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Sex Offenders' Perceptions Of North Dakota's Sex Offender Policies

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SEX OFFENDERS' PERCEPTIONS OF NORTH DAKOTA'S
SEX OFFENDER POLICIES

by

Mariah Dawn Laver Juanto
Master of Science, Emporia State University, 2008

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of


Doctor of Philosophy

Grand Forks, North Dakota

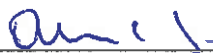
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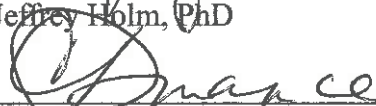
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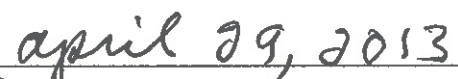


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Mariah Dawn Laver Juanto
04/26/2013

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ABSTRACT

Registered sex offenders in North Dakota were interviewed regarding their experiences with being on the registry. Results from the coded transcripts indicate that offenders felt the registry made finding housing and employment more difficult. Additionally, participants reported feeling the registry negatively impacted their ability to be involved in community organizations and impacted how they interacted with others, including forming supportive relationships. Participants also completed surveys, assessing general psychological symptoms, general stress levels, and demographic information, including registration requirement information. No significant relationships between sex offenders' registry requirements and psychological symptoms were found. Conclusions and implications for future research are discussed.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Sex offenders are viewed as more dangerous, less treatable, and more likely to repeat their offenses than other offenders, making sex offenders unique in how they are handled by the criminal justice system and viewed by the public (Craig, 2005; Farkas & Stichman, 2002). Additionally, research has indicated that this group of offenders is the most despised group of offenders, even in the eyes of other types of offenders (Miller, 1998). The public's knowledge of sex offenders seems to be limited to what is shown in the media, and the media tends to show only highly sensational cases that perpetuate myths and misconceptions about sex offenders. For example, a common belief in the public is that sex offenders have a very high recidivism rate (e.g., 75% or above; Levenson, Brannon, Fortney, & Baker, 2007). Research has also suggested that probabilities for recidivism are inflated even for instruments used to predict recidivism risk (Phenix & Arnold, 2008), and those instruments used to assess risk for reoffense (e.g., Static-99) now have new norms because of the inaccuracy and inflation in the previous norms. The media portrayal of sex offenders emphasizes the negative stigma, and that is likely affecting sex offenders. The public view of sex offenders portrayed by sensational media cases likely has an impact on sex offenders' ability to reintegrate into society; however, little research has been done to investigate the ability of offenders to reintegrate into the community. Recent legislation that has emerged across the United

States has also been influenced by sensational cases with large media attention (e.g., Jacob Wetterling, Megan Kanka). The new laws were designed as reactions to high-profile cases rather than being based on empirical evidence from available research literature, and these laws have helped to continue the scrutiny of sex offenders in the community.

Background of Sex Offender Legislation

Federal Legislation. Beginning in the 1990s, the United States (US) federal government and individual state governments began implementing a series of new laws designed to help manage sex offenders in the community. These laws focus on community notification policies, sex offender registration databases, civil commitment of sex offenders, and mandated sentencing laws. The first of the federal laws to be enacted was the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offender Registration Act, which was passed by President Clinton as part of his Federal Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs). The case of Jacob Wetterling made national news and was highly publicized in 1989; 5 years later, the act in his name was passed. The Jacob Wetterling Act requires that all states create and maintain a database of registered sexual offenders and of those who commit crimes against children; however, at that time, that information did not need to be public knowledge. In 1996, another sexual offense case made national headlines: the case of 7-year-old Megan Kanka. The New Jersey state government created “Megan’s Law” which established a community notification system that allowed for public access to information on registered sex offenders, and this law was adopted by the federal government as an amendment to the Jacob Wetterling Act.

The Wetterling Act was amended again in 1996 to include the Pam Lyncher Sex Offender Tracking and Identification Act, allowing for lifetime registration for repeat offenders and for certain aggravated offenses. This was followed by another amendment in 1998 that increased the registration requirements for sexually violent offenders, federal offenders, military offenders, nonresident workers, and students. This amendment also established the National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR). The Campus Sex Crimes Prevention Act amended the Wetterling Act in 2000 by requiring registered sex offenders to report all information regarding employment or enrollment at an institution of higher education.

The Adam Walsh Act (AWA) of 2006 replaced all the registration requirements set forth by the Wetterling Act by clarifying a universal set of guidelines for states to follow regarding registration of sex offenders (McPherson, 2007). The AWA created a new felony offense for failing to register as a sex offender and established severity levels for various sexual offenses; this act also established a system for applying registration requirements retroactively. Although the AWA sets guidelines for registration procedures, there are no set rules for community notification; it simply needs to happen. Therefore, community notification procedures vary from state to state and from community to community. For example, most states have an internet database that any person can use to search for and locate sex offenders in that state. Other forms of community notification include door-to-door visits by local law enforcement, press releases, flyers or postcards, placing signs in the offender's residence, or placing ads in the newspaper (Winick, 1998). Typically, the method used varies depending on the risk for reoffense.

North Dakota Laws. According to North Dakota Century Code §12.1-32-15 (2013), any adult and certain juveniles who are convicted of a sex offense must register with any local law enforcement agency that governs their residence, employment, and school (if applicable). Courts have the ability to deviate from requiring registration if the person has never had a sex offense conviction before and the person has no “mental abnormality or predatory conduct” associated with their crime. All offenders are assessed for risk in North Dakota; subsequently, each offender is given a risk level of low, moderate, or high. Community notification is also required in North Dakota for certain offenders. The North Dakota Century Code specifically states that law enforcement agencies must disclose information about offenders if they are moderate to high risk offenders, and at a minimum, this disclosure must be revealed to the victim of the offender and to any agency, organization, or group of people with similar characteristics as the victim. The laws do not specify how the information needs to be disclosed to the public, leaving the final decision to individual jurisdictions. For instance in the city of Grand Forks, the local police department notifies the community differently for the different risk levels (Community Resource Bureau). For Level 3 or high risk offenders, the department will notify the entire community of the offender’s information, as well as provide public safety education. The police department’s website also contains information about high risk offenders. For lower risk offenders, the department notifies victims, witnesses, and organizations and agencies who may encounter the offender. Other jurisdictions in North Dakota may employ other community notification techniques instead of or in addition to what the Grand Forks Police Department uses.

Efficacy of Laws

Both federal and state laws were implemented in order to protect children from potential harm caused by strangers; the major cases that led to the formation of the laws (e.g., Jacob Wetterling, Megan Kanka, Adam Walsh) involved a perpetrator that was a stranger to the child victims. Throughout North Dakota Century Code §12.1-32-15 (2013), the language used indicates the purpose of the laws is to protect the public from potential unknown dangers by making the danger (i.e., the offenders) known to the public. However, approximately 70% of sexual offenses are committed by acquaintances or by someone the victim already knows (Cohen & Jeglic, 2007). Another potential problem with sex offender policies is that these policies assume offenders will continue to register, but in reality, offenders have the capacity to move around wherever they choose without telling anyone. The responsibility of registering is placed on the offender, and therefore, the offender has the choice to ignore that responsibility. In some states, estimates indicate more than 40% of all sex offenders in the state are not currently registered, suggesting that sex offender registries may not be very useful at providing information because offenders choose not to register (Cohen & Jeglic, 2007).

More importantly is the question of which offenders fail to register, and this was investigated by Duwe and Donnay (2010). They explored the connection between failing to register and recidivism rates in Minnesota. Results indicated there were no significant differences between offenders who failed to register and those who did not with regard to general and sexual recidivism rates. The only differences found between the fail-to-register group and those who complied with registration were demographic variables (e.g., more likely to be a minority, longer criminal histories, shorter sentences, and less

education). Levenson, Sandler, & Freeman (2012) found similar results when comparing registered offenders who were convicted with a failure to register charge with those who had not failed. Additionally, results of that study found that failing to register was associated with general criminality, and was only associated with an increased risk for sexual recidivism for those offenders with adult victims. However, failing to register was more strongly associated with nonsexual rearrest than any kind of sexual rearrest (Levenson, Sandler, & Freeman, 2012). Additionally, Zgoba and Levenson (2012) found that failing to register did not significantly predict sexual recidivism; however, those offenders who did fail to register were more likely to have sexually assaulted a female adult stranger. The overall findings (Duwe & Donnay, 2010; Levenson, Sandler, & Freeman, 2012; Zgoba & Levenson, 2012) suggest that the registry does not help to clarify which offenders are more likely to sexually reoffend.

Other studies have investigated the effectiveness of sex offender policies at reducing recidivism, which is a stated goal of the Jacob Wetterling Act (United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs). One such study examined the ability of the Massachusetts Registry Law to prevent future offenses using available prison records for individuals with a current sexual offense and who would be classified as a “sexual psychopaths” (Petrosino & Petrosino, 1999). Data came from files of 136 convicted sexual offenders who were currently incarcerated within a specialized Massachusetts prison facility for sex offenders. Criminal histories were coded to determine how many of those offenders would have been registry-eligible if the sex offender registry had been in place at the time of their sexual crimes. Results indicated that approximately 27% of the sample used would have been registry-eligible prior to

their current offense, suggesting that police notification and registry information would not have been very helpful for roughly 73% of the cases. Petrosino and Petrosino (2009) also investigated how well registry information and community notification strategies would have prevented stranger-predator crimes (i.e., crimes where the perpetrator and victim had no discernible relationship) because, as mentioned, lawmakers created the new policies in order to make the public aware of the dangerousness of the strangers in their community. Results suggest that, with aggressive community notification procedures, law enforcement personnel would have had a good probability of providing appropriate information to 4 of the 12 stranger-predator cases used in the study; the probability was based on the proximity of the location of the crime to the offender's listed address and employment location. The six cases given a rating of "improbable" were given that rating because the offender lived in a completely different jurisdiction (e.g., town or state) from the victim, and the two cases given a rating of "poor to moderate" were cases in which the victim and offender lived in the same jurisdiction but not in the same part of town. Petrosino and Petrosino showed that notification laws could help in the prevention of some sex offenses, but the laws do not provide a high level of protection against most sex offenses.

Sandler, Freeman, and Socia (2008) compared re-arrest rates for convicted sex offenders prior to and following the enactment of the sex offender registry in New York State to determine the existence of differences of re-arrest between the two time periods. Specifically, Sandler et al. used the data regarding the total number of registerable offenses, total number of rapes, total number of child molestations, and the number of registerable offenses, rapes, and child molestations committed by convicted sex offenders

based on data from over 160,000 unique offenders with a combined total of over 170,000 sexual offense arrests. Researchers obtained the data from criminal history files from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services. The time periods used were 10 years prior to and then 11 years following the 1996 enactment of a public sex offender registry in New York. Researchers used a time-series analysis for each factor to compare rates from each time period. Results indicated no significant differences between any of the factors used, suggesting that the registration law had no impact on the re-arrest rates for sex offenders and no impact on the commitment of new arrests for sex offenses. The data indicated that 95.9% of all arrests for registerable sex crimes were of arrests of individuals with no previous convictions for a sex offense. Those findings suggest that having a registration may not be very useful in terms of deterring potential sex offenders from committing their crimes, indicating a public registry is not a very useful tool for reducing sexual offending.

A more recent study showed similar results for deterrence of adult sex crimes in South Carolina. Letourneau, Levenson, Bandyopadhyay, Armstrong, and Sinha (2010) used adult arrest data between 1990 and 2005 in the state of South Carolina (SC) to examine how well enacted legislation deterred new sex crimes. Trend analyses were conducted to investigate the intervention effects the first sex offender registration policy had (implemented in 1995 in SC) and the intervention effects the revision to the policy had in 1999 (revised to include online registry access). Results indicated the 1995 intervention had a significant effect, showing roughly an 11% decline in new sex crime arrests between 1995 and 2005, compared to the pre-registration laws time frame (1990 to 1994). The same decline in new arrests for nonsexual assaults and robberies was not

found, suggesting that the trend for decline in new sex crime arrests can be attributed to the sex offender-specific legislation. However, the 1999 intervention of including online registry access had no significant impact on the rate of sex crime arrests, suggesting that making the registry more easily accessible to the public had no impact on sex crime arrest rates.

Another study looking at the impact of community notification laws over time used data from more than one state (Vásquez, Maddan, & Walker, 2008). Researchers examined changes in the incidence of reported rapes per month prior to and following the enactment of registration laws. The time frame used was 1990 to 2000, as most states enacted legislation around 1995. Although all 50 states were initially considered for analysis, 13 states and the District of Columbia were removed from analyses because either data were missing from the pre-intervention time period, data were missing from the post-intervention time period, or data were not reported in a monthly format. The other 27 states were removed because an adequate model of the randomness (i.e., white noise) of the data for those states could not be generated for time-series analysis. Additionally, for some states, residuals within the model did not reflect normality (and could not be normalized through logarithmic transformations). Results showed that 6 of the 10 states that were kept in the analysis showed no significant changes in the number of reported rapes per month; however, three states did show a significant decrease in the number of reported rapes since the implementation of notification laws. One state also showed a significant increase in the number of reported rapes after the enactment of community notification laws. A limitation of the study lies in the focus on reported rapes, rather than including other sexual crimes. This is a significant limitation particularly

because the registration and community notification laws were enacted in response to sexual crimes against children and most reported rapes involve adult victims (Vásquez et al., 2008). However, the study showed some support for the effectiveness of the laws in three states, suggesting there is some utility for having sex offender specific policies.

Although North Dakota currently has no residence restriction laws for sex offenders, it is still important to address the impact residence restriction laws have had on sexual offending. Zandbergen, Levenson, and Hart (2010) investigated whether offenders living closer to schools and daycares in Florida were more likely to commit another offense than those who lived farther away from such places. The study compared a matched sample of 165 recidivists with 165 non-recidivists, using their addresses and the locations of the schools and daycares in their cities. The authors then counted the number of daycares and schools within a 1,000 foot radius and a 2,500 foot radius, as these are the buffers employed by the Florida statutes and the city ordinances. Chi-square analyses were conducted to compare the two groups on the counts of daycares and schools for each buffer zone. Results indicated non-recidivists were more likely to have one school within 2,500 feet of their homes compared to recidivists. Further analyses were conducted in order to determine if recidivists generally lived closer to schools or daycares than non-recidivists by analyzing the distance from the home of each participant to the nearest school or daycare. Results of the study indicated that sex offenders living closer to schools were no more likely to recidivate than those sex offenders living farther away (Zandbergen, Levenson, & Hart, 2010). This study supports that enacting residence restriction laws does not deter sex offenders from committing a new crime, likely because most offenders know their victims through already established relationships.

Although the previously discussed research shows little support for any long-term effects on recidivism rates (Petrosino & Petrosino, 1999; Sandler et al., 2008; Zandbergen et al., 2010), sex offender polices have another important purpose: to inform the community and thereby increase public safety.

Impact on the Community

Researchers have investigated the impact notification and registration laws have had on community members. Kernsmith, Comartin, Craun, and Kernsmith (2009) examined the relationship between use of the sex offender registry and awareness of sex offenders in one's community. Participants were 733 individuals living in the state of Michigan and each participant completed a computer-assisted telephone survey regarding knowledge and use of the sex offender registry, as well as awareness of sex offenders in the participant's community. Results indicated roughly 95% of respondents knew sex offenders were required to register with the local authorities, and approximately 89% knew the registration information was available for public access. However, Kernsmith et al. found that only 37% of participants had looked at the registry, and this percentage is similar to that found in other research. Additionally, 59% of the families with children less than 18 years of age, 40% of women, and 49% of participants who were younger than 30 years old accessed the registry information, implying that those with a higher risk of victimization (or having a household member at risk) were more likely to access the registry. Participants who did not access the registry were asked to provide a reason as to why they had not accessed the registry; results indicated the main reason (34% of all responses) was a lack of interest or a sense of not needing to know that information. The second most common reason for not accessing the registry was feeling safe in one's

neighborhood (15% of all responses given). Logistic regression showed that being younger (i.e., under 30), having children under 18, and having been a victim or knowing someone who had been a victim of a sexual crime increased the likelihood of accessing the information on the sex offender registry. Twenty-seven percent of all participants reported believing a sex offender lived in their community; data collected from the registry indicated 99.5% of all respondents lived in a zip code area that included registered offenders. Kernsmith et al. showed that one of the major reasons behind the sex offender laws (public awareness) was not being met; however, those with more reason to be concerned about sex offenders (younger females & families with children) did report accessing the registry, which could be an indicator of success for the sex offender policies.

Anderson and Sample (2008) also looked at community access and use of registry information using a sample of 1,821 adult residents in the state of Nebraska who were over the age of 19 years. Researchers used random dialing to contact various households in the state of Nebraska and surveyed participants via telephone. Results showed only 34% of their sample had accessed registry information, despite 90% of participants being aware of a publicly accessible sex offender registry in their state. The 34% observed in this study is similar to the 37% seen in the Kernsmith et al. (2009) study. In the Anderson and Sample study, participants' age related to their knowledge of an existing registry, with only 79% of younger persons (ages 19 to 24 years) knowing about a registry compared to over 90% of all other age groups. Participants showed a similar access pattern to that in Kernsmith et al. More specifically, results from Anderson and Sample showed that 42% of females, 46% of participants with children in the home, 32% of

participants 19 to 24 years, and 50% of participants between 25 and 44 years reported accessing registry information at some point. Participants also reported reasons for not checking the registry. Results indicated the main reason for not checking the registry was because someone else checked it or because they received information from a secondary source (e.g., the local school, a neighbor, spouse, and other relatives). Results also showed accessing the registry has become more of a professional issue than a personal one because many respondents reported accessing simply because of work (e.g., day care workers) or because of housing (e.g., landlords). Despite that only 34% of the sample accessed registry information, 88% of those who did access the registry reported feeling safer after learning where sex offenders in the area were residing. Almost all (91%) of participants with children reported feeling safer compared to 83% of those without children. Age was also important, indicating that all (100%) participants between ages 19 and 24 years reported feeling safer after reading information on the registry, whereas 89% of participants aged 25 to 44, 85% of those aged 45 to 64, and only 67% of those aged 65 and older reported feeling safer after accessing registry information. Although results showed high percentages of participants who felt safer after accessing registry information, only one-third reported taking preventative measures to increase their safety. The most common preventative measure was sharing the registry information with children, friends, other parents, and tenants. Others reported engaging in activities such as locking doors more often, and landlords reported evicting offenders from their establishments. In summary, fewer than half of participants reported accessing, but those who did access generally reported feeling safer as a result of becoming aware of offenders. However, preventative action was not common among those who accessed,

indicating that the sense of safety individuals may feel after accessing the registry may be a false sense of safety (given that no subsequent preventative action occurred).

