

Female Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse

A Bibliography



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Scope

This bibliography lists publications highlighting a wide variety of issues related to female perpetrators of child sexual abuse. More publications specific to Educator Sexual Misconduct are found [here](#).

Organization

Publications include books, book chapters, reports, research briefs, and articles and are listed in date descending order. Links are provided to full text publications when possible. However, this collection may not be complete. More information can be obtained in the Child Abuse Library Online (CALiO™).

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Female Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse

A Bibliography

Christensen, L. S., & Woods, J. (2024). [The underexplored topic of females who perpetrate child sexual abuse material offenses: What do we know about this offending group?](#). *Sexuality & Culture*, 1-14. DOI:10.1007/s12119-023-10188-7

Despite the emerging field of research on females who engage in contact child sexual abuse offenses, we know little about females who engage in child sexual abuse material (CSAM) offenses. This is concerning given the global proliferation of CSAM and recent research identifying female-perpetrated CSAM offending is more prominent than previously thought. This paper contributes to the underdeveloped field, by offering a beneficial and timely stop gap of current research on women who engage in CSAM offenses. In doing so, the synthesis explores the prevalence of females who engage in CSAM, why some females might perpetrate CSAM offenses (including co-offending, prior victimization, mental health, opportunity, and sexual motivation), the harms of female-perpetrated CSAM offending, and how the media portrays this offending group. To further extend our knowledge in this field, ideas for future research are also provided throughout. This paper should be useful for various disciplines including psychology, criminology, and law, globally, who are interested in better understanding CSAM offenses perpetrated by females.

Reingold, O. H., & Goldner, L. (2023). “It was wrapped in a kind of normalcy”: The lived experience and consequences in adulthood of survivors of female child sexual abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 139, 106125. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2023.106125

Background: Survivors' surveys on the frequency of sexual offenses committed by women indicated a prevalence rate of 9.9 % to 11.6 %. Nevertheless, only a few studies have explored the long-term consequences of abuse on survivors. Objectives: Examine the lived experiences and the long-term consequences of child sexual abuse committed by women. Participants: Fifteen adult participants who experienced child sexual abuse conducted by female offenders participated in the study. Methods: The Interpretive Phenomenological Approach was applied to semi-structured interviews. Results: Three central themes emerged: types of abuse, characteristics of the perpetrator, and consequences of abuse. Most survivors experienced direct or indirect forms of sexual abuse committed by their mothers. In most cases, the offenders masked their abuse in

caregiving, disciplinary or playful behavior. The survivors perceived their mothers as narcissistic, controlling, hostile, and having tremendous difficulties with separation. The survivors reported the need to engage in extensive negative long-lasting psychopathologies, which they attributed partly to having been invalidated and silenced by society. Many participants expressed fears of re-enacting the survivor or perpetrator role, which has led to difficulties in various relationships. They described an altered perception of their bodies as shameful and repulsive, manifesting in self-harm, eating disorders, and the elimination of signs of femininity. Conclusion: This complex form of sexual abuse hampers the internalization and the construction of positive feminine, masculine, and parental identities.

Schröder, J., Briken, P., & Tozdan, S. (2023). Comparing female-to male-perpetrated child sexual abuse as presumed by survivors—A qualitative content analysis. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 143, 106252. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2023.106252

Background: Female-perpetrated child sexual abuse (CSA) is taboo topic in society and an under-recognized issue in research and mental health care. Objective: The aim of the present study was to examine perspectives of individuals surviving female-perpetrated CSA (in parts in addition with male-perpetrated CSA) on the question whether female-perpetrated CSA and its sequelae were considered different compared to male-perpetrated CSA. Participants and setting: The perspectives of 212 survivors of female-perpetrated CSA were captured in a cross-sectional online study. Methods: Answers to the questions “How does female-perpetrated CSA differ from male-perpetrated CSA?” and “How do consequences of female-perpetrated CSA differ from those of male-perpetrated CSA?” were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Results: The analyses reveal ten categories of differences, such as a more subtle approach, different levels of violence, and more psychological manipulation. Further, the analyses suggest ten categories of different personal consequences, such as less belief and support, more psychological sequelae, and disturbed relationships with women. Conclusions: Approaches to raise awareness about gender stereotypes in the context of CSA are needed and special needs of survivors of female-perpetrated CSA in psychotherapeutic treatment can be derived from the results of this study.

Scurich, N. (2023). Female perpetrators of child sexual abuse in the United States. *Journal of Criminal Psychology, 13*(4), 417-428. DOI:10.1108/JCP-07-2023-0045

Purpose: Research on women who sexually abuse children is relatively scarce and tends to rely on small or unrepresentative convenience samples. The purpose of the current descriptive study is to examine characteristics female perpetrators of child sexual abuse using a large and contemporary dataset. **Design/methodology/approach:** This study analyzes data collected by the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, which is a census of all child protective services investigations or assessments conducted in all 50 states, as well as in the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico from October 1, 2018, to September 30, 2019. **Findings:** Only substantiated cases of sexual abuse were analyzed (n = 51,442 cases). Overall, 7.6% of the perpetrators were female, though the percentage of female perpetrators varied dramatically across states from less than 1% to over 36%. Female perpetrators tended to have younger victims than did male perpetrators. For children aged 2 or less, female perpetrators constituted approximately 20% of the abusers. Female perpetrators were more likely to victimize male and female children, whereas male perpetrators predominantly had female victims. More female perpetrators had a prior finding of maltreatment than did male perpetrators (32.3% vs 23.5%). **Research limitations/implications:** These findings add to the limited research base on female perpetrators of child sexual abuse and highlight avenues for further research into the differences between male and female sexual abusers. **Originality/value:** This study is a replication of previous research but also provides additional novel findings.

Augarde, S., & Rydon-Grange, M. (2022). Female perpetrators of child sexual abuse: A review of the clinical and empirical literature—A 20-year update. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 62*, 101687. DOI:10.1016/j.avb.2021.101687

A comprehensive and well-cited review on the topic of female child sex offenders was published by Grayston and DeLuca in 1999. Over the past twenty years, the clinical and empirical literature relating to female child sex offending has grown. In particular, more is now known about the characteristics of female child sex offenders, and the nature, type, and context of offences, as well as motivations underpinning offending. The purpose of this paper is to provide a review of the current clinical and empirical literature on female child sex offenders, and to update the summary profile on these offenders as originally proposed by Grayston and DeLuca (1999). Of particular note are updates to the co-offending literature and new research regarding the use of technology,

abuse within the educational context, and recidivism in female perpetrated child sexual abuse. Implications for assessment and treatment of this offender cohort are also discussed, alongside limitations of this review.

Kaylor, L. E., Winters, G. M., & Jeglic, E. L. (2022). Exploring sexual grooming in female perpetrated child sexual abuse. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 31*(5), 503-521.
DOI:10.1080/10538712.2021.1994505

According to official statistics, two percent of those who commit sex crimes are women, most of which involve child victims. However, victimization surveys suggest the true rate of female-perpetrated child sexual abuse is significantly higher than official statistics, and that it is under-detected and under-reported. Compared to men, relatively little is known about the behaviors and tactics that females employ to perpetrate child sexual abuse. While as many as half of male-perpetrated child sexual abuse involves sexual grooming, sexual grooming has not been empirically studied as it pertains to women. Existing literature, case studies, and media reports describe behaviors and strategies of women who abuse minors which may be suggestive of sexual grooming, particularly in cases of child sexual abuse perpetrated by female educators and child sex traffickers. This article explores what is known about female sexual offending, integrating it with the research on sexual grooming to provide a framework for understanding female sexual grooming behaviors. Implications for prevention, policy, and practice will be examined.

