Title: Group Child Sexual Exploitation: How and Why Does it Happen?

Part One: Critical Literature Review

What Do We Know About Adults Committing Group Child Sexual Exploitation Offences?

Part Two: Research Report

Norm, whose norm? Group Child Sexual Exploitation: How and Why does it happen?

Part Three: Critical Appraisal of the Research

Part Four: Service Evaluation

What motivates people to become support volunteers, mentoring peers through Offending Behaviour Programmes in prison, and how does the role match their expectations?

Portfolio submitted for the degree of

Applied Psychology:

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by

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Sarah Pancholi: Portfolio for the Degree of Doctor of Psychology (PsyD)

Abstract

This portfolio is comprised of four parts: A literature review, a research report, a critical appraisal of the research and a service evaluation.

The literature review investigated adult Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) globally, analysing factors contributing to people's offending behaviour. Twelve studies were included. There were variable definitions of CSE and a paucity of high-quality research. Results indicated common psychological themes such as cognitive distortions, group stages and ways of operating, and systemic issues like socio-economic conditions and subcultural norms that are a catalyst for CSE.

The research analysed interviews with sixteen serving prisoners convicted of group CSE in the UK. Data was analysed using a constructivist, grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014). Multiple adverse life experiences and criminal versatility were common. Those offending against children did so because of a pervasive sexual interest, which was the main function of their group involvement. Conversely, for people offending against teenagers, group involvement satisfied a need for kinship. CSE was part of a lifestyle that included sex as a transaction. The offending was incidental to group membership.

The critical appraisal analysed strengths and limitations of the research. The interviews produced rich data. The painstaking analytical approach and methodological rigour made the analysis insightful and thorough. The project's practical applications were apparent. Some participants were under-represented; females, high-level organised groups and the un-convicted. These should be considered preliminary findings and future research should seek to clarify whether they are representative.

The service evaluation analysed the success of a mentor scheme for serving prisoners supporting peers attending Offending Behaviour Programmes. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clark, 2013) revealed their motivations were altruistic and mutually beneficial. They gained positive, sometimes transformational benefits from supporting others. This is consistent with desistance literature about the need to be valued in order to be rehabilitated (Maruna, 2001; Garcia, 2016).

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for any other academic award.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I had like to extend a huge thankyou to Chloe Roberts, nee Whatson, for daring me to take on a doctorate alongside the day job. It was only my fierce sense of competition that meant I couldn't resist taking it on, so thank you for the inspiration, Dr Roberts!

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List of Abbreviations

ACCT: Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork

BPS: British Psychological Society

CEOP: Child Exploitation and Online Protection

CSE: Child Sexual Exploitation

FANI: Free Association Narrative Interview

HCPC: Health and Care Professions Council

HMPPS: Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service

NOMS: National Offender Management System

NRC: National Research Committee

OASys: Offender Assessment System

UK: United Kingdom

USA: United States of America

<div align="center">**Section 1: Literature Review**</div>

Abstract

This literature review critically evaluates contemporary research into the perpetrators of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) by groups, to contextualise the issue globally. Limitations and methodological issues are discussed, to indicate the extent to which the literature defines, understands and communicates the nuances involved in this type of offending. Findings are integrated into themes, indicating different ways in which exploitative sexual practices take place within subcultures around the world with common psychological, group, contextual and systemic processes that create the conditions for it to occur. Finally, the review draws everything together by evaluating strengths and limitations of the literature base and implications for next research steps and policy development.

Keywords: child sexual exploitation, CSE, groom, grooming, gangs, groups, multiple perpetrators

Background and Rationale

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is an endemic international issue. ECPAT International (2020) is working in 96 countries to tackle it, and to date, Interpol's CSE database has helped identify 19,400 victims worldwide (Interpol, 2020). The issue of group CSE in England was raised onto the political d news anagenda relatively recently, by campaigners working with victims and CSE survivors and several high-profile cases (Barnardos, 2011; CEOP, 2013; Jago, Arocha, Brodie, Melrose, Pearce and Warrington, 2011; Jay, 2014). Barnardos (2011) called for a National Action Plan because of the scale of the issue. An Inquiry by the Children's Commissioner highlighted 2,409 children known to be

victims of group CSE, and a further 16,500 at risk (Berelowitz, Clifton, Firmimin, Gulyurtlu and Edwards, 2013). They called for a focus on CSE by Government departments, and a commitment to address it (Berelowitz et. al., 2013).

But what exactly is CSE? In England and Wales, The Sexual Offences Act 2003 enshrined several relevant offences in the law; arranging or facilitating commission of a child sexual offence, causing or inciting child prostitution or pornography, and trafficking. The most recent definition of CSE published by the Department of Education (2017) defines it as: "a form of child sexual abuse where an individual or group, takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage, or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator." (Department of Education, 2017).

The strength of this definition is that it expanded the previous definition (HM Government, 2009), to emphasise the coercive element of "grooming" behaviour, designed to help professionals spot the signs of CSE and empower authorities to intervene. However, the limitation is that it is not entirely clear how CSE is easily distinguishable from Child Sexual Abuse, which is also characterised by grooming behaviour and can be carried out by groups. This is complicated by the expansion of the definition to include non-tangible gains like status, which are quite abstract and difficult to prove. Add to that the dynamics created by a coercive power imbalance and this is a difficult crime to prosecute.

As a result, most research and policy focus has been on identifying victim characteristics and vulnerabilities (Cockbain, Ashby and Brayley, 2017), improving safeguarding and having more informed and systematic professional responses to victims (Appleton, 2014; Bovarnick and Scott, 2017; McKibbin, 2017; Pearce, 2014; Sidebotham, 2017). The priority has been to improve strategies to safeguard and work with survivors. This evidence has now led to a more comprehensive and evidence-based strategy for tackling the problem from a young people's perspective (Department of Education, 2017). One consequence of this emphasis on victim safeguarding is that although there is much more UK research on supporting and working with victims, there is much less focussed on understanding the reasons behind perpetration. For policy makers, this limits the ability to formulate an evidence-based response to prevention, as well as apprehension, prosecution, intervention and rehabilitation of groups of people convicted of these crimes (Farmer, 2015).

There have been some attempts to understand group sexual offending using psychological theory (Harkins and Dixon, 2010; da Silva, Woodhams and Harkins, 2015). Harkins and Dixon (2010) propose a multifactorial framework for understanding group sexual offending against adults and children, drawing from various group behaviour theories like Social Comparison Theory and Social Dominance Theory (Harkins and Dixon, 2010). They propose that offences against children are "likely", or "seemingly" driven by sexual deviance and distorted attitudes, with group involvement an attempt to corroborate their behaviour as a social norm.

Building on this, da Silva et. al (2015) emphasise the importance of the juxtaposition of the individual, sociocultural and situational contexts to explain group processes in relation to group sexual offences. As Zimbardo (2007) argues, although the law, and Criminal Justice emphasises individual dispositional factors to apportion blame for crime, this neglects the situational and systemic factors that also contribute to offending behaviour (Zimbardo, 2007). But is this the same for CSE group offending specifically?

This literature review takes a systematic approach (suggested by Boland, Cherry and Dickson, 2017) to look at international perspectives on the perpetration of CSE by groups. By synthesising existing research concerned with understanding perpetrators around the world, the intention is to critically evaluate contemporary literature on this topic in terms of methodology, scope, breadth and generalisability of findings. Themes are drawn together to present a coherent and logical picture of our current understanding of this phenomenon generally. This is intended to place the UK debate in a global context, assessing the contributions of a broad range of research to our understanding of CSE, and offer suggestions for further research.

Methods

Search Strategy

The search was conducted using a systematic approach (Boland et. al., 2017).

Databases most likely to contain articles on group CSE were searched: Criminal

Justice Database, Applied Social Sciences index and Abstracts, PsychArticles

and PsychINFO. Findings were exported into Refworks, screened for duplicates

and catalogued systematically according to inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Because of the lack of research meeting the criteria, the search was expanded

by citation chaining, to source further relevant research cited within references.

Search terms

Search terms were devised to find the most relevant articles, even if the actual

words Child Sexual Exploitation did not appear specifically in the title.

child sexual exploitation, *OR* CSE, *OR* groom*

The initial search brought back a lot of information about grooming primates,
hence the string

NOT animal OR primate OR monkey

was added to ensure only studies related to human participants would be
retrieved.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To find the most relevant, recent, highest-quality articles available, the following criteria were applied:

Inclusion criteria:
- Scholarly, peer reviewed articles
- Published within the last decade (2008-2019)
- Relating to Child Sexual Exploitation
- Concerning offences with more than one perpetrator
- With a contact component to the offending

Exclusion Criteria:
- Sole focus on victims and/or professional responses to victims
- No information on people committing CSE offences
- Book chapters
- Unpublished works; grey literature (on reflection, this limited the results)
- Non-English language not readily translatable online

Screening and Selection

Initial searches revealed 1,845 articles for screening, after removal of duplicates. Screening of titles and abstracts for relevance and inclusion criteria left 262 full text potentially relevant articles. On examination, most were focussed on victim issues and offered nothing about people committing the offences. After screening those out, finally 12 articles were selected for appraisal, as described in the PRISMA Flow Diagram below:

Figure 1 - Prisma Flow Diagram:

Identification

| Records identified through database searching (n = 2,597) | Additional records identified through other sources (n = 10) |

Screening

Records after duplicates removed (n = 1,845)

| Records screened (n = 1,364) | Records excluded (n = 1,034) |

Eligibility

| Full-text articles assessed for eligibility (n = 262) | Full-text articles excluded, with reasons (n = 53) |

Included

Studies included in qualitative synthesis (n = 10)

Studies included in quantitative synthesis (n = 2)

From: Moher D, Liberati A, Tetzlaff J, Altman DG, The PRISMA Group (2009). *P*referred *R*eporting *I*tems for *S*ystematic Reviews and *M*eta-*A*nalyses: The PRISMA Statement. PLoS Med 6(7): e1000097. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed1000097

In relation to quality, qualitative articles were assessed using the framework by Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis and Dillon (2003). This analysis revealed variability in terms of design defensibility, methodological rigour and contribution to the field. Similarly, with quantitative papers, assessment using a Quality Assessment Tool for Quantitative Studies revealed limitations (Effective Public Health Practice

Project, 1998). Both quantitative studies were assessed as having moderately good methodologies, scoring 50% (9/18).

However, due to the sparsity of research focusing particularly on people committing CSE offences, all papers meeting inclusion criteria are included for discussion. It is acknowledged this method deviates from the strict conventions of a systematic review, meaning the included articles are of variable quality and depth of analysis. However, this variability forms part of the discussion about the available evidence, to highlight gaps and stimulate further, high quality research. Twelve peer reviewed papers were included in the final appraisal.

Table 1 - Results

Authors, date, Country	Title / CSE Definition	Purpose/Aim	Method	Main findings	Strengths and Limitations	Themes
Bach, J. E. and Litham, S. D. A. (2017) USA/Germany	"Kind regards": an examination of one buyer's attempt to purchase a trafficked child for sex. Commercial CSE Money for victim	Set out to examine cognitive distortions within correspondence as an in-road to understanding the perpetrator's perspective on buying a child for sex.	Single case study, qualitative narrative analysis of court transcripts detailing mainly e-mail correspondence between the potential perpetrator and the undercover agent posing as a "pimp" or trafficker/organiser of the encounter.	The perpetrator purchased gifts to give the 11yr old child; suggested this meant he wanted to "earn" affection" and thought the child then owed him sex. He asked for photos of the child smiling and wearing a bathing suit, to give illusion of consent and lack of harm. Wants them to smile and act like she enjoys it and draw him a picture. Juxtaposition of transactional business-like language coupled with the bondage gear and sedatives in his suitcase.	Strengths; gave in-depth insights into the interaction the person is trying to create, including some of the inconsistencies between his fantasy and his behaviour. Adds to the literature about the illusions created in a perpetrator's mind to justify and create fantasy where they're not causing harm. Limitations: single case study. Not direct evidence, from court transcripts used in an adversarial system where distortions are likely to occur. Not specifically about a group, but perpetrator interacting with someone they think is a co-d.	Transactional interaction; Business-like arrangement; Illusion of consent; Lack of awareness/ acknowledgement of harm
Cerqueira-Santos, E De Sousa D. A. De Melo Neto, O. C. Rocha, A. C. (2012) Brazil	Sexuality of Construction Workers: Perceptions about Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. Commercial CSE Child sex for money	Understand the reasons behind sexual exploitation of children and adolescents by Brazilian Builders	Quantitative analysis (t-tests, chi-square and regression analysis) of questionnaire data with 288 Brazilian construction workers. Comparison of perpetrators versus non-perpetrators	25.4% admitted to being involved in using child prostitutes. Involvement with prostitutes generally, drug-use and time away from home were the most important variables explaining involvement.	50% quality rating; moderately strong design on assessment criteria (scored 9/18). Strengths numbers of participants, comparison control group used to illustrate differences. Limitations, nothing said about the interaction between perpetrators or the "business" side of the exploitation, just about the contact offending.	Prevalence of CSE; Societally condoned/ tolerated; View of men as needing sex; Advocating dispassionate discourse to engage perps.

	Title / Focus	Method	Findings	Strengths & Limitations	Themes
Cerqueira-Santos, E Morais, N. A. S. Moura, A. S. H. Koller, S. H. (2008) Brazil	Children and Adolescents' Commercial Sexual Exploitation: Comparing Truck Drivers Clients and Non-Clients of Sexual "Services". Commercial CSE Child sex for money	Understand the reasons behind sexual exploitation of children and adolescents by Brazilian Truck Drivers Quantitative analysis (t-tests, chi-square and regression analysis) of questionnaire data with 239 Brazilian construction workers. Comparison of perpetrators versus non-perpetrators	35.6% admitted to being involved in using child prostitutes. Higher loading time, involvement with prostitutes generally and less awareness of children's rights Also, common cognitive distortions e.g. she's not a virgin, she looked older etc.	50% quality rating; moderately strong design on assessment criteria (scored 9/18). Strengths numbers of participants, comparison control group used to illustrate differences. Limitations, nothing said about the interaction between perpetrators or the "business" side of the exploitation, just about the contact offending.	Motivations for CSE perp. Cognitive distortions Prevalence of CSE Normalisation of CSE
Cockbain, E Brayley, H Sullivan, J (2014) UK	Towards a common framework for assessing the activity and associations of groups who sexually abuse children Gp CSE/abuse Group stages	Identify factors and processes underpinning CSA groups, activities and associations; group formation, evolution, identity and resources. Qualitative systematic situational analysis of behavioural data from archive police case files. 3 cases studied	Framework suggestive of pathways into involvement, group identity, resources derived from group involvement and evolution of the group.	Strengths in-depth analysis of the cases. Attempts to extrapolate lots of rich data. Limitations, from archive transcripts "cold cases" so no first-hand data about motivations and very small numbers of cases.	Processes and pathways in group development and evolution Group identity Resources derived
Coy, M (2016) UK	Joining the Dots on sexual exploitation of children and women: A way forward for UK policy responses Commercial CSE Men paying for sex	Draws parallels between adult women's sexual exploitation by men and the perpetuation of an environment where girls are exploited, whilst men who commit the crimes are invisible from policy. Discourse analysis of existing research findings to paint a picture of how it has focussed in on victims and left the men paying for girls' bodies completely out of policy development, save a few lines about disrupting and prosecuting.	It recommends developing more of a gendered approach to tackle the actions of men who pay for sex as a policy imperative, like the Nordic approaches focusing on intervening with perpetrators and disrupting the assumption that men should be able to buy access to women's and girls' bodies, rather than awareness and safeguarding of potential victims.	Strengths; uses data from lots of disciplines to describe the phenomenon of CSE, picks apart definitions and blurring of lines between definitions of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, trafficking and commodification of females. Helpful to suggest policy improvements. Limitations; not an empirical paper, no first-hand data. More of an opinion piece backed up with existing evidence. Doesn't account for male victims or female perps .	Discourse conflation of sexual abuse and CSE Research needs to focus on the men, not the victims. Readdress commodification of sex and youth as prize.

Author (Year) Country	Focus	Description	Methodology	Findings	Strengths / Limitations	Themes
Fortin, Paquette and Dupont (2018) Canada	From Online to Offline sexual offending; Episodes and Obstacles Grp CSE/Abuse Paedophilic interest	Explored scripts of how online offenders move between stages to work towards contact offending.	Multi-level crime script analysis of literature pertaining to online offending, using detailed analysis and abstraction from other studies.	Motivated offenders learn quickly how to access more specialised content by interacting with other "collectors", mimicking language and familiarising with methods and online identities. They can justify their actions and gain status by distributing. Those who go on to contact offending transition into grooming actual children, normalising and disinhibiting victims and/or arousing themselves ready.	Strengths; about interactions between "consumers" as a group, interactions and their functions. Explains mechanisms of progression to contact offending and nature of the online component of that scene. Limitations; uses data from different contexts and methodologies. Acknowledges not all people move through linear pathway and may perpetrate contact and online offending simultaneously.	Pathways from online to contact offending. Interaction between people perpetrating the offences. Processes involved in CSE.
Kashwera, A. C. Twikirize, J. M. (2018) Democratic Republic of Congo.	Ritualistic child sexual abuse in post-conflict Eastern DRC: Factors associated with the phenomenon and implications of social work. Ritualistic abuse War/superstition	Examination of factors associated with the resurgence of ritualistic child sexual abuse in post-conflict Eastern DRC.	Qualitative examination of primary and secondary data including interviews, focus groups and observations from 9 survivors and 13 parents or caregivers of victims.	Factors associated with RCSA in DRC are socioeconomic factors, magical practices and superstition, raping a virgin can strengthen protection rituals, heal HIV and AIDS, provide the rapist with financial and economic power, political instability and developmental factors.	Strengths, primary data and attention paid to potential motivations of perpetration. Limitations; only spoke to victims and their caregivers rather than perpetrators and small sample size to generalise.	Beliefs and misconceptions about CSE Cultural justifications Socioeconomic factors
Mooney, J. L. and Ost, S (2012) UK	Group Localised Grooming: What is it and what challenges does it pose for society and law? Grp CSE/Abuse Local grooming	Discourse analysis of legal case material, existing research, press coverage to examine GLG to explain stages of grooming and abuse process. Also recognised victims thought they had intimate Rel.	Discourse analysis from a legal perspective, looking at a broad range of literature on the topic area.	Recognises stages of grooming processes by perps, dynamics involved in development of "relationship" and how this enables the abuse, particularly of "non-ideal" victims. Recognises the difficulty of focussing on victim characteristics, perp becomes invisible. Talks about the legal challenges of trying to prosecute using SOA 2003.	Strengths: Good in-depth analysis of phenomenon of group grooming offences including dynamics and processes involved. Limitations: Because it's reliant on existing literature, it's talking about perpetrators' motivations from that perspective, so not much first-hand information about motivations.	Discussion of dynamics of grooming Invisibility of perpetrators in discourse Difficulties with definitions

Author (Year) Country	Title	Aim	Method	Description/Findings	Strengths/Limitations	Themes
Mujica, J (2013) Peru	The Microeconomics of sexual exploitation of girls and young women in the Peruvian Amazon. Commercial CSE Selling child sex	Examined social and economic dynamics underpinning the commercial sexual exploitation of female children and teenagers around the port area.	Ethnographic year-long qualitative discourse analysis, comprising of non-participant obs, in-depth interviews and legal file information. 20 interviews with male "consumers", pimps, relatives, 30 girls.	Describes operating mechanisms of the local CSE scene, with reference to its links to restaurants and bars in the port, including supply and demand economic model, "pimps" mostly relatives of the girls trying to maintain profitability by enticing men into premises, "looking after" girls' interests	Strengths; immersive data over a long period leading to a deep understanding of the phenomenon from the points of view of all involved. Limitations; localised study, so not necessarily representative more broadly, also no details about how the analysis was conducted.	Commercial dynamics in CSE. Kinship networks with a "caring" model. "buyers" want clean, well-cared for girls.
Salter, M (2012) Australia	The Role of Ritual in the Organised Abuse of Children. Ritual Grp Abuse Subculture religion	To develop a theoretical framework from which to understand the phenomenon of ritualistic abuse and its related themes.	Qualitative analysis of life story interviews with 16 survivors of ritualistic group abuse using Grounded Theory to develop a theoretical model to explain it.	Sexually abusive groups used shared rationales of religious or mythological origin to justify their organised abuse. Their psychological tactics dehumanised and degraded children to the point where they became complicit in their own abuse. Some even actively assist them in evading capture, as they're dependent on their abusers.	Strengths, in-depth analysis of cases including discussion of the dynamics of "relationships" with victims and complexity. Limitations, only talked to survivors, not perpetrators, so motivations assumed?	Shared religious or mythological justifications. Victims internalised these. Victims became complicit and dependent.
Soliman, Alsharqawi and Younis (2018) Egypt	Is Tourism Marriage of Young Girls in Egypt a Form of Child Sexual Abuse? A Family Exploitation Perspective. Commercial CSE Temporary marriage	Examines the phenomenon of short-term temporary 'marriages' of young girls by their families through agents, to sex tourists for financial gain.	Ethnographic qualitative study observing and talking to 42 parents who had entered into one of these arrangements.	Girls from deprived families, a way to make money, persuade girls do it for the sake of the family. Justify it's in the interests of the child and legitimate, culturally acceptable. Girls may not realise temporary, impressed with material luxuries. Usually v large age gap, power imbalance. Respect/understanding of girl's pov lacking from the parents and tourists. LT consequences for girls.	Strengths: First hand data from interviews talking to people involved. 42 participants, relatively large sample for a qual study. Reached saturation by the end, so in this locality, picked up the main issues. Also based interview guide on existing literature about arranged child marriage. Limitations: No detail on method of analysis or checking coding. Didn't explore relationship dynamics, or the effects on the experience.	Economically deprived families. Family commercial exploitation of girls. "buyer" sees them as sex objects. Girls impressed by luxuries reciprocal arrangements. Families justify as in the girl's interest.

Author	Title	Aim	Method	Findings	Strengths and Limitations	Themes
Trickett, L (2016) UK	Birds and Sluts: Views on young women from boys in the gang. Gang related CSE Subculture influence	Examination of reasons for normalisation of sexual abuse of young women by gang members	Qualitative analysis of 45 interviews of young male gang members in Birmingham.	Understanding the version of masculinity enacted by the young men explained their attitude towards female sexuality and availability in the context of their environment. Needs redressing	Strengths, primary data from perpetrators, contextualisation of subcultural features, good sample size given the method. Limitations, generalisability beyond that subculture not clear.	Normalisation of CSE within context. Concepts of masculinity

Geographical Location

Geographically, the twelve papers include four from the UK (Cockbain, Brayley and Sullivan, 2014; Coy, 2016; Mooney and Ost, 2012; Trickett, 2015), one each from the USA (Back and Litham, 2017) and Canada (Fortin, Paquette and Dupont, 2018), three from South America; two from Brazil (Cerqueira-Santos, Morais, Moura and Koller, 2008; Cerqueira-Santos, De Sousab, de Melo Netoa and Rocha, 2012) and one from Peru (Mujica, 2013), one from Australia (Salter, 2012) and two from Africa; one from Egypt (Soliman, Alsharqawi and Younis, 2018) and one from the Democratic Republic of Congo (Kashwera and Twikirize, 2018). Hence CSE is a recognised issue worldwide.