Caputo and Brodsky (2004) examined public safety and sex offender policies; more specifically, their research focused on the impact community notification had on a person's fear of crime and use of coping strategies to combat crime. The study used a sample of 250 residents in Alabama who had received recent notifications of an offender moving into their community. Researchers obtained names of those who had received notification from the local police department, and had then used the local telephone book to find participants' telephone numbers. Data were obtained from telephone interviews with participants, and interviews focused on how much attention was given to the notifications, general fear of crime, fear of personal crime, fear of sexual assault, and coping strategies used. Results indicated that having a stronger belief that community notification is important predicted stronger fear of crime in general, as well as personal crime, and fear of sexual assault. This finding suggests that notification strategies may only impact those who are already fearful of crime. Results also showed that placing more importance on notification and having higher fear levels predicted higher usage of coping strategies, which could be seen as a success because those who are worried about crime are perhaps using the information from notifications to protect themselves. Another viewpoint to consider, however, is that perhaps receiving notifications regarding sex offenders increases fear of crime. Further research needs to investigate the relationship between these variables.

Beck and Travis (2004) also investigated the relationship between fear of victimization and notification policies. The study used participants from Ohio, sending

them surveys via postal mail. Researchers compared a group of notified individuals ($n = 97$) with a group of not-notified persons ($n = 139$) on measures of personal fear and altruistic fear (i.e., emotional reactions to believing a member of one's household is in danger of being a victim of crime). Beck and Travis used multivariate regression analyses to identify predictors of personal and altruistic fear levels in the total sample, using notification, age, gender, race, education, and other demographics as potential predictors. Notification was a significant predictor of personal fear; however, gender and education level were better predictors of personal fear. Higher levels of fear were related to being female and having lower levels of education. Results indicated receiving notification about sex offenders was not significantly related to altruistic fear; gender and age were the only significant predictors. This finding suggests that receiving notifications does not increase fear that another person in the home (including children) will be victimized. When altruistic fear was broken down by question, notification was significantly related to sexual assault, implying that receiving a notification about a sex offender may not increase overall altruistic fear, but it does impact fear that someone in the home will be a victim of sexual assault. Other research (Beck, Clingermayer, Ramsey, & Travis, 2004) also indicates that notification tends to heighten a person's fear of being victimized. However, in the Anderson and Sample (2008) study, results suggested participants personally felt safer knowing about the information on the registry and also felt their families would be safer. These findings suggest people have different reactions to the different forms of sex offender information and community notification, perhaps because if it is more personal (e.g., someone is coming to your home, mail is arriving at your

home), it causes increased fear, whereas accessing registry information is much less invasive (e.g., viewing a website), leading to feelings of safety.

Mancini, Shields, Mears, & Beaver (2010) also surveyed Florida residents via telephone interviews regarding opinions of sex offender policies. Most participants were Caucasian, had more than a high school education, and were parents. The majority (82%) of the sample supported residence restriction laws. Participants with children were significantly more likely to endorse laws restricting where offenders can live compared to those with no children. More specifically, parents were 58% more likely to endorse residency laws than non-parents. Results also indicated that having more children further increased approval of residence restriction laws; essentially, if a parent has more than one child, the likelihood of them supporting residence restrictions increases to 70% compared to non-parents. Other variables also influenced the level of support for residence restrictions. Women, Whites, Hispanic/Latino participants, and political conservatives were also more likely to support residence restrictions.

The findings from the previously mentioned studies indicated that the public, as a whole, endorses most sex offender policies, including registration, community notification, and residence restrictions. The reasons for supporting these laws appeared to be connected to fear of crime, having children, and an increased feeling of safety by knowing where sex offenders are residing.

Public Perceptions of Sex Offenders. Several survey studies (Levenson, Brannon, Fortney, & Baker, 2007; Olver & Barlow, 2010; Schiavone & Jeglic, 2008) have focused specifically on the public's opinion regarding current sex offender policies and their opinion regarding the impact the policies have on sex offenders. Levenson et al.

(2007) asked 193 participants (mean age of 37) in Florida about their familiarity with notification laws; the different types of information about offenders that the public should be able to access; beliefs about sex offenders and their crimes; opinions regarding sentencing, probation, and treatment; and their confidence in the strategies used to protect the community. The sample used was predominately Caucasian/White, and more than half of participants had more than a high school education. Results indicated that most participants were familiar with the notification laws in Florida and believed that community notification procedures help to effectively lower the rate of sexual abuse. With regard to public access of information, over 50% of participants felt that the following information should be available to the general public: victim ages, HIV/AIDS status, license plate number and vehicle description, the identification of persons residing with the offender, home address, photograph, and name. Participants also had some misconceptions about offenders and their crimes, believing the majority of offenders will reoffend, and will do so at higher rates than other offenders. Additionally, participants mistakenly believed half of all sex offenses are committed by strangers. Results from the study indicated community members endorse strong sentencing laws, long periods of incarceration, and long periods of community supervision. Participants felt offenders should be required to undergo some form of treatment and believed that all offenders, regardless of risk level or offense, should be subjected to community notification. The findings of the Levenson et al. study indicated that the general public believes in the myths that tend to be purported by the media cases: sex offenders would recidivate at a higher rate than all other offenders and strangers commit a significant portion of sex crimes.

A study by Olver and Barlow (2010) surveyed a very different sample than that of the Levenson et al. (2007) study. Undergraduate students (mean age of 19) at the University of Saskatchewan were asked about their attitudes toward sex offenders. Results showed some agreement with the results from the Levenson et al. study. More specifically, the majority of the undergraduate sample believed that prison sentences were too lenient for sex offenders (63%), that lengthy sentences are necessary to reduce sex crimes (54%), that most sex offenders go undetected (64%), and that they would rather not have sex offenders living near them (59%). Additionally, roughly 60% of the students believed most sex offenders commit new crimes, and they estimated reoffense for offenders to be around 59%, which also is in agreement with results in Levenson et al. In contrast to the results in Levenson et al., most participants (65%) in the Olver and Barlow study disagreed with the statement that sex offenders should have no basic human rights. This conflict may be due to the differences in the samples; a younger sample may be influencing the opinions, along with the fact that these students are from Canada. There may be general differences in viewpoints when comparing Canadians and Americans. Additionally, the majority of participants in the Levenson et al. study identified as parents, and this may have increased their intolerance of sex offenders compared to an undergraduate sample that is less likely to have children of their own. Levenson et al. also noted in their study that at the time of data collection, two high profile cases of sex offenders committing repeat offenses against young female victims were being highly publicized in the media. This likely impacted participants' views, skewing the results to be more favorable of harsher punishments and fewer rights of offenders.

Schiavone and Jeglic (2008) surveyed communities about beliefs of the effectiveness of sex offender laws, including community notification, registration, and housing restrictions. Participants were from various metropolitan cities in the United States and took surveys via an Internet community messaging board. Researchers posted the survey in a different city each week. The final sample included 115 participants from 15 different states. A mean age is not reported, but 79% of participants were between the ages of 25 and 64. Results indicated 68% of participants knew what Megan's Law was and were familiar with it. The findings from the study supported the results of the Levenson et al. (2007) study: Most participants believed that all offenders regardless of risk level should be subjected to the regulations of the community notification policies. More specifically, participants felt community notification and registration laws do not violate the Constitution and do not violate sex offenders' right to privacy. The majority of participants (67%) felt that sex offenders do have some rights, showing agreement with the results in Olver and Barlow (2010). Additional results from Schiavone and Jeglic indicated the majority of participants felt communities are safer if they have knowledge of sex offenders, and felt it is fair for communities to have public access to information. Less than half of the sample believed the notification and registration laws help prevent offending; additionally, less than half of participants believed Megan's Law changes recidivism rates for offenders. These findings differ from the results of Levenson et al., in which participants believed community notification and access to registration information decreased sexual abuse. This difference is not well understood, given the similarity in samples (e.g., participants were mostly above age 25, most had education past high school, predominately Caucasian).

More research is necessary to fully understand the beliefs the general public has regarding sex offender policies in America. Knowing the views of the public regarding these policies is important for informing the development of new policies and influencing any future changes to current policies.

In a study by Rogers, Hirst, & Davies (2010), the focus was on how sex offenders' treatment participation affected the layperson's views. The sample consisted of 235 community members (mean age of 39) from an area of the United Kingdom, and was predominately Caucasian. Participants read vignettes describing a sexual offense scenario. Vignettes varied with regard to the female victim's age (e.g., 10, 15, 20 years) and what kind of program the sex offender completed while in prison (e.g., sex offender treatment or car maintenance programs). The younger the victim, the more participants viewed sex offenders as socially isolated, not capable of change, and being sexually deviant. Additionally, results indicated that participants' attitudes toward sex offenders were more positive when the vignette indicated the offender had completed treatment. More specifically, participants viewed offenders as more capable of change if they participated in the prison treatment program for sex offenders. This is interesting to note given that most participants in other studies (Levenson et al., 2007; Olver & Barlow, 2010) supported the statement that therapy does not reduce the risk to reoffend for most offenders. Some of the support for rehabilitation may be influenced by other factors, as noted in a study by Viki et al. (2012). Results of a survey of correctional workers suggested that the more participants dehumanized sex offenders, the less supportive of rehabilitation they became. The study using vignettes (Rogers, Hirst, & Davies, 2010) may have increased the humanization of the offenders, allowing for participants to

support rehabilitation. It is also likely that, given the samples are from different countries, there are general attitudinal differences regarding treatment for sex offenders.

Payne, Tewksbury, and Ehrhardt Mustaine (2010) found that most participants in their study did not believe offenders could be rehabilitated, especially if participants experienced corporal punishment as a child or who used physical aggression against a partner. Participants came from two areas in Virginia, and the sample was predominately White/Caucasian and older (49% of the sample were over 40), similar to those in other studies (Levenson et al., 2007; Rogers, Hirst, & Davies, 2010). However, participants (Payne et al., 2010) also indicated being unaware of how possible rehabilitation is, suggesting the public has little information regarding effective interventions for sex offenders. This may be due to media coverage that focuses on new sex offense crimes and on sex offenders who recidivate, and this is likely the only exposure the public has to sex offenders.

Results from most of the previously discussed studies showed a lack of support for rehabilitation of offenders as a way of reducing sexual crimes, but instead, a majority of participants expressed support for harsher, longer punishments as a way of decreasing sexual recidivism risk. It is not surprising that the public has negative views about the efficacy of treatment, given that persons who work directly with sex offenders have the same views about rehabilitation (Ferguson & Ireland, 2006; Jung, Jamieson, Buro, & Decesare, 2012).

Impact on Sex Offenders and Their Families

Although few studies have examined the effects of sex offender laws on the offenders and their families, some studies (e.g., Levenson & Cotter, 2005; Levenson &

Tewksbury, 2009; Robbers, 2009; Zevitz & Farkas, 2000) have shown the overall effects of the policies are negative. Levenson and Cotter (2005) investigated the effects of residence restriction laws in Florida. Researchers asked sex offenders in the Fort Lauderdale and Tampa areas to complete a survey during their group therapy sessions; 135 individuals completed the surveys. Questions on the survey included demographic data, information regarding offense history, and specific questions regarding issues related to residence restrictions (e.g., “I have had to move out of a home that I owned because of the 1,000-ft rule”). For the issues questions, participants rated their agreement on 3-point and 5-point Likert scales. Results revealed 50% of participants reported being forced to move from their current homes, 25% reported not being allowed to return to their homes following release from prison, and roughly 50% reported being unable to live with supportive relatives because of the residence restrictions. Additionally, over half of the sample used reported having difficulty finding affordable housing because of the 1,000-foot rule in Florida and reported feeling they had suffered emotionally because of the rule. Close to half (48%) reported suffering financially because of the residence restriction. Younger offenders were more likely to report having problems living with family members and finding affordable housing. Only two of all respondents reported feeling the residence restrictions were useful; most reported feeling the restrictions were impractical and not helpful. Some common themes among participants were feeling the law restricted their ability to have adequate levels of social support because of increased isolation from family, feeling the rule would not prevent reoffending if the offender desired to do so, agreement that “stranger danger” is a myth because most offenses happened with someone the offenders knew, and that if offenders committed stranger-

predator crimes, they did not do so in close proximity to their own homes. Overall, results of the study indicated problems with increased isolation, particularly from family, increased financial difficulties, and emotional hardship. Findings also indicated the lack of practicality of the restrictions: Offenders will reoffend regardless of where they live. In fact, by removing offenders from areas where children congregate, offenders may have an easier time finding victims that will not recognize them because children would not be from the offenders' neighborhoods.

Zevitz and Farkas (2000) reported similar findings of negative consequences to those found in the Levenson and Cotter (2005) study, but with regard to community notification laws in Wisconsin. Participants in the Zevitz and Farkas study were 30 sex offenders who had been the target of exposure through news media and/or community notification meetings. The majority of offenders reported being excluded from a residence and feeling ostracized by neighbors and lifetime acquaintances because of public access to their criminal offense information through community notification laws. Some participants also reported experiencing frequent moves because of the community notification laws, resulting in housing instability. Most offenders also reported receiving threats and being harassed, as well as losing jobs. Offenders also reported feeling their family members suffered emotional harm and harassment from those who found out they were connected to a sex offender. Offenders reported examples of children avoiding social activities (e.g., quitting the school's football team) because of ridicule from peers and other examples of their children losing friends after the public was made aware. Some participants also reported their parents were suffering from problems with depression because of media attention. Participants reported relationships ending because

relatives, spouses, and significant others did not want to deal with the media attention and some were afraid of being harassed or harmed. Findings suggested the consequences of sex offender policies do not only affect the individual sex offender, but also affect the parents, children, spouses, and significant others who are connected to the offender.

Mercado, Alvarez, and Levenson (2008) conducted a similar study using sex offenders in New Jersey who were subjected to community notification and residence restriction laws. Results of the study indicated that over half of the 138 participants lost a job or had to relocate because of the sex offender laws. Findings support those in the previous mentioned studies, indicating that being subjected to the sex offender laws leads to negative experiences in the community (e.g., having relationships end, being threatened or harassed, being physically assaulted).

Another study (Robbers, 2009) examined the potential consequences of living with the label “sex offender” using a sample of 153 registered offenders in Virginia. The offenders were asked about various experiences they had related to the label of “sex offender”. The majority of participants reported having the following negative experiences related to the workplace because of their label as a sex offender: lying to employers and coworkers about being a sex offender, accepting employment that is below their qualification and/or skill level, and feeling career advancements were slowed or were not given. Patterns emerged in responses related to personal experiences as well. Most offenders reported losing contact with relatives who had children, experiencing family embarrassment and shame, and having difficulties in intimate relationships. Over 80% of participants also reported having a fear of being humiliated in public because of the sex offender label. The findings further supported other research (Levenson & Cotter,

2005; Zevitz & Farkas, 2000) by showing that offenders have employment problems, family problems, lack social support, and feel isolated as a direct cause of their sex offender status.

Levenson and Tewksbury (2009) investigated the impact of sex offender policies on the non-offending family members of registered sex offenders. Researchers used an online survey to collect data, and invited participants to complete the survey via email lists and through links on websites. The sample used included 584 participants, of which 42% were a spouse of the offender and 33% were either a parent or stepparent of the offender. Over 60% of participants reported they lived in the home with the offender, and 82% of participants reported their family suffered a financial hardship because of the offenders' difficulty with finding employment, and this difficulty was attributed to being a sex offender. Results also indicated that 53% of participants reported their family suffered financial hardship because of the offender's loss of employment related to being a sex offender. Over 40% of participants reported being threatened or harassed by neighbors after the neighborhood was alerted to the sex offender's presence in the area. Results of this study also indicated that family members were more likely to experience negative consequences with greater residential buffer zones. Essentially, the larger the zone in which sex offenders could not live, the greater the negative impact on the family. This connection was not well understood, but it may be that offenders are pushed more to the edges of cities, requiring longer transportation routes to and from jobs, schools, and community resources (e.g., grocery stores, banks, probation/parole offices). The majority of the participants with children whose other parent was the registered sex offender reported their children's friendships had changed and reported feeling peers treated their

children differently after offender information was available for public access. Over 60% of respondents indicated feeling their children were treated differently by other adults (e.g., teachers, neighbors, parents of friends), and over 70% of participants reported feeling their children had been stigmatized because of the other parent's label as a sex offender. Those results corroborate the findings from Zevitz and Farkas (2000). Family members also found little value in notification policies; only 3% of participants felt their sex offender could be at risk to reoffend, suggesting they saw the community notification policy as worthless because the sex offender is not going to reoffend anyway. That statistic indicates family members' denial of the possibility of reoffense occurring, which could be negative for the offender. As with other offenders, sex offenders need social support from others who can accept the possibility of deviant behavior and who will also be useful at recognizing risk factors and maladaptive behavior patterns. The findings of the Levenson and Tewksbury study supported the idea that sex offender policies affect and punish more than just the offenders; children and family members are harassed, stigmatized, and treated poorly as a result of having a personal connection to the offender.

