

The Cycle of Abuse: When Victims Become Offenders

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Abstract

Various psychological theories exist in the literature to explain the behavior of men who commit child sex offences, including the belief that child sexual abuse (CSA) is a predisposing factor for the transition from victim to offender. These theories are, however, unable to explain the fact that while most victims of CSA are female, most perpetrators of CSA are male. The sex specificity of CSA in terms of victims and offenders suggests that the experience of CSA and its psychosocial effects may be different for boys, compared to girls. We hypothesize that CSA experiences may involve risk factors that affect the development of sexually abusive behavior for boys, rather than girls. Our aim was to determine whether the literature provides evidence of a cycle of abuse from victim to offender, and, if so, to document its characteristics. We undertook a comprehensive literature review of studies on both victims and offenders, including studies which revealed the following: age of onset of CSA, duration of abuse, gender of the abuser, the relationship between victim and abuser, grooming behaviors, the types and severity of abuse, and disclosure of abuse. While we found no evidence for the existence of a cycle of abuse for female CSA victims, we discovered evidence to support the existence of a cycle of abuse for male CSA victims who had experienced particular abuse characteristics. As an original contribution to the literature, we identified four factors that may be associated with a boy's transition from victim to offender as well as the methodological issues to be addressed in future research. Based on criminological theories, we argue that these four factors share a common theme, that is, that they represent experiences of power (for the abuser) and powerlessness (for the victim).

Keywords

sexual abuse, child abuse, cultural contexts, offenders, sexual assault, sexuality

Prevalence studies at a national and international level reveal that girls are more likely to experience child sexual abuse (CSA) than boys. While Finkelhor (2008) argued that prevalence rates for CSA decreased in the first decade of this century, Pereda, Guilera, Forns, and Gomez-Benito (2009a, p. 331) found a “pattern that remains more or less constant over the years, especially in women.” In their recent meta-analysis of 65 prevalence studies covering 22 countries, they found that 19.7% of women and 7.9% of men had experienced CSA before the age of 18 years and concluded that CSA is “a problem of considerable magnitude in all societies analyzed” (Pereda, Guilera, Forns, & Gomez-Benito, 2009b, pp. 331, 334).¹

A more comprehensive study of 331 independent samples from 217 international publications between 1982 and 2008, estimated a combined prevalence rate of 18.0% for females and 7.6% for males (Stoltenborgh, van Ijzendoorn, Euser, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2011, p. 84), although significant differences were found across different continents. For example, the “highest combined prevalence was found in Australia for girls [21.5%] and in Africa for boys [19.3%]” (Stoltenborgh et al., 2011, p. 84). Overall, there is a ratio of 2.5 women for every male victim of CSA (Pereda et al., 2009b, p. 334) which is similar to the rate reported by Finkelhor (1994) of 3:1.

In addition to revealing the persistence of CSA as a worldwide problem, these studies provide us with key information regarding the topic of this article—the gender of the majority of victims. We also know that most victims, both male and female, are abused by men or male adolescents known to them, such as relatives, family friends, or authority figures (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2014, 2015; National Institute of Justice [NIJ], 2003).

Given the persistence of CSA as a worldwide problem, various theories exist in the literature to explain the behavior of men who commit child sex offences. Because they are discipline specific, they vary in their conceptions of the problem of CSA: Is child sex offending about violence, sex, power, mental illness, personality disorders or deviance? Arguably, the most salient issue for any explanation of child sex offending is that CSA is overwhelmingly committed by men and male

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adolescents, indicating that, like all other crime categories, sex is the key predictor as to who will commit this type of offence (Collier, 1998).

The reasons why men sexually abuse children has been the subject of considerable research and debate (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Purvis & Ward, 2006; Richards, 2011; Robertiello & Terry, 2007), although there has been little theoretical engagement with the “man question,” that is, why men, rather than women, are more likely to become child sex offenders (Cossins, 2000). Instead, psychological theories focus on discerning individual factors that are associated with the development and repetition of sex offending, such as being sexually abused as a child.

Yet psychological theories must be able to explain not only why sexually abused boys are more likely to become offenders than sexually abused girls, but also why only some sexually abused boys, and boys who have not been sexually abused, become offenders. Because psychological theories tend to be gender-blind, it is important to examine the relationship between being a victim and perpetration of sexual abuse in later life by considering the relationship between abuse experiences, the development of sexuality, and its relationship to concepts of masculinity (Messerschmidt, 2000, p. 287).

A significant body of research suggests that there is a link between being a victim of CSA and later sexually abusing children in adolescence or adulthood (Bagley, Wood, & Young, 1994; Burton, Miller, & Shill, 2002; DeLisi, Kosloski, Vaughn, Caudill, & Trulson, 2014; Dennison & LeClerc, 2011; Felson & Lane, 2009; Hilton & Mezey, 1996; Jespersen, Lalumiere, & Seto, 2009; Romano & De Luca, 1997; Whitaker et al., 2008), although most studies rely on clinical or incarcerated samples of offenders in reporting that a majority of offenders are sexually abused as children (Elliott, Browne, & Kilcoyne, 1995; Felson & Lane, 2009; Romano & De Luca, 1997).

For the reasons discussed under Study Limitations (later), representative community samples provide more reliable estimations of the likelihood that a victim of CSA will become an offender in adolescence or adulthood. In a study of a community sample of 750 males aged 18–27 years, both CSA and emotional abuse were found to be the strongest predictors of male victims’ sexual interest in, and abuse of, children (Bagley et al., 1994). When emotional abuse was controlled for, CSA remained a statistically significant predictor of current sexual interest in children and male adolescents.

In a 45-year follow-up study, Ogloff, Cutajar, Mann, and Mullen (2012) linked 2,759 medically confirmed cases of CSA with police database records 13–44 years after the abuse was confirmed. When this data was compared to 2,677 men and women drawn from the Australian Electoral Commission (matched for age and gender), the authors found that 5% of male CSA victims were subsequently convicted of a sex offence, which was significantly greater than for men who had not been sexually abused as children (0.6%). The link between victimization and subsequent sexual offending was even greater among men abused at 12 years of age or older, with

9.2% being convicted of a sex offence. By contrast, female victims of CSA were no more likely than female nonvictims to be convicted of a sex offence.

Other studies have found little or limited evidence of a “cycle” of sexual abuse from victim to offender (Hanson & Slater, 1988; Salter et al., 2003; Thomas & Fremouw, 2009; Widom & Ames, 1994). As discussed later, the main argument against the existence of a cycle of abuse is that prevalence studies reveal that far more girls than boys are victims of CSA, yet far more men perpetrate CSA in adulthood (Cossins, 2000; Cowburn & Dominelli, 2001; Fischer & McDonald, 1998; Freel, 2003; Gold, Hughes, & Swingle, 1996; Little & Hamby, 1999; Putnam, 2003; Simons, Wurtele, & Durham, 2008; Walrath et al., 2003). Others have argued against a cycle of CSA because of the fact that other forms of childhood abuse are implicated in child sex offending (Bagley et al., 1994; Jespersen et al., 2009; Widom, 1996; Widom & Ames, 1994). However, explanations, which focus on family dysfunction and other adverse childhood experiences to explain why a man or male adolescent commits CSA, do not explain why *all* children, male, and female, who are subject to such experiences, do not become child sex offenders.

The sex specificity of CSA in terms of victims and offenders means it is necessary to ask whether sexual abuse and its psychosocial effects may be experienced differently for boys and girls, and whether these differences are able to account for the fact that while most victims of CSA are female, most perpetrators of CSA are male. This article hypothesizes that compared to girls’, (i) boys’ CSA experiences involve risk factors that affect their sexual and social development; and (ii) there is a common link between those risk factors, which may, in turn, predispose some boys to make the transition from victim to offender.

The findings from this review are discussed with reference to a theory of child sex offending that overcomes many of the limitations of existing theoretical accounts by considering the gendered nature of the cycle of CSA in terms of the ways in which CSA is experienced by male versus female victims.

Aims

In order to expand upon the existing literature, the key focus of this review is to determine whether or not there are significant differences between the CSA experiences of boys and girls reported in the literature, and whether individual abuse characteristics can be linked to future child sex offending. Accordingly, the two aims of this review are as follows:

- (a) to determine whether or not there is evidence to prove the existence of a cycle of abuse from victim to offender, in order to explain the phenomenon of child sex offending; and
- (b) if so, to document the abuse experiences that predispose CSA victims to becoming offenders.