Methodologies

In terms of research methods, ten of the twelve are qualitative analyses and the other two quantitative. Of the four UK studies, three are analyses of secondary data; one review of existing literature (Mooney and Ost, 2012) one review of policy (Coy, 2016) and a thematic analysis of file information from three cases (Cockbain et al., 2014). Only one used primary data, interviewing perpetrators and their associates (Trickett, 2016). Trickett's exact method of analysis is not described, although there is evidence of an in-depth understanding of the subculture. However, this was a very localised group, so not necessarily generalisable. The only evidence from the USA (Back and Litam, 2017) is a narrative analysis of a single case study from file information, using very limited data. The Canadian study (Fortin, Paquette and Dupont, 2018) describes a 'script analysis', but again, fails to specify its exact method. All this research extrapolates meaning from relatively small data sets. Several papers

acknowledge methodological limitations, talking about their research as preliminary findings, intended to contribute to the dialogue (Cockbain et. al., 2014), not intended to stand alone academically (Bach and Litam, 2017).

There are other studies with arguably more robust research methods in terms of sample size. For example, there are several ethnographies; two using mixed methods; quantitative designs using parametric and non-parametric tests analysing large data sets from hundreds of Brazilian truck drivers and construction workers (Cerqueira-Santos et. al., 2008; Cerqueira-Santos et. al., 2012). These had a moderately good global quality rating of 50% using the EPHPP QA tool (see appendix 1). However, some aspects were not so good, for example there was no indication the proportion of people asked who agreed to be involved, meaning the possibility of selection bias. One qualitative study interviewed 42 parents of exploited children in Egypt (Soliman et. al., 2018).

Quality assessments revealed One study in Peru (Mujica, 2013) carried out a discourse analysis and another in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Kashwera and Twikirize (2018) a thematic content analysis, both triangulating data from interviews, observations from immersion in subcultures, alongside case information from professionals. In Australia, Salter (2012) interviewed survivors of ritualistic organised group abuse. Although not perpetrators, survivors explained in detail the workings of groups, techniques used by abusers and the grounded theory analysis appeared robust (Salter, 2012). There is a sense that these analyses and explanations convey a deeper understanding of CSE. One limitation of the ethnographies is that, participant samples are actively recruited from a

targeted population, so although they provide rich data about a particular subculture, findings do not always examine broader societal dynamics within which it operates (Cerqueira-Santos et. al., 2008; Cerqueira-Santos et. al., 2012).

A common methodological issue is that ethical, and practical barriers to reaching participants willing to discuss their CSE offending, means the majority of research examines secondary data; interview transcripts and case notes, or policies and previous literature (Back and Litam, 2017; Cockbain et al, 2014; Salter, 2012; Coy, 2016; Fortin et. al., 2018; Mooney and Ost, 2012). Bach and Litam (2017) articulate an issue inherent in using secondary data; that documents were prepared within an adversarial court system, a portrayal of either one side or the other, as evidence to confirm or deny guilt. They recognise the potential for inherent bias in accounts produced for this purpose, as opposed to an unhindered explanatory narrative (Bach and Litam, 2017). Since much of the research uses secondary data drawn from adversarial systems, this criticism could be levelled at most results.

Overall, of twelve studies appraised, only four analyse primary data collected for the purposes of analysis. Of those, one interviewed parents of children involved in CSE (Soleman et al., 2018), drawing inferences from talking to victims' families and professionals, like most UK literature (Appleton, 2014; Barnardos, 2011; Beckett et. al., 2013; Berlowitz et. al., 2013; Coy, 2016; Jay, 2014; Pearce, 2013). One uses a mixed sample including "presumed perpetrators" (Kashwera and Twikirize, 2018), stating a strength of their research that it "most likely" contains first-hand data, with no way of knowing what

proportion of participants have offended. Only three studies sought out and interviewed people who had committed CSE as the main data collection method (Cerqueira-Santos et. al., 2008; Cerqueira-Santos et al., 2012; Mujica, 2013). Overall, the literature examining the perpetration of child sexual exploitation by groups is in its infancy and lacks first-hand information, particularly from Western Societies like the UK, USA and Canada.

Differing Definitions

The broad range of studies coming under the umbrella term Child Sexual Exploitation includes many definitions and interpretations of what constitutes CSE. There are no definitive tangible distinctions made between types of child sexual abuse committed in groups (Cockbain et al, 2014; Fortin et al, 2018). This meant the foci of the papers vary hugely, from very broad to narrow and specific: There are examinations of commercialised sexual exploitation of children on industrial (Cequeriera-Santos et al., 2008; 2012) and localised scales (Mujica, 2013). There is research on long-term ritualistic sexual abuse (Kashwera and Twikirize, 2018; Salter, 2012), group development, group processes and localised grooming (Fortin et. al, 2018; Mooney and Ost, 2012) and cognitive distortions involved in procuring child sex through an intermediary (Back and Litham, 2017). This reinforced the difficulty with using an umbrella term such as CSE to describe a multitude of different kinds of offending behaviour.

Synthesis of Research Data

The research is diverse in nature and scope. Overall, it can be synthesised into three overarching themes; firstly, psychological processes involved in perpetration of CSE offending (e.g. cognitive distortions and thinking patterns of those perpetrating and victimised); secondly group processes involved in CSE (development of groups and ways of operating, including conditioning methods) and lastly contextual and cultural factors explaining CSE (e.g. socioeconomic conditions, societal sexual norms and enabling subcultural conditions). Some studies included elements of all three. However, for clarity, each theme will be considered in turn:

Individual Psychological Processes

Cognitive processes involved in perpetration

Some literature describes cognitive distortions and disinhibiting thinking patterns acting as permission-givers for people engaging in CSE offending. For instance, in Brazil, Cerquieira-Santos et al. (2008) found a significant predictor variable for truck driver "customers" compared with other respondents was "give a ride for children". They concluded hitchhiking by children can lead to people committing CSE, using justifications like "she offered it", or "she thanked me for the ride", as victim blaming myths, to normalise their behaviour and shift responsibility away from them. Cequeira-Santos et al (2008) also found a tendency among participants to "shorten" the age groups of children and adolescents and see them as being ready for sex. Cequeira-Santos et al. (2012) argued people justified their use of sexual services as a means of recreation in a hostile environment where workers have few prospects and limited opportunities for

enjoyment. The viewpoint among many Brazilian workers is when they are away from home, it is acceptable for them to engage in sexual behaviour with locals, as a commercialised reciprocal arrangement. For a significant proportion, this extends to sex with minors. The primary reason cited by Brazilian construction workers for engagement in CSE is "Lack of shame in the face" (Cerquieira-Santos et. al, 2012). There is minimal sociodemographic, or professional differences between "clients" and "non-clients", breaking down assumptions of people committing CSE as being fundamentally different to their co-workers.

But it is not just in South America where distorted thinking about CSE being reciprocal leads people to engage in CSE. In North America, Back and Litam's (2017) narrative analysis of e-mails between a "would-be client" and an undercover agent advertising the purchase of child sex revealed cognitive distortions disinhibiting sexualised behaviour, giving the illusion of consent by the child (Back and Litam, 2017). For example, the "client" asked about the girl's favourite toy, so he could purchase one and bring it with him. Back and Litam (2017) interpret this as an indication he believed he was "owed" sex for money. He also asks for pictures with her wearing a bathing suit, smiling, equating her wearing revealing clothes and smiling as indicators of consent (Back and Litam, 2017). This interpretation of his actions is further supported by the final message, seeking to satisfy himself that the girl will be well-treated and that he wants her to "enjoy this and smile about it" (Back and Litam, 2017). Again, this shows he is telling himself the child consents, and will enjoy their sexual contact. This is in line with findings of another UK study by Cockbain et al. (2014), quoting a CSE group member as saying, "he was screwing him fairly regularly and most of the

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other boys as well…so the boys were very experienced …they were perfectly happy". The illusion that children give consent freely, perpetuates repeat offending, by psychologically denying harm.

Children's Perceptions of Victimisation

In some longer-term recurrent offending, victims come to believe cognitive distortions also, in scenarios where they've been conditioned to accept it. For example, in Australia, Salter (2012) found people committing offences use religious or metaphysical justifications as the rationale for their abusive behaviours as righteous domination, reframing ritualistic sexual abuse as their duty. These psychological justifications are used as dehumanising strategies to ensure victims become complicit in their own abuse, internalising these justifications over time. For instance, victims are conditioned to think they are inferior, deserving of victimisation, or even that the abuse is their route to salvation. Most victims experience extreme abuse over such a protracted period, they describe it as a routine, mundane part of their childhoods, to be tolerated, even that it becomes part of their identity (Salter, 2012). Because of these psychological conditioning methods, victims can become active participants in abuse, sometimes even shielding their perpetrators from detection, because it is such an integral part of their lives (Salter, 2012). This is a similar finding to long-term kidnap victims, modern slavery, or abusive coercive partnerships where victims are conditioned not to leave because a psychologically co-dependent relationship develops over time, albeit highly coercive.

This evidence fits with the UK experience that the psychological grooming process involved in CSE can lead to children and adolescents returning to abusive relationships and being treated by observers as "non-ideal" victims, complicit in their abuse (Appleton, 2014; Pearce, 2014; McKibbin, 2017; Sidebotham, 2017). Far from being a crime perpetrated by strangers, Mooney and Ost (2012) recognise the grooming process that means those involved are people the victims have come to trust and even love. As Mooney and Ost (2012) point out, the grooming process can leave victims not seeing themselves as such. Hence there's a tendency for them not to disclose abuse, or cooperate with authorities, who can fail to recognise the harm being caused because of the extent of these effects of psychological conditioning (Mooney and Ost, 2012).

Group Processes and Features

The grooming processes involved in CSE are psychological, but there are also several studies aiming to explain how they can contribute to group offending (Mooney and Ost, 2012; Cockbain, Brayley and Sullivan, 2014). In the UK, Mooney and Ost (2012) seek to explain the stages by which "group localised grooming" (GLG) occurs. Initial identification and communication with potential victims include identification of individuals, or small groups of young people, offers of gifts, lifts, alcohol or parties, as an acclimatisation stage to strike up a friendship (Mooney and Ost, 2012). There follows development of a trusting relationship, and in some cases cultivation of broader dependency, so that once sexual exploitation is introduced into the scenario, it is seen as part of a reciprocal arrangement where the girl is expected to engage in sexual behaviour

in return, sometimes with their "boyfriend", and sometimes with his friends and associates also (Mooney and Ost, 2012).

This process highlights the way sex is commodified to equate to material goods and services provided by the man, placing girls in a situation where sexual activity is expected as part of a perceived contractual arrangement. This fits with the assertion that more vulnerable young people, either socioeconomically, or lacking emotionally fulfilling relationships elsewhere, are potentially more likely to become so acclimatised.

From a slightly different perspective, Cockbain et. al (2014) focus on the dynamic mechanisms and processes by which CSE groups form, their evolution, group identity and resources individuals gain from group participation that leads them to take associated risks. They recognise pathways into groups vary and groups follow evolutionary group stages of expansion, depletion, schisms and cessation (Cockbain et. al., 2014). Similarly, Fortin et. al. (2018) describe stages that take lone internet offenders through stages where they start off by looking at Child Sexual Exploitation Images, latterly starting to engage with, learn from and pass initiation tests with other group members, moving towards distribution and transition to contact abuse. However, this interpretation implies a unidirectional process that isn't always evident. Cockbain et. al. (2014) found people to be involved in multiple, sometimes concurrent groups with varying degrees of durability and stability (Cockbain et al., 2014), suggesting less of a linear progression from online to contact group offending and more of a fluid, sometimes simultaneous multi-modal offending pattern.

Cockbain et. al. (2014) draw parallels between CSE and research into co-offending more generally. They posit this as a strong argument against seeing group child exploitation as a "special case", arguing the processes are like any other group offending (Cockbain et. al., 2014). They also point to the similarities between the characteristics of groups with previous findings about online child sexual abuse forums (Cockbain et al., 2014) such as psychological rewards derived from group involvement. They argue the wide range of resources available to people committing these offences as part of the group may explain why they remain involved despite risk of discovery.

Societal and Subcultural Contextual Processes

In addition to psychological and group processes, other research considers ways in which broader contextual and societal features contributes to CSE. There is evidence worldwide this can happen within sociocultural environments with a broad sense of entitlement of access to sex (Cerqueira-Santos et al., 2008; Cerqueira-Santos et. al 2012; Mujica, 2013; Soliman et. al, 2018; Trickett, 2016; Cockbain et. al, 2014; Kashwera, 2018; Salter, 2012). For example, in Brazil, Cerqueira-Santos et. al. (2008; 2012) report widespread use of children for sex among blue-collar migrant workers, in the construction industry and truck driving trade, in numerous urban centres across the country. 97.2% of construction workers reported child "prostitutes" are available nationwide. The biggest predictor of offending is "hanging out with prostitutes" of any age (Cerquieira-Santos et. al, 2008), with commodification of sex as a precursor to sexual activity with adolescents. These men are more likely to use

adults, and children for sexual services than respondents who do neither, with much lower knowledge and understanding of issues of children's rights than other respondents. They are generally of low educational, low socio-economic status, with little opportunity for career progression, using commercial sex and substance use, as ways of enjoying a difficult, joyless and transient lifestyle with few leisure opportunities (Cerquieira-Santos et. al; 2008, 2012).

Similar commercialised phenomena are reported by Mujica (2013) in Peru, and Soliman et. al. (2018) in Egypt, who both describe economically driven subcultural reasons for widespread commercial CSE. Mujica (2013) describes how it is commonplace in the Peruvian Amazon for girls to be commercially sexually exploited. In such a poor economy as Peru, CSE is seen as a way for local businesses to attract more customers to their establishments, offering girls as a supplementary service when buying food and drink (Mujica, 2013). However, far from the stereotype of a sexual exploitation perpetrator, their "pimps" tend to be women within the girls' family, or local communities with whom they have a long-standing relationship, and who serve a "protective" function. Girls generally work as waitresses in the local ports, sawmills and bars. Consumers are drawn to them as "safer" than street prostitutes, specifically because they have been cared for and are cleaner and more "fit for consumption".

Similarly, Soliman et. al. (2018) describe how many Egyptian families offer their daughters to sex tourists for short-term sexual "relationships", as a way of supplementing their incomes. Parents justify this by enacting a temporary

marriage between the pair, that is seen locally as legitimate and acceptable and it is a common view that this is in the best interests of the child (Soliman et. al., 2018). Hence the literature suggests that in various cultural and economic contexts, commercialised forms of CSE can be actively supported and facilitated by families and communities who see it as a necessary, normal part of life.

But far from being a problem restricted to developing countries, there are also UK examples of social contexts where female sexual availability is expected regardless of age, or maturity. Trickett's (2015) research with men as young as 16 with gang affiliations in Birmingham, reveals that within that subculture, there is a gendered honour code, where female honour is linked to sexuality and the inclusive/ exclusive dichotomy around sexual availability (Trickett, 2015) Whilst promiscuity is a source of honour for the young men, it is dishonourable for the females to engage in similar behaviour. "Birds" or girlfriends are expected to be exclusively sexually engaged with, and freely sexually available to one person, whereas "sluts", or "rides" are perceived as being sexually available to all men for casual sex, including those in the group. This shaming language around female promiscuity objectifies females as being available for sexual gratification at their whim and represents the exploitative lens through which the girls are viewed.

This view of girls as a sexual commodity also bonds young men talking about their shared experiences, forging hypermasculine identities and improving their social standing within the group. They pay little attention to issues around consent by females, suggesting that consent is assumed, unless a girl actively fights them off. They also express various ways in which they use coercion to

gain compliance, even if submission is not immediately forthcoming (Trickett, 2015).

Trickett (2015) contextualises her findings in terms of "cultural cues" transferred within communities of marginalised, socially excluded, poor, urban men, where hypermasculinity is formed in response to structural constraints, to earn respect and feel validated amongst peers. She explains that 'gang' culture represents an insular microcosm of UK society where group involvement and hypermasculine behaviours are intrinsic to self-esteem. The study contextualises this phenomenon in terms of wider socioeconomic and cultural alienation perceived by this group, which explains why their standing within that subculture is so important to them (Trickett, 2015). Whilst these results are from a microcosm of society, its implications go beyond the gang subculture and towards explaining UK adolescent sexual exploitation more broadly, mirroring the socioeconomic drivers of CSE offending in other less economically developed countries like Brazil and Peru.

There are examples in the literature where the cultural and political macroclimate combines to create conditions where CSE becomes widespread (Kashwera and Twikirize, 2018; Mujica 2013). For example, Kashwera and Twikirize (2018) studied factors associated with a resurgence in ritualistic child sexual abuse in the post-conflict Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, following years of armed conflict, where many boys were coerced into becoming child combatants in the national army and local militias. Subsequently returning and living in communities of other internally displaced people after the conflict,

with no prospect of returning home, they had extensive experience of extreme brutality. Predisposing factors relating to perpetration were stressful background, childhood abuse, depression, psychosocial disorder and drug abuse (Kashwera and Twikirize, 2016).

In this post-conflict situation, Kashwera and Twikirize (2016), describe how families of those offending and victims held magical beliefs and superstitions that facilitated ritualistic abuse. For example, when the local militia was created in 2012, the witchdoctor advised members to rape young girls to improve supernatural protection and invulnerability to bullets during battles and cure sexually transmitted diseases (Kashwera and Twikirize, 2016). Many of low socioeconomic status were advised that rape and blood rituals with virgins could improve financial and economic power and social standing (Kashwera and Twikirize, 2016). They argue once these kinds of superstitions and rituals are passed through communities, there is little prospect of controlling the repercussions, explaining these practices proliferate and become mainstream (Kashwera and Twikirize, 2016). These studies bring home how macropolitical climate, subcultural and individual factors can all influence the normalisation of objectively very extreme practices, where influential attitudes become accepted by a wider group or community.

Discussion

Main findings

Overall, the research can be synthesised into three main themes: individual psychological processes, group processes and societal, contextual processes, all playing a part in leading to the proliferation, and perpetuation of CSE around the world.

Common features of psychological cognitive distortions used to justify perpetration involve things like victim blaming and the illusion of consent to underrepresent harm caused, alongside long-term conditioning of victims to be complicit in their abuse over time. There are identified pathways into group offending, processes involved in development, perpetuation and dissolution of groups, and an understanding of the ways in which localised groups entice and condition, to enable them to offend repeatedly against the same victims. In terms of cultural disinhibition, the normalisation of commodification of sex and expectations of sexual availability, coupled with sexualisation of adolescence, structural inequality, deprivation and socioeconomic, or political hardship, can create cultural dynamics where CSE becomes normalised among communities, and attracts an inadequate policy response.

In summary, CSE is not an isolated or uncommon phenomenon, but rather is relatively widespread in diverse cultures and societies. There appear to be some common underlying causes; for instance, inequality and deprivation underpinning commercialisation of sex; sexualisation of adolescence; unhelpful cognitive distortions and justifications that become superstitions or commonly

accepted "truths". These can become routine and lead to the normalisation of CSE within a community, or even enabling the proliferation of group CSE throughout a society. It is also apparent that systematic child sexual exploitation can become so commonplace as to be tacitly facilitated, given certain conditions. This has implications for policy responses in situations where it is seen as so normal, an official response by authorities is not a priority, like in Peru (Mujica, 2013), or in the UK, where non-ideal, supposedly complicit but vulnerable victims do not see themselves as such (Mooney and Ost (2012), leading to their victimisation being systematically and routinely overlooked or mismanaged by authorities (Mooney and Ost, 2012).

Strengths

The main strengths of the review process, is that it was carried out systematically, using a recognised search method, strict inclusion and exclusion criteria, and published frameworks for assessing quality. It only included studies that had been peer reviewed, to maintain quality and pertained to the perpetration of CSE offending specifically. The main strength of the literature included for discussion is that it demonstrates the extent to which CSE offending is an issue around the world. It lends weight to the inference that this is a phenomenon not specific to one particular society, geographical area or cultural heritage. It enables insight into the common psychological, subcultural and societal influences and attitudes that can lead to CSE offending and the similarities that can be seen in the themes.

Limitations

The main limitation in the review process was the paucity of high-quality research into people perpetrating CSE offending. This necessitated a break from convention to include studies regardless of methodological rigour and quality, instead taking the opportunity to discuss flaws and gaps in knowledge, to stimulate further research. Most studies are small-scale and the majority use secondary data from file information, or interview data from participants who have been affected by CSE, but very few have spoken to people who have perpetrated CSE. This limits the depth of insight into the mindset of those who do. Perhaps on reflection, it would have been better to use even broader search terms and include unpublished literature. There may have been more studies using primary data for research within their organisations, rather than for academic purposes. As well as checking references, it would have been better to contact authors to check whether there were other studies in progress, or not yet published.

The biggest limitation of the literature remains that the bulk of research focusses so heavily on support and intervention for victims, there is much less evidence available to inform strategies to tackle people perpetrating these crimes. Variations in definitions of CSE also make it difficult to compare findings between studies; CSE is often conflated with commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking, ritualistic child abuse, localised and broader grooming gangs, including those predominantly operating online. In addition, there was no opportunity to demonstrate inter-rater reliability in the analysis of the data.

Implications of the review

Far from being something universally prohibited, policed and well-prosecuted, there are many cases of misperceptions, or lack of awareness of CSE by authorities, and inadequate policy responses as a result of inadequate research and understanding into the drivers for CSE offending by groups. There are several aspects of this with potentially profound implications for improvements in strategy.

Firstly, in an environment where commercialisation of sex is commonplace, evidence suggests this provides a context for Child Sexual Exploitation to flourish. Mooney and Ost (2012) explain that in the UK, where young people and their "boyfriends" operate in an environment where sex is seen as a commodity, to be bought not only with money, but also goods and lifestyle arrangements, exploitation can be justified as a reciprocal arrangement. Coy (2016) argues that in the UK, blurred boundaries between child abuse and exploitation, and commercialised sexual behaviour in adulthood, affects the policy discourse and official responses to CSE of adolescents. Commercialisation of sexual behaviour and prostitution is seen as acceptable at an arbitrary age cut-off where agency is assumed at age eighteen (Coy, 2018). Prevention measures have been limited to empowering young people to avoid victimisation and educating professionals to recognise signs of exploitation, to improve safeguarding (Coy, 2016). Coy argues that as a direct result of this blurred boundary, none of this policy development even aims to tackle the actions of people committing the offences, who are largely invisible in discussions about the sexual exploitation of

adolescents (Coy, 2016).

So, what is the way forward? Trickett (2015) argues that the sexualisation of adolescence ought to be addressed, reassessing how masculinity is interpreted and enacted by men and boys in our society. Coy (2016) advocates an approach akin to that in Scandinavia, where policy strives to tackle men's widespread perception of entitlement to access female bodies for sex, as the root cause of the issues underpinning CSE. Trickett (2015) advocates a wider debate in the UK around societal norms that lead to a macroclimate which facilitates abuse by, against and between young people, to achieve societal shift in attitudes and expectations (Trickett, 2015). There needs to be more emphasis on recognising and appreciating the drivers of CSE by those perpetrating offences, with a view to developing effective strategies for intervention and prevention that place responsibility on them to desist.

Secondly, a socioeconomic climate where there are many young people living in poverty, leaves many vulnerable to exploitation. Arguably, the same socioeconomic drivers making young people vulnerable to sexual exploitation are the same for those becoming involved in CSE offending as part of 'gang' subculture (Trickett, 2015) and other young people being exploited in the drug trade (Robinson, Mclean and Densley, 2019). To contextualise this, UK Government's poverty statistics (Devine, Booth and McGuinness, 2019) indicate there are 3.7 million; 26% of children living in absolute low-income households, earning less than 60% of the national average after housing costs. Poverty rates are higher for children than any

other group, and higher than 50 years ago, with 69% of those children living in working households (Devine, Booth and McGuiness, 2019).

