Chapter 1

General Introduction
1.1 Introduction

Sexual offending is often considered to be different from other forms of offending. It is generally thought to be caused by some type of illness due to biological and psychological deficits (Sample & Kadlec, 2008). This is further reflected in the widely held belief ‘once a sex offender, always a sex offender’ – which posits that once people commit a sexual offense, they will continue to commit sexual offenses (Letourneau & Miner, 2005). This assumption of persistent sexual offending (the ‘specialist’ view) underlies strict criminal justice policies for sexual offenders, juveniles as well as adults. If the specialist view holds true then special explanatory models, assessment tools, and treatment approaches are needed for (juvenile) sex offenders.

Increasingly, authors have proposed a more generalist view that perceives juvenile sexual offending as a manifestation of antisocial tendencies, and thus as part of the general criminal career and not as a marker of persistent sexual offending (e.g., Seto & Lalumière, 2010; Leroux, Pullman, Motayne, & Seto, 2014). If this view holds true, then regular theories, tools and treatments for juvenile offenders would also be applicable to juvenile sex offenders. However, the empirical evidence for either viewpoints is scarce and at times seemingly contradictory.

This dissertation aims to investigate the specialist and generalist view by examining the criminal career development of juvenile sex offenders over their life course. First, criminal career patterns of juvenile sex offenders are investigated, with particular emphasis on the question whether they specialize in sexual offending or not. Second, after it has been shown that juvenile sex offenders’ criminal careers strongly resemble those of non-sex offenders, we will investigate to what extent general life course criminological theories can explain juvenile sex offenders’ criminal career development into adulthood.

1.2 Definitions

1.2.1 The Juvenile Sex Offender

Juvenile sex offenders are youths who have committed a sexual offense (see for definition section 1.2.2). In the Netherlands, this implies that they were between the ages 12
1.2.2 Sexual Offending

Sexual offending comprises a wide range of acts, which can be broadly classified in two categories: contact sexual offenses, entailing physical sexual contact with a victim, and non-contact sexual offenses. For this study we focus on contact sexual offending. This decision is based on the general assumption that contact sexual offending differs from non-contact sexual offending in terms of risk factors in offenders, as well as criminal career parameters such as onset, crime mix and specialization (Hendriks, 2006). Also, non-contact offending includes a range of widely different forms, such as child pornography, public indecency or the trafficking of individuals. As such, it constitutes a fairly heterogeneous set of behavior. In addition, very few theories exist that explain risk factors or criminal careers for non-contact sexual offending, or for separate offenses within the larger set of non-contact sex offenses.

In the Netherlands contact sexual crimes are defined by ten different definitions described in the Dutch Criminal Code section ‘Misdrijven tegen de zeden’, crimes against morality (Bijleveld, 2007). The difference between these definitions or articles is reflected in elements of the crimes such as the use of violence (article 242 and 246 of the Dutch Criminal Code), the vulnerability of victims in order to protect those most vulnerable (article 243, 244, 245 and 247 of the Dutch Criminal Code), abuse of authority (article 249 of the Dutch Criminal Code) and inciting or being present at the abuse (article 248a through 248c of the Dutch Criminal Code). Table 1.1 gives an overview
of the contact sexual offenses included in this study.

Up until October 1st 2002 the sexual offenses described in articles 245 and 247 were so-called ‘complaint offenses’, where the victim, one of the parents or child protection services were required to register an official complaint regarding the offense to the police in order to start an investigation or prosecution. The Dutch legislator incorporated the complaint requirement to prevent prosecuting sexual interaction that occurred with mutual consent, since juveniles before age 16 may start sexual development and experimentation. After 2002 the law was adjusted so that the police could start an investigation without a complaint. However, if no complaint has been filed (for the offenses described in articles 245, 247 and 248 of the Dutch Criminal Code), and the victim is a minor between the ages of 12 and 16, the prosecution is required to consult the presumed victim. In this study, the sample members committed the sampling sex offense between 1988 and 2001, therefore all relevant offenses (article 245 and 247) were complaint offenses.

1.3 Prevalence of Juvenile Sex Offending

Sexual offending is recognized as a significant problem within society (Barbaree & Marshall, 2006). The reason sexual offending is seen as such a severe problem is the seriousness of the offense and the impact victimization has on the lives of these individuals. Moreover, victims are often the personification of the ‘ideal victim’; a helpless child or a woman falling prey to a strong and bad offender (Christie, 1986). This often leads to increased empathy with the victim and the feeling of disdain for the offender within society.

A significant proportion of sexual offenses are committed by juveniles. International studies estimate that between 20% and 50% of all sexual offenses are committed by juveniles (e.g., Barbaree & Marshall, 2006; J. Becker & Johnson, 2001). However, establishing the exact amount (prevalence and volume) of sexual offending is difficult. The known offenses based on registered data are often addressed as ‘just the tip of the iceberg’, since there is supposedly a high to very high dark number in sex offending. In other words, a high number of committed sexual offenses are never reported to the police (Wittebrood, 2006). It is expected that all types of offenses have a dark number, but for sexual offending this number is possibly higher for several reasons. First, the
### Table 1.1. Definitions of contact sexual offending

