

# The motivations of female child sexual offenders

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## Abstract

The aim of the literature review presented here was to identify goals and offense-supportive cognitions that act as motivational factors in the sexual offending against children of females. A scoping search revealed that there was currently no review in this area. A systematic search of empirical research that examined motivations in female child sexual offenders (FCSOs) was initiated based upon an inclusion and exclusion criteria. Identified studies were screened and reference lists were hand searched. A quality assessment tool reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of the final 13 articles. A data extraction form established for the current review enabled the extraction of standardized information. The review identified support for many motivational factors in FCSOs, which have previously been referred to in the literature. The review has categorized these into motivations and offense-supportive cognitions. There was strong support for the following motivations and goals: offending under coercion of an abusive co-offender, offending to meet one's own needs and offending to feel power and control over another. The strongest offense-supportive cognitions were entitlement and uncontrollability. There was an apparent overlap between the two categories, with some offense-supportive cognitions and functions amalgamating to facilitate females to engage in offending behavior. Limitations of the present literature and suggestions for future research are discussed.

*Keywords:* Female child sexual offender; (child) sexual offending against children; motivations; offense-supportive cognitions.

## 1.1 Introduction

Child sexual abuse encompasses diverse sexual acts committed by adults towards children. This includes contact offenses, such as rape and sexual touching, and non-contact offenses, such as viewing child sexual abuse material. It is of note that the definitions and classifications of the various offenses vary across countries. In the United Kingdom, the Sexual Offenses Act (2003) defines sexual activity with a child as being perpetrated by “a person aged 18 or over” who “intentionally touches a person under 16 years”, whereby the “touching is sexual” or “involves penetration”. There are also specific sections relating to victims under the age of 13 years old and As such, Female Child Sexual Offending (FCSO) would be defined as any sexual offense against a child under 16 years old, which is perpetrated by a female over the age of 18 years old. Conversely, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention define a child as a person under 8 years, and ‘sexual abuse’ as “any completed or attempted (non-completed) sexual act, sexual contact with, or exploitation (i.e., non-contact sexual interaction) of a child by a caregiver”<sup>1</sup> (Leeb, Paulozzi, Melanson, Simon, & Arias, 2008).

Whilst the phenomenon of sexual offending by females is becoming more widely recognized empirically, it is critically under-researched in comparison to sexual offending by males (Gannon & Rose, 2008). It has been suggested that research into female child sexual offending has been neglected due to the social construction of women as caregivers and nurturers (Denov, 2004; Saradjian, 2010). More specifically, women are perceived to be unable to commit such crimes against children.

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<sup>1</sup> *Sexual acts* include contact via penetration, however slight, between the mouth, penis, vulva, or anus of the child and another individual, and penetration, however slight, of the anal or genital opening by a hand, finger, or other object; *abusive sexual contact* includes intentional touching (not involving penetration), either directly or through the clothing, of the following: genitalia (penis or vulva), anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or buttocks; *non-contact sexual abuse* does not include physical contact of a sexual nature between the caregiver and the child, but can include the following: (i) acts which expose a child to sexual activity, (ii) filming of a child in a sexual manner, (iii) sexual harassment of a child, and (iv) prostitution of a child.

Over recent years, interest and exploration in this area has been growing. It is estimated that females comprise 5% of all sexual offenders in Canada, the UK, New Zealand and Australia (Cortoni & Hanson, 2005). Whilst the population of females convicted of sexual offenses against children is considerably smaller than that of males (Nathan & Ward, 2001; Williams & Bierie, 2015), there is an important need to understand their motivations and the function their offending behavior serves. Especially in light of their apparent differences, and the fact that interventions and treatment programs are predominantly based on empirical research, conducted with males who committed sexual offenses against children (Gannon & Rose, 2008; Nathan & Ward, 2001).

This review therefore aims to provide an overview of current knowledge and understanding of the motivations of adult females who have committed sexual offenses against children. For the purpose of the review, motivations encompasses: (i) the goal of perpetration of these offenses, such as the function of offending behavior being to elicit, or avoid a feeling or emotion as means of gaining a desired attribute, and (ii) offense-supportive cognitions, such as implicit theories and cognitive distortions. These are included as motivations in the present review as they are regarded to be types of motivational schemas in child sexual offending, given that they produce distorted evaluations of behavior (Baumeister, 1998; Ward & Keenan, 1999; Ward, 2000). Seto's (2017) Motivation-Facilitation Model also notes that offense-supportive cognitions act as a facilitator in child sexual offending.

Cognitive distortions, which are believed to justify the offending, arise from Implicit Theories (Ward, 2000). Implicit theories proposed by Ward and Keenan (1999) were derived from male samples, and have been influential in the area of explaining motivations in child sexual offending by males. They include: (i) viewing children as sexual objects, (ii) entitlement, (iii) dangerous world, (iv) uncontrollability, and (v) nature of harm, and draw

upon cognitive appraisals and rationalizations to explain the initiation and maintenance of offending, including how one interprets the behavior of the child, one's own views of the self, others and the world.

A further theory that attempts to explain motivations in FCSOs is Gannon, Rose and Ward's (2008) Descriptive Offense Process Model of Female Sexual Offenders. Two stages, namely 'goal establishment' and 'motivations and goal relevant distal planning', within the model identifies key motivations that are found in females who commit sexual offences. They are suggested to include the offender gaining sexual gratification and intimacy from engaging in different types of offending behavior, as well as for the purpose of revenge. However, this model does not exclusively examine FCSO.

Female typologies have been tentatively proposed based upon characteristics of the perpetrator and the offense, with the aim of identifying patterns and the relevant pathways to offending, as well as classifying 'types' within a heterogeneous population. However, there is no consensus within the literature in relation to the typologies. Due to the diversity within this population, it is recognized that women do not always fit into a distinct category. Mathews, Mathews, and Speltz (1989) developed a typology which drew upon motivational factors for the offense. Five categories were identified: (i) the teacher/lover, (ii) predisposed molester, (iii) male-coerced molester, (iv) experimenter, and (v) psychologically disturbed. Some of these refer to the way women cognitively appraise and rationalize situations and behaviors, such as the teacher/lover believing that the victim was willing to engage in sexual contact, and that this was an act of love or kindness. The 'male-coerced offender' was also noted to be fearful of men which acted as a pathway to offending under coercion.

More recently, Vandiver and Kercher (2004) developed a typology based on the characteristics of the offender and the offense, namely: (i) heterosexual nurturers, (ii) non-criminal homosexual offenders, (iii) female sexual predators, (iv) young adult child

exploiters, (v) homosexual criminals, and (vi) aggressive homosexual criminals. However, they did not distinguish between those women who engaged in sexual offending against a child with a co-offender, which is an area that attracts research in terms of exploring co-offending among females, typically under the coercion of a male.

Research in the area of child sexual offending has primarily focused on male perpetrators. To date, researchers have primarily explored FCSOs in the context of making comparisons with male child sexual offenders. This has been beneficial in terms of identifying the similarities present in the motivational factors between males and females (Nathan & Ward, 2001). However, differences in motivations have also been demonstrated (Gannon, Hoare, Rose, & Parrett, 2012; Gillespie et al., 2015). This is problematic, as presently treatment for FCSOs relies upon male-derived theories. This would suggest that interventions and treatment programs designed to rehabilitate FCSOs are of limited validity and efficacy, because they crucially overlook potential female-specific motivations and experiences (Gannon et al., 2014). This has led to researchers exploring this area further to recognize the need for a gender-responsive approach, and therefore develop models specific to FCSO (e.g. Eldridge, Elliot, Gillespie, Bailey, & Beech, in press) in order to effectively address the shortfalls present.

Given the increasing interest in FCSO, it is necessary to review the findings in this area. This will enable identification of the key motivations from the existing literature, and inform researchers and clinicians of current knowledge and understanding. This will have the potential to inform clinical practice with females who have sexually offended against children, thereby contributing to the existing evidence base, and furthering programs' efficacy in terms of reducing females' risk of reoffending. A review of this area will also identify gaps in the existing literature and evidence base.

#### 1.1.1 Aims

The aims of this review were therefore (i) to explore the goals reported by FCSOs as motivations in the perpetration of their sexual offending, and (ii) to explore their offense-supportive cognitions that may act as facilitators in the current literature base.

## 1.2 Method

### 1.2.1 Scoping Search

Prior to undertaking the systematic literature review, a scoping search was conducted to identify any potentially relevant literature in the area. Additionally, attempting to identify any existing reviews on the topic area. The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews and The Campbell Collaboration were used to conduct the scoping search in November 2017 and March 2018, with both searches yielding no results directly linked to motivations in female child sexual offending.

### 1.2.2 Search Strategy

The present review is based on the results from three databases, namely Web of Science, ProQuest and PsychINFO. The search took place on 22/03/18 and included reviews and studies, dated from 1900 to present in ProQuest and from 1967 to present in PsychINFO. The computer-based systematic literature search of databases was conducted using the following search strings: (((female\* or wom?n) near/1 (((baby or babies or child\* or infan\* or "school age\*" or \*pubescent\*) near/2 (rape or "sex\* abus\*" or "Sex\* assault\*" or "sex\* offen\*" or molest\*)) or p?edophil\*))) (Web of Science); (((female\* or wom?n) near/1 (((baby or babies or child\* or infan\* or "school age\*" or prepubescent\* or pubescent) near/2 (rape or "sex\* abus\*" or "Sex\* assault\*" or "sex\* offen\*" or molest\*)) or p?edophil\*))) (ProQuest); ((female\* or wom?n) adj2 (((baby or babies or child\* or infan\* or "school age\*" or prepubescent or pubescent\*) adj2 (rape or "sex\* abus\*" or "Sex\* assault\*" or "sex\* offen\*" or molest\*)) or p?edophil\*)) (PsychINFO).

It was decided to not include motivations, or synonyms of this, in the search string, in order not to limit the search strategy by relevant articles not being identified. To further encompass the identification of articles using an open search strategy, subject headings were implemented when using the database PsychINFO. These comprised of: human females; pedophilia; child abuse; sex offenses.

### 1.2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

For inclusion to the present systematic literature review, the search tool SPIDER was implemented and the following inclusion and exclusion criteria were used (see Table 1). These were developed by reviewing the existing literature to gain a scope of the key papers in order to ensure that these would be included in the review. Thereby creating a clear topic of interest. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to all articles that were generated from the search, after duplicates were removed.

Due to anticipated limited articles in this area, it was decided that the inclusion criteria would be kept broad in relation to design and research methodology. The initial criteria intended to focus on prepubescent victims (i.e. under 13 years). However, due to limited literature focusing on this, the criteria was extended. As such, the inclusion criteria was amended to reflect the age in key articles, namely under the age of 18 years. This is a limitation due to an individual not being deemed an adult until they are 18 years of age, yet the legal age of sexual consent is 16 years in England and Wales. A further complication in establishing the age of a child is the variation in age of consent across countries all over the world.

