

# Evidence and Frameworks for Understanding Perpetrators of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse

A report commissioned and funded by the Royal Commission into Institutional  
Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

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# Table of contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Acknowledgements.....   | 4         |
| <b>Executive summary.....</b>                                   | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>1.0 Introduction and Method.....</b>                         | <b>10</b> |
| 1.1 Introduction.....   | 10        |
| Aims and Scope of the Report.....                               | 10        |
| Structure.....  | 11        |
| 1.2 Method.....   | 11        |
| Study Types.....  | 11        |
| Effect Sizes.....   | 12        |
| Study Eligibility.....  | 13        |
| Search Strategy.....  | 14        |
| Study Selection.....  | 15        |
| <br>  |           |
| <b>2.0 Detailed Findings.....</b>                               | <b>16</b> |
| 2.1 Perpetrator Demography.....                                 | 18        |
| 2.2 Victim Characteristics.....                                 | 20        |
| 2.3 Adult Child Sexual Abusers.....                             | 22        |
| Typologies.....   | 24        |
| Developmental and Other Characteristics.....                    | 26        |
| Classification by Victim Characteristics.....                   | 31        |
| Paedophilia and Hebephilia.....                                 | 33        |
| Female Child Sexual Abusers.....                                | 36        |
| Summary.....  | 38        |
| 2.4 Characteristics of Child and Adolescent Sexual Abusers..... | 39        |
| Typologies.....   | 41        |
| Children with Problem Sexual Behaviour .....                    | 41        |
| Male Adolescent s Who Show Sexually Abusive Behaviour.....      | 42        |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Social, Personality, Mental Health.....   | 42        |
| Developmental Experiences.....  | 44        |
| Classification of Adolescent Offenders by Victim Characteristics.....   | 47        |
| Female Child and Adolescent Sexual Abusers.....   | 48        |
| Comparisons of Adults, Adolescents and Younger Children.....  | 49        |
| Summary.....  | 50        |
| <b>2.5 Institutional Child Sexual Abusers.....</b>  | <b>51</b> |
| Child Sexual Abuse in a Range of Institutional Settings.....  | 51        |
| Clergy Child Sexual Abusers.....  | 53        |
| Child Sexual Abusers in Educational Settings.....   | 56        |
| Child Sexual Abusers in Sport Settings.....   | 59        |
| Child Sexual Abusers in Residential and Foster Care Settings .....  | 60        |
| Comparisons of Professional Child Sexual Abusers with other Child Sexual Abusers.....                               | 61        |
| Summary.....  | 62        |
| <b>3.0 Integration and Emerging Issues.....</b>   | <b>64</b> |
| 3.1 Characteristics of Adolescent and Adult Child Sexual Abusers and Children with<br>Problem Sexual Behaviour..... | 64        |
| 3.2 Similarities and Differences in Child Sexual Abusers.....   | 68        |
| 3.3 Child Sexual Abusers in Institutional Contexts.....   | 69        |
| 3.4 Research Priorities for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse.....   | 74        |
| 3.5 Concluding Remarks.....   | 78        |
| <br>References.....   | <br>79    |
| Appendix: Description of Search Strategy.....   | 89        |

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## Executive summary

In January 2013, Her Excellency Quentin Bryce, (then) Governor-General, assembled a Royal Commission to inquire into institutional responses to child sexual abuse. The Royal Commission must recommend laws, policies, practices and systems that will effectively prevent or, where it occurs, respond to future abuse. To ensure it provides authoritative, relevant recommendations, the Royal Commission has developed a detailed research program. As part of the research program, the Royal Commission recognised the need for a synthesis of current evidence regarding the characteristics, motivations and offending behaviour of child sexual abuse perpetrators.

The purpose of this report is to provide a review of available scholarly literature concerning adult, adolescent or child perpetrators of child sexual abuse, and to relate findings from this general literature to more specific literature concerned with child sexual abuse in institutional contexts. The report identifies and explores the principal themes in the general literature which include: the adverse developmental events in the lives of perpetrators, mental health problems of perpetrators, deficits in their relationship skills, patterns in their abuse of others, and efforts to identify different types of perpetrator as based on the clustering of certain characteristics. The approach was to compare findings from the general literature on perpetrators of child sexual abuse with studies which focused specifically on individuals working in professional roles in institutional settings, so as to highlight the similarities and differences between general and institutional perpetrators. By identifying themes drawn from the literature on perpetrators of child sexual abuse, the report is intended to assist the Royal Commission in its understanding of perpetrators of child sexual abuse and to draw out implications from the literature for the prevention and response to child sexual abuse.

The findings in this report show that it is possible to identify commonalities in the characteristics of adult and child or adolescent perpetrators. However, a focus on these commonalities can obscure considerable diversity in the characteristics of perpetrators.

Diversity has been addressed in the literature by proposing typologies to identify groups of perpetrators, and these typologies may help to increase our understanding of the patterns of characteristics that are often combined within these groups. However, the typologies as well as the knowledge of typical perpetrator characteristics are not sufficiently specific to develop profiles of perpetrators. Therefore, it is not intended in this report to describe profiles of perpetrators or to indicate methods of predicting perpetrators.

In seeking to understand what is known about the characteristics of perpetrators, this review does not diminish or find justification for perpetrator behaviour; there is no justification for child sexual abuse.

## Methodology

We undertook a literature search of studies from prominent bibliographic databases and also searched grey literature pertaining to institutional child sexual abuse. Peer-reviewed articles as well as published reports where relevant, from the year 2000 onwards and published in English, were included. Some additional key articles, book chapters or books published earlier than this date were located from the reference lists of studies selected for review and also included in the review.

## Key Findings

Available studies suggest that the majority of identified perpetrators are male with between 6% and 11% of child sexual abuse perpetrated by females. Evidence relating to the age of onset of sexual offending is inconclusive but it does indicate that there are clusters of perpetrators who first commit contact sexual abuse in the 11 – 15 age range and the late 20s to early 30s age range.

Adult males who sexually abuse children experience higher rates of mental health difficulties (anxiety, depression), social skills problems, insecure attachment styles in adult relationships, intimacy problems and emotional congruence with children than comparison groups. They experience higher rates of physical and sexual abuse and emotional abuse or neglect as children than comparison groups. Females who sexually abuse children also experience higher rates of mental health difficulties, adverse childhood events and sexual abuse than comparison groups.

Younger children who exhibit sexually harmful behaviour typically cannot be distinguished based on their demographic or psychological characteristics. Instead, sexually harmful behaviour is often more strongly associated with exposure to domestic violence, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or adverse family environments.

Male adolescents who show sexually harmful behaviour experience greater anxiety, lower self-esteem, social isolation, greater anxious attachment in relationships and atypical sexual interests than other adolescent offenders. They also experience greater rates of childhood abuse, particularly emotional abuse or neglect or sexual abuse, than comparison groups. While very limited, the available evidence suggests that female adolescent sexual offenders may be characterized by considerable adverse developmental experiences, including sexual abuse. Exposure to violent pornography has also been identified as a concern in relation to sexually abusive behaviour by adolescents. Research indicates that consumers of violent sexually explicit material are almost six times more likely than non-consumers to report sexually aggressive behaviour.

There are indications from studies of known child sexual abusers that experiences of sexual abuse are associated with patterns of sexual offending and that child sexual abuse offenders experience higher rates of childhood sexual abuse than comparison groups. However, there is a lack of evidence to support a *unique* association of childhood sexual abuse with subsequent sexual offending in general. Experiences of physical abuse or child neglect in childhood may be more predictive of sexual offending than sexual abuse in childhood.

The review examined research concerning paedophilia, which refers to sexual attraction towards pre-pubescent children and is presumed to underlie sexual abuse of children, and hebephilia, a sexual attraction towards post-pubescent children. There is some empirical evidence for different patterns of arousal towards pre-pubescent and post-pubescent children. However, justification for the concept of hebephilia (and similarly the concept of ephebophilia which denotes an interest in children in the mid- to late-adolescent age range) remains controversial in the literature. Arousal towards pre-pubescent or post-pubescent children is also associated with persistent sexual offending.

Studies of perpetrators in institutional settings are particularly concerned with patterns of child sexual abuse by clergy, with more limited information being available regarding perpetrators in educational, sporting and out of home care settings. The range of institution types that have been studied is limited, and no studies were located concerning child sexual abuse in scouting institutions, or vulnerable child groups including those with disabilities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Studies concerning Roman Catholic clergy are most common in the literature concerning institutional perpetrators. The pattern of sexual abuse committed by clergy does seem to be distinctive, in that the most common victims were adolescent boys. Individual characteristics of clergy perpetrators such as frequency of offending, sexual abuse experiences and ephebophilia do not seem to explain this phenomenon. However, a situational explanation is supported by some evidence i.e. that churches provided many more opportunities for male sexual abusers to be alone with boys than with girls without attracting the same level of concern.

Available literature concerning child sexual abuse in educational settings suggests that the majority of victims are female and perpetrators may be adults or peers. Adult perpetrators are most commonly teachers, but other occupations are also represented. The sparse literature concerning sexual abuse in sporting settings suggests that adolescents, girls and elite athletes may be more at risk of sexual abuse.



Comparisons of perpetrators from professional or institutional settings with other perpetrators who have sexually abused children outside of family settings show that there are few differences between these groups, except that professional or institutional perpetrators may on average have fewer antisocial characteristics. Professional or institutional perpetrators are likely to be substantially similar to perpetrators who sexually abuse children outside of family settings.

### Key Limitations

There is a variance in the degree to which individual studies can attribute causality between certain risk factors and the likelihood of the perpetration of abuse. In the context of this report, a “risk factor” refers to a characteristic or experience that is found at statistically significantly higher rates than a comparison group such as non-sex offenders. A risk factor should not be treated as diagnostic; having the characteristic or experience does not mean an individual will become a child sexual abuse perpetrator. For example, although the available research shows that perpetrators are significantly more likely to be male, evidence also shows that most males are not perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Similar caution should be applied to other characteristics identified in this report, such as relationship styles and experiences of abuse. Throughout, this report notes the strength of causality reported by each study and is careful to ensure context is provided by comparing likelihoods to other populations, particularly when describing childhood experiences of sexual abuse among known child sexual abuse perpetrator populations.

It should also be emphasised that the overwhelming majority of available research is based on known perpetrators. As a result, the report’s findings do not provide any information concerning perpetrators who have not been identified, who may conceivably possess different characteristics from those who have been detected. Further, although there is some support for an empirical typology of adult males, there is no diagnostic profile for identifying perpetrators. This and other typologies are not sufficiently supported to make predictions about the likelihood of being a perpetrator. Instead, it is hoped that the review of studies will be more useful in informing responses to perpetrators.

### Future Research Issues in Institutional Child Sexual Abuse

The largest body of research from institutional contexts is based on child sexual abuse by clergy, and the majority of this research concerns Roman Catholic clergy. Although the research base in this area is sufficient to provide information about patterns of abuse and to allow some comparisons with literature based on perpetrators in general, there is little literature based on or including other religious denominations and almost no literature based on religious non-Christian institutional settings. There is a need for additional research based on perpetrators in non-Roman Catholic or non-Christian religious settings.

In educational settings, available research findings indicate the existence of sexual abuse by female perpetrators and by child or adolescent peers as well as abuse by male perpetrators. These findings suggest that further research is needed regarding sexual abuse by peers as well as abuse by female professionals, given the large number of female professionals present in educational settings.

Given the paucity of literature concerning child sexual abuse in sporting settings, survey research and analysis of official records is required to identify the prevalence and patterns of child sexual abuse, including common roles of perpetrators in sporting organisations and scenarios in which children are sexually abused in sporting settings. With regard to out-of-home-care settings, adolescents were identified as perpetrators in foster homes and particularly in residential settings. Further research is needed to identify the nature and situational context of child sexual abuse in these settings as an aid to prevention efforts.

### Evidence which may Inform Prevention

The concepts of social competence and emotional congruence with children are related to fixation with children or paedophilic interest. These two concepts may be potentially incorporated into an interview or questionnaire assessment instrument for potential institutional workers. Such an assessment instrument would need to demonstrate valid classification of individuals who do demonstrate paedophilic interest. The frequency of false classifications of individuals as having paedophilic interest and the consequences of false classifications for potential institutional workers would also need to be assessed.

Findings from studies of perpetrator behaviour from a situational perspective may be applied to the prevention of sexual abuse in institutions. These studies include perspectives from child sexual offenders generally, from institutions, and specifically from educational and residential care institutions. Descriptions of strategies used by perpetrators to gain the trust of children and the identification of situational characteristics that deter them from offending can be used to inform situational prevention strategies in institutions.

# 1.0 Introduction and Method

## 1.1 Introduction

### 1.1.1 Aims and Scope of the Report

This report was prepared for the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* (the Commission). The Commission will inquire into matters concerning how institutions have engaged and responded to allegations and instances of child sexual abuse. Institutions included in the scope of the Commission's interest include: faith-based institutions; educational settings; voluntary institutions such as scouting or sporting institutions; out of home care; and vulnerable child groups including those with disabilities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children.

The Royal Commission recognised the need for a synthesis of current evidence regarding the characteristics, motivations and offending behaviour of child sexual abuse perpetrators. The report informs the Commission's terms of reference regarding: (a) what institutions and governments should do to better protect children against child sexual abuse and related matters in institutional contexts in the future; and (b) what institutions and governments should do to achieve best practice in encouraging the reporting of, and responding to reports or information about, allegations, incidents or risks of child sexual abuse and related matters in institutional contexts.

The agreed scope of this report did not encompass empirical research, but rather a literature review of available scholarly literature concerning:

- evidence about the characteristics and motivations of perpetrators of child sexual abuse, whether adult, adolescent or child perpetrators;
- similarities and differences between adolescents and children with sexually abusive behaviour and adult perpetrators of child sexual abuse;
- similarities and differences between perpetrators with a preference for pre-pubescent victims and perpetrators with a preference for pubescent victims;
- evidence regarding perpetrator characteristics, motivations and typologies relevant to offending specifically in institutional contexts; and
- emerging innovative evidence identified in this literature.

### 1.1.2 Structure of the Report

There are three parts to this report. Part 1 explains the method and search strategy used to identify literature which we consulted for the purpose of compiling the report. Part 2 presents a snapshot of general patterns of child sexual abuse as well as data from available studies concerning the characteristics of adult child sexual abusers, child and adolescent sexual abusers, and adult child sexual abusers in institutional contexts. Part 3 presents an integration of the literature from Part 2, findings from the literature relevant to prevention, and priorities for research.

## 1.2 Method

### 1.2.1 Study Types

Due to the broad nature of the questions explored in this literature review and the paucity of available information in some areas, such as pertaining to particular institutional settings, we have included a broad range of study types. These study types are described below according to a pragmatic scheme of classification.

#### *Prevalence studies*

These studies examine rates of occurrence of a phenomenon in particular settings, with particular attention to representative sampling. For example, the occurrence of rates of sexual abuse in a particular country or an institutional setting may be reported. Prevalence may be described further in particular groups. For example, the occurrence of sexual abuse may be differentiated according to gender.

#### *Correlational Studies*

These studies provide descriptive statistics and explore associations between one or more variables or test hypotheses. There may be less attention to representativeness of the participant sample. Inferential statistical techniques are used to explore associations between variables. Associations between variables are explored and these studies do not involve intervention. These studies are conducted at a particular point in time, and may be described as cross-sectional. For example, these studies may examine strength of associations of particular variables in individuals who have committed acts of sexual abuse, the association of membership in the group of sexual abusers with scores on particular variables.

#### *Prospective Studies*

These studies explore associations between one or more variables and may test hypotheses. Statistical techniques are used to explore associations between variables and to test hypotheses. In addition, these studies are conducted with data collected at more than one point in time. For example, a prospective study might examine the occurrence of sexual

offending in adulthood in individuals who have or have not experienced documented physical or sexual abuse in childhood.

#### *Qualitative studies*

These studies explore relationships between variables in order to generate theory, or may evaluate the implications of policies or practices. Narratives derived from interview or written material are analysed for content or for underlying themes and connections. For example, strategies used by sexual offenders to groom children may be derived from analysis of interview material.

#### *Opinion pieces*

These articles reflect the opinion of the author in the service of putting forward a particular argument or opinion. Although references to previous studies may be used, the purpose of the writing is to put forward a particular point of view rather than to review representative literature.

#### *Narrative reviews*

These reviews discuss a particular issue, drawing support from findings from a range of previous studies. They may also include support from expert opinion.

#### *Systematic reviews*

These reviews synthesize information, findings and conclusions from available literature concerning a particular issue. They use systematic strategies for searching literature, specify inclusion and exclusion criteria for sources used in the review, and methods for assessing study quality and risk of bias.

#### *Meta-analyses*

Meta-analyses, like systematic reviews, synthesise available studies in a research area. However, meta-analyses provide quantitative summaries of findings, using statistical techniques to combine the quantitative findings from available studies. Statistical methods are used to assess risk of bias. Meta-analyses report summary findings as effect sizes.

### 1.2.2 Effect Sizes

Meta-analyses often refer to effect sizes or to odds ratios. The term 'effect size' refers to a standardised index that signifies the magnitude of a statistical effect. An example might be the level of psychological distress reported by a group of adults with a history of abuse as compared with those without such an experience. Although different interpretations apply to different effect size measures, the classifications that apply Pearson 'r' values are most well-known. According to this system, an effect size of 0.2 or less is generally considered small, 0.3-0.5 is moderate and anything 0.6 or greater is large. An odds ratio might tell us the odds of a person having a history of abuse if identified as a sexual abuser as compared to a non-offender. Odds-ratios are typically expressed as a single value which indicates the

extent to which a person is more likely to be an offender based upon the characteristic under consideration. For example, if the OR for history of abuse were 2.5, this would mean that a person with such experience would be 2.5 times more likely to be a sexual offender. Where reviews were not available or studies were subsequent to published reviews, findings from individual studies are reported.

### 1.2.3 Study Eligibility

In order to address the various research questions within the timeframe allowed for the review, we used the following strategy.

#### *Eligible types of studies for review*

- Peer-reviewed articles in professional journals
- Published reports commissioned by Australian or international government agencies.
- Articles or reports published in the years 2000 - 2014 and which were written in English
- Journal articles, books or book chapters published prior to 2000 where they described important concepts or provided important additional empirical data.

#### *Eligible subjects for review*

- Demographic, developmental, psychological, and offending characteristics of perpetrators of child sexual abuse
- Typologies of perpetrators of child sexual abuse
- Patterns of child sexual abuse in general
- Patterns of child sexual abuse in specific institutional contexts

#### *Excluded types of studies for review*

- Book reviews
- Unpublished dissertations
- Published reports commissioned by Australian or international government agencies.

#### *Excluded subjects for review*

- Sexual abuse of adults
- Effects of child sexual abuse
- Sexual assault (e.g., rape of non-minors)
- Domestic violence
- Special groups such as intellectually disabled offenders
- Assessment approaches for sexual offenders
- The prosecution, management or treatment of sexual abusers
- Internet-only sexual offenders, except where data concerning contact sexual offending was included

### 1.2.4 Search Strategy

We undertook a literature search of studies in a four-step strategy.

#### *Step 1*

- Search terms were first trialled using a limited preliminary search, using the electronic bibliographic databases PsycInfo and PubMed in order to analyse text words contained in the titles and abstracts of articles, as well as specific index terms used to describe articles.
- Initial key words used in the search included: sexual abuse, pedophilia, child molestation, offenders, and perpetrators. An example of the full electronic search performed in PsycInfo can be found in the Appendix.
- On the basis of the preliminary search, we determined that limiting the search from the year 2000 onwards included most relevant literature.

#### *Step 2*

All identified keywords and index terms were used to search all listed bibliographic databases. The full electronic search terms can be found in the Appendix. The following data bases were searched for any for any material that met the eligibility criteria.

- PsycInfo
- PubMed
- Embase
- The Social Services Abstracts bibliographic database was searched specifically for articles examining child sexual abuse in institutional settings.