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Specification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>242</td>
<td>Rape [Verkrachting]. Acts of partial or complete penetration of the body forced by means of violence or threat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>243</td>
<td>Intercourse with a will-deficient [Gemeenschap met een wilsonbekwame]. Acts of partial or complete penetration of the body of someone whom the perpetrator knows is unable to resist due to unconsciousness, physical or mental inabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>244</td>
<td>Intercourse with a child under the age of twelve [Gemeenschap met een kind beneden 12 jaar]. Acts of partial or complete penetration of the body of a person under age twelve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>245</td>
<td>Intercourse with a person under the age of sixteen [Gemeenschap met een persoon beneden 16 jaar]. Acts of partial or complete penetration of the body of a person under age sixteen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>246</td>
<td>Indecent assault [Feitelijke aanranding van de eerbaarheid]. By means of violence or threat force someone to commit or to allow lascivious acts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>247</td>
<td>Lechery with a child or an unconscious or mentally handicapped person [Ontucht met een bewusteloze, geestelijk gestoorde of kind]. Performing lecherous acts with someone who is unable to resist due to unconsciousness, physical or mental inabilities, or under age sixteen or seducing the latter person to commit such acts or endure such acts with a third person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>248a</td>
<td>Inciting a juvenile to lechery [Uitlokken van een minderjarige tot ontucht]. Inciting a person who has not yet reached the age of eighteen to commit a lecherous act or to endure such acts, by means of gifts, the promise of money or goods, abuse of power or misguidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>248b</td>
<td>Lechery with a juvenile between the ages of sixteen and eighteen years [Ontucht met een persoon tussen de 16 en 18 jaar]. Act of lechery with a person, who has reached the age of sixteen but not yet eighteen, who offers himself as available for committing sexual acts with a third person against payment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>248c</td>
<td>Being present at the commission of lecherous acts by juveniles [Aanwezigheid bij plegen ontuchtige handelingen door minderjarigen]. Being present at the commission or the showing of images of lecherous acts by a person who is under age eighteen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>249</td>
<td>Lechery with abuse of authority [Ontucht met machtsmisbruik]. Act of lechery with an underage child entrusted to the care or education of the perpetrator.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

chances of the offender and victim being acquainted are high, resulting in victims being less willing to report the offense (Wittebrood, 2006). Second, the sexual nature of the offense itself may also decrease willingness to report, as victims often feel shame, or guilt (Sable, Danis, Mauzy, & Gallagher, 2006). Finally, according to (Brouwers & Smit, 2005), low chances of clearance or ‘solving the sexual abuse’ also cause the limited number of reports to the police.

In the Netherlands, the low willingness to report is a general trend in violent offending (sexual offending included), as only 14% of all violent offenses are reported to the police (Akkermans & van Rosmalen, 2013). Thus, when inspecting the following paragraph with the prevalence of suspects officially registered for a sexual offense in the Netherlands, we have to take into account that this is likely just a small proportion of the actual number of offenders (Abbey, 2005). The following paragraph serves as an indication of the quantity of registered sex offenses by juveniles. Moreover, it helps us establish whether this number highlights a substantial problem in the Netherlands.

Over the past few years the number of registered offenses has steadily decreased in the Netherlands (Eggen & Kessels, 2013). Table 1.2 displays the number of male suspects for all offenses for the years 2005 to 2013 in the Netherlands. Following from the data in Table 1.2 this steady decline is also noticeable for suspects of offending. Specifically, for sexual offending we found a decline of about 50% from 2005 to 2013. These numbers are for all male offenders, including juveniles. According to current literature, a substantial number of all offenses are committed by juveniles (e.g., Huizinga & Elliot, 1987). For the Netherlands, we found that in 2005 about a fifth of all suspects were juveniles. However, this number has decreased to 14% in 2013.

Hendriks (2006) reported that in 2003, 22.7% of all sex offenses were committed by juveniles. In 2005 23.6%, almost one out of four of all male sexual offending suspects were juveniles. When comparing this to the percentage of juveniles suspected for all offending in 2005, one out of five (19.6%), we can establish that the proportion of juveniles suspected of a sexual offense is somewhat higher than the proportion of all juvenile suspects. In 2013, this difference is still visible as 12.2% of all male suspects were juveniles, and 14% of all sexual offense suspects were juveniles. Over time there appears to be a considerable decrease in juveniles suspected for a sexual offense. Why this decrease is somewhat stronger than for other offenses remains unclear. All in all, regardless of the decline, the data shows that juveniles are still responsible for a
Table 1.2.
Prevalence of all offending, juvenile offending and juvenile sex offending in the Netherlands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All male suspects</th>
<th>Juvenile male suspects</th>
<th>Sex offending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All offending</td>
<td>Sex offending</td>
<td>All offending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>422900</td>
<td>6945</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>418225</td>
<td>6870</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>407385</td>
<td>6245</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>386525</td>
<td>5720</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>347680</td>
<td>5140</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>323415</td>
<td>4575</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>315235</td>
<td>4395</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>291730</td>
<td>4070</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>262940</td>
<td>3455</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^a\) Provisional figures
\(^b\) Revised provisional figures

Substantial proportion of all registered sexual offending: about one in seven suspects is a juvenile.

1.4 Empirical Background

Empirical research regarding juvenile and adult sex offenders has grown considerably the past years. Most studies have focused on reexamining established knowledge about general offender samples, since sexual offenders are seen as different from the general population of offenders. Thus, broadly accepted implications within the criminological field for general samples, are not thought of as self-evident for (juvenile) sexual offenders (Smallbone, 2006). Therefore, empirical research on juvenile sex offenders still seems limited. Current evidence both supports the specialist view (i.e., juvenile sex offenders are different from other offenders) as well as the generalist view (i.e., juvenile sex offenders are similar to other offenders convicted for non-sexual offenses). We will compare the empirical findings for both views below focusing on several key aspects: risk factors, criminal careers and typologies of juvenile sex offenders.
1.4.1 Risk Factors

The assumption that juvenile sex offenders are different from other offenders comes from clinical practice and research on risk factors associated with sexual offending. Within the risk factor literature it is assumed that traits associated with general (i.e., non-sexual) offending do not entirely explain sexual offending (Worling & Långström, 2006). This implicates that established tools, treatments and models of juvenile criminal development might not be appropriate for juvenile sex offenders. Empirically, sex offenders have indeed been found to differ in risk factors from non-sexual offenders regarding three important domains.