Munroe, C., & Shumway, M. (2022). [Female-perpetrated sexual violence: A survey of survivors of female-perpetrated childhood sexual abuse and adult sexual assault](#). *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 37*(9-10), NP6655-NP6675.
DOI:10.1177/0886260520967137

Individuals who experience female-perpetrated sexual assault (FPSA) are underrepresented in the sexual victimization literature. Much of the existing research on FPSA centers on child welfare-involved families and convicted or incarcerated female sexual offenders, with limited research devoted to victims of FPSA. The current study included a diverse sample of 138 community adults who experienced one or more incident of FPSA, and sought to (a) describe individuals who experienced FPSA, including their overall trauma exposure, (b) describe perpetrator age and relationship to the respondent, (c) explore whether respondents labeled FPSA as sexual assault and

disclosed it to others, and (d) examine the prevalence of depressive and posttraumatic symptoms in this population. Of the respondents, 61.6% experienced childhood FPSA, 18.8% experienced adulthood FPSA, and 19.6% experienced both childhood and adulthood FPSA. Survivors of FPSA were highly trauma exposed; 71.7% reported a male-perpetrated victimization, over 90% reported any childhood sexual abuse, over 60% reported any adulthood victimization, 55.1% reported victimizations in both childhood and adulthood, and 78.3% endorsed any revictimization. Perpetrators of FPSA were often known individuals, including friends, family members, babysitters, and romantic partners. Incidents of female perpetrators co-offending with males accounted for only 5.5%–8.5% of FPSA events, contrary to myths about female offending. Incidents of FPSA were often labeled as sexual assault in retrospect, but only 54.3% of respondents ever disclosed an incident of FPSA. Depressive and posttraumatic symptoms were common. Results indicate FPSA is typically perpetrated by individuals acting alone who are known to and close to the victim. Incidents of FPSA may not be labeled as sexual abuse or assault at the time of the event, are not frequently disclosed, and may carry long-term mental health consequences for survivors. Significant research efforts are needed to better identify and help these underrecognized, highly trauma burdened survivors of violence.

Muniz, C. N., & Powers, R. A. (2022). The influence of authority role and victim gender on perceptions of female-perpetrated child sexual abuse. *Child Maltreatment, 27*(4), 550-560. DOI: 10.1177/10775595211033537

Child sexual abuse is often perceived differently based on characteristics of the victim and the perpetrator. However, unknown is whether variations in perceptions occur when the relationship to and gender of the victim are manipulated—particularly when the offender is a woman. The current study sought to explore whether authority role (neighbor, teacher, family, or clergy) and victim gender affect perceived outcomes for the victim. A factorial vignette design was used to randomly assign participants to one of eight conditions, and a series of analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to assess differences in perceived victim outcomes for the vignettes. Results showed significant differences for authority role, victim gender, and the interactions between authority and victim gender for nearly all dependent variables. Respondents recognized that the scenarios presented were damaging and harmful; however, certain authority positions (i.e.,

teachers) were sexualized leading to diminished perceptions of negative outcomes, particularly for male victims.

Vázquez-Tirado, S. (2022). Gender and victim stereotypes in perceptions of child sexual abuse in Puerto Rico. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, 19(2), 73-87.
DOI:10.1002/jip.1590

Factors such as cultural norms and stereotypes influence how child sexual abuse (CSA) is perceived in relation to gender of the offender and perceptions of responsibility and harm in Puerto Rico. Finkelhor and Browne's traumagenic dynamics model served as the theoretical framework for the investigation because it addresses four key factors related to the experience of CSA victims. A total of 525 people living in Puerto Rico participated in the study. They were asked to read a hypothetical case of CSA by a teacher with a minor student and answer related questions. Point-biserial correlational analyses were used to assess the influence of gender of the offender on perceptions of CSA. Results of the study indicated the male offender was attributed more responsibility and harm for the offence. Both male and female minor victims were identified by participants as partly responsible for the offence. Male and female offenders were identified as victims. Findings of this study could help to improve understanding of cultural differences in perceptions of CSA cases and its consequences.

Anderson, J. F., Reinsmith-Jones, K., Lee, T., & Brooks Jr, W. M. (2021). [The silence of female sexual offending: A public health issue](#). *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, 9(2), 1-12.

Bradbury, P., & Martellozzo, E. (2021). [‘Lucky boy!’; Public perceptions of child sexual offending committed by women](#). *Journal of Victimology and Victim Justice*, 4(2).
DOI:10.1177/25166069211060091

This exploratory study addresses the existing gaps on the public perceptions of child sexual offending committed by women. Using thematic analysis, the study extracted, coded and analysed the comments (N = 1,651) made by the general public to nine Daily Mail online newspaper articles published from 2018 to 2019, reporting the sentencing decisions of female sex offenders, who have been charged and found guilty with the offence of sexual activity with a child. From those comments, 170 coded themes were identified, and this amounted to 3,394 coded incidences. Unlike

previous research, this study cross-examines public responses to different typologies of offending behaviour; teachers, mothers, same sex offenders, co-offenders and finally those who offended for financial gain. The impact of these typologies was analysed through key descriptive case variables, which were quantitatively evaluated against the prominent themes that emerged. It found that while people demand equal sentencing decisions between male and female child sex offenders, this is limited by public perception when the abuser is an attractive female and, as a result, perceived as less harmful to the child, who is not seen no longer as a victim but as a ‘Lucky Boy’. Such preconceptions fuel shame, social stigma and stereotyping towards sexual exposure and prevents victims to disclose their abuse and achieve closure and justice.

Christensen, L. S. (2021). [Professionals’ perceptions of female child sexual offenders](#). *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(7-8), NP4115-NP4138. DOI:10.1177/0886260518785377

The aims of the current study were to (a) obtain an in-depth understanding about professionals’ perceptions of female child sexual offenders and (b) identify where system efforts should be focused to better address and acknowledge female child sexual offenders. In-depth semistructured interviews were conducted one-on-one with a diverse group of professionals (police officers, social workers, counselors, case managers, child and family support workers, and a legal professional; N = 21) involved in the community response and justice sector, which allowed for unique views across diverse vantage points. Four core themes were identified through thematic analysis: (a) female child sexual offenders are a heterogeneous group, (b) negative impact of female-perpetrated sexual abuse, (c) gender of perpetrator is predominantly insignificant in case dealings, and (d) the need for a more open discourse on female child sexual offenders. Professionals in the current study acknowledged that female child sexual offenders can inflict serious and persistent negative impacts on victims and that the gender of the offender is insignificant in their individual professional dealings of child sexual abuse cases. While these findings appear to be a positive step forward, away from earlier perceptions identified in the literature, it was evident that the gender of the perpetrator may still play a significant role in some dealings across professions and among colleagues. Two areas identified by professionals as requiring system efforts were (a) professional development along with the dissemination of appropriate research to better inform professionals and (b) the need for a more open discussion in society concerning female-perpetrated sexual abuse.

The findings of the current study may assist with appropriate recognition, protection, and intervention for victims of female-perpetrated sexual abuse.

Gerke, J., Lipke, K., Fegert, J. M., & Rassenhofer, M. (2021). [Mothers as perpetrators and bystanders of child sexual abuse](#). *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *117*, 105068. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105068

In research and literature, little attention has been paid to the role of women, especially mothers, in child sexual abuse. In order to estimate prevalences on mothers as perpetrators and bystanders, data was collected in a German nationwide representative survey. A total of 2,531 participants (53.3 % female, 14–94 years) were selected by a random route procedure and questioned with a paper-pencil-questionnaire. The survey included the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire as well as questions on the perpetrator-victim relationship, bystanders and the awareness within society on the topic of female-perpetrated child sexual abuse. Prevalences were calculated. The prevalence of child sexual abuse (6.6 %) as well as the proportion of female perpetrators (6.6 %) determined in the current survey were low compared to the findings of previous studies. Within the group of female perpetrators, biological mothers accounted for a larger share than biological fathers in the group of male perpetrators. Among the bystanders, the biological mother was named most frequently (24.6 %). The general population underestimates the involvement of biological mothers in child sexual abuse. The results confirm that female perpetrators account for a rather small but substantial proportion of the perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Furthermore, the results indicate that mothers play a role in sexual abuse – either as perpetrators or as bystanders – that has been underestimated so far. It is therefore necessary to sensitize professionals and the public to the topic of female perpetrators and especially to the role of mothers in child sexual abuse.

Majeed-Ariss, R., Wilson, R. J., Karsna, K., Martin, G. P., & White, C. (2021). Descriptive analysis of the context of child sexual abuse reportedly perpetrated by female suspects: Insights from Saint Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre. *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine*, *78*, 102112. DOI:10.1016/j.jflm.2020.102112

Determining the prevalence and characteristics of female-perpetrated child sexual abuse (CSA) is fraught with difficulty. There is a historical lack of empirical research and a discrepancy between the number of cases that reach the attention of the authorities and its suspected prevalence in

society. It is also noted that for a myriad of reasons many CSA reports do not progress through the criminal justice process so many remain as allegations rather than proven or disproven crimes. The study set out to answer the research questions: ‘What are the characteristics and context of CSA reportedly perpetrated by females, and what are the similarities and differences in the context of alleged CSA committed by male and female suspects?’ This study presents data from all service users aged 0–17 years (n = 986) that attended Saint Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) for a forensic medical examination over a three-year period. Data collection was performed retrospectively from the paper case files recorded at the time of attendance. Due to the small number of female suspects, analysis was restricted to frequency calculations. Results show females were reportedly involved in the alleged abuse of less than 4% of the children attending SARC. Females appeared more likely to be associated with the alleged abuse of younger children and abuse occurring within the child's home. This study's most arresting feature is that despite the large number of CSA cases examined, it was rare to have a female suspect. This study demonstrates how much is still unknown about female-perpetrated CSA.