Table 1

*Inclusion and exclusion criteria used for the current review*

SPIDER Category	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Sample	Female offenders Offender over 18 years of age at time of offense	Male offenders Juvenile/adolescent offenders



	Solo and group/co-offender	
Phenomenon of Interest	Contact child sexual offenses Victim is under 18 years of age Male or female victim	Non-contact offenses – e.g. online, grooming. Victim older than 18 years old.
Design	Case study Interview Questionnaire/survey Mixed design	
Evaluation	Motivation Belief of motivation Experience Attribution Influences Offense-supportive cognition(s)	
Methodological approach	Qualitative or Quantitative or Mixed Methods	

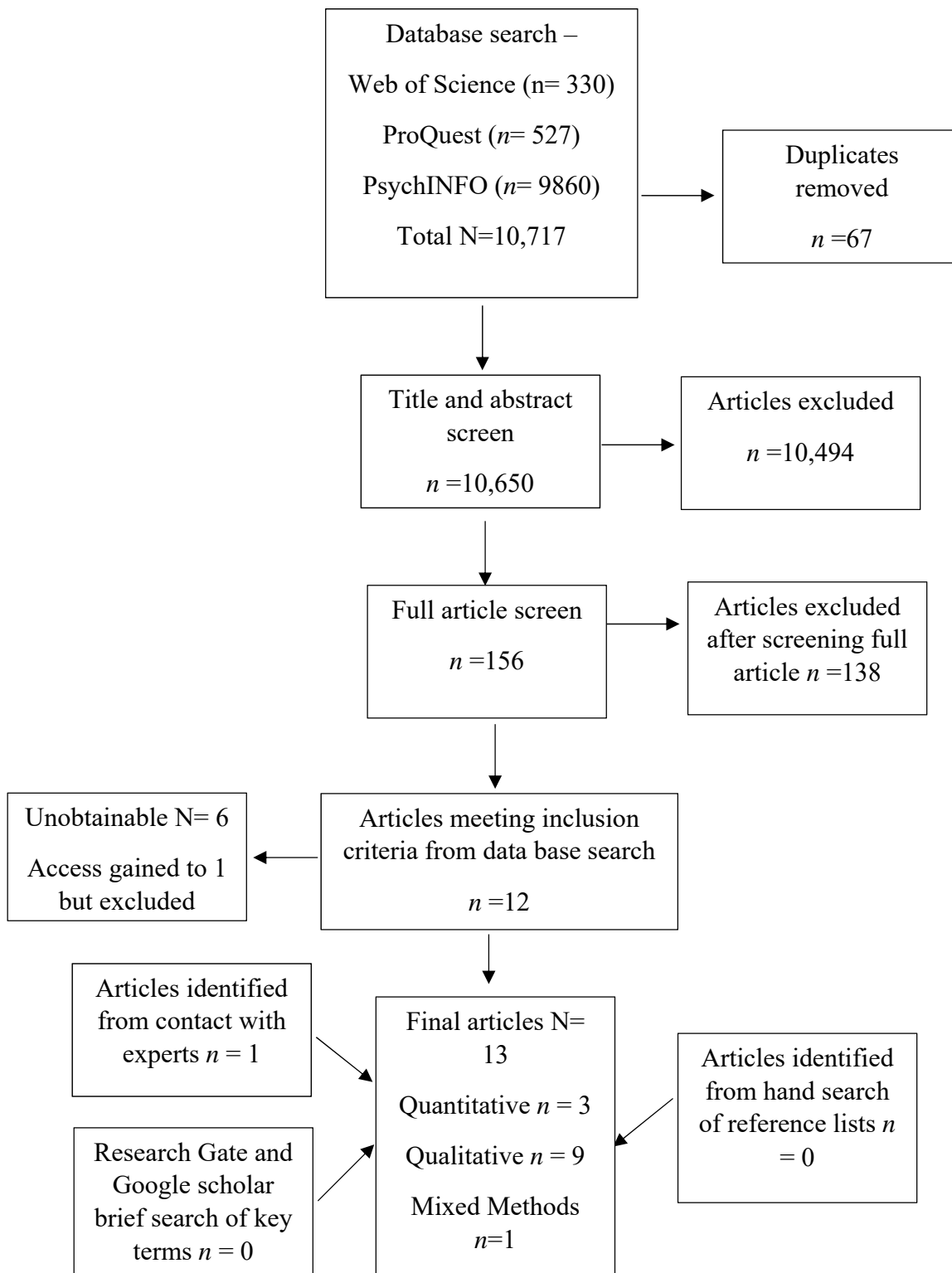
#### 1.2.4 Identification Process

Web of Science, ProQuest (Criminology and Sociology collection) and PsychINFO identified 10,717 articles using the aforementioned search strategy. These were sorted for relevance and duplications were removed ( $n = 67$ ). Following this, screening of titles and abstracts for relevance ( $n = 10,650$ ) was carried out utilizing the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Those that were ambiguous and had the potential to meet the inclusion criteria were accepted at this stage. A total of 156 articles made it through the screening process, to which a full-text screen was applied. The full text of each article was obtained from the e-library at the University of Birmingham, Research Gate and by directly contacting authors. However, six articles were not obtainable. All authors were contacted, however, only one responded providing the full text. This article was excluded upon review due to not meeting the inclusion criteria. In addition to this, the other five articles were subsequently excluded due to not being available in full-text. After reviewing the full texts of the remaining articles, three

were discounted as they were not written in English, and five were excluded due to comprising of a male perpetrator sample. Finally, 136 were excluded due to either not being relevant in terms of not having investigated motivations in FCSOs, or the sample comprising of females who sexually offended against both adults and children, where the data could not be disentangled. An example of the latter is an article by Gannon et al. (2008).

A brief search of Google Scholar and Research Gate was completed utilizing key terms (i.e. female child sexual offenders, motivations of female child sexual offender, and cognitions of female child sexual offenders). However, no articles were identified as meeting the criteria. Furthermore, the reference lists of the final 12 articles were hand-searched, although no additional articles were identified. Finally, four experts in the area were contacted via email, requesting unpublished literature in an attempt to reduce publication bias. This also allowed for certainty that the search had not missed any key articles. One expert replied to this request and sent an electronic copy of a dissertation, which met the inclusion criteria.

The final analysis therefore comprised of 13 articles.



*Figure 1.* Flow chart depicting the search results, and the exclusion of studies that did not meet the inclusion criteria at each stage of the screening process.

### 1.2.5 Quality assessment

The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT (Pluye et al., 2011) (Appendix C) was used to complete a rigorous assessment of the methodological quality for each article. The MMAT was developed for this purpose, and in order to facilitate reviews of the empirical research literature employing varying methodologies. A summary of coding supplied by the authors guides users through the scoring process. To assess each article, it was first necessary to determine their methodology by reading the abstract and methods section of each article. From this, it was determined that the final set of articles comprised of nine qualitative studies, three quantitative studies and one mixed-methods design.

As the MMAT allows for the quality assessment of all methodologies, the relevant section and questions were answered through the review of each article. Initially, all studies were screened by two questions, assessing clarity of research questions and if the data collected is sufficient in answering the stated research questions. Following this, the nine qualitative and three quantitative studies were assessed by four questions covering methodological rigor. For the mixed-methods design, there were 11 questions which probed for information relevant to assessing potential biases when employing each methodological approach.

Assessment of qualitative methodology included determining if consideration was given to the context in which participants reported information and also in relation to the researcher influence. Quantitative methodologies were assessed independently, based on whether the design used randomization of participants, a non-randomized design, or if the quantitative method was descriptive. This allowed for each sub-section to be assessed by focusing on salient aspects of the design. The three quantitative designs both reported non-randomized designs, and were therefore assessed in respect of recruitment, the comparability between groups and appropriate measurements for interventions/groups and outcomes.

Finally, the mixed-methods design was assessed based on the suitability of utilizing qualitative and quantitative designs, as well as the limitations of utilizing this design, whilst also assessing the article in respect of qualitative questions and the appropriate quantitative questions.

In accordance with the scoring guide of the MMAT, those studies that employed a single methodological approach were scored 25% for each criteria evidenced in the article. The higher the percentage, the higher the quality score for the study's methodology. For the mixed-methods design article, the premise of the overall quality not exceeding the quality of the weakest component was applied. This meant that if the weakest component met only one condition, the overall quality would be 25%. Whilst quality scores will be discussed, all studies regardless of their quality assessment score were included in the present review due to the limited number of articles in this area.

In addition to the MMAT, which assessed the quality of the methodology, the data extraction form considered factors in relation to ethics, data collection, recruitment and limitations reported by the researcher(s). This was deemed appropriate as the MMAT overlooked factors that extended from methodology. Structured judgement was used when critically appraising articles for considerations in the aforementioned areas. Factors identified on the data extraction form that extended from the MMAT were not numerically scored in relation to meeting these factors. However, they were considered when reviewing the quality of the article and factors were referred to where appropriate.

#### 1.2.6 Data extraction

A data extraction form (Appendix B) was used to extract data from the articles meeting the inclusion criteria. Extracted data related to: year of publication, research aims, context and participants, study design and methods, findings in respect of motivations and offense-supportive cognitions, and qualitative data in the form of participants' responses. The

extracted data was limited to the focus of the review. Therefore, if articles also explored other areas, this information was not extracted. The data extraction form was used to extract salient data from each article, regardless of methodology. Therefore, pertinent information from all articles was captured in a standardized way. The data extraction form also recorded information in relation to limitations and conclusions of the research, and each article's quality score which was taken from the MMAT.

During data extraction, it was necessary to exclude specific participants' data who did not meet the inclusion criteria. This was required for a total of five participants who had been convicted of non-contact offenses in research by Crawford (2013) and Matthews, Mathews and Speltz (1991). It was also necessary to exclude the data in relation to non-contact offending for one participant, whose offenses were both contact and non-contact, in a study by Collins and Duff (2016). This was pertinent to allow for validity and consistency of the inclusion criteria in the review.

### 1.3 Results

#### 1.3.1 Methodology and Characteristics of Articles

13 articles met the review's inclusion criteria. These comprised of nine qualitative studies, three quantitative studies and one study that employed a mixed-method design. Although it was decided that each article would be included, regardless of the quality score, it is of note that all received a quality score of above 50%. Pluye et al. (2011) did not comment or advise on the overall quality of studies or cut-off scores for good-quality articles, in relation to methodological rigor when using the MMAT. However, at least two of the four criteria were met in all articles that were quality assessed. Table 2 presents a description of the salient characteristics from each study. This information was gained from both the quality assessment and data extraction form.

#### 1.3.2 Population

Table 2 presents a summary of the characteristics of all articles. The majority of the studies were from the United Kingdom ( $n = 6$ ; Beech et al., 2009; Collins & Duff, 2016; Elliot et al., 2010; Gannon et al., 2009; Gannon et al., 2012; Gillespie et al., 2015) and the United States ( $n = 6$ ; Crawford, 2013; Jennings, 2000; Patel, 2015; Matthews et al., 1991; Sardina, 2017; Strickland, 2008). One study was from Australia (Nathan & Ward, 2002), and another one included participants from Canada and the United States (Jennings, 2000).

Sample sizes were small across most studies and many utilized qualitative methodologies, where a smaller sample size is appropriate. However, power calculations were not reported in studies that were quantitative, with the exception of Strickland (2008). Sample sizes varied between studies, ranging from 1 to 130 participants, but typically did not exceed 45 participants with the exception of one study.

Participants in qualitative studies ranged from one (Collins & Duff, 2016) to 30 (Nathan & Ward, 2002), with quantitative studies ranging from 34 (Gannon et al., 2009) to 130 (Strickland, 2008). The mixed-methods study comprised of 40 participants (Gillespie et al., 2015). The overall sample size across articles was 427 participants ( $M = 32.85$ ,  $SD = 32.83$ ), of which 290 were convicted of sexual offenses against children under 18 years of age, with the remaining 137 participants being controls<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> We attempted to disentangle the descriptive information in relation to each participant's offense and report this in percentages accordingly. However, eight of the studies did not explicitly report this information (Crawford, 2013; Elliot et al., 2010; Gannon et al., 2009; Gannon et al., 2012; Gillespie et al., 2015; Patel, 2015; Sardina, 2017; Strickland, 2008); five studies reported this information (Beech et al., 2009; Collins & Duff, 2016; Jennings, 2000; Matthews et al., 1991; Nathan & Ward, 2002), with some offering more detail than others. As such, it was not possible to provide a comprehensive overview of this information, which is also partly due to the varying legal definitions across countries, and participants engaging in more than one type of offending behavior. We attempted to extract this information, where possible, and recorded it within Tables 1-3 (see Appendix D), in order to illustrate the diversity of offending behavior. This included, but was not limited to, offenses involving penetration (e.g., rape, sodomy, digital penetration, penetration with an object), sexual assaults (e.g., masturbating the child, oral sex, touching, grabbing and fondling), inciting a child to engage in sexual activity (e.g., sexual performance, participating in strip poker, spin the bottle and other sexual games), aiding and abetting (e.g., facilitating the sexual abuse of the child by another, failing to protect the child from sexual abuse by another), child sexual abuse material (making, possessing and distributing), and purposefully engaging in sexual activity in the presence of a child. In order to classify these in an unambiguous way, offenses were categorized according to the UK's Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Participants' demographics were described sufficiently in many articles, enabling quantitative synthesis of some demographic information. Participants' ages were explicitly stated in some articles, with others opting to report the mean. The mean average age across all articles included in the present review, with the exception of four, was 35.16 years ( $SD = 5.86$ ). This calculation did not include Matthews et al.'s (1991) sample, as they did not report information in relation to participants' age. Three other articles only reported a range of ages (Collins & Duff, 2016; Gannon et al., 2012; Patel, 2015), and as such a mean could not be calculated.