First, psychological and psychiatric disorders are more prominent in juvenile sex offenders (Smallbone, 2006). In a Dutch sample Van Wijk, Van Horn, Bullens, Bijleveld, and Doreleijers (2005) found juvenile sex offenders to be significantly more neurotic and less extrovert than non-sexual juvenile offenders. Moreover, a higher prevalence of personality problems, depression and anxiety were found for juvenile sex offenders in a large meta-analysis by Seto and Lalumière (2010) examining 59 studies comparing adolescent sex offenders to adolescent non-sex offenders.

Second, specialized sex offender theories often emphasize the role of sexual abuse history, atypical sexual interests and psychosexual development (e.g., Marshall & Barbaree, 1990). Seto and Lalumière (2010), found that juvenile sex offenders significantly differed from other offenders regarding these aspects. They had been sexually abused more often, had atypical sexual interests and more psychosexual developmental problems.

Third, evidence has been found for a theoretical mechanism often hypothesized to explain sexual offending, namely social incompetence (Ward & Beech, 2008). Van Wijk et al. (2005) found that social skills in juvenile sex offenders were less developed than those of juvenile non-sex offenders. Seto and Lalumière (2010) found a similar pattern of less developed social skills in juvenile sex offenders compared to juvenile non-sex offenders. Thus, more psychological and psychiatric disorders, atypical sexual interests and psychosexual developmental problems, and social incompetence are risk factors that distinguish juvenile sex offenders from juvenile non-offenders.

Seto and Lalumière (2010) found that juvenile sex offenders also share risk factors with juvenile non-sex offenders that explain general offending, such as antisocial atti-
tudes and beliefs. This explains why juvenile sex offenders are in addition to involvement in sexual offending also exhibiting general criminal behavior (Seto & Pullman, 2014). Indeed, some risk assessment instruments designed to predict sexual re-offending risk in juveniles focus not only on risk factors for sexual recidivism but also on risk factors associated with general offending. For example, the Juvenile Sex Offender Assessment Protocol-II (J-SOAP-II) also includes antisocial behavior, impulsive behavior, school and conduct problems (Prentky & Righthand, 2003). The Estimate of Risk of Adolescent Sexual Offence Recidivism (ERASOR), a short term risk assessment (i.e., maximum of 1 year risk assessment), contains scales on deviant preoccupations and attitudes, antisocial orientation and poor self-regulation (Worling & Cruwen, 2000). In a literature review by Hempel, Buck, Cima, and Van Marle (2013), these two (J-SOAP-II and ERASOR) instruments were found to be the most accurate in predicting short-term sexual recidivism among juveniles, although their predictive validity is still insufficient to accurately predict long-term (sexual) recidivism in juvenile sex offenders. The authors emphasize that this is due to the rapid psychological and social changes taking place over the life course of juveniles (Hempel et al., 2013), as various risk factors are assumed to influence different developmental stage in life differently.

To conclude, juvenile sex offenders have specific ‘negative’ traits that have been linked to sexual offending and concur with the ‘specialist’ view of juvenile sex offenders. However, at the same time juvenile sex offenders also share a number of risk factors with juvenile non-sex offenders that are established risk factors for general offending, concurring with the ‘generalist view’.

1.4.2 Criminal Career

Most studies on offending by juvenile sex offenders are concentrated on sexual recidivism and not on the entire criminal career (including all types of offenses) over the life course (Lussier & Blokland, 2014). Follow-up periods in these studies have typically been short and varying definitions of re offending were often used, such as conviction, arrest or self-report data. While the focus on sexual recidivism is in line with the specialist view, such studies cover only one aspect of criminal development. Therefore, the these studies unable to shed light on the assumptions in line with the generalist view.
The empirical evidence on re-offending rates suggests that a substantial number of juvenile sex offenders commits a new sex offense after the initial sexual offense. However, the chances of non-sexual re-offending are substantially higher than those of sexual re-offending (Caldwell, 2002). In an extensive review of 63 data sets examining 11,219 juvenile sex offenders over an average follow-up period of 59.4 months, Caldwell (2010) found a mean sexual re-offending rate of about 7% while the mean general re-offending rate was 43.4% (Caldwell, 2010). Fortune and Lambie (2006) conducted a review of six studies and found a sexual recidivism rate of on average 10%, though rates varied greatly (0% to 42%). For non-sexual re-offending the rates were consistently higher, ranging between 8% and 52%. Other studies also found that general criminal re-offending rates were higher than rates for sexual recidivism in juvenile sex offenders (e.g., Zimring, 2004; Worling & Cruwen, 2000). However, almost all recidivism studies looked at samples of juvenile sex offenders convicted for the more serious types of sexual offenses, so a subset of all juvenile sex offenders. An exception is the study by Zimring, Jennings, Piquero, and Hays (2009), that examined a large community-based sample. This study also found that juveniles convicted for a sexual offense committed mainly non-sexual offenses. While they had a low sexual recidivism rate in adolescence, continued sex offending was even more unlikely in adulthood. For the same dataset, Zimring, Piquero, and Jennings (2007) concluded that the best predictor of adult sex offending is the frequency of all police contacts (i.e., for any crime) as a juvenile. Overall, it appears that a juvenile sex offense is not the precursor of adult sexual offending since recidivism studies indicate only limited specialization (Miethe, Olson, & Mitchell, 2006). Moreover, criminal diversity is apparent from recidivism studies. In some studies the re-offending rate was even comparable to that of juvenile non-sexual offenders (Sipe, Jensen, & Everett, 1998). As such, sexual offending by juveniles may be part of a wide array of offending caused by general antisocial tendencies (Van der Put, Van Vugt, Stams, & Dekovic, 2013). Van der Geest, Bijleveld, and Wijkman (2005) studied high-risk adolescents who had been treated in a facility for behavioral problems and found that sexual recidivism was 1.5% after seven years. Hendriks and Bijleveld (2004b) researched a group of juvenile sex offenders treated at the same treatment facility, and found a sexual recidivism rate of about 10% after seven years since the index offense. Thus, chances for sexual recidivism do appear elevated in those treated for a (more serious) sex offending as compared to those not treated for sex offending.
Chapter 1: General Introduction

