection from parent or caregiver. School risk factors which have been found to contribute to delinquency are poor academic achievement, truancy, and leaving school. Regarding environmental risk factors, it has been shown that lower socioeconomic communities, disorganization of neighborhoods, access to weapons, and increased violence or crime in the community, increase the likelihood of juveniles engaging in delinquency. Research findings from Hart et al. (2007) indicated main risk factors for delinquency (violent and nonviolent delinquent youth) were substance abuse, early onset of substance use, and difficulty learning. Furthermore, pertaining to specific

stages of development, antisocial peers have been associated with increased risk for delinquency, specifically for youth in mid to late adolescence, and substance use was a risk factor for early adolescence (Smallbone, 2006). The seminal research discussed provides a comprehensive understanding of the risk factors associated with the pathology of criminal behaviors, however it is also critical to understand risk factors specifically associated with violent crimes, which include sexual offending behaviors.

An awareness of risk factors for violent offending behaviors assists in putting into perspective the risk factors for sexual offending. Erbay and Ozcan (2021) conducted research on risk factors distinctively associated with violent crime, which included armed robbery, felony assault, murder, and sexual assault. The results of their study suggested a predictive relationship between violent crime and the following risk factors: early onset of criminal activity, male gender, use of substances, running away from home, exposure to domestic violence, and lack of emotional intimacy with parents. Mulford et al. (2018) explored the connection between history of victimization in childhood and later violent offending to identify significant risk factor to violent crime. The results of their analysis indicated risk taking behaviors, unstructured time, and lack of supervision were associated with violent offending behaviors. The findings of these studies suggest early onset of criminal behaviors, exposure to violence in the home, and lack of supervision and structured activities are predictive of violent offending which includes sexual violence. Further exploration of the differences in risk factors between violent offending and sexual offending are needed to develop targeted strategies and interventions to mitigate juvenile sexual offending.

Most of the risk factors associated with violent offending are also connected to sexual offending behaviors, but in some research, characteristics unique to juvenile sexual offending, when comparing this group to juveniles who have non-sexually offended, have been found. Fanniff et al. (2017) explored characteristics of juveniles who have engaged in sexual offending and juveniles who engaged in non-sexual offending. Their results indicated juveniles with sexual offenses displayed lower levels of antisocial behaviors, had less difficulties in school, had less involvement with antisocial peers, and were less inclined to engage in substance use. Fox (2017) conducted a similar study focusing on differences in criminal history, demographics, psychopathic traits, and histories of victimization between juvenile sexual offenders and juvenile non-sexual offenders. His findings revealed an earlier onset of criminal activity, more than one felony arrest, history of sexual abuse, lower levels of empathy, impulsivity, depression, and psychopathic symptoms increased the likelihood of a juvenile having a sexual offense. Grady et al. (2021) explored risk factors for juvenile sexual offending from an attachment theory perspective and concluded sexual abuse was predictive of juvenile sexual offending. Similar findings were indicated in research by Moyano et al. (2017), who concluded a history of sexual abuse and attitudes supportive of rape were predictive of juvenile sexual offending. History of trauma experiences, to include multiple victimizations, have also been identified as a risk factor for sexual offending in adolescence (Dillard & Beaujolais, 2019). Furthermore, juvenile sexual offenders were found to have higher rates of history of victimization, maltreatment, and early on

caregiver disruption (Siria et al., 2020), suggesting history of family dysfunction in these variations as risk factors to juvenile sexual offending.

Yoder and Precht (2020) explored differences in risk factors among juveniles based on offense type which included sexual offender, non-sexual offender, and criminally versatile groups. The results pertaining to distinctions among the offender groups were mixed, but one distinction identified was higher levels of impairment in executive functioning, specifically with memory, planning, and organization in the sexual offender group, potentially suggesting these deficits may play a role in type of offending. However, it is important to note, impairment in executive functioning was associated with histories of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse across all offender groups. Collectively, the research on risk factors for juveniles who have sexually offended indicates these youth are more likely to have a history of sexual abuse, display more symptoms of mental health illnesses, are less likely to have substance use issues, and have less difficulty in school, when compared to non-sexually offending juveniles. The connection between early traumatic experiences, specifically sexual abuse, and juvenile sexual offending highlights the importance of exploring how early life victimization plays a role in later functioning in justice-involved youth.

### **Adverse Childhood Experiences and Juvenile Sexual Offending**

Adverse childhood experiences (ACE) is a broad term used to describe various types of unhealthy encounters to include sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, physical and emotional neglect, domestic violence in the home, family incarceration, family substance abuse, parental separation/divorce, and family mental illness (Felitti et al.,

1998). Felitti et al. (1998) developed a scoring system to further explore the relationship of an accumulation of adverse experiences in childhood on later functioning. Since the development of the ACE scoring concept, where the presence of each experience related to a point on the scale (Felitti et al., 1998), a large portion of research on juvenile sexual offenders has explored the impact of adverse childhood experiences on later functioning and the role they may play in contributing to youth offending behaviors. Research on juvenile delinquency in Florida that found justice-involved youth were exposed to more adverse childhood experiences, as measured by ACE scores, than the general population (Levenson et al., 2017), suggesting the potentially strong influence of adverse experiences on juvenile offending. Gaining a better understanding of the effects of adverse childhood experiences may assist in identifying contributing factors to the development of youth offending behaviors to include juvenile sexual offending.

A plethora of research has explored the connection between adverse experiences in childhood with subsequent impairment in areas of functioning and found various negative effects to an individual's psychological, behavioral, neurological, and/or emotional well-being (Levenson et al., 2017). Histories of victimization during childhood have been found to be associated with delinquency in adolescence (Wemmers et al., 2018). In a sample of youth in child welfare services, an increase in the likelihood of juvenile delinquency was associated with history of maltreatment in the home and neglect (Vidal et al., 2017). In addition to delinquency, adverse childhood experiences have also been found to have a predictive relationship with negative outcomes such as levels of anger and aggression, as well as subsequent chronic and violent offending behaviors in

juveniles (Perez et al., 2018; Wemmers et al., 2018). Perez et al. (2018) indicated adverse childhood experiences were predictive of subsequent chronic and violent behaviors in adolescence. Additionally, it was found that adverse childhood experiences have a predictive relationship with aggression, impulsivity, problems in school, substance abuse issues, and mental illness (Perez et al., 2018). Multiple types of victimization, otherwise referred to as poly-victimization, has been shown to have a strong association with anger (Wemmers et al., 2018), further supporting the idea that adverse experiences strongly contribute to the negative psychological, behavioral, and emotional outcomes for juveniles.

Yoder and Precht (2020) explored the influence of childhood experiences of abuse on executive functioning in a sample of juvenile offenders and found histories of abuse were linked to deficits in executive functioning regardless of offense type. Furthermore, sexual abuse specifically has been linked to deficits in meta-cognition executive functioning more than physical abuse or domestic violence (Yoder et al., 2019). Research on the negative outcomes specific to sexual abuse suggested sexual abuse history was linked with an increase in depression and symptoms of posttraumatic stress in juveniles who sexually offended (Morais et al., 2018). Moreover, a history of sexual abuse in childhood was found to increase the likelihood of engaging in violent and delinquent behaviors by 1.7 times during adolescence (Kozak et al., 2018), and sexual abuse history in juvenile sexual offenders increased risk for sexual recidivism (Morais et al., 2018). The connection between exposure to adverse childhood experiences and negative outcomes has been strongly demonstrated throughout the research. To further

understand problematic sexual behavior in adolescence, research has also explored the pathway from adverse childhood experiences to juvenile sexual offending.

With the link between adverse childhood experiences and subsequent negative outcomes clearly demonstrated, researchers went a step further to explore the relationship of specific types of adverse experiences in childhood to juvenile sexual offending. In Barra et al.'s (2017) research, they examined the link between different types of adverse experiences and maltreatment with continued juvenile sexual offending within a sample of juveniles adjudicated for sexual offending behaviors. The results of their research indicated a predictive relationship between physical neglect (identified as lack of parental supervision, clean clothes, access to medical care, and food) and adolescent sexual offending behaviors. The findings also suggested a connection between a history of sexual abuse and sexually coercive behaviors in adolescence, but the relationship of sexual victimization was not as strong as physical neglect in predicting adolescent sexual offending. Physical neglect having a stronger predictive relationship to juvenile sexual offending than sexual victimization, suggests the impact of being disregarded and uncared for on the child's ability to develop healthy intimate relationships. These findings may also inadvertently support the concept of observational learning within the framework of social cognitive theory. It may be that as youth observed how their caregivers/parents took care of them, subsequently creating and reinforcing maladaptive beliefs regarding the treatment of others. Although physical neglect had a stronger association with juvenile sexual offending in Barra et al.'s study, other researchers have



suggested a greater connection between history of sexual abuse and sexual offending behaviors.

Research conducted by Casey et al. (2017) found a connection between a history of sexual abuse and sexual offending behaviors, with multiple victimization experiences increasing the likelihood of engaging in sexual offending. Similarly, in a literature review on the relationship between trauma experiences and juvenile sexual offending behaviors, history of trauma was identified as a risk factor for sexual offending in adolescence, and higher levels of sexual abuse victimization were found in the youth who sexually offended (Dillard & Beaujolais, 2019). The connection between sexual abuse history and subsequent sexual offending behaviors is often referred to as the victim–offender overlap.

### **The Victim–Offender Overlap**

Fueled by social cognitive theory’s assertion that early life experiences inform future behaviors, a considerable portion of research on juvenile sex offenders has focused on evaluating the link between a history of victimization to include physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and consequent juvenile sexual offending behaviors. Research on generational histories of abuse in the family explored how generational family abuse may influence juvenile sexual offending and found families with a history of abuse were associated with an increased risk of juvenile sexual offending (McCuish et al., 2017), showcasing the victim–offender overlap across generations. Papalia et al.’s (2018) review of the literature exploring the association between a history of sexual abuse during childhood and criminal delinquency in adolescence, supported the theory of the victim–offender overlap by finding that individuals with a history of sexual abuse were at a

higher risk of later engaging in general and violent delinquency when compared to a group of offenders without a history of abuse. However, the connection between a history of sexual abuse and engaging in sexual offending behavior in adolescence was not clear in this literature review and multiple factors seemed to impact this relationship; emphasizing the need for the victim–offender overlap to be explored further. Regardless of inconsistencies noted in prior research, the victim–offender overlap framework to conceptualize the pathway to juvenile sexual offending remains prevalent in the research and may provide a more in depth understanding of juvenile offenders.

Cain (2021) explored the victim–offender overlap in a sample of juvenile-justice-involved youth to examine the general relationship between histories of victimization and delinquent behaviors. The findings supported the victim–offender overlap through identifying an association between victimization and offense types. The results indicated youth with histories of victimization were more likely to be in the juvenile justice system for violent offenses than youth without a history of victimization who engaged in more nonviolent crimes, typically drug related offenses. Additionally, the study found histories of physical and sexual abuse and poly-victimization were associated with rape offenses.

Miley et al. (2020) took a more detailed examination of the links between violent victimization and violent offenses, household substance use and drug offenses, and sexual victimization and sexual offenses while controlling for co-occurring victimization and other predominate risk factors. Each type of victimization violent, sexual, and household substance abuse was associated with their analogous offense behavior: violent offending, sexual offending, and drug related offenses. Findings related to predicting

juvenile sexual offending suggested there was no relationship found with a history of physical abuse and later sexual offending behaviors, but this is not consistent with findings from other research. Dalskley et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review of the literature on the connection between childhood history of physical and sexual abuse and reoffending behaviors. Their analysis of the research indicated a small relationship between physical and sexual abuse histories and sexually reoffending behaviors. More interesting, the review found that in studies that controlled for variables commonly found in homes of abuse, such as problems with emotional regulation and substance abuse, there was a decrease in the relationship between abuse history and offending, suggesting other variables in the home may have a stronger relationship with reoffending behaviors.

Although there is support of the victim–offender overlap in the research, there are inconsistencies noted needing to be explored. Puskiewicz and Stinson (2019) examined the influence of adverse childhood experiences of victimization on the development of juvenile sexual offending behaviors. Although their results suggested sexual victimization and lack of healthy sexual boundaries in the home were associated with early onset of sexual offending behaviors, these factors were also associated with less persistent sexual offending patterns. This finding, although initially supporting the victim–offender overlap, is inconsistent with other studies finding sexual abuse history predictive of sexual recidivism (Barra et al., 2017).