Ethnicity of the samples varied, and categories were not used consistently throughout. A further mitigating factor was that some authors did not report on ethnicity (Elliot et al., 2010; Gannon et al., 2012; Gannon et al., 2009; Matthews et al., 1991; Nathan & Ward 2002; Strickland, 2008). In those articles that reported ethnicity, the sample comprised of the following ethnicities: White, Black, European, American, Hispanic, African American, White British, Italian, and Native American.

### *1.3.3 Recruitment and Offense*

Sources of recruitment were relatively consistent, with most recruiting samples from the Criminal Justice System. Many participants were recruited from prisons or correctional facilities, including probation (Beech et al., 2009; Gannon et al., 2009, 2012; Jennings, 2000; Nathan & Ward, 2002; Patel, 2015; Sardina, 2017; Strickland, 2008). One author used secondary data from prisons/correctional facilities (Crawford, 2013). Some participants were recruited from therapeutic treatment interventions (Matthews et al., 1991; Collins & Duff, 2016), with two studies utilizing secondary records (Elliot et al., 2010; Gillespie et al., 2015).

Age of the victim was an issue of definition, dependent on country and laws. Most countries defined a child as being under the age of 16 years (Beech et al., 2009; Collins & Duff, 2016; Crawford, 2013; Gannon et al., 2009, 2012; Elliot et al., 2010; Gillespie et al.,



2015; Jennings, 2000; Nathan & Ward, 2002). However, others defined a child as under the age of 18 years (Matthews et al., 1991, Sardina, 2017; Strickland, 2008), with Patel (2015) not including a definition of age.

Convictions in the review, where possible, only included contact sexual offenses. Where identifiable, data relating to non-contact offending behavior were excluded (Collins & Duff, 2016; Crawford, 2013; Matthews et al., 1991). The range of contact offenses varied between articles, with some articles including more offense-related detail than others. Contact offenses involved sexual activity with a child, ranging from rape or digital penetration to indecent assault. In some instances, joint offending was present in the sample and included the co-offending partnership between females and males.

#### *1.3.4 Original Data Collection Methods and Diagnostic*

Goal and offense-supportive cognition diagnostics can be viewed independently. In relation to the goals of FCSOs, this primarily comprised of interviews probing for information in relation to the research questions posed by the researchers of each study. One study used focused interviews (Sardina, 2017), allowing participants to tell the story of their experience. One study used two types of interviews: a structured interview and a clinical interview (Nathan & Ward, 2002). It was reported that both assessed information in relation to demographics, offense and clinical data. The difference between the two interviews was reported to be that the structured interview was a formalized, structured version of the clinical interview. Another study also used a structured interview (Jennings, 2000) which encompassed two sections – one of these schedules was specifically designed by the author and explored Finkelhor's (1984) Four Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse. A further schedule exploring cognitions was also used. Collins and Duff (2016) also used Finkelhor's model to code data after using multiple interviews, which also comprised a therapeutic intervention. Semi-structured interviews were also used (Beech et al., 2009; Gannon et al.,

2012) as a clinical interview to capture information. However, other methods were used, including reviewing secondary case files and reports (Elliot et al., 2010; Gillespie et al., 2015); which contained information from therapeutic reports, psychometrics and other professionals, where available. One article drew data from secondary questionnaires and interviews (Crawford, 2015). Another article also used comprehensive secondary data (Matthews et al., 1991) which coded data from an intake interview, a questionnaire in relation to family history, case notes, progress notes, and psychometrics including a personality assessment and self-concept scale.

In relation to offense-supportive cognitions diagnostics, some studies coded data from interviews (Beech et al., 2009; Gannon et al., 2012; Sardina, 2017) or secondary reports (Elliot et al., 2010; Gillespie et al., 2015). Others did this quantitatively, such as utilizing an Implicit Association Task (Gannon et al., 2009). This study employed a comparison group of offenders convicted of non-child sexual offenses, to determine any significant difference between the two groups in implicitly associating children with sex. Strickland (2008) opted for a battery of psychometrics to measure variables (personality disorder, substance abuse, trauma history, social and/or sexual competence, emotional neediness, and cognitive distortions). For the purpose of this review the relevant variable of cognitive distortions was measure by the female version of The Multiphasic Sex Inventor-II and the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire.

During the analytical process Finkelhor's Four Preconditions Model (1984) was used as a guiding theory in two studies (Collins & Duff, 2016; Jennings, 2000). This was the first multifactorial model to explain child sexual offending in males. It encompasses a number of innate needs, and contextual and situational factors, including that of sexual motivation. Ward and Keenan's (1999) Implicit Theories and Beech and Ward's (2004) Risk Factors for Child Sexual Offending were also drawn upon by other studies. One study modified an

existing framework devised by Elliot, Eldridge, Ashfield and Beech (2010) when coding for the presence of factors in relation child sexual abuse. The original framework by Elliot et al. (2010) provides static and dynamic risk factors, as well as vulnerability factors in child sexual offending perpetrated by females.

### 1.3.5 Quality of articles

Whilst the quality of articles varied, no study scored under 50%. When utilizing the scoring system of the MMAT, five articles met 100% of the considerations (Gannon et al., 2009; Patel, 2015; Sardina, 2017; Strickland, 2008), two met 75% (Collins & Duff, 2016; Crawford, 2013), and seven met 50% (Beech et al., 2009; Gannon et al., 2012; Gillespie et al., 2015; Elliot et al., 2010; Jennings et al., 2000; Matthews et al., 1991; Nathan & Ward, 2002). Whilst this allowed for methodological rigor to be assessed, it was decided that further considerations were needed when assessing the quality of articles, including considerations in relation ethical considerations and data analysis. As such, a data extraction form drawn up for this purpose was utilized to consider additional factors. An overview of the quality assessment analysis can be seen in Appendix D.

All articles produced a good rationale for conducting the research described, with appropriate data collection methods being used. There were clear research questions and aims detailed, and the data collected sufficiently enabled these questions to be answered. This led to a strong statement of findings in each study.

It was positive that most of the quantitative articles matched the groups on factors, such as demographics, to alleviate the impact of confounding variables (Gannon et al., 2009; Strickland, 2008), with Patel (2015) reporting the t-test and chi-square analyses used to explore the degree to which participants were matched in relation to demographics. The method sections were relatively well explained, including matched characteristics. Additionally, all variables were clearly defined in articles that employed a quantitative

methodology. The comparison groups were clearly defined, such as solo and co-offending females (Gillespie et al., 2015), FCSOs and non-sexual offending offenders (Gannon et al., 2009). or four varying groups of FCSOs Elliot et al. (2010) sample were divided into four groups: (1) Lone offender, victim over 12 years; (2) Lone offender, victim under 12 years; (3) Males associated; and (4) Male coerced.

Power analyses were not reported in some articles (Gannon et al., 2009; Gillespie et al., 2015; Patel, 2015). This information would have allowed for more reliability in results reported. Sample sizes were small in some groups, making it difficult to conclude if a true effect was detected. However, it is important to note that the FCSO population is small, and as such small sample sizes may be meaningfully justified even if this is not highlighted in the articles. Power analysis was reported to be .86 in Strickland's (2008) sample with a medium effect size, which allows results to be viewed reliably.

Many of the qualitative articles (Beech et al., 2009; Crawford, 2013; Elliot et al., 201; Jennings, 2000; Matthews et al., 1991; Gannon et al., 2010; Gillespie et al., 2015) did not report how findings may relate to the researcher's influence sufficiently. The researchers' role is salient in qualitative research, especially during coding and interpretation of the findings. It is important for researchers to be aware of how their experiences or opinions can influence every stage of the study (Berger, 2015). One author did acknowledge the unconscious researcher bias and explained how she would be flexible when viewing the data (Sardina, 2017). Jennings (2000) also reflected on how the construction of the interview schedule may have impacted on participants responding, yet did not relate researcher influence to interpretation of data. Many articles used second coders to measure inter-rater reliability of coding and the identification of themes or coding (Beech et al., 2009; Collins & Duff, 2016; Gannon et al., 2012; Gillespie et al., 2015; Sardina, 2017). The inter-rater reliability analyses used were typically a Cohen's kappa and results ranged from fair

(between 0.4 and 0.6) to good (between 0.6 and 0.75). However, others did not report inter-rater reliability or reported not using this (Crawford, 2013; Elliot et al., 2010; Jennings, 2000; Nathan & Ward, 2002). Nonetheless, with exception of Sardina (2017), the role of the researcher in the analytical process was not clearly defined in the articles that used a qualitative methodology.

A further overlooked factor was that of considering how findings may relate to the context. Whilst some researchers (Jennings, 2000) considered the impact of participants' environment on generalizability and ecological validity, others did not report this (Crawford, 2013; Matthews et al., 1999; Sardina, 2017). Whilst research on FCSOs who are convicted allows the phenomenon to be studied in women who are more likely to admit to their offense, thereby increasing the likelihood of participants talking in detail about their offending as they do not fear reprisals for disclosing undetected offenses, it does not consider the motivational factors of those that remain at large or are undetected. It is important to bear in mind that there may be differences in those who are able to conceal their offending in comparison to those who are detained, and again those who are willing to participate in research.

A further impact of context is the willingness to openly and honestly disclose information. The offense being studied is viewed negatively by many, and therefore implicates social desirability and impression management. This is especially important as all studies, with the exception of Gannon et al. (2009) relied on self-report. Crawford (2013) reported that those detained whilst completing forms reported less information. The author suggests that this could be due to participants being concerned of the information being obtained by officers, supporting the need for contextual considerations. Some researchers noted taking steps to ensure rooms were private (Jennings, 2000; Sardina, 2017) and rapport was built (Beech et al., 2009; Jennings, 2000; Sardina, 2017) prior to asking participants to

disclose sensitive information. Rapport with the researcher is likely to increase reliability and content of what is disclosed due to feelings of trust (McNamara, 2009).

Data collection was generally clear in all articles. Methods used to collect data were explicitly stated, and if a schedule was used to guide interviews this was explained. One article had two data collection methods, in the form of a structured interview and a clinical assessment (Nathan & Ward, 2002). However, it was explained that this was due to the structured interview being implemented by the organization from January 2000, although recruitment preceded this. It was acknowledged by the researchers that there was little difference in the aims of the two methods, and that one method is a formalized version of the other. Limitations of data collection methods include details on data saturation only being reported by one article (Crawford, 2013). Three articles relied on secondary case files (Crawford, 2015; Elliot et al., 2010; Gillespie et al., 2015) which placed heavy reliance on detail and quality of information being reported by the original author. Elliot et al. (2010) also failed to detail the randomization process for the selection of the initial 13 case files, which informed the construction of the risk factor coding framework.

In relation to the analytical process of the articles that featured a qualitative methodology, it was positive that some articles included anonymized extracts in the results section which enabled the reader to follow the emergence/presence of themes (Beech et al., 2009; Crawford, 2013; Gannon et al., 2012; Sardina, 2017). However, there were exceptions with others not providing a detailed description, and merely reported themes without supporting extracts from participants. This affected clarity of the themes at times.

### 1.3.6 Characteristics of Articles

Table 2 depicts the characteristics of the articles based upon the data extracted from 13 studies.

*Table 2*

Characteristics of articles included in the review.