At the same time, they are have much higher chances for re-offending to other crimes. Recently, a number of studies have investigated the entire criminal career of juvenile sex offenders, focusing on persistence, versatility in offending and desistance from (sexual) offending across the life course (e.g., Lussier & Blokland, 2014; Laws & Ward, 2011). Lussier and Blokland (2014) found that juvenile sex offenders’ criminal careers are similar with regard to the offending frequency of those juvenile non-sexual offenders who had between 2 and 5 registrations in the Police Record System (PRS) in the Netherlands. Therefore, discontinuity in sexual offending seemed normative for most of the sample. However, a small group (5%) was found to continue sexual offending in early adulthood. Only a few studies have been conducted on desistance, focusing on the presence or absence of an age-effect in sexual re-offending risk (Lussier & Healey, 2009). Kruttschnitt, Uggen, and Shelton (2000) found that eventually all sex offenders desist at various rates, although the mechanisms responsible for this desistance remain unclear (Laws & Ward, 2011).

In sum, the extant literature appears to offer support for both the specialist and the generalist view of juvenile sex offenders as (i) most studies found low, but elevated sexual re-offending rates and (ii) higher chances of general criminal recidivism. Moreover, (iii) juvenile sexual offending was seldom found to be a precursor for adult sexual offending.

However, some evidence has been found that there may be a small subgroup that does continue sexual offending, and thus fits the specialist view. One explanation for these seemingly in-congruent findings may therefore be that there is heterogeneity within the group of juvenile sex offenders, with some offenders fitting the specialist, and other the generalist view.

1.4.3 Typology

The mixed empirical evidence that was found in studies of risk factors and criminal career parameters (described above) supporting both the generalist as well as specialist view, can perhaps be reconciled if we allow for heterogeneity in juvenile sex offenders. Current knowledge asserts that juvenile sex offenders do not constitute a homogeneous group, but that there are subgroups. These subgroups have different etiologies, risk profiles, motivational and situational precursors, which are possibly associated with
different adult criminal careers. In the literature many typologies have been proposed based on personality profiles (e.g., Worling, 2001), offending history (e.g., Butler & Seto, 2002), underlying motivation for the sex offense (e.g., R. A. Knight & Prettky, 1993), and offending characteristics (e.g., Bijleveld & Hendriks, 2003; Hunter, Figueredo, Malamuth, & Becker, 2003; Långström & Grann, 2000). However, two typologies have received more consideration in empirical research: the first is based on victim age (child abusers versus peer abusers); the second distinguishes between individuals who committed the offense alone or with more than one co-offender (solo offenders versus group offenders). Empirically, these subtypes have been found to differ in personality, psychological and environmental characteristics. This makes these two typologies in our view the most substantiated. In addition, they are relatively straightforward and can be validly assessed.

Barbaree and Hudson (1993) argue that all juvenile sex offenders fit into two categories: those who abused a child (child abusers) and those who abused a peer or adult (peer abuser). These types are found to differ not only in offending characteristics but also in personality profiles. For example, Hunter et al. (2003) conclude that child abusers were lacking in social skills and low levels of self-esteem compared to peer abusers. Gunby and Woodhams (2010) found similar results, as the child abusers in their sample experienced greater deficits in self-esteem and social isolation. Also, the prevalence of disorders (e.g., pervasive developmental disorders) has been reported to be highest amongst those who had abused children (e.g., Van Wijk, 1999; Van Wijk et al., 2005; Hendriks, 2006). Using a sample of Dutch juvenile sex offenders Hendriks and Bijleveld (2004a) found child abusers to have more psychological disturbances, such as higher neuroticism and psychopathology scores than peer abusers. Moreover, the study found child abusers to have lower self-esteem, to experience social difficulties in connecting with other peers and child abusers were more likely to have been bullied in school. Those who abused a child were found to be more specialized offenders, who used less physical violence during the offense and were more often acquainted with their victim (Hendriks & Bijleveld, 2004a). The recidivism risk was also found to differ between child and peer abusers. In comparing 50 peer abusers, with 50 child abusers and 50 non-sex offenders Hagan, Gust-Brey, Cho, and Dow (2001) found child abusers to display significantly higher rates of sexual recidivism. Hendriks (2006) also found recidivism rates to relate to sex offender type. Given that child and peer abusers dif-
fer on important risk factors, Hunter et al. (2003); Hendriks (2006) argue that these subtypes should receive distinct treatment and prevention programs related to their particular risk profile.