The negative impact on family decreases offenders' options for supportive family members and may be changing how families view the sex offenders (e.g., increase the belief the offender is not at risk for reoffense). Having strong communities and having a sense of belonging within a community can be just as important for the offender's reintegration as having supportive family members. Robbers (2009) examined how being a sex offender can impact an offender's participation and involvement in the community by surveys sent via postal mail to sex offenders currently on the registry. Names and

addresses were obtained directly from the registry website for the state of Virginia. Along with the surveys and qualitative measures, Robbers mailed a descriptive cover letter and informed consent form to the offenders. Out of the 364 surveys mailed, 153 individuals returned their completed surveys. Results indicated 74% of participants were involved in church as members, but very few reported having any leadership roles in the church. Roughly 16% of participants reported being involved in a volunteer organization. Less than 10% of participants were involved in their children's sports programs, and most admitted being afraid that others involved in the program would have them removed because of their sex offender status. Of those who did not report any type of community involvement ($n = 100$), 20% reported moving to a new community with the purpose of being anonymous and avoiding any kind of community attention, suggesting some offenders feel they should not try to reintegrate because the community will never be willing to accept them.

Levenson, D'Amora, and Hern (2007) also interviewed offenders to ask about negative consequences of being subjected to the notification policies. Researchers used data collected from 239 sex offenders attending outpatient sex offender treatment in Indiana and Connecticut. These states were used because of their broad community notification policies which apply to all offenders, regardless of risk level. Participants completed surveys asking about various problems the person had experienced related to their status as a sex offender. Findings supported the evidence in other studies (Levenson & Cotter, 2005; Robbers, 2009; Zevitz & Farkas, 2000), indicating job loss, threats, harassment, damage to property, and family members' suffering as common experiences among offenders. Physical assaults and being forced to move from a home were also

reported by the sample from Levenson, D'Amora, et al. Offenders in the study were specifically questioned about positive consequences of community notification. The majority (69%) of participants disagreed with the idea that community notification motivated them to be more willing to manage risk factors; however, 74% of participants did report being more motivated to prevent reoffense as a way of establishing a better reputation (e.g., "I am not a bad person"). Some participants (around 20%) think the registration and notification laws help prevent offending and feel they have less access to potential victims through the vigilance of neighbors. The findings indicated some discrepancies in what offenders think regarding sex offender policies when compared to other studies (Levenson & Cotter, 2005), suggesting more research is necessary in order to understand the perspectives of the offenders.

Sex Offenders and Psychosocial Factors

Some research has focused on psychosocial factors that may separate sex offenders from the general population. For example, Fisher, Beech, and Browne (1999) compared 140 child molesters (including both offenders in the community and incarcerated offenders) to a group of 81 nonoffenders (i.e., newly recruited male prison officers with no prior experience working in corrections). Significant results indicated that child molesters had lower self-esteem, were more emotionally lonely, had higher levels of personal distress, were less assertive, and had less empathy for victims of sexual abuse than the nonoffender sample. The offender sample had significantly lower levels of emotional congruence with children than the nonoffenders but higher levels of general empathic concern for others. Results also showed that offenders and nonoffenders had similar levels of perspective-taking abilities, fantasy (ability to identify with fictional

characters), and cognitive distortions. The scores of the child molester sample were compared to the reported norms of the measures used, given that perhaps the attitudes of prison workers may not be the same as those in the general public. Results were similar to the previous comparisons, in that the child molester sample was more emotionally lonely and had higher levels of personal distress compared to American college students. Additionally, the child molester sample was less assertive compared to groups of male bus drivers and unemployed men. Fisher et al. then divided the sample into low-deviancy (e.g., only having one or two victims in the family) and high-deviancy (e.g., many victims, both male and female victims, both in and outside the family) offenders. Results showed a similar pattern to when the whole sample was used. However, low-deviancy offenders showed no significant differences in assertiveness when compared to nonoffenders. High-deviancy offenders had similar levels of emotional congruence to children (rather than lower levels) when compared to nonoffenders, and this subset of offenders also had significantly lower perspective-taking abilities, higher fantasy abilities, and more cognitive distortions compared to nonoffenders. These findings suggested that child molesters often have deficits in emotional well-being, including self-esteem, personal distress, and lack of emotional connections with others. A limitation of these results is that all the offenders used had child victims. Additionally, the authors did not provide a definition of what constituted being a “child molester,” and no information is given about the crimes the sample committed. However, it is still important to note the deficits in self-esteem, assertiveness, and supportive social connections, as these may be helpful factors in understanding the reasons behind sexual offending (e.g., boost self-esteem, decrease loneliness, decrease personal distress).

A small subset of studies has looked into psychosocial factors related to the effects of being a registered offender. Levenson, D'Amora et al. (2007) examined participants' stress levels, in addition to focusing on how being publicly labeled a sex offender can impact housing and employment. Over 60% of participants reported feeling that community notification causes more stress in their lives, inhibiting their progress in treatment. Participants reported they felt more alone and isolated (54%), lacked social support (50%), felt hopeless about changing (44%), and had little hope for their futures (55%) because they are on the registry and are subject to community notification policies. Robbers (2009) also considered psychosocial factors using the sample of offenders from Virginia. Participants reported similar themes to those in the Levenson, D'Amora et al. study: feelings of isolation (88.2%), feelings of hopelessness and despair (86.9%), suicidal thoughts (27.4%), and problems with relationships (86.9%). Offenders also reported feeling persecuted (84.9%), which led to greater anxiety and concern for being attacked or assaulted. Jeglic, Mercado, and Levenson (2012) also found that offenders who perceived a negative impact from community notification and residence restriction laws had more symptoms of hopelessness and depression. The offenders in the study also reported higher levels of depression and hopelessness than the general population, suggesting sex offenders are experiencing more mental health symptoms than the normative population.

Findings in the research discussed suggest being publicly labeled can have a negative impact on the psychological well-being of sex offenders, and may be impeding their treatment process (Jeglic et al., 2012; Levenson, D'Amora et al., 2007; Robbers, 2009). Additionally, research (Fisher et al., 1999) indicates that sexual offenders are not

functioning as well as the normal population with regard to emotional well-being (e.g., lower self-esteem, higher personal distress), and it is likely that sex offender policies are only serving to exacerbate these problems. Being publicly labeled as a sex offender may be increasing their problems with self-esteem, emotional loneliness, and personal distress. Increased stress (or decreased emotional well-being) has been shown to put criminals at increased risk for reoffense, across all types of crime. Van der Knaap, Alberda, Oosterveld, and Born (2012) assessed over 15,000 cases of individuals (both men and women) on probation, grouping the cases into those who reoffended within a 2-year time period and those who did not, to determine what factors were important for understanding the recidivism. The cases included over 900 sexual offenders. Logistic regression showed that decreased emotional well-being led to increased risk for reoffense for both men and women. Additionally, having other stresses, such as unstable housing, unstable employment, poor financial management, and a lack of pro-social friendships were significant predictors of reoffense for both men and women, but were stronger predictors for reoffense among the male offenders. Given that studies have suggesting the sex offenders laws increase housing and job instability, as well as negatively impact the financial stability of offenders and their families (Levenson & Cotter, 2005; Levenson, D'Amora et al., 2007; Robbers, 2009; Zevitz & Farkas, 2000), it can be implied that the laws may actually be increasing the likelihood of a sex offender committing a new sexual offense. No studies have specifically connected all of these factors (e.g., psychological functioning, registration status, and risk to reoffend). The lack of a variety of studies in the area of psychosocial factors and sex offenders indicates a need for more research in

order to better understand the psychological functioning of offenders, as well as the impact the laws have on offenders' well-being.

Rationale for Current Study

Despite what seems to be an increase in research regarding sex offenders, some holes are still present in the existing literature. A weakness in the currently available literature on how sex offender policies are impacting the offenders is the lack of information on the specific psychological effects related to being a registered offender. Although a small group of studies (Jeglic et al., 2012; Levenson, D'Amora, & Hern, 2007; Robbers, 2009) have reported that offenders feel more isolated, have more problems with relationships, feel hopeless about their futures, and other problems, other studies have focused only on housing, employment, and familial problems related to being publicly known as a sex offender (e.g., Levenson & Cotter, 2005; Zevitz & Farkas, 2000). Additionally, most of the previous research has focused on samples from urban areas, and few samples in the literature have come from small communities (Levenson & Cotter, 2005; Zevitz & Farkas, 2000). Currently, no available published studies have specifically focused on how being in a rural community affects sex offenders psychosocially. The previous literature also fails to distinguish between various crime categories, and research has suggested that not all sex offenders are alike. Rapists with adult victims tend to show different characteristics than those who have offended against children, including higher recidivism rates overall and with regard to sexual offenses (Serin, Mailloux, & Malcolm, 2001). Currently, the literature on how offenders perceive the impact of sex offender policies does not address any potential differences between offenders when grouped by their crimes.

A main purpose of the present study is to expand the current literature by filling in the gaps in the currently published research. The current study will be similar to previous studies in that it will investigate how offenders' relationships, employment, housing, and community involvement are affected by notification and registration policies. Previous methods used have included surveying participants and allowing them to share specific stories or instances to support their responses to questions about the direct effects of sex offender policies, and the current study will be adding to this literature by using open-ended questions to gather qualitative data from participants. This study will directly focus on the qualitative data and look for patterns; other studies have tended to focus on quantitative data, using narrative responses solely for support (Levenson & Cotter, 2005; Levenson, D'Amora et al., 2007; Robbers, 2009; Zevitz & Farkas, 2000).

The present study is also different from previous research because of the focus on psychosocial variables and how those relate to demographic and criminal information of sex offenders. Using multiple regression analyses, this study will investigate potential sex offender-specific variables (e.g., length of time on the public registry, risk level, type of crime, victim age, victim gender) that may predict psychological symptoms and stress level. The current study also will expand the scope of the present literature by examining sex offenders living in a rural area. The entire state of North Dakota is considered a rural area, and offenders in this area may have different experiences from offenders in more urban areas, which is typically where samples have been taken from (e.g., Levenson & Cotter, 2005).

Hypotheses

1. Sex offenders will report that being on the public sex offender registry and being subjected to community notification laws have negatively impacted their ability to obtain and maintain employment, obtain adequate housing, be involved in their communities, and have appropriate and supportive relationships with others.
2. Being in a smaller community increases the difficulty sex offenders report having with employment, housing, being involved in the community, and relationships.
3. Variables directly related to being a sex offender (e.g., length of time spent on the registry, total length of time to be on the registry, type of offense, risk level, number of sexual offenses, number of total offenses, victim age, victim gender) and other demographic variables (e.g., length of time in current city, length of time at current address, participant age, relationship status) will significantly predict scores on the Symptom Checklist-90-Revised and the Perceived Stress Scale.

CHAPTER II

Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between sex offender registration factors and psychological problems. Qualitatively, this study explored participants' subjective experiences with being a registered sex offender in North Dakota, as well as their personal opinions and beliefs regarding sex offender policies. The second part to this study was quantitative in nature, exploring whether the variables of registration time requirements, risk levels, length of time living in the same city, completed registration time, and age were predictive of overall psychological distress. This section describes the procedures and participants involved in the study.

Design

A mixed methods design was used to collect information regarding demographics, psychological symptoms, stress levels, and subjective experiences of sexual offenders. Individual semi-structured interviews were used to collect information about participants' experiences with being a registered sex offender. The interview was designed to be semi-structured in order to give participants some direction about where to begin with discussing their experiences. Also, the questions were designed to connect the interview to the major topics included in the hypotheses. Surveys were used to gather information regarding demographic information, current psychological symptoms, and current stress levels. The instruments are described later, as well as the interview methods.

Participants

Fifty male convicted sex offenders who were registered in the state of North Dakota participated in this study. A total of 519 letters were mailed to sex offenders in the following counties in North Dakota: Cass, Grand Forks, Barnes, Burleigh, Griggs, Kidder, Morton, Nelson, Oliver, Ramsey, Steele, Stutsman, Trail, Walsh, and Ward. The mailing addresses of registered sex offenders were obtained through the North Dakota Sex Offender website (<http://www.sexoffender.nd.gov/>). Fifty-five letters were returned as undeliverable to that person (e.g., no longer at that address), which is 10.6% of the total number of letters mailed out. The letters contained a request for participation in the study, a brief explanation of the study, and the contact information of the researchers to inquire about participating. All participants were males between the ages of 22 and 79, with a mean age of 43.4 years ($SD = 12.42$). The majority (94%; $n = 47$) of participants identified themselves as White, Non-Hispanic, and 6% ($n = 3$) identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino. With regard to education levels, 68% ($n = 34$) had a high school diploma/GED or less, 14% ($n = 7$) had earned a college degree, and 6% ($n = 3$) had started graduate school or had earned a graduate degree. The majority (66%; $n = 33$) of offenders currently were employed, while 22% ($n = 11$) were unemployed and 12% ($n = 6$) were receiving Social Security or Social Security Disability income. Most participants had a yearly average household income between \$10,001 and \$20,000 (56%; $n = 28$); 22% ($n = 11$) had a yearly income of \$10,000 or less; 6% ($n = 3$) had between \$20,001 and \$30,000; 4% ($n = 2$) had an income between \$30,001 and \$40,000; 2% ($n = 1$) had an income of greater than \$50,000, and 10% ($n = 5$) did not answer this question. With regard to housing, 46% ($n = 23$) were renting, 30% ($n = 15$) owned their homes, 18% ($n =$

9) lived with family, 4% ($n = 2$) were residing in a homeless shelter, and 2% ($n = 1$) lived in a halfway house. The average length of time spent at the current address was 64.21 months (approximately 5.35 years; $SD = 96.19$ months or 8.02 years), and ranged from 2 months to 581 months (approximately 48.42 years). Participants' length of time in their current city ranged from 2.50 months to 581.0 months (approximately 48.42 years), with a mean time of 133.54 months (approximately 11.12 years; $SD = 129.62$ months or 10.80 years). Thirty-four percent ($n = 17$) of participants identified as being single, 28% ($n = 14$) were married, 28% ($n = 14$) were divorced, and 10% ($n = 5$) were in a long-term dating relationship.

Sex Offender Specific Demographics. Most (54%; $n = 27$) participants were not on any form of supervision or probation, while 46% ($n = 23$) were on probation at the time of their participation. Additionally, the majority of participants (54%; $n = 27$) were required to register for 15 years, 16% ($n = 8$) were required to register for 25 years, and 30% ($n = 15$) were lifetime registrants. The length of time spent on the registry at time of participation varied from 2.5 months to 19 years. The average length of time spent on the registry by the time of participation was 83.5 months (a little less than 7 years; $SD = 51.07$ months or 4.26 years). A little over half (54%; $n = 27$) of participants were considered low risk, 26% ($n = 13$) were considerate moderate risk, and 20% ($n = 10$) were considered high risk offenders. The majority of offenders reported they received some form of psychological or sex offender treatment (72%; $n = 36$), leaving 28% ($n = 14$) reported never receiving any form of sex offender or psychological treatment. Sixty-six percent ($n = 33$) of participants reported having no criminal convictions other than their sex offense(s), while 32% ($n = 16$) of participants had between 1 and 7 other

convictions. Additionally, one (2%) participant reported having 34 other convictions. Total number of sex offenses varied in range from one offense only (76%; $n = 38$) to five total sexual offenses (4%; $n = 2$). Eight participants (16%) reported having two sex offenses and two participants (4%) reported having 3 sex offenses. Four participants (8%) reported having no victim (i.e., possession of child pornography or similar offense). Participants' reported victims for their most recent sex offense were grouped based on ages, which indicated that the majority of participants had victims between ages 12 and 18 (62%; $n = 31$), with six participants having victims over age 18 (12%), and nine participants (18%) having victims under age 12. For the most recent offense, 82% ($n = 41$) of victims were female, and 10% ($n = 5$) of victims were male.

Measures

Symptom Checklist-90-Revised. The Symptom Checklist-90-Revised (SCL-90-R) is a 90-item questionnaire designed to assess a broad range of psychological problems and symptoms (Derogatis, 1994). There are nine symptom scales: Somatization (SOM), Obsessive-Compulsive (O-C), Interpersonal Sensitivity (I-S), Depression (DEP), Anxiety (ANX), Hostility (HOS), Phobic Anxiety (PHOB), Paranoid Ideation (PAR), and Psychoticism (PSY). Additionally, the SCL-90-R has three scores that represent overall psychological distress and severity of symptoms: Global Severity Index (GSI), Positive Symptom Total (PST), and Positive Symptom Distress Index (PSDI). Participants chose how often they experienced the symptoms in the previous seven days using a 5-point rating scale that ranges from Not At All to Extremely. According to the manual for the SCL-90-R (Derogatis, 1994), two studies were used to establish internal consistency reliability. Derogatis, Rickels, & Rock (1976) used a sample of 209 volunteers from the

community. Coefficient alphas were found to be adequate for each scale, as Psychoticism had the lowest ($\alpha = .77$), and Depression had the highest ($\alpha = .90$); alphas were between .80 and .86 for the other seven subscales. The same study (Derogatis et al., 1976) also had a sample of 94 psychiatric outpatients who took the SCL-90-R twice, with one week elapsed time between test administrations. The first administration was done with patients who arrived for an initial interview at the outpatient clinic; the second administration was completed when they returned a week later for their follow-up appointments. Reliability correlations (r_{tt}) were adequate across the subscales; the Hostility subscale had the lowest ($r_{tt} = .78$), and Phobic Anxiety had the highest ($r_{tt} = .90$). All other test-retest r values for the other seven subscales were between .80 and .86, suggesting the SCL-90-R can reliably assess symptoms over a short-time period.