Author/ year of publication	Methodology	Recruitment	Participant demographics	Data collection strategy	Main findings	Strengths and limitations	MMAT Quality Assessment Score
E. Crawford (2013)	Qualitative	Archival reports from the Florida department of corrections research department. Participants were living/or serving a sentence in the state of Florida.	<p>32 female participants over 18 years old. All convicted of a sexual crime against a child under 16 years old.</p> <p><u>Age</u> Mean = 36.25 years</p> <p><u>Ethnicity</u> European American = 20 African American = 8 Mixed race = 3 No Race disclosed = 1</p> <p><i>3 participants (participant 19, 29 and 31) were excluded from the review due to committing non-contact Offenses.</i></p>	Data was drawn from pre-existing completed questionnaires and interviews completed by participants. Information was coded and sorted to uncover central themes.	<p><u>Goals</u> Force by another individual/coercion through fear and threats made by male co-offender. Coercion was also related to feeling their role as a woman was to please their male partner.</p> <p>Feeling in control of another individual, thing or situation.</p> <p>Being respected by victims and teaching them something new.</p> <p>Feeling uncomfortable with men their own age.</p> <p>A desire to meet own needs – love and attention.</p>	<p><u>Strengths</u> The researcher considered own biases in relation to coding of the data and reported being mindful of these to remain objective.</p> <p>Clear methodology section and results give quotes to support the motivations.</p> <p>Considers contextual limitations in responding.</p> <p>Data saturation point is considered.</p> <p><u>Limitations</u> Richer information may have been</p>	75%



					<u>Offense supportive cognitions</u> Emotional Reasoning; using own emotions to dictate what is right or true rather than the facts, such as participants getting their own needs met and feeling good sexually being more salient than being law abiding.  Blame; was placed on drugs and alcohol, co-offenders, and victims.	elicited if the researcher interviewed the participants directly for the purpose of the research.  No inter-rater reliability carried out on the coding of data.	
A. Sardina (2017)	Qualitative	The correctional centre for women in Indiana.	7 female participants detained in the correctional centre for women in Indiana for child sexual Offenses against children under 18 years old.  <u>Age</u> Mean = 27.57 years  <u>Ethnicity</u> White = 6 African American = 1	Data was collected through focused interviews with participants. Transcripts were coded using content analysis.	<u>Goals</u> To please a male partner.  Perception of personal inadequacy and attempting to feel good; including being submissive personality, immaturity and low self-esteem.  Coercion – a fear of physical violence.	<u>Strengths</u> The need for rapport and trust is considered to enable the participants to feel comfortable reporting their experience.  Secondary coding was utilised, which typically promotes reliability. However, the	100%

					<p><u>Offense supportive cognitions</u>  Diminishing responsibility; including blaming the victim, the victim being willing, the out of control child influenced the Offense, denial and the victim being the aggressor.</p> <p>To escape reality; likened to the world as a dangerous place and uncontrollable cognitive distortions.</p>	<p>details of this are not reported other than stating that once transcripts were coded by the main researcher they were given to an experienced researcher to code.</p> <p><u>Limitations</u>  Small sample size, however content analysis is concerned with the individual experience.</p> <p>Reliance on self-reported data may be inaccurate due to unconscious memory distortions, self-deception, and conscious impression management strategies.</p>	
Gannon, Rose and Williams	Quantitative.	Participants were recruited from 5 prisons and 1	34 female participants – 17 had committed a sexual Offense against	Implicit association task (IAT) used to determine if those who offended	<u>Offense supportive cognitions</u>	<p><u>Strengths</u>  Participants were matched on</p>	100%

(2009)	Quasi-experimental study.	probation service in England.	a child under 16 years, and 17 had committed range of non-child sexual Offenses.  <u>Age</u> Mean = 40.2 year (SD= 12.8)  <u>Ethnicity</u> Not reported	against children implicitly associate children with sex.  Control IAT categories depicting flower and insect words were associated as pleasant or unpleasant by participants. The experimental IAT were children and adult words and were associated with sex or non-sex. Individual effect size differences ( <i>D</i> scores) obtained from IAT's were used as dependent variables and two-way analysis of variances were conducted on the control and experimental IAT.	Results did not support the evidence to suggest that FCSOs sexualise children cognitively.	demographics to make groups comparable.  Implicit association tasks were counterbalanced.  <u>Limitations</u> No power calculation reported and the study utilised a small sample size. However, the potential participant pool was limited to 45.	
Nathan and Ward (2002)	Qualitative	Participants were recruited from within the correctional system in Victoria, Australia. Participants were	12 female child sexual offenders convicted of Offenses against children under the age of 16 years.  <u>Age</u> Mean = 30 years	Half of the participants completed structured interviews developed by Forensicare, the other half of the sample completed a detailed clinical interview which assessed demographic,	<u>Goals</u> A variety of motives were reported, some women attributed more than one motivation including: coercion/being threatened with physical	<u>Strengths</u> Rationale of two interviews explained - structured interview developed by Forensicare did not	50%

		referred between 1996 and 2000 for forensic evaluation to the Victorian Institute of Forensic Health, pre-release or post-release.	<u>Ethnicity</u> Not reported	Offense and clinical data. The authors reported that the difference between the two interviews is that the Structured interview is a formalised and structured version of the clinical interview.	abuse, rejection, jealousy or a desire to seek revenge against a partner, teaching the victim a lesson, wanting to please a partner, deviant sexual arousal, power, and affection.	commence being administered to until January 2000.  Clear inclusion and exclusion criteria.  Inter-rater reliability agreement score reported as 88.4%. However, no details in relation to the measure used or interpretation were reported.  <u>Limitations</u> It is not reported if the researchers considered the context or their own biases and interactions may have influenced results.	
K.T. Jennings (2000)	Qualitative	Participants were recruited from prisons or probation in	30 female participants were serving prison sentences or were on probation for child	Structured interviews. There were two interview schedules, one of these was specifically designed	<u>Goals</u> Emotional congruence; including not feeling like they had power or	<u>Strengths</u> The researcher considers how they may influence	50%

Canada and the United States.	<p>sexual Offenses. Victims were all under the age of 16 years old.</p> <p><u>Age</u> Mean = 31 years</p> <p><u>Ethnicity</u> White = 22 Black = 4 Native = 1 Hispanic = 1 Other = 2</p>	<p>for the study, assessing Finkelhor's Four Preconditions Model of Sexual Abuse on female sexual offenders. A further schedule designed by Abel, Becker, Cunningham-Rathner, Rouleau, Kaplan and Reich (1984) was used to explore cognitions.</p>	<p>control over their lives, not feeling comfortable around children emotionally or physically, victims remind the offender of themselves when they were children, intimacy and closeness.</p> <p>Sexual arousal; including fantasising about children and viewing them sexually.</p> <p>Blockage; including feeling intimidated by sexual relationships with an adult, not being in an affectionate or loving relationship and not having available sexual outlets at the time of the Offense.</p> <p>Coercion by a male partner to offend.</p> <p><u>Offense supportive cognitions</u> There was no great support for cognitive</p>	<p>findings, as may the context of where the interviews are held. This is reported to be acknowledged in the study design.</p> <p>Biases in the sample are considered e.g. not being representative of those who go undetected in the general population.</p> <p><u>Limitations</u> Small sample size, but this is in part due to limited access of potential participants.</p> <p>Only one coder, no inter-rater reliability score computed.</p>
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					distortions but there was evidence of unconventional beliefs including: an adult being able to tell if sex with a young child would be emotionally damaging to the victim in the future, the victim knowing that the offender still loves them if the victim refuses to have sex with the offender. Questions in relation to who is responsible if coerced by a male revealed mixed results, but some attributed only the male as responsible.		
Matthews, Mathews, Speltz (1991)	Qualitative	Participants were recruited after being referred to the Genesis II Female Sexual Offenders Treatment Program, in America from May 1985 to December 1987	16 female participants who had been convicted of sexually offending against children under the age of 18 years.  <u>Age and Ethnicity</u> Not reported  <i>2 participants were excluded due to being</i>	Data was taken from case studies which comprised of interview data and case records. This included an Intake Interview, Confidential Family History Questionnaire, case notes, assignments, progress reports, and testing (MMPI,	<u>Goals</u> Coercion; including feelings of dependency, fearing abuse or abandonment and being forced by partners. However, it was also reported that although some participants were initially coerced they also reported solo	<u>Strengths</u> The need to be open to what may emerge from the data is considered and implemented by the researcher by taking a holistic-inductive approach.  <u>Limitations</u>	50%

			<i>convicted of non-contact sexual Offenses.</i>	Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, and FACES). Themes and patterns were then assessed.	<p>offending after the initial coercion.</p> <p>Sexual arousal; including fantasising. Arousal was also linked to feelings of power, which was lacking form adult relationships.</p> <p>A desire for acceptance, attention, and closeness; Having unmet needs or low self-esteem; And feeling isolated. Feelings of anger, revenge, power, jealousy, and rejection (but not by or of the victims) was also reported.</p> <p><u>Offense supportive cognitions</u> Blaming others, including the victim, were not found to be supported by the data.</p>	<p>The researchers do not discuss any limitations of their research.</p> <p>The researchers do not consider the influence of the context in which participants are being interviewed.</p> <p>No mention of inter-rater reliability score or the use of a secondary coder.</p>	
Collins and Duff (2016)	Qualitative	The participant was recruited from a	1 female participant who had sexually assaulted a child under	The single case design comprised of an assessment interview,	<u>Goals</u> Multiple motivations reported including:	<u>Strengths</u> Analysis was collaborative with	75%

community forensic psychology service, who was engaging in a therapeutic intervention in the United Kingdom	<p>the age of 13 years old, the participant had also been convicted of making indecent images of a child and possession of indecent images.</p> <p><u>Age</u> 40-50 years</p> <p><u>Ethnicity</u> White</p> <p><i>Data in relation to non-contact offending was excluded.</i></p>	<p>followed by 22 50 minute sessions. Therapeutic sessions were used to gain information in relation to motivations. The information disclosed in sessions was coded using content analysis in relation to Finklehor's Precondition Model. The amount of disclosures that represented each motivation was provided quantitatively (in percentage). Contact and non-contact offending were reported independently of each other.</p> <p>An anxiety and depression scale was also administered during the course of the therapy.</p>	<p>arousal, escape and fantasy, pleasing a partners (co-offender) desires, sexual gratification, and finally as distraction form feelings of grief and isolation.</p> <p><u>Offense supportive cognitions</u> Removing own responsibility and putting responsibility on the victim, minimising the harm to the victim, justifying the abuse as an act of love, and projection of enjoyment to the victim.</p>	<p>the participant who was able to agree with the researchers' themes.</p> <p>The researcher considers the biases and influence of both the participant and the researchers.</p> <p>An independent coder was used to rate a random selection of 25% of the data to minimise bias which was reported to be in excess of 90% which they reported indicted 'good inter-rater reliability'. However, no information in relation to the analysis or measure of this is reported.</p>
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							<u>Limitations</u> Small sample size, even in comparison to typical research in this area which is noted to be small. This has implication for external validity.
Gannon, Hoare, Rose and Parrett (2012)	Qualitative	Participants were recruited from 5 female prisons and 1 probation service in England.	16 female participants who had sexually offended against children 16 years or younger.  <u>Age</u> Ranged from 21-78 years  <u>Ethnicity</u> Not reported	Data was gained from semi-structured interviews. This data was reviewed against Ward and Keenan's (1999) descriptions and examples of each male-derived implicit theories (ITs) for the presence or absence. The presence of any additional ITs were noted.	<u>Offense supportive cognitions</u> Uncontrollability and nature of harm.  The Dangerous world IT was amended to reflect the data, as such it was renamed 'dangerous men/males'.  There was no evidence from suggesting the sample viewed all children as sexual beings. However, there was evidence to suggest that some participants viewed their victim as sexual beings.	<u>Strengths</u> Inter-coder reliability was calculated using a Cohens Kappa score to assess reliability and reduce bias in coding for each IT – scores were 100% for all ITs, except nature of harm (88%) and Entitlement (63%). Scores of 60-80% are regarded as having good agreement and excess of 80% is viewed as very good agreement.	50%

					Additionally, no evidence of the IT of entitlement in the sample.	<u>Limitations</u> The researchers do not consider the context of where interviews took place, or their influence in relation to interviewing.  The methodology to obtain information in relation to ITs was alluded to being unable to distinguish between authentic underlying beliefs or impression management strategies.	
Beech, Parrett, Ward and Fisher (2009)	Qualitative	Participants were recruited from prisons within England and Wales.	15 female participants who had sexually offended against children under 16 years.  <u>Age</u> Mean = 47.3 years (SD=13.8)	Data was gained through semi-structured clinical interviews with participants. This was then assessed against Ward and Keenan's IT coding categories for presence or absence. There was also a	<u>Offense supportive cognitions</u> Uncontrollability, dangerous world, and children as sexual beings. There was also evidence for nature of harm, however evidence	<u>Strengths</u> Inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen's Kappa scores to rate agreement in coding – scores were: entitlement	50%