A literature review conducted by Plummer and Cossins (2018) sought to explore the inconsistency that most victims of sexual abuse are females, while most perpetrators of juvenile sexual offending are males. This review of the literature on the link between

victimization history and offense behavior did not find support for the victim–offender overlap in females, however there was indication that this association plays a role in male sexual offending who experienced other factors. The factors found in male victims of sexual abuse that appear to contribute to engaging in subsequent juvenile sexual offenses were being abused after age 12, the sexual abuse was frequent and severe, and the abuser was a person whom the male depended on such as a father. Cumulatively, research on the connection between childhood sexual abuse and sexual offending behaviors is supportive of the victim–offender overlap as a framework for understanding the pathway to juvenile sexual offending, while also suggesting the potential for additional factors that influence this relationship, particularly family characteristics.

### **Family Influence on Juvenile Sexual Offending**

The presence of some inconsistent findings within research on the victim–offender suggests the possibility of moderating variables that compound and strengthen the relationship between being victim and becoming an offender. Research exploring factors that interrupt the association between victimization and later delinquent behaviors have evaluated the influence of family victimization, family relationships, parental monitoring, and parental attachments to better understand contributing factors to juvenile sexual offending. Yoder et al. (2019) explored the relationship between victimization and offending, by examining the effects of family victimization on offending patterns versus extra-familial victimization. The results indicated physical forms of family victimization and forced sex was associated with a higher risk of serious offending patterns, to include sexual offending, in adolescence.

In evaluating the influence of various family relationships on juvenile delinquency, research has suggested parental maltreatment and victimization by siblings increased the likelihood of juvenile delinquency (van Berkel et al., 2018). Furthermore, strong parental relationships have been found to moderate the relationship between a history of maltreatment and adolescent offending behavior (Wilkinson et al., 2019). Gewirtz-Meydan (2020) examined the effect of child sexual abuse on psychopathology as moderated by social support and perceived parental quality. The findings indicated social support and parenting quality moderated the relationship between sexual abuse history of self-concept and reduced the likelihood of psychopathology, supporting the idea of the influence of familial factors on youth development. Research has even indicated family relationships serve as stronger mediators between histories of maltreatment and juvenile delinquency than moral values or school relationships (Manzoni & Schwarzenegger, 2019). Developing deeper into the family dynamic, parental supervision or monitoring has been examined in how it may play a role in delinquency.

Parental monitoring, generally defined as the parents' awareness of the child's activity and with whom the child is with at a given time, has been of particular interest in the role it may play in the connection between maltreatment and delinquency (Hartinger-Saunders et al, 2017). The level of parental monitoring has been shown to be related to the prevalence of risk-taking behavior for youth on probation, with lower levels of parental monitoring increasing the presence of risk behaviors in adolescence (Udell et al., 2017). Hartinger-Saunders et al.'s (2017) research also explored the impact of parental monitoring, finding a significant negative relationship with juvenile delinquency. Stewart

et al. (2019) examined the influence of parental monitoring among groups of juveniles with a sexual offense, juveniles with general delinquency, and a juvenile non-delinquent control group. The research found similarities between the juvenile sexual offenders and juvenile general delinquent groups on the scarce monitoring by the parents, with their parents being less likely to inquire about their activities, who they are with, or if other parents will be present. The link between family relationships and juvenile delinquency has been well established, lending support to further explore how the family dynamics may influence the connection between history of adverse childhood experiences and juvenile sexual offending.

A chaotic home, defined by more than one family residing together and moving homes often, and a history of sexual abuse were shown to be associated with sexual offending and negatively related to serious delinquency (Bonner et al., 2019), pointing to a larger influence of family stability on sexual offending than non-sexual offending. In a sample of juveniles who engaged in early onset sexual offending behaviors, family adversity and maltreatment were more prevalent than in early onset non-sexually offending juveniles (Rosa et al., 2020), suggesting the influence of family on juvenile sexual offending. Further promoting the link between family dysfunction and sexual offending, exposure to domestic violence in the family home was found to increase the risk of sexual offending behaviors by six times (Ybarra & Thompson, 2018).

Additionally, higher levels of family dysfunction, which included problems in caregiver attachment and unhealthy family interactions, were found in juveniles who had a history of sexual abuse and had engaged in sexual offending (Yoder et al., 2018a), prompting

further exploration of attachment and parenting interactions in relation to juvenile sexual offending.

Yoder et al. (2018c) explored parental and peer attachments in a sample of juvenile sexual offenders and juvenile non-sexual offenders to identify possible differences in attachment styles among the groups, and to evaluate if a predictive relationship between attachment and juvenile sexual offending exists. The results suggested juvenile sexual offenders had more deficits in maternal and paternal attachments, with an exception for paternal communication, than non-sexual offenders. More specifically, severe juvenile sexual offending was linked to lower communication in the maternal relationship and higher communication and lower trust in peer relationships, and lower trust in the maternal attachment was associated with more victims. In addition to types of attachment, parenting styles and interactions have been shown to be influential on sexual offending behaviors.

Richardson et al. (2017) explored how family experiences, in particular how parents interacted, influenced sexual coercion in an undergraduate adult male sample. The findings indicated the relationship between parents, warmth versus hostility, was associated with types of parenting styles such as overparenting and inconsistent parenting. Hostility within parent interactions was associated with sexual coercion in college males. Additionally, overparenting and inconsistent parenting styles were indirectly related to sexual coercion through increased feelings of entitlement. The influence of parenting styles was further explored in a literature review by Sitney and Kaufman (2021) who reviewed research focused on aspects of parental caregiving

practices in adults and juveniles who have engaged in sexual offending behaviors. The findings from the review suggested parental relationship and interactions which are modeled for their children are influential on later sexual offending behaviors.

Collectively, the findings indicated sexually abusive fathers create an increased risk of sexual offending behaviors in their sons by modeling unhealthy sexual behaviors and support the notion that sexual aggression observed contributes to an increased risk to engage in sexual offending behaviors. These findings provide support for social cognitive theory in better understanding the development of sexual offending behaviors and point to the need to further explore how family dynamics may moderate the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

This review of the scholarly literature on juvenile sexual offenders assisted in identifying the distinguishing characteristics of this population as well as establishing what is known about the relationship between history of abuse and juvenile sexual offending behaviors and what still needs to be discovered. The review of social cognitive theory provided a framework for understanding how juvenile sexual offending behaviors may develop from a history of sexual abuse and led to the selection of variables in my study that may moderate this relationship. This population, once lumped in with either juvenile non-sexual offenders or adult sexual offenders, was shown through the literature review to have some defining characteristics warranting research solely dedicated to juvenile sexual offenders. These distinctions were further highlighted in the research on risk factors for male and female juvenile sexual offending that identified a history of



sexual abuse, and possibly poly-victimization, mental illness, and chaotic home environments as risk factors for juvenile sexual offending. A review of the differences between male and females who engage in juvenile sexual offending behaviors suggest the need to separate males and females when conducting statistical analysis. The literature review also demonstrated the connection in the literature between adverse childhood experiences and juvenile sexual offending. However, in further exploring specifically the victim–offender overlap, while most research supported this link between sexual abuse history and sexual offending behaviors, there were inconsistencies. Finally, the research on the influence of family on juvenile sexual offending as a potential factor contributing to the victim–offender overlap, indicated a strong influence of family dynamics on juvenile offending behaviors. These main findings from the literature review provide a greater understanding of juvenile sexual offending and suggest specific needs for future research.

The discrepancies found in the literature, specifically regarding the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and subsequent juvenile sexual offending behaviors, supporting the need to further explore this relationship. Additionally, a review of the literature on this topic also highlighted several limitations and inconsistencies among the research designs and methodology to include variations in definitions, variable measurements, and samples, some with and some without comparison groups (Papalia et al., 2018), which are critical to be mindful of when making interpretations and drawing conclusions. Ozkan et al. (2020) and Morais et al. (2018) both found juvenile sexual offending as the strongest factor associated with sexual recidivism, calling for a need in

future research to better understand the contributing factors to initial juvenile sexual offending. Furthermore, multiple researchers indicated the possible presence of additional factors influencing this relationship (Dalsklev et al., 2021; Miley et al., 2020; Cain, 2021; Kozak et al., 2018). From their research findings that mainly supported the link between abuse and offending, but with small effect sizes, Dalsklev et al. (2021) and Miley et al. (2020) cited the need for future research to explore additional variables within the victim–offender overlap, with Cain (2021) specifically identifying the need for research to evaluate moderating variables in this relationship based on his findings. Yoder et al. (2018) recommended, based on their findings, additional research was needed to evaluate the interaction of family dynamics on offending patterns. Based on this review there remains a gap in the literature in understanding the compounding factors that influence the connection between a history of sexual offending and juvenile sexual offending.

An increased understanding of the factors that play a role in moderating the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and engaging in sexual offending behaviors as a juvenile will assist in developing effective strategies to prevent the occurrence of juvenile sexual offending and interventions to assist male and female juveniles who have sexually offended in living a healthy life. The potential of family dynamic factors having a moderating effect on the link between sexual abuse history and male and female juvenile sexual offending was evaluated through a multiple logistic regression design which assessed the moderating effect of selected family variables on a history of sexual abuse in predicting juvenile sexual offending. The secondary dataset used for this study was provided by a state’s department of juvenile justice and included

data on over 89,000 juveniles involved in the justice system in that state between January 2007 and 2015, with over 6,000 youth adjudicated for a sexual offense. This quantitative research design provided insight on how domestic violence, physical abuse, parental separation/divorce, and parental incarceration interact in predicting male and female juvenile sexual offending.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

Sexual offenses committed by juveniles account for about 17%–19% of all sexual offenses in the United States, based on data collected in 2020 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020). The prevalence of juvenile sexual offending suggested a need to further explore the precipitating events that contribute to the development of sexual offending behaviors in juveniles. The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the predictive relationship between a history of sexual abuse and engagement in male and female juvenile sexual offending when moderated by characteristics of family dysfunction.

This chapter focuses on providing details on the methods that were used to explore the relationship between sexual abuse history and male and female juvenile sexual offending as moderated by traits of family dysfunction. First, I provide the rationale for the research design, detailing the variables used in the study as well as how the variables were explored to see whether a statistically significant relationship exists. Next, the methodology of the study is provided to define the population and sample being used for the study, as well as the procedures for data collection. Then, I present the data analysis plan that will state the software being used for the statistical analysis, specify the research questions being explored, and explain how the results will be interpreted. Finally, this chapter reviews potential threats to validity in the research design, how these threats are being managed, and a review of ethical procedures along with potential ethical concerns that may arise.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

This study was seeking to gain insight into the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and male and female juvenile sexual offending by exploring if characteristics of family dysfunction strengthen this connection. The intent of this study was to explore the moderating effect of three variables on the relationship between an independent and dependent variable. In order to explore the predictive ability of variables for an identified outcome, a quantitative research design was needed. To explore this potential connection, I used multiple logistic regression as the statistical method for the research design. Multiple logistic regression is a statistical analysis that explores the relationship between one dependent variable with a binary outcome and more than one independent variable (Warner, 2013). This research design is highly utilized throughout social sciences research, in particular juvenile sexual offending research because juvenile sexual offending as a dependent variable is binary. Multiple logistic regression assists in identifying if more than one independent variable, and the interaction of multiple independent variables, increase the likelihood of the dependent variable occurring. The use of multiple logistic regression analysis helped to shed light on multiple potential influencing factors to better understand the pathway to the dependent variables, in this study, male and female juvenile sexual offending. The information from this analysis could assist in the development of prevention strategies and targeted treatment needs.

As noted in the literature review, there are discrepancies within the research regarding the predictive relationship between sexual victimization and subsequent juvenile sexual offending behaviors, as well as differences in development between males

and females, suggesting other factors may be influencing the relationship among male and female juveniles. Therefore, the dependent variables for this study were male and female juvenile sexual offending because the intent was to see what factors influence this outcome. Multiple logistic regression analysis was conducted with male juveniles who engaged in sexually offending as a dependent variable and the same analysis was conducted but with female juveniles who engaged in sexually offending as a dependent variable. The independent variable was a history of sexual abuse; this factor was commonly associated with the presence of sexual offending and in past research on juvenile sexual offending has been identified as having a weak and inconsistent predictive relationship with the dependent variable. In viewing this relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variables through the lens of social cognitive theory, additional observations made by a youth with a history of sexual abuse of family interactions/behaviors may influence sexual offending behavior as an adolescent. Consequently, the moderator variables selected to explore, which were hypothesized to influence this relationship, were a history of physical abuse, family violence, and parental separation/divorce. The use of multiple logistic regression research design allowed the opportunity to investigate whether the identified moderator variables strengthen the relationship between sexual victimization and male and female juvenile sexual offending.