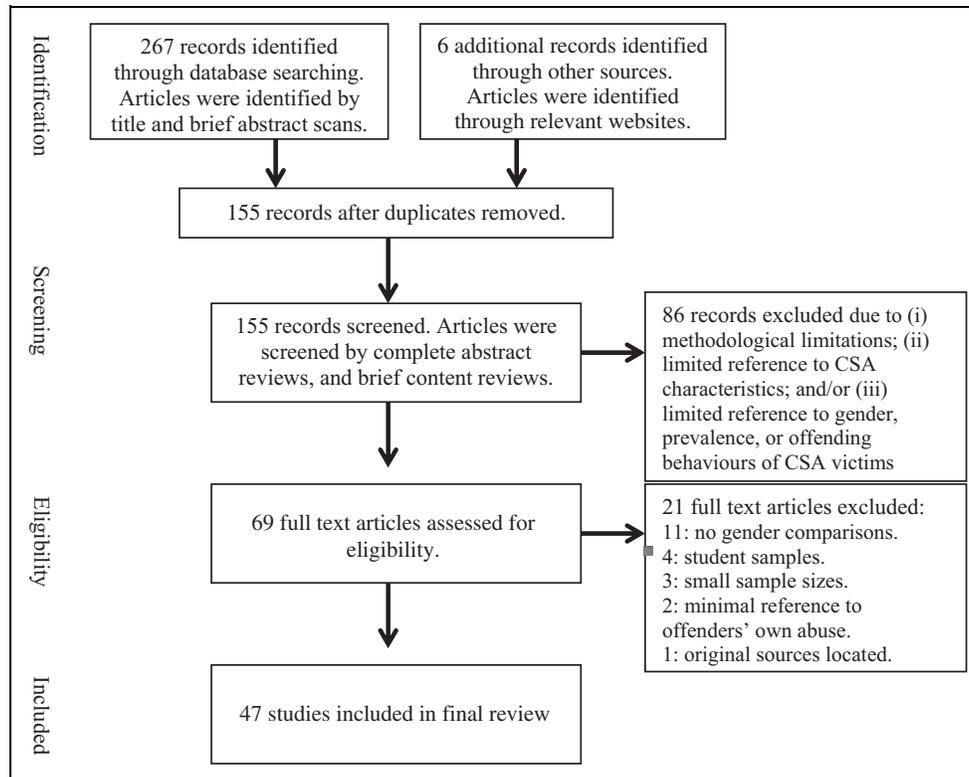


Figure 1. Flow of information through the different phases of the systematic review.

Method

Search Strategy

This systematic review was conducted with reference to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses. It involved four phases of review for a final sample of 47 studies (see Figure 1).

Identification. The medical, sociological, criminological, legal, and psychology literature was searched through JSTOR, PsychInfo, Violence and Abuse Abstracts, CINCH: Australian Criminology Database, Criminal Justice Abstracts, ProQuest Sociological Abstracts, and CINCH-Health. A university librarian was consulted to identify these as the most appropriate databases for the topic, and a three-step search strategy was then developed. The first step was to analyze the topic for its key concepts: gender, CSA, characteristics of CSA, child sex offending, and the cycle of abuse, in order to, select the key words to be used as search terms (step two). A combination of the following key words and terms were used: child sex* abuse, cycle of child sex* abuse, victim abuser cycle, sex* abuse cycle, gender, boys, girls, males, females, child sex* offend*, sex* offender, perpetrator, abuse characteristics, impact, and prevalence. Boolean logic was used at step three to restrict or broaden the search, while truncated terms were used to account for alternate word endings. Using the advanced search function, this search was limited to studies between 1980 and the present, in order to provide a wide ranging but realistic time frame.

Two hundred and sixty-seven articles were located based on their titles and a brief review of their abstracts. Six additional records were located through relevant websites, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Institute of Criminology. After duplicates were removed, 155 articles were identified. Because this search produced a scarcity of material directly on the topic of the cycle of CSA, a wide selection of articles were examined to ensure that all relevant information relating to the characteristics of CSA were included. At this stage, papers relating to victims and offenders were only excluded if any of the following were evident:

- discussed child abuse that did not include CSA;
- contained no reference to the characteristics of CSA or CSA experiences;
- did not specify the gender of the sample;
- were not written in English;
- were published prior to 1980; or
- were editorials or conference proceedings.

Screening. Articles were screened by reference to complete abstract reviews and brief content reviews. The definition of CSA varied across studies, so studies using both narrow (contact only sex offences) and broad (both noncontact and contact sex offences) definitions of CSA were included. The definition of a child also varied, so studies were included if they involved children and adolescents under the age of 18 years. The

reference lists of relevant peer-reviewed papers were also checked for other literature. At this stage, papers relating to victims and offenders were excluded if any of the following were evident:

- significant methodological limitations, such as studies that focused only on offenders involved in clergy abuse, or studies that only provided descriptive information;
- limited or no reference to at least one of nine abuse characteristics of CSA: age at onset; duration of abuse; frequency of abuse; relationship between victim and offender; gender of offender; types of sexual acts experienced; severity of abuse; patterns of disclosure; offender grooming behaviors;
- limited or no reference to the gender of victims; or
- limited or no reference to the offending behaviors of sexually abused children.

In acknowledging that selection bias may be a key limitation to this study and that it is necessary to explain the rationale for selecting the aforementioned nine abuse characteristics, all such characteristics were derived directly from the literature in terms of either defining an experience of CSA and/or explaining the transition from victim to offender. At this stage, 86 articles were excluded, leaving 69 articles for a final review of eligibility.

Eligibility. Sixty-nine articles were accessed for full-text review. Comprehensive analyses were conducted on the following: definitions used, methodological design, participant and sampling justifications, and analysis techniques. Our review of the victim-related literature was subject to the following inclusion criteria:

- articles that documented the experiences of boys and/or girls who were sexually abused as children, with reference to any of the above nine CSA characteristics; and
- articles that referred to the prevalence of CSA, gender differences in CSA experiences and prevalence, offending behaviors of sexually abused children.

For the review of the offender-related literature, the following inclusion criteria were used:

- articles that documented the abuse experiences of child sexual offenders, both as victims and offenders, with reference to any of the above nine characteristics of CSA;
- articles that referred to the following: the prevalence of CSA, gender differences in CSA experiences and prevalence, offending behaviors of sexually abused children, and the link between experiencing CSA and offending behaviors.

When a study's inclusion was not straightforward, it was reviewed in duplicate. Any conflicts about decisions for inclusion were resolved through discussion about the relevance,

reliability, and relative strengths and weaknesses of a study. Twenty-one articles were further excluded at this stage as a result of one of the following reasons: small student samples ($n = 4$) since such samples are not generalizable to other populations (see later); lack of gender comparisons ($n = 11$); small sample sizes ($n = 3$), resulting in a lack of statistical significance; a focus on offender behaviors with minimal reference to offenders' own abuse experiences ($n = 2$); and methodology, that is, a review where original sources could be located ($n = 1$).

Included. Forty-seven studies were included in the review. The characteristics of each study (year of publication, country, and participant characteristics and key findings) were extracted and summarized in Table 1, according to sample type, since the representativeness of a study's findings relies upon the type of population sampled (see later).

Study Limitations

CSA is a difficult phenomenon to study due to numerous methodological factors that may impact the generalizability of a study's findings (Loeb, Gaines, Wyatt, Zhang, & Liu, 2011; McGrath, Nilsen, & Kerley, 2010; Thomas & Fremouw, 2009; Wyatt & Peters, 1986). The majority of studies that document the characteristics of CSA victims and offenders involve non-representative samples (see Table 1) which, as discussed later, affects the comparability of studies. Accordingly, methodological limitations are considered throughout our literature review. Although our review included eight random, community samples—with their findings providing a higher degree of reliability of results compared to other sample types—such representative samples also have particular limitations as discussed later.

Clinical samples suffer from the limitation of self-report, unless the particular clinical cases were verified with independent corroborating evidence. Such samples usually involve nonrepresentative participants (e.g., those whose abuse experiences are severe and may be more likely to seek treatment, or those referred by physicians) which means that clinical study results are not generalizable to CSA victims in the community (Briere, Evans, Runtz, & Wall, 1988; De Jong, Hervada, & Emmett, 1983; Feiring, Taska, & Lewis, 1999; Kendall-Tackett & Simon, 1992; Lambie, Seymour, Lee, & Adams, 2002; Nash, Zivney, & Hulse, 1993; Ruggiero, McLeer, & Dixon, 2000). Clinical studies may also suffer from small sample sizes and lack demographic variability (Herbert, Tremblay, Parent, Daignault, & Piche, 2006), particularly when divided into subsamples, resulting in a lack of statistical power to detect differences. Clinical case note reviews suffer from possible recording errors and differences in detail recorded by different professionals (Glasser et al., 2001; Pierce & Pierce, 1985).