Grey literature pertaining specifically to institutional child sexual abuse was also searched.

- The CINCH database was searched specifically for articles examining child sexual abuse in institutional settings.
- The Google Scholar database was also searched specifically for articles examining child sexual abuse in institutional settings.

#### *Step 3*

An additional search for studies concerning problem sexual behaviour in children was conducted to increase the yield of studies in this area. The search terms can be found in the Appendix.

#### *Step 4*

The reference lists of selected articles and reports were searched for additional studies.

### 1.2.5 Study Selection

A flow diagram of search results is displayed in Figure 1. The initial search of PsycInfo, PubMed and Embase databases yielded 4,291 hits, in addition to 2,487 articles from Social Services Abstracts, CINCH, Google Scholar and other sources. The additional literature search for problem sexual behaviour in children yielded a total of 202 studies. After duplicates were removed, a total of 6,980 records were screened by title and abstract, of which 6,795 were excluded because they were not relevant to the research questions.

A total of 163 full-text articles were then screened for inclusion. Additional references were obtained from the reference lists of selected articles. A total of 112 studies were included in the final synthesis. They are listed in Tables 1 to 5.

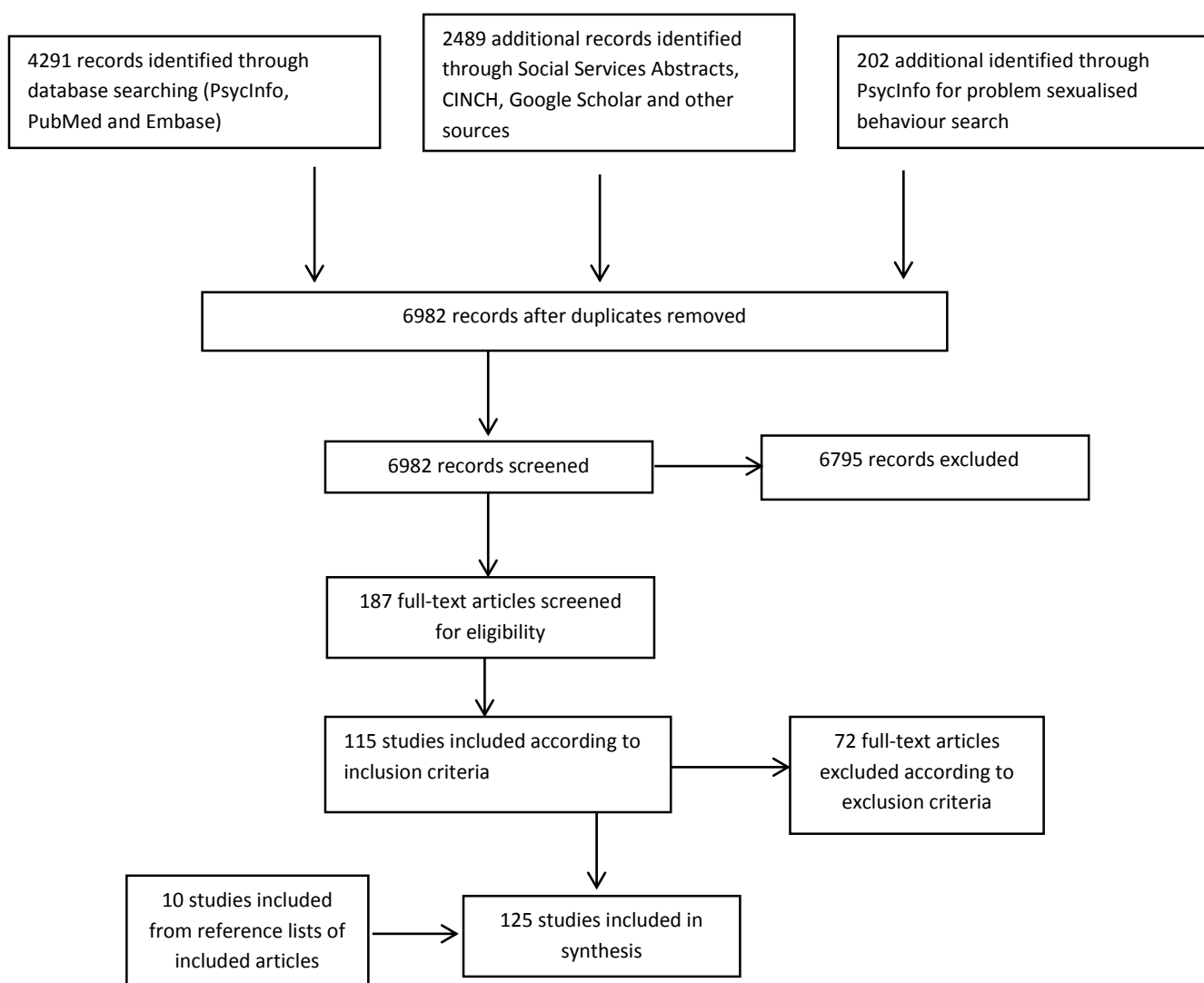


Figure 1. Flow of information from identification to inclusion of studies.



## 2.0 Detailed Findings

### *General Comments on the Detailed Findings*

Section 2 describes and summarises studies identified from the literature search. The studies concern characteristics of perpetrators of child sexual abuse, characteristics of their victims, and institutional contexts of their offending. The review of studies in this report shows that child and adult perpetrators show particular demographic characteristics, social characteristics, adverse developmental events and relationship styles on average, and that some of these characteristics are related to characteristics of victims. However, there is also considerable variation or heterogeneity in perpetrator characteristics identified in research studies. Researchers have tried to address the heterogeneity in perpetrator characteristics by proposing typologies to identify groups of perpetrators with similar characteristics. This report describes those typologies and evaluates available empirical support for them. Relatively few studies compare adult and adolescent perpetrators. However, those which have examined in this issue suggest that juvenile perpetrators may differ from adults in relation to circumstances of offending and characteristics of their victims. However, comparisons of adult and juvenile perpetrators require further study.

The report summarises findings from studies of perpetrators in institutional settings. This research provides information particularly about patterns of child sexual abuse by clergy, and more limited information regarding perpetrators in educational, sporting and out of home care settings. In general, the report shows that perpetrators in professional or institutional settings may differ little from those who sexually abuse children outside of family settings.

The report does, however, outline some important caveats concerning the information obtained from the studies reviewed in this report. First, the available research is based on known perpetrators. As a result, the report's findings do not provide any information concerning perpetrators who have not been identified, who may conceivably possess different characteristics from those who have been detected. Second, despite including research involving female perpetrators, the report reflects the predominant focus of the literature on male perpetrators. A third issue concerns the attributions of causality between certain risk factors and the likelihood of the perpetration of abuse. In the context of this report, a "risk factor" refers to a characteristic or experience that is found at statistically significantly higher rates in perpetrators of child sexual abuse than in comparison groups such as non-sex offenders. A risk factor should not be treated as diagnostic; having the characteristic or experience does not mean an individual will become a child sexual abuse perpetrator. For example, although the available research shows that perpetrators are significantly more likely to be male, this should not lead to a preoccupation with gender as a major risk factor for perpetrating child sexual abuse because evidence also shows that the great majority of males are not perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Similar caution should be applied to other characteristics identified in this report, such as relationship styles and experiences of abuse. Finally, it

should be noted that many researchers within this area have proposed or attempted to develop classification systems, models, typologies and diagnostic criteria to categorise perpetrators. Readers need to be aware that reference to any such classification system within a study does not mean that the model has broad support within the field. Additionally, while some of these models and typologies have been used in research the only classificatory term that is diagnostic is paedophilia. The DSM-V definition of paedophilia has three criterion: (a) over a period of at least six months, recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviours involving sexual activity with a prepubescent child or children (generally age 13 years or younger), (b) individual action upon these sexual urges, or the sexual urges or fantasies caused marked distress or interpersonal difficulty, and (c) the individual is at least 16 years and at least 5 years older than the child or children. Although there is some support for an empirical typology of adult males, there is no diagnostic profile that would enable the identification of perpetrators. This and other typologies are not sufficiently supported to make predictions about the likelihood of being a perpetrator. Instead, it is hoped that the review of studies will be more useful in informing responses to perpetrators.

### *Structure of Detailed Findings*

In Sections 2.1 and 2.2 we describe demographic features of perpetrators and victims of child sexual abuse. These sections are informed particularly by studies listed in Table 1, although section 2.1 on perpetrator demography also draws on studies listed in Tables 2 and 3. Table 1 lists two individual studies which provide information regarding demographic characteristics of perpetrators. Three meta-analytic reviews and two systematic reviews concern demography of victims and demography of offenders. A narrative review also concerns demography of offenders.

Section 2.3 addresses research concerning the psychological characteristics and patterns of offending by adult perpetrators, including research based specifically on female perpetrators. Section 2.4 addresses similar characteristics of child and adolescent perpetrators and includes studies of female perpetrators and comparisons of adult and juvenile perpetrators. Section 2.5 addresses studies of perpetrators from institutional settings, providing a basis for comparison to the more general literature described in 2.3 and 2.4.

*Table 1 Studies of perpetrator demography and victim characteristics*

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Individual studies             |  |
| <i>Demography of offenders</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Peter (2009)</li> <li>2. Smallbone &amp; Wortley (2000)</li> </ol> |
| Meta-analyses                  |  |

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <i>Demography of offenders</i> | Graves, Openshaw, Ascione, & Ericksen (1996)  |
| <i>Demography of victims</i>   | 1. Pereda, Guilera, Forn, & Gomez-Benito (2009)<br>2. Stoltenborgh, van IJendoorn, Euser, & Bakermans-Kranenburg (2011) |
| <b>Systematic reviews</b>      |   |
| <i>Demography of offenders</i> | Cortoni and Hanson (2005)   |
| <i>Demography of victims</i>   | Finkelhor (1994)  |
| <b>Narrative reviews</b>       |   |
| <i>Demography of offenders</i> | Gelb (2007)   |

## 2.1 Perpetrator Demography

### *Gender*

Sexual abuse, including child sexual abuse, differs by gender in that the great majority of perpetrators are men. Cortoni and Hanson (2005) examined international studies based on official records of sexual offences as well as self-report victimisation surveys, which included but were not restricted to, child sexual abuse offences. The proportion of male perpetrators across studies averaged more than 95%. Peter (2009) reported data more specific to child sexual abuse, from the 1998 Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, which was based on official records of investigated cases from child welfare and included a relatively broad definition of child sexual abuse, including sexual harassment. This study reported that 89.3% of child sexual abuse cases involved a male perpetrator. Results from Australian surveys carried out by the Australian Bureau of Statistics provide similar findings, in that the reported number of female perpetrators is so low (2% in one sample) that data were considered unreliable (Gelb, 2007).

It is, however, important to recognise the existence of a small group of female perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Figures for female perpetrators have been reported in some studies. Cortoni and Hanson (2005) found small differences in the source of information, in that female perpetrators made up an average of 3.8% of sexual offenders based on official records, and 4.8% based on victimisation studies. In victimisation studies specifically concerning child sexual abuse, female sexual offenders comprised 6% of sexual offenders.

Specifically for child sexual abuse, Peter (2009) reported that the prevalence rate of female-perpetrated child sexual abuse was 10.7%. The prevalence rate for female victims of female-perpetrated abuse was 9.3% and 14.1% for male victims. Although prevalence estimates of female-perpetrated child sexual abuse should be treated cautiously because they are based

on few studies, these estimates suggest that from 6% to 11% of child sexual abuse may be perpetrated by females.

### *Age of Onset for Offending*

Few studies provide data regarding the age of onset of sexual offending. A large meta-analysis concerning male adolescent sexual offenders (Seto & Lalumiere, 2010) showed that average age at first criminal justice contact ranged from 11.6 to 13.6 years across studies, but this is not the same as the age of first contact sexual offending, which may be earlier than the age of first criminal justice contact. In addition, two studies of convicted adult male sexual offenders provide self-report data concerning age of onset of sexual offending. Self-reports may be subject to distortion, but more accurate information is unlikely to be obtained from official records.

Simons, Wurtele and Durham (2008) recruited 132 incarcerated sexual offenders against children in the United States. The average age of onset for contact sexual abuse was 14.1 years, with a likely upper range of up to 36 years from other information, although this information was not supplied. Smallbone and Wortley (2000) obtained self-report data from 182 sexual offenders against children in Queensland, most of who were incarcerated or on community orders. Although age of onset ranged from 14 to 61 years, the average age of first contact sexual abuse was 29.4 for extrafamilial offenders, while the average was 31.1 years for intrafamilial offenders with a range of 14 to 61 years. For those who committed extra-familial and intra-familial offences (mixed-type), the average age at first contact sexual abuse was 31.1 years, with a range of 15 to 61. Just under a fifth of extra-familial offenders and just under a quarter of mixed-type offenders reported committing their first sexual offence before they were twenty years of age.

The age of onset is very different in these two studies. More than half of the sample reported in the Simons et al. (2008) study offended against relatives, so that this age of onset may not be representative of extra-familial offenders. However, it should be noted that average age of onset did not differ to a large degree for intrafamilial and extrafamilial offenders in the Australian study (Smallbone & Wortley, 2000). Average age at the time of inclusion in the study was higher for the Australian study (41.5) than for the US study (37.7) but not dramatically different. An additional difference was that the US sample was from a treatment population while the Australian sample was not selected in this way. Therefore, a possible but speculative explanation for the difference in findings between the two studies is that offenders in treatment may be more honest in self-reporting about the age of onset of their offending.

It is difficult to give a definitive answer about the average age of onset of sexual offending. There may be clusters of perpetrators who first commit contact sexually abusive acts in the 11 to 15 age range, or in the late 20s to early 30s age range. However, it is clear that the range for age of onset is very wide.

### *Culture and Ethnicity*

The majority of meta-analytic reviews and individual studies in Tables 2 and 3 do not record the ethnicity of perpetrators of sexual abuse. Of those reviews and studies that do report these data for adult or child and adolescent perpetrators, it is clear that the majority of perpetrators are Caucasian<sup>1</sup>, with minority groups of African-Americans, Aboriginal Canadians, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, according to the country in which the sample was obtained. The percentage of Caucasians in studies of perpetrators of sexual abuse may be greater for adults than for juvenile perpetrators, although there are few figures available to draw firm conclusions about this issue.

For studies of adult sexual offenders, a meta-analytic review (Helmus, Hanson, Babchishin & Mann, 2013) reports that sexual offenders are primarily Caucasian in 35 of 38 studies in which ethnicity was reported. For those studies in which offenders against both children or adolescents and adults are included, the proportions of Caucasians in two United States studies were 77% (Simons, Wurtele & Durham, 2008) and 67% (Levenson, Willis & Prescott, 2014b), and 80% in two Canadian samples (Cantor, Blanchard, Christensen, et al., 2004; Nunes, Hermann, Malcolm & Lavoie, 2013). The Australian study by Smallbone and Wortley (2000) study showed that the majority of their full sample (77.7%) was Australian-born, 14.2% were either born outside Australia or had no recorded ethnic origin. These findings should be interpreted with caution, we note that in the countries in which these studies were undertaken the majority of the population is Caucasian. Further, it is not known the extent to which these studies sought to recruit participants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Similar findings may apply to perpetrators who are not adults. A meta-analysis of US studies of demographic characteristics of non-adult sexual offenders (Graves, Openshaw, Ascione, & Erickson, 1996), showed that 59 or 60% had Caucasian ethnicity, across samples of perpetrators whose first reported offence was when they were aged 6-12 years or 13-15 years. Further interpretation of findings from this study is hampered by lack of detail concerning the data sources. For individual studies of male juvenile sexual offenders recruited from residential or treatment programs in the United States, figures for Caucasians were 56% (Grabell & Knight, 2009), 59% (Miner, Swinburne, Romine et al., 2014), and 60% (Kemper & Kistner, 2010).

Research concerning perpetrators of child sexual abuse reflects the finding that female perpetrators are few in number, so that most research based on perpetrators is mostly based on male perpetrators. Therefore, findings and conclusions about perpetrators in this report are findings about male perpetrators, unless otherwise stated. A second bias in the research concerning characteristics of perpetrators is that it is based on known

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<sup>1</sup> Noting that only English language studies were included in the review and research with different cultural groups is limited.

perpetrators. It is possible that perpetrators who are not identified have different characteristics from those who are detected.

## 2.2 Victim Characteristics

Systematic reviews and meta-analyses show that females are more likely to be victims of child sexual abuse than males. An early review of international studies found rates between 7% and 36% for women, and 3% and 29% for men, with 20% for women and 5 to 10% for men suggested as reasonable average figures (Finkelhor, 1994). In general, these findings have been borne out in more methodologically recent reviews which are more likely to include data from a wide variety of countries, combine multiple studies, and take advantage of broader sources of information. Such reviews are usually also more mindful of the methodological issues which may affect conclusions from reviewing multiple studies, including definitions of sexual abuse and sources of information. For example, a review of self-report studies from 22 countries, using meta-analysis, concerned the prevalence of child sexual abuse in community and student samples (Pereda, Guilera, Forns & Gomez-Benito, 2009). The review showed that the breadth of definitions of sexual abuse used in various studies (including non-contact child sexual abuse or including contact sexual abuse only), was not a statistically significant moderator of prevalence estimates. A second meta-analysis on the same topic (Stoltenborgh, van IJzendoorn, Euser, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2011) extended the work of Pereda and colleagues (2009) by including more than 300 studies, a larger number of moderator variables, as well as self-report and professional informant studies. The authors found statistically significant differences according to the definition of child sexual abuse used in studies, for girls only, but the results were somewhat inconsistent. The strictest definitions were associated with lowest prevalence as expected, but the broadest definitions did not show higher prevalence than the middle range definitions. Overall, definition of sexual abuse did not clearly affect estimates of its prevalence.

Across all studies included in a meta-analysis (Pereda et al., 2009), 7.9% of men (7.4% excluding outlier studies) and 19.7% of women (19.2% excluding outlier studies) had suffered some form of sexual abuse prior to the age of eighteen. According to included studies, rates of child sexual abuse for females ranged from 22.9% to 55.5%, with a mean of 37.8%, while rates for males were from 4.9% to 30.1%, with a mean of 13.0%. In a second meta-analysis (Stoltenborgh et al., 2011), self-report studies showed that the prevalence for females was 18.0% and was 7.6% for males, similar to the results of Pereda et al. (2009). The authors noted that females reported child sexual abuse more often than males, globally and for most continents. Overall, studies of child sexual abuse in the general population show that females are more likely to become victims of child sexual abuse than males, although sexual abuse experienced by males should not be overlooked. The gender distribution of child sexual abuse reported in these large scale reviews provides a reference point for data regarding sexual abuse in institutional settings, which are ported in section 3 of the report.

Peter's (2009) study based on the 1998 Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect also found that girls were more likely to be sexually abused. The study also examined age of victims for male and female perpetrators separately. Victims of female perpetrators were younger (5.84 years) on average than victims of male perpetrators (8.58 years), and more than 90% of victims of female perpetrators were aged under 9 years, compared to 57% for male perpetrators.

## 2.3 Characteristics of Adult Child Sexual Abusers

In this section we describe typologies of adult child sexual abusers, and characteristics of adult abusers drawn from the literature, including developmental, interpersonal and mental health variables.

Characteristics of adult child sexual abusers which have been identified in correlational studies include sexual abuse history, reported poorer parenting experiences, poorer social and relational skills, more exaggerated cognitive and emotional affiliation with childhood and children, and greater mental health problems. However, many of these characteristics do not meet criteria to be regarded as risk factors, as few studies establish that these characteristics were present prior to the participants committing acts of child sexual abuse (McMillan, Hastings, Salter & Skuse, 2008). It should also be noted that studies of the characteristics of child sexual abusers and summaries of those studies report average differences from comparison groups. Average differences may exist against a background of considerable heterogeneity in the population of child sexual abusers, so that many may, for example, show stable mental health and good interpersonal skills. It should be noted that the research presented in this section is based on known perpetrators. The findings that known perpetrators show on average indicators of lower social functioning may possibly indicate that perpetrators with lower social functioning are more likely to be detected. It is therefore not known if undetected perpetrators also show lower social functioning.