The implications for these socioeconomic drivers of sexual commercialisation are profound for strategic priorities, if we want to deal with the underlying causes that draw young people into situations where CSE is most likely to happen. Arguably, this would also impact on those perpetrating. In terms of intervention, if Cockbain et al. (2014) are right that perpetration of CSE mirrors other group offending, such as other crimes committed as part of a group subculture, like Trickett's (2015) Birmingham "gang" members, this may mean existing assessment and intervention methods and materials designed to address group offending may be adaptable for use with group CSE perpetrators. There is scope for interventions to acknowledge and deal with individual psychological processes that drive offending, by recognising individual and group motivations, as well as developing strategies to tackle the socioeconomic climate in which the offending is taking place.

Conclusions

Although research concerning perpetration of CSE offending is relatively sparse, nevertheless, it makes a valuable contribution to understanding the processes involved in the development and perpetuation of CSE from psychological, group and contextual perspectives. All three aspects are important to understand, for authorities to work towards formulation of a coherent, evidence-based response likely to be successful in prevention, law enforcement and rehabilitation of people committing CSE offences. However, there is still

much work to be done.

In particular, it would be helpful for future researchers to improve distinct definitions of terms, rather than using CSE as an umbrella term to cover any kinds of group sexual offending against children and adolescents. This would avoid conflating crimes potentially motivated differently. Also, future research would benefit from using primary data collected from the people perpetrating CSE related crime. Improved first-hand knowledge might assist in development of a deeper understanding from the people themselves, what led them to offend, and identify ways in which intervention and policy responses can better tackle this issue.

Geolocational Information

This paper is prepared in Leicester, England, United Kingdom. Data is from multiple countries around the world.

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Section 2: The Research Report

Introduction

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is an endemic international issue. ECPAT International (2020) is working in 96 countries to tackle it, and to date, Interpol's CSE database has helped identify 19,400 victims worldwide (Interpol, 2020). In the UK, CSE perpetrated by groups of adults has been brought into public and political consciousness by organisations working with young people affected, such as Barnardo's (Palmer and Stacey, 2002; Scott and Skidmore, 2005), Social Services, Education and Healthcare providers (Jay, 2014). They raised awareness that CSE was not well enough understood to produce an adequate response by authorities (Jay, 2014).

There have been attempts to quantify the extent of the problem, improve service provision and increase support for survivors (Harper and Scott, 2006; Scott and Skidmore, 2005;). Barnardos (2011) called for a National Action Plan because of the scale of the issue. A subsequent Inquiry by the Children's Commissioner highlighted 2,409 children known to be victims of group CSE, and a further 16,500 at risk (Berelowitz, Clifton, Firmimin, Gulyurtlu and Edwards, 2013). They called for a focus on CSE by Government departments, and a commitment to address it (Berelowitz et. al., 2013). Although this strand of research addresses part of the issue, it has done little to improve knowledge and understanding of people perpetrating CSE (Jago, Arocha, Brodie, Melrose and Paskell, 2011). Whilst more is understood about CSE dynamics from young people's perspectives, there is relatively little to explain why it happens in the first place.

The Children's Commissioner recommended that, "problem-profiling of victims, offenders, gangs, gang-associated girls, high risk businesses, neighbourhoods and other relevant factors must take place at both national and local levels" (Berlowitz et. al., 2013; p96). But although there have been calls for more research, most work has focused on finding ways to better safeguard young people; by improving professional awareness, understanding and responses to survivors (Bovarnick and Scott, 2017; Jago et. al., 2011; McClelland, 2011; Sen, 2017) addressing vulnerabilities linked to the behaviour of at-risk adolescents (Appleton, 2014) and working with those who do not perceive themselves as victims (Pearce, 2014). These measures aim to improve outcomes for young survivors (Harris, Roker, Shuker, Brodie, D'Arcy, Dhaliwal and Pearce, 2017) and particularly to improve conviction rates when they are witnesses in the Criminal Justice System (Barnardos, 2011). Much less has been done to address the perpetration of the crimes, the reasons for which are largely absent from the narrative.

But what exactly is CSE? The Sexual Offences Act (2003) enshrined some specific CSE-related offences into law in England and Wales, including arranging or facilitating commission of a child sexual offence, causing or inciting child prostitution or pornography, and trafficking. Barnardos' (2011) categories of CSE include inappropriate "boyfriend" relationships, peer exploitation and organised, networked sexual exploitation. The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (2013) indicated groups of perpetrating CSE offences can

range from two people, up to much larger groups. Hence group CSE is something of an umbrella term. Walker, Pillinger and Brown's (2018) rapid evidence review revealed that many studies either did not include clear definitions of CSE or did not offer a definition at all.

The UK Government published an updated definition in 2017, following another evidence review by Bovarnick and Scott (2017). It defines CSE as a form of child sexual abuse where an individual or group, takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage, or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator (Department of Education, 2017). This expanded the previous definition (HM Government, 2009), acknowledging the coercive element of "grooming" behaviour, which is helpful in the sense that it clarifies the problematic behaviours most likely to be observable. However, it is still not entirely clear how CSE is differentiated from Child Sexual Abuse, which is also characterised by grooming behaviour and can be carried out by groups.

This definition is problematic also because it has been expanded to include intangible gains like status, which are quite abstract and difficult to prove. In addition to this, UK law includes consideration of capacity to consent, and also whether the person was in a position to make that choice freely. In relation to CSE, the dynamics created by a coercive power imbalance could conceivably be argued to negate expressed consent, even in a case of a sixteen, or seventeen-year-old ostensibly consenting to sexual behaviour with

an adult over the age of eighteen.

In terms of theoretical explanations of group CSE specifically, the literature is sparse. There is some literature relating to online offending against children. Kloss, Beech and Harkins (2014) proposed a model to explain processes, characteristics and typologies of people offending against children online. Although they touched on other adults involved in "chat rooms", their focus was on dispositional explanations about the individual, rather than a broader discussion about situational or systemic factors that might be important for understanding the group aspects of behaviour (Zimbardo, 2007). Others have examined more situational, ecological and contextual factors involved in offence pathways arguing that particularly for the online environment, situational factors are important in understanding sexual offending (Elliot and Beech, 2009). Williams, Elliott and Beech identified specific stages of grooming processes involved in internet offending (Williams, Elliot and Beech, 2012). But are these processed applicable to people offending offline?

There have been some attempts to understand group sexual offending using psychological theory (Harkins and Dixon, 2010; da Silva, Woodhams and Harkins, 2015). Harkins and Dixon (2010) propose a multifactorial framework for understanding group sexual offending against adults and children, drawing from various Social Psychology group behaviour theories like Social Comparison Theory and Social Dominance Theory to explain sexual behaviour by groups (Harkins and Dixon, 2010). They propose that offences against children are

"likely", or "seemingly" driven by sexual deviance and distorted attitudes, with group involvement an attempt to corroborate their behaviour as a social norm.

Building on this, da Silva, Woodhams and Harkins (2015) emphasise the importance of the juxtaposition of individual, sociocultural and situational contexts to explain group processes in relation to group sexual offences. As Zimbardo (2007) argues, although the law, and Criminal Justice emphasises individual dispositional factors to apportion blame for crime, this neglects the situational and systemic factors that also contribute to offending behaviour (Zimbardo, 2007). But is this the same for CSE group offending specifically? Consideration has been given to reasons for offences against adults and children, however, there is nothing discussed in relation to offences against adolescents, teenagers, or CSE per se.

A third strand of research has examined gang-related, peer-aged CSE (Beckett, Brodie, Melrose, Pearce, Pitts, Shuker and Warrington, 2012), including discussion about adolescent and teenage sexuality and sexual agency within gangs. Pathways into gang-related sexual violence and exploitation are explained, including suggestions to improve multi-agency responses. Trickett (2015) talked directly to forty-five gang members about their attitudes towards females, promiscuity and the expectation of sexual availability, leading to a lack of empathy about girls' experience and a sense of entitlement to engage in sexually abusive behaviour (Trickett, 2015). This is an enlightening strand of research, in that it uses primary data to gain insight into cognitive distortions amongst this group, and importantly, about the group dynamics affecting

people's sexual behaviour. However, it is not clear whether these attitudes are replicated more broadly in CSE offending outside the context of street-gangs.

In summary, there are pockets of research taking different approaches to explaining aspects of group sexual offending against minors. However, none encompasses the broad range of offences within the definition of CSE. From a rehabilitative perspective, there is a need for evidence-based interventions (Farmer, 2015) and an informed response in line with "What Works" principles (McGuire, 1995). Kingston and Yates (2014) suggest intervention strategies that adequately reflect the diversity of offence pathways may increase treatment effectiveness. Problems inherent in researching this "hard to reach" population (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013) mean that significant gaps in knowledge about CSE perpetrators remain (Drummond and Southgate, 2018). Drummond and Southgate argue that filling these gaps may help when considering appropriateness and design of specific interventions (Drummond and Southgate, 2018). Hence there has been a call for research to supplement existing knowledge about CSE and ensure efforts to rehabilitate target criminogenic needs (Farmer, 2015).

Alongside this, Carter and Mann (2016) reviewed existing and planned National Offender Management System (NOMS) treatment programmes in the light of empirical evidence about what works to address criminogenic needs for general sexual offending. They proposed guiding principles to underpin future evidence-based rehabilitative practice. Factors demonstrated to be, or theoretically linked to risk of sexual offending, were in four domains: (1) sexual

interest; (2) offence supportive attitudes; (3) social and emotional functioning; and (4) self-management (Mann, Hanson and Thornton, 2010). Carter and Mann (2016) confirm all these factors can be considered to have a biological, social and psychological basis. Similarly, Ward and Beech (2016) have proposed a multi-level integrated theory to explain a variety of types of sexual offending, incorporating a combination of factors including biological, ecological, neuropsychological and personal agency.

However, there needs to be clarity about the extent to which these multi-level processes relate to group CSE offending, group processes, and offences specifically relating to children, adolescents and teenagers. The aim of this study was to investigate whether group CSE offences can be best explained using general theories of sexual offending (Carter and Mann, 2016), theories about sexual offending in groups (da Silva et. al., 2015), or whether they are better explained by models specific to sexual offending, or violence by groups (Harkins and Dixon, 2010).

This project was designed to capture information about how and why people got involved in CSE offending and what motivated them in relation to their group involvement. It was hoped the results would assist in the design of evidence-based treatment and rehabilitation approaches, with thinking and behaviour of participants at the heart of that design, to maximise engagement, in line with responsivity principles (Andrews and Bonta, 2010). The research question was "Child Sexual Exploitation by Groups: How and Why Does it Happen?

Method

Design

This was a qualitative, open ended exploration of child sexual exploitation by groups, from the perspective of people committing the crimes. It used a constructivist grounded theory approach to explore group processes, looking at people with different offence types (CEOP, 2013), pulling out information about pathways into, and dynamics of their offending, and within groups. The grounded theory approach was used to look with fresh eyes, at a topic that had hitherto only been seen from professionals' and victims' perspectives (Barnardos, 2011; Beckett, 2011).

Participants

Demographically, there were sixteen participants serving custodial sentences across the UK. Five were serving indeterminate sentences, others ranged from 5-18 years, with a mean of 10.5 years. The sample was not necessarily representative of people committing group CSE, more a snapshot of those convicted, in prison, available and willing to take part in the study.

Table 2

Demographics of participants by victim type

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		Children	Teenagers
Number (n)		5	11
Sex	Female	1*	0
	Male	4	11
Age	Range	51 – 71	22 – 46
	Mean	61	29
	Median	61	26
Ethnicity	Pakistani born	1	2
	Pakistani, UK Born	0	3
	White British	4	4
	Black African	0	5
	Caribbean UK Born	0	1
Religion	Muslim	1	9
	Christian	4	1
	No religion	0	1

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*Note: Participants included 1 Female spouse of male contact offender

     In terms of inclusion criteria, all participants had been convicted of offences of Child Sexual Exploitation (Sexual Offences Act, 2003), with at least one co-defendant. Offences ranged from trafficking and arranging sexual offending by others, to contact sexual offences committed as part of a network and distributing child abuse images they had created or arranged to be produced. Solely online, non-contact imagery trading on the web was excluded. Hence, all participants were either convicted of contact offences against children or involved personally with those who had contact convictions. Thirteen of sixteen had previous convictions for other offences than CSE, ranging from murder, serious violence and acquisitive offending, to drug possession and

supply, some of which was gang related. Overall, most were criminally versatile, although for the majority, this was their first conviction for sexual offending.

Measures/Questionnaires used

Hollway and Jefferson's (2013) method for interviewing guarded subjects was employed; this is a Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI) attending to social circumstances and the inner life of the interviewee, enabling people's experiences to be situated and made meaningful in psychosocial terms (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013). Participants were asked to explain in their own words how they came to be convicted of CSE, and to talk about anything they thought important to understand how this happened. Loose and not too prescriptive conversational prompts were used sparingly (Rubin and Rubin; 2005) to encourage further disclosure and ensure themes were well-explored. Participants who had been through treatment were instructed to set aside "programme language" and talk from their own perspective, rather than regurgitating a contrived version that mirrored stock phrases from offending behaviour programmes.

Procedure

Having gained ethical approval from Leicester University and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), a national list was generated of people convicted of CSE offending under the Sexual Offences Act (2003) and cross-referenced with the Offender Assessment System database (Home Office, 2006), to find those convicted in groups. Potential participants were approached

for consent, on the understanding their identities would remain anonymous, and their view represented as authentically as possible. They were given time to read, digest and discuss information to ensure informed consent (See appendix for consent forms), made aware of limits of confidentiality, data access, storage and destruction parameters, as well as quality assurance second coding. It was also made explicit that the study was part of a PsyD qualification, with publication for peer review likely, and the final report being the property of the University.

Interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone and transcribed later by the researcher, apart from with one participant, who did not consent to being recorded and for whom the interview was annotated. Participants were selected using contingent, purposeful sampling (Hood; 2007), which was theoretically, rather than demographically driven (Charmaz, 2014). All were interviewed by the same researcher, to standardise deduction of potential themes from early interviews, approaching later interviews in a purposive way, to explore potential themes with the flexibility to extend from description into interpretations, tested and validated through further data gathering (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Using this approach, it was possible to concentrate later interviews on people offending against teenage girls, because the processes involved in their offending appeared distinct from more well-understood and heavily researched types of sexual offences against younger children. The definition of children in this context was taken from The Sexual Offences Act (2003), which classifies

offences against children under thirteen as more serious by their very nature, attracting longer sentences than those against teenagers and adults.

In relation to safety, enquiries were made at the end of interviews to ascertain whether the participant needed follow-on support. There was the potential for them to be seen by Listeners and/or Samaritans, and the option to instigate the ACCT (Assessment Care in Custody and Teamwork) procedure for monitoring people at risk of self-harm/suicide. Notes were made on electronic prison records and in handover books, to alert staff to the potential for delayed distress. In terms of researcher safety, interviews were conducted in areas staffed for visitors, or suitable, predetermined rooms risk assessed for interviews. Precautions included the facility to raise the alarm, staff awareness of the location and timing of the interview and having a means of exit. British Psychological Society (BPS) and Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) codes of conduct were observed at every stage (BPS, 2018; HCPC, 2018).

Method of Analysis

Transcription, coding and analysis were carried out meticulously, according to procedures detailed by Charmaz (2014) and Saldana (2013). Initial line by line open coding was undertaken, including identifying 'in vivo' terms of speech with potential to indicate symbolic markers of meaning and potential analytic leads to be explored later. Next process coding was used to pick out the dynamic nature of participant experience, including differentiation between values, cognitions, emotions, actions and consequences, to begin to characterise the processes involved in relation to the trajectory into CSE offending. Analytic

memos were developed alongside, and as a result of these early stages of coding, in order to start inferring potential meanings for comparison across the data in the later, focused stage of analysis.

Focused coding then enabled the initial codes to be analysed and constructed into theoretical categories and represented in process diagrams. Categories were listed, with quotations in each, to illustrate them and interrogate them to test them against the data. This ensured categories remained true to the original data and any that were similar or related could be identified, sorted, amalgamated or jettisoned accordingly. Out of a total of sixteen transcripts, two were second-coded to assess reliability. 75% of the categories coincided, with the main differences being accounted for by linguistic choices that reflected attempts to refrain from pejorative language that the second coder did not share. There were no major omissions, or errors evident from this process.

Results

Two distinct subcategories of participants were identified within the sample; firstly, groups with a sexual interest in children; and secondly, those with convictions against teenage girls. These groups were categorised using the distinctions made in the Sexual Offences Act (2003), which distinguishes offences against children under thirteen from those against those between thirteen and eighteen. Some themes were common across both, so for instance severe trauma, life adversity and criminal versatility. However, the distinction was made between the two because there were also some fundamental
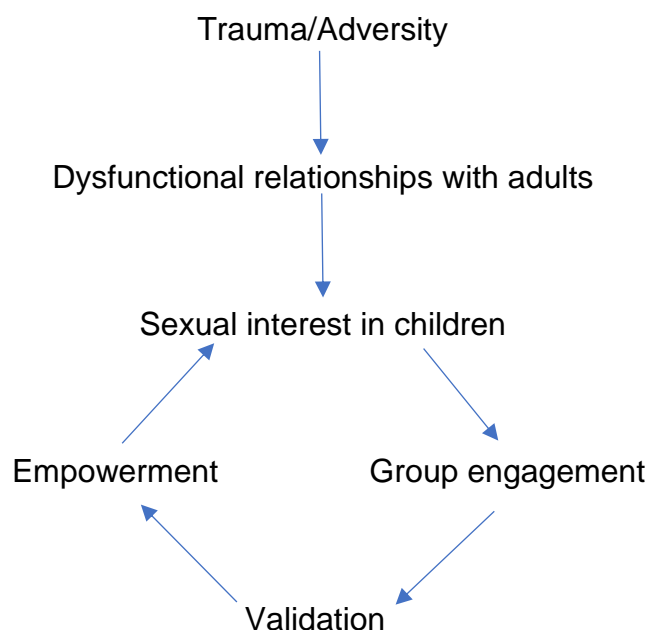
differences.

Groups with a Sexual Interest in Children

These participants were convicted of offences against children. There was a marked difference between the way this group spoke about their sexual offending compared to those offending against teenagers. They had known their behaviour was both socially unacceptable and illegal when they offended, but were still driven to offend, primarily due to a pervasive sexual interest. They invariably spoke about their offending as a reaction to adverse life circumstances.

Although some participants spoke of feeling guilt and shame related to how their offending was perceived by others, and in wider society, they had normalised their thinking and behaviour within the context of their own lives. Their engagement with others offending against children was validating and empowering, reaffirming their sexual behavior and precipitating further offending. This was the primary function of their group involvement and typically there was only a loose association with the others in the group, unless the offending took place within the family. See below the processes involved in their offending trajectory:

Figure 2 – Process Model for Group CSE against Children

Trauma/Adversity

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Dysfunctional relationships with adults

↓

Sexual interest in children

Empowerment   Group engagement

Validation

Trauma/Adversity   All participants described important, life changing trauma, that shaped their personality, relationships with others and view of the world. This related principally to abuse and neglect by primary caregivers, including severe and chronic childhood neglect in infancy, childhood and adolescence; parental absence, alcoholism, mental health issues and institutionalisation; systematic emotional, physical and sexual abuse, some by multiple perpetrators; and victimisation across contexts including home, school and in the locality. Most persisted chronically, throughout childhood and adolescence.

"it was forced penetration, you know…but of course, you couldn't say anything"
(P4; p12)

"my Mum was particularly brutal. I had get some good hidings" and "she used to belittle me".
(P2; p7)

"So, there were times when I wanted to scream, but what was the point in screaming?" (P3; p36)

"I mean I've been hit with fishing rods, hoover pipes, cricket bats" (P5; p19)

Corporal punishment, sexual abuse, deceit, marital infidelity and extramarital paternity were just some of the issues reported. All reported long-term emotional and developmental problems, as consequences of adversity. These included; enduring post-traumatic stress disorder, intrusive images of sexual abuse, physically disabling chronic conditions, including physical and cognitive impairments, longstanding emotional consequences such as severe depression, suicidal thinking, dissociative symptoms and Personality Disorder.

"I was determined to kill myself, to take my own life…the thing about it though, that is never left me that kind of suicidal thinking." (P5; p23)

"So, erm, and later on in life, I did not really understand what love was…and everything was distorted because of what happened." (P3; p5)

"It got to a point where, I created this cocoon and I wouldn't let anything in" (P3; p31)

Dysfunctional Relationships - with Adults Adverse life experiences affected development of a sense of "normal" behaviour in relationships and led to significant adulthood trust issues. Participants described social isolation as a significant issue for them. Several talked about learning to bury their emotional responses, keeping them hidden, either because there was nobody available for comfort, or because of fear; they had learned it was not safe to show any kind of emotion that could be interpreted as vulnerability.

"Being lonely, sucks bottom it does, it is a dreadful soul-destroying, crushing" (P5; p30)

"I did not talk about what I was feeling and what I was going through…not about the memories, the flashbacks, the anxiety, the panic attacks…I shut her out." (P5, p17)

"I just couldn't stand her being violent. I mean when she was drinking a lot, she got violent. I couldn't leave her with the baby on her own". (P2; p45)

For some, it became virtually impossible to reconnect with feelings as an adult or develop trusting adult relationships. Some confused sex and sexual contact with love. Others explained profound difficulties with anger and depression preceding their offending. A number described emotional issues that led them to seek comfort, or positive physical sensations, including substance misuse and sexualised behaviour, to try and experience positive feelings. One said because of sexual abuse, he perceived all adult relationships as manipulative and described being groomed and "trapped" into a marriage with no intimacy;

"She groomed me massively, without me even realising it". (P4, p66)

Another abused children together with family members, indicating this thinking and behaviour had become normalised within the family:

"You know because instead of chastising me in some way, she joined in." (P3; p60)

"she was an integral part of the abuse with the children." (P3; p60)

In summary, these respondents struggled with far-reaching consequences of trauma, which led to later involvement in child sexual offending and exploitation.

Sexual Interest in Children   Some participants linked their own childhood sexual abuse to the development of a persistent sexual interest in children. Sexualised behaviour with children had become normalised:

"It was like the norm…you knew who they were abusing, but, erm, it was as if it was natural."   (P4; p10)

"Between the ages of 11 and 14 that was a massive erm, er, er, abuse upon me, and me having mutual sex and masturbation with kids my own age, and it was more enjoyable."   (P4; p49)

"You know, we'd stop off and it was mutual… not mutual, there's no such thing as mutual masturbation with a child, but me masturbating him and getting him to do the same to me".   (P4; p79)

The default position for these participants was to satiate underlying sexual interest when other things in life had become stressful, they were not coping, or when adult relationships had broken down:

"I am driven by this kind of urge to…you know to self-gratify, to please myself"   (P5; p134)

"That urge was so strong, it kind of overruled everything!"   (P3; p61)

Some had a marked gap between offending against children whilst those adult relationships were happening. Others were secretively finding ways to offend whilst an adult relationship was still ongoing. In terms of criminogenic needs, sexual preference, sexual preoccupation, offence-supportive attitudes normalising abuse, and reinforcing characteristics of social interaction in the absence of intimacy appeared to account for the motivation behind offending and grouping with other like-minded people.

Group Engagement　　For most people offending against children, a major part of the trajectory into systematic group exploitation outside the immediate family was facilitated through online/digital engagement. The online environment did not cause the offending; propensities and vulnerabilities already existed. However, it was an enabler in several ways: Sharing indecent images and engaging in chat rooms served two functions; the desire to satiate sexual need and the desire to link with others with similar preferences, finding common ground with a group of likeminded others covertly online as a way of feeling better about their own sexual behaviour:

"In a lot of ways, the worst thing I ever did was getting a computer and getting online…because I can really trace my offending back to that period." (P5; p7)

"I started to look for more petite women. If you do search engines for teens say, you tend to get the more petite type…there was a gradual step down…I reached a point where the bare minimum of development aroused me." (P5; p65)

Validation　　There was a recognition it was easy to find, and engage in online chat in specialised chatrooms, whatever the sexual preference. They would be able to sort quickly through and discard or block areas they weren't interested in, and home in on others who shared their interests. This enabled them to swap indecent materials, to build a library of material for masturbation, as well as having more to swap. For those people offending against known children, it was an opportunity to extend their reach beyond their immediate circle. The interaction with others enabled them to feel they were not alone in their sexual preferences and there were others doing the same, so the interaction validated their thinking and behaviour:

"being anonymous, the computer allows you to be a lot more open than you would be face to face, so you can talk about things you'd never talk about and you can share things."　　(P5; p71)

"So, I started to build up from all different directions and create this network…that is kind of a connection like, OK I am not on my own in this." (P5; p74)

"I would go on, either as an older man, the age I am or maybe a bit younger interested in younger girls, or I would go on as a younger girl having thoughts about it, or acting on it." (P5; p77)

For some, the internet was a way of transitioning into contact offending.