Horowitz, Rosenberg, Baer, Ureno, and Villasenor (1988) used a sample of 103 psychiatric outpatients. Results showed similar internal consistency reliability coefficient alphas to those in the previous study, with Psychoticism again being the lowest ($\alpha = .79$) and Depression being the highest ($\alpha = .90$). The other seven subscales had alphas between .80 and .89, suggesting each subscale is fairly homogenous in what it is measuring. Additionally, the same participants were given the SCL-90-R when they first arrived for an initial interview for treatment at an outpatient clinic. Participants' names were then added to a 10-week waiting list for a psychodynamic therapy group. At the end of the 10 weeks, each participant again was administered the SCL-90-R. Test-retest r values were adequate; Somatization had the lowest ($r_{tt} = .68$) and Paranoid Ideation ($r_{tt} = .83$) had the highest. The other seven subscales had test-retest r values between .70 and

.81; given that a 10-week time period elapsed, these values strongly indicate that the SCL-90-R is consistently measuring the same concept over time.

Perceived Stress Scale. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is a 10-item measure that asks participants to rate how often they have felt or thought a certain way in the last month (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). The original scale was developed with 14 items, but analyses (Cohen, Kamarck et al., 1983) revealed that only 10 were necessary to assess perceptions of general life stress. Participants responded to each question on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 to 4 (0 = never; 4 = very often). The PSS was designed for users with at least a junior high education level. Cohen et al. (1983) used 3 different sample groups to assess validity and reliability. Reliability coefficient alphas were all adequate, regardless of the sample. The college freshman sample (N = 332) had an alpha of .84, the college students in an upper level psychology course (N = 114) had an alpha of .85, and the sample of smoking cessation treatment members (N = 64) had an alpha of .86. Additionally, 82 of the college students took the test again after 2 days, showing a test-retest r of .85; the smoking cessation group retook the PSS after 6 weeks, with a test-retest r of .55. This was an expected result, given the transitory nature of stress levels. Validity was demonstrated by significant correlations with various measures of life events, depressive symptoms, social anxiety symptoms, utilization of health services, and physical health symptoms (Cohen et al., 1983). Additional support for the 10-item version (used in this study) is shown by Roberti, Harrington, and Storch (2006). Researchers used a sample of 285 college students, conducting exploratory factor analysis on the 10-item version. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for reliability indicate adequate reliability for the total score ($\alpha = .89$), as well as the two factors that emerged.

Perceived Helplessness ($\alpha = .85$) was comprised of 6 items; Perceived Self-Efficacy ($\alpha = .82$) was comprised of the other 4 items. However, the two scales had a high degree of overlap ($r = .65$), suggesting it is best to use only total scores in practice. Corrected item-total correlations were between .58 and .72, indicating that each item is a direct measure of the overall factor being measured (Roberti et al., 2006). The PSS was also shown to have convergent validity, as it was significantly ($p < .05$) correlated with a measure of anxiety (Pearson $r = .73$), as well as an assessment of locus of control (Pearson $r = .20$). Divergent validity was also assessed by having participants complete a measure of religious faith and aggression; no significant correlations were found between scores on the PSS and scores regarding faith and aggression. Essentially, the PSS is measuring the same concept repeatedly and is valid based on its correlation with measures of similar symptomology.

Demographics. A self-made questionnaire was constructed by the author to document demographic variables of participants (see Appendix A). The main variables of interest were age, education level, income level, number and names of participants' convictions (both sexual and nonsexual), victims' ages, victims' genders, length of time spent on the registry, total required length of time to be registered, relationship status, and length of time residing in current residence and current community. (Questions relating to treatment, housing situation, employment situation, and probation status were asked during the interview.)

Interview. A semi-structured interview was developed by the author (see Appendix C). The interview was designed to gather information on how participants' registry status and the community notification process (if it applied) impacted

participants' housing, employment, community/social relationships, and personal/family life. Given that the interview was semi-structured, other topics or questions were asked depending on the various points of discussion brought up by the participant.

Procedures

The author and a research assistant met with all participants individually for data collection. Most participants were met in public locations (e.g., public libraries, college campuses, churches), with a minority being met in their private homes in order to better accommodate their transportation capabilities.

Informed Consent. At the time of data collection, each participant signed an informed consent form (see Appendix B) after it was explained verbally. Participants had the option of stopping their participation at any time without penalty. Participants were given the option of providing their name and mailing address if they wanted to receive a brief copy of the results of this study.

Survey Completion. Participants completed surveys individually. They were randomly assigned arbitrary research numbers, and all data were separated from the informed consent forms in order to ensure confidentiality.

Instrument Instructions. Directions were read aloud and printed on the front page of each survey. The instructions for the SCL-90-R were as follows:

“Below is a list of problems people sometimes have. Please read each one carefully, and blacken the circle that best describes how much that problem has *distressed you or bothered you in the last 7 days, including today*. Blacken the circle for only one number for each problem and do not skip any item. If you change your mind, erase your first mark carefully.”

The instructions for the PSS were as follows:

“The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, please indicate with a check how often you felt or thought a certain way.”

The instructions for the demographics page were as follows:

“Please answer each question honestly and to the best of your knowledge. Let me know if you have any questions.”

Interviews. Participants were asked to participate in an audio recorded interview, completed individually. Participants were asked to avoid using names of people in order to keep the recordings as anonymous as possible.

Debriefing. Participants placed all completed surveys back into the packets before handing the materials to me. After collecting the surveys, I thanked the participants for their cooperation and time. I debriefed participants orally, provided a written debriefing statement (see Appendix D), and answered participants’ questions about the research.

Data Analyses

Qualitative results were analyzed using NVivo software. Interviews were transcribed into word documents and imported into the NVivo program. After an initial reading of transcripts, domains and sub-domains were created by consensus. Groups of two or three (usually a mix of graduate and undergraduate students) did the initial coding of transcripts to identify common themes, and then discussed with this author. Main ideas were identified and discussed first, based on the content of what participants reported in the interview. These main ideas were then grouped into larger, more general categories

(domains). Reliability was assessed by having different groups review the same transcripts, along with this author, to ensure consensus and adherence to protocol across the groups. After the first 27 transcripts were analyzed, a set of codes was created in the NVivo software program for this project. . NVivo allowed for this hierarchy of categories to be pre-set in the software program, easing the process of coding, as well as keeping terminology consistent across coding groups. Groups met and entered codes directly into the software using the codes specified. If a group felt an interview contained important information, but the information did not fit with the established codes, groups could generate new codes and these were reviewed with the principle investigator. The codes were checked by the principle investigator and two undergraduate students to ensure agreement and accuracy in grouping coded information in the correct domains and subdomains. Hill, Thompson, and Nutt (1997) outlined a rigorous qualitative research methodology (consensual qualitative research; CQR); however, CQR was not used in this study due to the inability to maintain a consistent research group that would be able to engage in the consensus process. This study required a longer length of time than most given the larger number of interviews conducted compared to the 10-15 interviews used in most CQR studies. Undergraduate students who were part of the research team did not always stay with the research team for longer than one semester, leading to changes in the members of each coding group.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Version 20 for Windows.

Categorical predictor variables of Risk Level and Required Registry Length each had 3 levels, so both were each dummy coded as 2 variables with 2 levels prior to regression analyses. For example, Risk Level was dummy coded so that for one variable, all High

Risk and Moderate Risk participants were given a “0” for risk level, and all Low Risk participants were given a “1.” A second variable was created so that all Moderate Risk participants were given a “1” and all Low and High Risk were coded as “0.” A similar procedure was used for Required Registration Length, with one variable comparing 15-year Requirement (coded as 1) to the 25-year Requirement and Lifetime (coded as 0). The second variable coded Lifetime as 1 and 25-year and 15-year Requirements as 0. Forward regression analyses were used, as this study was exploratory in nature (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005).

CHAPTER III

Results

Psychological Functioning

Participants mean scores and standard deviations on the subscales of the Symptom Checklist-90-Revised (SCL-90-R) and scores on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) are shown in Table 1. All scores for the subscales of the SCL-90-R are reported as T-scores. The normative sample uses a mean of 50, and standard deviation of 10. The means and standard deviations below are specific to this sample.

Table 1. Mean Scores on the PSS and the SCL-90-R.

Instrument/Subscale	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
PSS	4.00	33.00	29.00	15.24	6.76
SCL-90-R: GSI	34.00	81.00	47.00	62.40	13.42
SCL-90-R: PSDI	40.00	81.00	41.00	58.44	9.97
SCL-90-R: PST	30.00	81.00	51.00	59.86	12.05
SCL-90-R: ANX	40.00	81.00	41.00	57.92	13.92
SCL-90-R: DEP	38.00	81.00	43.00	62.40	13.33
SCL-90-R: HOS	41.00	73.00	32.00	54.18	9.23
SCL-90-R: IS	41.00	81.00	40.00	63.58	12.17
SCL-90-R: O-C	39.00	81.00	42.00	60.40	11.25
SCL-90-R: PAR	41.00	81.00	40.00	58.84	13.25
SCL-90-R: PHOB	47.00	81.00	34.00	57.94	11.81
SCL-90-R: PSY	44.00	81.00	37.00	58.94	13.02
SCL-90-R: SOM	37.00	81.00	44.00	56.70	13.92

Qualitative Results

Of the 50 participants who completed the surveys, 47 agreed to participate in the audio recorded interview. The purpose of the interview was to gain a greater understanding of the experiences that sex offenders have had being on the registry. Overall, 14 major themes (domains) emerged from the content of the interviews. Each theme is comprised of a various number of core ideas (subdomains). Frequency counts were calculated for each domain and subsequent core ideas. The frequency counts are listed in Table 2. The labels general, typical, and variant are used to describe how often themes appeared within the interviews with participants, and the definitions are based on qualitative research guidelines (Hill et al., 2005; Hill, Thompson, & Nutt Williams, 1997). General is defined as 44 or more (91% - 100%) of the participants expressed that theme or core idea; typical is defined as 24 to 43 (50% - 90%) of participants expressed that theme or core idea; variant is defined as 3 to 23 (5% - 49%) participants identified that theme or core idea. There are no specific rules for qualitative data, but given the large sample in this study (i.e., 47 transcripts compared to the usual 10-15), it can be assumed that if at least 5% of the sample did not report an idea, then it can be eliminated from discussion. Additionally, it is important to note that, although many of the major domains described are similar to the direct questions asked of participants, the support for the core ideas within those domains can be found throughout the transcripts. Responses to questions across the interview contained various information, allowing for ideas to emerge that were not asked about directly.

Table 2. Frequency Counts for Domains and Core Ideas.

Domains and Core Ideas	Frequency (% of total <i>N</i>)	Label
Effects on The Self	47 (100.0%)	General
Introverted/Isolated	22 (46.8%)	Variant
Improved Self	12 (25.5%)	Variant
More Cautious/Aware	15 (31.9%)	Variant
Avoids Places/Situations	10 (21.2%)	Variant
Worries About Impact On Family	8 (17.0%)	Variant
Feels Embarrassed/Ashamed	4 (8.5%)	Variant
No Noticeable Changes	8 (17.0%)	Variant
Family Relationships	45 (95.7%)	General
Supportive Family Relationships	36 (76.6%)	Typical
Negative Impact On Kids/Grandkids	18 (38.3%)	Variant
Family Relationships Ended Due To Crime	11 (23.4%)	Variant
Difficult To Visit Family	3 (6.4%)	Variant
Family Has Been Verbally Harassed	8 (17.0%)	Variant
Some Family Worries About Association	7 (14.9%)	Variant
Family Is Distressed By Registration/Label	5 (10.6%)	Variant
Social & Community Relationships	42 (89.4%)	Typical
No Problems With Neighbors	25 (53.2%)	Typical
Has Supportive Friendships	24 (51.1%)	Typical
Has Fewer Friends Now	6 (12.8%)	Variant
Social Relationships Are More Difficult	15(31.9%)	Variant
Effects On Housing	41 (87.2%)	Typical
Difficult To Find Housing	24 (51.1%)	Typical
No Issues Finding Housing	16 (34.0%)	Variant
Able To Find Housing Through Connections	12(25.5%)	Variant
Housing Conditions Are Substandard	8 (17.0%)	Variant
Can Find Housing Under Right Conditions	4 (8.5%)	Variant
Frustrated About Low-Income Housing	3 (6.4%)	Variant
Effects On Employment	39 (83.0%)	Typical
Difficult To Find A Job	25 (53.2%)	Typical
Found Job Through Connections	14 (29.8%)	Variant
No Problems With Coworkers Or Boss	12 (25.5%)	Variant
Has Job Skills Can't Use	5 (10.6%)	Variant
Wants A Different Job	4 (8.5%)	Variant
Harassed/Avoided By Coworkers	5 (10.6%)	Variant
Size Of The Community	15 (31.9%)	Variant
Does Not Matter	6 (12.8%)	Variant
Small Town Is Better/Bigger Is Worse	4 (8.5%)	Variant
Bigger Town Is Better/Smaller Is Worse	5 (10.6%)	Variant

Table 2. Cont.

Domains and Core Ideas	Frequency (% of total N)	Label
Beliefs About Community Perceptions	28 (59.6%)	Typical
View All Sex Offenders The Same	17 (36.2%)	Variant
Believe The Worst About Sex Offenders	15 (31.9%)	Variant
Media/Government Are Negative Influence	10 (21.3%)	Variant
Feel Discriminated Against	9 (19.1%)	Variant
Lack Accurate Information about Offenders	3 (6.4%)	Variant
Sex Offenders Are a Target for Hatred	3 (6.4%)	Variant
Some People Are Vigilantes	3 (6.4%)	Variant
Impact On Community Involvement	40 (85.1%)	Typical
Involved In The Community	22(46.8%)	Variant
Wants To Be Involved/Or More Involved	15 (31.9%)	Variant
No Longer Allowed To Participate	7 (14.9%)	Variant
Has Experienced Harassment/Rejection	12 (25.5%)	Variant
Not Involved/Doesn't Want To Be Involved	7 (14.9%)	Variant
Impact Of The Label Of Sex Offender	8 (17.0%)	Variant
Label Makes Us Lower Than Human	4 (8.5%)	Variant
Stigma Is Attached To Label	5 (10.6%)	Variant
Label is Connected to Identity	4 (8.5%)	Variant
Positives Of The Registry	14 (29.8%)	Variant
Good To Track Some Offenders	8 (17.0%)	Variant
Motivation To Improve Self	3 (6.4%)	Variant
Helps Protect The Community	4 (8.5%)	Variant
No Positives Exist	9 (19.2%)	Variant
Negatives Of The Registry	37 (78.7%)	Typical
Disagrees with Aspects of Registry	12 (25.5%)	Variant
Upset About Increase In Registration Length	8 (17.0%)	Variant
Lack Of Continuity between States	3 (6.4%)	Variant
Increases Life Instability/Prevents Moving On	6 (12.8%)	Variant
Target For Police/False Accusations	6 (12.8%)	Variant
Restricts Freedom And Privacy	6 (12.8%)	Variant
Difficulty Maintaining Registration	4 (8.5%)	Variant
Suggestions To Improve The Registry	23 (48.9%)	Variant
Look At Each Case Individually	14 (29.8%)	Variant
Credit For Good Behavior	3 (6.4%)	Variant
Make Updates Easier	3 (6.4%)	Variant
Have Other Criminal Lists	3 (6.4%)	Variant
Better Education Of Rules	4 (8.5%)	Variant

Table 2. Cont.

Domains and Core Ideas	Frequency (% of total <i>N</i>)	Label
Experiences With The Legal System	21 (44.7%)	Variants
Good Relationships with Police/Probation	4 (8.5%)	Variants
Probation Rules Are Worse Than Registry	13 (27.7%)	Variants
Biases in System	6 (12.8%)	Variants
Worried about Future Policies	3 (6.4%)	Variants
Treatment Experiences	20 (42.6%)	Variants
Some Treatment Was Positive/Helpful	16 (34.0%)	Variants
Some Treatment Was Negative/Not Helpful	7 (14.9%)	Variants

Descriptions of Domains and Core Ideas

Effects on the Self. This domain is defined as the impact the registry and the label of sex offender had on the participants' sense of self, behaviors, or emotions. If participants said anything that indicated some aspect of themselves had changed since being labeled as a sex offender or since being on the public registry, this was counted as being part of this domain. Seven core ideas emerged from this domain, and they vary from positive changes (e.g., improved self) to negative changes (e.g., being more introverted/isolated). Participants reported feeling more socially isolated and introverted, and for some participants, this meant avoiding social interaction, and for others it meant avoiding public places in order to avoid other people (Isolation/Introversion). Additionally, participants reported specific ways in which they have improved themselves because of their registered sex offender status (Improved Self). Participants reported an increased sense of needing to be cautious and aware of their surroundings (More Cautious/Aware), as well as being avoidant of certain situations or places where they felt their risk of problems (not just reoffense) may occur (Avoids Places/Situations). Some participants reported negative feelings related to the registry, including worrying more, specifically about how family is affected (Worries About Impact on Family) and a

few reported feelings of shame and embarrassment (Feels Embarrassed/Ashamed). Other participants reported they had not noticed any changes in their behavior, suggesting that there may be protective factors against the negative impact of the registry that others reported (No Noticeable Changes). Examples for each core idea are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Examples of Core Ideas for the Effects on the Self Domain.

