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**An empirical analysis of conviction patterns, change over  
the life-course and external influences in relation to  
sexual offending behaviour**

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**BA (Hons), MSt (Cantab)**

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

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## **Abstract**

This PhD uses statistical analysis and qualitative interviews to analyse behaviour patterns in the context of causal theories of sexual offending and desistance from it, with a particular emphasis on socio-cultural reasons why people offend, stop offending, or offend at different points in life. This research makes an original contribute to the literature in a number of ways.

There are six main findings from this research that contribute to the literature in this area. One of the key findings is that there is substantial heterogeneity of offending behaviour amongst sexual offenders, suggesting that there is no one-size-fits-all approach for prevention, intervention or management. There was support in the research for a link between sexual offending and prolific non-sexual offending, but this only appeared to be one of several different sexual offending pathways. Other groups of offenders displayed considerable specialism in their offending (in terms of type of sexual offence and the fact that they had often only been convicted of sexual offences). This was magnified by the finding that offending rates were generally lower for sexual convictions than for other convictions: in fact, the vast majority of people in the dataset only had convictions for one sexual offence.

There was evidence from the qualitative interviews that adverse life events were a contributory factor to sexual offending, and the thesis has found that there is support for both psychological and socio-cultural causes (including gender-based elements), as well as an interaction between the two. It also suggested that there is evidence that sexual offending is not stable over the life-course, and that situational factors appear to be important in terms of determining behavioural change. Implications for prevention, intervention and management of sexual offenders are discussed.

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## **Declaration**

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature:

Printed name: Deborah Kyle



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## Terminology

This thesis uses the terms 'Crime' and 'Offence' interchangeably.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Overview**

This PhD looks at conviction patterns in the context of theories of sexual offending, with a particular emphasis on socio-cultural reasons for why people offend, stop offending, or offend at different points in the life-course. The thesis offers a robust quantitative analysis of convictions data in Scotland, using latent class analysis to identify typical groups of conviction patterns and comparing these in the context of existing theories about why people offend sexually. This quantitative research is also complemented by a qualitative dimension, involving interviews with people convicted of sexual crimes, in order to extract further detail about the motivations behind the offence and the lives of the people around the time of the offence. This methodology was chosen firstly because the heterogeneity of offenders means that studying people who commit these types of offences as one group is not appropriate. Secondly, multifactorial theories suggest that there are many different pathways into offending behaviour, and that these may reflect different underlying motivations for the offences. Latent class analysis clusters people into groups based on common offending patterns, to enable further analysis of these groups including age patterns, which can be used to examine support for different approaches to sexual offending behaviour (e.g. a life-course approach). This also enables a discussion of non-sexual offence patterns in relation to sexual offending behaviour. In order to explore the questions about the role of socio-structural influence on offending behaviour as well as provide additional context to the

quantitative patterns, the research was complemented by interviews with a number of people with sexual offences.

Findings of this thesis are summarised as follows. There is support for existing theories which suggest an interaction between psychological/developmental factors, situational elements and gender-based theories, which is consistent with multifactorial theories of why people sexually offend.

The different behaviour patterns between different groups of offenders suggest that there is no single cause of sexual offending behaviour, and that different behaviour may be the result of different underlying motivations to offend. There was support in the research for a link between sexual and non-sexual offending, but this only appeared to be true for some people. Sexual offenders who also had non-sexual convictions tended to be prolific non-sexual offenders rather than have an average number of convictions compared to others in the dataset, and their sexual offending appeared to be only a small part of a wider (predominantly non-sexual) criminal career. This is a feature of many of the multifactorial theories of sexual offending behaviour, which suggest that there are many different sexual offending pathways. This also implies that there is no one-size-fits all approach for prevention or intervention.

By analysing convictions data using quantitative techniques, the research established that offending behaviour was generally not stable through the life-course. The early 20s age group was a time of particular vulnerability to offending

behaviour for most people, which is reflective of the typical 'age-crime curve' for all offending behaviour (e.g. Farrington, 1986). However, sexual convictions tended to be more dispersed over the life-course than non-sexual convictions, especially for two of the groups. The qualitative aspects of the research indicated that life events were highly important in influencing patterns of sexual offending, which is consistent with a life-course approach to offending. This suggests that there are certain life stages at which people are more likely to offend. Hence whilst the risk of offending over the life-course varied between different groups of people, suggesting that approaches to intervention should take into account the role of life events and more variable and dynamic risk factors.

This chapter will outline the reasons I decided to undertake this research, highlighting the importance of study in this area, gaps in current research and background about sexual offending in general. It will then outline the original contribution of this research, followed by the structure of the thesis.

## **1.2 Background to the study**

### *Impetus behind research*

Sexual offences recorded in Scotland have been consistently increasing since 1974 despite other recorded crime decreasing over the last 10 years (Scottish Government, 2017). Despite this, research into the prevention of sexual offending and sexual reoffending has arguably not been afforded an equal level of importance to other areas related to offending behaviour.

This PhD research originated from working for many years as a police crime and intelligence analyst, often specialising in sexual offences, and witnessing the nature, scale and impact of these crimes. In particular, there appeared to be a tendency within law enforcement and other professional areas, which I may have been guilty of at times, to be resigned to the fact that there was little that anyone could do to either prevent these crimes from happening in the first place, or to prevent someone from reoffending, other than through constant monitoring or incarceration. At the same time, research continued to highlight the devastating short and long-term effects of these crimes, not only for the victim but for society as a whole (which are discussed in the next section).

In addition to the impact of these crimes, having studied criminology for my Master's degree (and considered criminological theories in the context of sexual offending behaviour), there also seemed to me to be an inability to reconcile theories of the causes of crime and of desistance from crime with what appeared to be a very different type of offence. These observations left me keen to spend more time researching theories and patterns of sexual offending and whether these offences should be treated as special cases as distinct from other crimes. On first researching sexual offences, it was apparent that research was more prevalent in the field of psychology than criminology. Coming from a police and sociological criminology background, however, I was particularly interested in where the non-psychological elements such as socio-cultural elements and life events fitted with the psychology-based causal theories. Being aware that many people who had committed sexual offences were also involved in non-sexual offences, I was also

interested in what the links between these two broad types of crime were. More specifically, I wanted to establish whether sexual offences could be viewed as merely one crime type amongst many crime types, or whether there was something fundamentally different about the offending patterns of people who commit sexual offences. I was interested in whether general criminological theories were sufficient to explain sexual offending behaviour, or whether a more nuanced and crime-specific theory was required. From a policy and practitioner perspective, I also wanted to know if generic preventative and treatment programmes, as well as the management of offenders and desistance concepts, were broadly appropriate for all types of offenders, or whether sexual offences required a fundamentally different policy and practice response. I was curious whether propensity to sexually offend could only be addressed within the realms of clinical treatment, or if other interventions may be appropriate. In particular, I was interested to see what evidence there was for a life-course perspective on sexual offending, which as will be discussed in Chapter 2, in my view, is one of the most convincing theories to explain non-sexual offending.

### **1.2.1 Extent and impact of sexual offences**

Having discussed my personal reasons for coming to this subject area, the remainder of this section will outline the prevalence of sexual offences in Scotland, as well as the research into the impact of these crimes, in order to emphasise the need for further research in this area.



### *Prevalence of sexual offending*

To give an idea of the level of sexual offending in Scotland, according to official figures recorded by the Scottish Government (Scottish Government, 2017), there were 10,822 sexual crimes recorded in Scotland in 2016-17, which equates to 5% of all recorded crime. This was higher than the level of non-sexual crimes of violence (7,164). However, it is generally well recognised in the literature that recorded crime statistics reveal only a small part of the true extent of sexual offending. According to the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) 2014-15 (Murray, 2016), for example, only 16.8% of adults who had been a victim of rape said they had reported their most recent rape to the police. Sexual assaults against children, particularly those committed by a family member, are likely to be reported even less frequently. Meanwhile surveys attempt to estimate the true prevalence of these crimes. The SCJS estimated that 3% of adults had experienced serious sexual assault since the age of 16, and 8% had experienced less serious sexual assault (although this is lower than estimates for England and Wales, which suggest a figure of 20% (Ministry of Justice, 2013)). A report for the NSPCC estimated that 1% of under 11s, 17% of 11-17 year-olds and 24% of 18-24 year-olds had experienced sexual abuse in their lifetime (Radford, Corral et al., 2011). It should be noted that different age groups may have different perceptions of what constitutes sexual abuse and this may affect these figures. Research also indicates that victims are more likely to report more serious offences (Ministry of Justice, 2013). Imperfect as they are, these figures at least help us attempt to quantify the problem or, at least, monitor how it changes over time.

Whilst it may seem that recently there has been a greater awareness of rape and sexual assault in the media, research has yet to suggest that there has been a decrease in the prevalence of rape myths (Edwards, Turchik et al., 2011). The media and public opinion, and even victims themselves do not always recognise what constitutes a rape or sexual assault. Studies have shown that up to 78% of women do not label their experience as rape even when it meets the legal definition (LeMaire, Oswald et al., 2016). Waites (2005) also outlined research which pointed out that the boundaries of consent for children are liable to cultural variability.

#### *Impact of sexual offending*

Research has found that adult and child victims of rape and sexual assault can experience a serious and long-term impact on their wellbeing. For example, Fergusson, McLeod et al. (2013) found that those who had experienced sexual abuse as a child had increased risks of mental health problems, a greater number of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms, lower self-esteem, lower life satisfaction, higher rates of sexual risk-taking behaviour, higher rates of physical illness and higher rates of welfare dependence. Trickett, Noll et al. (2013) found that childhood experience of sexual abuse resulted in increased rates of a range of physical, mental and developmental difficulties including obesity, major illness, depression, drug and alcohol abuse, and domestic violence. Children born to women who had been sexually abused in childhood were also at increased risk for child maltreatment. Allen, Tellez et al. (2014) found that victims of abuse

experienced higher levels of mental health problems as adults than those who had not been abused, even if the abuser was another child.

Adult victims of rape are similarly affected, with research showing that victims of rape suffer from many long-term adverse impacts including fear and anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, self-esteem issues, and difficulties in interpersonal functioning (Resick, 1993). Although this an area seldom researched, there is also an associated economic cost to society in terms of health and psychological services, criminal justice costs and lost productivity.

The above research highlights that there has never been a greater need for research into sexual offending behaviour: reported crimes continue to increase suggesting an urgent need to prevent these crimes. At the same time, an increase in those charged with and convicted of sexual offences has resulted in a greater need for tailored and appropriate intervention programmes.

### **1.2.2 Current gaps in research and original contribution of thesis**

Relative to other offences, sexual crimes have tended to be neglected in major studies about causes of criminality and theories of desistance. For example, within the extensive field of developmental and life-course criminology, there is very little attention paid to the criminal careers of sexual offenders (the work of Patrick Lussier being a notable exception) (Hendriks, van den Berg et. al, 2015). The most prevalent area of empirical research thus far in relation to sexual offences has been the work on the predictive ability of static variables (i.e. those which are fixed such

as age, victim type and relationship history) in estimating reoffending rates (e.g. Harris, Phenix et al., 2003). There has also been some work on dynamic variables such as intimacy deficits, social influences and mood, both for the purposes of predicting reoffending risk and to direct interventions (Hanson and Harris, 1998). Recently there has also been some qualitative empirical research into desistance from sexual offending (e.g. Farmer, McAlinden et al., 2015; McAlinden, Farmer et al., 2016; and Harris, 2014), although this is in its infancy. The extent of the literature is, however, limited.

There are four key theoretical gaps in the research which this thesis seeks to help fill. The first concerns a socio-cultural focus on the causes of offending and desistance. Laws and Ward (2011) argued that the 'etiological assumption appears to be that... individuals commit sexual offenses because they have a number of skill deficits that make it difficult for them to seek reinforcement in socially acceptable ways' (p99). In other words, current theoretical work does not generally seek to explore the role of factors external to the offenders' own skills deficits (Lussier and Davies, 2015). Whilst many theories suggest an interaction between psychological and socio-cultural elements, empirical evidence on the socio-cultural side has been sparser than that from a psychological perspective. Socio-cultural elements also offer an additional opportunity for intervention from non-psychologists (and society as a whole), which I believe is very important and has often been overlooked, with the exception of some good work carried out by Circles of Support and Accountability projects and the introduction of newer theoretical frameworks such as the Good Lives Model (Willis, Yates et al., 2012).

Importantly, this should be considered in the context of the prevention of offending (not only *reoffending*), if socio-cultural change may reduce the incidence and prevalence of these offences in society.

The second theoretical gap relates to the developmental nature of sexual offending behaviour. Many policy approaches to dealing with sexual offenders are based on a far more conservative set of risk-based principles than those for other types of offender, and assume that 'once a sexual offender, always a sexual offender' (Blokland and van der Geest, 2015; Jennings, Piquero et al., 2015). Nevertheless, there is extensive developmental literature to support the proposition that most individuals change in their propensity to offend over the life-course (in terms of non-sexual offending) (e.g. Farrington, 1986; Moffitt, 1993; Laub and Sampson, 1993) but less research has been conducted into the possibility that propensity may change for those who have committed sexual offences (Leclerc, Lussier et al., 2015). Lussier and Cale (2016) argued that;

'Contemporary research has produced abundant evidence showing that the developmental course of aggression and violence is linked to a wide range of developmental factors operating at different stages in life.... In order to advance a developmental life course model of rape and sexual aggression, it is necessary to expand the investigation of these factors accordingly' (p12).

Since research examining sexual offences from a life-course perspective has so far been limited (Cale and Lussier, 2014), engaging with this issue would enable us to determine whether most sexual offenders (like most offenders generally) only

commit crimes for a limited period of time in their lives and do not present a long term and indefinite risk to the public. If a life course perspective is sustained by the evidence, this would suggest that the risk of offending may not be stable over time for everyone and, indeed, more nuanced risk-based approaches are required.

The third theoretical gap that this thesis seeks to examine is the link between sexual and non-sexual offending, and to consider to what extent sexual and non-sexual offending may have similar causes or triggers. In addition to this, arguments for examining sexual and non-sexual crimes as theoretically similar will be explored. Some authors (e.g. DeLisi, 2015) recommend that all criminal offenders (even serial killers) are studied with mainstream theory and methods, thus not treating them as the 'other'. This will then allow reflection about the types of interventions which may be appropriate for one type of crime compared to another.

Finally, the wide variety of differing potential interacting causes of sexual offending behaviour, as well as the differing patterns of offending behaviour, suggests that there are many different pathways into sexual offending. Hence, a typological approach to analysing offending behaviour is important. Whilst multifactorial theories suggest many and complex pathways into offending behaviour, the research thus far has not generally analysed empirical support for these multiple pathways into offending (Hendriks, van den Berg et al., 2015).

In addition to the theoretical gaps, this research has a methodological advantage on much of the previous research. The main research into sexual offences has been conducted outside the UK, and such work has rarely, if ever, been conducted in Scotland. This is important since the nuances of the ecological contexts of offending may be particularly sensitive to local variation. There have also been many methodological issues with empirical analysis of sexual offences, even in major studies, making further robust research crucial. Limitations on follow-up time have meant that it has generally only been possible to track offenders for time periods of less than 10 years. Moreover, small sample sizes have resulted in problems with the statistical models generated, and have sometimes led to an inability to examine sexual offending as distinct from general offending. Previous studies have also generally focused on specialist samples rather than samples which may be generalisable to a wider population (Lussier, Blockland et al., 2015).

Hence the original contributions of this thesis are the following:

- This research has a focus on socio-cultural influences on sexual offending behaviour, which, with the exception of feminist theories, has often been superseded by psychological theories.
- This research has examined a life-course approach to sexual offending behaviour: research in this thus far has been limited to a few key authors.
- This research compares causes and triggers of sexual and non-sexual offending behaviour, which has rarely been researched.
- Whilst multifactorial theories suggest many and complex pathways into offending behaviour, the research thus far has not generally analysed

empirical support for these multiple pathways into offending. This thesis intends to address this.

- The dataset is a population of individual-level convictions, and takes into account a timescale of over 20 years.

### **1.3 Structure of thesis**

This thesis begins with a detailed discussion of the literature in Chapter 2. This chapter outlines different theoretical approaches to explaining sexual offending, including the difference between single factor and multifactorial theories and the role of psychological and developmental factors, which have been predominant in the literature thus far. The chapter discusses the relevance of non-sexual offending behaviour, before analysing sociological theories specific to sexual offences under the following broad categories: gender-based theories; developmental life-course perspectives; and the role of life events and social relationships. Finally, an overview of theories of reoffending and desistance (where they are distinct from the *cause* of sexual offending), are outlined. The chapter leads into the key research questions which the empirical research aims to answer.

Next, Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used for both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of this research, incorporating theoretical discussion of the critical realist stance taken. This chapter also discusses the data used and how access was obtained, outlining the difficult and lengthy process for this. The chapter then outlines the two methodologies used. The quantitative part of the



research used latent class analysis in order to study offending patterns of distinct groups of behaviour, as is consistent with the literature about the heterogeneous nature of sexual offending. The qualitative section outlines how interviews with people with sexual convictions were conducted in order to extract further detail about offences and explore questions about the role of socio-structural influence on offending behaviour. The interviews were conducted using a elements of a life history narrative approach and analysed using a thematic approach, based on interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of conviction patterns in relation to sexual offences in Scotland, firstly as a way of providing an overall description of the data used in the research, and secondly to provide a general picture of convictions patterns, including non-sexual offences. This provides context and permits comparison with sexual offences patterns. The chapter examines patterns of age at time of conviction, age at onset of convictions, frequency of convictions for different groups and patterns of escalation.

Chapter 5 then moves on to the statistical modelling process, outlining how the latent class model was chosen, and providing a detailed description of the steps used to decide on the model, which is a seven class model using 15 groups of offence types as indicators for the latent classes. The chapter outlines the justification for using a classify-analyse approach in providing further analysis of the latent classes in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6 provides a detailed analysis of the different groups uncovered by the model. This chapter provides comment on the characteristics of the different classes; in particular, age patterns, frequency of convictions, patterns of first and second convictions, non-sexual conviction patterns, and relationship between sexual and non-sexual conviction patterns. The chapter then analyses these patterns in a theoretical context, providing comment on what these patterns may mean including what different offence patterns tell us, why a person would offend at a particular time in their life, and whether any relationships between sexual and non-sexual offending can provide support for particular causes of offending or desistance.

The thesis then discusses the stories of those who have been convicted of sexual offences in Chapter 7, and how they may further explain the conviction patterns. This chapter begins by outlining the interview process and participants involved, followed by a discussion of key interview areas separated into two categories: sociological and psychological. The sociological section discusses gendered perspectives towards offending followed by life events and situational perspectives, including the effect of peers, employment, relationships and social control. The psychological section discusses evidence of potential psychological influences such as cognitive distortions and different attachment styles. The chapter then discusses participants' involvement in non-sexual offending activities (where they existed), whether these occurred at the same time as the sexual offending and any apparent links between the two. This is followed by a discussion about the participants' prospective plans for desistance.

The research is brought together in Chapter 8 by a full discussion of how the empirical data fits with the most prominent theories of the causes of sexual offending and desistance from sexual offending. Key findings include evidence of multiple different pathways into offending, evidence of specialism, links to non-sexual offending and evidence in support of a life-course approach. These are all discussed in the context of the theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter 2.

Finally, Chapter 9 reviews the key findings and makes some suggestions for policy, practice and further research. The recommendations for policy and practice were compiled with assistance from a focus group of Criminal Justice Social Work practitioners, who kindly gave up their time to lend their thoughts about the ‘So what?’ aspect of this research.

## **Chapter 2: Theories of the causes of sexual offending**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Sexual crimes have been ever-present in our society, however these crimes did not gain significant academic attention until the 1970s. At this time, feminist scholars such as Brownmiller (1975) highlighted the issue of the rape and abuse of women. Similarly, child sexual abuse only began coming to the attention of professionals in the late 1970s (Finkelhor, 1982), having being largely overlooked as a social problem until then. Finkelhor partially attributed the recognition of child abuse to feminism and its effects on social change, whereby increasing divorce levels made it possible for women to leave abusive situations, and perhaps for children to disclose victimisation. The increase in attention was also partly due to the increasing recognition of women's rights groups and child protection groups. Having already had some success in promoting other issues, they were more readily listened to than would previously have been the case: previous groups who had raised the issue of child sexual abuse had been dismissed as alarmist. As Finkelhor noted, the feminist and child protection groups saw the issue from differing perspectives, with feminists highlighting a patriarchal society as the cause and the child protection groups examining the issue from the point of view of family dynamics, and focusing on family work to tackle the issue. Whilst theoretical views have moved on, there is a parallel dichotomy in the theorising of sexual offences today: sexual abuse of adult and child victims continue to be separated theoretically and empirically, despite some theories attempting to explain both. Debates about the causes of child sexual abuse have generally originated from a psychological background, and psychological factors and

processes remain at the root of this body of literature. Research on adult sexual abuse has had more diverse attention, with a greater number of socio-cultural (particularly feminist) perspectives included. This reflects, to some extent, a similar debate in general criminology over whether the causes of crime are individual or socio-structural, which has broadly tended to favour the sociological perspective (Laub and Sampson, 1991), although views on this differ.

However, much of the literature now recognises the highly complex nature of sexual offending and presents integrated cross-disciplinary approaches which encompass cognitive processes as well as how these are affected by other factors such as environment. Ward (2014) also emphasised that there may be many different causes for different forms of offending behaviour. At the same time, there is perhaps not a clear line between theories which state that crime stems from an individual level and those which advocate the sociological perspective. Individual-level character traits are most often thought to come from a child's development, particularly their experiences with their parents. However, their parents' actions may also be driven by sociological influences. A child may be shaped by any combination of psychological and sociological factors. This chapter will discuss the prevalent theories which seek to explain sexual abuse, with a particular emphasis on socio-cultural perspectives, but whilst continuing to recognise potential interaction with psychological theories.

### *Theoretical approaches to sexual offending behaviour*

Ward, Polaschek et al. (2006) described different levels of theories, and outlining these is important to discussions which will follow. Level 1 theories are multifactorial and seek to explain how complex factors combine to get a person to a point where they offend sexually. This takes place in the context of the heterogeneous nature of sexual offending, and the fact that actually different types of offence are likely to have different causes (Ward, 2014). These level 1 theories include Marshall and Barbaree's Integrated Theory (Marshall and Barbaree, 1990) and Ward and Siegert's Pathways Model (Ward, Polaschek et al., 2006). Level 2 theories are single factor theories and describe one element of the multifactorial theories, generally psychological or socio-cultural factors such as intimacy deficits or feminist perspectives. Level 3 theories are descriptive models which describe the offending process.

Many of these theories describe an interaction between psychological, situational or socio-cultural elements, or are broad enough that they can encompass any of these elements. For example, Ward and Beech's Integrated Theory (2006) posited that sexual abuse is a result of many interacting factors. The theory suggested that there are three sets of factors which interact continuously: biological, ecological and neuropsychological, and any of these three areas may be the primary contributory factor. Biological factors are either inherited or influenced by early development, and ecological factors refer to a person's particular socio-cultural niche at any particular time. Hence socio-cultural perspectives do not compete with psychological elements; rather they complement them. One

criticism of the multifactorial theories may be that they are so broad as to not provide any particular direction on what may be common patterns and hence a starting point for interventions. This thesis intends to look in somewhat more detail about common patterns, with a view to providing common pathways based on empirical evidence.

In addition to theories which seek to explain sexual offending behaviour, there is a large body of research which describes offending behaviour in general. These theories are designed to take into account *any* offending behaviour, and therefore they should provide an explanation for sexual offences. Moreover, there is a well-documented link between sexual and non-sexual offences, which suggests there may be links between the causes of sexual and non-sexual offences. These links will also be explored in this thesis.

This chapter will begin by examining the role of general criminological theory in explaining sexual offending behaviour. It will then analyse sociological theories specific to sexual offences under the following broad categories: gender-based theories; developmental life-course perspectives; and the role of life events and social relationships. However, it is reasoned that many of these elements will interact with psychological and developmental factors, and so the chapter will begin with an overview of these theories. An overview of theories of reoffending and desistance (where they are distinct from the *cause* of sexual offending) will then be outlined, in order to provide an analysis of why people may stop

offending. Finally, I will outline common methodological difficulties in conducting research into the causes of sexual offending.

## **2.2 Can sexual offending be explained by general criminological theory?**

Sexual offending is often viewed very differently to other offences in its treatment and analysis, however general criminological theory should be able to explain *any* offending behaviour. Moreover, empirical research has suggested that there is a link between sexual and non-sexual offending: in fact, most actuarial prediction tools use general criminality as one of the predictors of sexual recidivism (e.g. Hanson and Thornton, 2000a; Hanson and Harris, 1998). The interaction between sexual and non-sexual offending appears to support social control theory: offenders with a proclivity towards sexual offences are more likely to commit a range of offences if social bonds are weakened. In examining the relationship between sexual offences and other crimes, we may be able to determine to some extent whether theories of general criminality may equally apply, and ask the question of whether a propensity to commit sexual offences, where the desire exists, also means an equal inclination to commit other crimes.

There are also some interesting patterns between sexual and non-sexual offending which may assist in our understanding of motivation to offend. For example, Butler and Seto (2002) found that there is an important typological distinction between those who commit only sexual offences, and those who commit sexual offences as part of a wider criminological spectrum, and that in fact 'sex-only' offenders had better pro-social attitudes and a lower risk of future criminality. Lussier and Cale



(2016) also suggested that when those who commit sexual offences as part of a wider criminological spectrum offend in a sexual manner, this was often in the context of a non-sexual offence (e.g. a violent crime). This suggests firstly that they did not set out to commit a sexual offence, but also that there may be similar motivations for the two crimes (although research has found that violence can lead to sexually abusive behaviour, which will be discussed later in this thesis). It is also possible that the concurrence of sexual and non-sexual offending is merely a coincidence of competing causes. For example, if a person has developed attachment and intimacy deficits, or a need for power and control, then he or she may be at higher risk of also developing antisocial personality traits. This may be through environment, or because the cognitive processes are similar.

Similarly, there appears to be a difference between different types of offenders in that those with adult victims are more prone to general criminality than those with child victims (e.g. Harris, Smallbone et al., 2009). According to conventional theory this is certainly possible since some of the literature suggests that offenders with adult victims are thought to be motivated in different ways than those with child victims (e.g. Ward, Hudson et al., 1995). However, these links have not been fully explored in the literature and it is not clear why this is the case. These different patterns of behaviour highlight the heterogeneous nature of sexual offending behaviour. On this note, Cale, Lussier et al. (2009) found several different types of antisocial trajectories in their study of convicted adult sexual aggressors of women (this study was concerned with adult female victims): early childhood onset of delinquency which was persistent throughout adolescence; the early childhood

onset of delinquency followed by escalation in adolescence; and late adolescent onset of delinquency. This suggests parallels with non-sexual offending behaviour, and emphasises the need for a typological approach to the analysis of sexual offending behaviour.

This section will now reflect on the theoretical arguments about whether sexual offending can be explained by general criminological theory, or whether theories specific to sexual offending are thought to be more appropriate.

### *Role of motivation in criminological theory*

Laws and Ward (2011) argued that criminological (desistance in this case, however it may also be applied to causal theories), theories are 'weaker when it comes to explaining why people (and offenders) are motivated to desire and seek certain outcomes' (p208). Similarly, Schwartz, DeKeseredy et al.(2001) argued that, 'researchers have made little attempt to discover what makes offenders different from the other persons at the scene' (p626). Often in criminological theories, the main focus is not the act itself, but the commission of the act despite it being against commonly accepted societal, moral or legal rules. For example, the basic premise of social control theory (Hirschi, 1969) is that social influences will encourage a person to refrain or desist from offending. These theories therefore assume that the act has crossed our mind or is an attractive proposition: indeed, the main question is not 'why do you want to do this?', but 'how do you stop yourself doing this?'. Similarly, Wikstrom's situational action theory (2010), rooted in control theory, argued that it can be applied to all types of crime *because* it is an

analysis not of why people would wish to indulge in a particular activity, but why they would do so in breach of a law.

Smallbone, Marshall et al. (2008) also argued that biological tendencies are overcome by cognitive development, and that other issues (e.g. attachment deficits) can hinder this cognitive development. The act of a person countering their desire either to conform with those around them or to weigh up the negative and positive consequences of their actions is consistent with control theories (e.g. Baumeister, Vohs et al., 2007), as it suggests that an internal desire may be countered by external processes, making the external process the most important element in preventing crime. This, in turn, implies a propensity to offend may be addressed *regardless of cause*.

There is some evidence that there are people with a predisposition to commit sexual offences who have not acted on this predisposition, which may provide weight to the argument that there are two separate processes involved. For example, Laws (1994) found that in his study, the control group who had never committed a sexual offence were found to have some overlap in fantasies of rape and child abuse, arguing that they 'harbour many of the same feelings, have the same fantasies, but fail to act upon them' (p8).

Whilst in criminological theories the main focus is not the act itself, but the commission of the act despite it being against commonly accepted societal, moral or legal rules, theories of the causes of sexual offending, on the other hand, are

more concerned with individual causes and pathways towards a sexual offence. This is discussed in some of the theories which look specifically at sexual offending behaviour. These differing theories are not necessarily at odds with each other, however they operate at a different level, and there are differences in opinion about which area is best to address: the underlying motivation or the reason an offender does not stop themselves from acting (or the reason they would act outwith social rules).

Whilst many criminological theories do not discuss the issue of motivation for offending (instead they either assume the predisposition to commit the act is inherent or that the motivation is not the area which needs to be addressed), theories into sexual offending tend to discuss individual motives to offend. The motivation to commit sexual offences initially sometimes appears harder to understand than for non-sexual offences. However, if we view intimacy, power and control (as outlined in the theories about causation which will be discussed further in this chapter) as desirable goods, this may take us closer to theoretical similarities between those who commit sexual offences and other offenders. As Willis, Yates et al. (2012) pointed out, the problem does not lie with the desire to achieve these things but how they are achieved: the issue is with the 'secondary goods—the activities/means individuals use to achieve primary goods—and not the primary goods themselves' (p126).

### *Differences in motivation for sexual offences*

Having mentioned that motivation to offend may be similar for sexual offences compared to other offences, on the other hand some authors suggest that there is an important distinction between the motivation to sexually offend and the motivation to commit other types of offences. Hanson and Bussiere (1998) argued that,

“[t]he correctional literature tends to minimize differences between types of offenders (e.g., Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990), but the current results suggest that sexual offenders may differ from other criminals.....For nonsexual offending, sexual and nonsexual criminals seem much the same, but separate processes appear to contribute to sexual offending” (p357).

Hence Hanson and Bussiere argued that different offending types have different causes, even within the same offender. Therefore in their view sexual offending behaviour cannot be explained by general criminological theory, as there are different causal processes between sexual and non-sexual offending, even if it is the same person who commits both types of offences. Moreover, some of the multifactorial theories suggest that being involved in other types of criminality is merely one of many pathways into offending (Ward and Siegert, 2002). This issue has never really been fully explored in the literature, and this research intends to examine empirical evidence for both viewpoints: namely, can sexual offending be explained by the same theories as other types of offending, or is there a unique causal process which explains sexual offending? Furthermore, this research will examine whether this is true on an individual level, i.e. for someone who commits

both sexual and non-sexual offending, are there separate causal processes for the two offence types, or are there similar reasons behind sexual and non-sexual offending?

### *Summary*

This section has reflected on the theoretical arguments about whether sexual offending can be explained by general criminological theory. The key difference is that general criminological theory does not tend to consider motivations to offend; it assumes this is inherent, and that the key issue is why a person would wish to act outwith the rules of society. A key question, therefore, is whether underlying motivation to offend is important, or whether the ability to prevent one's self acting on this motivation is more important.

In order to further analyse this issue, a comparison of sexual offending compared to non-sexual offending is desirable in order to examine the evidence that sexual offending can be explained by the same theories as other types of offending, or if there is a unique causal process which explains sexual offending. Furthermore, this research will examine whether this is true on an individual level.

The next sections will outline theories specific to sexual offending, reflecting on different areas such as socio-structural influences and developmental (psychological) factors. The sections will examine what the theories say about the importance of underlying motivations to offend and highlight gaps within the empirical research.

## **2.3 Psychological/developmental theories**

Many of the single factor theories which seek to explain the underlying cause of sexual offences stem from the field of psychology, and hence focus on issues within the individual, often caused by developmental issues. Attachment theories (causing intimacy deficits) and cognitive distortions are the ones most commonly linked to sexual offences, and there has also been a substantial amount of empirical research which tests the involvement of psychopathy in sexual offending. Whilst this thesis is not an analysis of psychological factors, many of the multifactorial theories describe an interaction between individual and socio-structural factors, and therefore some key psychological theories will be examined. Other psychological theories linked to sexual offending include theories of deficient victim empathy and deviant sexual preferences (Ward, Polaschek et al., 2006).

### *Attachment theory*

Attachment theory is well established within the neurobiological field (Kraemer, 1992) and is one of the theories most often linked to analysis of the causes of sexual offending (e.g. Smallbone and Dadds, 2000; Ward, Hudson et al., 1996; Bowlby, 1969). Attachment theory describes how the infant mimics behavioural and emotional characteristics from its primary caregiver, generally the mother. This is particular to social primates and is not learned behaviour, but rather a type of imprinting. If this attachment does not form for some reason, the infant has a higher risk of some form of social dysfunction. Studies suggest that insecurely attached children have 'lower self-reliance, low enthusiasm for academic tasks,

difficulty with integration into school social structures, and low resilience in the face of real or imagined stressors' than those with secure attachments (Kraemer, 1992: p494). Freedman (in Kraemer (1992) pointed out that the attachment process is more complex than simply mother (or primary caregiver) and child, and that the process is much wider, involving other members of the community (or family). This may explain why a caregiver may have several children with differing levels of attachment, as their place as a sibling and in the wider family may also impact. Smallbone and Dadds (2000) also found a potentially differing effect between attachment to the mother and the father. This serves to highlight how complex and heterogeneous the relationship between attachment style and sexual offending may be. The influence of the differing gender roles is also interesting in relation to feminist theories of rape, and in the context of the gender imbalance when it comes to people with sexual convictions.

Many authors have developed models of different attachment styles (e.g. Ainsworth and Wittig (1969, in Ward, Hudson et al., 1995)), and Ward, Hudson et al. (1995) devised arguably one of the most comprehensive models of attachment styles in relation to sexual offending. They argued that the type of attachment style will influence the characteristics of the offender, and hence their victim type and offence type. These are briefly defined as the following.

- The anxious/ambivalent offender will desire intimacy but fear relationships. The victim of this offender type will generally be a child who is known to the offender and will require minimal use of coercion or force.



- The first type of avoidant offender seeks a sexual relationship but avoids intimacy. This type of offender may resort to coercion if necessary.
- The second type of avoidant offender is hostile and does not desire close relationships. This type of offender is the most aggressive and will use force against adults and children.

This theory is attractive as it attempts to explain the complexities of different types of sexual offences, and there are few types of sexual crime which would not fall under at least one of those categories. However, many offenders do have intimate adult connections in place; in fact, many offend against their own family members whilst in an intimate adult relationship. Marshall (1989) would argue that this is due to the attachment with the adult being merely superficial without a sufficient level of emotional intimacy which the person seeks.

Whilst insecure attachment styles identify reasons a person may not have normative social functioning, what still appears unclear is the reason for the *sexual* element in certain instances. Bowlby (1969) explained the existence of force and coercion to some extent when he described attachment deficits as marking the different paths between cooperation and empathy, and coercion and noncompliance (see Smallbone and Dadds, 2000), yet this still does not explain the particular role of sexual coercion. Smallbone and Dadds (2000) suggested one reason for this may be due to the fundamental links between attachment, parenting and sexual behavioural systems becoming confused, and inappropriate behaviour (i.e. sexual offending) manifesting itself as a result.

Different attachment styles can also affect self-control: '[i]nsecure personal attachments and weak social attachments in turn lead to general problems with individuals' capacity for and commitment to self-restraint' (McKillop, Smallbone et al., 2012), which is consistent with other criminological theories which discuss issues of self-control.

### *Cognitive distortions*

Cognitive distortions are one of the most commonly linked individual factors in respect of sexual offending. Put very simply, cognitive distortions are ways of viewing and interpreting the world around us which may not necessarily reflect the reality. In the case of sexual offending, these may also be ways of justifying the offence. It is also thought that those who commit sexual offences develop implicit theories, based on cognitive distortions, which are unconscious scripts about their own and their victims' actions. These may be beliefs that they are not doing anything wrong and that societal beliefs are wrong when they consider the harm caused by sexual offences. This is said to explain why they offend when the offence is against the law and moral code of society, as their internal belief system can justify the act. These implicit theories may include beliefs that children are sexual beings and willing participants (Ward & Keenan, 1999; Polascheck and Ward, 2002), or that men are entitled to sex and it is a woman's (or sometimes a child's) responsibility to meet these needs. Many of the multifactorial theories include cognitive distortions as one element of the causal pathway (e.g. Hall and Hirschman's quadripartite model, 1991; Ward and Beech's Integrated Theory of Sexual Offending, 2006).

Ward (2009) furthered theories of cognitive distortions in his description of the extended mind theory, stating that:

‘social and cultural institutions and other people can also be regarded as external cognitive devices because of the role they play in providing critical information or in conducting cognitive processes for us; processes that are utilized in our problem-solving endeavours’ (p253).

Hence outside socio-cultural influences may also influence cognitive distortions. It is easy to see how this may be the case, taking into account the social and cultural complexities we all have to negotiate in life. In everyday society this may result in analysing relationships and trying to understand how other people act, and there may indeed be some negative consequences such as misreading signals within human relationships. When the cognitive distortion has taken an extreme maladaptive form, however, it may manifest itself in a variety of more destructive ways, from mental health aspects such as depression, to abusive and criminal behaviour such as domestic abuse and sexual offending.

Furthermore, messages given to us by society (whether this is our immediate social circle or wider society), may also be destructive. Ward (2000) pointed out that there is a high level of cognitive distortion amongst people who have committed sexual offences in terms of the justification of their actions by apportioning blame to the victim. Arguably, it is not only the individual who displays these attitudes. Particularly in terms of adult victims, there are often questions from society surrounding the level of culpability of the victim, for instance if they are under the influence of alcohol or have taken part in some sexual activity with the offender.

Similarly, in terms of child victims, offenders may believe that a child is capable of consent, or initiated the offence in some way. It may initially seem difficult to imagine that this is a view held by anyone except a small minority, however as will be discussed in a subsequent section, feminist theory argues that the oppression of women and the sexualisation of young women in particular is pervasive to such an extent that this extends to children. How far this may reflect cognitive distortions on a wider level, and from a gender-based perspective, is interesting to explore, and there will be further discussion of the socio-cultural influences on cognitive distortions further in this chapter.

### *Psychopathy*

There has been much empirical research suggesting psychopathic traits exist amongst people who have committed sexual offences. People with psychopathic traits typically possess certain characteristics such as being arrogant, dominant, deceptive and individualistic (Hare, Clark et al., 2000). They are often unable to form emotional bonds with others and do not adhere to social rules and conventions. Consequently, they are often at high risk of criminal behaviour.

Hare (1999) found that there was a relatively high instance of psychopathy amongst adult victim rapists (40-50%), and certainly much more than for those with child victims (10-15%). This may not be surprising given current thinking about adult rape and the link to a need for power (which will be outlined later in this chapter) in comparison with a quest for intimacy often thought to be the cause of some types of child sexual abuse. Several other studies (Gretton, McBride et al., 2001; Firestone, Bradford et al., 2000) also found a link between psychopathy

and recidivism in sex offenders. Kingston, Firestone et al.(2008) found that psychopathy was more strongly related to sexual recidivism than other factors.

Psychopathy has also been cited as being much more widespread in terms of general criminality than has perhaps been previously thought (DeLisi, 2009), and is no longer thought to be connected to only the most serious crimes: in fact, it is no longer thought to be connected only with deviance and criminality, but to other areas of life such as the workplace (Mathieu, Hare et al., 2013). Theories of the causes of psychopathy have ranged from the genetic (Hare 1970; Wiebe, 2009) to environmental factors, specifically poor parenting (Porter, 1996). It is also possible that there may be a link between attachment deficits, psychopathy and other personality disorders (Craig, Gray et al., 2013; Mack, Hackney et al., 2011). From a deterrence or desistance perspective, addressing psychopathy traits is perhaps one of the most difficult challenges. Psychopathy is characterised by a lack of guilt and empathy towards others, possibly caused by an inherent lack of fear (Wiebe, 2009). Hence people with psychopathic traits are less likely to learn from mistakes or respond to punishment. However, whilst psychopathic traits may explain why people may not desist from committing (any) crime, it is not clear why some people with psychopathic traits commit *sexual* offences, others commit other offences, and others do not commit any offences, suggesting other factors must be involved.

### *Summary*

There are many psychological theories which suggest reasons for antisocial behaviour, which generally stem from parenting and other developmental issues.

The theories are less clear as to why these issues result in a sexual offence as opposed to other behaviour which is outwith social norms. However, multifactorial theories suggest an interaction between these psychological issues and other elements. For example, Knight and Sims-Knight's Three-Path Model (Knight and Sims-Knight, 2003) proposed three causal pathways to sexual offences. In the first path, physical and verbal abuse in childhood leads to sexual coercion via hostile sexual fantasies and disinhibited sexual drive. In the second path, sexual abuse leads to sexual coercion via hostile sexual fantasies and disinhibited sexual drive. In the third path, physical and verbal abuse and callousness/lack of emotion leads to early antisocial behaviour and consequently sexual coercion. Hence, this section has provided a basis for understanding underlying issues which may provide one part of the contributory jigsaw in explaining sexual offending behaviour.

## **2.4 Gender-based theories of sexual crime**

Whilst socio-structural explanations of non-sexual crime are common (and arguably predominant), there are fewer sociological explanations for sexual offending. The predominant socio-cultural explanation for sexual offending is the gender-based analysis of sexual crime, which suggests that the role of men and women in society are thought to have an influence on sexual offending. Feminist theory broadly states that a patriarchal society 'create[s] and maintain[s] male control over females' (Waldby, Clancy et al., 1989: p97) and that sexual abuse is one of many ways used to dominate and suppress women in a world where women take second place to men and are merely 'object[s] for male manipulation'

(Waldby, Clancy et al., 1989: p98). The feminist interpretation of (interfamilial) child abuse also relates to this system of domination of the entire family (including the mother). Feminist theory argues that far from being morally repugnant (Ward, 1985), those who abuse women and children are actually acting within the normal rules of a society which continually condones domination and exploitation of women and children. This is all caught up in the socio-structural lack of power that these subordinated groups experience, and is analogous to the power exerted over other groups in terms of race, class etc.

Theories of rape have generally referred to the rape of adult women (Ellis, 1991). One of the key empirical arguments for a feminist perspective towards sexual violence is the overwhelming imbalance of female victims of adult rape. Hunnicutt (2009) outlined some arguments against the patriarchal theory of violence against women, including the failure to account for female perpetrators as well as male victims, and the minority of men who partake in such violence. As a counter-argument she suggested that instead of 'oppressor and oppressee' (p555), a more complex interaction between men and women must be understood, as well as the position of each man in the power structure in relation to other men. A power imbalance may also explain abuse of children, being undeniably in a weaker position of power. However, Hunnicutt argued that in most societies, violence - particularly sexual violence - is not used systematically to maintain societal hierarchy: instead, 'violence against women is more a consequence of hierarchies than a cause of them' (Hunnicutt, 2009: p561). In Hunnicutt's opinion a patriarchal society is reflective of a wider system of power domination which transcends

gender and can be applied to race, class, age and various other states of power. Hunnicutt argued that the male need to exert violent and sexual power over women is very much dependent on their status or otherwise in society.

Similarly, Scarce (1997) stated that 'rape is essentially a political weapon that is wielded by those who have more power over those who have less power. It should not surprise us that rape is also sometimes used against men who step out of line in the same way that it is used to keep women in subordination to men' (p234). Harris (2010) examined some of the theories pertaining to women who commit sexual offences. The most common type of female perpetrator had child victims, and of those with adult victims almost all had offended against female victims. This may represent the gender and power theoretical structure which is applied to male offenders. One of the theories (Wolfers, 1994) described a woman's structural powerlessness in the outside world manifesting in a need to exert control in the family sphere. Previous victimisation was also discussed, and this is also often considered with male offenders. However, Harris (2010) argued that if this were a valid theory, there would be many more female offenders than is currently thought to be the case. Some studies have also shown that female sexual offenders possess some of the same cognitive distortion as male offenders: children as sexual beings, children are not harmed by this experience, some things 'just happen' and that the world is a dangerous place and children are not a threat. The sense of entitlement, common in many cognitive distortions of male offenders, did not appear to be present in this study (Harris, 2010).



Moreover, it is an oversimplification to suggest rape is only about power, or more specifically that it is not about sex. There is a fundamental difference between exerting power in the form of sexual violence as opposed to other forms of violence and oppression. Foucault (Bell, 1993) argued that rape should be desexualised and treated as a violent act since the distinction between sexual violence and other forms of violence was merely a social construct. However, and Foucault alluded to this, it is precisely because of this socially constructed difference that rape *is* about sex. Offenders and victims are operating within the context of and under the influence of this social environment, so the separation of sex and violence (in rape) is not possible.

An alternative view of the reason that men exert this power over women is that they are unhappy with the loss of their status in the hierarchy. Harbridge and Furnham (1991) found that several studies showed a correlation between pro-rape views and unhappiness with the changing role of women in society. Whaley (2001) argued that as gender inequality declines, the perceived threat to men's power and their place in society rises in the short-term. In theory, this should be superseded in the long-term by a decrease in gender-based violence, as we work towards a more equal society and men no longer expect positions of power. This argument therefore implies that rape should be decreasing, however there is no evidence that this is the case. It is debateable whether general attitudes towards rape have changed over the years and it is very difficult to assess true rape figures due to changes in reporting and recording trends, however reported sexual offences continue to rise (Scottish Government, 2017).

It should be noted that not all gendered theories are socio-cultural. Malamuth's Confluence Model of Sexual Aggression (Malamuth, 1996) stemmed partially from an evolutionary perspective and described how two pathways of male sexual behaviour ultimately come together: sexual promiscuity and hostile masculinity. Sexual promiscuity is said to be preferred because offspring can be produced with minimal effort from the male, and also because they cannot be sure that any particular offspring are theirs, hence promiscuity maximises their chances of passing on their genes. It is also not of evolutionary importance if the woman is not interested in the relationship (unlike for women, who have to invest a longer period into producing offspring). Hostile masculinity is important for two reasons. Firstly, using force and coercion does not harm the man and potentially has the same desired result faster. Secondly, an ability to exert dominance over women is desirable because if she is under his control she is more likely to not deceive them over the paternity of her offspring.

In addition to Malamuth's model, the disinhibition model of rape outlined by Barbaree and Marshall (Barbaree and Marshall, 1991) intended to account for male sexual arousal to rape rather than to causally explain rape. The model described how severe emotional states may increase feelings of sexual arousal from rape, through means of being disinhibited by the stressful event. This is usually because the person has decreased motivation to act in a prosocial manner, and also through anger or hostility towards the female victim. This was found to be influenced by the following: permissive instructions (messages that rape was

not wrong); alcohol intoxication; anger towards a female; victim blame; excusability of the victim; and exposure to pornography. This model takes into account situational triggers as well as cultural messages which lessen negative views towards rape, and goes some way to explaining why sexual violence may be used instead of (or in addition to) non-sexual violence. This model is considered by the authors as a 'state' model, which means that it may apply to any man, and can occur on a transitory basis.

### *Gender-based perspectives on child abuse*

Generally, gender-based theories have been focused on why people offend against adults, whilst abuse of children is often explained by psychological deficits. Finkelhor (1982) raised one of the few arguments which may explain child sexual abuse from a sociological perspective. He argued that since the sexual liberation movement, women no longer assume a passive and subservient role to men during a sexual encounter. This idea reflects to some extent both a feminist perspective of rape being a quest for power and dominance, and also the attachment styles described by Ward, Hudson et al. (1995), in particular the inability to form adult relationships. To not over-simplify the issue, if an offender is unable to achieve the type of adult relationship that he wants, (if the type of adult relationship they seek is one of subservience), he may turn to younger people, even children. Finkelhor (1982) also argued that the families in which the abuse occurs tend to be socially isolated (although he acknowledged that this may in part be to avoid detection), and hold extreme patriarchal views that a father can 'do what he wants to with his children and his own family without censure at the hands of society' (p97).

Finkelhor (1982) saw the solution to this in the way that men express affection with male peers and women, arguing that appropriate emotional and sexual attachment towards friends, family and sexual partners will reduce the risk of obtaining these needs with children. This is broadly in line with attachment theory, however has a sociological cause rather than a parenting cause. It also has very interesting implications for a sociological desistance perspective, since change may be achieved outside of the psychological treatment.

### *Socio-cultural aspects of 'cognitive distortions'*

As suggested earlier in the chapter, views often described as cognitive distortions are commonly held by some groups in society. As discussed, it is often thought that those who commit sexual offences develop implicit theories in which they construct beliefs that they are not doing anything wrong. However, several authors have described how these implicit theories may in fact widely held societal beliefs. Griffin (1979), for example, argued that '[h]eterosexual love finds an erotic expression through male dominance and female submission' (p188). Seal and Ehrhardt(2003) also described one of the discourses for sexual intimacy for heterosexual men as sex as conquest. As one interviewee in their study stated,

'[d]ating is all about sexual harassment—sort of pushing the limits to see how far the other person is willing to let you go. Society believes that it is the man's role to test the waters. It is certainly expected by women' (p302).

This idea of women as objects to be persuaded, coerced and conquered is still common in society. This gives the message that consent is something which is to be won over rather than a mutually beneficial decision. It also suggests that if a man works hard enough in his pursuit then he should be rewarded, reinforcing views of entitlement. As Cowley (2014) argued, 'the normative elements of the traditional heterosexual sex script are eerily similar to the events that precede a sexual assault' (p1262). Other views such as that a rape is a less serious offence if a woman is under the influence of alcohol, dressed in a certain way or has consented to some sexual activity, are also not limited to those who commit sexual offences.

Regarding sexual activity with children, there has long been a movement which does not believe that an age of consent should exist, that children have the capacity to consent to sexual activity with adults, and that such activity is only abusive because society has framed it as abusive. This view is not confined to those seeking to excuse their own behaviour. Michel Foucault, for example, argued that children should be allowed to consent to sexual activity with an adult, and to deny them this right would be to situate the child in a position of oppression (Bell, 1993). Of course, the opposing view is that children are already situated in a position of oppression and that they cannot offer free and informed consent. Hence the views that we sometimes identify as implicit theories and cognitive distortions cannot be seen to be those of a small minority of people who offend. There is a duality in that these cognitive distortions and implicit theories may actually be distorted primarily by society.

It is, therefore, incongruent that society has such a strong reaction to these offences if, as feminist theory suggests, they are actually implicitly condoned by a patriarchal society. However, some authors suggest that the demonisation of a person who has committed sexual offences is a deliberate social construction intended to deflect attention away from the fact that it is a much more routine part of society than people think. Cowburn and Dominelli (2001) argued that social construction of moral panic (in relation to those with child stranger victims) serves to mask the dominant discourse of hegemonic masculinity, and deflect attention away from the abuse of women and children which occurs in everyday life and in private. Furthermore, it reinforces the masculine role of protector:

‘men’s role as protector is a key feature of hegemonic masculinity and crucial to men’s identity as men in their relationships with others, especially women and children’ (Cowburn and Dominelli (2001):p407).

This, then, serves to reinforce the female and child role of powerless victim, and potentially make them even more vulnerable to abuse from their ‘protector’. Society does appear to think of a ‘sex offender’ as a particular or strange type of person, and this means that when someone who is a conventional and accepted part of society commits a sexual offence, this can, amongst other things, make the victim find it harder to be believed. Moreover, a previous preventative focus on ‘stranger-danger’ does not take into account the fact that most sexual offences against children (and adults) are committed by someone who is known to them. This issue is likely to affect the causal process for several reasons. Firstly, this issue feeds into the social construction of hegemonic masculinity, which can be a causal

factor from a gendered perspective. Secondly, the focus on the abstract concept of a certain type of person as someone who commits sexual offences can incorrectly place the emphasis on strangers when protecting women and children from harm. Finally, this may undermine attempts to promote the message about issues of consent and sexual assault in an acquaintance or relationship situation, by implying that those who people are in a relationship with cannot be 'sex offenders'.

In addition to more traditional and radical feminist theories, theorists also recognise more fluid systems of masculinity, which suggests that masculinity can be more nuanced than a universal and fixed idea across society. The postmodern or poststructuralist argument is that masculinity differs according to different cultural, temporal and geographical spaces, and that theories should not view differences as fixed or inevitable (including fixed notions of power). Such theories should also be self-critical (Featherstone and Fawcett, 1994) and take account of complex inter- and intra-group differences, as noted by Gocke:

'...masculinity itself is not a homogeneous concept, being fractured across and within class, sexual orientation and race boundaries. Masculinity is experienced in a messy and contradictory way by different groups of men - and indeed within individual men themselves.' (1991, p. 7)

Poststructuralist theorists argue that all men are not necessarily socialised in similar ways, and hence this accounts for why not all men behave in a similar manner. Some theorists argue that poststructuralist feminist theories are incompatible with the idea of systemic power (Aitchison, 2000), however

postmodern/poststructuralist feminist theory argues that since the societal dynamic is complex and individual, this does not necessitate a universal theory of gender dynamics:

‘Theoretically the postmodern emphasis on local, contextual practices opens up useful possibilities. As postmodern feminists have demonstrated this does not mean an abandonment of macro analysis but does involve careful attention being paid to location and to specificity’ (Featherstone and Fawcett, 1994: p74).

Since ideas of masculinity are liable to temporal, cultural and geographical variability, notions of masculinity require constant reinforcement. Cossins argued that gender roles are ‘activities that are engaged in (rather than roles that are assumed)’ (2000: p102). Liddle (1993) also explored whether gender is something which happens to us or whether it is a something that people *do*. If gender roles are not indeed fixed, then this suggests that negative masculine roles may be changed, and that this change may take place both on an individual and wider socio-structural basis.

In outlining this notion of the potential for masculinity to be fluid, postmodern feminist theories share some similarities with the multifactorial theories in that they take into account multiple and complex explanations for offending behaviour rather than a ‘one-size-fits-all’ theory. Moreover, some postmodern theorists go one step further and argue against the concept of an objective truth:



‘Western philosophy’s quest for truth and certainty (described as logocentrism) is therefore abandoned and is seen as the product of a particular historical era that is becoming inappropriate in a postmodern society that is increasingly characterised by fragmentation, diversity and diffuseness in all spheres of life. Existing theories, particularly Marxism, which claim to embody certainty and objectivity are rejected as totalitarian; here it is not simply the conclusions that are rejected, but the quest for truth itself’ (Bryson, 1992, p. 225–26).

This highlights the wide spectrum of thought which postmodern theorists consider, sometimes rejecting not only the idea of a universal truth, but any objective truth.

Unlike many theories, the postmodern/post-structuralist view considers the influence of socio-cultural factors on child abuse (as well as offences against adult women), at the same time recognising the potential interaction between these and developmental/psychological elements:

‘a postmodern/post-structuralist analysis of child sexual abuse argues firstly that structural explanations and those which focus entirely on the individual have become unhealthily polarized’ (Lancaster and Lumb, 1999: p120).

Similar to Hunnicutt’s work (2009), the poststructuralist view of child abuse is that (some) men seek to abuse children because they are unable to exert power over adults in other areas of their lives. Cossins (2000) explored whether child sexual

abuse was a result of a lack of power in relation to other men, as this type of gendered power is expected and reinforced by some sectors of society. This view would take into account why those already in power would offend, as offending can be a way of reinforcing power already held. According to this view, sex with children offers a way of achieving unquestioning dominance:

‘Different masculinities contain normative sexual elements that are reproduced and affirmed by child sex offenders in a cultural environment where the objects of the culturally normative masculine sexual desire are constructed by reference to characteristics such as passivity and receptivity’ (Cossins, 2000: p88).

Furthermore, the desirability of a compliant and vulnerable partner is continually reinforced in society by means of infantilised images of the ideal partner (in the way that they dress and act). In fact, this issue is wider than sexuality, as women are treated in a child-like way in other areas of life (Cossins, 2000).

The postmodern/poststructuralist feminist perspective is that sexual abuse is caused by enactments of negative masculine roles, which vary significantly from one ecological niche to another. This implies that abuse is part of the spectrum of masculinity and, therefore, not deviant. Hence, as some feminist theories argue (Ward, 1985) this abuse is not acting outwith societal norms and the person who commits sexual offences is not the ‘other’. This has important ramifications from a treatment perspective: whilst addressing individual thought patterns may still be useful in preventing future offending, addressing particular cultural norms would also be required so that, when the person who has offended returns to their

community, dangerous and unhelpful attitudes do not continue to be reinforced. Lancaster and Lumb (1999) argued that many practitioners see sexual offending as part of the human condition and not something separate and deviant (i.e. they are not 'other'). However, practitioners do not generally feel that socio-structural explanations *on their own* are sufficient. Cossins argued that the view of the person who has sexually offended as 'other' is unhelpful in that it does not address the fact that these people are acting within a social context (and hence ignores the need to try and effect societal change). This echoes Cowburn and Dominelli's (2001) point that the 'dangerous deviant vs family man' stereotype obscures the abuse which takes place within the family, which is the most common type of abuse according to available statistics.

In summary, the postmodern/poststructuralist stance advocates that sexual abuse is produced by interactions between sociological forces, individual/psychological influences and particular family dynamics. Negative manifestations of socially constructed masculinity result in the abuse of power over women and children. However, postmodern/poststructuralist theorists generally take the view that that there is no universal feminist theory which may explain sexual abuse. Rather, the influence of toxic masculinities will vary according to a person's particular societal circumstances and personal history. Furthermore, this abuse is not acting outwith societal norms and the person who commits sexual offences is not the 'other'. Cossins (2000) admitted that this theory cannot predict which set of circumstances will result in a child sexual offence. However, post-structuralists do argue that this behaviour is not fixed for life: 'what we are pleading for is multi-factor explorations

which are specifically located, self critical and which recognise that people shift and change' (Featherstone and Fawcett, 1994: p76). This is encouraging from a treatment perspective and, in particular, for addressing the issue from a non-psychological perspective. Lancaster and Lumb (1999) argued that practitioners, often without realising it, tended towards a poststructuralist feminist perspective (as opposed to a radical feminist perspective), since this allows for a more nuanced approach and incorporates micro as well as macro factors) as well as recognising that a person has the ability to change. The role of negative masculinity, and the potential for this to change according to circumstance, will be explored throughout this thesis.