Studies relating to adult child sexual abusers are listed in Table 2. Thirty-one studies were correlational studies, addressing typologies, developmental characteristics, victim characteristics, paedophilia and hebephilia, and female sexual abusers. There were also seven narrative reviews, concerning typologies, developmental characteristics, victim characteristics, and female sexual abusers. There were two systematic reviews concerning female sexual abusers, or developmental experiences, and six meta-analyses concerned with developmental characteristics, sexual recidivism. Three prospective studies concerned the relationship of abuse experiences to later sexual abusive actions. Finally, there were four opinion articles, concerning developmental experiences and paedophilia and hebephilia.

Table 2 Studies of adult child sexual abusers and consequences of childhood abuse

| Correlational studies  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Typologies</i>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Groth &amp; Birnbaum (1978)</li> <li>2. Danni &amp; Hampe (2000)</li> <li>3. Knight, Carter and Prentky (1989)</li> <li>4. Looman, Gauthier, &amp; Boer (2001)</li> </ol>   |
| <i>Developmental Experiences and Other Characteristics - Abuse</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Connolly &amp; Woollons (2008)</li> <li>2. Levenson, Willis &amp; Prescott (2014b)</li> <li>3. Simons, Wurtele &amp; Durham (2008)</li> </ol>   |
| <i>Developmental Experiences and Other Characteristics – Other</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Craissati, McClurg &amp; Browne (2002)</li> <li>2. Marsa, O'Reilly, Carr et al. (2004)</li> <li>3. Stirpe, Abracen, Stermac &amp; Wilson (2006)</li> <li>4. Jamieson &amp; Marshall (2000)</li> <li>5. Marshall, Serran &amp; Cortoni (2000)</li> <li>6. Wilson (1999)</li> <li>7. McPhail, Hermann and Fernandez (2014)</li> </ol>                   |
| <i>Victim Characteristics</i>                                      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Guay, Proulx, Cusson, &amp; Ouimet (2001)</li> <li>2. Proeve &amp; Reilly (2007)</li> <li>3. Sim &amp; Proeve (2010)</li> <li>4. Aylwin, Studer, Reddon &amp; Clelland (2003)</li> <li>5. Proeve, Day, Mohr &amp; Hawkins, (2006)</li> <li>6. Carlstedt, Nilsson, Hofvander, et al. (2009)</li> <li>7. Levenson, Becker &amp; Morin (2008)</li> </ol> |
| <i>Paedophilia and Hebephilia</i>                                  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cantor, Blanchard, Christenson, et al. (2004)</li> <li>2. Cantor, Kuban, Black, et al. (2006)</li> <li>3. Blanchard, Lykins, Wherrett, et al. (2009)</li> <li>4. Blanchard (2010)</li> </ol>  |
| <i>Female Child Sexual Abusers</i>                                 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Vandiver &amp; Kercher (2004)</li> <li>2. Levenson, Willis, and Prescott (2014a)</li> <li>3. Christopher, Lutz-Zois &amp; Reinhardt (2007)</li> <li>4. Nathan &amp; Ward (2002)</li> <li>5. Johansson-Love &amp; Fremouw (2009)</li> <li>6. Wijkman, Bijleveld, &amp; Hendriks (2010)</li> </ol>  |
| Meta-analyses  |   |
| <i>Developmental Experiences and Other Characteristics - Abuse</i> | Jespersion, Lalumiere & Seto (2009)   |
| <i>Developmental Experiences and Other Characteristics – Other</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Whitaker, Le, Hanson et al. (2008)</li> <li>2. Dreznick (2003)</li> <li>3. Helmus, Hanson, Babchishin &amp; Mann (2013)</li> <li>4. McPhail, Hermann &amp; Nunes (2013)</li> </ol>  |
| <i>Sexual recidivism</i>   | Hanson & Morton-Bourgon (2005)  |
| Narrative reviews  |   |
| <i>Typologies</i>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Miller (2013)</li> <li>2. Robertiello &amp; Terry (2007)</li> <li>3. Richards (2011)</li> </ol>   |



|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | 4. Bickley & Beech (2001)   |
| <i>Developmental Experiences</i>                                   | 1. Starzyk & Marshall (2003)<br>2. Martin & Tardif (2014)   |
| <i>Female Child Sexual Abusers</i>                                 | Gannon & Rose (2008)  |
| <b>Systematic reviews</b>  |   |
| <i>Developmental Experiences</i>                                   | Hanson and Slater (1988)  |
| <i>Female Child Sexual Abusers</i>                                 | Stathopoulos (2014)   |
| <b>Opinion pieces</b>  |   |
| <i>Developmental Experiences</i>                                   | McMillan, Hastings, Salter & Skuse (2008)   |
| <i>Paedophilia and Hebephilia</i>                                  | 1. Seto (2012)<br>2. Franklin (2010)<br>3. Zander (2009)  |
| <b>Prospective studies</b>   |   |
| <i>Developmental Experiences and Other Characteristics - Abuse</i> | 1. Ogloff, Cutajar, Mann & Mullen (2012)<br>2. Salter, McMillan, Richards et al. (2003)<br>3. Widom and Ames (1994) |

### 2.3.1 Typologies

Typologies are devices used by researchers and clinicians to increase understanding against a background of considerable heterogeneity in individual characteristics and behaviour. Typologies are often developed at a relatively early stage of research in a particular field. Typologies require replication studies that test and re-test the typology categorisations in order to be validated. Three typologies were identified for adult male sexual offenders: fixated versus regressed offenders, a three-category typology, and a more elaborate typology with axes of fixation with children and contact with children. We describe each of these typologies and evidence regarding their validation.

A key concept in typologies for adult child sexual offenders is paedophilia. Not all perpetrators of child sexual abuse are deemed to be paedophiles. Paedophilia is a psychiatric diagnosis, which indicates a persistent sexual interest in *pre-pubescent children*, as reflected by sexual fantasies, urges, thoughts, arousal patterns, or behaviour. Paedophilia becomes a crime only if an individual who meets criteria for paedophilia acts upon his or her fantasies, urges, or preferences in contravention to the prevailing laws (Miller, 2013).

An early and influential typology in the sexual offender literature was developed by Groth and Birnbaum (1978), who distinguished between 'fixated' and 'regressed' offenders based on their motivation for abusing children sexually, with 175 males convicted of sexual assault against children. Their study distinguishes these types using descriptive statistics. Fixated

offenders, have a compulsive attraction to children dating back to adolescence, are likely to be diagnosed with paedophilia and have had virtually no age-appropriate sexual relationships during adulthood. They often develop relationships with vulnerable children and groom children for a continuing sexual relationship. They are presumed to have arrested psychological maturation. Regressed offenders, in contrast, begin offending as adults in response to stressors and view their victims as pseudo-adults. Regressed offenders tend to victimise children to whom they have easy access and often have similar sexual arousal patterns to men who do not offend against children (Robertiello & Terry, 2007); in other words they may be less likely to be diagnosed with paedophilia. This typology offers a simple classification approach, but makes presumptions about emotional and sexual development that are difficult to ascertain.

A second typology (Danni & Hampe, 2000), based on a sample of 168 men convicted of sexual offences against children, proposed three broad categories, which they labelled 'paedophile', 'hebephile' and 'incest'. Whereas paedophile offenders prefer sexual activity with prepubertal children and seduce their victims, hebephiles will sexually abuse a child who is at the same level of psychological development that they were when they felt most secure and are more likely to offend when subject to external stressors. Incest offenders sexually abuse family members out of a sense of entitlement. Their analysis supported their threefold classification, classifying close to 90 per cent of cases overall, although but the paedophile group were more frequently misclassified. Cross-validation of other participant samples using the typology is needed.

Knight, Carter and Prentky (1989) identified subtypes of child sexual offender across two axes. The first axis concerns the degree to which an offender is fixated with children and also considers his level of social competence. The second axis concerns the amount of contact an offender has with children as well as the meaning of that contact, as interpersonal or sexual. The amount of physical injury involved in the contact is also considered. Knight and colleagues' classification has additional support because it has been replicated on child sexual offenders in Canada with reasonable reliability (Looman, Gauthier, & Boer, 2001).

## Summary

Typologies may be useful for guiding treating clinicians and researchers in understanding the motivations of child sexual offenders. However, typologies are not mutually exclusive with regard to offender behaviour or victim characteristics, as sexual offenders do not always specialise in a particular type of behaviour or may abuse children with non-preferred characteristics (Guay et al., 2001; Proeve & Sim, 2010). Although the Knight and colleagues' typology has reasonable empirical support, it is inadvisable to make firm predictions about individuals on the basis of any typology.

### 2.3.2 Paedophilia and Hebephilia

#### *Definitions*

Paedophilia is a psychiatric diagnosis, which indicates a persistent sexual interest in *pre-pubescent children*, as reflected by sexual fantasies, urges, thoughts, arousal patterns, or behaviour. Paedophilia becomes a crime only if an individual who meets criteria for paedophilia acts upon his or her fantasies, urges, or preferences in contravention to the prevailing laws (Miller, 2013). In an opinion piece, Seto (2012) posed the question of whether paedophilia is a sexual orientation, based on evidence that a substantial minority of identified sexual offenders against children admit an onset of sexual interest in children before adulthood, some paedophilic sexual offenders show greater emotional congruence with children than other sexual offenders, and that paedophilia may be stable over time. Seto also noted that paedophilic individuals may distinguish less between boys and girls than men who are sexually attracted to adults distinguish between men and women, possibly because boys and girls differ less in body size and shape than do men and women.

The term *hebephilia* refers to a sexual interest in young *post-pubescent children*, while *ehebephilia* denotes an interest in children in the *mid- to late-adolescent age range*. These terms are controversial in the sexual offender literature. In an opinion article, Franklin (2010) noted that the term ehebephilia was introduced in 1906 by a German scientist to describe homosexual men who preferred youthful males from puberty to the early 20s. Hebephilia was investigated by Czech sexologist Kurt Freund, who later established a laboratory in Canada. A second group of researchers promoted a scale to measure ehebephilia, used for men who committed sexual offences against pubescent minors, in the context of priest sexual abuse scandals of the late 1990s.

#### *Measurement of Paedophilia and Hebephilia*

Because paedophilia (and hebephilia) is defined in terms of persistent sexual interest in children and is broader than sexual behaviour, research studies in which paedophilia is assigned based on the age of victims of convicted child sex offenders provide a less secure basis for investigating its nature and associated characteristics. A more suitable basis for measuring paedophilia and separating it from sexually abusive behaviour is likely to be the method of phallometry, in which sexual arousal in response to visual or auditory material is directly measured by penile erection and is therefore likely to be responsive to a person's sexual fantasies, urges and thoughts. The studies discussed in this section concerning paedophilia and hebephilia are based on this assessment approach. Additionally, it should be noted that the definitions of paedophilia used in research do not always directly align with the definition of paedophilia in the DSM (e.g., Blanchard, 2009).

#### *Cognitive Performance in Paedophilia*

Some relationships which are consistent with neurobiological aetiology of paedophilia are found in studies of neuropsychological and educational findings concerning paedophilic

men, who were categorised as such if they responded more strongly to pre-pubescent children than to any other gender–age category using phallometric assessment. Cantor, Blanchard, Christenson, et al. (2004) administered neuropsychological measures including a short form of an intelligence test and tests of memory, to 473 men assessed for illegal or disturbing sexual behaviour at a specialist Canadian psychiatric centre. Paedophiles obtained lower IQ scores as well as lower scores on tests of immediate and delayed verbal and visual spatial memory, when compared to hebephiles or men sexually attracted mostly to adults.

In a second study of 701 men from the same recruitment setting (Cantor, Kuban, Blak, et al., 2006), paedophiles showed twice the odds of failing grades or requiring special education, relative to sexual offenders who responded most to adults, using phallometric assessment. Controlling for estimated IQ, age at immigration to an English-speaking country and paternal education level did not account for this association.

Together with evidence that paedophilic men have a higher rate of having suffered head injuries causing unconsciousness, the authors suggested that paedophilic men may have suffered problems in neurodevelopment (Cantor, Kuban, Blak, et al., 2006). The authors' contention that their findings reflect neurodevelopmental problems is subject to general and specific objections. In general, correlational nature of this evidence does not prove a causal relationship between neurodevelopmental problems and paedophilia. Specifically, the participants in this research were referred because of disturbing or illegal sexual behaviour. It is possible that more intelligent individuals may be more likely to escape detection of their illegal sexual behaviour by more intentional selection of victims who are less likely to be heard and therefore less likely to be included in research studies of this kind. Such a selection effect is arguably less likely to apply to those individuals with adult victims, as adults are likely to have greater capacity and opportunity to report sexual abuse.

#### *Hebephilia not a distinct category*

Hebephilia has also been investigated using phallometric research. Blanchard, Lykins, Wherrett, et al. (2009) classified their 881 participants referred because of problematic sexual behaviour to the Canadian psychiatric centre, into groups according to self-reported sexual interest in different age and gender groups and compared their phallometric response to pre-pubescent males or females, pubescent males or females, and adults. Self-reported paedophiles differed most from those who preferred adults. In addition, the patterns of phallometric response differed between paedophiles and hebephiles in the expected directions, although the differences were not always highly distinct. The authors claimed that their results supported the existence of a distinct category of hebephilia, but other commentators disputed this claim (e.g. Zander, [2009] suggested that the notion of hebephilia is an ascription of pathology to a common pattern of arousal).

Blanchard et al. (2009) proposed replacing paedophilia with a new diagnostic category of “pedohebephilia”, allowing clinicians to specify one of three subtypes: paedophilic (sexually

attracted to children younger than 11; hebephilic (sexually attracted to children aged 11–14); and pedohebephilic (sexually attracted to both). It is notable that developmental evidence does not corroborate the distinction between hebephilic and paedophilic men, as these groups did not differ in their odds of failing grades or requiring special education (Cantor et al., 2006).

#### *Relationship of sexual arousal patterns to sexual abuse of children*

Although paedophilia is a psychiatric diagnosis (and hebephilia a disputed diagnostic term), it is related to sexual abuse of children. Blanchard (2010) compared phallometric assessment results, from 998 referrals to the specialist Canadian psychiatric centre, against numbers of child victims abused by offenders. As an example, he used a cutting score of at least three victims under the age of 15 years as an indicator of pedohebephilia (paedophilia or hebephilia). This victim count showed moderately accurate discrimination. Sensitivity (detecting true cases of pedohebephilia) was 66% and specificity (detecting true cases of non-pedohebephilia) was much higher at 91%. Available information in the article showed that abusing one or two children under 15 would not have been as strong an indicator of pedohebephilia. Although phallometric sexual arousal is associated with *repeated* child sexual abuse, the correspondence between sexual arousal towards children and sexual abuse of children is far from perfect. If an individual has three or more victims under 15, two thirds of the time they would show the associated sexual response pattern. If they do not have three or more victims under 15, they are very unlikely to show the associated sexual response pattern.

It is important to note that the definition of pedohebephilia used by Blanchard is not consistent with the DSM-V, which does not prescribe a cut-off in terms of the number of victims.

#### *Implications of research concerning paedophilia and hebephilia*

Research concerning phallometric assessment supports the idea that it is possible to find reliable patterns of sexual response, on average, to children, adolescents or adults. Furthermore, patterns of sexual response show a moderate relationship to repeated sexual abuse of children. However, the strength of this relationship is not sufficient for patterns of sexual response to be used to make decisions about risks posed by individuals to children. Furthermore, available evidence despite some evidence for differing sexual preferences between individuals self-reporting paedophilia or hebephilia, there appears to be no strong distinction between hebephilia and paedophilia to support diagnostic subtypes. Finally, correlational evidence for a relationship between paedophilia and intelligence and memory is not strong evidence of neurodevelopmental problems in individuals who are diagnosed with paedophilia.

### 2.3.3 Developmental and Other Characteristics

A variety of family and personal characteristics have been identified in adult sexual abusers of children. These include the attachment style that develops through parent-child interaction, experiences of sexual abuse and physical abuse and interpersonal difficulties of the individual (Starzyk & Marshall, 2003). The following discussion summarises recent research concerning adverse developmental experiences and social difficulties.

#### 2.3.3.1 Abuse Experiences

Child sexual abusers commonly report a history of sexual abuse experiences in their own childhood. They also report significant, but lower, rates of physical abuse or other types of childhood abuse. The authors identified one meta-analysis and three additional studies not included in the meta-analysis which examined the extent to which child sexual abuse perpetrators reported having themselves experienced childhood sexual abuse. A meta-analysis of 17 studies (Jespersen, Lalumiere & Seto, 2009) was based on self-reported abuse experiences by sexual offenders. Overall, the meta-analysis observed a higher prevalence of sexual abuse history among adult sex offenders than among non-sex offenders (odds ratio of 3.36). Only one of the 17 studies observed a lower prevalence. There were also greater odds of physical abuse (average odds of 1.6). In addition, an analysis of 15 studies showed that there was a higher prevalence of sexual abuse among sexual offenders against children compared to those with adult victims. Other studies not included in the meta-analysis showed similar results (Connolly & Woollons, 2008; Levenson, Willis & Prescott, 2014b; Simons, Wurtele & Durham, 2008).

#### *Lack of Evidence for Unique Association of Sexual Abuse with Sexual Offending from Prospective Studies*

The association between childhood or adolescent maltreatment and subsequent delinquent or criminal behaviour has been termed the *violence breeds violence hypothesis* (Bender, Postlewait, Thompson, & Springer, 2010), and other victim to victimising conceptualisations, such as the abused-to-abuser hypothesis. The abused-to-abuser hypothesis has generated considerable attention in the sexual offender literature. It is important to note that the great majority of sexual offender research is based on male offenders, so that evidence supportive of the hypothesis concerns male offenders. A limitation of the victim to offender literature is its failure to explicitly identify itself as a gendered theory and to note that the hypothesis may not apply to females. A prospective study (Ogloff, Cutajar, Mann & Mullen, 2012) in which there was an association between sexual abuse and sexual offending for males did not show a similar relationship for females.

It is also important to emphasise that most sexually abused children do not become sexual offenders. Additionally, many individuals who have committed child sexual abuse do not report having themselves experienced sexual abuse (Richards, 2011).

Two different research approaches have been predominantly employed to inform this hypothesis: longitudinal and prospective designs, or cross-sectional studies using retrospective measures which provide much weaker evidence. Although support is claimed for the sexual abuse to sexual abuser hypothesis on the basis of cross-sectional studies (Jespersen et al., 2009), those studies using prospective designs with more careful controls have not clearly supported the hypothesis.

Retrospective studies have shown that childhood sexual abuse in known sexual offenders may be associated with patterns of sexual offending. For example, Proeve and Reilly (2007) found that those who had reported being sexually abused were more likely to have a history of abusing multiple victims, male victims, male and female victims, and intra-familial and extra-familial victims than those who had not experienced sexual abuse. However, evidence from a meta-analysis of sexual recidivism studies is that childhood sexual abuse experiences are *unrelated to sexual recidivism* after individuals have been identified as sexual abusers, although the definition of childhood sexual abuse was not clearly specified in this analysis (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005).

There is support for childhood sexual abuse as a *risk factor* for sexual offending, where the temporal precedence of child sexual abuse was established. However, these studies did not control for the association of other types of maltreatment with sexual offending. An Australian study included a sample size of 2,759 cases of medically confirmed experiences of contact sexual abuse (Ogloff, Cutajar, Mann & Mullen, 2012), although it did not control for the effects of other types of child maltreatment. The study showed that child sexual abuse victims were 7.6 times more likely to be charged with sexual offences than the general population, *although it should be noted that 99% of male and female victims were not charged with a sexual offence*. The association was stronger for males who had been victimised at the age of 12 years or above than for those victimised at a younger age. However, this effect did not hold for female victims. In addition, a longitudinal study of 224 male victims of contact child sexual abuse referred to a specialist clinic (Salter, McMillan, Richards et al., 2003) with a follow-up period of 7 to 19 years showed that 12% of victims became abusers. Victim-abusers were more likely than non-abusers to have experienced physical neglect, intra-familial physical violence and to have been sexually abused by a female. The study did not include a non-abused comparison group, and the risk of becoming a sexual abuser in children who had experienced physical or emotional abuse was not known.