Core Idea	Examples
Introverted/Isolated	<p>“I’m a lot more cautious of where I go, what I’m doing, to keep it on the low so people don’t see me standing out in a crowd. I’ve become a lot more hidden as a person...I was more outgoing...I was more out there and always wanted to let people know that, ‘I’m here!’” – P8</p>
	<p>I’m a lot more cautious about, um, meeting people. You know like when I moved into the neighborhood, I pretty much stayed away from all the neighbors, stuff like that you know. I didn’t try and be outgoing, not that I’ve ever been a hugely outgoing person. Anyways, it’s changed me in that way; I’ve become more introverted – P25</p>
	<p>“My behavior has definitely changed, so has my attitude... I’m more scared of the public. I don’t go out, I don’t go out to stores. I think, I think they’re talking about me. Even though they’re not, that’s how I feel.” – P15</p>
Improved Self	<p>“I don’t drink and daydream. I used to daydream a lot, monkey around before, watch Nip/Tuck and stuff. I don’t do that no more. It’s just dumb stuff now. I was selfish before. I just lived by myself, I cared about nobody else. Now I wish I could be with my family and stuff.” – P3</p>
	<p>“I used to have a tendency to drift around a lot more than I have since I’ve been on there. ‘Cause, I know, you know, I’ve always got to keep them up to date where I’m at so...I...I would say it’s a minor effect but a noticeable one, but minor.” – P19</p>
More Cautious/Aware	<p>“I am still vigilant about being around kids...there has to be adults around. I have a friend that has 5 kids, and they invite me over for all of the holidays...I play with the kids, but I make sure there is an adult there...It’s my safety. I’m the one who is going to go to jail.” – P36</p>
	<p>“I have to be conscious of who’s around me at all times. When I am out and about I have to be open-minded and try to avoid those [problems] I can.” – P47</p>

Table 3. Cont.

Core Idea	Examples
Avoids Places or Situations	<p data-bbox="565 304 1443 373">“I’m afraid to go into places where kids might be because I might be accused of being some place I shouldn’t be.” – P22</p> <p data-bbox="565 409 1443 609">“[My probation officer] says to me, if I go to the mall, to make sure I have another adult with me you know, and that’s understandable. I’m not usually in the mall much anyways. I’m usually with [girlfriend] or my brother, or somebody. She said just make sure you’re not alone there, not that they’re going to do anything, but just for, just in case somebody does know and somebody wants to try to cause some trouble.” – P42</p>
Worries About Impact on Family	<p data-bbox="565 640 1443 871">“What do I do about their friends? And of course their parents could find out about me or pull me up on the list anytime. So what I’m saying is, if it was just me alone, single, I could handle anything that they throw at me, but my family is the one that has to walk along right beside me now. So I wonder you know, what about my son’s friends you know? And um, is he going to be persecuted for it or isolated because of it or, my two girls as they go up through school?” – P34</p> <p data-bbox="565 913 1443 1071">“[I worry] about someone harassing my wife or my step kids just for being associated with me. Like I said, it has not happened. And I’m a worrier by nature. But I’ve seen and heard enough of this. I’ve experienced enough of this while I was in prison to know that it’s real.” – P1</p>
Feels Embarrassed or Ashamed	<p data-bbox="565 1102 1443 1270">“I know when I first got out of the hospital I was really ashamed because this is a little hometown. I mean, I’d be out working in the yard and if a car was coming by, I’d walk behind the house...because of the shame. You know, facing people. But then, my fears were bigger than reality.” – P11</p> <p data-bbox="565 1312 1443 1375">“Just...a lot of embarrassment... Fear of people finding out and just a little ashamed too because of what I did.” – P32</p>
No Noticeable Changes	<p data-bbox="565 1407 1443 1606">“It has not affected or impacted me in any way. I feel the more information there is out there that the safer everyone will be. But at the same time, it almost seems like there is a knee jerk affect to it. I’ve only had one friend that has said, “Oh I found your name on the registry!” and I said, “Oh, indeed you did!” And he never asked any other questions about it.” – P5</p> <p data-bbox="565 1648 1443 1780">“I don’t worry about whether I’m on the registry or not. It doesn’t matter to me. I don’t care about that. What I do care about is how I’m, how I’m behaving in public. And if I’m behaving in a way that my grandma wouldn’t approve, then I’d better stop it. So, that’s what I feel.” – P26</p>

Family Relationships. This domain includes anything participants said about the idea that being a registered sex offender impacted family members and participants' relationships with family members. A total of eight core ideas emerged to comprise this larger domain. A majority of the participants reporting have some form of support from their family; although it may not have been all of their family members, if participants reported receiving support from a spouse, parent, or any relative, it was counted as a source of support for them (Supportive Family Relationships). Additionally, participants reported that their relationships with the minors in their lives, including children and grandchildren, have been negatively impacted in that the offenders cannot be involved in their lives, even though some of these participants had adult victims (Negative Impact on Kids/Grandkids). Some participants also reported their relationships with adult family members ended, although this appeared to be more because of the crime, not the registry. A few participants commented on the difficulty they have with visiting family members, given that the registry has requirements regarding how long a person can stay in another location (Difficult to Visit Family). In contrast to previous studies, only 8 (17%) participants reported that a family member had been harassed because of the participant's registry status; in this sample, participants reported incidents of only verbal harassment (Family Has Been Verbally Harassed). A small group of participants also reported that their family members had reported some concerns about being associated with them and how that might affect them (Some Family Worries about Association), and a few participants reported their family members were also generally distressed by the registry or by the person being labeled a sex offender (Family Is Distressed by Registration/Label). Examples for these core ideas are listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Examples of Core Ideas for the Family Relationships Domain.

Core Idea	Examples
Supportive Family Relationships	<p>“Everybody in my family is supportive. When I was released from incarceration I lived with my parents for a little bit and they wouldn’t let anything happen. If someone wanted to come over and harass me, it wouldn’t happen.” – P7</p> <p>“I’d say with my parents and my little brother it’s gotten better. We go out and do stuff a little more now as a family.” – P10</p> <p>“I’ve had my family come out and do family counseling and everything in Bismarck when I was there and, uh, my wife has come to my counseling here.” – P27</p>
Negative Impact on Kids/Grandkids	<p>“Initially after my daughter was born I got kicked out of the house. And social services got involved and for awhile I was allowed no contact whatsoever. Um, but I went through treatment...they kind of- they do an Abel screen which kind of evaluates your sexual preference and they found that I have no attraction to children so I got to return home and... when she was six months old so I missed the first six months but, but been there since.” – P40</p> <p>“And I think the biggest thing is our grandchildren, when they were in school I couldn’t go to any of their doings.” – P45</p>
Family Relationships Ended	<p>“Well a lot of ‘em didn’t talk to me while I was in prison. I think I sent about fifteen Christmas cards and got three back first year, little more the second year, and uh, the dynamic hasn’t really changed though.” – P30</p> <p>“I don’t have no- I’ve been out of prison since ’93 and I went and contacted my sister and I talked to her for about a week and she had her phone number changed. She doesn’t want to speak to me. My- I got three brothers and one sister and none of ‘em speak to me.” – P43</p>
Difficult to Visit Family	<p>“There’s the ‘how are you going to go visit them’. There are protection plans so then I have to get approved by my group and then my PO and then by the main director of it too.” – P14</p> <p>“And I could say that three-day rule when you first stay at somebody’s house? If you were to go visit somebody for a long weekend, I mean to me it’s dumb that you’d have to register. I can’t see where it helps anybody. If you were going to mess up, you could do it in two days, versus three days; you know what I’m saying?” – P11</p>
Family Has Been Verbally Harassed	<p>“My daughter is a Girl Scout...one of the other parents found out about me and they reported [my wife] to the Girl Scouts and said that she was bringing in girls to the house, which she never had been.” – P32</p>

Table 4. Cont.

Core Idea	Examples
Family Has Been Verbally Harassed	“As soon as the landlord found out, he wanted everyone to move out right away. He got belligerent with my mom and her husband. They had a talk and tried to explain things. ‘We’re not moving out, you can’t kick us out, and he’ll stay as long as he needs to.’” – P6
Some Family Worries Association	<p>“...she just happens to be a counselor in town. She is kind of a little tense at times when people can put the two of us together, but she takes the blows a little better than most people in the family. She has been fairly supportive.” – P4</p> <p>“It has come up, especially with my sister. She’s...she’s a pediatrician so it affects her a great deal worrying about whether her patients’ parents would find out or something like that and then...view her differently. I can understand her concern. I know that the label sex offender is not a very well looked upon one.” – P47</p>
Family Is Distressed By Registration/Label	<p>“[My father] mentioned he was ashamed because, you know, because I was on the registration, you know, that my name was a sex offender...so he was uh ashamed, you know, having someone tell him about me.” – P35</p> <p>“I was going to try and move to Montana to where my dad lives, and possibly try and get back in working out there again, and he goes that’s probably not a wise idea because it would affect the business out here because we share the same last name.” – Participant 4</p>

Social and Community Relationships. This domain encompasses friendships as well as relationships with others in the community, including neighbors. A total of four core ideas comprise this domain. A majority of participants indicated they had no significant problems with their neighbors, suggesting that despite reported housing difficulties (see the next section), participants are able to maintain at least civil interactions with others in their immediate housing environment (No Problems with Neighbors). A majority also reported having supportive friendships, individuals with whom they can socialize (Has Supportive Friendships), although a few participants did report that some friendships ended because of their crime and/or participants’ registration

status. Additionally, it was remarked by some participants that having social relationships (Has Fewer Friends Now), including friendships and romantic relationships, is much more difficult with their registry status (Social Relationships Are More Difficult). Examples for each of the four core ideas discussed in this domain are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Examples of Core Ideas for the Social and Community Relationships Domain.

Core Idea	Examples
No Problems with Neighbors	<p>“The people in this building? They are awesome. They've been really nice to me. I don't know their backgrounds, but, um, I know the whole neighborhood here even when I walk by them, they say "Hey! How you doing? Good morning!" And I feel as long as I'm not causing any harm in the neighborhood, people are going to see that, and they're not going to raise a fuss.” – P26</p> <p>“Like across the street I have my high school baseball coach and his wife who was a teacher and I talk to them almost every day and never come off as any different than another support for me. I don't get any dirty looks or fingers driving around town. I get the normal, small town country wave. That's been good for me and easy on me, in that aspect.” – P8</p>
Has Supportive Friendships	<p>“My friend group really hasn't changed that much. The friends I had before my conviction are about pretty much the same ones I have now. They're ...I am very close to my friends so they're very uh concerned...They want to make sure I'm okay. They're part of my support team.” – P47</p> <p>“I have friends from high school, and they know this stuff. They have kids too and they don't feel threatened or anything. And friends here in Fargo... most of them are sex offenders so... most of them are on the registry.” – P14</p>
Has Fewer Friends Now	<p>“It's slightly different. I never had a lot of friends to start with, but the friends I had I thought were pretty good friends. When all this came about , I lost a few of them because of it. They couldn't deal with what was going on, so I've had to change the way I do things a little bit.” – P12</p> <p>“I've been in my hometown since I was born so people know who I am but I tend to have less friends, less social events.” – P8</p>

Table 5. Cont.

Core Idea	Examples
Social Relationships Are More Difficult	<p>“If [my fiancé’s] friends have kids, I make sure she tells her friends if they want to come and talk to me. I mean, I’m not a threat to kids by any means, but I don’t want to put somebody in a spot where they find something out they didn’t know and panic and freak out. It’s only fair to them, I think.” – P7</p> <p>“I want to date so then that’s harder. People having kids and stuff. I’m forty so it’s hard to find women that don’t have kids...” – P14</p> <p>“I mean, before, I’m out there. (chuckle) Now, I mean when I was in Duluth... I was with about 5 different women, but they never knew I was on the registry. My name never came up, it never came up on the TVs or anything. I thought cool, leave it go. Well, when they found, it’s ‘shoo,’ and they’re gone.” – P41</p>

Effects on Housing. This domain encompasses anything participants reported that related to housing. A majority of participants discussed their struggle in finding appropriate housing (Difficult to Find Housing), including some needing to stay at homeless shelters because of a lack of landlords willing to rent to sex offenders. It is of interest to note that 34% of the total sample reported having no problems in looking for a place to live (No Issues Finding Housing), although some of this may be due to individuals owning a home prior to their convictions. Others admitted that having some connections to family, friends, and others in the community helped them to find a place to live (Able to Find Housing through Connections). A minority of participants commented that if the conditions were right, housing is available, usually if the landlord is a private renter and seems willing to give individuals a chance (Can Find Housing under Right Conditions). Some participants commented on the standards of the housing they were able to obtain, calling them “slums” (as shown in the examples below; Housing Conditions are Substandard), and although some participants attempted to use financial

assistance in obtaining housing that would be within their means, they were turned away from low income housing for being a registered sex offender (Frustrated about Low-Income Housing). Examples to illustrate these core ideas are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Examples of Core Ideas for the Effects on Housing Domain.

Core Idea	Examples
Difficult to Find Housing	<p>“...I literally have had three or four of them tell me, say ‘I’m sorry, we’d love to rent to you, but you’re a registered offender. Why don’t you come back when you’re off and we’ll have no issue?’ And it really had nothing to do with the crime. It had everything to do with the fact that I was a registered offender.” – P12</p> <p>“[Finding housing was] Like pulling teeth out of a turtle. Umm everyone kept checking my background and checking it...that’s got nothing to do with our housing.” – P46</p>
No Issues Finding Housing	<p>“It was surprisingly easy. I live with my brother, he’s at work right now, but we live with my brother, and he went on craigslist, found this place, and he called the guy up. Gave him our names for background check and everything and we moved in a month later.” – P42</p> <p>“Well, I bought my place. I bought a trailer house, um, after, well actually before I went to jail. And I lived there for 8 years and then I met my wife and we have purchased a house in the last couple years.” – P25</p>
Able to Find Housing Through Connections	<p>“ It didn’t affect me because the person that I’m renting from is a relative of my employer. But to be fair, I have heard from other people in my treatment group, that it is extremely tough.” – P5</p> <p>“I ran into one guy and he was one of my friends. Probably is now my best friend other than my brother... And uh, he was like, ‘What’s the offense?’ And I told him and he was like, ‘Ok.’ He wanted to make sure I wasn’t a serial rapist or a child molester...so when he found out what I was convicted of... he said, ‘I don’t have a problem with that.’” – P29</p>
Housing Conditions Are Substandard	<p>“He does not provide nice housing...he has a level of hospitality that he is going to extend and you can either rent from him or not; he doesn’t really care. He has sleeping rooms down in the basement of his house...I moved from there to another slumlord and lived there close to another three years.” – P48</p>
Housing Conditions Are Substandard	<p>“Well, there’s only like three renters in town that would ah, rent to an offender. And you know, they all charge exhilarant [<i>sic</i>] rent for less than adequate housing. Um, I live in a place probably two of these [small study rooms] put together for... \$350 a month.” – P16</p>

Table 6. Cont.

Core Idea	Examples
Can Find Housing Under Right Conditions	<p>“We ended up moving to another place in Grand Forks just a few blocks from where I am living now. There was no problem there either. When I got the place that I’m living in right now, my landlord just about floored me on this one... he said, ‘Everyone screws up and deserves a second chance.’ I thought, ‘Wow.’ He was understanding.” – P4</p> <p>“When we were looking for a place to live we would call the landlords and ask to meet with them and I would explain to them everything. The first place we found the guy let us live there no problem and it was cool. Then we moved out of that place and found a family that would let us rent their condo and they were cool about it.” – P7</p>
Frustrated about Low-Income Housing	<p>“I honestly felt like I didn’t have safe housing available to me, I tried going the public route and the first lady I talked to said, ‘You are the kind of person who we are trying to keep our clients away from,’ and I just thought, wow, OK.” – P48</p> <p>“I would sure love to go to Fargo and live up in Fargo ‘cause it’s closer to things and I don’t have to worry about...how I’m going to get there. But I can’t get an apartment. Nobody will rent to me... I had- I applied at [an agency] and they said because of my crime I couldn’t get on section 8.” – P43</p>

Effects on Employment. This domain was defined as any comment individuals made about how the registry or their sex offender status impacts their employment options, relationships with others in the work environment, or any other comments related to job skills or employment in general. A total of seven core ideas emerged within this domain. A majority reported having difficulty when they were job searching, including being rejected outright for being on the registry (despite felonies being more than 5 years old) and other issues when trying to obtain employment (Difficult to Find a Job). Again, connections seem to be important in order for offenders to meet their needs; roughly 30% reported being able to find their job through their social/family connections (Found Job through Connections). Some participants reported being frustrated because they have job skills (through schooling and training) that they can no longer use because

they are labeled as a registered sex offender (Has Job Skills Can't Use). Others reported wanting to find a different job or wanting to advance in the company, but felt these were not options available to them because they are labeled sex offenders (Wants a Different Job). Although more participants reporting never having had negative interactions with coworkers or bosses due to their registry status (No Problems with Coworkers or Boss), a small group (roughly 11%) did report being harassed at work or deliberately avoided and ignored by their coworkers (Harassed/Avoided by Coworkers).

Table 7. Examples of Core Ideas for Effects on Employment Domain.

Core Idea	Examples
Difficult to Find a Job	<p>“I got into school for diesel mechanics and everybody’s hiring. You can walk in the door and get a job. I was the only one in my class that went to a job every day, asked for a job, they said okay; as soon as you tell them you’re a sex offender, it was kind of a done deal. ‘We’ll call you back,’ and never heard from them again. I had to drive...about 60 miles one way to have a job.” – P18</p> <p>“They ask on the application what I was convicted of so I put sex offender. And once they see that... that’s the end. People at the employment office, once I go there and fill out the application, and then once they see that, oh no we can’t help you.” – P15</p>
Found Job through Connections	<p>“No, actually I didn’t have any problems finding employment...I got out of prison in 2009. I was working a full-time job by September 3...I’ve been at the same place since. That may be because of the small-town thing; I’d already built up somewhat of a reputation, and people knew my parents around, and they knew my work ethic so I think that helped me out a lot.” – P8</p> <p>“...luckily I had a couple people that I knew that I had worked with in the past and so I was able to find employment fairly easy in construction too. Because there are a lot of different felons that work construction.” – P31</p>
No Problems with Coworkers or Boss	<p>“When I got the [current job]...I didn’t even get completely from the tour of the place before everyone knew I was on the registry...I thought, ‘Oh boy, this ought to be fun.’ My supervisor said, ‘Just show up and do your job and so be it. If you’re here to do your job and you’re here to do it the best you can and you’re trying not to make people feel uneasy on purpose, then so be it. Who gives a hoo-ha.’ – P4</p>

Table 7. Cont.