## **Methodology**

### **Population**

Research conducted in the 1990s highlighted differences between adult and juvenile sexual offending behaviors (Smallbone, 2006). Further exploration of the

differences between adult and juvenile sexual offending behaviors suggested contributing factors to sexual offending were different for adolescents versus adults (McKillop et al., 2018). Additionally, differences between male and female development, as well as variations in risk factors found between genders (Hunter et al., 2006), indicated a need to evaluate relationships separately between males and females. This study was focused on exploring factors influencing male and female juvenile sexual offending. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in 2020, there were 120,298 sexual offenders overall in the United States (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020). Out of this population of sexual offenders, juveniles accounted for 20,514 sexual offenses, with an additional 12,384 offenders whose age is unknown in the United States in 2020. Based on these numbers from 2020, juvenile sexual offenders account for approximately 17%–19% of all sexual offenses reported in the United States. As a result of the prevalence of juvenile sexual offenders, the population being evaluated was juvenile sexual offenders defined as individuals, male and female, under the age of 18 who have been adjudicated for at least one sexual offending behavior.

### **Sampling and Sampling Procedures**

This study explored the relationship between youth, males and females separately, with a history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending when moderated by characteristics of family dysfunction. To fully explore this relationship, it was important to have a sample of youth involved in the justice system, to include both sexual and non-sexual offenders, to evaluate the predictive nature of a history of sexual abuse to juvenile sexual offending. Data including male and female non-sexual juvenile offenders and male

and female sexual juvenile offenders allowed for the ability to have a comparison group and thereby develop greater insight into how a history of sexual victimization and traits of family dysfunction may contribute to different categories of offending behaviors in adolescence.

A representative sample of the grander juvenile sex offender population was obtained through archival data from a southern state's department of juvenile justice (DJJ). This archival data includes de-identified information on youth who turned 18 between January 1, 2007, and December 31, 2015. This data set included youth who aged out of the DJJ system during this time frame and who were assessed with the full version of the Community Positive Achievement Change Tool (C-PACT), providing data on both juvenile sexual offenders and juvenile offenders who have not engaged in a sexual offense, otherwise referred to as non-sexual juvenile offenders. The C-PACT is a risk/needs assessment, which has pre-screen and full assessment versions, administered with the youth during their initial entry phase into DJJ after arrest. The data acquired from DJJ were for youth who received the full version of the C-PACT assessment. It is important to note that the full version of the C-PACT assessment was provided to youth identified as being moderate-high or high-risk from the pre-screen, and any youth being referred to placement in a program contracted through DJJ such as residential programs, day treatment, or intensive family services.

The dataset from DJJ was of youth who received the full C-PACT assessment and aged out of the juvenile system between January 2007 and December 2015 included 89,045 youth comprised of 19,910 females and 69,135 males. Within the sample there



were 6,549 total juveniles who were adjudicated for at least one sexual offense with 312 of those youth identified as female. Research has indicated different pathways to juvenile sexual offending between males and females (Hunter et al., 2006; Plummer & Cossins, 2018) and as a result, the relationships between a history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending were looked at separately for males and females. A G\*Power analysis was used to determine actual sample size needed to reach a .80 statistical power. The G\*Power logistic regression statistical test with a priori power analysis was calculated with one tail, a standard odds ratio of 1.3, an alpha error probability of 0.05 and a statistical power of .80, indicating a sample size of 568 was needed. As a result, out of the 69,135 male juveniles and 19,910 females in the dataset, a random sample was administered to select 300 male and 300 female juvenile delinquents without a sexual offense and 300 male and 300 female juveniles with at least one sexual offense for the multiple logistic regression analysis.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

The data requested from DJJ was data from January 1, 2007, through December 31, 2015, on all youth who turned 18 years of age, thereby aging out of the juvenile system during that time frame. The information within this data set was from the full C-PACT assessment, which was administered to all youth who are moderate-high to high risk and/or placed in a DJJ program/services. The C-PACT provided information to include demographics, psychosocial history, family history, mental health history, substance use history, medical history, academic history, social group, and assessment of the youth's skills and abilities. The information used within this data was strictly

historical; gathered from the youth's interview, probation officer, state representative, and/or parent/guardian and did not require an individual to make any type of interpretation in selecting the response. Furthermore, the outcome from the C-PACT assessment, determination of youth's level of risk, was not used for this research. Using historical data that were verified through records and collateral sources, versus data based on a person's interpretation, assisted in reducing threats to validity in the study.

### **Archival Data**

The data was requested from a southern state's DJJ, which maintains data on all youth who enter their custody. The organization, storage, utilization, and maintenance of youth data is overseen by the Office of Research and Data Integrity. This office within DJJ is focused on using data to improve prevention and intervention strategies with an ultimate goal of decreasing juvenile delinquency. To that end, DJJ permits researchers to request access to data to conduct research studies that assist in executing their overall mission. As a student researcher interested in exploring contributing factors to juvenile sexual offending, I initiated the process to obtain data from DJJ to use for my research.

The forms needed to request data from DJJ for the purposes of my research were obtained from the DJJ Office of Research and Data Integrity website. The forms completed and sent to DJJ for approval were a data request form, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) cover sheet, an IRB questionnaire, and a summary of the research project. The data request form is a form to obtain information from the researcher on the data being requested from DJJ. The IRB cover sheet is a form requesting basic information on the study and the principal investigator; this form was required to be signed by the

dissertation chair if applicable as well as the principal investigator. The IRB questionnaire gathered additional characteristics about the research plan to include intended population, details about the data being requested, and specifics of the research design. The summary of the research provided a brief summary of the study to include research question, data being requested, basis of the study, gap in the research the study is addressing, and the analytic strategy. A copy of all forms can be found in the Appendix.

After completing all the required forms, I sent them via email to the DJJ IRB director, IRB support staff, and director of research and data integrity. Upon receipt of the forms, I heard back from the director of research and data integrity providing me a preliminary green light on the project and was informed that approval forms would be sent from DJJ to review and sign. I then received a Privacy and Security Agreement from IRB support staff to be reviewed and signed by the principal investigator and the requestor's IRB representative. Once my proposal was approved, I forwarded the agreement for an IRB representative to review and sign. I then returned the signed document to DJJ to execute the agreement and finalize the approval to use the data.

### **Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs**

The Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) is an assessment to identify level and areas of risks and needs for delinquent youth involved in the juvenile justice system (Baglivio, 2009). The PACT's development was modeled after the Washington State Juvenile Court Assessment and the Youth Assessment Screening Inventory to assist in specifying level of recidivism risk for juvenile delinquents and criminogenic needs (Baglivio, 2009). The information for the PACT is gathered through a semi structured

interview with the juvenile (Baglivio, 2009). An interview guide is utilized by the juvenile justice department staff during the interview process to ensure all data points of the PACT are fully answered (Baglivio, 2009). Information from the interview is corroborated through the juvenile's parent/guardian, teachers, probation officer, or other source as needed (Baglivio, 2009). The data from the interview are then input into PACT software, which scores the assessment and produces an overall risk to reoffend classified as low, moderate, moderate-high, or high (Baglivio, 2009).

There are two versions of the PACT, a pre-screen, which is used as an initial assessment comprised of 46 items, and a full assessment with 126 items (Baglivio, 2009). The full assessment PACT is provided to all juveniles who score a moderate-high or high on the pre-screen assessment (Baglivio, 2009). Baglivio (2009) conducted a study to validate the PACT as a risk/needs assessment in predicting overall risk to reoffend. The outcomes of the study validated the PACT as a significant predictor of male and female risk to reoffend (Baglivio, 2009).

The archival data used for this study was from juveniles who received the full PACT assessment. The full assessment PACT contains information from the juvenile in the following domains: record of referrals, gender, school history, current school status, historic use of free time, current use of free time, employment history, current employment, history of relationships, current relationships, family history, current living arrangements, alcohol and drug history, current alcohol and drugs, mental health history, current mental health, attitudes/behaviors, aggression, and skills (Baglivio, 2009). The variables utilized in this study were taken from the full version PACT administered by

DJJ staff after juvenile arrest, but prior to placement in a residential setting, thus prompting the designation Community PACT (C-PACT). As noted, the full version of the C-PACT includes historical information and an interpretation of the youth's skills and current functioning based on a semi structured interview. The variables selected for use in this study were all historical in nature (either present or not present) and therefore were not subjective to the assessor's interpretation.

### ***Independent Variable***

The independent variable used for this study was history of sexual abuse. The information was gathered from the semi structured PACT interview and corroborated with collateral sources as needed. History of sexual abuse was defined as the juvenile reporting an experience in their past where they were the victim of nonconsensual sexual behaviors. This variable was coded as 0 = no history of sexual abuse and 1 = reported history of sexual abuse.

### ***Moderator Variables***

The moderator variables selected for use in this study to see if they strengthen the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending were physical abuse, family violence, and parental separation/divorce. Information to identify the presence of all moderator variables was gathered from the semi structured PACT interview and collateral sources as needed. Physical abuse was defined as a physical injury, not caused by an accident, inflicted by a family member on the youth. This variable was coded as 0 = no history of physical abuse and 1 = reported history of physical abuse. Family violence was defined by the presence of verbal intimidation,

yelling, heated arguments, threats of abuse, domestic violence, and witnessing violence in the home environment. This variable was coded as 0 = no report of any family violence and 1 = reported family violence. Parental separation/divorce was defined as the absence of either the mother or the father from the family home. This variable was coded as 0 = both parents live in the family home and 1 = either the mother or the father do not live in the family home.

### ***Dependent Variable***

The dependent variables used in this study were male and female juvenile sexual offending. The youth's official juvenile records were used to identify if the youth was male or female and if he/she had a sexual offense. A juvenile sexual offense was defined as being adjudicated for sexual offense prior to turning 18 years old to include both misdemeanor and felony sexual offenses. This variable was coded as 0 = no history of sexual offenses and 1 = reported history of sexual offenses.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The software used for the statistical analysis of the identified variables is IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27). The archival data requested for use from the state was in SPSS format. The only alteration to the data from its original form was that it has been de-identified so the data was not able to be associated with an individual. The statistical analysis conducted in SPSS was multiple logistic regression. Multiple logistic regression was selected to explore the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and male and female juvenile sexual offending as influenced by family dysfunction because the dependent variable, male and female juvenile sexual offending, were binary. Multiple

logistic regression was utilized to assess the relationship between independent predictor variables and membership to a particular group, the dependent variable (Warner, 2013). The results of the logistic regression analysis will be in terms of probability values (Warner, 2013). The outcome of the statistical analysis indicated the likelihood of juvenile sexual offending when the youth have a history of sexual abuse, and this interacts with variables of family dysfunction.

Logistic regression is a more appropriate statistical analysis when the outcome is group membership than multiple linear regression in part because the assumptions needed are less restrictive (Warner, 2013). For a study to use logistic regression four assumptions must be met (Warner, 2013). First, the dependent variable must be dichotomous. This assumption was met with the dependent variable in this study being the presence of a juvenile sexual offense, as a male or female, identified as 0 = no sexual offense as a juvenile and 1 = sexual offense as a juvenile. Second, the values of the dependent variable must be statistically independent. This assumption was met because the scoring outcomes of the dependent variable in this study were independent of each other. The third assumption for logistic regression is the model needs to utilize independent variables which are relevant predictors. This assumption was met as evidenced by the review of the literature that suggests a relationship between characteristics of family dysfunction influence juvenile sexual offending behaviors. The fourth and final assumption is the categories of the dependent variable are mutually exclusive of each other. This assumption was met because each juvenile in the data set either has been

adjudicated for a sexual offense prior to the age of 18 or they have not; it is not possible to be part of both groups.

### **Rationale for Selection of Variables**

Research on the risk factors related to juvenile sexual offending has shown a relationship between a history of sexual abuse and subsequent engagement in sexual offending behaviors as a juvenile (Dalskley et al. 2021; Miley et al., 2020). However, the effect size found in this relationship was small suggesting additional variables may play a role in the relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending. Multiple researchers have recommended the need for future research to explore additional variables, and the influence of moderating variables to assess the likelihood of juvenile sexual offending (Cain, 2021; Dalsklev et al., 2021; Kozak et al., 2018; Miley et al., 2020). Furthermore, some research has suggested, due to differences among developmental and risk factors, the pathways to juvenile sexual offending may be different for males and females thereby indicating a need to evaluate these pathways separately. From the gap in the literature the independent variable, sexual abuse history, was selected to further understand the pathway to the dependent variables, male and female juvenile sexual offending.

Yoder et al. (2018a) explored the family experiences of youth who engaged in sexual offending behaviors and youth who offended non-sexually. Their findings suggested youth who have offended sexually had high levels of impairment in their family environments resulting in the recommendation from these researchers that more research needs to be done to explore the influence of family dynamics on juvenile



patterns of offending. Social cognitive theory was utilized to assist in narrowing down possible family variables and identify moderator variables presumed to strengthen the relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending. Through the lens of social cognitive theory, it is not simply the observation of a behavior alone that leads to the imitation of the behavior, but how the individual interprets the observation and additional observations of behaviors that may be interpreted similarly, thus reinforcing interpretations and increasing the likelihood of imitating the behavior.