Muniz, C. N., & Powers, R. A. (2021). [The influence of authority role and victim gender on perceptions of female-perpetrated child sexual abuse](#). *Child Maltreatment*, 27(4), 550-560. DOI:10.1177/10775595211033537

Child sexual abuse is often perceived differently based on characteristics of the victim and the perpetrator. However, unknown is whether variations in perceptions occur when the relationship to and gender of the victim are manipulated—particularly when the offender is a woman. The current study sought to explore whether authority role (neighbor, teacher, family, or clergy) and victim gender affect perceived outcomes for the victim. A factorial vignette design was used to randomly assign participants to one of eight conditions, and a series of analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to assess differences in perceived victim outcomes for the vignettes. Results showed significant differences for authority role, victim gender, and the interactions between authority and victim gender for nearly all dependent variables. Respondents recognized that the scenarios presented were damaging and harmful; however, certain authority positions (i.e., teachers) were sexualized leading to diminished perceptions of negative outcomes, particularly for male victims.

Schröder, J., Kratzer, L., Yamak, Y., Briken, P., & Tozdan, S. (2021). [The role of stigmatization in developing post-traumatic symptoms after experiencing child sexual abuse by a female perpetrator](#). *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 12(1). DOI:10.1080/20008198.2021.1966982

The context in which individuals are exposed to child sexual abuse (CSA) and reactions to the disclosure of such abuse experiences play a major role in post-traumatic mental health. Female-perpetrated CSA is an under-recognized issue in society and mental health care, and is therefore supposed to be a breeding ground for stigmatization. The aim of the current study was to examine the mediating role of internalized and anticipated stigma on the effects of so-called victim-blaming experiences and the perception of abuse in the childhood of survivors of female-perpetrated CSA on their post-traumatic symptom severity. A total of 212 individuals who reported experiences of female-perpetrated CSA were assessed in an anonymous online survey. The International Trauma Questionnaire (ITQ) served as the primary outcome parameter for detecting differences in post-traumatic symptom severity within mediation analyses, where victim-blaming and abuse awareness served as predictors and anticipated as well as internalized stigma served as mediator variables. Internalized stigma fully mediated the deteriorating effect of victim-blaming on post-traumatic symptom severity, while abuse awareness and anticipated stigma showed no statistically significant effects as predictor and mediator variables. Yet, victim-blaming had a significant increasing effect on anticipated stigma. Efforts to enhance awareness of female-perpetrated CSA in society are needed and mental health care professionals should pay attention to the adverse effects of victim-blaming and internalized stigma on post-traumatic symptoms in individuals affected by female-perpetrated CSA.

Brown, K. M., & Kloess, J. A. (2020). The motivations of female child sexual offenders: A systematic review of the literature. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 50, 101361. DOI:10.1016/j.avb.2019.101361

The aim of the literature review presented here was to identify goals and offense-supportive cognitions that act as motivational factors in the sexual offending against children committed by females. A scoping search revealed that there was currently no review in this area. A systematic search of empirical research that examined motivations in female child sexual offenders (FCSOs) was initiated based upon an inclusion and exclusion criteria. Identified studies were screened and reference lists were hand searched. A quality assessment tool reviewed the strengths and

weaknesses of the final 13 articles. A data extraction form established for the current review enabled the extraction of standardized information. The review identified support for many motivational factors in FCSOs, which have previously been referred to in the literature. The review has categorized these into motivations and offense-supportive cognitions. There was strong support for the following motivations and goals: offending under coercion of an abusive co-offender, offending to meet one's own needs and offending to feel power and control over another. The strongest offense-supportive cognitions were entitlement and uncontrollability. There was an apparent overlap between the two categories, with some offense-supportive cognitions and functions amalgamating to facilitate females to engage in offending behavior. Limitations of the present literature and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Steely, M., & Ten Benschel, T. (2020). Child sexual abuse within educational settings: A qualitative study on female teachers who sexually abuse their students. *Deviant Behavior*, 41(11), 1440-1453. DOI:10.1080/01639625.2019.1624288

Despite growing interest, research on female sex offenders has been limited. Previous research on female sex offenders has focused on understanding behaviors, patterns, and motivations of female sex offenders overall, but only a handful of studies have specifically focused on teachers who are convicted of sexually abusing underaged students. For the present study, we examined the nature of child sexual abuse among a sample of female teachers, focusing specifically on the onset, situational context, and conclusion of these sexual abuses. We examined interviews conducted with 35 female sex offenders who used their position as a teacher to engage in a sexual abuse of underage students from 1995 to 2016 in a southern state. Based on the narratives of both victims and offenders, our findings indicated several categories of female teacher offenders including predatory, sexual friendship, and emotionally dependent. We hope the findings of the current study will help inform educational policy in efforts to prevent the occurrence of these abuses in the future.

Tozdan, S., Briken, P., & Dekker, A. (2019). [Uncovering female child sexual offenders—Needs and challenges for practice and research](#). *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, 8(3), 401. DOI:10.3390/jcm8030401

This article provides a short literature overview on female child sexual offenders (FCSO) focusing on the discrepancy between prevalence rates from different sources, characteristics of FCSO and their victims, as well as the societal “culture of denial” surrounding these women. FCSO are a powerful social taboo. Even professionals in the healthcare or justice system were shown to respond inappropriately in cases of child sexual abuse committed by women. As a result, offences of FCSO may be underreported and therefore difficult to research. The lack of scientific data on FCSO lowers the quality of child protection and treatment services. We therefore deem it particularly necessary for professionals in health care to break the social taboo that is FCSO and to further stimulate research on the topic of FCSO. We provide some general implications for professionals in health care systems as well as specific recommendations for researchers. We end with an overall conclusion.

Eldridge, H. J., Elliott, I. A., Gillespie, S. M., Bailey, A., & Beech, A. R. (2018). Assessing women who sexually abuse children. In J. Ireland, C. Ireland, & P. Birch (Eds.), *Violent & sexual offenders* (2nd ed. pp.128-150). Routledge. DOI:10.4324/9781315310411

This chapter discusses the assessment of women should be undertaken in the context of a gender-responsive approach, which takes account of societal perceptions of female sexual abuse, what research tells about the common realities of the women’s lives, about their victims, female-specific theories and explanations of the women’s behaviour, and their offence processes. A collaborative approach helps women understand how they came to offend sexually and how to develop an abuse-free life in which they neither abuse others nor experience abuse themselves. Studies frequently show high levels of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse in childhood and adolescence. Sexual abuse of children by women goes against most people’s schema of the world, leading them to feeling insecure, anxious, and disturbed by it, and they struggle to make sense of what has happened within their existing schema. Reconviction rates are low for male sex offenders but extremely low for female sex offenders, so identifying risk levels is difficult.

Zack, E., Lang, J. T., & Dirks, D. (2018). [“It must be great being a female pedophile!”: The nature of public perceptions about female teacher sex offenders](#). *Crime, Media, Culture*, 14(1), 61-79. DOI:10.1177/1741659016674044

Although female sex offenders have received increased scholarly attention in recent years, and have also gained widespread media attention, minimal research has focused specifically on public perceptions of their behavior. This study explores the nature of public perceptions of a group of offenders on which the media often focus—female teachers who assault adolescent male students—by examining reader comments posted on five Huffington Post articles published from November 2010 to November 2013. Using a thematic coding methodology to analyze over 900 online comments, we found that most comments recognize a current double standard in the sentencing process for female teacher sex offenders compared to their male counterparts. Comments also rely on traditional sexual scripts and/or gender role expectations to either acknowledge or deny a victim’s presence. Contrary to existing research that examined public perceptions and found that more punitive attitudes were expressed toward male sex offenders, these results suggest that the public believes in equality in sentencing for all sex offenders, regardless of gender. These results also confirm prior studies that find that the public perceives adolescent male victims of rape by older women “lucky.”