Because student samples also involve retrospective self-report, they are not generalizable to the general population (Allen, Tellez, Wevodau, Woods, & Percosky, 2014; Bendixen, Muss, & Schel, 1994; Ullman & Filipas, 2005; Wellman,

Table 1. Studies on the Characteristics of Child Sexual Abuse.

Study	Sample Type	Key Findings
Community samples (national representative, random, and nonrandom)		
Finkelhor, Hotelling, Lewis, and Smith (1990), USA	National community sample: 2,626 (56.3% female)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child sexual abuse (CSA) reported by 27% of women and 16% of men. 83% of boys' and 98% of girls' abusers were male. Median age: boys: 9.9 years; girls: 9.6 years. Boys more likely to be abused by strangers (40% vs. 21%), and younger offenders. Girls more likely to be abused by relatives (29% vs. 11%). 62% of male victims and 49% of female victims had experienced actual or attempted intercourse. Females more likely (65.9%) than males (55.1%) to be less than 12 years when first abused ($p = .038$). Females (74.9%) more likely than males (59.2%) to be abused by someone ≥ 11 years older ($p = .000$). Males (16.5%) more likely than females (9.4%) to be abused by a peer, 5 years or less older ($p = .002$). Boys more likely to experience actual or attempted intercourse ($p = .010$). Those abused more than once were more likely than those abused once to have experienced anal contact (52% vs. 18%) and penetration (38% vs. 3%; $p = .05$). 63% of the long-duration group were abused by intrafamilial abusers cf. 29% in the onetime abuse group. Sexual abuse reported by 17.9% ($n = 14$) of males and 7.9% ($n = 11$) of females. Most girls abused at 1–13 years (27.9%, $n = 39$); most boys abused at 5–6 years (28.4%, $n = 20$). Significantly more females (22.9%) than males (10.8%) were sexually abused as 3- to 4-year olds, ($p < .05$). Significantly more males (50.0%) than females (35.7%) were sexually abused as 7- to 10-year olds ($p < .05$). Girls experienced penetration (40.6%) more often than boys (30%), difference not significant. Boys significantly more likely to be abused by a female perpetrator than girls (30.8% cf. 13.5%; $p < .01$). 16% of men and 24.7% of women experienced CSA. Female victims: 92% abused by a male offender. Male victims: 20.8% abused by a female offender; 18.3% by both male and female abusers. Intercourse associated with an elevated risk for negative outcomes for males and females. Of those who reported CSA experiences, 42% of males and 23% of females reported intercourse. CSA reported by 40.2% of girls, 17.2% of boys. Girls reported higher rates for all CSA events except pornography and forced anal intercourse. 13% of females and 4.5% of males abused by a father. 27% of males and 10% of females abused by a neighbor. No differences for males/females abused by a stranger. Abuse by a father figure: highest mean trauma score (30.83) cf abuse by strangers, other relatives ($p < .05$). Severely abused women had significantly higher trauma scores than severely abused men ($p < .05$). Significantly higher proportion of men than women experienced anal abuse (no significance value reported). Girls and boys equally likely to have a familial perpetrator and to experience multiple forms of maltreatment. Girls were more likely than boys to have their abuse substantiated and to experience penetrative abuse ($p < .01$); although differences in penetration status did not emerge among adolescents).
Gordon (1990), USA	Random community sample: telephone poll (2,627); subsample: 585 victims (71.1% female)	
Bagley, Wood, and Young (1994), Canada	Random, stratified telephone sample: 750 males aged 18–27	
Schaefer, Mundt, Ahlers, and Bahls (2012), Germany	Non-random community sample: 245 CSA victims, (64.9% female) who accessed online support groups, $M = 26$ years	
Dube et al. (2005), USA	Non-random, community sample, 17,337 from a Health Appraisal Center: 54% female, $M = 56$ years.	
Mohler-Kuo et al. (2014) Switzerland	National, representative sample; 6787 9th-grade students; $M = 15.5$ years.	
Ketting and Feinauer (1999), USA	Random community sample: 465 adult CSA victims (90.1% female)	
Maikovich-Fong and Jafee (2010), USA	Sample from National Survey of Child & Adolescent Well-being: 573, ≥ 4 years (28% male); 234, ≥ 11 years (18% male)	
Dunne, Purdie, Cook, Boyle, and Najman (2003), Australia	National community sample: 1784 (49.1% male)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nonpenetrative CSA twice as common among women (33.6%) than men (15.9%; significance not calculated). Women (12.2%) more likely than men (4.1%) to have experienced unwanted penetrative sexual abuse.
Najman, Dunne, Purdie, Boyle, and Coxeter (2005), Australia	Random community sample: 1,758 (48.9% male), 18–59 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16% of adult men and 35% of adult women reported CSA experiences ($p < .001$). Females experienced more penetrative (12%) and nonpenetrative CSA (23%) than males (12% and 4%; $p < .001$).

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Study	Sample Type	Key Findings
Archival Data Analyses (including large samples of police and clinical data)		
Fischer and McDonald (1998), Canada	Archival data from police files: 1,037 CSA cases. 23% boys; 77% girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mean age—intrafamilial offenders: boys: 5.34 years; girls: 7.38 years ($p < .0001$). • Mean age—extrafamilial offenders: boys: 7.73 years; girls: 10.5 years ($p < .0001$). • At 10 years, extrafamilial abuse was associated with a greater proportion of boy victims ($p < .005$). • Of the 24 male subjects abused by women, 79% became offenders ($p < .05$). • Of the 111 male subjects abused by men, 54% became offenders ($p < .05$). • 59% of the 135 male victims became perpetrators cf. 2% of the 41 female victims ($p < .001$). • Being a victim of CSA was strongly linked with becoming a perpetrator ($p < .001$). • Males (63.8%) significantly more likely than females (48.5%) to experience extrafamilial abuse ($p < .001$). • Male victims more likely to be convicted of a sex offence (5%) cf. males in comparison group (0.6%; $p = .0001$). • Males victimized at ≥ 12 years: 9.2% convicted of a sex offence cf. boys abused under 12 (2.9%; $p < .001$). • Girls convicted of a sex offence: no significant differences between those abused before, or aged 12. • CSA victims 7.6 times more likely to be charged with a sex offence than the general population ($p = .000$).
Glasser et al. (2001), UK	Clinical case review: random selection 843 CSA victims (88.6% male) from a clinic (1985–1990). $M = 31.2$ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males (63.8%) significantly more likely than females (48.5%) to experience extrafamilial abuse ($p < .001$). • Male victims more likely to be convicted of a sex offence (5%) cf. males in comparison group (0.6%; $p = .0001$). • Males victimized at ≥ 12 years: 9.2% convicted of a sex offence cf. boys abused under 12 (2.9%; $p < .001$). • Girls convicted of a sex offence: no significant differences between those abused before, or aged 12. • CSA victims 7.6 times more likely to be charged with a sex offence than the general population ($p = .000$).
Ogloff, Cutajar, Mann, and Mullen (2012), Australia	Police database sample (1964–1995): 2,759 CSA victims (20.2% male), $M = 10.2$ years; 35.6 years at follow up. Comparison: 2677 from electoral rolls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males more likely to be abused by stepfathers ($p < .05$). • Significantly more females abused by natural fathers (41%) than males (20%; $p < .05$). • Oral intercourse most common with males (52%) cf. females (17%; $p < .001$). • Females more likely to experience fondling (63%) cf. males (32%; $p < .01$). • 45% males felt forced (cf. 30% females; $p < .01$). 43% males felt threatened (cf. 35% females; $p < .03$). • Mean age: boys: 8.7 years; girls: 10.5 years. • Boys reported more violence, and displayed more evidence of trauma (55.6% vs. 31.7% girls, $p < .005$). • Boys more likely to be abused by nonrelatives (88% vs. 75% girls). Girls more likely to be abused by relatives (25.6% vs. 12.5% boys; $p < .05$). • 78% of perpetrators were known to victims. Relatives most frequent abusers (48% boys vs. 36% girls); biological parents (24% boys vs. 20% girls); parental figures (8% boys vs. 18% girls). 82% of abusers were male. • Boys experienced more fondling and oral intercourse than girls (41% boys vs. 9.2% girls; $p < .008$). • Girls more likely to experience some form of penetration than boys (64% girls vs. 28% boys; $p < .008$).
Pierce and Pierce (1985), USA	Case note review: 205 (87.8% female), CSA substantiated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26 (11.6%) later became child sex offender. • 38% of victim abusers vs. 17% of nonabusers had been sexually abused by a female abuser. • Victim abusers did not experience more serious abuse, nor more likely to have multiple abusers cf. nonabusers.
DeJong et al. (1983), USA	Clinical case review: 72 boys; 344 girls under the age of 16 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No difference in mean age at abuse onset³: males = 9 years; females = 9.6 years. • Girls experienced more severe abuse, grading system, 1–3. Mean severity: girls, 2.95; boys, 2.45 ($p < .001$). • Girls abused to a later age (13.9 years) than boys (11.8 years; $p < .024$). • Mean age: boys 6.3 years; girls 5.5 years ($p = .06$). • More boys' abusers in a professional relationship with the victim (28.5%) than abusers of girls (10.3%). • Mean age: 7.65 years for males; 7.6 years for females. Average CSA duration: 3.91 years for males; 5.6 years for females. • Stepfathers molested more girls (22% cf. 8%; $p < .001$). Family friends molested more boys (38% cf. 10%; $p < .001$). • Natural fathers molested boys (33%) and girls (39%) about equally. • Males experienced significantly more anal intercourse (30% cf. 7% of females; $p < .001$).
Fontanella et al. (2000), USA	Clinical case review: 74 CSA cases (60.8% female), 2–5 years	
Representative and Longitudinal Clinical Samples		
Salter et al. (2003), UK	Longitudinal clinical sample: 224 male CSA victims ($M = 11$ years at referral)	
Clinical Samples		
Briere, Evans, Runtz, and Wall (1988), USA	Clinical sample: 80 abused men and women. $M = 27.1$ years	
Faller (1989), USA	Clinical sample: 87 male and 226 female victims.	
Kendall-Tackett and Simon (1992), USA	Clinical sample: 365 CSA victims (89% female), aged 18–59	