The interpretations made from the direct observation of sexual victimization is going to vary depending on the individual. Sexual abuse is a violation of an individual's sexual, emotional, and physical boundaries and therefore it can be assumed that sexual victimization in childhood may alter conceptualizations of healthy sexual relationships, emotional regulation skills, physical boundaries, and interpersonal relationship dynamics. As a result, variables within the family dynamic that may validate and reinforce cognitive distortions developed through direct observation of sexual abuse were identified.

Family violence was selected because this variable identifies if there was a history of unhealthy conflict within the youth's family as evidenced by the use of verbal intimidation, yelling, heated arguments, threats of abuse, presence of domestic violence, and witnessing violence in the home. The observation of one or more of these family violence indicators may further reinforce maladaptive beliefs from the experiences of sexual abuse by emphasizing unhealthy emotional regulation skills, a lack of respect for the physical boundaries of others, and detrimental interpersonal relationship dynamics. Domestic violence within the family has been found to increase the likelihood of sexual

offending by six times (Ybarra & Thompson, 2018). Furthermore, family dysfunction comprised of unhealthy family interactions was more prevalent in juveniles who had committed a sexual offense (Yoder et al., 2018a). Living in a home that involves some form of family violence for a child who has already been sexually victimized may further normalize the use of aggression.

Physical abuse history was selected as a moderator variable because it indicates whether there is a history of the youth being intentionally physically injured by a family member. Physical abuse is a form of violence that highlights the use of aggression, in particular physical aggression, to express oneself and/or manage conflict. A child exposed to physical abuse may learn unhealthy methods of emotional regulation and conflict resolution and normalize the use of power and dominance over others. Yoder et al. (2019) conducted research on physical victimization in the family and found physical forms of victimization were related to an increase the probability of sexual offending for juveniles. For children who have a history of sexual abuse, the experience of physical abuse may further establish unhealthy physical boundaries, use of aggression to express emotions, and negative interpersonal skills.

Finally, parental separation/divorce, defined as the youth not having either the mother or the father in the family home, was selected as a moderator variable because of the potential for this observation to reinforce unhealthy relationship schemas. At its core, parental separation/divorce may signal to the youth relationships are not forever and are not always stable. Additionally, parental separation/divorce means one of the youth's parents is not in the home that may inadvertently strain attachment formation with that

parent. Research has shown the strength of the relationship with a parent can moderate the relationship between a history of maltreatment and pattern of adolescent offending (Wilkinson et al., 2019). Parental separation/divorce may also impact level of monitoring in the family home. Limited parental monitoring has also been shown to be related to an increase in juvenile risk-taking behaviors (Udell et al., 2017). Parental separation/divorce may reinforce cognitive distortions related to unhealthy relationships strengthening the pathway to juvenile sexual offending.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The purpose of this study was to explore the predictive relationship between a history of sexual abuse and male and female juvenile sexual offending behaviors when moderated by characteristics of family dysfunction. Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory provided the framework for the selection of the moderating variables that are believed to strengthen the relationship between sexual abuse history and later male and female juvenile sexual offending. The research questions and hypotheses were constructed with the intent to explore this relationship.

RQ1: What was the relationship between history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending in males?

*H*<sub>0</sub>1: History of sexual abuse does not have a statistically significant relationship with juvenile sexual offending in males.

*H*<sub>1</sub>1: History of sexual abuse does have a statistically significant predictive relationship with juvenile sexual offending in males.

RQ2: How do traits of family dysfunction moderate the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and male juvenile sexual offending?

*H*<sub>02</sub>: The presence of variables depicting family dysfunction does not have a statistically significant moderating effect on history of sexual abuse in predicting male juvenile sexual offending.

*H*<sub>12</sub>: The presence of variables depicting family dysfunction was expected to strengthen the relationship between sexual abuse and male juvenile sexual offending.

RQ3: What was the relationship between history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending in females?

*H*<sub>03</sub>: History of sexual abuse does not have a statistically significant relationship with juvenile sexual offending in females.

*H*<sub>13</sub>: History of sexual abuse does have a statistically significant predictive relationship with juvenile sexual offending in females.

RQ4: How do traits of family dysfunction moderate the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and female juvenile sexual offending?

*H*<sub>04</sub>: The presence of variables depicting family dysfunction does not have a statistically significant moderating effect on history of sexual abuse in predicting female juvenile sexual offending.

*H*<sub>14</sub>: The presence of variables depicting family dysfunction was expected to strengthen the relationship between sexual abuse and female juvenile sexual offending.

## **Threats to Validity**

### **External Validity**

External validity refers to the ability to generalize the findings to the greater population (Warner, 2013). The sample used in this research was limited to justice-involved youth in a southern state who were 18 years old, from January 1, 2007, to December 31, 2015. Additionally, the youth in the sample were youth who were identified as being moderate-high- and high-risk youth who were administered the full C-PACT assessment. This sample then does not account for low-risk delinquent youth or youth who engaged in sexual offending behaviors that were never reported to the authorities. As a result, the sample may underrepresent youth in the community who have sexual behavior problems and commit a sexual offense. Therefore, the generalizability of these results is limited to juveniles who have been adjudicated of a crime and received the full C-PACT assessment that is for moderate-high- and high-risk youth.

### **Internal Validity**

Internal validity refers to the study's ability to assess the presence of a cause-and-effect relationship (Warner, 2013). A potential threat to internal validity in this study was in regard to measurement sensitivity. Measurement sensitivity describes the number of options available to select in the measurement provided (Warner, 2013). The independent and moderator variables used could be described as having a low level of sensitivity because they only provide information on whether that variable was present or not in the youth's history. The findings could be further enhanced by increasing the sensitivity of this measure by also reporting on the frequency, duration, and intensity of the family

dysfunction. For example, future research could be conducted to see if more occurrences of family dysfunction, over longer periods of time, and with heightened frequency and intensity of family violence or physical abuse, are more predictive of sexual offending in juveniles.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Ethical procedures and concerns for this research included the storage, access, use and confidentiality of the archival data. The data was requested from a southern state's DJJ. The process of requesting and accessing the data was detailed in the archival section of this chapter. The forms requesting the data from DJJ as well as the Privacy and Security Agreement can be referenced in the Appendix. The Privacy and Security Agreement was signed by myself as the principal investigator/requester of the data, the Director of the Office of Research and Data Integrity, a witness of the requester, and the requester's IRB Representative.

This privacy agreement set the parameters and expectations for the use, access, storage, and confidentiality of the archival data requested. The archival data was only utilized by the requester for the purposes of this specific study on the relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending when moderated by family dysfunction. Access to the archival data was limited to the requester and individuals associated with the requester for the purposes of the study. A list of the names of individuals at Walden University who will be involved in this research was provided to the DJJ IRB prior to gaining access to the data and these individuals were bound by the provisions of the agreement. Prior to gaining access to the archival data, it was de-

identified, so the confidentiality of all youth information was maintained. To further maintain confidentiality of the data, it was not reproduced or shared with any parties beyond those reported to the DJJ IRB. All data obtained from DJJ was destroyed within 90 days of the completion of the research project. Furthermore, DJJ was provided a draft analysis of the data as well as draft copies of written documents with results, findings, and conclusions at least 60 days prior to the release of the materials to others. After DJJ IRB completed their review, all revisions made by DJJ IRB were adopted into the study and the following disclaimer was added: the information contained does not represent the official position or policies of the state's DJJ.

An additional ethical concern regarded the use of the official name of the partner association who is providing the data. According to Walden University, capstones are not permitted to name partner organizations. As a result, instead of naming the partner organization, it was referred to in this study as a "southern state's department of juvenile justice" or "DJJ". This includes redacting the partner organization's name from all materials associated with this research.

### **Summary**

The exploration of the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and male and female juvenile sexual offending when moderated by factors of family dysfunction was conducted through a quantitative study utilizing multiple logistic regression analysis. Multiple logistic regression was utilized as the research design because it provided an understanding of the likelihood of a youth, male or female, with a history of child sexual abuse will commit a sexual offense as a juvenile. The sample population was comprised

of over 89,000 juveniles involved in the legal system in a southern state's DJJ. The data set was requested from a state's DJJ and was de-identified to protect the confidentiality of all parties. The moderator variables: physical abuse, family violence, and parental divorce/separation, were statistically analyzed through multiple logistic regression to see if they strengthen the relationship between history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending among males and females.



## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this quantitative study was to gain a deeper understanding of the factors which contribute to the development of sexual offending behaviors in juveniles who have a history of being sexually abused. To understand the baseline of how these variables interact, first, the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending behaviors was evaluated in a sample of juvenile delinquent males and a sample of juvenile delinquent females separately. Next, the study evaluated the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexually offending behaviors as moderated by traits of family dysfunction among male and female juvenile delinquents. Details of the archival data utilized for the analysis are provided and include a description of the demographic characteristics within each group. Then, the results from the statistical analyses for each of the research questions are explained.

### **Data Collection**

Archival data on a representative sample of the juvenile sexual offender population were procured through a southern state's DJJ. The de-identified archival data provided by DJJ included information on youth who turned 18 and aged out of the juvenile justice system between January 1, 2007, and December 31, 2015. The data were derived from the full version C-PACT administered to youth during initial entry into DJJ after an arrest who were identified as being moderate-high or high-risk from a pre-screen as well as all youth who were being referred for placement in a DJJ program.

The data included information on a total of 89,045 youth, comprised of 19,910 females and 69,135 males. Out of the over 89,000 youth represented in the data, there

were a total of 6,549 juveniles who engaged in a sexual offending behavior. Among the juveniles who had at a minimum of one sexual offense, there were 312 females and 6,237 males. To prevent statistical errors that may result from using a sample that is too large for the analysis, I conducted a G\*Power analysis, which assigned logistic regression as the statistical test with a priori power, was calculated with one tail, a standards odds ratio of 1.3, an alpha error probability of 0.05 and a statistical power of 0.80. The results of this calculation stated a sample size of 568 was indicated. As a result, a random sample from the data was administered to obtain 300 male juvenile delinquents with at least one sexual offense and 300 male juvenile delinquents without a sexual offense for a total of 600 males. I followed the same process of random sampling for the female juvenile sample to create a group with 300 female juvenile delinquents with a least one sexual offense and 300 female delinquents without a sexual offense for a total of 600 females.

### **Characteristics of the Sample**

Table 1 provides an overview of basic characteristics regarding the demographic and criminal background on the groups being utilized in this study: 300 juvenile males without a sexual offense, 300 juvenile males with a sexual offense, 300 juvenile females without a sexual offense, 300 juvenile females with a sexual offense. In regard to ethnicity, Black juveniles represented the largest race/ethnicity group for all groups with the exception of the sex offense female group whose largest race/ethnicity group was white. Among non-sex offense males, sex offense males, and non-sex offense females, the age range of 13–14 is the most common for the first offense, whereas for sex offense females, the majority (41%) were 12 and under at the age of first offense. Females who

sexually offended were found to have more legal involvement, with 48% of the females with a sexual offense having been previously committed to secure detention compared to 40% of females without a sexual offense. A similar pattern was found in the male groups as well, with sex offense males having a higher rate (7% more) of previous secure detentions than their non-sex offense male counterparts. The majority of youth in the sample represented a low overall level of risk to reoffend based on the C-PACT, suggesting the majority of the sample were at a low risk to reoffend at the time of the initial assessment. Overall, the trends appear to be consistent for the characteristics across males and females in all group types.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Characteristics of Male and Female Juvenile Offenders With and Without a Sexual Offense*

Characteristics	Non-sex offense males	Sex offense males	Non-sex offense females	Sex offense females
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>				
White	33.3%	38.7%	40.7%	48.3%
Black	49.7%	48.0%	45.3%	44.3%
Hispanic	16.7%	12.7%	14.0%	7.0%
Other	0.3%	0.7%	0%	0.3%
<b>Age of first offense</b>				
12 and under	25.3%	34.3%	20.3%	41.0%
13 to 14	35.0%	40.7%	42.0%	35.7%
15	16.7%	12.3%	16.3%	10.7%
16	17.3%	9.7%	13.0%	9.7%
Over 16	5.7%	3.0%	8.3%	3.0%
<b>Secure detention history</b>				
None	44.3%	37.3%	60.0%	52.0%
One	33.0%	38.7%	19.0%	27.0%
Two	10.3%	13.0%	12.3%	9.0%
Three or more	12.3%	11.0%	8.7%	12.0%
<b>Overall risk level</b>				
High	16.3%	15.0%	9.0%	19.7%
Low	39.7%	40.0%	51.0%	41.3%
Moderate	20.0%	18.3%	18.0%	18.3%
Moderate-high	24.0%	26.7%	22.0%	20.7%

Table 2 provides descriptive characteristics of the variables explored in the study for the non-sex offense male group ( $n = 300$ ) and the sex offense male group ( $n = 300$ ). From the table we can see that sex offense males have a higher rate of sexual abuse history in comparison to non-sex offense males which, from a strictly behavioral perspective, is somewhat expected. Furthermore, sex offense males displayed higher rates in all categories of study variables.