			<u>Ethnicity</u> White	miscellaneous category that allowed for the identification of new ITs.	suggested that this was the least supported IT.  The miscellaneous category identified tentative evidence for schemas related to self-sacrifice and subjugation.	100%, children as sexual being 87%, dangerous world 80%, uncontrollability and nature of harm 73%. Scores between 40-60% are regarded as fair agreement, 60-75% as good and excess of 75% reflect excellent agreement.  <u>Limitations</u> Limited ability to generalise findings due to small sample size.  Contextual implications on participants responding are not considered.	
Gillespie, Williams, Elliot, Eldridge,	Mixed methods – qualitative and quantitative	Archival data was used from women who had been referred to the Lucy Faithful	40 female child sexual offenders – 20 solo offenders and 20 co-offenders. All had offended against	Data was gained from case files. This comprised of a clinical report written by a LFF therapist for each	<u>Goals</u> Psychological and/or physical coercion by their co-offender.	<u>Strengths</u> A framework was used to code for an array of factors. This ensured that	50%

Ashfield, Beech (2015)	(quasi-experimental)	Foundation (LFF) in the United Kingdom, between 1998 and 2009.	<p>children under the age of 16 years old.</p> <p><u>Age</u> Co-offenders Mean = 38.83 (SD= 5.80) Solo offenders mean = 33.24 (SD = 6.83)</p> <p><u>Ethnicity</u> 9 Co-offenders known = White British 11 Solo offenders known = 9 White British, 1 Italian and 1 White American.</p>	<p>participant – this included a semi-structured interview and a psychometric report where available, and contained information in relation to cognitive distortions, self-esteem, emotional loneliness, personal difficulties, victim empathy and emotion regulation. If other professional report were available, they were also included in case files.</p> <p>A modified version (Version 2.0) of the Assessment Guidance Framework for use with Women Who Sexually Abuse Children (Elliott, Eldridge, Ashfield, &amp; Beech, 2010), was used to code for presence or absence of developmental factors, psychological dispositions, environmental niche factors, offense</p>	<p><u>Offense supportive cognitions</u> Children as sexual beings, nature of harm, entitlement, dangerous world, uncontrollability, and other directedness. There were differences in ITs between solo and co-offenders.</p>	<p>each case file was coded for the same information.</p> <p>20% of the papers were coded by a second examiner to measure inter-rater reliability, although no score is given.</p> <p><u>Limitations</u> Archival data is limited to the reliance on reliability by the author. It is also reliant on records being of quality detail and data.</p> <p>Some case files were more detailed than others due to the availability of additional reports. This may have led to factors being unrecognised in the data.</p>
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				preceding factors, and factors which may support the offender in making positive changes. The presence or absence of offense-supportive cognitions were also coded for in both solo and co-offenders.			
Elliot, Eldridge, Ashfield and Beech (2010)	Qualitative	Participants were recruited from the LFF in the United Kingdom. They were referred between 1998 and 2007 due to their criminal conviction, or from family court.	43 females who had sexually offended against children under 16 years old.  Participants were divided into 4 categories: lone offender with a victim under 12, lone offender with a victim over 12, male associated offender and male coerced offender. Distinction between male associated and male coerced was based upon case file information for the level of coercion. If it was explicitly stated	Data was collected from case files including a clinical report from a LFF therapist based upon a structured interview, a psychometric report, emotional loneliness, emotional self-management, general empathy, victim empathy, and cognitive distortion. Additionally, relevant reports from professionals such as probation were also used, where available.  A random selection of 13 case files were used to inform the configuration of a preliminary risk factor coding framework,	<u>Goals</u> A need or desire for intimacy, a need for power and control.  <u>Offense supportive cognitions</u> Low empathetic concern for the victim, and emotional congruence with children.  Viewing children as sexual beings, viewing the nature of harm as low, and having entitlement. The dangerous world distortion was present in some participants and uncontrollability, but	<u>Strengths</u> A standard framework was used to guide coding in each case file which allowed for consistency.  The research allowed for the differences between the four categories to be explored.  <u>Limitations</u> No information is given in relation to how the initial 13 papers were randomly selected.	50%

			that the female had been forced into abusive situations by a violent, often sadistic partner they were placed into the male coerced group.	risk factors were outlined by Beech and Ward (2004) in their etiological model of risk. Each file was then rigorously coded for the presence of risk factors.	these distortions had less support.	The categorisation of male coercion relied upon explicit statement of this which relies upon the quality of the report. No mention of a secondary coder or inter-rater reliability score.	
			<u>Age</u> Average = 31.2 years				
			<u>Ethnicity</u> Not reported				
Strickland (2008)	Quantitative – Quasi-experimental design.	Participants were recruited from 3 state prisons in Georgia.	130 female participants: 60 had been convicted of sexually offending against a child under the age of 18 years old and 70 non-sexual offenders who had committed any serious crime against a person that was not sexual in nature.	Data was gained from administering The Multiphasic Sex Inventory–II Female version and The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire–Brief Version to all participants. These measured the variables of interest: presence and type of personality disorders, substance abuse, trauma history, social and/or sexual competence, emotional neediness, and cognitive distortions.	<u>Offense supportive cognitions</u> No significant differences found between groups on Cognitive Distortions, both groups scored in the highest category of “marked lack of accountability and a blaming outlook”.	<u>Strengths</u> Participants were matched on demographics.  <u>Limitations</u> Using participants detained in prisons means results are not able to be generalised to the wider population.  Cognitive distortions are reported collectively rather than being	100%
			<u>Age</u> Mean for both groups = 36 years				
			<u>Ethnicity</u>				

			Only 67 disclosed ethnicity of these 45 were white, 17 African American and 3 self-identified as other	Chi-Square analyses conducted to determine significant differences between groups on the demographics variables. Independent samples <i>t</i> tests tested for significant relationships between the presence and type of personality disorders, substance abuse, trauma history, social and/or sexual competence, emotional neediness, and cognitive distortions.		explored independently. The different cognitive distortions being explored are not stated.	
Patel (2015)	Quantitative	Participants were recruited from prisons in Arizona	51 female participants – 21 who had been convicted of child sexual Offenses and 30 who had been convicted of other non-child sexual Offenses.  <u>Age</u> 22 - 60 ( <i>M</i> =35.08, <i>SD</i> =7.76)  <u>Ethnicity</u> 20 White American 9 Native American	Participants were divided into small groups to complete measures, with a maximum of eight participants at a time. All participants completed questionnaires that were created for the study; all participants completed a questionnaire assessing auditory cues which measured 10 ambiguous voice clips that could be interpreted in various ways. Following this a standard written vignette	<u>Offense supportive cognitions</u> Auditory cues measure - FCSO feelings of fearfulness were not significantly different from controls. FCSO feelings of anxiousness was significantly different from controls (controls higher). FCSO and controls interpretation of the auditory cues as threatening or as pleasant did not	<u>Strengths</u> Novel measures used that were reported to have more ecologically validity.  Social desirability considered and measured. Results indicated that they did not significantly correlate with cues.	100%

No other data was provided in relation to other participants.	questionnaire was administered which comprised of 20 vignettes describing everyday situations involving a man and a woman. Participants then completed a pictorial cues measure which comprised of 20 ambiguous photos of a man and a women interacting. These portrayed each interaction in three specific ways; the woman as the aggressor, a neutral description, and the man as the aggressor. Lastly, The Social Desirability Scale-17 (Stöber, 2001).	significantly differ from each other, they were just as likely to interpret the neutral male voice as threatening and pleasant.  Pictorial cue measure - results do not support the hypothesis, as FCSO and controls were just as likely to select negative interpretations of the pictorial cues.  Standard written vignettes measure - FCSO and controls did not significantly differ in their reports of how fearful they felt, or upon how they would react to the written vignettes. FCSO significantly differed in reports of how anxious they felt (controls higher).	Matched demographics and the results of these were reported.  <u>Weaknesses</u> Power calculations are not reported and the sample size is small.
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## 1.4 Data synthesis

The articles included in this review differed in terms of their primary aims. As such, the focus of their studies represented this. It can be seen from Table 2 that not all studies covered the two elements of motivations that are the focus in this review (i.e. goals and offense-supportive cognitions). Therefore, data will be synthesized in respect of each of the present review's aims. This is possible as all studies analyzed the attributional goal in participants' offending, offense-supportive cognitions, or both.

### 1.4.1 Goals

There appeared to be similarities in regards to the goals that were identified as motivational to FCSOs throughout the articles exploring this. These were typically identified through coding for the emergence of themes from self-reported data recorded through interviewing, with some using secondary reports. Exact calculations of the number of women disclosing each motivation, from a summed total from all articles which equated to 310 women, was attempted. However, vague reporting of the data, in some articles, did not allow for the true total to be determined. The true total of women meeting each motivation is likely to be higher. Subsequently, calculations should be viewed with this in mind.

### 1.4.2 *Male Coercion*

Seven articles found that females attributed their offending to be a consequence of fearing abuse from a male partner, often referred to as male coercion in the literature. Although Crawford (2013) did not report the explicit amount of participants who attributed coercion, data extracts from seven women out of 32 were included for this theme. Nathan and Ward (2002) reported four women out of 12 disclosed threats of violence and a self-expectation to follow the commands of their male partner as motivating their offending. Matthews et al. (1991) found eight women out of 16 reported a male partner initiated the offending prior to forcing them to participate. However, four of these women reported

independently engaging in sexual offending of children after the initial coercion. Gillespie et al. (2015) reported that 45% of women who co-offended ( $n = 20$ ) described being coerced. Elliot et al.'s (2010) sample of 43 women comprised of five women who were categorized as coerced by a male. Two articles are noted to report small evidence of male coercion in their data, both only identified one participant (Jennings, 2000; Sardina, 2017) out of a total sample size of 30, and seven respectively.

Based upon the available data it appears that 35 women, out of a summed total of 310, reported being coerced.

#### *1.4.3 Pleasing a Male Partner*

Participants were found to report offending to please a male partner. Although similar to the aforementioned coercion motivation, it is distinguishable due to threats being absent. Some women reported offending to please their partner, to avoid abandonment. This is often the case for women who are emotionally dependent on their partner. Three women in Sardina's (2017) sample of seven described being motivated to please a partner. Collins and Duff (2016)'s participant reported on the motivational factors in their offending. Statements that reflected pleasing her partner produced a score of 42% of the overall motivational factors reported. This primarily linked to a belief that offending maintained their relationship. Additionally, Nathan and Ward (2002) reported two women out of 12 describing this motivation.

Based upon the available data across all articles, six women out of 310 reported pleasing a male as a factor in their offending.

#### *1.4.5 Sexual arousal*

Deviant sexual arousal was described as a motivating factor in four articles. Eleven women in Matthews et al.'s (1991) sample of 16 reported being sexually aroused during the offending or fantasizing. It was reported that sexual arousal was gained by the majority of

women as they imagined their victims were adults. Arousal was gained through feeling they had power in a relationship. However, the authors do not report explicitly how many were motivated through sexual arousal. Sexually fantasizing about children was found to be low across studies (Jennings, 2000; Sardina, 2017). Nathan and Ward (2002) reported that five women out of their sample of 12 women, three being solo offenders, reported being partly motivated to offend due to sexual arousal. Collins and Duff (2016) reported that sexual arousal, gained through dialogue with the co-offender planning acts, comprised 29% of the statements disclosed by their participant to explain motivation. Jennings (2000) reported that sexual arousal demonstrated low support as a motivator. However, seven women out of 30 reported offending as they needed genital satisfaction and five women were aroused sexually by naked children.

Based upon the data scores provided, 24 women out of 310 reported being motivated by deviant sexual arousal. It appeared that many researchers held this motivation in low regard when compared to other motivations.