Empowerment   Some participants spoke of showing material to their potential victims, and interacting online to normalise it and encourage them to make a sexual approach to the adult;

"what better permission-giver than that she came to me?" (P5; p121)

"they showed pictures of themselves and it is live and it is webcam… and you know they are real, cause they are on the other end and that…and these 12, 13, 11 year old kids all talking about sex…and they are up for this" (P4; p55)

The online space was a way of meeting other people with access to potential victims, making contact to meet up and offend together, or arrange contact offences by others. In some cases, these networks were international:

"so we eventually ended up meeting together…I penetrated…I got…involved, we had a threesome and I was videoing it and sending it…" (P4; p55)

"we used to help other people with the same interests out as well. Made it easier [to justify the behaviour]."   (P2; p64)
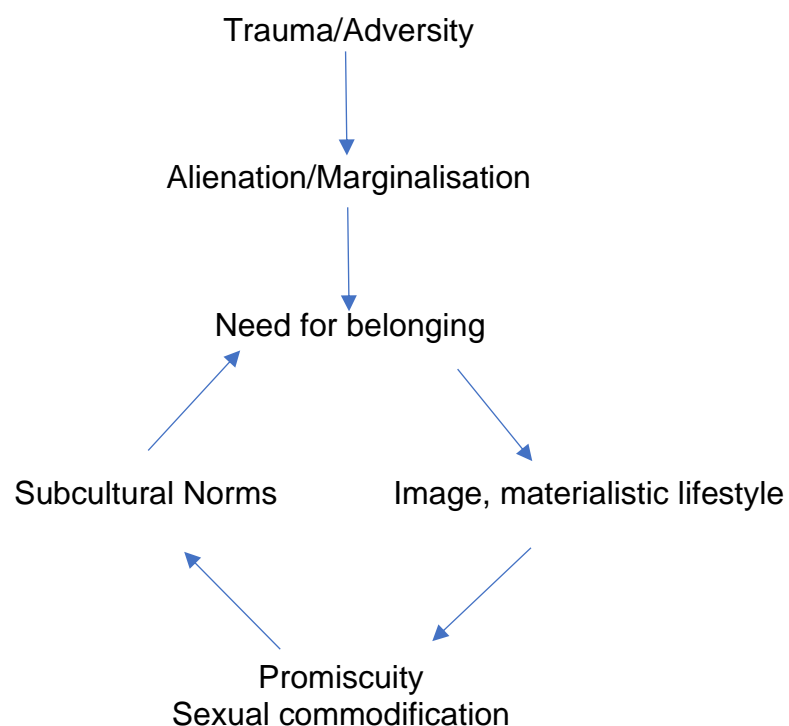
For these people, grouping together with others with a sexual interest in children empowered them to extend and diversify their sexual offending and reinforced their sexual interest. The group association was more of a means to an end, rather than a goal in itself.

Groups Offending Against Teenage Girls

This group of participants was distinct from the first. They were convicted of offences against teenagers. The trajectory into this type of offending was similar in some ways to those offending against children, in the respect that it was mainly a response to adversity of some description. For these men, group involvement was similarly empowering and validating, but the sexual offending was almost incidental; part of their image and lifestyle, rather than being the main purpose and focus of the engagement with the group. These men wanted to be respected and looked up to by their peers and were very materialistic and image conscious. Their transactional view of sexual behaviour was an extension of their materialistic outlook more generally, and an attempt to demonstrate their popularity. See below for process model:

Figure 3 – Process Model for Group CSE against Teenagers

Trauma/Adversity

Alienation/Marginalisation

Need for belonging

Subcultural Norms   Image, materialistic lifestyle

Promiscuity
Sexual commodification

Trauma/Adversity   Some of these participants reported a history of serious adversity, relating to sociocultural problems. Examples included childhood experience of war, death, forced migration, life-limiting illness; death of, or separation from parent/s; being in care, homelessness, displacement; racially motivated abuse, religious persecution, ethnic stereotyping, marginalisation and extreme poverty.

"after they told you you've got [chronic illness] when they told me I was so shocked, and I was like well I might as well just die and there's nothing left for me to live for". (P8; p49)

"he [Dad] got killed innit because he got shot…and I lost my Mum." (P8; p53)

"…every little thing I do, that I wasn't supposed to do, like, it would get me whipped." (P11; p7)

"Whatever you want to say about this country's not racist any more this and that, everywhere you go there is still people that have that same ignorance." (P12; p49)

The socioeconomic context in which half the participants convicted of offences against teenagers described living was high poverty, high crime areas, or areas in which they associated with peer groups behaving criminally:

"rough areas man it was mad. Drugs, fighting, shooting, murders, drug dealers killing drug dealers. Police scared to come in my area. If one car come in it'd get terrorised. They used to come in 6s!" (P7; p1)

"It was kinda rough. Anyone you see who you could chat to, like even when Social Services come see me they used to think it was the police…it was kind of hard." (P13; p6)

In a community with high unemployment and the only people flashing material wealth being criminals, they understood why some might decide to emulate that.

"So if they, all they see every day is drug use, or people stabbing each other people shooting each other, then 9-10 times, that is what they are gonna aspire to be, dyou nah'm sayin?" (P13; p59)

"make more money dealing drugs. No work. Why would you want to work?" (P7; p2)

"these guys had a lot of time on their hands. They had money coming in other ways."
(P9; p32)

Some reported developmental issues that can represent a predisposing factor for delinquency and involvement in group crime (Early Intervention Foundation, 2015).

"finished school and I did not pass my GCSE's did not pass year and I failed my GCSE's." (P13; p4)

"the teachers had a meeting with my family like…look he's got ADHD like, we want to send him off like and get him examined…they did not believe it". (P6; p54)

"Low [IQ]. Obviously, I am not up to that standard whatever yeah." (P9; p65)

"left school in about year 9…kicked out of junior school a couple of times for being in trouble, swearing at teachers yeah." (P7; p2)

The effects of this included lack of achievement and perceived career opportunities as a precursor to becoming involved in peer associations with criminally versatile co-defendants.

Alienation, Marginalisation Some participants felt lifelong alienation in their neighbourhoods. One said people's perception of his close friends as gang members was based on prejudice and assumption, when they were going about their daily business, being stereotyped according to race and appearance. He had no previous convictions, but felt marginalised nevertheless:

"there's a lot of us kids, we weren't antisocial, you get me there's a lot are in my

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area and do a lot of things, big groups walking round…if they see us walking together…we're all cousins like…to the police that is a gang and that is a group"
<div align="right">(P12; p48)</div>

"But this country tell the truth it is just like you dunno, you dunno where you standing, 'specially what like with the race as well like, they just pigeon hole you and that."
<div align="right">(P16; p33)</div>

There was a strong sense of alienation and resentment about UK society, as a context in which the rich and powerful committing crime appeared free from sanction, whilst black and minority ethnic youths were judged on appearance and labelled negatively.

Need for Belonging   Several talked about an environment demanding protection, safety in numbers, hypermasculinity, a siege mentality;

"I was getting into a lot of drama on road…I was hanging out with gangstas…you need a good group of people you can trust…friends I've grew up with yeah and these people yeah they like to fight yeah" (P11; p60)

"the more I am fighting, the more the bullies stop and I am thinking you know, this is working. This is working, you know?" (P11; p60)

"I used to carry a knife in the park with my boys" (P13; p35)

"If you're not riding, if you're not ruled, you're beat" (p13; p35)

"Then they come to my place and they start selling drugs night times…I explained to my Social Service worker…listen if I told them to get out of my house they might beat me up and that!" (P13; p6)

"I was homeless…used to sleep in the crack house" (P13; p8)

The Criminal Justice System appeared to have reinforced these people's sense of injustice and alienation. Most indicated they had not appreciated the severity with which their actions would be viewed at the time of their offending. They felt misunderstood and misrepresented by the media, the

public and the Criminal Justice System and genuinely shocked at their situation,

particularly their length of sentence. One talked about being overwhelmed by

the whole trial process, in disbelief that it was serious enough to be taking

place at a nationally notorious court. They were all keen to have their views

represented without bias or prejudice and not to be misrepresented as

paedophiles, or rapists, labels they strongly rejected:

"I am no paedophile. You can't see me, I walk on the streets. If I want any nice woman, I can get one…but not little kids man". (P8; p65)

"I shouldn't be in here. I know I did not rape anyone. I am not a rapist!" (P6; p2)

"I used to hate sex offenders. It is evil." (P7; p1)

"Obviously I've been in trouble with the police but nothing, nothing like this!" (P6; p5)

"Normal; drugs, fighting, antisocial behavior, driving motorbikes, cars, get chased by the police for fun and stuff. Well known to the PCSO's; plastic soldiers!" (P7; p1)

"I've committed crimes yeah, but not crimes like this! These are not my kind of crimes. I can do crimes, my crimes." (P8, p12)

Image and Lifestyle Far from thinking they would be labelled

negatively because of their associations with teenage girls, these men aspired to

be respected and seen as successful and were extremely image conscious.

Methods of achieving this ranged from a strong education and work ethic, to

displays of material wealth, to criminal versatility and involvement in gang-related

crime. Some talked about working hard at college, with entrepreneurial spirit,

to gain qualifications, work hard, build up a reputation, strive for self-

improvement, take pride in achievements and offer services people were

interested in.

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"when my business started…, I build up…so people know me, my number…we can help you to build your business and then we have work as well." (P15; p10)

"I've always been working all my life…and we always have business, do the work together." (P1; p5)

As an extension of this need to be perceived as successful, participants talked about prioritisation of gaining and showing material wealth. This was strongly linked to their sense of self-worth. They wanted to command respect from others in their community by financial success. Some did this by accruing cars, money and drugs. For some, their family already had wealth they took for granted, or for others, they and their friends were criminally versatile and experienced financial gain linked to that.

"So a lot of these youngster when they see guys coming out of cars, big chains on, money, all the girls, that is what they want to aspire to be, cause that is what they know. They are a product of their environment, that is all they are." (P12; p54)

"and I am always wearing a suit, obviously with a big car you know…other people's driving it." (P11; p47)

"I am doing good. Now yeah everybody knows me yeah…with the stuff I was doing, you wanted to be seen with the best girl. You wanted to be seen with the best guys." (P11; p45)

For the majority, there was the perception that girls were impressed by material trappings and image, as well as wealth-related demonstrations of affection and actively sought these out. This links in with their viewpoint that ostentatious behaviour made them popular with girls and led to normalisation of girls approaching them, regardless of their relative age.

"If girls see nice cars, they see money, they see this, that and they want, they want to meet people who are around that." (P6; p20)

"trying to lie about her age, trying to sit with her hands on a BMW car, like "who wants to get picked up?" and this and that. It is bad it is man, ah." (P6; p23)

This fed into participants' offence-supportive attitudes around what does and does not constitute grooming behaviours. This perpetuated their view about the dynamics of consent within their relationships, such as young people's willing engagement in alcohol, drugs and parties,

"girls hear about the drugs and that and they they are on you like this, like they want to be a part of it. Like they just think it is a status symbol like ah, I am with a drug dealer." (P6; p35)

"I chat to the girl and the girl said she's up for a threesome." (P11; p85)

"And girls come up and say they would like to give you their number… And you know girls nah mean oh I wanna go back to your hotel with you and…" (P11; p46)

Promiscuity and Sexual Commodification For a lot of participants, promiscuity was viewed as the norm, with the perception that many people meet others for sex without the expectation of a relationship:

"Girls on the side. Pissed up, fuck 'em. Side chicks." (P7; p5)

"When you're around lads every day and then meeting girls and then this and that it is just like it is a day to day thing…Like if you ask most lads, most people now won't get into a relationship now they'll just meet for a certain purpose and that is it…people rob one-night stands and like shit and it is not only males, it is females as well" (P6; p34)

"People rob one-night stands and like shit and it is not only males, it is females as well". (P6; p34)

"I did not want to be with her you know, and we were having sex and I did not want to build nothing [relationship] and…" (P11; p29)

Several participants described their normal, regular sexual behaviour

being misinterpreted, leading to conviction, rather than there being anything inherently different, or wrong with their behaviour on those occasions. They perceived it as a mismatch of expectations, where they just wanted sex and these girls wanted a relationship.

"girls get annoyed and want more. I am like fuck that, nothing serious" (P6; p51)

"think I love them after one night, especially the young ones. I did not think of it like that." (P11; p51)

"She wanted me as a boyfriend...This is my understanding now…Think if we're working with him, hanging out with him, we're better off." (P15; p38)

There was an implication by numerous participants that there had been some relationship, or ongoing interaction between them. There were several aspects of the dynamics they put forward to explain their offending in context.

"Know her for time, fuck buddies, go to her house, get pissed and have sex" (P7; p3)

"There was always a party in the house" "they were regular on coke at parties!" (P13; p19)

"sometimes they used to ring me middle of the night like in the city centre, saying yeah, can you pick us up please? I literally used to go and pick them up" (P13; p38)

There were numerous comments by participants about the nature of consent and the difficulty of negotiating consent in this context. Several were adamant that all sexual contact had been consensual,

"she had videos on her phone laughing and giggling. My co-d [co-defendant] said something about threesomes, and she giggled and said yeah, I do not mind" (P6; p10)

"sometimes we'd get so like drunk that we'd end up shagging each other and that dynah' mean? It wasn't anything bad like that." (P13; p45)

A lot of participants said that at the time of sexual contact, there was no indication of non-consent from the girls. They had gone home as usual, there had been no violence, no injuries and therefore from their point of view, no crime.

> *"She was having sex with lads saying like ah, my pussy's tight, come fuck me and all this and like if a girl's been raped, why's she saying that? Why's she putting it on snapchat?"* (P6; p23)

> *"Literally I never thought I was coming to prison."* (P10; p26)

One participant reported that in court, when asked whether he could have known that she did not consent, the victim said he could not have known. This person was particularly aggrieved that he still went on to be found guilty. Several said the girls had been approached by police asking about their sexual history in retrospect, and that they had made complaints to get themselves out of trouble for their own behaviour. Some said they had never heard the term child sexual exploitation until I asked them about it and explained the definition, even during trial.

> *"Everything is with their consent…and later on that is when you found that, you think that they've been told what to say, these things like somebody's talked to them!"* *(P16; p35)*

> *"If she's laughing and joking in front of my face and she's insinuating things with me, I am not doing nothing. Bearing in mind I am not touching her, she's not…I've not made a move on her, she's made a move on me!"* (P12; p12)

> *"No violence no nothing she said we were all happy laughing and joking laughing, no violence, no nothing at all."* (P12; p12)

There was evidence in quite a few accounts that participants had behaved in a way that could be interpreted as grooming. However, very few

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appeared to view this as a one-way thing they did to girls; more like they viewed

it as a reciprocal, mutually beneficial arrangement:

> *"Because we believe other people they need help so then we only try to help."*
> (P15;23)

> *They have no money to buy food, they have no money to buy drink…these people are poor…I am just gonna try and help."* (P15; p23)

> *"I used to get takeaways and let them stay over"* (P13; 37)

> *"People's coming there saying come buy drink, you nah mean, the kids are gonna party."* *(P14; p16)*

> *"When they['re] coming in there, they keep coming more."* (P15; p49)

The underlying attitude was if the girls came of their own accord, then

the behaviour was not wrong, or at the least, there was fault on both sides. Some

tended to hold a transactional view of interactions with girls, particularly those

convicted of trafficking, arranging and grooming, rather than contact offences:

One encapsulated this by saying,

> *"the problem is miss, that when the girls need food, drink, money for drugs, they always come, take it. Obviously when they coming, they are using the boys. The boys use them back. That is it all over miss!"* (P15; p50)

This came across as a strong offence-supportive attitude, with no

apparent recognition or acknowledgement of a mismatch of power, or coercive,

imbalanced interpersonal dynamics. In one case, the girl involved was seventeen

and the man was 34, but the respondent thought,

> *"What happened that day, they had sex. They both happy…they both aged, she's er 17, boy is 34 but that does not matter, it is not my problem."* *(P15; 46)*

Communication via social media was a significant factor in the process leading to offending. For a significant proportion, they saw it as normal to meet sexual partners online. Their girlfriends and friends' girlfriends befriended them online, and that is normal for this generation:

"She liked me from then, but I did not really know who she was…then after that she er, add me on Facebook yeah, you know, then we just start talking." (P11; p12)

"I picked her up on Facebook and I had get a thousand girls all liking my shit! That is what I am saying I do not need to force a girl to do anything with me!" (P6; p19)

The online environment was an integral part of the participants' shared experience with the group and with the girls. Many people meet through online dating and social media. Participants said it is common to accept friend requests from friends of friends, and to have 1,000s of friends on social media, many of whom they do not know in person;

"It is how girls get in contact it is how it is now, nowadays." (P6; p20)

"nah' mean and then I was having sex and love from all these girls and then I was happy having sex and then they were putting it on Facebook or Twitter you know." (P11; p47)

"like before a man had to approach a woman…them days are finished" (P12; p32)

Some had 5,000 followers online, with "random girls" adding them, only 200 of those being people they know. One said he had met girls all over the country "for a quick feel", but that this is normal behaviour in modern Britain. They would speak for a few weeks online and then meet up:

"literally it is like a swipe and it is a one night and it is seen as nothing, like literally." (P12; p32)

"I had meet 2-3 girls every day like…it was that accessible to me if I was bored…I had be like oh do you want to come and meet me and that, and that is how easy it was." (P6; p86)

For those seeking a reputation, or notoriety, this online environment was a way of self-promotion. They would gain as many followers as possible, to achieve the hypermasculine ideal of having girls falling over themselves to 'hook up' with them. Girls with whom they had had sexual contact would post pictures of themselves together online. Some were shocked that they had been charged with any kind of offence for sexual behaviour linked to this, because they said it was normal within their peer group and wider circles:

"I had so many friends on Facebook and like, on Instagram and Twitter like and it is like it weren't just girls from [home-town], like they was from all over!" (P6; p46)

"We'd been speaking for a few weeks and months and she'd be like ah, come see me…and finally I had go and that". (P6; p46)

They also spoke about the fact that some girls involved had even continued to message them after the sexual contact, and in some cases after arrest and charge.

"they say you raped them, then they are messaging you a day later, saying they want to perform sexual acts on you" (P6; p2)

"So they used to come over and they used to have drink and a smoke, and sometimes they might have sex with some people, but that is because they decided that is what they wanted, they wanted to be there." (P16; p31)

They did not see the girls as victims, but willing participants. They were particularly aggrieved about being convicted of trafficking offences, because they had either given lifts to girls, or sexual contact had happened in their car. Again, there was a perception that this was socially acceptable.

"Basically, trafficking yeah, if I meet a girl now, and I take her anywhere, that is the trafficking." (P6; p29)

"And then we picked the girls up and then we were chilling for a bit… in the car" (P10; p3)

A lot of offences had been prosecuted in retrospect. Participants said once the police had evidence of one complainant, they searched through records and approached girls they had known, to build a case against them. Their viewpoint was complaints had not been made by those girls, but rather girls had been backed into a situation where they lied to cover up their own previously willing misbehaviour:

"One girl come forward, the rest, all the rest the police found off my phone, and videos on my phone and, they've found girls from years ago and like, and like obviously then when they told the girls there's videos on the phone of you like doing sexual acts on people and then the girls are obviously not gonna admit it and that is when the barrister said they were forced into it" (P6; p4)

"These girls keep ringing my phone, like they are ringing me saying can you let us in the house…they did not look at my phone, they did not even look at my Facebook, I had evidence on my Facebook asking are we coming over this weekend, can we stay at yours, like loads of taxi messages". (P13; p20)

Subcultural Norms In relation to cultural expectations in the UK, there was a common perception that girls were dressed up as adults, with hair and makeup, portraying themselves as sexually mature, lying about their age to get into adult social environments like clubs and parties, where casual sex is the norm. They said girls behaved in a sexualised way suggesting they were older than they were, making it more difficult for them to negotiate sexual etiquette, or tell who was too young. Some talked about girls being around regularly in their circle of friends;

"I believed they were grown up. I wouldn't expect them to be out drinking so young" (P16; p22)

"They never told me their age. They always go night clubbing and that, so I thought these girls were older girls. Coming to me like 5 in the morning like when I am sleeping, so I never thought they was that age." (P13, p19)

There was a corresponding attitude expressed by respondents that teenage sex is normal, if the girls are ready for it. There was an implication that if a girl was already sexually active, they would not be committing a crime by sleeping with her;

"some people did have sex with them; they were up for it" (P16; p29)

"she's done whatever she's been doing, with a lot of people" (P12; p2)

Several participants talked about the fact that their own behaviour had been the same as usual, but that these particular girls were the issue,

"the girl used to run away, and they would find her with men. People should be looking after them, protecting them. I never knew they were vulnerable." (P16; p53)

There appeared to be a marked lack of understanding that sexual abuse can lead children and adolescents to display sexualised behaviours. They were interpreting this as meaning girls were sexually mature and ready for sex, such as one talking about a thirteen-year-old,

"they were prick teasing this…fella…I convinced myself she was up for anything, even at age 13." (P3; p87)

"a couple of them probably did have relationships with them, but there's no way we were like passing them round." (P16; p29)

There was an indication by many participants that they had not been aware of the girls' age at the time of their offending. One said he had cried when he was told by the police the girl who had given him oral sex was 15, because he

realised the seriousness of the implications, where he had not given it a thought at the time:

"What did happen, was consensual….and I was like look, I've literally like I've had a blow job. I did not know she was like 15. I thought she was like a reasonable age 18." (P10; p9)

Participants talked about their interpretation of the girls' behaviour as being indications of sexual maturity. They reported having blame pushed onto them by authorities and girls in retrospect, sometimes years afterwards, because the girls had been questioned and did not want to get in trouble for their behaviour that had been consensual at the time.

"Cause at the end of the day, the girls never go forward to the police. They police actually went to them." (P16; p20)

"this girl was vulnerable this girl was this, this girl was that, and neither one person for me was there like…never asking whether I was in care as well like" (P13; p59)

Another notable aspect of subcultural norms is that participants were culturally, ethnically and religiously diverse. Cultural, community and familial influences were an important theme discussed as being a large influence on attitudes and behaviour. Sexual expectations also differed between participants. The majority reported confusing messages they struggled to negotiate.

Several participants who either came to the UK as children and adolescents, or were born in the UK, described the cultural dichotomy between their families, ancestral cultural identity and modern British society. Some described tensions between cultural and familial expectations and UK adolescent norms in a more sexually permissive culture. Some talked about their families

being very religious or having expectations that they would be teetotal and not interact with girls until ready for marriage:

"They tried to do an arranged marriage [for my brother] but he did not speak to her."
(P6; p75)

In this context, they spoke about keeping home life separate from their social life, hiding alcohol and drug use, criminal activity, or sex outside of marriage. This was something of an adolescent journey into young adulthood, from being controlled strictly to becoming autonomous, whilst perceiving this level of control not to be the case for their peers.