Burgess-Proctor, A., Comartin, E. B., & Kubiak, S. P. (2017). Comparing female-and male-perpetrated child sexual abuse: A mixed-methods analysis. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 26(6), 657-676. DOI:10.1080/10538712.2017.1336504

This mixed-methods study compares experiences of female- and male-perpetrated child sexual abuse using self-report data from a correctional subsample of 26 women and 25 men currently incarcerated for a sex crime against a child. First, we use bivariate and logistic regression analyses to determine whether there are differences in offender, victim, and offense characteristics between women and men who commit child sexual abuse. Second, we examine participants’ open-ended responses eliciting details about their offenses. Quantitative results reveal some differences between women and men in victim characteristics, presence of a co-offender, and adulthood experiences with violence but no differences between women and men in experiences of childhood adversity, including prior child sexual abuse victimization. Qualitative results, however, suggest marked differences in the way women and men characterize their offenses. Overall, findings

indicate that women and men report unique experiences with child sexual abuse perpetration and therefore would benefit from gender-specific treatment.

Weinsheimer, C. C., Woiwod, D. M., Coburn, P. I., Chong, K., & Connolly, D. A. (2017). The unusual suspects: Female versus male accused in child sexual abuse cases. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 72, 446-455. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.09.003

When women encounter the criminal justice system, it is typically as victims rather than as offenders. Consequently, there is limited empirical research on women who have sexually offended against children, but there is a clinically-significant group of victims who have experienced female-perpetrated child sexual abuse (CSA). In a database of 4237 CSA cases that were heard in criminal courts between 1986 and 2012, we found 70 cases that involved female accused. We compared female-accused cases against a randomly selected sample of 70 male-accused cases from the same database. We investigated associations between gender of the accused and characteristics of the victim, offense, and criminal proceeding. Several important differences between female- and male-accused cases were found: proportionally more male complainants were in female-accused cases; female-accused of offenses were longer in duration; and despite offenses being similarly intrusive, female perpetrators received shorter sentences. This research indicates that there are potentially unique pathways to abuse for women and men, and unique experiences in the criminal justice system. Although female perpetrators are involved in a small proportion of CSA offenses, the cases that we describe herein are important to consider when developing appropriate support and intervention programs for offenders and victims of CSA.

Pittaro, M. (2016). Demystifying female perpetrated sex crimes against children. *Family & Intimate Partner Violence Quarterly*, 8(4), 301-309.

This article presents the sobering realities about females who perpetrate child sexual abuse (CSA), a phenomenon that up till now has been largely unaddressed. Of course, this is in part attributable to the fact that males are far more likely than females to commit CSA. But it also has something to do with the observation made by author Michael Pittaro: that for most people, it is just too heinous and counterintuitive an idea to contemplate that a female, whose traditional identity has included giving life, nurturing, and protecting the young, could molest a child. As clearly outlined

in this piece, the fact that some females do perpetrate child sexual abuse is, unfortunately, a sad reality and one that must be grappled with.

Budd, K. M., Bierie, D. M., & Williams, K. (2015). [Deconstructing incidents of female perpetrated sex crimes comparing female sexual offender groupings](#). *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 29(3), 267-290. DOI:10.1177/1079063215594376

Very little is known about co-offending by female sexual offenders (FSOs), especially in terms of diverse forms of offender groupings. To address this gap in the literature, this study uses 21 years (1992-2012) of National Incident-Based Reporting System data to analyze incidents of sexual offending committed by four female groupings: solo FSOs ($n = 29,238$), coed pairs consisting of one male and one FSO ($n = 11,112$), all-female groups ($n = 2,669$), and multiple perpetrator groups that consist of a combination of three or more FSOs and male sexual offenders (MSOs; $n = 4,268$). Using a multinomial logistic regression model, the data show significant differences in offender, victim, and crime context incident characteristics. The data also indicate that incidents with solo FSOs and all-female groups have similar characteristics, coed pairs and multiple perpetrator incidents have similar characteristics, and these two categorizations are fairly distinct from one another. Implications of this research are discussed in addition to directions for future research on female sexual offending.

McLeod, D. A. (2015). Female offenders in child sexual abuse cases: A national picture. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 24(1), 97-114. DOI:10.1080/10538712.2015.978925

Female sexual offenders are significantly underrepresented in the literature. Largely due to a failure of our society to recognize women as offenders, we allow them to avoid detection, prosecution, and interventions like tracking, registration, or mandated treatment. This could be partially due to differences that exist in their offending behaviors, victim profiles, and personal characteristics that set them apart from male offenders, to whom our systems have become more attuned. This article features an examination of virtually every substantiated child sexual abuse case reported to child protective services in the United States for 2010. Findings detail observed differences between male and female offenders on multiple domains and affirm female sexual offenders to be distinctly different from their male counterparts.

McLeod, D. A., & Craft, M. L. (2015). Female sexual offenders in child sexual abuse cases: National trends associated with child protective services system entry, exit, utilization, and socioeconomics. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 9(4), 399-416.
DOI:10.1080/15548732.2015.1064849

Up to 20% of child sexual abuse cases in the United States involve a female perpetrator in a primary role. However, less than 1% of incarcerated sex offenders in the United States are female. Female offenders appear to be systematically moving on different consequential trajectories than men when it comes to sexual offenses. This project assesses gendered disparities in the ways substantiated child sexual offenders experience the U.S. public child welfare system through an investigation of virtually every substantiated child sexual abuse case in the nation as documented by state level child protective services for 1 year (N = 66,765). Findings detail how during the time substantiated female sexual offenders are involved with child welfare agencies, they receive higher levels of mental health, substance abuse, family centered, and economic based services than comparable male sex offenders. Additional findings and implications are also discussed; including observed differential pathways for child welfare system entry and exit.

Gillespie, S. M., Williams, R., Elliott, I. A., Eldridge, H. J., Ashfield, S., & Beech, A. R. (2014). [Characteristics of females who sexually offend a comparison of solo and co-offenders.](#) *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 27(3), 284-301.
DOI:10.1177/1079063214556358

Although recent typologies of female sexual offenders have recognized the importance of having a co-offender, the clinical characteristics of solo and cofemale sexual offenders remain poorly understood. The aim of this study was to compare solo (n = 20) and co- (n = 20) female sexual offenders on a variety of clinical characteristics. It was found that although solo and co-offenders reported similar developmental experiences and psychological dispositions, differences were found in environmental niche, offense preceding, and positive factors. Specifically, solo offenders demonstrated a greater presence of personal vulnerabilities including mental health and substance abuse difficulties. Co-offenders reported a greater presence of environmentally based factors, including a current partner who was a known sex offender and involvement with antisocial peers. It is suggested that these results have implications for understanding assessment and intervention needs for these groups of sexual offenders.

Wijkman, M., Weerman, F., Bijleveld, C., & Hendriks, J. (2015). [Group sexual offending by juvenile females](#). *Sexual Abuse*, 27(3), 335-356. DOI:10.1177/1079063214561685

This study examined all group sexual offending cases in the Netherlands between 1995 and 2009 ($n = 26$) in which at least one juvenile female offender ($n = 35$) had been adjudicated. Information from court files showed that the majority of juvenile female group sexual offenders have (inter)personal problems and (sexual) abuse experiences. The aims of the offender groups in committing the offense could be categorized in three themes: harassing the victim, sexual gratification, and taking revenge. The reasons why juvenile female offenders participated in a group could be categorized into group dynamics versus instrumental reasons. The findings are contrasted with findings on juvenile male group sexual offenders. Implications of the findings for research and treatment are discussed.

Bourke, A., Doherty, S., McBride, O., Morgan, K., & McGee, H. (2014). Female perpetrators of child sexual abuse: Characteristics of the offender and victim. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 20(8), 769-780. DOI:10.1080/1068316X.2013.860456

This study investigates the prevalence rates of female perpetrated child sexual abuse in Ireland and explores the victim and perpetrator characteristics associated with the abuse. Data were from a nationally representative survey investigating sexual violence among adults living in Ireland ($n = 3120$). Descriptive statistics and regression analysis investigated the characteristics of female versus male perpetrated sexual abuse. Approximately 6% of all the victims of child sexual abuse in the sample were abused by a lone female, which represents 1.5% of the overall adult population. Analyses indicated that male and female perpetrated abuse differ mainly in terms of the demographic characteristics of the perpetrators and victims: female perpetrators are more likely to be younger, and are more likely to abuse male victims and older children and adolescents (9–17 years), compared with male perpetrators. In addition, female perpetrators are less likely to be a stranger to the victim and in a position of authority, compared with male perpetrators. Treatment services should be particularly tailored for female perpetrated abuse, as the dynamics between the victim and perpetrator are likely to be different to male perpetrated abuse. The study adds to this relatively neglected area of research.