The second classification is based on the finding that a substantial number of all juvenile offenses are committed in a group. Therefore, in all likelihood juvenile sex offending also often occurs in a group dynamic context under group pressure (Bijleveld, Weerman, Looije, & Hendriks, 2007). Several studies examined the difference between sex offenders who committed the offense without another offender present (solo sex offenders) and sex offenders who committed the offense with at least one co-offender (group offenders). The earliest work that compared these two groups is that of O’Brien and Bera, whereby the study found a low recidivism risk for sexual offending in group offenders (as cited by Weinrott, 1996). More recent studies found that group offenders had relatively normative personality profiles (e.g., Bijleveld & Hendriks, 2003; Bijleveld et al., 2007) although school achievement and intelligence were often below average (Bijleveld et al., 2007; ’t Hart-Kerkhoffs, Vermeiren, Jansen, & Doreleijers, 2011). Furthermore, group offenders had less sexual offending in their criminal history than solo offenders (Bijleveld et al., 2007).

To conclude, the most comprehensive typology with the most empirical support appears to be the typology developed by Hendriks (2006). Hendriks distinguished three distinct groups of juvenile sex offenders: those who sexually abused a child, those who sexually abuse a peer or older victim, and group sex offenders. Empirical evidence found that these three groups differ meaningfully in offending characteristics, personality profiles and recidivism rates (Hendriks, 2006).

1.5 Theoretical Background

1.5.1 Theories on Juvenile Sex Offending

In recent years, theory development regarding sexual offending has been considerable. The most prominent of the theories that have been developed are multifactorial, combining biological, psychological and environmental explanations for the onset and continuation of sexual offending (Ward & Beech, 2008). While all of these sex offending theories have been specifically developed for adults or adult child abusers, some
may be applicable to juvenile sexual offending, as they explain adult sexual offending through developmental adverse events (such as poor parenting, (sexual) abuse, neglect etc.) which occurred in childhood. Possibly, these events will also influence the period after childhood and therefore explain juvenile sexual offending.

Marshall and Barbaree (1990) propose a theoretical model consisting of a developmental pathway of sexual abuse starting from childhood. If a child experiences abuse or rejection this can result in insecure attachment and loneliness, causing difficulties to form social relationships with peers (see also; Barbaree, Marshall, & McCormick, 1998; Marshall & Marshall, 2000). The child may then develop a lack of self-confidence and a negative self-image (O’Reilly & Carr, 2006). This ‘syndrome of social disability’ as Barbaree et al. (1998) call it, may lead to the development of abusive sexual behavior in adolescence and adulthood. Given that the ‘syndrome of social disability’ is likely to be static over time and caused by childhood trauma that is difficult to repair, continuation of sexual offending from adolescence to adulthood is likely. Thus, this theory implicitly assumes continuation of sex offending, as the risk factors are present in an individual from childhood through to adulthood.

Ward and Siegert (2002) describe four pathways that may lead to sexual offending against a child, but the model does not explain persistence in child sexual abuse. The four pathways are based on the distinctive and interacting psychological mechanisms found in adult child abusers: intimacy and social skills deficits; distorted sexual scripts; emotional dysregulation; and cognitive distortions. Each of these mechanisms allows for a specific pathway characterized by distinct psychological and behavioral profiles, that will lead to the offense. However, the authors’ main conclusion is that if a juvenile commits a sexual offense, they probably will have been diagnosed with conduct disorder in early childhood. As a result of the conduct disorder they have low impulse control that will lead to criminal behavior (including adult and juvenile sexual offending) (O’Reilly & Carr, 2006). This implies that non-sexual criminal behavior and sexual offending also share similar developmental aspects and risk factors. Therefore, the model both gives particular pathways for sex offending as well as common etiologies, shared with general offenders. Thus, this model appears to have the largest potential for explaining the seemingly contradictory findings that sex offenders are both different from as well as similar to general offenders.

J. Becker and Kaplan (1988) developed, the only model (to our knowledge) that
Chapter 1: General Introduction

describes three post-sexual offending pathways for adolescents. The first pathway is that of discontinued offending or desistance. The second pathway specifically consists of continued sexual offending due to a paraphilic sexual interest. The offenders in this group constitute a homogeneous group with a particular psychological disorder as a risk factor. The third pathway consists of a continued and diverse criminal career in non-sexual and sexual crime. This pathway emphasizes the risk of a possible antisocial nature of some (juvenile) sexual offenders. The model by J. Becker and Kaplan (1988) emphasizes the heterogeneity within juvenile sex offenders, with three pathways that are quite distinct and influenced by specific risk factors.

In sum, these theories state that the causes of sexual offending might be the ‘syndrome of social disability’, conduct disorder and other psychological deficits, family and social environment influences. Most of these factors are stable over the life course and already present in childhood, underlining the view of continued sexual offending. Yet, most risk factors stated by the sex offender specific theories are also similar to those for non-sexual criminal behavior (see; Loeber & Farrington, 1998). Thus, it could be that general criminological theories might also be applicable in explaining the development of juvenile sex offenders.

1.5.2 General Criminological Theories

There is only one general criminological theory that states how sexual offending can be viewed in a developmental perspective. The dual taxonomy by Moffitt (1993) is a static theory that classifies individuals by their offending behavior over time. Moffitt (1993) describes two groups of offenders that follow a distinct offending pattern over time. The first and largest group is the adolescent-limited offenders, characterized by an offending peak in adolescence and a gradual decline with maturation. These youths with no clear problematic background, commit only minor offenses during adolescence. The second group, the life-course-persisters, commits serious offenses (e.g., violent and sexual crimes) over the entire life course. Thus, Moffitt (1993) views sexual offending as a clear indicator of chronic offending. The life-course-persistent group displays early deviant and serious delinquent behavior which is hypothesized by Moffitt (1993) to be caused by adverse background characteristics, like conduct disorder, environmental and familial variables, psychological deficits and impaired social functioning.
Therefore, according to Moffitt (1993), juvenile sex offenders are part of the life-course-persistent offender population, implying specialization and persistence for this offender population.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) assume level differences in the offending rate, due to a lack of self-control. The difference with Moffitt (1993) is that this theory explains all criminal behaviour and diverse offending rates through variation in the individuals’ level of self-control. The level of self-control is developed in early childhood under parental influences, and remains stable over time. For example, dysfunctional parenting is hypothesized to cause low self-control, which will then lead to criminal behavior such as sexual offending. This theory is referred to as static, meaning that individuals’ predispositions for offending are constant over time, generating continued offending over the life course.

