

**A thesis submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Regulations for the degree of
Doctor of Forensic Clinical Psychology**

VOLUME I

Research Component

PERPETRATORS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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OVERVIEW

Volume I

Volume I contains the research component of the thesis and is made up of three papers relating to perpetrators of child sexual abuse. The first paper is a systematic review of the existing literature pertaining to child sexual abuse perpetrated by both male and female offenders.

The second paper is the empirical research paper. Template Analysis and Young Schema Questionnaire (YSQ – S3) was used to explore the Implicit Theories (ITs) and early maladaptive schemas (EMSs) of ten mentally disordered child sex offenders.

The third paper is an executive summary, which is the public domain briefing document disseminating the main findings from the systematic review and empirical paper to wider audiences. A document has also been produced for the individuals who agreed to participate in the empirical research study.

Volume II

Volume II contains five forensic clinical practice reports (FCPR) to demonstrate the clinical components of the course.

FCPR 1 depicts psychodynamic and CBT formulations to understand the medication seeking behaviours of a 37-year-old male within a medium secure hospital.

FCPR 2 is a service evaluation that explored the clinical utility of the HCR-20 (version 3) by multi-disciplinary professionals within a forensic mental health setting.

FCPR 3 details a single-case experimental design that assessed the effectiveness of a CBT intervention in reducing an 11-year-old girl's obsessive thoughts and neutralising behaviours within the context of her OCD.

FCPR 4 documents a case study based on a 21-year-old woman referred to the community Learning Disability Service due to concerns around her relationships with others.

FCPR 5 was completed as an oral presentation. A written summary details the case of a 17-year-old male under the provision of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and referred to the emotional well-being service due anger management difficulties.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Julie and Ian Carter, who have shown me unfaltering amounts of support, love, care and guidance throughout my life; all of which has helped me to achieve my ambitions and become the person that I am today.

Your kindness and generosity has enabled me to pursue my dreams of becoming a Psychologist and you have been by my side every step of the way throughout this process. Without you both I would not be where I am today. You have helped me find strength during difficult times over the past four years, and made sacrifices to offer financial and emotional support during my time on this course.

I hope this dedication shows just how much you mean to me and that you are a significant part of my success. My achievements are reflective of your abilities as parents and human beings, and I cannot thank you enough for everything you have done.

On to the next journey!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to voluntarily participate in my empirical study. Talking to a stranger about your personal thoughts and feelings relating to your offending can be a difficult thing to do, so thank you for sharing those with me. I would also like to show my gratitude towards each client who consented and allowed me to use their information within the FCPRs detailed in Volume II.

I cannot thank the course staff enough for their constant support and encouragement throughout the four years, particularly John Rose, Monica Lloyd and Tony Beech. There have been some challenging times along the way, but your advice and guidance have helped me get to the point that I have today and I will always have very fond memories of my time on this course.

I want to thank all placement supervisors who have taken time out of their already busy schedules to share their knowledge and expertise with me. I have acquired valuable lessons about clinical and forensic psychology, management, leadership and team work within each of my placements, and am eager to put these skills into practice once I become a qualified Forensic Clinical Psychologist.

Finally, I want to thank my family, friends and partner, who have all been there for me during the deadlines, the stress, the tears, and the achievements over the four years. A special mention to the girls who I have spent the last four years of my life studying with. You have been my rocks, my sounding board, my pick-me-up, and are some of the most amazing people I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. A lot has happened over the course of the four years, and I am so happy that I have experienced these things with you. Thank you.

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**A COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDES
TOWARDS FEMALE AND MALE CHILD SEX OFFENDERS**

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

This review explores societal attitudes and perceptions of male and female perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Prior to explaining the purpose of this review and how it can be used in clinical practice, an outline of the current literature regarding female and male child offenders is discussed.

Method

The initial search identified 667 papers: 263 relating to female perpetrators only, 322 relating exclusively to male perpetrators, and 82 papers relating to male and female perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Implementation of specific exclusion criteria resulted in a final total of 12 articles. Two additional articles were identified through the reference section of the papers, which resulted in 14 papers included in the final review. Three different quality frameworks were used to appraise each article based on the methodological approach used within the study.

Results

An overall positive bias towards female compared to male perpetrated child sexual abuse was identified across six main themes detailed within the studies: *Severity of Harm to the Victim*; *Disclosure of Abuse and Likelihood of Believing Victim*; *Professional Involvement*; *Need for Treatment and Punishment of Offenders*; *Attributions of Sexual Offending Behaviour*; and *Training for Professionals*.

Discussion

The review concludes with theoretical assumptions about why there is a positive bias towards female child sexual offenders within the literature; referring to the influence of gender roles

and stereotypes. The impact of these influences is discussed in relation to support and treatment offered to the victims of female perpetrated abuse. Other variables, such as respondent and victim gender, were also found to be influential in the attitudes towards perpetrators. Areas for further research are also suggested based on these findings.

INTRODUCTION

Child Sexual Abuse is defined as;

“the engaging of the child in sexual acts that the child does not understand, to which the child cannot give informed consent or which violate the social taboos of society” (Krugman, 1986).

A recent publication by the NSPCC identified an increase in child sexual abuse cases over the past decade, with 47,008 cases recorded by the Police in 2014/15 (Bentley, O’Hagan, Raff & Bhatti, 2016). This increase was noted throughout all four countries included in the review within the UK. However, statistics depicting the prevalence of child sexual abuse throughout the world vary: with 1 – 35% of children believed to be the victim of sexual abuse in the USA (The Children’s Assessment Center, Houston, 2016); and 7% – 36% of females and 12% – 16% of males within Australia (Price-Robertson, Broomfield & Vassallo, 2010). Establishing precise prevalence rates of child sexual abuse is challenging due to difficulties with disclosing abuse. Furthermore, some cases that are disclosed but do not result in conviction may not escalate to the point where they get included in the figures for sexual abuse; thus, providing a lower representation of this problem. Additionally, discrepancies may occur due to the worldwide variations in legal age of consent. In Nigeria, the age of consent is 11, whereas within the USA each State has a different age range, varying from 16 – 18 years. In the UK and Australia, the age of consent is 16 years old (Dean, 2016), and in certain Middle Eastern and African countries they have no legal age of consent, but by law they ban all sexual relations out of marriage (“Highest and Lowest Ages”, 2016). This therefore limits the identification of true prevalence rates throughout the world. It also prevents the generalisation of findings within Westernised countries to less developed countries with regards to child sexual abuse research.

It has only been over the last 30 years that female sexual offenders have been highlighted within the sex offender literature, for example, Cortoni and Hanson (2005), estimated that females account for roughly 5% of all sexual offenders within Canada, UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand. However, it is possible that this is another example of under-estimation due to low conviction rates and few disclosures from victims.

Research into male perpetrated child sexual abuse has been extensive and has covered a variety of areas such as characteristics of the offenders, distorted cognitions and pro-offending beliefs, recidivism rates, rehabilitation and treatment efforts, and societal and professional perceptions of these offenders. Media representations of male perpetrators portray this client group in a negative way, making it difficult for them to re-integrate back into society or to remain in the community once identified as a sex offender (Ducat, Thomas, & Blood, 2009). Society perceives these individuals are unable to benefit from rehabilitation efforts, and as an on-going danger to society with high recidivism rates (Gakhal & Brown, 2011). Attitudes towards sex offenders also vary depending on an individual's professional standing, for example, Hogue and Peebles (1997), found that British police officers had less favourable attitudes towards child sex offenders compared to other British professionals such as mental health workers, social workers, and probation or parole officers. In addition to this, it has been found that professionals possess more negative attitudes towards sex offenders than any other offence type (Craig, 2005; Harnett, 1997; Hogue, 1993). There are also varying attitudes towards sex offenders depending on the type of offence committed; rapists were viewed as more violent and aggressive than paedophiles, who were respectively described as introverted, quiet and sexually deviant (Lea, Auburn & Kibblewhite, 1999).

An attitude is defined as;

“A relatively enduring organisation of beliefs, feelings, and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols” (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005: p. 150).

Previous research suggested that approximately only 10% of the variability in behaviour can be attributed to attitudes, with the other 90% attributed to situational factors (Wicker, 1969). However, Kraus (1995), completed a meta-analysis of 88 attitude-behaviour studies and found that attitudes significantly predicted future behaviour. More recent evidence also suggests that attitudes are predictably related to social behaviour, and are considered important in understanding how impressions and stereotypes can be formed (Higgins & Ireland, 2009).

The limited research conducted so far into female child sexual offenders indicates that there are varying attitudes towards female perpetrated child sexual abuse. Western society is less likely to acknowledge that females can perpetrate sexual abuse in the same way and for the same motivations as male perpetrators. Gender stereotypes and gender roles influence societal beliefs about female perpetrated child sexual abuse, and this can further influence whether victims disclose their experience of being abused by a female.

Research suggests several factors influence how people perceive child sexual abuse and the attitudes they possess towards the perpetrators. These included the age and gender of the victim, the type of sexual contact that occurred, the gender of the respondents in the study, and the gender of the perpetrator (Eisenberg & Owens, 1987; Heatherton & Beardsall, 1998; Higgins & Ireland, 2009). For this review, only the gender of the perpetrator will be focused on and discussed.

Aim

The aim of the review is to examine societal attitudes towards male and female perpetrators of child sexual abuse, to highlight the variety of ways these two offender groups are viewed

and treated by members of the public, professionals and the Criminal Justice System. This is an important area to explore and understand given that the attitudes and reactions of society are likely to influence victim disclosures, and have significant implications on treatment and support for the victims, as well as for the specific offender population.

METHOD

Information Sources and Search Criteria

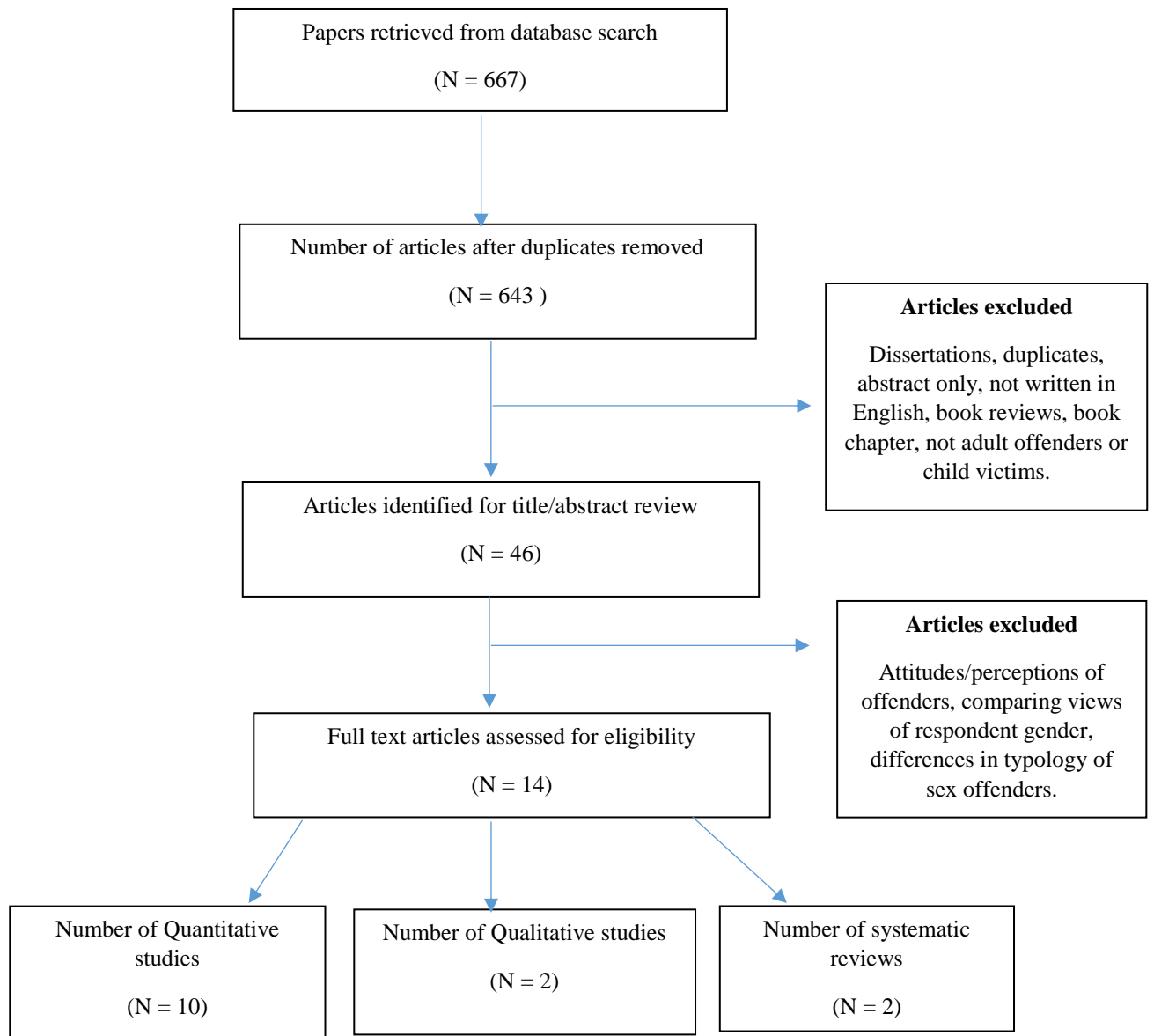
An outline of the literature selection process for this review can be seen in Figure 1. The following online medical databases were searched: Web of Science (1986 – 2016), PsychARTICLES full text, Embase 1974 – 2015, Ovid MEDLINE 1946 – 2015, and PsychINFO1967 – 2015. The following key terms were used during the search: male*, fem*, wom*, sex*, offend*, perpetrate* abus*, molest* child*, profession*, healthcare profession* public, society, toward, regard*, individual*, perspect*, attitude*, belief*, view*.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure the quality of the papers, only peer-reviewed journal articles were included in the review. No on-line first studies were identified during the search. Other inclusion criteria included full text articles only, papers that were published in English, and a range of research methodologies, such as systematic reviews, qualitative and quantitative studies. Only papers from 1986 – 2016 were included in the review. Research into female sex offenders has occurred relatively recently within the sex offending literature; therefore, the review has included any research within the last 30 years to ensure all findings regarding female and male sexual offenders have been captured. Nevertheless, due to the increased awareness of child sexual abuse over the last 20 – 30 years, it is likely that the attitudes consistent with society more than 30 years ago will not reflect current societal perspectives, therefore the search strategy did not go back further than the 1980's.

Figure 1

A flow diagram of the search strategy used to identify and select the relevant papers for review



Study Selection

The initial search identified a total of 667 papers, 263 relating to female perpetrators, 322 relating to male perpetrators exclusively, and 82 relating to male and female perpetrators combined. Once the duplicates had been removed and other articles consisting of dissertations, book reviews, abstracts only and unavailable articles had been excluded, this left 46 articles for title and abstract review. Any articles that focused on other aspects of child sexual abuse, as detailed above, were excluded from the study. Additional articles relating to other types of sexual offences, such as sexual homicide and rape, were also excluded. This left a total of 12 articles highlighted from the databases. An additional two articles were identified through the reference section of the papers already generated by the search. Five papers included in the review related to female perpetrators only and nine papers compared male and female perpetrators. No papers explored societal perspectives of only male perpetrators.

Data Abstraction

Five of the articles included in the review have explored additional variables to public and professional perceptions of child abusers in relation to perpetrator gender; only the findings relating to perpetrator gender will be discussed. The general characteristics and key findings from each of the studies in relation to perpetrator gender can be seen in Table 1. Additional qualitative information regarding the findings has been included in Table A in the Appendix.

Review of Methodological Quality

A variety of standardised quality assessment frameworks have been developed for different research methodologies. The appraisal framework by Fowkes and Fulton (1991), as recommended by the British Medical Journal, was used to assess the quality of the quantitative studies.

Tracy (2010) developed a framework to appraise qualitative studies. This framework drew on what she believed were best practices and specific components needed to conduct and produce meaningful results using a qualitative approach. This has been used to critically appraise the two qualitative studies within this review.

Components within the PRISMA-P checklist (Shamseer et al., 2015) were used to critically appraise the two systematic reviews within this review. It is important that there are specific protocols in place to assess the quality of systematic reviews to ensure the search and screening process has been accurately carried out, and that any papers that have been identified as relevant to the topic have been selected without bias. There were many sub-sections detailed within the specific items of the PRISMA-P checklist. To ensure the information included in Table 4 was succinct and clear to the reader, only the main headings have been included.

Table 1**General characteristics and key findings of studies**

Author (s) and location	Methodology	Sample characteristics	Summary points and key findings
<p>Article 1 Gakhal & Brown (2011) UK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quasi-experimental between-groups design with one independent variable (sample type) and one dependent variable (psychometric score) Participants completed Attitudes Towards Female Sex Offenders Scale (adapted from Attitudes Toward Sex Offender scale) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 176 participants in total 92 members of staff employed by UK chain store (public sample) 20 probation officers employed by Regional Sex Offender Unit (professional sample) 64 undergraduate psychology students (student sample) 	<p>Findings from this study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forensic professionals hold more positive attitudes towards female sex offenders than towards male sex offenders
<p>Article 2 Eisenberg & Owens (1987) UK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative – respondents presented with 4 case histories which varied per the type of relationship between perpetrator and victim and the type of activity involved 	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 299 (82 male and 217 female) with varying degrees of professional interest in the subject of child sexual abuse: Health visitors, Nursing staff and medical students <p>Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience ranged from 6 months to 33 years 	<p>Experimental data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abuse that involved female perpetrators, such as mother-on-son, or sister-on-sister abuse was less serious than abuse involving a male perpetrator <p>Survey data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 80% of respondents perceived the incidence of incest to be of 1/100; over 50% gave estimates of 1/500 or lower Beliefs around some children obtaining enjoyment from sexual act. Gender of victim influencing the impact of the offence Beliefs around some children being responsible for the abuse Differences in severity of harm depending on gender of perpetrator and gender of victim
<p>Article 3 Rudin, Zalewski & Bodmer-Turner (1995) USA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subjects obtained from Child Adolescent Sexual Abuse Resource Centre (San Francisco) An equivalent number of victims of lone male perpetrators were randomly selected from 1,498 	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victim sample (N = 211); 66 boys, 145 girls <p>Offender demographics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offender sample (N = 253); 190 adults, 62 juveniles 87 lone female perpetrators; 60 adults, 27 juveniles 	<p>Associations between the age of the victims and the gender and the type of perpetrator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On average, victims abused by lone male perpetrators (M = 9.3 years) were 2.9 years older than co-perpetrators (M = 6.4 years) and were 3.3 years older than lone female perpetrators (M = 6.0 years) <p>Association between the gender of child sexual abuse victims and the gender of the perpetrator</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consecutive confirmed cases of lone male perpetrators Data were obtained from a retrospective chart review that included the investigative interviews, the child abuse reports, and the medical documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 93 lone male perpetrators; 66 adults, 27 juveniles 73 co-perpetrators offended in 31 co-perpetrator cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proportions of victim gender with lone male perpetrators were 76.3% girls and 23.7% boys, while the proportions of victim gender with lone female perpetrators were 62.1% girls and 37.9% boys (statistically significant) <p>The difference in relationships between male perpetrator and their victims and female perpetrator and their victims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lone female perpetrators had a greater proportion of caretakers, while lone male perpetrators had a greater proportion of strangers (statistically significant) <p>The association among the severity of abuse and perpetrator gender and type</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results were not supported by previous findings that intra-familial abuse by females was less severe than that by males.
<p>Article 4 Heatherton & Beardsall (1998) UK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social workers from 5 social services departments and police working in Child Protection teams within 4 police forces were presented with 4 case vignettes (split into 2 parts) detailing incidents of sexual abuse A set of questions accompanied each part of the vignette – Part 1 N = 4 questions, Part 2 N = 6 questions Bem Sex Role Inventory – shortened version, used to rate adult in vignette Questionnaire used to rate attitudes regarding women’s sexualised behaviour towards children 	<p>Social workers</p> <p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Males N = 33, Females N = 32 <p>Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On average, males involved in 14 child sexual abuse cases over last 12 months On average, females involved in 9 child sexual abuse cases in last 12 months <p>Police</p> <p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Males N = 33, Females N = 32 <p>Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On average males involved in 37 child sexual abuse cases in last 12 months 	<p>Findings from this study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large differences between number of child sexual abuse cases both professionals deal with and the proportion of these that involve female perpetrators <p>No significant differences regarding relevance of gender between responses of male vs female perpetrated CSA in vignettes</p> <p>Female perpetrated CSA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (3/33) policemen who rejected the child’s account on any of the female perpetrator vignettes rated the perpetrator being female as a relevant issue influencing their belief in the child’s allegations <p>Male perpetrated CSA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 policeman rejected child’s account altogether (on both vignettes), 2 policemen rejected child’s account on only one of the vignettes <p>Findings from attitudes questionnaire</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On average females involved in 54 child sexual abuse cases in last 12 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All participant groups consider female perpetrated CSA to be a serious and harmful problem Most participants' attitudes indicated that they considered female-perpetrated abuse as a serious and harmful problem, accounting for a large proportion of the decisions they advocated
<p>Article 5 Smith, Fromuth & Morris (1998) USA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 84 students (46 men and 38 women) read the vignette depicting sexual intercourse between a 39-year-old male teacher and 16-year-old female student 85 students (48 men and 37 women) read the vignette depicting sexual intercourse between a 39-year-old female teacher and 16-year-old male student Respondents also completed a questionnaire consisting of 18 questions examining attitudes and perceptions about the vignette. Responses were rated using a 7-point Likert scale 	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 94 Male 75 Female <p>Ethnicity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 86% Caucasian 14% Unknown <p>Occupation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students from south eastern university. 	<p>Perceptions of impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement across both genders that this experience would not have been a positive experience for the offenders The experience was deemed a significantly more positive sexual experience for the victim when the offender was female compared to if the offender was male <p>Attribution of responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male respondents were less likely to believe that the teacher had misused their position of authority when the teacher offender was female compared to male However female respondents were more likely to believe that both the male and female teacher offenders abused their position of trust <p>Perception of the student's role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respondents believed that external factors that may have influenced the student victim were more relevant when the teacher offender was male compared to if they were female <p>Perception of guilt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 69% of the respondents believed the teacher would have been found guilty for statutory rape <p>Labelling of event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male respondents more likely to label sexual intercourse between male teacher and female victim as abuse compared to sexual intercourse between female teacher and male victim
<p>Article 6 Denov (2001) Canada</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative 23 professionals interviewed over a 7-month period between October 1997 and May 1998 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13 Police officers and 10 Psychiatrists <p>Police officers Gender</p>	<p>Findings from this study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus of training for both professionals centred on males as perpetrators, not females