#### *Gendered elements in multifactorial models*

Many of the multifactorial models mention gender-based elements of the pathway to offending. Since, in these theories, interacting elements can be psychological or socio-cultural, this may provide an explanation for why the majority of people do not commit sexual offences in society, i.e. certain people are more likely to be vulnerable to unhelpful cultural messages.

Marshall and Barbaree (1990) described a confluence of developmental factors (including patriarchal attitudes within the home), biological (hormonal) processes and socio-cultural factors which result in a sexual offence. They argued that those who have had difficulty forming healthy relationships are more likely to be vulnerable to cultural messages which attribute greater status and power to their male gender. Marshall and Barbaree also argued that individuals who enter puberty without adequate social and intimacy skills are likely to be rejected by

females of their own age, which can result in anger and resentment towards women in general.

Ward and Beech's Integrated Theory of Sexual Offending (2006) posited three sets of factors which interact continuously: biological, ecological and neuropsychological, and any of these three areas may be the primary contributory factor. Ecological factors refer to a person's particular socio-cultural niche at any particular time, and would account for gendered issues and distorted sexual scripts.

Finkelhor's Precondition Model (Finkelhor, 1984), described four elements which combine to facilitate the abuse of children: motivation to sexually abuse; overcoming internal inhibitors; overcoming external inhibitors, and overcoming the resistance of the child. Overcoming external inhibitors in this and other models may have gendered elements since certain situations may provide access to children; for instance a culture which promotes the sanctity of family life over intervention to protect a child.

In addition to the multifactorial models outlined above, any theory which includes cognitive distortions (e.g. Ward and Beech's Integrated Theory of Sexual Offending (2006); Hall and Hirschman's Quadripartite Model, 1991) may be considered to contain a gender-based element since as discussed cognitive distortions may be influenced by socio-cultural messages.

### *Summary*

This section has outlined the gender-based arguments for the abuse of women and children, and highlighted that socio-cultural messages are thought to have a key part to play in sexual offending behaviour, often as a way of exerting power over women. Some theories suggest that this exertion of power is used by men in general (although not universally across society), whilst some suggest that this is a reaction to the specific place of certain men in society (i.e. their own position in the power hierarchy), although this power hierarchy is itself a societal construction. Gender-based theories are more often offered as an explanation for sexual offences committed against adult women. They are less clear in explaining the heterogeneity of offending behaviour, although multifactorial theories suggest that gendered (and socio-cultural in general) elements are merely one part of a complex pathway towards offending behaviour.

### **2.5 Life course approaches**

The previous sections have outlined research which suggests that both developmental factors and socio-cultural influences (i.e. gender-based messages) have an influence on sexual offending. Whilst both psychological approaches and gendered theories may seem to suggest that propensity to offend should be fixed, many researchers suggest that sexual offending behaviour changes over time (e.g. Lussier and Cale, 2016). This is consistent with research into non-sexual offending, which suggests that offending behaviour peaks in late adolescence and then falls throughout life after that (Moffitt, 1993). Lussier and Cale(2016) argued that most theories of sexual offending, whilst incorporating situational factors, tend to

suggest traits which are fixed and stable and hence always present. Contrary to this, they argued that 'sexual aggression is generally characterized by a high degree of discontinuity over the life course, albeit some continuity' (p2), and that it is 'typically short-lived for most, and can be considered largely opportunistic and transitory' (p2) (although this particular paper does not take into account offences against children). Hanson (2001) also found that the risk of sexual recidivism decreases with age, across all categories of offence, although other evidence of an age-crime curve amongst those who commit sexual crimes is often based on general reoffending rather than sexual recidivism, perhaps for methodological reasons since sexual recidivism rates tend to be low. This suggests that there may be similar patterns in sexual and non-sexual offending, and this thesis intends to explore this.

Lussier and Cale (2016) also emphasised the need to further research the assumption that people who commit sexual offences as juveniles are the same ones who offend as adults. This has important implications for interventions, since it potentially presents a group who are at risk of future offending who have not yet come to the attention of any public agencies, and also questions the assumption that those who offend at a young age continue to be at high risk.

The next section will examine the evidence thus far that sexual offending is not stable over time, and argue that this suggests a significant influence of transitory life events in offending behaviour, even if this is merely a trigger for underlying issues. This is important from a policy perspective as it highlights the additional

non-psychological support which may be appropriate to prevent sexual offending and encourage desistance.

### **2.5.1 Criminal career approach and developmental life-course criminology**

The criminal career approach has been defined as ‘the longitudinal sequence of crimes committed by an individual offender’ (Blumstein et al., 1986, quoted in Blokland and Lussier, 2015: p5), or the ‘chain of criminal behaviors associated with an individual’ (Blokland and Lussier, 2015: p5). The criminal careers perspective is considered a framework for considering the development and trajectory of an individual’s offending behaviour rather than a theory of offending, per se (Thakker and Ward, 2015). Criminal careers scholars typically focus on four key dimensions of a criminal career, although other dimensions exist (Blokland and Lussier, 2015): *participation* (i.e. the difference between who commits crime and who doesn’t); *frequency* (i.e. the rate at which an individual offends); *seriousness* (i.e. the nature and severity of crimes committed); and *duration* (i.e. the length of the criminal career from first to last offence). Some theorists believe that each dimension of the criminal career approach (participation, frequency, seriousness and length) may potentially have different causes (which is suggested by some multifactorial models (Ward, 2014)), although others disagree with this (Blokland and Lussier, 2015). Some argue that current criminal career research tends to assume continuity of offending (Blokland and Lussier, 2015), although in theory the criminal careers approach can take into account one-off events, since this would be defined as a short duration and frequency.



Thakker and Ward (2015) considered existing multifactorial models of sexual offending in the context of the criminal careers paradigm. For example, Marshall and Barbaree (1990) suggested that adolescence is the most likely time for onset of sexual aggression, especially in vulnerable individuals, due to the physical and psychological changes taking place at this time combined with inability to cope with the social changes which occur in adolescence. In terms of prevalence, Hall and Hirschman's model (1991) suggested that sexual offending may be more prevalent in populations where offence-supportive views against women are supported: this is also consistent with feminist theories. Finkelhor's model (1984) suggested that frequency would depend on availability of a victim, which is linked to opportunity. Multifactorial models often take into account specialisation either in terms of individual characteristics specific to sexual offences (e.g. Finkelhor, 1984), or similar factors contributing to a propensity for general as well as sexual offending (e.g. Marshall and Barbaree, 1990).

#### *General life-course perspectives*

The criminal careers approach is most commonly explored and underpinned by developmental life-course (DLC) theories or perspectives. The DLC approach looks at the development of the individual over the life course and the effect of life events on the likelihood of offending behaviour. It has been defined as the study of the following (McGee, Farrington et al., 2015: p307):

'(1) the development of offending and antisocial behavior from childhood to adulthood;

- (2) risk and protective factors for offending and antisocial behavior;
- and
- (3) the effect of life events on the course of development.'

The DLC perspective looks at 'successive and continuing person x environment interactions' (Lussier and Cale, 2016: p9). A particular emphasis is placed on environment, and how this may change at different points in the life course. Whilst not incompatible with psychological theories of development, there is less emphasis on stable personality traits and, hence, the DLC perspective is less deterministic.

In relation to general (i.e. non-sexual) offending behaviour, Laub and Sampson (2001) argued that whilst there were several different theoretical frameworks for explaining the desistance process, the life-course theory offered the best 'fit' (although for them, the emphasis was on social bonds rather than psychological development). The large amount of evidence regarding life-course theory for general types of offending cannot be ignored; in particular the evidence that most people generally commit crimes when they are young and then 'age out' of offending (Moffitt, 1993). As we age, our lives and circumstances can be very different from one time period to another: the social ecology often changes dramatically, and this is no different for those who do or do not offend. Our life course can be affected by many different things, particularly those around us. We may gain a long-term partner, employment, children or different life-goals which affect the way we live our lives. In relation to offending in particular, these

influences may socially, morally, physically or psychologically prevent or inhibit us from engaging in certain types of behaviour.

There have been various theoretical explanations for why life events may encourage or discourage different behaviour. One potential explanation for changes in offending behaviour over the life-course is that they are related to changes in social relationship patterns. Smallbone, Marshall et al. (2008) argued that cultural norms influence attitudes and actions according to the 'proximal-distal' continuum'; networks closest to us such as friends and family will have a stronger influence than wider society. Consequently, different situations result in different moral rules, and these may change at different points in life. To give just one example, principles of differential association suggest that interaction with others, directly or indirectly, results in courses of behaviour consistent with the social group's actions or norms/values (Akers and Jensen, 2006), and these can include friends/family or wider influences such as the media. These associations can encourage or discourage criminal behaviour, resulting in risk or protective situations. Farrington (1992) also suggested changes in associations as a reason for changing offending patterns.

Risk or protective factors may also occur at different times in life and this may affect when a person commits crime. For instance, a protective factor when young may be a supportive family, whilst a risk factor may be residing in a disadvantaged neighbourhood (Losel and Farrington, 2012; Stouthamer-Loeber, 2002). If either of these situations are reversed (for instance when a person leaves home or if

relationships change), then the propensity to offend may also change. In adulthood, a move towards having one's own family may be a protective factor, however a breakdown of this family may be a risk factor (Stouthamer-Loeber, Loeber et al., 2002).

However, there is no overall consensus about why people 'age out' of crime. Glueck and Glueck (1974) suggested that the maturation process is responsible for offenders' ability to desist as they age (although their concept of 'maturation' was ill-defined), and that offenders who persisted had delayed maturity (they stated that one exception to this was if the offender had something significant going on in their environment, suggesting that environment can be an influencer which over-rides developmental factors). Blokland and Lussier (2015) also argued that a maturational approach best explains the age-crime curve commonly seen in general offending, whereas a dynamic approach would imply greater variance in patterns of offending (i.e. not such a high peak and steep drop in prevalence after the teenage years). This view would suggest that crimes which can be explained by a dynamic approach would tend not to follow the age-crime curve. This is interesting in the context of life-course criminology, as life events would be considered dynamic, unless there is something particular about life events and social bonds which occur in the late teenage years. This will be further explored throughout the thesis.

Other, more recent, work suggests a biological explanation for the age crime curve, due to physiological changes in the body including chemical and hormonal factors

(Walsh, 2009). Shover (1996) found that fear of time in prison increased with age, and in this respect we can align the life-course theory with rational choice theory in that, as a person ages, they become more likely to make a cost-benefit analysis that committing an offence is not worth the consequences: they are less impulsive and more able to think consequentially. This may be parallel to one's general reflections on life as they age. This thesis intends to consider empirical evidence in the context of the above viewpoints.

On the other hand, some theorists argue that the propensity to offend should not decrease over time. For example, Ward (2000) proposed that the longer an offender commits sexual crime, the more time they have to develop more complex implicit theories about their victims that lead them to continue offending. Indeed, Ward's theory could suggest that the more a person offends, the more this will then lead to other offending. Of course, it could be the other way around: they have an implicit theory which enables and motivates them to keep offending for longer. Nevertheless, this proposition that propensity does not diminish is interesting, and may suggest that it is the situational triggers which change over time. Similarly, Walker et al. (2012) found that in general, studies tend to suggest that aggression is stable over time. Gove (1985) also argued that most criminological theories suggest that crime should escalate rather than decline with the ageing process, although instead he argued that physical and biological processes are at play in the decline. The links between violent crime, sexual offending and other offending, as well as the implications of the age-crime curve for these potential links, are worthy of exploration and this thesis will address

these. Furthermore, the potential role of life events and DLC theory will be examined in the context of the age-crime curve.

In respect of current evidence relating to the application of DLC theory, David Farrington (2005) summarised several features of criminal behaviour over the life-course (this applies to general offending). These key findings will be compared to the empirical findings in this thesis in order to compare patterns of sexual convictions to 'general' offences:

- Prevalence of offending peaks in the late teenage years
- Onset of offending usually occurs in early adolescence, and terminates in the third decade of life
- Individuals who commit multiple offences are at increased risk of offending later in life (continuity of offending)
- Early onset predicts longer criminal career duration and higher offending frequency (compared to those with later onset)
- A small proportion of people are responsible for a disproportionate share of crime
- Offenders tend to be versatile in the types of offences they commit
- Some offences are more likely at particular age groups than others
- Versatility extends beyond criminal behaviour towards other types of reckless and antisocial behaviour
- As age increases, offending tends away from group activity to solo activity
- Motivations to offend tend to become less diverse with age

### *Life-course approaches to sexual offending*

Having outlined DLC approaches to 'general' (i.e. all types of) offending and stated the intention to consider this in the context of the empirical data gathered for this thesis, this section will consider current work on these approaches to sexual offending behaviour. This has been more prevalent in recent years (e.g. Lussier and Blokland, 2017). Some authors argue that this is because a life-course approach should take into account *any* offending, and hence sexual offences should not be treated as the 'other': 'DLC theories explicitly or implicitly assume that the same concepts and principles that apply to all other forms of offending apply equally to sexual offending' (Thakker and Ward, 2015: p44).

Smallbone and Cale (2015) developed an Integrated Life-Course Developmental Theory of Sexual Offending. Smallbone and Cale argued that developmental theories may explain propensity to offend, but not why offences may occur at a certain time or place: 'we need to keep a clear distinction in this regard between explaining criminal propensities on one hand, and explaining criminal events on the other' (Smallbone and Cale, 2015: p52). Criminal events, however, may be explained by the situational or life events which interact with the propensity to result in a criminal act. This theory hence seeks to explain both propensity to offend and how these offences manifest at a certain time or place. The theory seeks to incorporate individual (biological and developmental), ecological and situational factors to explain sexual offences under the life-course paradigm:

'Universal within-individual changes involving biological development interact with a range of psychological, ecological, and situational

factors relevant to both motivations and opportunities associated with sexual offending. Perhaps the most significant of these are the rapid increase in sexual drive during adolescence, the transitions from intense sexual attraction to potentially more enduring attachment bonds with intimate partners, parenthood and associated child-rearing activities, and the gradual decline of sexual drive in later life' (Smallbone and Cale, 2015: p56).

According to the biological argument in Smallbone and Cale's theory, prosocial behaviour has been adapted for times in which there are plentiful resources (where there is less competition) and antisocial behaviour has been adapted for times in which resources are scarce. Hence neither is good or bad, and there is no evolutionary reason that prosocial should be the default setting. Following that argument, we do not need to find causes of antisocial behaviour because sexual (or any) offending is not the 'other' – it is just part of a continuum of behaviour that adapts to the circumstances in which individuals find themselves. The biological argument also explains the overwhelming predominance of males in sexual offending, since it relates to the physical aspect of being born male. Smallbone and Cale argued that the interaction between social and biological factors occurs during adolescence and this accounts for the age-crime curve. The timing of the offences is driven by the dynamic factors rather than propensity: 'sexual offending trajectories are determined by the proximal antecedents and consequences of the offending itself, rather than by distal developmental antecedents' (Smallbone and Cale, 2015 p64).



In addition to theoretical work on the application of a life-course approach to sexual offending behaviour, recent research has provided empirical support for this approach. For example, Farmer, McAlinden et al.'s research (2015) into desistance from sexual offending against children found that when talking about the reasons for their original offence, most of the desisting group stated that they had not intended to commit a sexual offence, but had found themselves in a situation which enabled them to do it (conversely, the non-desisting group described actively seeking out opportunities to offend). This suggests that the situational element was important, at least for the timing of the offence. Of course, there may be an element of excuse-making in their accounts, although it is theoretically possible that environmental influence or opportunity may have provided a trigger. However, it was also common for the participants to state that this situational impetus was preceded by a life event such as a relationship breakdown. In other cases, there had not been a stressful life event but a positive one, suggesting that the situational aspect, rather than low mood or stress, was more important. Farmer, McAlinden et al. (2015) did point out that psychological vulnerabilities may make a person more prone to acting on situational elements, and hence situational factors are not necessarily *sufficient* for an offence to take place.

This section has explored the theoretical underpinnings of criminal career and developmental life-course approaches to sexual offending behaviour. The next section will look at individual life events and examine the theories of how and why each may have an influence on offending behaviour.

### **2.5.2 Life events, social bonds, and their relationship to offending**

Having discussed the overall life course approaches to general and sexual offending, the next section will consider individual life changes which are thought to have an influence on general offending, and consider them in the context of sexual offending, as well as examining empirical evidence on the issue thus far.

#### *Peers*

Akers (1990) argued that association with 'norm-violating peers' (p164) is one of the best predictors of general recidivism, and there have been several cultural deviance theories which advocate that the people directly surrounding us can influence our propensity towards criminal actions (Sutherland, 1992; Akers, 1977). Theoretically, it is not hard to imagine that this may be the case, since direct association with others who normalise such activity may have a counter effect to the will of society in general. If an offender associates with other offenders, they are not really breaking the rules of their society. Farrington (1992) also suggested that peer attachment can explain the general life-course trajectory, with criminal behaviour beginning in adolescence when offenders have a stronger relationship with their peers instead of their parents, and declining when the main influence is the spouse.

It is interesting to consider the effect of associations in the case of people who have committed sexual offences, and surprisingly there has been little research into this. Schwartz, DeKeseredy et al. (2001) presented an interesting paper on a feminist approach to routine activity theory in which they examined the effect of

peers as guardians who may prevent or encourage the offender. They argued that 'men who belong to these all male, patriarchal, homosocial networks are more likely than non-members to be motivated to abuse women sexually' (p628). There have been few studies which examined peer approval of or involvement in child abuse. One recent exception is Ashurst and McAlinden (2015), who found that young people participating in harmful sexual behaviour could be very much influenced by their peers. It is also thought that there may be a certain level of networking amongst those who commit sexual offences (Hanson and Scott, 1996), and this may be facilitated by the growth of the internet: '[r]esearch demonstrates the strong sense of social support and reinforcement that child pornography offenders may experience as a result of their involvement in online networks' (Carr, 2012: p104). However, many psychological theories about the causes of sexual offending, including attachment theory, state that some people who have committed sexual offences may have difficulty relating to their peers and so this may be a more complex area than for general criminality.

### *Relationships*

A history of stable relationships is seen as a protective factor in most risk matrices for sexual offences (Hanson and Thornton, 2000). Stable relationships are often seen as indicators of secure attachments, which in turn lessen the likelihood of intimacy deficits, which are thought to be a causal factor for sexual offending. It may be initially appear that such attachments must be fixed for life without treatment, however there is some evidence that attachment styles can change according to socio-structural elements: 'changes in caregiver environments and

stressful life events (severe illness, parental illness, divorce) have been shown to alter attachment patterns from infancy, through childhood and adolescence, to adulthood' (McKillop, Smallbone et al., 2012: p593). For example, Smallbone (2006) argued that being a caregiver can bring about a sexual offence since the offender confuses adult and parental attachment and seeks sexual intimacy with the child. This suggests that a person, rather than not having the opportunity, did not have the propensity to offend until becoming a caregiver. Different attachment styles may also result in different quality of relationships, where for instance the anxious/ambivalent individual may appear to have a good intimate relationship, however they may maintain an emotional distance within this relationship (Marshall, 2010). This further complicates the situation: the mere fact of being in an adult relationship or a peer group is not necessarily indicative of secure adult attachment. Nevertheless, attachment theories do support the possibility that experiencing different environments may actually alter the propensity to offend. Interestingly, some research has suggested that there is an age-crime curve for interpersonal violence: 'the predicted probability of IPV perpetration reaches its peak in the early twenties and subsequently declines during the latter half of the twenties' (Johnson, Giordano et al., 2015: p720). This supports Lussier and Cale's suggestion (2016) that aggression is not stable over time.

### *Employment*

Employment is thought to be a protective factor for non-sexual offending (LeBel, Burnett et al., 2008), however there has not been a large amount of research into whether it may be a protective factor for sexual offending. Hunnicutt (2009)

discussed the Marxist feminist view that the interaction between capitalist and patriarchal systems result in tension when men fail to achieve breadwinner status which ultimately manifests itself in violence against women, which would imply that unemployment could be a risk factor for sexual offences, at least for adult female victims. This has rarely been discussed in relation to sexual crime, however evidence does suggest that unemployment and lower socio-economic status are linked to sexual violence (as well as other crimes) (Gannon, Collie et al., 2008). For people who have committed sexual offences with child victims, high rates of unemployment and low socio-demographic status are not as prevalent as with other offences (Gannon, Collie et al., 2008), and in many cases they have used their employment as a means of accessing victims (Sullivan and Beech, 2002). Sullivan and Beech also debated whether having such a position of power may be the trigger for offending.

### *Social isolation*

Previous research has shown social isolation to be a factor in offending, and this is related to the gaining and retention of relationships as outlined above. This is thought to be because 'healthy relationships with others form the bedrock of accountability' (Mills, 2015: p393). Social isolation can also affect the way we view the world: '[t]he brains of lonely, in contrast to non-lonely, individuals are on high alert for social threats, so lonely individuals tend to view their social world as threatening and punitive' (Cacioppo and Hawkley, 2009: p451). Social isolation can be a subjective concept but it is often measured (in the psychological field) as a combination of living alone and having infrequent contact with family members,

friends and other acquaintances (e.g. from work and leisure activities) (Steptoe, Shankar et al., 2013).

Some theories of sexual offending incorporate social isolation because it may be caused by (or lead to) intimacy or attachment problems, thus leading to sexual offending this way (Ward and Beech, 2006). Relatedness is also one of the key primary goods outlined in the Good Lives Model: if this is important to a person and the person is unable to achieve it, they may attempt to gain it in inappropriate ways (Willis, Yates et al., 2012).

Research has found mixed results about whether social isolation is related to sexual offending. Porter, Newman et al. (2015) conducted a meta-analysis of the effects of social anxiety on sexual offending against children. They found that eight out of eighteen studies analysed had reported inconclusive association, whilst the remaining ten varied from strong to weak statistical association. Miner, Romine et al. (2016) found a link between sexual offending of adolescents and social isolation (through attachment deficits), although this was only true for those with child victims. In general, most research which looks at social isolation appears to link it with child victims rather than adult victims. On the other hand, social support is thought to be important in terms of *desistance* from crime (McNeill, 2006, 2009), and due to the fact that it is thought that desistance from crime is not necessarily related to the original cause (which will be discussed later in this chapter), it is thought that this should assist with desistance from sexual offending (McAlinden, Farmer et al., 2016). Social isolation is also one of the predictors of reoffending

commonly used in the risk assessment tools for those with sexual convictions (e.g. RMA Scotland, 2013).

#### *Place and environment*

Another area which may change over the life course and has the potential to alter propensity to offend is the effect of an individual's environment. Environment can be defined in many ways, from ecological niche (Wright, Pratt et al., 2012; Mears, Wang et al., 2008) to physical environment. Ward and Beech (2006) argued that ecology is one of the two (along with biology) fundamental developmental resources which 'provide the psychological and social competencies which are necessary for human beings to function in the world' (p49), and indeed some cognitive theories posit that mind and environment are inextricably linked (Ward, 2009).

The concept of place and accessibility of victims is one which has been much discussed in the context of routine activity theory (Cohen and Felson, 1979). Conversely, the extent to which opportunity can affect motivation has been rarely researched. Sexual offences are often committed after a period of grooming or coercion, however, this does not mean that the offender will not actively seek out a vulnerable victim, or be influenced to do so by some feature of his or her environment. Policymakers and practitioners often discuss certain residency restrictions such as not housing someone who has committed sexual crimes near a school, although limited research has tended to show that this does not have a significant impact (Duwe, Donnay et al., 2008; Zandbergen, 2010). On the other

hand, Ouimet and Proux (1994) found some evidence that recidivism was increased for those who had offended against children whose routine activities took them into closer proximity to children.

In terms of opportunity and access to victims, limited research has found that low socio-economic status is a risk factor for victims of child sexual abuse (Bahali, Akcan et al., 2010), which could mean that certain areas (i.e. those with lower socio-economic status) may theoretically be higher risk for victims. Sampson et al (1999) conducted some interesting work on the role of collective efficacy on a child's development, which found that concentrated disadvantage resulted in lower shared responsibility for child behaviour and welfare. However there has been a lack of replication of this research.

In some states in the US, there has been work carried out on spatial equity of people with sexual convictions (Grubestic and Murray, 2008), that is, geographical modelling to ensure that there are not high concentrations of people with a history of sexual offences residing in a particular area. The work may have interesting implications in terms of identifying if there are any links with housing large numbers of people with sexual convictions in the same area, and recidivism. Work to date to test this empirically has shown limited positive correlation between clustering of people with sexual convictions and an increase in sexual recidivism (Socia, 2013), although much more research is required to fully explore this issue.



### *Sexual offending patterns*

The previous sections have discussed theories which suggest sexual offending has the propensity to change over time for some individuals, as well as provided comment on individual areas which are thought to influence offending over the life-course. There is a lack of empirical research on mapping out overall patterns over the life-course for those who have committed sexual offences, with the exception of Lussier et al.'s studies. Lussier, Tzoumakis et al. (2010) looked at within-individual trajectories of sex offenders, and examined a subject group which is older than most studies have been able to reach (to age 35). The research grouped the offenders into four groups; a) very low-rate group (56%); b) late-bloomers (10%); c) low-rate desisters (25%); and d) high-rate chronics (8%). The only group which did not begin to desist with age were the late bloomers, who comprised 10% of the sample. This suggests that propensity to sexually offend does decline with age, and the high-rate chronics and the low-rate desisters roughly followed Moffitt's trajectories (Moffitt, 1993) (although it would be interesting to track these trajectories past age 35). Interestingly, Lussier, Tzoumakis et al. found an escalation into sexual offences for two of the groups (the low-rate desisters and the late bloomers), i.e. they had committed sexual offences after a period of committing other offences, which suggests that offending patterns are not uniform. However, Lussier et al.'s study is based on repeat offending in general, and not specifically sexual offences. They were also limited to those convicted of a prison sentence of more than 2 years, which may exclude those who have committed crimes at a younger age and then desisted. This thesis will look at patterns for sexual offending behaviour as distinct from and in comparison to

general offending, and the study extends to everyone who has been convicted in Scotland.

Lussier, Tzoumakis et al.'s study found some other interesting patterns. For example, the very-low rate offenders had the highest percentage of child victims, whilst the high-rate chronic group had the highest proportion of adult victims. Whilst age of victim is not one of the static variables in the most common risk assessment matrices, theoretically the distinction between the victim being an adult or a child is very important (e.g. Ward et al., 1995). High-rate chronics were also found to have the least specialisation in terms of sexual crimes, whilst the very low-rate group had the highest. Since this study included all offending, it is difficult to extricate the trajectories for sexual recidivism and hence make comment on recidivism for sexual offences, however it does suggest that different groups of offenders (in terms of victim type and specialisation) follow very different trajectories. Hence there appears to be a need to study differences in different types of offenders. This will be discussed further in section 2.7.

### *Summary*

This section has looked at the research which provides support for a life-course approach to sexual offending behaviour, which suggests that propensity to offend is not stable over time but is affected by ageing, life events and risk factors. Research has provided some support for influence of social relationships on sexual offending behaviour, although there is not a large amount of research in this area. Empirical research into offending patterns, however, suggests that sexual offending does decline with age, and that moreover, the trajectories for some

types of offenders follow that of non-sexual offenders (Lussier, Tzoumakis et al., 2010). This is perhaps in contrast with some risk-based approaches to reoffending which, at least in part, assume more stable propensity to offend. These risk-based approaches will be discussed in section 2.6.2. The research outlined has also shown that there are potentially distinct offending patterns for different types of offenders, which manifest in different trajectories. There are, however, many areas on which there is little research, including the role of specialisation and the links between aggression/violent crime, sexual offending and other offending.

## **2.6 Desistance and risk of reoffending**

This section will consider what current research says about risk of reoffending and desistance from sexual offending, as distinct from the cause of sexual offending. Whilst, as will be discussed, the desistance process does not necessarily mirror the causal process, patterns of offending will necessarily be influenced by desistance processes, particularly in terms of potential reasons many people do not continue to offend.

### *General desistance theory*

Desistance theories attempt to explain the journey from (arguably) relatively persistent offending to an offence-free life. Having generally stemmed from research into non-sexual offending, desistance theories offer a different perspective to the general literature on sexual recidivism, which is more commonly based on a treatment perspective. The desistance process is generally thought to involve a combination of agency and environmental factors/informal social controls (Farrall, Bottoms et al., 2010; Laws and Ward, 2011), along with a cognitive

shift (Maruna, 2001). Inevitably, though, one complication of the desistance process is the social status of the person as an 'offender'. As Farrall, Bottoms et al. (2010) argued,

'the process of having been convicted as a recidivist adult offender entails a degree of *social exclusion*, and – unless the offender is exceptionally fortunate – probably also an element of rupture of pre-existing social ties' (p548).

Even with strong internal and inter-personal drivers of change, the desisting ex-offender will face societal difficulties which he or she did not face prior to the offence, which may be exacerbated for those who have committed sexual offences (Willis, Levenson et al., 2010). Conversely, being detected as an offender (and the subsequent associated events) may also provide the positive impetus for an identity shift. As Gobbels, Ward et al. (2012) noted: '[p]ositive events are rather unlikely to elicit self-evaluative needs' (p456).

### *Desistance and reoffending*

The most prevalent area of empirical research thus far in relation to reoffending after sexual conviction has been the work on the predictive ability of static and dynamic variables. There has only recently been research specifically into the desistance process for those who have committed sexual offences. There has also been a lack of clarity about the similarities or otherwise between the prevention of recidivism and the encouragement of desistance, the two having generally come from different disciplines.

As desistance research has generally come from a sociological background whilst research into sexual reoffending has often been psychology-based, a key distinction between desistance and rehabilitation research outlined by Laws and Ward (2011) is that from a desistance perspective, changes occur 'outside the direct orbit of influence of practitioners' (p204): in fact, for many non-sexual offenders (and arguably many sexual offenders) this change occurs without intervention, although it can certainly be supported by professional agencies.

Laws and Ward argued that 'correctional practitioners concentrate on deficiencies whereas desistance researchers pay more attention to the presence of protective factors' (p206). This difference is highlighted in the comparison between two different models of treatment: the Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) model and the Good Lives Model (GLM). Both were developed for general offending (and have also been used for people who have committed sexual offences), however they highlight different approaches to preventing recidivism. The RNR identifies 'criminogenic needs' and targets them through treatment. Criminogenic needs are dynamic risk factors<sup>1</sup> which make a person more likely to commit an offence (Andrews, Bonta et al., 2011). The GLM, on the other hand, offers a strength-based approach which, through enhancing their lives and fulfilling basic human needs, means that people do not need to commit crimes in order to fulfil these needs (Ward and Stewart, 2003). Whilst not a direct translation of desistance

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<sup>1</sup>Risk factors included in the RNR are antisocial associates, antisocial cognitions, antisocial personality pattern, history of antisocial behaviour (a static risk factor), substance abuse, and family/marital, school/work, and leisure/recreation circumstances

theory, the GLM has more in common with it than other models of treatment and rehabilitation.

### *Asymmetry between cause and desistance*

There is some debate about the extent to which the factors which promote desistance after the commission of the offence mirror the initial cause. Laub and Sampson (2001) suggested that the predictors of desistance are the same as (or the reverse of) the predictors for offending, although others disagree (Uggen and Piliaven, 1998; Stouthamer-Loeber, 2002). Similar environmental events are generally suggested in relation to the promotion of desistance as those thought to be involved in cause (relationships, employment etc, see LeBel, Burnett et al., 2008), however whilst this may be true overall, this is not necessarily true on an individual level: i.e. addressing the same circumstances which contributed to a person's offending may not necessarily be useful in helping them to desist. A predominant view in treatment is that the causes of sexual offending are psychological and hence the causes of not reoffending are designed to reverse these (through treatment) (Laws and Ward, 2011). Desistance theories take a different perspective: whilst certain factors may be similar, the desistance process is different to the causal process, and how it is best supported depends on understanding it as a process in itself (Uggen and Piliaven, 1998). Graham (2006) argued that psychological approaches towards social change remain unproven, and that 'focusing on a process of desired change (rather than on undesired cause) could be...more insightful' (p194).

If crime aetiology and crime desistance are not straightforwardly related, this may provide more support for the view that desistance processes for sexual and non-sexual reoffences may be aligned. Laub and Sampson (2001) acknowledged that 'although problem behaviours may have different origins, the processes of cessation may be quite similar' (p32). This, they said, is due to a conscious decision to stop being brought about by a 'variety of negative consequences, both formal and informal' (p36). Theoretically then, the desistance process may be separate from the causal process, and hence, for instance, a sociological approach to understanding and supporting desistance may be attempted even if the causes of offending are not primarily sociological.

The following two sections will discuss research into the two different areas of desistance and reoffence, from a sexual offending perspective.

#### **2.6.1 Desistance from sexual offending**

Willis, Levenson et al. (2010) argued that 'desistance from sexual offending is dependent on specific environmental conditions, for example, stable housing, access to employment opportunities, cognitive transformations, and social support' (p553). Ward and Laws (2010) described 12 possible influences on the desistance process which they have identified from the literature. These are the following: ageing, marriage, work and job stability, military service, juvenile detention, prison, education, cognitive transformation, knifing off, spirituality, fear of serious assault or death, sickness and incapacitation.

Whilst empirical research into desistance from sexual offending is in its infancy, a small number of recent studies have looked at sexual offending through a desistance lens (e.g. Farmer, McAlinden et al., 2015; McAlinden, Farmer et al., 2016; Harris, 2014). Farmer, McAlinden et al.'s research (2015) compared groups of desisting and non-desisting participants. For the desisting group, the early stages of desistance often appeared to be situational, such as reduced contact with the victim. However, a cognitive shift also seemed to be important. Conversely, the non-desisting group described actively seeking out opportunities to offend. It is important to note that in this study participants had offended against children and not adults, and consistent with the typological literature, those who had offended against adults may have had different experiences.

This study (Farmer, McAlinden et al., 2015) also found evidence to support a 'rational choice' perspective where, amongst other issues, people made a conscious and rational decision to stop offending. This was based on realisation of harm caused and also the consequences of detection. Rational choice and deterrence theories have recently been seen to be somewhat outdated, however there appears to be evidence that there may be some element of this in desistance.

Employment played an important part in Farmer, McAlinden et al.'s study, providing a focus to their lives and an incentive to desist from offending. Keeping busy also appeared important, and this provides support for a situational perspective. However, the authors pointed out that employment did not appear



to be necessary to desistance, but rather helpful in supporting desistance. It may be that the people would have desisted anyway, and if they were in employment they used this to help make the best out of their lives. Relationships did not appear particularly significant to the desistance process either, although a supportive probation officer was often seen as important. Similarly, Harris (2014) found in her study of desistance from sexual offences that none of the participants identified informal social controls as the most important aspect of their desistance journey. Three participants had felt that they had simply 'aged-out' of offending.

This small number of studies has generally found support both for the situational and self-narrative aspects of traditional desistance research, although cognitive transformations appeared to be more important. Treatment was also perceived as a key element to many participants. Interestingly, social control seemed to be less crucial. This is significant since social control is thought to be important in terms of desistance from general offending. The next section will outline what the literature says about the risk of reoffending.

### **2.6.2 Risk of reoffending**

The variables used in the empirical research invariably fall into two categories. Static variables are those which are not subject to change and either originate from a person's development, or are fixed criteria such as age or gender. Dynamic variables are subject to change and relate to events and conditions occurring in the present. The next two sections will outline the most common static and dynamic variables used to predict reoffending and consider their relevance to

theory. There is some level of agreement about the role of static variables, and these have been tested more thoroughly. There is less agreement about the role of the respective dynamic variables. However, there is a difference between prediction and cause. As Ward and Beech (2006) argued,

‘the psychological vulnerability factors identified by various theorists in the sexual offending domain do not pick out in any meaningful sense the underlying causal mechanisms that actually generate sexual abuse’(p47).

This research intends to address this overall issue by analysing offence patterns in the context of causal theories.

### *Static variables*

Hanson and Thornton (2000) developed the Static-99 tool, which is widely used amongst practitioners globally. In general, most actuarial scales based on static variables use similar variables (in the UK RM 2000 is commonly used which was developed by David Thornton and also uses similar variables). Predictive accuracy varies according to different studies, however in Hanson and Thornton’s (2000) evaluation, the correlation for Static-99 was  $r=0.33$ , which is the correlation between what Static-99 predicted and measured sexual recidivism (on a scale from -1 to +1). This is an improvement on many scales (including unstructured clinical judgement), however a correlation co-efficient of 0.33 is considered weak-moderate by convention, and demonstrates that no risk matrix will have complete predictive ability. Predictors for Static-99 are the following variables:

- Age of offender
- Previous stable relationship (defined as residing with a lover for 2 years)

- Conviction for non-sexual violence
- Conviction for sexual offences
- Number of prior offences
- Prior sentencing date for any crime
- Conviction for non-contact offences
- Unrelated victims (changed to young, unrelated victims in Static 2002)
- Male victims (Static-99 is based on adult male offenders)
- Stranger victims

A later version, Static2002 (Harris, Phenix et al., 2003) was produced. However, the variables were very similar. These predictors suggest that offence *type* is relevant to future offending activity (including whether or not the offender had been involved in non-sexual offences), as is victim type. The fact that age is a variable may signify a life course element. What may also be surprising is the absence of variables relating to childhood experience, considering the theoretical importance placed on early experiences and attachment. Hanson and Morton-Bourgon (2005) found that indicators related to childhood developmental factors were not related to recidivism. This may lend some support to the idea of asymmetry between causes of the initial offence and the causes of the reoffence, suggesting that different dynamics are responsible for reoffending. It is difficult to disentangle the distinction between causes of offending, the causes of reoffending, and the *absence of* causes of desistance. Moreover, as Ward and Beech pointed out (2006), the predictive variables do not tell us much about *why* these factors should be more likely to result in a reoffence.

Moreover, as Lussier, Tzoumakis et al. (2010) argued, the basis of most actuarial tools are stable between-individual rates of offending; making the assumption that most offenders will follow the same life-course. Lussier et al.'s research, however, does not support this assumption, suggesting that different groups have different

offending patterns throughout life, although further research is desirable in this area. There has been a lack of research on the trajectories of sexual offending, and in particular regarding sexual as distinct from general recidivism.

### *Dynamic variables*

Whilst static variables are (arguably) reasonably good predictors of risk of reoffending and may help target those at high risk for psychological treatment, the variables in question are fixed and cannot be changed. Therefore, later risk assessment tools were developed which took dynamic variables into consideration. Hanson and Harris (1998) developed SONAR (Sex Offender Need Assessment Rating) in order to address a gap in evaluating change in risk amongst those who have committed sexual offences. Stable dynamic variables are the following:

- Intimacy deficits
- Social influences
- Attitudes tolerant of sexual offending
- Sexual self-regulation
- General self-regulation

SONAR also includes acute dynamic variables, the following:

- Substance abuse
- Negative mood
- Opportunities for victim access
- Anger/hostility

Dynamic variables appear to be more closely aligned with the theories about the causes of sexual offending, for instance intimacy deficits are often thought to be a consequence of an insecure attachment in infancy, and attitudes tolerant of sexual offence may be considered a consequence of either cognitive distortions or socialisation as a male in a patriarchal society. The acute dynamic variables may

represent inability to regulate emotion, or other developmental factors. Self-regulation may represent control, whilst opportunity is a key element in routine activity theory (Cohen and Felson, 1979).

From a sociological and policy perspective, these variables are interesting as they afford opportunities to intervene that do not necessarily have to be confined to a treatment setting. Hanson and Harris tested this model (Hanson and Harris, 2000b), and found it was able to accurately distinguish between recidivists and non-recidivists. The variables with the strongest predictive validity were general self-regulation, followed by attitudes and sexual self-regulation. In terms of the external variables, opportunities for victim access and negative social influences were also found to be important. This highlights that both internal and external influences are thought to be involved in the reoffending process.

In Scotland the Stable and Acute 2007 is used (RMA Scotland, 2013). This is a more detailed version of SONAR, and scores on the following:

Stable:

- Significant Social Influences
- Capacity for Relationship Stability
- Emotional identification with Children
- Hostility toward women
- General Social Rejection
- Lack of concern for others
- Impulsive
- Poor Problem-Solving Skills
- Negative Emotionality
- Sex Drive/Sex Preoccupation
- Sex as Coping
- Deviant Sexual Preference
- Co-operation with supervision

Acute:

- Victim Access
- Hostility
- Sexual Pre-occupation
- Rejection of Supervision
- Emotional Collapse
- Collapse of Social Supports
- Substance Abuse

The use and testing of these static and dynamic variables demonstrates that many influences from a person's development and current life situation are thought to have an influence on reoffending. In terms of the elements which are more amenable to change, opportunity and social support are areas in which intervention without clinical treatment may be possible. The idea of stress and other negative emotional states being linked to recidivism, predicated on the idea of sexual acts as a coping mechanism, is also one for which there is some theoretical and empirical basis (Hanson and Morton-Bourgon, 2005), and these are of practical importance as it may be possible to limit external stressors on a person who has offended in addition to providing treatment to help them cope with these situations.

A study by Blokland and van der Geest (2015) found that dynamic variables had no effect on recidivism (i.e. they were best predicted by stable risk factors). This means that in their study life events did not appear to be important. However, two points are important here: firstly, since Blokland and van der Geest's study is quantitative, it cannot take into account the quality or circumstances surrounding the life events, which is an issue with actuarial measurement of risk in general. Secondly, this does not mean that they have no effect on the *first* conviction, which is an issue often overlooked in favour of a focus on recidivism.

### *Summary*

The risk factors for reoffence are very different to the factors which are thought to promote desistance. One notable exception is that of social support, which is an acute dynamic risk factor as well as an important element of the desistance research.

There are still many empirical and theoretical gaps in relation to wider patterns of starting and stopping offending. Offence type, victim type and age appear to be risk factors for reoffending, however there has been very little research which explores why this might be the case. The fact that age is a variable may signify a life-course element, and the potential significance of changes in offending behaviour and propensity to offend have been discussed in section 2.5. The relevance of offence type and victim type may suggest that there are different motivations for different offending behaviour, as is suggested by some of the theories specific to sexual offences (e.g. attachment theories). Many studies into desistance and reoffending do not explore the potential differences between people with different offence and victim types, and this is also a gap which this research intends to address. There has also been limited research thus far into desistance from sexual offending, compared to risk of reoffending, and whether or not there is an asymmetry between the two. This will have an impact on whether desistance from sexual offending can be treated in the same way as desistance from non-sexual offending, in terms of group work and social support. Further

research is also needed into trajectories of sexual offending and whether propensity to offend is stable on an individual basis over time.

## **2.7 Heterogeneity of sexual offending behaviour**

The research outlined in this section has recognised the heterogeneous nature of those who commit sexual offences, and the theories outlined suggest that this may be because different types of offending behaviour have different causes. Therefore, it is not appropriate to analyse the behaviour of those who have committed sexual offences as if they were one group. For example, there appears to be theoretical differences between those who have only committed sexual offences and those who are also heavily involved in non-sexual offending, and those who offend against adults and children. Modus operandi of the offence is also important in terms of whether force is used and how the offence manifests. Lussier and Cale (2016) also advocated a taxonomic approach when considering a life-course perspective:

‘...a single theory of sexual aggression is insufficient to explain and account for the various longitudinal patterns of sexual aggression. A taxonomic model of sexual aggression, in that context, could be considered to describe and explain the multiple trajectories of sexual aggression....From a developmental perspective, this represents the principle of equifinality; the notion that in any open system the end state can be reached by multiple means.’ (p10).

Much research therefore analyses sexual offending and offenders in distinct groups. For example, Robertiello and Terry (2007) reviewed the various different ways of grouping those who had committed sexual offences, and found that in



general the main distinctions were between those who had offended against adults and children, followed by gender of offender, age of offender (whether adult or juvenile), and online or contact offences. There can also be many sub-types within these categories, often based on psychological characteristics. This thesis, therefore, will take this heterogeneity into account.

## **2.8 Methodological limitations of empirical studies involving sexual offences**

Most of the empirical studies in relation to people who have committed sexual offences have some methodological limitations, and this study is no different. Since people who have committed sexual offences are not a high volume group (according to official reports) and official recidivism rates are generally low, a longer timescale is often required to monitor the cohort. This has proven difficult with studies which monitor the effect of dynamic variables (i.e. variables which are subject to change), as this data is often not collected in longitudinal studies, and dynamic variables will rarely appear on secondary datasets. Even if given access to personal data files, the researcher is often required to manually search through each file for the existence of the variables. For many studies, interviews will be required to determine the variable, particularly if they are 'internal' variables such as deviant sexual fantasies or lack of empathy with the victim. This makes a large-scale quantitative methodology particularly challenging. Moreover, acute dynamic variables (those which occur in a relatively brief moment in time such as thoughts and feelings) in particular are only true in that moment in time.

Empirical studies of recidivism will often require access to official records, and data on people who have committed sexual offences is particularly sensitive. Anonymised data is also difficult to obtain since it can be very time-consuming to extract. There is a wider issue of a lack of access to secondary data for academics, and also a lack of involvement of those conducting long-term research on secondary data in discussion of how it is maintained. Most of the data is held for short-term, performance or operational reasons, meaning that it is very difficult to translate the variables in question for the purposes of academic research. This is understandable for resourcing reasons, and some projects are in place in some areas to try to make better use of administrative data and also to use new software to counter confidentiality and data protection issues. In general, certainly in the UK, this progress has probably been hampered by the effects of the recession and associated organisational reform, in which non-essential areas such as long-term research suffered from a loss of staff or financial input.

There is also a lack of robust evaluation of interventions with offenders, particularly people who have committed sexual offences, and of the positive or negative impact these may have on those involved. Whilst there may be financial and ethical difficulties of some methods in some instances, e.g. randomised controlled trials, this should not prevent serious attempts at determining the effects of these initiatives. Failure to do so will result in unknown consequences for the individual being treated as well as the public, not to mention the amount of resources being wasted. For example, whilst the Sex Offender Registration and Notification system (SORN) is used widely, there is very little evidence of the

effects that it has on offenders and reoffending (Walby, Olive et al., 2013). Some of the logistic aspects of SORN (those of monitoring and restricting the movements of the offender), are counter to the principles of other models of desistance, e.g. the Good Lives Model, which is underpinned by support and rehabilitation. Further evaluation of treatment methods would assist our knowledge of the desistance process.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

Chapter 2 has considered theories of the causes of sexual offending, with a particular emphasis on a sociological perspective, but also outlining key psychological theories as well as the potential interaction between the two. It has also considered how general theories of criminal behaviour may be viewed in this context; whether these are sufficient, or whether separate theories specific to sexual offending are required.

The chapter found that sexual offending and criminological theories are not incompatible, but that they operate on different levels. Criminological theories describe why a person does or doesn't offend when the crime is against the moral code of society, whilst theories specific to sexual offending consider why a person would want to carry out the act in the first place. Both aspects may have their place in the prevention of offending. However, in order to further analyse this issue, a comparison of sexual offending compared to non-sexual offending is desirable in order to examine why some people only commit sexual offences, and some people commit sexual offences as part of a wider pattern of offending.

Research is therefore required to examine whether this is true on an individual level: i.e. for someone who commits both sexual and non-sexual offending, are there separate causal processes for the two offences types, or are there similar reasons behind sexual and non-sexual offending?

There are many psychological theories which suggest reasons for antisocial behaviour, which generally stem from parenting and other developmental issues, and some of the key theories were outlined in Chapter 2 including attachment theories and cognitive distortions. The theories are less clear as to why these issues result in a sexual offence as opposed to other behaviour which is outwith social norms. However, multifactorial theories suggest an interaction between these psychological issues and other elements.

Research generally supports a gender-based perspective on sexual offending, often as a way of exerting power over women. Some theories suggest that this exertion of power is used by men in general (although is not universal across society), whilst some suggest that this is a reaction to the specific place of certain men in society (i.e. their own position in the power hierarchy). Gender-based theories are more often offered as an explanation for sexual offences committed against adult women. Gendered theories are less clear in explaining the heterogeneity of offending behaviour, although multifactorial theories suggest that gendered (and socio-cultural in general) are merely one part of a complex pathway towards offending behaviour.

This chapter also looked at the research which provides support for a life-course approach to sexual offending behaviour, which suggests that propensity to offend is not stable over time but is affected by ageing, life events and risk factors. Research has provided some support for influence of social relationships on sexual offending behaviour, although there is not a large amount of research into this. Empirical research into offending patterns, however, suggests that sexual offending does decline with age, and that moreover, the trajectories for some types of offenders follow that of non-sexual offenders (Lussier, Tzoumakis et al., 2010). Research has also shown that there are potentially distinct offending patterns for different types of offenders, which manifest in different trajectories. There are, however, many areas which there is little research on, including the role of specialisation and the links between aggression/violent crime, sexual offending and other offending and offending patterns for older offenders. Piquero (2015) also argued that 'there has been even less attention devoted to understanding how individuals interpret—and give meaning to—life events and transitions. Additional quantitative and qualitative research on life events remains important' (p342).

Research into desistance from sexual offending has found support both for the situational and self-narrative aspects of traditional desistance research, although cognitive transformations appeared to be more important. Treatment was also perceived as a key element to many participants, but social control seemed to be less crucial. Research into risk of reoffending showed that both internal and external influences are thought to be involved in the reoffending process. In

particular, opportunity and social support are areas in which intervention without clinical treatment may be possible. The idea of stress and other negative emotional states being linked to recidivism, predicated on the idea of sexual acts as a coping mechanism, is also one for which there is some theoretical and empirical basis. This suggests that a situational element is important. On the other hand, variables relating to childhood experience do not appear important, suggesting asymmetry between the causes of the initial offence and the causes of reoffending. Offence type, victim type and age appear to be risk factors for reoffending. The fact that age is a variable may signify a life-course element.

This chapter has thus identified some key gaps which this thesis intends to explore. The first concerns a socio-cultural focus on the causes of offending and desistance. Laws and Ward (2011) argued that the 'etiological assumption appears to be that... individuals commit sexual offenses because they have a number of skill deficits that make it difficult for them to seek reinforcement in socially acceptable ways' (p99). In other words, current theoretical work does not generally seek to explore the role of factors external to the offenders' own skills deficits. Whilst many theories suggest an interaction between psychological and socio-cultural elements, empirical evidence on the socio-cultural side has been more sparse than that from a psychological perspective. Socio-cultural elements also offer an additional opportunity for intervention from non-psychologists (and society as a whole), which I believe is very important and has often been overlooked, with the exception of some good work carried out by Circles of Support and Accountability projects and the introduction of newer theoretical frameworks such as the Good

Lives Model (Willis, Yates et al., 2012). Importantly, this should be considered in the context of the prevention of offending (as not only *reoffending*), if socio-cultural change may reduce the incidence and prevalence of these offences in society.

The second theoretical gap relates to the developmental nature of sexual offending behaviour. Many policy approaches to dealing with sexual offenders are based on a far more conservative set of risk-based principles than those for other types of offender, and assume that 'once a sexual offender, always a sexual offender'. Nevertheless, there is extensive developmental literature to support the proposition that most individuals change in their propensity to offend over the life-course (e.g. Laub and Sampson, 1993; Moffitt, 1993; Farrington, 1992). Lussier and Cale (2016) argued that;

'Contemporary research has produced abundant evidence showing that the developmental course of aggression and violence is linked to a wide range of developmental factors operating at different stages in life.... In order to advance a developmental life course model of rape and sexual aggression, it is necessary to expand the investigation of these factors accordingly' (p12).

Since research examining sexual offences from a life-course perspective has so far been limited (Cale and Lussier, 2014), engaging with this issue would enable us to determine whether most sexual offenders (like most offenders generally) only commit crimes for a limited period of time in their lives and do not present a long term and indefinite risk to the public. If a life course perspective is sustained by

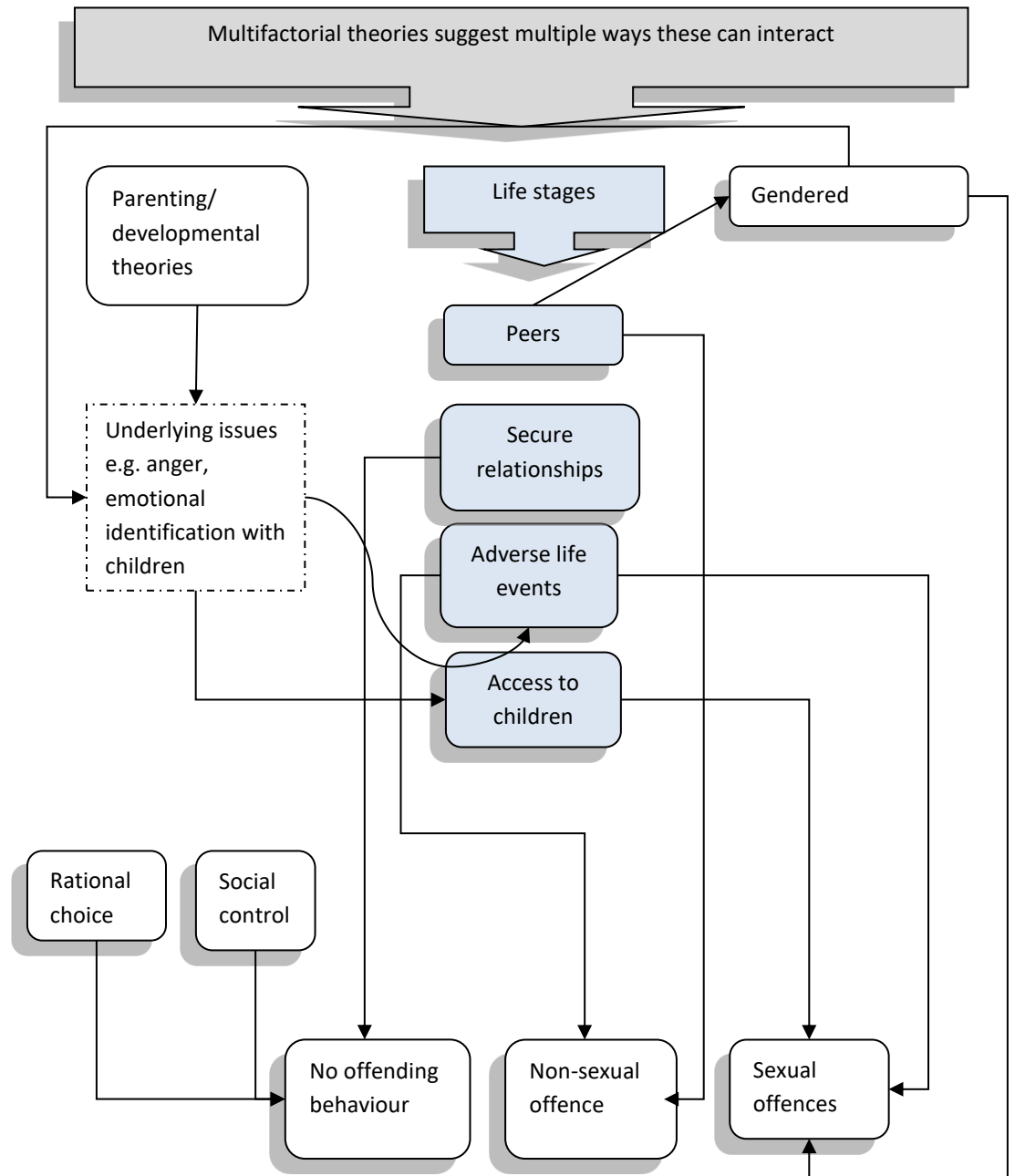
the evidence, this would suggest that the risk of offending may not be stable over time for everyone and, indeed, more nuanced risk-based approaches are required.

The third theoretical gap that this thesis seeks to examine is the link between sexual and non-sexual offending, and to explore to what extent sexual and non-sexual offending may have similar causes or triggers. This will then allow reflection about the types of interventions which may be appropriate for one type of crime compared to another.

Finally, the wide variety of differing potential interacting causes of sexual offending behaviour, as well as the differing patterns of offending behaviour, suggests that there are many different pathways into sexual offending. Hence, a typological approach to analysing offending behaviour is important. Whilst multifactorial theories suggest many and complex pathways into offending behaviour, the research thus far has not generally analysed empirical support for these multiple pathways into offending.

The following schematic provides an overview of key concepts and how they relate to each other, prior to an overview of the research questions to be explored in this thesis. This schematic provides an overview of the many and complex pathways into sexual offending behaviour suggesting by the literature, and attempts to outline a theoretical model.





*Figure1: Offence pathways according to the literature*

### 2.9.1 Research questions

Having reviewed the literature and examined the current gaps in research, the research questions to be explored in this thesis are the following:

- What are common patterns in types of sexual offending behaviour and what does this tell us about different potential motivations to offend?

- What is the link between sexual and non-sexual offending and does this tell us anything about the causal process?
- At what points in life (in terms of age and life situation) does offending commonly occur, and does this tell us anything about theoretical perspectives on offending?
- Do adverse life events have an influence on offending?
- What is the impact of socio-cultural messages on offending?
- What is the impact of social relationships e.g. family, intimate relationships, peers and employment, on offending?
- Do any of the above issues suggest certain groups are at a higher risk of offending/reoffending?
- To what extent are general criminological theories (of causation and desistance) helpful in analysing sexual offending behaviour?

The following chapter (Chapter 3), describes the data and methodology used to answer these questions, incorporating a discussion of the theoretical and practical reasons these were chosen.

## **Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter outlined theories of the causes of sexual offending behaviour, and highlighted that there is support for both psychological and socio-cultural causes, as well as an interaction between the two. It also suggested that there is evidence that sexual offending is not stable over the life course, and that situational factors appear to be important in terms of determining behavioural change. There is also a link between sexual and non-sexual offending behaviour, however the details of this link is not entirely clear from existing literature. Moreover, those who commit sexual offences are not a homogenous group and there may be many different pathways into offending behaviour which is reflected by the offending patterns. In addition to the theoretical gaps, there have been some methodological gaps in the data used: primarily that few studies have been able to track offenders for a long period of time. The main aim of this thesis, therefore, is to determine whether there are common patterns of sexual offending in the empirical data used which can inform causal theories of sexual offending, by examining socio-cultural influences on offending behaviour, whilst also taking into consideration the likely interaction with psychological elements. It will also examine the links to non-sexual offending to see if this can offer any further insights into the causes of sexual offending.