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Study	Sample Type	Key Findings
Burton, Miller, and Shill (2002), USA	Clinical sample: adolescents: 272 sex offenders and 199 nonsex offenders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 79.4% of the sex offenders vs. 46.7% of the nonsex offenders reported sexual victimization. Victimized sex offenders were more likely to experience: a male perpetrator ($p = .002$); both male and female perpetrators ($p = .000$); longer duration of CSA ($p = .034$); more forceful abuse ($p < .000$); penetration ($p = .000$). Best predictors of being in sex offender group: having both a male and female perpetrator and forcefulness of abuse. Sex offenders (47%) were more likely to have been abused by a relative than nonsex offenders (28%; $p = .000$). Among the child sex offenders, number of CSA incidents (+.454), younger age at abuse onset (-.688) and delay in reporting (+.661) were correlated with future CSA perpetration. The younger the child at the time of abuse and the longer the duration, the greater the detrimental effect on his psychosocial and psychosexual development.
Hunter and Figueredo (2000), USA	Clinical male sample (13–17 years). 55 abused sex offenders; 72 nonabused sex offenders; 28 abused nonoffenders; 40 maladjusted nonoffenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No difference between groups re: the frequency or duration of abuse; the age at which the abuse commenced or ceased; nature of CSA experienced.
Lambie, Seymour, Lee, and Adams (2002), NZ	Clinical sample: male CSA victims in treatment: 41 offenders and 47 nonoffenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower survivor functioning associated with: greater frequency and duration of abuse; older age at abuse onset; disclosure first to someone other than victim's mother; a perpetrator other than the victim's father/stepfather.
Ruggiero, McLeer, and Dixon (2000), USA	Clinical sample: 65 girls; 15 boys, mean age 9.4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girls more likely to experience abuse by a parental figure (41% vs. boys 20%; $p = .05$).
Feiring, Taska, and Lewis (1999), USA	Clinical sample: 96, aged 8–11 (68.8% girls); 73, aged 12–15 (75.3% girls)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boys more likely to experience abuse by a non-family member (52% vs. girls 30%; $p = .05$). Adolescents report higher levels of depressive symptoms, greater negative reactions by others, lower self-worth, and less social support than children.
Herbert, Tremblay, Parent, Daignault, and Piche (2006), Canada	Clinical sample: 63 CSA victims (79.4% girls); 63 nonvictims (79.4% girls); $M = 9.45$ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girls more likely to have experienced penetration (girls 71% vs. boys 54%; $p = .04$). 95% of cases involved a known perpetrator. Duration of abuse associated with greater behavioral problems ($p < .05$). Children abused by family member had more: internalizing behavioral problems ($p < .05$), externalizing difficulties ($p < .05$) and sexualized behaviors ($p < .05$) cf. children abused by a distant perpetrator.
Veneziano, Veneziano, and LeGrand (2000), USA	Clinical sample: 68 adolescent male sex abusers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victimized abusers were: 1.5× more likely to victimize a relative if abused by a relative; 2× as likely to victimize someone aged <5 years if first abused prior to age 5; 2× as likely to sexually abuse males if abused by a male; 1.5× more likely to commit anal abuse, if anal abuse experienced ($p < .01$); 7× more likely to fondle their victims if fondled ($p < .01$); 2× as likely to commit oral sex, if oral sex experienced.
Phelan (1995), USA	Clinical sample: 40 child sex offenders and 44 daughters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fondling most common act of abuse reported. Only five fathers and three daughters reported the abuse occurred once. Abuse progressed slowly over time with increasingly more serious types of sexual activity. First sexual advance arose out of behavior already established within the family.
Berliner and Conte (1990), USA	Clinical sample: 23 CSA victims, 10–18 years (91.3% female)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most children reported some type of coercion either to gain cooperation or to prevent reporting.
Kobayashi, Sales, Becker, Figueredo, and Kaplan (1995), USA	Clinical sample: 117 juvenile male sex offenders, 12–19 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A majority ($n = 14$) said there were threats. CSA committed by males was more coercive than CSA committed by females ($p = .002$). Significant link between sexual abuse by males, but not females, and sexual aggression by adolescents ($p < .01$).
Hall, Mathews, and Pearce (1998), Canada	Clinical sample: 100 abused children, 3–7 years (63% female)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongest relationships between CSA and sexual behavior problems were: sexual arousal during abuse ($p < .00001$); perpetrator's use of grooming ($p = .00001$).

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Study	Sample Type	Key Findings
McClellan et al. (1997), USA	Clinical sample: 499 youths, 5–18 years (27% female)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girls experienced more: chronic abuse ($p < .0005$), multiple abusers ($p < .09$), abuse by fathers/stepfathers (nonsignificant), or penetrative abuse (nonsignificant). Boys and girls likely to develop sexually inappropriate behaviors. Associated with more severe CSA & earlier onset. Boys more likely to develop sexually victimizing behaviors (27% of boys vs. 18% of girls, $p < .0005$). For boys, sexually inappropriate behaviors associated with higher rates of CSA by mother/stepmother ($p < .05$).
Incarcerated Samples Briggs and Hawkins (1996), Australia	84 incarcerated child sex offenders cf. 95 nonoffenders. All nonoffenders and 93% offenders had experienced CSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 71% abused by males only. 14.5% abused by females and males. 14.5% abused by females only. About 2/3 of offender-victims enjoyed their sexual experiences cf. <1/5 nonoffender-victims ($p = .0000$). Nonoffender-victims identified many more negative effects than offender-victims. The transition from victim to offender typically occurred during adolescence.
Fondacaro, Holt, and Powell (1999), USA	Incarcerated sample: 211 randomly selected males, $M = 32$ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over half of the CSA victims reported completed oral (53.5%) or anal penetration (59.3%). 40.4% met standard criteria for CSA, exceeding the rate in the general population.
Simons, Wurtele, and Durham (2008), USA	Incarcerated sample: 137 rapists and 132 child sex abusers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victimized child sex abusers (73%) more likely than victimized rapists (43%) to report: intrafamilial CSA (22% cf. 14%); abuse by a male perpetrator (53% cf. 34%); severe multiple episodes (e.g., force, oral, or anal abuse; $p < .005$).
Lang and Frenzel (1988)	Incarcerated sample: 52 incest and 52 pedophilic offenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35% of incest offenders, 30% of pedophilic offenders ($p < .001$) used gratuitous violence (e.g., pushing, grabbing, shoving, or spanking) to force children's compliance.
Smallbone and Wortley (2001), Australia	Incarcerated sample: 182 adult child sex offenders	<p>Most common grooming techniques for intrafamilial vs. extrafamilial offenders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> spending a lot of time with child (70.9% vs. 55.9%) nonsexual touching (67.1% vs. 64.4%) giving a lot of attention (64.6% vs. 59.3%). <p>Most commonly used means of keeping a child silent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> saying the offender would get into trouble (60.5%) hoping the child would not want to lose the offender because he provided affection (35.7%) giving the child rewards or privileges (20.8%).
Ward, Loudon, Hudson, and Marshall (1995), NZ	Incarcerated sample: 26 child molesters, $M = 44.9$ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified nine stages of the offence chain, including grooming strategies.
Student Sample Wagman et al. (1997), USA	Student sample; 71, 594 male and female high school students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.8% of male students and 1.3% of female students reported a history of sexual violence preparation. Male youth with a history of intra- or extrafamilial abuse were twice as likely as males without to perpetrate sexual violence ($p < .001$).
Reviews and Meta-Analyses Beitchman, Zucker, Hood, daCosta, and Akman (1991), Canada	Review of empirical studies on the short- and long-term effects of CSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More frequent abuse and longer duration linked to more severe outcomes (depression, exploiting others, and antisocial behaviors). Severity (penetration, force, and violence), and close victim-offender relationship linked to greater trauma. Boys more often abused by a stepfather. Girls more often abused by a natural father. Both associated with greater trauma than abuse by other perpetrators. Victims more likely than nonvictims to develop inappropriate sexual (or sexualized) behavior.