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview topics focused on investigating/assessing cases of sexual abuse, formal sexual abuse training initiatives and policies, female sexual offenders, victims of female sexual offenders, and the professional's own experience working with cases involving female perpetrators of sexual abuse • Direct observations of police officers working in sexual assault unit over 3-month period • Psychiatrists who specialised in sexual offending were interviewed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 Male • 2 Female <p>Rank</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Detective Constables • 8 Detective Sergeants • 1 Detective Lieutenant <p>Psychiatrists</p> <p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 Male • 3 Female <p>Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 specialised in child and adolescent psychiatry • 8 specialised in forensic psychiatry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational policies also focused on sexual assaults perpetrated by males against females • Traditional sexual scripts and professional discourse. • Female sex offenders are harmless • Female sex offenders are not dangerous • Re-constructing the assault, blaming the (male) victim
<p>Article 7 Denov (2003) Canada</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature review • Objective 1 - Reviewed articles detailing case and self-report data; examining the magnitude of female sex offending • Objective 2 - Explored the role of traditional sexual scripts and how this implicates prevalence rates of female sex offenders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 papers reviewed for Objective 1 • Literature divided into 2 categories: case-report and self-report studies • Categories separated into 3 groups: (a) perpetrators of sexual offences, (b) male victims of sexual offences, (c) female victims of sexual offences 	<p>Findings from group (a) studies</p> <p><i>Case-report studies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female sex offending a rare phenomenon; US Department of Justice 1.2% charged with forcible rape, 7% charged with sexual assault in US in 2001 <p><i>Self-report studies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combining the only 2 self-report articles, a prevalence rate of 58% for female sex offenders was found in a sample of male and female college students <p>Contrast between case-report (1.2-8%) and self-report data (58%)</p> <p>Findings from group (b) studies</p> <p><i>Case-report studies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 4 and 8% of male victims reported being abused by a female perpetrator • 29% of male victims reported sexual abuse by both males and females <p><i>Self-report studies</i></p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much higher rates of female sexual abuse reported by male victims, ranging between 42-78% <p>Higher prevalence rates between self-report (42-78%) and case report data (4-37%)</p> <p>Findings from group (c) studies</p> <p><i>Case-report studies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies found between 1 and 2.1% of females were victims of sexual assault perpetrated by females <p><i>Self-report studies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies found between 6 and 10% of female victims reported being abused by females
<p>Article 8 Rogers & Davies (2007) UK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sample of British students and the public were given a child sexual abuse scenario • The scenario varied based on the age (10 or 15 years old) and gender of the victim and gender of the perpetrator • Respondents were asked to rate their responses to each of the questions using a 7-point Likert scale 	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 141 males • 184 females • 12 missing gender <p>Ethnicity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 71.7% White • 10.7% Asian • 3.1% Afro-Caribbean • 11.7% Chinese • 2.8% Other <p>Sample background</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% undergraduate students from one north western university • 50% recruited from public car parks and beaches in the South 	<p>Results on perceptions towards perpetrator gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant main effect for perpetrator gender – male perpetrators seen more culpable than female perpetrators • Assault perpetrated by male deemed more severe than if it was perpetrated by a female • Male respondents rated female perpetrated sexual assault towards a male victim as less severe than female respondent • Males particularly considered assault of a 15-year-old male victim by a female perpetrator to be less severe and the victim less credible and more culpable, than corresponding assault on a female victim or assault by a male perpetrator • Victims of a male perpetrator seen as more credible than victims of a female perpetrator • A 15-year-old boy assaulted by a male perpetrator was deemed less culpable, than a 15-year-old boy assaulted by a female perpetrator
<p>Article 9 Kite & Tyson (2011) Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 361 police officers responded to an email questionnaire distributed to a random sample of 500 Male and 500 female police officers 	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 201 Female (56%) • 161 Male (44%) <p>Experience</p>	<p>Perceived seriousness of abusive behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant main effect for perpetrator's gender was found – male perpetrated abuse was perceived more serious than female perpetrated CSA

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vignette – hypothetical abuse story (modelled by one designed by Heatherston et al., 1998) Questions relating to the vignette assessed the participants' responses: seriousness of abuse, action required based on behaviour, and impact the abuse would have on the victim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 34% of officers employed for less than 3 years 20% employed for longer than 20 years <p>Parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 74 females and 107 male officers reported having children 	<p>Action taken by police</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant main effect of perpetrator gender – more stringent action taken against male perpetrator compared to female perpetrator <p>Perception of impact of abuse on victim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not significant; however mean score for perceived impact on child was higher for victim of male perpetrated abuse compared to female perpetrated abuse
<p>Article 10 Peter (2009) Canada</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bivariate tests of significance were performed on the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect. A stratified cluster sample of investigated cases from child welfare agencies between October & December 1998 22 types of child maltreatment were categorised into 4 four groups: physical, sexual, neglect and emotional maltreatment Final sample included 7672 children, primary form of maltreatment breakdown are as follows: 30.6% physical abuse, 10.4% sexual abuse, 42.5% neglect, 16.5% emotional abuse 	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 89% of alleged perpetrators were males (n=308), 11% (n=37) were females 71% of victims (n=246) were female 29% of victims (n=99) were males 	<p>Characteristics of female perpetrators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No difference in numbers of victims between male and female offenders Female perpetrators tend to be poorly educated and come from low socioeconomic background (may be over-represented) <p>Victim characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girls more likely to be abused than boys (71.3% = 246, over 28.7% = 99) Victims of female perpetrators tended to be younger than victims of male perpetrators. <p>Type of abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant difference regarding types of abuse perpetrated by male or female offenders Most frequent type of violence for male and female perpetrators was touching/fondling of genitals (51.4% n = 19 and 48.7% n = 150) <p>Family structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Half of the victims of female perpetrated CSA (n = 18) came from families comprising of both biological parents compared to 34% (n = 97) for male abusers Half of male CSA victims came from a lone mother household compared to 27% (n = 10) for female CSAs <p>Case and worker information</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professionals more likely to report male perpetrated CSA
<p>Article 11 Clements, Dawson & Nair, (2014) UK.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systematic review Literature search, qualitative and quantitative studies included between 1950- and 2011 Perspectives of adult men and women who had been abused by an adult female during childhood Perspectives of legal and health or social care professionals in relation to female perpetrated sexual abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13 papers reviewed 5 papers focused on professional perspectives. 8 focused on victim perspectives. 	<p>Professional perspectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More favourable opinions towards female abusers; fewer imprisonment & conviction rates, less involvement with police and social services Length of service (years) negatively correlated with perceptions of seriousness of FPSA Perpetrator gender significant when assessing believability of abuse allegation <p>Victim perspectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victims feeling betrayed by abuser Reports of mistrust of professional, through fear that their disclosure would not be believed, or through having direct experience of negative response Increased sexual difficulties Negative effects on psychological well-being Developing maladaptive coping strategies
<p>Article 12 Mellor & Deering (2010) Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All potential participants sent a questionnaire package to complete and return if they were willing to participate 4 vignettes (2 with males as perpetrator and 2 with females as perpetrator) presented to 130 participants 2 vignettes (participants received both vignettes with same gender as perpetrator) were presented to 101 participants Vignettes followed principles as those used in Heatherton and Beardsall's study (1998) A set of questions accompanied each part of the vignette – Part 	<p>Child Protection Workers (N = 61) Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Males N = 8 Females N = 53 <p>Psychologists (N = 99) Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Males N = 23 Females N = 76 <p>Psychiatrists (N = 43) Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Males N = 25 Females N = 18 <p>Probationary Psychologists (N = 28)</p>	<p>Overall findings from all participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender of perpetrator a relevant factor in deciding whether child's disclosure of abuse should be believed. Social services input deemed more appropriate when perpetrator was male in vignette. Gender of perpetrator does influence how negatively the victim is affected. Imprisonment and punishment more necessary when males were perpetrators. <p>Findings on participants by gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both male and female professionals deemed female perpetrators warranted less investigation <p>Findings on participants by profession</p>

	<p>1 N = 4 questions, Part 2 N = 6 questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants asked to complete standardised questionnaire: Attitudes regarding women's sexualised behaviour towards children questionnaire 	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males N = 3 • Females N = 25 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both psychologist groups viewed victims of female perpetrated CSA to be less negatively affected • Psychiatrists viewed therapeutic treatment as more necessary for female perpetrators; psychologists thought therapy more necessary for male perpetrators • Psychiatrists and psychologists felt prosecution less appropriate for female perpetrators than male <p>Findings on participants' gender by profession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female psychologists considered social services more appropriate for male perpetrators than females • Male psychiatrists more likely to consider victim of abuse as more negatively affected if perpetrator was male
<p>Article 13 Deering & Mellor (2009) Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentencing comments identified the County Court of Victoria from 1998-2004 • A total of seven female offenders were identified through the Austlii legal database search as having been sentenced for child sexual abuse crimes • 	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 female perpetrators • 7 matched male counterparts <p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All perpetrators received a sentence of imprisonment • One female perpetrator was originally given a suspended sentence of imprisonment prior to re-sentencing <p>Victim characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All over 7 years of age • Majority of victims aged 14 years • All victims of male offenders were female 	<p>Disclosure of abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In female perpetrated sexual offending, disclosure typically occurred a significant time after offence had been perpetrated. • More common for disclosure of abuse to occur closely after abusive behaviour in male perpetrated sexual offending <p>Female offenders</p> <p><i>Mitigating factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judge comments in 6/7 female perpetrators refer to various psychological/emotional difficulties and experiences • Five of the female sexual offender cases (5/7) included specific psychological and/or emotional difficulties or descriptions of personal adversity. <p><i>History of child sexual abuse</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only two female offenders in the current study disclosed a history of childhood sexual abuse. In both cases, the judge considered that this experience warranted a reduction in the disposition because it helped to explain the offending <p>In the absence of psychological maladjustment, offending was attributed to male coercion.</p> <p>Male offenders</p>

			<p><i>Mitigating factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance misuse seen as aggravating factor • The factors relating to male offenders were not treated as significantly as those concerning the female offenders • Factors considered less relevant when related to male offenders in comparison to female offenders <p><i>History of child sexual abuse</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one case involved a history of CSA, however judge described this individual's circumstances as "highly exceptional" <p><i>In the absence of psychological maladjustment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the three cases in which no psychological issues were referred to on behalf of the offender, the sexual crimes were attributed to the offender's desire and lust <p>Comparing CJS treatment of male and female offenders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The female offenders received relatively reduced terms of imprisonment
<p>Article 14 Higgins & Ireland (2009) UK & NI</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants were provided with a questionnaire pack: each participant was given a vignette and told to complete the Attitudes Toward Sex Offenders Scale 	<p>60% of the forensic sample was from England. 40% was from NI</p> <p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80 forensic staff • 80 prison officers • 82 members of the public <p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 121 males • 121 females <p>(242 total participants)</p>	<p><i>Perpetrator gender</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant differences were found between attitudes towards male and female sex offenders

RESULTS

Quantitative Studies

Ten of the studies used a quantitative methodology (Gakhal & Brown, 2011; Eisenberg & Owens, 1987; Rudin, Zalewski & Bodmin-Turner, 1995; Heatherton & Beardsall, 1998; Smith, Fromuth & Morris, 1998; Rogers & Davies, 2007; Kite & Tyson, 2011; Peter, 2009; Mellor & Deering, 2010; Higgins & Ireland, 2009). Eight studies looked at attitudes towards male and female offenders and two studies (Gakhal et al., 2011; Mellor et al., 2010) looked at just female offenders. Table 2 below provides information about the methodological quality of these studies after using the Fowkes and Fulton (1991) quality framework. A more comprehensive outline of the research quality is the Appendix section (Appendix 2 – Table B).

Table 2**Methodological Characteristics of Quantitative studies** (Fowkes & Fulton, 1991)

Article	Study design	Structured abstract	Research objectives	Study sample (representative, source, size, inclusion/exclusion criteria, non-respondents)	Quality of measurements and outcomes (validity, reproducibility, blindness, quality control)	Completeness (compliance, drop-outs, missing data)	Distorting influences, (contamination, changes over time, confounding factors, distortion reduced by analysis)	Overall judgement
Article 1 Gakhal & Brown (2011)	Quasi-experimental study	No	Yes	No	Yes	Partial	Partial	+
Article 2 Eisenberg & Owens (1987)	Cross-sectional	No	Partial	No	No	No	Yes	++
Article 3 Rudin, Zalewski & Bodmin-Turner (1995)	Cross-sectional study.	No	Yes	Partial	Yes	Partial	Partial	+
Article 4 Heatherton & Beardsall (1998)	Cross-sectional study	Yes	Yes	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial	+
Article 5 Smith, Fromuth & Morris (1998)	Cross-sectional	No	Yes	No	No	No	Partial	++
Article 8 (Rogers & Davies, 2007)	Cross-sectional	No	Yes	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial	+
Article 9 Kite & Tyson (2011)	Cross-sectional	No	Yes	Partial	Partial	No	Partial	+
Article 10 Peter (2009) Canada	Cohort study	No	Yes	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial	+
Article 12 Mellor & Deering (2010)	Cross-sectional	No	Yes	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial	+
Article 14 Higgins & Ireland (2009)	Cross-sectional	No	Partial	No	Partial	Partial	Yes	++

Note

(1) Research Objectives: Yes, objectives mentioned and are clear to the reader; Partial, objectives lack clarity; No, no objectives mentioned. (2) Study Sample: yes, sample represents a range of appropriate professional or victim perspectives of different gender, inclusion and exclusion criteria are also reported clearly; Partial, sample represents a limited range of professional or victim perspectives, such as only one professional group or a single gender perspective, and inclusion and exclusion criteria are reported partially or indirectly; No, sample has poor representation, such as student perspectives only, and inclusion and exclusion criteria are not reported. (3) Quality of measurement and outcomes: Yes, measures used are valid and reliable, data gathering methods are clear increasing reproducibility; Partial, reliability and validity of measures unclear or moderate, limited quality control; No, unclear how valid and reliable measures are, data gathering methods are unclear limiting reproducibility. (4) Completeness: Yes, information detailed about drop-outs and missing data; Partial, limited or moderate information about drop-outs, and missing data; No, no information about drop-outs or missing data. (5) Distorting Influences: Yes; many confounding variables distorting reliability of results, Partial; few or moderate confounding variables; No, no additional variables distorting the results (6) Overall Judgement: 0 – No problem; + Minor Problems; ++ Major Problems.

Of the ten studies detailed above, three were deemed to have major methodological problems that impacted on the overall quality of the studies. These were due to confounding variables potentially influencing the perspectives of the respondents (Higgins et al., 2009) and the sample characteristics of the participants (Smith et al., 1998). The participants in this study were only recruited from one source: a student population; thus, limiting the generalisability of the results. Furthermore, there was limited information detailed about the participants, which again may have resulted in additional confounding variables. In the study by Eisenberg et al. (1987), there were major flaws due to the lack of detail included in the write up of the study. It was unclear how they sourced their sample, what the procedures were during the study, and how this may have resulted in demand characteristics. In addition to this, the data from the different professional groups was not analysed separately. Separate analysis would have been beneficial as it would give an accurate representation of their general attitudes towards incest and child sexual abuse.

In the other seven studies, minor methodological issues were identified, which were related to limited information about completeness of the study, definitions not being clearly identified and labelled (Gakhal et al., 2011), and limited information about the validity of standardised tools used within the study (Peter, 2009).

Qualitative Studies

Two of the studies used a qualitative approach (Denov, 2001; Mellor & Deering, 2009). The study by Denov (2001) focused primarily on experiences and views of professionals with female sex offenders, whereas the study by Mellor et al. (2009) reviewed sentencing comments on an equal number of male and female child sex offenders. Table 3 below details the methodological quality of these studies using the quality framework developed by Tracy (2010). Additional information, including qualitative comments of the grading for these studies is in the Appendix section (Appendix 3 – Table C).

Table 3**Methodological Characteristics of Qualitative Studies** (Tracy, 2010)

Article	Worthy topic (relevant, timely, significant)	Rich rigor (theoretical constructs, sample, context)	Sincerity (self-reflexivity, transparency about challenges)	Credibility (thick description, multivocality, member reflections)	Resonance (generalisations, transferable findings)	Significant contribution (theoretically, practically, morally)	Ethical clarity (considers procedural, relational, situational ethics)	Meaningful coherence	Overall Judgement
Article 6 Denov (2001) Canada	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	++
Article 13 Mellor & Deering (2009)	Yes	Partial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial	No	+

Note

(1) Worthy topic: yes, the topic is relevant, significant and interesting; partial, the topic is relatively significant, timely or relevant; no, the topic is not relevant, timely or significant to clinical practice. (2) Rich rigour: yes, the study provides rich descriptions and explanations of the data, methods and forms of analysis undertaken; partial, the study provides a less detailed or limited description and explanations for these criteria; no, little or no information is provided to be able to assess these criteria adequately. (3) Sincerity: yes, the authors provide sufficient detail regarding their potential biases and reflect upon the impact of these within the research; partial, the study provides less detailed description of these criteria but does address some issues relating to researcher bias; no, little or no information is provided to be able to assess these criteria adequately. (4) Credibility: yes, the research findings appear credible, based on the methodologies employed and the depth of descriptions provided; partial, findings appear less credible due to a lack of clarity around analysis and description; no, little or no information is provided to be able to assess these criteria adequately. (5) Resonance: yes, the research provides important and significant insights regarding attitudes towards male and female perpetrated child sexual abuse, across varying contexts and populations; partial the research provides some insights but is less detailed or has less applicability; no, little or no information is provided to be able to assess these criteria. (6) Significant contribution: yes, the research findings help to influence theoretical and practical application of results and enhance knowledge professional knowledge regarding this topic; partial, there is limited applicability of results to practice and the findings have helped to enhance knowledge to some extent; no little or no information is provided to assess these criteria. (7) Ethical clarity: yes, clear description of ethical procedures is provided and the authors acknowledge the impact of broader ethical issues relating to relational and situational ethics; partial, ethical procedures are less detailed or limited consideration of broader ethical issues; no, little or no information is provided to be able to assess these criteria adequately. (8) Meaningful coherence: yes, appropriate theory and methods are utilised to achieve the aims of the study and attempts have been made to interconnect literature reviewed; partial, the research utilises methods that are generally appropriate but these may inhibit or fail to address some aims; no, little or no information is provided to be able to assess these criteria adequately. Overall Judgement: 0 – No problem; + Minor Problems; ++ Major Problems.

Denov's study was given an overall judgement of 'major problems' due to several major methodological issues relating to 'Sincerity' and 'Ethical clarity'. Tracy (2010) refers to sincerity in the context of the researchers reflecting on their own bias and goals, and how these may have influenced the interview schedules and the procedures used in the study; thus, potentially biasing the findings. Bias such as female interviewer asking male police officers about females committing sexual offences, were not highlighted within the article. No comments were made within the article about the consequences of using a male dominated sample.

In the context of this quality framework, ethical considerations included a variety of components, such as procedural ethics, situational ethics and relational ethics. It is unclear in Denov's study whether the participants were aware of the aims of the study, or if their behaviours were influenced by the researcher observing them in their day-to-day tasks. Furthermore, relational ethics were not discussed within the article; Denov does not explore the impact her presence may have had on the outcome of the results. Nevertheless, neither studies showed any issues within the areas of 'Credibility', 'Resonance', 'Significant Contribution', and 'Meaningful Coherence'.

Systematic Reviews

Two systematic reviews were used within this review (Denov, 2003; Clements, Dawson & Nair, 2011). Both reviews explored the attitudes and perspectives towards female sex offenders only. Table 4 below tabulates the quality of these two reviews using the appraisal framework developed by Shamseer et al. (2015). Table D (Appendix 4) depicts a more comprehensive outline of the grading of these reviews.

Table 4**Methodological Quality of Systematic Reviews** (Shamseer et al., 2015)

Article	Rationale	Objective	Eligibility criteria	Information sources + search strategy	Study records	Data items	Outcomes and prioritisation	Risk of bias in studies	Confidence in cumulative evidence	Overall Judgement
Article 7 Denov (2003)	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Partial	Yes	Partial	Partial	++
Article 11 Clements, Dawson & Nair (2014)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial	Yes	0

Note

(1) Rationale: yes, the review has described the rationale of the study within the context of what is already known; partial, there is a limited rationale provided and some references to previous literature; no, there is little or no information for this criterion to be rated. (2) Objective: yes, the objectives of the review are clearly highlighted and references are made to participants, interventions, comparators and outcomes; partial, Objectives are mentioned but not clearly outlined and there is limited information about participants, interventions, comparators and outcomes; no, there is little or no information for this criterion to be rated. (3) Eligibility Criteria: yes, study characteristics and report characteristics are clearly identified; partial, there is limited information relating to report and study characteristics; no, there is little or no information for this criterion to be rated. (4) Information Sources and Search Strategy: yes, a draft of a search strategy is listed that identifies the sources used and where the information was located; partial, some information pertaining to the search strategy and information sources is detailed; no, there is little or no information for this criterion to be rated. (5) Study Records: yes, the selection process and data collection process are clearly identified; partial, some information pertaining to selection process and data collection process; no, there is little or no information for this criterion to be rated. (6) Data items: All variables that will be extracted from the data and used for the review will be outlined; partial, some information pertaining to variables that are extracted is highlighted; no, there is little or no information for this criterion to be rated. (7) Outcomes and prioritisation: yes, all outcomes relating to the objectives of the review are listed and defined; partial, some information pertaining to the outcomes of the data is discussed; no, there is little or no information for this criterion to be rated. (8) Risk of bias: yes, methods relating to identifying bias within the studies are anticipated and described; partial, some information pertaining to anticipating and describing bias within the studies is documented within the review; no, there is little or no information for this criterion to be rated. (9) Confidence in cumulative evidence: yes, the methods used to assess the quality of the findings is discussed; partial, there is some information pertaining to the methods used to assess the quality of the evidence; no, there is little or no information for this criterion to be rated. Overall Judgement: 0 – No problem; + Minor Problems; ++ Major Problems.

Major methodological issues were identified within Denov's (2003) study in relation to the 'Eligibility Criteria', 'Information Sources and Search Strategy', and 'Study Records'; thus, this study received an overall judgement rating of 'major problems'. This was due to a lack of information about the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the review, the procedure and methods employed to identify articles, and the data extraction process. However, Clements et al. (2011) received an overall judgement of 'no problems', as very few methodological issues were highlighted. There was a risk of bias within their review, primarily due to using the search term of 'victim' to identify victim perspectives. Some individuals who do not identify with that label, and therefore do not refer to themselves as victims, may have different perspectives. Furthermore, only using peer-reviewed journals prevented additional unpublished, recent papers from being used in the review. When appraising the confidence of cumulative evidence within both articles, only minor problems were identified. This suggests that the findings are relatively reliable and valid, as the outcomes of the studies were clearly identified and the limitations for both systematic reviews were identified by the authors.