The chosen methodology for this thesis is in two parts. Firstly, a quantitative analysis of the characteristics of different groups of offenders was conducted using latent class analysis (LCA). This methodology was chosen firstly because the

heterogeneity of offenders means that studying people who commit these types of offences as one group is not appropriate. Secondly, multifactorial theories suggest that there are many different pathways into offending behaviour, and that these may reflect different underlying motivations for the offences. Latent class analysis clusters people into groups based on common offending patterns, to enable further analysis of these groups including age patterns, which can be used to examine support for different approaches to sexual offending behaviour (e.g. a life-course approach). This also enables a discussion of non-sexual offence patterns in relation to sexual offending behaviour. In order to explore the questions about the role of socio-structural influence on offending behaviour as well as provide additional context to the quantitative patterns, the research was complemented by interviews with a number of people with sexual offences.

This chapter will describe the theoretical, practical and methodological reasons that the methodology was chosen. It will start by stating that a critical realist approach was taken, which assumes that there is an objective reality, however we will probably never be able to know it fully. The chapter will then outline the research design, which was to use the Scottish Offenders' Index (SOI), an individual-level, Scotland-wide dataset of most convictions from 1989. It will then outline the reasons that latent class analysis was the chosen method for the research questions, before providing an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of LCA. The chapter goes on to provide an overview of the descriptive chapter, what this shows and how this fits in with the overall research. The chapter will then move on to the qualitative analysis, providing a brief discussion of the

techniques used to conduct the interviews and analysis; which were elements from a life history narrative and interpretative phenomenological analysis approach. Finally, the chapter will outline how I recruited and interviewed the participants, including interview themes.

### **3.2 Theory and methodological stance**

This research looks at both psychological and sociological phenomena, with an emphasis on the sociological. This research assumes a post-positivist interpretation (Corbetta, 2003): that 'social reality is real but knowable only in an imperfect and probabilistic manner' (p14). It is sometimes argued that positivist, particularly quantitative, research, is a construct which does not fit with the complexities of human behaviour (and this argument may apply to psychology as well as sociology); that human behaviour is something which cannot be predicted and therefore cannot be researched in the same way as other 'natural' phenomena, due to the conscious and self-aware nature of human beings and also the concept of free will and of the possession of a mind. However, the position of this thesis is that there is order or reason for why things happen in society, and that this is one of the main reasons for researching an issue and fundamental in trying to effect change.

Zachariadis, Scott et al. (2013) described critical realism as being 'a middle way between empiricism/positivism on the one hand, and anti-naturalism/interpretivism on the other' (p2). Critical realism takes the stance that there is an objective reality, however we will probably never be able to know it

fully. Rather, research is continually moving towards this goal. We do not observe causes of phenomenon but rather the specific circumstances under which an event seems to lead to another (Zachariadis, Scott et al., 2013). A critical realist stance also recognises that interpretation of phenomenon is subjective, relating this subjectivity to our incomplete understanding of the world.

This research also employs both quantitative and qualitative methods. There has been some discussion about the relative importance and appropriateness of each method and researchers have often favoured one method over another. More recently, authors have criticised the paradigmatic approach and suggested a complementary approach between the two (e.g. Maruna, 2010). A separation of theory and method is also possible: a qualitative approach is not necessarily anti-positivist, it may simply be the best or most appropriate way to study a particular issue. Similarly, a quantitative approach does not necessarily mean that the researcher sees the subjects as conforming to binary categories; there may simply be a more pragmatic reason for choosing this method. As Howe (1988) argued, 'Neither dogmatic adherence to the positivistic pipe dream nor chaotic methodological relativism (let alone the two, side by side) promise to advance research' (p14).

A primary aim of this project is to attempt to assist our understanding of the behaviours of those who have committed sexual crimes. This means that the research should be as generalisable as possible, in order to understand as many offenders as we can and therefore present the most likely inferences derived to

the best of our knowledge. That said, depth matters if we hope to derive a more nuanced understanding of social realities. Hence this thesis uses quantitative methods to comment on broad patterns, and qualitative methods to provide more detailed information. The qualitative aspect utilises interviews with people who have been convicted of sexual offences, which also incorporates how each individual makes sense of their lives and behaviour. This will be discussed further in section 3.4.

The rest of this chapter will discuss, in turn, the approaches used to the quantitative and qualitative parts of the research.

### **3.3 Quantitative analysis**

#### **3.3.1 Research design**

The quantitative part of this research uses data on convictions held in Scotland, per person, for most convictions since 1989. This data was primarily used because of the length of time it covered, as well as the fact that since most convictions are held in the dataset, patterns of sexual and non-sexual offending could be compared. To seek generalisability a large sample was required, meaning interviews or questionnaires would not be possible in the timescale of a PhD. Furthermore, there is a large amount of official data which has not been analysed in Scotland to any great extent regarding this particular subject, and this research aimed to capitalise on that. The following section will discuss the detail of the convictions data and reflect on any limitations and methodological difficulties, as well as outlining the significant issues in gaining access to quantitative datasets,

and the potential this has to impact on research practices in the future. It will then provide the theory behind the main statistical method, latent class analysis, and provide an overview of the model building framework.

#### *Access to data*

Access to data was probably the most challenging aspect of this PhD. Having previously worked within Police Scotland and hence had direct access to the data for which I was applying, it was originally intended that I take a career break and, as a member of staff, simply access the data myself. Unfortunately, the PhD coincided with a period of organisational change which severely hindered the data application process. Police Scotland was formed from the eight existing forces in April 2013, just prior to the commencement of this PhD in September 2013. As part of this period of organisational change, all career breaks were cancelled meaning that I had to apply to access the data as an external researcher. Whilst Police Scotland was supportive in principle of the research application, many organisational structures and policies were in the process of changing, as well as many staff moving within and leaving the organisation. This presented additional difficulties when seeking a formal process for access to official data, as many of these processes had not yet been formalised, and many of the staff which I dealt with changed post (several times) throughout the course of the application process.

The PhD was originally intended to focus on desistance and reoffending. I initially intended to focus on police charge data (which contains a reasonable level of detail), and link in convictions data from the Scottish Offenders Index (SOI) to



provide information on sentencing and time in prison. Initial discussions with Police Scotland and the Scottish Government, which started in late 2013, went well and I received data from the SOI in September 2014. Unfortunately, due to the process of organisational reform, and potentially some wider concerns about access to police data in general, there was a long and protracted series of negotiations and delays (amounting to over two years in total) regarding the police charge data. There also appeared to be a level of inconsistency about external access to research since I was aware of other projects which were approved well within these timescales. I finally received the police charge data in April 2016, almost two years after the first formal request was submitted and 7 months before my PhD funding was due to run out. Unfortunately to compound the issue, there was very little detail in the data, much less than initial discussions had suggested. The data was a subset of the convictions data focussing on the legacy Strathclyde area (since at the time of application the IT systems were had not been joined together: in fact, at time of writing this project had been abandoned). Moreover, there was no offence date in the data, meaning that time to reoffence analysis was not possible.

Prior to these issues, discussions had been ongoing with the national ViSOR team (which is managed by the Home Office and contains additional detailed information) to extract some data from this, and this had been approved. The ViSOR database contains information on people convicted of violent and sexual offences who are managed through Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). It was hoped that this further subset of data, linked with the police

charge data and the SOI, would provide sufficient detail for analysis. Unfortunately, two things happened. From a dataset of 1300 of the police charges, only 10 people were managed through the MAPPA process and hence appeared in the ViSOR database. This was an unexpected level of attrition but gives some indication of the difficulty in drawing conclusions from official data. Secondly, at the same time the Scottish Government identified a legal issue with data sharing, which was due to be a lengthy process and hence not likely to be resolved in the timeframes of the PhD. This meant that linkage between the SOI and the charge data was not possible within the timeframes of the PhD.

These events left me with the police charge data and the conviction data, but as two unlinked datasets. Due to the lack of detail, limited geographical coverage and timespan of the police charge data, the convictions data, whilst having the disadvantage of being convictions, was assessed to be more useful since this was Scotland-wide, contained information since 1989, and actually contained a very similar level of detail to police charge data in the end. Therefore the PhD was refocused and permission to undertake additional fieldwork in the form of interviews was applied for in order to complement the analysis of the convictions data. Hence the PhD was largely started over, including ethical approval, etc., at the time the funding was due to run out.

It is generally difficult to obtain information on sexual offences, particularly at an individual level, however even taking this into consideration this series of unlucky events was unexpected and could not have been reasonably foreseen. There is a

wealth of data within official databases which is largely left under-analysed, and the PhD experience was largely a much more frustrating experience, applying for this data as an 'outsider'. Such barriers to data access are not uncommon in partnership working, even working within organisations which have statutory obligations to share information with each other, and this is something of which I have had direct experience. One of the main problems I encountered in my previous employment (and this research) was the ability for unique identifiers to 'cross' organisational boundaries thereby enabling linkage of data, for data protection reasons. It is my understanding that this issue is being addressed which is a positive step for the future. The ability for this information to be shared would greatly enhance the ability to conduct long-term research.

Another important issue is the capability of the IT databases to automatically mine key variables. From my experience within the police, much work involves manually extracting the data from individual case files. This is extremely resource-intensive, particularly for statistical modelling when the number of required cases may be in the thousands. For the purposes of a PhD, this manual extraction is potentially worthwhile, however it is not normally possible for the researcher to do this for data protection reasons.

I would like to reiterate that throughout this research I have found Police Scotland, the Scottish Government, the Home Office and most other agencies I contacted for advice to be extremely helpful and supportive of the need for research, particularly in the current climate of severe financial constraints. However, a lack

of resources, data protection issues and the capabilities of the IT infrastructure means that conducting this type of research is very difficult. It seems unlikely in the foreseeable future that such organisations will have financial capacity to divert resources to long-term research. One solution would be for research staff to be based within the organisations solely for this purpose: as part of the organisation they would have access to all of the data and would be able to liaise with academia, thereby taking this workload from other staff. However, as always the crux of this issue is who would fund this. Another option would be to use a neutral data handling organisation such as the Administrative Data Research Centre to ensure no single organisation has access to all sets of information. Software-enabled anonymisation, encryption and linkage of data across various organisations or within a central hub, would also facilitate this long-term research.

### *Research validity*

This section will discuss how well the data used has the capacity to explore the issues in question. As discussed, the quantitative element of this research used convictions data. As such, generalisability was only possible to the extent of commenting on behaviour resulting in a conviction (which is discussed below): nevertheless it is felt that this will provide useful information on these patterns, and there is no reasonable way to address this issue – even charge data would not provide a true picture of offending. From a critical realist perspective, convictions are the end result of a series of events which resulted in a conviction. As such, there are no issues with external validity or reliability (as this is a complete set of conviction data with the exception that there is no information on people who may have been convicted outside Scotland after a conviction here) if it is accepted

that this research comments on behaviour which led to convictions, and not offending per se. Moreover, the research is exploratory and hence there are no particular concerns about internal validity.

The predominant complexity in this research is the link between conviction data and theorising about offending behaviour. Any use of official data to represent offending behaviour will result in concerns about construct validity (these limitations will be discussed in the next section), i.e. the link between offending and how this manifests as a conviction. Nevertheless, whilst bearing this in mind, some inference (in the non-statistical sense) can be made about offending behaviour in general. This research will consider data patterns in the context of the predominant theories about the causes of sexual offences. Hence this research would be considered a form of abductive research, which is the process of analysing a set of incomplete observations and presenting the most likely explanation (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012), although in this case I am not seeking to develop a new theory but to consider which established theories make sense in light of the observations.

### **Limitations of the data**

Whilst the SOI is a unique dataset in terms of temporal and geographical coverage, it is recognised that there are also limitations in using official data. Two of the main issues are under-reporting and attrition.

### *Attrition*

Attrition refers to cases wherein offences which have been reported to the police do not reach court stage, even though there is sufficient evidence for a charge. This may be for many reasons, including victim-survivors being unwilling to proceed with the judicial process, which is particularly common in cases of sexual offences (Hohl and Stanko, 2015). This research initially attempted to reduce the problem of attrition by using police charges (which was ultimately unsuccessful as has been discussed), however there still remained the problem of under-reporting, as well as the ethical issue that it is possible that someone may have been charged with a crime which they did not commit.

### *Under-reporting*

The extent of under-reporting of sexual offences is difficult to assess. According to the most recent Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (2014/15) (Murray, 2016), only 16.8% of people who had been a victim of serious sexual assault since the age of 16 had reported their most recent rape to the police. This figure was even lower for other forms of serious sexual assault (8.9% for 'other forced sexual activities'). Even fewer of these would have reached conviction stage. Moreover, there is likely to be a systematic element to under-reporting (for instance certain victim-survivors may be less likely to report, for instance due to their relationship with the offender, or other aspects of their own personal situation), and hence caution should be used when using charge or conviction data to draw conclusions about overall offence patterns. Another issue is that an individual may have committed many offences (which are known to authorities), however this may result in just one charge or conviction. This may be particularly true with cases of intrafamilial

abuse. Hence from official figures, it may appear that a person has committed one crime, however they may actually have committed many, potentially against the same person.

Self-report data has shown that many people who are interviewed report far greater levels of offending than has been recorded by official data. For example, Wood, Wilson et al. (2015) found that, in their study, whilst no respondent had reported more than four previous arrests or convictions, they self-reported on average 150 offences for child molestation, 54 offences of child rape and 802 offences of voyeurism. Weinrott and Saylor (1991) found in their study that 37 men who had been arrested for rape had been charged with a total of 66 offences, however these 37 men had self-reported 433 rapes. In the same study, of 67 men who had been arrested for child sexual offences, records showed 136 different victims, however the men self-reported 959 different victims collectively. What is not clear is the level of under-reporting regarding reoffending, since self-report data is often taken from incarcerated respondents. Those who commit sexual offences are often thought to have low rates of recidivism (an assumption usually based on official data), however this assumption may not be accurate.

Any official data will also to a certain extent reflect police/court activity and practices rather than reflecting offending behaviour per se. For example, many reported crimes are the direct result of police activity and detection patterns will reflect this. For sexual offences, this is probably less true than with other offences as, with the exception of online images of abuse, detections are usually victim-led.

However, this is not to say that there are not certain times where reporting will reflect police or other activity, for instance during police media campaigns or situations such as Operation Yewtree.

### *Latent class analysis*

This section will outline the detail of the statistical methodology used, latent class analysis, including outlining the theoretical basis. It will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using this particular technique, and why it is the most appropriate method to answer the research questions. The research questions relevant to the quantitative part of the thesis are the following (highlighted in bold):

- **What are common patterns in types of sexual offending behaviour and what does this tell us about different potential motivations to offend?**
- **What is the link between sexual and non-sexual offending and does this tell us anything about the causal process?**
- **At what points in life (in terms of age and life situation) does offending commonly occur, and does this tell us anything about theoretical perspectives on offending?**
- Do adverse life events have an influence on offending?
- What is the impact of socio-cultural messages on offending?
- What is the impact of social relationships e.g. family, intimate relationships, friends and work, on offending?
- **Do any of the above issues suggest certain groups are at a higher risk of offending/reoffending?**



- To what extent are general criminological theories (of causation and desistance) helpful in analysing sexual offending behaviour?

As noted in Chapter 2, since the literature has suggested that different groups may display different offending behaviour, these questions needed to be taken into account in the context of the fact that people who commit sexual offences are not a homogenous group. Hence, different groups of offenders were required to be identified based on their offending history. Once these groups were identified, for each group certain characteristics could be analysed which would inform the research questions; namely, do these groups also commit non-sexual offences, what are the age patterns for offending behaviour, are offending patterns similar for sexual and non-sexual offences, and do any of the groups have a higher frequency of offending? For the qualitative element of the research, interviewees were also chosen which represented as many of these groups as possible, in order to compare accounts between the groups.

Latent class analysis is the most appropriate method of analysis for analysing how underlying groups may manifest in patterns of behaviour, as will be discussed in the next section. As people who have committed sexual offences are a heterogeneous group, much of the research separates out different groups based on different phenomena (in this research offending behaviour, although personality characteristics are often used in other research) and analyses different characteristics of each group. Latent class analysis is used relatively infrequently

for this, particularly in the older studies, although a variety of other statistical techniques are used.

As discussed, the dataset used was the Scottish Offenders' Index (SOI). This data is held by the Scottish Government, and data is supplied to them from the Criminal History System (CHS) which is held by the Scottish Policing Authority. The SOI is a record of most convictions in Scotland from 1989 onwards, where a sentence was imposed. Variables included in the SOI include gender, date of birth, crime code and offence date. Further detail on the SOI is included in Chapter 4.

### **3.3.2 Methodology**

The theory behind latent class analysis (LCA) is that there exists an underlying variable, the latent variable, which is not directly observable but represents the 'true' situation. By their nature latent variables are not directly observable, but it is believed that other observations collectively represent the variable. One example often used is the concept of class. Class cannot be observed directly, however certain indicators may be used to indicate class, such as income, employment etc. Of course, how well these observations represent the underlying latent variable is subject to human error and misinterpretation. Hence the two key components which make up the latent variable are the individual observations and the degree of error, that is, how well (or not well) the observations represent the latent variable (Collins and Lanza, 2010).

Latent class analysis models each subject's response to each item of interest. For example, if items of interest were age of the victim (child/adult), employed (yes/no) and relationship status (yes/no), an individual's response may be (using dummy variables) 0,1,1, if these dummy variables were to indicate adult, employed, in relationship. LCA determines patterns which result in several latent classes. The patterns are derived from the frequency that each response pattern appears in the dataset, and the probability of each person belonging to a particular class. Each subject can then be assigned to their most likely class (Collins and Lanza, 2010).

#### *Formal notations*

There are two main parameters estimated in latent class analysis. The item-response probability is the probability that a particular item-response will appear in a particular latent class, conditional on membership of that latent class. Latent class membership probability is the probability of a particular pattern of item-responses in a particular latent class.

The following formula represents the probability of observing a particular response pattern. This probability is a product of the two parameters of latent class analysis: the probability of membership in each latent class ( $\Psi$ ), and the item-response probabilities ( $\mathcal{P}$ ).  $J$  are the observed variables ( $j= 1, \dots, J$ ),  $R_j$  represents the response categories relating to the observed variables.  $C$  represents the latent classes.

$$P(Y = y) = \sum_{c=1}^C \gamma_c \prod_{j=1}^J \prod_{r_j=1}^{R_j} p_{j,r_j|c}^{I(y_j=r_j)}$$

*Formula 1: Probability of observing response patterns in LCA*

$I(y_j=r_j)$  is an indicator function which in this case has been assigned to represent 1 if the response to variable  $j = r_j$ , and 0 otherwise.

Because the indicators of observations are categorical, latent class analysis makes few distributional assumptions. However, it does assume local independence, i.e. that the observed cases are independent within each latent variable class.

#### *Constructing the model*

The number of latent classes is decided by the researcher, based on the model fit for each number of latent classes along with substantive interpretation (several different class sizes should be tried). The description/label for the latent classes is also decided by the researcher, based on responses within each class, as well as substantive and theoretical knowledge.

#### *Relative model fit criteria*

Relative model fit statistics can be used to assist in determining the optimum number of classes. Model fit statistics compare two or more models in order to determine which one ‘represents an optimal balance of fit to a particular data set and parsimony’ compared to the other (Collins and Lanza, 2010: p86). According to the literature (Linzer and Lewis, 2011; Collins and Lanza, 2010), the most widely

used relative model fit criteria are the Akaike Information Criteria (AIC) (Akaike, 1987) and the Bayesian Information Criteria (BIC) (Schwartz, 1978). The AIC and the BIC both favour parsimony and hence ‘penalise’ the model for introducing further classes where these do not provide additional explanation according to the model fit. The AIC and BIC are described below:

$$\text{AIC} = -2\Lambda + 2\Phi$$

$$\text{BIC} = -2\Lambda + \Phi \ln N$$

*Formula 2: Relative model fit criteria*

where  $\Lambda$  represents the maximum log-likelihood of the model and  $\Phi$  represents the number of estimated parameters (Linzer and Lewis, 2011). A smaller IC value indicates a better balance of model fit and parsimony. A likelihood-ratio test cannot be used to compare models with different class sizes since it is not possible to estimate item-response probabilities for an empty latent class (which would be necessary in order to perform the likelihood ratio test (Collins and Lanza, 2010; Nylund, Asparouhov et al., 2007)). The AIC and the BIC do not require models to be nested and hence can be used to compare models with differing numbers of classes.

In addition to the AIC and BIC, an adjusted Bayesian Information Criteria (aBIC) is also used for comparison, represented in the following formula (*Formula 3*):

$$\text{aBIC} = -2\Lambda + \Phi \ln\left(\frac{N + 2}{24}\right)$$

*Formula 3: Adjusted Bayesian Information Criteria*

The aBIC is, as the name suggests, similar to the BIC except it has an adjusted criteria for sample size. This is intended to favour parsimony when using larger sample sizes, which would be appropriate for this study (Sclove, 1987).

*Maximum likelihood estimation*

In latent class analysis, maximum likelihood estimates are used to estimate the parameters of the model: class membership probabilities and item-response probabilities. Maximum likelihood estimation is a way of estimating parameters when a closed form solution (i.e. solving an equation) is not possible. Instead, numerous different parameters are estimated using computer algorithms, and the parameters are compared to find out which one appears to fit the observed data best: this is done by maximising the likelihood function (in practice this is often done by minimising the log of the likelihood function (Collins and Lanza, 2010)). Alternatively, Bayesian estimation can be used instead of the maximum likelihood approach.

*Methodological limitations*

Nagin and Tremblay cautioned against the reification of groups in latent analysis (2005). However, their argument was not with the technique per se, but with the leap from viewing the groups used in the modelling as approximations, to rigidly-defined groups. Moreover, the groups are not immutable. Nagin (2004) also

cautioned against defining groups in what might be a continuous spectrum of some kind of phenomenon. Sampson, Laub et al. (2004) urged use of theory in this case. This is likely to be true of offending behaviour, since individuals may display traits or characteristics to a greater or lesser extent, and are not likely to fit absolutely into separate categories: this was borne in mind throughout the analysis of the latent classes. With these points in mind, group-based methods can still be successfully employed to reduce the complexities of a heterogeneous group.

### *Descriptive statistics*

The descriptive chapter provides an overview of the dataset used, in addition to exploring some of the research questions. This has a dual purpose. Firstly, to determine if the latent class analysis appears to be an appropriate technique to use, and also to determine if there were any further patterns of offending which would require a more robust statistical technique (other than the LCA, for example trajectory analysis or sequence analysis). Secondly, it provides an insight into the wider context of offending behaviour (i.e. not simply within each latent class). Latent class analysis was only performed on data in relation to those who had been convicted of a sexual offence (due to the relatively low numbers in comparison to the overall dataset), however the descriptive analysis was able to provide an overview of all offending for comparative purposes. Research questions highlighted in bold were most relevant to the descriptive chapter:

- What are common patterns in types of sexual offending behaviour and what does this tell us about different potential motivations to offend?

- **What is the link between sexual and non-sexual offending and does this tell us anything about the causal process?**
- **At what points in life (in terms of age and life situation) does offending commonly occur, and does this tell us anything about theoretical perspectives on offending?**
- Do adverse life events have an influence on offending?
- What is the impact of socio-cultural messages on offending?
- What is the impact of social relationships e.g. family, intimate relationships, friends and work, on offending?
- **Do any of the above issues suggest certain groups are at a higher risk of offending/reoffending?**
- To what extent are general criminological theories (of causation and desistance) helpful in analysing sexual offending behaviour?

Methodology used in the descriptive chapter was primarily basic descriptive statistics such as frequencies and measures of central tendency. Kernel density graphs were used as a graphical depiction of age graphs (a kernel density estimate is a non-parametric method of estimating the probability density function (i.e. the probability that the first conviction would occur between each age group on the x axis)). Pearson correlations were also used when comparing different age patterns.

### *Summary*

Section 3.3 has outlined the approach to the quantitative part of the thesis. It has described that a convictions dataset (the SOI) was used since it contains details of



most convictions from 1989 to the present date, for the whole of Scotland, which is a larger dataset than research into sexual offending behaviour is normally able to analyse and also allows analysis over the life-course. This section also outlined that latent class analysis has been chosen as the statistical methodology as it clusters offending patterns into groups, thus allowing for further analysis of heterogeneous groups of people. This methodology also allows for an analysis of the link between sexual and non-sexual offending. The next section will describe the qualitative aspect of this thesis.

### **3.4 Qualitative data analysis**

This section will outline the qualitative part of the research, in which interviews were conducted with a sample of 10 people who had convictions for sexual offences, using elements of a life history approach and interpretative phenomenological analysis. The purpose of the interviews was to add some further detail and context to the quantitative data, as well as exploring issues for which the quantitative data did not hold information; specifically areas around the impact of life events, relationships and socio-cultural influences. The research questions pertinent to the qualitative section of the research were the following (highlighted in bold):

- What are common patterns in types of sexual offending behaviour and what does this tell us about different potential motivations to offend?
- **What is the link between sexual and non-sexual offending and does this tell us anything about the causal process?**

- **At what points in life (in terms of age and life situation) does offending commonly occur, and does this tell us anything about theoretical perspectives on offending?**
- **Do adverse life events have an influence on offending?**
- **What is the impact of socio-cultural messages on offending?**
- **What is the impact of social relationships e.g. family, intimate relationships, friends and work, on offending?**
- Do any of the above issues suggest certain groups are at a higher risk of offending/reoffending?
- To what extent are general criminological theories (of causation and desistance) helpful in analysing sexual offending behaviour?

#### **3.4.1 Methodology**

There are various different theoretical perspectives to choose when conducting qualitative analysis, and the method chosen should fit with the aims. The research does not aim to test a particular hypothesis; rather, it seeks to provide some possible suggestions, in conjunction with the theoretical analysis, for why different typologies may exist and for other patterns discovered in the data. As far as possible, participants were chosen to reflect different typologies as found in the quantitative analysis, and similarities and differences compared. However, it was also borne in mind that membership of groups should be considered to be fluid in many cases.

It was assessed that the best way to approach the interviews was a semi-structured approach. An alternative approach would be to conduct a more structured interview, asking specific questions about the people's lives, and for the researcher to interpret the link between life situations and theories of causation and desistance. However, the quantitative side of the research was exploratory, and did not aim to test a particular theory. Hence if a more structured approach was taken, this may have missed some important elements. It is recognised that the participants inevitably do not possess the conscious knowledge of all their actions (and neither does any other human). McAdams (2006), however, argued that the construction of life stories (which was the approach used) is not only a perception of our world but part of personality construction: 'the story menu goes so far as to shape lived experience itself: We live in and through our stories' (p16). Similarly, research on causation and desistance suggests that behaviour can be led by the construction of life stories (Vaughan, 2007). Thus, there appears to be a direct link between not only thoughts that the individual has, their external environment, and their behaviour, but also the narrative they construct surrounding this. Therefore, the author of this narrative, the participant, is in the best position to provide information on this.

### *Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)*

Whilst recognising that interviewees' accounts and the researcher's interpretation are necessarily biased, I did wish to take a small step towards discovering an external 'truth'. Hence the aim of the interviews was to see what it was possible

to learn about causation and desistance from how the participants viewed and framed their stories. This is a key feature of an interpretative phenomenological approach and I was keen to use elements of this approach in the analysis.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis was described by Smith (1996) as a bridge between cognition and discourse. Cognition is the study of a person's thought processes, but is still considered inherently quantifiable and interpretable. Discourse, on the other hand, does not accept that verbal reports can truly represent a person's internal processes, but is dependent on the situation in which they are being asked.

Hence interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, 1996) gains what Smith called the 'insider's view' (p264); that is, the participants' perspectives on events. The researcher also interprets the way that the participant tries to make sense of his or her world, and this adds an additional layer of analysis: described as the 'double hermeneutic' (Smith, 2004). Hence, the researcher is aware that the subject does not possess complete knowledge of the reasons for their actions, however additional information can be gleaned from the way that the subject tells their story and the things that they say. Consequently, connection can be made to other behaviours, although this is complicated by the two layers of interpretation. Since this research takes a critical realist position that there is an objective reality but that we cannot know objectively due to our necessarily subjective ways of apprehending it and our subjective position in relation to it, elements of an interpretative phenomenological approach were considered

appropriate. Whilst this research did not conduct specific line-by-line data analysis advocated by some proponents of IPA, a thematic approach underpinned by the principles of IPA was employed. However, given the nature of the interaction between cognitive processes and social elements which are thought to be relevant to sexual offending, as well as the importance of cognitive elements to the desistance process, elements of a life history approach are also useful.

### *Life history narrative analysis*

Life history narrative analysis has been chosen by some researchers in the field of sexual offences (e.g. Maruna, 2001; Laws and Ward, 2011; Harris, 2014) to study the personal stories of those who have committed offences. Narrative study originates from the field of personality psychology, which is the study of 'those factors, both within the person and in the person's environment, that are hypothesized to account for why one person thinks, feels, strives, and acts differently from another' (McAdams, 2006: p12).

Life history analysis suggests that people construct a 'story of their life' in order to make sense of it and apply some order to it. As these stories involve situational aspects, they take into account context more readily than personality traits, which are stable throughout different life events. This is an outward manifestation by the narrator, and therefore this construction may influence their thinking and behaviour. Life history analysis may be particularly pertinent to those who are attempting to desist since there may be an interaction between the telling and

framing of the life story and their own cognitive shift, which is thought to be crucial to the desistance process.

McAdams (1995) developed the Life Story Interview in which he asked participants to outline the story of their lives as if it was a book. Laws and Ward (2011) adapted this for interviews with those who had committed sexual offences, and have stated that in their considerable professional experience, that it has been an effective way for participants to open up. In this they asked the participant to describe chapters of their lives like they would if they were providing a plot summary, focusing on a few key events. They are asked to describe high points and low points of their lives.

For this thesis, the quantitative aspect examined patterns in offending, taking the critical-realist stance that an objective reality exists. For the qualitative aspect, the research takes the same view, however it views life history narrative construction as a critical interactive part of the behaviour of the participants. Due to the interaction between agency and structure, a person's account of their offending is not merely a subjective account, it is likely to have influenced their behaviour in some way. Hence life history narrative analysis (analysed using elements of an interpretative phenomenological perspective) has been used for four reasons. Firstly, the research is an exploratory analysis *in the context of theory* rather than aiming to test hypotheses, which is why a more structured approach would be too restrictive. Secondly, although accounts are necessarily subjective, the participant is in the unique position of being able to describe their

lives and thought processes at the time of the offence. Thirdly, rather than merely describing thought processes and events, internal narrative accounts actually help shape a person's behaviour, which is consistent with desistance research and cognitive elements of causal theories. Finally, the IPA approach meant that how the participant described their life stories could be analysed (the double hermeneutic).

### *Methodological limitations*

There are some methodological limitations in using this type of approach. In any interviews, there will be an element of subjectivity on the part of the researcher and participant. The 'common understanding that it is a representation of the individual's interior world makes it at once unknowable to the outsider and at the same time, known only in parts to its owner' (Frost, Nolas et al., 2010: p454). In addition to this, the participant may present a different story to the researcher, either consciously or unconsciously, and the researcher may interpret it in different ways, according to his or her background and experiences. For a participant describing illegal and socially unacceptable activities, this issue may be magnified: the 'social distance between the researcher and the participants is often greater than in other kinds of social research, which has the potential to cause participants to be especially skeptical of the researcher's intentions and motivations' (Sandberg, 2010: p448). Participants' accounts may also be shaped differently if they have undergone a treatment programme, either in a positive way if they have had the opportunity to think about their experience in a critical manner or are more comfortable talking about it; or in a negative way if the

participant is simply repeating what they think the researcher wishes to hear. Having been the subject of numerous different types of interviews in the past (e.g. police interviews) may also make the interviewee wary of the outcome of answering questions. Participants, particularly in relation to sexual offences, may frame their narratives in such a way as to present their offence in a particular light, e.g. place the emphasis on external events rather than that the behaviour is inherent within them. This was taken into consideration upon analysis of the interviews. Dean and Whyte (1958) argued that the researcher should not be attempting to get at the 'truth' (which in any event is not possible when dealing with perceptions of causal events, since this is not a known thing), but what 'the informant's statements reveal about his feelings and perceptions and what inferences can be made from them about the actual environment or events he has experienced' (Dean and Whyte, 1958: p38). Hence whilst this research is trying to edge closer to underlying causes, a subject's interpretation of his experience is just as useful in adding to the overall interpretation of the situation.

A critical realist stance recognises that research will also be subject to a certain amount of researcher bias, and the challenge is to recognise this bias and analyse it and one's findings critically. My own background in the police, my Masters degree from a Home-Office funded institution, my current position in a sociology department and the general position of the study of sexual offences will likely have introduced their own (albeit very different) biases towards the research.



### **3.4.2 Research Design**

#### *Participant recruitment*

The participants for the qualitative interviews were recruited via gatekeepers at two organisations; the Scottish Prison Service and a local authority Social Work Service. These organisations were chosen since they are the primary institutions which work closely on a daily basis with those who have sexual convictions. The initial idea was to use purposive sampling based on the quantitative results (i.e. based on typologies emerging from the conviction data), however since there were small numbers involved (10 participants), in reality anyone who volunteered was interviewed (criteria was any adult with a conviction for sexual offences). Staff approached potential participants and gave them a letter written by me, explaining the research and inviting them to take part (included in *Appendix 3*). Participants were all adults over 18 who have been convicted of a sexual offence and were currently subject to imprisonment or community supervision.

#### *Participation*

It was stressed to participants (via the gatekeeper who invited them to take part, within the invite letter, within the informed consent form and again by me prior to the interview) that participation was entirely voluntary and there would be no adverse consequences to them if they did not wish to take part. It was also stressed that this process was entirely different to other interviews or discussions that they would have previously undergone, e.g. treatment or police interviews. Participants were made aware that they could refuse to answer any questions, that they would not be pressed to answer any questions in any way, and that

consent to participate could be withdrawn at any time. Participants were given an information sheet outlining the research, and signed an informed consent form consenting to take part and to be recorded.

#### *Potential distress to participants*

Inevitably this research required participants to discuss private and sensitive matters and there was a possibility that this may have caused distress to participants. My plan was to attempt to minimise this in a number of ways. I had some training and practical experience of dealing with such sensitive issues as a previous Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) volunteer. CoSA volunteers provide support and monitoring of people convicted of sexual offending, but do so with professional support and supervision. Potential distress to participants was minimised in a number of ways.

Prior to the interviews, I attempted to put the participant at ease, reminded them that they were talking to me to help me out, that they need only talk about what they felt comfortable with, and that I would not press them on any matter. I informed the participants that if they needed a break this could happen at any time. Care was taken to watch for any potential signs of distress and if this occurred, I asked them if they were okay and if they needed a break. There were times where the participant was distressed by the conversation, however they generally preferred to continue talking. My style of interviewing was gentle and non-confrontational, and I hope I developed a rapport for the short time I was with the participants. After the interview, I allowed the participant some time to

‘decompress’ by thanking them for their help, stating that I hoped that they did not find the interview too difficult, and steering the interview towards more general conversation.

### *Confidentiality*

This research is a sensitive subject matter and it was expected that there would be understandable concerns about confidentiality. Participants were reminded that no-one had access to the interview recordings or notes except for myself and an approved transcriber if this was agreed by the participant (the transcriber was the University’s approved service and all staff have signed a confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement). Participants were also reminded that I would not refer to them by their real name in my notes, but by a pseudonym, and that if by chance the participant inadvertently revealed information about themselves in the interview (I would stop this at the time if possible), this would be redacted from the transcription and interview notes. Notes of the interviews and the transcription were held on the university’s secure network and will be destroyed upon conclusion of the research.

Participants were made aware (in the participant information sheet and also prior to the interview) that, as is standard, if information were to be imparted during the course of an interview that might indicate the participant had committed any offences that had not previously been disclosed, or if the participant revealed any other behaviour that might result in harm to others or themselves, the researcher would have to inform police or social services. This was fairly routine for the

participants as many of them had been involved in counselling or groupwork. This issue did not arise throughout the course of the interviews.

#### *Potential distress to researcher and personal safety issues*

The research also had the potential to cause distress to the researcher due to the nature of the issues being discussed. A comprehensive support system is in place to address this at the University with informal support available from staff and peers within the department, and I also had access to the University counselling service. However, I have 10 years' experience in Police Scotland and am a previous Circles of Support and Accountability volunteer, so had previous experience in being exposed to distressing subject matter. Therefore, the likelihood of experiencing distress was low, and in fact did not occur.

Nine out of ten of the interviews took place in a Scottish prison, which is a mixed-population prison but where specialist work with people who had been convicted of sexual offences is available. The interviews were conducted in an interview room opposite the staff area, and there was a window in the room. I was advised to sit nearest to the door, and given a personal alarm. The remaining interview was conducted in the Social Work offices in the Local Authority concerned. At no time did I ever feel that my personal safety was at risk.

#### *Interview themes*

Whilst the interviews for this research did not go into as much detail as some life history research outlined in the literature, some key elements were used.

Participants were asked to focus on the time of their lives around the offence (which would be considered one of the chapters from the life history narrative). The participant was free to pick out elements of their lives which stood out in this chapter, along with other elements such as relationships and state of mind. If the person was in the community, subsequent high points and low points were discussed. For all participants, positive and negative influences were discussed, which included staff or treatment. Participants were also asked directly what they thought may have influenced offending and desistance (or any plans to desist). Questions followed a similar format to the following. These questions were designed to allow the participant to open up about their lives and discuss life events and relationships. They were also designed to elicit how they framed their experiences, which as discussed may have had an influence on their behaviour.

- Can you tell me about your life when the offence occurred – e.g. were you working, who did you live with, what was your social life like? (This question led to some follow-up questions)
- How were you feeling around this time?
- Can you describe yourself as a person around that time? (Recommended by Laws and Ward, 2011) to identify myths and stories the person has identified about himself)
- Do you think anything in particular made the offence more likely to happen?
- Is there anything that you think may have prevented the offence?
- How is your life now/how do you see your life when you leave prison? (to identify turning points)

- Do you feel any differently within yourself or about yourself? (to identify cognitive shifts)
- How do you feel about the future – do you feel quite positive or do you have any fears? (to identify knifing off)
- Is there anything that you think might prevent you (or a person in general) from offending in the future?

### *Coding and analysis*

Interviews were transcribed by a transcription service due to the late stage in the PhD that the interviews took place. In addition to this, since there were a small number of interviews and these were all conducted by me, it was not difficult to remember details of the interviews. Also for this reason, coding was done manually on an excel spreadsheet rather than using a software package such as NVivo.

Coding was partly based on pre-existing themes from the literature review, as one of the key aims of this research was to explore the findings in the context of existing theory. However, coding was also flexible so that it had the capacity to accommodate emerging themes which had previously not been considered. Whilst some quantitative elements were introduced in order to gauge the most common responses and compare responses of those who were most closely aligned with the latent classes, it was not the intention of the interview analysis to fully code the transcripts in a quantitative manner. Because the intention of the analysis was to explore various theories, analysis similar to that employed in

grounded theory could be used: participants were asked general questions about their lives (e.g. in terms of specific areas such as life situation and motivation to offend etc), however the analysis was not conducted with any particular theory in mind and therefore flexible in describing emerging overall themes. This type of analysis would be close to the 'theoretical sensitivity' outlined by Glaser (1978), wherein the researcher 'reflect[s] upon empirical data material with the help of theoretical terms' (Kelle, 2007: p136).

The first stage in the analysis, immediately after each interview and prior to the interview being transcribed, was to type up my main thoughts from the interview, noting any over-arching themes or consistency with existing theory, as well as what appeared significant to the participant. Any significant new themes not already considered were also noted. The second stage was to analyse the transcripts in further detail, using open coding to note key areas mentioned in the interviews. The third stage was to organise these themes and analyse them across the participants (axial coding: Strauss and Corbin, 1990), taking into account existing theory as well as how these findings fit in with the quantitative results. The final stage was to take a 'step back' and see if there were any patterns to smaller themes which may be summarised on a higher level.

### *Triangulation*

The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in this research is not intended to follow traditional approaches to triangulation, which;

‘uses different methods in order to counter biases and assumptions brought by one method alone, and regards differences in findings as examples of flaws or biases in measurement’ (Frost, Nolas et al., 2010: p8).

Rather, it uses the interpretation of triangulation found in Moran-Ellis, Alexander et al. (2006), which is that it can be used to complement different aspects of research and ‘reflect different aspects of a phenomenon’ (Moran-Ellis, Alexander et al., 2006: p48). In this case, the quantitative aspect was able to provide comment on analysis of patterns of behaviour on a large scale, whilst the qualitative analysis provided two functions: to provide detail on elements that the quantitative data was unable to provide such as frame of mind and quality of relationships; as well as how the participants framed and made sense of their lives and offending behaviour.

### *Summary*

Section 3.4 has outlined the qualitative part of this thesis. It has described that 10 interviews were conducted with people who had sexual convictions in order to add some further detail and context to the quantitative data, as well as exploring issues for which the quantitative data did not hold information; specifically, areas around the impact of life events, relationships and socio-cultural influences, as well as how the person framed their experiences. The interviews were conducted using a life history narrative approach, since this has been used effectively in the past with people with sexual convictions. The interviews were analysed using elements of an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach, which



considers that a person's account of their offending is not merely a subjective account, it is likely to have influenced their behaviour in some way.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This thesis uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyse offending patterns and personal accounts of offending, and uses this empirical data to analyse theories of the causes of sexual offending and desistance. This chapter has outlined the research design and methodology which was employed in order to do this. This research assumes the critical realist stance that there is an objective reality, however we will probably never be able to know it objectively. Latent class analysis has been chosen as the statistical methodology as it clusters offending patterns into groups, thus allowing for further analysis of heterogeneous groups of people as well as an analysis of the link between sexual and non-sexual offending. For the qualitative element, interviews were conducted using a life history narrative approach and analysed thematically using elements of an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach. These two approaches are complementary as the quantitative analysis is able to provide comment on general patterns of offending behaviour, whilst the qualitative approach provides further detail not possible with a quantitative analysis, particularly on areas such as socio-structural influences on offending, as well as a view of how individuals made sense of their offending behaviour.

The next chapter will provide a descriptive analysis of the primary dataset, the SOI, before moving on to the model building and analysis. It will then describe the

findings of the analysis of the semi-structured interviews before moving on to a theoretical discussion of all the empirical findings.

## Chapter 4: Descriptive analysis of conviction data

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of conviction patterns in relation to sexual offences in Scotland, firstly as a way of introducing an overall description of the data used in the research, and secondly to provide a general picture of convictions patterns, including non-sexual offences, for context and comparison with sexual offences patterns prior to the latent class analysis. It was assessed that it would not be useful to include people who have *not* been convicted of any sexual offences in the statistical models, due to the substantially different comparative sizes of the two groups (sexual and non-sexual offenders), therefore this chapter will include some conviction patterns for non-sexual offences. Furthermore, some differences in patterns between offence types will be explored in order to determine support for the hypothesis of heterogeneity between offenders, although this will be more fully investigated by means of the latent class analysis. This chapter will, therefore, focus on descriptive patterns to provide a preliminary analysis prior to the latent class analysis in Chapter 5. At this stage it would be prudent to re-iterate the research questions which are relevant to the quantitative part of the research:

- What are common patterns in types of sexual offending behaviour and what does this tell us about different potential motivations to offend?
- What is the link between sexual and non-sexual offending and does this tell us anything about the causal process?

- At what points in life (in terms of age and life situation) does offending commonly occur, and does this tell us anything about theoretical perspectives on offending?
- Are certain groups at a higher risk of offending/reoffending?

The chapter will examine patterns of age at time of conviction, age at onset of convictions, and frequency of convictions for different groups (those who have been convicted of different types of sexual offences, those who have been convicted only of sexual offences, plus those who have been convicted of both sexual and non-sexual offences). This information will be used to explore common offending patterns as well as links between sexual and non-sexual offences.

## **4.2 Overview of dataset**

### *The Scottish Offenders' Index*

The dataset used, the Scottish Offenders' Index (SOI) is held by the Scottish Government. The data is supplied to them on a rolling basis from the Criminal History System (CHS) which is held by the Scottish Policing Authority, and the version used for this research was provided to the researcher in September 2014. CHS is roughly the Scottish equivalent of the Police National Computer (PNC), except that it does not contain vehicle details. The SOI is a record of most convictions in Scotland from 1989 onwards, where a sentence was imposed. The SOI is limited to convictions in which the main offence involved was a Group 1-5

crime in the Scottish Government's classification<sup>2</sup>, as well as some offences in Group 6<sup>3</sup>. Hence some offences are not included, however they tend to be minor statutory and common law offences. Perhaps the main area which is not included is convictions imposed outside of Scotland. The SOI also does not hold information obtained from the children's hearing system, which deals with most offences committed by children under the age of 16. However, more serious offences are dealt with through the courts and these will be included in the SOI.

If a person is convicted of more than one charge at the same time, it is the most serious offence (taken to be the one with the heaviest penalty) which is included in the SOI (the 'index' offence). In most occasions a sexual offence is likely to be deemed the most serious charge and hence this should not adversely affect the data, with the exception of identifying other offences committed at the same time as the index offence.

This dataset may be regarded as a population rather than a sample, since it contains complete data regarding convictions since 1989. However, this does not represent *offending* in general. There are a large number of crimes which are not reported, and a further number of crimes which are reported but do not reach

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<sup>2</sup>Group 1-5 crime include crimes of violence, sexual crimes, crimes involving dishonesty, fire-raising and vandalism

<sup>3</sup>Group 6 crimes included are the following: common assault, breach of the peace, threatening or abusive behaviour, offence of stalking, offensive behaviour at football, threatening communications (under the Offensive behaviour at football and threatening communication Scotland Act 2012), racially aggravated harassment or conduct, miscellaneous firearms offences, and social security offences

court stage, or secure a conviction even if the person has committed the offence (as outlined in Chapter 3). There are likely to be systematic reasons for this lack of reporting and attrition (vulnerable witnesses, familial circumstances etc) and hence the convictions data cannot be treated as a sample of the wider offending population.

#### *Variables included within the SOI*

The following variables were included in the SOI in the form in which it was received from the Scottish Government: *Offender ID (Unique variable for identification purposes); Gender; Date of birth; Age at time of sentence; Offence date (this actually relates to the date the offence was detected and is not a true offence date); Disposal date; Sentence date; Crime code; Number of previous convictions; Result (disposal); Number of sentence (days); Estimated time in prison; Estimated release date.*

#### *New variables created by researcher in relation to sexual offences*

From the existing variables listed above, it was possible for the researcher to create the following variables, relating to the conviction history for each individual in the dataset: *Convicted of only sexual offences; Not convicted of any sexual offences; Convicted of sexual and non-sexual offences.*

#### *Definition of 'sexual offences'*

A list of the offences defined as 'sexual offences' can be found in *Appendix 1*. These are generally any offence with a sexual motivation and include rape, sexual assault, coercion, abuse of trust, indecent images, voyeurism, indecent

communications and indecent exposure. Offences relating to both adult, child, female and male victims were included. Offences related to prostitution were not included as sexual crimes as in many cases it is the sex worker who is convicted, however these have been analysed separately. Many of the sexual offence codes were re-categorised after the Sexual Offences Act 2009, however, since I have regrouped all offences into smaller categories for the purposes of analysis, this should not greatly affect the findings. The only situation where this would be an issue would be crimes which were not offences prior to the 2009 Act. Instances where this may be the case are the following:

- Crimes which are age and gender-dependent, e.g. previously it was not an offence for an adult female to have sex with a young male, but the reverse was not the case (i.e. it was illegal for an adult male to have sex with a young female).
- It is an offence for two people aged between 13-15 to have intercourse or oral sex, even if consensual, and the presence of this offence is often questioned in analysis on rape. There is an offence code in the newer (post 2009) data which relates to two 'older children', although there are no convictions of this type in the dataset. Prior to 2010 (when the codes changed in practice), there were 10 cases where both parties were under 16 (only males were convicted, as was the law at the time), although it is obviously impossible to know the circumstances of the cases. These have been included in the dataset. However, the small numbers of these offences means that the analysis should not be adversely affected whatever the circumstance of these convictions.

- Breach of the peace with a sexual nature is now recorded as a sexual offence. Previously breach of the peace (non-sexual) and breach of the peace (sexual) had the same crime code and hence could not be distinguished. These are therefore not included in the dataset (as a sexual offence), as breach of the peace (non-sexual) is a far more common offence than breach of the peace (sexual).
- The definition of rape has changed to include penetration of the mouth or anus. This means that some offences previously classed as indecent assault (particularly rape of a male victim) will now be classed as rape. However, the previous code of indecent assault also covered a wide range of offences including some at the more minor end of the scale, such as touching over clothes. Hence it would not be appropriate to recode all indecent assaults as rapes.

Since this research is not a longitudinal study, changes in the nature of convictions over time have not been taken into account, nor have the impact of cohort or period effects. This means that in relation to offences which were either not an offence prior to the Sexual Offences (2009) Act or which were classified differently, convictions will appear according to the date they were convicted and may therefore be misleading (e.g. it is possible that convictions relating to male rape may not appear in the 'rape' class). It is also possible that this may affect the age profiles (e.g. it may appear as if a person/people were convicted of indecent assaults at a younger age and then rape at a later age, when in reality the law changed in the intervening period).



### 4.3 Overview of data

The following table (*Table 1*) shows basic frequencies for the SOI. There was a total of **511,920** individuals in the version of the dataset used. **11,715** (2%) of these people had convictions for sexual offences. Of the people who had been convicted of sexual offences, 5,659 (48%) had also been convicted of non-sexual offences. For most of the analysis in this thesis, a separate dataset of people who have (at any point) been convicted of at least one sexual offence was created. This is with the exception of occasions where information relating to people with only non-sexual convictions has been used, for comparison purposes.

<b>Overview of offenders and convictions</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Number of convictions within the SOI</b>	1,730,931
<b>Number of sexual offences</b>	12,871
<b>Number of non-sexual offences</b>	1,718,060
<b>Number of people within the SOI</b>	511,920
<b>Number of people who have been convicted of sexual offences</b>	11,715
<b>Number of people who have not been convicted of sexual offences</b>	500,205
<b>Number of convictions of people who have been convicted of sexual offences (sexual and non-sexual)</b>	49,961
<b>Number of convictions of people who have not been convicted of sexual offences (non-sexual only)</b>	1,680,970
<b>Number of people who have only been convicted of sexual offences</b>	6,056
<b>Number of people who have been convicted of sexual and non-sexual offences</b>	5,659

*Table 1: Overview of SOI*

The following table (*Table 2*) shows the breakdown of sexual offence types, grouped into wider categories. Full details of how the crimes were grouped can be found in Appendix 1. There were six groups used, and I attempted to group them in terms of similar characteristics such as relating to the seriousness of the offence, whether contact was used, etc. 'Rape, attempted rape and sexual assault by penetration' refers to crimes where physical penetration was attempted or achieved. 'Sexual assault' refers generally to crimes where there was a contact assault but not penetration; 'Indecent exposure and voyeurism' refers to non-contact offences, however offences relating to 'Indecent photos' were categorised separately as it was felt that this offence potentially has different characteristics, i.e. they may generally be online offences and as such the online space may provide a perceived distance or anonymity on the part of the offender. 'Indecent communications' were also non-contact offences where the offender did not have to be in the physical presence of the victim. 'Sexual coercion' refers to offences where there is some level of coercion or grooming involved.

Whilst effort was taken to ensure that these crimes were grouped appropriately with similar offences, any grouping will be subject to debate and other researchers may have chosen different ways to group the offences. Some offences could reasonably be grouped into more than one category. It should also be noted that some convictions will be different to the original charge. For brevity, throughout this thesis the category of rape, attempted rape and sexual assault by penetration is generally referred to as 'rape', and the category of indecent exposure and voyeurism is generally referred to as 'indecent exposure'.

The most prevalent crime group is ‘rape, attempted rape and sexual assault by penetration’, which accounts for 43% of sexual crimes in the dataset. Sexual assault (without penetration) accounts for 29%.

Offence type	Number of convictions in the dataset	%
Rape, attempted rape and sexual assault by penetration	5,570	43
Sexual assault	3,722	29
Indecent exposure and voyeurism	2,473	19
Indecent photos	981	8
Indecent communications	74	1
Sexual coercion	51	<1
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,871</b>	<b>100</b>

*Table 2: Breakdown of sexual conviction types*

#### *Frequency of sexual convictions and gender of offender*

As the following table (*Table 3*) shows, 93% of people within the dataset had only one conviction for a sexual offence, and 99% had two or fewer convictions. 98% of individuals with convictions for sexual offences in the dataset were male ( $N=11,530$ ).

Number of convictions	Number of people with this number of convictions	Percentage of people with this number of convictions
<b>1</b>	10,890	93%
<b>2</b>	656	6%
<b>3</b>	99	1%
<b>4</b>	34	<1%
<b>5</b>	14	<1%
<b>6</b>	9	<1%
<b>7</b>	5	<1%
<b>8</b>	4	<1%
<b>9</b>	0	0%
<b>10</b>	1	<1%
<b>11</b>	1	<1%
<b>12</b>	2	<1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,715</b>	<b>100</b>

*Table 3: Frequency of sexual convictions*

*Other offences committed by those with sexual convictions*

The following table (*Table 4*) shows a list of non-sexual crime types which those with sexual convictions have also been convicted of (full details of which crimes are in these groups can be found in *Appendix 1*). The most common other offences are disorder offences, theft and violence. This generally reflects offending trends in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2017), although crimes of dishonesty are usually more common than disorder offences.

Offence type	Number of convictions in the dataset	Percentage of convictions in the dataset
Disorder, threats and breach of the peace	10,379	28
Theft	9,618	26
Violence	6,987	19
Vandalism	2,240	6
Housebreaking	2,115	6
Drugs	1,959	5
Weapons offences	1,094	3
Prostitution	572	2
Other	2,126	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>37,090</b>	<b>100</b>

*Table 4: Other offences committed by those with sexual convictions*

#### 4.4 Age patterns for different groups of offenders

This section will compare age patterns for different types of convictions. This data (and that of the subsequent section) is left-censored by the age of criminal prosecution (currently 8).

##### ‘Specialism’

This section will compare data for sexual and non-sexual offences, as well as looking at similarities and differences between patterns of convictions for individuals who have been convicted of both sexual and non-sexual offences, compared to those who have only been convicted of sexual convictions.

##### *Age patterns*

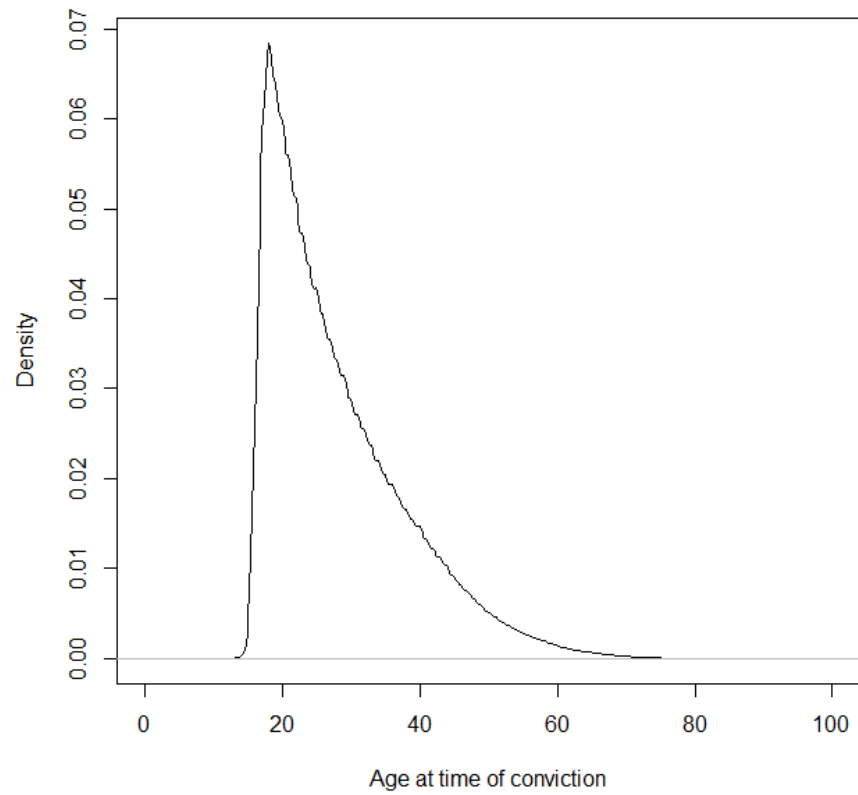
*Table 5* shows that the group which has only been convicted of sexual offences has a higher mean age at first offence at 39.8 than the other groups. This is markedly different to the other mean ages and is approximately a decade older

than the other groups. Those who have been convicted of both sexual and non-sexual offences have relatively similar mean ages at time of conviction for both types of offence, and are more similar in terms of age patterns to those who have never been convicted of sexual offences, than to those who have only been convicted of sexual offences.

<b>Mean age at time of offence</b>	<b>Only convicted of sexual offences</b>	<b>Convicted of sexual and non-sexual offences</b>	<b>Only convicted of non-sexual offences</b>
<b>First sexual offence</b>	39.8	30.9	NA
<b>First non-sexual offence</b>	NA	27.8	27.7
<b>All sexual offences</b>	40.0	31.5	NA
<b>All non-sexual offences</b>	NA	29.0	27.9

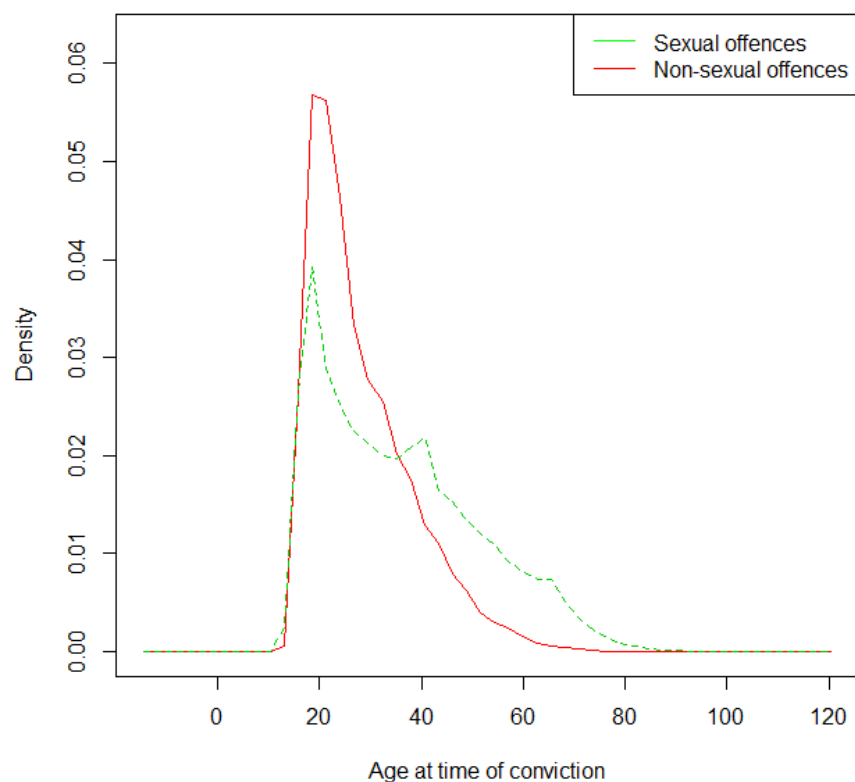
*Table 5: Mean ages at time of offence by specialism*

The following graphs (and others in this section) show univariate density estimates. A density estimate is an estimate, based on observed data, of the underlying probability density function, i.e. the probabilities of a conviction occurring at particular ages. For comparison purposes, age patterns for people who have never been convicted of sexual offences have been included first. *Graph 1* shows that convictions peak in the early 20s age group, followed by a steep continuous decline as the age increases.