Core Idea	Examples
No Problems with Coworkers or Boss	“[Coworkers] all know my situation, but I haven’t had any problems with them.” – P35
Has Job Skills Can’t Use	<p>“It’s not easy. I’ve been working at [a bottling factory] for 11 years now. It’s a great job. Great people, but I know that I can do more...Nothing against [the company] or the workers there, but I know I’m capable of doing more things because of my studies but I’m afraid I can’t.” – P32</p> <p>“Well, it is kind of directly involved in the registry because there are certain things that I can’t do. I’ve got an education degree, and I... I can’t teach and I can’t give music lessons or anything like that. So it does put a damper on my career goals and things like that.” – P16</p>
Wants a Different Job	<p>“I wanted to get a different job...’cause I figured more benefits and stuff with that one...I get the job, call her (my PO), and she says, ‘Oh you got to quit that job; you got to stay back with the truck stop.’ And you know I’d rather get away from the truck stop ‘cause there’s no benefits, no way to move up there. But I’ve been there just about two years...” – P3</p> <p>“I hate my job. I hate it with a passion. I work at a factory. I have a 4-year math degree and I have one year of law school...And I work at a factory.” – P7</p>
Harassed/Avoided By Coworkers	<p>“I was a welder [at the time of my crime]...I got bailed out of jail the next day, and there was a clipping on the board and an inflatable doll on the table. I couldn’t deal with that.” – P41</p> <p>“I think there’s probably a couple that are still a little uneasy with [my registry status], but if they’re uneasy, we all work side by side, but they might want me to go work over somewhere else instead.” – P4</p>

Size of the Community. Few participants commented about how their community’s size impacted them regarding the registry and being publicly labeled a sex offender, leading to only three core ideas in this domain. A few reported that they felt the size of the community didn’t matter (Does Not Matter); a few commented that they felt being in a small community was better, especially if they had connections in the community (Small Town Is Better/Bigger Is Worse). A few participants also noted that being in a bigger community (like Fargo, or larger) would be better than a small town,

expressing reasons that varied from feeling housing options would be greater or that people would be less involved in others' affairs (Bigger Town Is Better/Smaller Is Worse). Examples for each of these core ideas is provided in Table 8.

Table 8. Examples of Core Ideas for Size of the Community Domain.

Core Idea	Examples
Does Not Matter	<p>“I hate being on the registry in general. I don’t care if it’s in Grand Forks, Los Angeles, Minto. I mean, anywhere.” – P7</p> <p>“I don’t think the size of the community matters. People all have so many ideas about what sex offenders are. And they all (the cities) got the same people.” – P15</p>
Small Town Is Better/ Bigger Is Worse	<p>“I’m from a small town and people knew about my crime before I got sent away. The information on the website doesn’t really affect where I’m at and people I deal with. I’ve been in the same town for 25 years.” – P8</p> <p>“...with a smaller population you get to have more intimate relationships with people you know. They know you better. And like I said, people who know me, know I’m on the register, and it doesn’t matter. They know who I am.” – P5</p>
Bigger Town Is Better/ Smaller Is Worse	<p>“[Fargo is] better because 99 percent of the population is not going to care. So yes, Fargo is a big city, big enough to where [my registry status] is not going to be common knowledge.” – P17</p> <p>“If I lived in a big city, I bet it wouldn’t be as big of a deal, because there are so many of them around. When I lived in Virginia, nobody even knew or else they just didn’t care... In rural communities it’s much worse than being in a big city.” – P6</p>

Beliefs about Community Perceptions. Sex offenders’ beliefs about how the community perceives them emerged as a main domain, comprised of six core ideas. This domain encompasses any participant response that included general statements about what the general public thinks about sex offenders, whether it be a blanket statement about all offenders or if it is how the participant feels society views him. Most participants believed that society viewed all sex offenders as being identical, and

subsequently treated them the same, regardless of crime, victim information, or risk level (View All Sex Offenders the Same). Others pointed out they felt society believes the worst about offenders, as if all sex offenders commit the same heinous crimes shown in media and news (Believe the Worst about Sex Offenders). Some participants also commented directly about how the media and/or the government influences the public by encouraging the public to think of sex offenders in a negative light (Media/Government Is Negative Influence). Others felt society in some ways, discriminates against offenders or is biased against them (Feel Discriminated Against), and others felt society is unaware of the truth regarding the statistics of offenders (Lack Accurate Information of Offenders). A small number of participants had concerns that some people in the general public want to act as vigilantes or seek revenge against offenders (Some People Are Vigilantes). Examples to illustrate these core ideas are included in Table 9.

Table 9. Examples of Core Ideas for Beliefs about Community Perceptions Domain.

Core Idea	Examples
View All Sex Offenders the Same	<p>“The way sex offenders are looked at, whether it’s low, medium or high risk, it seems that it doesn’t matter; it’s all the same.” – P6</p> <p>“...not group us all in one ball and say that’s how sex offenders are. Keep the high separate from the low, ‘cause people that are low at least we try. And then you got the people that are high [risk] screwing everything for us. And we can’t do nothing about it. We have to work harder to prove [we aren’t high risk].” – P15</p>
Believe the Worst about Sex Offenders	<p>“In many people’s eyes I imagine I molest babies. Well babies aren’t my M.O. or my crime.” – P21</p>
Believe the Worst about Sex Offenders	<p>“Everybody that looks at this website and sees these people on there, including myself, immediately they get this visualization of somebody that sneaks around at...night, takes these kids, goes out does things to ‘em...” – P39</p>

Table 9. Cont.

Core Idea	Examples
Media/Government Are Negative Influence	<p>“People want to portray that [violent] image of all of us and that's how we're stereotyped. When a person hears, reads or thinks of us as a sex offender, they're not going to look into our crime. They're going to look at us and say, ‘Oh my God! We got a Rodriguez!’ or ‘We got a Kyle Bell!’ ‘We got a ‘whatever’ back in the streets!’ That's what they think of, and, it's projected by the media, by the police, by law enforcement, by government officials saying, ‘Well, we're going to crack down on these people.’” – P27</p> <p>“You see on CNN and things like Nancy Grace and shows like that and they usually have a panel of four people. They’re talking about this guy did this, this guy did that. He should have never been let out. They’re all un-curable. They’re just going to keep doing it. They need to be put away for life. You don’t ever see people that are active in programming or treatment. You don’t ever see that, hardly ever. I’ve never seen it on any success stories about people that have got out, purchased homes, started businesses, you know, done good.” – P 30</p>
Feel Discriminated Against	<p>“Some employers I think are going to discriminate against me, and really it’s the only legalized discrimination that can be done. If you’re an SO I can blow you out the door and guess what you can’t prove anything, you can’t say anything about it and you’re going to be discriminated against and there’s nothing you can do about it.” – P17</p> <p>“First of all I have to say we are extremely prejudiced against, we are extremely biased against um....It’s extremely difficult to do anything when it comes to the public.” – P20</p>
Lack Accurate Information about Offenders	<p>“People need to be more informed about all levels of stuff because everyone gets thrown in the same category, but it’s also beneficial, cause people know who to stay away from but... if you don’t have the knowledge of it, it’s just kind of, it doesn’t really matter anyway.” – P18</p> <p>“Some people think that if you’ve been convicted of a child molestation charge, you can’t be fixed and you’re automatically going to do it again. I don’t think people are aware of what the real facts are.” – P6</p>
Some People Are Vigilantes	<p>“Anybody can look me up, find out where I live, and if they have a problem with my crime they can come here and do whatever they want. And a lot of people can have themselves convinced, because I’ve known quite a few of these guys when I was in prison that thought like this: ‘Well, nobody’s gonna bother me because you’re the bad guy and what I’m doing is good. Who’s gonna pick on me for tapping a sex offender?’” – P1</p>

Table 9. Cont.

Core Idea	Examples
Some People Are Vigilantes	“I feel let down by the whole system because my information is out there. If somebody gets a hair up their ass and wants to come raise some hell, One, I’m a felon so I have no means to protect myself, so if this guy comes and kick my door in.” – P7

Impact on Community Involvement. Participants reported on their involvement in the community, and the connection that has to their requirement to publicly register as a sex offender. A total of five core ideas comprised this domain. The core idea with the highest frequency in this domain showed that participants are able to involved in the community to some extent, typically through church activities, but also through other community organizations (Involved in the Community). At the same time, some offenders are reporting that they want to be more involved, as well as some who are not involved but would like to be (Wants to Be Involved/Or More Involved). Rejection may be of concern for participants who want to be involved but are not, as roughly 26% reported experiencing rejection or harassment from others in the community. Rejection and harassment were grouped together, as some participants reported the rejection as a form of harassment (Has Experienced Harassment/Rejection). A small group of individuals reported they were not involved in the community and they do not want to be involved; this may be due to antisocial attitudes, or it may have something to do with being afraid of rejection. It was not clear in all examples as to the reason for not wanting to be involved (Not Involved/Doesn’t Want to Be Involved). Table 10 provides some key examples of each of the core ideas.

Table 10. Examples of Core Ideas for Impact on Community Involvement Domain.

Core Idea	Examples
Involvement in Community	<p>“I’d gotten involved in Sons of Norway... I was very well accepted...I’m very comfortable out at...our lodge building and I got an invitation cause I was receiving an award for membership and just the smells and the look in there, just felt like going home again.” – P47</p> <p>“Just because this happened to me as a minister, I didn’t stop going to church and so we have good friends in the church we go to.” – P24</p>
Wants to Be Involved/ Or More Involved	<p>“The church I go to, they have a small group, and they have been asking my wife and I to join in with the small group...and so far I’m very reluctant to do that because people talk.” – P1</p> <p>“Yeah, I wanted to join the Eagles, but I’m thinking like, ya know, I better not...I don’t know; it’s just I hate rejection.” – P38</p> <p>“I wish I could do more, but I think they’re going to find out that I’m a sex offender.” – P15</p>
No Longer Allowed to Participate	<p>“Special Olympics is about the only one that stopped because if you volunteer they want to know, ‘Were you on the registry?’” – P29</p> <p>“I had played in between 5 and 7 volley ball leagues a year for 12 years in Fargo, and that, obviously, came to an end. I’ve been teaching part time for six or seven years, and I consider that social, I mean one night class per semester . I loved it, honestly, that came to end.” – P48</p>
Has Experienced Harassment/Rejection	<p>“Last fall, I started having notes left in my yard, that I think first were intended to try to hurt, and then began to escalate and implied physical violence. The last one that my wife found, essentially, was threatening to burn down my house.” – P48</p> <p>“I was informed that the elders of this particular church that they needed to have a [board meeting]...and saying that well I cannot attend that church until that board meeting which is 6 weeks from now. And so, um, that’s been probably the first and biggest persecution.” – P17</p>
Not Involved/Doesn’t Want to Be Involved	<p>“I don’t do it [community activities] because I don’t want to. I don’t know why. I never have.” – P7</p> <p>“No. I don’t participate much in organized activities.” – P23</p>

Impact of the Sex Offender Label. A small group of participants (17%)

discussed the impact the sex offender label, along with what the label means to them.

Three core ideas emerged within this domain; one idea focused on the idea that the sex

offender label creates a sense of being less than human for these offenders (Label Makes Us Lower than Human). A second core concept was that there is a definite negative stigma attached to the sex offender label (Stigma Is Attached to Label), and, finally, that the label becomes connected to one’s identity (Label Is Connected to Identity). This is separate from the Effects on the Self domain because participants here were discussing the label specifically, rather than the broad issues of having one’s information on a registry. Examples are provided in Table 11.

Table 11. Examples of Core Ideas for Impact of the Sex Offender Label Domain.

Core Idea	Examples
Label Makes Us Lower than Human	<p>“They shouldn’t be labeling as a sex offender...start out labeled as a human being, and then when we label them sex offender, we put them lower than human beings...” – P35</p> <p>“I know that the label sex offender is not a very well looked upon one. Seems like we’re... right now it seems that the sex offender is considered probably the lowest one. The lowest person out there.” – P47</p>
Stigma Is Attached to Label	<p>“...then there’s still that, still that stigma involved you know. And um, having, having a title. I feel like I’m wearing a big A. You know, kind of like a scarlet letter.” – P16</p> <p>“That stigma is tied to it because you’re part of that same category. Think about it, you could actually kill someone, do time in confinement, get out and then have nothing wrong with you.” – P17</p>
Label Is Connected to Identity	<p>“What does it do to a person to be labeled a sex offender? You know if somebody tells me something long enough its kinda hard not to believe it.” – P22</p> <p>“There’s no getting that dog off your leg. Even being out of the pit, it’s like there is no way to... redeem yourself. You’re always going to be... what’s on the website is how people are always going to perceive you.” – P34</p>

Positives of the Registry. Some participants expressed that they are able to identify positives to having a sex offender registry, and three core ideas exhibit the identified positives: Good to Track Some Offenders, Motivation to Improve Self, and

Helps Protect the Community. However, some participants specifically indicated that no positives exist with regard to having this registry, and that it has no positive purpose.

Examples are given in Table 12 that illustrate the aforementioned core ideas for this domain.

Table 12. Examples of Core Ideas for Positives of the Registry Domain.

Core Idea	Examples
Good to Track Some Offenders	<p>“I think that there’s people out there that the public needs to be made aware of and needs to keep an eye on.” – P19</p> <p>“Checking on people, because if they know that person is a sex offender and if he doesn’t register, they could keep an eye on him. Or they could tell the police or something. Just to check, and keep in check on the person. ‘Cause I know a lot of people don’t register” – P3</p>
Motivation to Improve Self	<p>“The registry will make most people who are on it want to make changes in their lives. There are going to be some people who can’t for whatever reason...so yes, it can be motivating.” – P5</p> <p>“In my opinion, well, I don’t know, it gets you more responsible...Change jobs or move, ‘Hey, you got to do this or this is the consequence.” – P44</p>
Helps Protect the Community	<p>“If there is any other plus it’s that I’m checked on every four months. Which I think would be comforting for neighbors, you know, that I’m being checked on.” – P20</p> <p>“It protects the community, especially, on a level three. And I think it’s good to know where the level three sex offenders are.” – P9</p>
No Positives Exist	<p>“Any positives. Uh, no, I don't. I, um. I guess I see things as, uh, I guess as my personal, own opinion, um, how can you judge one behavior and not another?” – P27</p> <p>“I don’t see anything good ‘cause, you know, because being on the registry the cops watch you a lot more.” – P10</p>

Negatives of the Registry. Given the previous described domains, it is reasonable that a majority (79%) of participants identified negatives to having a registry for sex offenders. Within this domain, seven core ideas emerged to group the identified negative aspects of the registry. Most participants who identified negatives, indicated that they felt

their required length, their risk level, or even their requirement to register was inappropriate, and that was the main problem with the registry (Disagrees with Length/Risk Level/Being On It). Other participants identified the fact that the government can change their required registration length at any time without any regard to the individuals on the registry (Upset about Increase in Registration Length). Additionally, some participants identified that the registry inhibits them from moving on past their conviction and having a happier, more stable life (Increases Life Instability/Prevents Moving On). Other offenders identified a concern that the registry only increases the likelihood that they will be targeted by police or by others who would easily be able to make false accusations (Target for Police/False Accusations). Restrictions on offenders' freedoms and their privacy was also noted by a few participants. A few participants reported frustration that there wasn't more continuity between states (Lack of Continuity between States), while a few others admitted to having problems maintaining their registry information due to a lack of knowledge regarding rules (Difficulty Maintaining Registration). Examples are listed in the table below (Table 13).

Table 13. Examples of Core Ideas for Negatives of the Registry Domain.

Core Idea	Examples
Disagrees with Aspects of Registry	<p>"...through whatever notes they took in treatment and, you know, my prison records and what not, they obviously know I'm not a risk...so, why go to the bother of making me go on that registry?" – P19</p> <p>"I think that anybody deserves a second chance and I can understand somebody having to register for a period of time but as long as – as long as – somebody like me, I don't think that a 15 year registration fits the – you know, the punishment doesn't fit the crime." – P16</p>

Table 13. Cont.

Core Idea	Examples
Upset about Increase in Registration Length	<p>“[The registration increase] will feel worse next year because next year is the year I’m supposed to get off it. I feel really bad because when it first happened, one guy was gonna get off in three months and they added another five years onto it. I thought that was illegal and that they should be able to do that retroactive or whatever. Fine if they want to do it from that point on but I don’t think they should be able to go back and change it.” – P9</p> <p>“Originally I was to be registered for 10 years and then my name was going to be dropped off ...A few years back they decided, ‘Well, it’s going to 15 years now.’ That added almost 50% time to what I am going to be registered. And I was almost 8 years through. I guess my fear is that when I get close to that my name getting dropped off the list, all of a sudden it’s, ‘Oh, well, you know what? We can’t.’” – P12</p>
Lack of Continuity between States	<p>“See in Minnesota I no longer have to register anymore...I thought when I moved [to ND] that I didn’t have to register. Well, it just so happens the deputy sheriff had to come out and talk to me. I don’t remember what it was for...and I told him about [being a sex offender] and he said, ‘At least you’re honest. No, you’re gonna have to register in this state too.’... Okay, I didn’t know that.” – P43</p> <p>There’s no set standard, there’s no federal standard... but the rules are different for every state... Well it’s not fair to be convicted under Montana law, come to North Dakota and they’re...[requiring] 15 years. Because they tried to put me in jail for failure to register when I got here.” – P29</p>
Increases Life Instability/Prevents Moving On	<p>“...going through the treatment and my personal experience, stability has been everything. And without that stability in your life, as far as a job, and working, and somewhere to live and somewhere to call your own. Without that stability the chances of you reoffending are extremely high. And I’ve seen it...They didn’t have a stable job. They didn’t have a stable housing situation and they got in trouble. For myself, every individual that I’ve seen, including myself, that has gone through that—we’ve all had stable jobs. We’ve had stable housing environments.” – P12</p>
Target For Police/ False Accusations	<p>“I think the registry negatively hold back ninety percent of the people out there that are trying to do the right thing and watches the two percent that aren’t, but hey that’s the way it works.” – P21</p> <p>“It can ultimately help the police department do their jobs better but it can also be a hurtful thing because someone can out of the clear blue go ‘I seen this person over here doing this.’” – P4</p>

Table 13. Cont.