Finally, a well-known prospective study by Widom and Ames (1994), in which other types of abuse were assessed, found that sexual abuse did not *uniquely* predict sexual offending. Instead, childhood experiences of three different types of abuse (physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect) each increased the likelihood of sexual offending in adulthood. A recent prospective study which appeared after the literature search period (Widom & Massey, 2015) also does not support the abused-to-abuser hypothesis, as histories of physical abuse and neglect significantly predicted arrest for a sexual crime, but history of sexual abuse did not.

Although an increased prevalence of sexual abuse in the histories of child sexual abusers has been found in multiple retrospective studies, there is a lack of evidence from longitudinal studies that a history of sexual abuse uniquely predicts sexual offending. Instead, physical abuse or neglect, which commonly co-occur with sexual abuse, may be stronger predictors of sexual offending.

### 2.3.3.2 Attachment, Intimacy and Social Skills

Five studies concerning attachment styles and one review (Martin & Tardif, 2014) of attachment and intimacy issues were located. A single meta-analysis concerning loneliness and two concerning social skills were located.

In a study of 57 charged child sexual abusers recruited by university researchers from a community treatment program, without a non-sexual offending comparison group, Craissati, McClurg and Browne (2002) found that only one fifth of child sexual abusers, recruited from community treatment settings, described good bonding with at least one parent. Many described a parenting attachment style consistent with affectionless control, which is characterised by neglect and parental indifference combined with harsh and intrusive control (Craissati et al., 2002). It has been proposed that such early experiences can lead to insecure attachment styles during adulthood, which commonly manifest as a preoccupied or dependent style, a fearful and ambivalent approach towards relationships, or a dismissing or distant style when forming relationships with others.

Marsa, O'Reilly, Carr et al. (2004) undertook a study of 29 imprisoned child sexual abusers with comparison groups of violent offenders, non-sexual offenders and community controls. They found that imprisoned child sexual abusers (intra-familial or extra-familial) most commonly showed a *fearful* adult attachment style and more emotional loneliness, compared to violent offenders, nonviolent offenders and community controls, whereas a secure adult attachment style was found to be four times less common in this group.



Stirpe, Abracen, Stermac and Wilson (2006) assessed 22 extra-familial child sexual abusers, 19 intra-familial child sexual abusers and 20 sexual offenders against adults, as well as two groups of 20 controls: violent and non-violent offenders. All were imprisoned or on conditional release. Extra-familial child sexual offenders were most likely to show a *preoccupied* attachment style compared to intra-familial offenders, offenders against adults or nonsexual offenders.

Jamieson and Marshall (2000) recruited and assessed 20 extra-familial child sexual abusers, 20 intra-familial child sexual abusers, 20 non-sexual offenders from a prison setting and 21 community controls. They found a greater degree of *fearful* attachment in extra-familial but not intra-familial sexual abusers, who did not differ from community controls. Marshall, Serran and Cortoni (2000) assessed 30 child sexual abusers, 24 non-sexual offenders in prison settings and 20 community non-offender controls. They found no significant differences in attachment between child sexual abusers and others.

Overall, studies show that many identified child sexual abusers report insecure attachment styles, although the most common insecure attachment style has been found to vary across different studies (Martin & Tardif, 2014). It is not clear if there is a predominant insecure attachment style among child sexual abusers, or whether insecure attachment is more prominent in extra-familial sexual abusers.

#### *Intimacy Problems and Social Skills*

Disruptions to early attachment are also thought to contribute to intimacy problems in child sexual abusers. There is evidence from reviews of multiple retrospective studies that child sexual offenders report problems in loneliness, intimacy skills and social skills.

Compared to non-sexual offenders and non-offenders, a single meta-analysis discussed evidence concerning loneliness (Whitaker, Le, Hanson et al., 2008). Child sexual abusers exhibited greater loneliness and difficulties with intimate relationships at moderate to large effect sizes. They were more likely to show increased fear of rejection with adult partners and low engagement in intimacy skills that favour intimacy with romantic partners and female friends. They were less likely to give and receive support and encouragement, spend time alone with a partner and usually have fewer male friends in which they can confide about intimate matters (Martin & Tardif, 2014).

Social skills were addressed in two meta-analytic reviews. One review showed that the ability of child sexual abusers to interact with the opposite sex was poorer than rapists, non-sexual offenders and non-offenders (Dreznick, 2003). A second meta-analysis showed that, compared to non-sexual offenders and non-offenders, child sexual abusers showed greater deficits in social skills (Whitaker et al., 2008).

### 2.3.3.3 Emotional Congruence

The difficulty that child sexual abusers experience in forming effective relationships with adults coincides with the tendency of some to display exaggerated cognitive and emotional affiliation with childhood and children (Finkelhor, 1984; Wilson, 1999), a condition that is referred to as 'emotional congruence'. Individuals who show emotional congruence with children are more likely to meet their emotional attachment needs by interacting with children. Sexual offenders against children who have high levels of emotional congruence with children may seek child-oriented employment and report having children as friends. Three studies addressed emotional congruence, showing most support for the hypothesis that emotional congruence is related to sexual interest in children.

Wilson (1999) was included as an important study of emotional congruence although it was published earlier than 2000. He assessed emotional congruence in 72 paedophiles, 62 non-paedophilic sexual offenders, 27 sexual offenders against women, and 33 non-sexual offenders, recruited from correctional institutions, parole settings, and community treatment facilities. Paedophiles with male victims were more likely to endorse interest in interacting with children on the child's level, an indication of emotional congruence.

A meta-analytic review of 30 emotional congruence studies from peer-reviewed and grey literature sources (McPhail, Hermann & Nunes, 2013) showed that extra-familial child sexual abusers showed higher emotional congruence with children than non-sexual offender comparison groups and intra-familial child sexual abusers. Intra-familial abusers showed less emotional congruence than many non-sexual offender comparison groups. Furthermore, emotional congruence was associated with sexual recidivism with a small to moderate effect size and was stronger for extra-familial abusers.

McPhail, Hermann and Fernandez (2014) proposed and tested three types of emotional congruence using 221 imprisoned child sexual abusers. The three types included: *blockage*, in which fear of adult relationships and poor interpersonal competence results in finding children less threatening and more attractive as sexual partners; *sexual deviance*, in which sexual interest in children is the main association of emotional congruence with children; and *psychological immaturity*, in which the offender desires to relate to children because of a failure to advance emotionally and cognitively to a stage congruent with his chronological age. In general, the results were most consistent for *sexual deviance*, in that high emotional congruence with children was most strongly associated with sexual pre-occupation, using sex to cope with negative emotions, deviant sexual interests, beliefs supportive of child molestation and arousal to sexual activity with prepubescent males. There was also some support for *blockage* in the form of some evidence for greater problems with social rejection and loneliness, but there was less evidence of reduced social influence or an absence of long-term intimate relationships. There was little support for *psychological immaturity* in that there was no association between emotional congruence and difficulties in cognitive problem-solving ability, younger age or impulsivity.

#### 2.3.3.4 Mental Health

With regard to mental health problems in adult child sexual abusers, a comprehensive meta-analysis of comparisons (Whitaker et al., 2008) of child sexual abusers with other groups is informative. Contributing studies included some perpetrators of non-contact sexual abuse, although most studies did not report this issue. Participants were most commonly from prison settings and many were engaged in treatment programs. Compared to *non-sexual offenders*, child sexual abusers were more likely to have a history of mental illness, anxiety, and low self-esteem at moderate effect sizes. In comparison to *non-offenders*, they were more likely to show anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.

#### 2.3.3.5 Offence-supportive Attitudes

In addition to developmental, relationship and mental health variables, attitudes that support sexual abuse of children are of importance. Such attitudes are commonly addressed during treatment programs for child sexual abusers. In support of this focus, a meta-analytic review showed that attitudes supportive of child molesting showed a small and statistically significant relationship with sexual recidivism (Helmus, Hanson, Babchishin & Mann, 2013). However, it is not clear for how many child sexual abusers such attitudes are present prior to committing acts of sexual abuse.

### 2.3.4 Classification by Victim Characteristics

Classifying sexual offenders on the basis of victim choice is one method of classification that has received some empirical validation (Bickley & Beech, 2001). Victim characteristics include gender, age, and relationship to offender. However, because institutional child sexual abuse concerns extra-familial relationships between offenders and their victims, the characteristics of intra-familial offenders are not of particular significance for this review and therefore differences between intra-familial and extra-familial offenders are not discussed.

#### *Victim Gender and Age*

With respect to victim gender, an early systematic review of 25 studies by Hanson and Slater (1988) addressed its relationship with reported experiences of sexual abuse as a child. Broad definitions of sexual abuse experiences resulted in higher prevalence than in studies where a narrower definition was used. The authors found that offenders with boy victims had been sexually abused themselves at a greater rate than those with girl victims.

With regard to emotional congruence, meta-analytic findings show that high levels of emotional congruence with children are reported by extra-familial offenders who abuse male victims, as previously noted (McPhail, Hermann, & Nunes, 2013).

In the period covered by the literature search, four individual studies examined characteristics of child sexual abusers in relation to gender of victim. Overall, there is mixed evidence that gender of victim is related to other characteristics of child sexual abusers. With regard to sexual abuse experiences, 382 sexual offenders from an inpatient treatment program, who had committed contact offences, showed no significant differences in offences according to the victim's gender between those who did or did not report sexual abuse experiences (Aylwin, Studer, Reddon & Clelland, 2003). The definition of sexual abuse experiences was not given in the study.

Having boy victims has also been found to be associated with offending against multiple rather than single victims, in a study of 324 participants from a community treatment program (Proeve, Day, Mohr, & Hawkins, 2006).

Victim gender and victim age appear also to be related. In a study of 185 offenders referred for pre-trial psychiatric assessment, offenders with very young victims (0 to 5 years at age of onset of sexual abuse) were more likely than offenders with victims of 6 to 11 or 12 to 15 years to have abused both boys and girls (Carlstedt, Nilsson, Hofvander, Brimse, Innala & Anckarsäter, 2009). A study of 362 offenders assessed for civil commitment (Levenson, Becker & Morin, 2008), showed that abuse of victims younger than 6 years (whether this was age of onset or otherwise was not reported) was associated with abuse of both boys and girls, after controlling for factors such as sexual abuse as a child, antisocial characteristics, substance use disorders and risk of sexual recidivism. These studies suggest that offending against victims of 0 to 5 years may raise the risk of offending against both boys and girls.

### *Victim Preferences*

There is also evidence from two studies that victim preferences show a degree of stability over time. Guay, Proulx, Cusson, and Ouimet (2001) found that victim preferences in 178 incarcerated offenders remained stable across repeated sexual offence occasions. Most of the offenders showed stability regarding the gender of their victims. They also tended to maintain their choice of victim with respect to age, which was not specified as age of onset or age of disclosure. However, sexual offenders with victims who had reached puberty tended to be less stable in victim preference than those who had pre-pubertal victims. Similarly, Sim and Proeve (2010) found that victim gender was highly stable across repeated sexual offending occasions in 128 child sexual abusers attending a community treatment program. However, victim age, at onset of abuse, showed less stability, as there was considerable crossover from victims of 0 to 5, 6 to 12, or 13 to 17 years, particularly from the second to subsequent victims.

There is evidence that preference for victims of male gender in child sexual abusers is associated with emotional congruence and with offending against multiple victims and that victim gender preferences show some degree of stability. Preference for very young victims

may be associated with offences against victims of both genders. However, preferences for victims of particular age groups may be less stable than gender preferences.

### 2.3.5 Female Child Sexual Abusers

We located six correlational studies and two reviews concerning female child sexual abusers.

#### *Typologies*

Given the recency of much research concerning female child sexual abusers, the existence of typologies based on clinical observations or demographic subtyping rather than on empirical research is not surprising. An early typology (Mathews, Matthews and Speltz, 1989; reported in Miller, 2013) proposed three types. The *predisposed* (intergenerational) female child sexual offender perpetuates the cycle of abuse from her own childhood upon other children, often members of her own family or her own children. The *teacher/lover* female child sex offender typically initiates sexual conduct with an adolescent boy, often a student in her middle school or high school class. She is the most likely offender to regard the contact as similar to an adult relationship. The *male-coerced* female child sexual offender abuses under the influence, intimidation, or coercion of a male partner. She is likely to show traits of passivity, dependence, low self-worth, and feelings of powerlessness. An additional type is the *psychologically disturbed* female child sexual offender, who commits sexual abuse under the influence of or in the presence of an organic brain syndrome or severe mental disorder.

Vandiver and Kercher (2004) proposed a typology of female child sex offenders with six categories, based on 471 adult females registered as sexual offenders in Texas. Their six-category typology was developed using cluster analysis, a multivariate statistical technique. The *heterosexual nurturer* tends to victimise young adolescent boys, similar to those in the teacher/lover category. This was the most common category in the sample. The “*non-criminal*” *homosexual* offender initiates sexual relations with young adolescent girls, sometimes acting with a male accomplice, and the aim is claimed to be primarily romantic rather than exploitive. The *homosexual criminal* offender abuses teenage girls for primarily economic reasons and may or may not work with accomplices. The *female sexual predators* have committed a relatively high number of sexual offences against mainly young adolescent boys, while the *young adult child exploiters* tend to be younger than those in the other categories, typically in their mid-20s, and tend to victimise male or female younger, pre-pubescent children. Finally, the *aggressive homosexual offenders* primarily victimise adolescent females and may also be likely to commit a sexual assault against an adult.

According to Miller (2013), typologies of female child sexual abusers have common categories of: true sexual predators of young adolescent boys; offenders who develop a romanticised relationship with a young teenage boy to compensate for unmet needs for intimacy and approval; criminals who exploit children and adolescents for profit; mentally disordered offenders; and female child sexual offenders influenced by male partners. Typologies of female sexual abusers help to describe different psychological and situational

contributors to scenarios in which females sexually abuse children. However, they require empirical validation before they may be considered sufficiently reliable to guide efforts at the prevention of child sexual abuse.

#### *Demographic and victim details*

The phenomenon of female child sexual abusers has been more widely acknowledged and studied within psychology and criminology in recent decades. Although the average age of female child sexual abusers appears to be in the range of 26–36 years, women of all ages may sexually abuse children.

There appears to be no consensus as to whether male or female children are more vulnerable to sexual abuse by adult women (Gannon & Rose, 2008), or regarding the age groups of victims. Peter (2009) found that the prevalence rate for male victims of female-perpetrated sexual abuse was slightly higher than for females (14.1% vs. 9.3%). Victims were younger for female child sexual abusers (mean 5.84 years) compared to male counterparts (mean 8.58 years) and 92% of female-perpetrated sexual abuse victims were under the age of 9 years. Levenson, Willis, and Prescott (2014a), in their study of 47 female abusers from prison and community treatment programs, found that female victims of female sexual offenders were more common (58% vs. 42% males) and victims were most commonly teenaged minors.

Other studies suggest that patterns of sexual abuse by female abusers differ from those of males, although few studies have been devoted to this topic. Female sexual abusers are more likely to sexually abuse two or more children, which was a statistically significant difference from male-perpetrated sexual abuse (Peter, 2009). However, unlike male sexual offenders, who usually offend alone, female abusers are far more likely to commit their offenses in the company of a male co-offender (Miller, 2013; Stathopoulos, 2014).

#### *Relationships and Psychopathology*

Many female child sexual abusers appear to exhibit poor self-esteem and deficient social skills, which lead to loneliness and difficulties in forming lasting intimate relationships (Gannon & Rose, 2008). In terms of psychopathology, some studies of female sexual offenders report high rates of mental illness, particularly depression and substance abuse (Stathopoulos, 2014). Features of personality disorders characterise many female sexual offenders (Miller, 2013). Christopher, Lutz-Zois and Reinhardt (2007) recruited 61 female sexual offenders and 81 non-sexual offenders from a women's prison. They found that personality disorder tendencies did not seem to distinguish between sexual and non-sexual offenders. They suggested that these findings may, in part, reflect findings that criminal behaviour in females, in general, may be related to borderline and antisocial personality tendencies.

### *Developmental History*

Female child sexual abusers tend to come from more deprived backgrounds than non-sexual female offenders, having often been subject to poor living conditions, food deprivation, and lack of medical care. They have frequently suffered extreme emotional, verbal, physical, and sexual abuse.

In an Australian sample referred for forensic psychiatric evaluation, Nathan and Ward (2002) found that all 12 participants had histories of either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or domestic violence. A later study of 31 female sexual offenders compared them to three identical-sized groups of female non-sexual offenders, male non-sexual offenders and male sexual offenders from prison settings (Johansson-Love & Fremouw, 2009). Of female sexual offenders, 45% reported a history of sexual victimisation, significantly more than other groups.

For example, Wijkman, Bijleveld, and Hendriks (2010) investigated victimization histories of 111 adult women in the Netherlands who committed contact sexual offences, of whom the majority (77%) abused children, and one third abused their own child. Approximately one third had a history of emotional neglect, 16% had a history of physical and/or psychological abuse, and 31% had a history of sexual abuse.

Levenson et al. (2014a) found that verbal or emotional abuse (38%), emotional neglect (40%) and contact sexual abuse (50%) were more common than in a comparison sample. In addition, verbal abuse, emotional neglect and sexual abuse were positively correlated with having victims under 12 years of age.

### **Summary**

In summary, a review of recent literature concerning adult child sexual abusers shows that they exhibit higher rates of mental health difficulties (anxiety, depression), social skills problems, insecure attachment styles in adult relationships, intimacy problems, and emotional congruence with children. Their developmental histories show high rates of physical and sexual abuse compared to other offenders and males in the general population and greater emotional neglect than the general population.

There are also indications from studies of known child sexual abusers that experiences of sexual abuse are associated with patterns of sexual offending. Despite these findings from cross-sectional studies, studies of individuals who have experienced sexual abuse in childhood show that few go on to commit sexual offences. In addition, despite some evidence for a specific relationship between sexual abuse and sexual offending, other forms of child maltreatment may be influential in later sexual offending.

With regard to victim gender and age in the sexual abuse of children, there is evidence of a degree of stability in victim preference. However, having victims under the age of five years raises the risk of offending against victims of both genders.

From cross-sectional studies, there is evidence of lower performance on tests of cognitive ability in paedophilia. There are indications of sexual arousal differences for pre-pubescent and pubescent children, but the suggestion that there is a distinct condition of hebephilia remains controversial. Paedophilia is strongly related to 'fixated' child molesters, one type of a popular typology. Along with sexual preference, social competence is an important dimension of a second, empirically-derived typology.

According to available research, female child sexual abusers also experience mental health problems and a higher rate of childhood emotional neglect and abuse and sexual abuse than comparison groups. There are several typologies of female child sexual abusers, but these require further study, as does their patterns of offending.

## 2.4 Characteristics of Child and Adolescent Sexual Abusers

The term problem sexual behaviour is used in this section in relation to behaviour exhibited by children under 10 years, while sexually abusive behaviour is used in relation to children and young people from 10 to 17 years, to distinguish between these groups in terms of their levels of development and legal responsibility, in accordance with recent guidelines (CEASE, 2012). Sexually harmful behaviours is used to describe the behaviours of both children and adolescents. Sexually harmful behaviours refer to sexual behaviours directed towards another child which occur without consent, where one party is coerced or which does not occur between equals, such as where one child is much younger than the other (Ryan, 1997). For example, masturbation in private is part of normative sexual development, whereas coercing another child to watch or to masturbate is sexually abusive.

This section describes typologies of adolescent with sexually abusive behaviours, children with problem sexual behaviour, characteristics of male adolescents who show sexually abusive behaviour, characteristics of victims sexually abused by adolescents, and characteristics of female children with sexually harmful behaviours. Some studies use samples beyond the age ranges described above.