KEY FINDINGS

Severity of Harm to Victims

Ten of the studies referred to the severity of harm caused to the victims of sexual abuse. However, it was apparent that most of these studies found respondents perceived the victim would experience more harm if the abuse was perpetrated by a male than a female. Studies by Eisenberg et al. (1987), Smith et al. (1998), Rogers et al. (2007), Kite et al. (2011), Clements et al. (2011), Denov (2001), and Mellor et al. (2010), found that the respondents perceived male perpetrated abuse impacted on the victim more than female perpetrated abuse.

Smith et al. (1998) report that respondents believed a sexual experience for the victim would be a more positive experience if the perpetrator was female than if they were male. Respondents also perceived that the victim would experience more psychological harm if the offence was perpetrated by a male than a female. It is important to note that gender differences were identified between the respondents. Male respondents were more likely to label sexual intercourse between a male perpetrator and female victim as rape and abuse, than if it was a female perpetrator and male victim. Rogers et al. (2007) also found male respondents rated female perpetrated sexual assaults towards a male victim as less severe than the female respondents. Mellor et al. (2010) found similar results with their male respondents, however they also found that female professionals believed victims of female sexual abuse would be less negatively affected than victims of male sexual assault.

Denov (2001) identified that respondents perceived female sex offenders to be “harmless” and “not dangerous”. It was noted that the respondents believed female perpetrators posed no threat or danger to the community, despite their sexually aggressive acts. Furthermore, participants perceived there was no malicious intent underpinning the female offenders’ actions.

Despite these findings, some studies found no significant differences in the respondents' beliefs about the severity of harm perpetrated towards the victim based on the perpetrator's gender. The findings from the victim perspectives within the study by Clements et al. (2011) indicated that they experienced similar negative consequences regardless of the perpetrator gender. The respondents perceived victims experienced an increase in sexual difficulties, negative psychological effects on their well-being, and developed maladaptive coping strategies. Furthermore, they found that it was not the gender of the perpetrator that was a variable in the severity of the harm experienced by victims, but the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim that correlated with the level of harm; with the victim who is related to the perpetrator being most affected. Rudin et al. (1995), and Heatherton et al. (1998) found no significant differences regarding the severity of abuse experienced by the victims based on perpetrator gender.

All studies acknowledged that female perpetrated abuse does occur and is a serious issue that can have debilitating consequences on the victims. However, most of the findings indicated a bias towards female perpetrated abuse; in that it is perceived to be not as harmful to the victims, and the experience is deemed less severe than male perpetrated sexual abuse.

Limitations of studies

It is important to note that there was no consensus between studies over what they were referring to when using the terms 'affected' and 'severity of abuse'. A couple of the studies expanded on this by commenting on the psychological effects experienced by victims of sexual abuse. However, it was not clear if respondents based their rating of severity of abuse towards the victims on physical harm, psychological harm, or a combination of the two.

Disclosure of Abuse and Likelihood of Believing Victim

Eight of the articles identified a discrepancy between professionals believing victims of female compared to male perpetrated sexual abuse. Furthermore, differences were found in the disclosures made by victims of female compared to male perpetrated abuse.

In the study by Heatherton et al. (1998), 9% (3/33) of police officers rejected the child's account within any of the female perpetrator vignettes, and rated the perpetrator being female as a relevant factor influencing this decision. Smith et al. (1998) found male respondents were less likely to believe that a teacher misused their position of authority when the teacher was female in the vignette. However, this was not replicated by the female respondents in this study. The findings within this study again demonstrated gender differences in respondent perceptions regarding female versus male child sexual abuse, suggesting that there may be some additional gender stereotypes influencing perceptions of the perpetrators.

Mellor et al. (2010), and Clements et al. (2011), found that their professional respondents deemed perpetrator gender significant when assessing the believability of abuse. This was further supported by Roger et al. (2007) who found that respondents believed victims of male perpetrators were more credible than victims of female perpetrated abuse. Additionally, victim respondents in Clements et al. (2011) highlighted aspects of mistrusting professionals, and perceiving that their disclosures would not be believed if they were reporting abuse by a female. Deering et al. (2009) also found that gender of the perpetrator influenced the length of time it took for victims to disclose their sexual abuse. Female perpetrated sexual offending disclosures typically occurred a significant time after the offence had been perpetrated, while it was more common for male perpetrated sexual abuse to be reported closer to the time following the abuse. Furthermore, it was atypical for the victim to disclose the abuse perpetrated by a female offender unless it had included a male

co-offender. Peter (2009), also found that professionals were more likely to report male perpetrated child sexual abuse than abuse perpetrated by females, the reasons for this remain unclear and unexplored.

Denov (2003) found prevalence rates of female perpetrated sexual abuse varied greatly depending on whether the literature was looking at case-report studies (1 – 8%) or self-report studies (58%). However, the 58% of female perpetrated sexual abuse within self-report studies was identified through only two self-report articles using a sample of male and female college students. When the data for male victims of female perpetrated sexual abuse was explored, she found higher prevalence rates for self-report data (42 – 78%), compared to case-study data (4 – 37%). Finally, studies identifying female victims of female perpetrated abuse also demonstrated higher prevalence rates for self-report studies over case-study data (6 – 10% versus 1 – 2%). These all indicate that female perpetrated child sexual abuse is more prevalent if self-report data is being examined. Based on findings within the female sexual offending literature so far, this may be due to victims not disclosing their experiences of female perpetrated sexual abuse, because they perceive that they are less likely to be believed, or have their allegations taken seriously. The discrepancies between self-report and case-study data may also be attributed to the fact that female perpetrated abuse is less likely to result in convictions. Additionally, in any co-offending situations with a male perpetrator, it may be that only the male is held accountable and convicted for the offences; thus, reducing the woman's association with this type of offending behaviour.

The findings from all studies exploring disclosures and believability of abuse indicated a definite bias towards female offenders. Public, professional, and victim responses suggested that victims of female offenders make fewer disclosures than victims of male perpetrated abuse, and that their disclosures are less likely to be believed. There is also the possibility that there is a time difference between when victims of female perpetrated abuse

disclose compared to victims of male perpetrated abuse. These factors together are likely to provide an under-estimation of the prevalence of female perpetrated abuse and reinforce general perceptions of female perpetrated sexual abuse.

Limitations of studies

Both studies by Heatherton et al. (1998) and Smith et al. (1998), used vignettes which were not based on real life-scenarios; thus, this may have confounded the believability of the scenarios. The limitations of Roger et al. (2007) study was in relation to the methods they employed to gather their data. It was explained that 14 questions were used to obtain the information, yet there was no evidence of what these questions were or the construct validity of the questions. Deering et al. (2009) was the only study to identify differences in the length of time disclosures were made by the victims of female perpetrated compared to male perpetrated sexual abuse. It was unclear why these time differences were noted, and no other studies within this review identified similar findings. The sample size within this study was relatively small, so further evidence would need to be provided before any clear assumptions can be made.

Involvement of Professionals

Results from four of the studies within this review indicated variability in the extent of professional involvement for female perpetrated child sexual abuse compared to that of males. Heatherton et al. (1998) reported a large difference between the number of child sexual abuse cases Social Services and the police deal with and the proportion of these that involve female perpetrators. This was supported by Peter's (2009) study, who found that child welfare agencies were more likely to have a case open for victims of male perpetrated sexual abuse. In the study by Clements et al. (2011), professional respondents identified that female perpetrated sexual abuse was less likely to result in police and social work

involvement. The respondents in Mellor et al. (2010) also felt that Social Services input was deemed more appropriate when the perpetrator was male in the vignette. Both male and female respondents within this study also believed that female perpetrators warranted less investigation; therefore, these offenders were less likely to be involved with other professionals.

Overall, the findings suggest that there is less professional involvement in child sexual abuse cases where the perpetrator is female, than if the perpetrator was male. As discussed previously, this may be due to low disclosure rates made by the victims, however it may also be due to different professional groups perceiving that female perpetrated sexual abuse is less likely to warrant professional input. Further exploration is needed to understand the reasons underpinning these perceptions.

Limitations of studies

Peter's (2009) study was a retrospective study, which resulted in certain methodological limitations, such as gender of the perpetrator not included in the sexual abuse case data. Furthermore, only data from the Child Welfare agencies were used, which potentially biased the findings as these agencies are more likely to be involved with families from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Need for Treatment and Punishment of Offenders

Six of the studies made references to the conviction rates for male and female perpetrators, and one of the studies referred to the need for treatment in both offender groups. Male police officers within Heatherton et al. (1998) study stated that imprisonment was significantly less appropriate when the perpetrator was female compared to male, however the opposite was found by female social workers. Similar gender differences were noted in the study by Smith et al. (1998); who found that, although 69% of the respondents believed the teacher in the

scenario, regardless of the gender, would have been found guilty of statutory rape, only the male respondents recommended a longer prison sentence for the male perpetrator compared to the female offender.

Findings in Kite and Tyson's study (2011) indicated that police took more stringent action against male perpetrators of child sexual abuse compared to female perpetrators. Further analysis of the data indicated a positive correlation was found between police officers' perceptions of seriousness of abuse and police action. Additionally, a significant positive correlation was found between impact on the child and police action. This supports previous findings around male perpetrated child abuse perceived as causing more serious harm and having a greater impact on the child than female perpetrated child sexual abuse.

Participants within Mellor et al. (2010) study believed imprisonment and punishment was more necessary when males were the perpetrators; participants considered it more appropriate for male perpetrators to be criminally prosecuted, and to receive a prison sentence as a form of punishment for their abusive behaviour. These perceptions appeared to be reflective of actual occurrences within the Criminal Justice System in Australia. Deering et al. (2009) found that 100% of female offenders in their study (seven in total) received relatively reduced terms of imprisonment compared to their male counterparts.

Variations were noted across professionals in relation to their views of the perpetrators' need for treatment depending on their gender. Mellor et al. (2010) found psychiatrists viewed therapeutic treatment necessary for female perpetrators than their male counterparts, whereas, psychologists thought therapy was necessary for male perpetrators.

These findings indicate that overall different professionals and members of the public perceive sanctions, and imprisonment to be less appropriate for female perpetrators compared to male perpetrators of child sexual abuse, even when similar acts were perpetrated towards

the victims. As highlighted above, this may be due to perceptions around female child sexual abuse causing less harm to the child and impacting less on the victim. Only one study (Deering et al., 2009) referred to treatment recommendations for the perpetrators, and results within this study varied; therefore, the evidence relating to this is limited and further research is warranted.

Limitations of studies

Major problems with completeness of data were identified within the study conducted by Kite et al. (2011), as only 36.1% of the people approached participated with the research, although 361 participants is a large sample size for a quantitative study. Additionally, the sample was sourced from only one police department within Australia, limiting the generalisability of results across multiple police services due to cultural norms within the workforce potentially influencing the participants' responses.

Attributions of Sexual Offending Behaviour

Six of the studies found that respondents were more likely to attribute female child sexual abuse to external factors or to females experiencing psychological maladjustment. Smith et al. (1998) found that external factors were deemed more influential by respondents when the teacher offender was male compared to if the perpetrator was female. Heatherton et al. (1998) found that all four participant groups viewed male perpetrators as having an undifferentiated sex role in comparison to the 'typical' man, whereas all participant groups, except female police officers, viewed female perpetrators as possessing a masculine sex role compared to the 'typical' female. Denov (2001) referred to traditional sexual scripts for females and how these influence the public perceptions of female sex offenders. In her study, she identified these sexual scripts within the discourse of the professional respondents in her study. An example of this was identified within the training manual notes for police officers working

within a sexual assault unit. The following comment is in relation to identifying sophisticated strategies paedophiles may use to gain access to children:

“Techniques for obtaining access to children, which may include, winning the trust of the child's mother, [or] marrying a woman with an attractive child”.

The comment suggests that the female inhabits the role of main care giver for a child, implying that paedophiles are males, and the victims, alongside the children, are the females; thus, ignoring the possibility that females may be in the abusive role. In addition to this, Denov (2001) also found that when there were reports of female perpetrated child sexual abuse to the police, the circumstances surrounding this assault was adapted so that the victim was held responsible for the offence.

Some of the findings within the studies also found that blame was attributed to the victims; this was more commonly found when the perpetrators were females. Survey data within Eisenberg et al. (1987) highlighted that 3% of the respondents thought the children would be responsible for the abuse, and 10% of the respondents possessed beliefs regarding the victims obtaining some enjoyment from the sexual act. Rogers et al. (2007) commented that in sexual assaults perpetrated by a female, male respondents blamed the male victims. Additionally, a 15-year-old boy assaulted by a male perpetrator was deemed less culpable than a 15-year-old boy assaulted by a female perpetrator. However, this belief may be attributed to the fact that it is a same sex abusive act, which is likely to be perceived negatively by the respondents. Findings from this study also highlighted that the male respondents were more likely to deride male victims in the belief that men should always take, rather than resist any sexual encounter with a woman.

In 86% (6/7) of female perpetrators on trial for sexual offences against children Deering et al. (2009) found that the judge referred to various psychological and emotional difficulties experienced by the female. Furthermore, in five of these cases the specific

psychological and emotional difficulties of personal adversity were considered as relevant to a reduced sentencing disposition. In the two cases where psychological maladjustment was not deemed relevant to the offending, their responsibility towards offending was diminished as their behaviours were attributed to male coercion. The sentencing comments also highlighted that two of the female offenders disclosed a personal history of childhood sexual abuse. In both cases the judge considered that this experience warranted a reduction in the disposition because it helped to explain their offending. However, these attributions were not deemed relevant when it came to the male perpetrators; 57 % (4/7) of cases of male offenders highlighted areas of psychological and emotional maladjustment that were considered in the sentencing of the offender, yet the researchers found that these factors were not treated as significantly as those concerning the female offenders, although it is unclear how this was measured. In one case of male perpetrated child sexual abuse the offender disclosed a personal history of childhood abuse. The judge referred to this circumstance as “highly exceptional” and did not consider this a relevant experience when trying to explain the offending behaviour or warrant a reduction in the sentencing.

The findings from these studies indicate that most female perpetrated child sexual abuse can be and does get attributed to external factors, minimising the level of responsibility imposed on the offenders. It is likely that personal experiences of childhood adversities, abuse, and trauma impacts on the development of the individuals and the views and beliefs they hold about themselves and others. However, it seems that these experiences are deemed more problematic and relevant for female offenders compared to male offenders. Further exploration is warranted to further understand this bias.

Limitations of studies

The content of the survey questions was unclear in Eisenberg et al. (1987) study, therefore it was difficult establishing the validity of the data obtained. Furthermore, there was a lack of

clarity about the type of abuse they are referring to; whether it was male or female perpetrated abuse and whether it was homosexual or heterosexual abuse. Deering et al. (2009) analysed retrospective comments made by the judge during sentencing, which was one of the main limitations of this study. This is likely to confound the data, as it is possible that not all the information required was originally included in the sentencing comments. The researchers attempted to match both female and male perpetrator samples, which proved difficult due to two of the female offenders co-offending with a male. Nevertheless, this helped to highlight how co-offending with a male reduced the attribution of blame towards the female offender, thus reducing their prison sentence.

Training within Services

Only one of the studies in the review referred to perpetrator gender bias within the training professionals receive. Nevertheless, this article highlights an area for further research and discusses the implications of such bias within a real-life context. Denov (2001) found that the focus on training for both professional respondent groups centred entirely on males as perpetrators of child sexual abuse and not females. The organisational policies also focused on men as perpetrators and women as victims of crime, further highlighting that women were not viewed as perpetrators. In the Crime Analysis Report (CAR) the police officers were required to note details about the victim, including items of clothing; the options were skirt, bra, dress, underwear, all pointing to a female victim. Police were also required to detail the physical description of the perpetrator for the CAR, and the information is absent of any female paraphernalia; there were no options for bra, dress, or other female clothing items to select from, the only options reflect typical male items. The CAR therefore excludes the possibility of a female perpetrator and a male victim.

The Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th version (DSM IV, American Psychological Association, APA, 1994), which was the diagnostic tool used by

healthcare professionals when this study was conducted, also demonstrates bias towards males as perpetrators. Denov (2001) looked at the DSM IV due to the participant demographic including 10 psychiatrists who specialised in sexual offending. Paraphilias within the DSM IV are presented as a predominantly male problem:

“Except for Sexual Masochism... Paraphilias are almost never diagnosed in females (APA 1994: 524)”.

Studies have found that professionals will react based on what they have read and been taught, even when it contradicts their own work experience and knowledge (La Barabara, Martin & Dozier, 1980). This study has helped to highlight the influence organisational policies and training documentations may have on reinforcing and inciting gender bias in relation to the perpetrators of sexual offences. It would be beneficial for this study to be replicated in services throughout different parts of the world to establish whether similar gender bias is present in other countries, and to highlight where changes need to be made within organisational policies and training packages.

Limitations of studies

A couple of major methodological issues have been highlighted within this study, which may have confounded the results. Denov is a female researcher, looking at and asking questions to a male dominated participant group about female offenders. It is possible that her gender impacted on the participant's responses and actions throughout the different components of the research. In addition to this, it is unclear if the participants were aware of the aims of the study and if they were aware of the researcher observing them. Nevertheless, good quality, thick descriptions of the data were provided, and the researcher used different qualitative approaches to gather the data; all of which identified similar findings.

DISCUSSION

This review explored societal attitudes and perspectives towards male and female perpetrators of child sexual abuse. The findings from the review suggested that there were a variety of discrepancies between how female child abusers were viewed compared to male child abusers. They indicate that female perpetrated child sexual abuse is a serious issue and can negatively impact on the child, however, it is not perceived to cause as much harm to the victim and therefore does not receive as much attention and investigation as male perpetrated sexual abuse. Differences have been identified in terms of disclosure rates and believability of disclosures. Furthermore, conviction rates and length of prison sentences are significantly lower for female child sex offenders compared to males. The evidence also suggests that stereotypes and gender roles play a significant role in enabling society to minimise female perpetrated abuse and provide justifications for why women commit these types of crimes. These factors are likely to influence the true prevalence rates of female perpetrated child sexual abuse, support for the victims, and the treatment and rehabilitation efforts offered to the perpetrators.

Some of the findings varied depending on the gender of the respondents, which is an area requiring further exploration. It is possible that additional gender stereotypes feed into the gender roles of the respondents, which potentially influences the beliefs they hold about male and female perpetrators. The evidence also highlighted that some of the societal beliefs about male or female perpetrated sexual abuse may be influenced by victim gender. The common perception of male child abusers is that they are more likely to offend against females (Finkelhor, 1986), and females are more likely to offend against males (Vander May, 1988). However, the review by Rudin, et al. (1995) highlighted that both male and female perpetrators were more likely to offend against girls than boys (76.3% compared to 23.7% for male perpetrators, and 62.1% to 37.9% for female perpetrators). The gender roles assigned to

the victims may influence societal beliefs about females offending against boys, including the perception that males are sexual beings and are more likely to enjoy this act. Furthermore, it is possible that these gender stereotypes about males are likely to impact on male victims disclosing their experiences of sexual abuse.

Implications for Clinical Practice

The overall bias towards female sexual offenders identified within this review will have significant implications on how this sub-group of offenders are investigated and rehabilitated. Media representations of sexual offenders continue to reinforce the stereotype that females are unlikely to pose a risk to children; therefore, females are less likely to be monitored, and investigations into allegations of child abuse perpetrated by females may be biased due to prevailing attitudes regarding female perpetrated child abuse. Further implications of these biased attitudes towards female child abusers are also likely to affect the level of support and therapy available for their victims. More awareness and training within organisations working with children and offenders are warranted to highlight the presence of female sexual offending, the risk factors associated with this sub-group of sex offenders, and the impact this can have on their victims. Furthermore, the effectiveness of standardised sex offender treatment programmes on reducing risk within female offenders is yet to be explored. No treatment programmes have currently been devised specifically for female sex offenders, which affects the rehabilitative options available to this population.

Limitations

Specific variables have been considered which may have influenced the papers identified and selected for this review, the overall findings identified within the literature, and the methodological quality of the studies. According to the information collated for the quality frameworks, three of the articles were deemed to have major methodological issues, which

may have impacted on the reliability of the findings. Three different research methodologies were also included within this review, each requiring a specific quality framework, thus limiting how the articles could be compared with one another. However, excluding articles based on their methodological approach could have resulted in bias within the literature. The range of methodologies also resulted in a variety of approaches employed to gather data, including; questionnaires, observations, vignettes, and semi-structured interviews. Expanding the inclusion criteria to include non-peer-reviewed articles, like dissertations, may have also identified additional articles relevant to the review. However, using peer-reviewed articles helped to ensure the quality of the articles.

With regards to the search terms used when identifying and selecting relevant papers, there was no consensus over the terminology included within the literature. There is a tendency to perceive sex offenders as being male (Gakhal & Brown), therefore when some of the articles used the term ‘sex offenders’ without commenting on the gender of the offenders, this made establishing the accurate profile of the offender more difficult.

The varying age of consent throughout the different countries also impacted on the homogeneity of the studies. One of the studies conducted in the USA included scenarios to portray child sexual abuse where teachers were having a sexual relationship with their 16-year-old college students. This sexual contact would be against the law in certain states within the USA, but would be legal in the UK due to the different legal ages of consent.

Ideas for Further Research

This review has highlighted that societal and professional views regarding female sex offenders varies considerably to perceptions of male sex offenders. Consequently, additional areas have been identified which require further exploration with regards to how sex offenders are perceived and treated by different individuals. Areas for further research

include perceptions of homosexual or heterosexual child sexual abuse. Further evidence for treatment and rehabilitation efforts for female sex offenders is warranted. Sex offender treatment programmes have been standardised on the population of male sex offenders; thus, further research is needed to explore the applicability of these programmes to female sexual offenders.

It would also be useful for perceptions of sexual abuse dependant on victim gender to be explored further. Finally, studies looking at the organisational policies and training programmes for professionals within the UK would help to highlight whether gender bias within services that are in contact with sex offenders and their victims is an on-going problem. It is important for this bias to be minimised to ensure equal support to the victims, and equal rehabilitation strategies for the perpetrators, regardless of their gender.

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**EXAMINING IMPLICIT THEORIES AND EARLY MALADAPTIVE SCHEMAS IN
MENTALLY DISORDERED CHILD SEX OFFENDERS**

“Child abuse and neglect can be prevented in the UK”

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

Implicit Theories (ITs) and Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMSs) were explored within a group of mentally disordered male child abusers (N = 10). The existing literature base pertaining to ITs and EMSs within non-mentally disordered male child offenders was discussed, which helped to generate hypotheses about the presence of ITs, EMSs, and links between the two variables within a mentally disordered child abuser sample.

Methodology

This was a mixed methods single cohort design, which incorporated semi-structured interviews with a psychometric measure: Young Schema Questionnaire (version 3 – shortened, YSQ – S3). Template analysis was used to analyse the interview transcripts relating to the participant's offence accounts, and the YSQ – S3 was scored in accordance with the manual to identify the EMSs. Chi-square analysis was performed to explore any significant associations between the variables.