*Graph 1: Age at time of conviction for people with no sexual offences*

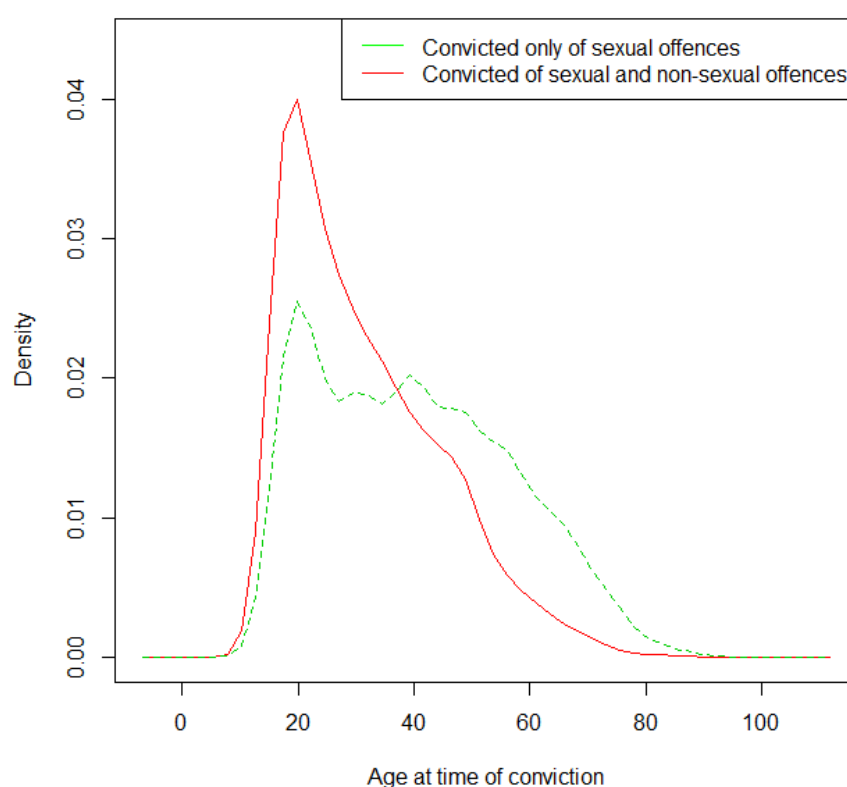
*Graph 2* shows the age patterns for sexual and non-sexual convictions. Non-sexual convictions peaked at an early age (early 20s) and demonstrated a steep decline in subsequent age groups. This pattern has been well documented in criminological literature (the traditional ‘age-crime’ curve refers to offending behaviour which peaks at a relatively young age and is followed by a steady or steep decline (Moffitt, 1993)). Sexual convictions tended to be more dispersed over the life course than non-sexual convictions, however they still peaked at approximately the same time.



*Graph 2: Age at time of conviction: sexual and non-sexual offences*

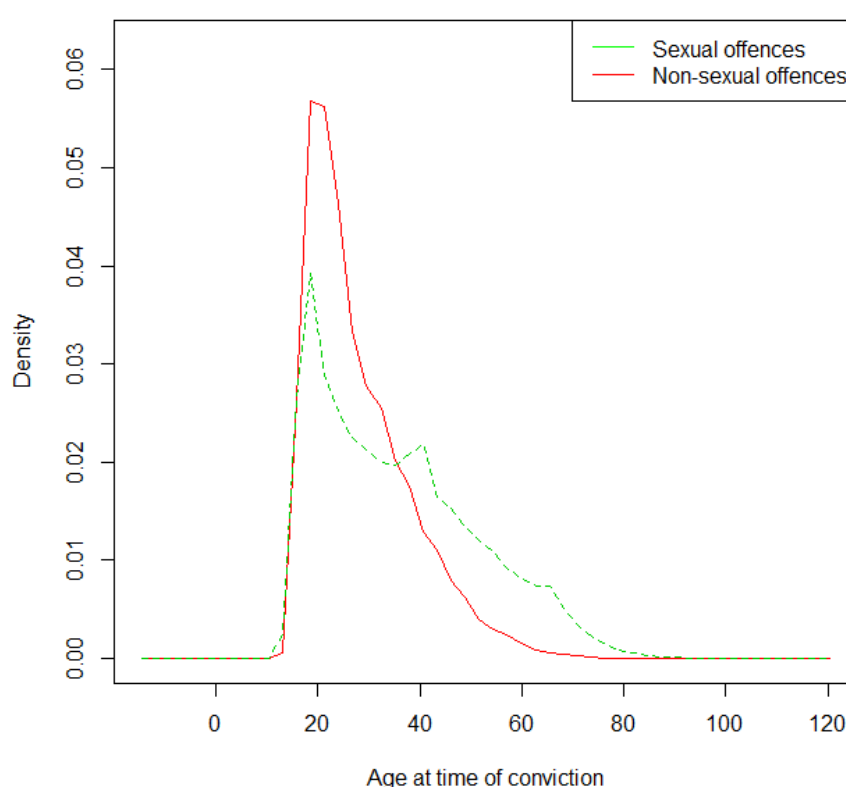


*Graph 3* shows different patterns of the ages at time of conviction (for sexual offences) for people with both sexual and non-sexual convictions, as well as those with only sexual convictions. Although there is a peak in the 20s age group for both groups, ages for those who only have convictions for sexual offences are more dispersed throughout the life-course, and there may be evidence of a bimodal distribution. This is different to the pattern observed in *Graph 2*, with a decline in convictions in *Graph 3* not being seen until the late 50s age group.



*Graph 3: Age at time of conviction for sexual offence: people convicted of both sexual and non-sexual offences, and only sexual offences*

Finally, *Graph 4* shows age patterns for those who have been convicted of both sexual and non-sexual offences, by conviction type. This graph shows relatively similar age patterns between both groups, although convictions for those who have only been convicted of sexual offences are slightly more dispersed.

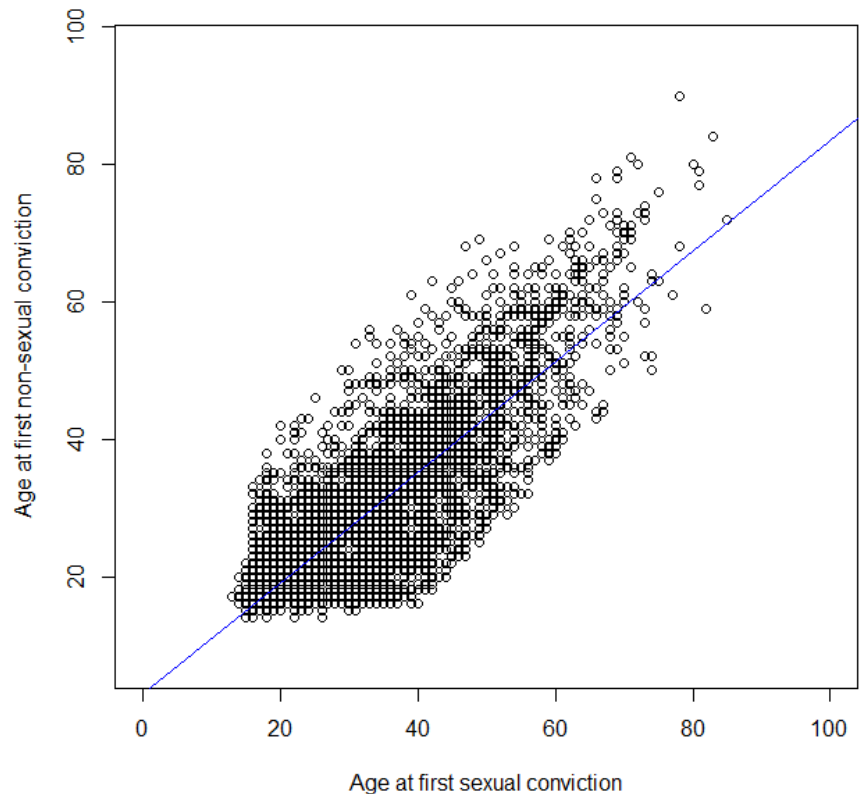


*Graph 4: Age at time of conviction for people convicted of both sexual and non-sexual offences*

Overall, the age graphs demonstrate that those who have been convicted of both sexual and non-sexual offences tended to display a somewhat similar pattern to the 'general' age-crime curve, both for sexual and non-sexual offences, although the decline is slightly steeper for non-sexual offences. Those who have only been convicted of sexual offences displayed different mean ages and age patterns, indicating that their offending behaviour may constitute a different substantive group. This will be explored in more detail in the following chapter.

### *Correlation between age at sexual offence and age at non-sexual offence*

For those with both sexual and non-sexual convictions, it is interesting to explore whether these convictions occur at the same point in a person's life, or if they for instance tend to be convicted of non-sexual offences early in their life (in line with the established age-crime curve). The age graphs showed similar patterns for both types of offences, however this was an aggregate graph and hence it may have been the case that, for instance, some people were convicted of non-sexual offences at an early age but sexual offences at a later age, and a different group were convicted of sexual offences at an earlier age and non-sexual offences at a later age. To explore this further, a correlation test was performed on the age at first sexual and non-sexual convictions to determine if there was link, for each person, between when they are convicted of their first sexual and non-sexual convictions. *Graph 5* shows the scatterplot of age at first sexual vs age at first non-sexual conviction (based on people who had had at least one sexual and one non-sexual conviction (n=5659, 48% of the dataset)).



*Graph 5: Correlation between age at first sexual and non-sexual conviction*

A Pearson correlation test indicated a strong positive correlation between age at first sexual conviction and age at first non-sexual conviction ( $r=.84$ ,  $p<0.00$ ). The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was .70, meaning that 70% of change in age at first sexual conviction can be predicted by age at first non-sexual conviction (and vice versa). This indeed suggests that when a person is convicted for a sexual offence is strongly linked to when they are convicted for a non-sexual offence. Whilst this only tells us about a person's first conviction, since 93% of people only have one conviction, it gives a strong indication that sexual and non-sexual offending behaviour occurs at similar points in a person's life for those who also have non-sexual convictions. The graph also shows the extent of dispersion is greater above the line than below it, suggesting that people are more likely to have

an older age of first sexual offence than age of first non-sexual offence (confirming the findings in Table 5).

### *Frequency of convictions*

Table 6 shows the mean number of sexual convictions for the various groups. Those who have been convicted of both sexual and non-sexual offences had a slightly higher mean number of sexual convictions, which is consistent with the theories which suggest that general antisocial behaviour is a risk factor for sexual offending for some people. Whilst this is a statistically significant difference<sup>4</sup>, this is a small difference. Interestingly, people convicted of both sexual and non-sexual offences had almost double the mean number of non-sexual convictions than those who have never been convicted of a sexual offence. This suggests that people involved in both sexual and non-sexual offending are potentially more likely to be prolific offenders. This will be explored further in the latent class analysis.

<b>Sexual offence types</b>	<b>Mean number of sexual convictions</b>	<b>Mean number of non-sexual convictions</b>
<b>Only convicted of sexual offences</b>	1.1	NA
<b>Convicted of sexual and non-sexual offences</b>	1.2	6.6
<b>Only convicted of non-sexual offences</b>	NA	3.4

*Table 6: Mean numbers of convictions by specialism*

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<sup>4</sup> This test was performed using a Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon Test

Although people who have been convicted of both sexual and non-sexual offences have a higher mean number of sexual and non-sexual convictions, there was no particular relationship between frequency of sexual and non-sexual convictions. Hence, those who are prolific non-sexual offenders were not more likely to be prolific sexual offenders.

#### 4.5 Type of sexual offence

This section will explore different sexual offence types to determine if there are any distinctive patterns for different offences. If so, this would suggest that there are underlying differences between people who are convicted of different types of sexual offences.

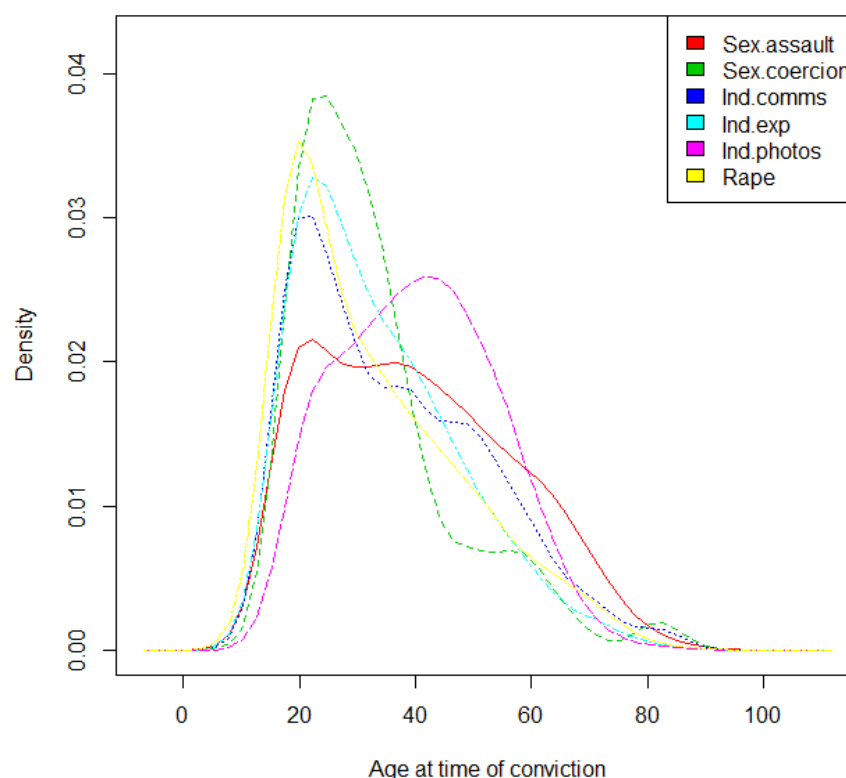
The following table (*Table 7*) shows the mean ages for the different types of sexual crime. There is some disparity between mean ages at time of conviction for different offence types, although the mean ages all range from 32-40.

Offence type	Mean age
Sexual coercion	32.5
Rape, attempted rape and sexual assault by penetration	33.1
Indecent exposure and voyeurism	33.6
Indecent communications	35.9
Sexual assault	39.8
Indecent photos	40.3

*Table 7: Mean ages by offence type*

On examining the age graphs for the different offence types, however, more marked differences between the groups can be ascertained (*Graph 6*). The peak age for most crime groups is relatively young (20s), however for indecent photos

and sexual assault the graphs peak at much older ages. There may be many different reasons for this: for example, is this when they have opportunity to offend (i.e. becoming a caregiver)? Is this because they have not been detected before (which probably would not fully explain the trend)? Have other factors in their life-course contributed to them not offending until a later age?



*Graph 6: Age patterns by sexual offence type*

### *Specialism and sexual offence types*

*Table 8* details whether any particular offence types were more likely to have been committed by people who had been convicted of only sexual offences, or of both sexual and non-sexual offences. The most marked difference was in the offence type of indecent photos, where almost 78% of those convicted of this type of offence only had sexual convictions. This is possibly related to findings in other

research which suggests that those involved in offences against children are less likely to have committed non-sexual offences (e.g. Harris, Smallbone et al., 2009). For offence types of indecent communications and sexual coercion, the numbers were too low to make an accurate assessment, although they also appeared more likely to have been committed by people with only sexual convictions.

		<b>Number of people with only sexual convictions</b>	<b>Number of people with sexual and other convictions</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Rape, attempted rape and sexual assault by penetration</b>		2,488	3,082	5,570
	%	45	55	100
<b>Sexual assault</b>		2,006	1,716	3,722
	%	54	46	100
<b>Indecent exposure and voyeurism</b>		1,024	1,449	2,473
	%	41	59	100
<b>Indecent photos</b>		762	219	981
	%	78	22	100
<b>Indecent communications</b>		42	32	74
	%	57	43	100
<b>Sexual coercion</b>		40	11	51
	%	78	22	100

*Table 8: Offence types by specialism*

#### **4.6 People with more than one conviction**

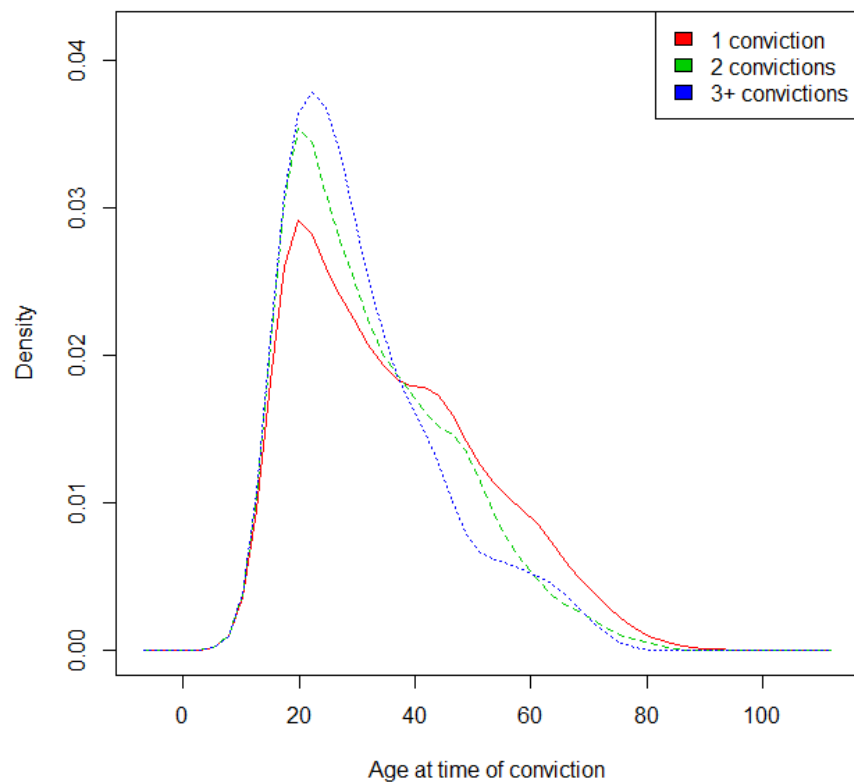
Risk of reconviction is an important consideration for practitioners and policy makers in order to prevent further victimisation, and hence those people with more than one conviction are worthy of further exploration. It is important, however, to note that analysis of convictions will not necessarily accurately reflect



the nature and scale of offending behaviour in general. Although 93% of people in the dataset only have one conviction for a sexual offence, there are 825 people who have more than one conviction, and hence this relatively small group of offenders has been analysed in this section.

### *Age patterns*

*Graph 7* shows age patterns for people with different frequencies of convictions for sexual offences. People who had a greater number of convictions were more likely to be younger when they were first convicted, whilst people with only one conviction have a 'flatter' pattern of age at first conviction, having a greater likelihood of being first convicted at an older age than the other groups (although they are still more likely to be convicted in their early 20s than at any other age). Since previous age graphs have shown that most people are convicted in their early 20s and do not go on to be reconvicted (and hence age at first conviction does not appear to be an additional risk factor for reconviction), this may be because people in the dataset did not have time to be reconvicted if they were first convicted at an older age.



*Graph 7: Age pattern by frequency of convictions*

#### *Progression from one crime type to another*

*Table 9* shows the progression of offence types from the first to the second conviction. There is very little evidence of patterns of progression between different offence types. In all first conviction types, it was far more common for the second offence type to be the same as the first (note that progression patterns with a frequency of fewer than five have been excluded hence percentages do not add up to 100). The most common sequence where the first offence type was not the same as the second was rape for the first conviction and sexual assault for the second conviction. It is often thought that people are more likely to ‘escalate’ into more serious offences, however this data suggests that in general, it appears more common for someone to have rape (which is often considered the most serious offence, however this is subject to interpretation) as their first conviction. In fact,

44% of people who have been convicted of more than one sexual offence have rape as their first conviction. There may be a judicial element here, particularly since this dataset is dealing with index offences, as people may have previously offended or been charged with other offences but not been convicted. Similarly, it may be argued that if a person has a previous conviction for rape, they are more likely to be convicted of another sexual offence due to increased monitoring.

There are very few people who have first convictions for sexual coercion or indecent communications (and then gone on to be reconvicted), and offences of indecent photos also have a very low reconviction rate. This is perhaps surprising, as those with convictions of indecent images (a large part of which are likely to be internet offences), are more likely to be monitored for further activity online. Offences involving the internet are also relatively unique in that they do not require a victim to disclose the offence; this can be uncovered directly by the authorities and evidence does not have to come from the victim (in fact, the identity of the victim need not be known). Of course, it is also possible that they are continuing to offend undetected.

<b>First conviction</b>	<b>Second conviction</b>	<b>Number of people</b>	<b>% of first conviction type</b>
<b>Rape</b>	Rape	182	51
<b>Rape</b>	Sexual assault	104	29
<b>Rape</b>	Ind. exposure and voyeurism	51	14
<b>Rape</b>	Indecent photos	19	5
<b>Sexual assault</b>	Sexual assault	102	51
<b>Sexual assault</b>	Rape	45	22
<b>Sexual assault</b>	Ind. exposure and voyeurism	30	15
<b>Sexual assault</b>	Indecent photos	19	9
<b>Ind. exposure and voyeurism</b>	Ind. exposure and voyeurism	148	65
<b>Ind. exposure and voyeurism</b>	Rape	49	22
<b>Ind. exposure and voyeurism</b>	Sexual assault	26	11
<b>Indecent photos</b>	Indecent photos	24	73
<b>Indecent photos</b>	Sexual assault	5	15

*Table 9: First and second conviction patterns by crime type*

*Table 10* shows the percentages of people who have been convicted of more than one offence, by the offence type of their first conviction. The only group who had a higher than average (7%) sexual reconviction rate were those with offences of indecent exposure and voyeurism, with 11% having been convicted of more than one sexual offence.

<b>First conviction</b>	<b>Number of people with offence type as first conviction</b>	<b>Number of people convicted of more than one offence</b>	<b>% who have been convicted of more than one sexual offence</b>
<b>Rape</b>	5,210	360	7
<b>Sexual assault</b>	3,415	202	6
<b>Indecent exposure and voyeurism</b>	2,076	228	11
<b>Indecent photos</b>	907	33	4
<b>Indecent communications</b>	62	1	2
<b>Sexual coercion</b>	45	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>11715</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>7</b>

*Table 10: Frequency of convictions by sexual offence type*

#### *Age patterns for first and second convictions*

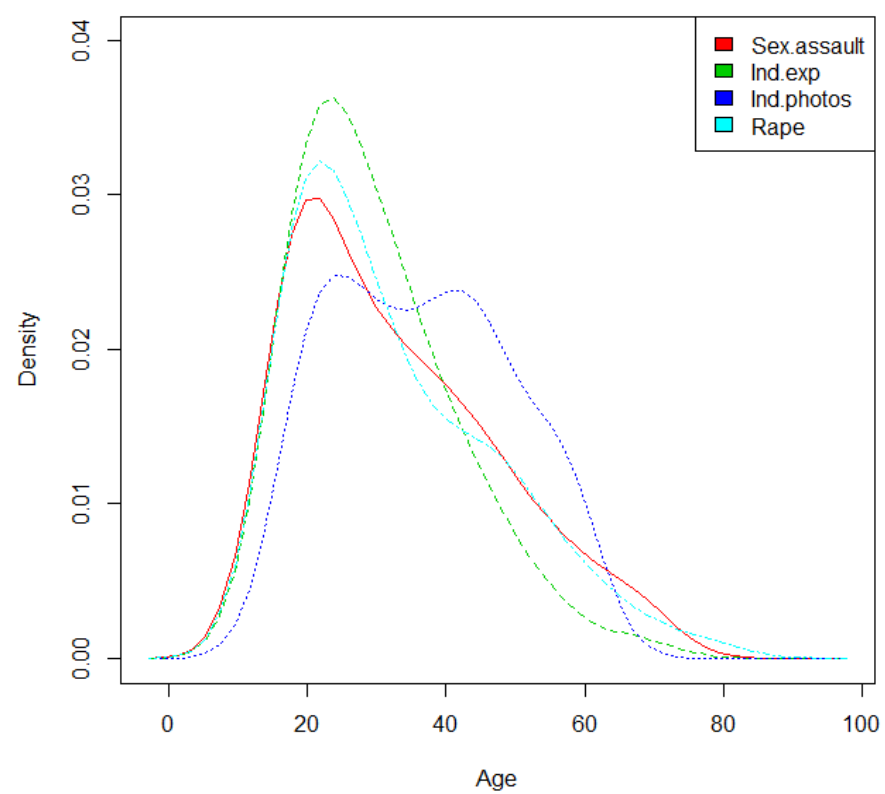
The following four graphs show age patterns for first and second convictions for the different offence types, as well as time between first and other convictions. This is in order to explore whether offenders who are convicted of different types of offences do so at different points in life, or whether their conviction patterns appear to be age-related.

*Graph 8* shows age at first conviction by first sexual conviction type, which then compares the different conviction types in *Graph 9* with age at second conviction. For those who had been convicted of more than one offence, age patterns for the second conviction tended to be different only for offences of indecent photos and sexual assault (although numbers were relatively low for indecent photos so this may be a misleading pattern). First convictions for indecent photos followed a broader, possibly bimodal pattern (*Graph 8*), whilst second convictions for indecent photos were markedly older, peaking after age 40 (*Graph 9*). Second

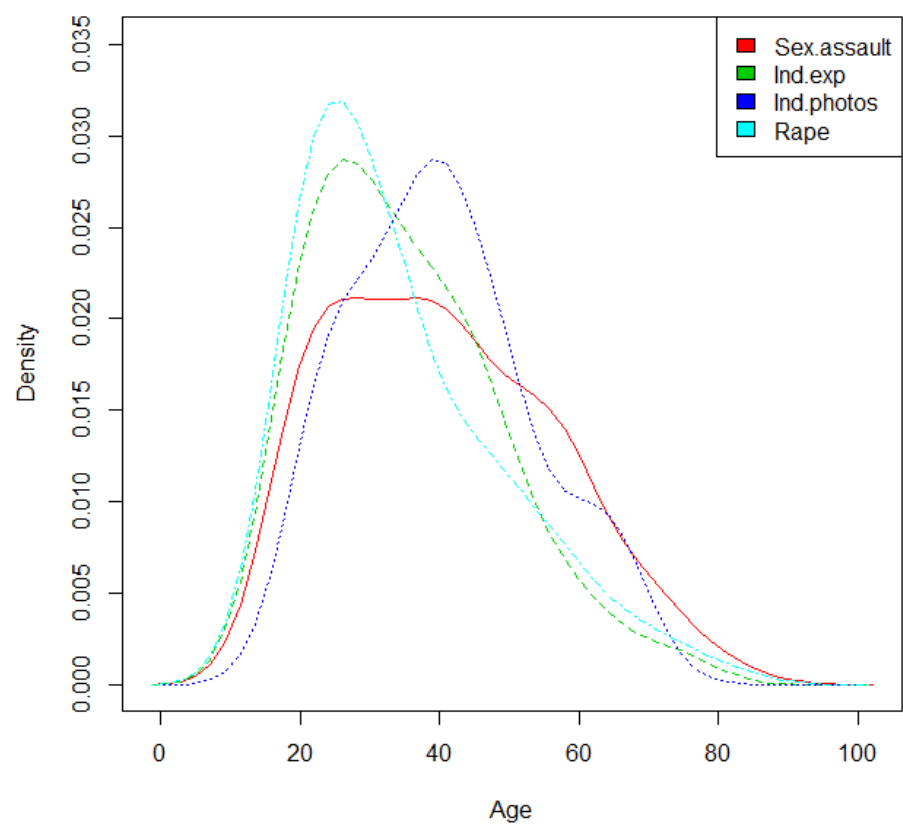
convictions for sexual assault also appeared to be a flatter pattern, also not beginning to decline until after age 40. Both of these patterns potentially indicate a greater length of time between convictions for these two offence types.

However, *Graph 10* does not support this line of thinking (note that this graph does not exclude time in prison as it was intended to give a true picture of convictions over the life-course). This graph shows that time between first and second convictions was similar for each crime type (graphs were organised based on first crime type and indecent communications and sexual coercion have been excluded due to small numbers). This is also mirrored in the graph showing first and most recent conviction (*Graph 11*).

This may, then, indicate different people or groups of people being convicted at different times. Overall, it is far more likely, even for those with 2 or more convictions, to be convicted of all offences in a relatively short space of time (at least less than a 10-year period), than to be convicted at a young age and then continue to be convicted of offences throughout the life. There may be many reasons for this including genuine desistance from offending, evasion of detection, time in prison or simply that offending behaviour (or opportunity) was tied to relatively temporary circumstances. There may also be some element of having been convicted for further offences after their first conviction due to these offences coming to light in the police investigation.

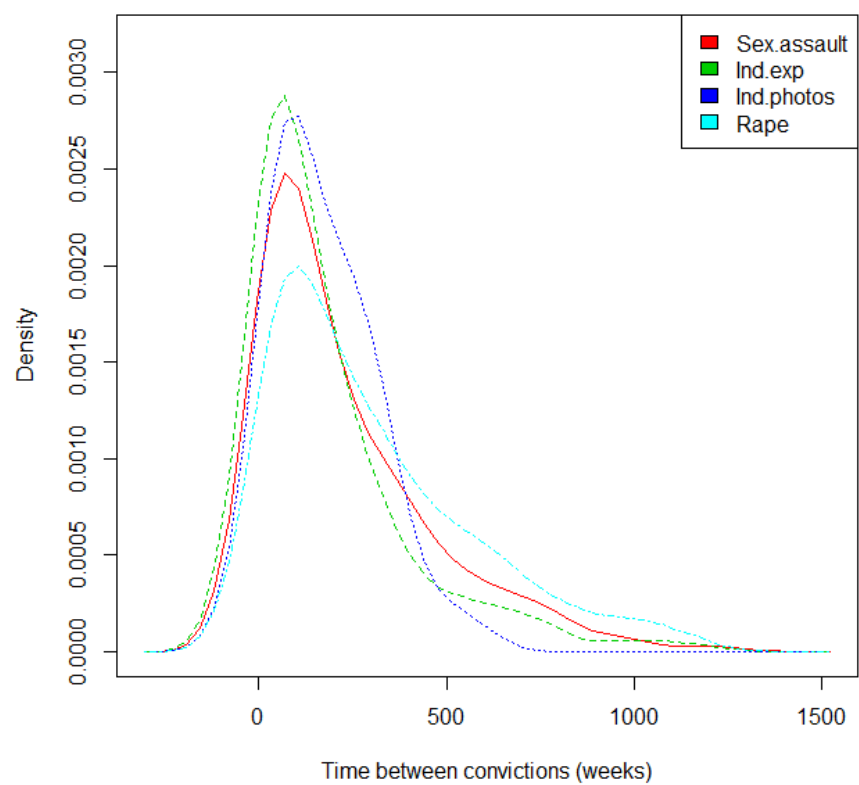


*Graph 8: Age at first conviction by sexual offence type*

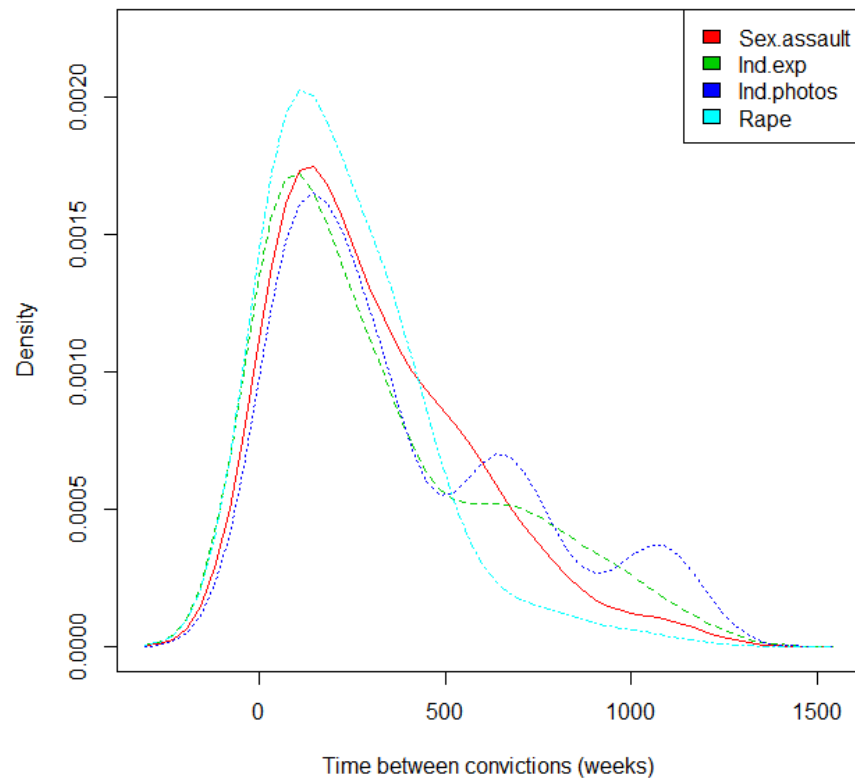


*Graph 9: Age at second conviction by sexual offence type*





*Graph 10: Time between first and second convictions (by first sexual offence type)*



*Graph 11: Time between first and most recent convictions (by first sexual offence type)*

In summary, there was little evidence in this section of particular groups being at a higher risk of reconviction, with the exception of the indecent exposure/voyeurism group. Neither was there evidence of progression from one type or another. However, age patterns appeared to show that different groups of offenders may be more likely to be convicted at different ages, whilst for others convictions appeared to be age-related. This will be explored further in the following chapters.

## 4.7 Discussion

One of the most prominent findings of this part of the data analysis is that 93% of people in Scotland who have a conviction for a sexual offence only have one conviction for sexual offending. This is also in the context of the fact that only 2%

of people with any type of conviction have a sexual conviction. As discussed in Chapter 3, this cannot be taken as an indication that they have only committed one offence. There are high levels of attrition and under-reporting for sexual offences (Hohl and Stanko, 2015; Wood, Willson et al., 2015; Weinrott and Saylor, 1991), for various reasons including victim-survivors being unwilling to proceed with the judicial process. Any official data will also to a certain extent reflect police/court activity and practices rather than reflecting offending behaviour *per se*. Another issue is that an individual may have committed many offences (which are known to authorities), however this may result in just one charge or conviction. This may be particularly true with cases of intrafamilial abuse. Hence from official figures, it may appear that a person has committed one crime, however they may actually have committed many, potentially against the same person. These issues, coupled with the fact that there is likely to be systematic reasons for these, means that convictions cannot be taken to be representative of offending. Hence this data should be seen as the chain of events which led to a *conviction* rather than an offence. Those who commit sexual offences are often thought to have low rates of recidivism (an assumption usually based on official data), however this assumption may not be accurate.

There are some interesting further points about the conviction patterns which were found in this chapter. I will summarise these points as answers to the research questions posed at the beginning of this chapter.

*1. What are common patterns in types of sexual offending behaviour and what does this tell us about different potential motivations to offend?*

There were different patterns relating to different offence types, which indicates that there is heterogeneity of offending behaviour and that it is related to the offence type committed. For example, the peak age for most crime groups is relatively young (20s), however for indecent photos and sexual assault the graphs peak at much older ages. Age patterns therefore appeared to show that different groups of offenders may be more likely to be convicted at different ages, whilst for others convictions appeared to be age-related.

*2. What is the link between sexual and non-sexual offending and does this tell us anything about the causal process?*

There is a strong positive correlation between age at first sexual conviction and age at first non-sexual conviction. However, the average age of first sexual conviction was higher than the average age of first non-sexual conviction for those convicted of both, so it seems likely that sexual convictions come after non-sexual ones in most cases. This may in turn suggest that the motivation for sexual offending may be more similar to the motivation for non-sexual offending. Of course, this may also be affected by a person's likelihood of coming to the attention of the authorities; if for some reason certain groups of people are more likely to come to police attention, both sexual and non-sexual offences may come to light at similar times.

Moreover, age graphs demonstrated that those who had been convicted of both sexual and non-sexual offences tended to display a somewhat similar pattern, both for sexual and non-sexual offences, and this was relatively similar to those

who had never been convicted of sexual offences. On the other hand, those who had only been convicted of sexual offences had different age patterns, indicating that their offending behaviour may constitute a different substantive group. This supports some research which suggests a link between sexual and non-sexual offences; for instance Ward and Siegert's Pathways model (Ward, Polaschek et al., 2006) suggests that for one group, the pathway into offending is due to antisocial cognitions.

There were some further additional findings regarding the link between sexual and non-sexual offending. Certain crime types, in particular indecent photos, appeared more likely to be committed by those with only sexual convictions rather than as part of a wider offending pattern. Furthermore, people convicted of both sexual and non-sexual offences had almost double the mean number of non-sexual convictions than those who have never been convicted of a sexual offence, suggesting that those who are involved in both sexual and non-sexual offending are more likely to be prolific non-sexual offenders. However, these individuals are not any more likely to be prolific sexual offenders.

*3. At what points in life (in terms of age and life situation) does offending commonly occur, and does this tell us anything about theoretical perspectives on offending?*

Non-sexual convictions peaked at an early age (early 20s) and likelihood of conviction then began to decline steeply: this pattern has been well documented

in criminological literature. Sexual convictions also peaked at this age but some offence types tended to be more dispersed over the life-course, with another, smaller peak around age 40, the pattern then decreasing more gradually. This suggests that, for some people at least, sexual convictions may be age-related, whilst for others propensity to offend is more evenly dispersed throughout life. This will also be further explored in the latent class analysis.

The fact that most sexual offenders were only convicted of one sexual offence means that generally, people who are convicted at an older age were not convicted when they were younger and vice versa, which is important to note regarding the life-course analysis. It was also more common to be convicted of all offences in a relatively short space of time (at least less than a 10-year period), than to be convicted at a young age and then continue to be convicted of offences throughout the life. There may be many reasons for this including genuine desistance from offending, evasion of detection, time in prison or simply that offending behaviour (or opportunity) was tied to relatively temporary circumstances. There may also be some element of having been convicted for further offences after their first conviction, due to the further offences coming to light during the police investigation process.

#### *4. Are certain groups at a higher risk of offending/reoffending?*

Those who have been convicted of both sexual and non-sexual offences had a much higher frequency of non-sexual convictions, which was not only higher than those with sexual convictions, but higher than the average offender.

There was little evidence of particular groups being at more risk of reconviction for sexual offences, with the exception of the indecent exposure/voyeurism group. Neither was there evidence of progression from one type or another: it was far more common for the second offence type to be the same as the first.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview of the convictions dataset used in this analysis, and highlighted some patterns relevant to the research questions. The findings suggest that there are differences in conviction patterns between those who have only been convicted of sexual offences and those who have sexual convictions as part of a wider pattern of offending, as well as between sexual offence types. There is also evidence that there are different age patterns between different groups of offenders. In order to explore these relationships further, more sophisticated statistical analysis will be employed in order to disentangle the conviction patterns for various different groups and see if these patterns can be separated in a meaningful way. For this, latent class analysis will be used in order to determine whether there are more complex groups of offending behaviours. The next chapter (Chapter 5) will further explain the reasons behind using this technique, and describe how the model was constructed, before analysing what the model showed in Chapter 6.

## Chapter 5: Constructing the latent class model

### 5.1 Introduction

As described in Chapter 2, in the case of sexual offences, much of the research suggests that offending behaviour can be grouped into ‘typologies’ since although those who sexually offend are a heterogeneous group, distinct patterns of behaviour can be identified. Latent class analysis is a statistical technique which identifies groups of similar behaviours (in this case, offending behaviour). These classes can then be analysed to see whether patterns of behaviour support theories of the causes of sexual offences and desistance outlined in Chapter 2.

The aim of this chapter is to outline the process used for building the model of latent classes, and to explain the reasons that the final model, a seven class model using 15 groups of offence types as indicators for the latent classes, was chosen. The chapter will begin with an overview of the data used and a brief account of how this fits with the literature outlined in Chapter 2. It will then outline the model selection process and the reasons that the final model was chosen, before briefly describing four other models and why they were rejected. The chapter will proceed to describe the decision-making process behind which variables were included as item-response probabilities, and explain why only offence types were used in the end. It will also analyse the effect of adding additional classes to the model, and provide a description of the relative model fit tests used and how these tests were used to compare different models. Finally, the chapter will outline the reasons for employing a classify-analyse approach to analyse the groups rather than introducing covariates.



## 5.2 Background information

### *Data source*

To briefly reiterate the description of the data in Chapter 4, data from the Scottish Offenders' Index (SOI) was used to analyse conviction patterns of people convicted of sexual offences. This data source includes details of most convictions in the Scottish courts from 1989 onwards. For the purposes of this research, data was extracted for people who have been convicted of sexual offences since the dataset began (a list of all sexual offences are included in *Appendix 1*). A brief overview of the data is as follows (*Table 11*).

Overview of offenders and convictions	Frequency
Number of convictions within the SOI	1,730,931
Number of convictions for sexual offences	12,871
Number of people within the SOI	511,920
Number of people who have been convicted of sexual offences	11,715
Number of convictions for people who have been convicted of sexual offences (sexual and non-sexual)	49,961

*Table 11: Summary of Scottish Offenders' Index*

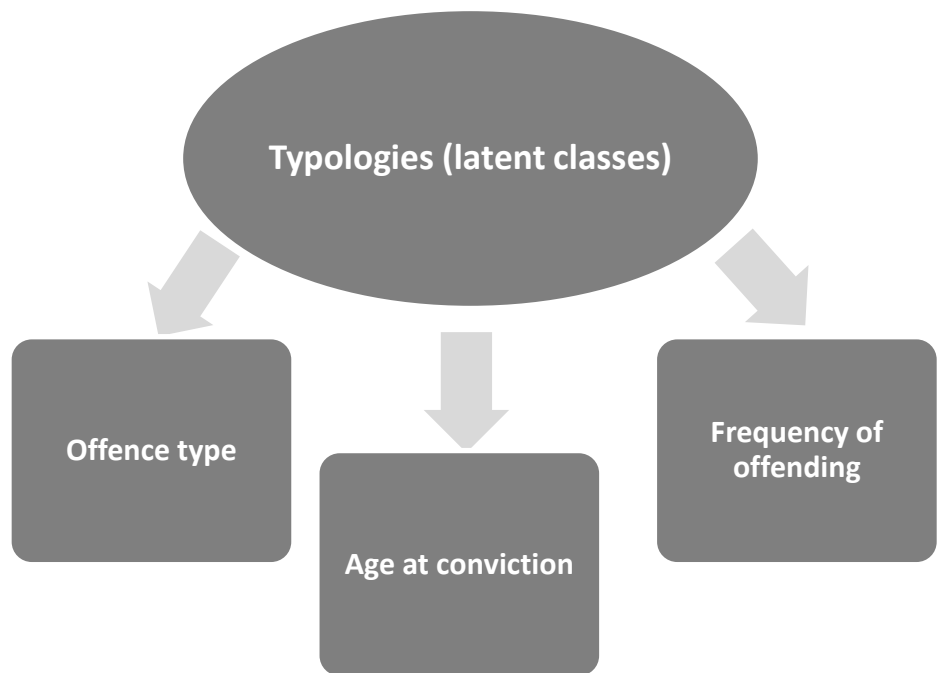
## 5.3 General approach to model selection

According to the literature, people who commit sexual offences are a heterogeneous group, and therefore it is difficult to obtain an accurate picture of patterns of offending by analysing them as one group. As described in Chapter 2, it is thought that people who commit sexual offences may cluster into a number of underlying typologies based on their offending behaviour. There is also thought to be a link between sexual and non-sexual offending. Hence, latent classes based on offence types offers a justifiable approach to better understanding how different forms of behaviour (both sexual and non-sexual) interact. The main

decision-making steps in the model selection process were firstly to decide how to group the crime codes, and secondly how to treat additional variables, i.e. as covariates, as additional item-response probabilities, or simply to analyse these as features of different groups. This is explained in further detail throughout this chapter.

#### *Additional item response probabilities and covariates*

As noted in Chapter 3, the SOI contains information about the offender and the conviction. Conviction type is important as this will tell us whether different groups of people commit different types of offences, and also explore the link between sexual and non-sexual offending. In addition to this, there are two sets of additional variables that are potentially useful for providing information to the latent classes in relation to the research questions. Age at time of first sexual conviction and age at time of first non-sexual conviction are important variables to consider when looking at life-course patterns of offending since the time of life at which someone is convicted may indicate a situational element (for instance socio-cultural influences such as peer influence, stressful life events or a caregiving role may be more likely to occur at different ages). Total number of convictions can give an indication of which classes may be at most risk of reconviction. *Figure 2* illustrates the latent class model using all additional information.



*Figure 2: Illustration of item-responses*

Information relating to age and frequency was added to the models and explored in various ways: as basic descriptive information per class (for Model 1), added to the model as item-response probabilities (in Models 3, 4 and 5), and added as covariates (Model 6). These different approaches will be explained later in the chapter.

#### *Software used*

The latent class analysis was performed using the package in R for polytomous variable latent class analysis (poLCA). poLCA uses expectation-maximization and Newton-Ralphson algorithms to estimate model parameters using maximum likelihood estimates (by maximising the log-likelihood function (Linzer and Lewis, 2011)). A full description of the principles of latent class analysis and maximum likelihood estimation was provided in Chapter 3.

### *Missing data*

There was no missing data in relation to conviction types in the dataset as the variables were simply whether someone had been convicted (or not) of an offence. There was a very small amount of missing data in the additional variables in relation to missing ages (a few cases out of the whole dataset), although for the ages at the times of the non-sexual convictions this was obviously only applicable to those who had a non-sexual conviction. The default setting in R is to exclude an individual who has any information missing. Hence this was changed so that information for individuals who did not have non-sexual convictions was retained within the model. It should be noted, however, that whilst there is little missing data within the limits of the SOI, as outlined in Chapter 3 there may be data which has not been included within the dataset. This includes more minor convictions, other convictions which occurred at the same time as the index offence, convictions which occurred outside Scotland and of course, offences for which there was no conviction received.

### *Relative model fit tests*

Relative model fit statistics were analysed to determine the optimum number of classes. Model fit statistics compare two or more models in order to determine which one 'represents an optimal balance of fit to a particular data set and parsimony' compared to the other (Collins and Lanza, 2010: p86) (for a more detailed explanation of model fit tests see Chapter 3). Model fit tests used in this thesis were the Akaike Information Criteria (AIC), the Bayesian Information Criteria

(BIC) and the adjusted Bayesian Information Criteria (aBIC). Each of these three criteria showed a similar pattern for the different class sizes and different models, and hence it can be reasonably surmised that the model fit statistics gave a good indication of relative model fit. A smaller IC value indicates a better balance of model fit and parsimony.

## **5.4 Model selection process**

### *Model 1*

To begin the model selection process, data was initially grouped into the following categories (*Table 12*): sexual crimes were coded into 6 different categories, and non-sexual crimes into a further 9 different categories. Full details of the offence codes within these categories can be found in *Appendix 1*. Univariate frequencies are also detailed in *Table 12*. These numbers refer to whether a person has been convicted of an offence of this type: a person may have been convicted of more than one type.

<b>Offence type</b>	<b>Number of people convicted of each crime type</b>	<b>% convicted of this crime type</b>
<b>Rape, attempted rape and sexual assault by penetration</b>	5,322	45
<b>Sexual assault</b>	3,586	31
<b>Indecent exposure and voyeurism</b>	2,187	19
<b>Indecent photos</b>	954	8
<b>Indecent communications</b>	72	1
<b>Sexual coercion</b>	51	<1
<b>Disorder</b>	3,236	28
<b>Violence</b>	2,960	25
<b>Theft</b>	2,571	22
<b>Vandalism</b>	1,495	13
<b>Drugs</b>	1,105	9
<b>Housebreaking</b>	875	7
<b>Weapons</b>	816	7
<b>Prostitution</b>	68	1
<b>Non-sexual other</b>	1,323	11

*Table 12: Percentage of people convicted of each crime type (calculated as a percentage of people who have been convicted of sexual offences)*

Matrices were produced detailing instances where an individual has been convicted of two crime types to give an idea of relationships between offences and to determine where sparseness may exist (see *Tables 13 and 14* for frequency and percentage breakdowns). The non-sexual convictions most often co-occurred with other convictions, in comparison to the sexual convictions (although not necessarily at the same time). Crimes of indecent exposure/voyeurism and rape were commonly connected to non-sexual offences (for example, 1628 people out of 5322 people who have been convicted of rape (31%) have also been convicted of disorder, threats and breach of the peace). The conviction type least linked to other offences appears to be indecent photos: only 8% of people convicted of this

type of offence had been convicted of the next most prevalent offence (disorder, threats and breach of the peace) (*Table 14*).

The two sexual offences most closely linked were rape and indecent exposure: 6% of people who had been convicted of indecent exposure had also been convicted of rape (*Table 14*). It is interesting to note how small these numbers are overall, however; driven by the fact that most people have only been convicted of one sexual offence.

	<b>Sex. Assault</b>	<b>Ind. Exp.</b>	<b>Rape</b>	<b>Ind. Photos</b>	<b>Ind. Comms</b>	<b>Sexual Coerc.</b>
<b>Sex. Assault</b>	<b>3,586</b>					
<b>Ind. Exp.</b>	96	<b>2,187</b>				
<b>Rape</b>	185	137	<b>5,322</b>			
<b>Ind. Photos</b>	25	9	24	<b>954</b>		
<b>Ind. Comms</b>	8	3	4	0	<b>72</b>	
<b>Sexual Coerc.</b>	3	2	2	1	0	<b>51</b>
<b>Viol.</b>	809	640	1,580	49	14	5
<b>Theft</b>	646	532	1,447	58	14	1
<b>Other</b>	442	275	640	63	7	3
<b>Dis.</b>	871	846	1,628	72	19	6
<b>Drugs</b>	244	276	583	24	7	2
<b>Vand.</b>	367	349	818	18	10	1
<b>HB</b>	203	144	554	11	2	0
<b>Weap.</b>	173	215	438	20	6	2
<b>Prost.</b>	1	51	16	2	0	1

*Table 13: Matrix of relationship between conviction types (N)*

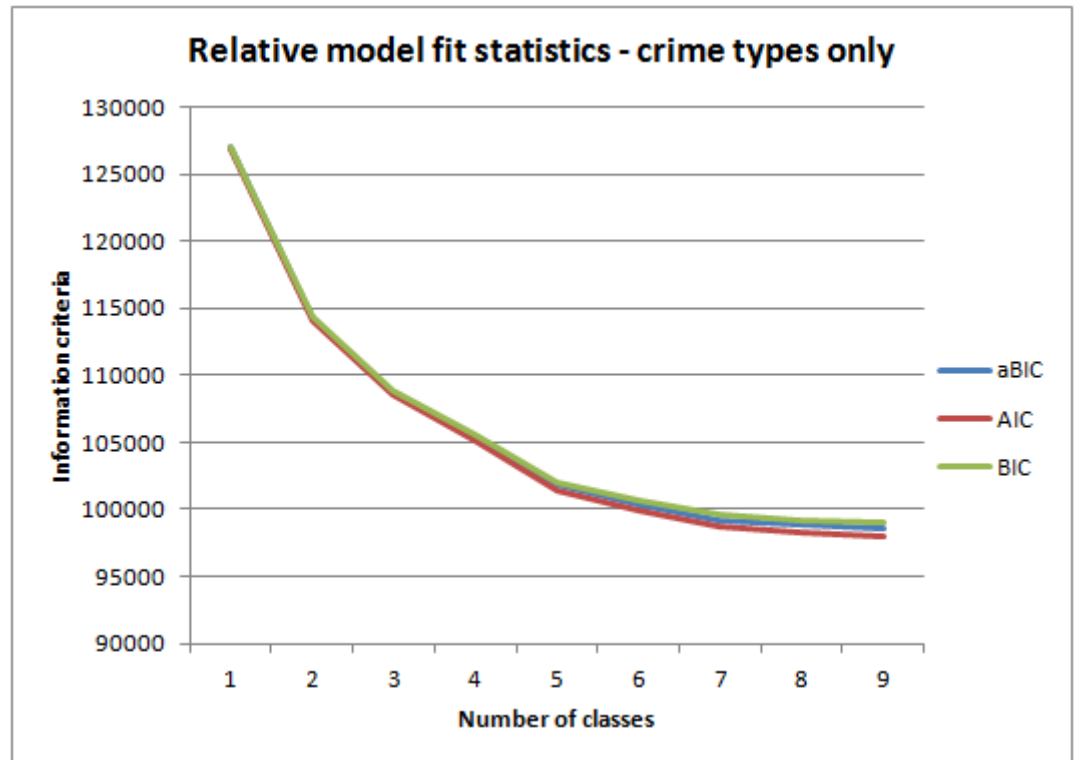
	<b>Sex. Assault</b>	<b>Ind. Exp.</b>	<b>Rape</b>	<b>Ind. Photos</b>	<b>Ind. Comms*</b>	<b>Sexual Coerc.*</b>
<b>Sex.</b>	<b>100</b>	4	4	3	11	6
<b>Assault</b>						
<b>Ind. Exp.</b>	3	<b>100</b>	3	1	4	4
<b>Rape</b>	5	6	<b>100</b>	3	6	4
<b>Ind.</b>	1	<1	1	<b>100</b>	-	2
<b>Photos</b>						
<b>Ind.</b>	<1	<1	<1	-	<b>100</b>	-
<b>Comms</b>						
<b>Sexual Coerc.</b>	<1	<1	<1	0.1	-	<b>100</b>
<b>Viol.</b>	23	29	30	5	19	10
<b>Theft</b>	18	24	27	6	19	2
<b>Other</b>	12	13	12	7	10	6
<b>Dis.</b>	24	39	31	8	26.4	12
<b>Drugs</b>	7	13	11	3	10	4
<b>Vand.</b>	10	16	15	2	14	2
<b>HB</b>	6	7	10	1	3	-
<b>Weap.</b>	5	10	8	2	8	4
<b>Prost.</b>	<1	2	<1	<1	-	2

\* Numbers in these two groups are small and so comparisons should be drawn with caution.

*Table 14: Matrix of relationship between offence types (%): percentages calculated by column*

After examining overall relationships, the latent class model was run, starting with one class and increasing the number of classes by one each time. Relative model fit statistics showed the following, with the aBIC, AIC and BIC beginning to stabilise after 7 classes (*Graph 12*).





*Graph 12: Relative model fit statistics*

The behaviour of the classes was analysed as the number of classes was increased, starting from two classes. As the classes increased, some distinct groups began to emerge in terms of the patterns of their item response probabilities (the probabilities, on average, for members of each class, of having been convicted of each offence type). The classes were generally split into ‘specialist’ and ‘generalist’ classes, i.e. those who had generally only been convicted of a sexual offence and those who have been convicted of a sexual offence plus a combination of non-sexual offences. Collins and Lanza (2010) advise that latent class separation and latent class homogeneity are two key indicators for evaluating item-response patterns. By the six class model, evidence of latent class homogeneity (where classes display a distinct pattern of item-response probabilities) began to emerge, with all but one of the classes having high probabilities of having committed one

of the sexual crimes. Latent class separation was also present (i.e. no two classes were similar), with distinct response patterns being observed.

In the seven class model, a clear pattern emerged. *Table 15* shows the item-response probabilities for the first model with seven classes (probabilities above 0.50 are in bold, and probabilities have been rounded to two decimal places for clarity). The table also shows two estimates of the size of each class: the estimated class population share (the average probability across all individuals of belonging to each class) and predicted class membership (the proportion of people who would be in each class if they were assigned to their most likely class). There are four classes in which members of the class have a probability of 1 (or close to 1) of having been convicted of the following offence groups: sexual assault, indecent exposure, rape, and indecent photos, however these have very small probabilities of having been convicted of any other offences. These groups may be considered a ‘specialist’ class and are not highlighted. In addition to this there are three classes where members have a high probability of being convicted of sexual assault, indecent exposure and rape respectively, and also a relatively high probability of having been convicted of non-sexual offences (violence, theft and disorder/threats/breach of the peace). These classes may be considered ‘generalist’ classes and are highlighted in a darker shade. In this model there is also good latent class separation and also latent class homogeneity.

<b>Model 1</b>							
7 class							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Sexual assault</b>	<b>1.00</b>	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.00	<b>1.00</b>	0.00
<b>Indecent exposure</b>	0.00	<b>0.97</b>	0.00	<b>1.00</b>	0.01	0.07	0.00
<b>Rape</b>	0.03	0.04	<b>1.00</b>	0.05	<b>1.00</b>	0.11	0.00
<b>Ind. photos</b>	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	<b>0.91</b>
<b>Ind. communications</b>	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.05
<b>Sexual coercion</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04
<b>Violence</b>	0.09	<b>0.76</b>	0.11	0.10	<b>0.77</b>	<b>0.73</b>	0.04
<b>Theft</b>	0.06	<b>0.64</b>	0.10	0.07	<b>0.69</b>	<b>0.60</b>	0.05
<b>Disorder, threats and BOP</b>	0.09	<b>0.86</b>	0.11	0.18	<b>0.76</b>	<b>0.77</b>	0.06
<b>Drugs</b>	0.02	0.37	0.03	0.03	0.33	0.23	0.02
<b>Vandalism</b>	0.02	0.45	0.04	0.04	0.45	0.40	0.02
<b>HB</b>	0.01	0.20	0.01	0.01	0.34	0.24	0.01
<b>Weapons</b>	0.01	0.30	0.01	0.02	0.25	0.19	0.02
<b>Prostitution</b>	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00
<b>Other</b>	0.06	0.33	0.04	0.04	0.30	0.35	0.05
<b>Estimated class population share</b>	0.24	0.05	0.31	0.13	0.12	0.07	0.08
<b>Predicted class membership</b>	0.24	0.05	0.32	0.14	0.11	0.07	0.08

*Table 15: Item-response probabilities for Model 1, 7 classes*

When an eight class model was analysed, it contained the four ‘specialist’ sexual offence classes as well as the three ‘generalist’ categories, as was seen in the seven class model. Inclusion of an eighth class resulted in the appearance of an additional category which had moderate probabilities of indecent communication and sexual coercion (0.56 and 0.45 respectively), but low probabilities of non-sexual convictions. This class size was low (1% of the dataset, n=117) due to the low overall frequencies of these two offence types.