#### *1.4.6 Own Needs*

This motivation is broad and encompassed many factors. However, they all related to the perpetrators' own needs being met, including love and attention. In Crawford's (2013) sample of 32 women, 12 women reported offending to meet such needs. They described feeling lonely and that offending made them feel wanted and loved. Feeling wanted was reported by one participant in Sardina's (2017) study of seven women. A further four women reported being motivated by a need for love, attention or being lonely in a sample of 16 women (Matthews et al., 1991). Ten out of 30 women in Jennings' (2000) study reported being motivated by a desire for intimacy, with 67% of the sample reporting that they were not in an affectionate relationship at the time of their offending. Gillespie et al. (2015) reported that solo offenders had a greater need for intimacy than co-offenders in their sample.

However, no descriptive figures are reported. Seven of Elliot et al.'s (2010) lone-offending sample, whose victims were older than twelve ( $n = 11$ ), reported a need for intimacy. Additionally, it was reported that a desire for affection motivated three women, two of whom were solo offenders (Nathan & Ward, 2002).

Overall, it appears that 36 women out of 310 were motivated to meet their own emotional needs.

#### *1.4.7 Power and control*

Feeling powerful or in control of someone was found to be a motivational factor. Many reported that they often felt powerless. Jennings (2000) reported that 90% of the women in their sample ( $n = 30$ ) did not feel that they had any power or control in their lives at the time of their offending. An extract from one participant described feeling a strong sense of power whilst offending, and explained that she liked the control. Gillespie et al. (2015) reported finding that solo offenders had a greater need to dominate or feel powerful, compared to co-offending females. Crawford (2013) detailed extracts from a female who reported that offending fed her ego. This was not an exception, as three women, two who were solo-offenders, reported that feelings of power motivated their offending in Nathan and Ward's (1991) sample ( $n = 12$ ). Matthews et al. (1991) reported that two out of 16 participants met this motivation. Elliot et al. (2010) found that seven out of 11 solo offenders whose victims were older than 12 years, and six of nine lone offenders whose victims were under 12 years, were motivated by feelings of power and control.

Overall, it appears that 20 women out of 310 were motivated by the desire to feel powerful and in control.

#### *1.4.8 Jealousy and Revenge*

Jealousy and revenge was reported to be a motivation in two studies. Nathan and Ward (2002) reported that seven out of 12 women were motivated by this. Four of these

women were in co-offending relationships and felt rejected, and three women reported pathological jealousy. Jealousy typically evoked a desire to gain revenge. Matthews et al.'s (1991) sample ( $n = 16$ ) reported being motivated by jealousy. However, not by or for the victim but of their partner cheating. Additionally, one acted out of revenge and another acted out of anger. They reported that their victims were safe targets to act out elicited feelings.

Overall, 10 out of 310 women were motivated by revenge or jealousy.

#### *1.4.9 Teaching*

Teaching as a motivation was reported by five women. However, the context of the lesson was different in two articles. Four out of 32 women reported feeling respected and that their offending taught the victim something new (Crawford, 2015). A further female in a sample of 12 women reported that offending taught their victim a lesson about “being boy mad” (Nathan & Ward, 1991). This motivation appeared less prevalent across all articles.

#### *1.4.10 Other*

Other motivations that were not found in more than one article were escape and fantasy, which was described by one female as offending to escape feelings of isolation (Collins & Duff, 2016). In addition to this, feeling uncomfortable around children (Jennings, 2000) was reported by 18 women, and five women reported feeling uncomfortable around men of their own age, preferring to be around younger boys (Crawford, 2015). Finally, the victim reminding the offender of herself as a child was another motivation reported by 16 women (Jennings, 2000).

#### *1.4.11 Offense-supportive cognitions*

All articles either explored offense-supportive cognitions explicitly or made reference to them during data analytical processes, with the exception of Nathan and Ward (2002). The cognitions in the studies reviewed were referred to as Implicit Theories or Cognitive Distortions. Ward (2000) explains that Cognitive Distortions emerge from Implicit Theories

and both explain the automatic influences on behaviors based upon our cognitions. Subsequently, they are grouped together under offense-supportive cognitions for the purpose of this review, with sub-categories reflecting the Implicit Theories proposed by Ward and Keenan (1999).

Four studies explored offense-supportive cognitions directly (Beech et al., 2009; Gannon et al., 2012; Gillespie et al., 2015; Elliot et al., 2010), with others making reference to these when explaining findings. Elliot et al. (2010) found 93% of participants held some kind of supportive cognition. Although there are differing degrees of support for each.

#### *1.4.12 Uncontrollability*

This implicit theory is based on the premise that offending occurs as perpetrators are unable to control their abusive behaviors. Beech et al. (2009) reported that this theory was the most common within their sample (87%). It was categorized by reports of being characteristically weak and unable to stop the occurrence of abuse. Many abdicated responsibility, positing that their co-perpetrator led the abuse. Some reported they had not learnt the appropriate ways to behave with children, due to their own historical abuse. It was found that the inter-rater reliability for this implicit theory was 'fair'. However, Gannon et al. (2012) found great support for 'uncontrollability', with 100% of their sample evidencing this through disclosures. Three themes of uncontrollability were identified from coding which explained uncontrollability through: substance abuse, not being able to control the victim, and uncontrollability due to their co-perpetrator. One of Sardina's (2017) seven participants attributed her co-offender drugging her as the reason for offending, which supports Gannon et al.'s (2012) theme of substance abuse. Gillespie (2015) found evidence of 'uncontrollability' in lone and co-offenders. 75% of both groups blamed external factors, and 35% of lone offenders and 30% of co-offenders believed their abuse was uncontrollable. Crawford (2013) reported that 44% externalized blame. Although there is support for distorted blame,

Strickland (2008) reported no significant difference between FCSOs and non-child sexual offending females on blaming outlook. Elliot et al. (2010) reported that this implicit theory was less common within their sample, except lone offenders whose victims were over 12 years, where eight participants saw themselves as a victim.

#### *1.4.13 Dangerous World*

Under this implicit theory, the offending is believed to occur as retribution or because children are viewed as safer intimately, than adults. This implicit theory was found in 53% of Beech et al.'s (2009) participants, although the 'dangerousness' reflected the family environment as opposed to the external world. This encompassed co-offenders who were abusive and instilled fear of defying orders to engage in sexually abusive acts. Gannon et al. (2012) did not find relative support for FSCOs endorsing this implicit theory in their sample. They did however find that 100% of their participants noted that men were dangerous, with a 100% inter-rater reliability. This led the authors to refer to this implicit theory as representing the gender specific dangerousness, renaming it dangerousness of men/males. Despite this finding, Patel (2015) did not find support for this in their sample. Data from Crawford's (2013) sample would show support, as 57% were intimidated by male relationships. Gillespie et al. (2015) posited mixed support for this implicit theory between lone and co-offending females, 0% of lone offenders and only 10% of co-offenders viewed children as a sexual threat to the mother. Although 45% of lone offenders viewed children as safer than adults, this was only found in 5% of co-offenders. Interestingly, only 30% of the sample viewed males as threatening. Elliot et al. (2010) only found support for this implicit theory in lone-offending females with victims over 12 years, but even then it was only reflected in five out of eleven participants.

#### *1.4.14 Children as Sexual Beings*

This implicit theory is based upon the belief that children have a capability of sexual enjoyment and desire sexual gratification. Beech et al. (2009) found evidence of this in 47% of their participants and posited that there were three themes: offenders saw their victims as more mature/adult-like, sexual arousal or attraction to or by children, and offenders believed that children enjoyed the sexually abusive acts and attempted to seek repeat encounters. Gannon et al. (2012) supported this implicit theory, with 63% of their sample viewing children as advanced sexually or enjoying the abuse. Elliot et al. (2010) found that 72% of their sample held these beliefs. This was especially high in lone offenders, with all eleven lone offenders with victims over 12 and seven out of nine lone offending females with victims under 12 demonstrating these beliefs. Of the offenders with victims over 12, nine believed that they were able to consent and five blamed the child. The belief of consent was reflected by disclosures by 60% of lone and 40% of co-offending females in Gillespie et al.'s (2015) sample, with 50% of the sample also giving the child adult characteristics. A participant in Matthews et al.'s (1991) sample believed that the abuse was voluntary and that they were mutual partners in sexual acts. Sardina (2017) found that 57% of the sample viewed the victim as a willing participant, with one participant believing the victim flirted with them and pulled her closer to initiate further contact. This was also found by Jennings (2000) who reported 60% of participants did not believe the victim attempted to stop the abuse. Despite the support, Gannon et al. (2009) reported no significant findings in relation to FCSOs cognitively sexualizing children, when using an implicit association task.

#### *1.4.15 Entitlement*

This implicit theory is based on the belief that some people are entitled to have their needs met when they wish, and however they choose. Gillespie et al. (2015) found support for this, with 55% of lone and 35% of co-offending females believing their needs are greater than their victims. Entitlement was greater in co-offenders, who believed that their partners'



needs were greater than their victims (70%). Elliot et al. (2010) found this distortion in 67% of the sample, with lone-offending females placing their needs greater than their victims – this comprised of eleven females whose victims were above the age of 12 years and five of the nine participants with victims under 12 years. Gannon et al. (2012) found support for males being entitled, which represented 44% of their sample. Despite these findings, Beech et al. (2009) and Gannon et al. (2012) did not find support for this implicit theory within their sample.

#### *1.4.16 Nature of Harm*

This implicit theory is based upon the premise that harm is viewed along a continuum, and that sexually abusive acts are not harmful to children. The degree of harm is moderated by certain factors, such as the use of force against the victim, the victim being aware of the offense taking place, and the social meaning placed on the offense in terms of its nature (i.e., considerable distress is more likely if the victim was conscious throughout the experience, and the person inflicting the abuse was in a position of trust and responsibility; less serious impact is more likely if the victim was not physically harmed/asleep, and the person inflicting the abuse was a stranger). As a result, according to this theory, the less intrusive the act, the less harmful it is perceived to be, and the more likely the offender is viewed as having due regard for the victim's wellbeing (Ward & Kennan, 1999). This was present in 20% of Beech et al.'s (2009) participants, and was categorized by the belief that if they carried out the acts she would be protecting the victim from more harm from the co-offender, who may not then abuse the victim. However, this was greater in Gannon et al.'s (2012) sample, with 81% believing that their abuse was less harmful compared to abuse by a male. The authors believed that females weighed up harmfulness against how harmful it would be if perpetrated by a male. 53% of Gillespie et al.'s (2015) participants did not view their offending as

harmful. Moreover, 40% of lone offenders viewed the abuse as acts of love. This was lower in co-offenders, as only 25% of participants endorsed this.

#### *1.4.17 Other Offense-Supportive Cognitions*

A further category was used by Beech et al. (2009) to assess for evidence of other offense-supportive cognitions within their sample. Although it was debated by the two coders, there was tentative evidence to support a schema representing self-sacrifice and subjugation. Subjugation represented offending after greater subjugation due to coercion and fearing consequences. Abandonment was represented by 15% of lone and 25% of co-offending females in Gillespie et al.'s (2015) sample. Self-sacrifice was the cognition that the offender would meet the needs of others despite her own needs and desire for gratification.

### **1.5 Discussion**

The current review aimed to explore the motivations in FCSOs, including the goals attributed to the offending and offense-supportive cognitions facilitating this. Research into this complex phenomenon is expanding, however, no literature review to date has synthesized the existing evidence base of the key motivations in a systematic way.

#### *1.5.1 Varying motivations*

This review found support for a range of motivations in relation to FCSO, across populations and sub-groups of FCSOs in different countries. Many of the motivations were consistent across participants, including being coerced by a male and the offense-supportive cognition 'uncontrollability'. However, some motivations have greater support than others, with females being motivated by different factors (rather than one exclusively). Additionally, there was evidence of female-exclusive motivations, which appeared to be related to personal situational factors, such as offending to please a male and being coerced by a male partner. In the male literature, it is often noted that males tend to offend independently and do not

typically offend in partnership, as appears to be the case in some females (Burgess-Proctor, Comartin, & Kubiak, 2017).