Results

ITs found in non-mentally disordered child abusers were the same across the mentally disordered offender sample: *Uncontrollability, Dangerous World, Degree of Harm, Entitlement, and Child as Sexual Object*. Mental Disorder influenced the activation of *Uncontrollability, Dangerous World and Entitlement*. A significant association was noted between *Degree of Harm* and *Dangerous World*.

Abandonment, Mistrust, Pessimism / Worry, Unrelenting Standards, Self-Punitiveness and Insufficient Self-Control were the most common EMSs. Significant

associations were noted between *Child as Sexual Object (IT)*, *Pessimism / Worry* and *Approval Seeking / Recognition (EMSs)*.

Discussion

Similarities amongst ITs across sex offender populations were noted. However, the results indicated that mental disorder influenced participant perceptions around locus of control, the trustworthiness of others, and how they met their sexual and non-sexual needs. Specific schemas also appear more prominent within a mentally disordered child abuser sample; therefore, treatments would benefit from addressing these schemas within therapy.

Keywords: Implicit Theories, Early Maladaptive Schemas, mentally disordered child sex offenders, child abuse.

INTRODUCTION

Prevalence rates of child sexual abuse

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a universal problem that requires extensive professional input to minimise the risk of individuals perpetrating sexual acts against children. CSA occurs when a child is persuaded or forced to participate in a sexual activity; either with other children, or with adults (The National Society and Protection of Cruelty to Children, NSPCC; Bentley, Hagan, Raff, & Bhatti, 2016). This does not always involve physical contact and can include online abuse, as well as the making and distributing of child pornographic images. A recent publication by the NSPCC highlighted that 2014/15 saw the highest number of CSA cases recorded within the UK over the last decade; with 47,008 cases recorded by the police (Bentley et al., 2016). This increase was noted throughout the UK, although it is important to note that this may be due to the ‘Savile effect’; individuals are now more aware of CSA, so there has been an increase in reporting it, plus improvements in professionals investigating such allegations. However, there are challenges with determining exact prevalence rates of CSA throughout the world, due to variations across nations around what is culturally acceptable behaviour with children, and no universal ‘age of consent’ rule (Singh, Parsekar, & Nair, 2014). A meta-analysis of 65 studies exploring CSA over 22 countries found 7.9% of males and 19.7% of females universally experienced CSA victimisation before the age of 18. Europe, America and Asia indicated prevalence rates of 9.2%, 10.1% and 23.9 % respectively, however Africa showed the highest prevalence rates (34.9%) (Whibey, 2009).

Child sexual offenders’ cognitions

Since the late 1980s, there has been a significant increase in the number of articles that have described the content of sexual offenders’ offence-supportive cognitions (e.g., Gannon, Keown & Rose, 2009). These specific cognitions were recognised by professionals following

face-to-face interactions with sexual offenders; where offenders would describe their offending behaviours and the contexts in which they occurred (Ó Ciardha & Ward, 2013). The term ‘cognitive distortions’ is used to capture the thoughts and beliefs perpetrators verbalised in relation to their sexual offending behaviours. Cognitive distortions were used within the sex offender literature when Abel and his colleagues applied this idea to child offenders. Within this context, cognitive distortions were beliefs that had developed because of conflict between an individual’s (deviant) sexual interest and societal norms. Cognitive distortions were adapted further to encompass post-offence justifications (Abel et al., 1989).

It was argued that child abusers develop pro-offending beliefs to cope with the discrepancies between their sexual behaviours and desires, and societal views regarding appropriate sexual behaviours. Beliefs of the offenders are developed in such a way that it enables them to frame their sexualised thoughts and actions towards children as being more acceptable. However, more recent evidence suggests that sexual offending is likely to be multifactorial in nature and explains how developmental experiences, social and cultural learning, and evolved mechanisms within individuals influence the development of offence related vulnerabilities. Examples of these include: victim empathy deficits, emotional dysregulation and cognitive distortions (Ward & Ó Ciardha, 2013).

One of the primary aims of sex offender treatment is to challenge and change the offence supportive cognitions. However, Ward and Keenan (1999) argue that these distortions derive from underlying beliefs about the victims, rather than unrelated, independent beliefs. The underlying beliefs, or schemas, form the basis from which the cognitive distortions are generated; therefore, the surface level cognitions verbalised by the offenders have been developed from deeper level beliefs held by the perpetrator. Ward (2000) described these entrenched beliefs as Implicit Theories (ITs).

Implicit Theories (ITs)

Ward et al. (1999) suggested ITs of a child offender are specific types of beliefs, or schemas, that enable them to explain, predict and interpret the intentions and behaviours of their victims. The ITs of the offender guide what information is processed and what 'evidence' supports or negates their beliefs. If the evidence does not fit with the beliefs and basic assumptions, it is then rejected, or interpreted in a way that will support the assumptions of the offender. Not only will the offender look for and interpret situations that support their beliefs, they may also start to select environments that condone their lifestyle, for example associating with other child offenders. Additionally, it was suggested that ITs contain different levels of beliefs. General level beliefs include assumptions about the nature of the world and people; middle level beliefs deal with categories of entities, such as children and women; and specific beliefs which are attributed to specific victims.

Research has indicated that beliefs of child offenders can be clustered into several themes enabling perpetrators to make predictions about a child's intentions, desires, and behaviours. These themes have been categorised into five broad ITs: *Children as Sexual Objects*, *Nature of Harm*, *Entitlement*, *Dangerous World* and *Uncontrollable* (Ward et al., 1999; Marziano, Ward, Beech & Pattison, 2006).

Children as Sexual Objects

This IT is associated with the idea that individuals are primarily motivated by a desire for sexual pleasure. Child offenders with this IT are likely to possess beliefs that children share this feature, and are capable of desiring and enjoying sex (Ward, Laws & Hudson, 2003). Ward et al. (1999) suggested that child offenders may also believe that children have the capacity to make decisions about when, with whom, and how their sexual needs will be

fulfilled. This IT can lead the individuals to interpret children's everyday behaviours as sexualised.

Nature of Harm

This theory is based on two general beliefs; there are degrees of harm, and sexual activity itself is unlikely to harm a person (Ward et al., 2000). The offender may be able to justify that the child has not been harmed, because they have not used any physical force during the time of the assault. Furthermore, if the sexualised act could have been more harmful, then any lesser act is viewed favourably by the offender. It is also likely that child abusers believe that engaging in sexual acts with children will not cause them any harm, and they will refer to the reaction of the child, or other people to provide evidence for this (Ward et al., 1999).

Entitlement

The underlying assumption to this IT is that some people are more superior and important than others (Ward, 2000). These individuals believe that they have the right to have their needs met and that other less important individuals should accept and adhere to this. It is the views of the more superior individual that are paramount; the views of the victim are less important and even ignored. It is possible that child abusers believe that they are more superior to children; thus, they have the right to have their sexual needs met as and when they require. The views of the children are not acknowledged by the offender because they are not valued as important.

Dangerous World

This IT is based on assumptions that the world is a dangerous place and that other people are likely to behave in ways that abuse or reject the offender for their own gains and interests (Marziano et al., 2006): two variations of this IT were discussed by Ward et al. (1999). The first assumption is that it is necessary to fight back and exert dominance and control over

other people. Child abusers may perceive children to be threatening and in need of retribution; therefore, children become their victims.

The second assumption is that adults are unreliable, unpredictable individuals; therefore, children are deemed more safe and less likely to cause harm to the offender. Child abusers perceive children to be less threatening, and more reliable and accepting of others. Consequently, the offenders believe that children can offer them the love, care and affection that they need, and are willing to satisfy the offenders' sexual needs and desires.

Uncontrollable

The underlying assumption to this IT is that the world, including emotions, thoughts and events is uncontrollable, and that behaviours occur based on factors out of one's direct control (Marziano et al., 2006). Child offenders believe they are not able to control their sexual urges and that their sexual desires are external to themselves, so they are not responsible for their sexually abusive behaviour. The offenders may also blame other people for their deviant sexual behaviours, as they may feel that they have behaved in ways due to factors out of their control.

There remains a lack of consensus within the literature about the prevalence of ITs within child abusers and whether these relate to the cognitive distortions of the offender (Ó Ciardha & Gannon, 2011; Chakhssi, Ruiters, & Bernstein, 2013). Young's Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMSs) has been offered as an alternative framework to assess, understand and work with the deeper level cognitions within sex offenders (Sigue-Leirós, Carvalho, & Nobre, 2013). It is now widely acknowledged that schemas are likely to influence the development of the cognitive distortions verbalised by the perpetrators (Mann et al., 2003). Thus, understanding the perpetrators' EMSs will help to identify which schemas are present and

more influential in the development of the offence supportive cognitions. Furthermore, it will help to guide where treatments should be targeted to reduce the risk of reoffending.

Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMSs)

These are described as “*self-defeating, emotional and cognitive themes*” (Young, Klosko, & Weishar, 2006). They are thought to be highly stable and contain emotional, sensorial and behavioural components. It is believed that EMSs are developed during early childhood and adolescence following exposure to traumatic and highly emotive experiences. Young et al. (2006) identified 18 EMSs, which are divided into five domains: *Disconnection / Rejection*, where individuals find it difficult forming attachments with others and believe that their need for love will not be met; *Impaired Autonomy / Performance*, where they appear extremely dependent on others; *Impaired Limits*, where they may demonstrate conduct problems and have difficulties adhering to rules and boundaries; *Other Directedness*, where they consistently seek to gain others’ approval, and *Over Vigilance / Inhibition*, where individuals feel like they need to suppress their feelings.

Research has attempted to explore the relationship between EMSs and sexual offending; with findings indicating that individuals who exhibit sexually aggressive behaviours have a higher frequency and variability of EMSs compared to non-sexual offender samples (Beech & Baker, 2004; Richardson, 2005). Carvalho and Nobre (2014) further explored the relationship between EMSs and sexual offending by administering the Young Schema Questionnaire to identify the EMSs in 33 child abusers. They found that the child abusers presented significantly more schemas from the *Disconnection / Rejection*, *Impaired Autonomy / Performance*, *Other Directness*, and *Over Vigilance / Inhibition* domain compared to the non-offender control group. More specifically, their results indicated that the

child abusers presented more schemas of *Abandonment, Mistrust, Defectiveness / Shame, Enmeshment, Subjugation, and Pessimism / Worry* than the control group.

It has been proposed that certain schemas such as *Hostile Masculinity, Suspiciousness, and Sexual Entitlement* are present within male sex offenders, (Mann & Shingler, 2006). Additionally, evidence suggests that child abusers' offending behaviours are typically driven by maladaptive schemas relating to mistrust / abuse, social incompetence, and insecure attachment (Chakhssi et al., 2013). Based on these findings, it has been queried whether there are associations between *Dangerous World IT* and *Mistrust EMS*, due to the fundamental beliefs associated with both variables around other people being untrustworthy and dangerous. In relation to the presence of the *Sexual Entitlement* schema within male sex offenders, it is possible that there is an association between the *IT Entitlement*; which is likely to underpin cognitions around having the right to meet their sexual needs, and the *EMS Entitlement / Superiority. Insufficient Self-Control* refers to an individual's inability to exert a level of control over their own impulses or feelings (Young et al., 2006); thus, it is anticipated that there may be links between this EMS and *Uncontrollability*. However, no research has attempted to explore these associations within a sample of child sex offenders.

Other studies that have attempted to explore EMSs within different clinical and offender populations have found a variety of EMSs within their samples. Jovev and Jackson (2004) explored the specificity of EMSs within three personality disorder (PD) groups and found that high scores within the *Dependence / Incompetence, Defectiveness / Shame* and *Abandonment* EMSs were associated in individuals with borderline personality disorder (BPD). However, the *Unrelenting Standards* and *Emotional Inhibition* EMSs were associated with the obsessive-compulsive PD and antisocial PD groups respectively. Chakhssi et al. (2013) found EMSs relating to *Abandonment, Social Isolation, Defectiveness / Shame, Subjugation, and Self-Sacrifice* were more prevalent in child sex offenders compared with

nonsexual violent offenders. Szlachcic, Fox, Conway, Lord, and Christie (2015) conducted a study into the relationship between EMSs and offence supportive attitudes of 31 mentally disordered sex offenders. They found that the sample possessed EMSs relating to *Insufficient Self-Control, Entitlement, and Enmeshment*. Furthermore, correlational analyses suggested that most of their offence supportive cognitions were associated with these schemas.

Mentally disordered child sex offenders

The research thus far has predominantly focused on identifying offence-supportive cognitions within non-mentally disordered child abusers. Sahota and Chesterman (1998) found that the cognitive distortions of mentally disordered sex offenders did not differ from those of their non-mentally ill counterparts. However, there has been no research that has attempted to elaborate on the ITs theory in relation to its relevance to child abusers who have experienced symptoms indicative of a mental disorder at the time of their offending.

Research has indicated that sexual offenders who present with serious and persistent mental illness are underrepresented within the sex offender literature. One of the reasons for this is due to the tenuous link between psychotic disorders and sexual offending. Packard and Rosner (1985) identified only 2 – 5% of the sex offender population suffered with a mental illness. Other findings have attributed factors such as substance misuse, personality disorders, anxiety disorders, depression, but not psychotic disorders to increasing the risk of sexual offending (Alish et al., 2007). However, Crassaiti and Hodes (1992) identified that criminal sexual behaviour post-dated the psychotic illness onset and occurred within the context of psychotic symptoms in 12 out of 15 cases where males with schizophrenia had committed sexual offences. Wallace et al. (1998) found that individuals with a diagnosis of schizophrenia were four times more likely to be convicted of a serious sexual offence compared to their non-mentally ill counterparts. Smith and Taylor (1999) identified high

sexual content within the psychotic symptoms of individuals who have perpetrated acts of sexual violence. Out of 80 participants in their study who were diagnosed with schizophrenia and whose index offence was of a sexual nature, they found that 96% reported experiencing delusions or hallucinations at the time of the offence. Nevertheless, the links between mental disorders and sexual offending remains poorly understood, which will have significant implications on the treatments provided for mentally disordered sex offenders. Furthermore, most of the studies examining mentally disordered sexual offenders have not differentiated between types of sexual offences; thus, raising questions about how applicable the findings are to specific subsets of sexual offender groups.

Based on previous findings, it is questioned whether sex offender treatment programmes would benefit from attempting to identify the EMSs of the perpetrators, as these seem to have a significant impact on how the individuals view the world and themselves. Identifying the roles of EMSs in motivating child abusers to commit sexual offences, and complementing this with the cognitive-behavioural approach that focuses on crime / victim related schemas could improve the outcome of sex offender treatment programmes and reduce recidivism rates.

Aims

This study aims to identify whether the five ITs identified within the non-mentally disordered child abuser population are applicable and relevant to the ITs identified within mentally disordered child sex offenders. Furthermore, the study explores whether there are any additional ITs relating to the participant's mental disorder and their sexual offences towards children.

The second aim of the study is to use Young's Schema Questionnaire (YSQ – S3; Young, 2005) to identify which EMSs are more prominent within this sample, and whether these match the EMSs identified within a non-mentally disordered child abuser sample.

The final aim of the study is to explore the link between the EMSs and ITs child abusers present with.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

It is predicted that mentally disordered child abusers will possess the same ITs as the non-mentally disordered population, but that additional ITs will be identified relating to their mental disorder.

Hypothesis 2

Participants will demonstrate EMSs relating to: *Abandonment*, *Mistrust*, *Insufficient Self-Control*, and *Entitlement / Superiority*, as identified in previous sex offender research.

Hypothesis 3

Based on the most prominent EMSs identified in previous sex offender research, it is predicted that *Uncontrollability*, *Dangerous World* and *Entitlement* will be the most common ITs amongst this sample.

Hypothesis 4

A significant association will be identified between *Dangerous World* (IT) and *Mistrust* (EMS), between *Uncontrollability* (IT) and *Insufficient Self-Control* (EMS) and between *Entitlement* (IT) and *Entitlement / Superiority* (EMS).

METHOD

Participants

Ten adult male convicted child abusers consented to participate in the study. A further three were approached but decided not to take part for personal reasons. Participants were identified over three forensic mental health establishments in the UK: one of which was within the NHS, and the other two were part of a private healthcare provider. The men all resided on medium secure wards and were under a section of the Mental Health Act. Six participants were under ¹Section 37/41. Four participants were under ²Section 37, ³Section 3, ⁴Section 45(a), and Section ⁵47/49. Seven of the men had already completed some form of sex offender treatment programme prior to the study. One male had not completed any treatment specific to his sexual offending history, and two men were engaging in sex offender treatment work at the time of the study. The age range of the sample at the time of data collection varied from 23 to 74 years (mean age = 45.7, SD = 22.1). There were 19 victims altogether, and their ages ranged from 3 to 15 years (mean age = 10.9, SD = 3.6). Eight participants had offended against under-age girls, and two had offended against under-age boys. In two cases, their index offence was not relating to any kind of sexual offence; however, together the participants received 17 convictions for CSA. Reports and participant admissions indicated the number of overall contact sexual offences towards children was significantly higher than what the conviction rates depicted. Nevertheless, specific numbers are unclear due to victims not reporting the offences to authorities. One participant engaged in regular sexual activities with under-age males, whom he described as “rent boys”; they were 15 and 16 years old at the time. He was never convicted of these offences. Another

¹ Section 37/41 is a hospital order with restrictions given by the Crown Court.

² Section 37 is a hospital order without restrictions given by the Crown Court.

³ Section 3 is admission to hospital for treatment.

⁴ Section 45(a) is a hospital direction order, also referred to as a hybrid order.

⁵ Section 45/49 transfer from prison with restrictions.

participant regularly touched female children in swimming pools, but these crimes were not reported. Three participants perpetrated intrafamilial CSA, but all ten individuals also offended against strangers. Three participants committed sexual offences during their adolescence. Despite residing in secure establishments since this time, they have continued to display sexual risks towards children, but have had no additional convictions of child sexual offences as an adult. Eight participants have a history of other offending behaviours including: theft, indecent assault and rape of an adult female, false imprisonment, arson, drunk and disorderly, and other violent related offences. A total of 50 non-sexual offences were recorded within the sample. The mental disorder diagnoses varied in the sample and included: Paranoid Schizophrenia (N = 2); Depression (N = 3); Conduct Disorder and ADHD (N = 1); Conduct Disorder, Attachment Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (N = 1); Schizoaffective Disorder (N = 1); and ⁶Multiple Disorders of Sexual Preference (N = 1). One participant had a primary diagnosis of Personality Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified. Seven participants had other co-morbid diagnoses of Personality Disorder, including: Borderline, Narcissistic, Anti-social, and Organic. Two participants were also assessed to have psychopathic traits. Five had a significant substance misuse history that was present at the time of their offending. Only one participant was in a relationship at the time of their offence. Four reported no relationship history at all, and one participant used to be married but his wife passed away seven years prior to the offence. Eight individuals reported a childhood history of abuse consisting of sexual, physical, emotional abuse and/or neglect. Six reported that they had been sexually abused themselves as a child.

Ethical Approval and Consent

⁶As classified within the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems – 10th version (ICD 10, World Health Organisation, 2010).

This study was conducted in accordance with the NHS research guidelines, as stipulated by the Birmingham and Solihull Research Ethics Committee. Additional ethical approval was also sought by the researcher's academic site and the different healthcare providers who oversaw the participants' care.

Information regarding the study was disseminated by the psychologist or psychiatrist involved in the patient's care. Individuals were given a participant information sheet and had at least a week to review the information. Those who verbally agreed to participate then met with the researcher to discuss the project in more detail. Following this, the individuals then chose whether they wanted to participate and completed the consent form.

Materials

Interviews

A semi-structured interview schedule was devised based on an interview template developed by Beech, Swaffer, Multra and Fisher (2009). This interview was used to extrapolate rapists' distorted beliefs and sexual fantasies, and although no specific procedure was used to test the reliability and validity of the interview schedule, it was able to identify the content, frequency, and triggers of the rapists' cognitive distortions. It was therefore felt that this schedule would also produce reliable and valid findings regarding the participants' cognitive distortions and the underlining schemas within this study. Two interviews were used: the first one gathered background information about the participant's personal and offending history. The second interview explored their sexual behaviours towards children in more detail, focusing on events, thoughts and feelings prior to, during and at the time of the offence. The participants were asked about distal and proximal antecedents at the time of their offence, including any fantasies relating to children or sexual feelings towards them. The last section of this interview also asked questions about their perceptions of victims of CSA in general.

Care was taken to ensure that open-ended questions were used and that the questions within the schedule were used during the interview. Certain prompts were used to establish their views on levels of controllability, degree of harm towards the victims, and their motivations at the time of the offence. Depending on the participant responses, additional prompts were asked to further explore their beliefs about their own needs, and their views of the world and other people.

Psychometrics

Early Maladaptive Schemas were measured using the Young Schema Questionnaire (YSQ – S3, Young, 2005), a copy of this measure is in the appendices (Appendix 14). This measure consists of 90 questions that explore the 18 EMSs and help to identify which schema and schema domains are most prevalent within each population. This questionnaire has been deemed to possess good psychometric properties and clinical utility (Waller, Meyer & Ohanian, 2001). Research examining the psychometric properties of the tool found good discriminant validity and internal consistency (Kriston, Schäfer, Jacob, Härter, & Hölzel, 2013; Saariaho, Saariaho, Karila, & Joukamaa, 2009). The participants were required to read each question, and then circle the response that best represents their views relating to that question. The responses are rated on a Likert scale from 1 (completely untrue of me), through to 6 (describes me perfectly).

Procedure

Once the participants had agreed to take part in the research, a time was arranged for the researcher to meet with the individuals to conduct the interviews. The interviews took place over two sessions; each lasted approximately one hour, and occurred in a private interview room in the hospital. The researcher arranged a third meeting with the participants to complete the YSQ – S3 and go through the debrief form. Each participant had another week after this final meeting to request for their information to be removed from the study. No

requests were made for this to happen. Both interviews were audio recorded, and transcribed verbatim into written text. The names of the participants were removed and replaced with a unique participant identification code using letters and numbers. Other identifiable information such as locations, and names of family members, victims, and professionals were also removed from the text. The researcher then analysed the transcripts and used the five ITs relating to CSA as ‘a priori’ codes to identify whether any of these five ITs were present within this data. Any additional offense supportive beliefs that did not seem relevant to the initial five codes were put into an “individualised IT” category. The scores from YSQ – S3 were copied onto the scoring database for the measure, and any responses rated as 5, or 6 were noted, in compliance with the scoring protocol detailed above.