A final nine class solution was attempted. The nine class model contained the four specialist sexual offence classes which had been present in recent models, as well

as the specialist class seen in the model with eight classes (indecent communications and sexual coercion). The ninth class was also a generalist rape class, which was very similar to the existing one. This meant that the model was starting to divert from good latent class separation. For this reason the nine class model was rejected.

In Model 1, based purely on interpretation of item-response probabilities, the models with either seven or eight classes appeared to be the best models. However, the eighth class showed poorer latent class homogeneity than the seven class model and was a small class (only 1% of the dataset). For this reason, the model with seven classes was assessed to be the most parsimonious and statistically robust one.

### *Model 2*

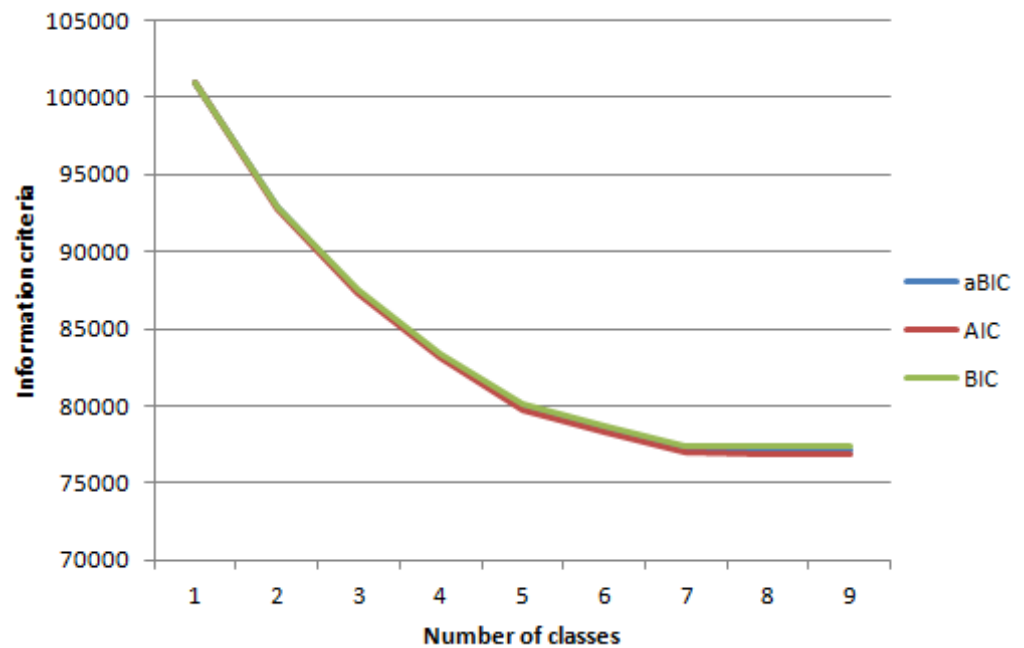
Although the seven class model appeared to be a good fit, many of the item-response categories had consistently low probabilities throughout all classes (prostitution, indecent communications, sexual coercion, drugs, vandalism, housebreaking and weapons). This is likely to be due to the low frequencies in some of the classes. Hence the crime types were collapsed further to determine what the effect on the model was. The second model was run on the new collapsed crime classes consisting of eight variables (four sexual and four non-sexual (*Table 16*)).

Offence type
Rape, attempted rape and sexual assault by penetration
Sexual assault
Non-contact sexual offences
Indecent photos
Disorder, threats and BOP
Violence
Theft
Non-sexual other

*Table 16: Offence categories for Model 2*

Drugs and prostitution offences were included in the ‘other’ category; weapons were included in the ‘violence’ category; sexual coercion was included in the ‘sexual assault’ category; vandalism was included in the ‘disorder, threats and breach of the peace’ category; housebreaking was included in the ‘theft’ category; and indecent communications was included in the ‘indecent exposure and voyeurism’ category (this category was renamed ‘non-contact other’).

The model fit statistics were compared as each new class was added as displayed in the following graph. As can be seen from *Graph 13*, again the model fit statistics began to stabilise after seven classes.



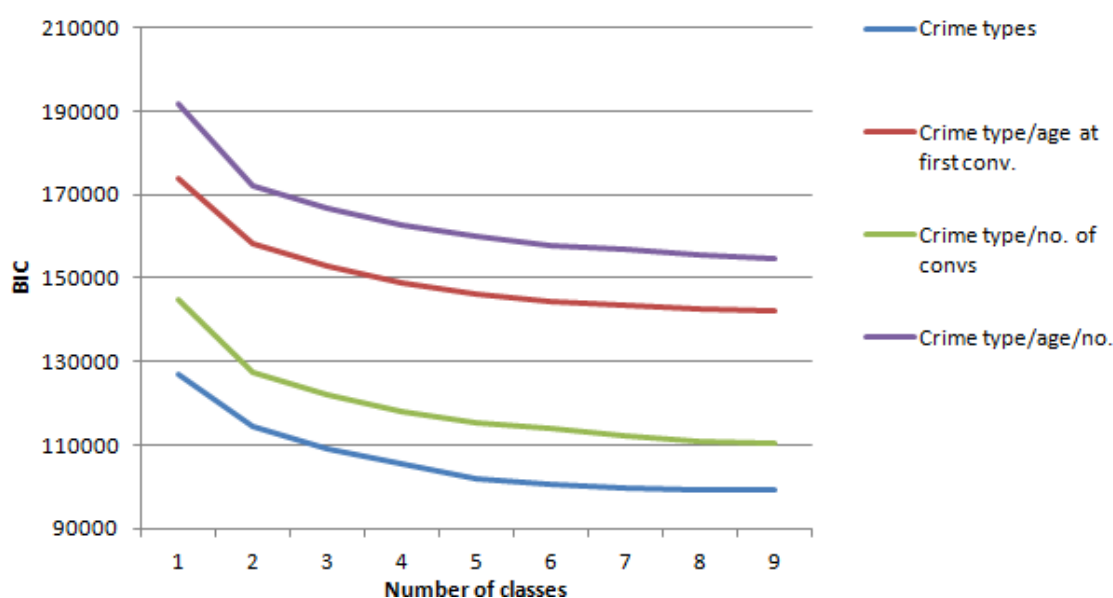
*Graph 13: Relative model fit statistics for Model 2*

The behaviour of the model as further classes were added and substantive interpretation of the classes was very similar to that of Model 1, and hence a seven class model was also chosen for Model 2. Since collapsing the categories to eight crime type groups did not substantially changed the groups, it was not considered to be of benefit to the model to switch to the eight group model. Moreover, retaining the original categories enabled more detailed exploration of the range of non-sexual offences. On the basis that it was an equally well-fitting model and provided more detailed information on profile of offenders, Model 1 was chosen over Model 2.

#### *Using additional item response probabilities*

In addition to including crime types in the model, the additional variables of age at first conviction (sexual and non-sexual) and frequency of convictions were

added to evaluate the effects on the model. A model was run using all additional variables (Model 3), as well as the additional variables separately (Models 4 and 5). As can be seen from the relative model fit statistics (*Graph 14* -only BICs were included in the graph for clarity, however AICs and aBICs also behaved in a similar manner for all models), for each model the model fit statistics showed a similar trend as the different classes were added. This indicates that in general, models with seven or more classes were an optimum fit (when only looking at model fit statistics).



*Graph 14: Comparison of BICs for inclusion of different additional variables*

#### *Model with all additional variables added (Model 3)*

In Model 3 the following additional variables were included as item-response probabilities in the model: age group at first sexual conviction, age group at first non-sexual conviction, number of sexual convictions, and number of non-sexual convictions. The relative model fit statistics stabilised after eight classes. In general, the classes were very similar to those of Model 1.

By the six class model, there were four specialist classes and two generalist classes (specialist sexual assault, specialist indecent exposure, specialist rape, specialist indecent photos, generalist rape and generalist sexual assault/indecent exposure (this latter class had a probability of 0.49 and 0.48 for sexual assault and indecent exposure respectively - see *Table 17*)).



Model 3						
Item-response probabilities		6 classes				
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sexual assault	<b>1.00</b>	0.49	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00
Indecent exposure	0.00	0.48	<b>1.00</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00
Rape	0.04	0.11	0.05	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	0.00
Indecent photos	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.01	<b>0.91</b>
Indecent communications	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.05
Sexual coercion	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04
Violence	0.10	<b>0.74</b>	0.09	<b>0.77</b>	0.10	0.03
Theft	0.07	<b>0.63</b>	0.07	<b>0.70</b>	0.10	0.04
Disorder, threats and BOP	0.10	<b>0.83</b>	0.17	<b>0.76</b>	0.10	0.04
Drugs	0.02	0.31	0.03	0.33	0.03	0.02
Vandalism	0.03	0.43	0.03	0.45	0.03	0.01
HB	0.01	0.23	0.01	0.33	0.01	0.00
Weapons	0.01	0.25	0.01	0.24	0.02	0.01
Prostitution	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00
Other	0.06	0.35	0.03	0.30	0.04	0.05
Age at first sexual conviction						
Under 20	0.10	0.20	0.14	0.36	0.20	0.05
20-29	0.17	0.36	0.32	0.40	0.23	0.21
30-39	0.18	0.23	0.22	0.17	0.19	0.24
40+	<b>0.54</b>	0.20	0.32	0.08	0.39	<b>0.50</b>
Age at first non-sexual conviction						
Under 20	0.12	0.47	0.18	<b>0.58</b>	0.21	0.12
20-29	0.28	0.31	0.35	0.29	0.30	0.34
30-39	0.22	0.14	0.22	0.10	0.22	0.28
40+	0.38	0.07	0.25	0.03	0.27	0.26
Number of sexual convictions						
1	<b>0.93</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>0.87</b>	<b>0.96</b>	<b>0.97</b>	<b>0.98</b>
2	0.06	0.10	0.10	0.04	0.03	0.02
3+	0.01	0.06	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00
Number of non-sexual convictions						
1	<b>0.62</b>	0.00	<b>0.58</b>	0.00	<b>0.61</b>	<b>0.70</b>
2	0.27	0.00	0.30	0.00	0.31	0.22
3+	0.11	<b>1.00</b>	0.12	<b>1.00</b>	0.08	0.08
Estimated class population share	0.24	0.12	0.13	0.12	0.31	0.08
Predicted class membership	0.24	0.12	0.13	0.12	0.30	0.08

Table 17: Item-response probabilities for Model 3, 6 classes

By the seven class model, however, instead of the generalist sexual assault/indecent exposure ‘separating out’ into two generalist classes with a high

probability of sexual assault and indecent exposure respectively (plus non-sexual convictions), this class remained whilst a new class with moderately low probabilities of sexual assault (0.35), indecent exposure (0.30) and rape (0.44) plus non-sexual convictions emerged (see *Appendix 2* for table of item-response probabilities). This may indicate a lower level of latent class homogeneity, since individuals in this group do not have high probabilities of convictions for any one sexual offence.

In the eight class model, the three generalist classes from Model 1 had now appeared (generalist sexual assault, rape and indecent exposure). A new specialist class with moderate probabilities of being convicted of sexual assault (0.60) and rape (0.68) emerged (although this class had low-moderate probabilities of non-sexual offences (0.20 for violence, 0.19 for theft and 0.36 for disorder, threats and breach of the peace) and so perhaps it is not appropriate to label it a 'specialist' class). This class did not appear in Model 1.

In terms of the age groups, in the six, seven and eight class versions of Model 3 there were two classes which had moderate probabilities of having a first sexual conviction over the age of 40 in each model (specialist sexual assault and specialist indecent photos). The age at first convictions tended to have poor latent class homogeneity (since few of the probabilities were particularly high), indicating that this may be a poorer model. It is also interesting to note that the age patterns for first sexual convictions for the groups did not match age patterns for first non-sexual convictions, and this will be explored further in Chapter 6. The frequencies

of convictions tended to display more defined patterns. Probabilities for frequency of sexual convictions tended to approach 1, with the exception of the sexual assault and rape specialist group in the eight class model (which had a 0.74 probability of two convictions). There was better latent class separation in the frequencies of non-sexual convictions, reflecting the specialist vs generalist classes.

Overall, Model 3 appeared to have more poorly defined latent class homogeneity than Model 1 and Model 2. For this reason it was assessed that Model 1 is still the best model.

#### *Model 4 (ages only)*

Model 4 introduced age group at first conviction as well as offence types to the model, but excluded frequency of conviction. For this model, the patterns when adding additional classes were very similar to Model 1, with the four specialist and three generalist classes emerging by the seven class model, and poor latent class separation in the model with eight classes. Relative model fit statistics stabilised after seven classes. The specialist rape class appeared to separate out into two classes in the eight class model; one with a younger age at first sexual conviction and one with an older age at first sexual conviction.

#### *Model 5 (frequencies only)*

In Model 5 frequency of convictions were introduced along with offence types (but excluding age groups). Again, in Model 5 the relative model fit statistics started to

stabilise after seven/eight classes. In the six class model, there were four specialist classes, plus the sexual assault/rape specialist class with probabilities of 0.57 and 0.63 respectively (which was also apparent in the eight class version of Model 3). In addition to this, there was one generalist class: generalist rape. In the seven class model, there were four specialist classes plus the sexual assault/rape specialist class (with probabilities of 0.57 and 0.67 respectively), plus a rape generalist class (see *Table 18*).

Model 5							
Item-response probabilities		7 classes					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sexual assault	0.49	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	<b>0.57</b>	<b>1.00</b>
Indecent exposure	0.49	0.00	<b>1.00</b>	0.00	0.00	0.38	0.00
Rape	0.07	0.00	0.00	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>0.67</b>	0.00
Indecent photos	0.02	<b>0.91</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.13	0.00
Indecent communications	0.01	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00
Sexual coercion	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00
Violence	<b>0.75</b>	0.03	0.09	0.10	<b>0.75</b>	0.14	0.09
Theft	<b>0.64</b>	0.04	0.06	0.09	<b>0.69</b>	0.14	0.06
Disorder, threats and BOP	<b>0.84</b>	0.05	0.15	0.09	<b>0.76</b>	0.31	0.10
Drugs	0.31	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.31	0.02	0.02
Vandalism	0.43	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.43	0.07	0.03
HB	0.23	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.32	0.02	0.01
Weapons	0.25	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.23	0.03	0.01
Prostitution	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00
Other	0.34	0.05	0.03	0.04	0.29	0.18	0.05
Number of sexual convictions							
1	<b>0.87</b>	<b>0.98</b>	<b>0.96</b>	<b>0.99</b>	<b>0.96</b>	0.00	<b>0.99</b>
2	0.09	0.02	0.04	0.01	0.04	<b>0.78</b>	0.01
3+	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.22	0.00
Number of non-sexual convictions							
1	0.00	<b>0.70</b>	<b>0.63</b>	<b>0.65</b>	0.00	0.37	<b>0.64</b>
2	0.00	0.22	0.28	0.32	0.00	0.36	0.25
3+	<b>1.00</b>	0.08	0.10	0.02	<b>1.00</b>	0.27	0.11
Estimated class population share							
Predicted class membership	0.12	0.08	0.11	0.29	0.13	0.03	0.23

Table 18: Item-response probabilities for Model 5, 7 classes

A sexual assault/indecent exposure generalist class also emerged with probabilities of 0.49 for both crime types (plus high probabilities of non-sexual convictions). This difference in pattern appears to be driven by the frequency of non-sexual convictions, where for the sexual assault/indecent exposure generalist

class the probability of having been convicted of three or more non-sexual convictions was 1. The eight class model had the four specialist classes and the three generalist classes, with the addition of the sexual assault/rape specialist class. This model began to diverge from good latent class homogeneity at this stage, with the sexual assault/rape specialist class only having moderate probabilities for any item response (a maximum of 0.74).

Overall Model 5 was stronger than Model 4, with the seven class model appearing to be the best fit. This indicates that number of convictions was a better indicator of the latent classes than age at first conviction. Very similar classes continued to appear regardless of model construction. On balance, however, the most parsimonious continued to be Model 1.

#### *Introducing covariates*

Instead of including variables in the model as item-response categories, additional information (age at first conviction and number of convictions) can be introduced in the form of covariates. Covariates can be interpreted as being able to predict group membership, and are essentially introduced by using the class as the dependent variable in a multinomial logistic regression. This would tell us, for instance, the odds (and by extension the probability) of being in a particular class compared to another for each increase in year of age, or for each number of conviction, or in other words how well age at first conviction and frequency of conviction can predict which class a person belongs to.

Introducing covariates can be done in a number of ways. Firstly, the model can simultaneously estimate the latent classes, as well as the relationship between the covariates and class membership (the 'one-step' approach). A primary advantage of this method is that since each individual is not assigned a class (this is done probabilistically), the risk of measurement error in this respect is removed. A key disadvantage is that since the covariates are estimated simultaneously with the rest of the model, this may change the size and characteristics of the latent classes, compared to running it without the covariates. From a conceptual basis, some researchers view the fact that the model is not built before the covariates are added as not a logical step in the research process (Vermunt, 2010). The one-step method is possible in R and was attempted with this data however the models consistently failed to converge after large amounts of time.

### *Three-step methods*

Alternatively, there are various types of three-step methods which introduce covariates by first running a latent class model, assigning each individual to a class and then running another model which predicts class membership from the covariates. Three-step methods have been shown to perform equally well as the one-step method (Asparouhov and Muthen, 2014). The simplest three-step method is to assign each individual to their most likely class (according to their individual class membership probabilities) and then perform a multinomial logistic regression. However, since this involves assigning each individual in the dataset to a class (and this may be wrong), this method runs the risk of class mis-specification. Furthermore, it does not account for uncertainty in the latent class

parameters, since this was only an estimate in step one yet this was used to estimate the individual-specific probabilities. Various other three-step methods provide a more accurate way of estimating the effects of covariates.

#### *Pseudo draw method*

The three-step method chosen for this research was the pseudo-draw method outlined by Wang, Brown et al. (2005). This method was chosen because firstly, it accounts for mis-classification error, and secondly it was possible within the R software. Comparisons of three-step methods have shown that this method performs well in terms of estimating the impact of covariates on latent class models (Clark and Muthen, 2009). This method assigns individuals to their most likely class, however it does this multiple times in a probabilistic manner. This means that, for instance, if a person has a 0.60 probability of being in class 1, a 0.30 probability of being in class 2, and a 0.10 probability of being in class 3, a class is chosen at random which reflects those particular probabilities. The resulting dependent variables are then analysed as the response of a multinomial logistic regression. Parameter estimates are combined (using Rubin's Rules (Rubin,1987)) to produce the mean across all the draws<sup>5</sup>. Therefore this method reduces the risk of class mis-specification, however, it should be borne in mind that it does not address the issue of uncertainty in parameter estimates. The covariate approach is now attempted (*Model 6*), using the three-step pseudo-draw method, based on the latent classes selected for Model 1.

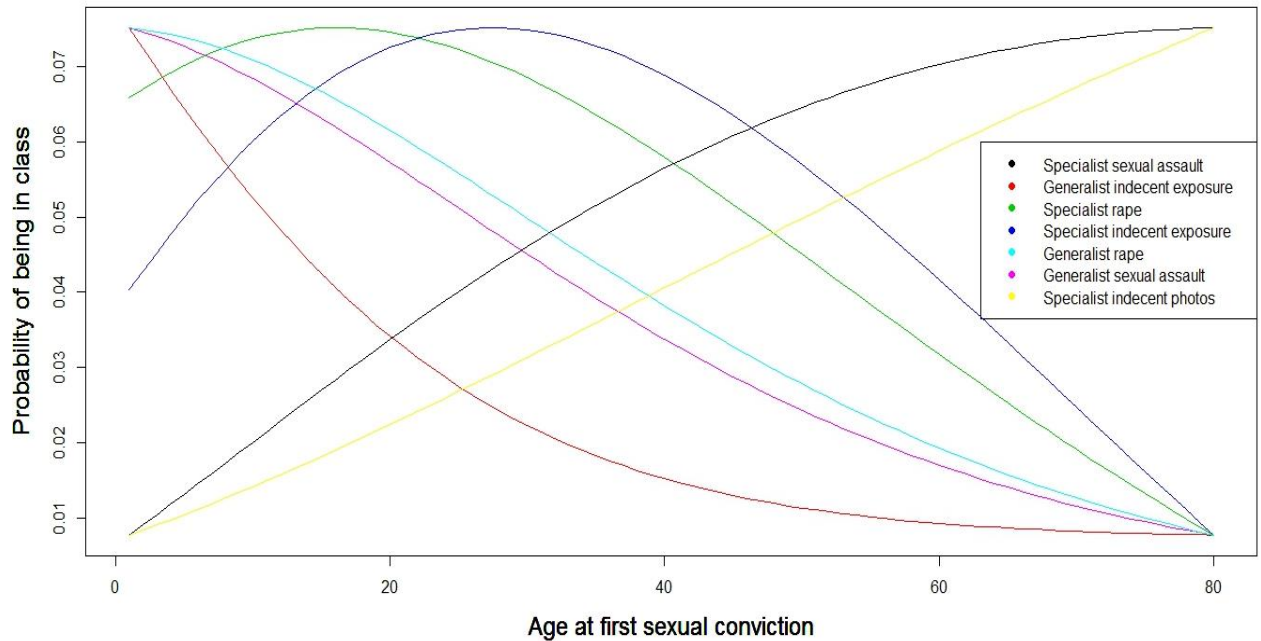
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<sup>5</sup> Rubin's Rules are a way of combining multiple statistical results, developed for multiple imputation processes.



### *Model 6 (including covariates)*

We can graph the estimated probabilities of belonging to each class for the different covariates. *Graph 15* shows the probability of being to each of the classes as age at first sexual conviction increases.

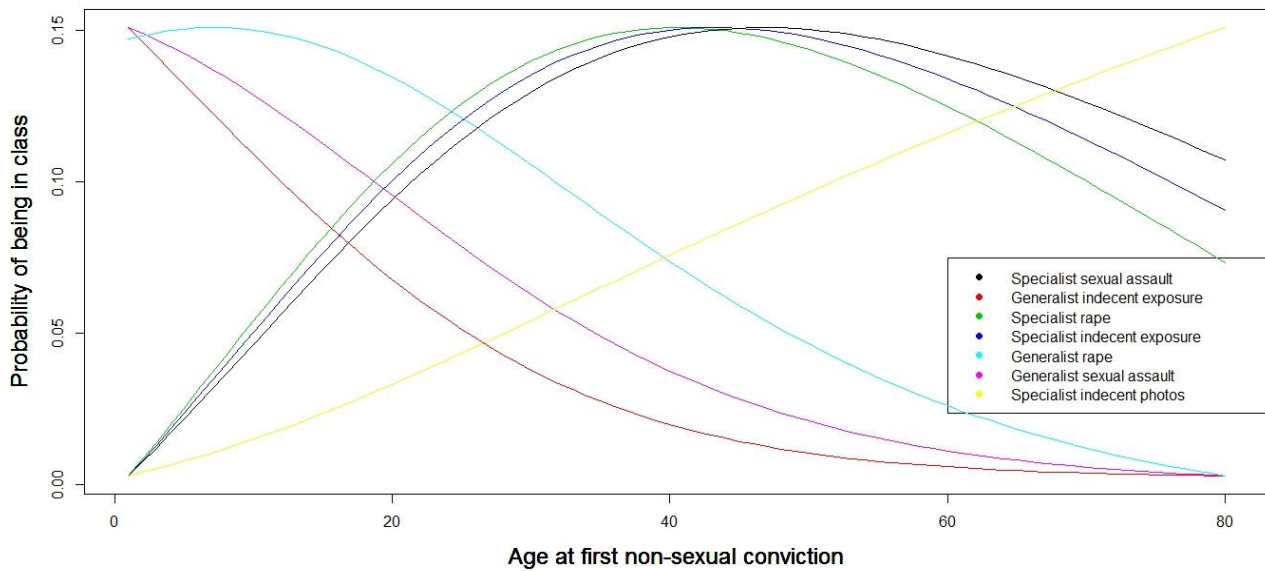


*Graph 15: Probability of belonging to each class by age at first sexual conviction*

The probability of being in a generalist class decreased as age increased, indicating that most people in generalist classes began their sexual conviction history at an early age: convictions then declined over time. There was an increased probability of being in the specialist sexual assault and specialist indecent photos classes as age at first sexual conviction increased, whereas the peak probability of being in the specialist indecent exposure or specialist rape classes was between 20 and 30. This indicates that those in the specialist sexual assault and indecent photos classes were more likely to receive a first sexual conviction later in life. However,

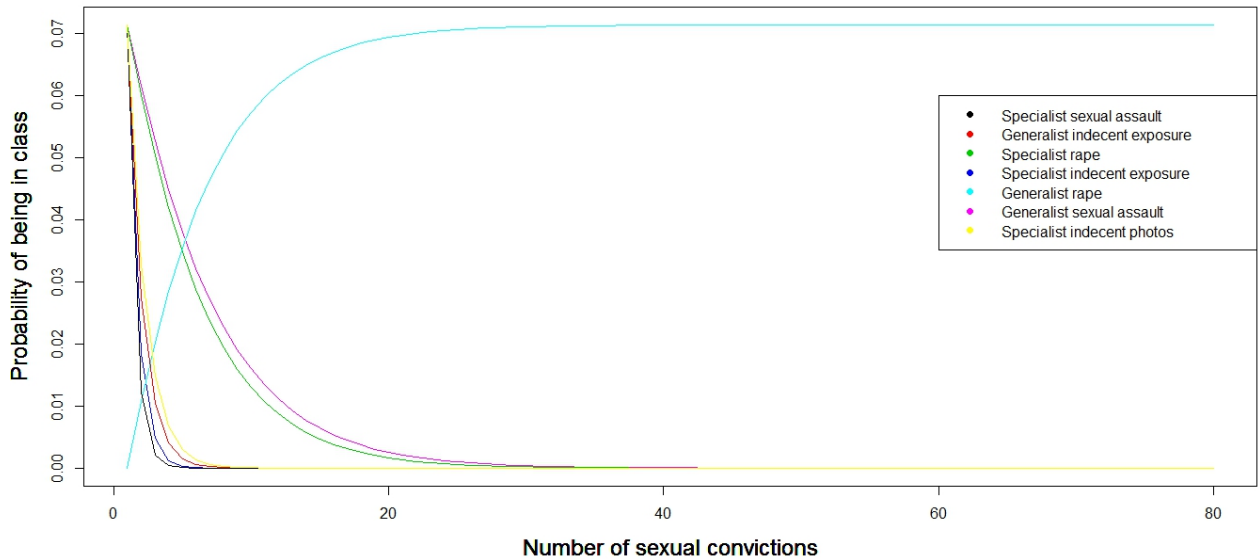
the probabilities were generally low for this covariate, suggesting age at first sexual conviction was not a strong predictor of group membership.

*Graph 16* shows the estimated probabilities of belonging to each class as age at first non-sexual conviction increases. The probability of belonging to a specialist class increased as the age at first non-sexual conviction increased. Within this, the probability of belonging to the specialist indecent photos class continued to increase as the age at first non-sexual conviction increased, whilst the probability of belonging to the other specialist classes decreased after the early 40s age group. The probability of belonging to the generalist classes decreased as the age at first non-sexual conviction increased. Overall, this means that for those in specialist classes, if they were convicted of non-sexual offences, they tended to be convicted at an older age, particularly those in the specialist indecent photos class. Those in the generalist classes began their non-sexual conviction history at an earlier age, which is consistent with conviction patterns for people without sexual convictions. Age at first non-sexual conviction was generally a slightly better predictor of class membership than age at first sexual conviction.



*Graph 16: Probability of belonging to each class by age at first sexual conviction*

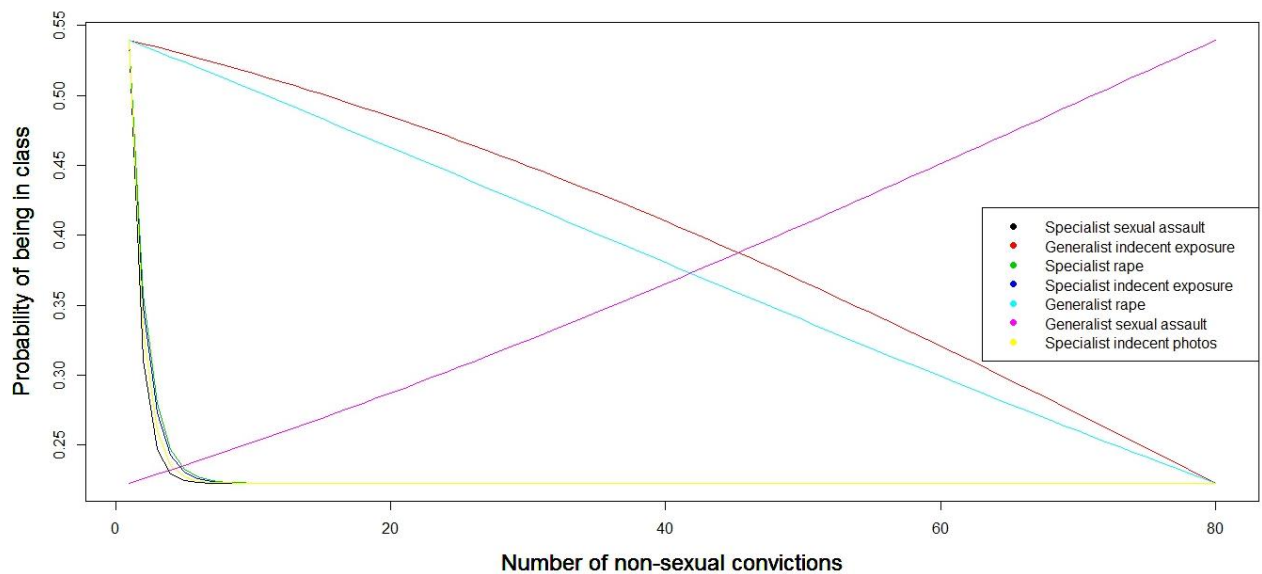
*Graph 17* shows the estimated probabilities of belonging to each class as the number of sexual convictions increased. As comparatively few people within the dataset had more than one sexual conviction, the probability of being in each class rapidly decreased as the number of sexual convictions increased, indicating that individuals in most groups were unlikely to have been convicted of more than one sexual offence. The exception to this is the generalist rape class, where the probability of being in this class increased as the number of convictions increased, then continued to remain high. This indicates that those in the generalist rape class were more likely than those in other classes to have more than one conviction for a sexual offence. Again, probabilities were generally low, meaning that this covariate was a poor predictor of class membership.



*Graph 17: Probability of belonging to each class by number of sexual convictions*

The final graph (*Graph 18*), shows the probability of being in each class as the number of non-sexual convictions increased. As would be expected, the probability of being in a specialist class rapidly decreased with the number of non-sexual convictions, meaning that most people in the specialist classes have a low number of (if any) non-sexual convictions. The probability of being in the generalist indecent exposure and rape classes decreased more gradually as the number of non-sexual convictions increased, meaning that people in these classes were less likely to have a high number of convictions for non-sexual offences, although this is more likely than for those in the specialist classes. The probability of being in the generalist sexual assault class increased as the number of convictions increased, indicating that individuals in this class were the most likely of all the classes to have a high number of non-sexual convictions. This covariate is the best predictor of class membership out of all the covariates, which is

consistent with theories which suggest that there is a link between sexual and non-sexual offending.



*Graph 18: Probability of belonging to each class by number of non-sexual convictions*

Whilst this method of introducing covariates is the most statistically robust technique and has shown some interesting patterns, there is a final method of analysing additional information within the classes which allows for more flexibility of analysis (for example in being able to present graphs of all convictions rather than just the first conviction) and furthermore, enables the inclusion of further information which it is not possible to include either as covariates or as additional item-response probabilities. The next section will discuss this technique.

### *Assignment of individuals to classes*

As discussed, it is possible to assign individuals to latent classes based on their most likely class, to enable further analysis of characteristics within the groups. Whilst this is often not advised due to the risk of classification uncertainty, Collins and Lanza (2010) stated that in their view it is acceptable in cases where 'homogeneity and latent class separation are sufficient to ensure a high degree of certainty' (p68). I have argued that in most models analysed in this chapter there has been a high level of latent class separation and latent class homogeneity. Moreover, since this thesis is exploratory, Collins and Lanza (2010) advised that this is another reason that the class assignment method is acceptable. Furthermore, in this research it was desirable to be able to analyse certain characteristics of the groups without including them into the model. In the SOI, some additional information is held regarding the age and gender of the victim, since some offence codes are age- and gender-specific (for example rape of older male child (13-15 years)). This information is not complete for all cases, particularly for older offences prior to the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009, and hence it was not possible to include this information directly into the model. Nevertheless, it is extremely beneficial to explore patterns of offences relating to age and gender of the victim in the different groups, even if statistical conclusions may not necessarily be drawn from them.

As this analysis was exploratory and in order to include the additional information relating to victims, I decided that the pseudo draw method of the classify-analyse approach was the most appropriate method of introducing the additional

information. This method of the classify-analyse approach assigns individuals to a class at random, according to individual-specific class membership probabilities (similar to the first stage of the pseudo draw method of class assignment (Wang, Brown et al., 2005)), and deals with class mis-specification by combining estimates of multiple class assignments. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 6, using this approach did not alter the interpretation of the age at conviction and number of convictions, and furthermore enabled some more detailed analysis, including information relating to victims. Moreover, I felt that this approach enabled presentation of this information in a way that was easier to interpret.

## **5.5 Summary of model selection and model decision**

In this chapter I have outlined the steps I took in the model building process, and attempted to justify my decisions for choosing the final model, which was the seven class version of Model 1, using the pseudo draw method to employ a classify-analyse approach to analyse additional detail about the classes.

Overall, the model selection process resulted in similar classes regardless of which model had been developed, indicating that there is a strong likelihood that underlying classes exist. These tend to be demarcated into ‘specialist’ and ‘generalist’ classes, i.e. based on sexual crime type plus whether or not the individual had also been convicted of non-sexual offences (generally violence, theft, and disorder/threats/breach of the peace). Collapsing the categories to eight crime type groups did not substantially alter the groups (hence Model 1 was chosen over Model 2). Inclusion of additional item response probabilities of age

and number of convictions resulted in slightly different class patterns, however these did not substantially change the nature of the classes, were generally not strong predictors of class or had poorer latent class homogeneity than Model 1 (hence Model 1 was chosen over Models 3, 4 and 5).

Introducing covariates (Model 6) as part of a three-step process is a more statistically robust method of examining additional variables, however this method was not chosen for several reasons. Firstly, it was desirable to analyse additional information relating to victim type which would not be possible using a covariate approach. Secondly, the classify-analyse approach chosen allowed for more flexible analysis of age and frequency patterns. Finally, comparing the two approaches did not result in substantially different results. For these reasons the seven class version of Model 1, using the pseudo-draw version of the classify-analyse approach to conduct exploratory analysis on the classes, was selected for future analysis in this research. The next chapter (Chapter 6) will explore more detailed characteristics of the classes, in order to compare the classes and consider what the differences and similarities may mean in terms of comparing different theories of sexual offending.



## **Chapter 6: Typologies of offending behaviour: Analysis of the latent classes**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter outlined the process for constructing the latent class model, and demonstrated why the final seven class model was chosen. The chapter also explained that for this particular research it was desirable to assign individuals to latent classes based on their most likely class, to enable further analysis of characteristics within the groups which it was neither possible nor helpful to include in the model. This chapter will provide comment on the characteristics of the different classes; in particular age patterns, frequency of convictions, patterns of first and second convictions, non-sexual conviction patterns, and relationship between sexual and non-sexual conviction patterns. The chapter will then analyse these patterns in a theoretical context, providing comment on what these patterns may mean in terms of why a person would follow a particular offence pattern, why they would offend at a particular time in their life, and whether any relationships between sexual and non-sexual offending can provide support for particular causes of offending or desistance. The analysis in this chapter had several interesting findings which are summarised below.

In all classes the majority of individuals only had one sexual conviction. This means that most people with a sexual conviction do not go on to be reconvicted of another sexual offence. Neither was there evidence of escalation into sexual offending. There was evidence of specialisation in the classes, both in terms of the fact that there were four distinct classes of offender who had generally only

been convicted of sexual offences, and also in terms of the fact that very few people were convicted of different types of sexual offences (although this may be due to the fact most people only have one conviction). The data suggested a heterogeneity of offender types, which is supported by the multifactorial theories into sexual offending behaviour.

For most classes, the peak age for sexual and non-sexual convictions was the early 20s age group followed by a steep decline, which is consistent with patterns of non-sexual offending (and this pattern was most marked in the generalist groups). This suggests that offending behaviour may be age-dependent. For two classes (specialist sexual assault and specialist indecent photos), offending behaviour was more stable over time, and these groups may have different underlying motivations to offend. However, for most people the data in this research does not support the idea that offending behaviour is stable over time for those who have been convicted of sexual offences.

The generalist classes tended to be prolific non-sexual offenders with only a small number of sexual convictions, suggesting that their 'primary' offending was non-sexual. However, the fact that this was only true for some people (the generalist groups) suggests that being involved in non-sexual offending is only one of many offending pathways. Convictions for sexual and non-sexual offences occurred at similar ages for the classes. This may indicate at least a situational trigger for the offences (or convictions), which is similar for both sexual and non-sexual

offending. This is also consistent with a life-course perspective, and suggests similar motivations or triggers for sexual and non-sexual offending.

## **6.2 Overview of model**

A reminder of the item-response probabilities for the model are shown in *Table 19*. There are four classes in which members of the class had a probability of 1 (or close to 1) of having been convicted of the following offences: sexual assault, indecent exposure, rape and indecent photos, however had very small probabilities of having been convicted of any other offences. These groups may be considered 'specialist' classes of sexual offenders, although their specialisation is largely due to the fact that they received only one conviction. In addition to this there were three 'generalist' classes where members had a high probability of being convicted of at least one sexual crime (namely sexual assault, indecent exposure and rape), and a relatively high probability of having been convicted of one or more non-sexual offences (violence, theft and disorder/threats/breach of the peace).

The estimated class population share shows that the largest classes were specialist rape (estimated 31% of the population share) and specialist sexual assault (estimated 24% of the population share). The smallest classes were generalist indecent exposure and generalist sexual assault (with an estimated 5% and 7% of the population share respectively). Specialist classes were generally larger than generalist classes, and comprised 76% of the dataset overall.

	Spec. sex. asst.	Spec. rape	Spec. ind. exp.	Spec. ind. photos	Gen. rape	Gen. sex. asst	Gen. ind. exp.
<b>Sex. asst</b>	<b>1.00</b>	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	<b>1.00</b>	0.00
<b>Ind. exp.</b>	0.00	0.00	<b>1.00</b>	0.00	0.01	0.07	<b>0.97</b>
<b>Rape</b>	0.03	<b>1.00</b>	0.05	0.00	<b>1.00</b>	0.11	0.04
<b>Ind.</b>	0.01	0.01	0.00	<b>0.91</b>	0.00	0.00	0.02
<b>photos</b>							
<b>Ind.</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.02
<b>comms.</b>							
<b>Sexual coercion</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Violence</b>	0.09	0.11	0.10	0.04	<b>0.77</b>	<b>0.73</b>	<b>0.76</b>
<b>Theft</b>	0.06	0.10	0.07	0.05	<b>0.69</b>	<b>0.60</b>	<b>0.64</b>
<b>Disorder, threats &amp; BOP</b>	0.09	0.11	0.18	0.06	<b>0.76</b>	<b>0.77</b>	<b>0.86</b>
<b>Drugs</b>	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.33	0.23	0.37
<b>Vandalism</b>	0.02	0.04	0.04	0.02	0.45	0.40	0.45
<b>HB</b>	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.34	0.24	0.20
<b>Weapons</b>	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.25	0.19	0.30
<b>Prost.</b>	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.07
<b>Other</b>	0.06	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.30	0.35	0.33
<b>Estimated class population share</b>	0.24	0.31	0.13	0.08	0.12	0.07	0.05
<b>Predicted class membership</b>	0.24	0.32	0.14	0.08	0.11	0.07	0.05

*Table 19: Item response probabilities plus additional summary statistics for classes*

### 6.3 Age profiles

#### *Age at first conviction*

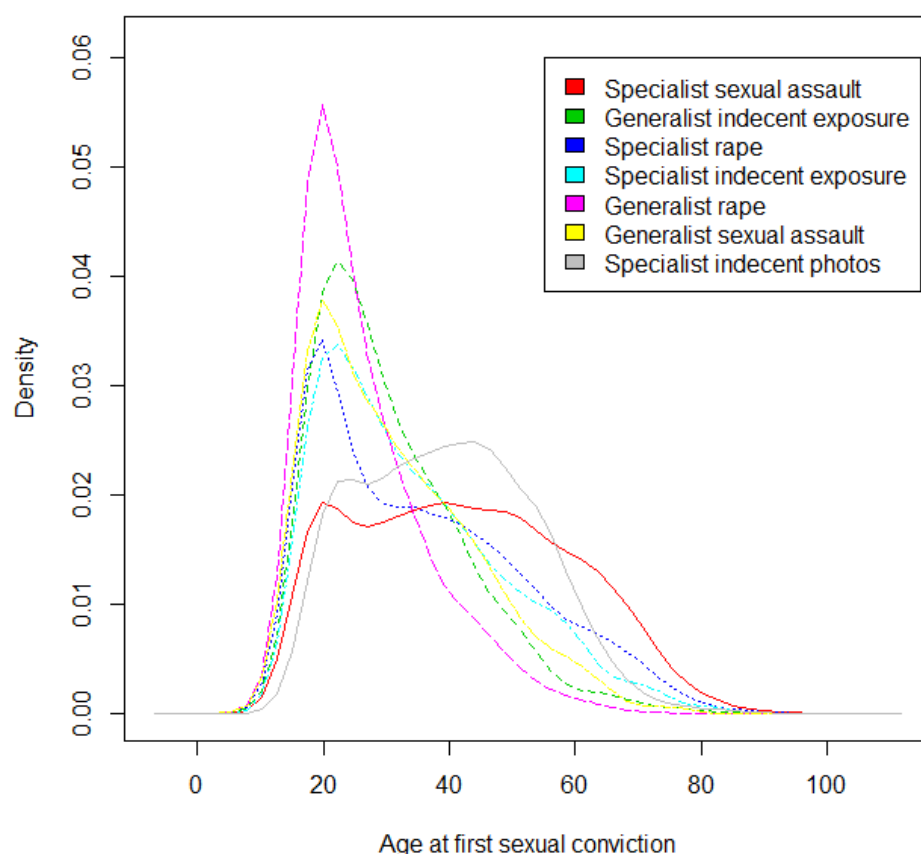
*Table 20* shows the mean age at first conviction for the different classes (ordered by age). For all classes, the mean age at first sexual conviction was higher than the mean age at first non-sexual conviction, meaning that a person was likely to be older on average when they received a conviction for sexual offending than other types of offending. Potential reasons for this will be explored later in the chapter.

Mean age was variable across classes, with the lowest mean age at first sexual conviction being for the generalist rape class ( $M=26.1$ ), and the highest being for the specialist sexual assault class ( $M=42.1$ ). However, the between-class differences were stable, meaning that classes which had a high mean age at first sexual conviction also had a high mean age at first non-sexual conviction. On looking at the ordering in *Table 20*, generalist classes all had a lower mean age at first conviction than the specialist classes.

	Mean age at first sexual conviction (SD)	Mean age at first non-sexual conviction (SD)
<b>Specialist sexual assault</b>	42.1 (16.9)	35.3 (14.6)
<b>Specialist indecent photos</b>	39.6 (13.4)	31.0 (10.8)
<b>Specialist rape</b>	35.6 (16.2)	30.7 (13.3)
<b>Specialist indecent exposure</b>	34.1 (14.2)	30.5 (12.5)
<b>Generalist sexual assault</b>	31.2 (12.7)	25.5 (10.6)
<b>Generalist indecent exposure</b>	30.5 (11.6)	23.7 (9.4)
<b>Generalist rape</b>	26.1 (9.9)	22.6 (8.4)

*Table 20: Mean ages at first conviction*

Graphs 19 and 20 show comparisons of kernel density plots of ages at first conviction for the different classes. A kernel density estimate is a non-parametric method of estimating the probability density function (i.e. the probability that the first conviction would occur between each age group on the x axis).

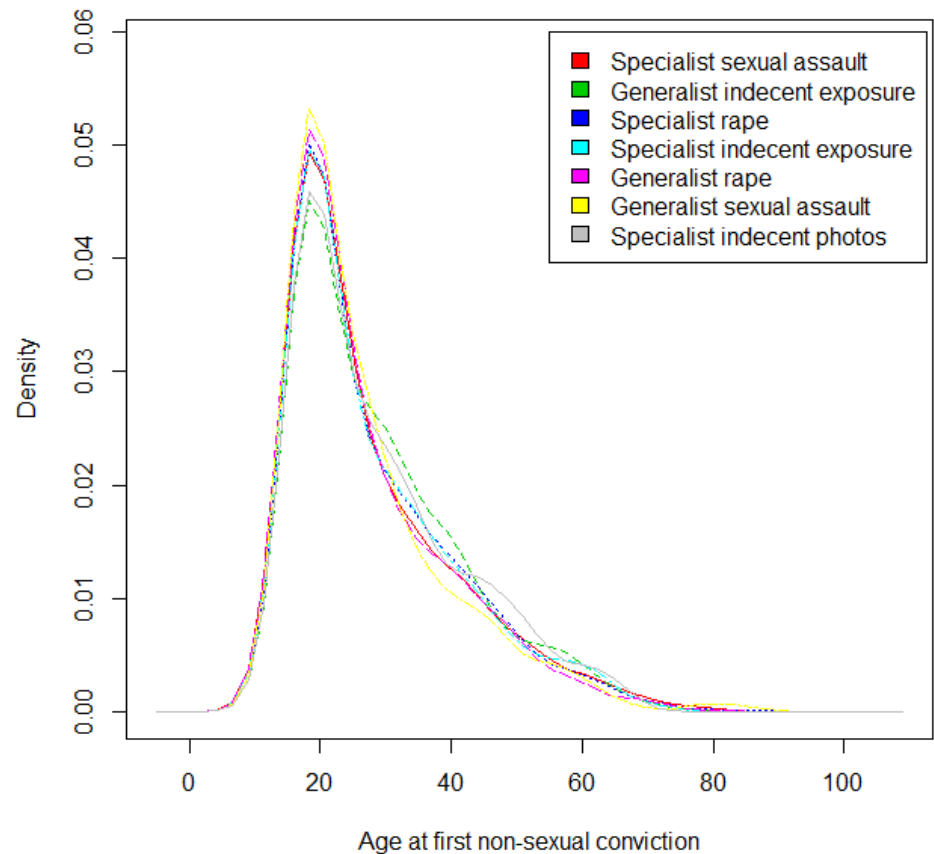


Graph 19: Kernel density estimates for age at first sexual conviction

There were different patterns for age at first sexual conviction for the different classes (Graph 19). Most of the classes had a peak probability of first conviction around the early 20s age group, which is consistent with conviction patterns in general, with the generalist rape class displaying the most marked of these patterns with the highest peak. Overall, age patterns for the generalist classes

were similar to age patterns for those with no sexual convictions (as detailed in *Graph 1*). For two of the classes (specialist sexual assault and specialist indecent photos), the pattern was very different, with no particular peak age, the probability being high from the early 20s to the early 50s, and the specialist indecent photos class peaking in the 40s age group. This suggests that, unlike the other classes, conviction patterns for these two classes were not limited to one specific age.

For age at first conviction for non-sexual offences, however (*Graph 20*), the patterns were remarkably similar for all classes, with all classes showing a relatively steep peak in the early 20s age group followed by a steep decline thereafter. This means that whilst age at first conviction patterns were variable between the groups for sexual offences, patterns for age at first non-sexual conviction were homogenous between the groups.



*Graph 20: Kernel density estimates for age at first non-sexual conviction*

When examining the correlations between age at first sexual conviction and first non-sexual conviction, for each individual (*Table 21*) the correlations for each group were consistently high ( $\geq .79$ ). Hence whilst people in each class were likely to have been convicted of a sexual offence at an older age for sexual offences than for non-sexual offences, for each individual these convictions were likely to have occurred in broadly the same time period. With the exception of the specialist indecent photos class, specialist classes had slightly higher correlations between first sexual and first non-sexual conviction. This initially appears incongruent with the age graph for first sexual and non-sexual convictions, however this disparity is likely to be due to the low number of non-sexual convictions for members of the



specialist classes ( $M=0.5$ ). This means that many people do not have any non-sexual convictions but if they do, they are possibly people who have sexual convictions at an earlier age.

<b>Class</b>	<b>r (df)</b>
<b>Specialist rape</b>	0.87 (1266)
<b>Specialist sexual assault</b>	0.86 (818)
<b>Specialist indecent exposure</b>	0.85 (552)
<b>Generalist rape</b>	0.83 (1426)
<b>Generalist sexual assault</b>	0.83 (772)
<b>Generalist indecent exposure</b>	0.79 (619)
<b>Specialist indecent photos</b>	0.79 (192)

*Table 21: Correlations between age at first sexual and age at first non-sexual convictions*

#### *Ages at all convictions*

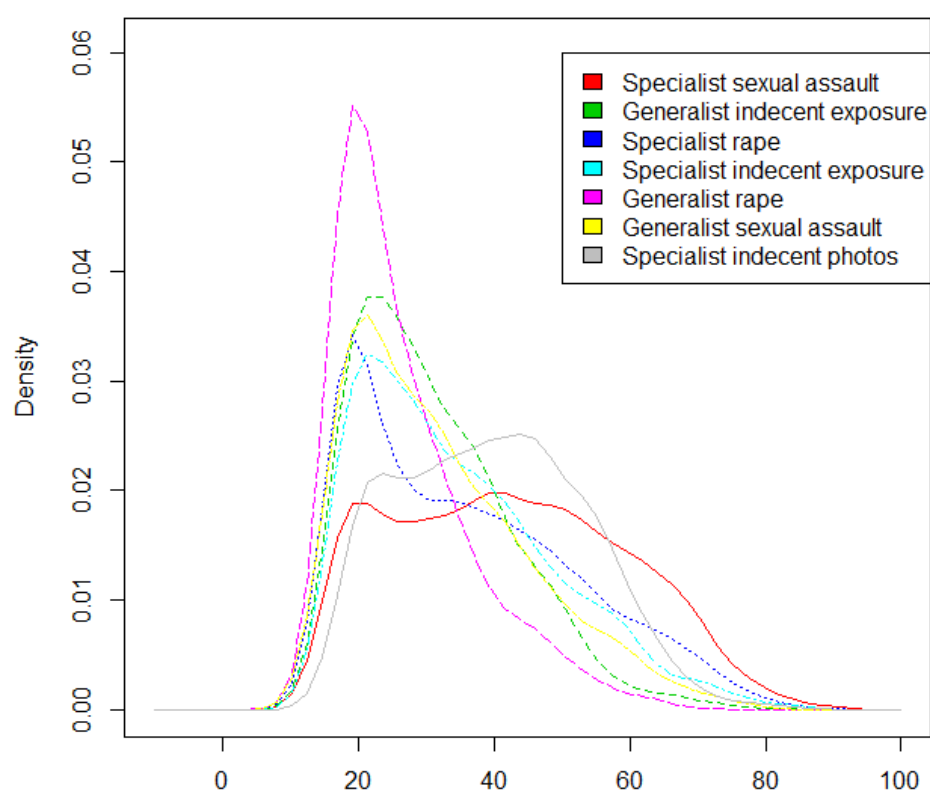
Table 22 shows mean ages for all convictions, for each class (ordered by mean age at sexual conviction), and displays similar patterns to those for the age at first conviction. Mean age for sexual conviction was older than for non-sexual conviction, with the exception of the generalist rape class, where the mean age was slightly older for non-sexual conviction. Specialist sexual assault again had the highest mean age for both categories of conviction, and generalist rape again had the lowest.

	<b>Mean age at sexual conviction (SD)</b>	<b>Mean age at non-sexual conviction (SD)</b>
<b>Specialist sexual assault</b>	42.2 (16.8)	35.1 (13.7)
<b>Specialist indecent photos</b>	39.6 (13.4)	32.2 (11.3)
<b>Specialist rape</b>	35.7 (16.2)	31.47 (13.1)
<b>Specialist indecent exposure</b>	34.6 (14.1)	32.6 (12.9)
<b>Generalist sexual assault</b>	32.2 (13.1)	30.0 (10.9)
<b>Generalist indecent exposure</b>	31.1 (11.4)	29.4 (10.6)
<b>Generalist rape</b>	26.4 (10.1)	26.9 (9.3)

*Table 22: Mean ages at conviction – overall*

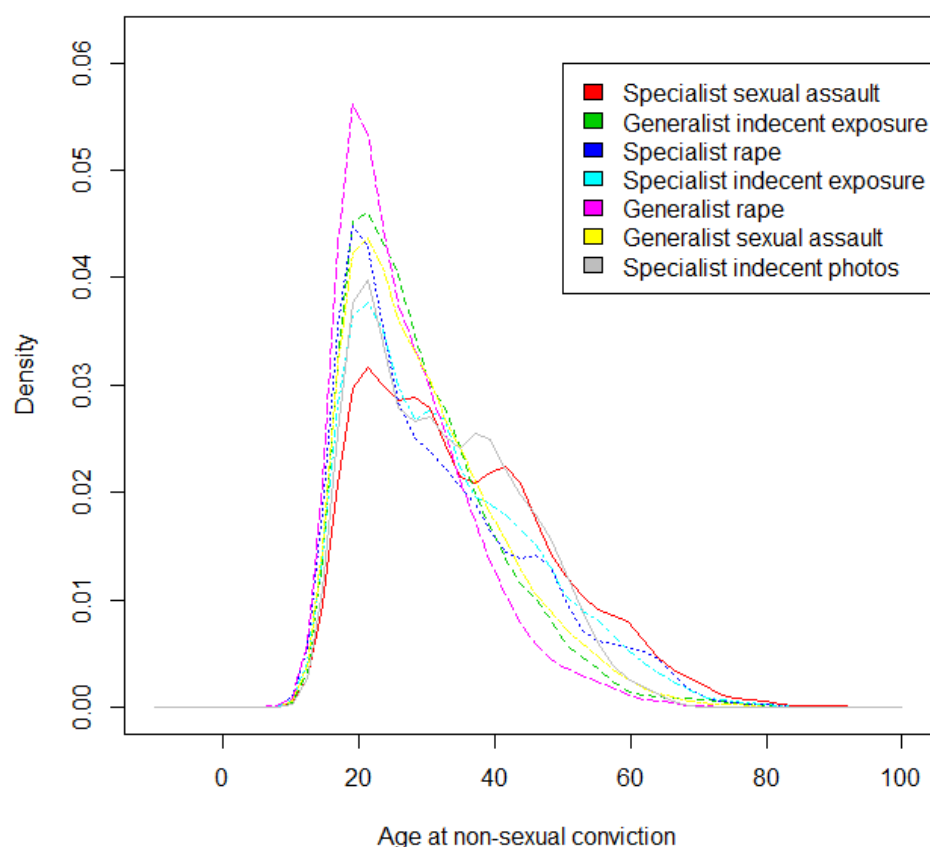
Overall, the generalist groups had lower mean ages at sexual and non-sexual conviction than the specialist groups, meaning that they were more likely to be convicted at a younger age.

*Graph 21* shows the kernel density estimate for age at all sexual convictions. Since most people only have one sexual conviction, this graph is very similar to the age at first conviction. There are two distinct developmental profiles emerging: those who are convicted in the early 20s age group but who have rapidly decreasing probability of being convicted after this (this pattern is more pronounced in the generalist classes plus specialist rape and specialist indecent exposure); and those for whom conviction appears less likely to be age-dependent (specialist sexual assault and indecent photos).



*Graph 21: Kernel density estimates for age at all sexual convictions*

*Graph 22* shows the age patterns for all non-sexual convictions. Patterns for non-sexual convictions between the classes were similar to those for sexual convictions, although the peaks for sexual convictions were less pronounced. Ages at all non-sexual convictions were more heterogeneous between the classes than ages at first non-sexual conviction. Peaks of non-sexual convictions were more pronounced in the early 20s age group, meaning that people were likely to be convicted of non-sexual offences at an early age, whereas the same was not true for sexual convictions: the age patterns were more dispersed across the life-course for at least some of the groups. The specialist sexual assault and specialist indecent photos classes appeared to have a second peak at an older age group for non-sexual offences (early 40s), and this mirrored the pattern for the ages of their sexual convictions.



*Graph 22: Kernel density estimates for age at all non-sexual convictions*

Overall, the generalist classes were convicted at an earlier age, both for sexual and non-sexual offences, whilst convictions for the specialist classes were more dispersed over different ages.

To summarise the findings of the age patterns, individuals in all groups appeared to be convicted of sexual and non-sexual offences at similar times in their lives, although it seemed that non-sexual convictions usually occurred first. The generalist classes were generally convicted at an earlier age, both for sexual and non-sexual offences, whilst convictions for the specialist classes were more dispersed over different ages, particularly specialist sexual assault and specialist indecent photos. Differences between sexual and non-sexual convictions were

particularly visible when looking at age at first conviction, where age patterns were homogeneous for all classes for non-sexual convictions, but displayed a more heterogeneous pattern for sexual convictions. This is possibly because those without any non-sexual offences were more likely to be convicted later in life. The implications of these patterns for theory will be discussed later in the chapter.