There was evidence of other situational factors that are also present in the male literature, including offending to meet one's own needs. The presence of personal situational factors, such as being with an abusive partner and feeling the need to offend to please him or being coerced by him, and feeling isolated, may be a factor in these motivations not being as consistent across samples. The varying strength of support for the different motivations and identified differences, highlight the need for further development of female-exclusive models of FCSO, and raising awareness of females who offend not being a homogeneous group.

#### *1.5.2 Identification of further goals in FCSO*

Gannon et al.'s (2008) Descriptive Offense Process Model for FSOs highlighted three key goals: intimacy, sexual gratification and revenge. However, this review has also identified support for further/other goals, which may be explained by some females attributing more than one factor as motivational in their offending (Collins & Duff, 2016; Nathan & Ward, 2002). The link between cognitive distortions and motivations is established by the research base (Baumeister, 1998; Seto, 2017), and it is therefore important to consider how offense-supportive cognitions may link to goals as a driving force to offend.

#### *1.5.3 Coercion*

Of the goals attributed to motivate FCSOs, coercion by a male co-offender was a salient factor in many females studied. This was categorized by fear of abuse to themselves by their co-offender, motivating females to offend in an attempt to guard against this. This motivational factor was demonstrated in most articles, including those rated with a higher quality assessment score. Elliot et al. (2010) explored environmental factors in relation to coercion and found that violence within the relationship was a risk factor. Additionally, those who were categorized as male-associated were often in romantic relationships with males

who had been reported to offend sexually against children. The fear of violence or abuse from a co-perpetrating male is also reflected in a tentative offense-supportive cognition. Although there was debate among the coders for ‘subjugation’ (reflecting coercion), there was some support. These findings may suggest a vulnerability in females, who may be targeted by males with the purpose to coerce or include them in their offending. However, there was also evidence to suggest that once females had been coerced to offend, they went on to offend independently (Matthews et al., 1991). This would potentially indicate that there may be another underlying motivation that is established during the initial offending, or a curiosity prior to this that is exacerbated after being coerced. A further explanation may be that females reported coercion in their offending as a strategy for impression management.

#### *1.5.4 Power and Control*

Some women reported being motivated to gain power and control. This may be explained through many FCSOs reporting they did not feel that they had power or control in their lives at the time of offending (Jennings, 2000). They subsequently attempted to regain power by having control through offending. This motivation is found in the wider sexual offending literature, which suggests that most rapists were motivated to regain power and control (Robertiello & Terry, 2007). The prevalence of this motivation was noted to differ between lone and co-offending females (Gillespie et al., 2015). It is possible that the higher attribution of power as a motivational factors in lone offenders may be due to co-offending females attributing external motivators, such as coercion as influential in their offending.

This motivation requires more exploration to understand how those attributing power and control as motivational, initially determine that this will be gained through offending. Many extracts reported that women felt that they felt that they had power during the offense, but it is not explained how they determined that gaining power in this way would be effective. The question therefore arises as to what function it serves FCSOs to offend in order

to gain power? It may be that once the individual has offended and felt power or control, it further reinforces the desire to offend to re-gain the feeling. However, at present this is merely speculative, and research would be required to build on this.

#### *1.5.5 Meeting Own Needs*

Meeting one's own needs was attributed to offending and may be linked to the offense-supportive cognition of 'entitlement'. It includes the desire to gain affection or love, and suggests that some offenders believe that they are entitled to meet their needs when and how they desire. It could be suggested that this implicit theory is likely to be present in females who offend to meet the goal of feeling affection. Viewing their needs as more important therefore rationalizes their sexually abusive behavior, and thereby avoids cognitive dissonance (a function of implicit theories; Mihailides, Devilly & Ward, 2004). According to Gillespie et al. (2015), there was stronger evidence in lone offenders for this implicit theory. This would appear to be consistent with literature suggesting that many co-offending females are coerced by a partner or offend to please them – they do not need to use this distortion to protect themselves or their self-concept. Subsequently, there may be potential evidence for other distortions to serve this function, such as the tentative self-sacrifice implicit theory noted by Beech et al. (2009), as the women are essentially sacrificing their own desires and needs for that of a partner.

#### *1.5.6 Least Supported Motivations*

The least supported motivations were pleasing a male partner and deviant sexual arousal. Females did not typically report fantasizing about children. However, the merely moderate support for deviant sexual arousal as a motivational factor may be explained by socially desirable responding, given that it is not socially acceptable to be aroused by children. This appears to be contradictory to the finding that the implicit theory of 'children as sexual beings' was found in over half of the articles on offense-supportive cognitions

(Beech et al., 2009; Elliot et al., 2010; Gannon et al., 2012; Gillespie et al., 2015), which may suggest that FCSOs view children as being sexually competent. As such, they believe children have a desire for sexual gratification. However, offending may not meet the perpetrators sexual needs. In line with the male literature, one would expect that viewing children as sexually competent and able to initiate sexual activity would also elicit sexual arousal in the perpetrator (Marziano, Ward, Beech, & Pattison, 2006), highlighting another difference between male and female perpetrators.

#### *1.5.7 Other Motivational Goals*

There were additional motivations reported by some studies that were not reflected across samples. This included offending that served a teaching purpose (Crawford, 2013; Nathan & Ward, 2002), and feeling uncomfortable around adult men (Crawford, 2013) and children (Jennings, 2000). This may suggest that there are indeed motivational factors that have not previously been identified.

#### *1.5.8 Offense-Supportive Cognitions*

There appears to be mixed support for offense-supportive cognitions when viewing these in relation to the five implicit theories, identified by Ward and Keenan (1999) in relation to male sexual offenders (Table 3).

*Table 3*

Ward and Kennan's (1999) Offense-Supportive Cognitions

Offense-Supportive Cognition	Description
Dangerous world	The world is dangerous and people are abusive or rejecting. As such, children are safer than adults, or offending asserts the need to punish.
Children as sexual beings	Children are motivated by and enjoy sex.
Nature of harm	There are degrees of harm and sexual activity is not harmful as it is beneficial.
Uncontrollability	The world is uncontrollable and offending is external to the person as such they are not responsible for the abuse.

Entitlement	Viewing the self as superior in some way and deserve to assert their needs above the needs of others.
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#### *1.5.9 Entitlement and Uncontrollability*

The implicit theory of entitlement appears to be supported across studies, as was that of uncontrollability. Extracts from participants' disclosures revealed that many attributed uncontrollability to being coerced to offend (Beech et al., 2009; Gannon et al., 2012), and therefore not being able to control the situation or their actions as they feared abuse themselves. This implicit theory therefore seems to be linked to coercion. However, whilst some females may feel that they are unable to have control due to fear, the implicit theory of uncontrollability may be used by females as a self-serving bias to allow them to make sense of their offending. Attributing blame due to fear or victimization therefore allows women to rationalize their abusive actions and abdicate themselves.

#### *1.5.10 Dangerous World*

The implicit theory of 'dangerous world' appeared to be predominantly related to men being dangerous, as opposed to the world, which is found in male child sexual offending literature (Beech et al., 2009; Crawford et al., 2013; Gannon et al., 2012). This led Gannon et al. (2012) to tentatively re-name this as 'men being dangerous'. This illustrates disparities in the cognitions female and males hold. The review found mixed support for this implicit theory, with little evidence across the sample of studies (Elliot et al., 2010; Gillespie et al., 2015). As such, other implicit theories may be more prominent in FCSOs, especially in those who are in more abusive relationships.

#### *1.5.11 Children as Sexual Beings*

There were fluctuations in strength of this implicit theory across samples. Elliot et al. (2010) found that this was more likely to be present in females whose victims were older than 12 years. This may be due to prepubescent children not being considered as 'adult-like',

which may be related to the belief that children are able to consent to sexual activity (Elliott et al., 2010; Gannon et al., 2012; Sardina, 2017). Interestingly though, Gannon et al. (2009) failed to find support for FCSOs cognitively sexualizing children using an implicit theory association task. This would appear to fit with participants across studies reporting low levels of sexually fantasizing about children (Jennings, 2000; Sardina, 2017).

#### *1.5.12 Nature of Harm*

The review found nature of harm to have the least support across studies. This reflects offending women protecting the victim from more severe harm by a male perpetrator (Beech et al., 2009; Gannon et al., 2012). It is more prominent in those FCSOs who offend in partnership with a male. Although Gillespie et al. (2015) provided evidence for this implicit theory in lone-offending females, the rationale differed in that it was more related to abusive acts that demonstrated love.

#### *1.5.13 Variations of Motivations*

There are a number of factors that could explain the variation across studies identified in this review, including the differences in study design and methods used to explore this area of enquiry, which are likely to impact on the information disclosed by participants. Additionally, information revealed by participants is dependent on their motivation for taking part, as well as how comfortable they feel in the context of research interviews. This highlights the importance for building rapport between researcher and participant.

#### *1.5.14 Suggestions for future research/clinical implications*

Since clinical practice should be grounded in the scientist practitioner model, whereby practice is informed by empirical research, interventions and treatments for females who offend sexually should draw upon literature concerning this phenomenon. This includes literature concerning motivations and facilitators to sexual offending. It appears that there are links between offense-supportive cognitions and motivations, which have previously been



highlighted in Beech and Ward's (2006) Integrated Theory of Sexual Offending and Gannon et al.'s (2008) Descriptive Model of the Offense Process for Female Sexual Offenders. As such, it would be interesting to explore their connection in future research, and how possessing both may increase vulnerability to offend in FCSOs exclusively.

Additionally, Beech et al. (2009) and Gillespie et al. (2015) have referred to further offense-supportive cognitions that have not previously been identified in males. As such, further exploration of the offense-supportive cognitions that motivate women to sexually offend against children would enable a deeper understanding of this and potentially uncover additional ones that have not yet been identified, or have tentatively been proposed.

It is acknowledged that treatment should address distorted thinking (Blumenthal, Gudjonsson, & Burns, 1999), with this forming the core aims of CBT interventions (Gannon, 2006). Therefore, identifying female-only motivations and cognitions would strengthen treatment efficacy, and have the potential to reduce recidivism rates. The emergence of further motivational factors in women that have not been previously identified in males reflect a need for female-specific models, as these would otherwise be overlooked when applying male models to females who have committed a sexual offense against a child.

The review has noted that there are situational factors that may increase the vulnerability for women to sexually offend against children. Although this is recognized in Gannon et al.'s (2008) Descriptive Model of the Offense Process for Female Sexual Offenders, research into this area would increase awareness and knowledge into these factors, which could be used to provide additional support to women who present with the relevant vulnerability factors in order to intervene early, prior to offending taking place.

Due to the varying motivations identified, risk reduction interventions need be innovative and adapted to meet the unique motivations underlying offending. This approach has been recognized by clinicians and researchers to increase efficacy (Levenson, 2014). In

regards to treating the motivation of power, reported frequently by females, following a Good Lives (GL) framework could be beneficial. This would allow the exploration of alternative, adaptive and prosocial ways to gain power and control. Harkins, Flak, Beech and Woodhams (2012) found that incorporating the GL framework to treatment of male child sexual offenders demonstrated positive evaluations in relation to a change in thinking and behaviour. Although there is concern that the GL framework takes the emphasis from risk, using it as a framework to guide treatment, whilst incorporating risk, may enable understanding of adaptive ways to meet their needs and meet risk reduction needs.

#### *1.5.15 Limitations*

Most studies heavily relied upon self-report, which is to be expected given the number of studies using a qualitative design. Consequently, it is important to consider the implications of social desirability and impression management. Women may disclose other motives to abdicate responsibility. Some argue that offense-supportive cognitions are post-offense rationalizations for their behavior to alleviate the internal struggle (Pollock & Hashmall, 1991). The use of external blame attribution in male child sexual offenders has been demonstrated by Gudjonsson (1990). It has previously been acknowledged that there is a correlation between cognitive distortions and social desirability in those who have committed sexual offenses against children when responding to questionnaires (Gannon, 2006), who are also more likely to impression-manage post-treatment (Mathie & Wakeling, 2011).

Additionally, six participants (38%) in Beech et al.'s (2009) study also participated in Gannon et al.'s (2012) study. Whilst this may be inevitable in light of the limited and difficult access to this population, it does have implications for findings as some women may alter disclosures based upon their prior experience.