The theories of Moffitt (1993) and Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) both assume continued offending for juvenile sex offenders. Within samples of general and high-risk offenders, evidence has been found for a life-course-persistent group that continues offending over time. However, even for these groups of chronic offenders, a decline in offending with the coming of age has been established (e.g., Sampson & Laub, 2003; Blokland, Nagin, & Nieuwbeerta, 2005; van der Geest, Blokland, & Bijleveld, 2009). This pattern is found in many life course studies and has been described as the age-crime curve, where offending shows a peak in the younger ages and a gradual decline with the coming of age (Farrington, 1986). Taking on of adult roles, such as leaving the parental home, acquiring steady employment, finding a partner, getting married and starting a family, has been used to explain this decline in offending over time (Arnett, 2004). Due to the taking on of adult roles responsibility for others besides oneself is increased, and embeddedness in conventional society is established. This in turn results in criminal behavior becoming less appealing since it jeopardizes the newly gained benefits of these adult roles (see; Hirschi, 1969; Sampson & Laub, 1993).

The life course theoretical approach, most prominently stated in the age-graded theory of informal social control by Sampson and Laub (1993), is often contrasted with the static theory by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), as it has a more dynamic approach. The risk of criminal behavior and continued offending is not constant but may fluctuate over time under influence of turning points (e.g., transitions to adult roles). Sampson and Laub (1993) do recognize the negative influence of traits like low
self-control. However, they state that if a transition to a qualitatively good social bond is made, even an individual with severe criminal dispositions will decline his offending rate (Laub, Nagin, & Sampson, 1998). Several empirical studies found support for this dynamic theory for different samples of offenders. Specifically for high-risk offenders who have similar adverse background characteristics as juvenile sex offenders, marriage, parenthood and employment were found to have a protective effect on further offending (see; van der Geest et al., 2009; Verbruggen, Blokland, & Van der Geest, 2012; Zoutewelle-Terovan, Van der Geest, Liefbroer, & Bijleveld, 2012).

1.6 Current Study and Societal Relevance

1.6.1 Current Study

The study of juvenile sex offenders is a complex one as there is no evident indication for development over time. On the one hand, juvenile sex offenders are presumed persistent sexual offenders, and, on the other hand, they are found to be similar to other offenders. This dissertation aims to describe and to some extent explain juvenile sex offenders’ criminal careers using general criminological theories that offer support for either the specialist or generalist view. To do so, we explore two directions. First, juvenile sex offenders’ criminal careers are analyzed to establish whether there is continuity or desistance in (sex) offending of juvenile sex offenders. Second, explanations for the development of the criminal career are analyzed in relation to established life course theories. The focus will be on societal development or life-events (marriage, parenthood and employment) that have been found to reduce the probability of offending in general offenders. The goal is to understand whether, for juvenile sex offenders, these life-events are similarly associated with criminal offending over time.

On the one hand, we can assume that established developmental life course theories are not applicable to juvenile sex offenders since previous studies have found distinct risk factors or traits in juvenile sex offenders, such as more psychological and psychiatric disturbances, higher levels of neuroticism, anxiety, depression, personality problems and lack of social skills (Van Wijk et al., 2005; Hendriks, 2006; Seto & Lalumière, 2010). Theoretically, we might assume that given such ‘negative’ relatively stable traits, the criminal career of juvenile sex offenders will be characterized by con-
tinued and specialized sex offending (see; Moffitt, 1993). Also, a juvenile sex offender may experience problems regarding societal development, as these adverse traits cause difficulties in finding a romantic partner and employment.

On the other hand, when we take into account the recent empirical knowledge on offending and recidivism, it seems reasonable to presume that established criminological life course theories are applicable. As described earlier, life course criminology assumes that the criminal development follows a typical pattern over time, starting with the onset of offending, a peak in adolescence, a gradual decline in early adulthood and finally desistance (Farrington, 1986). Different mechanisms are assumed to underlie the diminishing frequency in offending with maturation. The gradual decline in early adulthood is explained by becoming more embedded in society, through transitions such as marriage, parenthood and employment. Since the criminal career for juvenile sex offenders could be characterized by discontinuity in offending it seems reasonable to suppose that this can be explained by the same protective factors or transitions assumed for general offenders.

An additional possibility is that, due to the heterogeneity in juvenile sex offenders, some sex offender types continue sexual offending, while others desist or commit other types of offenses. This would imply that for some offenders, societal development through life-events is associated with a decline in offending with maturation, while for others it is not.

In this study the criminal career and societal development are studied on an aggregate level (entire sample) and on a subtype level (child abuser, peer abuser and group offender).