Gannon, T. A., Waugh, G., Taylor, K., Blanchette, K., O'Connor, A., Blake, E., & Ó Ciardha, C. (2014). [Women who sexually offend display three main offense styles: A reexamination of the descriptive model of female sexual offending](#). *Sexual Abuse*, 26(3), 207-224. DOI:10.1177/1079063213486835

This study examined a theory constructed to describe the offense process of women who sexually offend—the Descriptive Model of Female Sexual Offending (DMFSO). In particular, this report sets out to establish whether the original three pathways (or offending styles) identified within United Kingdom convicted female sexual offenders and described within the DMFSO (i.e., Explicit-Approach, Directed-Avoidant, Implicit-Disorganized) were applicable to a small sample ($N = 36$) of North American women convicted of sexual offending. Two independent raters examined the offense narratives of the sample and—using the DMFSO—coded each script according to whether it fitted one of the three original pathways. Results suggested that the three existing pathways of the DMFSO represented a reasonable description of offense pathways for a sample of North American women convicted of sexual offending. No new pathways were identified. A new “Offense Pathway Checklist” devised to aid raters’ decision making is described and future research and treatment implications explored.

Miller, L. (2013). Sexual offenses against children: Patterns and motives. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 18(5), 506-519. DOI:10.1016/j.avb.2013.07.006

Children are the quintessential innocent victims; therefore, special opprobrium is reserved for offenders who sexually abuse them. This article describes the more prominent typologies of pedophilic sex offenders and discusses the role of child pornography in child sexual abuse of actual children. It next examines the often overlooked population of women offenders who sexually abuse children. Attention then turns to the sexual abuse of children in child care settings and by members of the clergy; practical recommendations are provided for reducing the risk of this kind of institutional child sexual abuse. Theoretical conceptualizations of child sexual abuse are considered, in the three main categories of cognitive-psychodynamic theories, neuropsychological conceptualizations, and contributions from the emerging field of evolutionary psychology. Finally, recommendations are made for developing a way of handling sex offenders, including sexual offenders against children, that balances the fair administration of justice with society's obligation to protect vulnerable potential victims.

van der Put, C. E. (2013). The prevalence of risk factors for general recidivism in female adolescent sexual offenders: A comparison of three subgroups. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 37(9), 691-697. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2013.05.010

To our knowledge, there are no former studies in which subgroups of female adolescent sexual offenders are studied. Therefore, we examined differences in risk factors for general recidivism between female adolescents who have committed a felony sexual offense against a younger child (CSO, $n = 25$), female adolescents who have committed a felony sexual offense with a peer victim (PSO, $n = 15$) and female adolescents who have committed a misdemeanor sexual offenses (MSO, $n = 31$). Results showed that CSOs had considerably fewer problems in the domains of school (truancy, behavior problems, dropping out of school), family (e.g., parental alcohol problems, parental mental health problems, poor authority and control, out of home placements and run away from home) and friends (antisocial friends) than MSOs and/or PSOs. No differences were found in the prevalence of mental health problems, physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

Gannon, T. A., Hoare, J. A., Rose, M. R., & Parrett, N. (2012). A re-examination of female child molesters' implicit theories: Evidence of female specificity?. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 18(2), 209-224. DOI:10.1080/10683161003752303

Recent research by Beech, Parrett, Ward, and Fisher has suggested that Ward and Keenan's male-derived implicit theories represent a good theoretical fit for explaining female child molesters' offence-supportive cognitions. This paper re-examines the applicability of Ward and Keenan's (1999) male-derived implicit theories for explaining the self-reported offence supportive cognitions of 16 UK female child molesters. Using almost identical analytic methods to Beech et al., we show that it is indeed possible to code female child molesters' offence supportive cognitions under each of the five male-derived implicit theories proposed by Ward and Keenan. However, our results show that the content of female child molesters' offence supportive cognitions appears very different to that of male child molesters. Based on our findings, we discuss relevant treatment implications and offer a re-conceptualization of implicit theories for female child molesters using the sex-role stereotyping literature. We also propose that _ unlike male child molesters _ female child molesters are unlikely to hold generalized implicit theories that sexualize children.

McNulty, E. A. (2012). [Transcription and analysis of qualitative data in a study of women who sexually offended against children](#). *Qualitative Report*, 17(47), 1-18.

Research on sexual violence is often conducted within the qualitative paradigm. However, many writers have described the lack of specific detail provided with regard to decisions and processes involved in transcribing and analyzing this type of data. In this article, I will provide a description and discussion of the organization, categorization, and analysis of in-depth interviews in a recent study of women who sexually abused children. The study revealed common experiences of sexual and other abuse in the women's childhood and adult relationships. These experiences created vulnerabilities that appeared to play a significant role in the women's offenses. Although abused women rarely abuse others, the findings suggest that supporting and providing therapy to victims of abuse might minimize the potential for such outcomes.

Bader, S. M., Welsh, R., & Scalora, M. J. (2010). Recidivism among female child molesters. *Violence and Victims*, 25(3), 349-362. DOI:10.1891/0886-6708.25.3.349

During recent years, research about female sexual offender recidivism rates using official criminal justice records has increased. Although informative, rearrest or conviction rates may be insufficient for this population. This study examines two potential outcome measures for accurately studying recidivism among 57 female sexual offenders; a criminal recidivism measure based on formal legal charges and a reported recidivism measure based on child welfare reports. Based on the criminal recidivism outcome measure, 10 (17.5%) women were charged for a subsequent sexual crime. The broader reported recidivism measure identified six additional women with subsequent contact with police or child welfare agencies for sexually inappropriate behaviors. There were no significant differences found between the 41 nonrecidivists and the 16 recidivists. The implications of these findings are discussed.

Knoll, J. (2010). Teacher sexual misconduct: Grooming patterns and female offenders. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 19(4), 371-386. DOI:10.1080/10538712.2010.495047

Educator sexual misconduct has received increasing attention over the past decade. The attention has exposed a number of concerning issues, including a lack of formal research in the area and difficulties in recognizing and prosecuting cases. Public responses to high profile cases of sexual

misconduct involving female teachers suggest that gender-biased views on sex offenders remain prominent in society. This article will review the literature on female teacher sexual misconduct in addition to what is known about grooming patterns and warning signs. Finally, current dilemmas in resolving cases of educator sexual misconduct will be discussed, and basic prevention strategies will be recommended.

Martellozzo, E., Nehring, D., & Taylor, H. (2010). [Online child sexual abuse by female offenders: An exploratory study](#). *International Journal of Cyber Criminology*, 4(1/2), 592-609.

The expansion of the Internet and the proliferation of information technologies have created new opportunities for the sexual abuse of children. Sex offenders use the Internet to access and distribute indecent images of children and to select victims to groom for the purpose of abuse (Davidson & Gottschalk 2010; Martellozzo, 2010; Martellozzo & Taylor, 2009; Quayle, Erooga, Wright, Taylor, & Harbinson, 2006). It is a commonly held assumption, stated implicitly or explicitly in both public debates and scholarly research, that child sexual abuse is a typically male crime, in so far as offenders are generally held to be men and the level of sexual aggression involved in their offences is seen as closely related to masculine behaviour. This article aims to increase knowledge and understanding of the problem of online child sexual abuse by female offenders. As rehearsed in the literature (Martellozzo, 2011; Webster, Davidson, Bifulco, Pham, & Caretti, 2009), online child sexual abuse is predominantly a crime committed by men and only a small percentage of females sexually abuse children through the Internet. This article presents findings from analysis of qualitative data collected at the Paedophile Unit at the London Metropolitan Police.