**Table 2***Descriptive Characteristics of Study Variables for Males*

Study variables	Non-sex offense males		Sex offense males	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Sexual abuse	3%	97%	14.3%	85.7%
Physical abuse	12.3%	87.7%	23.3%	76.7%
Family violence	36.7%	63.3%	38.0%	62.0%
Parental separation	80.3%	19.7%	84.0%	16.0%

The descriptive characteristics of the variables being explored in the study for the female groups, non-sex offense females ( $n = 300$ ) and sex offense female group ( $n = 300$ ), are presented in Table 3. In the sample, history of sexual abuse was close to two times more prevalent in the sex offense female group (42.7%) than the non-sex offense female group (23.0%). As seen in Table 3, the rates for each of the variables in the study were slightly higher in the group of females with a history of sexual offending, but these rates were generally only slightly higher than the non-sex offending female group.

**Table 3***Descriptive Characteristics of Study Variables for Females*

Study variables	Non-sex offense females		Sex offense females	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Sexual abuse	23.0%	77.0%	42.7%	57.3%
Physical abuse	27.3%	72.7%	38.7%	61.3%
Family violence	54.0%	46.0%	58.7%	41.3%
Parental separation	86.7%	13.3%	89.7%	10.3%

## Study Results

### Hypothesis 1: Sexual Abuse Predicting Male Juvenile Sexual Offending

In RQ1, I explored the predictive relationship between history of sexual abuse and male juvenile sexual offending. To explore this relationship, binary logistic regression analysis was conducted in SPSS to determine the odds of a male juvenile with a history of sexual abuse having engaged in a sexual offense. Within the sample of male juvenile delinquents ( $n = 600$ ), there was an even split of males with a sexual offense history ( $n = 300$ ) and males without a history of sexual offending ( $n = 300$ ). A history of sexual abuse served as the independent variable in this binary logistic regression and the presence of having engaged in sexual offending behavior served as the dichotomous dependent variable. Each variable was coded as 0 = the variable was not present, 1 = the variable was present. The research hypothesis was a history of sexual abuse was predictive of subsequent sexual offending behaviors in juvenile males.

Table 4, showing the omnibus tests of model coefficients for Hypothesis 1, indicated the full predictive model was statistically significant; therefore, sexual abuse history does have a statistically significant predictor relationship with male juvenile sexual offending.

**Table 4**

*Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients- H1*

		Chi-square	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Step 1	Step	26.282	1	< .001
	Block	26.282	1	< .001
	Model	26.282	1	< .001

Table 5 provides a model summary with information on the percentage of variance within the outcome variable the independent variable was responsible for (Warner, 2013). The Nagelkerke R Square of .057 was interpreted as 5.7% of the outcome variable, male juvenile sexual offending, being attributed to the predictor variable, history of sexual abuse. This result showed sexual abuse history among male juveniles was predictive of sexual offending, but the relationship was small, suggesting there are additional variables which may have a stronger relationship with the outcome of juvenile sexual offending.

**Table 5**

*Model Summary – H1*

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell $R^2$	Nagelkerke $R^2$
1	805.495 <sup>a</sup>	.043	.057

<sup>a</sup> Estimation terminated at iteration number 4 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

The results in Table 6 displayed the actual group membership versus predicted group memberships (Warner, 2013) with 55.7% correct predictions based on the independent variable of sexual abuse history to predict the dependent variable male juvenile sexual offending.

**Table 6***Classification Table – H1*

		Predicted			Percentage correct
		JSOKID			
Observed		.00	1.00		
Step 1	JSOKID	.00	291	9	97.0
		1.00	257	43	14.3
Overall percentage					55.7

Table 7, Variables in the Equation, provided information on the likelihood of a male juvenile being part of the sex offender group if he has a history of sexual abuse. The numerical value of *B* for the sexual abuse variable was positive, indicating there was a positive predictive relationship between sexual abuse history of male juvenile sexual offending. Additionally, Table 7 shows the significance value was  $< .001$  indicating this relationship was statistically significant, therefore the null hypothesis can be rejected. The odds ratio  $\text{Exp}(B)$  is 5.410, indicated a male juvenile with a history of sexual abuse was 5.4 times more likely to engage in a sexual offense than a male juvenile without a history of sexual abuse.

**Table 7***Variables in the Equation – H1*

							95% CI for EXP(B)		
		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Wald	<i>df</i>	Sig.	Exp(B)	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Step 1 <sup>a</sup>	Sexual abuse	1.688	.376	20.114	1	< .001	5.410	2.587	11.314
	Constant	-.124	.086	2.107	1	.147	.883		

*Note.* CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

<sup>a</sup> Variable(s) entered on Step 1: Sexual abuse.



## **Hypothesis 2: Sexual Abuse Predicting Male Juvenile Sexual Offending as Moderated by Characteristics of Family Dysfunction**

For RQ2, I explored the predictive relationship between sexual abuse and male juvenile sexual offending as moderated by characteristics of family dysfunction. To explore this relationship, a multiple logistic regression analysis was conducted in SPSS to determine how characteristics of family dysfunction impact the odds of a male juvenile with a history of sexual abuse having engaged in a sexual offense. Within the sample of male juvenile delinquents ( $n = 600$ ), there was an even split of males with a sexual offense history ( $n = 300$ ) and males without a history of sexual offending ( $n = 300$ ). For this multiple logistic regression analysis, the independent variable was history of sexual abuse, the moderator variables were physical abuse history, family violence, and parental separation/divorce, and the dependent variable was juvenile sexual offense history among males. To create the interaction variable, the independent variable sexual abuse history was multiplied by each of the moderator variables: physical abuse, family violence, and parental separation/divorce. Each variable was coded as 0 = the variable was not present, 1 = the variable was present. The research hypothesis was characteristics of family dysfunction strengthens the relationship between sexual abuse and sexual offending behaviors in male juveniles.

The omnibus tests of model coefficients indicated the full predictive model was statistically significant (see Table 8), showing there was a statistically significant relationship between sexual abuse and male juvenile sexual offending.

**Table 8***Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients – H2*

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	33.157	5	< .001
	Block	33.157	5	< .001
	Model	33.157	5	< .001

The model summary in Table 9 provides information on the percentage of variance the independent and moderating variables were responsible for within the dependent variable. The Nagelkerke R Square of .072 was interpreted as 7.2% of the outcome variable, male juvenile sexual offending, was attributed to the predictor variables, sexual abuse, physical abuse, family violence, and parental separation/divorce. The Nagelkerke R Square was slightly higher than when run with just the independent variable of sexual abuse, suggesting the moderator variables selected faintly contribute to the variance in the outcome beyond that of sexual abuse history on its own.

**Table 9***Model Summary – H2*

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell $R^2$	Nagelkerke $R^2$
1	798.620 <sup>a</sup>	.054	.072

<sup>a</sup> Estimation terminated at iteration number 4 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

Table 10 shows the actual group membership versus predicted group memberships (Warner, 2013) with 57.2% correct predictions based on the independent variable of sexual abuse and moderating variables of family dysfunction to predict the dependent variable male juvenile sexual offending. As we saw with Nagelkerke R

Square, the percent correct was justly a little higher with the additional moderator variables added in suggesting the moderator variables, by a very slim margin, increase the accuracy of predicting male juvenile sexual offending.

**Table 10**

*Classification Table – H2*

		Predicted			Percentage correct
		JSOKID			
	Observed	.00	1.00		
Step 1	JSOKID	.00	264	36	88.0
		1.00	221	79	26.3
Overall percentage					57.2

Table 11, Variables in the Equation, provided information on the likelihood of a male juvenile being part of the sex offender group if he had a history of sexual abuse, physical abuse, family violence, and parental separation/divorce. The outcomes in Table 11 display how the moderator variables impact the relationship between sexual abuse and male juvenile sexual offending. The only statistically significant relationship among the moderator variables was present between physical abuse and male juvenile sexual offending with a .043 value just below the  $p$  value for statistical significance of .05. For juveniles with a history of physical abuse the odds ratio,  $\text{Exp}(B)$ , suggested these juveniles are 1.8 times more likely to have engaged in a sexual offense than male juveniles without a history of physical abuse. Family violence fell just slightly outside of statistical significance,  $p = .056$ . Parental separation/divorce was well outside the range of being statistically significance,  $p = .235$ . The moderating variable of family dysfunction also was well outside the range of having statistical significance,  $p = .892$ ,

indicating this variable does not have a statistically significant impact on the relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending and therefore, we must reject the hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis.

**Table 11**

*Variables in the Equation – H2*

		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Wald	<i>df</i>	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% CI for EXP(B)	
								<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Step 1 <sup>a</sup>	Sexual abuse	1.590	.573	7.712	1	.005	4.905	1.597	15.066
	Physical abuse	.565	.279	4.108	1	.043	1.759	1.019	3.038
	Family violence	-.380	.199	3.649	1	.056	.684	.463	1.010
	Parental separation or divorce	.264	.222	1.408	1	.235	1.302	.842	2.012
	Family dysfunction	-.104	.768	.018	1	.892	.901	.200	4.063
	Constant	-.286	.206	1.922	1	.166	.751		

*Note.* CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

<sup>a</sup> Variable(s) entered on Step 1: Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse, Family Violence, Parental Separation or Divorce, Family Dysfunction.

### **Hypothesis 3: Sexual Abuse Predicting Female Juvenile Sexual Offending**

For RQ3, I explored the predictive relationship between history of sexual abuse and female juvenile sexual offending. A binary logistic regression analysis was conducted in SPSS to determine the odds of a female juvenile with a history of sexual abuse having engaged in a sexual offense. The sample of female juvenile delinquents ( $n = 600$ ) was comprised of females with a sexual offense history ( $n = 300$ ) and females without a history of sexual offending ( $n = 300$ ). The independent variable was a history of sexual abuse, and the dependent variable was a sexual offense; both variables are

dichotomous. Each variable was coded as 0 = the variable was not present, 1 = the variable was present. The research hypothesis was a history of sexual abuse was predictive of sexual offending behaviors in juvenile females.

The Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients, Table 12, denotes if there is a statistically significant relationship for the full predictive model. There was a significance value of  $<.001$  indicating the model, the relationship between sexual abuse history and female juvenile sexual offending, was statistically significant.

**Table 12**

*Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients – H3*

		Chi-square	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Step 1	Step	26.613	1	< .001
	Block	26.613	1	< .001
	Model	26.613	1	< .001

Table 13, Model Summary, provided the Nagelkerke R Square value which provides information on how much the independent variable was responsible for variance in the dependent variable (Warner, 2013). The Nagelkerke R Square value was .058. This was translated to 5.8% of the variance in the dependent variable, female juvenile sexual offending, was attributed to the independent variable, sexual abuse history. These results show there was a relationship between sexual abuse and female juvenile sexual offending, but this relationship was small.

**Table 13***Model Summary – H3*

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	805.164 <sup>a</sup>	.043	.058

<sup>a</sup> Estimation terminated at iteration number 3 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

The Classification Table, Table 14, displayed actual group membership versus predicted group membership based on the independent variable (Warner, 2013). The overall percentage was 59.8%, which can be interpreted as based on a history of sexual abuse, there was a 59.8% accuracy in predicting female juvenile sexual offending.

**Table 14***Classification Table – H3*

		Predicted			Percentage Correct
		JSOKID			
Step 1	Observed	.00	1.00		
		JSOKID	.00	231	69
		1.00	172	128	42.7
Overall percentage					59.8

In Table 15, Variables in the Equation, we are able to interpret the odds of a female having a sexual offense based on a history of sexual abuse. The value of  $B$ , .913, was positive, therefore, we were able to determine there was a positive predictive relationship between sexual abuse history and female juvenile sexual offending. Furthermore, the significance value was  $<.001$  indicating this relationship was statistically significant, and as a result, the null hypothesis can be rejected. The odds ratio  $\text{Exp}(B)$  was 2.491, suggesting a female juvenile with a history of sexual abuse was 2.5

times more likely to engage in a sexual offense than a female juvenile without a history of sexual abuse.