1.6.2 Societal Relevance

The wide held belief of persistent sexual offending has led to special treatment for (juvenile) sex offenders in many countries. The general public, policy makers and lawmakers believe that sexual offending is a marker for sexual deviance and an ongoing high-risk for sexual recidivism. Therefore, sex offenders are put under increasingly strict criminal justice responses that may ostracize them and generate difficulties in transitioning to adult roles (particularly in finding employment) that have the potential to decrease offending in general offenders. Such special criminal justice responses
Chapter 1: General Introduction

designed to protect society from continued sexual offending may then in fact backlash, and reduce the protective effects of the transition to adulthood for juvenile sex offenders. In the Netherlands, (juvenile) sex offenders also assume a special position in the criminal justice system. See box 1 for an explanation of the current legal situation in the Netherlands.
In the mid 1950s the Netherlands Ministry of Justice introduced the law on Judicial Documentation (JD). Within this JD, records would be kept on all who had been irrevocably convicted of an offense. The JD would serve as the basis for issuing a certificate of good conduct [Verklaring Omtrent Gedrag - VOG]. This VOG, states that an applicant did not commit any offenses relevant to the performance expected to follow from the proposed employment. Offenses would only remain on record for a limited amount of time. In 2004, the government implemented radical changes because they found that the system did not work satisfactorily (Parliamentary Documents II, 1999-2000, 24797, #7:1). The JD was then extended to contain not only convictions, but also prosecutorial dismissals, un-disposed cases and transactions (which can be seen as plea bargaining with the public prosecutor). Police data [herkenningsdienststystem - HKS] may also be consulted in order to make the decision whether to issue a VOG. Sex offenders assumed a special position in the renewed law regarding the VOG. This was in response to a political debate regarding the recidivism rates and the importance of the protection of the public against all sex offenders; see (Boone, 2011). Since 2004, sex offenses (articles 240 to 250 Dutch Criminal Code) would be registered for an unlimited amount of time and therefore will always remain visible when a VOG is requested. Additionally, a list was added with specific employment types and job training positions, that will never be available to anyone ever registered for a corresponding sex offense. This causes sex offenders (juveniles and adults) to be barred from these jobs for life. Over the years, the number of occupations on this list has increased. It contains any position in which the sex offender might spend unsupervised time with children or persons dependent on their care. This comprises a very broad range of occupations such as concierges in schools, daycare attendants, taxi and bus drivers, caretaker jobs and the like. In addition, the barriers that sex offenders face in obtaining stable employment have expanded rapidly since increasingly more employers require the applicant to provide a VOG (Boone, 2011).

The Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice established a central agency, the COVOG, which will decide if someone will be issued a VOG. They use two criteria for this decision. The first is an objective criterion, where a retrospective period of four up to 20 years is inspected (depending on the offenses recorded in the JD), except for sex offenses where the entire JD is inspected (Boone, 2011). The second criterion is a subjective one where the ‘circumstances of the case’ are considered. This criterion was intended to give way to the issuing of a VOG if the offender had for instance a good probation record, despite the presence of a relevant offense. However, these exceptions are rarely applied anymore (Boone, 2011). In fact, in 2008 it was explicitly stated that the subjective criterion would only be used for sex offenders in exceptional and rare cases Boone (2011). For this reason, the available employment for sex offenders is much more limited as compared to other offenders. It can be argued that former sex offenders therefore experience more difficulties in the obtaining of (stable) employment than for other (ex-)offenders. Arguably, this indirectly renders the reintegration into society for (juvenile) sex offenders more difficult.
Chapter 1: General Introduction

1.7 Method Section

1.7.1 Sample

The sample for the current study comprises 498 male juvenile sex offenders. The sample or groups of individuals from the sample were previously studied by Bijleveld and Hendriks (2003); Hendriks and Bijleveld (2004b, 2004a, 2008); Hendriks (2006). All sample members had been convicted of, or had confessed to at least one contact sex offense as described in table 1.1. The sex offenses had been committed between 1988 and 2001, during which time the sample members were between the ages of 10 and 17 years old, with an average of 14.4 years ($SD = 1.8$). Slightly more than half of the sample were convicted of rape (articles 242 through 245 Dutch Criminal Code (for a more detailed account of the sampling offenses per article see table 1.3)). Over 25% of the juvenile sex offenders had been convicted for sexual assault (article 246 Dutch Criminal Code) and over 21% were convicted of lechery (article 247 through 249 Dutch Criminal Code). Three individuals under the age of 12 could not be convicted or prosecuted because of their young age. These individuals were included in the sample as they had confessed to the sex offense. All sample members had had an active role during the sampling offense (individuals who for instance were only on the lookout were discarded from the sample).

In response to the sampling offense, all individuals had been psychologically screened, in order to determine if treatment was necessary. After the screening 209 sample members (42%) did not receive any additional treatment and 107 individuals (21.5%) were treated in an outpatient treatment facility. The remaining 182 sample members (36.5%) were treated in an inpatient judicial treatment institution for juveniles.

The data collection was finished in 2010, resulting in a mean follow-up period of 14 years. At this time, sample members were then between the ages of 18 and 40 years, with an average of 28.7 years ($SD = 3.9$). Before the end of the observation period, seven individuals had died and fourteen emigrated according to the Dutch Municipal Personal Records Database [Gemeentelijke Basisadministratie - GBA]. Those who emigrated are considered lost to follow up after the date of emigration.

As described in the empirical overview, juvenile sex offenders constitute a het-

---

1 The ages include individuals who were censored due to emigration or death.
Table 1.3. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>242. Rape</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>243. Intercourse with a will-deficient</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>244. Intercourse with a child under the age of twelve</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>245. Intercourse with a person under the age of sixteen</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>246. Indecent assault</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>247. Lechery with a child</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>248. Inciting a juvenile to lechery</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>249. Lechery with abuse of authority</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

erogeneous offender group. Different classifications are possible, yet the classification according to victim type seems to be the empirically best established typology (see for an overview; section 1.4.3). Using this typology, roughly two distinctions can be made (see; figure 1.1). First, there is the difference between solo offenders (individuals who committed the offense by themselves with no help of other individuals) and group offenders (juveniles convicted of a sexual offense against a peer with at least one co-offender). Within the current sample 15.9% were classified as group offenders. The solo offenders could be child abusers, individuals who abused a prepubertal child at least five years younger: about 52% within this sample was characterized as a child abuser. The other solo offender type is the peer abuser, approximately 32% of the sample was classified a peer abuser, these individuals had sexually abused a peer (older or no more than 4 years younger). There was overlap in a few cases between peer and child abusers. These individuals were characterized as child abusers, since this was the ‘more’ distinct offense. Also, the overlap was mainly caused by the cut-off point in the definition of child abuser (i.e., the victim was at least five years younger than the offender). In conclusion, this study divides the sample in three juvenile sex offender types based on the sampling offense: child abusers, peer abusers and group offenders.