Core Idea	Examples
Target For Police/ False Accusations	“Well, you know if anything around here happens, since you’re on the registry you’re the first one that gets picked up. So you kinda tend not to want to go nowhere.” – P18
Restricts Freedom and Privacy	<p>“Absolutely, right to privacy has been totally invaded at this point. They say you lose that right when you get convicted. All right, but...Let’s try to be a little more realistic instead of trying to save the public from this you’re probably adding more paranoia to the fire...” – P6</p> <p>“[If there were no registry]...Have a lot more freedom in the sense that, say if I was to go buy a car, I’d have to go register it within three days. Being I live in one county and work in another county I have to go do it both.” – P11</p>
Difficulty Maintaining Registration	<p>“Well I have two failure to register convictions...which sucked, but, um, and mostly, because, you know, I wasn’t aware what the law was. Nobody sat down and said to me, ‘listen you have this many days for that. You can only spend this many days in one place before you’re in violation.’” – P40</p> <p>“Before I got locked up I did have a registry problem. I was working in Fargo and living in Fargo and I was still registered as being in Mayville and I was almost done with probation so I just kind of blew it off and I learned that that can come back and bite you.” – P8</p>

Suggestions to Improve the Registry. Participants’ responses that include ideas or suggestions for ways that the registry could be improved were grouped into six separate core ideas under this domain. The majority of respondents for this domain indicated wanting the government to spend more time considering each case individually before assigning risk levels and registration requirements (Look at Each Case Individually). Others made simple suggestions, such as allowing sex offenders to earn time off the registry for good behavior, completing treatment, etc. (Credit for Good Behavior), as well as allowing offenders to update their information through an online system or in a less cumbersome manner, rather than requiring they go to the local law enforcement station each time (Make Updates Easier). Some participants suggested

having registries for other crimes, such as murders and robberies (Have Lists for Other Crimes), as well as providing offenders with better education regarding the rules of registering when they first have to register (Better Education of Rules). Additionally, some offenders suggested providing the public with better education of the realities of sex offenders, rather than myths that many might have (Educate Public/Give Accurate Information). Examples for each core idea are listed in the table below (Table 14).

Table 14. Examples of Core Ideas for Suggestions to Improve the Registry Domain.

Core Idea	Examples
Look At Each Case Individually	<p>“...maybe look into the classification, reclassification of the levels. I mean there is a difference in the levels, but we sure aren’t being treated that way.” – P32</p> <p>“Violent offenders, or offenders against children, by all means should be on it but I think it definitely should be taken case-by-case, not just a blanket policy that, “Boy, you’ve committed this crime—bam, you’re on the register and nothing else matters” because I disagree with that. People look at me and think I’m Alfonso Rodriguez.” – P7</p>
Credit For Good Behavior	<p>“After eight years or so, honestly I don’t want to be on it anymore! I’m sure changes can be made. I’d like to see the ability for people to, based upon their history and their work as far as changing the way they are, I’d like to see people be able to get themselves off. The probation, and the court system and all the proper channels and be able to get yourself off of it” – P12</p> <p>“You’re following the rules. You’re doing...you’re keeping your nose clean. You’re not getting into trouble. You’re not going back to jail. Why do you have to keep wearing the GPS?” – P33</p>
Make Updates Easier	<p>“I wish that if you have to update your employment stuff you don’t have to go down there to update it. I wish you could do some of the stuff online to make it easier. Failure to register is a problem, but if they’d let you do it online that would be easier.” – P6</p> <p>“It’s not easy...I have to drive all the way down to Hillsboro because I work in Traill County. So I have to go all the way down there, waste my gas, and tell the police that I’m done working there. Then I have to come all the way back up to Thompson to tell the police there. Then I have to go all the way here so I can tell them about [my job]...Instead of going there, just call. Or like, tell the Thompson police, and just have them do it and that should be it.” – P10</p>

Table 14. Cont.

Core Idea	Examples
Have Other Criminal Lists	“I think that they should add people who do home invasions, murderers, stuff like that...a guy who does home invasions, you know, he hurts people too.” – P36
	“Um, personally I think they should have a registry for drunk drivers, too, because I want to know who in my neighborhood I have to worry about when they’re driving down the street.” – P29
Better Education of Rules	“They didn’t even talk to me. There was just a room of people that talk amongst themselves and they don’t even know who I am and just decide [the risk level] like that.” – P28
	“Yeah, going through it, I don’t know what the review process is or how they decide, I don’t know how they do that, so I really can’t offer too many suggestions on how they would change that.” – P42

Experiences with the Legal System. This domain encompasses any comments offenders relayed regarding their experiences with the legal system, including probation, law enforcement, and the courts. Four core ideas comprise this domain. Most participants’ responses in this domain centered on feeling that probation rules were more frustrating and problematic than the registry requirements and rules (Probation Rules Are Worse than Registry). A few participants reported positive relationships with police officers and probation officers (Good Relationships with Police/Probation); however, a few others felt the legal system was biased against sex offenders (Biased Against Sex Offenders). A small number also reported being concerned about the future implementation of sex offender policies, especially concerning possible residence restriction laws (Worried about Future Policies). Examples are provided in Table 15 for the core ideas.

Table 15. Examples of Core Ideas for Experiences with the Legal System Domain.

Core Idea	Examples
Good Relationships with Police/Probation	<p>“I think he thinks I’m doing so good so I don’t need to see him all the time, ‘cause he doesn’t even return my phone calls. I’ll call him to see if it’s alright to come here. He didn’t even call back. He said, “Just call and leave me a message and if I got a problem with it, I’ll call you back.” – P30</p> <p>“I kinda enjoy a cop comes by my house and calls me every month...and if I got any complaints, he’s right there...he used to come by my house once a month, every month, but now he just calls.” – P38</p>
Probation Rules Are Worse Than Registry	<p>“I have two nieces and a nephew, and none of my crimes were committed against children and probation still has the appendix that I’m not allowed to be within so many feet and so many this and that of kids. That’s one of those things, one of those burdens. My sister comes down to stay at my parent’s house for the weekend. I have to drive all the way up to Grand Forks.” – P8</p> <p>“I couldn’t really find anyplace in Fargo that wasn’t near a park or a school or something and a lot of that had to do with probation. They weren’t comfortable with me living in those places.” – P22</p> <p>“Again, the issue is, is that, you know...not necessarily the registry, but my rules of probation. I have to divulge the information to an employer. If I was off the probation, I wouldn’t have to really get into it a lot.” – P16</p>
Biases in System	<p>“Uh, if you and your boyfriend get caught in the act in your car, he’s going to jail for a sex offense, you won’t. But he will.” – P29</p> <p>“Every time someone else reoffends, ‘Maybe we should...up their registration to a little longer, a little longer.’ It’s not right...If they’re going to raise the registration, raise it on the people that are screwing up or have screwed up on their first time, not someone who has been on it for 10 years and is proving they made a mistake and are trying to correct their mistake.” – P4.</p>
Worried about Future Policies	<p>“They passed a zoning law [in another state] and [this guy] had to sell the house and move because he was no longer grandfathered, even though he lived there 27 years. As soon as they passed that law he had to move. So I worry that they could pass that law here.” – P1</p>
Worried about Future Policies	<p>“Is it going to end up like Florida where I’m going to have to find this place under the bridge or something?” – P16</p>

Treatment Experiences. A few participants commented on treatment experiences; given that this was not a question in the interview, it is interesting almost half (43%) of participants still commented on their treatment experiences. There is also some overlap between the two core ideas that emerged (Positive Experiences & Negative Experiences), indicating that some participants had both positive and negative treatment experiences. Examples are provided for each core idea in Table 16.

Table 16. Examples of Core Ideas for Treatment Experiences Domain.

Core Idea	Examples
Positive Experiences	<p>“Well I had long term treatment, which was two years, and I think the big thing was looking at seemingly unimportant decisions, which was very important, red flags, extremely important, I am an alcoholic, big into pornography. All those things I know I can get nowhere near, in fact two steps back. So I take steps to stay away from all those things.” – P21</p> <p>“I’ve learned an awful lot in treatment, about being selfish and self-centered. Um, the danger I’ve posed and the harm that I’ve caused to the general public and my family. I didn’t understand any of that before. But it helped me see.” – P20</p>
Negative Experiences	<p>“In a lot of ways, I don’t feel that the treatment providers and the legal system really want to sit down and acknowledge that treatment can work. They sent the message that we’re here more or less to collect a paycheck and we really don’t think that you can recover.” – P4</p> <p>“I thought it was a joke. I thought it was just ludicrous. Um, when I went in for my first evaluation, at [the local mental health center], they were nice as pie; they were pleasant people. And then when they extended [how long I had to be in treatment], I had a lawyer and we were going to fight it a little bit... ‘Well we’ll go in for a second evaluation.’ I went in, they (mental health center) were mean; they were cold; they were pissed that I dared to challenge their authority.” – P25</p>

Quantitative Results

Bivariate correlations of the dependent variables and predictor variables are presented in Table 17. The variables are as follows: Perceived Stress Scale Total Score

(PSS), Global Severity Index from the SCL-90-R (GSI), Positive Symptom Distress Index from the SCL-90-R (PSDI), Positive Symptom Total from the SCL-90-R (PST), Age (AGE), Length in City (LIC), Registration Time Completed (RTC). Required Registration Length and Risk Level could not be used in correlations as they were categorical variables. As shown in the table, there were no significant correlations between any predictor variables and any dependent variables.

Table 17. Bivariate Correlations for Dependent and Predictor Variables.

Variable	PSS	GSI	PSDI	PST	AGE	LIC	RTC
PSS	-----	.74**	.65**	.75**	.10	-.21	.09
GSI		-----	.82**	.96**	.06	-.16	.02
PSDI			-----	.71**	-.04	-.12	.01
PST				-----	.08	-.13	-.01
AGE					-----	.07	.38**
LIC						-----	.16
RTC							-----

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Forward multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine which, if any, independent variables (Length in City, Registration Time Completed, Required Registration Length, Risk Level, and Age) were predictive of Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) scores. Data screening indicated no outliers, so all cases were used. Required Registration Length and Risk Level were dummy coded as 2-level categorical prior to running analyses. No variables were entered into the model, indicating that none of the variables accounted for any significant amount of variance in PSS scores. No model could be generated by the SPSS software system.

Forward multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine which, if any, independent variables (Length in City, Registration Time Completed, Required Registration Length, Risk Level, and Age) were predictive of Global Severity Index

(GSI) scores of the SCL-90-R. Data screening indicated no outliers, so all cases were used. Required Registration Length and Risk Level were dummy coded as 2-level categorical prior to running analyses. No variables were entered into the model, indicating that none of the variables accounted for any significant amount of variance in GSI scores. No model could be generated by the SPSS software system.

Forward multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine which, if any, independent variables (Length in City, Registration Time Completed, Required Registration Length, Risk Level, and Age) were predictive of Positive Symptom Distress Index (PSDI) scores of the SCL-90-R. Data screening indicated no outliers, so all cases were used. Required Registration Length and Risk Level were dummy coded as 2-level categorical prior to running analyses. No variables were entered into the model, indicating that none of the variables accounted for any significant amount of variance in PSDI scores. No model could be generated by the SPSS software system.

Forward multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine which, if any, independent variables (Length in City, Registration Time Completed, Required Registration Length, Risk Level, and Age) were predictive of Positive Symptom Total (PST) scores of the SCL-90-R. Data screening indicated no outliers, so all cases were used. Required Registration Length and Risk Level were dummy coded as 2-level categorical prior to running analyses. No variables were entered into the model, indicating that none of the variables accounted for any significant amount of variance in PST scores. No model could be generated by the SPSS software system.

CHAPTER IV

Discussion

Mental health professionals as well as politicians are invested in finding ways to decrease sexual offending and sexual offenders' likelihood of committing another crime. Mental health professionals invest resources in developing effective, evidence-based treatments and valid assessments; politicians use laws and regulations. The available research indicates mixed results for the effectiveness of current treatments for sexual offending behaviors at reducing recidivism (Hanson & Broom, 2004; Hanson et al., 2002), and the ability of the laws and regulations is also under scrutiny. Researchers are trying to understand what will help offenders avoid committing future sex offenses, both in terms of treatment and legal restrictions. The current study sought to help gather more information about how the laws and the mental health of the offenders are related.

Conclusions & Implications for Future Research

The qualitative results indicate what was to be expected in Hypothesis 1; participants are reporting problematic experiences related to being on the registry, especially with regard to those factors that would help them reintegrate into the community (e.g., family relationships, housing, employment, community connections). Notable is that participants have family that are being harassed and family who are afraid of being associated with them. This supports the findings in previous studies that indicated the registry negatively impacts the families of offenders (Levenson &

Tewksbury, 2009). In smaller communities, like many of those in North Dakota, it is surprising that more family members were not concerned about being associated with offenders or harassed by others. It is possible that some family members, in an effort to be supportive of the offender, have not voiced concerns out loud to the offenders. In the present study, some offenders reported increases in family support following their conviction, which was not expected, but it could be that offenders are trying to use their family as a supportive network more than they had prior to the conviction. Future research needs to look at the views of the family members, not just the offenders, because their opinions of how the policies impact their lives are also important to gather. Research needs to expand to answer questions regarding how family dynamics change for sex offenders, doing comparisons of family dynamics at the time of the initial arrest and some time post-conviction and/or post-release. If, as treatment providers, we can understand the impact on families and how to improve the relationship between offenders and their families, it is possible that we can also act as resources for the families as well as the offenders.

Other supportive relationships, such as friendships and relations with neighbors, were also discussed by participants, with most indicating few problems in this area. It seems that the majority of sex offenders in this study have supportive friendships and are not harassed or bothered by neighbors. This does not support Hypothesis 1; however, participants did report that navigating new dating relationships and friendships was more difficult with the registry in place, which would support the prediction made in Hypothesis 1. It appears that once relationships are established, offenders have few, if any, problems maintaining those supportive networks.

Sex offenders in this study reported the registry most impacted housing, which supports Hypothesis 1. Many reported being able to find housing, but did not seem satisfied with their housing situation. This also supports findings from previous research on the policies (e.g., Levenson & Cotter, 2005; Zevitz & Farkas, 2000), suggesting that offenders across the country have problems finding housing when they are subjected to the legal requirements outlined by sex offender policies. Although the previous research included residence restrictions (which are not used in North Dakota), participants reported having residence restrictions placed on them by probation, making comparisons between studies more realistic. Some offenders reported not being able to live with family members because of the probation requirements, not the registry, suggesting that perhaps North Dakota needs to re-evaluate the probation system to make sure that offenders are given the best chance of success. Placing blanket rules on sex offenders may be limiting their supports, and at the same time, those rules are not likely to be decreasing risk. It is also understandable that some landlords and management companies would not want to rent to persons with criminal histories; however, it is unclear whether the companies are rejecting participants because they have a criminal history or because they were convicted of sex crimes. Future research could investigate reasons for rejecting sex offenders as potential renters; this would be helpful from a release planning perspective. It would also be helpful if those individuals who help sex offenders with release planning were able to provide information about options for housing. It would help offenders avoid wasting time (and money, in some cases) applying to live in housing where they will be rejected automatically, as well as decrease the amount of time the offenders spend in unstable housing and potentially decrease the amount of money spent

on housing offenders in social welfare housing (e.g., halfway houses, group living facilities, homeless shelters).

The current study also showed support for previous research (e.g., Levenson & Cotter, 2005; Robbers, 2009; Zevitz & Farkas, 2000) and for Hypothesis 1, in that offenders reported having difficulty finding jobs, and some had job skills they were no longer able to use because of their registry status. Future research should focus on understanding why certain jobs become unavailable to offenders and why employers are reluctant to hire anyone on the registry. Two participants mentioned that employers do not want the police checking in on their employees; however, this may not be the concern employers have at all. More research is necessary to understand what can be done to increase employment options for registered sex offenders, as this would increase their ability to reintegrate into the community. It is important to note that 75% of the sex offenders in this study who would be seeking employment (i.e., were not receiving any form of Social Security income) were employed at the time of their participation. It appears, then, that although they are having difficulty with finding jobs, the majority are able to obtain a job. None of the previous studies report the number of offenders who were employed at the time of the study, only that they had problems with employment (Robbers, 2009; Zevitz & Farkas, 2000). Although no comparisons to other samples can be made, an explanation for why 75% of the sample in the current study had jobs may be because North Dakota's economy is not suffering as much as other states have in the last few years. In fact, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics in December, 2012, North Dakota had an unemployment rate of 3.2%, the lowest in the nation. It may be that this is

acting as a buffer, so offenders are able to get jobs because there are not as many individuals applying for the same jobs.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that living in a smaller community would increase the negative impact that the registry had; however, the results were very mixed regarding community size. Few offenders discussed community size in the interviews. Of those that did, most offenders indicated they liked the size of their current community and thought that was best for them, regardless of whether that community was the size of Fargo or Grand Forks, or whether it was a small town of around 100 people. However, due to the small number of participants who discussed community size, it is unclear whether Hypothesis 2 was supported. Future research should specifically ask each offender about this subject, and contrast that to the attitudes of the citizens in various community sizes. As of the date of this document, no available studies focused on the community size in relation to the sex offender registry.

Offenders reported experiences with community involvement that aligned with prior research (Robbers, 2009), in that most participants who reported any kind of involvement were involved in churches and that very few were involved in their children's activities. It seems that most participants chose not to be involved in community organizations or children's activities because of the extra hassle or because of a fear of being rejected, which also corroborates findings from Robbers. Future studies should investigate the long-term impact that sex offender regulations have on parent-child relationships, especially for those offenders who have custody of their children but are not able to attend school functions, sporting events, or other activities because of their registry status. It may be important to understand how much does this somewhat forced

lack of parental involvement impact the relationship between the child and parent as the child develops.