Mellor, D., & Deering, R. (2010). Professional response and attitudes toward female-perpetrated child sexual abuse: a study of psychologists, psychiatrists, probationary psychologists and child protection workers. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 16(5), 415-438.
DOI:10.1080/10683160902776850

Previous studies have suggested that lay people and professionals both tend to deny or minimise female-perpetrated sexual abuse of children. However, such abuse has been shown to have negative impacts on the victims. This study investigated whether professionals who might

work with victims or perpetrators of childhood sexual abuse show a bias in processing scenarios and making decisions when confronted such abuse. A sample of 231 psychiatrists, psychologists, probationary psychologists and child protection workers responded to variations in vignettes in which women and men offended against children, and completed a questionnaire assessing attitudes to women's sexually abusive/offending behaviour toward children. All professional groups regarded cases involving female perpetrators of child sexual abuse as serious and deserving of professional attention. However, while there were some differences between groups, female perpetrators were more likely than male perpetrators to be considered leniently, suggesting that minimisation of female-perpetrated sexual abuse of children may persist in the professional arena. As a result, both female perpetrators of sexual abuse and their victims may go untreated, and in the case of perpetrators, their behaviour may go unsanctioned. Training for professionals to enhance their understanding of the seriousness of sexual abuse perpetrated by women is indicated.

Wijkman, M., Bijleveld, C., & Hendriks, J. (2010). [Women don't do such things! Characteristics of female sex offenders and offender types](#). *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 22(2), 135-156. DOI:10.1177/1079063210363826

The authors studied offender, offense, and victim characteristics in a cohort of 111 adult female sex offenders comprising all female sex offenders known to the criminal justice authorities in the Netherlands between 1994 and 2005. In 77% of the cases, the female sex offenders had abused children; almost two thirds of the women had co-offended with a male co-offender. Their backgrounds are on average problematic with sexual abuse being prominent (31%); mental disorders were also prominent (59%). Using multiple correspondence analysis, the authors distinguished four prototypical offender types. They identified the young assaulter and the rapist who are relatively young solo offenders. Two prototypes, the psychologically disturbed co-offender and the passive mother, comprise older women. They mostly abused their own children together with their male/intimate partner. These prototypes partly overlap with previous typologies. The authors discuss implications for theory and treatment.

Beech, A. R., Parrett, N., Ward, T., & Fisher, D. (2009). Assessing female sexual offenders' motivations and cognitions: An exploratory study. *Psychology, Crime & Law, 15*(2-3), 201-216. DOI:10.1080/10683160802190921

Semi-structured interviews eliciting cognitions and motivations were carried out with 15 incarcerated female child sexual abusers (nearly 50% of the current UK female sexual offender prison population). Qualitative analysis indicated that four of the five motivational schemas (implicit theories) suggested by Ward (Ward, 2000; Ward & Keenan, 1999) to underlie male sexual offenders' cognitions could be clearly identified in women, these were: Uncontrollability (UN, identified in 87% of participants), Dangerous world (DW, 53%), Children as sexual objects (CSO, 47%) and Nature of harm (NH, 20%). Entitlement, the final implicit theory (IT), commonly found in males, was not identified in any participants in the sample. Further analysis indicated that there were four main motivational types of offender based on combinations of these ITs. These were: (1) presence of DW/CSO, indicating sexual motivation and cognitions with fear of violence; (2) presence of DW/no CSO, indicating fear of violence with no sexual cognition or motivation; (3) presence of CSO/no DW, indicating sexual motivation and cognition; the NH IT also strongly featured in this group; and (4) presence of UN/no DW or CSO, indicating lack of control, sometimes with sense of protection for the victim. Suggestions are made on how the results can inform theoretical developments in the field as well as policy and practice.

Gannon, T. A., & Rose, M. R. (2009). [Offence-related interpretative bias in female child molesters: A preliminary study](#). *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment, 21*(2), 194-207. DOI:10.1177/1079063209332236

Although female child molesters are hypothesized to hold offense-supportive cognitions that facilitate their sexual offenses, there have been no implicit social-cognitive studies used to investigate this. Using an implicit memory recognition paradigm, it is shown that female child molesters—relative to female offender controls—are more likely to interpret ambiguous information about males in a threatening manner. These results suggest that female child molesters hold a series of beliefs about men's dangerousness and power. The authors discuss these results and explore the possibility that these beliefs about male dangerousness are related to a risk of abusing children.

Gannon, T. A., Rose, M. R., & Williams, S. E. (2009). Do female child molesters implicitly associate children and sex? A preliminary investigation. *Journal of Sexual Aggression, 15*(1), 55-61. DOI:10.1080/13552600802452559

A number of studies using the Implicit Association Test have shown successfully that male child molesters hold cognitive associations between children and sexual concepts. The results of such studies appear to indicate that male child molesters hold core cognitive associations that play some part in facilitating and/or maintaining sexual advances towards children. Given the relative success of the Implicit Association Test with male child molesters, we used this test with 17 female child molesters. The results showed that female child molesters did not differ from non-sexual offending females on the Implicit Association Test. In fact, female child molesters appeared more likely to associate adults with sexual concepts rather than children. We discuss these findings in relation to current assessment and treatment with female child molesters.

Peter, T. (2009). [Exploring taboos comparing male-and female-perpetrated child sexual abuse](#). *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 24*(7), 1111-1128. DOI:10.1177/0886260508322194

The objective of this article is to compare male- and female-perpetrated sexual abuse in terms of victim and abuser characteristics, type of abuse, family structure, and worker information. Bivariate tests of significance were performed on the 1998 Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, which included 308 male and 37 female abusers. Results show a prevalence rate of 10.7% for female-perpetrated sexual abuse. Girls were more likely to be victimized for both male- and female-perpetrated sexual violence and females tended to abuse younger children. The majority of children came from families with lower socioeconomic status although one in five victims of female-perpetrated sexual abuse came from middle-class homes. Referrals to child welfare agencies were more likely to be made by nonprofessionals when females abused.

Angelides, S. (2008). Sexual offences against 'children' and the question of judicial gender bias. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 23(57), 359-373. DOI:10.1080/08164640802233302

Fromuth, M. E., & Holt, A. R. (2008). Perception of teacher sexual misconduct by age of student. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 17(2), 163-179.
DOI:10.1080/10538710801916663

This study explored whether student age influenced perceptions of teacher sexual misconduct. Participants (300 undergraduates) read scenarios depicting teacher sexual misconduct in which the student's age was varied (9, 12, 15), and then answered questions about their perceptions. Data were analyzed with 2 (respondent gender) \times 2 (cross-gender dyads) \times 3 (student age) MANOVAs. Experiences involving the youngest student were viewed as the most abusive, followed by the 12-year-old, and the 15-year-old. Gender differences were evident, with women viewing the experiences more negatively. Scenarios involving a male teacher/female student were viewed more negatively than a female teacher/male student dyad. These findings illustrate the importance of educating students and school personnel about teacher sexual misconduct.

Gannon, T. A., & Rose, M. R. (2008). Female child sexual offenders: Towards integrating theory and practice. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 13(6), 442-461.
DOI:10.1016/j.avb.2008.07.002

Female-perpetrated child sexual abuse is beginning to be recognized as a significant problem in Western society. Despite this, however, relatively few researchers and professionals have conducted research of direct relevance for treating female child sexual offenders (FCSOs). In this review, we synthesize and update the available literature examining FCSOs' socio-demographic features, available typological distinctions, and research investigating the potential treatment needs of FCSOs. Our evaluation of the latest research suggests that researchers have spent the majority of their attention examining either socio-demographic or typological features of FCSOs at the expense of developing research investigating FCSOs' treatment requirements. We suggest that future research in this area should concentrate on developing research and adapting methods established with male sexual offenders to enable adequate and informative investigation of FCSOs' treatment needs. We anticipate that future research directed towards investigating this area will promote more effective empirically-driven clinical practice with FCSOs.

Gannon, T. A., Rose, M. R., & Ward, T. (2008). [A descriptive model of the offense process for female sexual offenders](#). *Sexual Abuse, 20*(3), 352-374. DOI:10.1177/1079063208322495

Although considerable efforts have been made to develop and validate etiological models of male sexual offending, no theory is available to guide research or practice with female sexual offenders (FSOs). In this study, the authors developed a descriptive, offense process model of female sexual offending. Systematic qualitative analyses (i.e., grounded theory) of 22 FSOs' offense interviews were used to develop a temporal model documenting the contributory roles of cognitive, behavioral, affective, and contextual factors in female sexual abuse. The model highlights notable similarities and divergences between male and female sexual offenders' vulnerability factors and offense styles. In particular, the model incorporates male co-offender and group co-offender influences and describes how these interact with vulnerability factors to generate female sexual offending. The gender-specific research and clinical implications of the model are discussed.