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Study	Sample Type	Key Findings
Richards (2011), Australia	Review of the available evidence for five common misperceptions about child sex offenders	Female victims most likely to have been abused by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a male relative (35.1%); father/stepfather (16.5%) • a family friend (16.5%) • an acquaintance or neighbor (15.4%) • another known person (11%) • a stranger (8.6%) • a female relative (1%); mother/stepmother (0.6%). Male victims most likely to have been abused by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • another known person (27.3%) • a stranger (18.3%) • a male relative (16.4%) • an acquaintance or neighbor (16.2%) • a family friend (15.6%) • a father or stepfather (5%)
Paine and Hansen (2002), USA	Literature review: children's disclosure of CSA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For boys and girls, the victim-perpetrator relationship is most often familiar, emotionally close, and significant. • Children abused by a close family member less likely to report abuse than those abused by a stranger. • 54% of those subjected to intercourse, and 50% subjected to attempted or noncontact CSA did not disclose. • Most children delay reporting for significant periods of time.
Tsopelas, Tsetsou, Ntoumas, and Douzenis (2012), Greece	Literature review: the consequences of CSA perpetrated by females	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys appear more hesitant and less likely to disclose than girls. • All female sexual abusers were in a caring relationship with the victim cf. male abusers. • Few studies reported that female abusers were total strangers to their victims.
Price-Robertson, Bromfield, and Vassallo (2010), Australia	Review: 14 studies on CSA prevalence, Australian community samples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevalence of penetrative abuse: males: 4–8%; females: 7–12% • Prevalence of nonpenetrative abuse: males: 11–16%; females: 23–34%
Watkins and Bentovim (1992), UK	Literature review: all aspects of CSA of boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinical studies, involving over 800 boys, are unanimous that boys more likely than girls to experience anal abuse.
Leclerc, Proulx, and Bearegard (2009), Australia, Canada	Review: implications of child sex offenders' modus operandi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numerous researchers believe that fear of being seen as homosexual contributes to nondisclosure by boys. • Various strategies used by offenders (e.g., gaining trust, cooperation in sexual activity, and maintaining victims' silence).
Holmes and Slap (1998), USA	Review: 166 studies of male child sexual abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 53–94% of perpetrators were male. 54–89% of perpetrators extrafamilial; 21–40% not known to the victims. • Force occurred in 10–25% of CSA events. Threats and force increased with victim age and male perpetration. • Negative responses to CSA reported by 15–39% of males, linked to: force, greater perpetrator-victim age difference. • Of those with positive reactions, 91% viewed abuse as physically pleasurable. Other factors associated with positive responses: age older than 12, longer duration, female perpetrator. • Actual clinical outcomes, rather than perceptions, revealed significant psychological sequelae.

^aAges reported assumed to be mean ages.

1993). As stated earlier, student samples were excluded from the present review with the exception of one large, random sample of students (Wagman Borowsky, Hogan, & Ireland, 1997). This is because if the student cohort is randomly selected (rather than a convenience sample of volunteers) and the sample size is large enough, the results may be generalizable to other student populations of similar demographic characteristics. Studies involving archival data from police files are also nonrepresentative (Fischer & McDonald, 1998), since reports of CSA to the police do not follow any systematic method or procedure and come from a number of sources.

With random, community samples, some bias may be evident in the sample composition; for example, a socioeconomic bias arises where recruitment relies on random telephone sampling (Bagley et al., 1994; Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, & Smith, 1990; Gordon, 1990; Dunne, Purdie, Cook, Boyle, & Najman, 2003; Najman, Dunne, Purdie, Boyle, & Coxeter, 2005) since this method does not capture homeless people or those without a listed telephone number. Because such samples also involve retrospective self-report (Dube et al., 2005), studies may suffer from over- or underreporting, with self-reports being dependent on the quality of the interview or survey instrument, the nature of the interview questions, the broadness of definitions of child and CSA, and the quality of participants' childhood memories.

Incarcerated samples of offenders are nonrepresentative of offenders in the general population for various reasons. The source of the sample (i.e., the type of jail or detention center) determines the extent of sample variation, such as intrafamilial or extrafamilial, treated or nontreated and the severity of offences committed (Briggs & Hawkins, 1996; Burton et al., 2002; Fondacaro, Holt, & Powell, 1999). Such samples usually involve self-reporting and self-selecting participants, which may result in under- or overreporting of criminal activities (Elliott et al., 1995; Simons et al., 2008). Studies are also limited if they lack comparison groups of offenders and non-offenders, if comparison groups are not matched for demographic characteristics, or if offender and comparison groups comprise small sample sizes, particularly when divided into subsamples.

Finally, as already noted earlier, literature reviews potentially suffer from selection bias.

Differences in Male and Female Experiences of CSA

In order to test our hypotheses, differences between the experiences of boys and girls are analyzed to determine whether there is evidence to support a cycle of CSA, and, if so, to document the abuse experiences that predispose CSA victims to becoming offenders. We examine not only whether boys and girls experience different types of abuse but also whether the impact of CSA on boys and girls differs in terms of their sexual and social development.

Age of onset. As set out in Table 1, there are conflicting findings about the ages at which boys and girls are most likely to

experience CSA, which may be a result of methodological differences in terms of the type and size of samples in various studies (Fischer & McDonald, 1998; Goldman & Padayachi, 1997; Gordon, 1990). Gordon (1990) reported that boys were older than girls at abuse onset in relation to a random, community sample of 585 men and women who reported experiences of CSA. By contrast, a study of a random, community sample of 2626 men and women found no significant difference in the median age at which boys and girls were first abused (9.9 vs. 9.6 years; Finkelhor et al., 1990).

Clinical and archival studies do not assist in resolving the above differences, since the age of onset reported in these studies may be a reflection of the age group that is old enough to report or more likely to come to the attention of authorities or other significant adults. Clinical studies reveal either no difference in age of onset for boys and girls (Briere et al., 1988; Kendall-Tackett & Simon, 1992), or that boys are younger than girls at age of onset (DeJong et al., 1983; Schaefer, Mundt, Ahlers, & Bahls, 2012; see also Fischer & McDonald, 1998). While pooling of age of onset data is an option, the different data sources must be comparable (Verma, 2002). The samples that are the subject of the aforementioned studies were not comparable due to the different population and sample types and the different findings reported (mean versus median age of onset).

While it is possible that age at onset is unrelated to the lived experience of CSA (Thomas & Fremouw, 2009), an older age at abuse onset has been found to predict later sexual offending behaviors (Cutajar et al., 2010; Feiring et al., 1999). In the largest known sample of CSA victims studied (2,759), Ogloff et al. (2012, pp. 3–4) found that age of onset *was* associated with the transition from victim to offender at a particular age. Ten percent of boys who had experienced CSA at 12 years or older were “subsequently found to have been convicted of a sexual offence” compared to boys abused under the age of 12 (2.9%), and girls abused at any age (0.1%). Ogloff et al. (2012, p. 5) concluded that “sexual victimization may be an important risk factor” for boys abused at 12 years or older because of the fact that psychosexual development is a “hallmark feature” of this male age group possibly because of “heightened sexual arousal . . . paired with cognitive distortion/implicit theories relating to sexual relations . . . and aberrant sexual urges.”