Implicit Theory Identification

The coding was carried out by the chief investigator with an independent researcher looking through two of the transcripts to establish inter-rater reliability. The themes identified by both raters were similar in nature, and where there were discrepancies, it was due to the independent researcher identifying other themes that were not relevant to the research question, such as comments about relationship status. Template analysis (King, 2004) was used to code all ten transcripts and identify the themes within the text. Template analysis is a form of thematic analysis that is suitable for research topics where there is an existing literature base (King, 2004). Findings from previous literature can be used to influence the ‘a priori codes’ and form the basis of the initial template. This template is refined and developed as the researcher becomes more familiar with the text. The initial coding procedure generates an initial template for the data, which is then applied to the next transcript and adapted and expanded as it is applied to the different transcripts. The final template remains once there are no, or very few changes needed. The five ITs identified from previous research into child abusers formed the basis of the ‘a priori codes’ in this study: *Uncontrollability, Dangerous*

World, Degree of Harm, Child as Sexual Objects, and Entitlement. Once the ‘a priori codes’ had been applied to a couple of the transcripts, the template was developed further by breaking down each IT code to identify sub-themes within these categories. These sub-themes were identified through reading the transcripts and noticing variations in the content of conversations relating to each IT, which demonstrated how the ITs encompassed the different level of beliefs Ward (2000) stated offenders verbalised about themselves, other people, and the world. Each transcript was read through twice, with the template applied, to ensure that the final template accurately portrayed the themes and sub-themes depicted in the transcripts. The additional theme of mental disorder was also identified within the text, and will be discussed further within the results section.

Data Analysis for Early Maladaptive Schemas

The questionnaire was scored in accordance with the manual: results were collated onto the YSQ template where each question corresponds to a specific EMS. Scores of either a 5 (mostly true of me), or a 6 (describes me perfectly) on any of the questions are counted in the analysis. A score of 2 or more within any EMS is deemed meaningful by the author; thus, an individual who has rated themselves as a 5 or a 6 on at least two of the questions relating to that EMS has a significant score. The present EMSs were then grouped into the corresponding schema domains to see which domains were prevalent.

Data analysis for EMS associations with ITs

Any potential associations between specific ITs and prevalent EMSs were analysed further. The researcher used chi-square analyses to explore the significance of these associations and areas for further investigation have also been highlighted.

RESULTS

Implicit Theory content

Test of hypothesis 1 and 3

An analysis of the interview transcripts using the five ITs identified within a non-mentally disordered child sex offender population highlighted that these five ITs were also present within mentally disordered offenders. Furthermore, the additional theme of *Mental Disorder* seemed to impact on cognitions relating to *Uncontrollability*, *Entitlement*, and *Dangerous World*. No additional ITs relating to the participant's mental disorder were identified within this sample.

To establish whether an IT was present or not, the number of comments within the transcripts corresponding to each IT were counted. Cut-off scores to demonstrate the presence of ITs across the sample were identified. Two approaches were used to identify the cut-offs: looking at the IQR within each IT, due to the data being non-parametric; and looking at the average number of comments across each participant. There was a large variability in the overall number of comments made by the participants, with four participants (example P1, P4, P7 and P9) verbalising a lower number of overall comments relating to the ITs compared to their peers. Relying solely on the IQR to identify the cut-offs did not seem to accurately capture the ITs that were present amongst those participants. Therefore, if the participants' comments within specific ITs did not meet the cut-off based on the IQR, but did exceed the average number of comments verbalised within their interviews, then the IT was also deemed present for that participant. Table 5 depicts the number of comments, the IQR for each of the ITs, and the average number of comments for each participant. Table 6 provides a visual representation of the present ITs across the sample. Each IT has been broken down into specific sub-themes to demonstrate the different types of cognitions present

within each of the categories, including the way the participants viewed themselves, the world, and their victims. Table 7 demonstrates the distribution of comments within these sub-themes. A diagram depicting the ITs and the corresponding sub-themes can be seen in Figure 2. Example comments relating to each sub-theme have been detailed below, additional examples can be found in Appendix 16.

Table 5

Number of comments and cut-off points for ITs

⁷ PP	Uncontrollable	Dangerous World	Entitlement	Children as Sexual Objects	Degree of Harm	Total No. of comments	Average No. of comments
1	10	2	12	9	16	49	9.8
2	31	0	30	3	16	80	16
3	55	3	20	5	19	102	20.4
4	10	1	17	1	10	39	7.8
5	53	12	17	6	8	96	19.2
6	43	9	15	3	22	92	18.4
7	17	12	23	4	8	64	12.8
8	34	11	12	3	22	82	16.4
9	17	9	15	1	7	49	9.8
10	22	1	15	14	29	81	16.2
⁸ Q ¹	17	1.25	15	3	8.5		
⁹ Q ³	40.75	10.5	19.25	5.75	20.5		
¹⁰ IQR	23.75	9.25	4.25	2.75	12		

⁷ Participant

⁸ Lower quartile

⁹ Upper quartile

¹⁰ Inter-quartile range

Table 6

Presence of ITs across the sample

PP	Uncontrollable	Dangerous World	Entitlement	Children as Sexual Objects	Degree of Harm
1	1	0	1	1	1
2	1	0	1	1	1
3	1	0	1	1	1
4	1	0	1	0	1
5	1	1	1	1	0
6	1	1	1	1	1
7	1	1	1	1	0
8	1	1	1	1	1
9	1	1	1	0	0
10	1	0	1	1	1

0 = Not present

1 = Present

Children as Sexual Objects. As expected within this population, this was the second most common IT found amongst the sample. Nine cases made comments relating to this, and it was significantly present within eight participants (80%). This IT was separated into two sub-themes: *Physicality* and *Sexual Behaviour*. Individuals who significantly demonstrated this IT verbalised comments related to both sub-themes, but the comments relating to *Sexualised Behaviours* were the most common (N = 25 compared to N = 13).

The *Physicality* sub-theme describes the types of comments made by the participants regarding their attraction to the physical appearance of the child.

“I put it down to their face. Err, they’re not only better looking than adults, I mean they are, they’ve also got, err, it’s a more immature face than an adult..... I mean yes I like the small bodies, yes I like, err, I like the flat chests, err, but, erm, that isn’t to say that I don’t

like, err, well that's another thing I like partially developed boobs, but best of all a flat chest." (P10)

The *Sexual Behaviour* sub-theme refers to comments made by the participants in relation to the types of behaviours the victims displayed prior to the offence; which they interpreted to mean the victims were desiring sexual contact.

"They moved within sort of striking distance, not, err, apparently sort of inviting me to touch them." (P1)

Dangerous World. Nine cases referred to this, yet it was the least common IT and only significantly present in five participants (50%). One individual (P2) made no comments relating this, and one participant (P10) verbalised one comment relating to '*Past Experiences*'. Within the interviews, participants described their personal experiences and how this framed their beliefs about the dangers presented by others. No comments were made by any participant about how safe children were in relation to others. This IT was broken down into the following sub-themes: *Past Experiences* and *Adults / Others are Dangerous*. It seemed that experiences of their own abuse during childhood impacted on how they viewed the world and other people at that time.

The *Past Experiences* sub-theme highlighted the dangerous and threatening experiences the participants were exposed to, and how this shaped their views of others.

"Dad would never care less anyway. My family never used to care less anyway, bung him £20 and he'd go straight down the pub and get pissed up and that, ha. See I've had a hard life." (P7)

"When I was growing up right, and I was being physically abused, emotionally abused, and in some parts sexually abused by my family, I was going to the police, nurses, doctors at the hospital when I ended up injured, not one believed me, and that was from the

age of 7 onwards, didn't believe me. Even when I was offending they still didn't believe me."

(P9)

The *Adults / Others are Dangerous* sub-theme encompassed current views and beliefs verbalised by the participants about how dangerous they perceive other people to be.

"Cus quite clearly the government's corrupt." (P6)

Another participant talked about his perceptions of others based on the people he associated with prior to his offence.

"When you got people coming round at 3 in the morning and mum's in the house and everybody's like oh we're gonna do this we're gonna do that, you can't go to the police you can't go to anybody." (P5)

Two individuals voiced their opinions on historical child sexual abuse cases. They alluded to the victims of these cases being dangerous due to 'making up' allegations and getting innocent people, which is how they viewed themselves, convicted for sex crimes that they did not commit.

"My issue with such high profile things I disagree with them. Err, because they start to be a trend, yeah if you're someone who hasn't been abused, could turn round and say they were abused 10-16 years ago, there could be no evidence. Then someone out there, even though it's proven not guilty will always have that question mark above their heads. Erm the idea of, I think it's something like Sue's (Sarah's) law, err, stuff like that I disagree with, because it puts a target on even my back." (P6)

"They're talking about things that happened in the 1970s. There's no physical evidence anymore, even if anything did happen. So to me it's just a money making scheme on somebody else's behalf.....Because not only do these (inverted comma gesture) victims get

something out of this, so do the police officers investigating it, so I believe it's all a great big corruption in the system. Anybody in the world can turn round and say they've been touched by somebody as a child, but whether they're telling the truth or not, is another story.” (P8)

Degree of Harm. Comments referring to this IT were evidenced in all ten cases and significantly present within seven participants (70%). Three sub-themes were developed based on the comments identified within the transcripts: *Reactions of Others*, *Minimising Behaviour*, and *Victim Reactions*. These sub-themes highlight how the reactions of others (professionals and family members), and the reactions of the victims at the time of, and following the offence, influenced the perpetrator's beliefs regarding the level of harm the child experienced. *Minimising Behaviour* was the most prevalent sub-theme amongst the participants who demonstrated this IT.

The *Reactions of Others* sub-theme encompassed views the participant had about the reactions of other people, and how this reinforced their beliefs that the level of harm they caused the child was minimal.

“But then basically nothing happened, so no-one told me off, no one, the police were involved I found out at a later date, but they didn't interview me, they didn't really say much about it at the time. So I was still left, everything went behind the curtains at the time, so because I didn't know what that meant or why that was, I carried on, I thought “no that's fine”.” (P6)

The *Minimising Behaviour* sub-theme highlighted specific comments the participants expressed in relation to minimising the level of harm they perceived their actions had on the victim.

When asked if sexual activity with children causes them any harm, he replied, *“well, it shouldn't do.” (P3)*

One individual (P10) also talked about his own personal experiences of abuse, and linked his reaction to the abuse with how he believed other people should react.

“I don’t understand why they (victims) can’t come to terms with it like I did. Erm, I mean the way I look at it is.....she (his perpetrator) didn’t do me any harm and if she needed to do that well I’ve done her a turn (laughs). I mean I didn’t ask to do it, but she did me no harm so I can cope with it.” (P10)

A couple of participants talked about their actions demonstrating care towards the victims due to the victims’ personal circumstances at the time.

“Back then I thought it was me caring for her; showing love and affection, but now I know it’s not.” (P4)

“Because of all that (violence within the home) and because I’d seen his reaction and I kind of started to believe more of what she was saying, I booked her into a hotel room. Now I’d go to and from there to see if she was ok.” (P8)

The *Victim Reactions* sub-theme refers to the reactions of the victim during and following the offence, and how this reinforced the participants’ beliefs that their actions caused no harm to the victim. All ten cases talked about the reactions of their own victims, and the reactions of victims of CSA in general. Interestingly, differences were noted regarding the degree of harm the participants thought their victims would experience in comparison to other CSA victims.

“He were enjoying it. He were laughing and giggling, I couldn’t give him enough you know what I mean “more, more, harder, harder”.” (P3)

Some participants talked about the fear response displayed by their victims at the time of the offence, and explained that their victims occasionally attempted to resist what was

happening to them. Following on from this, when they were asked about CSA victims in general, all participants identified some short and long term consequences to victims, and eight of the cases identified that being a victim of CSA can cause harm to the child.

“I would say in all cases it does affect the child. Whether that be physical damage like forcing a penis into a vagina, or the emotional damage of the child.” (P2)

“I think it always causes harm.” (P4)

These findings suggest that there are differences in participants’ perceptions regarding the level of harm they believe their victims were exposed to, and the level of harm others can perpetrate towards victims. These comments provide further evidence for the minimisations perpetrators typically make about their own offending compared to others.

Entitlement. This was the most common IT alongside *Uncontrollability*. All ten participants (100%) made comments relevant to this IT, and it was significantly present within all individuals. Three sub-themes were identified within this IT: *Sexual Needs*, *Child as an Easy Target*, and *Needs (other)*. This IT encompassed beliefs expressed by the participants regarding their needs, the importance they placed on these needs, and how they attempted to meet them. Differences were noted between the types of needs verbalised by the participants; some individuals talked primarily about their sexual needs, whilst others also referred to a desire for love, intimate relationships, or to escape from a personal situation. However, the number of comments pertaining to each of the ‘Needs’ sub-themes was relatively even amongst the participants. The sub-theme of *Child as an Easy Target* was also noted throughout the transcripts. This sub-theme was less prominent within the transcripts, with a total of 15 comments referring to this across the nine participants.

Sexual Needs, this sub-theme refers to the participants believing that they have a right to meet their sexual needs through others, as and when required.

“So I wanted to like, in a way, go in, have sex, come out, and that would be the end of it.” (P2)

Needs (other). In addition to their sexual needs, participants also talked about other needs that they believed they have the right to address. These included: companionship, somebody to love, and to escape from their personal difficulties.

“It was about having the closeness and the relationship as well.” (P2)

“The thing is cus I was, all my life I was always a bully; took what I want fuck everyone else kind of attitude.” (P6)

One individual talked about his sexual behaviours with the victims as an exchange: the victims getting what they want, and in return he gets his needs met. This comment could also be linked with the minimising behaviour sub-theme; however, he was not implying that his behaviours caused less harm to the victim; he was attempting to justify why he engaged in those sexual acts with the victims.

“Like an exchange really, I’ll do this for you, you do that for me. They (victims) wanted summat they want it, err, like one of em said to me one day they said “I’ve seen a nice sweatshirt up in JD sports”, I think it was a Nike one about £30 or £40, and he said “I’d love to have that”, and I said “ok, do you want me to buy it for you then”, he said “yeah I wouldn’t mind” I said “you know what you gotta do for it don’t you” he said, “what, yeah I do”.” (P7)

This comment seemed to stem from a fundamental belief he had about the world based on his earlier experiences of being victimised, and the value he placed on certain things, like earning money.

“I didn’t mind helping him out, he’d pay me good money, buy me clothes, £200-300 at a time. I was making a fortune, so I didn’t mind, ha.....that’s what life is all about, money. You can do anything for money, so I didn’t think it was wrong.” (P7)

The *Child as an Easy Target* sub-theme referred to comments made about children being vulnerable; thus, providing participants with an opportunity to ensure their needs could be fulfilled.

“Children can be manipulated by adults because they are not so mature, and erm, adults in that case could take advantage of children, err, by getting them to do things that they wouldn’t normally do if they didn’t persuade them.” (P10)

Uncontrollability. This IT featured most prominently within the participants’ offence accounts. Consequently, it was deemed significantly present within all ten cases (100%). Four sub-themes were identified: *Thoughts, Own Behaviour* (consisting of *Substances* and *Sexual Urges*), *Others’ Behaviour*, and *Personal Rules*. Distinct differences were noted within the transcripts around participants being unable to control their thoughts, and being unable to control their behaviours, which some participants linked with their use of substances or their sexual urges prior to and at the time of their offence. Two participants also talked about their own internal rules regarding what would be ‘right and wrong’ at the time, which influenced their perceived level of control over the situation. Participants also talked about the role of other people, including the victims, in making them feel like they had no control over what was happening at the time of the offence. Overall, participants verbalised feeling out of control due to other people’s actions, more than they felt out of control of their own thoughts. This could be attributed to the participants’ unwillingness to take responsibility for their actions.

Thoughts. Eight participants perceived that their thoughts were out of their control, including thoughts about the victim, sexual fantasies, and having no control over their thoughts in general.

“Summat there is uncontrollable in my head.” (P3)

The *Own Behaviour* sub-theme demonstrates participants’ beliefs that their behaviours were out of their control. All participants demonstrated this theme within their offence accounts; however, three participants cite substances as one of the reasons for being unable to control their behaviours. Six participants attributed their lack of control over their behaviours to their sexual urges. All participants made comments to feeling out of control at some point during their offending but do not refer to specific influential variables; this has been titled ‘*General*’.

Sexual Urges

“I obviously was sexually aroused at the time (of the offence), so that played a factor in it.” (P5)

“I think that idea of even sex, I think just the word, even the idea of sex just really like triggered something like.” (P6)

Substances

“Yeah I was on my own, I was under the influence of alcohol and drugs at the time, and obviously I committed the offence.” (P5)

“I’d been smoking a lot of cannabis earlier in the afternoon. Smoking a lot of cannabis and when I smoke cannabis it makes me feel sexy.” (P7)

General

Talking about offending against children in swimming pools, *“I would need to try, or felt compelled to try sort of more than once per visit.”* (P1)

Talking about his role as ‘master’ during the sexual offence, *“I had to do it.”* (P3)

The *Others Behaviour* sub-theme refers to other people’s actions, and how that reduced the participant’s level of control at the time of their offending. Their responses included the role of victims and how other people’s decisions influenced the level of control the participants experienced. All ten participants referred to this in their interviews.

“When I went to her house I thought maybe her dad would be there, or maybe her parent, or her sister would be there. But when she wasn’t I think that’s what also triggered that spur of the moment feeling.” (P2)

The *Personal Rule* sub-theme refers to the participants’ own rules about what they think is right or wrong. Within the context of the offence, they used these rules to guide what they could and could not do to the victim. Only two participants voiced comments relating to this sub-theme, however, it featured more prominently within P10.

“The problems were the child belongs to somebody, if somebody came, tampered with my child, it’s my possession, you know, I don’t like that. I wouldn’t want somebody tampering with my car, nor would I like somebody tampering with my son. So it was the parents and the people who own the child who you have to negotiate with in my mind.” (P10)

Despite all participants having diagnoses of a variety of mental disorders, no additional ITs were identified within the transcripts in relation to their mental disorder. However, it was noted that possessing a mental disorder seemed to influence three ITs (*Uncontrollability, Entitlement, and Dangerous World*) and potentially increased the participant’s vulnerability at the time.

Uncontrollability. Eight participants verbalised how their mental disorder linked with their levels of control: three participants talked about their thoughts being uncontrollable, and five participants talked about their behaviour being uncontrollable.

Thoughts

“You know, me mind said the devil told me to go for it, and I went for it.” (P3)

“My mind-set at the time, going through the depression and everything, and the post-traumatic stress whatever, I think a lot of that was related to how I felt about the death of my Uncle and my father.” (P5)

Own Behaviour

“I was just too stressed at the time, I was poorly, I just stuck with it, so I did as she told me to do.” (P8)

Entitlement. Four participants made links between their mental disorder and meeting their needs. These comments related to their sexual needs, and about trying to escape the situation they were in.

Needs (other)

“So trying to fill those needs and being, well at the time, you know they can’t diagnose me with Personality Disorder, but they diagnosed me with a Conduct Disorder.” (P2)

Dangerous World. Two participants made comments relating their mental disorder to their views of the world and their perceptions of other people.

Past Experiences

“There was a time I got so depressed that I wished I was kidnapped and put on a, erm, sex slave ring. Literally my life was total shit at the time, I’m telling you now death wouldn’t

have come quick enough then. Erm, I got to a point where I was about giving up on life, and that, got into self-harming.” (P6)

Adult / Others are Dangerous

“Well I think it made me more vulnerable sort of.” (P7)

It is possible that participants already possessed beliefs underpinned by these three ITs, but the presence of their mental disorder activated the ITs and made them more prominent.

Table 7

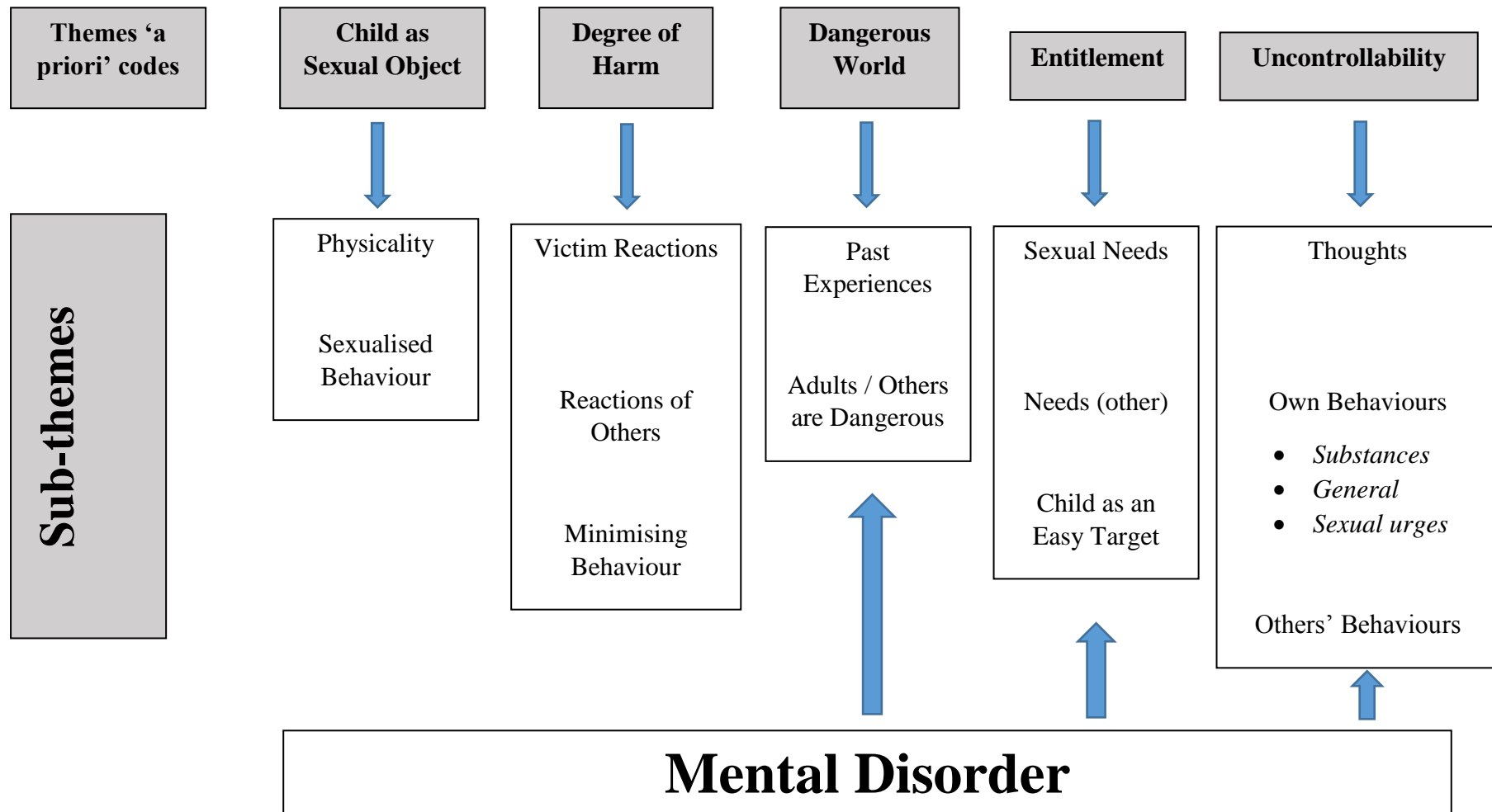
Presence of Implicit Theories and sub-themes

PP	Thoughts	UNCONTROLLABLE				Others' Behaviours	ENTITLEMENT			DANGEROUS WORLD		DEGREE OF HARM			CHILDREN AS SEXUAL OBJECTS	
		Own Behaviours					Sexual Needs	Needs (other)	Child as an Easy Target	Past Experiences	Adult / Others are dangerous	Reactions of Others	Minimising Behaviour	Victim Reactions	Physicality	Sexual Behaviour
		Substances	Sexual Urges	General	Personal Rule											
1	4	0	2	2	0	2	5	0	1	1	1	5	4	7	1	8
2	8	0	5	14	0	4	15	13	2	0	0	2	6	5	3	0
3	11	0	16	15	0	13	17	2	1	0	3	1	3	9	3	2
4	2	0	0	5	0	3	4	9	4	0	1	0	6	4	0	1
5	8	13	3	18	1	11	3	14	0	6	6	1	7	0	4	2
6	10	4	3	10	0	16	5	8	2	3	5	4	15	3	0	3
7	0	1	0	8	0	8	9	14	0	4	7	3	4	1	3	1
8	1	5	0	7	0	21	0	12	0	6	5	1	18	3	0	3
9	0	0	0	11	0	6	4	8	3	5	4	0	4	3	2	0
10	4	0	3	4	7	11	12	0	3	1	0	8	16	5	2	12

Indicates presence of ITs

Figure 2

A diagram of themes and sub-themes identified within the transcripts



Further analysis of the ITs data indicates that there is a sub-set of participants who do not possess the *Dangerous World* IT, but who do present with *Degree of Harm*. It is questioned whether certain individuals who do not perceive others to be dangerous, or consider their past experiences to be an indicator of how threatening the world is, also perceive that their sexual behaviours with children have not been harmful. It is possible that their fundamental beliefs about the level of threat other people pose has influenced their beliefs regarding the levels of threat they can pose to others, e.g. other people are not dangerous; therefore, I am not dangerous to children. Furthermore, participants P5, P7 and P9, who presented with the *Dangerous World* IT, did not present with the *Degree of Harm* IT. A chi-square analysis was performed to explore this link in more detail and showed a significant effect: $X^2(1, N = 10) = 6.43, p < 0.05$ (Appendix 17).