Strickland, S. M. (2008). [Female sex offenders exploring issues of personality, trauma, and cognitive distortions](#). *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 23*(4), 474-489. DOI:10.1177/0886260507312944

Few studies have investigated the characteristics of female sex offenders and factors and/or causes of female deviance. Research to date has been descriptive in nature, with few comparison studies. Using a correlational design and three valid instruments, female sexual offenders and a matched group of female nonsexual offenders are compared in the areas of personality disorders, chemical dependency, childhood trauma, sexual trauma, emotional neediness, cognitive distortions, and social competence. A sample of 130 incarcerated females, 60 sex offenders, and 70 nonsexual offenders is used. Significant results are found in the areas of total childhood trauma and severity of sexual abuse suffered and social and sexual adequacy. No differences are found in abuse of substances, personality disorders, emotional neediness, or cognitive distortions.

Vandiver, D. M., Dial, K. C., & Worley, R. M. (2008). [A qualitative assessment of registered female sex offenders judicial processing experiences and perceived effects of a public registry](#). *Criminal Justice Review, 33*(2), 177-198. DOI:10.1177/0734016808318448

In this study, the effect that the sex offender registry has had on female sex offenders in two states is explored. In-depth personal interviews were conducted with nine registered female sex offenders

from Illinois and Texas. Questions were asked about the arrest that led to registration and the effect that sex offender registration statutes have had on their lives. Braithwaite's crime, shame, and reintegration theory was relied on to assess the extent to which the processes described in his theory occurred in this sample. The focus of many of the questions included whether the women were able to reintegrate into their communities or if they were stigmatized. It was found that every respondent reported at least one negative effect on her life as a result of being identified on the public registry. Also, many of the stigmatization processes described by Braithwaite were applicable to the interviewed women.

Bunting, L. (2007). Dealing with a problem that doesn't exist? Professional responses to female perpetrated child sexual abuse. *Child Abuse Review*, 16(4), 252-267.
DOI:10.1002/car.982

The literature highlights that the way in which professionals identify and respond to child sexual abuse has been shown to be influenced by the gender of the perpetrator. Equally, whilst similar to male sex offending in terms of the intrusiveness and seriousness of the abuse, some aspects of female sex offending can cause particular problems for professionals. The fact that some sexual abuse can be disguised as childcare can make it difficult for professionals to identify this type of abuse whilst high rates of co-offending bring additional difficulties in determining the degree of female involvement and assigning responsibility. The survey findings indicate that risk assessment tools for female sex offenders is a key area requiring development and point towards small inconsistencies in the current practice of risk assessing females in the community. The survey also identifies the lack of treatment programmes for this group of offenders as well as drawing attention to the need for national policies and procedures, staff training and the identification of areas of good practice. Increased discussion and debate about how best to work with this group of sex offenders is also required. Copyright © 2007 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Ford, H. (2006). *Woman who sexually abuse children*. John Wiley & Sons.

Vandiver, D. M. (2006). Female sex offenders: A comparison of solo offenders and co-offenders. *Violence and Victims, 21*(3), 339-354. DOI:10.1891/vivi.21.3.339

Even though much of the prior sex offender literature focuses on males, recent research has included females as offenders. Such research, however, has been limited by small sample sizes. Several researchers have proposed typologies of female sex offenders that include both females who act alone (i.e., solo offenders) and females who act with another person (i.e., co-offenders), often a male. The current research includes a cross-national sample of 123 females who were solo offenders and 104 who were co-offenders. It was found that the two groups of females were not significantly different in regard to their age, race, time of offense, and the location of the offense. Co-offenders were more likely than solo offenders to have more than one victim, to have both male and female victims, to be related to the victim, and to have a nonsexual offense in addition to the sexual offense listed.

Denov, M. S. (2004). [The long-term effects of child sexual abuse by female perpetrators: A qualitative study of male and female victims](#). *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 19*(10), 1137-1156. DOI:10.1177/0886260504269093

Although the long-term effects of sexual abuse by men have been studied extensively, minimal research has explored the effects of sexual abuse by women. This qualitative study explores the experience and long-term impact of sexual abuse by women. The data were derived from in-depth interviews with 14 adult victims (7 men, 7 women) of child sexual abuse by females. Most respondents reported severe sexual abuse by their mothers. The vast majority of participants reported that the experience of female-perpetrated sexual abuse was harmful and damaging. As a result of the sexual abuse, male and female respondents reported long-term difficulties with substance abuse, self-injury, suicide, depression, rage, strained relationships with women, self-concept and identity issues, and a discomfort with sex. In light of the popular and professional perceptions that sexual abuse by women is relatively harmless as compared to sexual abuse by men, the implications of these long-term effects are discussed, particularly in relation to professionals working in the area of child sexual abuse.

Vandiver, D. M., & Kercher, G. (2004). Offender and victim characteristics of registered female sexual offenders in Texas: A proposed typology of female sexual offenders. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 16(2), 121-137.
DOI:10.1023/B:SEBU.0000023061.77061.17

Victim and offender characteristic of all registered adult female sexual offenders in Texas (N D 471) were examined. The most common offenses the females were arrested for were indecency with a child—sexual contact, sexual assault on a child, and aggravated sexual assault on a child. The majority (88%) of the females were Caucasian and the ages ranged from 18 to 77 (M D 32). The results of Hierarchical Loglinear Modeling yielded a complex relationship between offender and victim characteristics; thus, identification of preferred victims is mitigated by more than one variable. Additionally, the employment of cluster analysis yielded 6 types of female sexual offenders. The most common group includes 146 offenders, heterosexual nurturers. They were the least likely to have an arrest for a sexual assault. The victims were males who averaged 12 years of age. The other types of offenders included, noncriminal homosexual offenders, female sexual predators, young adult child exploiters, homosexual criminals, and aggressive homosexual offenders.

Denov, M. S. (2003). The myth of innocence: Sexual scripts and the recognition of child sexual abuse by female perpetrators. *Journal of Sex Research*, 40(3), 303-314.
DOI:10.1080/00224490309552195

Although child sexual abuse has been studied extensively, minimal attention has been paid to sexual abuse by females. This paper explores the prevalence of female sex offending and reveals the paradoxes that exist within the available data. Moreover, it highlights the role of traditional sexual scripts in impeding the official recognition of the problem. Traditional sexual scripts, particularly the perception of females as sexually passive, harmless, and innocent, appear not only to have influenced broader societal views concerning sexuality and sexual abuse but also to have permeated the criminal law, victim reporting practices, and professional responses to female sex offending. The implicit denial of women's potential for sexual aggression within these three domains may ultimately contribute to the underrecognition of the problem in official sources.

Nathan, P., & Ward, T. (2002). Female sex offenders: Clinical and demographic features. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 8(1), 5-21. DOI:10.1080/13552600208413329

This paper provides clinical and demographic data on 12 female child sex offenders in the correctional system in Victoria. Information was obtained through clinical assessments completed whilst women were incarcerated or in the community setting and from sentencing comments. An analysis of this information revealed that the characteristics of these women and their offences generally fitted the profile of female sex offenders described in the current literature. However, the findings also revealed that the women differed in some respects to the typical portrayal of female sex offenders. Although the majority of women were co-offenders with males, only a few females appeared coerced and motivated by fear. In the group of male accompanied offences, women were also motivated by rejection and revenge, leading to the development and extension of a new category - the male accompanied: rejected/revengeful.

Denov, M. S. (2001). Culture of denial: Exploring professional perspectives on female sex offending. *Canadian Journal of Criminology*, 43(3), 303-329. DOI:10.3138/cjcrim.43.3.303

Nathan, P., & Ward, T. (2001). Females who sexually abuse children: Assessment and treatment issues. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 8(1), 44-55. DOI:10.1080/13218710109525003

This paper addresses the neglected and under-researched subject of female sex offenders who abuse children. More specifically, it provides a review of the nature of female sexual abuse of children and considers key issues associated with its assessment and treatment. In particular, we consider the important question of typology and its relationship to treatment. Our major aim is to provide an overview of the important factors and issues associated with this poorly understood group of offenders, rather than provide an exhaustive review of the literature.

Miccio-Fonseca, L. C. (2000). Adult and adolescent female sex offenders: Experiences compared to other female and male sex offenders. *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality*, 11(3), 75-88. DOI:10.1300/J056v11n03_08

Female sex offenders (N = 18) were compared with male sex offenders (N = 332) and with females who were not sex offender (N = 215) on various experiences in their personal histories.