Studies concerning children and adolescents with sexually harmful behaviours are shown in Table 3. Twenty-three studies were correlational studies, addressing typologies, developmental characteristics, victim characteristics, female children with sexually harmful behaviours, and comparisons between adults and adolescents. One prevalence study was also located, which also informed the literature concerning female children with sexually harmful behaviours. There were two narrative reviews concerned with typologies and a



meta-analysis concerned with developmental characteristics. There were three opinion articles, concerning children with sexual behaviour problems and typologies.

Table 3 Studies of child and adolescent sexual abusers

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Prevalence studies</b>  |  |
|  | Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Chaffin (2009)  |
| <b>Correlational studies</b>                                       |  |
| <i>Typologies</i>  | Prentky, Harris, Frizzell, & Righthand (2000)  |
| <i>Developmental Experiences and Other Characteristics - Abuse</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Silovsky &amp; Niec (2002)</li> <li>2. Friedrich, Davies, Feher, &amp; Wright (2003)</li> <li>3. Fanniff &amp; Kimonis (2014)</li> <li>4. Dennison &amp; Leclerc (2011)</li> <li>5. Daversa &amp; Knight (2007)</li> <li>6. Grabell &amp; Knight (2009)</li> </ol>   |
| <i>Developmental Experiences and Other Characteristics – Other</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hendriks &amp; Bijleveld (2004)</li> <li>2. Miner, Robinson, Knight, et al. (2010)</li> <li>3. Miner, Romine, Robinson, Berg &amp; Knight (2014)</li> <li>4. Wanklyn, Ward, Cormier, Day &amp; Newman (2012)</li> <li>5. Fanniff &amp; Kimonis (2014)</li> <li>6. Ybarra, Mitchell, Hamburger, Diener-West &amp; Leaf (2011)</li> <li>7. Hunter, Figueredo, Malamuth, &amp; Becker (2004)</li> <li>8. Burton (2000)</li> </ol> |
| <i>Victim Characteristics</i>                                      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Kemper &amp; Kistner (2010)</li> <li>2. Leroux, Pullman, Motayne, &amp; Seto (2014)</li> </ol>   |
| <i>Female Child Sexual Abusers</i>                                 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Schwartz, Cavanaugh, Pimental, &amp; Prentky (2006)</li> <li>2. Roe-Sepowitz &amp; Krysik (2008)</li> <li>3. van der Put, van Vugt, Stams &amp; Hendriks (2014)</li> </ol>   |
| <i>Comparisons with Adult Abusers</i>                              | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Aylwin, Studer, Reddon &amp; Clelland (2003)</li> <li>2. Finkelhor, Ormrod, &amp; Chaffin (2009)</li> <li>3. Tardif, Auclair, Jacob, &amp; Carpentier (2005)</li> </ol>  |
| <b>Meta-analyses of Retrospective Studies</b>                      |  |
| <i>Developmental Experiences</i>                                   | Seto & Lalumiere (2010)  |
| <b>Narrative reviews</b>   |  |
| <i>Typologies</i>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Miller (2013)</li> <li>2. Robertiello &amp; Terry (2007)</li> </ol>  |
| <b>Opinion pieces</b>  |  |
| <i>Typologies</i>  | O'Brien & Bera (1986)  |
| <i>Children with Sexual Behaviour Problems</i>                     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Chaffin, Lyon, Berliner et al. (2008)</li> <li>2. Friedrich, Trane &amp; Gully (2005)</li> </ol>   |

### 2.4.1 Typologies

Robertiello and Terry (2007) reviewed typologies of juveniles who commit sexual abuse. None have sufficient empirical support to be useful in directing practice. The most sophisticated was a descriptive typology by O'Brien and Bera (1986) which classified juveniles who commit sexual abuse into seven categories: naive experimenters; undersocialised child exploiters (social isolation, family dysfunction); sexual aggressives (abuse peers or adults, history of delinquent behaviour, high impulsivity); sexual compulsives (deviant sexually fantasies, paraphilic behaviour); disturbed impulsives (impulsive, psychological disorders); group influenced offenders; and pseudo-socialised (lack intimacy, have superficial relationships with peers). The degree to which these types are distinct from each other is unknown.

The empirically based typology based on 96 juvenile sexual offenders referred for assessment and treatment following sexual offences (Prentky, Harris, Frizzell, & Righthand, 2000), aimed to develop a risk assessment instrument. The juveniles were classified into rationally derived categories of: child molester, rapist, sexually reactive child, fondler, paraphilic offender, and unclassifiable. Most juveniles were classified into in the first category, while two categories contained only 3 members each. The risk assessment instrument scales showed little ability to discriminate categories clearly and initial development of categories was not empirically supported.

## 2.4.2 Children with Problem Sexual Behaviour

### 2.4.2.1 Social and Mental Health Factors

According to a task force report written on behalf of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (Chaffin, Lyon, Berliner et al., 2008), there are no incidence or prevalence data concerning problem sexual behaviour in children. A substantial number of young girls are among children with problem sexual behaviour and there is no clear pattern of demographic, psychological or social factors among these children that would distinguish them from other children, but only a difference in severity. Those children with more severe problem sexual behaviour tend to have more comorbid social, family and mental health problems.

### 2.4.2.2 Sexual Abuse

Early theories emphasised sexual abuse as the predominant cause of problem sexual behaviour in children (Friedrich, Trane & Gully, 2005). However, other research has shown

that many of these children have no known history of sexual abuse. A 2002 study examined data from the primary caregivers of 37 children with problem sexual behaviour, including coercion or intimidation, aged 3 to 7 years, of whom 65% were girls (Silovsky & Niec, 2002). Suspected sexual abuse was confirmed in 38% of cases. There were no differences in the severity and frequency of sexual behaviour problems according to substantiated history of child sexual abuse.

Various factors may be associated with problem sexual behaviour in pre-teen children more strongly than sexual abuse (Friedrich, Davies, Feher, & Wright, 2003). In this study of three large non-clinical samples of children and children from outpatient psychiatric settings, as well as children with a confirmed history of sexual abuse, problem sexual behaviour was also accounted for statistically by domestic violence, physical abuse, social competence, exposure to sexually explicit material, and personal vulnerabilities.

Although sexual abuse is associated with problem sexual behaviour, other abuse experiences or environmental influences where sexual abuse is not necessarily present are also associated with problem sexual behaviour.

### 2.4.3 Male Adolescents Who Show Sexually Abusive Behaviour

#### 2.4.3.1 Social, Personality, Mental Health

In this section, a comprehensive and recent meta-analysis is used as a basis for the discussion of characteristics of adolescents who show sexually abusive behaviour. Seto and Lalumiere (2010) examined 59 studies comparing male adolescents with documented sexually abusive behaviour with male adolescents who committed non-sexual offences, published between 1975 and 2008. They noted that eight studies included some participants who committed non-contact sexual abuse, but none did so exclusively. Their concern was to elucidate the characteristics of adolescents who commit sexual abuse and to determine factors specifically associated with sexually abusive behaviour. Adolescents who abused younger children as opposed to abusing peers were not distinguished in the meta-analysis. The findings are supplemented with more recently published studies concerning the topics addressed in the meta-analysis, or other studies of interest. Unless otherwise stated, reported findings come from this meta-analytic study.

#### *Family Factors*

The meta-analysis addressed family problems, including satisfaction and relationship problems, family separation, and criminality. There was no significant difference between adolescents who committed sexually abusive behaviour and those who committed non-sexual offences in problematic family relationships, communication or satisfaction. Many adolescents were separated from one or both of their biological parents, but there was no significant group difference in this category. Family criminality was common in both types of adolescents, but there was no overall difference.

### *Antisocial History and Attitudes*

The principal factors associated with adolescent sexually abusive behaviour include age at first criminal contact, criminal history, and antisocial tendencies and attitudes. Those who committed sexually abusive behaviour were slightly older than those with non-sexual offences at age of first contact with the criminal justice system, but the difference was not statistically significant. Every study in the meta-analysis showed that, although adolescents who committed sexually abusive behaviour showed a fairly high degree of conduct problems, such as suspension and expulsion from school, they had a less extensive criminal history. Adolescents who committed sexually abusive behaviour showed less evidence of involvement with delinquent peers or gangs.

Adolescents who committed sexually abusive behaviour did not differ from those with non-sexual offences in measures of antisocial attitudes and beliefs, including beliefs about sex, women, or even sexual offending. Overall, both groups were similar in attitudes and beliefs, including attitudes about sexual behaviour.

### *Mental Health and Substance Abuse Problems*

According to the meta-analysis, adolescents who committed sexually abusive behaviour reported more mental health problems than non-sexual offenders in anxiety and low self-esteem, but did not differ significantly in other mental health problems such as depression. For substance abuse, all but one study showed greater substance use problems among those with non-sexual offences. An additional study of 116 male adolescents prosecuted for sexual offences and referred for specialist assessment in the Netherlands (Hendriks & Bijleveld, 2004), showed that, compared to adolescents who sexually abused peers, those who abused children showed greater emotional problems, more bullying by others and lower self-image.

### *Intellectual, Educational and Social Competence*

With regard to cognitive ability, adolescents who committed sexually abusive behaviour had lower scores on measures of intelligence, but none of the differences were significant. However, those with non-sexual offences showed more learning problems or disabilities, and more academic achievement problems.

A social incompetence explanation of sexually abusive behaviour proposes that adolescents who engage in such behaviour have difficulty initiating or maintaining age appropriate and consensual relationships because they have deficits in relationship skills. Interpersonal problems can include general social skills deficits, heterosocial skills problems and social isolation. Compared to those with non-sexual offences, adolescents who committed

sexually abusive behaviour tended to have more problems in all categories including general social skills, social skills with the opposite sex, and social isolation. However, only differences in social isolation between the groups reached statistical significance.

Insecure attachment in relationships is thought to increase the likelihood of sexual offending because poorly attached individuals are more likely to try to fulfil their intimacy needs in inappropriate relationships (Marshall & Marshall, 2000). Indeed, recent studies have reported that adult sexual offenders differ from other offenders in being more likely to have insecure childhood and adult attachment styles. Miner, Robinson, Knight, et al. (2010) compared 156 adolescent males recruited from residential or outpatient treatment programs with 122 non-sexual adolescent offenders. They found that adolescents who sexually abused child victims were distinguished from those with non-sexual offences by higher attachment anxiety (fearful or preoccupied styles) and a less cynical view of others. The effects of attachment anxiety on sexually abusive behaviour were accounted for by isolation from peers and difficulty relating to girls or women. In a second study in which 140 adolescents with sexually abusive behaviour against children were compared with adolescents in treatment for mental health or substance abuse problems, Miner, Romine, Robinson, Berg and Knight (2014) found that anxious attachment had a significant association, in that adolescents who showed the highest degree of attachment anxiety were most likely to commit acts of child sexual abuse.

In summary, adolescents who commit sexual abuse are, on average, less involved with criminal peers and have less criminal history, less substance abuse and fewer problems with academic achievement than their peers who commit non-sexual offences. However, they report more problems than their peers with anxiety, low self-esteem and social isolation. Recent research shows that they may show greater anxious attachment in relationships and that the relationship of attachment problems to sexual abuse may be accounted for because both are related to social isolation. The relationships of these variables with sexual abuse are average effects and it should be noted that conduct problems were frequent among adolescents who committed sexual abuse as well as peers who committed non-sexual criminal acts.

#### 2.4.3.2 Developmental Experiences

##### *Abuse and Neglect Experiences*

The meta-analysis by Seto and Lalumiere (2010) also examined comparisons of physical and sexual abuse across studies. They noted that definitions of physical and sexual abuse varied across studies, although the definitions with particular studies were consistent for comparisons of sexually abusive and non-sexual offending groups. The studies showed a higher prevalence of *physical abuse* among adolescents who were sexually abusive, although the average effect size was small (1.6 times more likely to have experienced

physical abuse) and variable between studies. Most studies reported greater prevalence of *emotional abuse or neglect* among this group, with a small to medium effect size.

Of studies that reported exposure to sexual violence in the family, adolescents who were sexually abusive had higher scores, with an average small and variable effect size. All but two of the 31 studies in which sexual abuse experiences were examined showed a more frequent history of sexual abuse among adolescents who were sexually abusive, with a medium to large average effect size. They were also more likely to have been sexually abused than non-sexually abusive individuals in the studies that compared these groups. Adolescents who were sexually abusive had more than five times greater odds than adolescent non-sexual offenders for having been sexually abused. A more recent study of 108 incarcerated juveniles who had convictions of sexual offences, charges, or self-reports of sexual offences, compared them with 119 juveniles incarcerated for non-sexual offences (Fanniff & Kimonis, 2014). There was a higher rate of sexual abuse among the sexually abusive group (Fanniff & Kimonis, 2014). In addition, in a study of 111 adolescents, who abused children under 12 and were referred to a sexual offending treatment program (Dennison & Leclerc, 2011), those with more than one victim were more likely to have been sexually abused in childhood than those with one victim. There were no statistically significant differences for physical or emotional abuse.

Overall, adolescent males who commit sexual abuse are more likely to report experiences of childhood abuse, particularly emotional abuse or neglect and sexual abuse. A recent study showed that sexual abuse experiences differentiated those with single or multiple victims. However, the sample, from a treatment program, may be subject to selection effects.

#### *Indirect Relationships of Abuse Experiences to Sexual Abuse of Others*

An empirical approach to exploring the inter-relationships of developmental variables, social-cognitive and personality variables and sexual offending was taken by Daversa and Knight (2007), in a study of 329 sexually abusive adolescents from residential treatment facilities. Their structural equation model produced four different paths that accounted for statistical variation in abuse of child rather than adolescent victims. The paths included: from emotional abuse and physical abuse, through psychopathy and sexual fantasy, to child fantasy and child victims; (b) from emotional abuse and physical abuse, through sexual inadequacy, sexual fantasy, and child fantasy to child victim; (c) from emotional abuse and physical abuse, through sexual inadequacy, to child fantasy and child victim; and (d) from sexual abuse directly to child victim. Their results supported the association of emotional and physical abuse, as well as sexual abuse, to sexual offending against children, through measures of sexual self-image and fantasy.

The relationship of sexual abuse at different ages to offending was investigated by Grabell and Knight (2009), in a sample of 193 recruited from inpatient treatment facilities. The

authors examined the impact of reported sexual abuse experiences at different ages on sexual preoccupation and compulsivity, in adolescent sexual offenders who had victims of any age. They found that the relationship between childhood sexual abuse and sexual preoccupation and compulsivity was moderated by the age the abuse occurred. The age range of 3 to 7 years was the only age range where experiences of sexual abuse statistically accounted for sexual preoccupation and compulsivity.

These two studies employed cross-sectional designs to explore possible relationships between childhood abuse experiences and psychological variables related to sexuality, which are related to sexual offences against others. Longitudinal studies are required to establish the temporal relationships of these variables.

#### *Other Developmental Experiences*

Other relevant developmental experiences which have been studied to date and were identified by the search strategy used in the method include interpersonal sexual experience, sexual interests, exposure to pornography, and exposure to physical and sexual abuse of females. There may be developmental experiences common to perpetrators which have not been studied, so that the experiences listed in this section do not constitute an exhaustive list of the relevant developmental experiences of perpetrators.

According to the meta-analysis (Seto & Lalumiere, 2010), those who were sexually abusive did not have less sexual experience than those who committed non-sexual offences. Indeed, studies that reported age at first intercourse found that they reported an earlier age of onset.

Wanklyn, Ward, Cormier, Day and Newman (2012) compared 52 participants who had committed sexual offences with 172 who had committed violent non-sexual offences. They found that sexually abusive adolescents displayed higher odds of sexually precocious behaviour than non-sexually offending adolescents. However, Fanniff and Kimonis (2014) found no differences between groups in their age at first sexual intercourse or the number of intimate relationships.

There was a small group difference in the meta-analytic studies that examined exposure to sex or to pornography, which showed that adolescents who were sexually abusive reported greater exposure. A media survey of exposure to pornography in children and adolescents (Ybarra, Mitchell, Hamburger, Diener-West & Leaf, 2011) from 1,588 households with members aged 10-15 years over a three-year period, showed that the relationship between sexually explicit material and sexually aggressive behaviour appears to be due to the violent content of the sexually explicit material. Consumers of violent sexually explicit material were almost six times more likely than non-consumers of violent sexually explicit material to report sexually aggressive behaviour. In contrast, consumers of non-violent sexually explicit

material were equally likely to report sexually aggressive behaviour compared to those who reported no consumption.

Another developmental factor, exposure to sexual or physical violence toward females, was indirectly linked to sexual offences against prepubescent children in a sample of 182 adolescent males in institutional treatment programs (Hunter, Figueredo, Malamuth, & Becker, 2004). Exposure to violence towards females was related to psychosocial deficits, including poor self-esteem, loneliness, peer rejection and social isolation. Psychosocial deficits were directly related to sexual offences against prepubescent children.

Finally, the meta-analysis results also suggest that atypical sexual interests should be given more prominence in understanding adolescent sexually abusive behaviour. Adolescents who engaged in such behaviour reported significantly more atypical sexual fantasies, behaviours, or interests (such as sex with animals or exhibitionism), than non-sexual offenders, with medium to large effect sizes. It is possible that atypical non-contact sexual behaviour precedes more aggressive sexual behaviour, although it is not clear that the progression is inevitable or even frequent. In this regard, Burton (2000) included 263 adolescents recruited from residential treatment facilities. He found that adolescents who reported having committed sexually penetrative acts tended to commit contact fondling offences, but also non-contact sexual exposure acts first. Most adolescents who committed penetrative acts had committed prior exposure and fondling, although not all who committed fondling acts progressed to penetrative sexual acts.

Results of the studies in this section suggest that sexually precocious behaviour may not be related to sexually abusive behaviour in adolescents. However, use of violent sexually explicit material accounted for variation in future sexually aggressive behaviour. In addition, cross-sectional studies suggest that atypical sexual behaviour may precede contact sexual abuse, but this proposal requires further investigation with longitudinal research designs.

#### 2.4.3.3 Classification of Adolescent Offenders by Victim Characteristics

Two studies grouped adolescents on the basis of the ages of their victims. In the first study of 296 male adolescents in a residential institution (Kemper & Kistner, 2010), adolescents who sexually abused children tended to victimise male and female relatives whereas offenders against age peers tended to victimise female acquaintances. In the second study, Leroux, Pullman, Motayne and Seto (2014) compared adolescents who had sexually abused peers or adults, children, or both categories of victim, in a sample of 162 participants referred to a family court clinic. Those with child victims were less sexually experienced than those with any peer or adult victims and had higher rates of atypical (paedophilia, sexual sadism or other atypical interests) phallometric results and psychosexual disorder labels. In addition, adolescents with victims in both categories were similar to those with peer or



adult victims only, in reporting higher rates of exposure to mainstream pornography, higher rates of previous intercourse and higher delinquency indicators than those who abused children only. The authors proposed that the behaviour of adolescents who sexually abuse children cannot be explained solely as a manifestation of general delinquency tendencies.

Taken together, these studies may indicate that adolescents who sexually abuse younger children may differ on average from those who sexually abuse age peers. Differences may include higher rates of sexual disorders, or lower relationship skills resulting in choice of less powerful and more available victims. However, further investigation of personal differences which are related to type of victim are required.

#### 2.4.4 Female Child and Adolescent Sexual Abusers

There are few studies of female child or adolescent sexual abusers. The four studies in this section address developmental experiences and patterns of offending.

##### *Developmental Experiences*

Schwartz, Cavanaugh, Pimental and Prentky (2006) reported on a sample of 154 girls (aged from 3 to 17, with an average of 12 years) referred for urgent welfare assessments, who had begun to engage in sexually inappropriate or coercive acts with other children. Pregnancy and birth complications were present for slightly more than one-quarter, 15% had a history of head trauma and 20.5% had a learning disorder. All of the children were exposed to considerable caregiver instability, multiple different caregivers, and changes in living situations. A very high proportion had been subjected to neglect (95%), physical abuse (81%), witnessing domestic violence (84%) and sexual abuse (81%) and many had also witness sexual deviance (42%).