## 6.4 Frequency of convictions

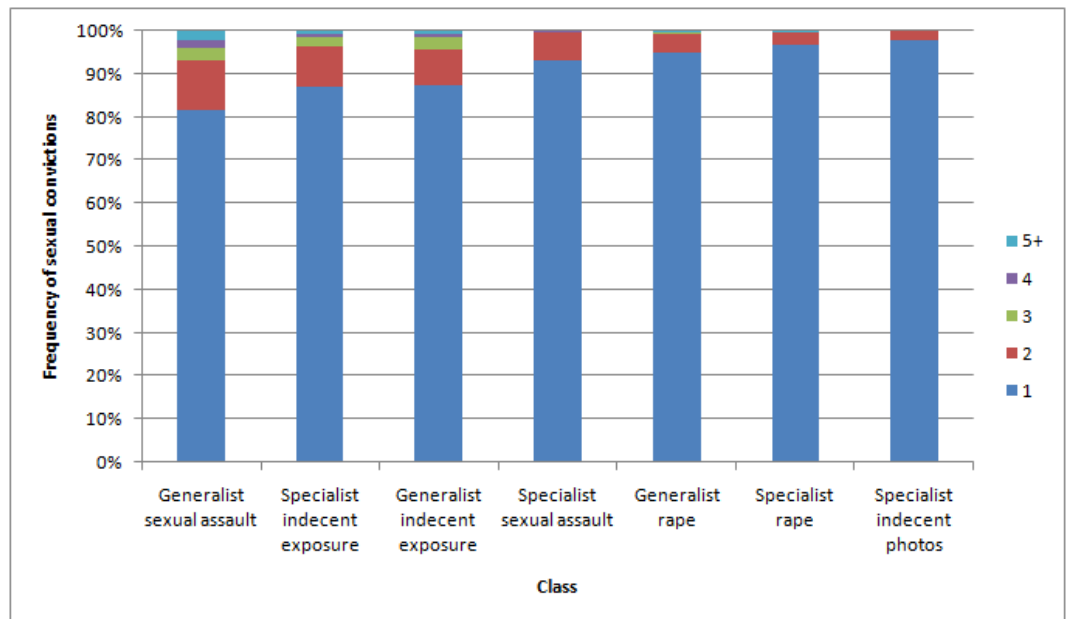
*Table 23* shows the mean number of sexual and non-sexual convictions for individuals estimated to be in each class (ordered by number of non-sexual convictions). As most people only had one sexual conviction, mean numbers were very low for sexual convictions, however the generalist groups tended to have a higher than average number of non-sexual convictions (overall people in the dataset had a mean of 3.4 convictions ( $SD=5.5$ )). This suggests that people in the generalist classes tended to be more prolific in terms of their non-sexual offending. Those in the generalist groups (with the exception of generalist rape) also tended to have slightly more convictions for sexual offences than those in the specialist groups, although this difference was not large.

	Mean number of sexual convictions (SD)	Mean number of non-sexual convictions (SD)
<b>Specialist indecent photos</b>	1.0 (0.2)	0.4 (1.1)
<b>Specialist sexual assault</b>	1.1 (0.3)	0.5 (1.0)
<b>Specialist rape</b>	1.0 (0.2)	0.7 (1.5)
<b>Specialist indecent exposure</b>	1.2 (0.7)	0.8 (1.7)
<b>Generalist sexual assault</b>	1.4 (1.1)	10.3 (11.8)
<b>Generalist rape</b>	1.1 (0.3)	10.7 (10.1)
<b>Generalist indecent exposure</b>	1.2 (0.6)	13.5 (14.7)

*Table 23: Frequency of convictions*

### *Frequency of sexual convictions*

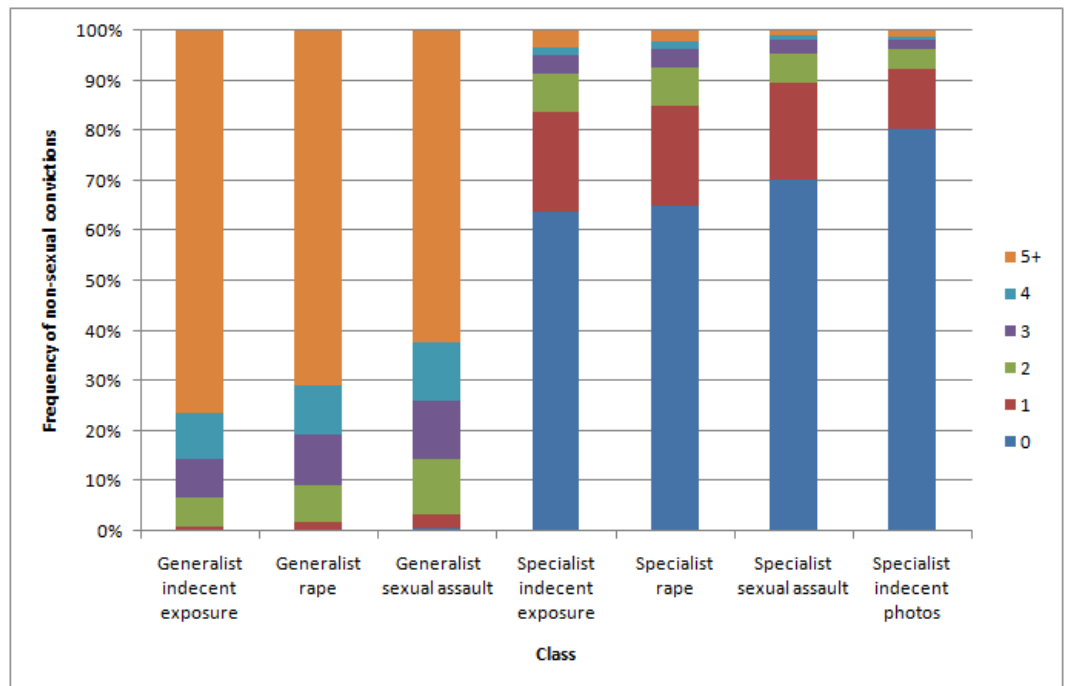
*Graph 23* shows the frequency of sexual convictions per class, expressed as percentages of the total number of estimated convictions for each class. In all classes the majority of individuals only had one conviction. The generalist sexual assault class had the highest percentage of individuals with more than one conviction, with 18% of people assessed to be in this class having more than one conviction, followed by the specialist indecent exposure class, with 13% of people assessed to be in this class having more than one conviction. The class with the fewest sexual convictions was the specialist indecent photos class, with only 2% of individuals estimated to be in this class having more than one conviction. There was less demarcation between specialist and generalist groups when looking at frequency of sexual convictions than when looking at age profiles. Offence type appeared to be a better predictor of frequency of sexual convictions, with both specialist and generalist sexual assault and indecent exposure classes having the highest comparative frequencies of sexual convictions.



*Graph 23: Frequency of sexual convictions per class*

#### *Frequency of non-sexual convictions*

*Graph 24* shows the estimated frequency of non-sexual convictions per individual in each group. Reflecting earlier patterns in the mean number of convictions, the generalist classes tended to have a high frequency of non-sexual convictions. In fact, for each of the three generalist groups, over 60% of individuals had five or more non-sexual convictions. This is in contrast to the dataset in general, where only 18% of people had five or more convictions. The generalist groups also had far more non-sexual than sexual convictions. This suggests that sexual offending was only part of a wider pattern of offending behaviour for the generalist classes, who appeared to be at the extreme end of the spectrum in terms of frequency of offending.



*Graph 24: Frequency of non-sexual convictions per class*

Hence, whilst it was true that some sexual offending was linked to a general propensity to offend (48% of people with a sexual conviction also had at least one non-sexual conviction), it also appears to be the case that for a smaller group (an estimated 24% of the dataset were in a generalist class) sexual offending is linked to a prolific pattern of more widespread offending behaviour. This is consistent with theories which suggest that general antisocial tendencies are linked to sexual offending, however this is not true for the majority of people with sexual convictions. There may be important theoretical conclusions to be drawn from this, and this will be discussed in Chapter 8. For example, this may suggest that the motivation to sexually offend for the generalist classes may be similar to the motive for non-sexual offending.

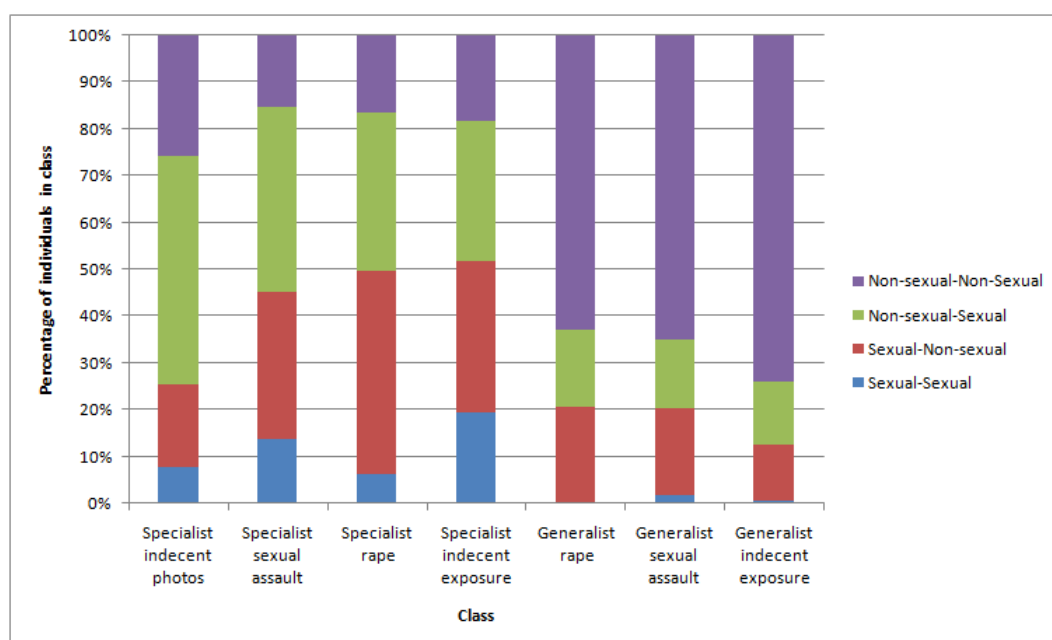


## 6.5 Other conviction patterns

### *Escalation into sexual offending and 'precursor' offences*

The concept of 'escalation' in the context of sexual offending may suggest three things: firstly, a person may begin their offending career with non-sexual offending then move on to sexual offending and cease the non-sexual offending; or secondly, that a person may progress to sexual offences whilst still committing a variety of offences. Finally, it may suggest escalation from more minor sexual offences to more serious ones.

Graph 25 shows the patterns of first and second offences, by proportion of each class, to illustrate where a sexual conviction occurred in the overall offence history (the graph shows only those with more than one conviction).



Graph 25: Patterns of first and second offences

For the generalist classes, the most predominant pattern was to have at least two non-sexual convictions prior to a sexual conviction (this occurred in over 60% of individuals in each of the generalist classes). This may indicate an 'escalation' into sexual offending, however since the frequency of their non-sexual convictions far outweighed the frequency of the sexual convictions, it is more likely that the sexual conviction was a small part of a larger overall offending pattern for the generalist classes. Similarly, there was no evidence that the most recent non-sexual convictions were of a more serious nature, or indeed that there was any particular pattern in terms of most recent convictions.

In Lussier, Tzoumakis et al.'s study (2010), for most people the onset of their sexual offences occurred at a time when their non-sexual criminal activity was slowing down. In this research on the other hand, in each of the generalist classes over 65% of individuals had a non-sexual conviction as their most recent conviction (and as previously discussed most of these individuals had two non-sexual convictions prior to a sexual conviction). This means that it did not appear that the sexual conviction occurred at the end of a pattern of non-sexual offending, either because their non-sexual offending had ceased or because a sexual offence had resulted in a lengthy prison sentence.

Across the specialist classes, approximately half of individuals (who had two or more convictions) had a sexual conviction as their first conviction, with the exception of specialist indecent photos where only 25% of individuals estimated to be in the class (who had more than one conviction) had a sexual conviction as

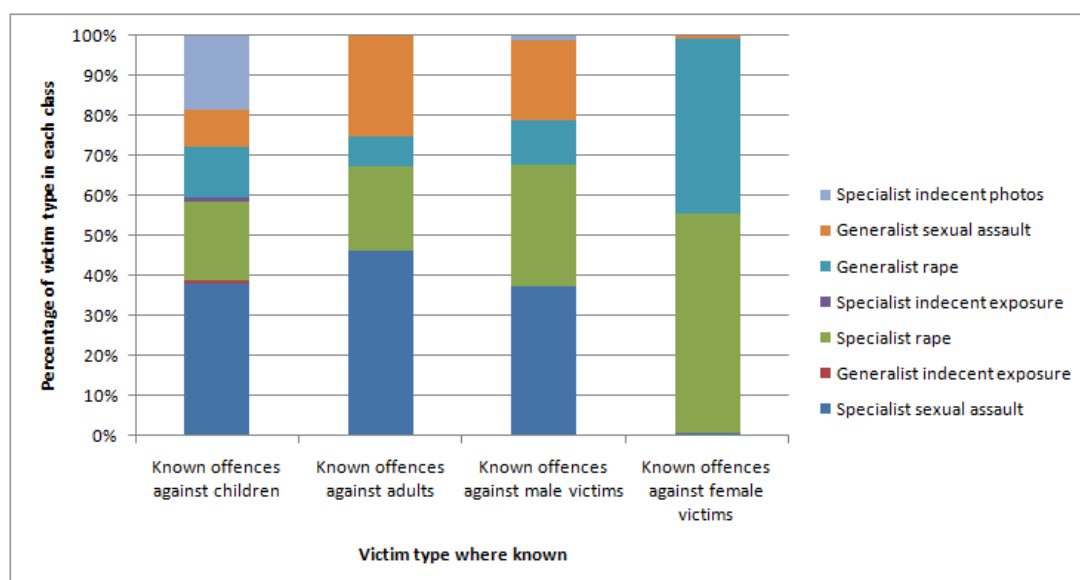
their first conviction (first convictions were a mix of theft, disorder/threats/breach of the peace, and violence). Therefore there were no clear patterns in terms of where the sexual offence occurred in the context of other offending for the specialist groups. It should also be borne in mind that 52% of people in the dataset only had sexual convictions.

To summarise, this exploratory analysis has shown that whilst, overall, the generalist classes were convicted of non-sexual offences first, there was no evidence of escalation into or out of sexual offending, or of any other patterns in relation to the time order of the convictions. The descriptive analysis in Chapter 4 also did not reveal any patterns in terms of the sequence of sexual offences. For this reason and due to the very small number of people with greater than two convictions, more complex sequence analysis was not conducted. Where a person had sexual and non-sexual convictions, the sexual convictions appeared to be a more arbitrary occurrence in terms of the overall offence pattern, although previous findings in this chapter have suggested that sexual and non-sexual offending are likely to occur at similar times in life for most individuals.

### *Victim types*

Whilst victim characteristics were not included in the dataset, some of the crime codes contained age and gender information, particularly after the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009. It was therefore possible to conduct some descriptive analysis on the groups using this information. 42% of sexual convictions in the dataset had an age indicator (n=5413) and 4% of convictions had

a gender indicator (n=486). The incomplete nature of these indicators is the reason it was not possible to include this information in the model, nevertheless these codes can offer some additional information. *Graph 26* shows the breakdown of class per victim type, where this information is known. It should be noted that this information is more often available for offences committed after 2009 (for convictions relating to historical offences the crime code would relate to the offence at the time the offence was committed), and also that for some crimes (particularly public indecency and indecent exposure), gender and age of victim is rarely specified. A child victim in this case is under age 16.



*Graph 26: Percentages of victim types, where known, per class*

Where an offence was known to have a child victim, 38% were committed by someone assessed to be in the specialist sexual assault class (only 24% of people were estimated to be in this class overall and so this is higher than expected). 19% were committed by someone assessed to be in the specialist indecent photos class

whilst this class comprised 13% of the dataset (this is expected since this offence relates specifically to children). Whilst these findings should be read with caution due to the incomplete coding, it is interesting that the classes which are potentially linked to offences against children are all specialist classes. Some research (e.g. Harris et al., 2009) has found that involvement in both sexual and non-sexual offending is more likely to be related to sexual offences against adults, and these findings are consistent with this, although further research on victim type would be necessary to further explore this.

Of offences where the victim was known to be an adult, 71% were committed by someone assessed to be in the generalist or specialist sexual assault classes (these classes made up 7% and 24% of the dataset respectively). Of offences where the victim was known to be female, 98% were committed by someone assessed to be in either the specialist or generalist rape classes (31% and 12% of the dataset). However, there are a low number of convictions where it is specified that a female was the victim (only 121 out of 12,871 sexual offences), despite there being many crime codes where it is possible to specify this, and hence this is possibly an artefact of the data.

## **6.6 Descriptive analysis of classes**

The following section will summarise the main findings for each class, prior to moving on to a discussion of overarching patterns and how these may provide comment on theories of causation and desistance.

### *Specialist rape*

This is the largest class, comprising an estimated 31% of the dataset. Individuals in this class have a probability of 1.00 of a conviction for rape (or attempted rape or sexual assault by penetration), and low probabilities ( $<.30$ ) of convictions for violence, theft, and disorder, threats and breach of the peace. This class has a very low mean number of sexual offences ( $M=1.0$ ) which means most people were only convicted once. This class had the highest correlation between age at first sexual and non-sexual conviction (.87). Hence convictions were most likely to be a 'one-off' event and individuals in this class were unlikely to be involved in other types of offending behaviour. This class was most likely to be convicted in their early 20s, however they may have been convicted at any point up until the age of approximately 60, as is consistent with the other specialist classes. This suggests that for this class offending may be more likely in the early 20s age group, and interventions based on a life-course perspective may be appropriate.

### *Specialist sexual assault*

This is the second largest class with an estimated 24% of the population share. Overall, people in this class had a probability of 1.00 of having been convicted of sexual assault, and very small probabilities ( $<.10$ ) of having been convicted of the following offences: rape, violence, theft, and disorder/threats/breach of the peace. This class had the second lowest mean number of non-sexual convictions ( $M=0.5$ ). Individuals in this class were the oldest estimated age group with a mean age at conviction of 42.2 for sexual offences and 35.1 for non-sexual offences. The age pattern for this group tended to be more dispersed over different ages than

for other groups, both for sexual and non-sexual offending, with ages ranging from 20 to 50 for sexual offences. Where an offence was known to have a child victim, 38% were committed by someone assessed to be in the specialist sexual assault class, which was higher than the estimated class size of 24%. On the other hand, of offences where the victim was known to be an adult, 46% were committed by someone assessed to be in the specialist sexual assault class. Based on the analysis of victim codes and the fact that there appears to be some evidence of a bimodal pattern in the age density graph, it may be that this group in fact comprises of two distinct groups; one with adult victims and one with child victims. On the other hand, some other research (Francis, Hargreaves et al. 2015) has found a bimodal age pattern in offenders with victims under the age of 16 and with male victims (at age 16-20 and then at age 30-40). The specialist sexual assault class had a high correlation between first sexual and non-sexual conviction (.86), yet the age graph showed a different pattern for sexual and non-sexual convictions. This may be explained by this bimodal pattern: those with non-sexual convictions tended to be convicted at an earlier age and possibly also had adult victims. Further research into the patterns in terms of age of victims would be desirable.

#### *Specialist indecent exposure*

Individuals assigned to this class had a probability of 1.00 of a conviction for indecent exposure (or voyeurism), as well as low (<0.30) probabilities of convictions for violence and disorder/threats/breach of the peace. This class had a comparatively high mean number of sexual offences ( $M=1.2$ ), which is consistent

with the findings of Blockland and van der Geest (2015), which found that those with indecent exposure convictions had the highest sexual reconviction rates. This class also had the highest probability of all the specialist groups of a non-sexual conviction, which was for disorder, threats, and breach of the peace (0.18) (similar to the generalist indecent exposure class which also had a high probability for disorder, threats and breach of the peace). Hence of all the classes, indecent exposure classes were most linked to non-sexual offending. It may be worth bearing in mind that offences of indecent exposure do not always have a sexual motive (arguably), and there may be some convictions within this related to urinating in public etc. This may be important to consider in terms of interventions.

#### *Specialist indecent photos*

Individuals in this class accounted for an estimated 8% of the dataset. Convictions of people within this class are likely to be primarily internet offences, and practitioners are likely to be interested in whether there is a link between internet and contact offences (this does not detract from the serious nature of this crime itself, however different interventions may be required if there is a link to contact offending). This analysis indicates that people in this class were very unlikely to have convictions for other sexual or non-sexual offence types. If they did, they were likely to be other non-contact offences (indecent communications and sexual coercion), which may mean that interventions specific to internet offences are appropriate for this class. This class has the second highest mean age at first sexual conviction ( $M=39.6$ ), the lowest mean number of sexual convictions



( $M=1.0$ ), and also the lowest mean number of non-sexual offences (0.4). By its nature, this class generally only has child victims (as the offence specifically relates to indecent photos of children). The peak age for first conviction is late 40s, and this was the oldest peak age of all the groups, however age patterns were more dispersed over life than for other age groups. This suggests that risk of offence does not decrease with age as it does for many other groups.

### *Generalist rape*

Individuals assigned to this class had a probability of 1.00 of a conviction for rape (or attempted rape or sexual assault by penetration), and high probabilities ( $\geq .70$ ) of convictions for violence, theft and disorder/threats/breach of the peace. They comprised an estimated 12% of the dataset. Individuals in this class also had moderate probabilities ( $>.30$ ,  $<.50$ ) of convictions for drugs offences, vandalism, housebreaking and weapons offences. This class had the youngest mean age at both first sexual ( $M=26.1$ ) and first non-sexual conviction ( $M=22.6$ ), and a high mean number of non-sexual convictions ( $M=10.7$ ). This is the steepest age curve, with a dramatic peak in the early 20s and a steep decline, with few people receiving their first conviction after the age of 40. This class most closely followed age patterns for non-sexual offences. Individuals in this class had the highest probability of a conviction for a violent offence (0.77), however there was not a large difference in the probability of violence for any of the generalist groups. In general, individuals in this class started their conviction history early and, despite being prolific non-sexual offenders, finished it early. The offence patterns for this group is consistent with the findings of Blokland and van der Geest (2015) which

found that 'rape is often part of an extensive criminal repertoire' (p281). Similar interventions may be appropriate for both sexual and non-sexual offending for this class, and their offending is possibly age-related.

#### *Generalist sexual assault*

This class is the second smallest class with an estimated 7% population share. This class had the highest mean number of sexual convictions ( $M=1.4$ ), and also the highest probability of having a conviction for another sexual offence type (a probability of .11 for rape and a probability of .07 for indecent exposure), meaning that individuals in this class may be more likely to reoffend (although the probability is still relatively low). Individuals in the class had overall high probabilities ( $>.70$ ) of convictions for violence and disorder, threats and breach of the peace, and moderate ( $>0.30$ ,  $<0.50$ ) probabilities of convictions for theft and vandalism. Of offences where the victim was known to be an adult, 25% were committed by someone assessed to be in the generalist sexual assault class, which is much higher than the class population share.

#### *Generalist indecent exposure*

This is the smallest class with an estimated 5% of the population share. Individuals estimated to be in this class had a probability of .97 of having a conviction for indecent exposure (or voyeurism); high probabilities ( $>.70$ ) of convictions for violence and disorder/threats/breach of the peace; moderate probabilities ( $>.30$ ,  $<.50$ ) of convictions for theft, drugs offences and vandalism; and low probabilities ( $\leq.30$ ) of convictions for housebreaking and weapons offences. Individuals in this

class had the highest probability of a conviction of all the classes for disorder, threats and breach of the peace. Individuals in this class had the highest mean number of non-sexual convictions ( $M=13.5$ ) and the second highest mean number of sexual convictions. Although a small probability (.07), this class had the highest probability of all the classes of convictions for prostitution offences. This class also had the second youngest mean age at first non-sexual conviction ( $M=23.7$ ), and the second youngest mean age at first sexual conviction ( $M=30.5$ ), although the class had the lowest correlation between age at first sexual and non-sexual conviction (however this was still .79). To summarise, individuals in this class were most likely to start being convicted at a young age, and to be prolific offenders. However, the likelihood of having a conviction for either sexual or non-sexual offending decreased consistently throughout their lifetime after a peak in the early 20s. Since sexual offending does not appear to be their primary offending type and sexual offending occurs at similar times, interventions aimed at non-sexual offending may also address sexual offending behaviour. Offending for this class appears to be age-dependent and therefore a life-course approach may be appropriate.

## **6.7 Discussion of quantitative findings**

This section will discuss the over-arching quantitative patterns across the classes, and reflect on how they fit with current literature, prior to a wider ranging theoretical discussion in Chapter 8.

### *Age patterns*

This research has found that most of the classes had age patterns which suggested that the likelihood of being convicted of a sexual crime decreases with age, which is consistent with trends for general offending. From a theoretical perspective, the decline in offending with age has more often been linked with non-sexual offending, and primarily sociological aspects such as relationships and peer associations, although there are many theories about why this may be the case. Theories of psychological causes, on the other hand, tend to suggest that offending should be more stable over the life course. For example, Ward (2000) considered that in respect of sexual crimes, the longer an offender is committing crime, the more time they have to develop more complex implicit theories about their victims. Similarly, Walker, Bowen et al. (2012) found that in general, studies tend to suggest that aggression is stable over time. In this research, for most classes the peak age for sexual convictions was the early 20s age group followed by a steep decline, which is consistent with the well-known age-crime curve (Moffitt, 1994; Moffitt, 1993). This pattern was true for both sexual and non-sexual convictions, with the exception of specialist sexual assault and specialist indecent photos classes: for these classes conviction patterns were more dispersed throughout life, potentially suggesting that, for them, propensity to offend is more stable. The class which had the most pronounced peak in the early 20s was the generalist rape group, which is possibly linked to the fact that individuals in this group generally have a high number of non-sexual offences (see further discussion in the section about links to non-sexual convictions). This is consistent with the findings of Lussier, Tzoumakiset al., (2010): 'most sex offenders typically follow the

age–crime curve, especially those characterized by a very active criminal involvement’ (p163). In fact, the three generalist groups tended to have the highest peak of offending at this age, for both sexual and non-sexual offences. Hence the data in this research does not support the idea that propensity to sexually offend is stable over time for most people, nor that any other form of offending is stable over time, at least when looking at convictions.

The two groups which did not follow this age pattern for sexual offences were the specialist sexual assault and the specialist indecent photos classes, for which convictions were more dispersed throughout life, with small peaks in the 40s age group. The fact that these are specialist groups is consistent with the hypothesis of Lussier, Tzoumakis et al. (2010), that, ‘most sex offenders that are in their mid-30s or older have a minimal criminal involvement beyond their index crime and their sex crime is not an inclination toward an active and persistent criminal activity pattern’ (p163). These two groups are thought to have a number of child victims, and the convictions may occur at an older age for several reasons. Firstly, there may be an element of historical reporting of child abuse, or, particularly in the case of indecent photos, detection of the offence may have taken longer since this is sometimes as a result of police investigations which may detect historical offences. This is unlikely to fully explain the pattern, since although the number of historical offences are high, the majority of reports are still for recent offences (Boal and Gwynne, 2017). However, it is also possible that there is a situational element involved, for example offences may occur at an older age due to opportunity brought about by the offender being in a care-giving role. There may

be a connection to adult relationship patterns, for example, the divorce rate in Scotland peaks from the late 30s to the late 40s age group (Scottish Government, 2010). A history of a stable relationship is seen as a protective factor in most risk matrices for sexual offences (Hanson and Thornton, 2000), and the qualitative interviews in this research found that relationship difficulties often immediately preceded a conviction, as will be explored in Chapter 7. This is not to say that relationship difficulties are necessarily a direct cause, however as discussed in Chapter 2 there is some evidence that relationship patterns can have an influence on offending behaviour. For instance, attachment styles can change according to socio-structural elements including divorce (McKillop, Smallbone et al., 2012). Other theories also suggest that situational elements such as relationship difficulties provide a trigger for offending behaviour: for example Hall and Hirschman's quadripartite model (1991) states that affective dyscontrol, or inability to regulate emotions, may result in sexual offending. Francis, Hargreaves et al. (2015) suggest that '[a]ge effects are predominantly related to maturity and opportunity' (p248). Potential theoretical reasons behind these age patterns as well as those which peak in the early 20s age group will be explored in more detail in Chapter 8.

### *Frequency of offending*

In all classes the majority of individuals only had one conviction for a sexual offence. This fact (with the caveat that the conviction data cannot truly represent offending behaviour) is counterintuitive to the psychological basis of many theories, which suggest that it is very difficult to address behavioural traits or

personality characteristics. On the other hand, Hanson and Morton-Bourgon's research (2005) found that indicators relating to childhood developmental factors were not related to recidivism. This may lend some support to the idea of asymmetry between causes of the initial offence and the causes of any reoffending, suggesting that different dynamics are responsible for reoffending.

The low overall average number of convictions for sexual offences ( $M=1.2$ ,  $SD=0.8$ ,  $Median=1$ ) differs from the average number of convictions per person in the database ( $M=3.4$ ,  $SD=5.5$ ,  $Median=1$ ), meaning that people are convicted of fewer sexual offences than other crimes. As has been pointed out throughout this thesis, there may be an element of under-reporting or attrition which is more magnified in respect of sexual offences. However, there may also be other reasons. The desistance process may differ for those convicted of sexual offences, and this will also be discussed in more detail in the Chapters 7 and 8. Firstly, the stigma attached to being convicted of sexual offences, although theoretically contrary to the principles of desistance, may act as a deterrent to committing any further offences. Maruna's research into desisting ex-offenders (2001) highlighted that many people considered the adverse effect on their own lives as the main reason for desisting (rather than the impact on the victims, although this research was primarily focussed on non-sexual offences), and the life changes of a person who has been convicted of sexual offences cannot be underestimated. Secondly, after detection many offenders are given access to groupwork and psychological treatment which may enable them to think differently about their offending. Linked to this, they may be more likely to undergo an identity shift. Thirdly, there

may be a situational trigger to their offending which may have meant that they were never at a high risk of reoffending. Those with sexual convictions tended to be older (and are serving longer sentences) than other offenders, and the ageing process is thought to be a factor in desistance (Ward and Laws, 2010). Finally, the restrictions placed on those with sexual convictions, especially around access to children, may mean that physically they are less likely to be presented with an opportunity to offend.

The class with the lowest number of convictions for sexual (and non-sexual) offences is the specialist indecent photos class. Whilst some research demonstrates a link between possession of indecent images and contact offences (CEOP, 2012), it may be that those who offend in this way have a stronger bond to social norms (as demonstrated by their low levels of non-sexual offending), and hence are not willing to commit what they perceive as a more serious offence. Research has also found that offenders sometimes perceive the online space as an area to which the normal social rules do not apply (Rimer, 2017), either because of a perceived sense of anonymity, or a sense of detachment from the crime. On the other hand, being in a generalist group was not a particularly strong predictor of having a higher frequency of sexual convictions (both specialist and generalist sexual assault and indecent exposure classes had the highest comparative frequencies of sexual convictions), which suggests that lack of bonds to society may not be linked to frequency of sexual offending.



### *Links to non-sexual offending*

The division of the latent classes was based to a large extent on whether or not individuals had non-sexual convictions (as well as their sexual offence type), and there were clear links to general offending behaviour. One explanation is that general low societal bonds make it more likely for those in generalist groups to commit all types of behaviour which go against the moral code of society. It should be noted, however, that prolific general offending behaviour was only one part of the overall picture (only 24% of people were assessed to be in general groups), and hence this appears to be one of many pathways into sexual offending behaviour. This is consistent with many theories including Ward and Siegert's Pathways Model (2002), in which those who offend as part of the antisocial cognition pathway have views of entitlement which means that they do not recognise social norms due to their own sense of superiority. This model focuses on child abuse, however, and other research suggests that those with child victims are less likely to have a history of non-sexual crime (e.g. Harris, Smallbone et al., 2009).

There were some features of the conviction patterns which were interesting in relation to the link with general offending. The generalist classes were more likely to be convicted of sexual offences at a younger age, and ages at time of conviction (for most classes) peaked in the early 20s, which is consistent with general conviction patterns. All classes displayed age patterns similar for their sexual convictions to that of their non-sexual convictions (to varying extents), and there was a high positive correlation for individuals in all classes between their first

sexual and non-sexual convictions. There may be many reasons for this (which will be more fully explored in the analysis of the interviews with those who have been convicted of sexual offences in Chapter 7), however it may be tied in with life circumstances which mean that certain stressors make a person more likely to offend in a variety of ways (sexual and non-sexual). Another potential explanation is peer involvement, since this is arguably the age at which we spend an increased amount of time with peers rather than family, and research has shown that some offending behaviour is more likely to occur in groups (Shapland and Bottoms, 2011). Moreover, there is some research which suggests that sexual offending can be influenced by peer involvement (Schwartz, DeKeseredy et al., 2001). For each group, the extent of their non-sexual offending was analysed in more detail to determine if there were any patterns unique to the groups. Non-sexual offence types for all classes were similar; the most common non-sexual offences being minor assaults, breaches of the peace, shoplifting and non-compliance offences such as failure to notify police.

However, whilst it is more usual to begin non-sexual offending at a relatively early age, some sexual convictions were often more dispersed throughout life, particularly for the specialist groups. Whilst there may be some element of historical reporting here, this cannot fully explain the patterns. The older age at conviction was more common in the specialist classes, which is in contrast to the findings of Lussier, Tzoumakis et al.'s (2010) study in which the 'late-bloomer' category had generally committed non-sexual offences, and had a high frequency of offending. Similarly, the groups with the lowest offending rates in the Lussier

study had their peak offending levels in the 18 to 23 age group, whereas the findings in this research indicated that groups with the *highest* frequency of offending were most likely to be convicted at this age. Lussier, Tzoumakis et al.'s study looked at within-individual offending, whereas this study looks at offending patterns for the groups, and it is entirely possible that individuals may have different trajectories than groups. Moreover, their study was concerned with frequency, and the trajectories in this research reflect prevalence, and so the specialist sexual assault and specialist indecent photos classes (which had older ages) may more closely match the very low rate group in Lussier, Tzoumakis et al.'s study (both classes had low frequencies of convictions, as do all specialist classes). None of the generalist groups in this research had a high probability of having a conviction at a later age, either for sexual or non-sexual offending.

For all three of the generalist groups, over 60% of individuals had more than five non-sexual convictions. This is in contrast to the dataset in general where only 18% of people had five or more convictions. They also had far more non-sexual than sexual convictions, and were likely to have received at least two non-sexual convictions prior to a sexual conviction. Two of the generalist groups had higher than average frequencies of sexual convictions (generalist sexual assault and generalist indecent exposure), however the frequency of their sexual offending was nowhere near the frequency of their non-sexual offending. This suggests firstly that their 'primary' offending was non-sexual, but also that the generalist groups tended to be prolific offenders rather than just having an average number of convictions. This is consistent with theories which suggest that general

antisocial tendencies are linked to sexual offending (at least for the generalist groups), and also research which suggests that those who had only committed sexual offences (i.e. the specialist groups) had better pro-social attitudes and a lower risk of future criminality (Butler and Seto, 2002).

Classes which were tentatively linked to offences against children were all specialist classes. Whilst these findings should be read with caution due to the incomplete coding, some research (e.g. Harris et al., 2009) has found that non-sexual offending is more likely to be related to sexual offences against adults. This may suggest that people who offend against children may be more bonded to social norms than those who offend against adults, which is surprising considering the way in which society views sexual offences against children. This issue will be further explored in the next two chapters.

As outlined in Chapter 2, general criminological theories focus not on the act itself, but the commission of the act despite it being against commonly accepted societal, moral or legal rules. Hence it is possible that there are different motivations to offend but that there are particular points in life where social influences or life circumstances are less likely to prevent an offence, or more likely to encourage it. In addition to this, many of the theories of the causes of sexual offending suggest that an inability to cope with stressful situations may be a contributing factor in offending behaviour: this may equally apply to non-sexual offending behaviour. Similarly, according to the principles of the Good Lives Model, offending behaviour is caused by an inability to obtain certain 'primary

goods' in an appropriate way (Willis, Yates et al., 2012), and it is possible that this may manifest in both sexual and non-sexual offending. Hence, theory does support a link between sexual and non-sexual offending, however it is important to note that this does appear to be only one pathway into sexual offending.

## **6.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed further characteristics of the seven latent classes of the best fitting and most parsimonious model, focusing on age patterns, frequency of convictions and the link between sexual and non-sexual convictions. Analysis has revealed the following main findings:

- In all classes the majority of individuals only had one sexual conviction. This means that most people with a sexual conviction did not go on to reoffend (if reoffending is defined as another sexual offence and a conviction is taken as a marker of reoffending). This is in contrast to some psychological theories of offending which suggest that behavioural traits should remain constant throughout life. It may indicate an asymmetry between cause and desistance for sexual offences, suggesting different dynamics are responsible for cause and desistance, or it may be that the offence was tied to a particular set of circumstances. It is possible that different interventions are appropriate to prevent offending in the first instance, compared to reoffending.
- For most classes, the peak age for sexual and non-sexual convictions was the early 20s age group followed by a steep decline, which is consistent with

patterns of non-sexual offending (and this pattern was most marked in the generalist groups). This suggests that offending behaviour may be age-dependent, and that there is something in particular about the early 20s age group which makes offending behaviour more likely: this possibly points to a life-course perspective into sexual offending behaviour. One policy implication of a life-course perspective is that a person is not at constant risk of offending throughout life. For two classes (specialist sexual assault and specialist indecent photos), offending behaviour was relatively stable over time, and these groups may have different underlying motivations to offend. However, for most people the data in this research does not support the idea that offending behaviour is stable over time for those who have been convicted of sexual offences. Another implication of this finding is the use of relatively stable risk-based assessments, which may over-estimate risk throughout the life-course.

- Convictions for sexual and non-sexual offences occurred at similar ages. This may indicate at least a situational trigger for the offences (or convictions), which is similar for both sexual and non-sexual offending. This is also consistent with a life-course perspective.
- The generalist classes tended to be prolific non-sexual offenders with only a small number of sexual convictions. This suggests that their 'primary' offending was non-sexual. These classes tended to receive non-sexual convictions prior to sexual convictions (although at similar times of life), however there was no evidence that non-sexual offending discontinued

prior to sexual offending: neither was there any indication of escalation into sexual offending.

The above highlights the link between sexual and non-sexual offending, however this was not true for all people in the dataset (approximately 24% of people in the dataset were estimated to be in a generalist group). Hence there is strong evidence that there are distinctively different sexual offending pathways which are defined in terms of both age and type of offending, and prolific non-sexual offending is one of them. This is consistent with much of the theoretical literature (e.g. Ward and Siegert, 2002) which suggests that antisocial behaviour is one pathway into sexual offending. This may suggest that similar interventions are appropriate for all types of offending behaviour, for certain groups of people.

- There was evidence of specialisation in the classes, both in terms of the fact that there were four distinct classes of offender who had generally only been convicted of sexual offences, and also in terms of the fact that very few people were convicted of different types of sexual offences. This is perhaps because of different motivations to offend, which in turn indicates a heterogeneity of offender types, which is supported by the multifactorial theories into sexual offending behaviour. However, this is also possibly driven by the fact that most people only have one sexual conviction.

- There was tentative evidence within the quantitative findings that were consistent with research which has found that non-sexual offending is more likely to be related to sexual offences against adults, whilst those who offend against children are more likely to only commit sexual offences. This is somewhat surprising considering the way in which society views sexual offences against children. This is worthy of further exploration as it may suggest different motivations for those who offend against adults and children: further research using victim types as variables would be desirable.

#### *Areas to analyse in interviews*

The quantitative data has uncovered some interesting findings, however it is difficult to provide more nuanced analysis without additional detail. Chapter 7 will analyse qualitative interviews conducted with people who have received a conviction for a sexual offence, and explore what their accounts may tell us about the patterns ascertained in the quantitative analysis. The interviews explored, in particular, whether there were any socio-cultural influences on the offence, what was happening in the life of the participant at the time they committed the offence, and whether there were any patterns relating to victim type. This chapter will also more fully explore the relationship between sexual and non-sexual offending by exploring the reasons behind any non-sexual offending and whether this coincided with the sexual offending. Areas the interviews particularly aimed to explore, based on the quantitative findings, were the following:



- Is it common for offending behaviour to be preceded by situational events which may have been triggers for the offending?
- For people whose sexual and non-sexual offending happened at the same time, were there any common life events which may have been triggers for the offending?
- What are the reasons for not continuing to offend, and how do these differ between people who represent each of the latent classes?
- Did any of the participants make a connection between their sexual and non-sexual offending?
- Did participants with child victims offend late in life, and if so why did they not offend earlier?
- Did participants with child victims display strong pro-social attitudes separate to their offending behaviour?
- For participants who would be most closely associated with a generalist group, how did they feel about their sexual offending compared to their wider offending?

Finally, Chapter 8 will bring the quantitative and qualitative findings together with a more fully developed analysis of the different causal and desistance theories in the context of the quantitative and qualitative findings of this research.

## **Chapter 7: Behind the statistics: Interviews with those with sexual convictions**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter will provide an overview and analysis of the qualitative interviews, which were conducted with a small sample of people with sexual convictions in order to provide further detail, background and context to the quantitative findings. The main purpose of the interviews was to consider, from the accounts given by participants, potential causes or triggers of sexual offending behaviour (or cessation of sexual offending behaviour), and to determine if there were any patterns between the different latent classes identified in the previous two chapters. Drawing on the key theories identified in the literature review (Chapter 2) particular attention was given to sociological and life-course causes and triggers, and how these interacted with psychological elements, to determine the extent that 'external' issues may have an impact on why or when someone would commit sexual offences, as well as looking at their offending pathways and (where appropriate) their route to desistance. This information was then used to compare the different theories described in Chapter 2, to provide an overview of how the empirical research from this study supports or challenges particular theories. Research questions relevant to the qualitative element of the thesis were the following:

- What is the link between sexual and non-sexual offending and does this tell us anything about the causal process?

- At what points in life (in terms of age and life situation) does offending commonly occur, and does this tell us anything about theoretical perspectives on offending?
- Do adverse life events have an influence on offending?
- What is the impact of socio-cultural messages on offending?
- What is the impact of social relationships e.g. family, intimate relationships, friends and work, on offending?

This chapter will begin by outlining the interview process and participants involved. It will then discuss key interview themes separated into two sections: sociological and psychological. The sociological section discusses gender-based perspectives towards offending, followed by life events and situational perspectives including the effect of peers, employment, relationships and social control. The psychological section will discuss evidence of potential psychological influences such as cognitive distortions and different attachment styles. The chapter will then discuss participants' involvement in non-sexual offending activities (where they existed), whether these occurred at the same time as the sexual offending and any apparent links between the two. This will be followed by a discussion about the participants' prospective plans for desistance.

## **7.2 Background**

### *Participants*

Participant recruitment was voluntary and this element of the research was organised in the later stages of the PhD. For these reasons, there was insufficient time to persist in recruiting a fully representative and numerically large sample

(which would have involved applying to a variety of other prisons and social work departments). Access was gained via gatekeepers within a local authority Social Work Service and the Scottish Prison Service. Only one person who was in the community volunteered, and nine people from within the prison. It appears somewhat typical that it is easier to recruit from a prison environment for this type of research, possibly because those who have left prison want to leave their offending life behind and also perhaps because it is physically more convenient for those in prison to take part. Since the interviews were conducted within a prison which specialises in housing those with sexual convictions (although it is a mixed prison), it is likely that the offences which the participants had been convicted of were skewed towards more serious convictions (as many participants had committed serious non-sexual violence at the time of the sexual offence) and with people who had received longer sentences. Rape in particular, whilst one of the largest latent classes, was over-represented, and there were no participants who would have aligned with the indecent exposure classes; hence only five of the seven latent classes were represented in the interviews. However, participants were an extremely heterogeneous group, having been convicted of a wide variety of offences against both adults and children, in vastly differing circumstances. The difference in the circumstances of the offences and in the people committing the offences, even within this small sample, highlights the complex and heterogeneous nature of sexual offending. The following table (*Table 24*) provides basic details about the participants, including which latent class they most closely resembled (assigning the participants to the quantitative latent class was done on

the basis of their conviction types only rather than other factors such as age and frequency, in order to replicate (to some extent) the model selection process).

Participant no	Pseudonym	Quantitative category	Age at time of conviction(s)	Victim under 16	Gender of victim
1	Jack	Specialist Rape	21	Y	F
2	Bob	Generalist Rape	44	N	F
3	Sean	Specialist Rape	33	N	F
4	Martin	Generalist Rape	21-35	N	F
5	Simon	Specialist Sexual Assault	28	Y	M
6	Dan	Specialist Rape	48	Y	F
7	John	Generalist Rape	29	N	F
8	Paul	Generalist Rape/Generalist Sexual Assault	Teenage - 30s	Y	F
9	Jim	Generalist Rape	35	N	F
10	George	Specialist Indecent Photos	60	Y	F

*Table 24: Details of participants (pseudonyms used)*

### *Interviews*

The interviews in prison were conducted within an interview room on one of the floors of the prison, whilst the participant who was within the community was interviewed in a social work office. The interviews were semi-structured, and

loosely followed a life history approach, as outlined in Chapter 3. The only offence-specific questions I asked were about the nature of the conviction, victim age/gender and whether the participant had any other convictions (sexual or non-sexual). I also asked whether the participant had taken part in a programme whilst in prison, as this may have affected the way they thought about their offence or how they answered the questions. Some participants used language structures which suggested that they were repeating narratives they had learned whilst in a programme. Whilst this may have been an indication that they had learned to think differently about their offence, it was sometimes difficult to tell if they had internalised this or were simply telling me what they thought I wanted to hear. It was also challenging to gain information about what they were thinking at the time of the offence, rather than with hindsight, although most participants seemed able and willing to distinguish between these two different positions. However, it was also the case that programme work may have enabled the participant to reflect on similar issues to those which were discussed in the interviews, and hence come to their own conclusions, thus giving this research the benefit of many more hours of work in the programmes.

On this point, I was very aware that, by conducting research into external factors which may have an impact on sexual offending, I did not wish it to appear that I was seeking to excuse or condone any offending behaviour. In fact, a few participants pointed out that whilst they may have had adverse life circumstances prior to the offence, they could not use this as an excuse for their offence, and this is something I hoped I was careful to distinguish. I was also aware prior to the

interviews that there may be participants who did not admit their offence and this did occur, although this only happened with one participant. I had experience through my previous role as a Circles of Support and Accountability Volunteer, and the training here recommends a style of motivational interviewing in which the person involved is encouraged to discuss their general situation without directly confronting the issue of offence denial (similar to the approach outlined by Ware and Marshall, 2008), and it was not my place in a research interview to attempt to challenge the participant. Hence although it was not possible to directly discuss the motivation for the offence in this case, since the participant denied that the offence had occurred, it was still possible to discuss other issues in the participant's life at the time of the conviction, and there were several significant life events which had also occurred around this time. In general, however, participants appeared to be very open about their offences, and most did not display any current offence-supportive attitudes, at least to me.

I am mindful, however, that the facts that I was a stranger and that the interviews were conducted in a relatively formal setting (and recorded) may have influenced the participants' openness. Some of the issues I discussed were similar to those explored through group work and in psychological assessments, and this may have led the participants to answer in a certain 'prescribed' way, if they associated me with the psychologists and group work facilitators, and had previously been wary of being too honest in these situations (e.g. if progression or release was dependent on a risk assessment). Finally, since I am a female researcher (interviewing participants who had mostly committed sexual offences against

female victims), this may have affected the answers given, particularly when discussing gender- or victim- related issues. There was nothing evident in any of the interviews that led me to strongly suspect that this was the case, however I kept an open and critical mind whilst conducting the analysis.

### *Consistency with quantitative findings*

For the interview participants, ages at the time of their convictions were broadly in line with the patterns outlined in the quantitative analysis (participants were asked about all convictions, not just the one they were serving this sentence for). Participants aligned with the specialist rape class had ages at time of conviction from age 21-47, which is in line with the age patterns in the quantitative analysis: the graph peaked in the early 20s, followed by a steadier decline from approximately 30 to late 50s. Individuals likely to fit with the generalist rape class had convictions ranging from the teenage years to 44, which again is broadly consistent with the age graphs which peaked in the early 20s age bracket and sharply declined to the age of 40. There was only one individual aligned with the specialist sexual assault class, which was the most evenly distributed of all the age groups in the quantitative analysis. This participant had convictions from the teenage years to his 30s, and also had the highest frequency of sexual convictions, which is consistent with the quantitative findings for this class. The participant associated with the specialist indecent photos class was 60 when convicted, which is consistent with the age profile for this group (which is the oldest peak at approximately 50 years), although he actually committed the offence in his late 30s (also consistent with the age graph). In terms of the non-sexual offences,



participants in the generalist classes mainly described committing non-sexual offences first, or at the same time as their first sexual offences, which is consistent with the quantitative findings. Those with child victims were more likely to be in the specialist classes, which is also consistent with the quantitative research. The participant with a male victim was also in a specialist class, however no conclusions will be drawn based on the sex of the victim in a single case.

### **7.3 Sociological perspectives**

This section will provide an analysis of potential sociological influences on the offending behaviour of the participants, including associations, life circumstances and gendered perspectives, grouped into common areas previously discussed by the literature as outlined in Chapter 2. It will describe participants' accounts of their offending and whether there were any particular differences or similarities between people associated with different latent classes. Of course, often sociological and psychological areas are interlinked, however they have been separated here for the purposes of clear discussion.

#### **7.3.1 Gender-based perspectives**

A key perspective on sexual offending, particularly against adult females, is how this is influenced by the way women are viewed in society. Feminist theories often argue that a patriarchal society creates and maintains control over its female members (e.g. Waldby et al., 1989) and that sexual abuse is one of many ways used to dominate and suppress women. This is a complex issue since different ecological niches can differently reflect wider social structures. For example,

gender dynamics will play out differently in different family and peer situations. Several of the participants mentioned how their views on women had influenced their offending (which will be discussed later in this chapter) and it was interesting how different their accounts were in terms of how negative views towards women can influence offending in different ways, and how these views can themselves stem from different origins.

### *Sexual assault as a weapon*

For example, Jim was a feared and respected member of the criminal community, and thus had status, power and control over many people. Some authors (e.g. Hunnicutt, 2009) have argued that the male need to exert violent and sexual power over women is very much dependent on their status or otherwise in society. In other words, when men lack power in other areas of their lives, they are more inclined to offend against women. However, Jim's account highlighted that this was not always the case.

Jim described how at the time of his offence he had likened his actions to a 'punishment beating', and that this act was carried out to send a message to rivals about how far he was willing to go: 'the best way of making somebody fear you, is to let them think that you would go beyond what the other guy would do'. Jim also stated that using sexual assault as a weapon was not uncommon within the circles in which he had previously moved:

'Most things in the underworld is about degrading people,  
that's the worst thing you could do to somebody, is

degrade them. And probably, the best way of degrading somebody is through sexual, making them do things that, you know, it's gonna haunt them, their every thought.'

[Jim].

The use of this particular terminology (of sexual assault being a weapon) by some participants (although this may have been repeated from group work) is interesting, as it reinforces the use of sexual assault as a violent act, and that (in hindsight at least), it was a conscious means of perpetrating or furthering an assault.

I explored with Jim the issue of why these acts of violence were directed against women and not men when most of the key players in this particular criminal group were men and hence they were the ones he sought to send a message to. I wondered whether in some cases the woman may be used as an instrument to send a message to another male. This may be similar to historical situations where rape was akin to a property offence, committed against another man (Brownmiller, 1975): the woman involved is simply an object to be used as part of a man's game. Firstly, Jim outlined how men were in fact sometimes the victims of sexual assaults, but that this was unlikely to be reported since the fact of being a victim of this type of assault would cause them to lose status.

'I think there's a lot more male sex offences...maybe not sex offences, as in, somebody having sex with somebody, or rape, or whatever the case may be. But there's a lot of people who have been, you know, had things done to

them, to degrade them, or whatever the case may be.'

[Jim].

However, Jim's victim was female, and upon reflection Jim realised that there was a difference between the way that men and women were subject to these sexual assaults:

'I justified it by making out it was a punishment. It wasn't a punishment, it was sexual, it was sexual gratification, it had to be. Because if I wasn't having sexual gratification, then I couldn't have done it, it's as simple as that. And I can see that as clear as day, now.' [Jim].

Hence the offence was ostensibly a demonstrative act of power and control, justified as part of a wider repertoire of serious offending in order to maintain criminal status, but the concern to retain power and control could not fully explain the act: part of it was about sexual gratification. However, given Jim's description of an act of degradation, the interlinking of sex and power remain apparent. The act of sexual violence exerts an extra layer of control over the victim due to the fact that it is an act of sexual violence and not another act of violence. This also reflects the findings of Bell (1993) who argued that whilst it is commonly accepted that rape is about power, it is not simply about power, as there is a reason that the need for power acts manifests as a sexual offence and not as something else.

#### *Link between violence and sexual arousal*

There also appeared to be a link between violence against women and sexual arousal, according to Jim: 'the violence leads to the arousal, if I'm honest'. All of

the participants in the sample who had offended against adult females had used force, and there were often serious violent acts committed against their victims in the course of their crimes. Another participant (also most closely defined as the generalist rape category) described the sexual element of the violence as a way of prolonging the feeling:

‘the violence...was a quick act to put somebody  
down...maybe there is a very thin grey area or a very thin  
line between the two...the violence was a very quick act[...]  
and I was probably just trying to prolong that feeling’.

[John].

This is consistent with some previous studies which have found that feelings of anger (towards a female) ‘attenuate arousal to consenting sex and enhance arousal to forced sex’ (Yates, Barbaree et al., 1984: p293). Several of the participants described fantasies of domination, and this coupled with the participants’ descriptions of how feelings of anger turned into sexual arousal, suggests a desire to exert power and dominance over women through means of violent assault. As Jim’s case highlighted, this is not always because of a lack of power in other areas of life.

#### *Anger towards women*

Linked to the previous discussion of the connection between anger and sexual arousal, it was common for the participants who had offended against adult women to have stated in their interviews that they had anger issues. There was, in fact, a common theme that the source of the anger amongst the participants was often perceived by them to be caused by a particular woman, and then

extended to women in general, and this link was acknowledged by the participants. For instance, several of the participants described how their own experience of abuse led them to be mistrustful of women. Although such abuse had usually been committed by men, the perceived failure of female family members, particularly the mother, to protect them from this abuse had resulted in resentment towards women in general. For example, Martin (most closely aligned with the generalist rape class and with adult female victims) stated that whilst he was abused by both men and women, this resulted in a hatred of women. He described his offending at the time as the use of sexual assault as a weapon: '[w]omen can't be trusted, they deserve all they get'. In other participants, this had occurred not only when the woman had perpetrated the abuse, but when they had failed to believe the participants' abuse at the hands of a man. This potentially illustrates an extreme consequence of the gendered construction of the role of women in society as caregivers and nurturers, and seems to be a form of punishing women for their failure to fulfil this role. This is consistent with research into interpersonal violence against women, in which:

'[f]orms of conflict especially likely to be associated with violence centre on women's transgression of conservative gender roles or challenges to male privilege...conflicts about transgressions of gender norms and failure to fulfil cultural stereotypes of good womanhood are among the most important variables for risk of intimate partner violence' (Jewkes, 2002: p1425).

An alternative interpretation may be that men's masculinity is sometimes threatened by issues such as low self-esteem, sexual jealousy, perceived betrayal or even being abused by a man (O'Neil and Nadeau, 1999) which may result in a perceived need to demonstrate their strength and manhood.

However, violent convictions do not have a particularly unique link to sexual convictions in the quantitative data: if people have violent convictions they also tend to have other non-sexual convictions. Moreover, in this small group at least, anger issues were generally apparent only in participants with adult victims. Use of force during the offence was far more common in the generalist rape group than in any of the other groups. Participants with female victims under 16 generally used grooming behaviour rather than force to get their victims to comply. Those with child victims more often emotionally identified with children, and less frequently had anger issues.

### *Summary*

This section has discussed the influence of negative views of women on sexual offending behaviour in the interviews. It appeared that in this sample there was a link between anger issues, violence, adult victims and non-sexual offending. The anger issues were often caused by a perceived failure of women to fulfil their role in society, and hence led to violent sexual acts perpetrated against women. Some of the views held may be seen as cognitive distortions, such as that women can't be trusted, they must be punished or that they deserve all they get. There also appeared to be a link between violence against women and sexual gratification.

These views are consistent with theories of interpersonal violence (Jewkes, 2002), as well as theories which state that anger is linked to arousal towards forced sexual intercourse (Yates, Barbaree et al., 1984). Hence, negative and destructive views towards women appeared to be a cause of sexual offending behaviour, although there was generally a trigger for this behaviour to turn into a sexual offence (these triggers will be discussed in the next section).

### **7.3.2 Life events, relationships and situational perspectives**

This section will outline how propensity to offend may be influenced by different life events and situational elements; issues which were explored throughout the interviews.

#### *Social isolation*

Previous research has shown social isolation to be a factor in offending because 'healthy relationships with others form the bedrock of accountability' (Mills, 2015: p393). It can also affect the way we view the world: '[t]he brains of lonely, in contrast to non-lonely, individuals are on high alert for social threats, so lonely individuals tend to view their social world as threatening and punitive' (Cacioppo and Hawkley, 2009: p451). Social isolation can be a subjective concept but it is often measured (in the psychological field) as a combination of living alone and having infrequent contact with family members, friends and other acquaintances (e.g. from work and leisure activities) (Steptoe, Shankar et al., 2013). Relatedness is also one of the key primary goods outlined in the Good Lives Model: hence if this is important to a person and the person is unable to achieve it, they may attempt to gain it in inappropriate ways (Willis, Yates et al., 2012).



Four participants specifically mentioned social isolation in the time prior to their offence. These participants were all most closely aligned with specialist offending groups and three had child victims. A further two participants stated that they did not have a social life outside of work and family, although this may not be strictly counted as social isolation. It is possible that a lack of pro-social peers would remove potential for social control, especially if they were in a family situation where they were regarded as the 'head of the family' (one of these participants offended against a family member, however the other offended against a stranger). It is interesting that in the sample there appeared to be a link between social isolation and offences with child victims, as distinct from adult victims (and these in turn were also more likely to be aligned with specialist classes). It is possible that those with child victims were more prone to social isolation as they struggled to form adult relationships, and offending can be a means to gain emotional closeness: this was alluded to in the interviews. Some of the participants with child victims clearly struggled with adult connections, and this impacted on their lives:

'[S]ocial interaction, even if it is only a few minutes each day...that still makes a difference because it still gives you an idea that there are people out there who care about you...that external factor really helps to keep your internal on a fairly even keel.' [Sean].