Early Maladaptive Schemas

Test of Hypothesis 2

One participant refused to complete the YSQ – S3, due to his paranoia at the time about completing questionnaires; therefore, the data is based on nine respondents. Table 8 depicts the presence of EMSs amongst the participants. All EMSs were present, but six maladaptive schemas were more common amongst this sample: *Abandonment* (67%), *Mistrust* (78%), *Unrelenting Standards* (78%), *Insufficient Self Control* (67%), *Pessimism / Worry* (67%) and *Self Punitiveness* (67%). The *Abandonment / Instability*, and *Mistrust* EMSs are present within the *Disconnection / Rejection* domain. *Unrelenting Standards*, *Pessimism / Worry* and *Self Punitiveness* are part of the *Over Vigilance / Inhibition* domain, and *Insufficient Self Control* is part of the *Other Directedness* domain. These results support previous findings regarding the maladaptive schemas and corresponding schema domains that are prevalent within child abusers.

Five participants (56%) demonstrated beliefs that were indicative of *Self-Sacrifice*, *Entitlement / Superiority* and *Approval Seeking / Recognition*. Previous research found *Self-Sacrifice* and *Entitlement* schemas were present within a sex offender sample compared to a non-sex offender sample. The *Enmeshment* schema was the least common, with only one individual scoring on this. Previous research has identified that this schema was present within a mentally disordered sex offender population; however, it is unclear if that population was a specific subset of sex offenders, like child abusers, or whether it incorporated a variety of sexual offenders.

Table 8Presence of Early Maladaptive Schemas

Participant No.	Emotional Deprivation	Abandonment	Mistrust	Social Isolation/Alienation	Defectiveness/Unlovability	Failure to Achieve	Dependence	Vulnerability to Harm	Enmeshment	Subjugation	Self-Sacrifice	Emotional Inhibition	Unrelenting Standards	Entitlement/Superiority	Insufficient Self-Control	Approval Seeking/Recognition	Pessimism/Worry	Self-Punitiveness
1		X	X	X		X		X		X		X	X		X	X	X	X
2		X	X						X	X	X				X	X	X	
3	X	X	X					X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
4		X		X			X				X			X	X			
5		X	X	X	X		X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6	X		X										X	X			X	X
7																		
8		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
9			X										X					X
10													X					

Links between ITs and EMSs

Test of hypothesis 4

Inspection of the data highlighted potential associations between the ITs and EMSs; thus, chi-square analysis tests were performed to tentatively explore the significance of these associations. Two significant effects were identified between *Child as Sexual Object* and *Pessimism / Worry*, and *Child as Sexual Object* and *Approval Seeking / Recognition*.

It was hypothesised that there would be a link between *Dangerous World* and *Mistrust* due to the fundamental beliefs associated with this IT. Four individuals who demonstrated the *Mistrust* schema also verbalised comments pertaining to *Dangerous World*; however, chi-square analysis indicated no significant effect between these two variables. It is important to note that one participant (P7) who demonstrated a presence of *Dangerous World* beliefs did not complete the YSQ – S3; thus, this may have influenced the results.

Another hypothesis referred to a potential link between *Insufficient Self-Control* and *Uncontrollability*. Six participants demonstrated a significant score within this EMS, and the individuals who did not score on this seemed to have a low number of significant maladaptive schemas; participants 6, 9 and 10 indicated that they possessed a total of 6, 3 and 1 EMSs respectively. Additionally, *Vulnerability to Harm* and *Subjugation* may also be associated with this IT, as they both refer to feeling out of control within situations, or surrendering control to others. However, no significant effects were found between *Uncontrollability* and any of the EMSs discussed above.

It was assumed that there would be a link between *Entitlement* IT, and *Entitlement / Superiority* EMS. However, only five participants demonstrated significant scores within this schema, despite this being one of the most prevalent ITs within the sample.

In relation to the eight participants who demonstrated paedophilic tendencies, certain EMSs appeared present within this sub-group of offenders. Unfortunately, P7 refused to complete the questionnaire so his scores cannot be included; however, six participants (67%) demonstrated significant scores within the *Unrelenting Standards* EMS. This was the only schema rated significant for P10. A chi-square analysis indicated no significant effect between the *Child as Sexual Object* IT and this EMS. Six participants also scored within the significant range for *Mistrust*, and *Pessimism / Worry*. Chi-square analysis indicated that there was a significant effect between this IT and *Pessimism / Worry*, $X^2(1, N = 9) = 5.14, p < 0.05$ (Appendix 17); however, no significant effect was found between this IT and *Mistrust*. Five individuals (56%) within this group also scored within the significant range on *Approval Seeking / Recognition*. A chi-square test was performed and indicated a significant effect between *Child as Sexual Object* and this EMS, $X^2(1, N = 9) = 3.21, p < 0.1$ (Appendix 17).

Preliminary analyses have highlighted significant associations amongst ITs, and between specific ITs and EMSs; therefore, it will be useful to explore the significance of these links in more detail with a larger sample in the future.

DISCUSSION

This study looked at ITs and EMSs within a mentally disordered sample of child sex offenders. The results supported some aspects of the hypotheses relating to prevalent EMSs and ITs, but additional associations were also identified across ITs, and between EMSs and ITs, which were not predicted prior to the study.

Hypotheses 1 and 3

Participants displayed the same ITs as their non-mentally disordered counterparts, but no new ITs relating to mental disorder were identified. Expanding on previous ITs research, sub-themes within each of the ITs were identified to demonstrate the different level of beliefs verbalised by the participants.

Although no additional ITs relating to mental disorder were identified, this variable seemed to impact on the participant's perceived locus of control (*Uncontrollability*), their entitlement beliefs (*Entitlement*), and influenced their views around the safety and trustworthiness of others (*Dangerous World*).

As predicted, *Uncontrollability* and *Entitlement* were the two most common ITs, demonstrating a presence across all participants. *Dangerous World* was the least common IT, which did not support the initial hypothesis. It was noted that both *Uncontrollability* and *Entitlement* encompassed thoughts pertaining to specific individuals and specific circumstances relating to the offence, as well as thoughts pertaining to general experiences outside of their offending; which may explain why they were prevalent within the participants' offence accounts.

A significant association was found between *Degree of Harm* and *Dangerous World*, which was not predicted in the initial hypothesis. Beliefs regarding the dangerousness posed by others were linked with their beliefs about the level of harm they caused their victims.

Offenders who possess beliefs about other people being dangerous and perpetrating harm towards others can acknowledge that their behaviours caused a level harm to the child. Whereas, if they do not possess beliefs about other people being untrustworthy and dangerous, then it seems that they are less likely to accept that they can perpetrate harm, and are more likely to minimise the level of harm imposed on the child.

Hypothesis 2

The results from this study indicated a high variability of EMSs across the sample, including *Abandonment*, *Mistrust*, and *Insufficient Self-Control*, as predicted prior to the study. *Unrelenting Standards*, *Pessimism / Worry*, and *Self-Punitiveness* were also prevalent amongst this sample, which was not predicted in the initial hypothesis. Individuals who endorse beliefs relating to punitiveness were typically exposed to harsh punishments during childhood (Young et al., 2006). These individuals may engage in relationships with children as a way of staying safe, or to project their punishments onto others.

Only half of the sample scored within the significant range for the *Entitlement / Superiority* schema, which is surprising, given all participants demonstrated the presence of the *Entitlement IT*. Discrepancies between these two variables could be attributed to the differences in perceptions regarding getting their sexual needs met, and general beliefs around getting what you want regardless of the consequences. Approximately half of the comments within the *Entitlement IT* related to sexual needs, and the other half related to meeting other needs. Thus, it is possible that because the YSQ – S3 only explored the participants' perceptions around meeting their general needs, it has provided an under-representation of entitlement beliefs.

The EMSs results suggest interventions may benefit from addressing offenders' EMSs: *Abandonment*, *Mistrust*, *Insufficient Self-Control*, *Unrelenting Standards*, and *Pessimism / Worry*, alongside exploring and challenging their pro-offending cognitions.

Hypothesis 4

No significant associations were identified between *Dangerous World* and *Mistrust*, *Entitlement* and *Entitlement / Superiority*, or between *Uncontrollability* and *Insufficient Self-Control*, as hypothesised prior to the study. However, unexpected significant associations were found between *Child as Sexual Object*, *Pessimism / Worry*, and *Approval Seeking / Recognition*. It is possible that individuals who place an excessive emphasis on seeking approval, recognition, or attention from others (Young et al., 2006), interpret children's behaviours in a sexualised way; they perceive that children are more likely than adults to accept them, and interpret innocent interactions initiated by the child as proof that the child is showing them attention.

Individuals who score within the significant range for *Pessimism / Worry* EMS are typically encompassed by feelings of worry; they think about negative outcomes and appear hypervigilant and indecisive. Carvalho et al. (2014) found *Pessimism / Worry* to be prevalent amongst their sample of child abusers; however, it is unclear how beliefs relating to this are linked to beliefs about the sexualised behaviours of children. Mann et al. (2006) suggested that a pessimistic outlook on life develops during childhood and protects individuals from the negative representations they have of the world. Worrying about their future and negative life events is likely to impair their ability to develop appropriate interpersonal relationships; thus, increasing the risk of developing inappropriate relationships with children (Carvalho, et al., 2014). Further exploration is warranted to explore how these variables are associated and how this influences decisions to engage in sexual activities with children.

Overall, the results suggest getting their needs met (*Entitlement*) is a predominant motivating factor for individuals perpetrating sexual acts against children. All participants minimised their level of ownership and responsibility for the sexual offences by attributing locus of control to external factors (*Uncontrollability*), and most participants justified their actions by minimising the impact on the child (*Degree of Harm*). Therefore, interventions that support the individuals to meet their needs in pro-social ways, and help to increase their internal locus of control may also be effective in reducing recidivism rates within this population.

Limitations

The sample size is relatively small for quantitative methodology. It is possible that the sample size impacted on the accuracy of any statistical analysis procedures; therefore, it would be useful to replicate this study with a larger sample.

This sample was not a homogenous group due to the variety of mental disorders present within forensic mental health establishments. It is possible that additional variables, such as personality disorders, may have confounded the results by influencing the type of EMSs that were more prevalent across this sample. Furthermore, one participant refused to complete the questionnaire, which may have affected the EMSs results.

Certain limitations are associated with using interviews as an approach to gather data. The participants were given a brief about the study prior to the interviews; therefore, they may have adapted their answers to provide socially desirable responses. Participants who have difficulties trusting other people are less likely to be open and honest; thus, potentially influencing their replies during the interview. Furthermore, one participant was in denial about his offence, which impacted on how he responded to specific questions. The time limitations reduced the amount of information obtained during the interviews. A couple of

participants also made attempts to divert the conversation to other topics, which further impacted on the amount of time available to explore their responses.

Future Research

This study demonstrated that the same ITs are present within a mentally disordered child sex offender population, and that symptoms associated with their mental disorder potentially perpetuate beliefs relating to *Uncontrollability*, *Entitlement*, and *Dangerous World*. It would be useful to explore the ITs and sub-themes within a larger sample of mentally disordered child abusers and to explore whether specific mental disorder diagnoses are associated with variations in ITs.

Preliminary statistical analysis indicated significant associations between *Child as Sexual Object*, *Pessimism / Worry* and *Approval Seeking / Recognition*. These associations were unexpected, and would benefit from further exploration within a larger sample of mentally disordered child abusers. Furthermore, it would be helpful to examine the specific variables that underpin these associations, as these findings may help identify additional target areas for sex offender treatments to explore, which may help reduce the risk these individuals pose to children.

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Executive Summary

PERPETRATORS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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Executive Summary

Perpetrators of child sexual abuse

This paper provides an overview of a systematic review and empirical research study submitted as partial fulfilment for the degree of Doctorate in Forensic Clinical Psychology, University of Birmingham, UK.

Key terms

The terms ‘child sexual abuse’ ‘child sexual offenders’ and ‘perpetrators of child sexual abuse’ are used throughout both papers. Child sexual abuse refers to any kind of sexual activity that involved male and female individuals under the age of 16. Child sexual offenders, and perpetrators of child sexual abuse refer to male perpetrators only; references to female perpetrators have been made clear by using the adjective ‘female’ within the text.

Child sexual abuse in context

The National Society of Protection and Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) estimate that 1 in 20 children are a victim of sexual abuse (Bentley, O’Hagan, Raff, & Bhatti, 2016). Furthermore, the latest figures show that there has been a rise in child sexual abuse cases across the UK.

The total number of recorded sexual offences against children under the age of 16 in England has increased by 85% over a five-year period from 16,627 in 2010/11 to 30,698 in 2014/15.

Within Wales the number of recorded cases has doubled over the past ten years, from 779 in 2004/05 to 2,461 in 2014/15, and in Scotland the number of cases has increased by 52%, from 2,284 in 2010/11 to 4,082 in 2014/15 (Bentley et al., 2016).

Perpetrators of child sexual abuse

Research into perpetrators of child sexual abuse has focused primarily on male offenders. Over time, researchers have explored the cognitive distortions of male offenders, and have developed theories of sexual offending based on the risk factors associated with this population. More recently, studies have explored the core beliefs and schemas of child offenders to understand the factors that underpin their cognitive distortions.

Historically, societal perspectives of women indicated that females were highly unlikely to perpetrate sexual offences against children. More recent findings suggest that females account for approximately 5% of all sexual offenders across the UK, Canada, USA, Australia and New Zealand. However, this statistic varies depending on the data gathering methods employed: self-report studies indicate higher prevalence rates of female perpetrated sexual abuse compared to case report studies.

A Systematic Review of the Literature

A review of public and professional attitudes towards female and male child sex offenders

The aim of the review was to systematically explore and evaluate the existing literature base regarding societal views of male and female child offenders.

A search of the literature was conducted in June 2016 using online medical databases. After accounting for the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 14 papers were identified: ten papers were quantitative studies, two papers were qualitative studies and two papers were systematic reviews. Five papers focused solely on female perpetrators and nine papers compared male and female perpetrators. Three quality frameworks were used to assess the overall quality of the papers; this identified that three papers demonstrated major

methodological flaws due to the study design employed, and the risk of bias in the sample, which may have impacted on the applicability of the results.

The findings from the review indicated distinct differences between male and female perpetrators. In relation to the victim characteristics of male versus female perpetrated sexual abuse, the findings indicated that male offenders were more likely to abuse victims who were older ($M = 9.3$ years) compared to their female counterparts ($M = 6.0$ years). Both perpetrators were more likely to abuse girls than boys, however there was a statistically significant difference between the number of boy victims abused by males compared to females (23.7% to 37.9% respectively). Additional findings were also noted regarding the influence of gender stereotypes on perceptions of how child sexual abuse affected boy victims compared to girls.

Studies into the victims of child sexual abuse highlighted that abuse perpetrated by either gender impacted on victims in very similar ways; with negative effects on their psychological well-being and the development of maladaptive coping strategies noted within these studies. However, professional and public perceptions indicated that victims of female perpetrated abuse would be less negatively affected than victims of male perpetrated abuse.

Differences were also noted in conviction and incarceration rates between female and male perpetrators. Females were less likely to receive prison sentences for their abuse, and if they did, the sentence length would be significantly shorter than their male counterparts. Judges were more likely to take mitigating factors into account for female perpetrators and less likely to do this for male offenders, even when the mitigating factors were the same across both offenders.

Overall, the findings indicated that victims of both female and male perpetrated sexual abuse would be negatively affected by the abuse, however, it was apparent that female perpetrated sexual abuse was deemed less severe than abuse perpetrated by males. These views influenced treatment and punishment responses by professionals, and influenced the level of investigation conducted by professionals. Societal attitudes towards female sex offenders resulted in victims of female perpetrated sexual abuse perceiving that professionals would not believe their allegations, nor would they be investigated as rigorously, compared to victims of male perpetrated abuse.

The Empirical Paper

Examining implicit theories and early maladaptive schemas in mentally disordered child sex offenders

Template Analysis was the qualitative approach used to analyse the interview transcripts of ten male mentally disordered child sex offenders. All ten individuals were residing within medium secure facilities across England and had received convictions for contact sexual offences against children under the age 16. A semi-structured interview schedule was developed to explore the personal histories of the participants and the specific Implicit Theories (ITs) that had already been identified within a non-mentally disordered population: *Uncontrollability* (feeling out of control), *Dangerous World* (other people are untrustworthy and pose a danger), *Degree of Harm* (minimising the level of harm perpetrated towards the child), *Entitlement* (getting their needs met), and *Child as Sexual Object* (sexual attraction towards children). The interviews took place in a private room within the hospital to help the participants feel comfortable and willing to discuss their experiences. Two interviews were completed: the first interview explored their personal history and the second interview focused on their offence accounts. These interviews were completed over separate days to limit the pressure they were exposed to. To assess the participants' Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMSs), participants also completed Young Schema Questionnaire (version 3 – shortened version, YSQ – S3).

The five ITs previously identified within non-mentally disordered child offenders were present within this sample. However, different sub-themes were identified within each of these ITs which represented the different level beliefs possessed by the offender. Additionally, mental disorder seemed to impact on the activation of three ITs:

Uncontrollability, Entitlement, and Dangerous World. *Uncontrollability* and *Entitlement* were the most common ITs amongst the sample, whereas *Dangerous World* was the least common. A significant association was found between *Degree of Harm* and *Dangerous World*: individuals who possessed *Degree of Harm* did not possess *Dangerous World* and vice versa.

Mistrust and *Unrelenting Standards* were the most common EMSs, followed by *Abandonment, Self-Punitiveness, Pessimism / Worry* and *Insufficient Self-Control*, which supported previous findings into the EMSs of sexual offenders. *Enmeshment* was the least common EMS, with only one individual scoring within the significant range. This contradicts a previous finding, which highlighted that this schema was prevalent within their sample of sex offenders.

Chi-square analysis was performed to tentatively explore any significant associations between EMSs and ITs. A significant association was found between *Pessimism / Worry, Approval Seeking / Recognition* (EMSs) and *Child as Sexual Object* (IT). Further exploration is warranted within a larger sample to understand this association and how it links to offending against children.

This research has highlighted common themes and schemas across a sample of mentally disordered child sex offenders. Clinical recommendations within this study highlight that future treatments amongst this population should attempt to address the present EMSs and support the individuals to meet their needs and establish a level of control over their lives in appropriate ways to reduce their risk of reoffending.

This study contributes to the existing literature base relating to male child abusers and further highlights similarities and differences amongst offenders who possess symptoms indicative of a mental disorder and their non-mentally ill counterparts. Further research would benefit from exploring the relevance of these findings within a larger sample of mentally disordered sex offenders. Furthermore, it may be helpful to use a homogenous group of mentally disordered offenders to explore whether these findings vary across different sub-groups of offenders with a mental disorder.

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Dissemination document for participants

**WHAT ARE THE THOUGHTS AND CORE BELIEFS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH A
MENTAL DISORDER WHO HAVE OFFENDED AGAINST CHILDREN?**

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Dissemination document for participants

During the recruitment process, participants and professionals at the research sites verbalised their desire to receive feedback about the findings of this study. A document has been developed to disseminate the results from this study to the participants and the professionals who were involved in supporting recruitment, to aid their clinical practice with the mentally disordered sex offender population.

The dissemination document will be presented to the participant by the chief investigator where possible, or where appropriate, by their clinician who liaised with the participant and chief investigator during the recruitment process. The document will also be made available to professionals who have requested a copy of the results.

WHAT ARE THE THOUGHTS AND EARLY MALADAPTIVE SCHEMAS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH A MENTAL DISORDER WHO HAVE OFFENDED AGAINST CHILDREN?

Information

Many studies have explored the thoughts and beliefs of male child sex offenders. However, very few studies have attempted to look at how relevant these findings are to individuals who have offended against children whilst experiencing symptoms indicative of a mental disorder.

Recent studies have looked at core beliefs, or schemas, of sex offenders to understand whether these influence the types of thoughts they have about themselves, their victims, and other people. However, very few studies have examined these within a mentally disordered sex offender population.

This study has examined whether the thoughts and schemas identified within a non-mentally disordered sample are like those identified in a sample of child abusers with a mental disorder. This study has also explored the significance of any associations between the thoughts and schemas. Recommendations have been made about future research topics, and about appropriate treatment recommendations for this client group.

What did the researcher do?

Ten males, who had convictions for child sexual offences and resided in forensic mental health units were interviewed. Two interviews were completed in total: one focused on gathering information about their personal history, and one explored their offending against the victims in more detail. Participants also completed a questionnaire (Young Schema Questionnaire, YSQ – S3, Young, 2005), which looked at their early maladaptive schemas.