**Table 15**

*Variables in the Equation – H3*

		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Wald	<i>df</i>	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% CI for EXP(B)	
								<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Step 1 <sup>a</sup>	Sexual abuse	.913	.180	25.681	1	< .001	2.491	1.750	3.546
	Constant	-.295	.101	8.575	1	.003	.745		

*Note.* CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

<sup>a</sup> Variable(s) entered on step 1: Sexual Abuse.

#### **Hypothesis 4: Sexual Abuse Predicting Female Juvenile Sexual Offending as Moderated by Characteristics of Family Dysfunction**

RQ4 explored the predictive relationship between sexual abuse and female juvenile sexual offending as moderated by characteristics of family dysfunction. Multiple logistic regression analysis was conducted in SPSS to determine how characteristics of family dysfunction impact the odds of a female juvenile with a history of sexual abuse subsequently engaged in a sexual offense. The sample of female juvenile delinquents ( $n = 600$ ) was comprised of females with a sexual offense history ( $n = 300$ ) and females without a history of sexual offending ( $n = 300$ ). In setting up the multiple logistic regression, the independent variable was history of sexual abuse, the moderator variables were physical abuse history, family violence, and parental separation/divorce, and the dependent variable was juvenile sexual offense history among females. To create the interaction variable, the independent variable sexual abuse history was multiplied by each of the moderator variables: physical abuse, family violence, and parental

separation/divorce. Each variable was coded as 0 = the variable was not present, 1 = the variable was present. The hypothesis was characteristics of family dysfunction strengthens the relationship between sexual abuse and sexual offending behaviors in female juveniles.

Table 16, Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients, indicated the full predictive model was statistically significant; showing there was a statistically significant relationship between sexual abuse and female juvenile sexual offending.

**Table 16**

*Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients – H4*

		Chi-square	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Step 1	Step	28.639	5	< .001
	Block	28.639	5	< .001
	Model	28.639	5	< .001

In the Model Summary, Table 17, we were shown the percentage of variance the independent and moderating variables were responsible for within the dependent variable. The Nagelkerke R Square of .062 was interpreted as 6.2% of the dependent variable, female juvenile sexual offending, was attributed to the predictor variables, sexual abuse, physical abuse, family violence, and parental separation/divorce. In comparison to the previous binary logistic analysis used to explore hypothesis 3, with sexual abuse as the only predictor variable, we observed a slight increase in the percentage of variance, suggesting the combination of moderating factors may have contributed to the dependent variable just slightly more than the sexual abuse history alone.



**Table 17***Model Summary – H4*

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell $R^2$	Nagelkerke $R^2$
1	803.137 <sup>a</sup>	.047	.062

<sup>a</sup> Estimation terminated at iteration number 3 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

Table 18, Classification Table, provided a comparison of actual group membership compared with predicted group membership (Warner 2013), the overall percentage of correct predictions based on the independent variable of sexual abuse and moderating variables of family dysfunction to predict the dependent variable female juvenile sexual offending was 59.8%. Interesting to note this was the same percentage correct as seen in RQ3 which included the one predictor variable sexual abuse history; thereby suggesting the moderator variables did not increase the ability to predict female juvenile sexual offending.

**Table 18***Classification Table – H4*

		Predicted			Percentage Correct
		JSOKID			
Step 1	Observed	.00	1.00		
		JSOKID	.00	231	69
		1.00	172	128	42.7
Overall percentage					59.8

Table 19, Variables in the Equation, provided information on the likelihood of a female juvenile being part of the sex offender group if she has a history of sexual abuse,

physical abuse, family violence, and parental separation/divorce. The outcomes in Table 19 indicated the only statistically significant relationship was between sexual abuse and female sexual offending with a significance value of .003 which is below the significance threshold of .05. The relationships individually between physical abuse, family violence, and parental separation/divorce were not statistically significant and as a result, the odds of female sexual offending cannot be determined from these variables. The moderating variable of family dysfunction was also outside the range of having statistical significance with  $p = .330$ , indicating these variables do not have a statistically significant impact on the relationship between sexual abuse and female juvenile sexual offending and consequently, we must reject the hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis.

**Table 19**

*Variables in the Equation – H4*

		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Wald	<i>df</i>	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% CI for EXP(B)	
								<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Step	Sexual abuse	.738	.246	9.026	1	.003	2.092	1.292	3.386
1 <sup>a</sup>	Physical abuse	.037	.253	.022	1	.883	1.038	.632	1.703
	Family violence	-.153	.193	.628	1	.428	.858	.588	1.252
	Parental separation or divorce	.109	.262	.174	1	.676	1.116	.667	1.865
	Family dysfunction	.354	.364	.950	1	.330	1.425	.699	2.907
	Constant	-.326	.266	1.496	1	.221	.722		

*Note.* CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

<sup>a</sup> Variable(s) entered on Step 1: Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse, Family Violence, Parental Separation or Divorce, Family Dysfunction.

## Summary

In attempts to advance knowledge on the pathway to juvenile sexual offending multiple logistic regression analysis was utilized to see if characteristics of family dysfunction strengthened the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending. A sample of the juvenile population was obtained from archival data from the DJJ in a southern state. From this sample a group of male juveniles ( $n = 600$ ) comprised of male juveniles with a sexual offense ( $n = 300$ ) and male juveniles without a sexual offense ( $n = 300$ ), and a group of female juveniles ( $n = 600$ ) comprised of female juveniles with a sexual offense ( $n = 300$ ) and female juveniles without a sexual offense ( $n = 300$ ), was created for the analysis.

The descriptive characteristics of the data displayed the most common age of the first offense for all groups fell between age 13 and 14, with the exception of the female juvenile sex offending group that was at age 12 and under. Additionally, it was found that both males and females who had a sexual offense had a higher overall percentage of sexual abuse history consistent with theories of the victim–offender overlap and social cognitive theory. The male and female juvenile sex offender groups were also shown to have higher rates of physical abuse in their histories. However, the results from the analysis of the moderation effect of family dysfunction on the pathway from sexual abuse to sexual offending in juveniles were not as hypothesized.

In regard to the pathway from sexual abuse to sexual offending, in both the male and female juvenile samples, the relationships were found to be statistically significant. Male juveniles with a history of sexual abuse were estimated to be 5.4 times more likely

to engage in a sexual offense and females with a history of sexual abuse were estimated to be 2.5 times more likely to engage in a sexual offense. However, when adding in the moderating variable of family dysfunction comprised of physical abuse, family violence, and parental separation/divorce, no statistically significant moderation effects were found on the relationship between sexual abuse and sexual offending behaviors. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis for RQ2 and RQ4 had to be rejected, and the null hypotheses were accepted.

Although findings were not significant in demonstrating an impact of family dysfunction on the relationship between sexual abuse history and juvenile sexual offending in males or females, this research provided minimal support for the victim–offender overlap concept and suggests other factors may contribute to the relationship. Through a deep dive into the interpretation of these results as well as the limitations, this research provided insight into the need for future research in the field to better understand the pathway from sexual abuse to sexual offending patterns in juveniles. Furthermore, even with the rejection of hypotheses regarding the moderation effect of family dysfunction, the implications of this research for positive social change will be explored.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The aim of this quantitative research was to explore the potential impact of family dysfunction on the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending. Previous research on the connection between sexual abuse history and juvenile sexual offending suggested there was a small predictive relationship, leading to questions about ancillary factors that may impact this relationship. The purpose of this research was to examine whether factors of family dysfunction, which were defined as physical abuse, family violence, and parental separation/divorce, would strengthen the relationship between a sexual abuse history and juvenile sexual offending.

The key findings from this study provided support for prior research, which proposed a relationship between a history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending. In the male juvenile sample, the likelihood of a male juvenile engaging in a sexual offense was 5.4 times greater if he had a history of sexual abuse. A similar, albeit smaller, relationship was found in the female sample where female juveniles with a history of sexual abuse were 2.5 times more likely to engage in sexual offending behaviors. When exploring how characteristics of family dysfunction may moderate this pathway among males and females, no statistically significant impact was found for either sample. Although findings were not as hypothesized, the lack of findings may provide insight into limitations in this study as well as direction for future research.

## **Interpretation of Findings**

### **Relationship Between Sexual Abuse and Juvenile Sexual Offending**

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, which suggested that observed behaviors are learned and contribute to the engagement in these modeled behaviors later in life, led to researchers exploring the potential connection between a history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending; this theorized connection was referred to as the victim–offender overlap. The rationale behind the victim–offender overlap is individuals who directly observed sexual offending behaviors through their victimization are then more likely to engage in a similar behavior. Support for this connection was found throughout the review of the literature on juvenile sexual offending as well as in this current study.

A review of the descriptive characteristics of the samples utilized in this study revealed these samples reflected similar patterns identified in previous research. For example, the majority of females in the sex offense group were 12 and under at the age of first offense, but for female non-sex offense group and both male groups, the majority committed their first offense age 13–14. This finding was consistent with previous research conducted by Hickey et al. (2008) who found that females engaged in sexual offending behaviors at a younger age than their male counterparts. Also, Roe-Sepowitz and Krysik (2008) found that females with a sexual offense had more involvement with the legal system than their non-sexual offending female delinquent counterparts. This pattern was found in this female sample with 48% of females with a sexual offense having a prior commitment in secure detention compared to 40% of females without a

sexual offense. Furthermore, the male and female juvenile sex offender groups were shown to have higher rates of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and family violence in their histories, thereby indirectly supporting Casey et al.'s (2017) research findings, which found multiple victimizations increased the likelihood of sexual offending behaviors. The characteristics of the sample used in this study being similar to prior research provided reassurance the sample is representative of the grander juvenile sex offender population.

In regard to the relationship specifically between a history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending, the findings from this study were consistent with a large portion of the prior research that proposed a history of sexual abuse has a predictive relationship with juvenile sexual offending (Casey et al., 2017; Dillard & Beaujolais, 2019; Fox, 2017; Grady et al., 2021; Miley et al., 2020; Moyano et al., 2017). In this study, the results indicated that male juveniles with a history of sexual abuse were 5.4 times more likely to engage in a sexual offense. Additionally, the results in the female juvenile sample demonstrated a similar relationship, with females who have a history of sexual abuse being 2.4 times more likely to commit a sexual offense as a juvenile. It was interesting to see that although the rates of sexual abuse history in the female sex offender group are almost double of the male sex offender group, the relationship with juvenile sexual offending is smaller for females. This finding may in part be due to the overall rate of past sexual abuse in the female non-sexual offending juvenile group (23%) being much higher than the male non-sexual offending juvenile group (3%). Even though the relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending was smaller in the female sample, the presence of a statistically significant relationship was important to

note in light of research by Plummer and Cossins (2018), who did not find support for the victim–offender overlap in females. Overall, the findings of this study indicated that a history of sexual abuse does have a statistically significant relationship with juvenile sexual offending for both males and females which is supportive of the conceptual pathways to juvenile sexual offending derived from social cognitive theory.

### **Moderation Effect of Family Dysfunction on Juvenile Sexual Offending**

As researchers have strived to better understand the connection from sexual abuse to juvenile sexual offending, many have evaluated the potential impact of family dynamics on this relationship. Yoder et al.'s (2019) research findings pointed to victimization within the families as being associated with an increased risk of serious offending to include juvenile sexual offending. Gewirtz-Meydan's (2020) research indicated the quality of parental support moderated a relationship between a history of sexual abuse and psychopathology, with reduced likelihood of psychopathology for juveniles with a history of sexual abuse who had increased quality of parental support. Additionally, Manzoni and Schwarzenegger (2019) found that in juveniles with a history of maltreatment, family relationships mediated the relationship to juvenile delinquency. These findings, which suggested family dynamics impact the pathway from victimization to juvenile delinquency, were aligned with the tenets of social cognitive theory, which propose that the individual's likelihood of repeating an observed behavior is influenced by additional observations made by the individual which reinforce whether or not the behavior is repeated (Bandura, 1986). As a result, in this study, I sought to explore



whether characteristics of family dysfunction moderate the relationship between sexual abuse history and juvenile sexual offending.

To explore the moderating effect of family dysfunction on the relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending, first, I identified characteristics that suggest dysfunction within the family unit by reinforcing a lack of physical boundaries, deficits in emotional regulation, and unhealthy interpersonal relationships skills. The moderator variables representative of family dysfunction were physical abuse, family violence, and parental separation/divorce. Consistent with research that suggested domestic violence and unhealthy family interactions were identified at higher rates in juveniles who have sexually offended (Yoder et al., 2018a), the prevalence of the moderating factors of family dysfunction used in this study were observed at higher rates in both the male and female sexual offending groups than the non-sexual offending groups.

In both the male and female juvenile sexual offending groups, rates of physical abuse and sexual abuse were higher than compared with the non-sexual offending juveniles. This finding was consistent with those of Dillard and Beaujolais (2019) and Siria et al. (2020), whose research suggested that rates of victimization are higher in juveniles who sexually offend than in their juvenile delinquent counterparts. The rates of physical abuse in the sexual offending male group were almost twice those in the non-sexual offending male group. The prevalence of physical abuse in the female sexual offending group was 11% higher than in the female non-sex offending group.