Three participants directly related offending to social isolation, although this concept may have been picked up through group work. For the participant with

an adult victim who spoke of social isolation, the isolation appeared to be a factor because it led to a somewhat skewed view of the world, including misogynistic views which he hadn't previously experienced, and so this is possibly related to an absence of pro-social contacts able to counter destructive thinking patterns.

Perhaps surprisingly, most of the participants described their families as supportive of them after the offence. Interestingly, many of the participants described how they had actually developed better relationships with their families since their convictions. This was for a variety of reasons. One participant described how his offending behaviour had led to his family believing him about being a victim of abuse. Another suggested that his parents were once again able to take on a parenting role, with their child in a situation in need of help. It is also possible that families were forced to reflect on internal family dynamics when they were faced with a family member with a sexual conviction. This family support seemed encouraging in looking to the future, however as one participant pointed out, in prison it was not possible to form proper friendships since those with sexual convictions are not allowed to keep contact with each other when they leave prison. This may suggest an unmet need for men in this situation to make pro-social relationships and emotional connections that might sustain them in preparing for and returning to the outside world. Circles of Support and Accountability represent one means of filling this gap (Wilson, McWhinnie et al., 2007) since volunteers provide an artificial social support.

## *Peers*

Peer approval of sexually inappropriate behaviour is also thought to provide a context which may enable sexual assault:

‘[E]nvironments that support beliefs conducive to rape and increase risk factors related to sexual violence... In-group social norms tend to make rape myths seem like normal belief patterns, further engraining the myth’ (Burnett, Mattern et al., 2009: p466).

This is also consistent with the postmodern/poststructuralist feminist view that masculinity is experienced in a different way by different groups of men.

None of the participants mentioned friendships as something particularly important in their lives, nor did they connect peers to their offending behaviour, contrary to literature on causes of and desistance from non-sexual crime (Sutherland, 1992; Akers, 1977). Family life appeared to be much more important in general, even though many people had experienced a breakdown of relationships with their childhood families and adult partners. It was anticipated that there may have been some participants who had committed sexual assaults on adult female acquaintances or partners and that this was tied up with issues surrounding peer influence, lack of awareness of consent and lack of perception of what constitutes a sexual crime. However, this was not apparent in the interviews: few of the participants directly spoke of an environment that overtly encouraged rape myths, although there may have been more subtle and ingrained cultures which resulted in negative attitudes towards women. It could be argued

that there are fewer convictions of this type of assault in general, hence they were less likely to have been included in this study. It is also possible that this type of offender may be less likely to frame themselves as a person with sexual convictions and hence less likely to agree to take part in such an interview.

One possible exception to the apparent lack of peer influence on offending was Jim. Jim was heavily involved in the criminal community, as were his peers. He described how his community had a very macho culture, with wives and mothers venerated, but other women treated as objects, and also stated that sexual assaults were common within his community:

‘I think it’s a myth for people that have never really been involved in crime, to think that most criminals scorn the thought of sexual offending. It’s not the case’. [Jim].

In this case, peers did appear to have an influence on offending, since the social network indirectly (or perhaps directly) condoned such offences by means of them being common occurrences and also through the highly patriarchal culture within his network. Therefore, Jim’s account appeared to support at least a contributory sociological motive for the offence, since the patriarchal nature of the subculture in which he lived supported the view of women as objects, and hence enabled them to be used for sexual gratification.

Jim also described the irony with which people who were thought to have committed similar offences castigated those with sexual convictions:

'I know guys...who have beaten rape charges...And they would be the first to shout, you know, beast, monster, whatever the case may be'. [Jim].

This appeared to be another way to show one-upmanship over rivals rather than that the person was particularly concerned about this type of offending behaviour. It is also consistent with Cowburn and Dominelli's (2001) argument that social construction of moral panic in relation to those with sexual convictions serves to deflect attention away from the abuse of women and children which occurs in everyday life and in private, and to reinforce the male role of protector, even amongst men who themselves may have been perpetrators of abuse.

### *Relationships*

Most of the participants were not in a close adult relationship when their offences occurred: in fact, relationship breakdown was a common occurrence prior to an offence. The presence of a relationship did not appear to prevent an offence, although most of those in relationships at the time of their offence did describe relationship difficulties or a lack of emotional closeness. Participants who directly attributed their relationship breakdown to their offending generally displayed anger issues towards the situation and, at least at the time, blamed their partner for the negative turn that their lives had taken. This is consistent with the previous discussion about anger at women for failing to maintain their expected role or for challenging male privilege.

As is consistent with previous research, those with child victims appeared to struggle with adult relationships, either not having longer-term relationships or describing a lack of emotional closeness. This may also be connected to their own history of abuse, which was common amongst those with child victims (this issue will be discussed further below). One of the participants described how he saw the relationship with his young victim as closeness and friendship, and it appeared to be an attempt to form a relationship, although in retrospect he was aware that this was grooming behaviour. This particular participant felt that if he had adult emotional connections he would not have offended.

### *Work*

Most participants were working prior to the offence, although some had lost their jobs immediately prior to offending. There did not appear to be any particular pattern in terms of association with different latent classes, nor did work appear particularly important to most of the participants. For those who had lost their jobs prior to the offence, the offence tended to be part of an overall life change rather than directly related to the employment aspect (for instance related to a relationship breakdown or a change of lifestyle after the employment).

The participant for whom work was perhaps most significant was Bob (most closely associated with the generalist rape class). Bob had lost his job prior to his offence, however this occurred along with several other negative life events, and Bob viewed not seeing his children as the primary factor in his negative behaviour. However, in the interview, he spoke about his employment frequently. Bob was

now employed in various roles in the prison, and this was an obvious source of pride to him. There was also a sense of being needed by the other prisoners. This may have been evidence of an identity shift, however it may also have been that becoming a 'father figure' in prison was a response to losing contact with his children. Bob fit the profile of a persistent non-sexual offender, who committed offences when he was younger, desisted when he had a particular 'traditional' lifestyle (marriage, children and stable employment), then continued the offending behaviour when his lifestyle changed (his relationship broke down, he lost custody of his children and he lost his job, however he also gained a new friendship group and travelled around with his new employment). This is consistent with other accounts of desistance from non-sexual offending (e.g. Weaver and McNeill, 2015), where changes in relationships, employment, routines and networks can promote offending or desistance. In general, therefore, employment was not in itself seen to be an important contributory factor towards offending behaviour in the interviews.

### *Social control*

Social control theory posits that social influences will encourage a person to refrain or desist from offending (Hirschi, 1969). None of the participants spoke directly about social control, and only one participant indicated that his peers were involved in similar behaviour. That said, as noted above, many of the participants described experiencing social isolation prior to their offence, and it is possible that this may have resulted in a lack of social control which then failed to provide a 'guardian' against their offending behaviour. All of the participants who

offended against children stated that they themselves had been abused, primarily by family members, and hence if family members are involved in abuse, and the family is the network to which they are closest, then in effect their network is not providing any boundaries which would stop the abuse.

Some of the participants spoke of those around them commenting on or questioning their behaviour. However, this seemed to have little effect on their decision to commit an offence, although this is impossible to quantify, since social control may have prevented offences prior to their conviction. A more common narrative was that they did not process what others were saying to them or did not care in the heat of the moment. This would pose difficulties in terms of preventative or educational work, and suggests more focused programme work would be beneficial. Jim described a complete absence of social control, being in such a high-status position in his community:

'My life, at that period, I didn't have to answer to anybody for anything, in my mind [...]. So I think if I'm honest with you, I would have to say, no, I didn't have any regrets, or any guilt feelings. I convinced myself that it was necessary, I convinced myself that it was justified, 'cause they took my stuff, and nobody messed with me.' [Jim].

### *Opportunity*

Opportunity to offend is mentioned in some of the multifactorial theories (and in many general criminological theories) as one of the elements which may



contribute to an offence, although research does not generally suggest that opportunity alone is a cause of sexual offending. Whilst many of the offences outlined in the interviews were described as being 'spur of the moment', none of the participants stated that the offences were completely unexpected to them; contrary to recent findings on desistance from sexual offending (Farmer, McAlinden et al., 2015)). However, neither did the participants describe active planning and forethought prior to an offence, or that they had deliberately gone to any particular lengths to seek out a victim, although this may have happened subconsciously. A common scenario was that thoughts of a deviant sexual nature had been present for some time and the opportunity presented itself. The participants generally crossed paths with their victims by accident, or were known to them. Hence opportunity did play a role, at least in terms of which victim was chosen and when the offence happened, but there was no evidence that opportunity was ever the sole trigger.

Access to child victims was generally more difficult or happened less frequently than access to adult victims, since this required unsupervised access and some sort of relationship with the child's parents. This may in part explain the more dispersed offender age pattern for those with child victims. According to Blockland and Lussier (2015), patterns which do not follow the age-crime curve suggest a dynamic approach rather than a maturation approach, and this would suggest that the timing of the offences for those with child victims is potentially driven by more immediate factors (such as opportunity), although other factors may also underpin the propensity to offend. This is accounted for by some DLC-

criminal career theorists who believe that different aspects of offending behaviour may have different causes (Blokland and Lussier, 2015). It also seemed that opportunity was less of a trigger for those with adult victims, this instead more commonly being adverse life events. Having said this, the role of opportunity does not explain why convictions for indecent photos tend to occur later in life, since this offence does not depend on opportunity (at least not in terms of access to a child). These conviction patterns are also in contrast to other research which suggests that people who commit sexual offences online are likely to be younger than those who offend offline (although not substantially) (Babchishin, Karl Hanson et al., 2011). That said, there is possibly a disparity between those who offend and those who are convicted or, like the interview participant with the conviction for indecent photos, are detected later in life. It is also possible that older offenders are more likely to be caught, because they are less technically capable.

### *Family dynamics*

Six of the participants disclosed that they had been victims of abuse themselves (primarily the participants whose victims were children, and most related their own offending to this abuse). Whilst it is possible that some people may lie about having been a victim of abuse in order to mitigate their own offences, research has suggested that a history of abuse can lead to offending behaviour (e.g. Ward and Siegert, 2002), although this is clearly not a direct path since only a minority of people who have been abused go on to offend sexually themselves. All participants who disclosed the identity of the person who had perpetrated their

own abuse stated that it was a family member, and there may be various reasons that abuse by family members is more prevalent than abuse by others in this sample. Firstly, most abuse is committed by someone known to the victim (Radford, Corral et al., 2011), and so this may be a simple reflection of the wider population. Secondly, a supportive non-abusing family may counter the longer-term effects of abuse (Eisenberg, Ackard et al., 2007), thus protecting the person from going on to offend themselves. Thirdly, an abusive family situation may be more likely to lead to offending behaviour either due to learned behaviour, more complex effects of an abusive family dynamic, for example attachment deficits, or as part of differing ecological ideas of masculinity. For example, there were many participants who had not been believed when trying to disclose their own abuse, leading to anger and resentment, particularly towards their mothers in their role of protecting their children. This all reflects a dysfunctional family environment which may have contributed in various ways to the participant forming an inability to make adult connections, or to develop misogynistic or offence-supportive attitudes.

Participants had different views on why their own abuse may have led to their sexual offence. Martin, most closely aligned with the generalist rape category (with adult victims), describes the effect as a deliberate attempt to hurt:

‘I used sex as a weapon. Because I knew how it had hurt me and frightened me as a child’.

Paul (generalist rape or generalist sexual assault with child victims) stated that he didn't realise his offending was wrong, due to his history of abuse. Even though he knew this on the surface, he couldn't internalise this until he was much older:

'[c]ause if you grow up in an abusive family and you believe that's right, then that's right. Doesn't matter what they say to you, it's right'.

This view was echoed by another participant with child victims. It wasn't strictly the case that both men genuinely did not know that this was wrong. It seemed to be more that while they understood their behaviour as constituting a *legal* offence, because it had happened to them within their family they struggled to view it as *morally* wrong.

#### *Situational triggers (but not causes)*

Having discussed the influence of relationships, situational factors and life events in offending behaviour, it did not appear that these factors alone were sufficient for an offence. The role of life events in this sample appeared to be that these events triggered *existing* issues, primarily anger for those with adult victims. These anger issues were generally already present due to adverse childhood experiences. This is consistent with theories which suggest that anger is one of the situational aspects which may provide the trigger for offences, and also Smallbone and Cale's (2015) point about developmental theories explaining propensity to offend but not the timing of the offence. For instance, the disinhibition model of rape outlined by Barbaree and Marshall (1991) described how 'an emotional or cognitive state may increase the rape arousal of men who

would otherwise show strong inhibition of rape arousal' (p626). Barbaree and Marshall (1991) described many reasons that this state may occur, including anger towards the victim and victim blame. This model would suggest an interaction between situational states and other issues such as cognitive distortions. Likewise, Ward and Siegert's Pathways Model (Ward and Siegert, 2002) described inability to regulate anger as being a possible feature of the emotional dysregulation pathway.

Similarly, it was more common in those with child victims for opportunity to provide the main impetus for the timing of the offence and the victim chosen, however the underlying causes appeared to be other issues such as a lack of significant adult connections, which in turn may have been due to adverse childhood experiences.

In the quantitative analysis, age patterns for non-sexual convictions were similar to the age patterns for sexual convictions (with most classes following the traditional age-crime curve). This may be due to a tendency for behaviour to be triggered by life circumstances (or for a maturation approach to be more appropriate to these groups). This is more pronounced in the generalist groups (who in the interviews at least were more likely to have had adult victims).

There was one exception which appears to go against the hypothesis that situational issues are not generally the *cause* of the offence. Sean did not allude to any childhood or underlying psychological issues, and attributed his offence to

his situational difficulties, albeit a situation which continued for quite some time (a long-term illness which resulted in low self-esteem, job loss, social isolation and a relationship breakdown). During this time Sean stated that he had developed misogynistic attitudes (which had not previously been present), which ultimately resulted in a sexual offence against his ex-partner. He stated that he believed that his offence was a reaction to trauma, and an outward manifestation of anger at the world. Sean described both feelings of betrayal by his partner and self-esteem issues, and both of these issues may be the reasons that the anger resulted in a sexual offence, as outlined in section 7.3.1. Whilst in all accounts of situational perspectives there may be some element of shame management, Sean's account was a convincing example of how motivation to sexually offend may occur at any point in life. This is consistent with other research in which life events which cause the person to feel that they are not fulfilling their traditional masculine role can result in frustration and anger, which then manifests as violence towards women. For example, Jewkes (2002) described potential reasons behind the link between poverty and intimate partner violence:

'In these circumstances, ideals of masculinity are reshaped to emphasise misogyny, substance use, and participation in crime. Violence against women becomes a social norm in which men are violent towards women they can no longer control or economically support. Violence against women is thus seen not just as an expression of male powerfulness and dominance over women, but also as being rooted in male vulnerability stemming from social

expectations of manhood that are unattainable because of factors such as poverty experienced by men' (p1424).

Whilst this makes sexual offending difficult to predict, more conventional (i.e. not directed specifically towards sexual offences) psychological help may be effective in these circumstances, as would addressing expectations of male and female roles. Sean himself felt that if he had received psychological help then his offence would not have occurred, and in fact many of the participants stated that whilst they might not have been aware that they were about to commit a sexual offence, they knew that things were not good and that something adverse was about to happen. Many stated that they felt that if they had been able to talk to someone about their thoughts and feelings, the offence may have been prevented. It is possible that dealing with other issues in their lives, and in particular how anger issues are handled, may act as a preventative measure.

However, the fact that this anger is mis-directed towards women suggests that wider societal issues are also involved. Whilst it is possible that the situation was the cause in Sean's case, it is also possible that misogynistic views may be latent and hence not strictly caused by the situation alone. If this is the case, and in light of the other participants' accounts, individual and wider education may be useful in terms of negative gender-based attitudes which result in these anger issues. This should extend beyond the perpetration of sexual and non-sexual violence, to other areas such as responsibilities within work, at home, and with child-rearing.

### *Summary of life events and situational perspectives*

In summary, there was evidence that the role of situational factors and life events was important, both in the quantitative and qualitative analysis. Participants commonly reported significant adverse life events immediately prior to their offence. These included illness, relationship breakdowns, bereavement, losing jobs and losing access to children. This is consistent with previous research which has indicated that adverse life events can be a trigger for offending (Hanson and Morton-Bourgon, 2005). The role of adverse life events appeared to be more important in those with adult victims, whilst opportunity or unsupervised access to children played more of a role for those with child victims. In most cases, situational elements alone did not appear to be sufficient: there were longer-term underlying issues involved which was often anger issues for those with adult victims and insufficient adult attachments for those with child victims. The role of life events is important in terms of potential interventions and also in predicting when in life a person may be more likely to commit an offence. These may be considered under the criminal career/life-course approach to offending behaviour (McGee, Farrington et al., 2015: p307).

### **7.4 Psychological perspectives**

Whilst this research places an emphasis on exploring sociological issues, the importance of psychological elements and their interaction with external factors cannot be ignored. Anger issues have been explored in the previous section since they appeared, within these interviews, to be underpinned by gendered perspectives. This section will explore other psychological issues which were



apparent throughout the interviews. It should be noted that the psychological perspectives may be consistent with, or interact with feminist perspectives: as discussed in Chapter 2 cognitive distortions and attachment issues may be influenced by attitudes towards women, particularly in the poststructuralist interpretation of feminist theory.

### *Cognitive distortions*

Cognitive distortions - ways of viewing and interpreting the world around us which may not necessarily reflect reality - are commonly linked to sexual offending. Cognitive distortions may include beliefs that children are sexual beings and willing participants, or that men are entitled to sex and it is a woman's (or sometimes a child's) responsibility to meet these needs. Some of the interview participants described how, at the time of their offences, they potentially had distorted ways of viewing the world. For example, Jim alluded to a sense of entitlement in his interview, in relation to his sexual and non-sexual offending, in the sense that if he wanted something, he did not see why he should not have it. This sense of entitlement was possibly created by the fact of his high status within the community, and was potentially reflected in other areas in life. Some of the participants with child victims, who themselves had been abused, described how they felt that this was how things were meant to be, which may be interpreted as a sense of entitlement, and in fact one participant used this word when describing how he felt at the time:

'...you think you're entitled. You think you're entitled to do what you're going to do and you're not entitled. You're

not entitled to abuse anybody or invade anybody's space.

But you believe at the time you're entitled to do what you're going to do and just do it, ken, 'cause you think you're entitled to it. And you wonder why they're crying and you're saying, well I'm entitled to do it, what are you greeting for? It's allowed to happen. It's meant to happen'. [Paul].

Another participant, Jack, had used grooming techniques but stated at the time that he thought this was friendship and closeness: this may also be interpreted as cognitive distortion. Other cognitive distortions present in the interviews include views that women were not to be trusted or were to blame for situations which they had no part in.

#### *Attachment issues*

Whilst it was not possible to determine attachment issues from the interviews, many aspects of the participants' accounts were consistent with the likely behaviour types outlined by Ward, Hudson et al.'s (1995) model. For example, those with child victims often expressed a lack of adult relationships and used grooming type behaviour, which is consistent with the anxious/ambivalent attachment type. Other participants demonstrated that they avoided intimacy (with adults), yet used force in their offences. They also viewed others (particularly women) as untrustworthy, and this may be consistent with the first avoidant attachment style. Ward, Hudson et al. (1995) described how in the

second type of avoidant attachment style the individual has a positive view of themselves and a negative view of others, blaming others for any problems in their lives. The issue of blaming others (particularly women) as responsible for negative situations in their lives was common. Use of force in this particular attachment style is thought to be a way of expressing aggression and not simply instrumental to committing the act, and this is also consistent with many of the accounts, in particular the anger issues previously discussed. Comparisons with attachment theories will be more fully explored in Chapter 8.

#### *Self-control, rational choice and offence-supportive attitudes*

Self-control has been defined as 'the capacity for altering one's own responses, especially to bring them into line with standards such as ideals, values, morals and social expectations, and to support the pursuit of long-term goals' (Baumeister, Vohs et al., 2007: p351). Some participants appeared to have issues with self-control. For instance, Simon (convicted of specialist sexual assault with child victims) described how seeing his particular victim type (young males) triggered feelings within him, and in his account he described having 'bad' and 'good' sides to himself and choosing to listen to the 'bad' side. His account appeared to reflect a lack of self-control, at least in the latter stages of his offending history, although initially he admits that he didn't want to change. Indeed, a common account was that the participant was not, at the time, particularly trying to stop themselves and it was more closely related to a rational choice to commit the offence.

The distinction between self-control and rational choice is important since there may be potentially different methods of working with people who choose to offend as a rational choice and those who lack the self-control to prevent it. The rational choice perspective fits in with one perspective on desistance - that a person will change when they have realised that the consequences of their behaviour (to themselves or others) outweighs the benefits. In contrast, offences thought to be triggered by problems related to self-control may require strategies that enhance self-control as well as for external control measures that limit opportunity. Offences related to a lack of self-control also appeared less likely to be triggered by situational events, although opportunity may have played a greater role.

### **7.5 Relationship between sexual and non-sexual offending**

The relationship between sexual and non-sexual offending has been explored throughout this research in order to compare different theories of 'general' offending and desistance from crime. Interview participants did not generally make a direct link between their sexual and non-sexual convictions, although in most cases they occurred at similar points in their lives. This is consistent with Thakker and Ward's assertion that 'DLC theories explicitly or implicitly assume that the same concepts and principles that apply to all other forms of offending apply equally to sexual offending' (Thakker and Ward, 2015: p44). For a couple of participants, the non-sexual offending and sexual offending appeared to have similar triggers, i.e. extremely adverse life events, and in other cases the non-sexual crimes were on an ongoing basis so were likely to have coincided with the

sexual offences anyway. In the quantitative analysis, age patterns for non-sexual convictions were similar to the age patterns for sexual convictions, although sexual convictions tended to be slightly more dispersed through the age groups, particularly for some classes.

Whilst the participants with child victims hadn't generally committed non-sexual offences, there was no evidence of particularly pro-social attitudes; they did not necessarily present as particularly rule-following. For example, one described a penchant for fast driving and one had also committed a serious breach of rules at work. It is therefore unclear why people with child victims appear to be less likely to commit non-sexual offences. There is possibly a link to levels of social isolation, which were more prevalent in participants with child victims. Research suggests that recidivist offenders can be part of social networks which 'encourage[] collective participation in behaviours that individuals might not normally have undertaken alone' (Weaver and McNeill, 2015: p99; see also Shapland and Bottoms, 2011), and hence it is possible that those with child victims are less likely to commit other crimes because they are not part of such networks.

Participants did not particularly dwell on their non-sexual offending, nor appeared to reflect on it to a great extent, although this may have been because this was not the main focus of the research. In contrast to studies of desistance from non-sexual offending, none of the participants appeared particularly concerned about their non-sexual offending, although this may be because it has been eclipsed by the ramifications of their sexual offending.

Jim was the participant whose sexual offending appeared most directly related to his non-sexual offending. At the beginning of the interview he hadn't connected the two behaviours, however as the interview progressed he stated that he viewed the sexual offence as very much caught up in the non-sexual offending (since he stated that it had started as a 'punishment' and a way to instil fear amongst his community).

'...the other side of it is that I don't think it was anger. I think there was probably anger involved, but it wasn't driven by anger. It was driven with wanting to be a somebody, or wanting to be a face, you know. And I think a lot of it had to do with, also, the people that I'm associating with, at the time of my crimes, because they're violent. And in that world, you convince yourself that you can only answer violence through violence.' [Jim].

Whilst Jim eventually reflected that this was his way of justifying the offence and that there were further reasons including entitlement, power and sexual gratification, it seems that the sexual offending was related to the non-sexual offending for two reasons. Firstly, similar feelings of entitlement had resulted in both types of offending, and secondly, the victimisation of this particular person was potentially enabled by the attitude towards women in Jim's proximal community.

Another participant, Paul, was most closely aligned with the generalist sexual assault class and had offended against young (child) females. Paul had one of the most extensive non-sexual offending histories. Paul had also committed some acquisitive crimes (vehicle theft) and this appeared to be primarily a 'business' decision as part of his daily work, however he also stated that he had anger issues towards adult males, and had charges/convictions for these. The assaults, however, possibly had similar motives to the sexual offending as Paul said that he felt he was repeating behaviour he had suffered in the past. He had also been the victim of violent behaviour as a child, and so it was difficult to disentangle this. Interestingly, unlike other participants, he stated that his (non-sexual) anger was never directed towards females (there was no suggestion that force was used in his offences), and so this appeared to be separate from the sexual offences. It is also interesting in itself that the sexual offence was not perceived to be an act of violence since it did not involve the use of non-sexual violence.

## **7.6 Desistance**

'It does make you sit and think about...is it worth it? And it's no'.' [Simon].

As most participants were in prison, the issue of desistance from offending could not be fully explored. However, participants were asked about any future plans, were they to be released. The most common reason for planning not to reoffend was the impact on their families, as well as the impact on victims. In contrast to some other research (particularly about desistance from non-sexual offending (Maruna, 2001)), the participants did not generally talk of the impact of future offending on their own lives. This may be a result of programmes they have

attended, although not all participants had taken part in a programme at the time of the interviews. There were no particular patterns (relating to the latent classes or victim type) in the reasons people expressed for their future plans to desist.

Jim's perspective on desistance was interesting, and he was firmly of the belief that crimes (both sexual and non-sexual) are committed due to self-interest. As a 'successful' offender with no particular negative consequences to his offending (prior to his lengthy prison sentence for his sexual offence), his perspective is perhaps different to many offenders. Jim did not think that he would have desisted from non-sexual offending, since the benefits to him in terms of financial reward and status far outweighed the cost, which is perhaps the opposite to many desisting former offenders.

'[I]f you're a gambler, and you go into the bookies, and your first three races, you win, then you're more likely to become hooked, than if you had lost your money in the first three. And I think crime, for me, at the young age that I started anyway, if you become successful at it, you're more likely to enjoy it. And that's the sad facts. I was, unfortunately - well at the time, I thought I was fortunate - but when you look at it in the real world, I was unfortunate that my younger years in crime, there wasn't really any catastrophic punishments.' [Jim].

This view is similar to the framework developed by Paternoster and Bushway (2009), in which a person's identity as someone who commits criminal acts



changes according to whether or not the outcomes of having this identity are beneficial, or if the benefits outweigh the costs. In Jim's case there had been no negative consequences and hence he did not take the decision to desist.

Having something to lose was also a factor in some accounts. For instance, Simon spoke of a time when he desisted and related this to being at a turning point, having come out on licence, when he could see a positive future. This was in contrast to other occasions where there didn't appear to be the same risk of losing positive aspects of life. In contrast, Sean described having more to lose as being a contributory factor in his offending, since this exacerbated his anger at his victim. Sean described having two similarly negative periods in his life (due to illness), however the first period did not result in offending behaviour or maladaptive thinking patterns. This was partly because the initial period was shorter, but partly because in the second period he had built up a life (marriage, job and children) and felt like he had more to lose:

‘I think at that time because I was obviously still a teenager  
and I hadn't been working or anything like that up to that  
point in time, I'd been in schooling, I don't think I felt like  
I'd lost as much'. Sean

Most of the participants did not see prison as a deterrent, apart from the fact that it prevented them from seeing their families. In fact, many participants described prison life as easier than being on the outside, since there was a set routine and nothing to worry about. However, being away from their previous lives and having

time to reflect on their past did seem to be an important element in terms of them coming to the conclusion that their offence was wrong, even if they had not participated in a programme. This is consistent with other work on desistance, which found that in some cases “having time to think’ is often imbued with rehabilitative power’ (Schinkel, 2015: p12). It may be that in some cases another change in circumstances (i.e. rather than being in prison) may have facilitated a similar period of reflection about past behaviour. This would be consistent with a life-course perspective on offending.

## **7.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed interviews with 10 people who have been convicted of sexual offences. There was evidence within the interviews of both psychological and sociological influences. Gendered elements appeared to be particularly pertinent amongst those with adult victims, including anger towards women, the use of sex as a weapon, and the link between violence and sexual arousal. These issues usually resulted in an offence because they were triggered by adverse life events (including illness, relationship breakdowns, bereavements, losing jobs and losing access to children). Life events appeared to be more serious and specific (i.e. major losses rather than general feelings of being down), in participants with adult victims.

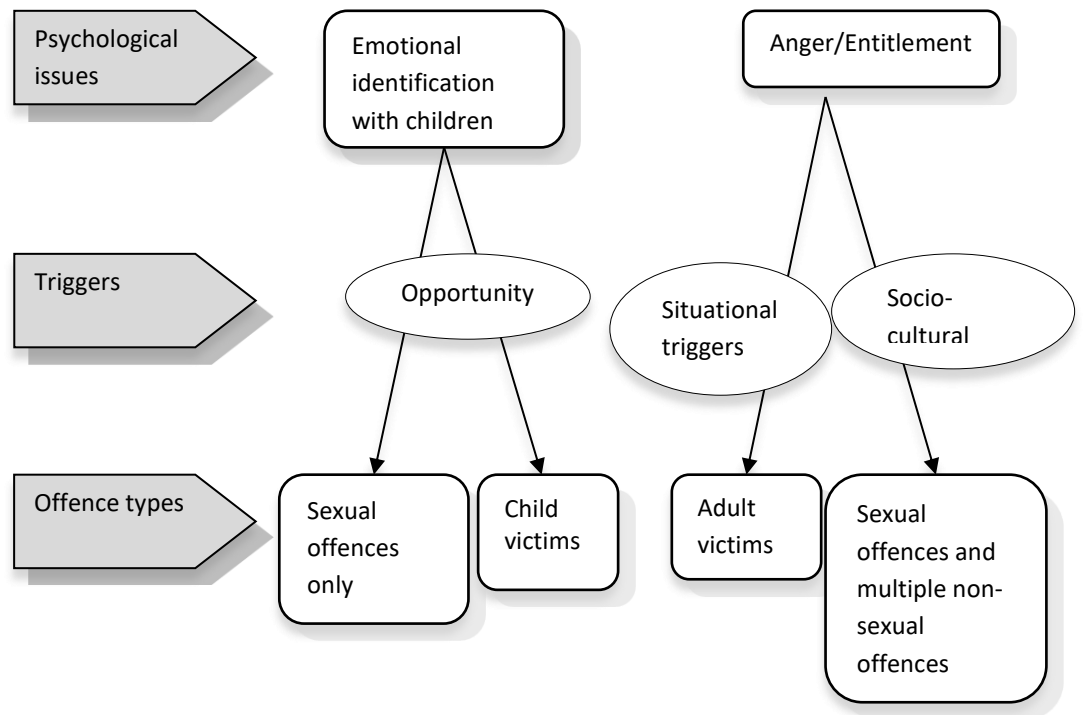
In contrast, those with child victims generally had developmental issues such as difficulties with adult relationships caused by adverse childhood experiences. In

contrast to the offences with adult victims, opportunity appeared more pertinent to the timing of the offence in terms of unsupervised access to children.

Overall, there was evidence to support a life course perspective since these life events were risk factors for offending. In particular the role of family and intimate relationships, seemed particularly important.

There appeared to be clear differences between those who had been convicted of only sexual offences and those who had been convicted of both sexual and non-sexual offences (as is consistent with the findings of the latent class analysis), as well as those with adult and child victims.

The following diagram is a visual representation of the most common offence pathways in the sample, showing how different social and psychological factors related to the different classes. It should be noted here that each of the 'triggers' may apply to any different path into offending. It is possible that the timing of any offence may be explained by opportunity (even if a maturation approach is taken). It is also possible that socio-cultural messages contribute to sexual offences against children, as per the postmodern/poststructuralist feminist approach. Therefore each stage of the pathways outlined in the diagram is fluid, however, the figure relates to common patterns within my small sample.



*Figure 3: Schematic of common offence pathways*

Chapter 8 will analyse these findings and those of the quantitative analysis in the context of the most prevalent theories of why people commit sexual offences, and examine whether the empirical data in this research provides evidence to support or refute the theories.

## **Chapter 8: Contextualising the findings: Theoretical analysis and discussion**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter will draw together the key findings from the empirical analysis and consider them in the context of the key theories discussed in Chapter 2. The chapter argues that overall, there is support for an interaction between psychological/developmental factors, situational elements and gender-based theories, with offending behaviour often being caused by underlying psychological or gender issues, but triggered by life events or situations. Ward and Hudson (1998) outlined different levels of theories according to how many stages of the offence process they explain, or the 'generality of focus' (Ward, Polaschek et al., 2006). Multifactorial approaches explain each stage of the process, but are flexible in that they recognise that for every offender there may be multiple different influences on the process, which may be different for every offender. Thus multifactorial approaches merely look at multiple different aspects of offending and the potential interaction of these different aspects, whilst recognising that there may be numerous different combinations of processes at play. This is important to the thesis because the thesis looks at different aspects of the offence process, from individual issues such as life events and psychological/developmental issues, to wider socio-cultural phenomenon such as gendered issues, as well as the interdependency between the two (e.g. negative ideas of masculinity which can interact with adverse childhood experiences to result in maladaptive views about women). Multifactorial theories are also consistent with other approaches (such as the poststructuralist/postmodern

approach which suggests that different ecological niches can result in differing ideas of masculinity, and the criminal career aspect which suggests different causes for different dimensions), which seek to account for multiple aspects of offending behaviour. This thesis found that there appear to be multiple different pathways into offending behaviour. Moreover, the data patterns provide considerable support for a developmental life-course (DLC) perspective into sexual offending, which states that offending behaviour is influenced by life changes and life events (McGee, Farrington et al., 2015). This chapter will outline the key findings of the thesis in turn, incorporating for each major finding how and to what extent the different theories explain the findings, highlighting gaps for which extant theories do not provide adequate explanation.

## **8.2 Key findings of empirical analysis**

Key findings of this thesis are outlined as follows. Although offenders are likely to have been convicted of only one sexual offence, people convicted of sexual offences exhibit considerable heterogeneity in terms of their offending patterns. Offenders can be clustered into seven general groups. Some of these groups demonstrate specialist behaviour, with their sexual offence as their only experience of offending. Other groups demonstrated more generalist offending patterns, whereby the sexual offending was part of an overarching profile of offending across multiple crime types including violence, property crime, and general forms of disorder. It did not appear that sexual offending was the primary form of offending for these generalist offenders, and there was no evidence of progression from non-sexual offending to sexual offending. Moreover, these

groups tended to be prolific non-sexual offenders rather than simply having been convicted of an average amount of offences. There was no evidence in this study of many chronic sexual offenders who committed multiple sexual crimes, although sexual offence frequency was slightly higher for the crime type of indecent exposure and voyeurism.

There were some clear indicators that life-course played some part in sexual offending, with crimes coinciding with patterns of life stages (particularly in the early 20s age group) and with some examples of clear 'turning points' which were typically marked by relationship breakdown, loss of stability (e.g. home), loss of employment (income) and loss of access to their children. These adverse life events may have been a trigger in offending for some, whereas for others life events and situations enabled an offence in terms of opportunity or a person's position within the community. Propensity to offend may also have been affected by early childhood experiences, and it is possible that the life stages were merely the triggers for the offence rather than the underlying cause. The cause of the offending behaviour may have had an effect on the selection of the victim (in terms of whether the victim was a child or an adult) and the specific modus operandi of the offence (in terms of whether they used coercion as opposed to physical force/violence). Socio-cultural messages, in particular gendered messages, were also a contributory factor in the sexual offending.

This chapter will consider each of the key findings in the context of extant theories, discussing which theories are supported by the empirical evidence in this thesis.

## **8.3 Theoretical discussion of key findings**

### **8.3.1 Heterogeneity of offending patterns**

The latent class analysis estimated that, in terms of types of convictions, there were seven distinct groups of offenders, suggesting that there is heterogeneity in offending behaviour amongst people who have committed sexual offences. Further analysis of these groups showed other distinct characteristics including different patterns of offending based on age, type and frequency of offending, as well as potentially different victim types in terms of gender and age. The qualitative analysis also suggested that along with different offence types and ages of victim, people in the classes possibly differed by different modus operandi of the offence, particularly in terms of force and violence used. The qualitative analysis also suggested that some of these differences were due to different underlying motivation for the offences (for instance anger issues or inability to obtain adult relationships, in turn often caused by adverse childhood experiences).

The fact that offenders can be clustered into multiple groups with distinct patterns is supported by many of the multifactorial theories. For instance, Ward and Siegert (2002) suggested five different pathways to offending, however these are not fixed and other pathways may be possible. Other multifactorial theories (e.g. Marshall and Barbaree's Integrated Theory, 1990; Ward and Beech's Integrated Theory of Sexual Offending, 2006) also take into account multiple and complex paths into offending. Similarly, attachment theories (e.g. Ward, Hudson et al., 1995) support the conclusion that there may be many different patterns of



offending, caused by different attachment styles. The latent classes, however, suggest that these pathways, whilst complex, are not unique and many people may follow similar pathways. Empirical research has also supported a typological approach to sexual offending pathways (e.g. Robertiello and Terry, 2007).

This complexity and heterogeneity of offending pathways suggests not only that there is no single cause of sexual offending behaviour, but also that no single approach to intervention and treatment is appropriate (and that risk assessments tailored towards different types of offending behaviour may be more appropriate). This will be discussed further in the next chapter on policy implications.

### **8.3.2 Specialism vs general offending in sexual offending**

This section will look at one of the key features of the latent class analysis - the fact that there was evidence of both specialism in sexual offending behaviour, and sexual offending behaviour as part of a prolific non-sexual offending pattern, which indicates non-specialism. These patterns will be analysed in a theoretical context to comment on what this may mean about offending behaviour.

#### *Specialism*

The findings of this thesis suggest specialism of offending behaviour in two respects. Firstly, a majority of people convicted of sexual offences (52%) were only convicted of sexual offences (and not non-sexual offences); secondly, according to the latent classes most people were only convicted of one sexual crime *type*. This

is consistent with the findings of other research (e.g. Blockland and van der Geest, 2015). However, these findings about specialism may have been artificially inflated by the fact that most offenders (93%) were generally only convicted of one sexual crime. It may also be the case that these are one-off offences, and that the causes are transient and linked to a particular set of circumstances, such as a situational trigger or a temporary lack of a particular 'primary good' (Willis, Yates et al., 2012): in other words, some people only commit one offence and are not pre-disposed to commit others. However, the under-reporting of sexual offending and poor conviction rates should caution us about drawing this conclusion; and even if the conclusion were valid, this would not negate the need to find potential causes and subsequently attempt to find ways to prevent these offences.

Other research has found evidence of specialisation amongst those with sexual convictions. A study of convictions in England and Wales found that specialisation was more evident for non-contact offenders, particularly those with convictions relating to indecent images (Howard, Barnett et al., 2013). This study also suggested that those with adult victims were more prone to non-sexual offending than those with child victims. Other studies based on arrests tend to show more involvement in non-sexual offending, but still suggest greater levels of specialisation in those with child victims (Miethe, Olson et al., 2006).

One of the key questions when analysing specialism in sexual offending is why, if a person is willing to breach social norms in this way (which is usually considered more serious than other offences), do they not then commit all types of offences?

Generally, theories of specialism suggest that the particular specialism is 'an expression of the offender's personality and attitudes' (Cornish and Clarke, 1989: p103) or as a result of a different motivation to offend rather than an absence of social control (Benson and Moore, 1992). This may also be interpreted as an attempt to gain a particular 'primary good', according to the principles of the Good Lives Model (Willis, Yates et al., 2012). In other words, the underlying cause or motivation to offend is offence-specific.

Theories specific to sexual offending behaviour are also consistent with the findings concerning specialism. Ward, Hudson et al.'s taxonomy (1995) suggests that differing underlying attachments are responsible for different behaviour types (for instance in the choice of victim and modus operandi of the offence), and so in theory this concept would support the idea that people tend to stick to a particular behaviour pattern. For instance, Ward, Hudson et al. (1996) found that those with child victims were more likely to have preoccupied (negative view of self and positive view of others) or fearful (negative view of self and negative view of others) attachment styles. Both these types of offenders are less likely to have violent tendencies than the other attachment styles, which may also provide some explanation for why individuals with adult victims appeared more likely to be violent and use force.

The fact that people are generally not convicted of more than one sexual offence *type* also points to different motivations for different sexual offence types. Some offences are more likely to have adult vs child victims (as some offences are age

specific), and there may be different motivations for offending against these victim types. Similarly, the motivation may affect the offence type or modus operandi (for instance someone with underlying anger issues may be more likely to use physical force rather than emotional or psychological manipulation). The same offence may have different modus operandi (for instance, a rape may be committed using force, implied force, threat or other forms of coercion), and so more detailed research would be beneficial in analysing this further (for example using data with modus operandi key words). This had been an original intention with other datasets explored, however unfortunately this was not possible given the limitations of the datasets available for this study.

Information from the interviews and tentative findings from the quantitative data suggests that those with child victims tended to be in specialist groups, and hence there appeared to be a link between those who offended against children, and those who only commit sexual offences, although the converse may not necessarily follow (i.e. that those in specialist groups are more likely to have child victims). As discussed, other studies have found that those with child victims are more likely to be specialists (Howard, Barnett et al., 2013; Miethe, Olson et al., 2006). In the interviews, those with child victims did not display particularly pro-social attitudes, and it is therefore unclear why people with child victims appeared to be less likely to commit non-sexual offences than those with adult victims. There is possibly a link to levels of social isolation, which were more prevalent in participants with child victims. Research suggests that recidivist offenders can be part of social networks which 'encourage[] collective participation in behaviours

that individuals might not normally have undertaken alone' (Weaver and McNeill, 2015: p99; see also Shapland and Bottoms, 2011), and hence it is possible that those with child victims are less likely to commit other crimes if they are not part of such networks. All participants who took part in the interviews offended alone (in terms of their sexual offences, to the best of my knowledge), and hence acting in a group is possibly more applicable to the non-sexual side of their offending.

### *Non-specialism*

Whilst there was evidence of specialism in the data, at the same time there was also evidence that sexual offending could be linked to prolific non-sexual offending. Whilst 48% of people with a sexual conviction also had at least one non-sexual conviction, for a smaller group sexual offending is linked to prolific offending (an estimated 24% of the offenders in the dataset fell into the generalist class). It was also clear from the narratives of generalist offenders that the boundaries between sexual and non-sexual offending were sometimes blurred, and that they were just points on the continuum of a generally deviant lifestyle. There does not appear to be a large amount of empirical evidence about the link between sexual offending and *prolific* non-sexual offending, and so this is a gap in the literature.

Ward and Siegert's Pathways Model (Ward and Siegert, 2002) suggests antisocial cognitions as one of the key pathways to sexual abuse, which is consistent with this finding. According to this model, individuals in this pathway are generalists and are extensively involved in non-sexual offending, possibly due to 'dangerous

world' or implicit entitlement theories. Entitlement was mentioned by two interview participants, and there was also evidence of the 'dangerous world' view, or more pertinent in the interviews, the 'dangerous *women*' view.

Age patterns for sexual and non-sexual convictions (where non-sexual convictions were present), were generally similar both on an individual and a group level (with some exceptions), which would suggest that contributory factors for sexual and non-sexual offending may be similar, either for the reason they occurred in the first place, or for the reason that the person did not go on to reoffend. It seemed that for those in generalist groups, their sexual conviction was simply a small part of a wider criminal career.

The finding that many people commit sexual offences as one small part of a wider offending pattern is interesting in itself. It may be that some offenders with a proclivity towards sexual offences are more likely to commit the offences if social bonds are weakened. For them, sexual offending may simply be part of a wider willingness to defy social norms, and that there is nothing particularly abhorrent for them about sexual offences as opposed to non-sexual offences. This is illustrated by the quote from one of the interview participants:

'I think it's a myth for people that have never really been involved in crime, to think that most criminals scorn the thought of sexual offending. It's not the case'. [Jim].

This is consistent with feminist theories which state that the abuse of women is widely sanctioned by society (e.g. Ward, 1985). It is also consistent with the

finding that this pattern of offending (sexual offending as part of a wider non-sexual offending pattern) is more prevalent with those with adult female victims. In other words, whilst abuse of children may be seen to be an unacceptable breach of a moral code, abuse of adult women is merely seen as being on a par with other types of offending. Further research into where offences with adult male victims sits within this hypothesis would be interesting. However, this hypothesis cannot explain *all* sexual offending, since most people with a sexual conviction do not have any non-sexual convictions. Again, this links back to the potential different pathways for offending behaviour.

#### *Different pathways*

Whilst the theories discussed in the previous section offer some reasons why the generalist groups may be prolific non-sexual offenders, these theories are less effective in providing an explanation for why the specialist groups do not tend to commit many non-sexual offences. This asymmetry suggests that there may be an underlying difference in motivation between the specialists and the generalists. One possible explanation is that the specialists have unique motivations based on their particular crimes, whilst the generalists are simply not bound by social control and therefore commit a variety of crimes, or that there is a common underlying motivation which can explain both their sexual and non-sexual offending (e.g. entitlement).

There is also a body of research into different attachment styles being responsible for non-sexual offending behaviour (e.g. Fonagy and Levinson, 2004; Ogilvie,

Newman et al., 2014). Further research into similarities and differences between specialist and generalist groups would be beneficial. Whilst not a direct comparison, there may be a parallel here with research into the dual taxonomy (Moffitt, 1993) of adolescent limited and life-course persistent offenders: life-course persistent offenders' actions were hypothesised to be caused by a neuropsychological deficit whilst adolescent-limited offenders were thought to be influenced by social factors such as relationships with parents and peers, as well as conflicts in their place in society. In the interviews, there was some evidence that those in generalist groups were more sensitive to situational triggers (although this was generally caused by underlying issues), and hence this might be worthy of further exploration.

Ward and Siegert's Pathways Model (2002) supports the finding of specialism between those who are only convicted of sexual offences and those who are convicted of sexual offences as part of a wider offending pattern to a certain extent, since antisocial cognition is only *one* pathway towards offending: hence, the antisocial cognition pathway would result in non-specialist offending behaviour, whilst other pathways may lead to people only being involved in sexual offending behaviour.

Identifying each person's pathway will assist in identifying their motivation to offend and, hopefully, areas in which to prevent reoffending. They could possibly also assist in the prediction of later offender pathways, and provide a more nuanced approach to risk assessment for different types of offender. This would



contribute to the better design, delivery and evaluation of offender programmes. Moreover, identifying common pathways may also help to identify areas in which broader spectrum interventions, e.g. education or public awareness campaigns, could help to prevent offending behaviour.

### **8.3.3 Low reoffending rates for sexual crimes**

The mean number of sexual offences per person (based on numbers of people who have been convicted of a sexual offence) is 1.1 compared to  $M=3.4$  for all convictions in the SOI. This finding that most people do not go on to be convicted of another sexual crime (even when not given a prison sentence) is interesting and contrary to some theories which may suggest that propensity to sexually offend is fixed (see Lussier and Cale, 2016). This study concerned convictions only and this should always be borne in mind when discussing levels of offending, however other studies have found that desistance is the default position for those with a history of sexual offences (Blokland and van der Geest, 2015). As highlighted in Chapter 2, studies based on self-reports tend to show much higher levels of offending behaviour than official figures.

For the generalist groups, the fact that sexual offending appeared to be a small part of a wider offending repertoire may suggest that sexual offending is not something that they actively have to try to desist from, since it is not a large part of their offending activity. The issue of whether a sexual offence can ever be a 'one-off' is a difficult one. Most people with sexual convictions are not reconvicted (although this may not reflect the true offending situation), however those in the

practitioner field do not generally advocate moving away from treatment of offenders and relying on 'natural' desistance supported by changes in environment, as criminological researchers have previously been more inclined to do in relation to general offending (Laws and Ward, 2011). A key consideration in this is the relative role of psychological versus situational factors for each person, and this may be different for each person. If psychological issues, particularly trait-like elements, are the dominant influence on the offence, this suggests that there may be a continuing risk of reoffending without treatment. If situational triggers are more prevalent, the series of events which may lead to an offence might be a rarer occurrence, and hence the person would be of lower risk (but not no risk) of offending. This highlights the potential importance of addressing situational issues in addition to psychological factors.

Whilst there may be explanations for the low reconviction rate including a greater impact of being caught - such an impact might be due to greater stigma in society as well as potentially a realisation of the greater impact on the victim and the offender's family - most sexual offending theories do not articulate an explanation for why those with sexual convictions would necessarily be at a lower risk of reoffending than people with non-sexual convictions. On the contrary, many theories would suggest that sexual offending should be more stable than conviction patterns suggest. Other theories which take into account situational elements recognise that, for many people, propensity to offend can change throughout life: some even suggest that it can be a transitory state, which may

explain the low reconviction rate. These theories will be discussed further in this chapter.

#### **8.3.4 Life events and their relationship to offending**

Lussier and Cale (2016) argued that most theories of sexual offending, whilst incorporating situational factors, tend to focus on traits which are fixed and stable and hence always present. They argued that, however, 'sexual aggression is...typically short-lived for most, and can be considered largely opportunistic and transitory' (p2) (although this paper did not take into account offences against children). The developmental life-course perspective looks at 'successive and continuing person x environment interactions' (p9), and hence propensity to offend continually changes throughout the life course:

'The life course approach stresses that human development does not stop after childhood, but rather, continues to unfold well beyond throughout the entire life-course. Attitudes, values, and behaviours are shaped by life experiences and significant turning points' (Lussier and Cale, 2016: p74).

A particular emphasis is placed on environment, and how this may change at different points in life. According to the quantitative results of this thesis, for many people offending behaviour did not appear to be stable throughout the life-course (in fact many people appear to offend at the same time of their lives, i.e. the early 20s), which seems to suggest risk factors particular to this age group, thus supporting developmental life-course theory. The qualitative interviews also suggested that propensity to offend could be triggered by life situations and

immediate risk factors, which is also consistent with a life-course approach. Moreover as a paradigm, developmental life-course theory is not inconsistent with other theories of the causes of sexual offending. This section will examine potential life events and other factors which may explain patterns of offending, follow with an overall discussion of these findings in the context of a DLC perspective.

### *Theoretical explanations for the influence of life events*

Many of the multifactorial theories take into account situational and transitory influences (e.g. Finkelhor, 1984; Marshall and Barbaree, 1990), generally through inability to regulate emotion (e.g. Ward and Siegert, 2002) or situational factors leaving people unable to meet their needs in appropriate ways. This is consistent with the life-course perspective and discussion of situational triggers. Ward and Beech (2006), in respect of their Integrated Theory of Sexual Offending, went so far as to say that sometimes the ecological niche alone may be sufficient: 'sometimes the major causal factors resulting in sexual offending reside in the ecological niche rather than within the person' (p53). This view is not generally consistent with the interviews: most people appeared to have underlying issues which were triggered by situational elements, however the interviews may not have been representative of offending in general. The situational perspective may also be one explanation for the low recidivism rate for sexual offences. Sociological theories also support a life-course perspective: for instance Laub and Sampson (1993) suggested that social bonds were key to general offending

behaviour and thus changes within them were responsible for changing offending patterns over time.

Changing attachments may also explain some of the life-course changes in offending patterns. If a positive adult relationship can and does mitigate an adverse childhood experience, then it seems likely that a healthy adult relationship may have a promotive effect on desistance from sexual offending. This would also be consistent with the age patterns for most people (particularly the generalist groups), if a positive adult relationship after their first offence (in their early 20s) encouraged them to desist. Conversely, insecure attachment styles may be self-perpetuating for some people over the life-course, as they struggle with intimate relationships since they have come to expect the worst. Ward, Hudson et al. (1995) stated that there was still conceptual ambiguity with attachment research regarding whether it should be considered 'a personality trait or the product of a unique person-situation interaction' (p324). More recent research tends to suggest the latter (Lussier and Cale, 2016), and this would provide a better explanation for differing age patterns, providing a reason that most people do not go on to be reconvicted. This research was unable to explore this since most of the participants were in prison and therefore not physically able to form conventional adult relationships.

Attachment theories may also take into account the situational triggers which were present in the sample interviewed:

'[T]hese fantasies may not necessarily be translated into action unless the man's adult relationship is stressed (which can be expected to be highly probable in insecurely attached males), or he is disinhibited (e.g., by alcohol), and these stresses and disinhibitory processes coincide with an opportunity to offend' (Ward, Hudson et al., 1995: p327).

Smallbone and Dadds (2000) also described how attachment deficits can lead to feelings of distress causing confusion between different behavioural systems and lead to sexual feelings instead of parental feelings. Hence situational triggers (which may cause feelings of distress) may result in this confusion of behavioural systems and consequently offending behaviour.

The early 20s age group appears to be particularly relevant to sexual offending, as the quantitative conviction patterns peak at this age. This is slightly later than the peak ages for convictions in general in Scotland taken from the dataset used for this research (which is in the late teens as is consistent with some other research into the age-crime curve (Moffitt, 1993)). Hence whilst for those who are convicted of sexual offences, sexual and non-sexual convictions tend to occur at similar ages (for most people), these convictions occur slightly later than for people who have never been convicted of sexual offences. For those who have only been convicted of sexual offences, this may mean that different age-related triggers (such as relationships) are involved. However, for those who are prolific non-sexual offenders, since it would appear that their primary offending was not sexual, it is less clear why they do not mirror general conviction patterns. This may

be related to the fact that they are prolific rather than 'average' non-sexual offenders: there may be different motivations involved such as entitlement or dangerous world theories (although it would seem unclear why they did not also offend in adolescence).

On comparing the findings in this thesis to David Farrington's 10 accepted conclusions about (general) criminal behaviour over the life-course (Blokland and Lussier, 2015), some findings reflect Farrington's findings and some are not consistent. Farrington found that *prevalence* in offending is highest during the late teenage years, which roughly mirrored the findings in this thesis (although this thesis found that the peak age group for convictions was in the early 20s, this may be because conviction age is slightly later than other measures of offending). Similarly, they found that onset of offending was at a similar age.

Farrington found that there was continuity of offending over the life-course, which is not consistent with the findings of this thesis. He also found that those who had an earlier onset of offending behaviour were more likely to have a higher frequency of offending, which is supported to some extent by the findings of this thesis, in that classes with young mean ages at time of conviction (generalist rape and generalist indecent exposure), had high mean numbers of non-sexual convictions. However, this pattern was only true of non-sexual convictions.

Farrington found that offenders tended to be diverse in their offending. The findings of this thesis did not find that this was true of sexual offences. The

generalist groups were versatile in their *non-sexual* convictions, however in terms of sexual offending, specialism or one-off convictions were more common. Similarly, this thesis did not find evidence of sequential patterns in offending unlike Farrington's findings, although the thesis hypothesised that certain offences against children were more likely at an older age.

Farrington found that as people get older, they tend to commit offences alone rather than in a group. Whilst this thesis did not examine number of perpetrators in a conviction, this finding would be consistent with the idea, explored within this thesis, that one potential explanation for the high prevalence of offending in the early 20s age group is the influence of peers and social structure. In addition to this, Farrington's finding that reasons for offending tend to become less diverse with age may also be a factor in the offending pattern for sexual convictions.

Whilst Blokland and van der Geest (2015) suggested that a maturational approach was incompatible with dynamic influences on offending behaviour (i.e. that a maturational approach implies that only the ageing effect and not exogeneous variables have an impact on offending), this is not necessarily the case. Rocque (2014) argued that the idea of maturation has been poorly defined, and suggests many potential factors may underpin this approach (Rocque, 2014): civic/communal maturation, psychosocial maturation, adult social role maturation, neurocognitive maturation and cognitive transformation/identity maturation. One of Rocque's points was that delays in maturation may be due to dynamic factors such as experience of the criminal justice system, marriage,



employment and identity changes. Hence life events may delay the maturation process and in this way life-course theories are not incompatible with maturation theories.

To sum up, both the empirical evidence in this study and other theoretical frameworks which seek to explain the causes of and pathways into sexual offending support a developmental life-course perspective into sexual offending. It should be emphasised that this does not discount the importance of psychological elements, or the interaction between psychological and situational or life events. In fact, the qualitative interviews seem to suggest that for many people, there are underlying issues which have been present since childhood but which manifest in sexual offending when certain external conditions are present. Hence life events alone may not be sufficient for many people to commit a sexual offence, however they can predict when a person is more vulnerable to offending behaviour.

The following sections will look at individual life events, situations and relationships to determine the level of theoretical and empirical support for the relative importance of each one.

### *Relationships*

Relationships with other adults were found in the interviews to be significant in the participants' lives and breakdown in relationships often coincided with offending patterns of the participants, both for sexual and non-sexual offences.

Moreover, many participants in this research, particularly those with child victims, stated that they had difficulty with adult relationships, often due to being victims of abuse themselves. This is consistent with some of the psychological theories: for instance stable and emotionally intimate relationships are often seen as indicators of secure attachments (Marshall, 1989), which in turn lessen the likelihood of intimacy deficits, which are thought to be a causal factor for sexual offending.

Being in an adult relationship may to some extent account for the fact that peak conviction age for most classes (particularly those thought to contain a large amount of adult victims) was in the early 20s, and that convictions were less likely after this. This is a time in life when many relationships begin to form, and so it may be that a long-term relationship a short time after the offence acted to prevent reoffending (both sexual and non-sexual), or similarly that many offences may have been committed against a partner, acquaintance, or in a dating scenario. There may be some parallels with domestic abuse here: the peak perpetrator age for domestic abuse is 26-30 (Office for National Statistics, 2016) (although this may be due to younger people being more likely to report or identify behaviour as domestic abuse). Some theories relating to domestic abuse suggest that the age profiles for perpetrators are due to attempts to control the sexual behaviour of females during their reproductive years (and hence are actually due to the age of the female victim rather than the perpetrator, although this is often similar (Peters, Shackelford et al., 2002)). This has biological origins and relates to a supposed drive to ensure any offspring are genetically related. There has also

been some research which suggests that emotional loneliness is related to the acceptance of violence towards women (Check, Perlman et al., 1985). Research into this issue appears to be sparse, although there may be many other potential reasons for the age profiles, as well as reporting issues. The later offences (in the 40s age groups) also coincide with peak divorce rates (Scottish Government, 2010), although a connection to this is speculation. Moreover, these explanations would not account for the prevalence of non-sexual offending over sexual offending.