Roe-Sepowitz and Krysik (2008) described 118 female adolescents drawn from a statewide database, who were charged with sexually abusive behaviour, with an average age of 14 years. Many of the female adolescents came from families characterised by multiple inconsistent caregivers, unstable living conditions, and limited control or supervision. Up to one-third experienced school suspension or dropout and more than half had prior referrals for delinquency. Sexual abuse was reported by about a quarter of the sample and physical abuse and neglect by between 11 and 14 per cent. Substance abuse was present for about one-fifth of the sample and nearly a half had a current mental health diagnosis, most frequently depression or attention deficit and hyperactivity problems. A third study of adolescents referred for court assessment (van der Put, van Vugt, Stams & Hendriks, 2014), compared 40 female adolescents who showed sexually abusive behaviour to 533 female violent non-sexual offenders. The female adolescents who showed sexually abuse behaviour had fewer school problems, family problems, fewer antisocial associates but more social isolation than female violent non-sexual offenders and a higher rate of sexual abuse outside

the family (38% vs. 21%). The female adolescents who showed sexually abusive behaviour exhibited few differences when compared to 743 adolescent males who were sexually abusive, except for a higher frequency of sexual abuse outside the family and more alcohol and drug abuse.

The comparison of female adolescents who exhibited sexual or non-sexual antisocial behaviour in the third study may indicate that adverse developmental events are characteristic of adolescents who show either type of antisocial behaviour. More comparison studies are needed to identify developmental experiences which may be specific to female adolescents who sexually abuse others.

### *Patterns of Offending*

Roe-Sepowitz and Krysik (2008) found that the majority of their sample (78%) had only one victim, with a slight preponderance of male victims. For 44%, the victim was more than 5 years younger. The most commonly reported relationship with victims was a sibling relationship, including step and foster siblings.

Data from crime events gathered by the US Department of Justice showed that females made up 7 per cent of juvenile sexual offenders (aged from 6 to 17 years). Females were younger than their male counterparts, with the proportion of those aged younger than 12 at 31% compared to 14% of males. They were more likely than males to offend with others, in conjunction with adults and to be involved in incidents with multiple victims (Finkelhor, Ormrod & Chaffin, 2009).

These two studies suggest somewhat contrasting patterns of offences with regard to typical numbers of victims. The former was drawn from an offender sample, while the latter was based on crime reports, so that it may possibly give a less selected representation of typical patterns of sexual offences by adolescent females.

### 2.4.5 Comparisons of Adults, Adolescents and Younger Children

We located three studies in which adolescents and adults were compared. All studies concerned patterns of sexual abusive acts and one study focussed on females only.

Aylwin et al. (2003) compared 121 male sexually abusive adolescents and 434 adult offenders from residential treatment programs in relation to gender of victim. More adult offenders had girl victims only, whereas adolescents were more likely to have boy victims or victims of both genders. Using data from crime events gathered by the US Department of Justice, Finkelhor and colleagues (2009) compared sexual offences against victims less than 18 years of age committed by adults and by juvenile offenders aged from 6 to 17 years. Compared to adults, juveniles were more likely to offend in groups; were more likely to

have a male victim; were somewhat more likely to offend against acquaintances; and, were more likely to offend in a school setting. Younger (aged less than 12 years) and older juveniles (aged 12 years or more) were also compared in this study. Younger juveniles were more likely to be female (15% versus 6%); more likely to have male victims (37% versus 20%) or to have victims less than or equal to 10 years; and, were somewhat more likely to offend in incidents with multiple offenders or multiple victims. Results of these two studies suggest that adolescents are more likely than adults to have male victims and were more likely to commit sexually abusive acts together with others. These trends were strengthened in children under 12 years who abused others.

Tardif, Auclair, Jacob and Carpentier (2005) compared 13 female adults and 15 female adolescents from a French treatment program who were sexually abusive. Adolescents were more likely than adults to have victims less than 5 years and from 6 to 10 years. The authors noted that the majority of the adult female offenders had a maternal or mother figure relationship with their victims (daughter, son, nephew, or niece) and argued that there was a problematic development of maternal identity. In contrast, the juvenile females were said to gain a feeling of control over their situations by acts of sexual abuse.

## Summary

Adolescents who display sexually abusive behaviour, like other adolescents who display antisocial behaviour, show increased rates of conduct problems. However, adolescents who display sexually abusive behaviour show more anxiety, self-image problems, anxiety in relationships and atypical sexual interests than other adolescent offenders. In addition, they experience greater amounts of physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect and especially sexual abuse than comparison groups. This may be particularly true for those adolescents who sexually abuse children rather than peers. In addition, the relationship between sexual abuse at different ages with sexual offending and the reasons for this relationship deserve further study. There are also indications that male adolescents who are sexually abusive are more likely than adult perpetrators to abuse boys.

According to available studies of female adolescents who are sexually abusive, this group may be characterised by considerable aversive developmental experiences, including sexual abuse. Further studies of this group are needed.

## 2.5 Adult Institutional Child Sexual Abusers

### 2.5.1 Child Sexual Abuse in a Range of Institutional Settings

The institutions within the scope of the Royal Commission include faith-based institutions, educational settings, voluntary institutions, and out-of-home care. A range of institutional settings in which child sexual abuse may be perpetrated by paid or voluntary workers was surveyed by Gallagher (2000) in a study of child protection records from English and Welsh local authorities. The highest proportion of cases came from community-based settings, which included pre-school care settings, schools, churches and other voluntary institutions. Of these, the highest proportion of cases was observed in schools. A smaller proportion of cases arose from foster care or community contexts, and fewer still came from residential care settings. Most cases of institutional child sexual abuse involved a single victim, although there were cases which involved multiple abusers. Any generalisation of the findings of this study should be considered cautiously, as the sample size was small (65 cases) and the fact that it was based on official reports which are known to under-report child sexual abuse as compared with self-report surveys (Stoltenborgh et al., 2011). However, the study shows that children may be sexually abused in a range of institutional settings.

Although search terms included all institutions within the terms of reference of the Royal Commission, the range of institutions that have been studied is limited. Overall, the results of the literature research show a particular focus on child sexual abuse by clergy. The report presents findings from institutions which have been the subject of research, so that the findings do not represent all institutions or categories of professional perpetrators.

Literature concerning occurrence of child sexual abuse and its perpetrators in specific institutional settings is described in this section in Table 4. There were five prevalence studies from religious, educational, residential and foster care, and general settings. Seventeen correlational studies addressed religious, educational, residential and foster care, sporting, and general professional settings. There were four opinion articles concerned with religious and sporting settings.

The following issues were noted during the survey of literature concerning child sexual abuse in institutional settings.

- Recognized typologies in the literature concerning perpetrators in institutional settings were not found.
- Concepts of paedophilia and hebephilia have been discussed with regard to literature concerning clergy perpetrators.
- Literature concerning perpetrators in institutional settings is most prevalent regarding clergy perpetrators, but there is relatively little literature concerning educational, sporting and out-of-home care settings.
- Using sources and search terms described, the authors were unable to locate studies pertaining specifically to the other categories of voluntary institutions such as scouting institutions, or vulnerable child groups including those with disabilities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Table 4 Studies of child sexual abuse in institutional settings

| Prevalence studies                 |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <i>All settings</i>                | Gallagher (2000)   |
| <i>Religious settings</i>          | Terry (2008)   |
| <i>Educational settings</i>        | 1. Timmerman (2003)<br>2. Nhundu & Shumba (2001)   |
| <i>Residential and Foster Care</i> | Euser, Alink, Tharner, van IJsendoorn, & Bakermans-Kranenburg (2013)   |
| Correlational studies              |  |
| <i>Religious settings</i>          | 1. Mercado, Tallon, & Terry (2008)<br>2. Piquero, Piquero, Terry, Youstin, & Nobles (2008)<br>3. Terry, Mercado, & Perillo (2008)<br>4. Cartor, Cimboric, & Tallon (2008)<br>5. Parkinson, Oates, & Jayakody (2010)<br>6. Parkinson, Oates, & Jayakody (2012)<br>7. Firestone, Moulden, & Wexler (2009)<br>8. Langevin, Curnoe, & Bain (2000)<br>9. Randall, Carr, Dooley, & Rooney (2011) |
| <i>Educational settings</i>        | 1. Moulden, Firestone, Kingston, & Wexler (2010)<br>2. Ratliff & Watson (2014)   |
| <i>Sporting settings</i>           | 1. Brackenridge, Bishopp, Maoussali, & Tapp (2008)<br>2. Leahy, Pretty, & Tenenbaum (2002)   |

Table 4 Studies of child sexual abuse in institutional settings (cont.)

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Correlational studies</b>                 |  |
| <i>Residential and Foster Care</i>           | Hobbs, Hobbs, & Wynne (1999)   |
| <i>Professionals as Child Sexual Abusers</i> | 1. Sullivan, Beech, Craig, & Gannon (2011)<br>2. Turner, Rettenberger, Lohmann, Eher, & Briken, (2014)<br>3. Moulden, Firestone, & Wexler (2007) |
| <b>Narrative reviews</b>                     |  |
| <i>Religious settings</i>                    | 1. McGlone (2003)<br>2. Böhm, Zollner, Fegert, & Liebhardt (2014)  |
| <i>Educational settings</i>                  | Shakeshaft (2004)  |
| <b>Opinion pieces</b>                        |  |
| <i>Religious settings</i>                    | 1. Plante (2003)<br>2. Neustein & Leshner (2008)   |
| <i>Sporting settings</i>                     | 1. Parent & Bannon (2012)<br>2. Hartill (2006)   |

## 2.5.2 Clergy Child Sexual Abusers

### 2.5.2.1 Roman Catholic Clergy

The largest amount of literature concerning clergy abusers describes those associated with the Roman Catholic Church. An unsystematic review (McGlone, 2003) and an opinion study (Plante, 2003) emphasized particular patterns of victim characteristics in Roman Catholic settings. A more recent set of studies of Roman Catholic clergy offenders were derived from the Nature and Scope Study of Child Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church by researchers at John Jay College (Terry, 2008). Three additional articles in section 2.4.2.1 are based on this source of data (Mercado, Tallon, & Terry, 2008; Piquero, Piquero, Terry, Youstin, & Nobles, 2008; Terry, Mercado & Perillo, 2008). Data for the Nature and Scope Study were obtained from three survey instruments sent to the presiding bishops in all Catholic dioceses and other numerous Roman Catholic religious communities in the United States. All surveys are based on diocesan personnel records from 1950 to 2002. First, a diocesan survey sought information about the diocese, such as size and population. Secondly, a cleric survey sought information about all priests with allegations of abuse, and thirdly, a victim survey sought information about individuals who made allegations of sexual abuse against priests, as well as the circumstances of the abuse. The John Jay Research Team gathered information about every allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by priests and deacons in the United States by gathering information from existing files at all Catholic dioceses, eparchies, and religious

communities. There were allegations from 10,667 victims concerning 4,392 priests. Finally, a review of literature concerning child sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic Church (Böhm, Zollner, Fegert & Liebhardt, 2014) included broader data from eight European samples of victims.

#### *Victim Characteristics in Roman Catholic settings*

McGlone (2003) noted previous opinions that Roman Catholic clergy offenders offended against male victims in about 80% of cases and that 80% of priest offenders are ephebophiles (attracted to teenaged children). In his own review, he found that 68% offended against male victims, 20% against female, and 12% against both males and females. With regard to age of victims, Plante (2003) suggested that as many as 90% of priests who sexually abuse children choose adolescent boys rather than pubescent children or young girls.

In the John Jay Nature and Scope study (Terry, 2008), the most common gender and age at time of abuse of victims abused by priests were boys between the ages of 11 and 14, with more than 40% of all victims fitting this classification. In addition, the mean age of male victims was older than the mean age of female victims. Overall, 81% of victims were male.

The review by Böhm and colleagues (2014) included European samples of victims. The studies were based on allegations and used variable definitions of child sexual abuse. The majority of victims were male and adolescents made up the larger proportion of victims of priest abusers. Where religious brothers were perpetrators rather than priests, the proportion of male victims was even larger.

The patterns of victim characteristics from Roman Catholic settings described in these settings is unlike that reported in studies of general populations, in which victims are more likely to be female. Victims of sexual abuse in Roman Catholic settings are also commonly in the adolescent age group.

#### *Patterns of Sexual Abuse*

The John Jay Nature and Scope study showed that from 1950 to 2002, approximately 4% of all priests who were active in ministry throughout this time had allegations of sexual abuse. The majority of priests with allegations of abuse were diocesan priests (69%) followed by religious priests in religious orders (22%). The majority of priests (55.7%) had one formal allegation of abuse, while a very small proportion (3.5%) had 10 or more allegations. Priests were accused of committing more than 20 types of sexually abusive acts, the most common of which were touching victims under or over clothes, but also ranging to penile penetration. The most common location of abuse was in a private place, usually in a dwelling or work location of the priest (Terry, 2008).

Chronic offenders represented 1.76% of the full sample, or 7.82% of all offenders, but were responsible for 36.3% of all police investigations (Piquero et al., 2008). Mercado et al. (2008) compared those clerics who had just one allegation with those who had a moderate (2 to 3), high (4 to 9), or exceptionally high (10-plus) number of allegations of sexual abuse. Priests with the most victims began abusing at an earlier age and were more likely to have male victims than those who abused fewer victims, while those with one allegation were the most likely group to have a female victim (33% of victims of these perpetrators were female, compared to 19% of victims of all priests). Priests with the most victims were most likely to abuse a child who was 15 to 17 years of age. However, all categories of abusers, including those with one victim, had more male than female victims, while those with ten or more victims had the highest percentage of male victims.

#### *Developmental characteristics of sexually abusive priests*

With regard to developmental factors, Plante (2003) stated that most of the victimising priests (over 60%) have been victims of sexual abuse as children themselves, figures which are similar to other samples of child sexual abusers. Priests' history of child sexual abuse was also related to the patterns of sexual abuse they perpetrated in the John Jay College surveys (Terry, Mercado & Perillo, 2008). Those priests who had themselves experienced childhood sexual abuse engaged in sexually abusive behaviour for longer durations, engaged in abuse earlier in their ordained careers, had more male victims and victimised slightly older adolescents. They were also more likely to have exclusively male victims and to have substance abuse problems.

#### *Paedophilia and Hebephilia*

Differences between paedophilia and ephebophilia or hebephilia have been proposed with regard to clerical sexual abuse. Cartor, Cimboric and Tallon (2008) compared paedophilia and ephebophilia in a study of allegations against Roman Catholic priests (from the John Jay College survey), where the allegations included sexually abusive verbal behaviour but also contact sexual abuse. The paedophile group was defined as offenders with two or more allegations of abuse with victims younger than ten years of age exclusively and the ephebophile group was defined as offenders with two or more allegations with only male victims between the ages of 13 to 17 years old. Analyses indicated that there were significant differences between the paedophilia and ephebophilia groups, in that ephebophiles were younger at the age of first offence, had a longer duration of abuse, were more likely to have a history of substance abuse and were more likely to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs at time of abuse.



### 2.5.2.2 Clergy from Other Religious Settings

Similar patterns of victim age and gender to those from the Roman Catholic church were found in a study of 191 cases of reported child sexual abuse and 135 sexual abusers in the Anglican Church of Australia (Parkinson, Oates & Jayakody, 2010; 2012), where child sexual abuse included sexual assault, exploitation or sexual grooming. Three quarters of complainants were male and a large majority were between 10 and 15 years of age at the time of the alleged first abuse.

Similarly, a Canadian study of 33 clergy from various backgrounds (Firestone, Moulden & Wexler, 2009) found that 39% had multiple victims, the majority of whom (67%) were male, with a mean of 11.67 and a modal age of 13 years for all victims.

### 2.5.2.3 Comparisons of Clergy Sexual Abusers with Others

Clerical child sexual abusers have been compared with other sexual offenders in two of the located studies. Langevin, Curnoe and Bain (2000) assessed 24 clerics (71% Roman Catholic) charged with, or accused of, sexual offences. All clerics were male, with 71 % sexually assaulting male children and 17 % female children. They were compared with Christian non-cleric controls and a general sample of 2,125 sex offenders. The majority of all groups had one or two victims, which was a non-significant difference. When clerical sexual offenders were compared to a control group matched on offence type, age, education, and marital status, there were few differences between groups on variables that are significant in the commission of sexual offences. The majority (71%) of clerical sexual offenders showed a sexual preference for male children, but did not differ from the control groups in this respect.

Randall, Carr, Dooley and Rooney (2011) compared 30 clerics with 73 lay child sexual offenders (i.e. non-clerical) from a community-based treatment centre for sexual offenders and 30 non-offending controls. The only variable which distinguished the two groups of offenders was 'conscientiousness', with clerical offenders being more conscientious than lay offenders. In this study, 'conscientiousness' was broadly defined as indicating planned rather than spontaneous behaviour in individuals when controlling, regulating, and directing their impulses. The main conclusion to be drawn from both studies is that clerical and lay child sexual abusers are more similar than different.

### 2.5.3 Child Sexual Abusers in Educational Settings

We located a review article and five studies concerned with child sexual abuse in educational settings. The studies concerned prevalence and patterns of abuse and characteristics of perpetrators of sexual abuse.

#### *Prevalence and Patterns of Sexual Abuse in Educational Settings*

According to Shakeshaft (2004), who reviewed relevant studies from the United States, the most reliable study showed that nearly 9.6% of students are targets of unwanted sexual activity by an educator at some point during their schooling (grades 8 to 11), with 6.7% involving physical contact (unwanted sexual activity was defined to include non-physical, grooming-type activities such as sexually-related conversations or showing students pictures of a sexual nature). Across the studies reviewed, the majority of students who were targets of unwanted sexual activity by an educator were females, but proportions varied by type of study, from 54% to 77%. Studies based on formal reports (i.e. to a school authority) found a higher proportion of female students than studies in which students were asked directly. The author suggested that abuse of females is more likely to be formally reported than abuse of males, but that the differences between the percentages of males and females who are abused may be smaller than formal reports suggest.

In a Dutch study of 513 secondary school students (14-15 years of age) who reported experiencing unwanted sexual attention, 27% reported unwanted sexual attention from a teacher and 73% reported unwanted sexual attention from a peer. It should be noted that unwanted sexual attention in this study was defined broadly, including unwanted physical contact (excluding sexual violence), verbal behaviour such as suggestive jokes, and non-verbal behaviour of confronting with pornographic pictures. Unwanted sexual attention from teachers was most commonly physical contact or non-verbal, and less commonly verbal. Gender breakdown also varied for incident type. When looking at combined data (i.e. both teachers and peers), boys reported significantly more verbal incidents (70% compared to 47% for girls), while girls reported more physical incidents (21% compared to 11% for boys).

In an African cultural setting, Nhundu and Shumba (2001) reported on 110 cases of teacher-perpetrated child sexual abuse reported to the educational authority, in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe. All involved contact sexual abuse and the majority involved sexual intercourse, including rape. They found that 98% of victims were female and that the mean age of abused pupils was 11.6 years, with ages ranging from 8 to 16 years.

Studies from educational settings on three continents show that female students are more likely to be sexually abused than males, although the proportions of female and male victims vary significantly between different studies. Differences in definitions of sexual behaviour, sources of information and ages of children included in the studies makes further interpretation of findings difficult. It is clear that students experience physical sexual abuse, including rape in the Zimbabwean studies.

### *Perpetrator and Abuse Characteristics*

The Timmerman (2003) study from the Netherlands was the only located study to address sexual abuse and harassment by professionals and by peers. As noted above, 73% of reported unwanted sexual attention was from peers, the majority of whom were males (77%). Unwanted sexual behaviour by peers was most commonly verbal harassment (65%), although some physical unwanted sexual attention did originate from peers. Unwanted sexual attention by a teacher was reported by 27% of secondary school students and was most commonly non-verbal (32%), followed by physical contact (24%) or verbal harassment (20%). 25% of unwanted sexual attention was a combination of these behaviours. The majority of unwanted sexual attention by teachers came from males (86%).