While an increased likelihood of a boy becoming a sexual offender if abused at 12 years or older may also be related to more negative psychological outcomes among victims abused at an older age (Cutajar et al., 2010), what remains unanswered, however, is why boys' psychosexual development would be more affected by sexual abuse than girls'.

Duration and frequency of abuse. Duration of abuse is associated with more serious types of abuse (such as penetration; Bagley et al., 1994) and with more severe psychosocial outcomes in victims (Briere et al., 1988; Beitchman, Zucker, Hood, daCosta, & Akman, 1991; Burton et al., 2002; Hunter & Figueredo, 2000; Ruggiero et al., 2000). As listed in Table 1, some research shows that girls experience longer duration of abuse

than boys. In a study which surveyed 824 male and female college students' experiences of sexual abuse, Wellman (1993, p. 543) found that, in response to the survey question, "I was repeatedly sexually abused as a child or teenager," women reported higher rates of repeated CSA than men. In another student sample, Ullman and Filipas (2005) found that female college students were more likely to report longer duration of CSA experiences measured in years, compared to male students. In a clinical sample of 365 adult men and women who were sexually abused as children, Kendall-Tackett and Simon (1992) also found that women reported longer duration of abuse, measured as the time between the age of onset and the age of cessation of abuse.

Although duration of CSA has been linked to negative outcomes for victims in a number of studies, Lambie, Seymour, Lee, and Adams (2002) found that it did not necessarily correlate with an increased likelihood of becoming an offender in relation to a clinical sample of 88 male CSA victims of whom 41 were child sex offenders. By comparison, Burton, Miller, and Shill (2002) found that victimized sex offenders were more likely to have experienced longer duration of abuse, compared to victimized nonsex offenders.

While duration of abuse data is inconclusive, other researchers have suggested that the frequency of abuse, rather than duration, may be a more important predictor of later negative outcomes (Beitchman et al., 1991; McClellan et al., 1997; Nash et al., 1993; Ruggiero et al., 2000). For example, self-reports from a random community sample of 750 males revealed that men who had experienced multiple CSA incidents were more likely than men who had experienced a single incident, or no sexual abuse, to later have sexual contact with a child or adolescent (Bagley et al., 1994, p. 690).

Hunter and Figueredo (2000) also found that more frequent sexual abuse was predictive of adolescent sex offending in a clinical sample of 235 male CSA victims who either did, or did not, become offenders. They suggest that multiple abuse experiences increases the likelihood of experiencing more invasive abuse which has a greater impact on an individual's psychosocial and sexual development. By contrast, Ogloff et al. (2012, p. 4) reported that frequency of abuse did not have a significant effect "upon the presence of criminal history" among an archival sample of 2,759 CSA victims.

As a result, it is unclear whether frequency of abuse is a factor that influences the transition from victim to offender. If, as two out of three of the above studies suggest that it does, no account is taken of the fact that girls' experiences of CSA are more likely to involve frequent abuse (Briere et al., 1988; Wellman, 1993), compared to boys. How then to explain the fact that frequently abused boys may be more likely to become offenders, compared to frequently abused girls? It is possible that the frequency of abuse that leads to the development of sexually abusive behavior differs for boys and girls. McClellan et al. (1997, p. 963) concluded that "there are gender differences in the threshold of sexual abuse exposure necessary to produce sexually inappropriate behaviors," where boys require a much lower threshold of abuse (i.e., severity and frequency)

than girls. In their clinical sample of 273 victims aged 5–18 years who exhibited sexually inappropriate behaviors, girls were found to have experienced more frequent abuse, while boys were significantly more likely to develop victimizing sexual behaviors (molestation, incest, and/or rape). By comparison, girls were more likely to develop *reactive* sexual behaviors, such as flirting, or inappropriate grabbing or touching.

Gender of the abuser. While the majority of child sex offenders are men (ABS, 2015; Bendixen et al., 1994; Burton et al., 2002; Cossins, 2000; Faller, 1989; Gordon, 1990; Mohler-Kuo et al., 2014; Richards, 2011), when women do commit CSA, they are more likely to abuse boys rather than girls (Bendixen et al., 1994; Dube et al., 2005; Faller, 1989; Mohler-Kuo et al., 2014; Schaefer et al., 2012; Tsopelas, Tsetsou, Ntounas, & Douzenis, 2012; cf. Richards, 2011).

No random community studies have reported findings on the relationship between the gender of the abuser and the likelihood of future offending by victims. In a retrospective clinical case review of 843 subjects, Glasser et al. (2001, p. 493) reported that the transition from victim to offender was associated with abuse by a female perpetrator, with male victims significantly more likely to become a perpetrator if abused by a sister or mother. Similarly, when Briggs and Hawkins (1996) compared the experiences of 84 victimized male sex offenders with 93 victimized nonoffenders, they found that sexual abuse by a female relative was associated with the transition from victim to offender, compared to sexual abuse by a male relative or a nonrelative.

Nonetheless, it is difficult to conclude that boys who are abused by women are more likely to become offenders, since the vast majority of boys are sexually abused by men (McGuffey, 2008). For example, when Burton et al. (2002) compared the CSA experiences of adolescent sex offenders and adolescent nonoffenders, they found that the sex offenders ($n = 216$) were more likely to have experienced abuse by a male perpetrator, or by *both* male and female perpetrators, than the nonoffenders ($n = 93$). Among a clinical sample of 117 adolescent male sex offenders, Kobayashi, Sales, Becker, Figueredo, and Kaplan (1995) found a significant link between sexual abuse by male perpetrators, but not female perpetrators, and the commission of sexual aggression during adolescence.

The above conflicting findings mean that it is not possible to conclude that the transition from victim to offender is influenced by the gender of a boy's abuser. Rather, criminological and psychological theories suggest that this transition may be related to the degree of psychological trauma experienced (Briere et al., 1988; Fondacaro et al., 1999; Herbert et al., 2006), including the degree of powerlessness and loss of control (Cossins, 2000) which, in turn, may be related to the relationship between victim and abuser. For example, Kobayashi et al. (1995, p. 30) suggested that when boys are abused by a male offender, confusion and anxiety over their sexual identity may lead to "inappropriate attempts to reassert masculinity," including sexual aggression against others.

Relationship between victim and abuser. Although most victims of CSA are abused by people known to them (ABS, 2014; Finkelhor et al., 1990; Herbert et al., 2006; Mohler-Kuo et al., 2014; Paine & Hanson, 2002; NIJ, 2003; Richards, 2011; Salter et al., 2003), victim report studies indicate that girls are more likely than boys to be abused by a family member, especially a parental figure or older relative (DeJong et al., 1983; Feiring et al., 1999; Finkelhor et al., 1990; Goldman & Padayachi, 1997; Gordon, 1990; Kendall-Tackett & Simon, 1992; Ketring & Feinauer, 1999; cf. Fontanella, Harrington, & Zuravin, 2001; Maikovich-Fong & Jafee, 2010).

By contrast, boys are more likely to be abused by a non-family member who is known to them (ABS, 2014; DeJong et al., 1983; Faller, 1989; Finkelhor et al., 1990; Goldman & Padayachi, 1997; Gordon, 1990; Ogloff et al., 2012). When boys are abused within the home, they are much less likely to be abused by a parent or grandparent, and more likely to be abused by a relative closer in age, such as an older cousin or sibling (Finkelhor et al., 1990; Gordon, 1990). In a large community sample of 2,627 men and women, Gordon (1990) found that boys' abusers were aged between the victim's own age and 5 years older, while girls were more likely to be abused by someone 11 or more years older. Similarly, in a national survey of 2,626 men and women who had experienced CSA, Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, and Smith (1990, p. 21) found that boys were more likely to be abused by younger offenders, "most of whom were older adolescents," older siblings or cousins.

Some studies suggest that abuse by a family member is associated with the transition from victim to offender. In a comparison of a clinical sample of CSA victims (216 male adolescent child sex offenders and 93 male adolescent nonchild sex offenders), Burton et al. (2002) found that the offenders were more likely than nonoffenders to have been abused by a relative or parent. Such abuse may be related to the degree of trauma suffered, since Herbert, Tremblay, Parent, Daignault, and Piche (2006) found that among a clinical sample of 63 male and female CSA victims, those who were abused by a family member displayed more significant psychological symptoms than those abused by a nonrelative.