Marshall and Barbaree's Integrated Theory (1990) described a confluence of developmental factors (such as attachment deficits or patriarchal attitudes within the home), biological (hormonal) processes, and socio-cultural factors, which result in a sexual offence. Marshall and Barbaree argued that negative experiences during the developmental stage make it hard to form healthy and appropriate adult relationships. Adolescence is a particularly vulnerable time due to a combination of powerful hormonal urges, and also the fact that this is the time when sexual and relationship scripts are being learned. In addition to this, situational stressors act as triggers for an offence if a person has developed masturbatory coping strategies, which have turned into offence-related behaviours. According to some research a substantial minority of offences are committed by other children and young people (approximately a third according to the NSPCC (Radford, Corral et al., 2011), however this would not explain why so many convictions occur in the early 20s age group rather than adolescence

(although it is possible people are more likely to be convicted at an older age even if more offending takes place at a younger age).

Marshall and Barbaree also argued that individuals who enter puberty without adequate social and intimacy skills are likely to be rejected by females of their own age, which can result in anger and resentment towards women in general. This issue was not explored in the interviews, however it may to some extent account for the relatively young age at which most people are convicted of sexual offences. As discussed there was a common theme of anger towards women, however this appeared to have been developed in childhood rather than adolescence, although it was impossible to be definitive about this and the sample was small. Further research into the reasons for the prevalence offending behaviour in this particular age group would be beneficial.

Other empirical research supports the idea of an age-crime curve for sexual offences (e.g. Lussier and Healey, 2009), although there is sometimes disagreement in this, possibly due to the differing patterns for different sub-groups.

### *Opportunity*

Opportunity appeared to be a factor in many offences, in the sense that none of the interview participants described actively targeting a victim, however they took the opportunity to offend when they had access to a victim. This was particularly true of those with child victims. Most (but not all) of the participants with child

victims groomed their victim over a long period of time and hence secured unsupervised access prior to offending. This may explain why those with child victims appear to offend at an older age or at different ages throughout the life-course: the opportunity to offend came at this stage in the life course and not before. The role of opportunity is also taken into account in the multifactorial theories (e.g. Finkelhor, 1984; Malamuth, 1996) where the role of opportunity and access is also outlined in terms of overcoming external inhibitors. As discussed, in the interviews opportunity appeared more pertinent to the timing of the offence for some people than for others (particularly those who offended later in life), however it is possible that opportunity was also a driver for offences which occurred in the early 20s age group, and likely that it plays some factor in all offences; in fact many general criminological theories posit opportunity as one of the key enablers of an offence (e.g. Cohen and Felson, 1979). Most theories do not suggest that opportunity alone is a sufficient condition for an offence (something which was consistent with the interview accounts), however it may be that it is more of a driver for some offences than for others. Other empirical research suggests that opportunity also plays a role (e.g. Beauregard, Proulx et al., 2007) however it is often thought that the offender is involved in more active planning and merely waiting for an opportunity to arise (which were often at least partly engineered by the offender). None of the interviewees in this research described this, however it is possible that they were not willing to admit this or were not fully aware of it at the time. Hence, it is possible that for some the propensity to offend is stable throughout life and they offend when the

opportunity arises, however for others propensity to offend is short-lived, but must also coincide with opportunity.

### *Peers*

The influence of peers was only apparent in one participant in the interviews, however this may have been due to sample size. However, much research into non-sexual offending offers the influence of peers (and the absence of influence of romantic partners) as a risk factor for offending behaviour (e.g. Sutherland, 1992; Akers, 1977), and the quantitative and qualitative research both suggested that sexual and non-sexual offending occurred at the same time. There is some research which suggests that peer associations can have an influence on sexual offending (primarily towards adult victims e.g. Schwartz et al., 2001, however there has also been some research to suggest peers may have an influence on offending against child victims (Ashurst and McAlinden, 2015)). Theoretically, the postmodern/poststructuralist feminist approach would support the influence of peers since this may provide the context of a particular framing of masculinity. Peer influence may explain the link to non-sexual offending, but not why convictions are at a later age than for those who have not been convicted of sexual offences. Further research into this issue would be desirable.

### **8.3.5 Adverse childhood experiences**

In the qualitative section of this research, there was some evidence that propensity to offend may have been affected by early childhood experiences. This is consistent with some theories: for example Ward and Siegert's Pathways Model

(2002) suggests abuse in childhood as a key potential factor in sexual offending behaviour, via the multiple dysfunctional mechanisms pathway. Attachment theories also state that abuse and neglect in childhood can lead to attachment deficits, leading to different types of offending behaviour. Whilst it was not possible to assess interview participants for attachment issues, many people displayed behaviour consistent with different attachment styles, and patterns in the quantitative and qualitative elements of the research provided support for attachment theories. Many participants also reported that they had been abused as a child (particularly those with child victims). There are various descriptions and interpretations of attachment theories (and how they relate to sexual offending) in the literature. For example, Ward, Hudson et al.'s taxonomy (1995) seemed to be supported by the qualitative research, in terms of difficulties in forming adult relationships, emotional identification with children, different modus operandi of the offences (in terms of victim type and use of force/violence) and the view of others (particularly women) being untrustworthy. Moreover, differing attachment styles may explain the heterogeneity of offending patterns, and contemporary research on attachment theories suggest that attachments can change throughout life (McKillop, Smallbone et al., 2012), which would also be consistent with the life-course paradigm.

#### **8.3.6 Socio-cultural perspectives**

Socio-cultural messages, in particular messages about gender, were also a contributory factor in sexual offending according to the interviews. This viewpoint is supported by the gender imbalance in the conviction data (i.e. that 98% of sexual

offenders are male). Negative and unconstructive attitudes towards women are thought to contribute to sexual offending, and these can come from proximal (e.g. close friendship group or family) or distal (wider society) influences. These can also interact with other factors such as psychological/developmental issues to trigger an offence.

In the interviews in this study, evidence of gender-based contributory factors was more prevalent in participants with adult female victims, and was related to the way in which the participant had come to view women in society, which generally stemmed from an early age. All of the participants in the sample who had offended against adult females had used force, and there were often serious violent acts committed against their victims in the course of their crimes. It was common for these participants to have stated in their interviews that they had anger issues, and they were often generalist offenders. Themes in the interviews included the use of sexual assault as a weapon, that violence appears to be linked to sexual arousal, and of issues of anger against women. It is not clear, however, why these offenders were more likely to be generalists, unless this is merely due to sample bias, as there does not appear to be a clear theoretical reason for the link between extreme negative views against women and prolific non-sexual offending. One of the interviewees alluded to entitlement, and this may be a possible explanation: an offender may feel entitled to behave however he chooses, and also feel entitled to expect women to perform certain roles in society. This is, perhaps, in contrast to those who have developed anger issues due to childhood abuse, however it may have the same end result.



Some studies have found a link between sexual offenders (with adult victims) and the 'grievance/revenge' schema (e.g. Milner and Webster, 2005). This schema was also found to be prevalent in those with violent non-sexual offences, and this highlights a potential crossover with those who commit sexual offences with force and violence.

As well as broader feminist theories into sexual offences, many other theories into sexual offending behaviour allow for gender-based elements. For example, the disinhibition model of rape outlined by Barbaree and Marshall (1991) described how severe emotional states may increase feelings of sexual arousal from rape, through means of being disinhibited by the stressful event. This is usually because the person has decreased motivation to act in a prosocial manner, and also through anger or hostility towards the female victim. This was found to be influenced by the following: permissive instructions (messages that rape was not wrong); alcohol intoxication; anger towards a female; victim blame; excusability of the victim; and exposure to pornography. Hence this model takes into account situational triggers as well as cultural messages which lessen negative views towards rape. This model is considered by the authors to be a 'state' model, which means that it may apply to any man, and can occur on a transitory basis, which is particularly pertinent to the life-course perspective, and would also be consistent with the low reconviction rates.

Marshall and Barbaree's Integrated Theory (1990) also suggested that anger and sexual arousal are linked. This is consistent with studies which suggest that anger,

arousal and non-consensual sex are linked (Yates, Barbaree et al., 1984). It should also be noted that fantasies of rape and domination are not particularly unusual and hence are not merely confined to those who have acted on these thoughts. Joyal et al (2015) found in their research that 22% of male respondents had previously fantasised about forcing someone to have sex, and 23% had fantasised about sexually abusing a person who is drunk, asleep or unconscious. Over half (60%) had had fantasies of dominating someone sexually. Whilst this does not necessarily mean that most people would act on these fantasies (and sexual domination can take place in a consenting relationship), it does demonstrate how common the link between domination, sexual violence and sexual arousal is, and also that those with thoughts about abusing and dominating women are not necessarily far out of social norms.

Other theories take into account the issue of gender: for instance, Ward and Siegert's model mentions the use of sexual assault as punishment in the emotional dysregulation pathway. Malamuth's Confluence Model of Sexual Aggression (1996), described two pathways of offending as sexual promiscuity and hostile masculinity, suggesting that those in the hostile masculinity path are often mistrustful of women and achieve sexual satisfaction from humiliating and controlling women, which was a narrative which featured in the interviews. Marshall and Barbaree's Integrated Theory (1990) described how those who have had difficulty forming healthy relationships are more likely to be vulnerable to cultural messages which attribute greater status and power to their male gender. Ward and Siegert's Pathways Model (Ward and Siegert, 2002) incorporated

cultural messages in the sexual scripts pathway, as norms and values determined how to interpret personal or cultural cues. In the interviews in this study, cultural messages appeared more pertinent to those with adult victims, however it could also be interpreted that those who have been victims of abuse themselves have been subject to distorted proximal cultural views, which suggest that sexual activity with children is acceptable.

The issue of anger towards women has been discussed in terms of non-sexual interpersonal violence, which is thought to be more common where there is a discrepancy between the male and female partners' views of traditional roles (e.g. Bell and Naugle, 2008; Jewkes, 2002). An alternative interpretation may be that a person has had their masculinity threatened by issues such as low self-esteem, sexual jealousy, perceived betrayal or being abused by a man (O'Neil and Nadeau, 1999) which results in a perceived need to demonstrate their strength and manhood. One of the interview participants in this study described feelings of low self-esteem (due to a serious illness), as well as a (perceived) betrayal by his ex-partner. Either way, this results in the female victim being seen as someone who must be violently kept in her place in order to reinforce the male's status, or to ensure she maintains her proper role in society. Gender-based theories are not particularly clear on why this would result in a sexual, rather than non-sexual violent, offence. As previously discussed, this issue was explored in the interviews, and the most common explanation for this was the contributory role of sexual arousal.

Many of the theories into the causes of sexual offending behaviour take into account gendered elements through means of distorted beliefs (e.g. Finkelhor, 1984). Cognitive distortions, ways of viewing and interpreting the world around us which may not necessarily reflect the reality, are commonly linked to sexual offending, and as outlined in Chapter 2 these may stem from socio-cultural messages. Several issues which were discussed by the participants in this study may be viewed as cognitive distortions, and these were generally relevant to their styles of thinking at the time of the offence. Types of cognitive distortions included the following: children as sexual beings; entitlement; and dangerous world theory, which are all cognitive distortions which have previously been identified in the literature (Ward and Keenan, 1999; Polaschek and Ward, 2002). Polaschek and Ward's (2002) work on cognitive distortions also stated that as part of the entitlement cognitive distortion, punishment of women is often deemed acceptable: '[A] man, any man, is entitled to punish a woman for unsuitable conduct and the punishment can be rape, if he wants sex' (p398). This is consistent with the findings in the interviews of sexual assault being used as a weapon, as a consequence of perceived unacceptable behaviour on the part of a particular woman in the perpetrator's life (even if this was not the particular woman they were 'punishing'). Moreover, the last part of this sentence '*if he wants sex*' is also consistent with the idea that the punishment part is only half of the story, and that sexual gratification is also a motivation. This is also something that was discussed during the interviews, with some of the participants explaining that they felt in particular that the physical violence aspect of the rape turned into sexual arousal for them. Hence it may be the case that sexual gratification was an important part

of the act, and that this was internally justified by the offender via the cognitive distortion that the woman needed 'punished'.

One participant expressed views of entitlement at the time of his offence, and this was in part due to his social network indirectly (or perhaps directly) condoning such offences by means of them being common occurrences and also through the patriarchal basis of his direct society. It was expected that gender-based views of entitlement would be more prevalent, however the limited evidence of this may be due to sample bias, or because the participants did not recognise that they had held these views at the time.

Whilst it was not as apparent from the interview accounts of gendered elements relating to sexual offences committed against children, according to the postmodern/poststructuralist feminist approach, some men seek to abuse children because they are unable to exert power over others in other areas of life. It is possible that this was an issue which was present but not recognised by the interview participants at the time but upon reflection. Issues which have developed from childhood such as lack of adult attachments may in fact have resulted in feelings of lack of power or of diminished masculinity, which have in turn resulted in a need to exert power over a child.

#### **8.4 Conclusion**

Analysis of theories into sexual offending behaviour in the context of the empirical research in this thesis has suggested that there is support for an interaction

between psychological/developmental factors, situational elements and gender-based theories. There is also some support for a life-course approach to understanding and theorising sexual offending behaviour. In particular, the age patterns in the quantitative analysis suggested not only that offending behaviour was generally not stable through the life course, but that the early 20s was a time of particular vulnerability to offending behaviour for most people in the dataset. This and the fact that life events were important to offence patterns in the qualitative analysis suggests that there are certain life stages and events through which people are more likely to offend. The fact that sexual and non-sexual offending generally coincide, along with the fact that the generalist groups appeared to be primarily non-sexual offenders, suggests that the motivation to offend may be the same for both sexual and non-sexual offences. However, those with sexual convictions were prolific non-sexual offenders rather than 'average' offenders, and so there may be different underlying motivations compared to most non-sexual offenders who offend in adolescence then tend to 'age out' of offending. The theories do not explicitly account for why the early 20s is the most likely time to offend for the generalist classes, nor why they would offend slightly later than non-prolific, non-sexual offenders, however they accommodate the possibility that there are different causes for different offending trajectories.

The differences between the specialist and the generalist groups suggests that there are different underlying motivations for each pattern (and probably different motivations for different types of sexual offences since people generally stick to one type of offence), suggesting that there is no single cause of sexual

offending behaviour. This is a feature of many of the multifactorial theories, which suggest that there are many different pathways into sexual offending behaviour: this also suggests that there is no one-size-fits all approach for prevention. Nevertheless, there are some common patterns of offending behaviour.

Two of the specialist groups were more likely to be convicted throughout life rather than displaying age-limited offending patterns, and overall the offending of all specialist groups was more dispersed throughout the life-course than in the generalist groups. This may either be because their propensity to offend is 'trait-like' rather than 'state-like', or because they are more likely to be one-off offences influenced by (non age-specific) events throughout the life-course. Data from the interviews would tend to suggest the former, as situational triggers appeared to be more pertinent to the generalist groups, although more research would be required to strengthen this interpretation. There appeared to be patterns between specialism and age of victim, and further research into this is desirable. Quantitative age patterns suggested that the situational triggers for generalist offenders were generally age-related, and the interviews suggested that their offending patterns were more sensitive to adverse life events acting as triggers for offending behaviour. However, it is also possible that it is the propensity to offend which is the driver at this age rather than a situational trigger. For the generalist groups, their sexual offence did appear to be one small part of a wider offending pattern. This suggests that sexual offending, for some, may simply be part of a wider willingness to defy social norms, but that there is nothing particularly abhorrent for them about sexual offences as opposed to non-sexual offences. This

is consistent with feminist theories which state that the abuse of women is widely sanctioned by society (e.g. Ward,1985), particularly if this pattern of offending (sexual offending as part of a wider non-sexual offending pattern) is more prevalent with those with adult female victims, as is tentatively suggested by the data. This in turn would suggest that theories into non-sexual offending are sufficient to explain the offending patterns of the generalist groups.

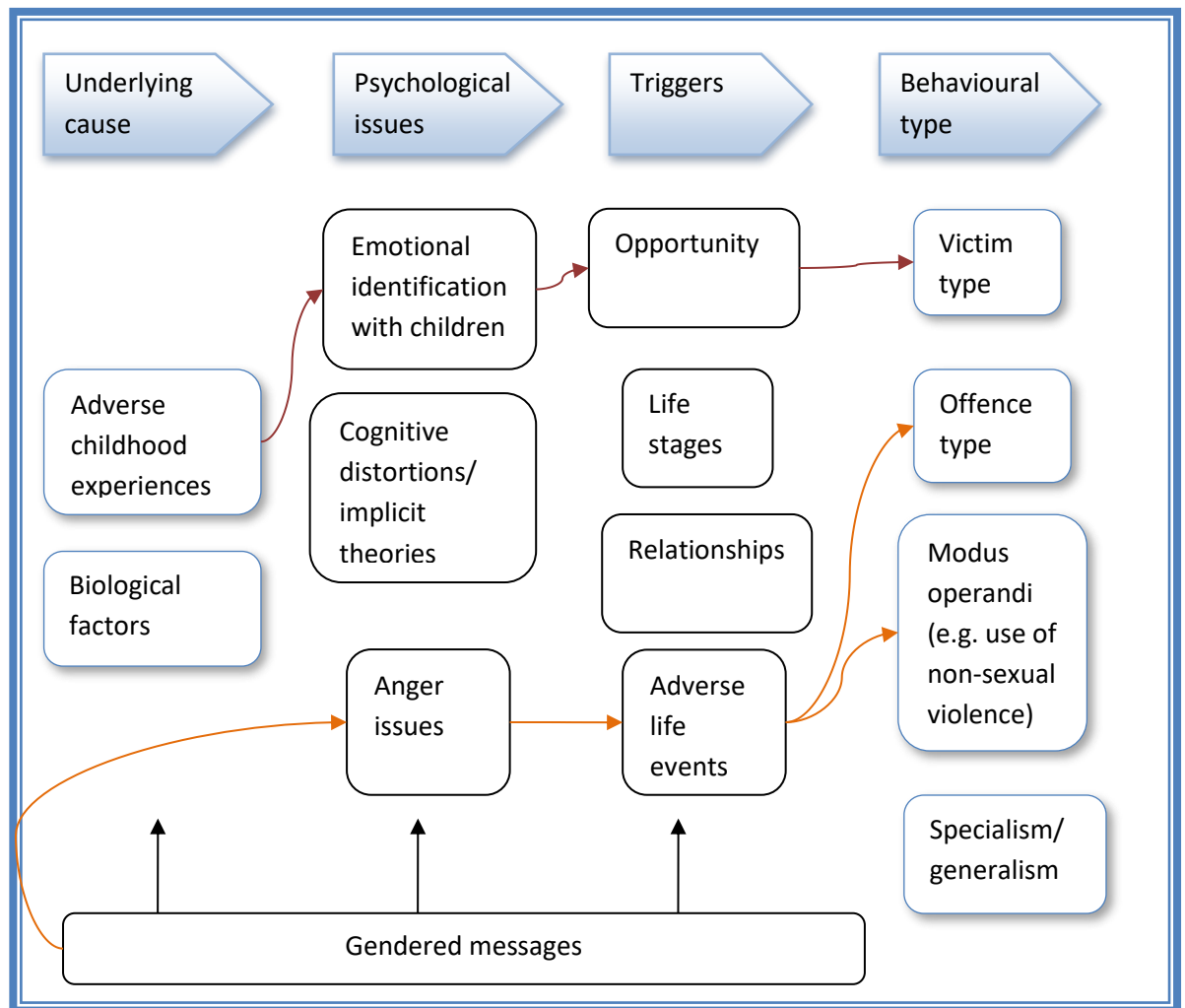
The data in this thesis also supports a gendered perspective towards offending behaviour. Firstly, the majority of offenders in the dataset were male, and secondly, the interviews suggested that negative views towards women and their place in society had contributed to sexual offending behaviour. A gendered perspective is supported by many of the theories of the causes of sexual offending, and it is likely that there is at least interaction with other elements.

Data from the interviews tended to suggest that there were generally underlying issues which stemmed from childhood, and that these resulted in offending behaviour due to either being triggered by adverse life events, or because the person had an opportunity to offend. The relative roles of life events and opportunity appeared to be affected by different underlying motivations which, in turn, were different for the specialist and generalist groups and for those with adult and child victims.

The following schematic provides an overview of the relationship between psychological, situational and gendered causes and triggers of offending as



uncovered by the analysis in this chapter. Two suggested pathways have been highlighted for clarity (in red and orange) but there are likely to be multiple possible paths. Hence issues under each of the four top headings (underlying cause, psychological issues, triggers and behavioural type) may all interact with any of the others. This figure is consistent with multifactorial theories. For instance, in Finkelhor's Precondition Model (1984), the motivation to sexually abuse may involve psychological issues (e.g. emotional identification with children) or socio-cultural factors (e.g. gendered issues). Overcoming internal inhibitors may be similar to triggers, for example times of stress caused by life events. Overcoming external inhibitors may be seen as opportunity (e.g. being in a situation where they have access to a child). Similarly, in Marshall and Barbaree's Integrated Theory (1990), vulnerability to sexually offend develops in childhood (the underlying cause), resulting in a deficit of individual skills with which to negotiate appropriate social relationships (psychological issues). These then interact with social and biological processes (these may be considered underlying causes or triggers in my figure). These are just two examples of how the issues identified in this research may be accounted for by the multifactorial theories. The pathways highlighted in Figure 4 were evident in this research, however these are by no means the only ones.



*Figure 4: Overview of offence pathways*

The next chapter will conclude the thesis by reviewing the research steps, reiterating the findings, highlighting the unique contribution of this research and considering what this may mean in terms of policy implications and suggestions for future research.

## **Chapter 9: Conclusion and policy implications**

### **9.1 Introduction**

Sexual offending has a devastating impact on victims, wider communities, families of offenders and the offenders themselves, with known effects including mental health problems, lower self-esteem, lower life satisfaction (Fergusson, McLeod et al., 2013), obesity, major illness, drug and alcohol abuse, and domestic violence (Trickett, Noll et al., 2013). Yet it is not one of the most commonly researched areas within criminology. This thesis aimed to gain a greater understanding of why these offences happen. It did this by examining in detail the profile of individual sexual offenders and their offending histories (both sexual and non-sexual), supplemented by some qualitative interviews to provide context and rationale, and identifying key theories which seek explain sexual offending.

This thesis has found that there is support for both psychological and socio-cultural causes, as well as an interaction between the two. It also suggested that there is evidence that sexual offending is not stable over the life-course, and that situational factors appear to be important in terms of determining behavioural change. There is also a link between sexual and non-sexual offending behaviour, however this appears to be true for only a proportionately small group of offenders. Moreover, those who commit sexual offences are not a homogenous group and there may be many different pathways into offending behaviour, which is reflected by the offending patterns.

One of the ultimate aims of the research was to provide evidence that may assist in the development of prevention or crime-reduction strategies being developed by policymakers and practitioners working in the field of sexual offending. Having robust empirical evidence about patterns of offending as well as a strong theoretical basis should help us to understand how to assist people to not offend. This empirical research comprised a Scotland-wide population of people with convictions, as well as interviews with a small number of those who had been convicted of sexual offences. This has provided a unique research base and uncovered some interesting findings. The previous chapter outlined the six key findings of the research. A brief summary of how the key findings answer the main research questions, including a reiteration of the unique contribution for each of the research questions is as follows. This will be followed by some recommendations for how to address some of the main issues in practice. Findings and recommendations were discussed with a group of Criminal Justice Social Workers in order to gain practitioner perspectives, as well as being a means of knowledge exchange.

### **1. What are common patterns in types of sexual offending behaviour and what does this tell us about different potential motivations to offend?**

Most individuals only have one sexual conviction, which is lower than the average number of convictions per person in Scotland, although this may not necessarily reflect offending behaviour. There were seven identified groups of offender types, based on their offending behaviour. Although offenders are likely to have been convicted of only one sexual offence, groups of people convicted of sexual

offences exhibit considerable heterogeneity in terms of their offending patterns. Some latent classes exhibited considerable specialism, with their sexual offence as their only experience of offending. Other groups demonstrated more generalist offending tendencies. There was some evidence within the study that different underlying motivations may impact both the type of victim and the type of offence.

The heterogeneity of offending behaviour is one of the key findings of this research. Moreover, mapping suggested pathways into offending is one of the unique findings, since whilst multifactorial theories suggest many and complex pathways into offending behaviour, the research thus far has not generally analysed empirical support for these multiple pathways into offending.

## **2. What is the link between sexual and non-sexual offending, and does this tell us anything about the causal process?**

For many people, sexual offending was part of an overarching profile of offending across multiple crime types including violence, property crime and general forms of disorder. It did not appear that sexual offending was, for these people, the primary or the initial form of offending, and there was no evidence of progression from non-sexual offending to sexual offending (or vice versa). Moreover, these groups tended to be prolific non-sexual offenders rather than simply having an average amount of offences. Those with a substantial history of non-sexual offending appeared to be more likely to offend against adults rather than children, and similarly those with child victims tended to be in specialist groups. This is

consistent with some other research, however, these are tentative findings and further research is recommended in order to explore this issue.

Age patterns for sexual and non-sexual convictions (where non-sexual convictions were present), were generally similar both on an individual and a group level (with some exceptions), which would suggest that contributory factors for sexual and non-sexual offending may be similar, either for the reason they occurred in the first place, or for the reason that the person did not go on to reoffend.

Whilst common actuarial tools use general antisocial tendencies as a risk factor for reoffending (e.g. Hanson and Thornton, 2000a; Hanson and Harris, 1998) the fact that firstly, in the context of this research this seems to only apply to a relatively small group of offenders; and secondly that this is linked to prolific rather than average offending has not previously been discussed in relation to sexual offences, to my knowledge. Further research into this issue would be desirable.

**3. At what points in life (in terms of age and life situation) does offending commonly occur, and does this tell us anything about theoretical perspectives on offending?**

There were some clear indicators that life-course played some part in sexual offending. The most common age at which to be convicted of a sexual offence was in the early 20s, and this suggests that there is something particular about this age which means that more people have a propensity to sexual offend.

In the interviews, there were some examples of clear ‘turning points’ that were typically marked by relationship breakdown, loss of stability (e.g. home), loss of employment (income) and loss of access to children. After the offence, however, ‘turning points’ for change appeared to occur as a slow realisation of the impact of the offence, sometimes independently of groupwork (although this is also a tentative finding). Since most people are only convicted of one offence (regardless of sentence type), it may be the case that ‘spontaneous desistance’ is possible for some people, although further research would be required to substantiate this. Due to the marked pattern of offending in the early 20s age group, it might also be that ‘ageing out’ of sexual offending is possible.

This is also a gap in the research. Research examining sexual offences from a life-course perspective has so far been limited (Cale and Lussier, 2014). Many policy approaches to dealing with sexual offenders are based on a far more conservative set of risk-based principles than those for other types of offender, and these findings suggest that the risk of offending may not be stable over time for everyone and, indeed, more nuanced risk-based approaches are required.

#### **4. Do adverse life events have an influence on offending?**

There was evidence from the interviews that adverse life events were a trigger in offending for some, and the age patterns suggest that life events may be important to when people offend. On the other hand, for others non-adverse life events enabled an offence in terms of opportunity or a person’s position within the community.

This has been a key theoretical gap as theoretical work has not generally sought to explore the role of factors external to the offenders' own skills deficits. Socio-cultural elements offer an additional opportunity for intervention from non-psychologists (and society as a whole), which I believe is very important and has often been overlooked, with the exception of some good work carried out by Circles of Support and Accountability projects and the introduction of newer theoretical frameworks such as the Good Lives Model (Willis, Yates et al., 2012). Importantly, this should be considered in the context of the prevention of offending (as not only *reoffending*), if socio-cultural change may reduce the incidence and prevalence of these offences in society.

### **5. What is the impact of socio-cultural messages on offending?**

Socio-cultural messages, in particular gendered messages, were also a contributory factor in the sexual offending. These included the perception that a woman has a lesser role in society, views that women are dangerous and can't be trusted, and perceptions of certain relationship scripts.

In addition to this, the fact that sexual assault was used as a weapon over (or in conjunction with) non-sexual violence, is consistent with some gender theories which support the idea that inequalities in heterosexual relationship scripts have resulted in sex being seen as an instrument of power over women. Linked to this is the finding of violence against women causing sexual arousal. This is consistent with studies which suggest that anger, arousal and non-consensual sex are linked. However, such research has been sparse and thus this can be considered a gap in the research.



The fact that some people commit sexual offences as part of a wider willingness to defy social norms possibly suggests that there is nothing particularly abhorrent for them about sexual offences as opposed to non-sexual offences (though this would generally only be applicable to those with adult female victims).

**6. What is the impact of social relationships e.g. family, intimate relationships, friends and work, on offending?**

As previously discussed, a breakdown in relationships can be a trigger for offending for some people and this was a finding of the qualitative interviews. Propensity to offend may also have been affected by early childhood experiences, as was also evidenced in the interviews. Failure to achieve emotional intimacy and adult relationships (both sexual and non-sexual) also appeared to be a factor, generally caused by adverse childhood experiences. These adverse childhood experiences may also have had an effect on the selection of the victim (in terms of whether the victim was a child or an adult), and the specific modus operandi of the offence (in terms of whether they used coercion as opposed to physical force/violence).

**7. Do any of the above issues suggest certain groups are at a higher risk of offending/reoffending?**

There was little evidence in this study of a prevalence of chronic sexual offenders who committed multiple sexual crimes (although of course there is a small number of such people), although frequency was slightly higher for the crime types relating

to indecent exposure and voyeurism. There was no evidence of particular non-sexual offending behaviour suggesting a proclivity to prolific sexual offending. There was also no evidence of progression into sexual offending from non-sexual offending, or progression from less serious to more serious offences. This finding is consistent with other research, which suggests that those with sexual convictions are at lower risk of reoffending (in terms of known offences at least), than other offenders (Loucks, 2002).

#### **8. To what extent are general criminological theories (of causation and desistance) helpful in analysing sexual offending behaviour?**

The fact that there is a clear link between sexual and non-sexual offending (for some people) in terms of the times in their lives at which they are convicted of both offences, the role of life events in triggering offending behaviour for both offence types, and the fact that for some people sexual offences appears to be just one part of a wider pattern of offending behaviour, suggests that general criminological theories do have relevance for analysing sexual offending behaviour. However, these theories appear to be more relevant to the generalist groups. Asymmetry between cause and desistance also suggests that general desistance theories can apply to sexual offending. This means that similar interventions may be appropriate for those who have committed sexual offences (recognising the heterogeneity of offending behaviour and that no 'one-size-fits-all' approach is appropriate). Whilst there have been more recent attempts to align desistance interventions for sexual and non-sexual offending in Scotland (e.g. the Good Lives Model), traditionally a more risk-based approach (as opposed to a

strength-based approach more common in desistance work for non-sexual offenders), has been more common (Ward and Stewart, 2003).

## **9.2 Recommendations**

This section will provide some key directions for intervention in terms of prevention and desistance. Whilst detailed recommendations are outwith the scope of this research (for instance in terms of suggesting particular psychological interventions), it is hoped that these general recommendations will assist as a starting point for those with expertise in each area.

### **9.2.1 Recommendations for policy and practitioners**

#### **Flexibility in groupwork and other programmes, tailored to different pathways to offending behaviour**

The finding that there are different motivations for different types of offences, which is consistent with multiple possible pathways to offending, suggests a flexible approach to groupwork and other programmes for offenders, since a 'one-size-fits-all' approach would not be appropriate. Different areas need to be considered including a combination of developmental, psychological and socio-cultural factors. This is already a feature of the most commonly used programmes in Scotland such as Moving Forward, Making Changes, as group members are encouraged to reflect on their own unique experiences and benefit from the experiences of others as well as peer support.

The finding that people only tend to be convicted of one sexual offence type may also indicate that whilst there may be different pathways to offending, each person potentially only follows one. Therefore, identifying each person's pathway will assist in identifying their motivation and/or opportunities to offend and, hopefully, areas in which to prevent reoffending. This is done to a certain extent in offender programmes. Lower level intervention may also be appropriate for certain groups. Moreover, identifying common pathways – and/or 'broad spectrum' influences on propensity to offend, like certain negative attitudes towards women -- may also help to identify areas in which wider interventions (e.g. education) may be possible in order to prevent offending behaviour.

#### *Desistance pathways similar to those for non-sexual offending*

The empirical research and theoretical analysis has provided some support for the idea that the desistance process may be similar for those who commit sexual offences to those who commit non-sexual offences, and hence similar support may be appropriate for the two groups. This is for a variety of reasons: firstly, the original cause of the offence need not be causally important in the desistance process, and secondly, for some people sexual and non-sexual offending patterns may be similar and have similar motivations. However, it should be stressed that this may not be true for all groups, hence the emphasis on being aware of each offender's pathway into offending. In Scotland, elements of similar desistance pathways (to non-sexual offending) have been brought in to groupwork for those who have committed sexual offences, for instance the Good Lives Model (Purvis, Ward et al., 2011).

*Support for parents to prevent developmental issues which may result in offending behaviour*

In order to prevent many of these issues from occurring in the first place, support for parents and wider education on the impact of child abuse and neglect (including that it may lead to future offending behaviour) may be beneficial. There are already many structures in place regarding this, however greater awareness of issues which parents may not necessarily see as neglect (such as lack of bonding with a young infant which may result in an attachment issue) may have an impact. Continued education of children and young people about behaviour that is abusive, whether they are victims or perpetrators towards other young people, may also provide them with the confidence to seek help.

*Improved access to psychological treatment, regardless of whether this is tailored to sexual offending behaviour, particularly for those who have experienced childhood trauma or neglect*

Several of the participants in the interviews specifically stated that they felt that if they had someone to talk to or had been able to address their feelings, this may have prevented their offence. It was also apparent that many participants had experienced significant life events including severe trauma as children which they had not been able to address, and which left them unable to obtain appropriate and successful adult attachments. Similarly, many of the contributory factors which were consistent with the findings of this research and the causal theories (including issues with emotional regulation and emotional identification with

children), may be helped by means of some form of psychological support. It is not within the scope of this research or the researcher's expertise to specify which types of support would be most appropriate, however support in childhood and adolescence may be particularly beneficial. Interview participants generally stated that there were often lengthy waiting lists for groupwork (to the extent that even after a long prison sentence of some years they had not been able to access this support), and individual sessions were generally not available. This is reflective of a wider issue of access to mental health services. Moreover, from a prevention point of view, a person will not always be aware that certain thoughts or behaviours may result in a sexual offence, nor might they have the capacity or willingness to address this at an early stage. Although this would be extremely resource-intensive and unlikely to happen in the short or medium term, greater access to mental health services (for everyone) may well reduce rates of sexual offending.

In addition to this, access to support and help for people who have had inappropriate thoughts towards children and adults would act as a preventative step. This service is already provided by some agencies such as Stop It Now!, however wider access as well as reducing the fear of asking for help in this situation would assist in the prevention of these offences.

#### *Individual and wider education on gender-based issues*

There was evidence within the interviews of gender-based contributory factors to the offending behaviour, and many theories support this. Furthermore, the vast

majority of known offenders are male and the victims either women or children, which suggests a gendered element to sexual offending behaviour. Several interview participants indirectly attributed their anger to a particular woman in their lives (generally from childhood but also sometimes from adulthood), even if they themselves recognised that the women were not the *source* of the anger. It was common for anger to be misdirected at one woman in particular, and then by extension to all women. This anger was generally triggered by perceptions of a failure to protect or a betrayal. This may be linked to expectations of a woman's role in society as entailing certain caring responsibilities towards men. In addition to this, the fact that sexual assault was used as a weapon over (or in conjunction with) non-sexual violence, is consistent with some gendered theories which support the idea that inequalities in heterosexual relationship scripts have resulted in sex being seen as an instrument of power over women.

Individual and wider education may be useful in terms of how these anger issues manifest towards women. This should extend beyond the perpetration of sexual and non-sexual violence, to other areas such as responsibilities within work, at home, and with child-rearing. Furthermore, steps should be taken to address relationship and sexual scripts, and in particular the issue of sex being perceived and used as an instrument of power over women. Research suggests that the most effective way to achieve this is on a multi-level basis: targeting children and young people, families, peers and communities simultaneously (Walby, Olive et al., 2013). In addition to this, and relating to improved access to psychological treatment, there may also be gender-based barriers to asking for help, in the sense

that some men may be prohibited by gender-based messages about men being perceived as weaker if they ask for support. Finally, as well as education on relationship scripts, improved sex education would be beneficial. One of the findings from the practitioner focus group was that there still appears to be a deficit of sex education in schools, and that knowledge of sex appears to stem predominantly from peers or pornography.

### *Social support*

The empirical research indicated that a lack of adult emotional connections can be a contributory factor in offending, particularly in those with child victims. Whilst some of this would probably need to be addressed through psychological work so that a person can gain the skills to connect with adults in an appropriate way, improving access to social support (and addressing the stigmatisation of those who have been convicted of sexual offences), would assist in the desistance process. As Laws and Ward (2011) argued: 'the delivery of treatment is not enough. We need also to be seeking to strengthen offenders' social networks and their relationship to the world beyond the therapy room' (p109). Whilst social support is difficult to artificially construct, evidence from the participants' accounts suggests that in the initial stages, supportive staff members (such as prison staff and social workers) may provide them with confidence in order to ease the process into returning to the community and building social support. Other programmes such as Circles of Support and Accountability (Wilson, McWhinnie et al., 2007) can also provide support in order to build a bridge between a person's previous and future life. Many people in the practitioner focus group also felt that



barriers to work and training also contributed to a deficit of social connections, as well as prohibiting the ex-offenders from finding something meaningful in their lives.

#### *Improved access to data to facilitate research into sexual offending*

A lack of resources, data protection issues and the capabilities of the IT infrastructure across public sector agencies means that conducting this type of research is very difficult. Furthermore, it seems unlikely in the foreseeable future that such organisations will have financial capacity to divert resources to long-term research. Perhaps one solution would be for research staff to be based within the organisations solely for this purpose. As part of the organisation they would have access to all of the data and would be able to liaise with academia, thereby taking this workload from other staff. Software-enabled anonymisation, encryption and linkage of data across various organisations or within a central hub, would also facilitate this long-term research.

### **9.2.2 Recommendations for further research**

There were several findings which were not clearly explained by existing theories, and it is recommended that further research is carried out in the following areas.

#### *Young age at sexual conviction*

For most (though not all) of the latent classes identified in the quantitative analysis, the peak age for sexual and non-sexual convictions was the early 20s age

group followed by a steep decline, which suggests a parallel with sexual offending. There are some theories into why this is the case, including the impact of peer influence (e.g. Schwartz, DeKeseredy et al., 2001) and inability to achieve relationships (Marshall, 1989), however further research is required to explore potential causes.

#### *Antisocial behaviour pathway*

There appeared to be clear differences between those who had been convicted of only sexual offences and those who had been convicted of both sexual and non-sexual offences. Moreover, those with non-sexual convictions tended to be prolific non-sexual offenders. Whilst some of the multifactorial theories suggest antisocial behaviour as a pathway, it is not clear if this fully explains the difference between the two groups. It is possible that the 'generalists' in the quantitative analysis merely form one pathway. Further research on the significance and reasons behind this pathway would provide a clearer theoretical background and further information which may assist the prevention and desistance processes.

#### *Desistance from sexual offending*

Whilst recently there has been some research into desistance from sexual offending, traditionally research has focused on risk factors for reoffending. This does not generally tell us what would assist the desistance process, or anything about the process itself. Most individuals only have one sexual conviction, and most theories do not articulate an explanation for why those with sexual convictions would necessarily be at a lower risk of reoffending than people with

non-sexual convictions (apart from under-reporting). On the contrary, many theories would suggest that sexual offending should be more stable than it actually is. Hence further research into the reasons behind this would be prudent, as well as continued research into the desistance process itself.

#### *Link between situational triggers and adult victims*

The qualitative research found that those with adult victims appeared to be more sensitive to situational contexts, and those with child victims more commonly had to wait for an opportunity to offend. This is also consistent with the quantitative patterns, and possibly indicates 'state' explanations (or at least triggers) for those with adult victims and 'trait' explanations for those with child victims. The multifactorial theories take into account situational contexts, often through means of something similar to inability to manage emotions, although they do not generally state that this is more specific to offenders with adult victims. This link between adult victims and emotional state is therefore still conceptually unclear. However, these findings may also be due to sample size and therefore further research would be beneficial to determine if this finding is of wider significance.

#### *Link between non-sexual offending and adult victims*

Those with a substantial history of non-sexual offending appeared to be more likely to offend against adults rather than children, and similarly those with child victims tended to be in specialist groups. Participants in the interviews who had offended against children did not display particularly pro-social attitudes, and so

it is unclear why this would be the case. Further research into whether this is true in a wider context (and if so, why) would be beneficial.

### **9.2.3 Final words**

Finally, whilst there has been a move towards more support for those who have committed sexual offences and away from only monitoring and containment, this is an issue which society can have extreme views on, amongst other things due to the long-term damage that sexual offences cause. However, this thesis and other research supports the idea that help with unwanted thoughts and feelings, about offence-supportive acts and other issues in the offenders' lives, can reduce levels of sexual offending. Extending this message to the wider public will be helpful in a cultural shift towards how society deals with perpetrators of such crimes. Whilst management of risk and immediate safeguarding of potential victims will always be a priority, research suggests that a holistic approach to the prevention of offending and the promotion of desistance may be more effective in preventing future victims. Whilst not the focus of this research, support for victims/survivors of sexual assault and meeting their needs in terms of their voices being heard and sufficient reparation towards them (Kyle, 2016) is also important. It is hoped that by a combination of advances in ways of working with individual offenders, and extending cultural messages about the relationship scripts and treatment of women and children, will enable a reduction in such behaviour which has such far-reaching effects on individuals and society.

## **Appendices**

## **Appendix 1: Crime codes and groupings**

### **Rape, attempted rape and sexual assault by penetration**

<b>Offence description</b>	<b>JD code</b>
Rape (offences prior to 1 December 2010)	14000
Rape of male (16+)	14001
Rape of female (16+)	14002
Rape of older male child (13-15 years)	14003
Rape of older female child (13-15 years)	14004
Rape of young male child (Under 13)	14005
Rape of young female child (Under 13)	14006
Attempted rape (offences prior to 1 December 2010)	15000
Attempted rape male (16+)	15001
Attempted rape female (16+)	15002
Attempted rape older male child (13-15)	15003
Attempted rape older female child (13-15)	15004
Attempted rape young male child (under 13)	15005
Attempted rape young female child (under 13)	15006
Sexual assault by penetration of male (16+)	16001
Sexual assault by penetration of female (16+)	16002
Sexual assault by penetration of male (13-15 years)	16003
Sexual assault by penetration of female (13-15 years)	16004
Assault by penetration of young male child (under 13)	16015
Assault by penetration of young female child (under 13)	16016
Intercourse with older male child (13-15)	16025
Intercourse with older female child (13-15)	16026
Penetrative sexual activity with older male child (13-15)	16027
Penetrative sexual activity with older female child (13-15)	16028
Sexual activity with older male child (13-15)	16029
Sexual activity with older female child (13-15)	16030
Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000 (relates to abuse of trust)	17001
Sexual intercourse with girl under 13 (offences prior to 1 December 2010)	18002
Sexual intercourse with child under 16(offences prior to 1 December 2010)	18003
Carnal knowledge of mentally disordered person	18004
Householder permitting carnal knowledge of mentally disordered.	18005
Abducting girl under 18 woman mentally disordered	18006
Person with custody & care of girl or other causing her seduction	18008
Commission or conspiracy to commit sexual acts outside U.K.	18013
Procuration of sexual services from children under 18	18015
Procuration of child under 18 for pornography	18016
Sexual Abuse of trust of person under 18	18019
Sexual Abuse of trust of mentally disordered person	18020
Bestiality	18021

Administering a substance for sexual purposes	18023
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### Sexual assault

Offence description	JD code
Sexual Assault	16000
Contact Sexual Assault (13-15, 16+)	16000
Sexual assault of male (16+)	16005
Sexual assault of female (16+)	16006
Sexual assault of older male child (13-15 years)	16007
Sexual assault of older female child (13-15 years)	16008
Sexual assault of young male child (under 13)	16017
Sexual assault of young female child (under 13)	16018
Other sexual offences involving children aged 13-15 years	16000
Lewd and Libidinous practices	18022

### Sexual coercion

Offence description	JD code
Sexual coercion of male (16+)	16009
Sexual coercion of female (16+)	16010
Sexual coercion of older male child (13-15 years)	16011
Sexual coercion of older female child (13-15 years)	16012
Coercing a person into being present/ looking at sexual activity	16013
Cause young male child (under 13) to participate in sexual activity	16019
Cause young female child (under 13) to participate in sexual activity	16020
Cause young child to be present/ look at sexual activity (under 13)	16021
Cause older male child (13-15) to participate in sexual activity	16031
Cause older female child (13-15) to participate in sexual activity	16032
Causing an older child (13-15) to be present/ look at sexual activity	16035
Grooming of children for the purposes of sexual offences	18014

### Indecent communications

Offence description	JD code
Communicating indecently	16014
Communicating indecently with young child (under 13)	16022
Communicate indecently older child (13-15)	16036

## Indecent exposure and voyeurism

Offence description	JD code
Sexual exposure to a young child (under 13)	16023
Voyeurism young child (under 13)	16024
Sexual exposure older child (13-15)	16037
Voyeurism older child (13-15)	16038
Public indecency	17002
Sexual exposure	17003
Voyeurism	17004

## Indecent photos

Offence description	JD code
Taking, distribution, possession etc of indecent photos of children	18018

## Non-sexual crime groups

### Violence

Offence description	JD code
Murder	1000
Attempted Murder	2000
Serious Assault	4000
Robbery and assault with intent to rob	6000
Common assault	47001
Common assault of an emergency worker	47006

### Theft

Offence description	JD code
Theft by opening lockfast places (excl motor vehicle)	20001
OLP (excl motor vehicle) with intent to steal	20002
Attempted OLP (excl motor vehicle) with intent to steal	20003
Theft by OLP from a motor vehicle	20004
OLP with intent to steal from a motor vehicle	20005
Attempted OLP with intent to steal from a motor vehicle	20006
In building with intent to steal	21003
Theft not elsewhere classified (excl motor vehicle)	22001
Theft of motor vehicle & contents incl taking and drvg away	22002
Theft by shoplifting	22003
Theft from a motor vehicle not elsewhere classified	22005

Attempted theft of a motor vehicle	22006
Reset	23000
Breach of Trust and Embezzlement	24000
Fraud	25000
Forgery (Other)	26000
Bankruptcy	27000
Clandestine removal of other property	29002
Currency offences	31001
Proceeds of crime	31004
Social Security Offences	66000

### Disorder, threats and breach of the peace

Offence description	JD code
Threats and Extortion	7000
Breach of the peace	47002
Racially aggravated harassment	47004
Racially aggravated conduct	47005
Anti-social behaviour offences	47007
Threatening or abusive behaviour	47008
Offence of stalking	47009

### Drugs

Offence description	JD code
Production, manufacture or cultivation of drugs	44002
Supply, possession w.i. to supply etc of drugs	44003
Possession of drugs	44004
Drugs, other offences	44099

### Vandalism

Offence description	JD code
Fireraising excluding Muirburn	32001
Vandalism, reckless damage and malicious mischief	33001
Culpable and reckless conduct (not with firearms)	33011

### Housebreaking

Offence description	JD code
Theft by housebreaking	19001
Housebreaking with intent to steal	19002
Attempted housebreaking with intent to enter and steal	19003
Theft by housebreaking other property	19006
Att hsebrking w.i. to enter & steal other property	19012



## Weapons offences

Offence description	JD code
Possess a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime & cause	11001
Reckless conduct with firearms	33002
Explosive Substances Legislation	37001
Possession of an offensive weapon	43001
Having in a public place an article with a blade or point	43003
Possession of an offensive weapon (not elsewhere specified) in a prison	43006
Firearms, Miscellaneous Offences	55000

## Prostitution

Offence description	JD code
Offences related to prostitution	18010
Procuration of Homosexual Acts	18012
Soliciting services of person engaged in prostitution	18017
Procuration (excl homosexual acts)	18001

## Other

Offence description	JD code
Culpable homicide (common law)	3001
Causing death by dangerous driving	3002
Death by careless driving when under infl. of drink or drugs	3003
Cruelty (neglect & cause) to & unnatural treat. of children	8001
Abduction	11002
Incest	12000
Illegal homosexual acts	13001
Prevention of crimes	21001
Vagrancy and known thief	21002
Obstruct/hinder other emergency worker in pursuance of duty	35005
Prevention of terrorism, other offences	36009
Public mischief (including wasting police time)	38003
Falsely accusing (named) person of crime	38004
Escape and rescue (inc escape from police cust. or prison)	38006
Personation of police	38010
Failing to give name to or remain with constable	38011
Obstructing constable in pursuance of lawful duty	38013
General attempts to defeat/pervert the course/ends of justice	38017
Failure to notify police/provision of false information	38018

Witness, offences by (formerly code 38/15)	39009
Breach of non harassment order granted by civil court	39013
Breach of anti social behaviour order	39014
Breach of sex offender order	39015
Breach of risk of sexual harm order (sho) or interim risk of sho	39017
Breach of non harassment order (criminal court)	39012
Sedition	34002
Breach of football banning order	39018
Off behaviour at football	47010

## Appendix 2: Additional tables

Model 3							
Item-response probabilities	7 classes						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sexual assault	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.49	0.35	<b>1.00</b>	0.00
Indecent exposure	0.00	<b>1.00</b>	0.00	0.49	0.30	0.00	0.00
Rape	0.00	0.04	<b>1.00</b>	0.09	0.44	0.03	<b>1.00</b>
Indecent photos	<b>0.91</b>	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01
Indecent communications	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00
Sexual coercion	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00
Violence	0.03	0.08	<b>0.74</b>	<b>0.74</b>	<b>0.68</b>	0.09	0.09
Theft	0.04	0.06	<b>0.70</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>0.52</b>	0.06	0.08
Disorder, threats and BOP	0.04	0.15	<b>0.73</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>0.83</b>	0.09	0.09
Drugs	0.01	0.03	0.34	0.38	0.12	0.02	0.02
Vandalism	0.01	0.03	0.46	0.46	0.28	0.02	0.03
HB	0.00	0.01	0.36	0.27	0.10	0.01	0.01
Weapons	0.01	0.01	0.25	0.28	0.13	0.01	0.01
Prostitution	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.00	0.00
Other	0.04	0.03	0.29	0.36	0.25	0.06	0.04
Age at first sexual conviction							
Under 20	0.05	0.15	0.42	0.29	0.00	0.11	0.19
20-29	0.22	0.33	0.46	0.49	0.06	0.17	0.23
30-39	0.24	0.21	0.12	0.19	0.34	0.18	0.19
40+	<b>0.50</b>	0.31	0.01	0.03	0.59	<b>0.54</b>	0.39
Age at first non-sexual conviction							
Under 20	0.13	0.20	<b>0.67</b>	<b>0.68</b>	0.00	0.13	0.19
20-29	0.34	0.37	0.31	0.32	0.23	0.29	0.32
30-39	0.27	0.21	0.02	0.00	0.48	0.21	0.22
40+	0.26	0.23	0.00	0.00	0.29	0.38	0.27
Number of sexual convictions							
1	<b>0.98</b>	<b>0.88</b>	<b>0.96</b>	<b>0.85</b>	<b>0.84</b>	<b>0.93</b>	<b>0.97</b>
2	0.02	0.10	0.04	0.10	0.09	0.06	0.03
3+	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.05	0.07	0.00	0.00
Number of non-sexual convictions							
1	<b>0.74</b>	<b>0.65</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	<b>0.67</b>	<b>0.69</b>
2	0.21	0.30	0.04	0.00	0.06	0.27	0.28
3+	0.05	0.05	<b>0.96</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>0.94</b>	0.06	0.02
Estimated class population share	0.08	0.12	0.11	0.09	0.07	0.24	0.29
Predicted class membership	0.08	0.12	0.11	0.08	0.07	0.24	0.29

*Item response probabilities: 7 class version of Model 3*

## Appendix 3: Information given to interview participants



College of Social  
Sciences



### Participant Information Sheet

**Name of researcher:** Debbie Kyle

**Title of research project:** An analysis of life course offence patterns for those convicted of sexual offences

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Before you agree to take part in this research project, it is important that you understand why my research is being done and what it involves. Please take time to read and consider the following information. Do not hesitate to ask for clarification if anything is unclear or you would like more information.

#### **The research**

The research is looking at the points in life where people commit sexual offences, and is trying to understand the many factors which may influence offending behaviour but particularly 'external' factors such as friendships, relationships, family situation and opportunity. It is hoped that by asking these questions that this will help stop people from being in a similar situation in the future.

#### **About the interview**

You will be asked to talk about your life at around the time of the offence in your own words, and in particular I will be interested in discussing what led you into offending. I will ask a few questions that will make it easier for you to tell your story.

You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to, and you may stop the interview at any time. You can also change your mind and decide not to take part at any time, without giving a reason. There will be no negative consequences to you if you do this.

With your agreement, I would like to record the interview using a digital audio recorder. This is so that I do not have to try to make notes of what you say as you talk, and so that I do not mis-remember your comments or forget anything important.

#### **Storage of research data**

After the interview your comments will be typed up and stored securely on the university's secure network, which is password-protected and only visible to me. When I have finished the research, the transcripts will be deleted.

### **Guarantee of confidentiality**

Your name will not appear anywhere in the write up of the project, or any academic presentations or discussions relating to the research findings. Even within the notes you will not be referred to by your name but will be given a code or pseudonym. Prison, police or social work staff will not hear your interview. The only other person who may listen to the interview is someone who is paid to transcribe it (type it up), just to save me time, however they will not be given your name or any other details about you and they have signed a confidentiality agreement. If you would prefer this not to happen, you can let me know and I can type it up myself so that I am the only person to hear it.

The only exception to this guarantee of confidentiality is that if, during your interview, you were to tell me anything that led me to believe that you, or another person, might be at risk, or if you mentioned other offences which had not been previously disclosed. This is standard practice in research and does not mean that I expect this to happen. If this were to happen, I would discuss this with you at the interview.

### **Research findings**

Based upon the research, I will be writing a PhD thesis and possibly a number of other documents, e.g. journal articles/conference presentations. What you say in your interview will be referred to in these documents, but it will be written in a way that makes sure that no one knows that it is about you or that you said it.

I will let you know when the findings are published so that you can read them if you are interested.

### **Further questions or concerns**

The study has been approved by the College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow. If you have questions about the research you can contact me, using the details below. You can also contact my research supervisor or the College Ethics Officer.

Debbie Kyle  Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research  Ivy Lodge  63 Gibson Street  Glasgow  G12 8LR  <a href="mailto:d.kyle.1@research.gla.ac.uk">d.kyle.1@research.gla.ac.uk</a>  0141 330 6224	Supervisor:  Prof Fergus McNeill  Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research  Ivy Lodge  63 Gibson Street  Glasgow G12 8LR	Ethics Officer:  Dr Muir Houston  School of Education  Rm 223, Level 2  St Andrew's Building  Glasgow G3 6NH
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**Informed Consent Sheet****Name of researcher:** Debbie Kyle**Supervisor:** Professor Fergus McNeill

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the research study, and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from this study at any point, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that I do not have to answer a question if I do not want to.
4. I agree/do not agree (delete as appropriate) that my interview will be recorded, and any notes taken during it will be typed. The information will only be used for the stated research purposes. The material will be treated as confidential, kept in secure storage at all times, and destroyed upon completion of the research.
5. I agree/do not agree (delete as appropriate) for an approved transcriber to type up this interview.
6. I understand that some of my words may be used in the research report and presentation of findings but that these will be anonymised.
7. I understand that any data that I provide through taking part in this research will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
8. I agree / do not agree (delete as appropriate) to take part in this research.

Signature.....Date.....

Name.....

Thank you very much.

## Appendix 4: Information given to focus group participants



### Participant Information Sheet – Focus Group

**Name of researcher:** Debbie Kyle

**Supervisor:** Professor Fergus McNeill

**Title of research project:** An empirical analysis of external influences and change over the life-course in respect of sexual offending behaviour

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Please take time to read and consider the following information. Do not hesitate to ask for clarification if anything is unclear or you would like more information.

#### **The research**

My research looks at the points in life where people commit sexual offences, and is trying to understand the many factors which may influence offending behaviour but particularly 'external' factors such as friendships, relationships, family situation and opportunity. In order to gain expert opinion on the findings and as a means of knowledge exchange, I am running a focus group with practitioners who have expertise in this field. Discussion at the focus group will feed into the thesis conclusion and recommendations.

#### **About the focus group**

At the focus group I will provide a short briefing note with details of the key findings and suggestions for possible recommendations. In the focus group I will go through these verbally in turn, and invite discussion on whether the findings and the suggestions for how to address these issues fit with your practical experience.

If everyone in the focus group is in agreement, I would like to record the discussion using a digital audio recorder. This is so that I can be engaged with the focus group and not be distracted by taking notes.

### Storage of research data

After the interview comments may be typed up and stored securely on the university's secure network, which is password-protected and only visible to me. When I have finished the research, the notes will be deleted.

### Guarantee of confidentiality

Your name will not appear anywhere in the write up of the project, or any academic presentations or discussions relating to the research findings. Even within the notes you will not be referred to by your name but will be given a code or pseudonym.

### Further questions or concerns

The study has been approved by the College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow. If you have questions about the research you can contact me, using the details below. You can also contact my research supervisor or the College Ethics Officer.

Debbie Kyle  Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research Ivy Lodge 63 Gibson Street Glasgow G12 8LR  <a href="mailto:d.kyle.1@research.gla.ac.uk">d.kyle.1@research.gla.ac.uk</a>  0141 330 6224	Supervisor:  Prof Fergus McNeill Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research Ivy Lodge 63 Gibson Street Glasgow G12 8LR  <a href="mailto:fergus.mcneill@glasgow.ac.uk">fergus.mcneill@glasgow.ac.uk</a>  0141 330 5075	Ethics Officer:  Dr Muir Houston School of Education Rm 223, Level 2 St Andrew's Building Glasgow G3 6NH  <a href="mailto:muir.houston@glasgow.ac.uk">muir.houston@glasgow.ac.uk</a>  0141 330 4699
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## Informed Consent Sheet

### Focus Group 13/12/17

**Name of researcher:** Debbie Kyle

**Supervisor:** Professor Fergus McNeill

**Title of research project:** An empirical analysis of external influences and change over the life-course in respect of sexual offending behaviour

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the research study, and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from this study at any point, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that I do not have to answer a question if I do not want to.
4. I agree/do not agree (delete as appropriate) that this focus group will be recorded, and any notes taken during it will be typed. The information will only be used for the stated research purposes. The material will be treated as confidential, kept in secure storage at all times, and destroyed upon completion of the research.
5. I understand that any data that I provide through taking part in this research will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
6. I agree / do not agree (delete as appropriate) to take part in this research.

Signature.....Date.....  
.....

Name.....

Thank you very much.

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