The second interviews were analysed and common themes relating to the thoughts of the participants were highlighted. The questionnaires were scored so maladaptive schemas relating to each participant were identified.

What were the results?

Five themes were identified across the sample in relation to their thoughts, these were: feeling out of control (*Uncontrollability*); getting their needs met (*Entitlement*); other people posing a danger (*Dangerous World*); sexual attraction towards children (*Child as Sexual Object*); and minimising the level of harm perpetrated towards the child (*Degree of Harm*). These findings are the same as those found in a sample of child abusers with no mental disorder. The most common thoughts were related to Entitlement and Uncontrollability.

Each of the five themes were broken down further to show the different types of thoughts relating to these categories, see Table 9.

Table 9

Themes and sub-themes representing the participants' thoughts

Uncontrollability			Dangerous World	
Thoughts	Own Behaviours e.g. Substances, Sexual Urges and General	Others' Behaviours	Past Experiences	Adults / Others are dangerous
Related to their thoughts being out of their control, including thoughts about the victim, sexual fantasies, and having no control over their thoughts in general.	Believed their behaviours were out of their control. This was attributed to being under the influence of substances, having no control over their sexual urges, or perceiving that they had no control over their actions in general.	Comments about other people's actions, and how that reduced the participant's level of control at the time of their offending.	Highlighted the dangerous and threatening experiences the participants were exposed to growing up, which shaped their views of others.	Highlighted current views and beliefs verbalised by the participants about how dangerous they perceive other people to be.

Table 9 cont.

Entitlement			Degree of Harm			Child as sexual Object	
Sexual Needs	Child is Easy Target	Needs (other)	Reactions of Others	Victim Reactions	Minimising Behaviour	Physical Appearance	Sexualised Behaviours
Believing that they had the right to meet their sexual needs through others, as and when required.	Referred to comments about children being vulnerable; thus, enabling participants to meet their needs.	Participants talked about other needs they believed they had the right to address. These included: companionship, somebody to love, and as a way of escaping from personal difficulties.	Views about the reactions of other people and how this reinforced their beliefs that the level of harm they caused the child was minimal.	The reactions of the victim during and following the offence, which reinforced the participants' beliefs that their actions caused no harm to the victim.	Specific comments expressed by the participants that minimised the level of harm they perceived their actions had on the victim.	Comments about their attraction to the physical appearance of the child.	Comments made in relation to the types of behaviours the victims displayed prior to the offence; which they believed meant the victims were desiring sexual contact.

Participants' mental disorder influenced their thoughts relating to *Uncontrollability*, *Entitlement*, and *Dangerous World*. For example, they said that their mental disorder made it difficult for them to meet their needs in appropriate ways, or affected how much control they had over their thoughts prior to their offending.

An association was found between *Degree of Harm* and *Dangerous World*. Individuals who demonstrated thoughts relating to *Degree of Harm* did not verbalise thoughts that indicated the presence of *Dangerous World*, and vice versa.

The most common Early Maladaptive Schemas were: *Abandonment* (67%), *Mistrust* (78%), *Unrelenting Standards* (78%), *Insufficient Self-Control* (67%), *Pessimism / Worry* (67%) and *Self-Punitiveness* (67%).

A significant association was found across participants who had thoughts about *Children as Sexual Objects* and who possessed the *Pessimism / Worry* schema.

56% of people also possessed the *Approval Seeking / Recognition* maladaptive schema. A significant association was found across participants who had thoughts about *Children as Sexual Objects* and who also had this schema.

How are these findings helpful?

These findings show the similarities and differences between mentally disordered and non-mentally disordered child sex offenders. They also show how mental disorder can influence the thoughts of individuals.

The results show which Early Maladaptive Schemas are the most common amongst this client group, which may help to guide treatment recommendations. In relation to the *Pessimism / Worry* schema, individuals who score within the significant range are typically encompassed by feelings of worry; they think about negative outcomes and appear

hypervigilant and indecisive. Worrying about their future and negative life events are likely to enhance their feelings of self-control, but also impact on their ability to develop appropriate interpersonal relationships. This does not explain why individuals with this schema display a sexual preference for children; therefore, further research is warranted to explore this further.

Individuals who possess the *Approval Seeking / Recognition* schema place an excessive emphasis on seeking attention, recognition and approval from others; their feeling of self-worth is based on achieving this. Therefore, it is possible that these individuals perceive that children are more likely to accept them for who they are and interpret innocent interactions initiated by the child as proof that the child is showing them attention. Individuals may benefit from treatment that helps them to develop their self-esteem independently from others; thus, reducing the reliance they place on other people to enhance this.

What now?

Thank you for your help with the study. If you want any further information, you can contact Shevaun Carter at the University of Birmingham by asking *name of local collaborator for that site*. You can also speak to a member of staff on your ward about these findings. This document is for you to keep if you so wish.

**A thesis submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Regulations for the degree of
Doctor of Forensic Clinical Psychology**

VOLUME I
APPENDICES

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Appendix 1 – General characteristics and key findings of studies

Table A

Author (s) and location	Methodology	Sample characteristics	Summary points and key findings
<p>Article 1 Gakhal & Brown (2011) UK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quasi-experimental between-groups design with one independent variable (sample type) and one dependent variable (psychometric score) One-sample t-tests were performed to compare mean scores in this study with those of previous studies Participants completed Attitudes Towards Female Sex Offenders Scale (adapted from Attitudes Toward Sex Offender scale) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 176 participants in total 92 members of staff employed by UK chain store (public sample) 20 probation officers employed by Regional Sex Offender Unit (professional sample) 64 undergraduate psychology students (student sample). 	<p>Findings from this study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forensic professionals hold more positive attitudes towards female sex offenders than towards male sex offenders
<p>Article 2 Eisenberg & Owens (1987) UK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative – respondents presented with 4 case histories which varied per the type of relationship between perpetrator and victim and the type of activity involved Each professional group was randomly divided into 4 sub-groups: 1 case history and general questionnaire going to each sub-group All cases involved a male adult and a female child Respondents were given questions about the case histories (experimental data) and questions about incest in general (survey data) Analysis of variance to examine whether relationship between adult and child or the 	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 299 (82 male and 217 female) with varying degrees of professional interest in the subject of child sexual abuse: Health visitors, Nursing staff and medical students <p>Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age ranged from 18-59 years' old <p>Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience ranged from 6 months to 33 years 	<p>Experimental data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abuse that involved female perpetrators, such as mother-on-son, or sister-on-sister abuse was less serious than abuse involving a male perpetrator <p>Survey data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 80% of respondents perceived the incidence of incest to be of 1/100; over 50% gave estimates of 1/500 or lower Beliefs around some children obtaining enjoyment from sexual act. Gender of victim influencing the impact of the offence Beliefs around some children being responsible for the abuse Differences in severity of harm depending on gender of perpetrator and gender of victim Awareness of emotional problems experienced by victim in later life

	type of activity involved influences responses		
<p>Article 3 Rudin, Zalewski & Bodmer-Turner (1995) USA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subjects obtained from Child Adolescent Sexual Abuse Resource Centre (San Francisco) A consecutive sample was obtained of victims who were molested by lone female perpetrators and by co-perpetrators from January 1987 through August 1992 An equivalent number of victims of lone male perpetrators were randomly selected from 1,498 consecutive confirmed cases of lone male perpetrators Data were obtained from a retrospective chart review that included the investigative interviews, the child abuse reports, and the medical documentation Subjects were divided according to perpetrator gender and type, and comparisons were made for age, gender, relationship to the perpetrator, and severity of abuse 	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victim sample (N = 211); 66 boys, 145 girls <p>Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age range of victims between 1.4 years and 17.4 years' old Mean age was 7.5 years' old <p>Offender demographics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offender sample (N = 253); 190 adults, 62 juveniles 87 lone female perpetrators; 60 adults, 27 juveniles 93 lone male perpetrators; 66 adults, 27 juveniles 73 co-perpetrators offended in 31 co-perpetrator cases 	<p>The association among the age of the victims and the gender and the type of perpetrator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On average, victims abused by lone male perpetrators (M = 9.3 years) were 2.9 years older than co-perpetrators (M = 6.4 years) and were 3.3 years older than lone female perpetrators (M = 6.0 years) The cumulative percentage for victims 6 years and younger was: 30.1% for victims of lone male perpetrators, 45.2% for victims of co-perpetrators, and 67.8% for victims of lone female perpetrators – statistically significant age differences <p>The association between the gender of child sexual abuse victims and the gender of the perpetrator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proportions of victim gender with lone male perpetrators were 76.3% girls and 23.7% boys, while the proportions of victim gender with lone female perpetrators were 62.1% girls and 37.9% boys (statistically significant) Male perpetrators chose female victims three times as often as male victims <p>The difference in relationships between male perpetrator and their victims and female perpetrator and their victims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lone female perpetrators had a greater proportion of caretakers, while lone male perpetrators had a greater proportion of strangers (statistically significant) <p>The association among the severity of abuse and perpetrator gender and type</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No difference regarding the severity of abuse among the victims Results were not supported by previous findings that intra-familial abuse by females was less severe than that by males. Also, the findings were not consistent with studies that found a greater severity of abuse when most of the females were co-perpetrators

<p>Article 4 Heatherton & Beardsall (1998) UK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social workers from 5 social services departments and police working in Child Protection teams within 4 police forces were presented with 4 case vignettes (split into 2 parts) detailing incidents of sexual abuse • Each participant received the 4 vignettes • Vignettes varied on identity and gender of the perpetrator, gender of the victim, activity in which the child and perpetrator were mutually engaged when the abuse occurred, the way the abuse was described by the child, and the response of the alleged perpetrator • A set of questions accompanied each part of the vignette – Part 1 N = 4 questions, Part 2 N = 6 questions • Bem Sex Role Inventory – shortened version, used to rate adult in vignette Questionnaire used to rate attitudes regarding women's sexualised behaviour towards children • Participants read through each vignette, completed the accompanying questionnaire for the vignettes and completed the 2 standardised questionnaires • 6 weeks after data completion, participants then asked to use BSRI – S to rate a typical man and woman 	<p>Social workers</p> <p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males N = 33, Females N = 32 <p>Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mode age band for males 35 – 39 years' old • Mode age band for females 40 – 44 years' old <p>Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average length of time in child protection cases for males, 7 years 4 months • Average length of time in child protection cases for females, 6 years 3 months • On average, males involved in 14 child sexual abuse cases over last 12 months • On average, females involved in 9 child sexual abuse cases in last 12 months • Overall, males had worked with 2 CSA cases that involved female perpetrators. Females had worked with 1 CSA case involving female perpetrator <p>Police</p> <p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males N = 33, Females N = 32 <p>Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mode age band for males 35 – 39 years' old • Mode age band for females 30 – 34 years' old 	<p>Findings from this study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large differences between number of child sexual abuse cases both professionals deal with and the proportion of these that involve female perpetrators <p>No significant differences regarding relevance of gender between responses of male vs female perpetrated CSA in vignettes</p> <p>Female perpetrated CSA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (3/33) policemen who rejected the child's account on any of the female perpetrator vignettes rated the perpetrator being female as a relevant issue influencing their belief in the child's allegations <p>Male perpetrated CSA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 policeman rejected child's account altogether (on both vignettes), 2 policemen rejected child's account on only one of the vignettes <p>Total number of responses in support of the child's and the perpetrator's accounts indicated no significant differences between participants' responses on the male vs female perpetrator vignettes</p> <p>Findings from BSRI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The four participant groups, except policewomen, viewed female perpetrators as having a masculine sex role compared to the typical woman • All participant groups viewed male perpetrators as having an undifferentiated sex role in comparison to the typical man <p>Findings from attitudes questionnaire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All participant groups consider female perpetrated CSA to be a serious and harmful problem • Most of the participants' attitudes indicated that they considered female-perpetrated abuse as a serious and harmful problem, accounting for a large proportion of the decisions they advocated
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		<p>Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average length of time in child protection cases for males, 3 years 3 months • Average length of time in child protection cases for females, 4 years • On average males involved in 37 child sexual abuse cases in last 12 months • On average females involved in 54 child sexual abuse cases in last 12 months • Overall, males had worked with 2 child sexual abuse cases that involved female perpetrators • Overall, females had worked with 4 sexual abuse cases that involved female perpetrators 	
<p>Article 5 Smith, Fromuth & Morris (1998) USA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each student was randomly given one vignette to read. • 84 students (46 men and 38 women) read the vignette depicting sexual intercourse between a 39-year-old male teacher and 16-year-old female student • 85 students (48 men and 37 women) read the vignette depicting sexual intercourse between a 39-year-old female teacher and 16-year-old male student • Respondents also completed a questionnaire consisting of 18 questions examining attitudes and perceptions about the 	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 94 Male • 75 Female <p>Age range</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18-21 years' old <p>Ethnicity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 86% Caucasian • 14% Unknown <p>Occupation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students from south eastern university. 	<p>Perceptions of impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement across both genders that this experience would not have been a positive experience for the offenders • The experience deemed a significantly more positive sexual experience for the victim when the offender was female compared to if the offender was male • Respondents also rated the student as experiencing more psychological harm when the offender was male compared to if the offender was female • Male respondents believed the experience would have been more positive and less psychologically harmful than the female respondents <p>Attribution of responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male respondents were less likely to believe that the teacher had misused their position of authority when the teacher offender was female compared to male

	vignette. Responses were rated using a 7-point Likert scale		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However female respondents were more likely to believe that both the male and female teacher offenders abused their position of trust <p>Perception of the student's role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents believed that external factors that may have influenced the student victim were more relevant when the teacher offender was male compared to if they were female <p>Perception of guilt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 69% of the respondents believed the teacher would have been found guilty for statutory rape • Male respondents recommended a longer prison sentence for male teacher offender compared to female teacher offender <p>Labelling of event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male respondents more likely to label sexual intercourse between male teacher and female victim as abuse compared to sexual intercourse between female teacher and male victim • Male respondents more likely to label the event as rape when the teacher was male than when the teacher was female
<p>Article 6 Denov (2001) Canada</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative • 23 professionals interviewed over a 7-month period between October 1997 and May 1998 • Interview topics focused on investigating/assessing cases of sexual abuse, formal sexual abuse training initiatives and policies, female sexual offenders, victims of female sexual offenders, and the professional's own experience working with cases involving female perpetrators of sexual abuse • Direct observations of police officers working in sexual assault unit over 3-month period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 Police officers and 10 Psychiatrists <p>Police officers</p> <p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 Male • 2 Female <p>Rank</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Detective Constables • 8 Detective Sergeants • 1 Detective Lieutenant <p>Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35-52 years' old <p>Psychiatrists</p> <p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 Male 	<p>Findings from this study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus of training for both professionals centred on males as perpetrators, not females • Organisational policies also focused on sexual assaults perpetrated by males against females • Traditional sexual scripts and professional discourse. • Female sex offenders are harmless • Female sex offenders are not dangerous • Re-constructing the assault, blaming the (male) victim

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case-file analysis of all cases of sexual assault involving a female reported to the unit between June 1995 and October 1997 • Psychiatrists who specialised in sexual offending were recruited from two psychiatric hospitals and interviewed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Female <p>Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 specialised in child and adolescent psychiatry • 8 specialised in forensic psychiatry <p>Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35-60 years' old 	
<p>Article 7 Denov (2003) Canada</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature review • Objective 1 - Reviewed articles detailing case and self-report data; examining the magnitude of female sex offending • Objective 2 - Explored the role of traditional sexual scripts and how this implicates prevalence rates of female sex offenders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 papers reviewed for Objective 1 • Literature divided into 2 categories: case-report and self-report studies • Categories separated into 3 groups: (a) perpetrators of sexual offences, (b) male victims of sexual offences, (c) female victims of sexual offences 	<p>Findings from group (a) studies</p> <p><i>Case-report studies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female sex offending a rare phenomenon; US Department of Justice 1.2% charged with forcible rape, 7% charged with sexual assault in US in 2001 • In 2001, Home Office statistics show 2% of adults convicted of a sexual offence were female • Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics – 1.2% of adults convicted of sexual assault were female <p><i>Self-report studies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combining the only 2 self-report articles, a prevalence rate of 58% for female sex offenders was found in a sample of male and female college students <p>Contrast between case-report (1.2-8%) and self-report data (58%)</p> <p>Findings from group (b) studies</p> <p><i>Case-report studies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 4 and 8% of male victims reported being abused by a female perpetrator • 29% of male victims reported sexual abuse by both males and females <p><i>Self-report studies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much higher rates of female sexual abuse reported by male victims, ranging between 42-78% <p>Higher prevalence rates between self-report (42-78%) and case report data (4-37%)</p>

			<p>Findings from group (c) studies</p> <p><i>Case-report studies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies found between 1 and 2.1% of females were victims of sexual assault perpetrated by females <p><i>Self-report studies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies found between 6 and 10% of female victims reported being abused by females • Females offending against males at a higher rate than females. Discrepancies between self-report and case report data, suggesting female perpetrators are under-reported within case report data
<p>Article 8 Rogers & Davies (2007) UK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sample of British students and the public were given a child sexual abuse scenario • The scenario varied based on the age (10 or 15 years old) and gender of the victim and gender of the perpetrator • The scenario was one of non-consensual touching of the victim • There were 14 dependent measures which focused on victim credibility, victim responsibility, and the perceived severity of the assault • Respondents were asked to rate their responses to each of the questions using a 7-point Likert scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of 380 questionnaires distributed 337 were returned <p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 141 males • 184 females • 12 missing gender <p>Age range</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18-71 years' old • Mean age 29.6 years' old <p>Ethnicity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 71.7% White • 10.7% Asian • 3.1% Afro-Caribbean • 11.7% Chinese • 2.8% Other <p>Sample background</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% undergraduate students from one north western university • 50% recruited public car parks and beaches in the South 	<p>Results on perceptions towards perpetrator gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant main effect for perpetrator gender – male perpetrators seen more culpable than female perpetrators • Assault perpetrated by male deemed more severe than if it was perpetrated by a female • Male respondents rated female perpetrated sexual assault towards a male victim as less severe than female respondent • Males particularly considered assault of a 15-year-old male victim by a female perpetrator to be less severe and the victim less credible and more culpable, than corresponding assault on a female victim or assault by a male perpetrator • Victims of a male perpetrator seen as more credible than victims of a female perpetrator • A 15-year-old boy assaulted by a male perpetrator was deemed less culpable, than a 15-year-old boy assaulted by a female perpetrator

<p>Article 9 Kite & Tyson (2011) Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 361 police officers responded to an email questionnaire distributed to a random sample of 500 Male and 500 female police officers • Vignette – hypothetical abuse story (modelled by one designed by Heatherston et al., 1998) Age of child in vignette was changed to 10, due to evidence suggesting this is when police are more likely to act and most common age of abuse. Researchers did not include gender of victim • The questions relating to the vignette were used to assess the participants' responses: seriousness of abuse, action required based on behaviour, and impact the abuse would have on the victim 	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 201 Female (56%) • 161 Male (44%) <p>Age</p> <p><i>Female officers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mean age = 31.23 years' old • Youngest = 20 years' old • Oldest = 54 years' old <p><i>Male officers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mean age = 36.82 years' old • Youngest = 19 years' old • Oldest = 57 years' old <p>Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34% of officers employed for less than 3 years • 20% employed for longer than 20 years <p><i>Female officers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mean job experience was 8 years • Minimum of 3 months • Maximum of 29.5 years <p><i>Male officers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mean job experiences 11 years • Minimum of 3 months • Maximum of 35 years <p><i>Experience with sexual abuse cases</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26% of officers had no experience • 49% were exposed to between 1-15 cases • 20% exposed to 20-100 cases • 5% exposed to over 100 cases 	<p>Perceived seriousness of abusive behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant main effect for perpetrator's gender was found – male perpetrated abuse was perceived more serious than female perpetrated CSA <p>Action taken by police</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant main effect of perpetrator gender – more stringent action taken against male perpetrator compared to female perpetrator <p>Perception of impact of abuse on victim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not significant; however mean score for perceived impact on child was higher for victim of male perpetrated abuse compared to female perpetrated abuse
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38 cases on average for female officers • 40 cases on average for male officers <p>Parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 74 females and 107 male officers reported having children 	
<p>Article 10 Peter (2009) Canada</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bivariate tests of significance were performed on the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect. A stratified cluster sample of investigated cases from child welfare agencies between October & December 1998 • The investigating worker of the child abuse cases completed a 3-page maltreatment assessment questionnaire form • 22 types of child maltreatment were categorised into 4 four groups: physical, sexual, neglect and emotional maltreatment • Final sample included 7672 children, primary form of maltreatment breakdown are as follows: 30.6% physical abuse, 10.4% sexual abuse, 42.5% neglect, 16.5% emotional abuse • Only a randomly selected partial sample of sexual abuse cases asked about gender of perpetrator; thus, article is based on partially selected sample (n=345) 	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 89% of alleged perpetrators were males (n=308), 11% (n=37) were females • 71% of victims (n=246) were female • 29% of victims (n=99) were males <p>Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age of perpetrators was between 21 and 30 years' old • Average age of children was 8 years' old 	<p>Characteristics of female perpetrators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debate over research evidence that females mainly offend in conjunction with male co-perpetrator • Conflicting evidence around average age of female offenders (typically younger than male counterparts) • No difference in numbers of victims between male and female offenders • Female perpetrators tend to be poorly educated and come from low socioeconomic background (may be over-represented) <p>Victim characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debate over whether females are more likely to be abused than males. This study found girls more likely to be abused than boys (71.3% = 246, over 28.7% = 99) • Found victims of female perpetrators tended to be younger than victims of male perpetrators. This study found on average victims were younger for female perpetrated abuse (5.84 years) compared to males (8.58 years) <p>Type of abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant difference regarding types of abuse perpetrated by male or female offenders • Most frequent type of violence for male and female perpetrators was touching/fondling of genitals (51.4% n = 19 and 48.7% n = 150) <p>Family structure</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results from article indicate that half of the victims of female perpetrated CSA (n = 18) came from families comprising of both biological parents compared to 34% (n = 97) for male abusers Half of male CSA victims came from a lone mother household compared to 27% (n = 10) for female CSAs Differences in household income and victims of sexual abuse <p>Case and worker information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professionals more likely to report male perpetrated CSA Child welfare agencies more likely to have another case open for victims of male perpetrated sexual abuse
<p>Article 11 Clements, Dawson & Nair, (2014) UK.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systematic review Literature search, qualitative and quantitative studies included between 1950- and 2011 Perspectives of adult men and women who had been abused by an adult female during childhood Perspectives of legal and health or social care professionals in relation to female perpetrated sexual abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13 papers reviewed 5 papers focused on professional perspectives. 8 focused on victim perspectives. 	<p>Professional perspectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimised impact of abuse on child in comparison to male perpetrated sexual abuse More favourable opinions towards female abusers; fewer imprisonment & conviction rates, less involvement with police and social services Length of service (years) negatively correlated with perceptions of seriousness of FPSA Perpetrator gender significant when assessing believability of abuse allegation <p>Victim perspectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victims feeling betrayed by abuser Reports of mistrust of professional, through fear that their disclosure would not be believed, or through having direct experience of negative response Increased sexual difficulties Negative effects on psychological well-being Developing maladaptive coping strategies Positive initial perceptions of FPSA have been identified previously amongst male survivor samples Victim most affected when related to perpetrator
<p>Article 12 Mellor & Deering (2010) Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All potential participants sent a questionnaire package to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N = 231 participants <p><i>Child Protection Workers (N = 61)</i></p>	<p>Overall findings from all participants</p>