The review by Shakeshaft (2004) showed that in studies in which the profession of perpetrators was recorded, the largest number of perpetrators worked as teachers or substitute teachers (31%), with teacher's aides, coaches and bus drivers also represented. Unsurprisingly, the majority of perpetrators were male. Of studies based on public records, the percentage of female perpetrators varied from 4% to 20%. However, gender differences were less for studies in which students were asked about perpetrators, with two studies showing almost identical figures of around 57% male and 43% female offenders. In the Zimbabwean study (Nhundu & Shumba, 2001) almost all perpetrators were male teachers, of whom the majority were married. Beginning teachers with up to five years of experience were most likely to sexually abuse school children.

We located two published studies concerning characteristics of teachers who have sexually abused children. Moulden, Firestone, Kingston and Wexler (2010) reported on 113 sexually abusing male Canadian teachers, based on crime reports and all involving contact offences. The authors found that 53% of perpetrators were single, and their sexual orientation included 42% heterosexual, 15% bisexual, and 29% homosexual. Few reports noted any psychological or substance abuse issues in the perpetrators. Victims were slightly more likely to be female (56%), but there were no differences between male and female victims with respect to age. The majority (60%) of victims were aged 12 years or above. The most common sexually abusive acts included fondling or hugging the victim, masturbation, and kissing.

Ratliff and Watson (2014) described a sample of 431 public school teachers in the South-eastern United States who were included in the study if arrested or charged with sexual misconduct offences. The sample included 319 male as well as 112 female participants, of whom the majority (63.5%) worked at the secondary grade level. Males were more likely to commit offences with students aged 12 and younger, whereas females were more likely to

commit offences with students of 13 and older). However, the magnitude of the effect was small.

The above studies of sexual abusers in educational settings suggest that the majority of physical sexual abuse is by adults, most commonly teachers or teaching assistants. This may perhaps reflect the preponderance of teachers among adults in educational settings. The majority of perpetrators are likely to be male, taking into account differences between public record and self-report sources raised in the Shakeshaft (2004) review. However, substantial numbers of perpetrators may be female. There is insufficient information to suggest trends regarding general ages of victims or preferences of male or female perpetrators. Further studies of patterns of sexual abuse in educational settings and characteristics of sexual abusers are needed.

#### 2.5.4 Child Sexual Abusers in Sport Settings

Few studies have been conducted concerning the prevalence and characteristics of sexual abuse in sport. Leahy, Pretty and Tenenbaum (2002) reported that 31% of females and 21% of males in a sample of 370 Australian competitive athletes recruited from sporting clubs, reported a lifetime history of sexual abuse, with a higher rate among elite athletes. Of more relevance to the issue of sexual abuse in institutional settings was the finding that some participants reported sexual abuse within the sport environment (41.5% of the females who reported a lifetime history of sexual abuse and 29.4% of the males who reported a lifetime history of sexual abuse).

Brackenridge, Bishopp, Maoussali and Tapp (2008) reported an analysis of 159 cases of criminally defined sexual abuse reported in the print media. In 98% of cases, the perpetrators were coaches, teachers, or instructors directly involved with athletes. Incidents of abuse were against females in 68% of cases, against males in 28% of cases and against both males and females in 4% of cases. Victim age at the time of the abuse ranged between 9 and 21 years for females, with a mean of 14.8 years, and between 11 and 17 years for males with a mean of 13.7 years. This study is useful in the absence of other studies based on respondent surveys or official records, but selection factors which lead to publication in print media are unknown. Hartill (2006) and Parent and Bannon (2012) ventured the opinion that the sexual abuse of male children is under-recognised in sports organisations.

The limited studies in sport settings suggest that victims are more likely to be female. The finding that victims may be more likely to be teenaged may reflect the greater involvement of older children in competitive sport. Perpetrators may be coaches or instructors in most cases. Additional studies of child sexual abuse in sport settings are needed to support and extend these tentative findings.

### 2.5.5 Child Sexual Abusers in Residential and Foster Care Settings

There are few studies of child sexual abuse in residential or foster care settings. Two studies have compared child sexual abuse in both types of setting. Hobbs, Hobbs and Wynne (1999) conducted a retrospective study of 158 children fostered or in residential care in the UK, based on paediatrician reports of physical or sexual abuse. Secondly, a large and methodologically strong Dutch prevalence study included reports from 264 professionals working in out-of-home-care settings as well as reports from 329 adolescents staying in residential or foster care, and informants were randomly selected from 82 out-of-homecare facilities. The study used an inclusive definition of child sexual abuse as sexual interactions with or without physical contact involving children aged 0 to 17 (Euser, Alink, Tharner, van IJsendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2013). The study addressed child sexual abuse occurring within a one-year period and also compared residential and foster care placements.

#### *Prevalence of child sexual abuse*

Euser et al. (2013) found that, from reports of professionals, the overall prevalence rate of child sexual abuse was 2 per 1,000 children in foster care and 5 per 1,000 in residential care and most acts of sexual abuse involved physical contact. Comparisons to the general population were also included. Children in out-of-home care had a nearly five-fold increase overall compared to the general population, but this applied to residential care settings, while the prevalence of child sexual abuse in foster care was not significantly different from the general population.

Sexually abused children were mostly 12 years or older (86%) and the majority were girls (95%) in the Euser et al. (2013) study. In the Hobbs et al. (1999) study, 60% of sexual abuse in foster care involved girls, whereas girls were the subject of 33% of reports from residential care settings.

Based on self-report sources, Euser et al. (2013) reported that the majority of victims reported child sexual abuse with physical contact. Prevalence rates were 168 per 1,000 in foster care, 280 per 1,000 in residential care, and 341 per 1,000 in both foster and residential care. Compared to the general population, the risk of child sexual abuse was significantly higher for residential care settings but not foster care settings. Of adolescents who reported child sexual abuse, 60% were girls, although relatively more boys than girls were living in residential settings.

#### *Identity of Perpetrators*

Hobbs et al. (1999) reported that perpetrators in foster care were foster parents, natural parents during contact, or other children. In residential settings, other children within or outside the home were perpetrators of sexual abuse.

Euser et al. (2013) provided data regarding perpetrators of child sexual abuse from professional reports. Those in foster care settings were most likely to be foster parents or other adult family members (57%), unknown to the report provider (29%), or adolescents in the same foster home (14%). In residential settings, perpetrators were most likely to be adolescents from the same facility (50%) or other adolescents (29%) and less likely to be employees of the facility (7%).

With regard to self-report data (Euser et al., 2013), of those adolescents (54%) who reported on the relationship with the perpetrator, similar percentages of perpetrators in foster care settings were foster parents or other adult family members, adolescents from the same foster home or other adolescents (27%), while 40% were sexually abused by other adults. In residential care settings, the majority of perpetrators were adolescents from the same facility (57%) or other adolescents (27%), and less likely to be employees (13%). Details of the types of sexual abuse committed by different categories of perpetrators were not given.

Available evidence suggests that perpetrators may be most commonly foster parents or other adults in foster care settings. However, other adolescents were represented among perpetrators to a greater extent in residential care settings. The types of abuse committed by adult versus adolescent perpetrators are not known.

### 2.5.6 Comparisons of Professional Child Sexual Abusers with other Child Sexual Abusers

Three studies reported comparisons of professional and other child sexual abusers, where professional abusers were those who sexually abused children with whom they worked. The first two studies included groups of professional abusers from several different professions. In general, professional child sexual abusers were similar to others who abused children outside of their families. Sullivan, Beech, Craig and Gannon (2011) compared 41 professionals who sexually abused children (66% religious professionals) with 31 intra-familial and 31 extra-familial abusers, all attending an intensive treatment program. The professionals were less likely to have previous sexual convictions than extra-familial offenders. Professionals and extra-familial offenders were more likely to have abused males or victims of both genders than intra-familial offenders and to have more than 20 victims, but there was no difference between the two extra-familial offender groups. Professionals were more likely to have abused post-pubescent children than the other extra-familial offenders and also intra-familial offenders, although the difference with this latter group was not statistically significant. There were no significant differences between the groups on

sexual or physical abuse experiences, drug or alcohol problems or psychiatric problems. On psychological measures, the professionals showed greater sexual preoccupation and emotional congruence with children than intra-familial offenders, but there was no difference from the other extra-familial offender group. The researchers concluded that in many ways the professionals were similar to extra-familial offenders.

A study of 248 child sexual abusers in Austria (Turner, Rettenberger, Lohmann, Eher & Briken, 2014) included extra-familial offenders, intra-familial offenders and 38 who had abused children in the course of professional work (predominantly teachers or priests), or in a voluntary capacity. The differences between this group and the other extra-familial offenders are of importance here. In comparison to this group, those who abused children with whom they worked had more education, lower scores on measures of psychopathy or diagnoses of antisocial personality disorder, and fewer problems with drug or alcohol use. However, these offenders were more likely to choose male victims and were more likely to be diagnosed with paedophilia and to have higher scores on a scale of paedophilic interests.

Finally, a study that included female professional sexual abusers (Moulden, Firestone & Wexler, 2007) provided information regarding sexual abuse patterns by 14 adult Canadian females employed as child care providers in their study. This group sexually abused both male and female children of a very young age (mean 5.1, most common age 3 years). Further study of female sexual abusers in childcare settings is needed.

In summary, perpetrators who abuse children with whom they work may differ little from others who sexually abuse children outside their families in many ways, although one study suggested that they may have fewer antisocial characteristics than other extra-familial abusers.

## Summary

Studies of child sexual abuse in institutional settings concerned church settings, educational settings, out of home care settings and sports settings. In clergy settings, the predominance of male victims, particularly adolescent boys, is a striking feature which has been replicated across research studies. Like adult sexual abusers in other settings, many clergy have been victims of sexual abuse as children and may be similar in other ways to lay child sexual abusers.

Research from educational settings shows that sexual abuse of females is more likely to be reported than abuse of males, but the differences between the percentages of males and females who are abused may possibly smaller than official reports suggest. Adult perpetrators are most likely to be teachers or substitute teachers, although other personnel are represented. There are also indications that perpetrators may frequently be peers, especially when broader definitions of unwanted sexual behaviour are used.

In out-of-home care settings, available research suggests that sexual abuse in foster care may not be greater than in the general population, but is greater in residential care settings. Like the general population, girls are more commonly victims of sexual abuse in out-of-home-care settings. When children are sexually abused in foster care settings, perpetrators are most likely to be foster parents or other adult family members. However, adolescents may be more likely to perpetrate sexual abuse in residential care settings than adults.

In sport settings, there are limited data to suggest that girls are more likely to be victims of sexual abuse and coaches or instructors are most likely to be perpetrators. More studies in this institutional setting are needed.



## 3.0 Integration and Emerging Issues

### 3.1 Characteristics of Adolescent and Adult Child Sexual Abusers and Children with Problem Sexual Behaviour

A body of research regarding characteristics of child sexual abusers was reviewed in section 2 of this report. Much of this research was obtained from studies of known offenders in correctional or mental health treatment settings and is primarily helpful for professionals in intervention or administrative roles working in those settings to understand these individuals and to inform approaches to intervention and management of child sexual abusers. Our concern in this section is rather to consider the implications of findings from this research for informing the protection of children against sexual abuse in institutional contexts. We therefore comment on the relevance of research findings for this purpose.

#### 3.1.1 Characteristics which are less helpful to inform child protection

##### 3.1.1.1 Adult Child Sexual Abusers

- With regard to adverse developmental experiences, there are consistent findings of high rates of physical abuse and emotional neglect, and particularly, higher rates of sexual abuse in the developmental histories of male child sexual abusers, which also seem to hold true for female child sexual abusers. However, few individuals who have experienced sexual or other abuse in childhood go on to commit sexual offences, so that these factors are not strongly predictive.
- Adult child sexual abusers, both male and female, also exhibit higher rates of mental health difficulties (anxiety, depression), insecure attachment styles in adult relationships, social skills problems, and intimacy problems. However, these are average differences with comparisons of non-abusers and so may mask considerable heterogeneity among individuals. There are many who, for example, show adequate or high levels of social and relationship skills. Indeed, one would expect that severe difficulties in social and relationship skills are less likely to be present in adults who are selected to work or volunteer in institutions. Finally, research concerning these characteristics does not so far establish them as risk factors which occurred prior to individuals committing acts of child sexual abuse.
- The limited correlational evidence of association between paedophilia and lower performance on tests of intelligence or educational outcomes may potentially be subject to selection effects of characteristics of victims and of selection by source of recruitment. In addition, these findings are not informative for the protection of children.

### 3.1.1.2 Adolescents or Children who display Sexually Harmful Behaviours

- Although there may be an association between experience of child sexual abuse and the subsequent display of sexually harmful behaviour, experiences of social, family and mental health concerns may be associated more strongly with sexually harmful behaviour in children. In short, the association with experience of child sexual abuse is not causal and should not be read in a vacuum.
- In general, male or female adolescents who display sexually harmful behaviours have experienced greater rates of physical abuse than comparison groups and more emotional abuse and neglect and sexual abuse than other adolescents.
- Adolescent sexual abusers also show greater rates of social difficulties, including conduct problems, problems with learning and academic achievement, more anxiety, greater self-image problems, and more social isolation than other adolescent offenders. Similar patterns of mental health problems and social isolation may also characterise female adolescent sexual offenders. In addition, adolescents who abuse children rather than peers show more insecure attachment in relationships. These findings represent average differences and therefore do not contribute particularly to the goal of protection of children.
- Typologies of adolescent males who sexually abuse others are not well developed. The most empirically based typology was not well supported when tested. At the present state of development, typologies of adolescent child sexual abusers do not contribute strongly to our understanding of this group or to the goal of child protection.

## 3.1.2 Characteristics which may help to inform protection of children

### 3.1.2.1 Adult Child Sexual Abusers

- The typology of child sexual abusers by Knight and colleagues has a degree of empirical support. This typology includes fixation with children (paedophilic interest) and social competence (success in adult employment, relationships and social responsibilities) on the first axis, and high fixation and low social competence was associated with a sexual preference for children. Although it is important to be aware that many child sexual abusers may not fit neatly into types, it may be possible to translate two related aspects of the child fixation and social competence axis (social competence and emotional congruence with children) into criteria which could be applied to institutional staff members or volunteers.

- Social competence may be assessed by relatively uncontroversial questions about job history, adult intimate relationships and friendships, parenting responsibilities and activity in adult-oriented organizations, based on research guidelines (Knight, Carter, & Prentky, 1989).
- Child fixation or paedophilia is less amenable to assessment of institutional workers without specialist assessment equipment and direct questions of individuals who experience paedophilia are unlikely to be answered truthfully. However, the concept of emotional congruence with children may be amenable to assessment of institutional workers. Emotional congruence with children is exaggerated cognitive and emotional affiliation with childhood and children, which is associated with sexual reoffending (McPhail et al., 2013) and with sexual pre-occupation, sex as coping, beliefs supportive of child molestation and arousal to sexual activity with prepubescent children (McPhail et al., 2014). Indicators of emotional congruence include viewing children as having unique qualities of understanding, interest in childlike activities, having children as friends, and generally feeling more comfortable with children than adults.
- Although child fixation and social competence might conceivably be applied to potential institutional workers, considerably more exploration and testing of this possibility is needed. The two concepts would require translation into an assessment instrument, which would need to demonstrate predictive validity, that is, good classification of individuals who demonstrate paedophilic interest. An evaluation of the consequences of using such an instrument with potential workers would also be required. This issue is discussed further in section 3.4.2.

### 3.1.2.2 Abusers who are Adolescents or Children

- The relationship of atypical sexual interests in adolescents to sexually abusive behaviour was highlighted in a large meta-analysis (Seto & Lalumiere, 2010). Observation or reports that an adolescent has engaged in atypical sexual behaviour such as exhibitionism or bestiality would be cause for closer inquiry and assessment of risk for sexually abusing peers or younger children.
- Exposure to violent sexually explicit material has been found to account for variation in sexually aggressive behaviour in children and adolescents, which provides support for the relevance of this variable (Ybarra et al., 2011). Awareness that that a child or adolescent is a consumer of violent pornography may prompt intervention and closer consideration of risk of sexual abuse to other children.

### 3.1.3 Gaps in literature and suggestions

- Findings regarding mental health problems and particularly social difficulties in identified adult and adolescent sexual abusers may be influenced by aspects of the literature which produced these findings, which is based generally on information collected after their identification as individuals who have committed sexual abuse. Therefore, they may have experienced legal consequences of being identified as someone who committed acts of sexual abuse, including imprisonment or other sanctions, or social consequences such as loneliness and relationship problems.
- Research concerning relationship styles and affiliation with children may be arguably less subject to the influence of legal and social consequences; however, the data are collected from retrospective self-reports, often from individuals undergoing intervention programs who are therefore focussed on their personal histories. This context may influence the data obtained. Findings regarding characteristics of child sexual abusers are therefore subject to limitations of retrospective self-report.
- Longitudinal studies would address the limitations of data collected after an individual has been identified as committing sexual abuse, if information regarding attachment and relationship issues and mental health were collected prior to reports of sexually abusive behaviour. However, such studies present logistical difficulties of repeated data collection over a time period, as well as an understandable tendency to underreport sexually abusive behaviour even if legal and practical issues concerning the confidentiality of reporting were addressed.
- The research questions which frame this report are particularly concerned with individual characteristics of adults, adolescents or children who commit sexual abuse. In contrast to studies of characteristics of child sexual abusers, a situational approach emphasises the role of opportunity in child sexual abuse (Richards, 2011). For example, many individuals abuse children known to them and relatively few have diagnosable sexual disorders (Smallbone & Wortley, 2001). The situational approach is likely to be helpful in focussing attention on measures that could reduce child sexual abuse. The situational approach is discussed in a later section in relation to clergy offenders in the Roman Catholic Church.

New studies which concern situational perspectives on child sexual abuse are listed in Table 5. Three correlational studies concern religious and general settings. There are also four qualitative studies concerning professional or residential settings and two opinion pieces concerning religious settings.

Table 5 Studies of child sexual abuse from a situational perspective

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Correlational studies</b>                     |   |
| <i>General</i>                                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Smallbone &amp; Wortley (2001)</li> <li>2. Leclerc, Proulx, &amp; McKibben (2005)</li> </ol>  |
| <i>Religious settings</i>                        | Terry and Ackermann (2008)  |
| <b>Qualitative studies</b>                       |   |
| <i>Professional or residential care settings</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Colton, Roberts, &amp; Vanstone (2010)</li> <li>2. Knoll (2010)</li> <li>3. Green (2001)</li> <li>4. Green &amp; Masson (2002)</li> </ol> |
| <b>Opinion pieces</b>                            |   |
| <i>Religious settings</i>                        | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Marcotte (2008)</li> <li>2. Terry and Freilich (2012)</li> </ol>  |

### 3.2 Similarities and Differences in Child Sexual Abusers

- A comparison of adult and adolescent sexual abusers by comparing the characteristics described in research studies suggests that there are many similarities between these groups. Both groups experience increased mental health and relationship difficulties relative to comparison groups (Seto & Lalumiere, 2010; Whitaker et al., 2008). In addition, adult and adolescent sexual offenders against children are similar in that they experience high rates of physical abuse, emotional neglect, and sexual abuse (Fanniff & Kimonis, 2014; Jespersion et al., 2009; Levenson et al., 2014; Seto & Lalumiere, 2010; Wijkman et al., 2010).
- Indications from the few studies in which adolescent and adult sexual abusers have been compared suggest that adolescent offenders may be more likely to offend in groups (Finkelhor et al., 2009), have less stability in the gender of their victims and may be more likely to abuse boys than adult abusers (Aylwin et al., 2000; Finkelhor et al., 2009). These offence characteristics of lower stability in victim characteristics and higher likelihood of offending in groups may suggest a greater degree of situational influence for adolescents. Therefore, prevention efforts for adolescent sexual abuse may particularly focus on decreasing opportunities, as well as implementing positive educational and peer interventions regarding sexuality.