"My Mum and that are really religious, so they never knew, like they never knew I was like meeting girls and this and that."   (P6; p39)

"Like I've always said that fuck me there's nothing serious. I can't get myself into that, I can't! I can't get serious, I can't do any of that stuff. My family would kill me!"   (P6; 51)

However, this was not universally the case. One participant talked about it being acceptable within his community for a man to have more than one wife.

"Normal to have main wife and side wives."   (P7; p4)

He saw it as normal in his extended family and friends to have "side wives" whom the main wife was not aware of, for fun and sex, but who knew they were married. This is the context within which he viewed the girls. For some, their conviction and that of other family members had come as a complete shock to the family. They talked about the deceit leading to a lack of trust within those relationships.

"I wasn't bringing them to the door so they wasn't like meeting them."   (P6; 39)

Conversely, one participant said coming to the UK was a shock when they were no longer controlled using corporal punishment and strict discipline. Trying to integrate into, and navigate within a culture where adults had much less control over children, particularly during adolescence, teenage and young adulthood:

"all my life I've had a lot of pressure on me and I've been scared...This is my time to actually mess around!" (P11; p15)

Several participants were from backgrounds where sexual maturity and early promiscuity are more prevalent and accepted. These participants saw sexual promiscuity as the norm, surprised at the seriousness of their conviction.

Countries around the world differ significantly on cultural norms in relation to sexual maturity and ages of consent: In Nigeria the legal age of consent is 11, other African countries vary between 12-14, in large parts of Europe and South America it is 14, and in many other parts of the world such as the Middle East and parts of Asia there are no lower age limits, but laws restrict sex before marriage (World Population Review, 2019). It is important to contextualise this, because some sexual behaviours considered criminal in one country, may not be so in another. This was evident in participants' perceptions of their sexual behaviour:

"Apart from if you beat up a girl, fair enough, yes, if you kill a girl, yes, but having sex with a girl I never know about that, because I was…I've never heard about getting done for that" (P11; p75)

Discussion

Main Findings and Synthesis with Previous Research

The aim of this study was to identify and explore UK CSE offending by groups of adults, through the eyes of those convicted. Grounded Theory analysis of interview data (Charmaz, 2014) revealed some common features of participants' trajectories into offending. Some linked adverse life experiences, including things like abuse, displacement, poverty, marginalisation and other vulnerabilities as significant precursors to their offending. The majority were also criminally versatile, having more previous non-sexual than sexual convictions. This is consistent with previous research on sexual offending (Glasser, Kolvin, Campbell and Glasser, 2001; Harris, Knight, Smallbone and Dennison, 2010; Plummer and Cossins, 2018; Smallbone, Heaton and Hourigan, 2003; Smallbone and Wortley, 2004;) and the effects of trauma on likelihood of sexual and general offending (Ward and Beech, 2006, 2016; Baglivio, Wolffe, Piquero and Epps, 2015; Fox, Perez, Cass, Baglivio, and Epps, 2015; Johnstone and Boyle, 2018).

Beyond these commonalities, there were marked differences between groups offending against children, compared with people convicted of offences against teenagers. Differences were evident between the development and nature of the groups, the primary motivation for group involvement and the general worldview and subcultural environmental factors relevant to CSE offending. For this reason, the results were reported separately, to highlight the distinctions between them.

Those people offending against children were doing so primarily because of a persistent sexual interest. For these people, the function of their group involvement with adults outside abusive family dynamics was twofold: Engagement with others offending similarly, made them feel emboldened and connected on a level they found difficult in adult relationships and reinforced that their behaviour was in some way more acceptable. Secondly, in some cases it also meant they had access to more children to offend against, than if looking for children in their close environment. Both aspects were highly reinforcing of continued group involvement and a catalyst for further offending.

This is exactly what Harkins and Dixon (2010) hypothesised. The fundamental need for human relationships and intimacy, as outlined in the Good Lives Model (Ward and Marshall, 2004) translated into a sexual attraction towards children these people sought to fulfil. This is also in line with Mann, Hanson and Thornton's (2010) assertion that lack of emotionally intimate relationships with adults is an empirically supported predictor of sexual offending. The function of group involvement for these people was explained by da Silva, Woodhams and Harkins (2015) in relation to group sexual offending. Social corroboration increased people's confidence in offence-supportive beliefs shared with other group members (da Silva et. al., 2015).

Conversely, those convicted of CSE offences against teenagers were part of a modern, connected, social media, smart-phone generation that helped people facilitate meetings and communicate with others in their daily lives. These people shared a worldview that was generally promiscuous, image-conscious

and materialistic, where sex is commodified, and teenage sexual activity is perceived as the norm, if the young people think they're ready for it. This better explains the transactional aspect of CSE offending and the complex dynamics associated with it. It also explains their marked surprise about being convicted. As LeFebre (2018) found, about 5% of Tinder users merely engage in 'hook-ups', isolated meetings to initiate sexual encounters as sexual experimentation, without the intention of it leading to a relationship (LeFebre, 2018).

For a proportion of participants, there were also adversities and vulnerabilities in their backgrounds that contributed to their trajectory towards crime. Adverse childhood experiences and socioeconomic hardship were common. For some, feelings of alienation and marginalisation influenced decisions to engage in problematic peer relationships, such as gangs and antisocial groups, as described by Johnstone and Boyle (2018) and Wilkinson, Beaty and Lurry's (2009). Wilkinson et. al (2009) described how in deprived urban social contexts, marginalised youth, believing they are without protection from authorities, turn to each other for self-help and protection. For others without a traumatic history, group involvement was with family and friends they'd grown up with. For all these people, their group involvement satisfied a need for kinship, or belonging, in line with the Good Lives Model (Ward and Brown, 2004; Ward and Marshall, 2004).

One very clear distinction between people offending against teenagers compared with those offending against children, is that the main function of their group involvement was not primarily about the CSE offending. These were

people with previously existing friendship groups, or known associates, where the sexual offending was almost incidental, as one aspect of their general lifestyle, rather than being the main purpose of the group. This was in stark contrast with those who had offended against children. The function of group involvement in these cases shared more in common with group sexual offences committed against adults, as described by Harkins and Dixon (2010). Sexual offending occurred as a corollary of group membership, more about situational factors, rather than being driven by deviant sexual interest (Harkins and Dixon, 2010).

Participants described their offending behaviour as consensual sexual activity. Their description of the reciprocal arrangements between them and the girls was like that found by Appleton (2014). The focus of discussions amongst professionals about CSE risk to adolescents, centred on the behaviour of the young people (Appleton, 2014). This is what Mooney and Ost (2013) described as a construction of "non-ideal" victims as being complicit in their victimisation, which means they do not perceive themselves as victims, nor are they seen as victims by others, including by authorities (Mooney and Ost, 2013) and in the case of this study, by the adults involved. Mooney and Ost (2013) argued that damaging perceptions of victims need to be challenged more broadly in society.

To put this into perspective, the Bailey Review (2011) expressed UK parents' views that commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood are now rooted in wider adult culture, such that young people feel pressured to take part in a sexual life before they are ready. As Coy (2016) points out, youth and

youthful good looks are eroticised and young people are sexualised within UK culture as being physically desirable, fuelling entitlement attitudes towards sexual availability (Coy, 2016; Trickett, 2015). Likewise, Buckingham, Willett, Bragg and Russell (2010) found that some young people dressed in a sexualised manner and embodied a more sexualised image from the media than others, at a younger age (Buckingham et. al., 2010). Even the Sentencing Council (2013) make distinctions between sexual crime committed against minors of different ages, with lesser sentences for offences against children over the age of thirteen. The implication is that offences against teenagers are less serious, and the attitudes of the adults surveyed in this study confirm that this is a viewpoint that can contribute to the commission of CSE by groups.

Contribution to Understanding of CSE by Groups

This study confirms that CSE offending perpetrated by groups of adults in the UK shares much in common with other group sexual offending in several important ways. Group CSE offending against children is primarily driven by sexual interest. The main functions of group involvement by these people are to validate group attitudes and empower further offending. By contrast, group CSE offending against teenagers is part of a generally materialistic worldview and lifestyle choices. These groups are characterised by commodification and transactional attitudes towards sex and consent, that are tacitly accepted by the teenagers involved in a complicated relationship dynamic. The function of group involvement is different; these are primarily friends and associates and the sexual offending behaviour is mainly incidental.

These findings make a unique contribution to the field, because this information is not surmised, assumed or inferred from secondary data, but is grounded in the expressed attitudes of people convicted of these crimes. In terms of wider implications, this makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the dynamics involved in problematic sexual activity between teenagers and adults. It has the potential to improve crime prevention, by targeting problematic attitudes that could lead adults closer to CSE offending.

Participants talked about their sexual behaviour being normal within the context of their social circle. Renold and Ringrose (2011) conceptualise girls' sexual development as a non-linear negotiation of modern society, in ways that may look from an adult perspective as if they are expressions of sexual maturity when in fact, they may be nothing of the sort. Thus, however tempting it might be to take a dispositional view that demonises adults involved in CSE as somehow personally defective, immoral, or predatory, this underestimates the systemic and situational factors that are highly relevant to offending in groups (Zimbardo, 2007). Is there anything fundamentally different about these people's psychological disposition from friends, peers, or indeed the wider public? Alternatively, are these group behaviours part of a broader social, societal consensus or groupthink about adolescent sexuality, that form the conditions within which this offending takes place (Zimbardo, 2007)?

Implications of the Findings

There is an opportunity here, for these findings to be used to inform policy. A public information campaign aimed at providing an improved understanding of common cognitive distortions and misperceptions of coercion and consent in relation to teenage sex, could lead to a reduction in CSE offending against teenagers. Adults at risk of becoming involved in problematic sexual relationships with teenagers could learn a greater appreciation of how resource and power imbalances affect the validity of consent. This might for a significant number affect their decisions to engage in sexual behaviour with teenagers, even if they appear consensual on some superficial level.

This is consistent with the message from the Department for Education (2017) guidance, which advocates early and continuous age-appropriate education of children and young people, where messages are communicated within a safe, non-judgemental way. This is a similar development as has been made with professionals dealing with the survivors of CSE, since research such as Jago et. al. (2011). They found professionals on local safeguarding boards tasked with protecting children misunderstood issues of consent for adolescents, noting "consensual sexual activity" in reports about thirteen-year-olds (Jago et. al., 2011). This kind of research finding has led to information campaigns helping professionals and "at risk" young people to understand the nuances involved in CSE. The question is, why are we not having those conversations with the general public more broadly as well? Arguably, this wider conversation is long overdue.

This insight offers an opportunity for engagement and discussion with the next generation of adults, among whom will be potential perpetrators. Discussing these issues using objective and non-judgemental language, is arguably more likely to lead to open conversation with a broader reach. This would inform anyone currently holding common misperceptions about boundaries of consent, as opposed to being reliant on a journalistic narrative that demonises people as predatory paedophiles. The aim of this would be to develop better understanding of potentially harmful sexual behaviour, promote conversations about relationship dynamics, and prevent future generations from repeating these offending behaviour patterns, by opening a wider debate about sexualisation of adolescence in UK society and the consequences of this for people growing up and living in that environment.

In addition, these findings also have important implications for rehabilitation of people already convicted of group CSE. They represent a starting point for the development of interventions most likely to engage people, by acknowledging the processes contributing to their decisions to offend and working alongside them from that starting point. This would necessitate a case-by case formulation approach to identifying the most appropriate treatment targets for each individual convicted of group CSE (Sturney and McMurran, 2011).

For those with trauma-related aetiology a compassion-focussed approach might be most appropriate. The aim would be to engender self-compassion and acceptance, to motivate change towards positive engagement

with others (Gilbert, 2009). For those whose group involvement was about a sense of belonging or safety, akin to other gang-related offending, identity work might be the primary focus (Hennigan and Spanovic, 2012). For those with a specific sexual interest in children, they could be encouraged to engage in interventions aimed at helping them manage that propensity (Blagden, Mann, Webster, Lee and Williams, 2018). For those whose CSE offending was mainly due to misconceptions about the boundaries of consent, this could be the main treatment target. These ideas are wholly consistent with the current HMPPS Interventions approach to prioritisation of primary treatment needs and engaging people in offending behaviour programmes designed to address those.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

In terms of limitations, this was a small-scale study, looking at data from participants convicted of group sexual offences against minors. It would be appropriate to scale up the investigation, to assess the extent to which these participants are reflective of the wider population convicted of CSE related offending and serving sentences currently, or whether there are any further cases where additional, or different treatment needs are evident. For example, there were few participants involved in organised crime in the study, and only one female participant who was a spouse of the person with the contact conviction. It is difficult to generalise, when the evidence-base is limited. There is no evidence that these participants are representative of people committing CSE in groups generally, especially those remaining undetected and un-convicted. Future research will need to examine whether these initial themes related to CSE

group offending is replicated with a broader sample.

Another limitation is that Child Sexual Exploitation is such an umbrella term that it encompasses a variety of behaviours and offences. The design of this study aimed to develop theory to explain CSE, and to discover motivations and group dynamics distinct from other sexual, or group offending. However, the experiences of participants and trajectories into offending were diverse. Hence it is perhaps unsurprising people would have different potential treatment needs for offences labelled CSE. On the one hand, further research is advocated to check these initial findings against a broader sample, although these initial results suggest themes mirror those for other types of group sexual offending. Arguably, a case formulation approach would be the surest way to assess treatment needs for individuals convicted of CSE related crime.

Participants' convictions against teens were mainly for offences taking place during their late teens to early thirties. However, these are relatively new offences from the Sexual Offences Act 2003, new to the Criminal Justice System, hence there's no data about whether this offending would have continued if they hadn't been apprehended. The interview data revealed no significant difference in onset of offending for the group offending against children, just that their ages differed at time of interview. However, in terms of future research, it would be a good to conduct longitudinal research into people convicted of offences against teenagers, so see whether there are a proportion for whom a sexual interest in this age group is more of a chronic, enduring issue that may indicate the need for a management approach to problematic sexual

attraction. Also, in relation to the level of denial and attitudes towards offending and conviction, it would be interesting to find out whether that remains the case over time, or whether that aspect of the findings was related to their relatively early stage of incarceration.

Importantly, in relation to the methodology of future research, it is imperative to continue to use primary data wherever possible and include the voices of adults involved in CSE groups in the narrative about this type of group sexual offending. This would ensure that rather than limiting research to victim perspectives, important though that is, more emphasis can be placed on understanding the reasons why people commit these crimes. This would enable a fuller debate and discussion about what can be done to prevent and deter them from doing so. A deeper and more nuanced understanding of the criminogenic needs of perpetrators will mean an evidence-based approach to prevention and treatment can be more thoroughly developed and successfully implemented.

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Figure 4: Thematic Map for Development of Process Models
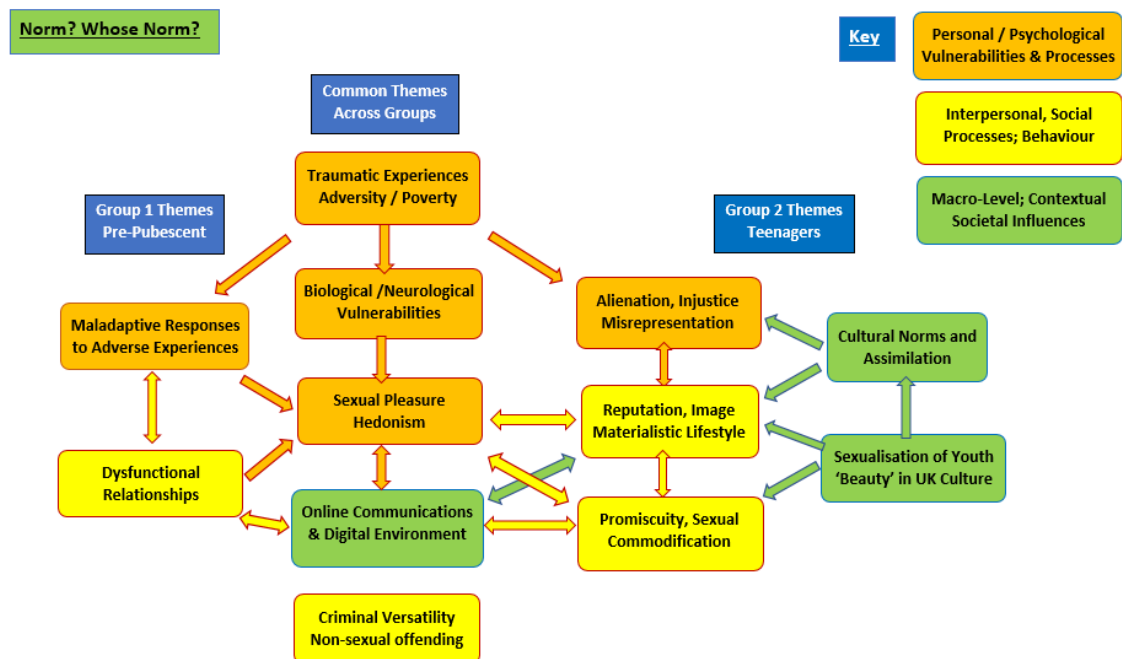
Appendix 1: Leicester University Ethics Approval Letter

University Ethics Sub-Committee for Psychology

20/04/2016

Ethics Reference: 5519-slp55-neuroscience,psychologyandbehaviour

TO:

Name of Researcher Applicant: Sarah Pancholi

Department: Psychology

Research Project Title: Group child sexual exploitation: an investigation into the viewpoints of perpetrators.

Dear Sarah Pancholi,

RE: Ethics review of Research Study application

The University Ethics Sub-Committee for Psychology has reviewed and discussed the above application.

1.   Ethical opinion

The Sub-Committee grants ethical approval to the above research project on the basis described in the application form and supporting documentation, subject to the conditions specified below.

2.   Summary of ethics review discussion

The Committee noted the following issues:

The application was discussed at the ethics committee meeting on 20th April 2016 and was approved, as all potential ethical issues were carefully considered, despite the sensitive nature of the project.

3.   General conditions of the ethical approval

The ethics approval is subject to the following general conditions being met prior to the start of the project:

As the Principal Investigator, you are expected to deliver the research project in accordance with the University's policies and procedures, which includes the University's Research Code of Conduct and the University's Research Ethics Policy.

If relevant, management permission or approval (gate keeper role) must be obtained from host organisation prior to the start of the study at the site concerned.

4.   Reporting requirements after ethical approval

You are expected to notify the Sub-Committee about:

- Significant amendments to the project
- Serious breaches of the protocol
- Annual progress reports
- Notifying the end of the study

5.   Use of application information

Details from your ethics application will be stored on the University Ethics Online System. With your permission, the Sub-Committee may wish to use parts of the application in an anonymised format for training or sharing best practice. Please let me know if you do not want the application details to be used in this manner.

Best wishes for the success of this research project.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. P****

Chair

Appendix 5: Confirmation of Leicester University Ethics Approval for Amended Research Question.

- ****(Prof.) ***@leicester.ac.uk>

Hi again ********,

Thank you very much for your prompt and positive response.
I really appreciate it.

Sarah Pancholi, BSc, MSc, MSc, C.Psychol., AFBPsS.
Senior Lecturer in Forensic Psychology,
⬚
V**** (Prof.) ***@leicester.ac.uk>
Fri 18/05/2018 11:31

- Sarah Pancholi;
- Palmer, Emma J. (Dr.) ***@leicester.ac.uk>

⬚
Dear Sarah
Thank you, this sounds a sensible and practical amendment.
Kind regards
P****

P*******
Professor of Child and Adolescent Mental Health

Sarah Pancholi
Fri 18/05/2018 11:08

- ***@le.ac.uk;
- Palmer, Emma J. (Dr.) ***@leicester.ac.uk>

Hi P***,

I have a research ethics question I am hoping you can help me with please.

I am part way through a research project for my PsyD. My initial question was "Child Sexual Exploitation by groups; how does this happen?"

I am in the final stages of analysis of my data and starting to think about how to write it up.

It is been pointed out by one of my supervisors that there is much said by the participants about *why* this offending happened, rather than exclusively *how*. Although the two things are closely related, they do look distinct from each other.

She suggested one reason why people do not pass their degrees is if they do not answer the question, which seems logical.

However, this leaves me with something of a dilemma.

When I spoke to the participants of this study, one of the things that came across quite strongly was that they were keen for me to represent their perspective as authentically as possible.

Thinking through the implications of this, I am looking to include as much of what they said as possible, even if it isn't strictly speaking exactly what my initial question was.

Hence in order to make sure I am answering the research question, without leaving out big chunks of what they've told me, I am thinking about amending my question to "...how and why does this happen?", rather than just how.

Is that OK with you please?

I've contacted National Offender Management Service National Research Council to make sure it is OK with them also, so I won't amend anything without both your say so.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Best regards,
Sarah Pancholi, BSc, MSc, MSc, C.Psychol., AFBPsS.

Appendix 2: National Offender Management System (NOMS): National Research Committee Research Approval Letter

APPROVED SUBJECT TO MODIFICATIONS – NOMS RESEARCH

Mrs Sarah Pancholi
Senior Psychologist Public Sector
Prisons
HMP XXXX
sarah.pancholi@hmps.gsi.gov.uk

National Offender Management Service
National Research Committee
Email: ***@noms.gsi.gov.uk

1st September 2015
Ref: 2015-222
Title: Group child sexual exploitation: how does this happen?

Dear Sarah,

Further to your application to undertake research across NOMS, the National Research Committee (NRC) is pleased to grant approval in principle for your research. The Committee has requested the following modifications:

- The following should be included in the participation information sheets/consent forms:
  o It must be made clear to research participants that they can refuse to answer individual questions, and that this will not compromise them in any way.
  o Participants should be informed how long their data will be held.
  o Access to any NOMS records for the participants should be explicitly covered.
  o It needs to be clear that the following information has to be disclosed: behaviour that is against prison rules and can be adjudicated against, illegal acts, and behaviour that is potentially harmful to the research participant (e.g. intention to self-harm or complete suicide) or others.
  o Potential avenues of support should be specified for those who are caused any distress or anxiety.
  o The respondent should be asked to direct any requests for information, complaints and queries through their prison establishment.
- The interview schedules should be tested/piloted in the first instance to check ease of use, coverage of key issues and overall length (monitoring any respondent fatigue).
- Under the Prison Act (as amended by the Offender Management Act 2007), mobile phones, cameras and sound recording devices are classified as list B items, requiring authorisation from Governing Governors / Directors of Contracted Prisons (or nominated persons) to take them into and use them in prison (PSI 10/2012 Conveyance and Possession of Prohibited Items and Other Related Offences).
- When using recording devices, the recordings should be treated as potentially disclosive and it is recommended that devices with encryption technology are used. Recordings should be wiped once they have been transcribed and anonymised unless there are clear grounds for keeping them any longer.
- Research data should be kept no longer than necessary, e.g. when the research is to be published and the scientific journal requires the original data to be kept for a specified period
- In the final research reports, the limitations should be clearly set out (e.g. the samples may not be fully representative).

Before the research can commence you must agree formally by email to the NRC (National.Research@noms.gsi.gov.uk), confirming that you accept the modifications set out above and will comply with the terms and conditions outlined below and the expectations set out in the NOMS Research Instruction (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service/about/research).

Please note that unless the project is commissioned by MoJ/NOMS and signed off by Ministers, the decision to grant access to prison establishments, National Probation Service (NPS) divisions or Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) areas (and the offenders and practitioners within these establishments/divisions/areas) ultimately lies with the Governing Governor/Director of the establishment or the Deputy Director/Chief Executive of the NPS division/CRC area concerned. If establishments/NPS divisions/CRC areas are to be approached as part of the research, a copy of this letter must be attached to the request to prove that the NRC has approved the study in principle. The decision to grant access to existing data lies with the Information Asset Owners (IAOs) for each data source and the researchers should abide by the data sharing conditions stipulated by each IAO.