	<p>complete and return if they were willing to participate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child protection workers recruited from child protection staff meetings • Psychologists recruited from Victorian Psychologists Registration Board • Probationary psychologists recruited from Victorian Psychologists Registration Board • Psychiatrists recruited through The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists • 4 vignettes (2 with males as perpetrator and 2 with females as perpetrator) presented to 130 participants • 2 vignettes (participants received both vignettes with same gender as perpetrator) were presented to 101 participants • Vignettes followed principles as those used in Heatherton and Beardsall's study (1998) • A set of questions accompanied each part of the vignette – Part 1 N = 4 questions, Part 2 N = 6 questions • Participants asked to complete standardised questionnaire: Attitudes regarding women's sexualised behaviour towards children questionnaire 	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males N = 8 • Females N = 53 <p>Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <35 N = 40 • 36 – 50 N = 19 • 50< N = 2 <p>Psychologists (N = 99)</p> <p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males N = 23 • Females N = 76 <p>Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <35 N = 14 • 36-50 N = 47 • 50< N = 38 <p>Psychiatrists (N = 43)</p> <p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males N = 25 • Females N = 18 <p>Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35 – 50 N = 16 • 50< N = 27 <p>Probationary Psychologists (N = 28)</p> <p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males N = 3 • Females N = 25 <p>Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <35 N = 21 • 35 – 50 N = 7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender of perpetrator a relevant factor in deciding whether child's disclosure of abuse should be believed. • Social services input deemed more appropriate when perpetrator was male in vignette. • Gender of perpetrator does influence how negatively the victim is affected. • Imprisonment and punishment more necessary when males were perpetrators. <p>Findings on participants by gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both male and female professionals deemed female perpetrators warranted less investigation • Female professionals believed victims of female perpetrated CSA would be less negatively affected • Sanctions considered less appropriate for female perpetrators <p>Findings on participants by profession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social services involvement less likely in female perpetrated CSA • Both psychologist groups viewed victims of female perpetrated CSA to be less negatively affected • Psychiatrists viewed therapeutic treatment as more necessary for female perpetrators; psychologists thought therapy more necessary for male perpetrators • Psychiatrists and psychologists felt prosecution less appropriate for female perpetrators than male • Both groups less likely to consider imprisonment for female perpetrators <p>Findings on participants' gender by profession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female psychologists considered social services more appropriate for male perpetrators than females • Male psychiatrists more likely to consider victim of abuse as more negatively affected if perpetrator was male • Female psychologists and male psychiatrists felt prosecution and imprisonment more appropriate for male rather than female perpetrators <p>Child Protection workers most likely to consider female perpetrated CSA as a serious and valid issue</p>
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			Overall, the view that female-perpetrated child sexual abuse is a serious issue that warrants attention was also revealed across all professional groups on the attitudes questionnaire
<p>Article 13 Deering & Mellor (2009) Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentencing comments identified the County Court of Victoria from 1998-2004 • A total of seven female offenders were identified through the Austlii legal database search as having been sentenced for child sexual abuse crimes • A search for comparative cases involving male child sexual offenders was undertaken using the Austlii legal database Seven individual sentencing transcripts involving male offenders that could be compared to those concerning the female offenders were identified and located • Content analysis is the qualitative approach used to analyse the data 	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 female perpetrators • 7 matched male counterparts <p>Offence characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlawful sexual penetration acts, indecent acts, incest, maintaining a relationship with a child/young person, and sexual offences committed against a child and young person by a person in position of care or authority • Only one comparative case involved multiple victims • Only two cases consisted of sexual abuse lasting over 1 month. • No eyewitnesses in any of the cases <p>Offender characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In only one case did the offender have a prior criminal history • One case involved an offender with substance abuse problems • No offender used threats to commission the sexual acts. • Majority of cases used physical force • 3/7 (female offenders) and 4/7 (male offenders) involved extra-familial 	<p>Disclosure of abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In female perpetrated sexual offending, disclosure typically occurred a significant time after offence had been perpetrated. It was atypical for the victim to disclose the abuse perpetrated by a female offender unless it had included a male co-offender • More common for disclosure of abuse to occur closely after abusive behaviour in male perpetrated sexual offending <p>Female offenders</p> <p><i>Mitigating factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judge comments in 6/7 female perpetrators refer to various psychological/emotional difficulties and experiences • Five of the female sexual offender cases (5/7) included specific psychological and/or emotional difficulties or descriptions of personal adversity, which were considered as relevant to a reduced sentencing disposition <p><i>History of child sexual abuse</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only two female offenders in the current study disclosed a history of childhood sexual abuse. In both cases the judge considered that this experience warranted a reduction in the disposition because it helped to explain the offending <p><i>In the absence of psychological maladjustment - male coercion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the two cases that were not attributed to psychological maladjustment, their responsibility towards offending was diminished due to attributing their offending to male coercion <p>Male offenders</p> <p><i>Mitigating factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance misuse – even though one perpetrator was heavily dependent on alcohol and cannabis and committed his offences within hours of using the substances, the judge thought the perpetrators

		<p>relationships between victim(s) and offender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two of male offender cases involved female co-offenders as well <p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All perpetrators received a sentence of imprisonment • One female perpetrator was originally given a suspended sentence of imprisonment prior to re-sentencing <p>Victim characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All over 7 years of age • Majority of victims aged 14 years • All victims of male offenders were female 	<p>offending and substance misuse were independent of one another. Substance misuse seen as aggravating factor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four out of the seven cases of male offenders involved psychological/emotional difficulties that were considered in the sentencing of the offender • The factors relating to male offenders were not treated as significantly as those concerning the female offenders • Factors considered less relevant when related to male offenders in comparison to female offenders <p><i>History of child sexual abuse</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one case involved a history of CSA, however judge described this individual's circumstances as "highly exceptional" <p><i>In the absence of psychological maladjustment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the three cases in which no psychological issues were referred to on behalf of the offender, the sexual crimes were attributed to the offender's desire and lust <p>Comparing CJS treatment of male and female offenders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The female offenders received relatively reduced terms of imprisonment
<p>Article 14 Higgins & Ireland (2009) UK & NI</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants were provided with a questionnaire pack: each participant was given a vignette and told to complete the Attitudes Toward Sex Offenders Scale • Each vignette described an offender as either a male offender or a female offender who has been convicted of an offence of indecent assault against a female adult or a female child • Each participant only received one of the four vignettes 	<p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80 forensic staff • 80 prison officers • 82 members of the public <p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 121 males • 121 females <p>(242 total participants)</p> <p>Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age range is 21 – 47 years' old • Average age 38.6 years' old <p><i>Female</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average age 34.3 years' old 	<p><i>Perpetrator gender</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant differences were found between attitudes towards male and female sex offenders

		<p><i>Male</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Average age 42.7 years' old <p>60% of the forensic sample was from England. 40% was from NI</p>	
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Appendix 2 – Methodological characteristics of quantitative studies

Table B

Article	Study design	Structured abstract	Research objectives	Study sample representative Source, size, inclusion/exclusion criteria, non-respondents.	Quality of measurements and outcomes Validity, reproducibility, blindness, quality control	Completeness Compliance, drop-outs, missing data	Distorting influences Extraneous treatments, contamination, changes over time, confounding factors, distortion reduced by analysis	Overall judgement
Article 1 Gakhal & Brown (2011) UK	Quasi-experimental study	No Different components of research included but not in a structured way, lacking clarity.	Yes Research objectives are detailed.	No Used psychology undergraduates only to represent student sample, may not reflect attitudes of student population. Big difference in sample sizes of groups. Only used participants from one store to reflect public sample attitudes.	Yes Internal consistency and validity of tool is detailed in results section. Participants also completed the tool independently without influence of researcher.	Partial No drop-outs, however unclear why there were so few professionals recruited for the study, did they not want to take part? Some of the answers to questions also included “undecided”, which does not give a clear view either way.	Partial Definition of female sex offender was not included. One of the responses in the scale included “undecided” does not give clear attitudes towards female sex offenders. The mean for the public and student samples indicate that they were closer to an ‘undecided’ average, rather than an overall negative attitude.	+
Article 2 Eisenberg & Owens (1987) UK	Cross-sectional	No Different components of research included but not in a structured	Partial One objective to examine attitudes held by certain professionals. Very broad	No Variances in age and gender of different professional groups – although attempts were made to include	No No example of questions used so unable to say whether they were measuring what the researchers wanted them to	No No information of drop-outs, or missing data or compliance of subjects.	No Unclear how the procedures were followed; whether there were any demand characteristics by	++ Reasonable attempt highlighting the differences in attitudes between professionals

		way, lacking clarity.	objective, unclear as to why this is important to explore.	different professionals, experiences and ages. Unclear how they were recruited or where they were sourced from. Inclusion and exclusion criteria not included. No information of number of participants within each professional group.	measure. No example of case histories, again unclear how much information was included and whether they were detailed enough to allow the participants to answer the questions. Unclear what the subjects were told about the study, were they blind to the aims? How did the researchers ensure quality control? Did all participants complete the questions in a room together? Were they posted out? What were the survey questions?		participants at the time; how the data was gathered. Subjects may be influenced by their colleagues if surveys completed together? Unclear what was happening around the time of data collection in the media about CSA – if this study were to be repeated now there may be different perception of incest and CSA given the high publicity of such abuse? Researchers analysed professional groups, duration of experience and gender separately; but not age as confounding variable.	depending on victim-perpetrator factor and on sexual behaviour; however, some methodological issues that prevent the findings from the generalised survey data from being useful and relevant to today. The survey data was also not analysed separately to examine attitudes held by certain professionals, which would have been beneficial to do, given this would give an accurate representation of their general attitudes towards incest and CSA.
Article 3 Rudin, Zalewski & Bodmin-Turner (1995) UK	Cross-sectional study.	No Different components of research included but not in a structured way, lacking clarity.	Yes Clear objectives that can be met by the study design.	Partial Included public health sample, so not just restricted to offences that have been reported to police, minimising bias in sample. Large sample size and covered a reasonable length of time.	Yes Used different databases and sources to gather information.	No No drop-outs, however unclear if there is any missing data within the data sets. Inaccurate participant numbers included. Total offender sample N = 253,	Partial Unclear if there was any missing data for the sample included. And whether this influenced sample selection.	+

				Different selection procedures for male perpetrators, as there were many more cases reported. Unclear if this is one of many, or the only centre that works with sexually abused children.		individual adult and juvenile offender sample N = 252.		
Article 4 Heatherton & Beardsall (1998)	Cross-sectional study	Yes Abstract structured.	Yes Clear objectives and appropriate design.	Partial Wide range of experience and length of service. Equal mix of male and female respondents for both IV's. Attempted to recruit from multiple social work services and Police headquarters in UK. Unclear how they sourced their participant sample.	Partial Information in vignettes varied in ways other than gender of victim and perpetrators, so responses from participants may be due to other variations in vignettes – like relationship between perpetrator and victim. However, vignettes were piloted prior to study to ensure any variation in responses was due to gender of victim and perpetrator and not due to other variables (agreement ratio 80%). Questions seemed relevant to research objectives. Structured tools used, however little evidence of BSRI-S being used to assess self to other perceptions.	Partial Some of the services approached refused to participate. Only 55% response rate from Police force and 77% response rate from social work department. Unclear if there was any missing data in responses due to participants filling the questionnaires in then sending them back.	Partial Attempts to disguise focus of the study through adding filler questions. Attempts to account for other confounding variables by using 4 vignettes to explore different victim perpetrator gender pairings. Participants completing questionnaires without observation of researcher, may go back and change answers, may have guessed focus of study (demand characteristics), may have coped answers of other professionals; worked on it together, been influenced by attitudes of others. Unlikely that professionals will	+

					Attitudes regarding women's sexualised behaviour tool demonstrated good reliability, consistency and validity.		be making decisions about treatments and appropriate actions for the victim independently – research not necessarily a true reflection.	
Article 5 Smith, Fromuth & Morris (1998)	Cross-sectional	No different components of research included but not in a structured way, lacking clarity	Yes Clear objectives and appropriate design.	No Reasonable sample size; however not generalizable as only used student sample with a very narrow age range. Limitations of between subjects' design. Demographic information not included.	No Vignette not assessed by external professionals so unclear how reliable and accurate the vignette is to reality. Validity of questionnaire also not detailed. Unclear what the questions are and whether they measure what they claim to.	No No mention of missing data or drop-out rates.	Partial Gender of victim was confounded with gender of perpetrator. Unclear how respondents completed questionnaire; influenced by other peers at the time? No mention of own experiences of sexual abuse. Limitations of just using a student sample due to lack of generalisability between student perceptions and public perceptions. Vignette are scenarios and not real-life cases.	++ Major methodological issues due to sample characteristics, limited information about sample, lack of information about completeness of questionnaires and measures used to assess perceptions.
Article 8 (Rogers & Davies, 2007)	Cross-sectional	No Different components of research included but not in a structured	Yes Clear objectives and appropriate design.	Partial Large sample size Used participants from across the country Using student population has limitations as there are	Partial Unclear what questions were used in the questionnaire booklet and the level of construct validity.	Partial 43 participant data missing. 12 returned with unknown gender. Some people approached	Partial Sample of students (biases in student sample). Questionnaires completed in own time, may have	+ Overall reliable study for preliminary findings. Sample characteristics may

		way, lacking clarity.		differences in attitudes between students and non-students. Occupational status of public not detailed. Opportunistic sampling.	Internal reliability of questions within the different factors measured all deemed moderate to high. No example of Likert scale used. Scenario developed is an accurate reflection of CSA cases.	declined to take part. No evidence of incomplete questionnaires.	been rushed or completed with others; thus, influencing responses. They accounted for personal experience of sexual abuse and whether respondents had children. Didn't account for professional experiences with children or child abuse cases.	have resulted in confounding variables, but they attempted to account for this in analysis. Scenario used was deemed accurate based on real-life situations and the questionnaire deemed ethical by BPS
Article 9 Kite & Tyson (2011)	Cross-sectional	No Different components of research included but not in a structured way, lacking clarity.	Yes Clear objectives and appropriate design used.	Partial Range of ages, experience and use of both genders (stratified sampling). Large sample size. Only sourced from one Police department within Australia.	Partial Focus group for vignette prior to study. However, only 3 questions used to elicit response and draw conclusions from.	Partial Low response rate (36.1%).	No Controlled for other variables such as relationship between perpetrator and victim, and sexual activity. All participants sourced from one service, participants may be influenced by peers, or may be influenced by cultural norms within workforce. Brief, general cover letter to minimise biases in responses.	+
Article 10 Peter (2009) Canada	Cohort study	No Different components of research included but not in a structured	Yes 5 clear objectives highlighted in introduction.	Partial Sample representative of families involved with child welfare agencies; however biasing one of the objectives: family	Partial No information about validity of Maltreatment Assessment Questionnaire form. If the worker has	Partial 85% response rates from welfare workers. Final analysis based on randomly selected partial sample due	Partial Average age of victims of female perpetrators in this study 5 years old – difficulties reporting abuse?	+

		way, lacking clarity.		structure of child victims. Child welfare agencies more likely to be involved with families from low socioeconomic backgrounds and reported to CJS.	completed this, how reliable and accurate is information (limited time, incomplete answers)?	to this sample having information about gender of perpetrator. 11% female perpetrated CSA – prevalence rates between 1-20% current study in the middle of this.	How well are welfare workers able to identify female perpetrators?	findings published. Partial sample used for analysis; however, sample did seem to represent prevalence rates for female perpetrators and did seem to support previous findings.
Article 12 Mellor & Deering (2010)	Cross-sectional	No Different components of research included but not in a structured way, lacking clarity.	Yes Clear objectives and appropriate design.	Partial Sample included professionals involved in child protection cases. Number of years' experience of professionals not included. Non-random sampling and random sampling employed to recruit different professionals. Large gender difference significantly more females than males.	Partial Information in vignettes varied in ways other than gender of victim and perpetrators, so responses from participants may be due to other variations in vignettes – like relationship between perpetrator and victim. Questions seemed relevant to research objectives. Questions used are clear to the reader and have been used in previous research. The questionnaire used showed strong face validity. Cronbach's alpha for this scale of 0.89.	Partial Less than 50% response rate for each of the professional groups. Unclear if there are missing data in the questionnaires.	Partial May be biases in respondents who have chosen to take part. Experience of different respondents may have confounded the results; unclear what this information is. Professionals may have completed questionnaires together and may have been influenced by attitudes of peers. Gender difference between professional sample.	+

<p>Article 14 Higgins & Ireland (2009)</p>	<p>Cross-sectional</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Different components of research included but not in a structured way, lacking clarity</p>	<p>Partial</p> <p>Design appropriate to aim, but researchers initially focus on one aim, but the results and discussion are about other aims of the study.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Reasonable sample size. Demographic information on public sample not included. Does not expand on what is meant by 'forensic staff'. How do these differ from Prison Officers? Prison officers only recruited from one prison within NI. Experience with SO's not detailed.</p>	<p>Partial</p> <p>Face validity of vignettes? Reliability of ATS measured</p>	<p>Partial</p> <p>Missing data and outliers were acknowledged in article, but no stats were provided.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Multiple confounding variables depending on information included in vignettes. Participants may be rating their scores on ATS based on their own experiences of sex offenders, rather than vignettes. Experience of SO's not taken account. Only one vignette per participant, more likely to measure individual differences between participants. What were participants told prior to study? Were researchers present during study?</p>	<p>++</p> <p>Results discussed don't reflect research question. Information detailed in abstract opposes results.</p>
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Yes – No problems; Partial – Minor Problems; No – Major Problems

0 – No problem; + Minor Problems; ++ Major Problems.

Appendix 3 – Methodological characteristics of qualitative studies

Table C

Article	Worthy topic (relevant, timely, significant)	Rich rigor (theoretical constructs, sample, context)	Sincerity (self-reflexivity, transparency about challenges)	Credibility (thick description, multivocality, member reflections)	Resonance (generalisations, transferable findings)	Significant contribution (theoretically, practically, morally)	Ethical (considers procedural, relational, situational ethics)	Meaningful coherence	Overall Judgement
Article 6 Denov (2001) Canada	Yes	Yes Uses semi-structured interviews, informal observations, reviews of Case Analysis Reports and DSM IV, and reviews of organisational and training procedures.	No Biases not considered. Female researcher asking about female sex offenders, potentially biasing result. Effects of male dominated sample? No self-reflexivity throughout the article.	Yes Thick description of data to support assumptions. Different methods of data collection elicit same findings.	Yes	Yes Highlights where practices within services could be developed, both formally and informally. Highlights the impact of such practices and viewpoints on offenders, the victims and the public.	No Unclear of procedural ethics – don't know if sample new the aims of the study, or if they were aware of the observer participant. Relational ethics – researcher's impact on the findings not discussed.	No	++ Impact of gender bias on results. Methodological limitations with observation. Relational ethics not considered.

<p>Article 13 Deering & Mellor (2009)</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Partial</p> <p>Content analysis of previous comments made by judges during sentencing. A reasonable sample size (7 for each gender) – although some comparisons not made due to co-offending with female perps. Lots of description provided for each theme that was explored.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Researchers were open and honest about limitations within their data sample and how this impacted on the analysis. Researchers also reflected on the varying explanations that could account for the decisions and comments made by the judge in the reports.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Rich amount of data, thick descriptions in each factor explored. The findings are supported by findings from previous research (which is highlighted in the article).</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Findings can be generalised across Countries and County's within Australia. Findings also resonated strongly with reader.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Highlights the mass differences in attitudes and sentencing decisions between perpetrators, despite similar offences being committed. Supports previous notions and beliefs about female and male sex offenders. Challenges comments made within government policies about the gender of the perpetrator being irrelevant to sentencing.</p>	<p>Partial</p> <p>Used retrospective comments made by judges – unclear how much data was included for each of the samples. Unlikely that the individuals involved in each case gave their permission. However, positive that the comments made would not have been influenced by the researchers.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>+</p> <p>Methodological limitations due to retrospective study. Ethical considerations regarding offender consent to read the court transcripts.</p>
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Yes – No problems; Partial – Minor problems; No – Major problems

0 – No problem; + Minor Problems; ++ Major Problems.

Appendix 4 – Methodological characteristics of systematic reviews

Table D

Article	Rationale	Objective	Eligibility criteria	Information sources + search strategy	Study records	Data items	Outcomes and prioritisation	Risk of bias in studies	Confidence in cumulative evidence	Overall Judgement
<p>Article 7 Denov (2003) Canada</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Professional and public attitudes regarding sexual abuse – predominantly male perpetrator with female victim; impacting on support and services available for victims and female perpetrators.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>To explore whether the prevalence of FCSA is a rare or under-reported phenomena.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>No information about time frames for articles, what the inclusion and exclusion criteria are.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>No information about search strategy employed. How did author identify 15 articles? Who those 15?</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Unclear how data from these articles was extracted.</p>	<p>Partial</p> <p>Literature divided into 2 categories and then subdivided into 3 further categories.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Outcomes are clearly defined.</p>	<p>Partial</p> <p>No clear search strategy; thus, unclear if there are biases in studies. Majority of self-report studies were conducted in early 1990's late 1980's. Majority of case-report studies conducted in late 1990's early 2000's – making comparisons difficult?</p>	<p>Partial</p> <p>Quality of articles and studies reviewed not discussed. Author does highlight limitations of case-report and self-report methodologies.</p>	<p>++</p> <p>Limited information provided about search strategy and approaches used to select final papers for review.</p>
<p>Article 11 Clements, Dawson & Nair (2014)</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Professional attitudes and beliefs vary for female and male perpetrated sexual abuse. Not viewed as serious, affecting level of support &</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>To examine the different perspectives to inform professional practice.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Partial</p> <p>Reporting bias by only including peer-reviewed articles, using 'victim' as a search term may have</p>	<p>Partial</p> <p>Variation in quality of articles, limiting ability to synthesise findings. Quality frameworks</p>	<p>0</p> <p>Minor methodological limitations, but the impact of these were discussed within review.</p>

	acknowledgement offered to victims.							biased papers selected.	used different studies made explicit.	
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Yes – No problems; Partial – Minor problems; No – Major problems

0 – No problem; + Minor Problems; ++ Major Problem