- With regard to comparisons of females, adolescent female sexual abusers may be more likely to abuse victims aged up to five years than other age groups, which was not true of adult abusers (Tardif et al., 2005). It is difficult to interpret this isolated finding. Further comparison studies of adolescent and adult sexual abusers are needed to explore other differences between adult and adolescent females who commit sexual abuse.

## 3.3 Child Sexual Abusers in Institutional Contexts

### 3.3.1 Child Sexual Abusers in Work or Voluntary Contexts

Studies of those who abuse children in the course of professional or voluntary work (Sullivan et al., 2011; Turner et al., 2014) include predominantly clergy and educational in their participant samples, with representation also from child care staff or adults associated with sport or other youth organizations. Therefore, studies specifically concerning clergy abusers are included in this section. Findings from studies of professionals show that they share many similarities with, or understandable differences from, other child sexual abusers.

#### 3.3.1.1 Child Sexual Abuser Characteristics

- Studies of clerical child sexual abusers, gathered from treatment settings and largely concerned with Roman Catholic clergy, show that they differ little from comparable sexual abusers in those studies in which they were directly compared (Langevin et al., 2000; Randall et al., 2011). Estimates for the prevalence of sexual abuse experiences among priests are high, but not higher than for samples of non-clerical offenders (Plante, 2003).
- Perpetrators who abuse children sexually in the course of their work tend to be better educated and less antisocial in orientation or documented criminal activity (Sullivan et al., 2011; Turner et al., 2014). This is not a surprising finding, given that these perpetrators are often professionals, who presumably require advanced study and observance of social convention in order to gain their positions.

#### 3.3.1.2 Strategies Used to Engage and Abuse Children

- Studies of the strategies used by child sexual abusers in work contexts show a variety of non-coercive strategies (Leclerc, Proulx, & McKibben, 2005). First, strategies to gain trust include bestowing extra attention, giving privileges and rewards or taking their side in disputes. Strategies to gain cooperation include increased focus on discussions about sex and introducing non-sexual and sexual touch. Strategies to ensure silence include giving rewards or mentioning legal consequences of disclosure for the perpetrator. Colton, Roberts and Vanstone (2010) described grooming strategies of engaging children who were socially isolated, testing their reactions to physical contact, normalising physical contact, gaining their trust by helpful actions, and introducing pornography.

- The findings of studies of grooming strategies by child sexual abusers in work contexts may assist supervisors and other institutional staff to be alert to behaviour patterns that may indicate a risk of sexually abusive behaviour, such as singling out children for extra time and attention without clear reason, or apparently unusual affection or touching.
- From the perspective of sexual abusers, physical features and procedures in the work environment may facilitate or deter sexual abuse. For example, prevention of contact with children alone or behind locked doors and periodic monitoring of work were listed as possible preventive measures by sexual abusers (Colton et al., 2010).

### 3.3.2 Explanations of Patterns of Sexual Abuse by Clergy

- The pattern of sexual abuse committed by clergy in the Roman Catholic Church is distinctive, in that the most common victims were adolescent boys (Böhm et al., 2014; Firestone et al., 2009; McGlone, 2003; (Parkinson et al., 2010; 2012; Plante, 2003). This distinctive pattern, which differs from more general patterns of child sexual abuse, requires explanation.
- A first possibility is that those offenders who abuse males have more victims and that this accounts for the high proportion of male victims. The John Jay College data showed that priests with one allegation of abuse, who comprised more than half of the offending priests, were more likely than those with more than one victim to have female victims. However, even the group with one victim had more male than female victims (Mercado et al., 2008), so that this explanation does not seem to account for the observed patterns.
- With regard to the finding of a high proportion of adolescent victims of priests, a possible explanation is that there is an over-representation of hebephilia or ephebophilia among priests (Cartor et al., 2008). Although there is some evidence for sexual preference differences with regard to age, we do not consider that there is a strong case for a distinct diagnostic category of hebephilia. Therefore, explaining the high representation of adolescent victims according to perpetrator factors may not be tenable.
- Researchers and commentators have proposed more situational explanations for the patterns of sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic Church. Marcotte (2008) noted that the John Jay College data showed a temporal pattern in incidents of abuse, in that they peaked in the decade 1960-1979. He attributed the peak in incidents partly to changes in the social structure of Catholic life during the peak period, which involved increased conflict and rebellion against the authority structure of the Church. However, he did not extend this analysis to the distribution of victims.

- Other researchers advanced more specific situational analyses. Terry and Ackermann (2008) noted that, as a whole, the sexually abusive priests had a late onset of deviant sexual behaviour, low incidences of chronic sexual offending, sexual abuse of strangers and networking among offenders, similar to non-clergy populations of sexual offenders. In advancing a situational account of sexual abuse by priests, they also noted that the most common location for sexual abuse was a parish residence or priest's home and the average time after ordination when the priests began their abuse coincided with time when many priests move into a parish residence. In addition, Terry and Freilich (2012) noted that, although over the whole 50-year period of data 80% of victims were male, there were higher proportions of male victims in the 1970s and 1980s, but the proportions of female victims in the 1990s to 2000s increased. They noted that these trends coincided with social and structural changes in the church: for example, that the rise in the proportion of female victims from 1990 onwards coincided with participation of girls in altar service and youth group activities. They also noted that increases and decreases in abuse of males were correlated with increases and decreases in alcohol and drug use by priests with male victims, arguing that alcohol is a recognised disinhibitor for situational child sexual abusers.
- The argument that the distinctive patterns of sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic Church can be explained by situational factors seems plausible. Similar patterns of victim age and gender were found in the Anglican Church of Australia (Parkinson, Oates & Jayakody, 2010; 2012). These authors also favoured a situational explanation, suggesting that both Anglican and Catholic churches provide many more contexts for male sexual abusers to be alone with boys than with girls, without attracting the same level of concern from other people. An implication of this reasoning is that concerns about the level of contact between clergy members and children or adolescents, as well as relevant institutional policies and guidelines, should apply equally to males and females.

### 3.3.3 Abusers in Educational Settings

- Because of the small amount of available literature concerning child sexual abuse in educational settings, we should be cautious in drawing any conclusions from the literature. However, the available literature suggests that the pattern of sexual abuse with regard to gender is similar to that of the broader community, in that the majority of victims were female (Shakeshaft, 2004; Timmerman, 2003) and adult perpetrators are most commonly male teachers, although other occupations may be involved (Shakeshaft, 2004).



- A recent study of perpetrators in schools (Ratcliff & Watson, 2014) suggested that they were more likely to be teaching at secondary school level than in lower grades. The extent to which this apparent pattern of sexual abuse reflects opportunity, in that older students may have more likelihood of being with educators in situations of less supervision, rather than properties of the perpetrators, is not known.
- The Ratliff and Watson (2014) study included a relatively large number of female perpetrators. The “teacher/lover” type or similar categories of female perpetrator which researchers have identified in the literature, in which the perpetrators develop romanticised relationships with adolescents, may be of particular interest for understanding female perpetrators in schools.
- Practical suggestions for identifying concerning teacher behaviour were provided by Knoll (2010). He suggested that teacher perpetrators engage in a grooming process of giving special attention, support or rewards to students, then introducing sexually-related discourse and increasing touching and physical contact. Kroll listed potential warning signs of sexual misconduct, including inappropriate preferential treatment, repeated time in private spaces with a student, giving gifts or cards, and acting as a particular student’s confidante.

### 3.3.4 Child Sexual Abusers in Residential and Foster Care Settings

#### 3.3.4.1 Patterns of Sexual Abuse in Residential and Foster Care Settings

- Available research shows different patterns of sexual abuse in foster care and residential out-of-home-care settings. Perpetrators in foster care settings may be most likely to be foster parents (Euser et al., 2013), but natural parents may also abuse children during contact. In addition, other children may also be perpetrators (Hobbs et al., 1999). Possible prevention measures to prevent sexual abuse in foster care settings may include screening foster parents for a history of child sexual abuse, supervision of contact visits by natural parents, and supervision of children spending time together.
- Sexual abuse in residential care settings may be more frequent than in the general population. In addition, male victims are likely to be more frequent than in foster care settings, although on balance girls may be more frequently sexually abused in residential settings (Euser et al., 2013; Hobbs et al., 1999).

- An important finding from studies of sexual abuse of children and adolescents in residential care settings is that other adolescents are frequently perpetrators (Euser et al., 2013; Hobbs et al., 1999). However, the kinds of abusive acts committed by adolescents against other adolescents and children require further investigation.

#### 3.3.4.2 Problematic Behaviour in Residential Settings and its Prevention

- Staff members in the institution have been identified as perpetrators, but this may infrequently be the case (Euser et al., 2013). Nevertheless, the potential for severe and long-term abuse is high when residential staff members are able to exert considerable power over the lives of the children in their charge. Where residential care staff members are perpetrators, they may employ intimidation tactics, including forced sleep deprivation and humiliation, as well as grooming tactics by offering some children privileges not afforded to others, including power over other children. In addition, intimidation tactics may also be used to control other staff members, as well as attempts to decrease positive relationships between children and non-abusive staff (Green, 2001). From the perspective of prevention, grooming and intimidatory behaviour with children or other staff members should be of particular concern, as it may indicate potential or actual occurrence of sexual abuse in residential care settings.
- Green and Masson (2002) found that sexual activity between children or adolescents in residential care was rarely consensual, reciprocal or not exploitative. They described initiation rituals involving unwanted sexual acts that were viewed as a joke and others that merged bullying and sexualized violence. They also noted the importance of gendered attitudes, in which females were seen by males as existing for their pleasure, and females did not define their experiences as peer sexual abuse.
- Staff members were at times reluctant to engage with issues of sexuality with children who had previously been sexually abused, or they felt that discussing sexuality might encourage sexual activity. In order to address peer sexual abuse in residential institutions, Green and Masson (2002) suggested that it is important for adults and children to enter into open dialogue about sexual development and sexual behavior, despite the understandable sensitivity about this issue.

#### 3.3.5 Child Sexual Abuse in Sport Settings

As noted, the scarce literature concerning sexual abuse in sporting settings suggests that adolescents and girls may be more at risk of sexual abuse than other groups, and that perpetrators are likely to be coaches or instructors (Brackenridge et al., 2008; Pretty & Tenenbaum, 2002). The suggestion that elite athletes may be at greater risk may perhaps reflect more frequent and closer contact of coaches and athletes at elite level (Parent &

Bannon, 2012). More research is needed to investigate patterns of sexual abuse in sports settings, before engaging in interpretation of those patterns.

## 3.4 Research Priorities for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse

In this section, we discuss priorities for research concerning sexual abuse in institutional settings which may helpfully inform future prevention efforts. We discuss these priorities under headings of: (a) understanding perpetrators and patterns of abuse; (b) assessment of institutional workers; (c) prevention of at-risk behaviour and general prevention.

### 3.4.1 Understanding Perpetrators and Patterns of Abuse

#### 3.4.1.1 Patterns of Abuse

- Although there is a reasonable body of literature concerning sexual abuse in the American Roman Catholic Church and some informative research concerning sexual abuse in the Anglican Church in Australia, research regarding patterns of clergy sexual abuse on other settings is lacking.
- Within the Roman Catholic context, nuns have been identified in a German report as perpetrators of physical or sexual violence, but the nature of that abuse was not identified (Böhm et al., 2014). Therefore, female sexual abusers within faith traditions may be an additional emerging research issue.
- There is a lack of basic research concerning sexual abuse in sporting organizations. As noted above for religious organizations, a coordinated and cooperative research effort between sporting institutions is needed, with due attention to the sensitivities of those organizations.
- With regard to educational institutions, the existing literature provides some indications of patterns of sexual abuse. In general, more studies of patterns of sexual abuse in educational institutions are needed, particularly in Australia. More specifically, a focus on female perpetrators in educational institutions may be warranted, given the data from published North American studies.
- The occurrence of sexual abusive behaviour by adolescents in residential institutions is supported by research. However, further research regarding the nature of such abuse by adolescents is needed, to determine the extent of unwanted sexual behaviour by adolescents that falls within the scope of the Royal Commission's concern. Identification of the nature and patterns of sexual abuse by other adolescents in institutional settings may lead to more informed efforts at prevention of sexual abuse in these settings in the future.

### 3.4.1.2 Understanding Perpetrators of Sexual Abuse

- Typologies of adult female perpetrators require substantially more validation research. It is possible that these typologies might inform our understanding of institutional perpetrators, given that female perpetrators have been identified particularly in educational institutions. Typologies of adolescent perpetrators also have little empirical support at present. However, adolescents are less likely to have formed enduring characteristics that might inform understanding or prediction of future behaviour, so that typologies based on adolescents may be inherently less stable. Therefore, typologies of adolescent perpetrators may be less likely to assist in understanding institutional child sexual abuse.
- Although Internet sexual offenders are not a focus of this review, emerging research concerning these offenders shows a complex relationship to contact sexual abuse. Those individuals who have convictions only for child exploitation material are relatively unlikely to re-offend, and even less likely to commit subsequent contact sexual offences (Eke, Seto & Williams, 2011; Seto, Hanson & Babchishin, 2011). However, from official data, 12% of identified Internet sexual offenders were known to have committed a contact sexual offence, while self-report studies showed that about half admitted to prior contact offences. Possession of child exploitation material should therefore be within the scope of future research concerning institutional perpetrators.
- Atypical sexual interests and exposure to violent pornography have been identified as concerns in relation to sexually abusive behaviour by adolescents. Additional correlational and especially longitudinal research studies concerning the relationship of sexually abusive behaviour to exposure to pornography, as well as atypical sexual interests of various types, is needed. This research may be relevant to understanding sexually abusive behaviour by adolescents in residential institutions.

### 3.4.2 Assessment of Institutional Workers

- Although recent revisions of psychiatric diagnostic systems recognize that individuals with a sexual attraction towards children may not commit sexual abuse, and individuals who do abuse children sexually may not have this sexual attraction, a pattern of sexual attraction towards children is a relevant risk factor for sexual abuse which is relevant to screening and selection of paid or voluntary institutional workers. For assessment of institutional workers, measurement of variables associated with sexual interest in children such as social competence and emotional congruence may be possible. As noted in section 3.1.2.1, it may be possible to adapt self-report measures of these

variables to produce an interview instrument for use with prospective institutional workers. A program of research in this area would initially assess the strength of relationship between interview and self-report measures, followed by validation research with known groups of perpetrators. Such an assessment instrument would be required to demonstrate predictive validity. If it were to make a useful contribution to the goal of protecting children, the instrument should demonstrate that the rate of false positives (individuals who are wrongly classified as posing a risk to children) and false negatives (individuals who actually pose a risk to children but are not classified as such) is not so large as to render the use of instrument ineffective in assisting this goal. An important consequential issue is that false positive classifications may unnecessarily prevent potential institutional workers from pursuing their chosen careers. There is a need to balance the consequences of assessment procedures for institutions and institutional workers with the need to protect children in those institutions.

- Possession of child exploitation material, which is often obtained through the Internet, should also be investigated in the screening of institutional workers. As noted in 3.4.1.2, the relationship of possession of such material to future child sexual abuse may not be strong, but the possibility of prior contact sexual offences involving children should be considered for individuals who are identified as possessing child exploitation material, including those in institutional settings.

### 3.4.3 Prevention of At-Risk Behaviour in Institutions

- Additional research from a situational perspective on child sexual abuse is likely to be helpful for identifying at-risk behaviour by workers in institutional settings. Representative research studies involve qualitative interview or questionnaire studies with perpetrators, victims or third parties, concerning the modus operandi of sexual abuse perpetrators. These studies have helped to elucidate patterns of grooming by child sexual abusers. These patterns can be translated into descriptions of behaviour that may be identified by supervisors, co-workers or children in institutional settings. Intervention with institutional workers who exhibit at-risk behaviour is likely to be an important part of efforts to prevent institutional sexual abuse. Previous studies of this type from institutional settings (Green, 2001; Green & Masson, 2002; Knoll, 2010) should be complemented with additional studies from specific institutional settings, particularly including unrepresented settings such as sporting institutions.
- Research from a situational perspective may also inform general policies and procedures which may be effective in decreasing opportunities or deterring sexual abuse. Further studies from the perspective of known offenders such as that by Colton and colleagues (2010) may assist institutional managers to evaluate the potential usefulness of various policies and procedures on the one hand, and the physical design of institutional buildings on the other hand.

### 3.5 Concluding Remarks

This review shows that there is a relatively large literature concerning characteristics and life experiences of child sexual abusers, whether adult or adolescent. Conversely, there is a relatively small amount of literature concerning child sexual abusers in institutional settings, with the exception of the Roman Catholic Church. There is a need for considerably more research concerning child sexual abuse in institutional settings.

Results from studies in which abusers from institutional settings are compared with others find few differences. Therefore, it seems reasonable to apply research from the general literature to understanding sexual abusers in institutional settings. In addition, we noted above that research concerning some characteristics of child sexual abusers could be applied to the development of assessment tools for institutional workers.

Although the research questions were particularly focussed on characteristics of child sexual abusers, the goal of prevention of child sexual abuse in institutions is likely to be served more profitably by adopting situational perspectives. Some findings from situational studies of general settings may be applied to institutional sexual abuse; for example, the study of grooming strategies used by abusers. However, specific situational perspectives may be necessary in order to understand child sexual abuse in some institutional settings, involving consideration of particular characteristics of the institution. A notable example of this point is the pattern of sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic Church. There may be other examples where child sexual abuse in institutional settings requires specific analysis of institutional characteristics, but basic research concerning prevalence and patterns of sexual abuse may be required as a first consideration.

In seeking to understand what is known about the characteristics of perpetrators, this review does not diminish or find justification for perpetrator behaviour; there is no justification for child sexual abuse.

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# Appendix

## Description of Search Strategy

### PsycInfo:

Sexual abuse.sh or sexual abuse.ti or sexual abuse.ab or pedophilia.sh or pedophil\*.ti or pedophil\*.ab or paedophilia.sh or paedophil\*.ti or paedophil\*.ab or child molest\*.ti or child molest\*.ab

AND

Perpetrators.sh or perpetrator\*.ti or perpetrator\*.ab or offender\*.ab or offender\*.ti

### PubMed:

child abuse, sexual[mh] or child sexual abuse[tiab] or pedophilia[mh], pedophil\*[tiab] or paedophil\*[tiab] or molest\*[tiab]

AND

criminals[mh] or perpetrator\*[tiab] or offender\*[tiab]

### Embase:

“child sexual abuse”/de OR “child sexual abuse”:ti,ab OR “sexual abuse”:ti,ab OR pedophilia/de OR pedophil\*:ti,ab OR paedophil\*:ti,ab OR “child molestation”:ti,ab OR molest\*:ti,ab

AND

crime/de OR crime:ti,ab OR crimin\*:ti,ab OR offender/de OR offend\*:ti,ab OR perpetrat\*:ti,ab

**CINCH:**

child sexual abuse OR sexual abuse OR pedophil\* OR paedophil\* OR molest\*

AND

crime OR crimin\* OR offend\* OR perpetrat\*

**Social Services Abstracts:**

child sexual abuse OR sexual abuse OR pedophil\* OR paedophil\* OR molest\*

AND

crime OR crimin\* OR offend\* OR perpetrat\*)

Additional Search for Problem Sexual Behaviour in Children

**PsycInfo:**

child.ti. or child.ab. or adolescen\*.ti. or adolescen\*.ab.

AND

sexual behavior.sh. or sexual behavior?r.ti. or sexual behavior?r.ab. or sexualised behavior?r.ti.  
or sexualised behavior?r.ab.

AND

perpetrators.sh. or perpetrator\*.ab. or perpetrator\*.ti. or offender\*.ab. or offender\*.ti. or  
juvenile sex offender\*.ti. or juvenile sex offender\*.ab. or juvenile delinquen\*.ti. or juvenile  
delinquen\*.ab.