Please quote your NRC reference number in all future correspondence.

Yours sincerely,
National Research Committee

National Research Committee - Terms and Conditions

All research
- **Changes to study -** Informing and updating the NRC promptly of any changes made to the planned methodology. ***This includes changes to the start and end date of the research***.
- **Dissemination of research** - The researcher will receive a research summary template and project review form template attached to the research approval email from NOMS. These two forms are for completion once the research project has ended (ideally within one month of the end date).The researcher should complete the research summary document for NOMS (approximately three pages; maximum of five pages) which (i) summaries the research aims and approach, (ii) highlights the key findings, and (iii) sets out the implications for NOMS decision-makers. The research summary should use language that an educated, but not research-trained person, would understand. It should be concise, well organised and self-contained. The conclusions should be impartial and adequately supported by the research findings. It should be submitted to the NRC alongside the completed project review form (which covers lessons learnt and asks for ratings on key questions). Provision of the research summary and project review form is essential if the research is to be of real use to NOMS.
- **Publications -** The NRC (National.Research@noms.gsi.gov.uk) receiving an electronic copy of any papers submitted for publication based on this research at the time of submission and at least one month in advance of the publication.
- **Data protection** - Researchers must comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and any other applicable legislation. Data protection guidance can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website: http://ico.org.uk. Researchers should store all data securely and ensure that information is coded in a way that maintains the confidentiality and anonymity of research participants. The researchers should abide by any data sharing conditions stipulated by the relevant data controllers.
- **Research participants -** Consent must be given freely. It will be made clear to participants verbally and in writing that they may withdraw from the research at any point and that this will not

have adverse impact on them. If research is undertaken with vulnerable people – such as young offenders, offenders with learning difficulties or those who are vulnerable due to psychological, mental disorder or medical circumstances - then researchers should put special precautions in place to ensure that the participants understand the scope of their research and the role that they are being asked to undertake. Consent will usually be required from a parent or other responsible adult for children to take part in the research.

- **Termination** - NOMS reserves the right to halt research at any time. It will not always be possible to provide an explanation, but NOMS will undertake where possible to provide the research institution/sponsor with a covering statement to clarify that the decision to stop the research does not reflect on their capability or behaviour.

Research requiring access to prison establishments, NPS divisions and/or CRCs

- **Access –** Approval from the Governing Governor/Director of the establishment or the Deputy Director/Chief Executive of the NPS division/CRC area you wish to research in. (Please note that NRC approval does not guarantee access to establishments, NPS divisions or CRC areas; access is at the discretion of the Governing Governor/Director or Deputy Director/Chief Executive and subject to local operational factors and pressures). This is subject to clearance of vetting procedures for each establishment/NPS division/CRC area.
- **Security** – Compliance with all security requirements.
- **Disclosure –** Researchers are under a duty to disclose certain information to prison establishments/probation provider. This includes behaviour that is against prison rules and can be adjudicated against, undisclosed illegal acts, and behaviour that is potentially harmful to the research participant (e.g. intention to self-harm or complete suicide) or others. Researchers should make research participants aware of this requirement. The Prison Rules can be accessed here and should be reviewed: http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/offenders/psipso/pso/PSO_0100_the_prison_rules_1999.doc

Appendix 3: National Offender Management System (NOMS) Ethics Approval for Amended Research Question

Sarah Pancholi
Tue 22/05/2018 15:26

● National Research [NOMS] <***@noms.gsi.gov.uk>

+1 other
⬚

Hi ****,

Thank you so much. That is excellent news. I really appreciate your understanding.

I'll let you know as soon as I've finished writing up and produced the summary document.

Sarah Pancholi, BSc, MSc, MSc, C.Psychol., AFBPsS.
e-mail: ***@coventry.ac.uk

National Research [NOMS] <***@noms.gsi.gov.uk>

• Sarah Pancholi

Dear Sarah,

Thank you for email. The NRC is happy to approve this amendment to your research question.

Kind regards,
****,
NRC Co-ordinator

From: Sarah Pancholi [mailto:****@coventry.ac.uk]
Sent: 18 May 2018 09:16
To: National Research [NOMS] <****@noms.gsi.gov.uk>
Subject: Ref: 2015-222 Title: Group child sexual exploitation: how does this happen?

Good morning NRC folks,

I am in the final stages of analysis of my data for the above research and starting to think about how to write it up.

On analysis of the data, there is much said by the participants about *why* this offending happened, rather than exclusively *how*. Although the two are closely related, they do look distinct from each other.

In order to make sure I am answering the research question, without leaving out big chunks of what they've told me, I am thinking about amending my question to "...how and why does this happen", rather than just how.

Thinking through the implications of this, what the participants told me is that they were keen not to be misrepresented and to have their own stories properly told, so it is with that in mind I am looking to include as much of what they said as possible.

Is that OK with you please?
Sarah Pancholi, BSc, MSc, MSc, C.Psychol., AFBPsS.

Appendix 4: Consent Form for Research Participants

Dept. of Neuroscience, Psychology and
Behaviour

<u>Consent to Interview for Research Project</u>

Hello! My name is Sarah Pancholi and I am writing to you to ask whether you will speak to me as part of a research project. This would involve me talking to you for about an hour or so (maybe more if you have a lot you want to say). You do not have to take part if you do not want to, but it would be really helpful if you would. There are no consequences to you, good or bad, whether you take part or not. If you change your mind, that is OK too, right up until the interview has taken place.

The reason for the project is that there are more people coming into prison for offences with child victims, committed with others in a network, or group. My research is to find out more about how these networks or groups work. The media tends to demonise people who have been involved in these crimes, and there is no research where anyone's asked offenders what happened for them to become involved and how it happened. All existing research has talked to victims, or people working with victims. This project gives you the chance to talk about how you got involved in your offending, and how you are linked with the network or group. It is expected people end up in this situation for different reasons. Different people will be driven to offend by various motivations, and this is what I am really interested in knowing more about. You do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable.

My project plan is to interview a number of prisoners to work out the range of reasons people are involved in group offending with child victims. I will ask questions about your background, you as a person and also about how you got involved in your offending. I will also ask you about how you are linked to a network or group and how you interact with others in that group. I will then look at everyone's interview notes and pull out themes that are common with others involved in similar offending. This will enable me to construct a theory about how this type of offending happens. This information will be used by NOMS to respond to the increasing numbers of people being convicted of similar offences.

The information you give will only be used for the purposes of the research. There are times when information has to be passed on to the authorities; for example, if you talk about a person/people in danger, or at risk, including details (such as names, addresses); also, if you tell me you are going to hurt yourself, others, or threaten the security of the establishment. Basically, any behaviour that could lead to adjudication must be passed on. If I am worried you might hurt yourself, I will need to open an ACCT. If any of this happens, I will be sure to tell you to who I am passing the information and why. Otherwise, everything you say will be treated as confidential. Please tell me if you're upset by our interview, so that I can make arrangements for you to be supported afterwards.

After I have spoken to you, information from each interview will be given a code number. This means that once the interviews have been completed, nobody will know who you are from the paperwork. From that point on, it will not be possible for you to withdraw consent, as the data will be completely anonymous. Your answers to questions will then be coded and the main reasons for offending will be looked at in detail alongside everyone else's. Data will be held securely in line with the Data Protection Act. I will also ask someone else to double score and check my coding, to make sure I've got it right.

As well as being made available to NOMS, the final research paper will form a research thesis that will be published nationally, in a psychology journal (I do not know which one yet). This is to enable other researchers to look at the results and help them think about other things to research next. You will not be identified in any way in this paper. This is also a project that will lead to my qualification as a Doctor of Psychology (PsyD), so it will be submitted to Leicester University and they will own a copy of the final report. You can request a copy if you wish to read it. All original documents will be destroyed once the paper is published.

Although I am a Senior Chartered and Registered Forensic Psychologist, and I have worked for the Prison Service for eighteen years, you do not have to worry about coming across me during your sentence. I guarantee you that if I am asked to be involved in your case in any way, for instance writing a risk assessment for parole, or assessment for interventions, I will declare that I already know you and turn down that piece of work. I will not talk to any other Psychologists involved in risk assessment in your case either. This has been agreed by my managers. This means there is no conflict of interest and you can tell me about your offending purely as a researcher, not as someone who is ever going to be commenting on your risk of reoffending.
If there are any other questions you have about the project, or anything that is explained above, please feel free to ask me and I'll do my best to answer them as best I can.
_____

Please tick **one** box below:

I have read and understood the above information and I **do** give my consent to take part in an interview

I have read the above information and **I am not sure**, so I want to ask the researcher more questions before I decide whether to take part

I have read the information and I **do not** want to be involved in the project

Name: _____Signature: _____Date: _____

Prison Number: _____ Current Establishment: _____

Appendix 5: Consent Form for Use of Recording Equipment

Dept. of Neuroscience, Psychology and
Behaviour

Consent for use of Recording Equipment during interview

As a participant in a research project on people whose offences were committed as part of a network or group, with a child victim, you have agreed to be interviewed about your offending.

The information from this interview will be put together with interview answers by all the other participants. Nobody will be able to see who gave what answers once the data is analysed. **Your name will not appear anywhere** in the research report. The report will only talk about general themes. There will be no way of identifying you, as each interview transcript will be given a code number once the interviews are finished and names will not appear on the paperwork.

In order to make sure that everything you say is recorded accurately, I would like to use recording equipment during the interview. The recording will be held securely in line with the Data Protection Act. This means when being transferred from place to place, it will be in a locked container, and then within a locked cabinet on arrival. It will then be **typed out** word for word onto paper and the **recording destroyed** as soon as this is done. This may involve use of a HMPPS typist, if you agree to that (below). The HMP typist will also honour assurances of confidentiality and anonymity and will not divulge any information from the interviews.

The only reason for this request is so that I do not have to take notes during the interview. This will make sure that I can concentrate on what you are actually saying, and make sure that when I copy the recording onto paper, I am not misquoting, or misunderstanding anything you say, but putting it down word for word. I think this will lead to a better interview, where I am not sitting scribbling away. It will also mean that the final results are **more likely to be an accurate reflection** of what's been said.

_____

Please tick relevant box/es below:
I have read the above information and **I am happy** for the interview to be recorded
I have read the above information and **I am not happy** for the interview to be recorded

I **am happy / am not happy** for an HMPPS typist to transcribe my interview (delete one)

Name: _____ Signature: _____Date: _____

Prison Number: _____ Current Establishment: _____

Part Three: Critical Appraisal of the Research

Critical Analysis of Topic area

As a Forensic Psychologist, I watched high-profile cases in the news, of groups of men prosecuted for Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), listening for useful information to explain their behaviour. However, the narrative was sensationalist and emotive, saying nothing about motivations, or trajectories into offending, but demonising and "othering" "perpetrators", with words like "predatory" and "paedophiles". Conducting initial scoping searches of academic research on the topic, I found the prevailing narrative was about safeguarding young people; identifying their vulnerabilities, helping them survive their experiences, and learning lessons from previously inadequate professional responses to CSE. From those perspectives, the research was useful, impactful and insightful. However, there was something missing. There was little talk about the people committing these offences. I was none the wiser about people committing CSE in groups, or what their treatment targets might be. This was the gap in knowledge I identified and aimed to address.

I attended a conference (CCATS, 2015), where two people from a medico-legal background reported the findings of their discourse analysis on the nature of the narrative around CSE and how demonisation of perpetrators is not conducive with helping to improve conviction rates (Mooney and Ost, 2015). They argued perpetrators do not conform to preconceptions, meaning neither safeguarding agencies, nor children at risk have a realistic picture of CSE, hampering attempts to manage risk of harm. This experience made me determined to remain as impartial as possible when collecting and analysing

data about CSE, being aware of my inherent feminist biases, attempting to correct for those as much as possible. I wanted to represent participants' viewpoints impartially, so CSE could be better understood and interventions tailored to treatment needs in line with "What Works", particularly responsivity principles (Maguire, 1995). This was the main aim of my study.

Critical Analysis and Rationale for Evolution of Methodology

My initial thoughts were to have a two-stage research design. Speaking to Juliette Kloss at Birmingham University about her PhD on internet "chat room" offending groups, we discussed the need for an initial qualitative study, to find out more about the nature and composition of CSE groups, how people become involved, their roles and perceptions of the group, the social dynamics. The second part of my project, which I pitched in my initial research proposal to NOMS, was to then follow up with a large-scale quantitative analysis of everyone in prison for CSE offending in groups, to get more of an overall analysis of the proportions and numbers of people committing which offences. Speaking to Emma Palmer, my supervisor, I realised that what I was planning was too ambitious to be achievable in a PsyD, and I should stick to making a good job of the first part of the project, rather than a superficial job of both.

In my research proposal, I said I was going to approach this project from a direct realist perspective, using thematic analysis to draw out themes. The service evaluation was the first time I had carried out a qualitative study, but I had supervised trainees using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2013), which seemed appropriate for a research area without much existing literature,

as a bottom-up, inductive approach. However, as soon as I started finding out in more depth about qualitative methods, I realised if I stuck to this plan, I was in danger of producing a surface level descriptive analysis that wouldn't really add much to understanding of CSE. On reflection, I think this is what happened in my service evaluation, where, although there was nothing inherently wrong with my analysis, the data itself was arguably superficial, which limited the depth of analysis possible. I really did not want that to be the case in my empirical paper. I heard a presentation by Zoe Stephenson from Birmingham University about qualitative research design. This was when I first realised that Grounded Theory appeared to be more appropriate for the depth of analysis I wanted to achieve.

Further reading, reflections and early conversations were taking me more into thinking from a constructivist position, whereby everyone has their own view of reality that shapes what they come to view as normal, routine, or justifiable, from their perspective. I appreciated the concept of symbolic interactionism, whereby data analysis is not just an examination of events, but also inferring the meaning of those events to the person. That is what's most important about how experiences shape people. Hence despite realising it was probably going to be more laborious, I decided to take a Grounded Theory approach instead as a constructivist interpretive approach to data analysis (Charmaz, 2014), to make sure my data collection was as thorough as possible, to achieve deeper understanding.

In grounded theory, data collection evolves according to initial coding and findings, to ensure that theory evolves according to findings rather than preconceived ideas Charmaz (2014). This design was chosen as the most appropriate because the aim was to understand and explain the offending behaviour in context, without presupposing it was driven by similar processes as other types of previously researched sexual offending. The analysis looked for pathways and processes, motivations, dynamics and influences affecting people's decisions to offend. This was imperative, to enable the research to be most useful to agencies developing services and interventions and tasked with setting treatment targets for rehabilitation. The aim was to enable policy makers to have an evidence-based, coherent theoretical framework of potential treatment targets, on which to ground that service development.

On reflection, I am glad I used Grounded Theory, because it meant I thought about the participants' interpretations of their life events and their emotive responses, at every stage of data collection and analysis. I attended to what they were telling me, but also the emotion in the room, things they found difficult to discuss, or skirted over, a method which generally gave me richer data to understand their lived experience. Although Grounded Theory has been criticised for its mechanistic abstraction of chunks of data (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996), I did it by hand rather than using a computerised package. This meant I could attend to meaning throughout the process, rather than losing sight of participants' conscious and subconscious experiences.

I used Hollway and Jefferson's (2013) psychosocial approach to

qualitative research. This method seeks to ground the theoretical perspective in the data, whilst accounting for difficulties inherent in researching a potentially contentious topic with defended subjects. Consideration was given to designing a semi-structured interview schedule, to give predictability and control over the flow, and make sure no important information was missed. This would need to be open-ended and unpresumptuous about participants' likely answers, to avoid unconscious bias from existing knowledge and attitudes (Charmaz, 2014). This would be a familiar method, more likely to flow naturally compared to a totally unstructured approach.

However, it would mean offering categories, topics and ideas to participants about likely considerations to include in their answers. By implication, things not included in the interview schedule could be interpreted by participants as not important for them to mention. This could limit the extent to which the interviewees set the agenda and potentially undermine the principle of looking for novel ideas, and issues not already addressed in other research, inadvertently skewing the data. Hence the use of semi-structured interviews to guide participants would represent a limitation in the methodology.

Critical Analysis of Interview Procedure

Because of the sensitive nature of the topic, a level of reticence was anticipated. Hollway and Jefferson (2013) talk about the importance of understanding the 'defended' subject; the effects of defences against anxiety on people's actions and stories about them. Adopting a minimalist style, trying hard

to get the perspective of the participant with the minimum questioning, enabled the avoidance of leading questions. This was recognised by Hollway and Jefferson (2013) as being an approach that is most likely to work well with guarded subjects. In this method of intensive interviewing, there is enough structure to orient the person in time and place, but other than that, they are free to set their own agenda of important associations and to speak about their experiences in a way that makes sense to them.

Hollway and Jefferson's (2013) example of an interview structure showed it was possible to pare the questions down to the bare minimum. Some general principles for probing and clarification follow-up questions were used, to orient in time and place and avoid the above awkward and clumsy experience, but still retain a mainly free-flowing narrative style. This enabled a deeper discussion to evolve about their innermost thoughts and feelings. This also fitted with the grounded theorist approach of not presupposing themes and facilitating the content to be decided and weighted as far as possible by the participants (Charmaz, 2014).

Another important aspect of data collection was the method of recording and transcribing. Charmaz (2014) explains using a recorder allows researchers to give full attention to participants, with steady eye contact, to obtain detailed data. The nature of an intensive interview is such that the interviewer needs to really listen to what the participant is saying. This is essential in order to be sensitive to their experience, understand it and decide

moment by moment when it is appropriate and necessary to interrupt the free narrative to ask for particular examples, or more detail, to gain rich enough data for meaningful analysis without affecting the participant's flow unnecessarily (Charmaz, 2014). This technique of free narrative was adopted throughout, sometimes necessitating several interviews per participant, with care taken to interrupt as little as possible, summarise, clarify, and ask for detail where necessary.

It was important to be aware of my own reactions to what participants were telling me about their lives and offending. As a professional psychologist, my interview skills talking to clients have been honed to offer an empathic response to hearing difficult, sometimes shocking material. As a researcher, it was important for me to be aware of my emotional reactions and hear participants' experience afresh. This would mean being aware of how my responses might affect the depth and direction of the interviews, and the richness of data.

I realised it would also be important for me to bear my reactions in mind whilst coding, to ensure inferences made were accurately captured within the annotation. I realised I would need to manage my feelings effectively during the process. This was harder than anticipated. I think it was one of the reasons it took me longer than I thought to work through the data. It was difficult reading and attending to the emotion of it was quite harrowing at times. I learned that no matter how experienced you are professionally, you cannot underestimate the emotive nature of the subject matter.

It was important for me to think about the potential for the participants to be adversely affected by the nature of the questions, and by discussing things they may have hitherto kept wholly, or partially hidden. Particularly with a type of crime where people do not talk about it, there's the possibility that talking might bring to light suppressed emotions. I thought about how to respond appropriately to ensure they were supported. Hollway and Jefferson (2013) hypothesise a relationship between people's ambiguous representations and their experiences, so tracking this relationship needs to take psychosocial factors into account, both for the participants, their inner world and outer experiences and mine. I would need to judge when to ask clarification questions and when to sit silent.

A grounded theorist needs to be aware of their own subconscious biases, or else what they think is a free narrative may have been shaped into something completely different. Charmaz (2014) explains that how interviewers pose, emphasise, and pave their questions can force data. The wrong questions fail to explore pivotal issues or to elicit participants' experiences in their own language. She asserts that without at least an 'interview guide', an interview can be fraught with pitfalls, particularly for novices. She indicates that this approach invites asking awkward, poorly timed, intrusive questions that you may fill with unexamined preconceptions (Charmaz; 2014).

In reality, what I found most awkward about the interviews was the fact that they were recorded using a Dictaphone. Whilst this was essential to

capture the participants' narratives word for word, it also left me feeling exposed without my pen and paper. I realised I use that to hide behind, and think through how to respond in the moment, using writing time to think about how best to respond, or which follow-up questions to ask, rather than looking people in the eye. It was a tricky balance to achieve, between leaving participants' free narrative, and making sure they were not going off topic, some of which was necessary for rapport-building, but also may have been a strategy for those not wishing to talk about their innermost thoughts and feelings. I am not sure I got this right all the time. Several times, I became aware I had interrupted their flow, which affected the course of the interview. In future, I would think carefully about the potential for having some more structure to interviews, and how to achieve that without presupposing their direction. It is a tricky balance, but something to be mindful of.

Procedural Limitations

One limitation of my qualitative approach is it limited me to a relatively small sample size, in comparison to my initial idea that I would be able to also carry out a large-scale quantitative analysis, for instance of nationwide datasets of participants with CSE convictions. I knew there would be a limit to the amount of data I would be able to capture by sticking to the first part of my design, so for instance there would be limited generalisability in relation to demographics of my participants, or themes around their experiences.

It was surprisingly difficult to find people convicted of CSE offending by groups, and it is possible some types of offences were underrepresented in my

sample. I couldn't say for certain my participants were representative of all people committing CSE offending. Not many participants were involved in high level organised crime, save some involved in gang-related activity and one whose premises were used for CSE. Some may be under-represented in the prison population, with potentially different characteristics, for those more difficult to identify or prosecute. Hence there may be aspects of CSE offending by groups where I had not reached true saturation on some themes. However, I was satisfied that by the end of my data collection, there were very similar themes being discussed over and over.

Having said that, I did not want people to draw inferences from the proportions of different demographics, with such a small sample size. I was conscious I would have to be careful to explain these limitations in my report, and in the way I communicated my findings to others more generally as preliminary results, designed to stimulate further research. I learned it is important to be accurate in reporting, to ensure limitations are made explicit, and people can make informed decisions about how to interpret and generalise from results. I will take this learning forward into future research.

Ethical Considerations

As well as University approval, it was important to have approval by the National Offender Management Service; National Research Committee (NRC), and from OASYs (Offender Sentence Planning System) administrators for global access to identify potential participants. Because of the sensitive nature of the topic, I had to demonstrate clearly how I was going to protect participant

anonymity and safety and satisfy data protection rules. This altered my methodology, by not being allowed to download University data analysis software onto a work computer, but not being able to export any data onto a non-networked computer, forcing me to conduct the analysis by hand.

There were strengths and limitations brought about by this. Positively, it meant that I was truly familiar with the data and immersed in it, having transcribed every interview and coded it several times over. I was able to ensure I was mindful of the nuances of emotional content, as well as things left unsaid. However, it did make the process more laborious, and potentially meant unconscious bias may have affected the way I attended to certain aspects of the data.

It was also important ethically that participants gave informed consent. I ensured they were aware of important features of the project before agreeing. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions, and prior to their decision, they were left with a copy, with the option to change their mind, or ask further questions. This feedback loop was designed into the procedure, to ensure participants had time to reflect and consult in an unpressured way on whether to participate. It was made explicit that consent was voluntary, without positive or negative consequences either way. Participants were aware their data would be anonymised using a number, but they could withdraw consent right up until coding if they changed their mind after the interview. Guarantees were given that no personal identifiers would be used, and no individuals would be identifiable from the finished scientific report. Conclusions would be drawn on

themes and patterns emerging from the data. Assurances were given that no geographical, or individual demographic data would be included. Overall, I think I made the consent process as transparent as possible and stayed within ethical boundaries. I was pleased with this aspect of the project.

Given the intention to use qualitative methods of analysis of the research, a Dictaphone was used as the most accurate method of recording conversations and transcribing them line for line verbatim. The Dictaphone was stored securely, interviews transcribed, and participants assigned a number. Recordings, transcripts and notes were made using numerical values, meaning identifiers were absent from any paperwork that included offence-information. A secure lockable bag was used and never unattended. The database and transcripts were stored on an encrypted laptop, on a secure server. Electronic data remained on the secure server until analysed and sanitised for publication and peer review. I believe I made the data as safe as I possibly could.