Nonetheless, studies report varying findings on the association between psychological trauma and a victim's relationship with their abuser. DeJong et al. (1983) found that among a clinical sample of 416 victimized boys and girls, evidence of trauma *increased* when the abuser was a nonrelative, while Ullman and Filipas (2005, p. 775) reported more negative outcomes among a sample of 733 male and female college students, when there was a "less well-known victim offender relationship."

Because none of the aforementioned studies included random community samples, it is not possible to conclude that abuse by a family member is associated with the transition from victim to abuser. Current research defines a "close" relationship as a familial one, yet the transition from victim to offender may be linked to the closeness of the relationship as perceived by the victim. Wyre (2000, p. 64) has suggested that it may be the degree of dependency established between victim and

offender that is implicated in this transition as a result of the grooming process:

if you look at a group of children to see why some offend and others do not, the key lies in . . . in the nature of the relationship their abuser formed with them as part of the abuse. The controls exercised by the abuser on the relationship appear to have more bearing on the likelihood of them going on to abuse . . . than the type of abuse.

Wagman et al. (1997, p. 7) also concluded that "the pattern of sexual abuse may continue if a child identifies closeness, acceptance, and affection with inappropriate sexual activity," since their study found that males with a history of intrafamilial or extrafamilial CSA were twice as likely to perpetrate sexual violence than those without such histories among a large sample of 71,594 high school students. Thus, the closeness of that relationship, as perceived by the victim, may be more important to the transition from victim to offender than the distinction between familial and nonfamilial abusers.

This proposition is consistent with the findings of Ketring and Feinauer (1999) who reported more severe trauma symptoms among those abused by a father figure from a random community sample of 419 female and 56 male victims of CSA, while Herbert et al. (2006) found, in a comparative clinical sample, that children suffered more behavioral problems if abused by a close versus a distant adult.

Nonetheless, if girls are more likely to be abused by a parental figure or someone 5 or more years older (and suffer more trauma: Ketring & Feinauer, 1999) and boys are more likely to be abused by those closer in age (and suffer less trauma: Ketring & Feinauer, 1999), how then to explain why girls are less likely to become offenders than boys?

Types and severity of abuse. Abuse severity (involving penetration) is associated with greater trauma for both boys and girls (Beitchman et al., 1991; Dube et al., 2005). Some clinical and random community studies report that girls are more likely than boys to experience penetration (Feiring et al., 1999; Fontanella et al., 2001; Najman et al., 2005; Schaefer et al., 2012), although boys may be more likely to experience threats of, or actual force (DeJong et al., 1983; Pierce & Pierce, 1985). A review of 14 prevalence studies estimated that 7–12% of girls compared to 4–8% of boys experienced penetrative sexual abuse (Price-Robertson, Bromfield, & Vassallo, 2010), while two community samples of Australian men and women found that women were three times more likely than men to have experienced penetrative sexual abuse (Dunne et al., 2003; Najman et al., 2005) even though boys may be more likely to experience anal penetration (Ketring & Feinauer, 1999; Watkins & Bentovim, 1992; see also Nash et al., 1993; Ullman & Filipas, 2005). Although some studies (Dube et al., 2005; Gordon, 1990; Finkelhor et al., 1990) report that boys were more likely than girls to experience actual intercourse, the weight of evidence in Table 1 favors the conclusion that girls are more likely to experience penetrative abuse than boys.

Clinical studies suggest that victims who experience more serious and invasive abuse are more likely to become child sex offenders. Burton et al. (2002) reported that victimized male adolescent child sex offenders ($N = 216$) were more likely to have experienced serious abuse than victimized male adolescent nonoffenders ($N = 93$). In relation to an incarcerated sample of 137 rapists and 132 child sex abusers, Simons, Wurtele, and Durham (2008) found that victimized child sex offenders were more likely than victimized rapists to experience severe multiple abuse episodes, involving, force, oral, or anal abuse.

However, other studies have reported that abuse severity is unrelated to the transition from victim to offender. In a longitudinal study involving a clinical sample of 224 male victims of CSA, Salter et al. (2003) found that more invasive or serious abuse was unrelated to victims becoming offenders, while Ogl-off et al. (2012, p. 4) reported that seriousness of abuse did not have a significant effect "upon the presence of criminal history among" a population of 2,759 CSA victims.

Disclosure of abuse. Numerous studies have found that girls are more likely to report abuse and to have their abuse substantiated (Finkelhor et al., 1990; Gordon, 1990; Maikovitch-Fong & Jafee, 2010; Paine & Hansen, 2002; Ullman & Filipas, 2005). However, these findings are inconsistent with the facts that girls are more likely to be victims of intrafamilial abuse and that "children abused by family members are more likely to delay disclosure" (Cossins, 2010, p. 80; see also Paine & Hansen, 2002).

Some consider that there are key differences in the disclosure experiences of boys and girls. Boys abused by father figures or peers who develop a "relationship" with the victim may make it difficult for a boy to prevent, stop or disclose the abuse (Parkinson, Oates, & Jayakody, 2012). The same may be said for girls, but what appears to distinguish boys' experiences from girls' is that boys' experiences of CSA may lead to confusion and anxiety over sexual identity (Watkins & Bentovim, 1992), with boys enjoying some aspects of the CSA experience (Briggs & Hawkins, 1996; Rind, Tromovitch, & Bauserman, 1998). Disclosure may be less likely for boys because of fears of being labeled homosexual (Watkins & Bentovim, 1992), or the fear that they will become abusers as well as the belief that "boys do not get abused" (Paine & Hansen, 2002). Confusion over sexual identity may affect not only disclosure but also the transition from victim to offender, since some boys may normalize their abuse experiences, a coping mechanism that has been linked to child sex offending in adulthood (Briggs & Hawkins, 1996).

Grooming methods. The grooming methods used by an offender to gain a child's trust and acquiescence are also thought to be associated with the transition from victim to offender (Wyre, 2000). However, no studies have addressed the pathways by which grooming has this effect. Girls' and boys' experiences of manipulation by offenders to gain their compliance appear to be characterized by quite similar processes, that is, the use of

psychological and physical desensitization of children to physical and sexual touching (Berliner & Conte, 1990; Lang & Frenzel, 1988; Leclerc, Proulx, & Beaugard, 2009; Phelan, 1995; Smallbone & Wortley, 2001; Ward, Loudon, Hudson, & Marshall, 1995). The key difference between the CSA experiences of boys and girls is that boys appear more likely to experience force (Pierce & Pierce, 1985), which may be implicated in the transition from victim to offender (Burton et al., 2002). However, because force occurs in a minority of cases (Gordon, 1990), there may be other features of the grooming process that contributes to later offending by boys since:

A child being approached in the street by a "predatory pedophile" will develop a different set of beliefs about their abuse than someone who is abused by a "pedophile" who takes time in forming the relationship. (Wyre, 2000, p. 97)

A boy may become confused about his role in the abuse, especially when grooming and abuse result in physical pleasure. For example, Holmes and Slap (1998, p. 1858) found that only 15–39% of male victims reported negative responses to sexual abuse in their review of 166 studies, while 91% of those with positive perceptions viewed the events as physically pleasurable. Similarly, in a clinical sample of sexually victimized nonoffenders and offenders, Lambie et al. (2002) found that male victims who became offenders were more likely to report physical pleasure as victims.

Craven, Brown, and Gilchrist (2007, p. 296) argue that grooming practices that result in positive perceptions enhance the victim's sense of self-blame, since the child may interpret sexual stimulation "as evidence that they are enjoying themselves [which] . . . may have an impact on the child's developing identity." Consistent with this proposition, Hall, Mathews, and Pearce (1998, p. 1055) found that grooming strategies that contributed to sexual pleasure were predictive of interpersonal sexual problems among a clinical sample of 100 sexually abused children. They hypothesized that

the gradual induction of the victim into the "secret" activity, their level of involvement and pleasure experienced, and self-blame may all work together to increase the likelihood that the child will continue the behavior and become even more offender-identified and isolated from positive social networks as the behavior continues.

Discussion

The purpose of this article was to answer a key research question which has not previously been addressed in the literature. We hypothesized that differences between the CSA experiences of girls compared to boys could account for the fact that more boys make the transition from victim to offender, despite the fact that more girls are victims of CSA. In order to test this hypothesis, we undertook an extensive literature review to determine whether there is evidence to support a cycle of CSA,

and, if so, to document the abuse experiences that predispose male CSA victims to becoming offenders.