1.7.2 Data

For this study four data sources were consulted: treatment files, Judicial Documentation, the Dutch Municipal Personal Records Database (GBA), and centralized employ-
Chapter 1: General Introduction

![Diagram of offender types]

Figure 1.1. Number of sample members per offender type.

Permission for the use of the various data sources was obtained from the Netherlands Ministry of Security and Justice for the use of the Judicial Documentation (JD) and the Judicial Penitentiary Database (TULP), from the Netherlands Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BPR) for the use of the Municipal Personal Records Database (GBA), and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment for the access to the centralized employment records (SUWINET).

Treatment files

During treatment and screening, a wide variety of therapists, psychologists and psychiatrists had collected information on the sample members. The information was collected using validated standardized measurement instruments in treatment files (if the juvenile had been treated residentially) or screening files (when screening had taken place in an outpatient center). The nature of the files is multidisciplinary as they contain information on developmental, psychological, environmental, background, treatment and judicial variables. Trained researchers had extracted and coded the scores on the validated measurement instruments (e.g., the Adolescent Temperament List and the Netherlands Personality Questionnaire-Youth, and for intelligence, the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised for the Netherlands or the Raven Progressive Matrice) into interpretable norm values. For information on the scoring instrument and inter-rater reliability see Hendriks (2006).
Judicial Documentation

All information on offending was obtained from the official registry at the Judicial Documentation Centre of the Netherlands Ministry of Security and Justice. Every offense registered for prosecution is listed per individual in Judicial Documentation (JD) abstracts, regardless of the verdict. The offenses in the JD are registered by date of perpetration, type of offense (coded according to the Dutch Criminal Code), conviction date and sentence. The abstracts are available after the age of legal responsibility, which is age 12 and up. Conforming to research practice in the Netherlands, all offenses for which a person was acquitted or when prosecution dropped the case on ‘technical grounds’ (predominantly when the case is expected by the prosecutor to end in acquittal, such as insufficient proof, a wrong suspect identified etc.) were excluded from the data. The remaining offenses were coded using the standard classification system of Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 2010). In this study the following offense categories are used (as defined in; CBS, 2010): sexual offending, (non-sexual) violent offending, property offending, and other offending. The other category contained mainly drug offenses, serious traffic offenses and offenses as described in the Dutch law on weapons and ammunition.

Data on incarceration was obtained through the Judicial Penitentiary Database (TULP) of the Netherlands Ministry of Security and Justice. From this database dates of admittance and release were extracted. In cases where data were missing, the sentence registered in the JD was then used to estimate the dates of admission and release. Entitlement to early release was subtracted from the sentences as described in the JD.

Dutch Municipal Personal Records Database

The Dutch Municipal Personal Records Database (GBA) contains information on each inhabitant of the Netherlands, registered with the different municipalities. Basic information is available, including date of birth and date of death, full name, information on date of marriage, children (date of birth and full names), emigration date and country, and home address(es). For this study information on marriage and parenthood was collected, as well as information on emigration and death.
Chapter 1: General Introduction

Employment data

Information on employment was collected from the national database (SUWINET) of the Netherlands Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. The database holds information on official employment (with an employer) and social benefits for each individual. Additionally, information on business ownership was collected from the trade register of the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce [Kamer van Koophandel - KVK]. In both data sources the start and termination date of an employment contract or business ownership was collected in order to establish the employment history per individual.

1.8 Dissertation Outline

This dissertation examines the development of a sample of 498 juvenile sex offenders over the life course by exploring the criminal (i) and societal development (ii) from ages 12 to age 28.

Chapter 2 will focus on describing the criminal career and the associated background characteristics. Using a semi-parametric group-based modeling method, offender trajectories within the sample will be distinguished. Trajectories will be estimated for sexual and general offending. With a nonlinear canonical correlation analysis, background characteristics are ascribed to the offending trajectories to establish whether distinct factors are associated with the development of different criminal careers over time.

Chapter 3 examines whether the decline in the general adult offending rate for juvenile sex offenders uncovered in Chapter 2 can be explained by life course transitions of marriage, parenthood and employment. These transitions have been found to explain the decline in adult offending for general population as well as high-risk samples. The within-individual changes in these transitions on offending are studied using a hybrid random effects model. In addition, the extent to which the effects of life-events on offending differ for child abusers, peer abusers and group offenders, who have distinct background characteristics, is investigated.

Chapter 4 further explores the effects of employment, given that Chapter 3 identified this as the strongest predictor of adult criminal career development, using a hybrid
random effects model to investigate within-individual changes in offending due to employment quality and employment stability. Again, differences per offender type are also investigated.

Chapter 5 examines the employment-crime association in more depth by studying the influence of two moderating factors, age and employment quality on the bidirectional employment-offending association. This is executed by using dynamic probit panel data models that will allow us to disentangle the bidirectional relationships (i.e., reciprocal effects and state dependence) in the employment-offending association.

Finally, chapter 6 provides a general discussion of the main findings from this study. Theory, prior research and policy implications will be addressed alongside the key strengths of the study, limitations and suggestions for future research.