I anticipated a potential conflict of interest brought about by role confusion. Prisoners are used to having psychologists involved in their cases risk assessing, holding power to advise on sentence planning decisions and parole boards. Participants needed to feel clear about the distinction between this and my research role, to contribute openly. It could affect the findings if they were not clear about the implications of giving full responses, trying to paint themselves in a positive light, or minimising their involvement. To mitigate that, I made it explicit during the consent process and offered guarantees that I would not be involved in their sentence, or appeal procedures, and interview

information would not be shared with people assessing their risk. This ensured

a greater degree of security for them to be open. It was also important that

prison management understood these restrictions on information sharing,

particularly in light of my employee status. This was explained carefully in the

documentation provided to governors, so they could give informed consent also.

Critical Analysis of Data Analysis

When I started analysing the data, supervision enabled me to see that I

might not be answering the question, "Child Sexual Exploitation by groups; how

does this happen?". My participants had said as much about *why* the offending

happened, rather than exclusively *how*. Although closely related, these did look

distinct from each other. This left me with a dilemma. I did not want to fail my

degree because my research did not answer the question. However, one of the

things that had come across strongly from participants was they were keen for

me to represent their perspective authentically. I did not want to cut out great

swathes of information from their interviews to attend only to things I was

interested in reporting. This seemed to be wholly at odds with my stated

intentions to ask them to tell me the important things that led them to offend,

and report those accurately. I thought it would be more ethically sound, if a little

unorthodox perhaps, to amend my question to include both "...how and why

does this happen?", rather than just how.

I wanted to take a more reflexive approach and be true to the ethical

approach to which my participants had agreed. Happily, both the University and

HMPPS ethics committees also appeared to think it was a sensible amendment, which was agreed fairly quickly (see appendices for permissions). On reflection, perhaps I could have avoided this happening, if I had have kept tighter control over the interviews. It is something to keep in mind in future; I ought to ensure the participants are answering the research question, rather than constructing a narrative about what they want the question to be.

Another tricky aspect of analysis was drawing out themes and working out a central organising principle. I had approached my initial and focused coding in a systematic way, moving from line by line through to organising the data into themes. One of the most difficult things was trying to construct a coherent narrative. Participants had told me rich and varied stories about their lives, and how they had come to be where they were. There was such a diversity of experience, I ended up with a lot of themes. It took a long time to sort through and go back to the data to bring it together into a semblance of something communicable to others. I did not want to be too reductionist and miss nuances in the data. However, the supervision process taught me I would need to make some decisions about which superordinate, and subordinate themes were important, and which data was less important to report. Eventually, I settled on the core category of "Norm, whose Norm?" The principle finding was that every participant rationalised their offending in context. There were different mechanisms for different people, but essentially their cognitive constructions of their version of reality enabled them to get to a point where their offending was justifiable to themselves on some level.

I found this part of the project the most challenging. I picked it up and put it down so many times, variously blaming other aspects of my busy life and daily routine for coming in the way of finishing. Ultimately, the thing that took a long time was getting straight in my head what I wanted to say. It was difficult to be true to the data, the participants, say something meaningful, not reductionist, and also useful and impactful when communicated to others without being so complicated as to render it unreadable, or in any way inflammatory. How does one interpret, analyse and construct grounded theory whilst remaining sufficiently close to the data? How can I have the most positive impact? The more I read, the more complicated the whole thing appeared. I got some way to working through this in supervision.

I also fed back my initial findings to key people and invited questions. That really helped me develop ideas verbally, processing them to the point where I was able to get the writing on track. I attended a workshop on how to talk so that people will listen, to help me visualise how best to write impactfully. I think the main thing I learned is that being the principle researcher in a project that is basically a solo enterprise is a lonely place. Having now moved into working within a department of researchers, and attended some collaborative research events stimulating discussion, I understand the value of research teams, to bounce ideas, check assumptions and stimulate thinking from fresh perspectives. Moving forward, I would place more focus on having collaborative partnerships with others.

Quality Control

It was important for me to acknowledge my own personal and professional standpoint on CSE, to not lend too much weight subconsciously on those aspects of the data, whilst paying too little to novel ideas, or contrary evidence. I worked with young people in care early on in my career, when CSE was much less understood. I saw the vulnerabilities of young people talked about in the literature, and the extent to which they walk into potentially dangerous situations trying to be "grown up" and navigate an adult world. As a child of the seventies, I have always considered myself a feminist and an egalitarian. However, this is not useful, as a researcher aiming to understand the perspective of perpetrating adults.

It is challenging to acknowledge and let go of emotions stirred by hearing stories of pain and hardship, so they do not get in the way of hearing other perspectives. I kept in mind that it was imperative I did so for my research to be most useful, and not to join the queue of people who "do not understand how it is", that perpetuates a victim stance by the perpetrators. If I am serious about being egalitarian, it is equally important that everyone involved in CSE is understood equally well as each other, whatever the nature of their involvement. Having worked with people who have committed all manner of crimes, it is rare to find any that does not make sense when you see it from their viewpoint. I felt a level of unease in anticipation of these interviews, in case this crime was the exception to that rule, or in case I was perceived as colluding with these crimes. On reflection, there was nothing particularly unusual about the people I met;

nothing to set them apart from any other, familiar crime stories. In a sense, I was able to re-learn, or confirm what I already knew. These were just people.

To ensure quality of data and coding, participants gave consent for it to be checked by a third party, to ensure attention was paid to the potential for bias, and to ensure quality of analytic coding during analysis. I was reassured to hear I had been methodical in my approach. Once all the transcripts were done, analysed and on my rolodex, I also got a colleague to code two of my sixteen interviews; one from each of the two subcategories. Ideally, I would have had all of them blind-coded and made the higher order analysis more of a collaborative process, to avoid subconscious bias. However, this was not possible within resource constraints, which was a limitation of the procedure.

My instructions were for the colleague to attend to processes contributing to the participants' decisions to offend, and to think about themes on a personal, psychological, social and societal level. This process enabled me to compare my categories and themes to that of my colleague. For the most part, the themes were similarly worded, in some cases exactly the same. It was interesting the main differences in interpretation were in relation to the symbolism and emotion I had perceived from the participants, as opposed to the public narrative about CSE. For example, my colleague had coded one theme "justifications" and "denial" for both participants, whereas I had coded similar content as "consent issues" for one, and "permission-givers" for the other. I was happy that my categories were broadly similar in meaning but used less inflammatory language. This reassured me I was communicating themes

adequately, without inadvertently recreating the emotive language from previous research I was seeking to avoid.

Reflection on the research process as a whole

My reflection on the process as a whole, is that I did what I could within external boundaries and parameters to make the research as high quality as possible. I worked ethically, stayed as faithful to participants' accounts as possible, analysed as thoroughly as I could, checked my conscious biases and thought about what my subconscious ones might be. I wrote up my findings as even-handedly and objectively as I could, thinking about the audience I was writing for, and how best to maximise its impact on rehabilitative thinking in relation to CSE offending. I acknowledge this is a small-scale investigative study, which as a stand-alone piece of work has its limitations. However, I hope that it will be food for thought for further research, specifically that which uses direct data from people who are committing CSE related offending.

Discussion of future research strands and opportunities

My findings indicate people convicted of CSE can be understood by adopting a case formulation approach to their offending, accounting for thinking and behaviour in terms of an inclusive biopsychosocial approach (Sturmey and McMurran, 2017). However, these findings are preliminary. With a sample size of sixteen, no matter the richness of the data in terms of individuals' lived experience, there is a need for further research to extend these findings into larger scale analyses. Data exists within HMPPS to examine the demographic

composition of the overall convicted CSE population. There is also the opportunity for interventions teams across the UK to be tasked with analysing data on a greater scale during assessments of clients for Offending Behaviour Programmes, to test the extent to which my themes reflect a true representation of potential rehabilitative treatment targets. This would enable analysis of whether there are others whose issues have not been captured within my data set, or could be unpacked further to improve, or build on my initial categories. In relation to purposive sampling, it would be good for further studies to include more participants involved in CSE as part of organised crime, as these were underrepresented in my sample. Also, future research about adult females involved in group CSE might discover a different perspective also.

The visceral negative reaction of participants regarding damning public opinion about them, is consistent with current thinking around rehabilitation needing to take a more compassion-focussed, strengths-based approach, rather than feeding into negative narratives that perpetuate dichotomous thinking and alienation (e.g. Marshall, Marshall, Serren and O'Brien, 2011). Perhaps this could also be used as a template for research into other divisive narratives, versus understanding and empathic approaches to dealing with other aspects of offending behaviour that are more likely to lead to engagement in rehabilitative work.

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Appendix 6: Statement of Epistemological Position

The epistemological position taken in relation to the research project was a constructivist, interpretive, inductive one. This is because of the recognition that its aim was specifically to understand participants' offending behaviour from their perspective, to appreciate what life events and experiences meant to them in relation to their offending trajectory. Rather than just hearing the words, the aim was to hear the meaning also, and the emotions invoked by recounting their narrative.

The discourse around Group Child Sexual Exploitation is emotive and pejorative, which, whilst understandable from the point of view of safeguarding children and young people, it is not a helpful starting point for development of therapeutic alliance. Rehabilitation, to me, means working alongside people to understand their behaviour in context, and then walking with them to navigate a more positive way forward in their lives. This is the perspective of my approach to the research, with the aim of helping support development of meaningful interventions to prevent recidivism.

Section 4: Service Evaluation

What motivates people to become support volunteers, mentoring peers through Offending Behaviour Programmes in prison, and how does that role match their expectations?

Introduction

Desistance Literature

Literature concerning desistance from criminal behaviour has become prominent in shaping developments in rehabilitative culture. For instance, Laub and Sampson's (2001) longitudinal study of the trajectory of criminality between adolescence to age 70 found people desist because of individual choice, situational contexts and structural influences. They argued the need to examine individual motivation alongside the social context in which individuals are embedded. They purported the processes of desistance operate simultaneously at individual, situational, and community levels and across different contexts within a person's life (Laub and Sampson; 2001).

Similarly, McNeill, Farrall, Lightowler and Maruna (2012) discussed evidence about the importance of self-identity in the desistance process identified by Maruna (2001). Maruna (2001) found that to desist from crime, ex-offenders need to develop a coherent pro-social identity. He found those able to desist from crime had high levels of self-efficacy, saw themselves in control of their futures and had a clear sense of purpose and meaning in their lives. They also found a way to 'make sense' out of their past lives and even find

redeeming value in lives that had often been spent in and out of prison for long periods of time. The desisting ex-prisoners often said they wanted to put these experiences 'to good use', by helping others to avoid the same mistakes. This is also a well-known phenomenon in other areas of desistance such as substance misuse (Van Hout and McElrath; 2012).

So how do mentoring roles help people develop a positive self-image? Voluntary Action Leeds (2016) argued ex-offenders being given the trust, responsibility and support that comes with a volunteer role can be the turning point they need to change their lives. But what is it about being a mentor that makes it such a potentially transformative experience? Garcia (2016) examined the relationship between female mentors and mentees, to see what was important in making this a positive relationship supporting desistance. Both understood mentors were a resource for those who were ready to make constructive changes and willing to reach out for help. Mentees noted mentors' ability to provide different outlooks on negative situations, their capacity to provide suggestions on how to deal with feelings and situations and their presence as someone to speak to during difficult times. These were noted as underlying factors that facilitated desistance. Mentors helped mentees recuperate from "bad places", guiding them through goals toward self-sufficiency and demonstrating pride in their successes.

Garcia (2016) argued positive reinforcement may shape the desistance process through strengthening people's confidence in their abilities to make constructive changes. There are several limitations to generalising from this

study. It concentrates mainly on the value of the mentorship on the desistance of the mentee, rather than the mentor. It is also not clear whether the same factors would apply to men.

In the journey towards rehabilitation, what benefits do mentoring opportunities have for people adopting these roles in custody? Perrin's (2012) study of Listeners[2] aimed to offer a deeper understanding of how this role affects a person's attitudes, beliefs, emotions and experiences of imprisonment. He revealed three main themes: 'personal transformation', 'countering negative prison emotions' and 'acquiring life tools'. Subthemes included prisoners experiencing profound internal changes and complete attitude shifts. He later broadened his study to include several other peer support schemes in the same prison; 'Insiders'[3] and 'Toe-by-Toe'[4] mentors (Perrin; 2016). His results suggested people in prison for sexual offending adopting peer-support roles were able to re-story their lives through 'doing good' in prison, 'giving back', and consequently resisting negative labels. He proposed these benefits were theoretically linked with better reintegration outcomes for these offenders, who are publicly denigrated in the extreme and find it especially difficult to integrate. Peer-support roles also appeared to help prisoners cope with the realities of imprisonment, principally through instilling meaning, purpose, and perspective. This study offered in depth analysis of peer supporting and its positive benefits for participants. However, these roles were not related to Offending Behaviour

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[2] Listeners: Specially trained support volunteers trained by Samaritans to listen and support fellow prisoners
[3] Insiders; scheme for peer mentors able to offer advice and support about generic prison issues
[4] Toe by Toe mentors: Teaching other prisoners with literacy difficulties to read and write

Programmes, so it is not clear whether these results would be mirrored within the programmes' support volunteer role.

Rationale/Aims

This evaluation aimed to extend Perrin's work into examining the motivations of prisoners to engage in intervention programme support volunteering and the extent to which this was empowering. This scheme gives graduates from nationally accredited Offending Behaviour Programmes the opportunity to support others, share experiences, talk through issues and concerns and offer support to those undertaking the same programmes. Mentors are expected to model pro-social behaviours they've been taught and help mentees feel more confident in their ability to use interventions to achieve positive change. The evaluation looked at the stated motivations behind people's applications to become volunteers, to find out whether their actual experience of mentoring over a nine-month period matched up to their initial expectations. The aim was to work out whether this scheme is a positive experience for people, in line with desistance literature and Perrin's (2016) findings, to encourage aspects working well and encourage volunteers to suggest improvements to the scheme, as a further empowerment for them.

Method

Participants

Participants were the existing cohort of 18 programme support volunteers, in one prison establishment, recruited in October 2016 and still fulfilling the role in June 2017. They were all serving custodial sentences for offences of a sexual nature ranging from rape, false imprisonment, sexual assault and murder, through to arranging, possession and distribution of indecent images and breach of sexual offending prevention orders. Ten of the eighteen were serving indeterminate sentences. The other eight were serving determinate sentences from 4 years to 14 years, with an average sentence of 7 years. Their ages ranged from 28-61 years, with an average age of 44. They were all graduates from at least one high intensity Accredited Offending Behaviour Programme during this sentence.

Measures

To be accepted as support volunteers, potential candidates are routinely asked to provide answers about their reasons for volunteering and what they are hoping to gain from the role on standardised application forms. This forms part of the standard selection process, alongside security and behavioural checks. These measures were used as the data to measure their intentions and aspirations. Secondly, a short four-question questionnaire was devised, to examine the extent to which the reality of the role had lived up to their initial expectations. The rationale for using these particular questions was so that they matched the aspirational questions asked during the recruitment process, to check the extent to which those aims had been met. Participants

were also asked whether there had been any unintended consequences of their involvement as a volunteer, whether they would recommend the role to others and whether they could suggest any improvements to the scheme. These questions were included to ensure a balanced response, including any developmental feedback and ideas for potential improvements.

Procedure

With permission from the data asset owners (Governor and Programme Managers), existing secondary data from the eighteen application forms was analysed to discover themes about participant motivations for involvement in the support volunteer role. Implicit consent This analysis was presented to the monthly support volunteer meeting, to refresh their memory about the kinds of things they had been hoping to gain from the scheme on application and ask for their consent to fill in the follow-up questionnaire, to analyse the extent to which expectations had been met. All participants had been in the role for nine months, a long enough period for them to form a view about the realities of the role in comparison with expectations.

Written consent was gained to fill in the subsequent questionnaire and take part in a follow up discussion. It was explained the intention was for this to be a supportive, positive way to ensure the scheme worked as well as it could. The voluntary nature of participation in the study was explained, and that there would be no positive or negative consequences attached to their decision. It was explained themes would be fed back to volunteer coordinators running the project, for them to consider potential improvements. This was guaranteed to be

done anonymously, in case feedback was less than favourable, so they could speak candidly. All volunteers were happy to take part.

Participants were given the option of filling the questionnaires in on the day, taking them away to think about their answers and filling them in in their own time, or filling them in one to one. For two participants, this was done separately from the meeting, due to their individual literacy needs. The process was designed to help them keep a level of independence from the volunteer co-ordinator staff. They were also offered the option of being given a copy of the final report.

Thematic Analysis was used to provide a systematic element to this qualitative data analysis (Ibrahim, 2012). The complete coding method described by Braun and Clarke (2013) was used to make the analysis inclusive in the first instance, and then examine themes and identify central organising concepts in a data derived, inductive manner, rather than a researcher derived, deductive manner. Complete coding using an inductive approach was seen as the best way of counteracting potential unconscious bias by virtue of the researcher's dual role as a psychologist working closely with the programmes department. This was to ensure potential themes were not missed because they were less salient, and preconceptions were not being imposed on the data.

The analysis moved from a semantic level, to analyse how the themes identified within the data related to existing literature. To ensure quality of analysis, coding was also checked by another psychologist experienced in the

Braun and Clarke (2013) method, to ensure it was a coherent interpretation, remaining true to the original data, with reference to and reflective discussion about any potential bias. Several suggestions for improvement were made and incorporated into the analysis.
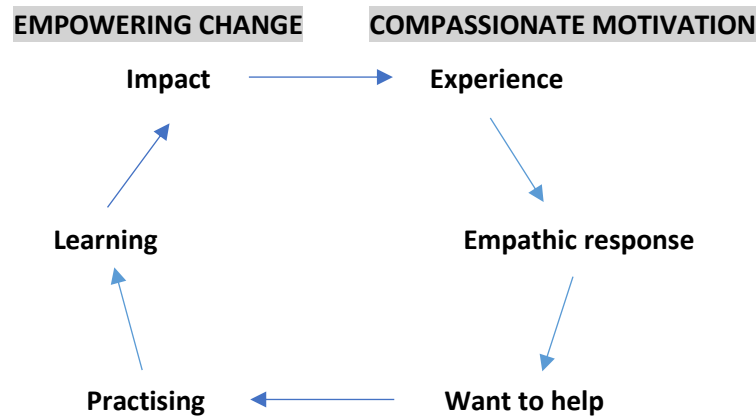
Ethical Considerations

There were several potentially sensitive aspects of this evaluation. Participants were all serving prisoners, fulfilling a supportive role in the prison. It was important they felt able to give honest answers about the scheme without fear it could jeopardise that. It was made clear to them feedback would be given in themes, without the presence of the volunteer co-ordinators and without being identified by name. It was important to get the proper permissions to use existing questionnaire data from applicants, taking steps that no individual was identifiable from the report. They were assured that permissions had been sought from the University ethics board and the prison Governor. It was made clear this project was being conducted as a doctoral study.

It was also important for participants to know it would not help or hinder them in terms of risk assessment or parole process. They were encouraged to speak or write freely about their experiences of the volunteer role, with the option of one to one interview, if they had things they wanted to discuss that were delicate, or they wanted to talk about any aspect of the scheme having a detrimental effect on them.

Results

Figure 1 – Thematic Map

EMPOWERING CHANGE   COMPASSIONATE MOTIVATION

Impact → Experience

Learning

Empathic response

Practising ← Want to help

Overview of Themes

The analysis noted two overarching superordinate themes within the data. The first was that overwhelmingly, participants wanted to be involved in the scheme for compassionate reasons. Subthemes within this were that they had experience of the emotional impact of starting programmes, having been through it themselves. This led to an empathic response towards new starters and the difficulties they face. This drove them to want to help and support their peers, by applying for the volunteer role.

The second theme was empowering change. Subthemes within that were that people saw their time in programmes as the first step in a journey of ongoing learning and personal development. They valued the opportunity to practise using the skills taught on programmes in the role of support volunteer. Hence at the application stage, they anticipated the scheme would have a

positive impact on them, as well as benefitting the people they were there to help and increasing the effectiveness of programmes.

After fulfilling the role for a period of nine months, volunteers indicated the scheme had to a great extent lived up to their hopes, with very few exceptions. In addition, some of the answers indicated some had got far more from the role than they had anticipated. This showed in the way they were able to express this in richer and more subtle terms, giving some quite particular examples, rather than the more general ambitions that were evident from the initial applications. These are set out under the appropriate theme headings throughout.

A reciprocal relationship between the two themes was also evident. Volunteers, having experienced programmes and benefitted from them already, expressed increased insight and empathic concern for the difficulties experienced by new starters, which in turn drove their desire to help. Likewise, by helping others as volunteers, they were empowered to continue practising and improving themselves, which increased the impact of the programmes on them, as well as the mentees. The two themes reinforced each other, enabling the impact of programmes to be maximised for all concerned, showing the value of mentoring schemes to add value and improve longer-term impact of interventions.

Superordinate Theme 1 – Compassionate Motivations

Given that this was an open-ended question on the application forms, there was a perhaps surprisingly consistent theme running through the responses about why people wanted to volunteer. Most participants expressed similar compassionate motives for wanting to support peers through Offending Behaviour Programmes. Three subthemes within that compassionate motivation were that people empathised with and understood the position people were in, which prompted them to want to help.

Subordinate themes: Experience, empathic response, wanting to help

Experience

The majority of participants expressed the fact that they could understand how the new starters feel, because they have been there personally when they were first starting out on courses themselves. Lots of them talked about knowing what kinds of emotions come up and how they felt they could share the benefit of their experience to help the new people settle in and deal with them more effectively and get the most out of programmes.

"I understand what they are going through and I would be able to help them get through the course." (P13; p3)

"Being able to understand how hard confronting things can be." (P14; p3)

"I have plenty of experience to be able to carry out supporting another prisoner to achieve their outcome whilst on programmes." (P11; p3)

"I have got knowledge from the course that I completed which will help me on giving advice on programmes." (p10; p3)

Empathic response

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The empathy expressed by participants was about how they could see how difficult it was for some people just starting their journey to engage fully and immerse themselves in the learning experience of programmes. They talked about this being due to negative emotions that come along with that early stage of engagement in group-based interventions and the difficulty of overcoming these. They recognised the benefit of their usefulness to others in communicating an empathic response and working through problems with the mentees. There was evidence of them being able to use their own insight and experience to good effect in responding empathically to the new starters. For instance, some talked about their positive personal qualities such as patience, calming, non-judgemental, respectful approach that they thought would be valuable to help them in the mentoring role. These are in line with core person-centred counselling principles used by professional helpers (Pratt, 1994) and show that the volunteers were talking about the importance of responding empathically to the concerns of their peers.

"I can recognise when someone is having problems or someone is not right."
(P2; p1)

"I am able to listen to concerns with a sympathetic ear."   *(P4; p4)*

"I understand what they are going through and I would be able to help them get through the course."   *(P13; p1)*

"Understanding that you are not alone. Someone once gave me advice, you cannot change the past, but it's up to you to change the future, something I took on board and carried through my sentence."   *(P3; p1)*

There was also a recognition of the attributes needed for a volunteer, like empathy and listening skills. There was recognition that these are skills that need to be taught and learned in order to be effective:

PSVs need to have certain attributes to be approachable / tolerant / but are they all like this or do some simply want the kudos? *(P5; p4)*

"It therefore depends where someone it mentally, emotionally and chronologically in their sentence as to whether they would benefit from the role" *(P4; p4)*

These participants recognised that they needed to have gone through a learning process and been taught some of these interpersonal skills, to be at the point at which they were in a position to help others.