We found that we could not offer a definitive answer in order to prove or disprove the hypothesis because of the different methodologies, sample types, and sample sizes used in relevant studies. However, as a result of this review, we have been able to do the following:

- identify particular commonalities associated with boys' CSA experiences, compared to girls' by identifying four key factors that may be associated with a cycle of abuse for male victims;
- conclude that there is no evidence for the existence of a cycle of abuse for female CSA victims;
- identify the methodological issues that ought to be addressed in order to further investigate the hypothesis that particular CSA experiences predispose male victims to becoming offenders, compared to female victims; and
- analyze the four key factors within a criminological, theoretical context which no other analysis has previously done, thus identifying the common link between these factors.

By identifying this common link, we argue that these factors represent experiences of power (for the abuser) and powerlessness (for the victim). If other factors are implicated in predisposing male victims to becoming offenders, we propose that they will also represent experiences of power for the abuser and powerlessness for the victim.

Overall, the literature describes far more diversity in relation to boys' experiences of CSA, compared to girls. Boys are *less* likely to experience prolonged or frequent abuse, and are more likely than girls to be abused by similarly aged family members and peers, men who have a professional relationship with them, female offenders or strangers. Boys tend to experience less serious sexual abuse and may perceive the abuse as a positive experience or a combination of positive and negative experiences, irrespective of whether their abuser is male or female, thereby suffering less trauma than girls.

While girls are more likely to be abused by older males and family members, their experiences are characterized by frequent abuse over relatively long periods of time and more serious forms of sexual abuse, such as penetration. As a result, girls are more likely than boys to experience greater trauma and more negative, reactive behavioral effects.

Crucially, this literature review reveals that male CSA victims may be more likely to become child sex offenders if any of the following is true for them:

- i. are abused when they are 12 years or older (Ogloff et al., 2012; archival sample);
- ii. are subject to frequent sexual abuse (which may lead to increasing severity of abuse; Bagley et al., 1994: representative community sample; Hunter & Figueurodo, 2000: comparative sample of victimized offenders and nonoffenders; McClellan et al., 1997: clinical sample

of male and female victims; cf. Ogloff et al., 2012; archival sample);

- iii. are subject to serious sexual abuse (Burton et al., 2002; Simons et al., 2008; comparative samples of offenders & non-offenders; cf. Ogloff et al., 2012; archival sample); or
- iv. have been abused by someone, such as a father figure, with whom they have a relationship of dependency (Burton et al., 2002; comparative sample of victimized offenders and nonoffenders; Herbert et al., 2006; clinical sample; Ketring & Feinaurer, 1999; community sample; Veneziano, Veneziano, & LeGrand, 2000; sample of offenders).

While we found no evidence for the existence of a cycle of abuse for female CSA victims, the above evidence supports, but does not confirm, the existence of a cycle of abuse for male CSA victims who experience at least one of the above four abuse characteristics, thus pinpointing areas for future research.

In addition, we discovered a major gap in the psychological literature concerning CSA victims and child sex offenders, which highlights the need for more research to address this gap. In order to determine the factors that are implicated in the transition from victim to offender for male victims, we suggest that the following methodological issues ought to be addressed:

- i. the relationship, if any, between frequency of abuse and male victims' sexualized behaviors compared with female victims' sexualized behaviors;
- ii. the relationship, if any, between the gender of the abuser, and the transition from victim to offender;
- iii. the closeness of the relationship between victim and abuser as perceived by the victim, compared to the current definition of closeness as a familial relationship;
- iv. the relationship, if any between closeness of relationship and the transition from victim to offender;
- v. a measure of severity that takes into account victims' experiences of severity;
- vi. the relationship, if any, between abuse severity and the transition from victim to offender; and
- vii. the relationship, if any, between particular features of the grooming process (such as force/lack of force, instigation of physical pleasure, and victim self-blame) and the transition from victim to offender.

We also consider that it is important to place this research within a criminological, theoretical context in order to consider the cultural significance of sexual aggression in the form of CSA. To this end, criminological theories based on analyses of life histories (Colton & Vanstone, 1996; Connell, 1995; Cossins, 2000; Kimmel, 2007; Messerschmidt, 2000) focus on the relationship between crime, power and masculinity, thus providing insight into the cultural impact of childhood and adolescent experiences of abuse and competition amongst peer groups. For example, the power/powerlessness theory (Cossins,

2000), which explains the relationship between men's experiences of power and powerlessness as a result of their social relationships with other men (work, sport, peer groups, and family), predicts that the greater a boy's experiences of powerlessness and the extent to which those experiences inform his sexuality, the more likely he will seek out sexual experiences with less powerful objects of desire, such as children so "that powerlessness and sexuality become central and defining features of his masculinity, and, hence, his experiences of self-worth" (Cossins, 2000, p. 195).

Arguably, sexual abuse creates a particular vulnerability for boys aged 12 years or older because adolescence is a critical time for the development of sexual identity and experimentation. Other experiences of powerlessness during adolescence, which arise from a boy's relationships with men and male peers (Cossins, 2000; Messerschmidt, 1999), are likely to be compounded by sexual abuse. The literature review also identified that boys may be more likely to become offenders if they are subject to frequent and more serious sexual abuse, both of which may produce entrenched experiences of powerlessness.

The closeness of the relationship between a boy and his offender (such as father/son or teacher/pupil) may also affect the transition from victim to offender, since a close, dependent relationship with a father or male authority figure is a site of powerlessness because of the trust and betrayal issues involved in sexual abuse. While some evidence reveals that boys may view their sexual abuse as positive or with indifference (Artime, McCallum, & Peterson, 2014; Briggs & Hawkins, 1996; Gartner, 2000; Senn, Carey, Vanable, Coury-Doniger, & Urban, 2007; West, 1998), a relationship of dependence carries with it the added risk that sexual abuse may be a boy's first sexual experience from which he learns that sexuality is based on power and powerlessness. For male CSA victims, the development of a sexuality based on their abusive experiences may represent a cultural resource for expressing power and control, so that a cycle of CSA may be perpetuated by "men who normalize their own experience of sexual abuse" more so than victims who do not (Briggs & Hawkins, 1996, p. 231). In other words:

being a victim violates a prominent masculine norm: exhibiting submission and weakness at a time in their development when they are expected to exhibit dominance and strength. (Coohy, 2010, p. 860)

A boy may be more likely to develop a sexuality based on his CSA experiences to the extent that:

- i. they represent the dominant early sexual experiences in his life;
- ii. his abuser is the main role model for sexual behavior; and
- iii. the boy associates trauma and powerlessness with sexual expression.

It is possible that frequent and serious sexual abuse which becomes the dominant sexual experiences in a boy's life when

he is 12 years or older in a relationship of dependency with a father or authority figure may mean that a boy normalizes his CSA experiences, thus leading to a cycle in which he later enacts similar sexual practices with a child. For example, Veneziano, Veneziano, and LeGrand (2000) found that male CSA victims were several times more likely to commit certain types of sexual abuse if they themselves had experienced it. Overall, boys with CSA experiences may be at greater risk of becoming an offender compared to girls because of the way the abuse is interpreted by them in a culture that valorises exploitative sexual practices involving some degree of dominance or control (Cossins, 2000; Messerschmidt, 2000).

Conclusion

This literature review is significant in furthering understandings about the sexual abuse of children. In particular, it addresses a gap in the literature by shedding light on the cycle of CSA and why it only appears to exist among sexually abused boys, rather than sexually abused girls. This article has identified four factors that may predispose male victims to becoming child sex offenders as well as the common link between these factors, that is, that they represent experiences of power (for the abuser) and powerlessness (for the victim).

These conclusions have implications for the prevention of CSA in terms of treatment programs for victims and for offenders. Arguably, such programs ought to recognize the gendered nature of CSA by recognizing the specific types of abuse experienced by boys, which may predispose them to becoming offenders, the ways in which boys' make sense of their abuse experiences, and the impact of these experiences on boys' psychological and sexual development.

The limitations of this literature review, as discussed under Study Limitations, should, nonetheless, be recognized. The conclusions based on this literature review are tentative only and await further studies involving representative community samples to test their validity as well as investigating the relationship between other possible characteristics of boys' experiences of sexual abuse and the transition from victim to offender.

Authors' Note

All our research materials are listed in our references and are available online from relevant journals/publishers.

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Notes

1. Note that rates of child sexual abuse (CSA) vary considerably from country to country, largely because of "methodological differences

between studies” (Stoltenborgh et al., 2011, p. 90), since there is “no standardised practice for determining the prevalence” of CSA (Pereda et al., 2009b, p. 333).

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