A further limitation in relation to the sample population is that all studies recruited at least some participants from prisons, whilst others also used case files from those referred from family court proceedings, in addition to known convicted females (Elliot et al., 2010; Gillespie et al., 2015). As such, the literature review has limited ecological validity outside of the convicted population. Whilst it is unlikely that FCSOs that are not convicted would volunteer information in relation to their offending, due to evading detection, there are likely to be differences between those who have been convicted and those who remain undetected. A study by Neutze, Grundmann, Scherner, and Beier (2012) examined the generalizability of findings from detected male child sexual offenders to undetected male child sexual offenders, and found that there was no differences in the cognitive distortions they held. However, the authors noted a difference in social functioning, which was higher in the undetected males than in the detected males. This finding may be relevant to females who reported coercion, offending to please a male partner and feeling uncomfortable around men as motivational in their offending.

Due to the broad inclusion criteria, some articles were included in the review that were less detailed in the area of motivational factors that play a role in FSCO. This predominantly applies to those studies that were examining the efficacy of models (Elliot et al., 2010; Gillespie et al., 2015). As such, the number of studies specifically examining motivational factors, including goals of offending and offense-supportive cognitions was limited.

To the authors' knowledge, the broad inclusion criteria allowed for all relevant literature available on this topic to be included in the present review. However, due to the limited research in this area, only 13 studies were identified. While participants in the included studies represented a varied heritage, the research predominantly originated from Western countries (i.e., Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and United States), and may

therefore not be characteristic of countries *across the world*. Subsequently, additional motivations for females who sexually offend against children may exist, but have not been identified here. Further research in non-Western countries, where cultural norms, beliefs and values are different, is therefore encouraged.

#### 1.5.15 Conclusion

Overall, the review has highlighted support across studies for a number of key motivations among FCSOs, including coercion, pleasing a male partner, meeting one's own needs, jealousy, and gaining power and/or control, as well as revenge. Some of these are different to those found in the male literature (i.e. coercion, pleasing a male partner).

Additionally, there was support for all of the five implicit theories, namely uncontrollability, children as sexual beings, entitlement, nature of harm, and dangerous world, although evidence to support these varied in strength. However, the implicit theory of 'dangerous world' was suggested to be more reflective of men being dangerous (Gannon et al., 2012), which tentatively demonstrates a difference in implicit theories held between females and males. Less support was found for the following motivations/implicit theories: (i) being motivated by a deviant sexual arousal, (ii) teaching the victim a lesson, (iii) escapism, (iv) fantasy-driven, and (v) feeling uncomfortable around adults and preferring the company of children. In addition to these, self-sacrifice, subjugation and abandonment have also been previously reported (Beech et al., 2009; Gillespie et al., 2015).

Despite its limitations, the present review is the first to provide an overview and summarize motivational factors in FCSO. Research in this area is growing and it is necessary to contribute to our knowledge and understanding of this phenomenon. It is recognized that females who commit sexual offenses are not a homogenous group (Nathan & Ward, 2002; O'Connor, 1987). Consequently, different women will be motivated by different factors. It is paramount for treatment and interventions to be evidence-based, and they should therefore be

based on female-exclusive models and theories of child sexual offending. They should encompass the different motivations that are found in females, such as coercion, offending to please a male partner and the tentative finding of women viewing men as dangerous rather than holding the implicit theory of ‘dangerous world’. As such, this review has amalgamated the current evidence base from existing literature in this area. It encompasses published research articles and dissertations from countries across the world in order to explore the key motivations of FCSOs, and highlights the need for further research.

Finally, the review’s conclusion are in line with existing research suggesting that multiple motivational factors may be at play in the lead up to a female committing a sexual offense, and that an amalgamation of these is likely responsible for sexual offending in this population (Collins & Duff, 2016; Matthews et al., 1991; Nathan & Ward, 2002).

## References

\*indicates those publications that have been included in the present review

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## Appendix A – Data extraction form

Title	
Author(s)	
Year of publication	
Location of study (e.g. country)	
Study aim(s)	
<b>Context and Participants</b>	
Sample size	
Age of sample	
Ethnicity of sample	
Offense	
Offense disclosure (e.g. self-disclosure, criminal record)	
Context of data collection (e.g. prison, community)	
<b>Study design and Methods</b>	
Methodological approach	
Data collection method (e.g. interview, case study)	
Data analysis method (e.g. thematic analysis, IPA)	
Theoretical method to guide interpretation	
<b>Findings</b>	
Key motivations identified	
Data extracts related to key themes	
Offense supportive cognitions identified	
Data extracts related to key	

Offense supportive cognitions	
Recommendations made by author	
<b>Quality of study</b> – based upon information in the quality assessment	
Appropriateness of methodology	
Appropriateness of recruitment process	
Data collection considerations	
Researcher- participant relationship consideration	
Ethical considerations	
Data analysis considerations	
Statement of findings considerations	
Overall quality assessment score	
<b>Additional factors</b>	
Limitations of study	
Conclusion	
Further notes	

Appendix B – Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) used to quality assess publications

Types of mixed methods study components or primary studies	Methodological quality criteria	Responses			
		Yes	No	Can't tell	Comments
<b>Screening Questions (for all types)</b>	Are there clear qualitative and quantitative research questions (or objectives), or a clear mixed methods question (or objective)?				
	Do the collected data allow address the research question (objective)? E.g. consider whether the follow-up period is long enough for the outcome to occur (for longitudinal studies or study components).				
	<b>Further appraisal may be not feasible or appropriate when the answer is 'No' or 'Can't tell' to one or both screening questions.</b>				
<b>Qualitative</b>	1.1. Are the sources of qualitative data (archives, documents, informants, observations) relevant to address the research question (objective)?				
	Is the process for analysing the qualitative data relevant to address the research question (objective)?				
	Is appropriate consideration given to how findings relate to the context, e.g. the setting in which the data were collected?				
	Is appropriate consideration given to how findings relate to researchers' influence, e.g. through their interactions with participants?				
<b>Quantitative randomised controlled (trials)</b>	2.1. Is there a clear description of the randomisation (or appropriate sequence generation)?				
	Is there a clear description of the allocation concealment (or blinding when applicable)?				
	Are there complete outcome data (80% or above)?				
	Is there low withdrawal/drop-out (below 20%)?				
<b>Quantitative non-randomised</b>	3.1. Are participants (organisations) recruited in a way that minimises selection bias?				
	Are measurements appropriate (clear origin, or validity known, or standard instrument; and absence of contamination between groups when appropriate) regarding the exposure/intervention and outcomes?				

	In the groups being compared (exposed vs. non-exposed; with intervention vs. without; cases vs. controls), are the participants comparable, or do researcher take into account (control for) the difference between these groups?				
	Are there complete outcome data (80% or above), and, when applicable, an acceptable response rate (60% or above), or an acceptable follow-up rate for cohort studies (depending on the duration of follow up)?				
<b>Quantitative descriptive</b>	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the quantitative research question (or objectives), or the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the mixed methods question (or objective)?				
	Is the sample representative of the population understudy?				
	Are measurements appropriate (clear origin, or validity known, or standard instrument)?				
	4.4 Is there an acceptable response rate (60% or above)?				
<b>Mixed methods</b>	5.1 Is the mixed methods research design relevant to address the qualitative and quantitative research questions (or objectives), or the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the mixed methods research question (or objective)?				
	Is the integration of qualitative and quantitative data (or results*) relevant to address the research question (or objective)?				
	Is appropriate consideration given to the limitations associated with this integration, e.g., the divergence of qualitative and quantitative data (or results*) in the triangulation design?				
	Criteria for the qualitative component (1.1 to 1.4) and appropriate criteria for the quantitative component (2.1 to 2.4, or 3.1 to 3.4, or 4.1 to 4.4), must be also applied				

## Appendix C – Overview of quality assessment scores

Below are the scores for quantitative methodologies:

Y = Yes, N = No, U = Cannot tell/Unsure

	Questions from the MMAT					Additional Questions			
Authors	Recruited to reduce bias	Appropriate measures	Comparable groups	Complete outcome data	Score	Ethical considerations	Strong rationale	Strong statement of findings	Data collection considerations
Gannon (2009)	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%	Y	Y	Y	Y
Strickland (2008)	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%	Y	Y	Y	U
Patel (2015)	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%	Y	Y	Y	Y

Below are the scores for qualitative methodologies:

Y = Yes, N = No, U = Cannot tell/Unsure

	Questions from the MMAT					Additional questions			
Authors	Relevant sources of information	Relevant analysis	Context consideration	Researchers influence	Score	Ethical considerations	Strong rationale	Strong statement of findings	Data collection considerations
Crawford (2013)	Y	Y	N	U	75%	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sardina (2017)	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%	Y	Y	Y	Y
Nathan and Ward (2002)	Y	Y	N	N	50%	Y	Y	Y	U
Jennings (2000)	Y	Y	Y	U	50%	Y	Y	Y	Y
Matthews et al. (1991)	Y	Y	N	U	50%	N	Y	Y	N
Collins and Duff (2016)	Y	Y	Y	N	75%	Y	Y	Y	Y
Gannon et al. (2012)	Y	Y	N	N	50%	Y	Y	Y	U
Beech et al. (2009)	Y	Y	N	N	50%	Y	Y	Y	Y
Elliot et al. (2010)	Y	Y	N	N	50%	N	Y	Y	Y



Below are the scores of mixed-methods methodologies:

Y = Yes, N = No, U = Cannot tell/Unsure

	Questions from the MMAT												Additional Questions			
Authors	Relevant	Relevant	Context	Research	Recruite	Appropri	Compara	Comple	Appropri	Qualitati	Consider	Score	Ethical	Strong	Strong	Data
Gillespie et al. (2015)	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	N	50 %	Y	Y	Y	Y

# Appendix D – Frequency data in relation to offenses committed by participants in the included studies and classified using the Sexual Offences Act (2003)

Conviction data were used from studies (with the exception of Mathews et al. (1991), as they do not state whether they are reporting convictions or self-report) to report offense frequencies. A limitation of this is that it may underrepresent the frequency of types of offending behavior engaged in by participants. However, it was felt that as a majority of studies predominantly report conviction data, it was appropriate to keep the source of data consistent. We also attempted to tally up self-report data in Nathan and Ward's (2002) study, and it became apparent that self-report frequency data underrepresented the conviction frequency data. Please note that some studies were more detailed in relation to their reporting of this data (e.g., Beech et al. (2009), by reporting the number of convictions per offense per person – i.e., nine counts of indecent assault for Participant 1). As a result, frequency data is likely to be skewed.

Table 1

*Total number of participants included in the classification*

Studies	Participants
Nathan and Ward (2002)	12
Jennings (2000)	30
Mathews, Mathews and Speltz (1991)	16
Collins and Duff (2016)	1
Beech, Parrett, Ward and Fisher (2009)	15
Total 74	

Table 2

*Categories of offending behavior according to the Sexual Offences Act (2003)*

Offenses involving...	Frequency
Penetration	66
Sexual assault/touching	50
Child sexual abuse material	25
Aiding and abetting	9
Inciting a child to engage in sexual activity	9
Intentionally causing a child to watch/view sexual activity	2
Attempted rape	3
Incest	10

Table 3

*Ambiguous offenses not possible to classify according to the above categories of offending behavior according to the Sexual Offences Act (2003)*

Offense description	Frequency	Study
Gross indecency	1	Jennings (2000)

Child endangerment	2	Jennings (2000)
Corrupting a child	1	Jennings (2000)
Sexual immorality	1	Jennings (2000)
Multiple abusive acts	1	Collins & Duff (2016)
Indecency with a child	18	Beech et al. (2009)
Child cruelty	2	Beech et al. (2009)
Intimidation of witness	1	Beech et al. (2009)
Child neglect/failure to protect	3	Beech et al. (2009)
Grievous bodily harm	1	Beech et al. (2009)
Offences against the person	9	Beech et al. (2009)
Sexual offences	4	Beech et al. (2009)
Sexual activity with child	8	Beech et al. (2009)
Manslaughter	1	Beech et al. (2009)
Cruelty to child	5	Beech et al. (2009)

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