Results of the regression analyses indicate that general psychological functioning is not predicted by sex offender registration factors (e.g., length of time on the registry, required time to register), showing no support for Hypothesis 3. However, due to the limited sample size and the subsequent limited power behind the analyses, no further information can be gained from these results. Although it would appear that despite the negative impact sex offenders perceive it to have, the registry may not have a significant impact on offenders' psychological symptoms or their perceptions of general stress, this may not be the case. The lack of significance in the regression models does not indicate that the registry has no impact on psychological functioning; it only indicates the need for further research, especially given that the sample did not meet the minimum needed to even see a large effect. Also, the hypotheses of this study focused on overall psychological symptoms; perhaps using a more specific type of symptomology would increase the predictive value of the registry-specific factors. In the current study, the mean of the sample on the Interpersonal Sensitivity (IS) scale of the SCL-90-R was 1.36 standard deviations above the mean of the normative sample. This scale includes items such as, "Feeling very self-conscious with others" and "Feeling that people are unfriendly or dislike you." The higher than average IS scale score corroborates what most offenders were reporting in the interviews (i.e., an increase in self-consciousness when in public), suggesting that the registry may have had an impact on specific symptoms, rather than overall psychological functioning. This would be a potential area for follow-up analyses.

Although not specifically addressed in the hypotheses, it is important to discuss some of the other themes that emerged from the interview data. For example, reasons for participants' lack of community involvement may also stem from how sex offenders believe the community views them. Results from this study suggest that offenders believe the community believes the worst about all offenders, groups all offenders into the highest risk category, and believes all of them had child victims. Unfortunately, their beliefs about the community perspective are not inaccurate, given that prior studies on community views of sex offenders is not positive (Levenson Brannon, Fortney, & Baker, 2007; Mancini, Shields, Mears, & Beaver, 2010; Olver & Barlow, 2010; Payne, Tewksbury, & Mustaine, 2010; Schiavone & Jeglic, 2008) . These negative views, and the fact that the offenders understand them, may limit motivation to engage in community organizations, especially if the person fears being rejected.

Results from the current data also showed an impact on the offenders themselves, with most offenders reporting they have become more socially isolated. Participants also reported being more cautious and aware of surroundings because of their registry status; however, most treatment goals target increasing offenders' awareness of their surroundings and seek to increase their ability to assess risk for reoffense using environmental cues (Laws, 1989), suggesting this may not be a negative. It may be beneficial for participants to maintain a heightened level of awareness of their surroundings in order to protect them from being falsely accused (from their perspective), but a secondary benefit is that having offenders be cautious in public and aware of any potential risks would likely help protect the public from a reoffense. This area needs

more research to better understand whether sex offenders' awareness of their surroundings in fact would increase public safety.

With regard to the registry itself, some participants noted that it can be a motivating factor to better themselves and improve their reputation. This somewhat corroborates the previous results from Levenson, D'Amora, & Hern (2007), although fewer of the present sample reported this positive compared to the sample in that study. Some participants also reported having more prosocial values, but these were also few (less than five participants). The other positives identified (e.g., it is good to track some offenders, it might help solve future crimes) are vague and are not necessarily supported by research on the efficacy of the laws. Participants may have been trying to reframe the registry in a more positive light as a way of coping with being on it. Most participants easily identified negatives to having the sex offender registry, including that the length required to registry is too long, that they should be exempt from it because it lacks utility, and that it violates their rights and freedoms. Most salient is perhaps that offenders felt it prevented them from being able to move on and improve their quality of life. Whether this is true or not may not matter because as treatment providers we need to understand what the client believes is preventing them from improving themselves. Providing offenders with coping skills to deal with the reality of being on the registry may be something treatment providers can do. Future research can investigate more thoroughly what characteristics might help a sex offender cope with registry requirements and effects (e.g., more psychological resources, better coping skills).

Additionally, many of the participants indicated suggestions for improving the registry (e.g., allowing offenders to earn time off the registry through good behavior,

treatment progress, etc.). It would be interesting to gain an understanding of how the voting public would view such changes. Given that policy makers are elected by the general public, research regarding the public's opinion of the suggestions would be helpful before trying to exact change in the policies. It might be especially interesting to gauge whether the public would also like to see registries for other types of offenses, especially violent offenses.

A result that was unexpected is that participants reported having significant difficulties with probation requirements. This is a topic that requires more research, especially with regard to what requirements sex offenders have to follow and those impact their ability to reintegrate (e.g., being required to divulge their sex offender status to each person they want to form a relationship with at the beginning of the relationship). Additionally, sex offenders are not trusting of law enforcement, but this does not come as a surprise, given that they likely had negative interactions with law enforcement beginning with their arrest for the sexual offense charge. This lack of trust in law enforcement is likely a common factor among criminals, and is not likely to be a unique problem to sex offenders.

It is also important to note the treatment experiences discussed by offenders. The fact that some participants had very helpful treatment experiences and were able to at least identify some of the coping skills and treatment jargon indicates they are at least learning something about decreasing risk through treatment. For those that had bad experiences, it would prudent to investigate further the connection between the offenders and the treatment they received, including looking at therapist variables, treatment components and breadth of topics addressed, and looking at offender characteristics.

Future studies could also investigate those treatment factors and offender characteristics that increase ability to accept and cope with being on the registry. As noted earlier, some participants felt the registry was motivation to prove oneself. It could be that those participants who had those thoughts about the registry might also have had more effective treatment experiences or perhaps had personality traits that made them more amenable to treatment. More research is needed to fully understand all of the variables that may be at work with regard to sex offenders, treatment, and the registry.

A few offenders suggested providing the public with more education regarding sex offenders and their risk. Klebin and Jeglic (2012) provided undergraduate students with a brief psychoeducational intervention regarding treatment for sex offenders. Results indicated that participants who received the intervention had more positive post-intervention attitudes toward treatment for sex offenders than those that did not receive the intervention. Viki et al. (2012) also made the suggestion that encouraging the community through psychoeducation to view sex offenders as humans could result in more support for the rehabilitation of offenders. Given that the public dictates policy changes (indirectly through voting), it seems imperative to decrease the myths the public has regarding sex offenders (e.g., they cannot be rehabilitated, they all reoffend). The difficulty is establishing a balance between promoting realistic views and effective laws and seeming as if psychology is promoting sexual offending behaviors.

The data of the current study also suggests it is difficult for offenders to separate the impact of the registry with the impact of the sex offender label. Their conviction, the label of “sex offender,” and the registry occurred one after another. Defining what amount of impact each individual piece has on the offenders and their lives is difficult,

especially given that offenders report the label itself has a direct impact on them. Results show participants felt the label came with a pre-determined negative stigma, and this stigma became connected to their sense of self. Future research should investigate which of those three factors has the most impact on offenders' ability to reintegrate into the community. Comparison studies between sex offenders on the registry and other offenders on the registry (e.g., in North Dakota, persons convicted of child abuse or neglect are also on the registry) might provide insight into how much the registry itself is impacting offenders. The lack of significant findings in the regression analyses in the current study support that being on the registry may not be a psychological burden for sex offenders. It may be affecting other facets of life, such as their overall perceived quality of life.

Future research should use instruments that are more specific to the sex offender policies (e.g., asking about how much of one's daily stress is directly caused by the registry status), similar to those used in the study by Levenson, D'Amora, and Hern (2007), rather than a general symptom/stress measure. Using instruments specific to the policies to predict psychological distress may potentially help clarify whether or not the registry has a direct impact on psychological functioning. Qualitative data gathered from this research study would be especially helpful in designing a comprehensive questionnaire that can target key areas related to sex offender policies that are important to the sex offenders. Future research should be conducted using a measure designed from the information gained in this study, and expand the study to include offenders in other states to allow for cross-state comparisons. Additionally, future research should consider assessing sex offenders at the time of arrest, after the conviction, upon first release into

the community, and after a specified amount of time has passed of being on the registry. This would help clarify if significant changes occurred over time for each individual, rather than using only post-conviction/release scores.

Limitations

Possible limitations of this study include that all participants were living in North Dakota at the time of their participation and that all participants were male. Although the federal government has mandated that all states adhere to their sex offender policies (i.e., the Adam Walsh Act), not all states have implemented those laws and there is still the option of states to have more stringent requirements than the federal laws. Therefore, how the policies in North Dakota have impacted the registered offenders may not apply to sex offenders in other states. Additionally, female sex offenders may have different experiences than the male participants in this study.

An additional limitation is that the sample size is only 50 participants, limiting the analyses that can be done and the number of predictors that could be explored. The small sample size may also have biased the results in unknown ways. A larger sample of both men and women would help better evaluate the connection between registration status and psychological factors. The sample also was self-selected, and it is possible that some type of self-selection bias is represented by my sample. For example, it may be that those who chose to participate, despite discussing negatives with the registry, have accepted the registry as being part of their lives and are not psychologically distressed by the registry. This is particularly important to address, given the response rate of 9.6%. However, this response rate is similar to other studies using a similar method of mailing letters to all registered sex offenders (Mercado, Alvarez, & Levenson, 2008). When researchers

(Levenson, D'Amora, & Hern, 2007) used a more specific sampling method (e.g., requesting participation through outpatient treatment groups), the response rates were significantly higher (e.g., 74%). This suggests that perhaps obtaining permission to recruit from the community mental health centers and other providers may have increased the response rate. Robbers (2009) also had a higher response rate (42%), but the sampling method included providing participants with a survey and a self-addressed envelope. No interaction with researchers was required for participants unless they had questions about the study; future researchers should consider these methods as better ways to recruit higher numbers of participants.

Another factor that may have impacted this study is that participants may have felt compelled to answer in a certain way, given that they completed the surveys in the same room as a female examiner. Some participants may have attempted to portray themselves in a more positive light regarding the psychological symptoms, leading to less than honest answers. Additionally, participants may have had problems separating whether the registry status, the label, or the conviction was responsible for any particular difficulties in their life. These factors occur altogether, so it may be that in some cases, the registry is not to blame for the negative experiences they have had, but society's reaction to the label of "sex offender."

Another limitation is in the method used with the qualitative data. Due to the length of time needed to complete this study, it was not feasible to maintain a large research group (6 or more people) to engage in thorough qualitative analyses, such as those outlined in the consensual qualitative research process (Hill, Thompson, & Nutt, 1997). As such, this may have impacted the data analyses to allow for more personal

biases (those of the principle investigator, as well as those of the transcribers and coders) to interfere with how data were coded. However, given that the interviews were semi-structured, much of the data gleaned is simply as responses to direct questions. This suggests that even if more rigorous methods were employed to ensure analytic accuracy of the interviews, the results would not be significantly different from the results presented in this paper. It is still important to note that more information and better validity of results would likely be achieved through more rigorous methods of data analysis. Future research should target a smaller subset of sex offenders to decrease the time required to complete the study, which would allow for a consistent research team to engage in more meticulous data analyses.

A final limitation may be that the instruments used as dependent variables are general measures of psychological functioning. Perhaps that is not what should be looked at, but rather overall quality of life. Participants reported in the interviews issues related to quality of life (e.g., adequate housing, satisfaction in employment, supportive relationships), and the results from this study are limited to psychological symptoms. Although quality of life is connected to psychological health, perhaps more information could be gleaned from research that uses a quality of life measure.

In conclusion, it is important for the mental health community to call into question the utility of laws (and therefore, government money being spent on enforcing such laws) that do not decrease the risk to the public (Cohen & Jeglic, 2007; Duwe & Donnay, 2010; Levenson, Sandler, & Freeman, 2012; Petrosino & Petrosino, 1999; Sandler, Freeman, & Socia, 2008; Vázquez, Maddan, & Walker, 2008; Zandbergen, Levenson, & Hart, 2010), but in fact, may inadvertently increase potential risk factors for

future sexual offenses (e.g., decreased social support, decreased community involvement, difficulty finding employment). The mental health community needs to act as advocates for overall better mental health across the globe, and therefore, needs to examine all factors (political, social, etc.) that may be impacting the mental health of any given population. Despite the limitations, the results of this study only emphasize that policies based on high profile cases rather than on research are not necessarily effective at achieving their stated goals. Politicians have the right mindset in trying to prevent future sexual offenses from occurring, but the current sex offender policies are not achieving that goal. Instead, it appears these policies are only restricting offenders from accessing potential support networks, largely because of the blanket way these regulations are applied. Continued research and promotion (through publication and community awareness) of the results of research are necessary in order to push for more effective policies.

Appendices

Appendix A
Informed Consent Form

Study Name: Sex Offender Perceptions of North Dakota's Sex Offender Policies

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The Department of Psychology and at the University of North Dakota supports the practice of protection for people participating in research and related activities. This study has been reviewed to determine that it poses little or no risk of harm to you. Any information obtained from you will be kept strictly confidential. Although you may be assigned an arbitrary participant number to assist in data collection, we assure you that neither your name nor participant number will be associated in any way with any reportable results. The following information is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in the present study.

This study involves interview and survey research only. You will complete an interview with the researcher, three surveys, and a demographics sheet. The surveys focus on problems people sometimes have regarding stress and mood. The interview will focus on your family life, work experiences, social life, and experiences in the community related to being on the North Dakota sex offender registry. The interview portion of this study will be recorded in order for complete and accurate review of responses during the data analysis process. I, the researcher, understand that some of these questions may make participants uncomfortable, so I want you to be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time, and that if you do withdraw from the study, you may do so without penalty. The demographic information being collected will in no way connect the results of this study with you; however, some of the questions may ask about your convictions. The study should take approximately two hours to complete.

You will gain no benefits by participating in this study. I, the researcher, am obligated to tell you as much as you care to know about the study after your part in the study is complete. If you would like a written summary of the results, please include your name and address in the space provided, and I, the researcher, will send you a copy when it is available.

All persons who take part in this study must sign this consent form. Your signature in the space provided indicates that you have been informed of your rights as a participant, and you have agreed to volunteer on that basis.

"I have read the above statement and have been fully advised of the procedures to be used in this project. I have been given sufficient opportunity to ask any questions I had concerning the procedures and possible risks involved. I understand the potential risks involved and I assume them voluntarily. I likewise understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without being subjected to reproach."

Signature of Participant

Date

For written summary of results:

Printed Name: _____

Mailing Address (include city, state, and zip code): _____

Appendix B Demographics Questionnaire

Your age: _____

Relationship status (circle one): single married divorced widowed long-term dating relationship
 **Other: _____

How long have you lived in your current city/town? _____

How long have you lived at your current residence? _____

How long have you been on the sex offender registry (indicate in years and/or months)? _____

How long are you required to be on the registry? _____

What is your current risk level according to the legal system? high moderate low

Please fill in the following table for any sexual offenses **for which you have been convicted:**

Crime	Year of Conviction	Victim(s) Age(s)	Victim(s) Gender(s)	Prison Sentence?

What other crimes have you been convicted of (please list)? _____

Is there any other information you feel the researchers should know about you, your conviction(s), the registry, or sex offenders? Please use the back side if necessary. _____

Appendix C Interview Questions

Introduction: The following questions will be asking you about how areas of your life have changed because of your information being available through the sex offender registry and through community notification procedures. Please keep in mind that, although your life likely has become different simply because of your conviction, I would like you to focus on what has changed since your information has been posted on the registry.

Personal & Family Life

1. What about your relationship with your spouse/significant other has changed after you had to register?
2. What has changed about your relationship(s) with your child(ren)?
3. How has your relationship with your parents changed?
4. Other family members? (e.g., siblings, in-laws)
5. What problems has your family experienced as a result of your being on the sex offender registry?
6. How do you feel you have changed since your placement on the registry?

Social Functioning & Community Involvement

7. How have your relationships with your friends changed since you registered?
8. What social or community activities were you involved in prior to your placement on the registry?
 - a. How has your involvement in those activities changed since your placement on the registry?
9. What are your relationships like with your current neighbors and other community members?
 - a. How is this different from your previous relationships with neighbors?
10. Is community notification a requirement for you?
 - a. How has community notification impacted your relationship with neighbors?
11. How connected do you feel to others in your community?
 - a. What makes you feel that way?
12. What impact has your placement on the registry had on your ability to find housing?

Employment

13. How has your status as a sex offender impacted your ability to find and maintain employment?
14. What problems have you had with employers or co-workers because of your placement on the registry?
15. What other employment problems have you had related to your placement on the registry?

Appendix D
Debriefing Statement

Sex Offender Perceptions of North Dakota's Sex Offender Policies

First, thank you for participating in my study. I appreciate you taking the time to answer my questionnaires and interview questions openly and honestly. This research is my psychology doctoral dissertation, and is of great importance to me. The main topic of the research, the impact of the sex offender registry on sex offenders, is a more recent topic in psychology, and one of great importance because of the potential influence this research could have on law-making policies.

I hope the results of this study will provide answers to some questions about how registration laws have impacted those who are on the registry. I also hope that these results can influence sex offender policy changes in the future.

I ask that you please keep the information from this study, including all procedures and survey information, confidential by not sharing any of it with others. I may need more participants, and by telling others, you may influence the results of this study and/or the behaviors of other participants.

Please alert me if you have any questions at this time. You may also contact me at the following number: (701) 777-3451 or email me at mariah.laver@my.und.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. April Bradley, at the following number: (701) 777-3790 or email her at april.bradley@mail.und.edu.

If you need assistance or have any mental health concerns or needs, the following services are available:

Northeast Human Services
701-795-3000
151 South 4th St, Suite 401
Grand Forks, ND

Psychological Services Center
701-777-3691
210 Montgomery Hall, UND Campus
Grand Forks, ND

Thank you again for all your help as a participant in my research!
-Mariah Laver

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