Correspondingly, the rates of sexual abuse were also higher in both the male and female sexual offending juvenile groups than their non-sexual offending counterparts.

The findings from this study, which showed increased rates in multiple areas of victimization (physical abuse, sexual abuse, family violence) in the male and female sexual offending groups, also supported findings from Casey et al. (2017) and Cain (2021), who concluded that histories of multiple victimizations increase the likelihood of sexual offending. Furthermore, in evaluating the rates of physical abuse and sexual abuse between the male and female juvenile sex offender groups, it was observed sexual offending female juveniles have increased rates of victimization (42.7% sexual abuse history, 38.7% physical abuse history) than their male counterparts (14.3% sexual abuse history, 23.3% physical abuse history). This provides support to previous research by Hunter et al. (2006) and Hickey et al. (2008) who found higher rates of childhood maltreatment in females who sexually offend than males.

Although all the individual rates of each variable of family dysfunction (physical abuse, family violence, and parental support/separation) were higher in the sex offense groups of both male and females, when exploring the moderating effect of family dysfunction, on the relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sex offending, there was no statistically significant moderation effect found in either the male or female juvenile groups. Prior research has shown juvenile delinquents have higher rates of victimization than community samples (Wemmers et al., 2018) and this may largely contribute to the lack of a moderation effect being identified in this study. Based on these

findings, characteristics of family dysfunction are not found to moderate the pathway from sexual abuse to juvenile sexual offending in male juveniles.

The lack of a statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and juveniles engaging in sexual offending behaviors in this study was not consistent with other research that suggested a potential influence. For example, in research by Bonner et al. (2019), a chaotic home environment (i.e., characterized by caregiver disruption, similar to parental separation/divorce) was associated with juvenile sexual offending. Ybarra and Thompson (2018) found that domestic violence (which was included in the definition of family violence moderator variable) increases the risk of sexual offending. Furthermore, Sitney and Kaufman (2021) from their research were able to suggest that parental interactions with their children are influential on the development of juvenile sexual offending behaviors. Since the findings from this study did not support prior research on traits of family dysfunction and its connection to juvenile sexual offending, it is important to review the limitations of the study to see what else may be learned from this analysis and improved upon in future research.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The chief limitation of this research was generalizability. In this study, I sought to gain insight into the population of juveniles who engage in sexual offending behaviors. To study this population, archival data were requested from a southern state's DJJ, which comprised a large sample of juveniles ( $n = 89,045$ ) who were arrested for a criminal behavior and aged out of the justice system between January 1, 2007, and December 31,

2015. Within this large sample of justice-involved juveniles, there were 6,237 males and 312 females who were arrested for a sexual offense with all other youth having engaged in non-sexual criminal behavior. Since the sample was only comprised of individuals with a criminal history, the results of this analysis were limited to juvenile-justice-involved youth. Furthermore, it has been estimated that 28% of the sexual offenses that take place in the family home are never reported in attempts to protect the family and avoid legal involvement (RAINN Statistics, 2020). Therefore, any findings from this study, whose sample was limited to justice-involved juveniles, may not be fully representative of the greater population of juveniles who sexually offend.

Moreover, it was within this limitation of the representative sample being comprised solely of justice-involved youth, that the results may have not yielded a statistically significant moderation effect of family dysfunction on the relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending. Research has indicated that justice-involved juveniles have experienced higher rates of adverse childhood experiences, which includes sexual abuse, physical abuse, family violence, and parental separation/divorce, than the general population of juveniles (Levenson et al., 2017). The review from the descriptive characteristics of this data display high levels of family dysfunction present across the sample. Therefore, since both groups (juveniles who sexually offended and juveniles without a sexual offense) demonstrated such high levels of family dysfunction, it is more understandable when conducting the analysis that a statistically significant moderation effect was not found, and the findings were limited to justice-involved juveniles.

The construction of the variables, specifically the lack of measurement sensitivity, was another limitation of this research. All variables used in this analysis were dichotomous and thereby were limited to only identifying the presence or absence of each event for the juvenile. The exploration of the relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending may be enhanced by utilizing variables with increased measurement sensitivity that could identify the frequency, duration, and timing of the juveniles past sexual abuse, family violence, and physical abuse. However, with this research being limited to dichotomous variables, the findings were also limited to only indicating the likelihood of a juvenile sexually offending based on the presence of sexual abuse and family dysfunction.

### **Recommendations**

The primary limitation of this research, generalizability, translated into the main recommendation for future research. The lack of statistically significant results from the moderation analysis in this research may be in part due to the juveniles in the sample, whether they committed a sexual offense or not, all being involved in the justice system and having high rates of adverse childhood experiences. Juveniles involved in the justice system have been shown to have increased exposure to adverse childhood experiences compared to juvenile community samples (Levenson et al., 2017). The increased prevalence of family dysfunction variables across justice-involved juveniles in the sample created difficulty in determining if these adverse effects of family dysfunction contributed to juvenile sexual offending. Therefore, the main recommendation for future

research is to incorporate a sample of juveniles from the community who have not had legal involvement.

However, gathering a community sample to include juveniles who have engaged in sexual offending behaviors may be challenging due to underreporting of sexual abuse that takes place in the family home (RAINN Statistics, 2020). Another challenge with a community sample is that juveniles may be reluctant to report their own sexual offending behaviors and/or even recognize when engaging in sexual offending behaviors.

Consequently, it will benefit future researchers to incorporate clear, concise, and easy-to-understand definitions of sexual offending behaviors in their research with juveniles in the community. Additionally, for juveniles to feel comfortable in being fully transparent and honest, enhanced confidentiality measures to conceal the identity of the juvenile will also be a critical component of future research in the community.

Improvements to measurement sensitivity of the variables in the study is also recommended for future research. This study was limited by the measurement of the variables only distinguishing whether the event was present or not in the youth's history. Future research that incorporates duration, frequency, and additional information on the perpetrator of abuse and/or maltreatment in the youth's past may broaden understanding of how family dysfunction may moderate the relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending. For example, in research by Sitney and Kaufman (2021), findings suggested that males who were sexually abused by their fathers had an increased risk of engaging in sexual offending behaviors. Family dysfunction may have a stronger impact on moderating the relationship between sexual abuse and sexual offending if the

perpetration of the sexual abuse was by a family member. From a social cognitive theory perspective, the maladaptive behaviors and cognitive patterns developed from sexual abuse perpetrated by a family member may then be further reinforced in the juvenile by then experiencing family dysfunction because the same family members who were abusive are also part of the family dysfunction. In regard to frequency and duration, social cognitive theory suggested retention processes are impacted by the amount of exposure to the modeled behavior, and brief or single observations of a behavior are less likely to be repeated (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, the frequency and duration of the sexual victimization may affect the retention processes and subsequently impact how, and if, these behaviors are imitated. As a result, future research will benefit from including details on frequency, duration, and the relationship to perpetrator of the past sexual victimization.

This study defined characteristics of family dysfunction as a history of physical abuse, family violence (which includes domestic violence and verbal aggression), and parental separation/divorce. Future research may benefit by either using alternative indicators of dysfunction within the family environment and/or evaluate other environments that may support and reinforce maladaptive patterns previously observed through sexual victimization. Social cognitive theory posits ancillary observations and interactions reinforce the original modeled behavior (Bandura, 1986). This study evaluated the impact of ancillary observations within the family unit, however, other environments the juvenile is a part of, such as school and/or social network, may have a larger influence on reinforcing maladaptive behaviors and cognitions. It is recommended

future researchers explore how the juvenile's school environment and social experiences may moderate the relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending because these are also major areas of a youth's life where additional observations may be made that potentially reinforce prior unhealthy observed behaviors.

### **Implications**

This research aspired to enhance understanding of the moderating factors that strengthen the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending. Through a deeper understanding of the moderating factors within this relationship prevention strategies, treatment interventions, and risk assessments could be improved in attempts to reduce juvenile sexual offending. Although the characteristics of family dysfunction were not found in this study to moderate the relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending, there are some key implications for the field and future research.

Across the sample of male and female juveniles involved in a southern state's juvenile justice system high levels of family dysfunction characteristics were observed. The prevalence of physical abuse, family violence, and parental separation/divorce across all delinquent juveniles in the study may point to these factors contributing to overall juvenile delinquency. Future research that adds in a comparison group of community juveniles will help to shed additional light on how these factors contribute to delinquency.

The findings of this study did provide support to social cognitive theory in demonstrating a significant predictive relationship between sexual abuse history and



juvenile sexual offending amongst both males and females. Moreover, the findings of a statistically significant predictive relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending in the female group, which contradicted findings from other research (Plummer & Cossins, 2018), may have additional implications for prevention strategies, treatment interventions, and risk assessments specifically for the female juvenile population. For example, screenings conducted with juveniles in the community, either in school or in government organizations, may be enhanced by identifying youth who have a history of sexual victimization and then referring these youth for services that target healthy sexual and physical boundaries as well as intimacy development.

In general, the results of this study provided support and guidance for additional research exploring juvenile sexual offending from a social cognitive theory framework. This study demonstrated the prevalence of family dysfunction among juvenile delinquents, indirectly providing support for future research to further explore how ancillary observations in the home environment may shape and influence the individual's conceptualization of observed behaviors and reinforce cognitive patterns supportive of delinquency. This study's support to social cognitive theory as a framework for understanding how sexual offending behaviors may be learned may also promote the need to focus on the ancillary observations and interactions with juveniles receiving interventions either in the community or in residential programs.

### **Conclusions**

Juveniles are responsible for a sizeable portion of the sexual offenses committed each year in the United States. Through research which can assist in identifying factors

that contribute to the development of juvenile sexual offending, improvements can be made to prevention strategies, treatment interventions, risk assessments, and how policies are applied to this population, with a sole objective of reducing sexual offending behaviors. This quantitative research strived to gain an in-depth understanding of how characteristics of family dysfunction may influence the relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending. Although this research was not able to demonstrate that characteristics of family dysfunction strengthen the pathway from sexual abuse to juvenile sexual offending, this study did provide further support to social cognitive theory and the victim–offender overlap by finding a statistically significant relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending in both males and females.

The hope is the lack of findings in this research will serve as a springboard for additional research to explore ancillary factors that contribute to juvenile sexual offending. It is clear from the research, not all youth with a history of sexual abuse subsequently engage in sexual offending behaviors. Additional insight into the factors that may moderate the relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending would assist in targeting interventions to address these moderating factors and further enhance risk assessments. Finally, with a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to the development of juvenile sexual offending, the application of sex offender registration and notification policies can be revised to only target juveniles with the highest level of risk for sexual recidivism.