Wanting to help

The overwhelming impression from most participants' applications was that their empathy for their peers was driving them to want to put something back and help others make the most of their time on the courses. They spoke about wanting to reciprocate, give back and share the skills they have learned, and about being an ambassador for programmes, to show their value and help others get the most out of their learning experience:

"People helped me, I want the chance to pass that on and help others." *(P15; p2)*

When I was starting my courses, this support volunteer wasn't on offer to me, so I know how hard and stressful this is, I am willing to help anybody to better themselves." *(P7; p2)*

"Willingness to help others. Throughout my life the experiences I have encountered enabling me to pass on the positives to others" *(P3; p2)*

"I have benefitted therefore wish to reciprocate" *(P12; p2)*

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After nine months in the role of support volunteer, most volunteers were pleased it had enabled them to help other people, as anticipated on application. They saw this as a very positive effect of the support volunteer scheme. They expressed a level of intrinsic pleasure in doing good things for other people and seeing how the recipient of their help and support benefits from their intervention.

"I can see that when I have helped someone, they feel more relaxed." (P12; p3)

"I wanted to give something back to the prison community. I didn't have much help when I was on the courses, but I am glad I can help someone who is about to start a course". (P13; p3)

"Because you can get a lot out of it by helping each other." (P5; p3)

A caveat to this was that some participants about stressful aspects of the role, particularly when there were issues that they couldn't help with, such as bearing the brunt of gripes about things like programmes waiting lists over which they had no control.

*"There continues to be a lack of concrete and positive information regarding *** and its accompanying waiting list. More clarity would help programme volunteers and programme participants alike."* (P4; p4)

"Only in the respect that when people find out they can't get on the courses as quick as they expect PSV are first in the firing line." (P2; p4)

These people were experiencing the stress created by being in that kind of interpersonal role where there's not always an easy way to help solve every problem.

Superordinate Theme 2 – Empowering Change

The second overarching theme was about the process of personal change participants recognised in relation to learning from programmes. There was a sense that engagement in the support volunteer role after finishing their own engagement in programmes would empower continued momentum towards positive change for both the mentors and the mentees. Lots of people spoke about this as an opportunity to practise what they had learnt in their own programmes and intended to use in the role of volunteer. They also anticipated a range of positive emotional impacts of this volunteer work in helping them develop a more positive self-image that would be beneficial to them in the future. Ultimately, the support volunteer scheme was feeding in to the maximisation of the impact of Offending Behaviour Programmes on all concerned.

Subordinate themes – Ongoing learning, practising of skills and individual and collective impact

Ongoing learning

Most respondents indicated a view that programmes are the start of a learning process that continues after the taught element of the courses they had attended. They said they were aware of the need to keep that learning going, be reflective about their own areas for development and continue improving themselves going forward. They appeared to have momentum and a thirst for ongoing learning.

"If you accept that there's no room for improvement, then you will never become a better person. Myself, everything I do I am always learning, taking on board, then learning more."　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*(P3; p2)*

"I would like to keep working on myself and improving in what I am doing" *(P13; p2)*

"I'm working on my skills every day it's an ongoing thing because I feel myself or anyone can always learn more in life."　　　　　　　　　　　　*(P7; p2)*

"Continued learning on all skills that I have gained through six offending programmes (behaviour) + (sexual), always motivated to learn new skills."　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*(P11; p2)*

In the follow up questionnaires, the impact of being a support volunteer in terms of ongoing personal learning and development appeared to have matched the participants' hopes on application. The answers given not only expressed a general principle of helping them maintain and build on positive change, as with the examples above, but in some cases, some quite specific examples of more subtle ways in which it has helped them develop:

"As I have gained more confidence it has shown in the way I talk and the way I can make eye contact".　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*(P9; p5)*

"I have gained more compassion, empathy, share experiences and more people skills."　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*(P6; p1)*

The changes fed back by the volunteers appeared to bear out the finding that there is a mutually beneficial and empowering aspect to their engagement in the scheme.

Practising skills

There were lots of responses about practising and using skills daily. People also listed particular skills they found useful or wanted to continue to improve. Some of these answers were dependent on the exact courses participants had engaged in, but some were more generic across all programmes. Regardless of which courses they had been on, there was a recognition that communication skills were key to success in the volunteer role, and the importance of continuing to develop these more generally for ongoing self-improvement. There were lots of indications that people were aware of their own imperfections, but that they were motivated to practise in order to keep improving:

> *"It's a perfect role to practice new skills learnt on courses and has helped me develop as a person."* *(P10; p2)*

> *"[work on] all [the skills] as everything can be improved. Practising these skills in everyday situations…"* *(P6; p2)*

Nearly all volunteers said something about the value of having the opportunity to practise their skills after a taught programme is over. The volunteer role presented an opportunity for enabling and encouraging them to keep practising the skills they have been taught, regularly. They recognised this as being valuable to help them continue their learning journeys.

> *"It always keeps using the skills you have learnt, rather than completing programmes and then forgetting about what you have learnt"* *(P3; p5)*

> *"Has helped me continue to build new me – and I quite like him"* *(P5; p4)*

But it wasn't all plain sailing. Some raised practical issues they'd experienced whilst mentoring, and interpersonal situations that had presented challenges:

"An awkward person in induction that seemed to know everything going." (P3; p4)

"Induction talks getting cancelled last minute and message not getting to us."
(P10; p2)

"Sometimes a rowdy group." (P11; p2)

"I was questioned once about another prisoner, but once I'd explained myself, it was all sorted." (P13; p2)

Overall, the impression was that they recognised the difficulties inherent in the role, but that made it more valuable an experience for them to have mastery over situations they previously would have struggled to negotiate.

Individual impact

A subtheme of empowering change was people expressing some really quite profound emotional benefits they were hoping to gain from the role of support volunteer. Alongside their thirst for continuous improvement and ongoing learning, many expressed the impact they were hoping this would have on their self-esteem and confidence going forward. They talked about the intrinsic satisfaction and pride that comes with helping other people and mutual benefits they were hoping to share with the people they help.

"A huge sense of worthiness combined with a sense of pride and inner peace"
(P5; p4)

"satisfaction of being able to help and offer support." (P9; p4)

Responses revealed a deep yearning for self-improvement and improved self-efficacy emotionally. Analysis showed participants anticipated a sense of empowerment would be a reciprocal experience for all involved in the scheme.

Most participants indicated in follow up questionnaires they had experienced a positive emotional impact from performing the support volunteer role. Indeed, their follow up responses indicated a level and depth of impact that they felt quite strongly about and that they had not necessarily anticipated. They not only felt good about helping others, but in turn, this helped them to feel better about themselves in a variety of ways:

"The pride of wearing a blue jumper, Self-respect / respect of others" (P11; p4)

"I have now come a long way in bettering myself and changed my attitude and behaviours." (P12: p4)

Collective impact

The overwhelming impression from almost all the volunteers was the scheme had been a positive experience for them, and it was worthwhile being involved. The vast majority of participants' hopes and expectations had been fulfilled. Participants were able to explain this more fully after 9 months of being in the role. They also indicated that the scheme had made them feel even more positive about the benefits of programmes and their potential impact.

"Sharing my experience of programmes and their positive impact on my life" (P5; p3)

"It would be a poorer prison without this scheme. To some people it is a lifeline and also a life changer." (P9; p4)

Indeed, there were several comments about the potential for expansion of the scheme to make fuller and more active use of the volunteers:

"I would like to see support volunteers allocated a certain individual who needs mentoring instead of waiting for one to come forward." (P7; p4)

"In HMP A, the "peer mentors" were far more structured in their approaches to inductions, staff training etc., and I expected the same coming here." (P4; p4)

"Yes, with the volunteer talks to newbies on A3 but I believed more people would ask for my assistance." (P11; p4)

There is an argument for making this a more active role, by expanding the level of input and range of activities in which volunteers are involved. This could potentially increase the impact of the scheme on those involved and also as a good advertisement for engagement in Offending Behaviour Programmes.

Discussion

Main Findings

The main findings of this evaluation were that volunteers had compassionate motivations for wanting to become support volunteers, and the scheme empowered positive change for all concerned. The volunteers had insight and experience of the emotional impact of starting programmes. This drove an empathic response towards new starters and a desire to help peers overcome those difficulties. The opportunity this gave for continued learning and practicing of skills turned the scheme into a mutually empowering experience for volunteers, as well as those they helped. They reported significant gains in confidence and communication skills, as well as some profound improvements in self-compassion and positive self-regard, as a result of being able to help others and feel involved in something worthwhile. These gains affected their

continued motivation to engage positively in the scheme and reinforced their initial compassionate motivations.

Synthesis with Previous Literature

The fact the participants' main motivations for volunteering were compassionate in nature is consistent with Perrin's (2016) study of other peer-support roles within the same establishment for people convicted of sexual offences. He described this as giving them the ability to re-story their lives through 'doing good' in prison, 'giving back', and consequently resisting negative labels. Similarly, Maruna (2001) found that desisting ex-prisoners often said they wanted to put their experiences 'to good use' by helping others to avoid the same mistakes.

The fact that the participants could empathise with the negative emotions of new starters is also consistent with Garcia's (2016) analysis of the mentor mentee relationship. She found it was the mentors' ability to provide different outlooks on negative situations, their capacity to provide suggestions on dealing with these and their presence to speak to during difficult times, which were the most important factors in this healing relationship. Applying that finding here, the fact that the support volunteers had all been through the same thing themselves added to their ability to be compassionate to others in a similar situation. They talked about this as a reason for thinking they had relevant experience to share, in order to help. They were able to identify their positive qualities and skills that they had learned on programmes, were continuing to develop and knew would be useful for others to learn too.

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The reported gains experienced by volunteers was in line with Perrin's (2012) theme of 'personal transformation', profound internal changes and complete attitude shifts. This is in line with the findings of Voluntary Action Leeds (2016) that the trust, responsibility and support that comes with a volunteer role can be the turning point people need to change their lives. This is also consistent with McNeill, Farrall, Lightowler and Maruna's (2012) argument about the importance of self-identity in the desistance process and Maruna's (2001) assertion that ex-offenders need to develop a coherent pro-social identity and improved levels of self-efficacy. Participants were using the opportunity of volunteering to gain personally and emotionally. They talked about wanting to give themselves the confidence and self-belief to be able to continue their positive learning journey, as well as giving something to their mentees. This is in line with Maruna's (2001) findings that people desisting from crime saw themselves in control of their futures, had a clear sense of purpose and meaning and redeeming value in their lives.

Contribution and Implications of the Findings

But what are the implications of these findings? Some talked about replicating this approach in other areas of their life moving forward. Hence there is potential for this scheme to have a lasting impact on volunteers' future thinking and behaviour in custody, and potentially beyond their prison sentence. Given that these volunteers were all men convicted of sexual offences serving custodial sentences, research suggests that in order to desist from future crime, they need to develop a more positive self-image (Maruna, 2001) and have confidence in their ability to make constructive changes in their lives (Garcia,

2016). As Perrin argued (2016), benefits were theoretically linked with better reintegration outcomes for people convicted of this offence type, who are publicly denigrated in the extreme and find it especially difficult to integrate. This is in line with the Good Lives Model (Ward, Mann and Gannon, 2007). The implications of this evaluation are it was a significant enabler for participants to begin to feel a sense of agency and control over their day to day lives. It would be good for future research to examine whether these gains led to a tangible difference in terms of reintegration and rehabilitation longer term.

The executive summary was disseminated to the Prison, Psychology and Programmes management (see appendix). A copy of the full report was also made available to Management teams. Support volunteers and coordinators were also given the results in their next support volunteer meeting, including a flipchart presentation and a handout of results (see appendix). Suggestions from volunteers about extending the scheme and increasing the areas within which they are used for support were met with interest. Volunteer coordinators were keen to support volunteers to continue to improve the scheme.

Critical Appraisal

In terms of strengths, the analysis was rigorous using a well-recognised method of thematic analysis suitable for an inductive, bottom-up approach. This meant not only could themes be drawn out, but also the relationships between those themes and their relative importance. The evaluation used primary data, gained first-hand from people involved in the scheme. Because application

forms had been filled out prior to participants becoming volunteers, there was no need to rely on their memories of what they were hoping to get out of the scheme, so there was less room for misremembering, or misrepresentation of their initial hopes.

In relation to weaknesses, interviews by an independent researcher may have yielded richer, more nuanced data than analysis of existing application forms and a short follow up questionnaire from a member of staff. In relation to ethics, although the information owner had given consent, it was possible some participants might not have been happy about their questionnaires being used in this way without explicit permission. Although assurances were given about anonymity of feedback to the establishment and volunteer coordinators, it is possible there may still have been a degree of impression management from some. From the group atmosphere and the way co-ordinators interacted with volunteers, it appeared they felt safe to talk about all aspects of the role freely, so this is seen as a relatively minor limitation. There was generally a good level of institutional support for the volunteer scheme, sensibly weighed up against the potential for security concerns and the need for proper checks and balances. Management were on board with rehabilitative culture and there was no resistance to feedback.

Another limitation is that this evaluation relied solely on self-report data. In terms of future research, it would be valuable to follow up a cohort of volunteers in a longitudinal, matched control study, to ascertain whether stated positive experiences of volunteering had a tangible longer-term impact on

resettlement and reconviction outcomes once people left prison. This is really the only way to know with any certainty whether the participants' stated improvements and the benefits they perceived really did have an impact on their likelihood of recidivism.

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Appendix 7: Executive Summary for Prison Management Team

Executive Summary

This evaluation examined the motivations of prisoners serving prison sentences for sexual offences, volunteering to assist their peers through accredited intervention programmes. The support volunteer scheme gives graduates from nationally accredited Offending Behaviour Programmes the opportunity to support others setting out on that journey. They share experiences, talk through issues and concerns and offer listening support to those undertaking the kinds of programmes they've already been through. Mentors are expected to model the pro-social behaviours they've been taught and in turn, help the less experienced attendees feel more confident in their own ability to make use of the interventions to achieve positive change.

Given that these volunteers are all men convicted of sexual offences serving custodial sentences, research suggests that in order to desist from future crime, they need to develop a more positive self-image (Maruna, 2001) and have

confidence in their ability to make constructive changes in their lives (Garcia, 2016). Perrin argued (2016), benefits were theoretically linked with better reintegration outcomes for people convicted of this particular offence type, who are publicly denigrated in the extreme and find it especially difficult to integrate.

This is in line with the Good Lives Model (Ward, Mann and Gannon, 2007). This desistence and strengths-based literature has become more influential in recent years in terms of offender rehabilitation and the support volunteer scheme is an example of this theoretical perspective in practice.

As part of the selection process, applicants are asked to provide written information about why they want to become support volunteers and what they are hoping to get out of the role. This evaluation examined the motivations expressed by a cohort of successful applicants on their application forms. It evaluated whether after nine months of volunteering, their experience of carrying out that role had matched up to initial expectations. It also examined whether they had experienced any other consequences as a result of their volunteer status, with a view to feeding back the findings to the volunteer support co-ordinators responsible for the scheme. The aim was to evaluate what aspects of the scheme worked well and give ideas from the prisoners themselves about how it could be improved further.

The overall conclusion of this evaluation was that the support volunteer scheme was viewed very positively by most volunteers. They said they valued the benefits of the scheme, both for their own self-development and that of the peers they supported. They said it had helped them to maintain and build on skills learned on programmes and to take those skills forward into their daily

lives. Some even reported some fundamental positive shifts in their thinking about themselves and their capabilities that they could carry forward.

The implications of these findings are that the opportunity to be a support volunteer was a significant enabler for participants to feel a sense of agency and control over their day to day lives. The main limitation was that this was a short-term, local audit of the scheme in action in one location. There would be significant merit in a longitudinal piece of research to examine whether those stated benefits identified would endure beyond the participants' involvement in the scheme and whether being a volunteer had any significant impact on their eventual reintegration into society and desistence from crime.

Appendix 8: University of Leicester, Ethics Approval Letter for Service Evaluation

University Ethics Sub-Committee for Psychology

13/04/2017

Ethics Reference: 10226-slp55-neuroscience,psychologyandbehaviour

TO:

Name of Researcher Applicant: Sarah Pancholi

Department: Psychology

Research Project Title: What motivates people to volunteer to support their peers through Offending Behaviour Programmes?

Dear Sarah Pancholi,

RE: Ethics review of Research Study application

The University Ethics Sub-Committee for Psychology has reviewed and discussed the above application.

1.   Ethical opinion

The Sub-Committee grants ethical approval to the above research project on the basis described in the application form and supporting documentation, subject to the conditions specified below.

2.   Summary of ethics review discussion

The Committee noted the following issues:

All recommendations have now been addressed

3.   General conditions of the ethical approval

The ethics approval is subject to the following general conditions being met prior to the start of the project:

As the Principal Investigator, you are expected to deliver the research project in accordance with the University's policies and procedures, which includes the University's Research Code of Conduct and the University's Research Ethics Policy.

If relevant, management permission or approval (gate keeper role) must be obtained from host organisation prior to the start of the study at the site concerned.

4.   Reporting requirements after ethical approval

You are expected to notify the Sub-Committee about:

- Significant amendments to the project
- Serious breaches of the protocol
- Annual progress reports
- Notifying the end of the study

5.   Use of application information

Details from your ethics application will be stored on the University Ethics Online System. With your permission, the Sub-Committee may wish to use parts of the application in an anonymised format for training or sharing best practice. Please let me know if you do not want the application details to be used in this manner.

Best wishes for the success of this research project.

Yours sincerely,

Prof.****

Chair

Support Volunteer Focus Group Consent Form

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Title: What motivates people to volunteer to support their peers through Offending Behaviour Programmes?

Researcher: My name is Sarah Pancholi from the University of Leicester, School of Psychology. I also work for the Psychology Department here, but this project has nothing to do with that role.

Purpose of data collection: *I am working towards becoming a doctor of psychology*

Details of Participation: *I am asking all support volunteers to attend a brief focus group, to ask whether your experience of being a support volunteer has matched up to the expectations you had when you applied. I will also be asking whether there have been any consequences you weren't expecting when you put yourself forward for the role. If you have things to say which you'd rather not tell me in a group setting, I will give you a paper questionnaire to be filled in during, or after the session. I can help people who struggle to write, if you ask for help.*

CONSENT STATEMENT

1. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to take part in the session without giving any reason. The focus group will be held during a support volunteer meeting, but anyone who does not want to take part may remain silent.

2. I am aware of what my participation will involve.

3. My data are to be held confidentially and only Sarah Pancholi will have access to them. Once the focus group information is written up, my name will not appear on it and the write up will be anonymous. Some direct quotes will appear on it, but without names. Sarah will get another psychologist to check her scoring, to make sure it is right, but this will be anonymised first, i.e. participant 1, participant 2 etc.

4. My data will be kept in a lockable filing cabinet for a period of at least five years after the appearance of any associated publications. Any aggregate data (e.g. spreadsheets) will be kept in electronic form for up to one year after publication, after which time they will be deleted.

5. In accordance with the requirements of some scientific journals and organisations, my coded data may be shared with other competent researchers. My coded data may also be used in other related studies. My name and other identifying details will not be shared with anyone.

6. The overall findings may be submitted for publication in a scientific journal, or presented at scientific conferences.

7. This study will take approximately three months to complete.

8. I will be able to get general information about the results of this research by requesting a copy of my final thesis, if I am still here at that point, or leave Sarah my contact details.

9. Sarah will ensure that there is no conflict of interest between this project and her role within the Psychology Department. This means she agrees not to write or supervise a psychological assessment relating to my case, from this point forward, unless I agree this is OK.

I am giving my consent for data to be used for the outlined purposes of the present study.

All questions that I have about the research have been answered to my satisfaction.

Please tick each box that applies to you:

I agree to participate in the focus group. ☐

I will not take part in the group ☐

I agree to fill in a questionnaire ☐

I will not fill in a questionnaire ☐

I need help to fill in a questionnaire ☐

_____

Participant's signature: _____

Participant's name (please print): _____Date: _____.___

_____

If you would like to receive a summary of the results when the study is complete please tick this box. Sarah will contact you if you are still in prison at this point, or if you have left a forwarding address. ☐

If you have further questions about this study, you may contact Sarah Pancholi. This study was reviewed by the University of Leicester Psychology Research Ethics Committee (PREC). You may contact the Chair of PREC Professor Panos Vostanis at ****@le.ac.uk if you have any questions or concerns regarding the ethics of this project

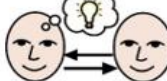**Please note that this form will be kept separately from your data**

Appendix 10: Handout for Support Volunteers

<u>Service Evaluation: What makes people to want to be support volunteers?</u>

Empathy: their shoes

Understanding: been there

COMPASSION

Want to help!

<u>What qualities and experiences do you bring to the role?</u>
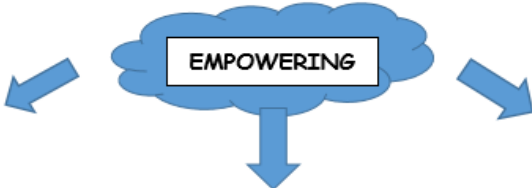
WHAT YOU OFFER

Positive qualities

Share experiences

Want to give something back!

<u>What do volunteers hope to get out of the role?</u>

EMPOWERING

Learning

Practising

Being a good citizen!

POSITIVE IMPACTS

Emotional wellbeing

Confident use of skills

You're a good advert for programmes!

Appendix 11: Visual Map Explanatory Notes

What are the benefits of volunteering as a support volunteer helping others benefit more fully from Offending Behaviour Programmes?

a) What motivates people to want to fulfil the role of support volunteer?
b) What qualities and experiences do they bring to the role?
OVERARCHING THEME 1: COMPASSIONATE MOTIVATION
(Subordinate themes: EMPATHISING, UNDERSTANDING => WISHING TO HELP)
Support volunteers know what it is like to start out on programmes. You can put yourselves in the shoes of new starters and understand the negative emotions that come along with that, because you've been there. A lot of you talk in your application forms about wanting to give back to others, to help by sharing your own experiences in the hope it will benefit them.

OVERARCHING THEME TWO: WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TO OFFER
(Subordinate themes: SHARED EXPERIENCE, POSITIVE PERSONAL QUALITIES)
A lot of people talk about wanting to share the benefits of their experiences, and of giving something back to support people. Positive qualities like being non-judgemental, calm, patient and trustworthy were some of the things you said you thought would be important in the role.

c) How does the experience of being a support volunteer match expectations?

Expectations:

OVERARCHING THEME THREE: NURTURING, EMPOWERING CHANGE
(Subordinate themes: LEARNING, COMMUNICATING, PRACTISING => CONSOLIDATING)
When talking about what you expected to gain from the role, you said that you wanted to continue to practise what you'd learned on programmes, and to keep that learning going. A lot of people said specifically they would use their communications skills like listening, for self-development reasons as well as to help the new starters. It seemed as if the scheme helped everyone to feel like you are a continuing part of the programmes community and serve a useful purpose, empowering everyone to change for the better.

OVERARCHING THEME FOUR: HAVING A POSITIVE IMPACT
(EMOTIONAL WELLBEING, SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT, GETTING THE BEST FROM PROGRAMMES)
The final theme from the application forms is the positive benefits you were expecting to get from being a support volunteer. People said that they thought it would be enjoyable, satisfying and rewarding, and give a sense of pride. Lots of people said they were hoping it would help with their confidence, whilst others were looking for it to help with their self-esteem. Finally, lots of you talked about skills you've learned that you thought would be useful to you in this role, and about showing others that programmes really can work!

Appendix 12: Chronology of Research Process

2014:

Research Idea

Funding Application for University Fees

2015:

University Application

Research Ethics Applications; University and NOMS NRC

Design Study

Find Topic for Service Evaluation

2016:

Probation Review

Design Service Evaluation

Seek permissions and ethics approval

2017:

Data Collection for Research

Carry out Service Evaluation

Write up Service Evaluation

2018:

Transcribe data

Data analysis

Literature Review

2019:

Synthesis of Literature into Results

Write up for Submission

Submission