Female sex offenders who were victims of sexual abuse were compared to female sex offenders who were not. The present study is part of a comprehensive, seven-year research project described elsewhere (Miccio-Fonseca 1995, 1996). The project dealt with comparative experiences and characteristics of adult and adolescent sex offenders, victims, and their families. The groups in the present study were analyzed with regard to an array of variables, including psychological, medical, gynecological urological, drug, law enforcement, and homicidal and suicidal histories. Other variables studied were sexual difficulties and dysfunctions, sexual health, and life stressors. Female and male sex offenders differed significantly on numerous psychological, life-stressor, and sexual variables. Female sex offender differed significantly from females who were not sex offenders on the same sets of variables, and they were significantly younger. Implications for clinical practice with this population are discussed.

Grayston, A. D., & De Luca, R. V. (1999). Female perpetrators of child sexual abuse: A review of the clinical and empirical literature. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 4*(1), 93-106. DOI:10.1016/S1359-1789(98)00014-7

Although women have long been viewed as offenders in cases of physical child abuse, it is only recently that clinicians and researchers have begun to seriously consider the problem of female-perpetrated sexual abuse of children. The purpose of the present paper is to review existing clinical and empirical literature on female sex offenders, in order to develop a summary profile of female perpetrators that may be of value to professionals involved in the assessment and treatment process.

Hetherington, J. (1999). The idealization of women: Its role in the minimization of child sexual abuse by females. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 23*(2), 161-174. DOI:10.1016/S0145-2134(98)00119-7

The aim was to review the literature on female perpetrated child sexual abuse by highlighting how cultural myths about women inhibit recognition of this much hidden phenomenon. Three sections are presented. Part 1 evaluates evidence concerning beliefs about child sexual abuse by women which minimize the problem. Part 2 provides a theoretical account of psychological processes that are hypothesized to maintain these beliefs. Part 3 illustrates that professionals working in the area of child sexual abuse are not immune to these processes. As a result, recommendations for future

professional practices are made. The paper demonstrates that in the context of what is known about child sexual abuse, cultural beliefs which serve to idealize women and minimize their potential harm to children are largely invalid. Individuals are urged to suspend their disbelief about female perpetrated child sexual abuse. Denial of the phenomenon may result in it continuing to be under-reported and trivialized. As this persists the price will ultimately be paid by victims of on-going abuse and survivors of past victimization whose suffering will be compounded by disparagement of the issue.

Robinson, S. (1998). From victim to offender: Female offenders of child sexual abuse. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 6(1), 59-73 DOI:10.1023/A:1008634516803

Historically, women have been seen to have a much lower recorded rate of crime than men. In the area of child sexual abuse, women have figured prominently in official statistics as victims but have had virtually no official recognition as offenders. It is difficult for many people to accept that women do sexually abuse children and this can result in discounting by personnel in child protection services and police. This article discusses female offenders of child sexual abuse and the way in which these cases are processed by the criminal justice system.

Peluso, E., & Putnam, N. (1996). Case study: Sexual abuse of boys by females. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 35(1), 51-54.
DOI:10.1097/00004583-199601000-00012

Two examples of boys who experienced unwanted sexual contact with females are presented. The literature regarding this type of abuse is reviewed and supports the finding that such contact is relatively common and may have definite negative consequences for the victim. Conventional interview techniques can frequently fail to uncover these occurrences. Clinical, psychological, and sociocultural factors contribute to difficulty eliciting the data. Even when young males attempt to report unwanted sexual contact, care givers may fail to respond in a manner indicating sensitivity to the trauma. Further research could help to determine the long-term consequences of such experiences in male children and adolescents.

Saradjian, J. & Hanks, H. G. I. (1996). *Women who sexually abuse children: From research to clinical practice*. John Wiley & Sons.

Kaufman, K. L., Wallace, A. M., Johnson, C. F., & Reeder, M. L. (1995). [Comparing female and male perpetrators' modus operandi victims' reports of sexual abuse](#). *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *10*(3), 322-333. DOI:10.1177/088626095010003006

Although a sizable percentage of all sexual abuse in the United States is perpetrated by females, until recently the subject of sexual offending by this population has been largely overlooked. In this study, reports of child sexual abuse by 53 victims of female perpetrators were compared with reports by a group of 53 victims of male perpetrators. Victims were matched for age, race, and sex. The purpose of this investigation was to gain information about similarities and differences in the modus operandi of female and male offenders. Females were more often involved with males in co-offender situations. They were also more likely to exploit their victims than males. Male offenders were reported to be more sexually invasive in their abuse and were more likely to use bribes to obtain victim cooperation than females.

Rudin, M. M., Zalewski, C., & Bodmer-Turner, J. (1995). Characteristics of child sexual abuse victims according to perpetrator gender. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *19*(8), 963-973. DOI:10.1016/0145-2134(95)00058-G

Characteristics of child sexual abuse victims were determined through a comparison of 87 victims of lone female perpetrators to 93 victims of lone male perpetrators according to age, gender, and relationship of perpetrator to the victim. Lone female perpetrators abused children 3.3 years younger ($M = 6.0$ years) than lone male perpetrators ($M = 9.3$ years). Both lone female and lone male perpetrators abused more girls (62%, 76%, respectively) than boys. Female perpetrators were more likely to be caretakers than male perpetrators, whereas male perpetrators were more likely to be strangers than female perpetrators. Lastly, lone female perpetrators, lone male perpetrators, and male/female coperpetrators did not differ regarding severity of abuse. Thus, contrary to popular assumption, abuse by female perpetrators was *not* less severe than abuse by male perpetrators.

Green, A. H., & Kaplan, M. S. (1994). Psychiatric impairment and childhood victimization experiences in female child molesters. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 33(7), 954-961. DOI:10.1097/00004583-199409000-00004

To assess psychiatric impairment and childhood victimization experiences in female child molesters. Eleven incarcerated female child molesters were compared to 11 women imprisoned for nonsexual offenses as to their psychiatric diagnoses based on interviews with the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-III-R, Outpatient Version (SCID-OP), the SCID II for Personality Disorders, and the Harvard-Upjohn Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Interview. A family and sexual history with a description of childhood victimization experiences was also obtained by using the Wyatt Sexual History Questionnaire. The majority of the subjects in each group exhibited major depression, alcohol/substance abuse, and PTSD, but the sexual offenders demonstrated more psychiatric impairment on the Global Assessment of Functioning Scale on the SCID-OP. The sexual offenders demonstrated a higher incidence of childhood physical and sexual abuse within the family than the comparison group, and these victimization experiences were more severe and more frequently associated with PTSD. The sexual offenders and the comparison women described negative relationships with parents and caretakers, and with spouses or boyfriends. However, the sexual offenders perceived their parents as more abusive, while the comparison women regarded their parents as more neglecting. Incarcerated female child molesters exhibited greater psychiatric impairment and more intra-familial physical and sexual abuse than a comparison group of women imprisoned for nonsexual offenses.

Banning, A. (1989). Mother-son incest: Confronting a prejudice. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 13(4), 563-570. DOI:10.1016/0145-2134(89)90060-4

This paper examines the proposition that the incidence of child sexual abuse by female perpetrators is underestimated. This may be due to a culturally based unwillingness to believe that women commit such acts. Female sexual offenders have been little studied and poorly understood. Until recently mother-child incest was considered to be virtually nonexistent and there remains a huge discrepancy in the incidence of male and female offenders. The predisposing factors contributing to this situation are examined for both men and women and an illustrative case history of mother-son incest is used to highlight our prejudices. The tentative conclusions reached are that (1) we

underestimate the incidence of sexual abuse of male and female children by women and that (2) the changing roles of men and women in Western societies may lead to an increase in such abuse.

Faller, K. C. (1987). Women who sexually abuse children. *Violence and Victims*, 2(4), 263-276.
DOI:10.1891/0886-6708.2.4.263

This article describes a clinical sample of 40 women who sexually abused 63 children. Sixty percent of the female perpetrators victimized two or more children. Almost three-fourths of these women sexually maltreated children in polyincestuous family situations. More than four-fifths were mothers to at least one of their victims. The most common form of sexual activity was group sex; the next most common was fondling. The mean age of these women was a little over 26; they were poor and poorly educated. Their victims were also young, having a mean age of 6.4 years at the time the case was identified. About two-thirds of the victims were female and one-third were male. Female perpetrators evidenced marked difficulties in psychological and social functioning. About half had mental problems, both retardation and psychotic illness. More than half had chemical dependency problems, and close to three-fourths had maltreated their victims in other ways in addition to the sexual abuse.