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### Appendix A: Literature Search Strategy

For each database searched the following sets of keyword combinations were used:

1. risk factors or contributing factors or predisposing factors 2. juvenile delinquency or juvenile offenders or youth offenders 3. sexual assault or rape or sexual violence or sexual abuse or sexual offense
  
1. juvenile delinquency or juvenile offenders or youth offenders 2. sexual assault or rape or sexual violence or sexual offense 3. social cognitive theory or sct or social-cognitive theory
  
1. juvenile delinquency or juvenile offenders or youth offenders 2. social cognitive theory or sct or social-cognitive theory
  
1. social cognitive theory or sct or social-cognitive theory 2. delinquency or crime or delinquent behavior
  
1. juvenile delinquency or juvenile offenders or youth offenders 2. sexual assault or rape or sexual violence or sexual abuse or sexual offense

Appendix B: Archival Data Request Forms

IRB Data Request Form pg. 1

**Department of Juvenile Justice  
Institutional Review Board  
Data Request Form**

<b>Name</b>	Dahlia Kaplan	<b>Contact Number</b>	(407) 928-8821
<b>Project Title</b>	The relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending when moderated by family dysfunction	<b>Email Address</b>	dkaplan@kandorpilc.com
<b>Request Date</b>	12/20/2021	<b>Required Date</b>	02/01/2022
<b>Purpose/Context:</b> What is the /data required for? Which questions are you trying to answer with it?	<p>The purpose of this study is to explore the predictive relationship between a history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending behaviors when moderated by characteristics of family dysfunction.</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> No data is required from DJJ. The de-identified data is already in the possession of Michael Baglivio DJJ background screening current, standing data-sharing MOU with DJJ. Dr. Baglivio will share ONLY a de-identified data file (in SPSS format) to the Principal Investigator. The project requires no data file development, analysis, or staff time from DJJ.</p>		
<b>Description of Information Required</b>			
<b>Desired Timeframe:</b> Fiscal Year(s), Calendar Year(s), specified date range	January 1, 2007 and December 31, 2015		
<b>Geographic Location(s):</b> Statewide data, only certain counties or judicial circuits included, only certain programs included	State wide		
<b>Type of System Involvement:</b> Arrests, placements in secure detention, probation, or a residential facility, only first-time offenders with a felony arrest	All DJJ-involved youth who turned 18 during the desired timeframe, indication of whether the youth had a sexual offense as per charges. Must have full assessment C-PACT		
<b>Served, Releases, Admissions, or Referrals:</b> Please specify the population of youth you would like to be included in your dataset.	All DJJ-involved youth who turned 18 between January 1, 2007 and December 31, 2015.		
<b>File Unduplicated by:</b> What should each row represent? An arrest, a placement, a youth?	DJJID (unique youth)		
<b>Existing Variables Requested:</b> Using the "Readily Available Data" sheet available online, please indicate which variables you would like included. As necessary, please indicate the timing of any dynamic variables. For example, would you like the risk score for each youth before their placement in a residential facility, their most recent risk score or both?	All C-PACT variables, demographics (age, sex, race, ethnicity), indication as to whether the youth had a sexual offense prior to age 18, exact charge ID of that offense.		
<b>Any Exclusion Criteria:</b> For example, "please don't include youth over the age of 16 because I would	Include only youth with C-PACT full assessments		



## IRB Data Request Form pg. 2

<i>like to examine juvenile recidivism with a 2 year follow up period."</i>	
<b>Variables Requested to be Built:</b> Age at first secure detention placement, recidivism (please provide your operationalized definition, e.g., a new arrest within 2 years of release OR any VOP or new-law offense while on probation).	Dichotomous (yes/no) flag for whether the youth had a sexual offense.
<b>Additional files:</b> Will another dataset be used in conjunction with the one specified in the request? Please explain.	No
<b>Format Required:</b> SPSS, Stata, Table, Map, Graph, Spreadsheet, Word, etc. – Please specify.	SPSS









**DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE**

**Introductory Questionnaire  
Institutional Review Board**

Name of Principal Investigator: Dahlia Kaplan, LMHC, CFMHE, CCCE

Project Title: The relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending when moderated by family dysfunction

1. Characteristics of the research (check all that apply):

- Archival Data Study Method (requires Data Request Form)**
  - Identified Data
  - De-identified Data**
- Non-Archival Data Study Method
  - Survey/Questionnaire
  - Intervention
  - Experimental
  - Behavioral or Psychological Study
  - Exercise or Nutrition Study
- Deception of Subjects
- Use of Impaired Subjects\*
- Collection of Physical Specimens (e.g., blood, urine, hair)
- Use of Placebos
- Non-Approved Indication for Approved Drug
- Non-Approved Dose for Approved Drug
- Experimental/Marketed Drug: IND # \_\_\_\_\_
- Experimental/Marketed Drug: IND Exempt
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Impaired subjects include those who have physical or mental limitations which restrict their ability to understand, or who are dependent on the individuals who may be consenting for them. The subjects include, but are not limited to, people who are in one of the following categories: mentally or emotionally impaired, illiterate, or those who require certain care. Some subjects are permanently impaired by definition of their circumstances; others are temporarily impaired.

2. Where did this study idea/request originate?

- At the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice
- At another State of Florida agency (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- An academic institution (please specify) Walden University, College of Behavioral Sciences, Forensic Psychology
- A research institution (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- From a grant proposal
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

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<http://>

*The mission of the Department of Juvenile Justice is to increase public safety by reducing juvenile delinquency through effective prevention, intervention and treatment services that strengthen families and turn around the lives of troubled youth.*

IRB Questionnaire pg. 2

3. Is financial or material support required for this study?  Yes  No (If No, skip to #5)

Source of Funding:	Applied for	Obtained	
Grant Institution	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	(please specify) _____
NIJ	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
OJJDP	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
BJA	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
DJJ	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
State [REDACTED]	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
University	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	(please specify) _____
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	(please specify) _____

4. Expected dates of the study: Start Date: 12/01/2021 End Date: 12/31/2022

5. Expected location(s) of the study? (please specify)  
 (Researcher fills out **top portion** of Research Acknowledgement Form at this time)

_____ N/A _____	Research Acknowledgement Form Filled Out	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
	Signature Obtained (DJJ Process)*	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
_____	Research Acknowledgement Form Filled Out	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
	Signature Obtained (DJJ Process)*	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
_____	Research Acknowledgement Form Filled Out	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
	Signature Obtained (DJJ Process)*	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

\* Refer to DJJ's IRB Handbook for the specific process on obtaining signatures for the Research Acknowledgement Form

6. Describe any significant relationship between the investigator(s) and any of the participants in the study. Check all that apply:

- Researcher/Participant
- Teacher/Student
- Contract or Department Provider/Delinquent
- Health Care Provider/Patient
- Employer/Employee
- Friend or Family
- Other (please specify) The study involves secondary data analysis of de-identified archival DJJ data of youth that aged out of DJJ by 2016.

7. Are you currently or have you ever been employed by the [REDACTED] Department of Juvenile Justice or a DJJ provider?  Yes  No

If yes, explain any possible conflicts of interest or explain why this situation will not result in a conflict of interest. Previously employed with a DJJ residential services provider (G4S Youth Services), left employment on good terms to return to pursue a Ph.D. There are no conflicts as the current project entails secondary data analysis of archival DJJ data not specifically related to residential placement and no indication of provider will be included in the de-identified data.

8. Describe the youth assent/parent consent process?  
 N/A as the current project entails secondary data analysis of de-identified archival DJJ data for youth that aged out of DJJ by 2016.

## IRB Questionnaire pg. 3

## 9. Participant Information

9a. Estimated number of participants 89,000, Age Range: 11 to 18 years of age

9b. Describe participant types (e.g., normal controls, habitual offenders, sexual offenders)

All youth who received a C-PACT full assessment from DJJ involvement that reached 18 years of age by 2016. The sample youth who had a juvenile sexual offense prior to age 18 (approximately 3,600) will be compared to the larger proportion of the approximately 89,000 youth who did not have a sexual offense.

9c. Are participants selected based on gender?  Yes  No If yes:  Males/ Females  
If yes, specify reason. \_\_\_\_\_

9d. Are participants selected based on race/ethnicity?  Yes  No

If yes, specify races/ethnicities. \_\_\_\_\_  
If yes, specify reason. \_\_\_\_\_

9e. Describe the plan for dealing with youth who cannot read or are developmentally disabled.  
N/A as the project entails only secondary data analysis of de-identified archival DJJ data.

10. If you are planning to interact with youth or staff at a DJJ facility or property where they may receive information about possible abuse of a youth, how do you plan to comply with Statute 39.201 regarding mandatory reporting?

- Incidents of abuse will be reported to 1-800-96ABUSE  
 Other (please explain): N/A as the project entails only secondary data analysis of de-identified archival DJJ data

11. In the event of a psychological or medical emergency, plans for management are:

- Normal provisions of the DJJ program.  
 On-site physician with emergency medications and equipment provided by investigators.  
 Public or community emergency services (e.g., 911).  
 Other (please explain): N/A as the project entails only secondary data analysis of de-identified archival DJJ data

12. Will any services, tests, medical procedures, etc., be performed that are in addition to the routine rehabilitative regimen or overlay services for the participants, including drug testing?

- Yes  No (If No, skip to #13)

12a. Who will have access to the results?

12b. If the study involves pharmacological intervention, will any of the drugs, devices, etc., be given to the participants free of charge? If so, please specify. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

IRB Questionnaire pg. 4

12c. Who or what agency will pay for them? \_\_\_\_\_

13. **All individuals**, including the principal and co-investigators, who will have access to juveniles, their parents, department employees, or contract providers or individuals who will have access to confidential information must undergo background screenings. Please identify **all individuals** who will require background screenings **and your time frame** to complete DJJ background checks on each individual. *\*Background Screenings submitted to the Department without the title of the IRB submission and the email address of the principal investigator included on the documentation will be discarded. Please refer to DJJ's IRB Handbook for the specific process.*

N/A as the project entails only secondary data analysis of **de-identified** archival FDJJ data. The data is being provided by Michael Baglivio, who has a current background screening with FDJJ, and a standing data-sharing MOU with FDJJ. Only de-identified data will be shared with the P.I.

14. What measures will be taken to protect the confidentiality of the information (e.g., tapes, pictures, personal documentation) obtained? Specifically address how the principal investigator will store, handle, and destroy the information.

14a. During the research study: De-identified data will be stored on a password protected computer. No information can be traced to any specific youth.

14b. After completion of the research study: The data file will be permanently deleted at the completion of the project.

15. Will research participants be compensated?  Yes  No (If No, skip to #16)

15a. Reimbursement of Expenses?  Yes  No  
If yes, specify the expenses for which the participant will be reimbursed.

\_\_\_\_\_

15b. Monetary Compensation?  Yes  No If yes, amount: \$\_\_\_\_\_

If monetary compensation is provided, a pro-rated payment is required. Please outline the amount and schedule of all payments. If a pro-rated payment scheme is not applicable, an explanation must be provided below. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Given the group of participants you will recruit, could the monetary compensation unduly influence a subject to participate in this study or remain in this study when other factors in the subject's health/environment would keep the subject from doing so? (Please specify). \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

16. Is there an oversight committee that reviews safety data for this research study?

IRB Questionnaire pg. 5

Yes       No      If **yes**, please specify: **●**DJJ IRB.

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Updated 4/18/14

## Summary of Research pg. 1

**The relationship between sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending when moderated by family dysfunction**

Dahlia Kaplan, LMHC, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Forensic Psychology, PhD program, Walden University

**Research Questions:** What role do characteristics of family dysfunction play in the relationship between a history of sexual abuse and juvenile sexual offending among youth involved in the [REDACTED] juvenile justice system?

**Data:** Secondary data analysis of de-identified archival [REDACTED] DJJ data. The data will be provided by Michael Baglivio (current [REDACTED] DJJ background screening, current data-sharing MOU with [REDACTED] DJJ). The sample is the same one we have used in a prior publication examining differences between juveniles with sexual offending histories (hereafter JSO) and non-JSO youth with respect to adverse childhood experiences (ACE).

Citation: Levenson, J. S., Baglivio, M., Wolff, K. T., Epps, N., Royall, W. C., Gomez, K. C., & Kaplan, D. (2017). You learn what you live: Prevalence of childhood adversity in the lives of juveniles arrested for sexual offenses. *Advances in Social Work, 18*(1), 313-334.

While that study examined ACE differences across subtypes of youth and by sex, the study failed to examine other theoretical and empirical constructs as to why some juveniles engage in sexual offending. The current study proposes to take a more detailed examination of such constructs, specifically exploring the effects of family dysfunction on youth with a history of sexual abuse who engaged in juvenile sexual offending via measures included in the C-PACT full assessment.

The sample employs official [REDACTED] Department of Juvenile Justice [REDACTED] DJJ charge data on all youth who aged out of the juvenile justice system (turned 18 years of age) between January 1, 2007 and December 31, 2015. The current study includes juveniles assessed with the C-PACT full assessment during the study period (n=89,045; 19,910 females, 69,135 males). Youth who were only assessed with the C-PACT pre-screen were excluded, which intentionally oversamples higher risk youth. Thus, the current sample of 89,045 youth included 46.3% low-risk, 18.7% moderate-risk, 21.9% mod-high-risk, and 13% high-risk youth, as classified by the full assessment. Just under 7.4% of the juveniles evidenced an official charge for sexual offending prior to the age of 18. Specifically, 312 females and 6,237 males were arrested for a sexual offense, making the prevalence of female juvenile sexual offending 1.6% and male juvenile sexual offending 9% of all delinquent youth in the current sample.

**Descriptive Statistics**

	White	Black	Hispanic	"Other"	Age <sup>a</sup>
Female JSO	41.7%	45.0%	12.8%	0.5%	15.5
Female non-JSO	48.7%	42.9%	8.0%	0.3%	16.2
Male JSO	36.5%	46.0%	17.0%	0.5%	15.9
Male non-JSO	40.1%	46.1%	16.6%	0.5%	16.3

Note: JSO= juvenile sexual offense; a=Average age at assessment upon first arrest.

## Summary of Research pg. 2

**Analytic Strategy:** First, we will conduct descriptive statistics for the selected (theoretically informed and based on prior work) PACT item distributions of the JSO group. Multiple regression design will be utilized to assess the moderating effect of family dysfunction on youth with a history of sexual abuse in predicting juvenile sexual offending. This quantitative design will provide insight on if these variables interact in predicting juvenile sexual offending in a sample of DJJ-involved youth who had a sexually related offense prior to age 18.